

## Article

# What Do We Know About the Demand for Evaluation? Insights From the Parliamentary Arena

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## Abstract

Research on evaluation has mainly focused on the use of evaluation and has given little attention to the origins of evaluation demand. In this article, I consider the question of why parliamentarians demand evaluations with parliamentary requests. Building on the literature of delegation, I use a principal-agent framework to explain the origins of evaluation demand. In doing so, I argue that the parliamentarians mainly demand evaluations in order to hold the government accountable. The quantitative analysis shows that Swiss parliamentarians demand more evaluations if they have the impression that the administration does not implement the policies within their meaning. This finding suggests that parliamentarians demand evaluations in order to fulfill their oversight function towards the government. This conclusion could be relevant in order to understand the role of evaluations within the parliamentary arena.

## Keywords

evaluation theory, evaluation practice, politics, surveys

## Introduction

In the last 20 years, the importance of evaluations has increased worldwide, which can be observed due to their rising institutionalization (Barbier & Hawkins, 2012; Fouquet & Méasson, 2009; Jacob, Speer, & Furubo, 2015). In times of recession and austerity, evaluations are an important information source for policy makers in order to estimate the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenses (Frey & Widmer, 2011; Leeuw, 2009).<sup>1</sup> Considered as an academic service, evaluations assess government actions systematically and transparently and contribute to the successful operation of the state in various ways (Widmer & DeRocchi, 2012, p. 14, 27). Unsurprisingly, Dahler-Larsen (2012) argues that we live in the age of evaluation.

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Even though governments spend a considerable amount of financial resources for evaluations every year, the question about the origin of evaluations has rarely been investigated so far, since research on evaluation has mainly focused on the use of evaluation (Alkin & Taut, 2002; Askim, 2008, 2009; Balthasar, 2007; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Frey & Widmer, 2011; Henry & Mark, 2003; Johnson et al., 2009; Kirkhart, 2000; Weiss, 1987, 1989, 1998; Whiteman, 1985). Within the political system, the parliament is an important demander of evaluations, as evaluations are particularly useful for members of parliament. On the one hand, evaluations provide information for the legislation in order to make a decision (Christie, 2003, p. 9; Weiss, 1989). The evaluation reports contain information either about what consequence policies have or what policies work.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, evaluations help parliaments to fulfill their oversight function toward the government (Bättig & Schwab, 2015; Lees, 1977; Pelizzo & Staphenurst, 2012). Consequently, recent studies have observed an increasing importance of evaluations in the parliaments (Jacob et al., 2015; Speer, Pattyn, & DePeuter, 2015).

Although some authors have discussed the demand for evaluation (Pattyn, 2014a, 2014b; Toulemonde, 1999; Widmer, 2008; Zollinger, 2009), literature has so far mainly neglected the origins of evaluation. Moreover, scholars have completely left the parliament as a demander of evaluations out of the discussion, although parliamentarians are an important stakeholder of evaluations (Vedung, 2010, p. 268). The knowledge about the parliamentarians' motivation to demand evaluations may lead to evaluations where parliamentarians have stronger interests to be involved. Moreover, parliaments often ignore evaluation results (Weiss, 1999, p. 474). In order to increase the evaluation utility for parliamentarians, one has to understand what parliamentarians are seeking in evaluations, so that evaluators can improve the evaluation practice (Rog, 2015, p. 226). Hence, this article aims to contribute to research on evaluation by explaining the demand for evaluations specifically within the parliamentary arena.

In this article, I consider the question of why members of parliament demand evaluations with parliamentary requests. Building on the delegation literature (Braun & Gilardi, 2006; Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991; Strøm, Müller, & Bergman, 2006), I argue that the chain of delegation has two consequences for the parliament in order to fulfill its oversight function. On the one hand, a parliamentarian cannot be sure whether an agency will implement a policy in the parliament's sense (bureaucratic drift). On the other hand, the parliament often lacks in information in order to access the implementation by an agency (asymmetric information). Hence, I argue that parliamentarians demand evaluations in order to hold the government and its agencies accountable. In doing so, the article examines the hypotheses that a parliamentarian's perception of the extent of bureaucratic drift and asymmetric information influence a parliamentarian's likelihood to demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests.

I analyze these arguments empirically with a parliamentary survey that was conducted among Swiss parliamentarians at the national and subnational level in order to obtain information about their relationship to evaluations. Switzerland is of particular interest, as it is characterized by an advanced evaluation culture (Balthasar, 2007; Horber-Papazian, 2015; Horber-Papazian & Jacot-Descombes, 2012; Jacob, 2002; Jacob & Varone, 2004; Mader, 2009). According to Jacob, Speer, and Furubo (2015, p. 145), the Swiss parliament is characterized by a high institutionalization of evaluation compared to other parliaments from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member states. Moreover, a general evaluation clause was introduced in the course of the new federal constitution in 1999, urging the Federal Assembly to ensure that federal measures are evaluated with regard to their effectiveness (Widmer, 2007, p. 76).

This article is structured as follows: First, the second section illustrates how parliaments can demand evaluations in Switzerland. The third section describes the concept chain of delegation and how delegation affects the evaluation demand by the parliament. Then the fourth section presents another group of variables, which might influence the demand for evaluations. The fifth section introduces data and methods, together with the operationalization. Then the sixth section presents the results of a multilevel analysis, which shows that parliamentarians are more likely to demand

**Table 1.** Parliamentary Evaluations in Switzerland 2010–2014.

Evaluation Characteristic	Attribute	Percentage
Purpose	Effectiveness	40.0
	Efficiency	13.0
	Benefit	17.4
	Cost	29.6
Perspective	Ongoing	16.3
	Retrospective	32.6
	Prospective	51.1
Object	Single measure	25.5
	Project	21.8
	Program	19.2
	Strategy	33.5
	Policy field	0.0

Note.  $n = 188$ .

evaluations with parliamentary requests if they think that the administration does not implement the policies in their sense. Finally, the seventh section discusses the results, while the eighth section concludes them and discusses their relevance for research on evaluation.

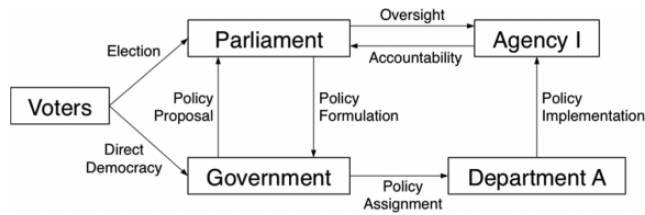
## How Parliaments Demand Evaluations in Switzerland

Switzerland has not only developed a high degree of evaluation institutionalization, but also an active evaluation practice, even if the administration activity is not evaluated in a comprehensive and frequent way (Mader, 2009, p. 60). According to Jacob et al. (2015), Switzerland has the second highest evaluation culture after Finland. In doing so, the country has the most developed institutionalization of evaluation within the parliaments of all OECD member states.

Swiss parliamentarians have different possibilities in order to demand evaluations.<sup>3</sup> In general, one can distinguish between two different ways: On the one hand, parliamentary committees can demand evaluations directly by commissioning specialized units with an evaluation. Although this procedure has a legal basis, committees hesitate to go by this way in Switzerland, with the exception of the Parliamentary Control of the Administration.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, individual members of parliament can indirectly demand evaluations. In doing so, parliamentarians do not commission evaluations directly but urge the government to evaluate a policy. Parliamentarians can either include an evaluation clause<sup>5</sup> into the law that obliges the agencies to conduct an evaluation and to report about its results (Bussmann, 2005) or to submit a parliamentary request to the government. According to Janett (2004, p. 145), Swiss parliamentarians prefer to demand evaluations with parliamentary requests.

Parliamentarians ask for all sorts of evaluations. Bundi, Varone, Gava, and Widmer (2015) analyzed the parliamentary requests of parliamentarians at the federal level between 2010 and 2014. In total, the members of parliament submitted 188 parliamentary requests that demanded an evaluation, which all had different characteristics (Table 1). In doing so, the study distinguished between the evaluation purpose, perspective, and object<sup>6</sup>. According to the analysis, the parliamentarians most often demand evaluations in order to prospectively assess the effectiveness of a strategy. These findings confirm the results of Balthasar (2009, p. 497), who argues that parliamentarians are rather interested in prospective than retrospective evaluations.

In the next section, I will present the theoretical framework of with whom I plan on answering my research questions. The relationship between the parliament and the government is characterized by



**Figure 1.** The chain of delegation in Switzerland.

a principal–agent relationship, since the parliament delegates the implementation of policies to the government (Lupia, 2003).<sup>7</sup> Hereafter, I will argue that the delegation of policy implementation leads to a principal–agent situation, in which evaluations help parliamentarians to oversee the executive’s actions.

## Delegation and Evaluation

A central concept in the policy cycle process is the *chain of delegation*, in which those authorized to make political decisions mandate others to make such decisions on their behalf (Braun & Gilardi, 2006; Strøm, 2000; Strøm et al., 2006). In contemporary democracies, the chain of delegation starts with an election where citizens delegate their policy preferences to politicians (Müller, Bergman, & Strøm, 2006, pp. 19–21). The elected politicians—the parliamentarians—are responsible for transforming the policy preferences into the legislation. Since they only have limited resources and lack in specific policy knowledge, parliamentarians are not suitable for the implementation of the legislation. Hence, they delegate the implementation of the policies to the government, which usually distributes the tasks among the heads of the different government departments. The chain of delegation closes when the responsible heads of the government departments delegate the implementation of the specific policies to their public servants.

The concept of the chain of delegation was developed in the context of parliamentary democracies. Although Strøm (2000, p. 264) argues that Switzerland is not a parliamentary system, as the government is not dependent on the parliament’s confidence,<sup>8</sup> the concept is also suitable for the Swiss context. Concerning the policy process, two additional steps in the chain of delegation appear. First, Swiss voters can not only delegate their policy preferences to their representatives through the process of elections but also influence the policy process directly via direct democratic instruments (Linder, Bolliger, & Rielle, 2010; Vatter, 2014). They can change the constitutions if a majority of voters and cantons accept the proposal in a ballot. In doing so, they delegate their policy preference to the government, which leads us to the second additional step of the Swiss chain of delegation. In general, the government prepares the policy proposals and delegates them to the parliament—about 75% of the bills are developed by the executives (Lüthi, 2014; Vatter, 2014). Although the government prepares the policies, the parliament has a strong influence on the legislative proposals. Studies on the rate of the amendments assume that more than 40% of the government proposals are modified within the parliament (Jegher & Lanfranchini, 1996; Schwarz, Bächtiger, & Lutz, 2011). After the parliament has formulated the policy, the remaining process is equivalent to other parliamentary democracies. As soon as the parliament has formulated a policy and submitted it to the government, the policy is assigned to a particular department, which delegates the implementation to an agency (Figure 1).

In literature, it is often argued that the chain of delegation can be modeled as a principal–agent relationship (Huber, 2000; Kiewiet & McCubbins, 1991; Müller et al., 2006). The principal–agent theory describes the basic problems between a principal and an agent (Grossman & Hart, 1983; Pratt & Zeckhauser, 1991; Williamson, 1975). According to Gilardi and Braun (2002, pp. 147–148), the principal

commissions the agent to render a service in his advantage in exchange for a certain reward. The theory is based on the assumptions of a methodological individualism: From this point of view, the agent is interested in reducing its effort as much as possible—as long as the principal barely can be satisfied. The principals' interests are insufficiently taken into account, as the agent does not inform the principal about opportunities for action. Hence, the principal cannot control whether the agent accomplishes a task that should be done while he is dependent on him. As a consequence of this dependency, the principal has to deal with an uncertainty, if the agent proceeds in a certain way in order to achieve his goals.

According to Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991), two problems appear in the delegation process between the parliament and the agencies, which implement the delegated tasks by the government. First, the parliament may not approve an implementation of a certain policy by the agency. This situation is often called *bureaucratic drift* in literature, since the public servants drift away in their interpretation of the policy from the goals of the parliament (McCubbins, Noll, & Weingast, 1989, pp. 435–440). Second, the parliament may lack in information in order to assess the policy implementation by the agency. Since the public servants know much more about the implementation of a policy than the parliament, there is an *asymmetric information* between them (Banks & Weingast, 1992; Saalfeld, 2000). As a consequence, there is uncertainty as to what extent the agency will implement a policy in a way, which the parliament would approve. In order to reduce this uncertainty, the chain of delegation is mirrored by a corresponding chain of accountability that runs in the opposite direction (Müller et al., 2006, p. 19). According to Lupia (2003, pp. 44–51), the problem of bureaucratic drift and asymmetric information gives the parliament an incentive to seek information about the government. He argues that such information can be generated in institutions and can distinguish between *ex ante* and *ex post* mechanisms. On the one hand, *ex ante* mechanisms help parliaments to learn about their agencies before and to anticipate asymmetric information problems. On the other hand, *ex post* mechanisms can be used in order to learn about the agencies' actions after the task and to deal with bureaucratic drift. Members of parliament have different possibilities in overseeing the administration units in order to control them and ensure accountability. According to McCubbins and Schwartz (1984), parliaments have a strong preference to fire alarm oversight where the parliament only intervenes in the case of indications from the media or the civil society. In doing so, they can organize hearings, inspections, or commission evaluations in order to fulfill their oversight function.

In Switzerland, the parliament's oversight function is not only weakened by the direct democratic instruments but also by the strong position of the government. Thus, the control capacity of the Swiss parliaments is rather limited compared to other countries (Schnapp & Harfst, 2005). In order to fulfill their oversight function, the control committees are the most important institutions for Swiss parliaments. The committees continuously control the administration with inspections by establishing subgroups, which focus on a special issue and write a report with recommendations for the attention of the government. Though, the government is not always responsive to the recommendations. Although it comments on the reports and often agrees with the findings, they put forward good reasons why no changes are needed in the present practices. Furthermore, the control committees also have problems in dealing with the high amount of information, which is why other instruments are taken into account (Mastronardi, 1990, pp. 139–144).

As a consequence, the Swiss parliaments cannot control the complete policy implementation process. While hearings and inspections are difficult and costly to establish with nonpublic actors, and the resources of the control committees are limited, members of parliaments focus on parliamentary instruments (Proksch & Slapin, 2011; Wiberg, 1995). Evaluations in particular seem to be an instrument to oversee the activities of agencies and thus to provide accountability (Jacob et al., 2015, p. 40; Pollitt, 2006). During evaluations, agencies have to report about their activities and provide information for parliaments. Not only do the parliamentarians gather information about a certain policy, but also do they find out how the administration has implemented it. Moreover, evaluations allow parliamentarians to selectively oversee the policy implementation, which they

tend to prefer than monitoring all activities. Hence, parliamentarians mainly demand evaluations in order to hold the government accountable (Speer et al., 2015; Widmer & DeRocchi, 2012). Thus, following hypotheses are investigated:

**Hypothesis 1:** The bigger a parliamentarian's perceived bureaucratic drift, the more likely a parliamentarian will demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests.

**Hypothesis 2:** The stronger a parliamentarian's perceived asymmetric information between the parliament and the agencies, the more likely a parliamentarian will demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests.

Since research on evaluation has not investigated the motivation for the parliamentary demand for evaluations, only little is known about this topic. Hence, it seems appropriate to focus on further explanatory factors. Building on literature about evaluations and parliaments, several aspects have to be considered in order to answer the research question. I call this variable group the *(un)usual suspects*, since some of them are known to be important for the evaluation activity in the literature, while others are less well discussed. In the next chapter, I will explain their relevance for the parliamentary demand for evaluations.

## The (Un)Usual Suspects

In research on evaluation, the attitude toward evaluations has widely been used as an explaining factor in several studies. According to Johnson et al. (2009, p. 384), several studies analyze the influence of attitude on the utilization of evaluations but unfortunately find no clear evidence in the investigated articles.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the literature on evaluation capacity building (ECB) uses the attitude toward evaluations as a requirement in order to build evaluation capacity (Labin, Duffy, Meyers, Wandersman, & Lesesne, 2012). In both research areas, a more positive attitude toward evaluations leads to a higher use of evaluations or ECB. There is a good reason to believe that the individual attitude of parliamentarians toward evaluation not only varies among them but also has an influence on the motivation to demand an evaluation (Christie, 2007; Mark & Henry, 2004). Parliamentarians with a more positive attitude toward evaluations are more likely to demand evaluations because they are more familiar with them and they see a profit.

**Hypothesis 3:** The more positive a parliamentarian's attitude toward evaluations, the more likely a parliamentarian will demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests.

The most important characteristic of parliamentarians is their ideology. The political parties have a different attitude toward the state or the society, which effects their behavior in the parliament. According to Balthasar and Rieder (2009, p. 416), a parliament will rather check the administration's performance in cantons with a high percentage of liberals and conservatives, but the authors have not found a significant influence. However, Frey (2012, p. 279) argues that politicians from the political center allow themselves to be convinced by evaluations, as the political ideology moderates the openness toward evaluations. Since they are more open for evaluative information, it does not seem unlikely that political center parliamentarians demand evaluations with parliamentary requests more often than a parliamentarians of a left- or a right-wing party.<sup>10</sup>

**Hypothesis 4:** A parliamentarian of a center party will more likely demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests than a parliamentarian of a left- or right-wing party.

Parliaments are usually subdivided into committees, which can be distinguished between two different types. According to Heierli (2000, p. 18), both the federal and cantonal level know committees,

which differ in their time frame (standing and ad hoc) and their function (legislative and oversight). The oversight committees both deal with questions about the government and administration's actions. While the finance committees oversee the budget, the control committees supervise the government, the administration, and the courts. In doing so, both come across evaluations more frequently than other parliamentarians. Since the oversight committee members are more exposed to evaluations, it is more likely that they will more often demand evaluations than other members of parliament.

**Hypothesis 5:** A parliamentarian of an oversight committee will more likely demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests than a parliamentarian, which is not a member of an oversight committee.

As mentioned in the introduction, Switzerland has a general evaluation clause, which shall encourage the parliament to let the public policies be evaluated on their effectiveness. While the federal level has known this type of evaluation clause since 1999, some cantons included a general clause in their constitution afterwards or had it even before (Horber-Papazian, 2007, p. 137). A general evaluation clause is an article in the constitution that suggests that public measures should be evaluated. Although a general evaluation clause is mostly of symbolic use and does not have a binding effect, there is a probability that this factor influences the parliamentarians' motivation to demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests. A general evaluation clause provides a legal foundation in order to conduct an evaluation and foster the parliamentarians' motivation to demand an evaluation.

**Hypothesis 6:** A parliamentarian in a parliament, whose constitution has a general evaluation clause, will more likely demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests than a parliamentarian in a parliament, whose constitution has no general evaluation clause.

The institutional position of a parliament toward the executive can also influence the parliamentary demand for evaluations. A study from Kaiss (2010) illustrates the cantonal variation of the parliament's power in an index.<sup>11</sup> While Geneva and Berne have strongly developed legislative competences, Glarus and both Appenzell Outer Rhodes and Inner Rhodes have rather weaker positions. I argue that the stronger the parliamentary rights are, the more the parliament will demand evaluations because it feels at eye level with the government.

**Hypothesis 7:** The stronger the institutional position of the parliament toward the executive, the more likely a parliamentarian will demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests.

In the next section, I will discuss the data and the methods that I use to examine the hypotheses. In doing so, I discuss the parliamentary survey and the operationalization of the variables that are included in the model.

## **Data and Method**

The basis of this study is an online survey among the cantonal and federal members of parliament, which was conducted during May and June 2014. The parliamentarians were asked about their relationship to evaluations.<sup>12</sup> In total, 1,570 parliamentarians have participated in the survey, which comes up to a response rate of 55.3%.<sup>13</sup> Compared to similar surveys among Swiss parliaments, this percentage is relatively high. Brun and Siegel (2006) achieved a response rate of 21.3% in a survey about performance reports in the context of new public management. Focusing only on the federal level, Bütikofer (2014) was even able to collect 65% in the lower and 70% in the upper house.

In order to measure the dependent variable—the demand of an evaluation with parliamentary requests—the parliamentarians were asked if they ever submitted a request in the last 4 years in

order to investigate a public policy regarding its effectiveness or efficiency. The independent variables were also mostly collected through the online-survey. The delegation variables were obtained by asking the parliamentarians if they agreed that the administration implements the legislation in their meaning, or that they had enough information in order to judge the administration's implementation. In contrast, the parliamentarian's attitude toward evaluations is measured on a multidimensional scale. According to Rosenberg and Hovland (1965), attitude is based on a three-dimensional structure, which contains cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. First, the cognitive dimension illustrates the (potential) knowledge about evaluations. Second, the affective component indicates the parliamentarian's benefit of an evaluation. Finally, the last dimension indicates the behavioral intention of a parliamentarian whether the person will use an evaluation. Hence, the parliamentarians were asked whether they read evaluation summaries, whether they think that evaluations are useful for them, and whether they usually use evaluations in order to make decisions. The 3 items are gathered together in a single index.<sup>14</sup> In addition, I create a dummy variable for parliamentarians of center parties<sup>15</sup> and a dummy variable for the membership in an oversight committee. Similarly, a dummy variable indicates if there is a general evaluation clause in the cantonal or federal constitution, while the institutional position is measured by an index according to Kaiss (2010). Moreover, I also include several control variables: age, sex, urbanity, education, professionalization, parliament experience, board membership,<sup>16</sup> the size of the administration, and the expenses on the cantonal and federal level. The operationalization is summarized in Table A1 in the Appendix, and the distribution of the variables is described in Table A2 in the Appendix.

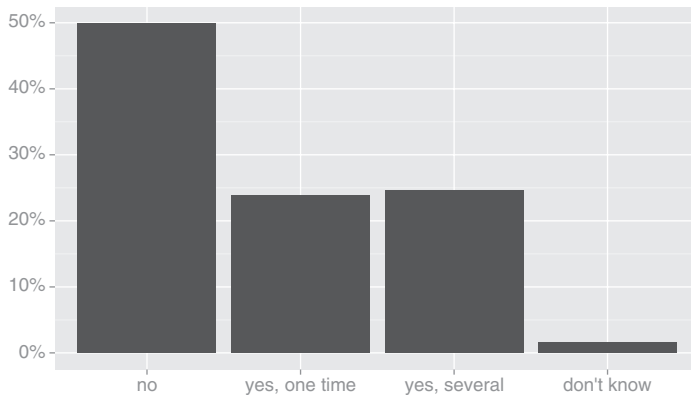
Two aspects have to be considered when choosing a suitable method to examine the hypotheses. First, the outcome of the dependent variable is binary, which is why I will use a logistic regression model. Second, the data are grouped into a higher level (parliaments). Thus, the parliamentarian's behavior might be dependent on the parliament in which the parliamentarian is part of. Hence, a multilevel approach is pursued, as it involves data, which is arrayed hierarchically and has several advantages (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). In doing so, I can integrate variables on the parliament level in my model, which I expect to have a theoretical impact on the parliamentarian's probability to demand a parliamentary request. However, in this way, I also can reduce the standard errors, which would be underestimated if the parliament variables had not been integrated in the model. In doing so, I cluster the data with regard to the parliaments.

Through statistical analysis, I will test the two theories against each other in order to find out if the delegation variables can explain the parliamentary demand for evaluations or if the (un)usual suspects play the leading part in this story. Hence, I will test different models, which distinguish between their included variables. However, in the literature on evaluation, hardly anything is known about the parliamentary demand for evaluations. As a consequence, I will first illustrate the distribution of the dependent variable.

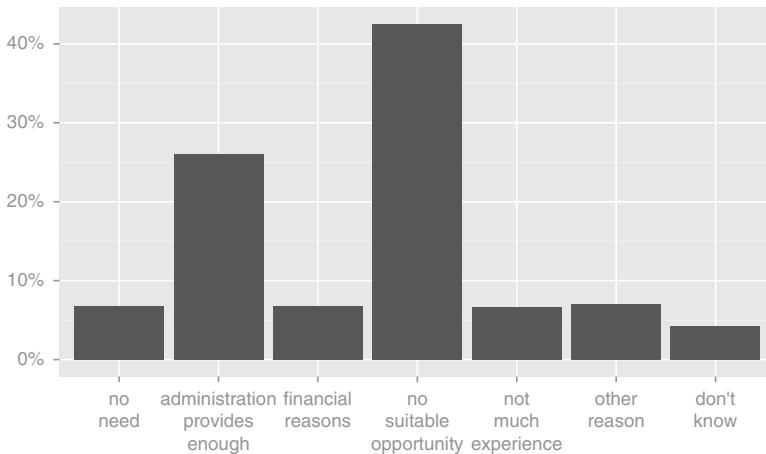
## Results

In the survey, the parliamentarians were asked if they proposed a parliamentary request in order to examine a state measure in the last 4 years (Figure 2). Almost 50% of the parliamentarians, which participated in the survey, replied with no. On the other hand, nearly the same percentage (49%) demanded an evaluation with a parliamentary request during the last 4 years. Within this group, there is about the same share of parliamentarians that proposed only once (24%), respectively, several times (25%). At a first glance, this percentage seems quite high. However, one has to consider that parliamentary requests can not only be proposed by a single parliamentarian but also by several members of parliament, especially when a committee is the initiator of the request. Moreover, by far not all parliamentary requests successfully pass the parliamentary arena.





**Figure 2.** Percent of parliamentarians demanding an evaluation ( $n = 1,499$ ). “Did you propose a parliamentary request in order to examine a state measure regarding its implementation and effects?”



**Figure 3.** Parliamentarians’ reason for no parliamentary requests ( $n = 724$ ). “Why did you not propose a parliamentary request in order to examine a state measure regarding its implementation and effects?”

If the parliamentarians responded with no, they had to declare their most important reason for not demanding an evaluation with a parliamentary request (Figure 3). According to more than 42%, no suitable opportunity ever arose. Twenty-six percent of the asked parliamentarians indicated that the administration already provides enough evaluation reports. Moreover, 7% of the members of parliament argued that they have only been in the parliament for a short time and have not much experience. Only few parliamentarians chose the response option that there is no need for such studies and that evaluations should be resigned for financial reasons (each 7%). Hence, only 13% mention rather negative reasons why they do not demand evaluations, albeit one can assume that parliamentarians with no suitable opportunity may simply not be interested in the evaluations. This corresponds to the responses to the question about the parliamentarian’s utilization of evaluation.<sup>17</sup>

As a next step, I will check the determinants for the probability to demand an evaluation with a parliamentary request. In doing so, I executed six different models (Table 2). First, an “empty model” is tested in order to ascertain if there is any variance on the parliament level. In doing so, Model 0 has no

**Table 2.** Individual and Parliament Random Effects Models.

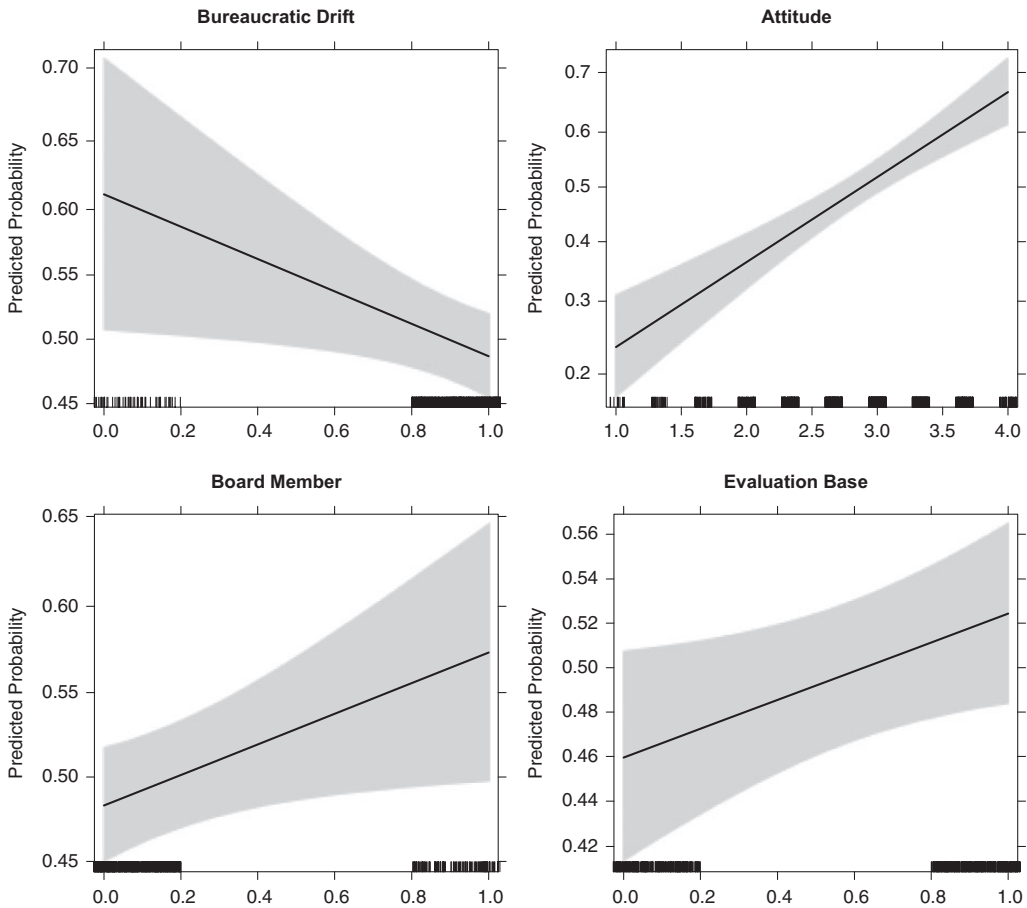
Dependent Variable: Parliamentary Request						
	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Individual level						
Predispositions						
Age		0.679	0.687	0.600	0.661	0.840
Sex		0.134	0.129	0.200	0.208*	0.176
Urbanity		0.070	0.055	0.023	0.040	0.054
Education		0.127	0.136	0.058	0.068	0.094
Political dispositions						
Professionalization		0.705**	1.015**	0.159	−0.031	0.002
Parliament experience		0.026***	0.026***	0.029***	0.029***	0.028***
Board member		0.395**	0.379**	0.366**	0.384**	0.397**
Delegation						
Bureaucratic drift		−0.338*	−0.350*			−0.523**
Asymmetric information		−0.006	−0.006			0.039
(Un)usual suspects I						
Attitude				0.704***	0.697***	0.728***
Center party				−0.053	−0.077	−0.151
Oversight committee				0.205*	0.206*	0.276**
Parliament level						
Parliamentary disposition						
Size of administration			−0.000		−0.000	−0.000*
Public expenses			−0.000		−0.000	−0.000
(Un)usual suspects II						
Evaluation base					0.205*	0.229*
Institutional position					1.037	1.026
Residual variance						
Between $\psi$	0.031	0.131	0.097	0.085	0.000	0.000
Parliamentarians	1,474	1,372	1,372	1,384	1,384	1,337
Log likelihood	−1,020.519	−928.145	−926.804	−908.097	−903.459	−866.227

Note.  $n = 28$  Parliaments.

\* $p < .1$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

indicators on the individual- and parliament levels, suggesting some autocorrelation in the variance of parliamentary requests on the parliament level. The likelihood ratio test shows that the error terms correlate on the parliament level, since the variance between them does not equal to zero.<sup>18</sup> Hence, it seems reasonable to use a multilevel approach, which should explain the variation at the parliament level.

Model 1 tests the explanatory strength of the delegation variables, controlling the parliamentarians' predispositions and political dispositions. As we can see, the variable bureaucratic drift has a significant effect, which means that if a parliamentarian thinks the administration implements the legislation in the meaning of the parliament, the parliament's probability to propose a parliamentary request decreases. On the other hand, it seems that it has no effect if a member of parliament thinks he has enough information to judge the implementation. However, also the professionalization, the experience in a parliament and the membership in the parliament board have a highly significant influence in whether an evaluation will be demanded. When the variables on the parliament level are also included, the outcome does not change remarkably (Model 2). Not only does the effect of the political dispositions stay highly significant but also the effect of the variable bureaucratic drift. On the contrary, the size of the administration and the public expenses do not seem to have an effect.



**Figure 4.** Individual probability to demand an evaluation with parliamentary requests.

After testing the effect of the delegation variables, Model 3 checks if the variables of the group (un)usual suspects I have an influence on the dependent variable. The parliamentarians' attitude toward an evaluation and the membership in an oversight committee are indeed significantly positive, while the party ideology does not seem to be of relevance.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the professionalization of a parliamentarian is no longer significant. This finding indicates that the effect of professionalization in Models 2 and 3 is probably not robust. A possible explanation could be an interfering effect of the (un)usual suspects I variables. In Model 4, the variables on the higher level are added as well as the parliamentary disposition and the (un)usual suspects II. Compared to Model 3, the coefficients stay stable. While the evaluation base in the cantonal and federal constitution only has a weakly significant effect on the parliamentarian's likelihood to demand an evaluation, the institutional position has no influence at all.

In Model 5, I combine the delegation variables and the (un)usual suspects. The full model confirms the prior results and provides evidence for Hypotheses 1, 3, and 5 and tends to reject Hypotheses 2, 4, 6, and 7. First, the perceived bureaucratic drift seems to influence a parliamentarian's likelihood to demand an evaluation, while the asymmetric information has no influence. Second, the parliamentarians' predispositions do not seem to be important, but their political dispositions indeed play a crucial role. Third, the un(us)al aspects have no influence on the parliamentarian's motivation to demand an evaluation, apart from the attitude toward evaluations and the

membership in an oversight committee. The effects of the variables can also be observed in the predicted probability to demand an evaluation (Figure 4).

The figure illustrates the individual propensity to demand an evaluation for the effect of the variable's bureaucratic drift, attitude, board member, and evaluation base.<sup>20</sup> As the graphs show, the strongest effect can be observed between a parliamentarian with a negative attitude and a parliamentarian with a high one. The other variables have a less strong effect, but also the 95% confidence interval is broader.

## Discussion

In the end, who demands evaluations in the parliament? The statistical analysis provides some evidence that those parliamentarians demand evaluations who want to hold the government accountable. Since they have the impression that the agencies might not implement the policies in their sense, parliamentarians seem to take evaluations as an instrument in order to fulfill their oversight function. Hence, it is not surprising that parliamentarians in an oversight committee tend to demand more evaluations than their colleagues who are not. In addition, a parliamentarian needs to have a positive attitude toward the instrument evaluation in order to request it. The analysis also shows that more experienced members and members in a leading position (parliament board members) demand more evaluations, which suggests that they are more sensible to accountability than their colleagues. As a consequence, the evidence from the analysis suggests that the parliamentarians see themselves as principals who want to control the agent, in form of the bureaucratic agencies. Moreover, these findings confirm other studies that suggest that parliamentary requests are an important instrument in order to perform oversight (Martin & Vanberg, 2008; Proksch & Slapin, 2011). As Wiberg (1995) argues that parliaments rather control the government by threatening it with a vote of confidence than by parliamentary requests, the latter receives an even more important role, since the Swiss parliament cannot dissolve the government. However, since the exertion of such instruments are time consuming, members of parliament demand evaluations sparingly.

These conclusions could be very relevant for the literature on evaluation use and the evaluation practice. In the last 15 years, several scholars have argued that research on evaluation should shift from *evaluation use* to *evaluation influence* in order to capture advanced impacts and consequences of evaluations (Kirkhart, 2000; Mark & Henry, 2004). However, Herbert (2014, p. 412) argues that present studies on evaluation influence have several limitations. On the one hand, the studies rely mostly on the information from the evaluator, whose perspective could be biased. On the other hand, several studies focus on self-reports by organizational stakeholders that have an interest to be perceived as an evidence-based organization. Hence, the findings of this study provide important new insights from the parliamentary arena, an important stakeholder of policy evaluations (Vedung, 2010). The findings mostly coincide with those of Speer, Pattyn, and DePeuter (2015), who have investigated the evaluation demand in the Flemish and in the German parliament. Compared to these parliaments, the Swiss case can be classified between them. While Swiss members of parliaments rather ask for evaluations for reasons of accountability than to use the evaluation information as in Germany, parliamentarians from opposition and government parties do not differ from each other in their evaluation demand as in Flanders. This is not surprising, since Switzerland is considered as a consensus democracy, which involves a substantial share of parties in the government (Lijphart, 2012; Sciarini, Fischer, & Traber, 2015). The results imply an important message: If an evaluation wants to be relevant and influential for a parliament, it should rather focus on accountability than on learning. Evaluators can enhance the utility of evaluations when they pay attention to the parliamentarians' needs. This conclusion corresponds with the findings of Borrás and Højlund (2015, p. 114) that the main learners of evaluations are program units and not external stakeholders (e.g., parliaments).

# Conclusion

In the last 20 years, evaluations have established themselves as an important instrument to assess public policies. In research on evaluation, the motivation for the production of evaluations has rarely been investigated empirically so far. Moreover, the role of the parliament has completely been neglected in this discussion, although an evaluation is an important tool for the members of parliament. In this article, I have developed the argument that parliamentarians demand evaluations in order to hold the government accountable. The statistical analysis of the parliamentary requests demanding an evaluation indicates that Swiss parliamentarians ask more likely for evaluations, if they think that the administration does not implement the policies in their sense.

This study has also some limitations. When conducting a survey, different sources of measurement errors can additionally occur that may question the analytical power of the sample, even if the number of participants is sufficient. Generally, there are two main problems: On the one hand, the representativeness of the sample can be biased by the members of parliament who did not participate, since the nonresponses might differ significantly from the responses of the participants (self-selection). On the other hand, the responses are reported directly by the parliaments themselves. Since the members of parliament have to remember their past actions on evaluations, they are likely to under- or overestimate their activities (misreporting). In addition, the findings are limited due to the fact that only one country was investigated, although Switzerland is very appropriate for these research questions, since it is characterized by a high evaluation institutionalization. However, more studies from other countries would help explain the demand for evaluations. Moreover, it would also help to understand whether the strong evaluation culture affects the evaluation demand by the parliament. The analysis suggests that the individual factors are more important than the context, even if the evaluation culture might influence all parliamentarians. This finding alludes that the analysis provides information on the parliamentary evaluation demand that goes beyond the case of Switzerland.

This article offers strong empirical evidence for the explanation of the motivation behind the parliamentary demand for evaluations due to a new database which was gathered by conducting a survey. Until now, only selective aspects have been researched in the relationship between parliaments and evaluations. Although plausible arguments were discussed in this article, it is clear that more research has to be done in order to understand the role of evaluations in parliaments. In my opinion, this article is a useful starting point for such research.

# Appendix

**Table A1.** Operationalization of The Variables.

Variable	Operationalization	Source	ER HYP
Dependent variable			
Parliamentary request	In the last 4 years, did you propose a parliamentary request in order to examine a state measure with regard to implementation and impact? Dummy: 0 for <i>no</i> , 1 for <i>yes</i>	Parliament survey	
Individual level			
Predispositions			
Age	Age of a parliamentarian in years rescaled on a scale of 0–1	Parliament survey	
Sex	Dummy: 0 for <i>male</i> , 1 for <i>female</i>	Parliament survey	
Urbanity	Place of residence—Urbanity Dummy: 0 for <i>rural</i> , 1 for <i>urban</i>	Parliament survey	

(continued)

**Table A1.** (continued)

Variable	Operationalization	Source	ER	HYP
Education	What is your highest degree of education? Dummy: 0 for <i>under pedagogical university</i> , 1 for <i>pedagogical university and upper</i>	Parliament survey		
Political disposition				
Professionalization	Over the last year, what is the amount of time spent for your parliament mandate, in percentage of a full-time job? Scale of 0–100	Parliament survey		
Parliament experience	How many years of experience do you have in a communal, cantonal, and/or national parliament? Total years	Parliament survey		
Individual level				
Political disposition				
Board member	Membership in the parliament office Dummy: 0 for <i>no</i> , 1 for <i>yes</i>	Parliament survey		
Delegation				
Bureaucratic drift	Generally, the administration implements the legislation within the meaning of the parliament Dummy: 0 for <i>agree</i> , 1 for <i>disagree</i>	Parliament survey	—	C
Asymmetric information	The parliament has enough information to judge the administration's implementation of the legislation Dummy: 0 for <i>agree</i> , 1 for <i>disagree</i>	Parliament survey	—	F
(Un)usual suspects I				
Attitude	Index of three dimensions: During the last 4 years, how many times did you read an evaluation summary? Evaluation is a useful instrument for me as a member of parliament Whenever possible, my political decisions are supported by evaluation or other studies Scale between 1 = <i>never/strongly disagree</i> and 4 = <i>very frequently/strongly agree</i>	Parliament survey	+	C
Center party	Membership in a center party Dummy: 0 for <i>no</i> , 1 for <i>yes</i>	Parliament survey	+	F
Oversight committee	Membership in an oversight committee Dummy: 0 for <i>no</i> , 1 for <i>yes</i>	Parliament survey	+	C
Parliament level				
Political disposition				
Size of administration	Size of administration Number of employees of the public administration	Badac (2008) EPA (2014)		
Public expenses	Public expenses per inhabitant in Swiss francs (CHF)	Badac (2010)		
(Un)usual suspects II				
Evaluation base	General evaluation clause in the cantonal/federal constitution Dummy: 0 for <i>no</i> , 1 for <i>yes</i>	Horber-Papazian (2007, supp.)	+	C
Institutional position	Institutional position of the parliament toward the government	Kaiss (2010, supp.)	+	F

Note. ER = Expected relationship; HYP = Hypothesis corroborated (C) or proven false (F); supp = Data supplemented.

**Table A2.** Descriptive Statistic of All Variables.

Variable	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Parliamentary request	1,474	0.493	0.500	0	1
Age	1,570	0.517	0.102	0.21	0.83
Sex	1,570	0.301	0.459	0	1
Urbanity	1,570	0.643	0.479	0	1
Education	1,481	0.511	0.500	0	1
Professionalization	1,483	0.239	0.161	0	1
Parliament experience	1,486	10.576	8.330	0	56
Board member	1,570	0.147	0.348	0	1
Bureaucratic drift	1,486	0.915	0.278	0	1
Asymmetric information	1,448	0.711	0.454	0	1
Attitude	1,508	2.719	0.628	1	4
Center party	1,570	0.452	0.498	0	1
Oversight committee	1,492	0.396	0.489	0	1
Size of administration	1,570	17,810.630	17,108.07	344	57,747
Public expenses	1,570	13,291.960	3,527.737	7,530	23,662
Evaluation base	1,570	0.571	0.495	0	1
Institutional position	1,570	0.608	0.108	0.28	0.76

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## Notes

1. In the literature, it is widely discussed, which role evaluations played during the financial crisis. While some authors see an increasing amount of evaluations due to the austerity, others argue that evaluations do not seem to have helped policy makers to solve the dilemma of spending (Curristine & Flynn, 2013, p. 126; Marra, 2013).
2. Retrospective evaluations are well discussed in the context of evidence-based policy making (EBPM). According to EBPM, evidence should take the center stage in the decision-making process in order to make more effective policies (Davis, Nutley, & Smith, 2000). In contrast, prospective evaluations as Regulatory Impact Assessments appraise policies ex ante in order to inform decision makers. As such, evaluations predict and evaluate the consequences of an intended public policy under specific conditions, they can help parliamentarians to make better regulations (Rissi & Sager, 2013, p. 348).
3. In this article, an evaluation is defined as a report or document that systematically and transparently assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, benefit, and/or costs of a policy.

4. The Parliamentary Control of the Administration is the competence center of the Federal Assembly in matters of evaluations and conducts evaluations on behalf of the control committee. The unit only exists on the federal level, yet its function is partly fulfilled by the cantonal audit offices (Grüter, 2013, p. 650). Since 1993, they have conducted 62 evaluations: <http://www.parlament.ch/pvk> (Last update: 9/2/2015).
5. Bussmann (2005, pp. 97–99) distinguishes between four different types of evaluation clauses: General, institutionally focused and area-field-focused evaluation clauses, and evaluation clauses for para-state institutions.
6. Policy evaluations can target different levels of policies. Widmer and DeRocchi (2012, p. 26) differ between five levels. Single measure, project (several measures and temporary), program (several measures, perpetual), strategy (several projects or programs), and policy field.
7. The principal–agent theory is rarely ever used in research on evaluation. Although Vedung (2008) used the framework prominently in order to distinguish between political actors in an evaluation context, there are only few other examples (Clements, Chianca, & Sasaki, 2008; Van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002).
8. The Federal Council—the Swiss government—is elected in the beginning of the legislature by the parliament for 4 years. However, the parliament is not able to dissolve the government. Unless the members of the Federal Council resign, they stay in their position for the complete legislature (Klöti, Papadopoulos, & Sager, 2014, p. 195).
9. The latest investigation suggests rather no effect on the evaluation utilization. According to Bogenschneider, Little, and Johnson (2013, p. 266), parliamentarians from New York and Wisconsin do not often use evaluations, although they have quite a positive attitude toward them.
10. In addition, Speer et al. (2015, p. 45) argue that DIE LINKE in Germany has the highest interest in EBPM, but it remains unclear whether this result is due to ideological preferences or to their opposition role.
11. The index measures the parliament’s power toward the government and is based on the three main functions of the parliament: election, legislation, and oversight. In total, 17 indicators are used for the measurement (e.g., possibility to elect the head of the government, right to initiative legislation, power of the committees, etc.). For more information, see Kaiss (2010).
12. As parliamentarians have a broad understanding of an evaluation, the survey gave a definition in the introduction: “In this survey, evaluations are interpreted as studies, reports or other documents, which assess a state’s measure in a systematic and transparent way with respect to their effectiveness, efficiency, or fitness for purpose.”
13.  $N = 2,841$ . Note that some seats were vacant due to parliamentarians’ withdrawals.
14. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of the 3 items is .69; they correlate significantly on the 99% level.
15. Following parties are considered as a center party: Free Democratic Party, The Liberals, Christian Democratic People’s Party, Green Liberal Party, Conservative Democratic Party, Evangelical People’s Party, and Christian Social Party.
16. The parliament board is responsible for the organization and for the procedures of the parliament and thus has a leading function.
17. The parliamentarians were asked if they use evaluations for legislation (11% never), oversight (13%), and budget-making decisions (12%).
18.  $\psi$  is significant at the 10% level.
19. Concerning the party ideology, I also tested the effects for every single party as well as for the two party groups “left parties” and “right parties.” There were no significant effects for these variables.
20. All other individual and contextual determinants are at the median.

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