

Representatives of whom?

Party group coordinators in the European Parliament

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Abstract

We investigate the role of party group coordinators on committees in the European Parliament. Tying in with previous work on committee and rapporteurship assignment, we focus on key party political actors in legislative politics. Party group coordinators are the nexus mediating between individual MEPs, national party delegations that citizens voted for, and the European party group. They assign rapporteurships and compile voting instructions along which MEPs vote very cohesively. Against this backdrop, and in line with partisan theory, we expect the party leadership to closely monitor their performance. Drawing on a novel dataset comprising information on coordinators in the four biggest political groups in EP6 (2004-2009) and EP7 (2009-2012), we provide tentative evidence that coordinators are indeed the representatives of the leadership and that party group loyalty helps explain their reappointment, while more disloyal coordinators seem not to be confirmed in their position.

I. Introduction

Since its increase in powers with the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament (EP) is more relevant than ever in the political system of the European Union (EU). Research has elucidated the workings of the European Parliament and its committees. The central role of the rapporteur in the EP has been pinpointed, and their influence over legislation has been shown empirically. But reports are bid for by party group coordinators, who likewise appoint (shadow) rapporteurs for their groups and who bear ultimate responsibility for voting recommendations to groups along which MEPs vote very cohesively. These individuals thus form a small group of highly influential MEPs, who occupy crucial positions in collective decision-making in the European Parliament (EP). In analysing the role of party group coordinators, we ask the fundamental question of who shapes voting decisions in the EP.

The EP's committee system has been described as its "legislative backbone" and the political parties as its "lifeblood" (Neuhold 2001: 6). Political coordinators constitute the nexus between the thematic organisation of the parliament through committees and the ideological organisation through European party groups as well as national party delegations that citizens voted for. Consequently, political coordinators act not only in their individual capacity as MEP. They are pivotal for the successful functioning of the EP's party groups and smooth committee work in specialising thematically to accumulate expertise. For instance, they compile voting instructions along which MEPs of their group vote very cohesively, despite the fact that each party group in the EP represents a very 'heterogeneous collection of established groups and temporary alliances' (Raunio 2000: 242). To understand the EP as 'an institution that furthers party interests while also privileging expertise and consensus' (Yoshinaka et al., 2010: 24) we need to know more about these pivotal actors, and their interaction with others.

However, knowledge about coordinators is scarce. In this paper we address this by providing insight into coordinators' work, their legislative behaviour and underlying incentive structures. To this end, we draw on partisan theory (Cox & McCubbins, 1993) in order to assess the role of this partisan post in legislative politics. We show that coordinators' party group loyalty helps explain their re-appointment. Thus, we provide some tentative support for partisan theory suggesting that the group leadership will seek to reward loyal MEPs on the post.

The paper starts off by positioning the coordinator in research on organisation and specialisation in legislative politics, suggesting that they represent the missing link between sectoral and ideological organisation. It then outlines the selection and tasks of coordinators. Second, we derive several

hypotheses from partisan theory. Third, we present a new dataset on party group coordinators and delve into the empirical test, which a concluding section discusses in more detail.

II. Organisation and specialisation in the European Parliament: the role of the coordinator

This section analyses the conduct of legislative work in the European Parliament. Most of the parliamentary work is carried out in the EP's committee structure. There are 20 standing parliamentary committees, two sub-committees (on human rights; security and defense) and one special committee (on organised crime, corruption and money laundering). In the following, we set out the institutional environment and the position therein of the party group coordinator. In highlighting insights from previous research, we moreover situate this research in the broader research agenda on EU legislative politics.

1. Party coordinators in the European Parliament: a missing link

The EP has been able to manage the increase in powers due to mainly two organisational reasons: internal legislative thematic specialization (Bowler and Farrell, 1995) and ideological coordination by political parties (Hix et al., 2007). Party group coordinators occupy the nexus between these levels for collective decision-making in the EP that facilitate expertise and consensus.

Party groups as organising units

In 2009, more than 140 national party delegations from the 27 Member States joined one of the seven party groups in the EP, representing a heterogeneous collection of established groups and temporary alliances (see Raunio 2000).

At the same time political groups are remarkably cohesive, and their voting cohesion has increased with time (Hix & Noury, 2009). The relatively high voting cohesion of the political groups is, at least partly, explained by the similar ideological preferences of their members. "Party groups at the transnational level not only operate in a similar policy space as do national parties, but also tend to be formed mainly as coalitions of parties that are like-minded on matters of policy" (McElroy and Benoit, 2010: 396; McElroy and Benoit, 2011).

Thus, "politics in the European Parliament is very much like politics in other democratic parliaments, dominated by left-right positions and driven by the traditional party families of domestic European politics" (Hix et al. 2007: 181). While increasing party group size to gain resources and maintaining

party group cohesion work in opposing directions, party groups need to implement measures to reconcile these two dynamics.

Specialisation in committees

Legislative specialisation in committees plays a vital role in the production of EU legislation. In particular, scholars analyse the composition of parliamentary committees (Mamadouh and Raunio, 2003; Settembri and Neuhold 2009; Yordanova 2009; Whitaker, 2011), where much of the detailed legislative work of the EP is carried out. McElroy (2006: 5) concludes that committees are “highly representative of the EP as a whole, in terms of both party and policy representation”. However, Parliamentary seniority seems to matter. Whereas Bowler and Farrell (1995) discover no impact in the early 1990s, Mc Elroy (2006) and Yordanova (2009) show that previous membership on the same committee had the strongest impact on the distribution of committee seats in more recent legislatures.

But most decision-making processes actually involve only a sub-set of the members of the EP. Some actors are in a position of authority that might privilege them in the legislative process. Within committees, Neuhold (2001: 5) identifies chairs and vice-chairs, (shadow) rapporteurs, and party group coordinators as “key players”. Committee chairs have been studied with a view to their proportional allocation across groups, and have, together with the two largest groups’ agreement to share the spoils of the EP presidency, usually provided an example for the consensual nature of the EP (cf. Hix, 2008).

In particular rapporteurs and rapporteurship allocation have attracted scholarly attention, given their prominent role in the inter-institutional decision-making process. Drawing on Crozier and Friedberg (1977), Farrell and Héritier (2004) identify them as so-called “relais actors” representing the EP in negotiations with the Commission and Council. Therefore, “they control the flow of information from their own organization to the other and vice versa”, acting as “gatekeepers” and “information brokers” endowed with “power in the intraorganizational bargaining of outcomes” (Farrell and Héritier 2004: 1188).

Accordingly, the most important leadership role on any given proposal is arguably held by the rapporteur of the responsible committee (Kaeding, 2004; Benedetto, 2005; Farrell and Héritier, 2004; Hausemer, 2006; Mamadouh and Raunio, 2003; Rasmussen, 2008; Yoshinaka, McElroy and Bowler, 2010; Hurka and Kaeding, 2012; Jensen and Winzen, 2012) and respective shadows (Judge and Earnshaw, 2011). They have considerable impact on final legislative outcomes (Costello and Thomson 2010; Judge and Earnshaw, 2011). Rapporteurs are identified “as the most important relais actors”

within the EP in particular “when they are closely linked to large political groups and power brokers within the larger political groups in Parliament” (Farrell and Héritier, 2004: 1200–1).

The allocation of reports is controlled by EP party groups. Party group coordinators on the committees secure reports for their group through a bidding process. Benedetto (2005) identifies a positive correlation between the number of assigned reports and EP party size; Hausemer (2006) shows that salient reports go to party groups closest to the centre of the political spectrum. But whether they win a report or not, coordinators need to allocate these as well as shadow rapporteurships among the MEPs from their group on the committee, heeding to some extent the wishes of national parties and individual colleagues (Mamadouh & Raunio, 2003: 339). Nevertheless, Yordanova highlights,

“There are no rules on how the coordinators should allocate reports. The lack of any formal procedures assuring the proportional allocation of reports to national (party) delegations gives more freedom to party group coordinators to accommodate individual legislators’ interests or use the allocations strategically” (2011:101).

Accordingly, Yordanova (2011) investigates the strategic considerations underlying the allocation within rather than across party groups. Likewise, Høyland (2006) finds that MEPs from governing national parties receive more reports than their peers from opposition parties.

While it is often appreciated in passing that coordinators distribute reports between individual MEPs from national delegations, the office of the coordinator has received only little scholarly attention (Neuhold, 2001; Yoshinaka et al., 2010; Whitaker, 2001; Yordanova, 2011). The following section therefore sheds light on the role of coordinators.

2. Selection and responsibilities of political party group coordinators in the European Parliament

Within every parliamentary committee a significant part is played by party group coordinators. Only recently recognised in the EP’s rules of procedure (Rule 192, see below), party group coordinators influence the work of the EP’s committee system to a considerable extent.

Rule 192: Committee coordinators [...]

1. The party group may designate one of their members as coordinators.
2. The committee coordinators shall if necessary be convened by their committee Chairs to prepare decisions to be taken by the committee, in particular decisions on procedure and the appointment of rapporteurs. The committee may delegate the power to take certain decisions to the coordinators, with the exception of decisions concerning the adoption of reports, opinions or amendments. The Vice-Chairs may be invited to participate in the meetings of committee coordinators in a consultative role. The coordinators shall endeavour to find a consensus. When consensus cannot be reached, they may act only by a majority that clearly represents a large majority of the committee, having regard to the respective strengths of the various groups.
3. The committee coordinators shall be convened by their committee Chair to prepare the organisation of the hearings of Commissioners-designate. Following those hearings, the coordinators shall meet to evaluate the Commissioners in accordance with the procedure laid down in Annex XVII.

[...]

Tasks: constraining members and providing opportunities

Coordinators are sometimes known as party groups' 'spokespersons' on the policy area their committee deals with. Their office comes with specific tasks within the committee and party group, which can be divided along three categories:

First, with their counterparts from the other political groups, they discuss the day to day business, including the committee agenda and plenary votes. In particular, they bid for reports so as to distribute them to one of the party groups. In addition these meetings provide a forum to informally discuss party group positions and priorities, as well as to negotiate possible compromise amendments (e.g. Corbett et al., 2011: 151).

Second, among their party groups' committee contingent, they convene preparatory meetings before the start of the committee meeting to settle on a party line (Corbett et al., 2011:117). In addition, in case of absences, they nominate the substitute members who can fill up the remaining votes for the party (ibid.: 151). In particular, as discussed, they allocate (shadow) rapporteurships for legislative and non-legislative acts.

Finally, with regard to the plenary, coordinators tasks concern the optimal preparation of votes and representation of the party. They establish the speakers' lists for plenary sessions (Corbett et al., 2011: 151; see also Slapin & Proksch: 2010), maximise their party group's presence during key votes in committee and the full plenary, and ensure voting cohesion. Thus, they support the party groups whipping systems (Hix & Hoyland, 2011: 57; Corbett et al., 2011: 151). In particular, they bear ultimate responsibility for voting instructions to their groups' MEPs.

Selection

Kreppel (2002:204) suggests that coordinatorships in EPP and S&D are distributed across national (party) delegations using the d'Hondt method. Neuhold in contrast highlights that "in most groups the committee members elect the co-ordinators, and they allocate tasks to the members of their own group" (2001: 7). Indeed, coordinators are elected by each party group's members on every committee at the start of each legislative term and mid-term, coinciding with other committee and EP leadership positions. Sometimes, the workload is divided by creation of co-coordinators, deputy coordinators, or pre-arranged switches at mid-term. In particular in large groups, the post is often hotly contested and MEPs canvass their colleagues in series of personal meetings in order to gain their votes.

Interaction with other authorities

The interaction with other authorities and MEPs can be analysed with regard to influence and role expectations. First, considering the committee's bureau (chair and vice-chair persons), "the balance of power between chairs and party group coordinators appears to vary in terms of personality and size of the groups from which the holders of these offices are drawn" (Whitaker, 2011: 91). Influential coordinators have been argued to be able to "usurp" the role of chairs (Whitaker, 2001). It is instructive to realise the different role expectations that specific posts in the parliament and party hierarchy trigger with office holders. Whereas the bureau "plays a very integrative role in achieving a consensual atmosphere within committee", coordinators "need to establish unity within the respective groups" (Neuhold, 2001: 10). Thus, for coordinators party unity may take precedence over consensus in committee, for which a committee chair and rapporteurs may more often be willing or forced to make concessions. At the same time, coordinators need to work constructively with the other groups' coordinators.

Legislative influence

Practitioners have recognised the importance of coordinators over legislative outcomes. Marshall (2010) finds that interest representatives ascribe higher importance to lobbying coordinators than authoritative committee posts such as chairs and vice chairs.

“Taken at face value these results appear to indicate that lobbyists overestimate the influence that party coordinators have over the committee process. But the more likely reading ... is that lobbyists take account of the often decisive yet unobservable role that party coordinators play in defining their party’s position over which amendment to support” (2010:570).

Perceived preference coherence of MEPs has been identified as a mechanism accounting for parliamentarians’ voting decisions (Ringe, 2005, 2010). Given limited resources, MEPs rely on the expertise of their colleagues in a division-of-labour arrangement resulting in them usually following others’ advice on how to vote. Coordinators support for specific amendments thus amounts to a quasi proxy vote of large group components.

Corbett et al. (2011) argue that coordinators’ influence, often brought to bear in party group meetings, has decreased with the move towards first-reading amendments (Reh et al., 2012), which de facto rule out group amendments at plenary stage and reduce the group decision to rubberstamping (or not) a pre-cooked compromise. However, this may only be one part of the picture. First, coordinators usually take part in the decision to enter into negotiations on a first reading agreement in the first place. Second, they frequently take part in trilogues and can closely follow the negotiation through the (shadow) rapporteur. Finally, they play an important role in the acceptance of the compromise in committee. Therefore, while their channels of influence may have changed, coordinators seem far from relegated to the sidelines of legislative work.

Differential roles across parties

The challenges to party group coordinators vary across groups and depend on the size of committee and party group contingents. While for the Greens/EFA, currently two members sit on the International Trade committee, there are eleven from the EPP group representing eight national delegations. In order to find a common party position, coordinators for large groups need to mediate between individual MEPs and various national party delegations on the committee. Those for smaller groups will often need to find compromises without immediate feedback from colleagues, and thus need excellent knowledge of their colleagues’ preferences in order for their group to support the deals and to protect their very own credibility. While coordinators from large groups will thus spend

much of their time in meetings with MEPs from their own group, they can rely on colleagues support for (shadow-) rapporteurships. Their counterparts in smaller groups in contrast often need to engage in a higher number of these themselves, and thus take part in many informal trilogues with Commission and Council to draft amendments and negotiate with them.

Coordinatorships: a party post in need of scrutiny

The discussion so far has revealed that coordinators hold a core position in the party and committee, and that it is very much a party post. The need to satisfy different national delegations, and to constructively work with colleagues despite ideological differences, means that coordinators occupy a position that prepares for posts in the higher echelons of the parliamentary and party hierarchy. Faced with high additional workload, coordinators are usually very committed, ambitious MEPs, characterised by expertise, interpersonal and negotiating skills paired with credibility to represent the party group line. Pulling the strings from behind the scenes, coordinators are thus key players in the Parliament, and better understanding their role will help us with understanding EU policy-making.

III. Developing hypotheses

A growing body of research has investigated questions of committee and rapporteurship assignment by testing theories of legislative organisation developed in the context of the U.S. Congress (e.g. Kaeding, 2004; Yordanova 2009). These distributional, informational and partisan theories (Shepsle & Weingast, 1987; Krehbiel, 1991; Cox & McCubbins, 1993) allow for deriving certain postulates as to the composition and preference distribution of rapporteurs, committees and the plenary vis-à-vis each other. Here, our primary objective is assessing a “party post” by partisan theory (Cox & McCubbins, 1993). While self-selected committee members may be interest outliers (in line with distributional theory) or specialists (in line with informational theory), party group coordinators task is to keep them in check. More than for other prominent posts, such as rapporteurs, we expect the selection of party group coordinators to take place with a view to party group objectives.

While some coordinators serve for many consecutive terms, seniority does not seem to be a necessary condition for obtaining a position as coordinator. About one quarter of the coordinators of the four largest groups at the outset of the 7th legislative term were newcomers to Parliament. Once elected and doing a good job, coordinators and their colleagues might however wish not to change successful arrangements. A party’s successful management of a policy area depends on the coordinator, so members on the committee have a strong incentive to select the person they deem

best fit for the job. In line with Kreppel (2002:200), who referred to chairs serving more often than others as “superchairs”, “super-coordinators” do exist. For instance, Contanze Krehl (S&D, DE) has been coordinator on the Regional Development Committee since 2004. This provides some anecdotal evidence motivating an enquiry into the reasons as to why fluctuation and continuity on these posts seem to go hand in hand.

Partisan theory (Cox and McCubbins, 1993) posits that parties influence behavior by using offices that they control as sticks and carrots inducing party group loyalty in voting. Party posts are thus prizes for loyal voting behavior, and can be withdrawn if actors perform unsatisfactorily. Indeed, MEPs are expected to pursue the interests of their party group because they depend on the group for promotion within the EP (Hix & Hoyland, 2011: 55). Yordanova argues that in the case of the EP, “it is voting with the group majority rather than with the group leadership that can be interpreted as loyal group behaviour” (2009: 265). Party coordinators, in particular of the larger groups, are crucial both as agents of the party group leadership controlling fellow MEPs and reporting back to the leadership, and as checks on the party line. Backbenchers will look to coordinators for information on how to vote, making them important proxies.

Accordingly, we expect coordinators to be party hacks par excellence who will be held to the highest standards by their group leadership. They are prime targets to be assessed, i.e. rewarded and punished, based on their party group loyalty.

Party group coordination does not only come with different challenges in larger and smaller groups, but the pool from which the party group can select varies with group size and committee contingents. We can derive two rivalling expectations from these dynamics based on committee work on the one hand, and selection dynamics on the other. Since larger groups are potentially more diverse and need to accommodate more national party delegations, their party leadership might expect lower levels of loyalty from coordinators than the leadership of ideologically more cohesive smaller groups. In contrast, with only small committee contingents to choose from, we might expect small party groups’ coordinators to be less loyal than those of larger groups. The argument thus goes that small parties need to accept more defections from their coordinators, as they have no credible threat of replacing them.

H1: Party group loyalty scores of coordinators of the larger EPP and S&D are different from those of the smaller ALDE and Greens/EFA groups.

Coordinators’ tasks give them particular responsibilities within the policy area covered by their committee, and they can influence the party line by assigning (shadow) rapporteurs, by persuading

them to follow their preferences, and by issuing voting instructions. Thus they shape the party line, and the party leadership might assess their loyalty with regard to the area for which they are responsible. While coordinators may in general be party hacks, we would accordingly expect them to be more loyal in their own policy area than overall.

H2: Coordinators will be more loyal to their party group in the policy area of their committee than overall.

While we here so far only focus on coordinators, rather than MEPs in a broader sense, we can shed some light on party loyalty as a career determinant. While changes in coordinators at halftime are often agreed at the outset of a legislative term, a new parliament denotes a fresh start at which coordinators' performance can be assessed. While party loyalty may only be one factor, partisan theory motivates the proposition that disloyal coordinators can be punished by not confirming them in their post, while loyal coordinators are more likely to be confirmed in their position. We look at overall party group loyalty and sectoral party group loyalty.

H3: The more loyal a coordinator is to their party group, the more likely it is that they will be confirmed in their position.

IV. Empirical tests

We will first present the data we are using, before providing insight into some descriptive information of interest in order to better gauge the distribution of coordinators. Subsequently, we test the hypotheses.

Data

We present a novel dataset on party group coordinators, their characteristics and voting behaviour. The data covers the sixth and seventh legislative term (August 2004 – March 2012) for the four largest party groups: the European People's Party (EPP) and its predecessor, the European People's Party-European Democrats (EPP-ED); the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (S&D), previously known as Party of European Socialists (PES); the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for

Europe (ALDE); and the Greens/ European (Greens/EFA).¹ We restricted ourselves to these groups, because with decreasing party group size, party group contingents on committees become smaller, and the pool from which a coordinator can be drawn shrinks, eventually making coordinatorship assignment a question of committee assignment. We collected information from Corbett et al. (2005, 2007, 2011), publicly available information from party group websites and publications, as well as comprehensive information provided by the party groups at our request.

It comprises more than 225 MEPs who served as coordinators on a specific committee for one or several of the four half terms, resulting in more than 400 coordinatorships. We complemented this information with basic information on their party group and committee affiliation, nationality, as well as information on their career, such as parliamentary experience, EP and party leadership positions, drawing on Hoyland et al. (2009) and EP information. In addition, we added overall and sectoral party group loyalty scores taken from VoteWatch.eu. These measure the proportion of how often an MEP voted with the majority of their party group.

Non-proportional allocation of coordinators within party groups

While it has been argued that coordinator positions have historically been distributed proportionately at least within EPP and S&D (Kreppel 2002), this does not seem to be the case anymore. The below table reveals the difference in the actual and predicted number of coordinator posts (based on the d'Hondt method) for national party delegations in the EPP, S&D, ALDE, and Greens/EFA.

Expected_ total_np	Observed_total_np						Total
	0	1	2	3	6	7	
0	71	18	0	0	0	0	89
1	11	9	5	3	0	0	28
2	2	3	0	2	0	0	7
3	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
4	0	1	1	2	1	0	5
5	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
6	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
7	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
8	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	84	32	6	11	2	1	136
Fisher's exact = 0.000							

Figure: Expected and observed allocations of coordinatorships per national party delegation.

¹ Henceforth, we will refer to the groups by their current acronyms.

Variation in loyalty of coordinators of big and small groups

In order to test the variation in coordinators' loyalty between big and small groups, we compare loyalty scores of EPP and S&D as large groups as opposed to ALDE and Greens/EFA as smaller groups. We run separate comparisons for EP6 and EP7. For each of the terms, we test both overall and sectoral group loyalty, resulting in four distinct analyses. We first test the four dependent variables for normal distribution, but based on the Shapiro-Wilk test, we cannot assume a normal distribution of the variables. Therefore, we use a Wilcoxon Mann Whitney test to compare the medians of the groups.

	EP6: agreement with sectoral party line		EP6: agreement with overall party line	
	small group	big group	small group	big group
N	54	56	60	62
Mean (Std Error)	96.62 (0.7)	95.92 (0.686)	94.2672 (.51814)	92.2904 (.96051)
95 % conf. interval	95.22, 98.02	94.54, 97.29	93.228, 95.307	90.366, 94.215
Median	98	97.66	95.92	95.09
Std deviation	5.378	5.183	3.80752	7.18777
skewness	-3.040 (0.311)	-2.309 (0.316)	-1.095 (.325)	-2.124 (.319)
kurtosis	10.753 (0.613)	6.004 (0.623)	.458 (.639)	3.010 (.628)
Shapiro-Wilk	.000	.000	.000	.000
Mann-Whitney U		1344.0		1601.0
Wilcoxon W		2829.0		3555.0
Z		-1.005		-1.326
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.315		.185

	EP7: agreement with sectoral party line		EP7: agreement with overall party line	
	small group	big group	small group	big group
N	59	57	66	63
Mean (Std Error)	96.62 (0.7)	95.92 (0.686)	94.9817 (.59537)	95.1814 (.30616)
95 % conf. interval	95.22, 98.02	94.54, 97.29	93.7899, 96.1735)	94.568, 95.795
Median	98	97.66	96.81	95.77
Std deviation	5.378	5.183	4.5731	2.312
Skewness	-3.040 (0.311)	-2.309 (0.316)	-1.859 (.311)	-1.46 (.316)
Kurtosis	10.753 (0.613)	6.004 (0.623)	4.005 (.613)	1.424 (.623)
Shapiro-Wilk	.000	.000	.000	.000
Mann-Whitney U		1438.5		1703.00
Wilcoxon W		3091.5		3719.00
Z		-1.351		-1.772
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.177		.076

Overall, we do not find systematic evidence for a difference in median loyalty scores for coordinators from small and big groups. This is with the exception of overall loyalty scores of coordinators in EP7, where we find at a 10 per cent level of significance a difference between smaller and bigger groups. The result suggests that bigger groups may need to give more leeway to coordinators. But when taking sectoral loyalty in the same term and both loyalty scores for the previous term into account, the robustness of the insight is put in question.

Variation in loyalty between sectoral and overall party group loyalty

In order to assess whether coordinators' powers coincide with a higher loyalty score for sectoral as opposed to overall party group loyalty, we compare mean loyalty scores on the two dimensions for those MEPs that served as coordinators in at least one half-term of EP6 or EP7, respectively. Since the Shapiro-Wilk test suggests that the dependent variables are not normally distributed, and as the samples are matched, we draw on a Wilcoxon signed ranks test in order to compare the medians of the groups.

	EP6: agreement with sectoral party line	EP6: agreement with overall party line
N	110	110
Mean (Std Error)	94.6218 (.57696)	93.2608 (.55681)
95 % conf. interval	93.4783, 95.7653	92.1572, 94.3644
Median	96.67	95.2450
Variance	36.617	34.104
Std deviation	6.05117	5.83984
Range	38.29	25.43
IQR	4.59	5.59
Skewness	-2.824 (.230)	-2.386 (.230)
Kurtosis	10.562 (.457)	5.421 (.457)
Shapiro-Wilk statistic	.707	.681
Sig.	.000	.000
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test: Z		-2.964
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.003

	EP7: agreement with sectoral party line	EP7: agreement with overall party line
N	116	116
Mean (Std Error)	96.27 (.489)	95.0798 (.33681)
95 % conf. interval	95.30, 97.24	94.4127, 95.7470
Median	97.96	96.2
Variance	27.79	13.159

Std deviation	5.272	3.62759
Range	28	21.21
IQR	4	3.42
Skewness	-2.642 (.225)	-2.076 (.225)
Kurtosis	7.978 (.446)	6.132 (.446)
Shapiro-Wilk statistic	.682	.816
Sig.	.000	.000
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks		
Test: Z	-4.037	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

We find strong evidence for a difference in overall and sectoral party group loyalty of EPP, S&D, ALDE and Greens/EFA coordinators in EP6 and EP7. The results strongly support the hypothesis that coordinators are more loyal to their party group in the policy area in which they are responsible than to their party group overall. In our matched samples, we find a difference in median loyalty scores at 5 per cent level of significance for EP 6, and at any conventional level of significance for EP7.

Punishment and confirmation

In order to test whether party group loyalty plays a role in re-appointments of coordinators, we focus on coordinators who served as MEPs in EP6 and EP7, thus excluding those who terminated their careers as MEPs. Within this group, we ask whether party group loyalty helps explain reappointment. We opt for a parsimonious model only controlling for the party group, as loyalty might vary by group and as, of course, systems of reward and punishment may differ. We run two models, one based on overall loyalty scores (a) and one on sectoral loyalty scores (b) as a robustness check. As our dependent variable capturing reappointment as coordinator is dichotomous, we use binary logistic regressions.

	Model a		Model b	
	B (S.E.)	Exp (B)	B (S.E)	Exp (B)
Constant	-13.965 (6.387)**	.000	-15.904 (7.948)**	.000
Overall party group loyalty	-	-	.153 (.084)*	1.166
Sectoral party group loyalty	.132 (.066)**	1.141	-	-
Party group				
Party group 1	-.243 (.584)	.784	-.376 (.580)	.686
Party group 2	-1.389 (.731)*	.249	-1.222 (.721)*	.295
Party group 3	.124 (.605)	1.132	-.048 (.629)	.953

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05

The results provide tentative evidence that party group loyalty helps explain re-appointment of coordinators of the four biggest groups between EP6 and EP7. The first model focusing on overall party group loyalty suggests at a 5 per cent level of significance that a one-unit increase in loyalty increases the odds of re-appointment by 1.141. The second model confirms the finding. We find at 10 per cent level of significance that a one-unit increase in sectoral loyalty increases the odds of re-appointment by 1.166. In other words, party groups, or in cautious terms, party group contingents on committees, seem to factor in party group loyalty when deciding on re-appointments. This gives tentative support to partisan theory suggesting that party groups punish and reward their members based on their voting with the party group majority.

V. Discussion

We shed light on the role of coordinators and their central function in EP decision-making. As a key actor at the committee level, where most legislative work takes place, coordinators bear responsibility that the party line be heeded and reflected in voting decisions of the group. Thus, they are crucial in achieving the legislative outcomes for which their constituent national party delegations can be held to account by citizens in elections.

We find that coordinators' loyalty does not systematically differ between smaller (ALDE, Greens/EFA) and bigger (EPP, S&D) groups, even though group size influences the ability to credibly threaten punishment, such as not being confirmed in one's post in the following term. Coordinators are significantly more loyal to their group in the policy area for which they are responsible as opposed to the overall party group line. This might reflect their own influence on this line, but might also suggest that they are held to higher standards by the party group leadership. Irrespective of this, we find that an increase in party group loyalty increases the odds of re-appointment as committee coordinator. This supports partisan theory suggesting that parties will punish and reward their members based on their loyalty.

However, different standards might be applied to rank-and file MEPs. Raunio suggests that "MEPs may vote against their group, but they are expected to make this known to the group before the vote" and that "group cohesion is based more on voluntary compromises and legislative majority requirements than on disciplinary measures by the group leadership" (2000: 212). This might not apply to the leaderships' extended arms in the committee, who have particular importance in shaping the party line. But by holding these to account, who are essentially proxy voters for large

contingents of their party group who will follow their advice, party groups may go a long way to implementing a coherent platform.

Future studies of legislative politics should take account of the role of the coordinator in legislative politics. So far, the relation of the party group coordinator and (shadow) rapporteur is in the dark (but see Yoradanova 2011) – we know little about how these interact, which relation they have to each other, and who ultimately decides in case of conflicts. Thus, better understanding of coordinators provides us with leverage for analysing (shadow) rapporteurship assignment, as well as legislative decisions of political groups.

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