

Party group coordinators and rapporteurs: discretion and agency loss along the European Parliament's chains of delegation

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ABSTRACT

The European Parliament organizes its legislative activities along two chains of delegation to the rapporteurs – one institutional, one partisan. We analyze discretion and agency loss along these chains of delegation from the perspective of party group coordinators who select the rapporteur on behalf of the party group. Do coordinators minimize agency loss towards their national party, their European party group, the committee median or the plenary median when allocating reports? Data from the 2009–2014 legislative term demonstrate that coordinators tend to select rapporteurs who are close to their own national party's ideal point on the integration dimension. This has important implications for intra-parliamentary and intra-party delegation, party group cohesion and broader policy-making in the European Union.

KEYWORDS Coordinators, delegation, European Parliament, party groups, rapporteurs

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Introduction

The recent literature on decision-making in the European Union (EU) reflects an increasing awareness of the role of individual actors for decision outcomes. While early scholarship on EU bargaining typically conceptualized the EU institutions as unitary actors who seek to maximize their collective utility (e.g. Tsebelis, 1994), more recent research aims to shed light on the variance of preferences of individual decision makers within these institutions and how the selection of these individuals matters for the legislative process. In particular, research on the European Parliament (EP) has increasingly focused on political dynamics taking place at the institution's committee level, where the EP's policy positions are strongly influenced by powerful individual legislators, the so-called *rapporteurs*. In the context of augmented powers of the EP following different treaty revisions (Hix and Høyland, 2013) and the increasing informalization of EU decision-making (Farrell and Héritier, 2004; Reh et al., 2013), these individual actors have become extremely important (Costello and Thomson, 2010). This article contributes to the literature investigating the factors that determine the selection of these rapporteurs. It adopts a principal-agent perspective and analyzes the extent to which the selection of a particular rapporteur is associated with potential agency loss for the various different principals the rapporteur is supposed to serve.

We argue that the EP is characterized by two complementary chains of delegation. On the one hand, the *institutional* chain of delegation runs from the plenary to the standing committees, which in turn delegate the tasks of drafting the EP's position and representing the EP in inter-institutional negotiations to individual rapporteurs. In this chain, the rapporteur serves as the agent of the committee and by implication, of the plenary as a whole. On the other hand, the rapporteur also serves as an agent of his or her transnational party group as the final link in the *partisan* chain of delegation. Since rapporteurs enjoy a clear informational advantage when they engage in the formulation of the EP position due to their privileged access to policy-relevant information and their enhanced resources (Kaeding, 2004), agency loss is potentially an issue in both chains of delegation. Yet the risk of agency loss is strongly influenced by party group coordinators, who make the final call on who becomes rapporteur (Daniel and Thierse, 2018). This contribution assesses the extent to which delegation within the EP entails risk of agency loss along the institutional and partisan chains of delegation, adopting the perspective of the party group coordinators: Do coordinators minimize potential agency loss towards their national party's – and, by proxy, their own – ideal point when picking a rapporteur? Do they serve their party group by predominantly selecting rapporteurs close to the party group median? Or do they follow institutional considerations by picking rapporteurs close to the committee or EP median? The article answers these questions using an original dataset that connects information on Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), coordinators and rapporteurs in EP7 (2009–2014). In order to measure the positions of the relevant actors, the analysis draws on data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), which provides national party positions on the left–

right and integration dimensions (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017). These are the dominant dimensions in the EP (Hix et al., 2007), and, based on research on voting behavior in the EP (Hix, 2002), national parties' positions can be reasonably used as proxies for MEPs' own positions. Drawing on CHES data, we also calculate the positions of party groups, committees and the EP as a whole based on seat-weighted positions of the constitutive national parties.

The results demonstrate that party group coordinators primarily care about the ideal point of their national party when nominating rapporteurs from their party group's committee contingent. They nominate rapporteurs who minimize the distance to their own national party rather than the plenary, committee or party group median. This finding holds on the integration dimension rather than the left–right dimension for all types of reports as well as Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) reports, which lead to binding legislation.

The relevance of rapporteurs for EU decision-making

With the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the EP co-legislated under the OLP in roughly 89% of legislative procedures during the 2009–2014 legislative term (Pittella et al., 2014: 3). Changes to the legislative procedure in the Amsterdam Treaty allowed for so-called first reading and early second reading agreements (93% in EP7 according to Pittella et al., 2014: 8), in which the EP rapporteur negotiates a deal with the Council even before and/or around when the first reading takes place in the plenary of the EP. The politics of early agreements has been subject to a large body of research (e.g. Brandsma, 2015; Bressanelli et al., 2016; Costello and Thomson, 2010; Farrell and Héritier, 2003, 2004; Héritier and Reh, 2012; Rasmussen and Reh, 2013; Reh, 2014; Reh et al., 2013). While these studies vary in terms of the precise focus they put on the political process, they all share the notion that early agreements have tremendously increased the importance of individual legislators in the EP, in particular rapporteurs.

In keeping with this, previous studies demonstrated that rapporteurs wield significant influence over the final position of their committee and thereby the EP as a whole. For instance, amendments tabled by the rapporteur during committee negotiations are only rarely challenged successfully by the other committee members (Hurka, 2013). Moreover, rapporteurs not only influence the EP position if early agreements are made under the OLP and when the consultation procedure applies (Costello and Thomson, 2010), but also significantly influence the final bargaining outcome when they represent the EP in inter-institutional negotiations (Costello and Thomson, 2011; Farrell and Héritier, 2004).

Rapporteurs are selected at the committee level of the EP and given the fact that committees are the central workplaces of the institution (Neuhold, 2001; Yordanova, 2013), they have recently received a strong increase in academic attention. While some have focused on the determinants of committee membership

(McElroy, 2006; Yordanova, 2009), others have put more emphasis on the legislative practices taking place at the committee level (Costello and Thomson, 2010; Finke, 2012; Roger and Winzen, 2015). By far the largest literature, however, has developed on the factors that influence the selection of the committees' rapporteurs (e.g. Benedetto, 2005; Daniel, 2013; Hausemer, 2006; Høyland, 2006; Kaeding, 2004, 2005; Yordanova, 2011; Yoshinaka et al., 2010). These studies have brought to light a wide range of factors that matter for the selection of individual rapporteurs, such as their education and seniority (Daniel, 2013), their relative ideological positions (Kaeding, 2004; Yoshinaka et al., 2010), their expertise in a given issue area (Yoshinaka et al., 2010) and the question of whether their national party is represented in the Council (Høyland, 2006). However, none of these studies explicitly acknowledges the fact that any rapporteur selection necessarily entails varying degrees risk of agency loss (depending on the principal) and the crucial role played by the individual who is ultimately responsible for the rapporteur selection: the party group coordinator.

Party group coordinators: Behind-the-scenes wire-pullers

Despite the fact that 'group coordinators are part of a highly influential circle of members of the European Parliament' (Daniel and Thierse, 2018: 1), scholarly knowledge about EP coordinators is rather sketchy (Kaeding and Obholzer, 2012; Ringe, 2010: 59–63; Yordanova, 2013: 64). As focal points for their party group's committee members, these individual legislators are 'effectively running the show' (Kaeding and Obholzer, 2012: 15) at the committee level of the EP. Specifically, party group coordinators play an important liaison role within their respective committee and represent 'the nexus mediating between individual MEPs, national party delegations that citizens voted for, and the European party group' (Kaeding and Obholzer, 2012: 14). While holding a committee-level position, they significantly shape outcomes in plenary by bearing responsibility for their party group's voting instructions and by allocating reports to MEPs from their group, thus effectively deciding on the EP's lead negotiator on a specific legislative proposal.

This central role becomes particularly relevant when it comes to the distribution of reports. Reports are distributed to party groups in an auctioning system, in which the coordinator bids for them with points allocated to the group according to its size. The coordinator then has the task of selecting a rapporteur from within the party group's committee contingent. In each EP committee, party group coordinators are thus responsible for coordinating the work of their respective party group and act as spokespersons for the policy area. They are elected by their party group colleagues in the committee for two and a half years. Their assignments are not made at random, but follow a strategic rationale. Recent research has shown that the selection of party group coordinators is strongly driven by incumbency in the committee system as well as their professional background (Daniel and Thierse, 2018: 10). Yet, while we have gained some knowledge

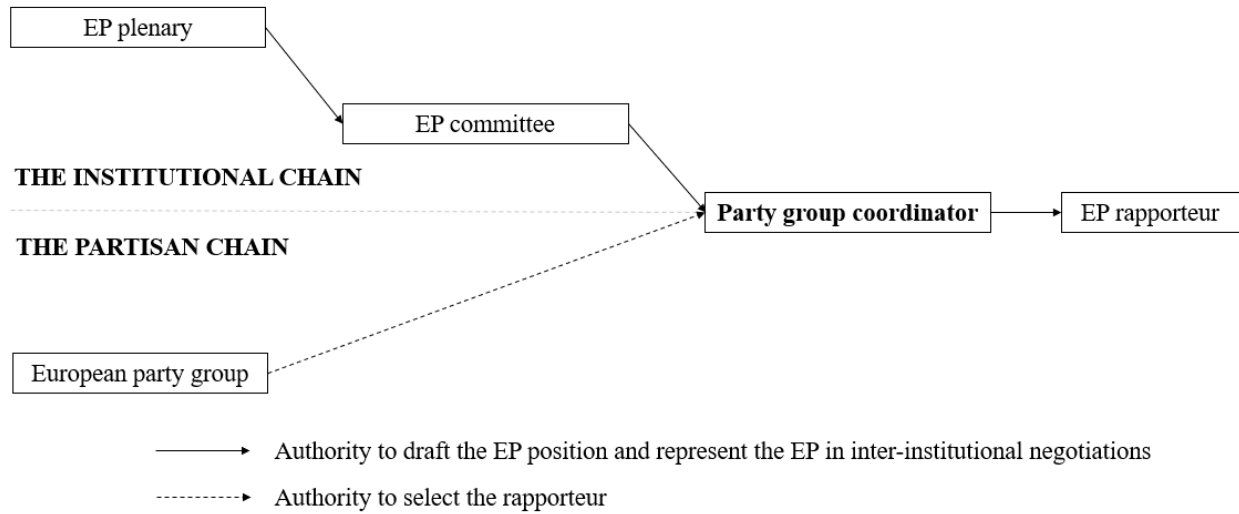
on the factors driving the selection of party group coordinators, we know only very little on how these important actors actually behave in the legislative process. If party group coordinators are particularly experienced politicians, what does this entail for the actions they take in committee? Does their increased seniority endow them with more discretion and are they accordingly more willing to act according to their own (or their national party's) interest? Or does their longer socialization into the norms of EP decision-making render them more loyal to the transnational collective actors to whom they are responsible (their group, their committee and the EP plenary)?

Rapporteurs as the final link in two chains of delegation

Party group coordinators can be considered crucial intermediary actors in two chains of delegation (institutional and partisan) that characterize the legislative organization of the EP (see Figure 1). In the *institutional* chain of delegation, party group coordinators are the ones who influence the degree of potential agency loss suffered by the EP plenary and the committee when a rapporteur is being selected.¹ According to rule 52a (1) of the EP rules of procedure, rapporteurs are 'responsible for preparing the committee's report and for presenting it to Parliament on behalf of that committee' (European Parliament, 2017). This implies a clear institutional mandate and an obligation for rapporteurs to serve in the interest of their respective committees and the institution as a whole when they draft the EP position and represent the institution in inter-institutional negotiations. In the institutional chain of delegation, rapporteurs are being entrusted with those tasks and can therefore be considered agents of two collective principals: the EP plenary and their committee. However, neither the plenary nor the committee have control over who eventually becomes their agent, because the right to select the agent is first allocated to a particular party group, which in turn delegates it to the party group coordinator (see below). In the institutional chain of delegation, party group coordinators are thus the final intermediaries that delegate the authority to draft the EP position and represent the EP in inter-institutional negotiations to a particular rapporteur. When party group coordinators delegate these tasks to rapporteurs, the agent's policy preferences can either diverge or converge with the median positions of the rapporteur's two collective, institutional principals, implying varying potential for institutional agency loss.

¹ Please note that our study does not analyze the extent to which agency loss actually occurs when rapporteurs carry out their duties. Instead, we analyze the ideological distance between principals and agents as proxies for *potential* agency loss.

Figure 1. Two chains of delegation in the European Parliament.



The plenary as the main principal in the institutional chain has a natural incentive to set up committees that reflect the preference distribution in the entire chamber in order to receive efficient policy output in line with the plenary’s median position (Krehbiel, 1991). In the EP, this incentive is of particular importance, because the EP can increase its power in inter-institutional negotiations if it appears cohesive (Costello and Thomson, 2013). However, while it has been demonstrated that EP committees are highly representative of the EP plenary when it comes to their partisan composition (McElroy, 2006), individual legislators also often self-select into committees that promise benefits for their own electoral fortunes, thereby leading to biased committees consisting of high-demanders in the committee’s jurisdiction (Kaeding, 2004; Shepsle and Weingast, 1987; Yordanova, 2009). Thus, committees potentially often fail to provide the plenary with unbiased legislation, even though their partisan composition mirrors the composition of the plenary. The extent to which this is actually the case is difficult to determine, although some studies suggest that committee output might indeed be biased systematically, especially in certain types of committees (Hurka, 2013; Kaeding, 2004). For our purposes, the most important lesson of this literature is that the EP median and the committee median are not necessarily identical. This implies that the potential for agency loss resulting from the selection of a given rapporteur can be of different severity for the plenary and the committee. By forwarding key legislative tasks to rapporteurs, party group coordinators are thus key intermediaries determining the potential for agency loss along the EP’s institutional chain of delegation.

Yet, rapporteurs are not only agents in an institutional sense, but can also be thought of as agents of two partisan principals: their national party and their transnational party group. While the question of whether rapporteurs consider the preferences of their national party or their party group more important

when drafting their reports is beyond the analytical focus of our study, it draws attention to the fact that rapporteurs do not primarily owe their selection to their own national party, but to the party group as a whole and, more specifically, the party group coordinator. This implies that next to being institutional agents, rapporteurs are also agents in a *partisan* chain of delegation. In this partisan chain, European party groups delegate the right to select the final agent (the rapporteur) to the party group coordinator. The party group coordinator is thus an agent of the party group and exerts discretion in the selection of the rapporteur. Party group coordinators are confronted with the task of selecting an agent, whose preferences may be close or distant from the party group median and the coordinator's own ideal point. While their institutional role requires party group coordinators to serve the interests of their respective party group when carrying out their duties, coordinators are certainly not immune to pressure exerted by their national parties. Therefore, it is relevant to determine the extent to which party group coordinators prioritize the preferences of their party group and their national party when they go about their central task of selecting the rapporteur.

One may wonder whether party groups do not always select coordinators that represent their median position in the first place, in order to avoid potential agency loss from their rapporteur selection. According to partisan theory (Cox and McCubbins, 2007), party groups indeed have clear incentives to do so, yet political reality is more complicated. Party groups will hardly find it possible to select their median MEPs as coordinators in all 20 standing committees, because this would create distributional conflicts within the group. In fact, as existing research on coordinator selection shows, the pool of coordinators selected by individual party groups is relatively diverse in terms of nationality and ideological positions (Daniel and Thierse, 2018). As Figure 2 shows, party group coordinators' ideal points are not necessarily representative of their party group's median on the left–right and pro-anti-integration continuum.

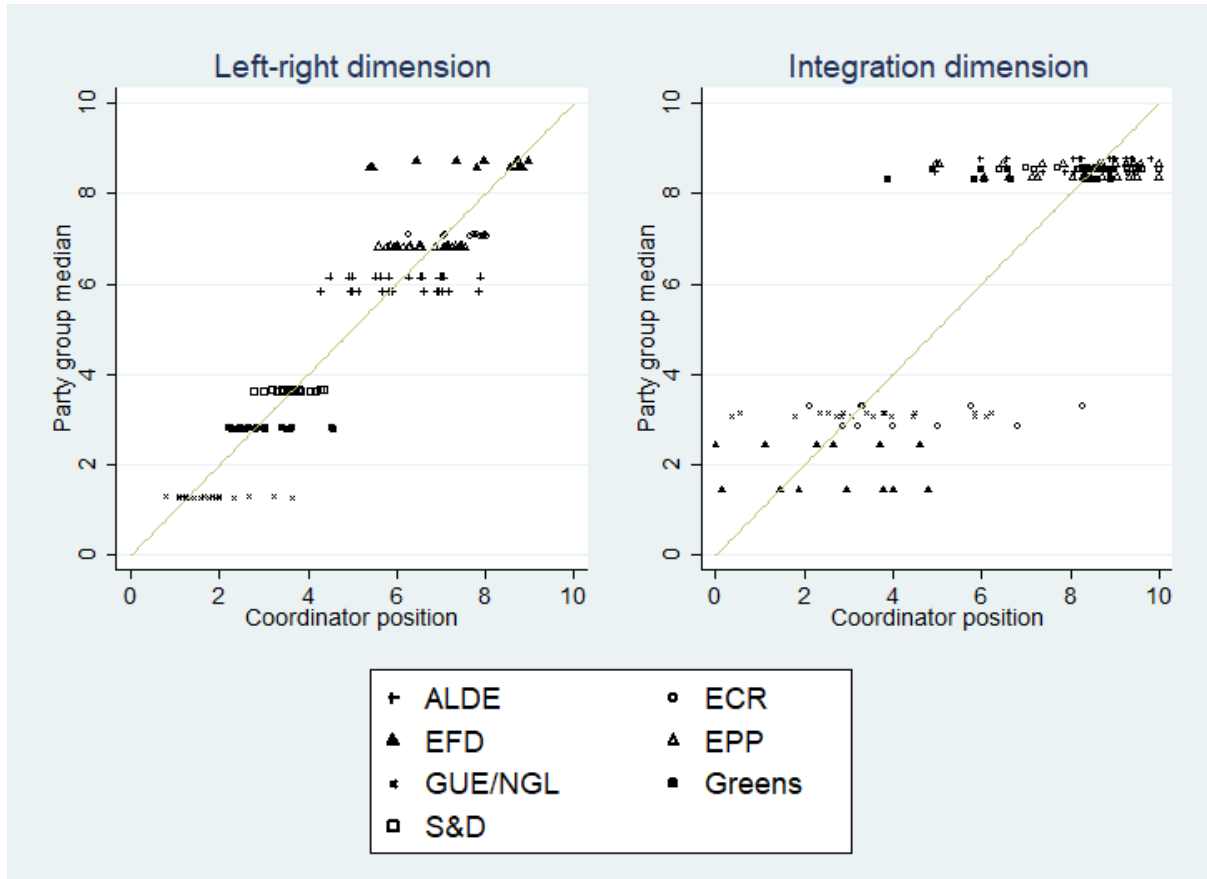
Thus, we argue that there are two chains of delegation governing the selection of rapporteurs in the EP and that party group coordinators are the key intermediaries influencing the potential for agency loss suffered by different principals in both of these chains. The following section develops four competing hypotheses that build on different incentives for party group coordinators to minimize agency loss for their own national party, their party group, their committee or the plenary as a whole.

Discretion and agency loss: Selection logics guiding party group coordinators in the EP

Assuming that party group coordinators are boundedly rational actors, who seek to maximize utility while minimizing agency loss, both utility and agency loss can relate to different actors in the two chains of delegation outlined above: their national party, their party group, their committee or the EP plenary as a whole. We start with the two collective actors in the partisan chain of delegation, the coordinator's national party and their European party group and then move on to the committee and the plenary as the key actors

making up the institutional chain of delegation.

Figure 2. Party group medians and party group coordinators' national parties' positions on the (a) left-right and (b) integration dimensions.



National party first?

Even though political conflict in the EP mainly unfolds along ideological instead of territorial lines, MEPs often side with their national party in roll-call votes (RCVs) if the preferences of the national party and the European party group diverge (Hix, 2002). At the committee level, existing research shows that national parties carefully select their committee members in order to reduce agency loss and that the representativeness of national party committee delegations increases with the legislative power of the respective committee (Whitaker, 2005). Accordingly, despite growing party group cohesion and transnational cooperation, national parties continue to exert strong influence over policy-making in the EP.

Even though party group coordinators primarily owe their allegiance to their transnational party

group, they do not lose their national party affiliation when taking office. As a result, party group coordinators have clear-cut incentives to nominate rapporteurs close to their national party's ideal point. Selecting rapporteurs with similar policy preferences should increase the chance that the final position of the committee and the EP as a whole will closely resemble the policy preferences of the party group coordinator and her national party. Since national parties crucially determine the re-election chances of their MEPs through election funding and the composition of electoral lists, securing policy outputs that please the national party seems like an attractive strategy for party group coordinators. While their institutional role requires them to keep the interests of the entire party group in mind, their status as national party members also provides them with incentives to pull the final policy output closer towards their own ideal point.

H1: Group coordinators try to minimize agency loss for their national party when distributing rapporteurships.

European party group first?

Coordinators are selected by their party group's committee contingent. Partisan theory (Cox and McCubbins, 2007) expects them to seek policy outcomes that correspond to the position of the party group median. As a consequence, coordinators' best choice for the rapporteur should be close to the median of the party group. Clearly, this is not always feasible, otherwise one would observe a very limited pool of rapporteurs. However, if party group coordinators take their responsibility towards their party group seriously, the pool of rapporteurs a coordinator selects during an EP term should be normally distributed around the party group median. In other words, the probability of receiving a rapporteurship should be inversely related to an MEP's ideological distance to the median of the party group. The fact that the party group's committee membership voted them into their position should incentivize party group coordinators to make sure that their rapporteur selection is oriented towards the median position of the party group.

H2: Group coordinators try to minimize agency loss for their European party group when distributing rapporteurships.

Committee first?

The committees of the EP have been described as the 'legislative backbone, keeping the institution upright' (Neuhold, 2001). As the main venues for legislative deliberation and policy work, EP committees have established a strong norm of consensus building over the years (Settembri and Neuhold, 2009). Rapporteurs are the key actors that put this norm into practice through regular consultations with their shadow

rapporteurs and the tabling of compromise amendments. However, the open amendment rule operating at the committee stage implies that any draft report can be corrected towards the committee's median position. Accordingly, rapporteurs who are located closer to the committee median in the first place should be expected to deliver their reports more efficiently than those who are located in farther distance from the committee median.

Thus, rapporteurs are expected to formulate policy positions that do not only please their national party or European party group, but have the potential to find a majority in the committee as a whole. In fact, this conforms to their institution-ally prescribed role as *committee rapporteurs*. Moreover, committing to choosing such committee rapporteurs may increase the chances of coordinators to obtain specific reports in the inter-group negotiations. Thus, MEPs close to the committee median are likely to be particularly efficient in identifying the overall committee preference and should therefore be likely candidates for rapporteurships.

H3: Group coordinators try to minimize agency loss for their committee when distributing rapporteurships.

The institution first?

Every committee report needs to get the approval of the full chamber in order to be considered a position of the EP. Since the committee and EP median positions are not necessarily identical, the question of whether coordinators rather pick rapporteurs closer to the EP median or the committee median becomes relevant. After all, the EP plenary might be required to step in and correct biased committee reports towards its median position especially if the reporting committee is composed of high demanding preference outliers (Kaeding, 2004; Yordanova, 2009). In these scenarios, party group coordinators might aim to nominate rapporteurs closer to the EP median in order to contain excessive agency loss resulting from a biased committee composition. Moreover, in particular in inter-institutional negotiations with the Council, the rapporteur acts as the representative of the EP as a whole. He or she negotiates on behalf of the institution in informal trilogues. This is arguably the clearest case of the rapporteur acting as an agent of the plenary (see e.g. Delreux and Laloux, 2018).

If the set of rapporteurs that party group coordinators nominate indeed tends to be located closer to the EP median than the positions of the coordinators' national parties or European party groups, threats of institutional agency loss in the EP should be comparably low. Whether or not party group coordinators indeed follow such an institutional logic of report allocation, however, has not been analyzed empirically thus far.

H4: Group coordinators try to minimize agency loss for the EP plenary when distributing rapporteurships.

Data and methods

We test the hypotheses by merging data on rapporteurship allocation in EP7 (2009–2014) with information on MEPs, coordinators and their national parties' positions. Given our focus on the role of the party group coordinator, 'non-attached' MEPs – who are not affiliated with any of the seven party groups in the EP – are excluded. The analysis investigates two dependent variables: the overall number of reports across all legislative and non-legislative procedures and the number of unique reports under the OLP that an MEP drafted (i.e. not counting follow-up reports at second reading and conciliation).² These two dependent variables allow for a more nuanced assessment of the dynamics of delegation and the robustness of the findings: while important and binding decisions are adopted under different procedures, including e.g. the budgetary and special legislative procedures, the OLP is a straightforward, widely used case in which the coordinator is arguably subject to more intense scrutiny by his or her principals when delegating the report to an MEP.

The analysis draws on MEPs' national parties' policy positions from the CHES (Bakker et al., 2015) as a measure of their preferences on the two key dimensions in EP policy-making (Hix et al., 2007): the general left–right (Irgen) dimension and EU integration dimension (position; re-scaled so that both measures are on a 0–10 scale). It uses the CHES trend file (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017) and, if possible because parties are included in several waves, we linearly interpolate the scores to obtain half-term specific scores reflective of the changes in expert assessments of national party positions. While MEPs vote very cohesively with their European party groups, an MEP's national party represents a good proxy for their policy positions, in particular when including freshmen who do not have an established voting record in the EP. It is thus reasonable that coordinators would rely on national party affiliation as a useful heuristic. In order to test the hypotheses, we compute the seat-weighted median of the plenary, the different committees and party groups based on their constituent MEPs and their national parties' positions. It is then possible to calculate the absolute distance between *MEP and coordinator*, *MEP and party group median*, *MEP and committee median* as well as between the *MEP and the plenary median* on the two dimensions. Our distance measures hence differ from those used by previous studies on report allocation as they are based on national party positions rather than Nominat scores derived from individual RCV. While the former is based on the party label, the latter is based on behavior revealed during the legislative term. The former has the advantage of being a useful heuristic before an RCV track record exists (i.e. it is not post hoc), and the latter has the advantage of being MEP-specific.

² We include rapporteurships for reports only, not for opinions by additional committees. We include co-rapporteurships as individual observations.

The models include a host of control variables that might affect the allocation of reports. A first set focuses on the status of an MEP's membership on a committee, differentiating between the committee chair, full members and substitute members. The expectation is that *Chairs* write more reports, given the standard practice on EP committees that those reports which are not bid for by groups (usually routine reports of low salience) are handled by the chair. While *Substitute* members of committees can act as rapporteurs, we expect them to do so less frequently than full committee members.

A second set controls for different measures of MEPs' seniority. *Incumbent MEP* captures those representatives that already served in the EP in previous terms. In addition to this general measure, the models also include *Committee seniority* and *EP leadership experience*. The latter two variables are counts of half terms in which the MEP was a member of the specific committee, because such specialization could be rewarded by more reports, and the EP bureau, which might suggest that MEPs may not get involved anymore in the details of the legislative process.

Third, previous research on the legislative term has demonstrated that MEPs from the new member states were allocated fewer reports (Hurka and Kaeding, 2012; Hurka et al., 2015). Hence, the models include a dummy variable *New member state*, coded 1 for MEPs hailing from these countries.

Fourth, different delegation sizes might affect report allocation. We control for the seat share of the MEP's national party within their party group's contingent on the committee (*National party size [committee]*), as some party group delegations may be dominated by specific national parties. Likewise, MEPs from larger member state delegations within a party group might act as rapporteur more frequently, for which a variable capturing the member state's seat share in the party group (*National delegation size [EPG]*) controls. Moreover, the models control for *party group loyalty* (i.e. the percentage of how often an MEP has voted with the majority of their party group) as well as overall *participation* (i.e. the percentage of votes in which they participated) based on RCV.³ Finally, the models include committee dummies to capture varying numbers and types of reports allocated within different committees.

Since committee and party group positions, including that of the coordinator, are usually reshuffled at midterm, our observations reflect MEP seats on the 20 standing committees for the first *and* second half terms of the legislative term. As a consequence, we also include a control variable differentiating between the two half terms, in the first of which more reports are allocated (*EP7/II*). Each observation then captures the number of reports an MEP obtained on the specific committee during a half term (2009–2011 and 2012–2014, respectively), and all variables are coded by half term. The models include an exposure term to control for differences in the length of service on individual committees, e.g. in the case of MEPs switching

³ These data are taken from www.votewatch.eu.

committees, entering the EP late (e.g. MEPs from Croatia that joined the EU during the term) or leaving it early (Hilbe, 2014: 62–66).⁴

Given the allocation of reports by individual party group coordinators in the committees, we robustly cluster standard errors by responsible coordinator.⁵ We estimate negative binomial regressions, since the dependent variables are count data with a distribution that is marked by a variance that is larger than its mean.

Results

In order to assess the importance of the coordinator in report allocation, the models shed light on the relevance of the distance between an MEP's national party and the different principals of the coordinator: the coordinator's national party (Model I), the party group median (Model II), the committee median (Model III) and EP plenary median (Model IV). We then include the four sets of independent variables in two separate combined models. Model V includes the distance to the coordinator, the distance to the party group and to the committee. Model VI replaces the committee by the EP plenary median. This is necessary because the two distance measures are highly correlated, reflecting that committees in EP7 are representative of the plenary composition (see McElroy, 2006).⁶

The results in Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that coordinators clearly matter in report allocation. They use their discretion to minimize agency loss vis-à-vis their national party rather than the EP, committee or party group median. In particular, this finding is more pronounced when analysing OLP reports.

Models I–VI in Table 1, in which the dependent variable captures all types of reports, show that an increase in the distance between the party group coordinator's national party and the MEP correlates with a smaller number of reports for the MEP. In contrast, we do not find any significant results for the distance between an MEP and the EP, committee, or party group median. Model I reveals statistically significant effects for the distance between the coordinator and the MEP on both the left–right and integration dimensions, but only the latter is significant at the 5% level. Models V and VI suggest that when controlling for an MEP's distance to the other relevant principals, indeed only the distance on the integration dimension remains significant. Hence, coordinators seem to delegate reports more frequently to MEPs from their group whose national party has preferences on the integration dimension that are similar to those of the coordinator's national party.

⁴ The Online appendix provides summary statistics for all variables used.

⁵ The Online appendix demonstrates that results are broadly robust to clustering at the MEP level.

⁶ Please see the Online appendix for a correlation table and variance inflation factors of the independent variables included in the different models.

Table 1. Negative Binomial Regression: All Reports.

	Model I MEP- Coordinator	Model II MEP- EPG	Model III MEP- Committee	Model IV MEP- EP	Model V Combined A	Model VI Combined B
L-R: MEP-Coordinator	-0.12* (0.07)				-0.06 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.07)
Integration: MEP- Coordinator	-0.10** (0.04)				-0.15*** (0.05)	-0.15*** (0.05)
L-R: MEP-EPG		-0.16 (0.11)			-0.10 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.11)
Integration: MEP-EPG		0.00 (0.05)			0.01 (0.07)	0.00 (0.07)
L-R: MEP-Committee			-0.010 (0.078)		-0.01 (0.08)	
Integration: MEP- Committee			0.038 (0.049)		0.10 (0.07)	
L-R: MEP-EP				-0.01 (0.08)		-0.01 (0.08)
Integration: MEP-EP				0.04 (0.05)		0.11 (0.07)
Chair	6.87*** (0.46)	6.80*** (0.45)	6.772*** (0.449)	6.77*** (0.45)	6.86*** (0.46)	6.86*** (0.46)
Substitute	-1.48*** (0.11)	-1.50*** (0.10)	-1.499*** (0.103)	-1.50*** (0.10)	-1.47*** (0.10)	-1.47*** (0.10)
Incumbent MEP	-0.01 (0.10)	0.00 (0.10)	0.004 (0.102)	0.00 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.10)
Committee seniority	0.09*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.096*** (0.028)	0.10*** (0.03)	0.09*** (0.03)	0.09*** (0.03)
EP leadership experience	-0.38** (0.17)	-0.39** (0.17)	-0.380** (0.169)	-0.38** (0.17)	-0.37** (0.17)	-0.37** (0.17)
New member state	-0.21* (0.11)	-0.19 (0.11)	-0.203* (0.113)	-0.20* (0.11)	-0.20* (0.12)	-0.20* (0.12)
Size of National Party	-0.49	-0.16	-0.172	-0.17	-0.61	-0.61

(Committee)	(0.65)	(0.64)	(0.638)	(0.64)	(0.62)	(0.62)
Size of Nat.	-1.09*	-1.04	-0.918	-0.92	-1.29*	-1.30*
Delegation (EPG)	(0.64)	(0.65)	(0.638)	(0.63)	(0.69)	(0.68)
General EPG loyalty	0.02***	0.02***	0.019***	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.007)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
General participation	0.02***	0.02***	0.017***	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.005)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
EP7/II	-0.54***	-0.55***	-0.552***	-0.55***	-0.55***	-0.55***
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.071)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Party group dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Committee dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Constant	-2.42***	-2.71***	-3.057***	-3.07***	-2.49***	-2.49***
	(0.69)	(0.73)	(0.731)	(0.73)	(0.73)	(0.73)
ln(alpha)	0.37**	0.38***	0.381***	0.38***	0.36**	0.36**
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.145)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Observations	3,188	3,226	3,226	3,226	3,188	3,188

Note: Models include an exposure term.

Standard errors clustered by coordinator in parentheses. * p<0.1, **p<0.5, ***p<0.01.

Table 2. Negative Binomial Regression: Ordinary Legislative Procedure Reports.

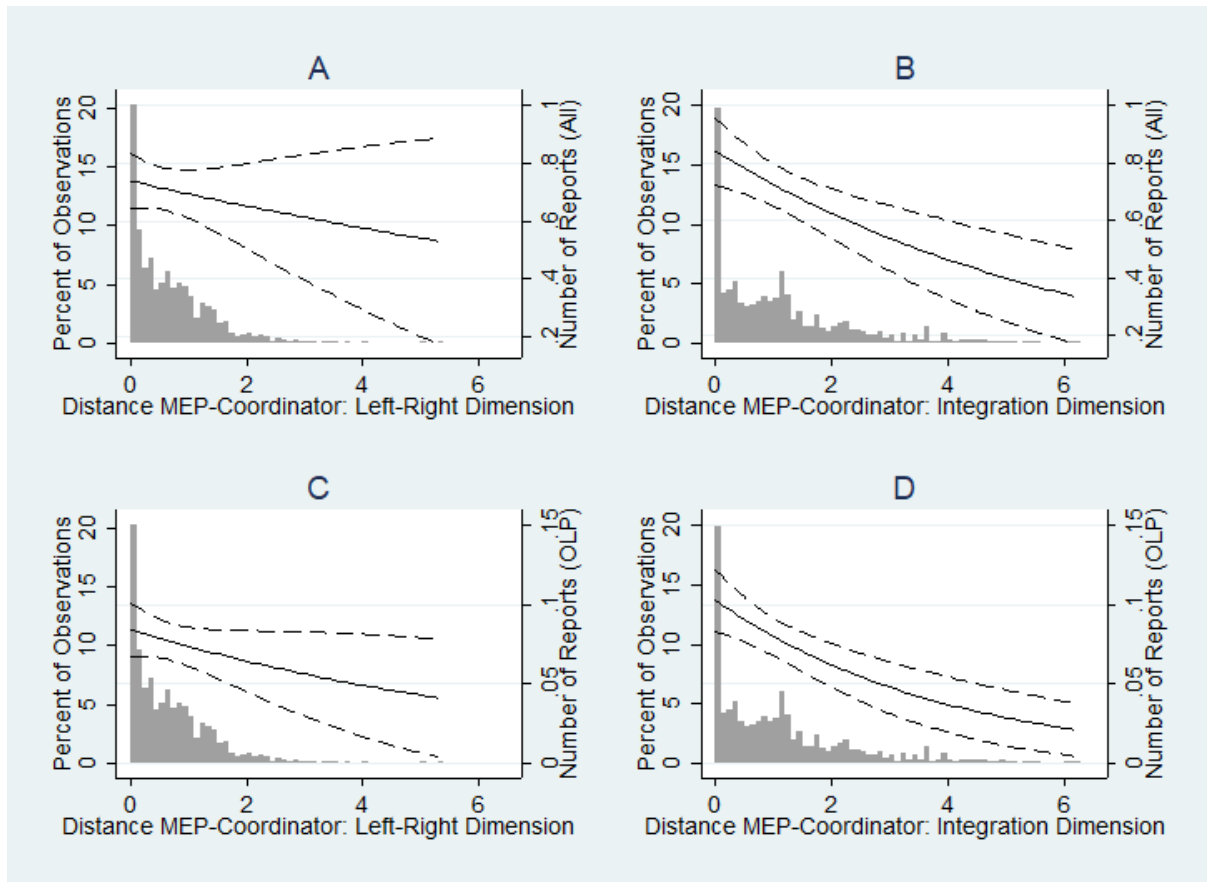
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V	Model VI
	MEP-Coordinator	MEP-EPG	MEP-Committee	MEP-EP	Combined A	Combined B
L-R: MEP-Coordinator	-0.20** (0.09)				-0.13 (0.10)	-0.13 (0.10)
Integration: MEP-Coordinator	-0.17** (0.07)				-0.25*** (0.07)	-0.25*** (0.07)
L-R: MEP-EPG		-0.19 (0.16)			-0.11 (0.16)	-0.11 (0.16)
Integration: MEP-EPG		0.03 (0.07)			0.11 (0.09)	0.11 (0.10)
L-R: MEP-Committee			-0.03 (0.10)		0.01 (0.10)	
Integration: MEP-Committee			0.05 (0.07)		0.09 (0.09)	
L-R: MEP-EP				-0.03 (0.10)		0.01 (0.10)
Integration: MEP-EP				0.05 (0.07)		0.08 (0.09)
Chair	6.71*** (0.74)	6.57*** (0.74)	6.55*** (0.75)	6.55*** (0.74)	6.64*** (0.75)	6.64*** (0.75)
Substitute	-1.44*** (0.13)	-1.50*** (0.13)	-1.50*** (0.13)	-1.50*** (0.13)	-1.45*** (0.13)	-1.45*** (0.13)
Incumbent MEP	0.13 (0.16)	0.14 (0.15)	0.15 (0.15)	0.15 (0.15)	0.09 (0.16)	0.09 (0.16)
Committee seniority	0.06* (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)	0.06* (0.04)	0.06* (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)	0.07* (0.04)
EP leadership experience	0.01 (0.23)	0.02 (0.23)	0.03 (0.24)	0.03 (0.24)	0.03 (0.24)	0.03 (0.24)
New member state	-0.14 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.14)	-0.14 (0.14)	-0.14 (0.14)	-0.10 (0.14)	-0.10 (0.14)
Size of National Party	1.33	1.61*	1.57	1.57	1.21	1.22

(Committee)	(0.99)	(0.97)	(0.97)	(0.97)	(0.96)	(0.96)
Size of Nat.	-1.63**	-1.12	-1.06	-1.06	-1.59*	-1.56*
Delegation (EPG)	(0.81)	(0.85)	(0.84)	(0.84)	(0.87)	(0.87)
General EPG loyalty	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
General participation	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
EP7/II	-0.67***	-0.66***	-0.66***	-0.66***	-0.69***	-0.69***
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Party group dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Committee dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Constant	-3.82***	-4.22***	-4.51***	-4.52***	-4.13***	-4.14***
	(1.03)	(1.06)	(1.08)	(1.08)	(1.05)	(1.05)
ln(alpha)	0.51***	0.54***	0.54***	0.54***	0.49***	0.49***
	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)
Observations	3,188	3,226	3,226	3,226	3,188	3,188

Note: Models include an exposure term.

Standard errors clustered by coordinator in parentheses. * p<0.1, **p<0.5, ***p<0.01.

Figure 3. Predicted number of reports (with 95% confidence intervals and histograms).



The results in Table 2 demonstrate that this logic of delegation also holds for OLP reports, which are an example of binding reports that are usually considered important and competitive. In fact, an MEP’s proximity to the coordinator’s national party has a stronger effect when considering the allocation of OLP reports, while the distances to the other principals in the chain of delegation are generally not significant. The combined models further buttress the importance of the coordinator’s national party’s ideal point. This suggests that coordinators use their discretion when choosing rapporteurs on behalf of their party group to minimize the risk of agency loss towards their national party’s, and by proxy their own, position. Remarkably, the results are more clear-cut for OLP files.

In order to assess the substantive significance of these results, we can calculate marginal effects (based on Model VI, Tables 1 and 2). Figure 3 illustrates the number of reports (with 95% confidence intervals) that an MEP is expected to obtain per half term on any committee where he or she is a full member, depending on the distance between their own and the coordinator’s national party on the left- right (a, c) and integration (b, d) dimensions. Focusing on the integration dimension, with a move from the minimum distance (national party match) to the maximum observed distance (6.22 on the integration scale),

the predicted count of all reports an MEP receives falls by about 60% from 0.84 to 0.33 (panel b). OLP reports are much rarer and more important prizes, given that they lead to binding legislation, so the expected counts are smaller, but the effects are stronger. Here, an MEP from the same national party as the coordinator is predicted to receive 0.1 reports, while an MEP at the maximum observed distance can only expect 0.02 reports – a stark 80% drop (panel d). While based on extreme examples, as the histograms in the panels demonstrate, this suggests substantive differences.

In terms of our control variables, we find that MEPs' status on a committee is an important predictor of the number of reports she writes. As expected, committee chairs write significantly more reports, and substitute members write significantly fewer than full committee members. The results for MEP seniority are more mixed. Incumbency does not have a significant effect, but MEPs that served longer on a committee, and hence specialized in a specific policy field, are generally allocated more reports. However, the evidence is weaker when it comes to OLP reports, which may be more political. In this context, the effect of EP leadership across the two dependent variables is interesting. MEPs with more EP leadership experience generally write significantly fewer reports (models in Table 1), but this does not hold for OLP reports (Table 2).

Nationality of one of the more recent member states has the expected negative impact on report allocation in most of the models. The controls capturing the dynamics associated with larger national party contingents in a committee and member state contingents in party groups show mixed, inconsistent results. A higher share of MEPs from one national party within the party group delegation on a committee has a positive effect in one of the models on OLP reports. Affiliation with larger national delegations within party groups has a negative, significant effect on the number of reports an MEP obtains in some of the models. The two behavioral variables, RCV participation and party group loyalty, suggest that more involved and more loyal MEPs overall write more reports. This matches the profile of backbenchers involved in legislative work. In contrast, for OLP files, we only find a weakly significant effect for participation. Hence, these reports may attract more senior MEPs who are less constrained by party group discipline.

Discussion

Party group coordinators exert discretion in distributing reports to MEPs from their party group. They can thus minimize agency loss for different principals: the EP plenary, the committee, their party group or their own national party. Rapporteurs are usually considered the agent of the EP plenary as a whole, in particular when representing the chamber in inter-institutional negotiations with the Council of the EU in trilogues leading up to OLP legislation (Delreux and Laloux, 2018). However, against the backdrop of the rise in first-reading agreements under the OLP, it has been argued that decision-making authority has shifted from

the plenary to the committee level (Reh et al., 2013). This would reinforce the need for coordinators to placate the committee median when choosing the rapporteur. This argument is in line with broader theories of legislative politics, according to which legislators trade authority over policy making through the committee system (Weingast and Marshall, 1988). Nevertheless, coordinators are party politicians, with two principals – the party group and the national party (Hix, 2002). Entrusted with a party group post, we would expect them to choose agents close to the party group’s ideal point. Yet, the national party is generally considered to exert control over re-election opportunities, and, in addition, the national party’s position is a good proxy for the MEP’s own preference. When allocating reports, coordinators hence have to choose how to use their discretion and how to weigh the relevance of the different principals.

The results demonstrate that coordinators allocate more reports to MEPs close to their national party’s – and thus arguably their own – ideal point. This holds on the integration dimension for all types of reports as well as for OLP files, which lead to binding legislation. Coordinators appear willing to exert discretion to minimize agency loss for their national party also in cases in which the EP has significant power and in which the rapporteur represents the EP in bicameral negotiations with the Council. In contrast, we do not find support for the alternative hypotheses according to which proximity to the EP plenary median, committee median or party group median would increase an MEP’s number of reports. Importantly, the findings hold on the integration dimension rather than the left–right dimension, which is usually considered the dominant dimension of politics in the EP (Hix et al., 2007).

The significance of the integration dimension in report allocation chimes with previous findings on party group formation and report allocation. First, policy congruence on the left–right dimension is – at a general level and in particular for the larger groups – a better predictor for party group membership of a national party than congruence on the integration dimension (McElroy and Benoit, 2010). Party group cohesion on the ideological dimension should, as a consequence, be naturally high based on this selection effect. Accordingly, there is little risk of significant agency drift on that dimension. In contrast, the relative lack of congruence on the integration dimension poses a material risk of agency loss for the coordinator when delegating to one of their colleagues from the party group. This presents one explanation of the findings. Second, we already know from research on report allocation that pro-integration MEPs write more reports than Eurosceptic MEPs (Yoshinaka et al., 2010: 475), which might ‘suggest a clear way in which the choice of rapporteur helps shape policy outcomes. Members of the EP who are opposed to further integration are systematically excluded from the report allocation process’. Yoshinaka et al. (2000) found that distance from the party group median on both the left–right and integration dimension helps explain report allocation, with the latter having a stronger effect (see also Hausemer, 2006; Yordanova, 2011). While their measure was based on Nominat scores based on roll-call data, our findings provide a different insight in that they are based on positions associated with party labels, which may represent an important

heuristic in particular as long as MEPs do not have an established RCV track record. One way of explaining the different findings regarding the effect of distance from the party group median is that, at least over time, party group coordinators learn to look beyond party labels – which are at the heart of our measures of positions – and recognize an individual MEP’s loyalty to the group. MEPs can hence successfully differentiate themselves from the colleagues in their national party. Another potential explanation is that dynamics have changed since these studies focusing on EP4 (94-99), EP5 (99-04) and the first half term of EP6 (04-07). At least in part, these are periods that are materially different in terms of procedures, powers and content of legislation. In sum, our results on the key role of the party group coordinator add to this literature in that they help explain the mechanism by which some MEPs might receive more than one report, while others receive none.

Overall, these findings have important implications for EP decision-making, policy outcomes and our understanding of the roles of the party group coordinator and rapporteur in intra-party and intra-parliamentary delegation. First, our findings shed light on the under-researched position of the party group coordinator in the EP committee system. While committee chairs and EP leadership positions come with more prestige and attract more attention, party group coordinators’ evident discretion in report allocation potentially has meaningful policy consequences (Roger and Winzen, 2015). In allocating coordinator positions, party groups thus distribute influence over policy. The evidence that it is not the party group preference but the coordinator’s position that affects report allocation may lead national party delegations to reflect on the selection of coordinators. Second, in terms of intra-parliamentary delegation, the apparently politicized selection of the rapporteur suggests that an understanding of the rapporteur as mere agent of the plenary may be an oversimplification. In fact, party groups have recognized the risk of agency loss in the delegation to the rapporteur and have instated shadow rapporteurs as checks on the rapporteur (Judge and Earnshaw, 2011). Without the promise of policy benefits, it seems unlikely that coordinators would systematically choose MEPs close to their national parties’ ideal point. In this context, it would be interesting for future research to shed further light on the conditions under which coordinators minimize agency loss towards specific principals, and how they deal with freshmen MEPs who do not have an established voting record. MEPs’ career paths as well as national-level considerations could affect the coordinators’ calculus. For instance, one might expect MEPs eyeing a long-term career in the EP to be particularly sensitive to their party group, while national elections might incentivize coordinators to allocate prominent reports to specific nationals (see e.g. Koop et al., 2018). Third, however, the findings do not necessarily imply a lack or failure of oversight within party groups. Indeed, the allocation of coordinators within a party group may amount to a trade in influence over different policy areas, allowing different national party delegations to shape policy in select fields. In this vein, it would be interesting to study the implications of the coordinator’s as well as the rapporteur’s ideal points on party group cohesion

(Bressanelli et al., 2016).

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