

# Learning on the Job? EU Enlargement and the Assignment of (Shadow) Rapporteurships in the European Parliament

STEFFEN HURKA, MICHAEL KAEDING and LUKAS OBHOLZER

## Abstract

This article investigates the determinants of assignments to European Parliament negotiating teams comprising both rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs. We re-examine the argument that underrepresentation of MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) from new Member States on these key posts after enlargement might have been due to a 'learning phase'. We find that MEPs from newer Member States remain considerably less likely to act as rapporteurs during the second term after enlargement (2009–14). Most importantly, this trend also holds for shadow rapporteurships under the co-decision procedure, which is when they matter most. This structural underrepresentation entails important implications for European integration, most importantly that MEPs from newer Member States are less able to influence legislation. We suggest that the patterns we find could be the result of reduced willingness, a more limited skill set, or a structural disadvantage of MEPs from the accession states in the report allocation process.

**Keywords:** European Parliament; EU enlargement; rapporteurs; parliamentary committees; codecision; legislative organization

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## Introduction

Rapporteurs are the ‘primary legislator’ (Yordanova, 2010, p. 100) inside the European Parliament (EP), and have received considerable attention (e.g. Kaeding, 2004, 2005; Yoshinaka et al., 2010; Mamadouh and Raunio, 2003). They draft the legislature’s opinion and negotiate on its behalf with the European Commission (Commission) and Council of Ministers (Council). Accordingly, they are the linchpin of intra- and inter-institutional decision-making and have important procedural privileges. As the importance of rapporteurs has increased, they have been more tightly controlled by shadow rapporteurs from competing party groups (e.g. Judge and Earnshaw, 2010).<sup>1</sup> ‘Shadows’ follow the progress of a file through committee and plenary, and can join the rapporteur in closed-door trilogues with the Commission and Council. In this article, we investigate the allocation of rapporteurships and shadow rapporteurships in the 2009–14 term (EP7).

In so doing, we re-evaluate the finding by Hurka and Kaeding (2012) that MEPs from the accession states were less likely to become EP chief negotiators in the 2004–09 term (EP6), and re-examine their argument that this might have been due to a learning phase. This expectation is supported by recent research by Daniel (2013, appendix), who shows that it is common for MEPs from new Member States to be allocated fewer reports in their first term after accession. If MEPs and their national party delegations had to familiarize themselves with the functioning of the EP after the 2004/07 enlargement (Bailer, 2009), we would expect them to have accumulated this expertise after five years (De Clerck-Sachsse and Kaczyński, 2009). As a corollary, the effect should have disappeared in the second term after enlargement, as in other areas of legislative behaviour (Lindstädt et al., 2012). We further probe the learning argument by analysing the appointment of shadow rapporteurs, providing the first large-scale analysis shedding light on ‘shadows’ in addition to rapporteurs. From a legislative careers perspective, shadow rapporteurships can be considered a stepping stone toward rapporteurships. They provide an opportunity for MEPs to learn on the job the ins and outs of this important position, while demonstrating their suitability for rapporteurships at the same time.<sup>2</sup> Thus, under-representation among shadow rapporteurs would point to a deeply ingrained feature of the EP, as it would perpetuate the imbalance among rapporteurs.

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<sup>1</sup> Party group co-ordinators on committees bid points allocated to them in line with the size of their group in order to win a report for the group. All other groups can nominate a shadow rapporteur.

<sup>2</sup> The underlying argument is that co-ordinators, upon winning a report for a group, will be more likely to award it to an MEP who has proved to command the necessary skill set required of rapporteurs. In addition, co-ordinators might use rapporteurships on important files as a reward for MEPs who took on the ‘chore’ of acting as shadow rapporteur, making it an informal precondition for junior MEPs to represent the EP.

We draw on comprehensive data on the 2009–14 legislative term to test hypotheses resulting from the expectation that the ‘learning phase’ is now over. The dataset includes the allocation of 2161 reports and 6589 shadow reports to 851 MEPs, i.e. the population of reports retrievable from the website of the EP after the last plenary session in April 2014. Overall, we find that even in the second term after enlargement, MEPs from formerly new Member States are under-represented as rapporteurs in general, and under the co-decision procedure in particular. Most importantly, this also holds for co-decision shadow reports, which are easier to obtain and a natural first step toward lead rapporteurships. While the effect is smaller than in EP6, and smaller for shadow reports than for full reports, the results remain statistically significant and thus do not support the learning argument. Under-representation of MEPs from newer Member States among rapporteurs seems to have become a structural feature of the EP.

This raises important questions on how MEPs from these countries use their time in office, and what their ambitions are. In other words, are these MEPs less willing, lacking skills, or simply disadvantaged? Regardless of the causes of under-representation, its consequences for European integration seem to be clear: MEPs from newer Member States are arguably less able to influence European legislation as a result of their absence from the influential post of rapporteur. In order to increase their legislative influence and to advance their careers inside the EP, we suggest that these MEPs may want to become more assertive in demanding first shadow and then full rapporteurships. In a similar vein, national parties should promote the selection of candidates with an interest in a long-term career in the EP if they wish to influence European legislation. At this point, we should emphasize that the article is interested in descriptive instead of substantive representation (Phillips, 1995). In other words, we do not suggest that interests of MEPs from the accession states cannot be represented by MEPs from the EU-15. The extent to which this is actually the case is an interesting and important question for future research, but cannot be answered within the scope of this article.

The article proceeds as follows. We first review the literature on rapporteurship assignment, and discuss the impact of enlargement on our expectations. We then present the data. On this basis we delve into the empirical analysis, which is followed by a discussion of the results.

## **I. The Role of Rapporteurs and Shadow Rapporteurs in EU Law-Making**

Committee proceedings are to a large extent shaped by key players who contribute to building consensus (Settembri and Neuhold, 2009). Next to committee chairs (Neuhold, 2001, p. 5f) and

political group co-ordinators (Kaeding and Obholzer, 2012), it is rapporteurs in particular who perform this important task and thereby impact considerably upon the outcome of EU law-making (Benedetto, 2005; Høyland, 2006; Rasmussen, 2011; Hurka, 2013; Mamadouh and Raunio, 2003; Costello and Thomson, 2010; 2011).

Inside the European Parliament, rapporteurs are ‘legislative entrepreneurs’ (Benedetto, 2005) provided with special access to resources unavailable to other MEPs (Kaeding, 2005, p. 85). Most importantly, their selection ‘determines the range of political opinions that are represented in the policy positions of the European Parliament’ (Hausemer, 2006, p. 512). Outside the EP, rapporteurs are crucial ‘relais actors’ during (in-)formal trilogies (Yoshinaka et al., 2010; Farrell and Héritier, 2004) with Council and Commission. This role of rapporteurs has become particularly prevalent during EP7, with 85 per cent (EP6: 72 per cent) of co-decision files concluded at first reading, and a further 8 per cent (10 per cent) at early second reading (Pittella et al., 2014).

At the same time and due to the eminent importance of rapporteurs, the appointment of so-called ‘shadow rapporteurs’ by those political groups that do not hold the rapporteurship has become increasingly significant: ‘In some cases they [...] practically constitute informal sub-committees’ (Corbett et al., 2011, p. 159). This process is reflected in changes to the EP’s internal rules of procedure stipulating that the EP’s negotiation teams ‘shall be led by the rapporteur [...] and comprise at least the shadow rapporteurs from each political group’ (Rule 73, §3).<sup>3</sup> The more salient a file, the tighter the control by shadow rapporteurs (Rasmussen and Reh, 2013, p. 1019). In the end, their relationship is of ‘some significance in building and sustaining the necessary consensus to secure a successful legislative outcome’ (Judge and Earnshaw, 2010, p. 57). Consequently, rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs ‘tend to work in tandem’ and jointly lead the files through the decision-making process, despite hierarchy (Ringe, 2010, p. 59).

But shadow rapporteurs are not only influential as the primary negotiation partners of the rapporteur within the committee; they are also ‘the primary sources of information for their party colleagues’ (Ringe, 2010, p. 59). They occupy a pivotal position within their political group (Ringe, 2010, footnote 85), acting as a ‘powerful focal point of group activity on dossiers, leading discussions on the group’s behalf and mobilizing and coordinating group activity in the tabling of amendments in committee’ (Judge and Earnshaw, 2010, p. 57). In practice, they mobilize their party group in preparation of amendments and therefore play a prominent role in

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<sup>3</sup> Reh (2014) reflects on the EP’s changes to its internal rules by asking under which conditions early agreements are democratically tenable or problematic (see also Obholzer and Reh, 2012).

the quest to find consensus within the committee ‘across the boundaries of political groups’ (Settembri and Neuhold, 2009, p. 142) by monitoring the work of the rapporteur and by reporting back to their respective political group. Furthermore, they provide party group coordinators with an opportunity ‘to spread the burden of speaking and negotiating for their Group. [...] A particularly striking example of this was the REACH chemicals legislation, where the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs [...] met on an almost weekly basis over an extended period of time to identify the main area of agreement and possible solutions for the key problems at stake’ (Corbett et al., 2011, p. 159).

All in all, rapporteurs and their shadows together represent key negotiating actors in shaping EU laws, and therefore have become ‘particularly prominent “targets” for the supply of information and, in reverse [...] significant “consumers” of information from outside organizations’ (Judge and Earnshaw, 2003, p. 105). The close co-operation between the rapporteur and his or her shadows suggests that the latter position helps getting acquainted with the intricacies of the job of the rapporteur and determines the likelihood that incumbent MEPs are getting reelected (van Thomme et al., 2015). This justifies our argument that shadow reports may be a stepping stone toward lead rapporteurships.

## **II. After Enlargement: Learning on the Job?**

Given their prominent role, one might expect most MEPs to aspire to act as rapporteur on important files. However, despite their acknowledged significance for the outcome of intra- and inter-institutional negotiations, Hurka and Kaeding (2012) find that the odds of becoming rapporteur were significantly lower for MEPs from new Member States in the 2004–09 term. Most importantly, this pattern holds when comparing MEPs from the latest accession countries with first-time MEPs from the old Member States. Daniel (2013, p. 844) shows that this finding is not limited to the ‘big bang’ eastern enlargement, but likewise holds for earlier enlargement rounds. It has been argued previously that this initial under-representation could have been the result of a learning process for freshmen. As Bailer (2009, p. 194) pointed out, ‘a substantial number of parliamentarians from new member countries [...] meant a possible learning period in which the newcomers had to learn the rules of the house’. In other words, the full integration of new legislators into the legislative operations of the EP is the final result of a gradual process that takes some time to evolve. During the ‘initiation phase’, when new legislators are familiarized with the norms and procedures of the chamber, the allocation of reports would therefore follow a ‘look but don’t touch’ logic. The fact that the under-representation of new

MEPs from the accession states was especially significant for particularly salient reports further buttressed the learning process argumentation. Inexperienced MEPs from Eastern Europe were primarily allocated consultation reports in which the European Parliament has less impact on the final outcome.

The learning view outlined above is further corroborated by studies on party group development and voting behaviour. Bressanelli (2012) highlights the challenge that enlargement posed for political groups which were confronted with more heterogeneous national party delegations than before. Nevertheless, Hix and Noury (2009) show that voting behaviour was ‘more of the same’: party groups continued their trend toward higher voting cohesion, even though the pattern was not entirely consistent across the political spectrum. Lindstädt et al. (2012) nuance these findings in providing evidence of a learning process among MEPs from the new Member States. They find that newcomers adapted their behaviour and increasingly voted with their party group, eventually adopting their peers’ behaviour.

A similar learning process may occur when it comes to rapporteurships. In fact, we expect the learning process to take place at two levels. First, individual MEPs may adapt their behaviour in order to secure rapporteurships. The finding of Lindstädt et al. (2012) may be due to the realization of these MEPs that the group rather than the national party controls their career progress in the EP. Voting behaviour might be instrumental in being rewarded by the group (Hix et al., 2007).<sup>4</sup> Hence, MEPs may be allocated more reports because they learned to toe the party group line in the second term after enlargement.

Second, organizational learning may take place at the level of national party delegations. If MEPs require specific skill sets (e.g., negotiating skills or language skills) to be capable of acting effectively as rapporteurs, national parties may have adapted their candidate selection in the run-up to the 2009 elections. As a consequence, they may have nominated candidates that would be able to successfully work as rapporteurs so as to maximize the party’s influence on policy. Likewise, national parties represent fora for information exchange between incumbent and newcomer MEPs. Lindstädt et al. (2012) find that newcomer MEPs from old Member States were less likely to vote against the party group line than newcomer MEPs from new Member States in EP6. If that was because newcomers could learn from their incumbent peers in the national party, EP7 would have provided this opportunity for MEPs from new Member States for the first time. Thus, learning might have taken place in the framework of national parties.

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<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, Bressanelli (2014) argues that groups adopted better internal co-ordination of positions, possibly seeing the preferences of MEPs from new Member States more frequently accommodated in the party line.

In a nutshell, the learning argument implies that we do not expect any systematic difference between MEPs from old and newer Member States in rapporteurship allocation in EP7. This expectation is further bolstered by the findings of De Clerck-Sachsse and Kaczyński (2009), who argued that the initiation phase of new MEPs from the accession countries was already completed during the second half of the sixth term as far as the allocation of co-decision reports was concerned. If this is really the case, then we should no longer observe any imbalances in the seventh legislative period.

**H1:** MEPs from old and new Member States are equally likely to become rapporteur in EP7.

In addition, we expect the same hypothesis to hold for shadow rapporteurship assignment.

**H2:** MEPs from old and new Member States are equally likely to become shadow rapporteur in EP7.

### **III. Research Design and Data**

In the following analysis, the dependent variable is a simple count variable representing the sum of reports allocated to an MEP during the 2009-2014 legislative term. We differentiate between reports and shadow reports and split these into a total of 11 different types of files for each. Accordingly, the analysis distinguishes, for example, between important co-decision files under the ordinary legislative procedure that produce binding legislation, and non-binding resolutions (e.g. ‘own-initiative reports’).<sup>5</sup> The main independent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether an MEP represents one of the 13 Member States that joined the EU in 2004, in 2007 and most recently in 2013.

We use a series of variables that control for factors that might influence report allocation. First, we include a dummy variable indicating whether an MEP served as chair or vice-chair of a committee during the term (*chair or vice-chair*). This is because the committee leadership often takes on unpopular reports that do not find any bidder among the groups’ co-

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<sup>5</sup> This allows us to provide a disaggregated analysis controlling for the type of report. However, building on an aggregate analysis of all reports, we constrain the further analysis to three types of legislative procedures (co-decision, own initiative and consultation). We do so both for practical and technical reasons: first, we lack the space to pursue a detailed analysis of all ‘exotic’ legislative procedures. Second, since only very few reports are allocated under those latter procedures, we would run into estimation problems. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the models for ‘all reports’ include also reports allocated under procedures other than co-decision, own initiative and consultation.

ordinators (Hausemer, 2006; Corbett et al., 2011). Next, we draw on VoteWatch Europe's measure of the proportion of plenary roll-call votes in which the MEP participated while in office (*attendance*). In addition, co-ordinators may take experience into account when allocating reports (Kaeding, 2004). We therefore control for the number of terms that an MEP has served (*EP experience*). Moreover, as Daniel (2013) recently identified a gender effect, we introduce a corresponding dummy variable (*female*).

Finally, as for inter-institutional dynamics, Høyland (2006) has found that MEPs whose national parties are represented in the Council are more likely to serve as rapporteurs. In a similar vein, we expect MEPs whose Member State holds the rotating presidency to have a higher likelihood of being selected, and therefore control with a dummy for MEPs fulfilling this criterion (*Council Presidency*). On top of this, we include party group and committee dummies. First, these capture the unequal distribution of MEPs from old and new Member States across these organizational entities (see e.g. Corbett et al., 2011, pp. 86–111). Second, they account for differences in the number of reports allocated to the different standing committees of the EP and groups (Costello and Thomson, 2011).

### *Descriptive Statistics*

In order to put our hypotheses to an empirical test, we automatically extracted ('crawled') data from the website of the EP and complemented this where necessary by additional hand-coded information, as well as VoteWatch data.<sup>6</sup> Our resulting data set is composed of all 851 MEPs that served in the EP during the 2004–09 term.<sup>7</sup> Figures 1a and 1b display the distribution of the dependent variables as they are analysed below. More than half of all MEPs received at least one report, while 242 MEPs did not receive a single report. The most active MEP of the seventh term was Barbara Matera (EPP, Italy), who drafted a total of 54 reports. Outliers like Matera are mostly on the Budget (BUDG) and Budgetary Control (CONT) committees, where large numbers of reports are allocated *en bloc*. Under the co-decision procedure, the outlier was Vital Moreira (S&D, Portugal), who drafted 19 co-decision reports, presumably due to his status as chairman of the Committee on International Trade (INTA). As far as consultation reports are concerned, our data show that the procedure has lost importance after the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>8</sup> Only 100 different MEPs drafted reports under the consultation procedure, which implies that a vast majority – 751 MEPs – did not draft any consultation reports at all.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.votewatch.eu>

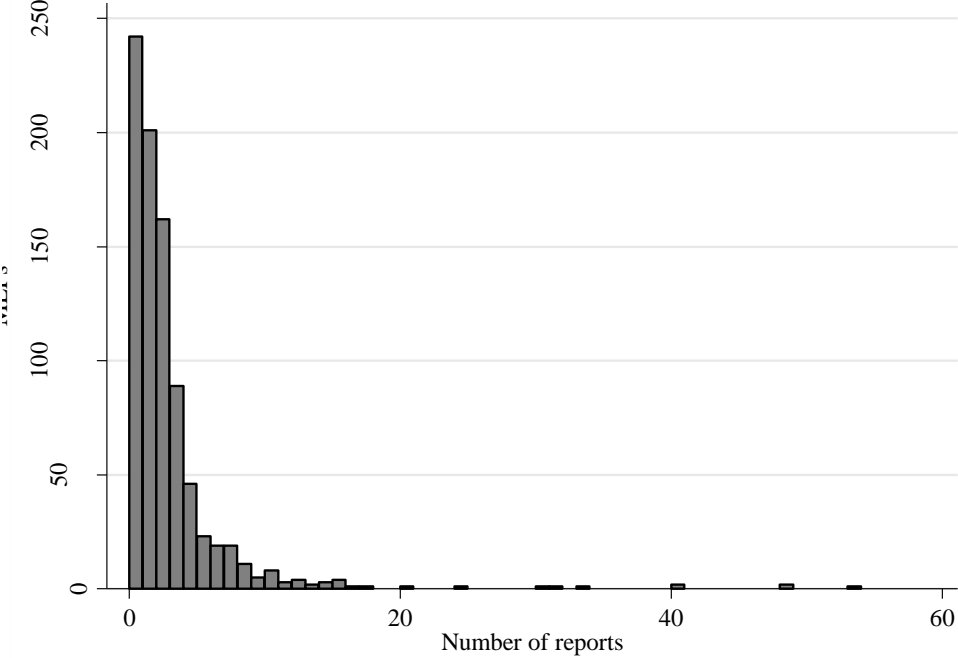
<sup>7</sup> Two MEPs left the EP even before the first roll-call vote took place in plenary. They are excluded from the analysis, as are those who became MEP only after the last plenary session.

<sup>8</sup> The display of the corresponding histogram is omitted due to space limitations.

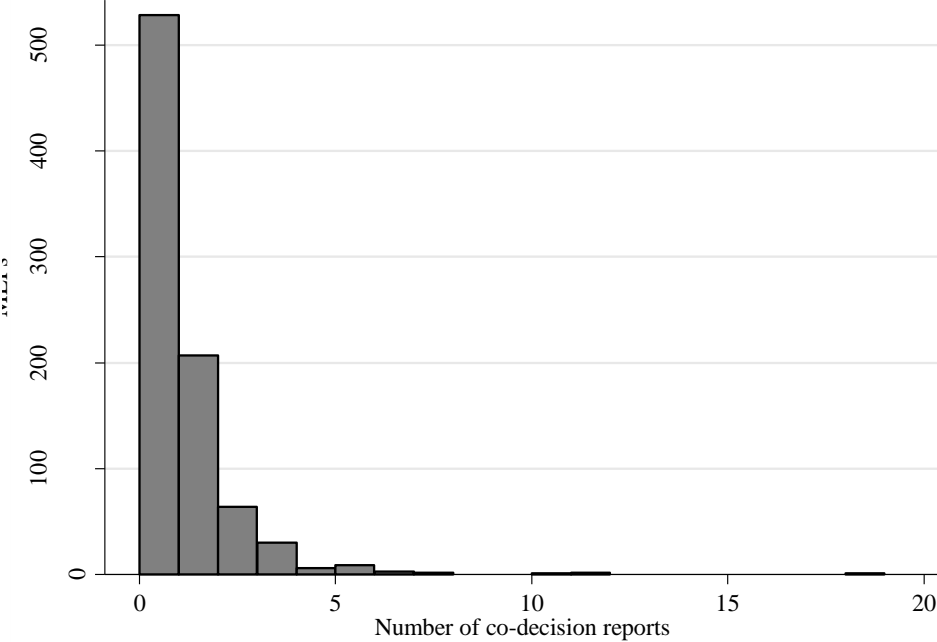


Finally, as Figure 2 illustrates, the distribution of reports is highly proportional to the party groups' seat shares in plenary.

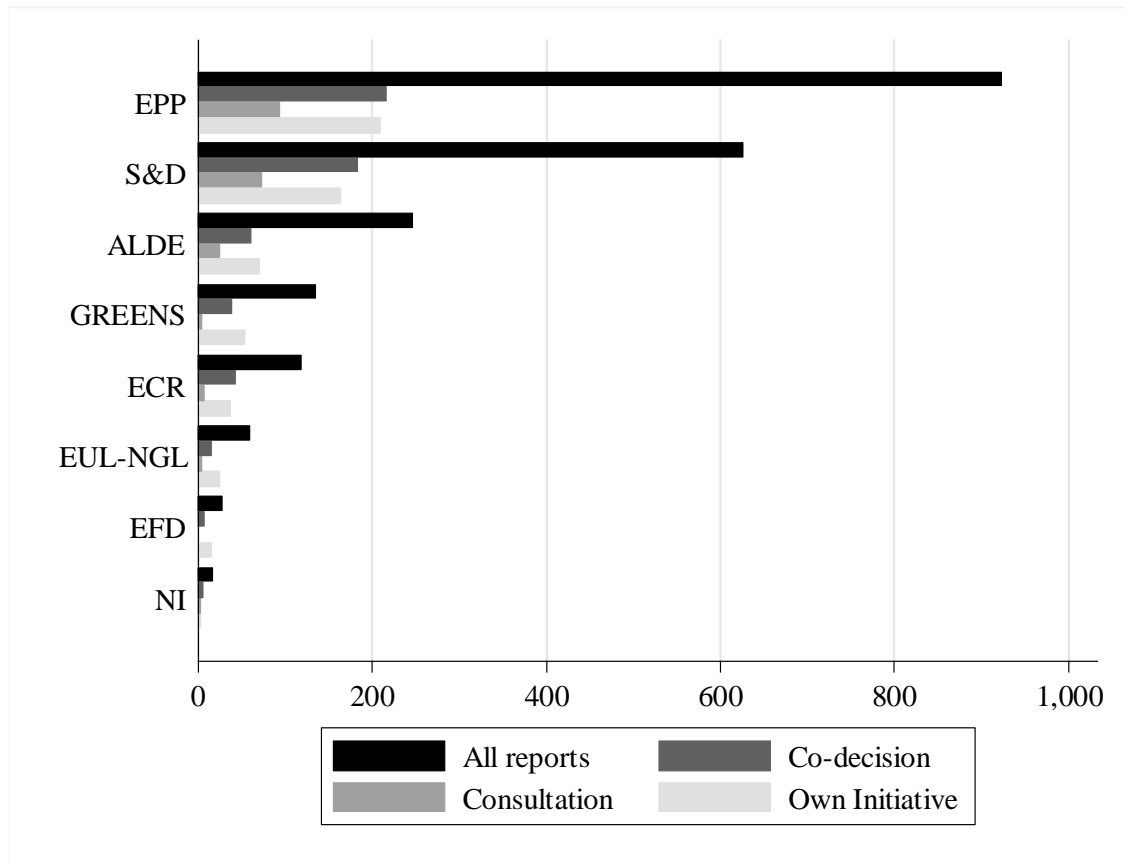
**Figure 1a:** *Number of reports per MEP (7<sup>th</sup> legislative term)*



**Figure 1b:** *Number of co-decision reports per MEP (7<sup>th</sup> legislative term)*



**Figure 2:** Report allocation across party groups and legislative procedures (EP7)



### Data Analysis

In order to model the allocation of (shadow) reports in the seventh EP and test the research hypotheses developed above, negative binomial regressions are required due to over-dispersion of the data.<sup>9</sup> The resulting models are presented in Tables 1 and 2 for lead and shadow rapporteurships respectively.<sup>10</sup> The models lead us to two central conclusions: first, the under representation of MEPs from the accession states in the report allocation process continued throughout the seventh legislative term of the institution. Second, also the allocation of shadow rapporteurships under the co-decision procedure was biased against MEPs from newer Member States. In the following, we consider the results in some more detail.

<sup>9</sup> We also considered the application of zero-inflated count models, which would be more appropriate from a statistical point of view. Unfortunately, we are lacking a clear theoretical explanation for excess zeros. If we model excess zeros with the share of the legislative term an MEP served in the institutions, the variable that might be most useful in this context, we obtain the same substantive results. However, the significance levels for our main independent variable of interest drop to the .05 level. In the appendix, we also report the results of logit models, which use dichotomized versions of our count variables.

<sup>10</sup> We report incidence rate ratios, which imply a negative relationship if their value is located between 0 and 1 and a positive association if they are larger than one. For a more detailed description of incidence rate ratios, consult Long and Freese (2006, p. 359ff).

**Table 1: Negative Binomial Regressions: Report allocation in the 7th European Parliament**

Variables	Model I All reports	Model II Co-decision	Model III Own initiative	Model IV Consultation
MEP from accession state	0.78*** (0.07)	0.78* (0.11)	0.72*** (0.08)	1.26 (0.37)
Chair or Vice-Chair	1.71*** (0.16)	1.42*** (0.19)	1.47*** (0.14)	2.05** (0.63)
Attendance	1.02*** (0.00)	1.02*** (0.01)	1.01 (0.00)	1.00 (0.01)
EP experience	1.08** (0.04)	1.06 (0.05)	0.97 (0.04)	1.45*** (0.16)
Female	1.14 (0.10)	0.99 (0.12)	1.14 (0.11)	1.43 (0.43)
Council Presidency	0.90 (0.08)	0.77** (0.10)	1.04 (0.10)	1.08 (0.31)
EPP	1.34** (0.17)	1.19 (0.22)	0.99 (0.14)	1.71 (0.74)
S&D	1.21 (0.16)	1.35 (0.26)	1.07 (0.15)	1.47 (0.65)
GREENS	0.89 (0.16)	0.93 (0.24)	1.08 (0.20)	0.49 (0.35)
ECR	1.04 (0.20)	1.22 (0.32)	0.98 (0.20)	0.77 (0.50)
EUL-NGL	0.83 (0.18)	0.73 (0.25)	0.93 (0.22)	0.81 (0.61)
EFD	0.52** (0.14)	0.43* (0.20)	0.59* (0.17)	0.00 (0.00)
NI	0.29*** (0.09)	0.34** (0.16)	0.14*** (0.08)	0.88 (0.75)
Committee control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	851	851	851	851

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; Incidence Rate Ratios reported; standard errors in parentheses; reference group: ALDE. The share of the term actually served is incorporated as a measure for exposure.

Table 1 suggests that ten years after eastern enlargement, MEPs from newer EU Member States still have not caught up with their peers from the older EU-15 in the report allocation process. Even after controlling for confounding factors, the negative effect of being a member from the accession states on the number of allocated reports persists and is still remarkably similar to what has been found for EP6. Comparing the effect across different legislative procedures, we also detect the same pattern as during EP6. Models I–III show that, controlling for a series of variables, MEPs from the 13 newer Member States only receive a number of reports that is decreased by a factor of 0.7 to 0.8 in comparison to MEPs from the EU-15, depending on the legislative procedure in place. Most importantly, they still receive fewer reports under co-decision, i.e. the ‘ordinary legislative procedure’ following the coming into

force of the Treaty of Lisbon. In contrast, the relationship does not hold for consultation reports (Model IV).

The control variables generally support the existing literature on report allocation. Chairmen and women received more reports than regular or substitute committee members, due to the fact that they are responsible for the drafting of reports which are not acquired by any political group. The results also underscore previous findings on the importance of attendance rates for the allocation of reports. Party groups reward active MEPs with influential positions in the legislative process. Predicted probabilities calculated on the basis of Model I suggest that MEPs from the accession states can make up their disadvantage in allocated reports if they score highly in terms of attendance. Everything else being equal, Model I predicts a 25 per cent probability of a zero count for MEPs from the EU-15 with an attendance record of 80 per cent. For MEPs from the accession states with a perfect attendance record, this probability is 21.5 per cent. An MEP's seniority is relevant to her chances to obtain rapporteurships, which corroborates recent findings by Daniel (2013). Our results suggest, however, that the relationship does not hold across all types of legislative procedures. More senior MEPs are especially active in the drafting of consultation reports, which suggests that experience, and perhaps good contacts, are particularly relevant if the EP does not have any clear-cut procedural power. In contrast to Daniel (2013), our results do not confirm a gender discrimination effect in the report allocation process. Finally, we find that MEPs whose home countries held the Council Presidency were under-represented in the allocation of co-decision reports. However, this finding does not hold for the other legislative procedures.

Yet, what if we only compare the performance of newcomer MEPs (i.e. all MEPs serving their first term) from the longer-standing Member States with those from the accession states? In Figure 3, we plot predicted probabilities for this specific group of MEPs which can be obtained from Model I (all reports). The data show that the predicted probability for a zero-count for a newcomer MEP from the longer-standing Member States is about 6 percentage points lower than the same probability for a newcomer MEP from the EU-13 (holding all other variables at their means). It is interesting to note that the predicted probability for a count of exactly one is even slightly higher for newcomer MEPs from the EU-13. However, newcomers from the EU-15 are consistently more likely to draft two or more reports. Accordingly, the under-performance of MEPs from the accession states is not merely due to a lack of political experience. If this were the case, their rates of report allocation would be similar to the rates of newcomer MEPs from the EU-15.

**Table 2:** *Negative Binomial Regressions: Shadow report allocation in the 7th European Parliament*

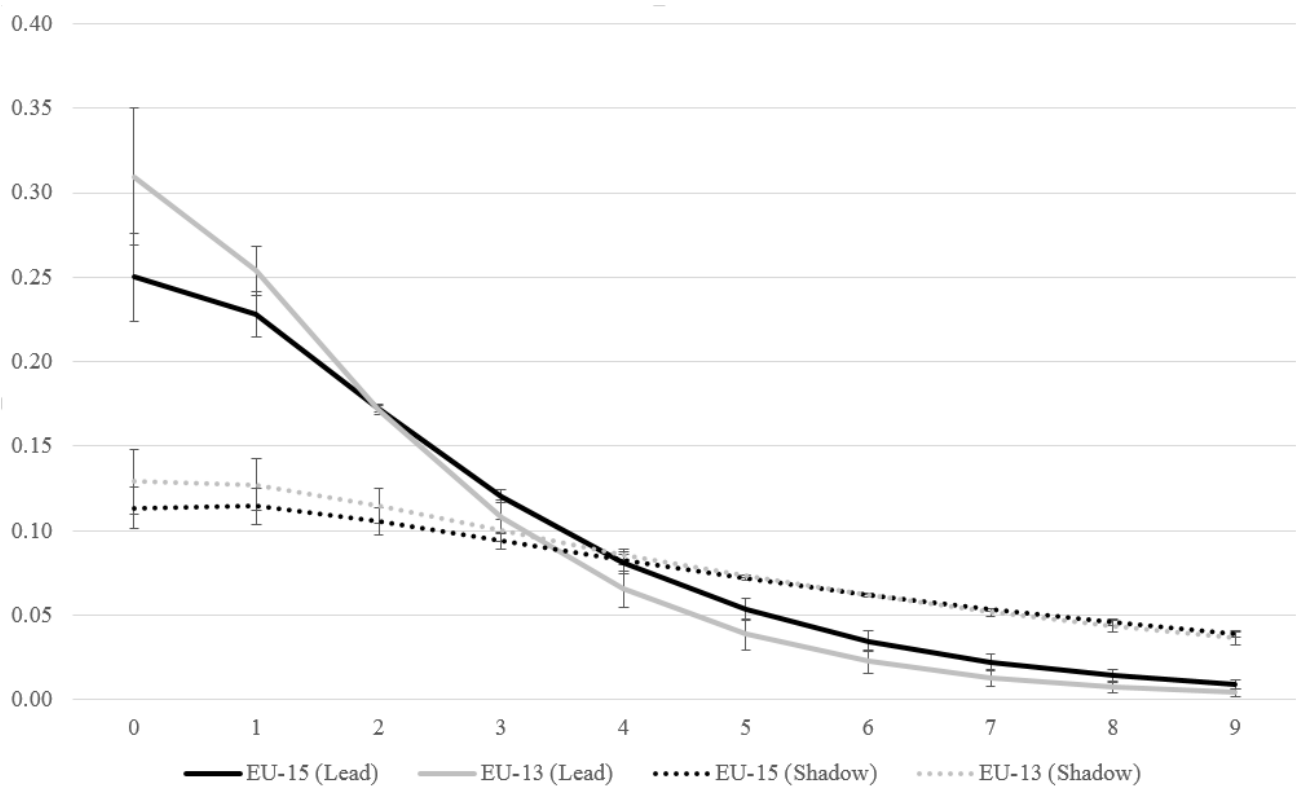
Variables	Model I All reports	Model II Co-decision	Model III Own initiative	Model IV Consultation
MEP from accession state	0.88 (0.08)	0.80** (0.09)	0.95 (0.09)	1.41* (0.29)
Chair or Vice-Chair	1.26** (0.12)	0.93 (0.11)	1.10 (0.11)	1.00 (0.23)
Attendance	1.02*** (0.00)	1.02*** (0.00)	1.02*** (0.00)	1.03*** (0.01)
EP experience	0.89*** (0.03)	0.93* (0.04)	0.86*** (0.04)	0.86* (0.08)
Female	1.20** (0.10)	1.10 (0.10)	1.25** (0.11)	1.16 (0.22)
Council Presidency	0.93 (0.08)	0.88 (0.09)	0.89 (0.08)	0.77 (0.15)
EPP	0.22*** (0.03)	0.23*** (0.03)	0.25*** (0.03)	0.17*** (0.05)
S&D	0.35*** (0.04)	0.37*** (0.05)	0.42*** (0.05)	0.37*** (0.10)
GREENS	1.09 (0.18)	1.16 (0.20)	1.31* (0.20)	1.42 (0.45)
ECR	1.36* (0.23)	1.50** (0.26)	1.55*** (0.25)	1.48 (0.51)
EUL-NGL	1.57** (0.28)	1.81*** (0.34)	1.78*** (0.31)	1.85* (0.66)
EFD	0.76 (0.16)	0.78 (0.18)	0.90 (0.19)	0.67 (0.30)
NI	0.27*** (0.06)	0.13*** (0.04)	0.29*** (0.08)	0.26** (0.15)
Committee control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	851	851	851	851

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; Incidence Rate Ratios reported; standard errors in parentheses; reference group: ALDE. The share of the term actually served is incorporated as a measure for exposure.

Yet Figure 3 also shows that we cannot confirm a major difference in the predicted probabilities for the number of allocated shadow reports among newcomer MEPs from the EU-13 and the EU-15. In fact, the figures are fairly similar across different report counts. However, if we differentiate between different types of reports, we find that the non-significant relationship on the aggregate report level (Table 2, Model I) masks the fact that MEPs from the accession states are significantly under-represented when shadow reports are distributed under the co-decision procedure (Table 2, Model II). As far as reports under the remaining procedures are concerned, we find that the relationship is either insignificant (Model III for own-initiative reports) or reversed (Model IV, consultation reports). Thus, while MEPs from the EU-13 are

not under-represented for shadow rapporteurships on the aggregate level, they are clearly under-represented for politically important co-decision files and over-represented for politically less important consultation files. Thus, patterns of under-representation are particularly pronounced for reports of relatively strong political impact and not detectable or even reversed if the EP’s power in the legislative process is smaller. As for the control variables, the two largest groups in the EP accrue significantly fewer shadow reports across all legislative procedures than the group Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), which again serves as a point of reference. Of course, this is due to the fact that those groups already receive a comparably large number of lead rapporteurships. Finally, being present in plenary meetings is rewarded not only with lead rapporteurships but also with shadow rapporteurships. Women tend to be over-represented among shadow rapporteurs, but as we have discovered above, this does not imply that they are under-represented in the allocation of lead rapporteurships.

**Figure 3:** Report allocation: predicted probabilities for newcomer MEPs (all reports)



In sum, we observe that the learning process that had been deemed responsible for the under-representation following the enlargement in 2004 has either been prolonged for another five years or, as we will argue below, might have never really occurred. Apparently, the under-

representation of MEPs from Eastern Europe in the report allocation process was not simply a temporary phenomenon, as put forward by other authors (De Clerck- Sachsse and Kaczyński, 2009), but in fact the relatively low legislative activity of the newcomer MEPs seems to have become a structural feature of the institution.

#### **IV. Discussion: Less Willing, Lacking Skills, or Simply Disadvantaged?**

Why has the under-representation of MEPs from formerly new Member States in the post of (shadow) rapporteur become a structural feature of the EP? In principle, the influence of the rapporteur over outcomes should be an incentive for policy-seeking MEPs to pursue these posts. While MEPs may have required an adaptation phase to understand the norms inside the EP (Lindstädt et al., 2012), we expected these effects to have disappeared in EP7. While the size of the effect in our analysis is somewhat smaller for EP7 than it was for EP6, as well as smaller for shadows than for lead rapporteurs, the overwhelming evidence suggests that learning in this field does not seem to be taking place.

There are three main readings of these unexpected results. First, the incentive set of this group of MEPs may differ from that of MEPs from older Member States, making them less willing to take on the workload that accrues to a (shadow) rapporteur. Second, MEPs from these countries may select different routes toward effective representation of their constituents' interests and therefore have distinct skill sets; as a consequence, they may be better suited for other positions or activities than those of the rapporteur. Third, there might be a systematic bias in rapporteurship allocation, thus disadvantaging MEPs from newer Member States. In the following, we discuss these three interpretations in some more detail.

##### *Less Willingness?*

MEPs from newer Member States may face different incentives than their colleagues from the older Member States, and hence may be less inclined to take on a (shadow-) rapporteurship. For instance, Høyland et al. (2013) show that candidate-centred electoral systems discourage MEPs from activity at the European level. Moreover, MEPs' national career ambitions impact their legislative behaviour, leading to higher rates of defection from their party groups (Meserve et al., 2009). As Scarrow suggests, 'dominant political career patterns provide useful clues about expected activity within legislatures' (Scarrow, 1997, p. 254). We know that legislative career paths in and beyond the EP differ starkly across countries. More than 15 years ago, Scarrow (1997, p. 259) distinguished between 'those who use their seats as stepping-stones for

winning (or regaining) national political office’, “European careerist[s]” who show a long and primary commitment to their European jobs” and those for whom the EP was an end-of-career ‘dead-end’. MEPs from post-communist Member States may predominantly fall into the first or third category. Indeed, Whitaker (2014) shows that MEPs from the European periphery, which includes seven new Member States in his operationalization, are less likely to return to the EP. In line with this possibility, our analysis included a control variable capturing the participation in roll-call votes and is robust to including party group as well as national party loyalty (not reported).

Theories of legislative organization might likewise help explain why MEPs from new Member States may have fewer incentives to act as rapporteur. Distributive theory suggests that MEPs who are preference outliers self-select into committees that advance their constituents’ interests. For instance, rapporteurs in ENVI are preference outliers with ties to specific interest groups (Kaeding, 2004). MEPs from new Member States may have less strong preferences on the issues dealt with by these committees, making them less willing to invest their scarce resources in writing a report.

Our evidence casts doubt on this line of reasoning, however, since underrepresentation of MEPs from newer Member States is more pronounced for important co-decision (shadow) reports as opposed to other procedures, and more widespread under lead as opposed to shadow reports. If they did not wish to act as rapporteur, they would hardly be willing to take on these reports, which are certainly less important.

#### *Lacking Skills?*

A second explanation centres on the skills required by (shadow) rapporteurs. Beauvallet and Michon (2010) show that in EP6, MEPs from the accession countries were more educated and more often had national parliamentary or ministerial experience than MEPs from the EU-15. Prima facie, this stacks the odds in favour of MEPs from the new Member States, as more educated MEPs are more likely to obtain reports (Daniel 2013).

Further, our models take EP experience into account. Nevertheless, MEPs from newer Member States may have strengths in different fields that render them a better fit for other positions. More knowledge on the skills and expertise of MEPs might help us find out how this affects career paths.

#### *Disadvantage?*



MEPs may be disadvantaged for three principal reasons. MEPs whose national party is represented in the Council of Ministers are more likely to be allocated rapporteurships, suggesting an informational advantage of these MEPs, who can rely on their colleagues for information on positions in the Council (Høyland, 2006). If the second-order effect of European elections is strong in new Member States, non-government parties may perform particularly well, with negative consequences for the influence of the countries' MEPs. However, Schmitt (2005) presents evidence to the contrary. Likewise, MEPs may be more likely to become (shadow) rapporteur if their country holds the rotating presidency in the Council. In EP6, only two accession countries held the presidency, *prima facie* giving credence to the argument. However, our presidency control is in the opposite direction.

A second reason might lie in the party groups' mechanisms for the allocation of reports. Upon successfully bidding for a report, party group co-ordinators allocate these to an MEP. Hence, allocation of co-ordinators may be the root of the 'problem': If MEPs from old Member States are over-represented on these posts, they might be biased in favour of rapporteurs from their own countries. Obholzer and Kaeding (2012) discuss the representation of Member States in co-ordinators' posts, showing that MEPs from newer Member States were under-represented during EP6, but painting a fuzzier picture for EP7. These findings deserve more thorough investigation.

A third explanation draws on informational (Krehbiel, 1991) and partisan (Cox and McCubbins, 1993) theories of legislative organization. These congressional theories can be used to develop hypotheses on the choice of rapporteurs based on preferences of the plenary and party groups respectively. According to the informational theory, rapporteurs should be representative of the plenary median, and according to the partisan theory, they should be representative of the party (group) median. If MEPs from newer Member States happen to be preference outliers with respect to either reference group, these theories predict that they would indeed be allocated fewer rapporteurships. However, we control for loyalty to the national party and European party group (not reported) and do not find support for this line of reasoning.

### *Implications*

We have shown that MEPs from new Member States were considerably less likely to be allocated lead rapporteurships, and for the first time confirmed that this finding surprisingly also holds for shadow reports under co-decision, which are the shadow reports that matter most. Accordingly, the argument that the integration of MEPs from the accession states has been 'much less of a challenge than originally feared' (De Clerck-Sachsse and Kaczyński, 2009, p.

4) should be reviewed critically. The findings challenge future research on report allocation and legislative careers inside and beyond the EP to help shed light on the different readings of the results that we offer. Only if future studies are sensitive to inter-country variation in MEPs' characteristics and ambitions (see Scully et al., 2012) will a conclusive answer to the question of the causes of under-representation of MEPs be found. Likewise, it would be desirable to scrutinize questions of learning and its timeframe based on earlier rounds of enlargement to gauge how they compare.

Meanwhile, the findings imply that MEPs from the new Member States are more rarely in a position to influence EU policy. This might adversely affect the legitimacy of European integration in these countries. Therefore, MEPs from the newer Member States may want to thrust themselves more actively into the competition for rapporteurships during the 2014–19 legislative term. If a European elite is emerging in the EP (Whitaker, 2014; Beauvallet and Michon, 2010), national parties might want to optimize their candidate selection in order to ascertain that a share of their MEPs are committed to a longer-term career at the European level.

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## Appendix

**Table A: Logit Regressions: Report allocation in the 7th European Parliament**

Variables	Model I All reports	Model II Co-decision	Model III Own initiative	Model IV Consultation
MEP from accession state	0.49*** (0.11)	0.56*** (0.11)	0.64** (0.12)	1.18 (0.33)
Chair or Vice-Chair	2.29*** (0.67)	1.52** (0.32)	1.91*** (0.39)	1.67* (0.47)
Share of term served	40.26*** (16.01)	22.11*** (10.68)	15.10*** (6.09)	15.05*** (11.63)
Attendance	1.04*** (0.01)	1.03*** (0.01)	1.01 (0.01)	1.00 (0.01)
EP experience	1.18* (0.12)	1.09 (0.08)	0.90 (0.07)	1.26** (0.12)
Female	1.59** (0.37)	1.02 (0.19)	1.19 (0.21)	1.11 (0.30)
Council Presidency	0.97 (0.21)	0.83 (0.15)	1.11 (0.19)	0.84 (0.22)
EPP	1.18 (0.40)	0.95 (0.26)	1.20 (0.31)	0.91 (0.33)
S&D	1.60 (0.57)	1.02 (0.29)	1.71** (0.46)	0.63 (0.25)
GREENS	0.82 (0.37)	1.07 (0.40)	1.23 (0.44)	0.39 (0.25)
ECR	1.71 (0.83)	1.15 (0.44)	1.34 (0.49)	0.56 (0.32)
EUL-NGL	0.70 (0.33)	0.60 (0.27)	0.89 (0.37)	0.71 (0.46)
EFD	0.19*** (0.10)	0.35** (0.18)	0.27*** (0.13)	- -
NI	0.07*** (0.04)	0.19*** (0.11)	0.08*** (0.06)	0.60 (0.43)
Committee control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	851	851	851	818

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; Odds Ratios reported; Standard errors in parentheses; Reference Group: ALDE. Dependent variable: 0: no reports obtained, 1: at least one report obtained.

**Table B: Logit Regressions: Shadow report allocation in the 7th European Parliament**

Variables	Model I All reports	Model II Co-decision	Model III Own initiative	Model IV Consultation
MEP from accession state	0.77 (0.18)	0.66** (0.13)	0.79 (0.16)	1.20 (0.29)
Chair or Vice-Chair	1.64 (0.50)	1.25 (0.28)	1.52* (0.36)	0.87 (0.23)
Share of term served	30.47*** (12.61)	8.87*** (3.25)	21.50*** (8.65)	25.16*** (16.46)
Attendance	1.05*** (0.01)	1.03*** (0.01)	1.04*** (0.01)	1.02** (0.01)
EP experience	0.72*** (0.07)	0.86* (0.07)	0.71*** (0.06)	0.76** (0.08)
Female	2.28*** (0.58)	1.35 (0.26)	1.73*** (0.34)	1.24 (0.29)
Council Presidency	0.79 (0.18)	0.89 (0.16)	0.90 (0.17)	0.80 (0.19)
EPP	0.19*** (0.08)	0.18*** (0.05)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.15*** (0.05)
S&D	0.43* (0.20)	0.43*** (0.13)	0.22*** (0.08)	0.35*** (0.11)
GREENS	1.28 (0.86)	1.02 (0.44)	0.77 (0.38)	1.17 (0.46)
ECR	1.00 (0.64)	1.30 (0.60)	0.83 (0.41)	1.00 (0.42)
EUL-NGL	1.39 (0.99)	1.48 (0.72)	1.35 (0.77)	2.28* (1.02)
EFD	0.29** (0.18)	0.45* (0.22)	0.23*** (0.12)	0.49 (0.27)
NI	0.05*** (0.03)	0.07*** (0.04)	0.06*** (0.03)	0.10*** (0.08)
Committee control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	851	851	851	851

Notes: \* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; Odds Ratios reported; Standard errors in parentheses; Reference Group: ALDE. Dependent variable: 0: no shadow reports obtained, 1: at least one shadow report obtained.

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