


# Seniority and Ideological Proximity? A Longitudinal Analysis of the Appointment of Party Group Coordinators in the European Parliament

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## Abstract

Group coordinators have a key role in shaping coherent policy agendas in European Parliament (EP) committees and in building consensus about the party line among the group's specialists. They also yield considerable discretion and influence legislative outcomes through their selection of rapporteurs. This article builds and expands on previous research to analyse longitudinally the determinants of group coordinator selection. The EP's gradual empowerment to co-legislator status has arguably increased the stakes of selecting competent group coordinators. Drawing on a unique dataset that includes all party group coordinators of the European People's Party in seven terms of the EP (1984–2019), the article shows that committee incumbency, coordinator seniority and, to a lesser extent, ideological proximity to the committee contingent influence who becomes a coordinator. The results are robust to replication of analyses on a sample of Socialists and Democrats Members of the European Parliament and to controlling for several factors associated with partisan and distributive theories of committee organisation.

**Keywords:** committees; European Parliament; legislative organisation; seniority

## Introduction

Committee group coordinators are key actors in the European Parliament (EP) due to their role in the formulation of the group's position and in steering negotiations on specific policies, as well as their participation in coordination meetings that decide on procedural and substantive aspects of committee work, such as the allocation of rapporteurships or committee hearings (Ringe 2009; Hix and Hoyland 2014; Ripoll Servent 2018).

Daniel and Thierse (2018) have focused on group coordinators in EP8 and showed that their selection was positively influenced by committee seniority and by having been a group coordinator in the past, whereas pure expertise, ties with interest groups and the degree of loyalty to the party group did not seem to matter. Nevertheless, it is necessary to assess whether these patterns reflect the relatively recent empowerment of the EP or whether they are representative of a *modus operandi* that has been in place since the early days of the EP. The longitudinal analyses presented here enable such an assessment. The gradual empowerment of the EP to the status of co-legislator with the Council in multiple policy areas over the past decades could have increased the stakes regarding the nomination of experienced and competent group coordinators. These qualities are needed for ensuring that the European Party Group's (EPG) rapporteurs are chosen and supervised in a way that minimises this risk of agency loss for the EPG and that the legislative work of the EPG's committee contingent is efficient and geared towards consensus-building.

This article does exactly that by drawing on a unique longitudinal dataset that includes all party group coordinators of the European People's Party (EPP) in the first eight terms of the EP (1979–2019). The selection of group coordinators has certain unique features compared to other offices in the supranational legislature. Group coordinators are elected, at the start of each legislative term, by their peers, the EPG's committee contingent. They are not selected by their EPG leadership, as it happens with most other positions in the EP.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the proportionality criteria that apply to virtually all other EP offices do not affect this selection process.

The article tests two hypotheses related to the informational logic of committee organisation and also advances a novel hypothesis – probing whether the relative absence of leadership and proportionality constraints leads to the election of group coordinators who are more congruent with their committee contingent than other aspirants. Our findings show that committee incumbency, coordinator seniority and, to a lesser extent, ideological proximity to the committee contingent influence who becomes a coordinator. The results are robust to replication of analyses on a sample of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and to controlling for several factors associated with partisan and distributive theories of committee organisation. The patterns uncovered do not seem to reflect the empowerment of the EP, and the few over-time changes appear rather to be related to enlargement waves.

The introduction is followed by a discussion of the relevance of group coordinators in the institutional architecture of the EP. The next section introduces our hypotheses and reviews relevant theoretical arguments and empirical findings related to the selection of group coordinators. I then present the data, discuss the variables' operationalisation and the main method used and briefly introduce a series of attributes and descriptive statistics relating to the coordinators and the entire sample of MEPs. The next section discusses the findings of the multivariate analyses and robustness tests. The conclusion synthesises the main findings and points to further directions of research.

### *Why Care Who Becomes a Committee Group Coordinator?*

The EP's Rules of Procedure mention the group coordinators' role in the appointment of rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs, in the organisation of the hearings of Commissioners-designate and in the evaluation of their performance, and the possibility that decisions on behalf of the entire committee are taken at coordinator meetings if ex ante delegation has taken place. The growing responsibility of group coordinators is also reflected by the increased space devoted to them in successive versions of EP's Rules of Procedure.<sup>2</sup>

Based on rich ethnographic data, Ringe (2009: 60) argued that group coordinators have a key role in managing the broad policy agendas of their committees and ensuring the EPG line is coherent across the different policy initiatives examined in the committee. They organise preparatory meetings with the committee contingent in advance of committee meetings to agree the EPG's position on legislative files, and they also nominate substitute members who can vote in committee meetings instead of their missing colleagues

<sup>1</sup>Obholzer and Kaeding (2015) note the competitiveness of the group coordinator elections: 'in large groups, the post is often hotly contested, and MEPs canvass their colleagues in series of personal meetings in order to gain their votes'.

<sup>2</sup>Compare, for instance, rule 205 of the Rules of Procedure of EP8 with rule 192 of the Rules of Procedure in EP7.

(Corbett et al. 2011). Moreover, coordinators' success is judged based on their ability to shape a 'party line that comes out of committee ... as broadly acceptable as possible to the greatest number of national party delegations, and thus the party group as a whole' (Ringe 2009: 61). In practical terms, when coordinators achieve consensus among the EPG contingent in the committee (i.e. the party group's experts on the topic), a very powerful signal is sent to the non-specialist MEPs: that they can support the EPG's line in the plenary without reservations (Ringe 2009: 61).

Coordinators matter greatly also through their role in bidding for and acquiring reports for the EPG, distributing them to EPG members in the committee (Chiou et al. 2020) and steering negotiations on them (Daniel 2015). In order to minimise the discretion of rapporteurs in trilogues and potential agency loss derived from this, group coordinators now also participate together with shadow rapporteurs and committee chairs in some inter-institutional negotiations (Ripoll Servent 2018: 255). But the simple act of choosing the rapporteur gives coordinators significant leverage, which, it seems, they do not hesitate to use. Drawing on a sample of report allocation from the seventh term of the EP, Obholzer et al. (2019) have shown that committee group coordinators do not try to minimise the agency loss for their EPG, their committee or the EP plenary in this process, but that they systematically favour MEPs who are closer ideologically to the coordinators' national party position on European Union (EU) integration. Committee group coordinators are also involved in the selection of shadow rapporteurs: they facilitate the bottom-up self-selection process and arbitrate between competing demands when there are multiple candidates for the position (Häge and Ringe 2020). The influence that group coordinators have over the legislative process in the EP is recognised not only by academic observers but also by organised interest groups and lobbyists (Marshall 2010). These stakes regarding the group coordinator's efficient distribution of reports and their consensus-building work regarding the EPG's position at the level of the committee contingent have arguably increased with successive treaty reforms that have expanded the policy areas in which the EP is a co-legislator and can actually make a difference in what EU legislation is adopted.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The informational logic has been shown to best predict both committee assignment patterns in the EP (Whitaker 2019) and the nomination of MEPs to committee positions such as chairs (Whitaker 2011; Chiru 2020) and group coordinators (Daniel and Thierse 2018). According to this logic, committees are organised in such a way as to facilitate the policy specialisation of legislators and make the work of legislature as a whole more efficient through a neatly tailored division of labour (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990; Mickler 2022). This implies committee assignment and allocation of committee office that matches the expertise and professional and educational backgrounds of the legislators and favours further specialisation by continuous membership in the same committee and committee leadership positions (Martin 2014).

MEPs who have previously served in the same committee have had the chance not only to specialise further on the policy areas in the jurisdiction of the committee but also to develop a working relationship with other MEPs active in these areas and with bureaucrats working for the Commission and the Council if they have been selected as rapporteurs and participated in inter-institutional negotiations. These are particularly

helpful resources for the coordinator, who is supposed to be able to build consensus among their committee contingent for the common EPG position and negotiate deals with MEPs from other groups or representatives of other EU institutions (Ringe 2009: 61). Drawing on data from the eighth term of the EP, Daniel and Thierse (2018) have shown that committee incumbents are 7.4% more likely to be selected as committee group coordinators all other things being equal. The value of committee seniority might have been higher in earlier terms of the EP when the pool of experienced legislators was smaller, and the overall smaller numbers of legislators could also reflect a less diverse body of expertise and professional and educational backgrounds.

*H1: Members who have served on the respective committee in the previous legislative term are more likely to become their group's coordinator.*

All the arguments discussed above for committee incumbency would apply even more to committee group coordinator seniority. Thus, given the highly complex nature of the role and the importance of in-house accumulated knowledge and social networks, it makes sense for members of committee contingents to vote to re-elect their previous group coordinator in a new term. Nevertheless, they might also use previous performance in the role as a heuristic to discard lower quality coordinators when promising aspirants also challenge for the role (Hermansen 2018). Another caveat also needs to be discussed. A successful spell as a group coordinators could also lead to a lower likelihood of being re-elected in this office if the MEP has Progressive ambition and runs to become a committee chair or for EPG leadership positions. This was the pathway followed by prominent MEPs such as Manfred Weber, Martin Schulz or Elmar Brok. Indeed, re-appointment as group coordinator is not automatic, and Daniel and Thierse (2018) have shown that coordinator incumbents were 51.4% more likely to be (re-)selected as committee group coordinators in the eighth term of the EP, all other things being equal.

*H2: Members who have previously served as coordinators for their group on the same committee are more likely to be nominated as coordinators.*

Scholars of the EP committee system have emphasised time and again that the selection of the group coordinator is decided by committee members, not by the EPG leadership, and the proportionality criteria that apply to virtually all other EP offices do not affect this selection (Ringe 2009: 56; Daniel and Thierse 2018: 940). Given this relative freedom, and the assumption that a fair share of MEPs would be motivated by policy goals, it is reasonable to expect that their own ideological preferences and their proximity to the positions of the coordinator aspirants would play a role in the voting decision of the committee members. This can be understood better using a principal agent framework: given the discretion that the coordinators have in selecting rapporteurs (Ringe 2009; Ripoll Servent 2018; Obholzer et al. 2019), committee members would want to minimise the potential agency loss by delegating power to an agent, that is, the coordinator, whose preferences are aligned with theirs.

One might question the amount of ideological diversity among MEPs who are part of the same EPG and the same committee. We know that national party affiliation to EPGs is mainly driven by ideological congruence and that EPGs are generally congruent with

their national parties on the left–right dimension and on the European integration dimension (McElroy and Benoit 2010; Bressanelli 2012). The congruence on the EU integration dimension is however weaker for certain EPGs (McElroy and Benoit 2010), and it is also probably declining generally given the rise of Eurosceptic citizen attitudes and position shifts of some mainstream national parties in those Member States where Eurosceptic parties have made a breakthrough (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020). Additional sources of ideological heterogeneity for EPGs are strategic switches by national parties targeting national domestic goals (McDonnell and Werner 2020) as well as the increased salience of the cultural dimension of conflict.

The hypothesis that ideological distance between aspirants and committee contingents would shape the selection of coordinators has not been tested previously, but previous research has shown descriptively that in EP7, there was some variation across EPGs and committees in the extent to which the ideal points of the committee group coordinators mirrored the median positions of their EPGs on the left–right and European integration dimensions (Obholzer et al. 2019: 246). Such evidence can be reconciled with our hypothesis if we consider that the extent to which EPG committee contingents' preferences mirror the median positions of the EPG would depend on the degree to which the committees in question have a distinct ethos (e.g. LIBE or ENVI) and attract ideological outliers or not, given self-selection of MEPs into committees (Whitaker 2019).

*H3: Members who are ideologically more distant from the average position of their committee group contingent are less likely to be nominated as coordinators.*

In addition to these hypotheses, the models also include four control variables: newcomer status, the share of committee co-partisans, age and gender. MEPs who have been elected for the first time are most likely at a disadvantage compared with their colleagues for nomination as coordinator, given that the job requires both knowledge of the very specialised legislative processes taking place in the EP as well as a network of intra-partisan and cross-partisan connections to achieve group consensus and broker policy compromises.<sup>3</sup> A higher share of committee co-partisans, that is, committee members that belong to the same national party delegation, should be an asset for coordinator aspirants as they might be easier to convince and mobilise in the election than other colleagues. Age could be used by those voting in the coordinator elections as a heuristic for likely parliamentary effort and career ambition (Bailer and Ohmura 2018). Finally, I also control for the gender of MEPs, as scholars have emphasised that the gender imbalance in the selection of group coordinators has decreased over time (Ahrens and Kantola 2022). The EPP lags behind other groups in this respect despite a declared goal to have at least one-third of all committee offices allocated to women MEPs (Ahrens and Kantola 2022).

<sup>3</sup>The newcomer heuristic might be more easily available to committee members than knowledge of the length of time each colleague has served in the supranational legislature. Regarding the latter, Daniel and Thierse (2018) have shown that seniority in the EP did not make a legislator more likely to be appointed committee group coordinator in the eighth term.



### *Data, Indicators and Method*

The article focuses on the selection of group coordinators in the EPP because of its long tradition of having group coordinators (see Kreppel 2002: 194–196) and because its size facilitates regression analyses at the level of the committee contingent. Moreover, the fact that the EPP is a genuinely transnational group allows for assessing whether different national legislative organisation models have an impact on the selection of group coordinators. The data on the group coordinators for the first six terms of the supranational legislature were obtained from the EPP's archive and they are based on the 'Reports on the activities of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian-Democratic Group) of the European Parliament' and Yearbooks of the Group. For the seventh term, the data were retrieved from the EP website (European Parliament 2009), whereas for the eighth term I relied on Daniel and Thierse's (2018) data collection. The data on MEPs' characteristics, committee tenures and party affiliations were retrieved from Høyland et al. (2009) and COMEPELDA (Däubler et al. 2022).

The dependent variable of this study is dichotomous: the MEPs selected to be group coordinators at the start of each term are coded 1, whereas all others are coded 0. *Coordinator seniority* is coded 1 if the MEP has ever been a group coordinator in the same committee in past terms. *Committee incumbent* is coded 1 if the MEP has been a member of the same committee in the previous term. To test our hypothesis on ideological distance, we employ three variables that indicate the absolute difference between the position of the median MEP in each committee contingent and the position of the national party of the respective MEP on the economic left–right dimension, on European integration and on the GAL–TAN dimension. These variables, *Distance on LR*, *Distance on EU integration* and *Distance on GAL–TAN*, combine data from CHES (Jolly et al. 2022) and CMP (Volkens et al. 2021), for the latter using the item response theory scaling model discussed in Däubler and Benoit (2021). Because of data availability, I could compute these variables only for the last four legislative terms covered in the analysis. Figure A1 in the Appendix shows that on average, the median ideological distance on EU integration for EPP MEPs was much higher in terms 5 and 6, but it has then declined considerably in terms 7 and 8 and it has become comparable with the ideological distance on the left–right and GAL–TAN dimensions. Figure A2 shows overall lower levels of ideological distance for the S&D MEPs compared with the EPP MEPs and an increase in the heterogeneity on the GAL–TAN dimensions in the last two terms analysed.

The *share of committee co-partisans* indicates the percentage of the EPG's committee contingent belonging to the same national delegation as the respective MEP. *Age* indicates the MEP's age at the start of that legislative term.

Given that the selection of committee group coordinators is decided by the members of each EPG's committee contingent, a fixed effects conditional logit model (Chamberlain estimator) is the appropriate choice. This modelling strategy allows for the attributes of the coordinators to be correctly assessed only in comparison with other EPG members of the same committee who were potential aspirants for the position (Cann 2008). Moreover, this model also allows for consideration of the different prestige of the committees (Daniel and Thierse 2022), and the variation in the amount of work coordinators would be expected to do given committees' different levels of involvement in EU

law-making, which in turn is likely to influence the number and quality of aspirants. Running the models separately for each term enables testing also whether the effect of the three hypotheses has changed with the gradual empowerment of the EP. Given the higher stakes discussed above, that is, the expanded possibility of EP committees to shape EU legislation, this empowerment might have increased the value of committee incumbency and coordinator seniority and made concerns about ideological distance even more prominent in the eyes of the committee contingents electing the coordinators.

### *Attributes of the Committee Group Coordinators and MEPs in the Sample*

Our sample covers 152 spells of group coordinators elected at the start of each of the first eighth terms of the EP. Overall, 23 EPP MEPs have been coordinators twice, whereas five MEPs had three or more spells. Unlike for committee chair positions, there is little movement across committees in exercising this office. Only five MEPs have been coordinators of their group in two different committees.<sup>4</sup> Four committees have delegated the coordinator responsibility to two MEPs simultaneously: AFET (term 7), BUDG (terms 7 and 8), DEVE (terms 6 and 7) and ENVI (term 7).

As noted by previous research, women MEPs from the EPP tend to be slightly under-represented as group coordinators. Thus, although EPP female MEPs represent 27.1% of all EPP committee members in the first eighth terms of the EP, their share among coordinators during the same period is 21%. If we exclude the first term of the EP, 21.9% of the coordinators were newcomers, but this share is heavily skewed by terms 2–4. After this period considerably fewer newcomers have been appointed coordinators in the EPP, ranging between 0 and 3 per term.

There are also clear patterns related to national delegation affiliation as it becomes obvious from Figure 1, and another finding emphasised in the scholarship also applies to our longitudinal sample (Piedrafito 2014; Daniel and Thierse 2018). Thus, German MEPs have been over-represented as group coordinators in the EPP: 36.2% versus 22.6%, their share among all EPP committee members. The next two most common nationalities for EPP group coordinators are Spanish (12.5% compared with 9.7% in the entire sample of EPP committee members) and Dutch (9.8% vs. 4.7%). One possible explanation is the similarity in terms of legislative organisation in two of these national parliaments compared with the EP. Thus, Daniel and Thierse (2018) note that the coordinator position resembles that of *Obleute* in the German Bundestag (see also Siefken 2021), whereas the Spanish Congress also has a functional equivalent to the coordinator position, the committee spokesperson, ‘who organizes, controls, and decides on any matter in the committee in the interest of the PPGs’ (Oñate and Aldegue 2021: 246).

### *What Drives the Selection of Committee Group Coordinators?*

The models in Table 1 indicate only partial support for H1. Although the coefficients indicate a positive association between committee incumbency and being selected as coordinator in six of the seven legislatures analysed, they reach conventional levels of statistical significance only for the fourth, sixth and seventh terms. These terms coincided

<sup>4</sup>Carmen Fraga Estevez for AGRI and PECH, Elmar Brok for AFET and EMPL, Georg Jarzembowski for REGI and TRAN, James L. Janssen van Raay for JURI and AFCE and Monika Hohlmeier for BUDG and LIBE.

Figure 1: Nationality of EPP Committee Group Coordinators.

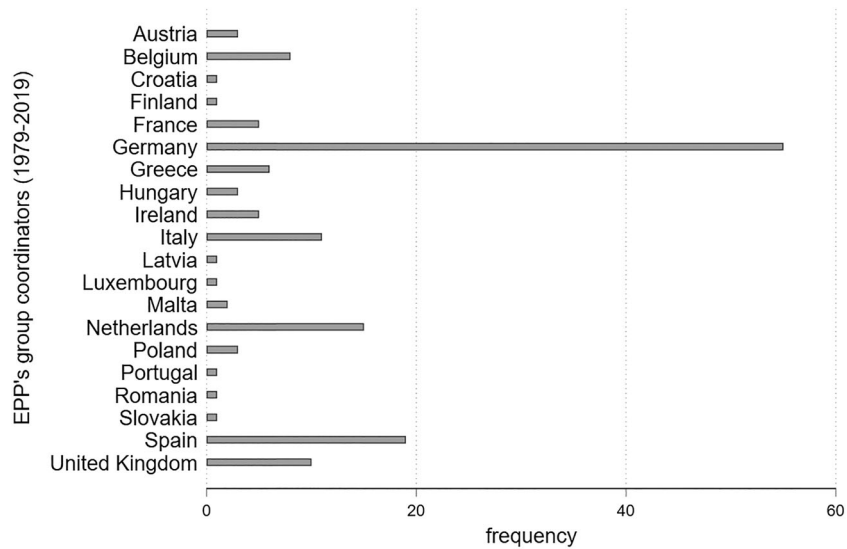


Table 1: Determinants of Committee Group Coordinator Selection per Term

	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5	Term 6	Term 7	Term 8
Committee incumbency	2.525	3.677	12.750 <sup>+</sup>	0.744	5.811*	6.916*	2.923
Coordinator seniority	5.695*	18.170**	12.520**	7.175*	5.974**	1.421	13.020***
Newcomer	0.688	3.112	14.680*	0.210 <sup>+</sup>	0.000	0.420	0.304
Share committee co-partisans	1.002	0.966	0.982	1.005	0.955	1.021	0.969
Age	1.066	0.995	0.998	1.016	0.964	0.969	0.964
Female	6.581*	0.179	1.124	0.349	1.010	0.259*	0.373
N	142	171	187	262	315	290	290
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.345	0.321	0.237	0.244	0.487	0.267	0.312

Cell entries are odds ratios; significance levels at: <sup>+</sup> $p < 0.10$ , \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

with the last three waves of EU enlargement, and it is not surprising that the expertise associated with past committee membership was valued more in the context of large intakes of novices to EP committee politics. Committee incumbency is a better predictor of group coordinator selection than a committee seniority variable. Replacing committee incumbency with a variable recording the number of past memberships in the same committee does not make a difference for the likelihood of an MEP being selected as coordinator, which can be interpreted as committee members putting a premium on the recency of the experience and expertise accumulated by their aspirant colleagues.

The second hypothesis is fully corroborated: having previously served as a coordinator in the same committee makes an MEP between 6 and 18 times more likely to be appointed in this position than colleagues lacking such a record. The only term in which this variable does not make a difference is the seventh term. This term marked a



substantial turnover with respect to the available group coordinators seniority – only eighth EPP MEPs had such experience compared with 17 in the previous term. Overall, the empowerment of the EP in the past two and a half decades to the status of co-legislator does not seem to have increased the importance of seniority for the election of coordinators in the EPP. The control variables make little or no difference to the likelihood of being appointed a committee group coordinator and do not display fully consistent patterns across terms. Replacing the newcomer dummy with an ordinal variable indicating the number of terms an MEP has served prior to the current legislative cycle does not make any difference either.

The regression models in Table 2 include the three ideological distance variables. Generally, it seems the divergence of MEPs' ideological orientations from their committee contingent does not matter for selection as committee group coordinators in the EPP. Further analyses showed that this is true also if the mean ideological distance is used instead of the median ideological distance for all three variables.

Table 2: Ideological Distance and Committee Group Coordinator Selection

	<i>Term 5</i>	<i>Term 6</i>	<i>Term 7</i>	<i>Term 8</i>
Committee incumbency	0.894	8.100*	4.225	2.843
Coordinator seniority	3.530	5.515*	2.577	15.470**
Distance on LR	10.750	4.537	0.928	0.276
Distance on EU integration	1.818	1.705	0.597	0.915
Distance on GAL–TAN	0.001	0.002	0.653	2.362
Newcomer	0.223 <sup>+</sup>	0.000	0.166	0.257
Share committee co-partisans	0.976	0.948	1.029	0.972
Age	1.001	0.963	0.970	0.949 <sup>+</sup>
Female	0.271	1.471	0.537	0.308
N	257	293	170	252
McFadden's $R^2$	0.348	0.536	0.307	0.340

Cell entries are odds ratios; significance levels at:  $+p < 0.10$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ,  $***p < 0.001$ .

Table 3: Determinants of Committee Group Coordinator Selection in S&amp;D

	<i>Term 6</i>	<i>Term 6</i>	<i>Term 7</i>	<i>Term 7</i>	<i>Term 8</i>	<i>Term 8</i>
Committee incumbency	3.709	3.326	4.870*	5.853*	4.152 <sup>+</sup>	4.359 <sup>+</sup>
Coordinator seniority			5.988 <sup>+</sup>	5.419	4.096	2.784
Distance on LR		2.253		0.438		3.622
Distance on EU integration		0.056 <sup>+</sup>		0.309		0.879
Distance on GAL–TAN		0.235		0.882		0.133*
Newcomer	0.635	0.699	0.499	0.558	0.262	0.168 <sup>+</sup>
Share committee co-partisans	1.000	0.998	1.159 <sup>+</sup>	1.145	1.069	1.057
Age	1.020	1.046	0.966	0.972	0.973	0.950
Female	2.396	2.626	0.438	0.453	2.842	4.310 <sup>+</sup>
N	186	181	205	201	261	260
McFadden's $R^2$	0.135	0.195	0.271	0.281	0.316	0.376

Notes: Cell entries are odds ratios; significance levels at:  $+p < 0.10$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ,  $***p < 0.001$ ; coordinator seniority was not included in the regressions for the EP6 sample presented in the first column of Table A1 above as I lacked information about who the coordinators of the S&D were in the previous terms.

### *Additional Analyses and Robustness Checks*

A first robustness check was to rerun the models in Table 2 for the sample of S&D group coordinators and MEPs from the sixth, seventh and eighth EP terms. The findings in Table 3 corroborate the importance of committee incumbency while also providing some evidence for the ideological distance hypothesis. Thus, in the sixth term, S&D MEPs from national parties with divergent positions on EU integration were considerably less likely to be appointed as group coordinators, whereas in the eighth term the same applies to MEPs from national parties with divergent positions on the GAL–TAN dimension. The latter finding is also interesting from the perspective of the above-mentioned increased heterogeneity on the GAL–TAN dimension observed for S&D committee contingents in recent terms.

I was also able to test two additional predictions of the informational and distributive theories of committee organisation for the sample of MEPs from the fifth and sixth terms, drawing on data from Whitaker (2011). These models include the sector knowledge of the MEPs coded based on their profession and education, and a second variable indicated if they had ties with special interests that were relevant for the committee. Although sector knowledge should make an MEP more competent in the eyes of their colleagues, ties with interest groups might be detrimental as indicating outlying policy preferences (Yordanova 2009, 2013; Daniel and Thierse 2018), or on the contrary, they could be perceived as a signal of expertise and interest in the field – in line with the self-selection logic of the distributive theory. The results in Table A1 in the Appendix show that ties with interest groups made MEPs seven times more likely to be elected committee group coordinator in the fifth term, whereas sector knowledge did not make a difference in either term. These findings contrast somewhat with the results of Daniel and Thierse (2018), but more data should be collected to allow for a more certain conclusion. At the same time, adding these variables in the models does not influence the strength of coordinator seniority as a predictor.

In an additional set of analyses, I compared the selection of group coordinators in the more powerful committees. In line with previous research, I classify committees into powerful and less powerful based on their legislative activity and their influence over the EU budget (Yordanova 2009; Whitaker 2011; Daniel and Thierse 2022). The threshold used for the former is whether the committee was involved in at least 5% of the cooperation or co-decision reports in that term. This allows a dynamic classification that captures better the evolving prestige and power of EP committees. Table A2 shows that whereas coordinator seniority matters greatly irrespective of committee type, committee incumbency is an extra argument for nomination as coordinator in the more powerful committees. Similarly, newcomers and older MEPs have a lower likelihood of becoming coordinators of their group in these powerful committees.

Last but not least, I also tested the main prediction of the partisan theory of committee organisation, which maintains parties use committee assignment and committee office allocation to reward loyal legislators who toe the party line and punish rebels (Cox and McCubbins 2007). The level of disloyalty towards the EPG<sup>5</sup> in roll call votes taken in

<sup>5</sup>This is proxied with the absolute distance between a MEP's score and the median of their EPG on the first NOMINATE dimension scaled from their roll-call votes (Hix et al. 2007).

the past term does not influence the likelihood of being appointed to the office of coordinator. The models in Table A3, run separately for terms 2–7, are logit models, given that the conditional logit would not make sense in the context of samples that include only the returning MEPs.

## Conclusions

The analyses presented in this article have shown that the selection of group coordinators in the EP's committees follows predictable patterns throughout the 35 years of parliamentary history analysed here. In these selection processes, in which, atypically for the EP, legislators' choice is not constrained by proportionality and leadership intervention, coordinator seniority and committee incumbency appear as the most important factors in shaping the voting decisions of the EPG's committee contingent. However, there is little evidence that the empowerment of the EP has changed the patterns of group coordinator selection.

I find only partial evidence for the ideological proximity hypothesis and only in the case of the robustness check conducted on the S&D sample. This contrasting finding emphasises the case for further exploring the differences between EPG in the selection of committee group coordinators. In particular, the prominent role played by the EPP and S&D in shaping legislation in the EP might also make their committee contingents particularly prone to using efficiently the expertise and seniority of their colleagues when deciding whom to choose as their coordinator. Although it is highly unlikely that committee incumbency and group coordinator seniority does not matter for the selection of group coordinators in other EPGs, further research could explore the extent to which their selection is dominated in smaller and less transnational EPGs by those EPGs' largest national delegations.

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# Appendix

Figure A1: Average Ideological Distance of EPP MEPs Relative to Median EPP MEP in Committee. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcms.13482)]

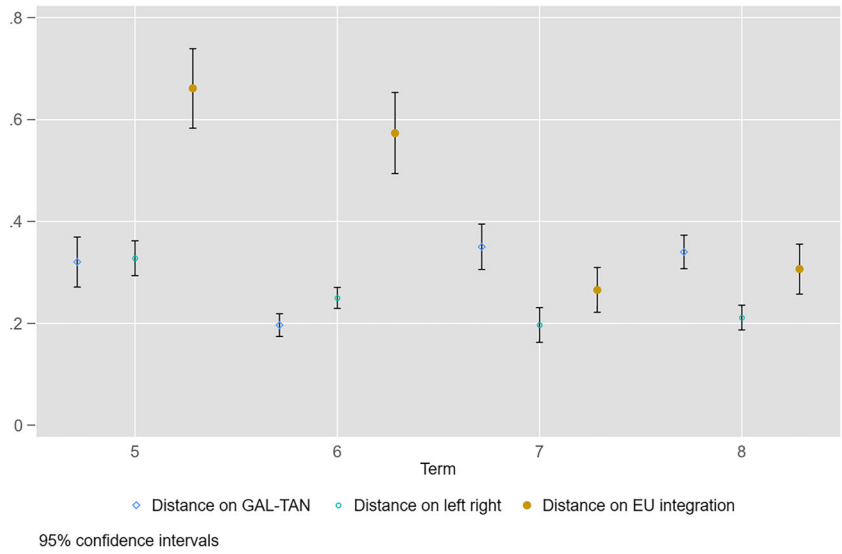


Figure A2: Average Ideological Distance of S&D MEPs Relative to Median EPP MEP in Committee. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcms.13482)]

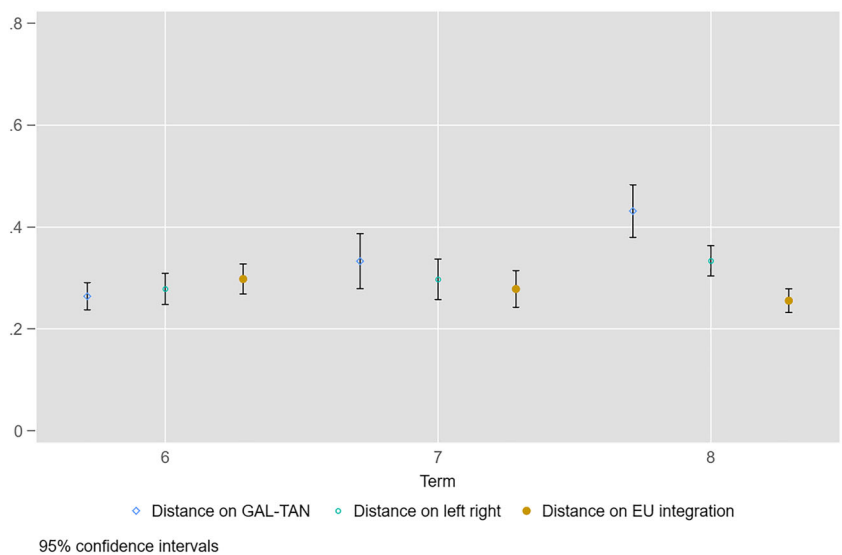


Table A1: Assessing the Role of Sector Knowledge and Interest Group Ties

	<i>Term 5</i>	<i>Term 6</i>
Committee incumbency	0.540	5.157 <sup>+</sup>
Coordinator seniority	8.534*	7.189**
Sector knowledge	1.639	2.660
Interest group ties	7.148 <sup>+</sup>	1.058
Newcomer	0.146*	0.000
Share committee co-partisans	1.008	0.968
Age	1.002	0.958
Female	0.281	1.339
<i>N</i>	258	315
McFadden's <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.282	0.501

Cell entries are odds ratios; significance levels at:  $+p < 0.10$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ,  $***p < 0.001$ .

Table A2: Determinants of Committee Group Coordinator Selection by Committee Type

	<i>Powerful</i>	<i>Powerful</i>	<i>Less powerful</i>	<i>Less powerful</i>
Committee incumbency	2.944*	2.833*	3.124**	2.340
Coordinator seniority	6.763***	5.094***	5.696***	6.558**
Distance on LR		1.160		0.828
Distance on EU integration		1.035		1.878
Distance on GAL–TAN		0.575		0.233
Newcomer	0.274*	0.000	1.001	0.332 <sup>+</sup>
Share committee co-partisans	1.004	1.042	0.998	0.937 <sup>+</sup>
Age	0.972 <sup>+</sup>	0.954*	1.001	0.991
Female	0.585	0.566	0.688	0.437
Term fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>N</i>	894	596	918	453
McFadden's <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.242	0.357	0.135	0.241

Cell entries are odds ratios; significance levels at:  $+p < 0.10$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ,  $***p < 0.001$ .

Table A3: Committee Group Coordinator Selection and EPG Disloyalty (Logit Models)

	<i>Term 2</i>	<i>Term 3</i>	<i>Term 4</i>	<i>Term 5</i>	<i>Term 6</i>	<i>Term 7</i>
Committee incumbency	2.299	1.840	0.728	0.621	3.194 <sup>+</sup>	5.902*
Coordinator seniority	6.225*	35.33**	19.79**	12.82**	8.937***	1.665
Lagged EPG disloyalty	3.366	0.874	0.181	1.465	1.397	1.022
Share committee co-partisans	1.023	0.920	1.012	1.043	0.995	0.986
Age	1.016	1.015	0.993	1.018	0.966	0.967
Female	2.784	0.163	0.825	0.223	1.218	0.233*
<i>N</i>	78	103	100	121	154	137
McFadden's <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.207	0.333	0.213	0.147	0.182	0.121

Cell entries are odds ratios; significance levels at:  $+p < 0.10$ ,  $*p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ ,  $***p < 0.001$ .