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PARTY ORGANIZATION AND PARTY DEMOCRACY
Austrian Representation in the Nationalrat and the European parliament

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Abstract: This paper explores the role of the Austrian political parties in the selection of legislators for both national and European office. In doing so, it first considers variation in party organization and its impact on candidate recruitment, before analyzing differences in the individual backgrounds of Austrian members of the European Parliament with recent members of the Nationalrat. Austrian MEPs are found to have higher rates of education than their national MP colleagues, across all parties, even though they may be less politically experienced. A quantitative analysis reveals that education is important for legislative influence within the European Parliament, correlating to a large degree with the accrual of legislative committee rapport portfolios. Placed within a broader European context, the findings suggest that political parties that are able to recruit legislators from specialized professional backgrounds stand to benefit in the EU policymaking process. The findings also support an emerging view of the European Parliament as a body of specialists—a view that has implications for party democracy in Austria and abroad.

One major function of political parties is the recruitment and selection of suitable candidates for election across multiple levels of government. In Europe, this function is particularly involved, as elected political life within the EU member states takes place at both the national and European level. While both the European and national parliaments of Europe have been studied at great length, few have considered the potential for differences in the composition of representative bodies at these two levels and the ramifications of these differences for policy outputs. In this paper, I use the Austrian case, in order to present some early possibilities for how to address candidate selection and recruitment processes across multiple levels of representation in European governance.

Since Reif and Schmitt's (1980) initial study on the 1979 European elections, the perceived wisdom of both scholars and the popular press alike is that EU citizens view the European Parliament (EP) as a legislature of 'second order' importance. Nonetheless, a veritable academic cottage industry has developed around this institution, blossoming to such an extent that Kreppel (2011) notes that the EP is now likely the most widely studied legislature outside of the US Congress. One major area that remains underdeveloped within this sub-literature, however, is the treatment of the European Parliament by national political parties.

Most of the extant literature on national parties, and their involvement in EP affairs, addresses the extent to which parties can exert influence over MEP legislative behavior—whether in the domain of voting behavior, committee chairmanships, or national policymaking priorities (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007; Müller and Saalfeld 1997; Whitaker 2009). While such work logically

attempts to transport pre-existing theories of party government and apply them to Brussels and Strasbourg, it often ignores one of the major functions of political parties *prior to* the seating of their deputies in the legislature. That is, political parties are the major gatekeepers for the professional advancement of politicians in Europe.

The notion that political parties control the professional fortunes of their membership via candidate recruitment and nomination systems predates the classic works of Ostrogorski and Michels, yet it remains less clear how political parties can use these electoral procedures to manage political careers across multiple levels of government. Taking the European Parliament into consideration, if the EP is a 'second order' institution in the eyes of the public, is it also of a lesser importance to the party? And if parties select legislators of a lower political caliber for service at the EP than they would for national office, what does this mean for the quality of policymaking in the EU's only real domain for direct democratic input?

This paper considers the professional profile of the Austrian delegation to the European Parliament, since Austria's accession to the EU in 1995. In doing so, it takes the novel approach of comparing the individual membership of both the Nationalrat and Austrian EP delegations, with an eye for drawing comparisons between the types of politicians who are selected for service at both the national and European levels. If political parties consider the EP to be of 'second order' importance, then it is reasonable to expect that they will send candidates to the EP that do not possess the same personal and professional qualities as members of the Nationalrat. As Gallagher et al. (1988) note in their classic volume on candidate selection, the selection of quality legislators by political parties can have profound consequences on the quality of policy that is enacted in the legislature. For this reason, it is also important to consider the consequences of any discrepancies in candidate quality between the national and European levels.

Taking the Austrian delegation to the EP as the referent case, I compare individual and professional backgrounds from the most recently concluded session of the Nationalrat, 2006-2008, with all Austrian deputies sent to the EP, 1995-2009, in an attempt to isolate the treatment of the EP by the Austrian political parties. I then examine implications for candidate quality on policy

development, by correlating differences in the personal and professional backgrounds of MEPs with the obtaining of *rapporteur* assignments—one of the most valuable contributions that an individual MEP can make on the EU legislative process.

Austria makes for an excellent case for consideration. As an advanced democracy with a consolidated multi-party system and a tradition of politics at multiple federal levels, it benefits from a relative 'new-comer' status to the world of EU politics—having joined the EP just after the implementation of the co-decision procedure with the Council of Ministers. In this way, we might expect political parties to treat the EP more objectively than original 'Gang of Six' countries, who have dealt with the EP since before its transformation into an arena of real political import. In short, if we expect major differences between candidate quality and performance at the national and European levels, Austria would make for a crucial case within which to view this variation.

In the next section, I briefly discuss existing work on candidate selection and professional advancement of political careers in the EP. I apply this discussion to the Austrian case in the following section, where I demonstrate that, although the Austrian public may consider the EP as a 'second order' institution, the profile of Austrian MEPs is either similar or higher to that of their Nationalrat colleagues, when professional background and educational qualifications are taken into consideration. I then use the third section to run a series of statistical tests, which demonstrate the importance of promoting quality deputies in the EU legislative process. My results indicate a strong connection deputy education, experience, and the awarding of valuable legislative *rapporteurships.* I use the final section to apply my findings to the broader European context—suggesting that political parties play a valuable role in the selection of candidates for the EP, which should not be ignored or diminished by a popular bias against the institution's relative importance.

I. 'Second Order' Legislatures and Candidate Selection

How do political parties impact the electoral fortunes of their politicians destined for the EP, long before the first electoral ballots have been cast? Holland's (1987) discussion of Labour's strategy in recruiting skilled UK MEPs for the initial 1979 elections presents one example of the journey from individual ambition to electoral possibility: local councils filter potential candidates up through a

series of reviews and selections before finally slating national party ballots. Gherghina and Chiru (2010) present a modern version of a similar tale—demonstrating the importance of party favor, local support, and previous experience on the electoral success of MEP candidates in the 2009 Romanian EP elections (see also Protsyk and Matichescu 2011). Although different in time and place, such scholarship epitomizes three decades of direct elections to the EP, where success is often determined by list rank, visibility, and ballot access—variables that are generally controlled by the party.

Recruitment and Nomination: Two Stages of Party Control

Hazan and Rahat (2006) present the most cohesive work to date on the major sources of variation for candidate recruitment and nomination among political parties. In the first stage, a given candidate must first be nominated for election. Candidate selection can be open to all registered voters its most inclusive (such as in the United States), to party members only, or to a minute subset of party members having fulfilled a set of special requirements. For example, the authors detail a previous policy of the Belgian *Parti socialiste*, where candidates for public office were required to be party members in good standing for more than five years, subscribe to the *PS* newspaper, send their children to state schools, make appropriate donations to party organizations, and partake in the party youth and women's guilds. Such exclusive measures clearly restrict the ability of politicians to match professional ambitions with actual outcomes (see also Rahat 2009).

In the second stage of the proposed candidacy, Rahat and Hazan (2006) stress the importance of the party's 'selectorate' at winnowing the pool of potential candidates down to a list to use in the general election. Their work discusses candidate selection along a continuum that ranges from open primary elections at its most inclusive to selection via a single party leader at its most exclusive—with numerous tessellations of local and central committee control in between[1]. Selection clearly matters, as they demonstrate with an Israeli example, where potential Knesset candidates from a minor clerical party are easily eligible for party nomination, but must first be

[1] For a discussion of additional sources of institutional variation in candidate selection processes, see work by Siavelis and Morgenstern (2008), as well as Narud, Pedersen, and Valen (2002).

selected by a small clique of rabbis at the peak of the national party organization. How, then, should this matter for MEPs and their relation to politicians with national legislative mandates?[2]

Party Organization and Professional Control

MEPs that belong to parties which organize their selection processes more centrally—restricting candidacy to a small subset of voters or selecting potential nominees at a central party level—are more likely to operate at the mercy of their parties in their career trajectories. Simply put, more centralized recruitment restricts individual ambition, and increases the chance that a politician's career will be more centrally managed than a politician belonging to a party with the opportunity for multiple sources of input and selection. As Norris (1997, 1999) puts it, parties can either be 'siloes'—funneling members up and down along well-established ladders of elected service—or they can be 'lateral networks' that permit entry and exit at multiple stages of the game (see also Katz 2001).

In terms of the EP, this should mean that national parties with the most centralized selection and restrictive eligibility practices will be more likely to treat the EP as a 'rung' on an extended 'ladder'—shuffling politicians between the national and EP level as needed—whereas parties with decentralized sources of support and less concern for pedigree and credentials may treat the EP as one potential office of many—allowing politicians their candidacy to the EP more directly. This interaction is likely to affect a given MEP's behavior while at the European level. If parties with more centralized selection and management of political nominations are more likely to treat office-seeking at multiple levels as a directed "ladder," and the EP is perceived of as being a lower "rung" in prestige and importance, then we might expect the quality of MEPs to be lower than that of national MPs. How has evidence of this theory been brought to bare thus far in the history of the EP?

[2] For an interesting discussion on the relationship between national parties and their MEPs, see Raunio (2000).

Professional Ambition in the European Parliament

Initial work by Scarrow (1997) suggests that there is a strong basis of national variation when it comes to MEP career tenures. Her article details the propensity of French and Italian MEPs to demonstrate much shorter life expectancies in their elected service at the EP level than their German and British colleagues, who serve much longer terms in the EP, on average. While this high 'turnover rate' for MEPs is often cited as a detriment to the institution's development as a serious legislature, it should be noted that this large degree of the volatility of career mandates is likely to be attributable to national parties.

In relatively unitary systems, such as France or Italy, centralized party apparatuses are uniquely responsible for slating national and European electoral lists[3]. In the French case, it's not uncommon for well-known politicians to stand for election at the European level, in order to raise the visibility of their lists, without ever intending to fulfill their mandate. Interviews conducted by the author with a number of French elected officials have confirmed the use of the EP as a "second place" prize for defeated national MPs, or simply as a way of providing an elected mandate until the next national election.

With French parties at the switchboard for both national and European lists, a clear link can be drawn between party centrality and the manipulation of electoral trajectories. Lundell's (2004) discussion of candidate selection centrality highlights the relatively high propensity of French and Italian parties to "centralize." One logically draws a connection between this centrality of selection procedures and the volatility of MEP tenures at the European level.

Thus far, I have candidate selection for the European Parliament as a product of two main variables: (1) the relative importance of the EP to the party and (2) the party's ability to control the selection and nomination of candidates across multiple levels of government. As I have suggested, both the party's assessment of the EP and their ability to manipulate the electoral fortunes of their would-be MEPs can have profound consequences on the productivity and output of party MEPs in

[3] French electoral laws for the European Parliament were changed in 2004 to replace national lists with a set of regional ones. For a discussion of the effects of this change on EP campaigns, see Costa, Kerrouche, and Pélerin (2007).

Brussels. Turnover and transience do not bode well for quality legislative output and parties with a limited view of the EP's importance are less likely to waste their personnel spoils on a 'second order' arena. Naturally, this paints a rather gloomy assumption about the nature of elected democracy at the European level. However, are these assumptions well founded?

As I have suggested in my introduction, Austria makes for an interesting case for the evaluation and management of politicians at the European level for a number of reasons. Its continuously successful multi-party system allows for a relatively large degree of partisan variation, which should allow us to see multiple examples of candidate selection practices in action. Its federal structure suggests that parties are used to working at multiple levels of elected government, while its relatively small political circles suggest that parties are likely to have above average information about their candidates. As Austria has only participated in the EU since 1995, all three waves of Austrian delegates to the EP have taken place since the implementation of co-decision between the EP and the Council of Ministers—meaning that parties have every reason to take the EP seriously when selected their members.

In the next section, I explore the composition of the Austrian delegation to the EP, as compared with the most recent Nationalrat. In doing so, I show that, I should that Austrian parties are sending MEPs with less elected experience to Europe, although they send MEPs with a generally higher level of education that their national colleagues. There is also an interesting amount of variation by political parties, suggesting a role for candidate selection practices to impact legislator quality. In the fourth section, I apply differences in the composition of the Austrian delegation to the allocation of rapporteur assignments, which are one of the most useful ways for individuals, and thus parties, to contribute to the EU policymaking process.

II. The Impact of the Party on Austria's Delegation to the EP

I have thus far suggested that parties can vary in their approach to the EP along two main lines—their assessment of its importance and their ability to control candidate nomination and selection for EP lists at a central level. The Austrian delegation makes for an interesting case to explore these two propositions. I begin by briefly analyzing the degree to which political parties

restrict candidate selection and nomination practices in Austria, before comparing the Austrian delegation to EP with its national MP colleagues. In doing so, I illustrate that although the Austrian parties have generally high control over the 'shuttling' over their politicians along multiple levels of government, they have packed the EP with experienced and well-educated deputies, as compared with the most recent Nationalrat.

Candidate Selection in Austria

The general tendencies for party centrality and restrictiveness in candidate selection are summarized best along two dimensions—larger parties tend to centralize more, in order to prevent collective action problems, and more federal systems tend to lead to greater decentralization (Gallagher et al. 1988; Lundell 2004). Insofar as these findings apply to Austria, Müller describes a relatively inclusive candidate selection process, with local organizations communicating their nominees for national office with the central party organization (in Katz and Mair 1992). Lundell's (2004) constructed index of party selection centrality rates most Austrian parties as moderately centralized (3/5), whereas the SPÖ is judged to be slightly more centralized in its selection and nomination of candidates (4/5). By contrast, Thorlakson (2009) views the FPÖ to be the least central of the Austrian parties. Generally, though, the picture of Austrian party politics continues to be one of federal 'moderation,' insofar as candidates are managed by the central party structures (Bolleyer 2011).

Insofar as this concerns the EP, we should expect few surprises in the collective profile of the Austrian MEPs. Adept at working in multiple federal levels, MEPs from traditional parties of government – the ÖVP and SPÖ – should not look very different in their professional and personal profiles from their national MP counterparts. Meanwhile, with their more 'federated' approach, we might expect a greater variation in the profile of MEPs from the Grüne and FPÖ, which would theoretically lead to greater differences in the profiles of MEPs and MPs from those parties.

Comparing the Nationalrat and EP Delegations

In order to compare the treatment of the EP by political parties with the Nationalrat, I have collected biographical data on all members of the Nationalrat, 2006-2008, as well as all Austrian MEPs between 1995 and 2009. As the delegation to the EP is relatively small, my unit of analysis is individual mandate, which is to say 'deputy-legislative period'. If, for example, an MEP has participated in all three waves of the EP from 1995-2009, she would be treated as three separate entries in the sample. This is a logical conceptualization for the purposes of my study, as the party would have to select her for EP service three times, based upon individual merits that could certainly mature over time. The resultant 64 observations for the MEPs are of a reasonable 'medium' size with which to compare with the 190 separate individuals holding Nationalrat mandates from 2006-2008.

The common perception of MEPs among the public continues to be one of the elder statesman, illustrated by the popular German saying, "Hast du einen Opa? Shick ihn nach Europa!"[4] Therefore, I begin by comparing the relative ages of Austrian MEPs and MPs. In their discussion of MEPs and their personal characteristics, Beauvallet and Michon detail the increased importance for MEPs to posses advanced skills for negotiation and deliberation. As the nature of legislation at the EP level is comparatively technical, they also note the need for expertise in specific subject areas (in Déloye and Bruter 2007: 343-346). Therefore, I also compare the relative levels of education attained by MPs and MEPs from Austria. Finally, the notion that parties may send less experienced candidates to the EP is worth exploration. Thus, I also test for differences in the previous elected experiences of Austrian MEPs and MEPs.

[4] Do you have a grandfather? Send him to Europe!

Figure 1.

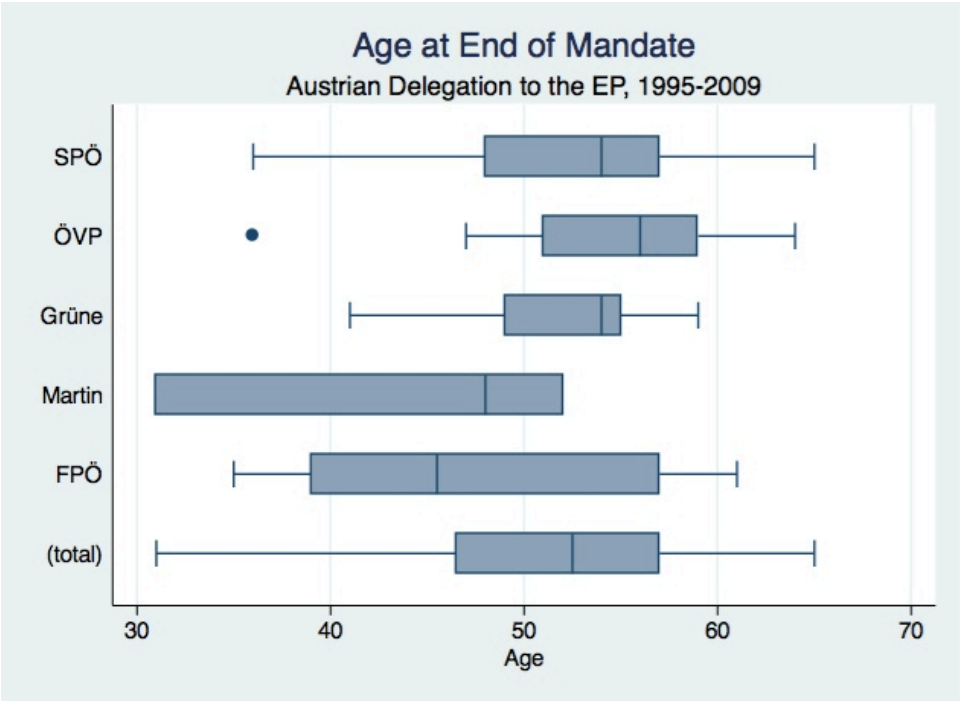
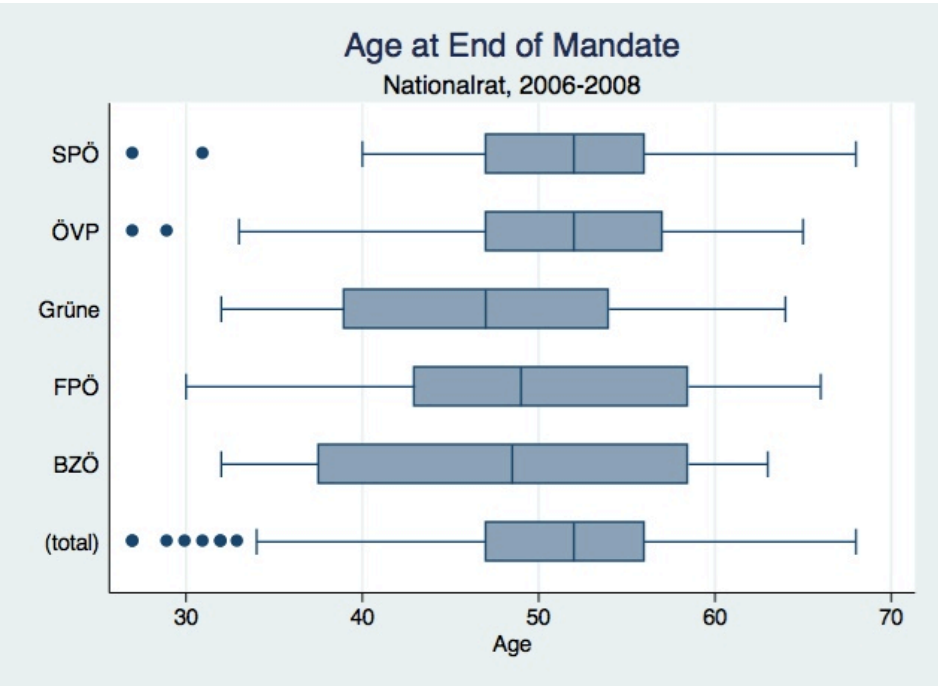


Figure 2.



Figures 1 and 2 show differences in deputy age, by party. The average age of Austrian MPs and MEPs at the end of their mandates is actually quite similar (MEPs were 51,6 years old, while MPs

were 51,0 years old). The distribution between the parties is fairly similar, although there are some interesting differences. MEPs from the ÖVP and Grüne parties tend to be somewhat older in the EP, but certainly not approaching retirement, which suggests that parties are not simply filling mandates with newcomers. Conversely, the average age of a Grüner MP was 47,4 in 2008, which is much lower than the global average of 50,4 for the legislature. This could suggest that the Grüne are not wasting their few spots in the EP on younger politicians, but rather on those who are ready for primetime.

The opposite is true for MEPs from the FPÖ, who were an average of 47,4 at the end of their respective mandates. This compares with an average age of 50,4 in the Nationalrat. This could indicate the lack of expertise among FPÖ politicians at the European level and suggest that the party is placing its big names in the Nationalrat. However, the scission between the FPÖ and BZÖ during the 2006-2008 Nationalrat makes it difficult to draw a reliable inference, as BZÖ members – many of whom were formerly affiliated with the FPÖ – are somewhat younger, on average.

Figure 3.

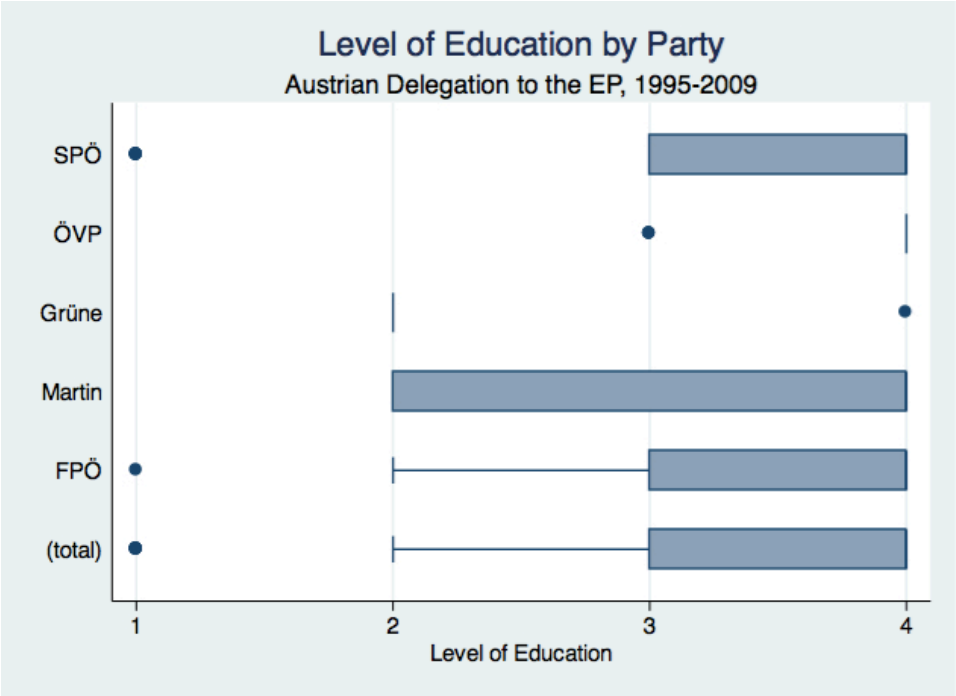
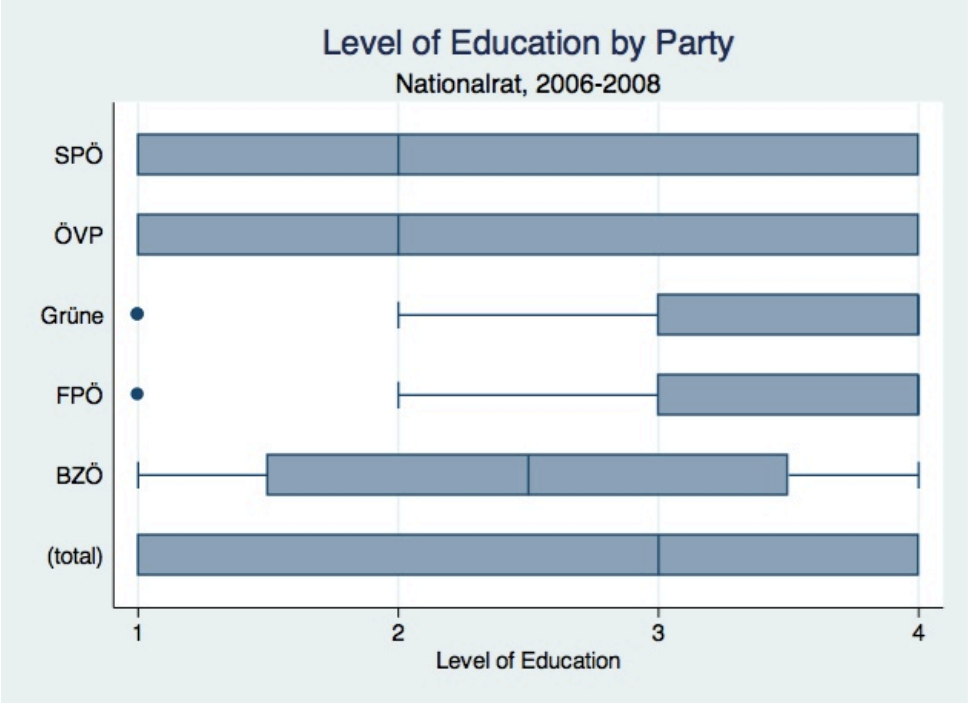


Figure 4.



Shifting our focus now to the relative levels of education between the two legislatures, we note the largest differences between the profiles of MPs and MEPs from Austria. Politicians were rated from 1-4, based on their highest degree earned. Those whose educational background ended in a technical or vocational degree were given a 1, while those who completed the *Gymnasium* were coded with a 2. Politicians with undergraduate training at a university were given a 3, while those having obtained a postgraduate degree (masters, PhD, or equivalent) were assigned a 4.

On average MEPs scored 3,28, while MPs received only a 2,49. Differences within the major parties are even more striking, as MEPs from the ÖVP received a 3,82, while their national colleagues scored only a 2,40. The SPÖ demonstrated a similar degree of difference, with MEPs scoring a 3,04 and MPs scoring 2,22. The importance of these differences should not be overlooked. There is a clear selection effect for MEPs to have higher, more specialized, educational training. While the nature of the political left and the SPÖ's connections with organized labor and trade unionists certainly predisposes politicians from the SPÖ to have a technical or vocational background, the party would

also seem to be aware of the highly technical nature of EP legislative work—thus sending a more academic audience to Brussels, instead.

Figure 5.

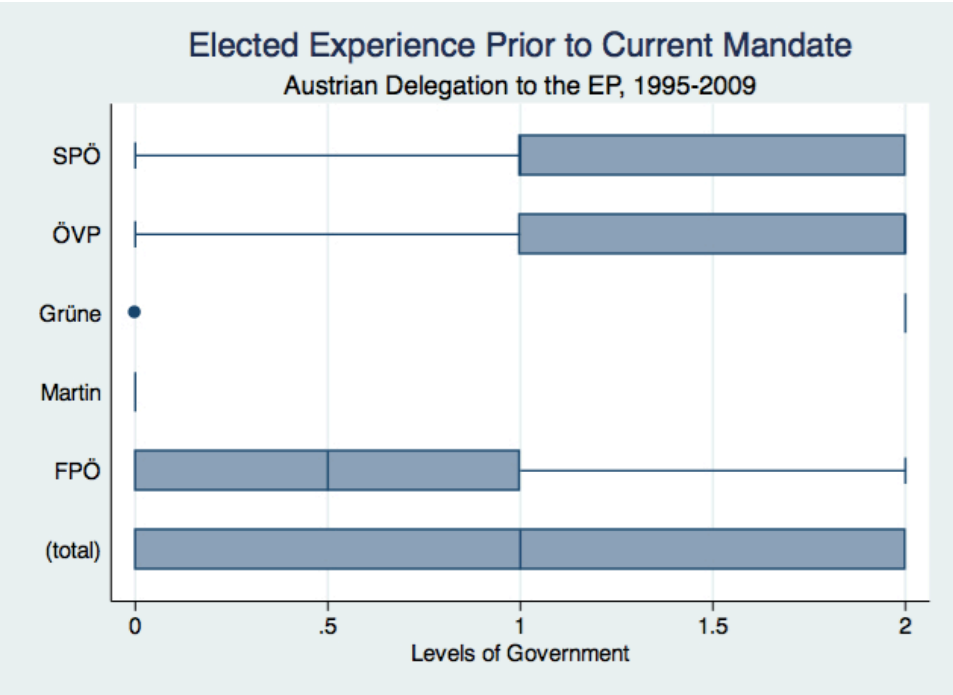
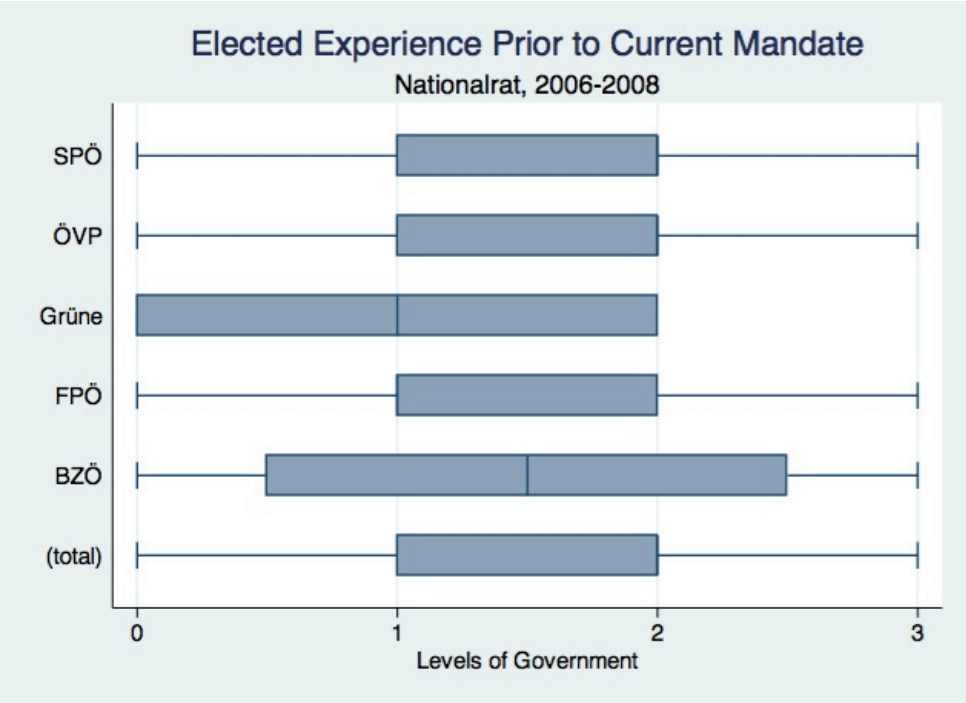


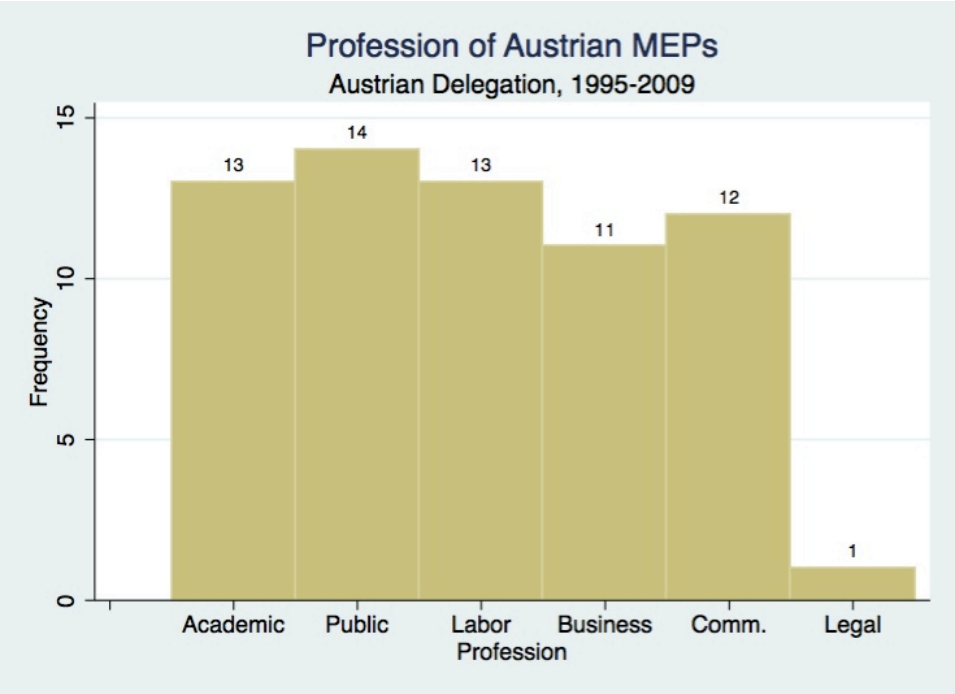
Figure 6.



Finally, when the previous elected service of MEPs and MPs is compared, we see another interesting comparison between the two levels. Politicians' biographies were coded on a three-point scale, based upon the number of levels at which they had previously been elected. Points were awarded for regional or local mandates, election to the Nationalrat or Bundesrat, and cabinet or other national executive portfolios. The motivation for this particular comparison is an attempt to see if previous political experience matters for obtaining party nominations to the EP and Nationalrat. If parties send less experienced politicians to Europe, then we would expect to see lower-than-average experience from Austrian MEPs.

As Figures 5 and 6 show, this does seem to be the case. On average, MEPs have served at only 1,1 previous levels of government, while MPs had, on average, served at 1,7. Only the Grüne MEPs outperformed their national MP colleagues, while FPÖ MEPs show an average of less than 1 levels of elected experience, prior to joining the EP. The eurosceptical "Hans-Peter Martin List" had no previous elected experience, whatsoever.

Figure 7.



Looking at the differences between EP and Nationalrat delegations, we can observe some interesting footprints from party nomination and selection procedures. Austrian parties seem to bias their selection for the EP in favor of educated politicians with advanced degrees, while not necessarily relying on veteran politicians to send to Europe. As Figure 7 shows, the professional background of Austrian MEPs skews towards academics, businessman, lawyers, and journalists—not the typical strong suit of the SPÖ across other levles, for example.

In this section, I have attempted to demonstrate the differences in the personal and professional backgrounds of Austrian MPs and MEPs. The mainline parties, with strong control over their nomination and selection procedures, present MP and MEPs with a much tighter distribution than the FPÖ and Grüne, suggesting that centralization may lead to a higher direction of candidates across levels. Meanwhile, the substantive difference between the levels of age, education, and experience of both MEPs and MPs suggests a qualitative difference in the 'types' of politicians going to Europe. In the next section, I use these differences to test for an impact on rapporteurship allocations, which are an important vehicle by which political parties can control policymaking in their favor.

III. Personal Profiles and Professional Advantages

The previous sections have documented the link between party organizations and representative outcomes at the national and European levels. However, why does this matter? One major reason for parties to control their nomination and selection of candidates for the legislature is the effect of legislator quality on the success of policymaking. Following the rational party model, parties have an incentive to promote their desired outcomes through bargaining at all levels of policymaking (Weingast and Marshall 1988). While this insight is not at all new, it does speak to the importance of providing politicians that will be able to promote party policies effectively, and in so doing, expect to exact real change in legislative outcomes.

As Ringe (2009) notes in his volume on legislating in the EP, policy outcomes originate mostly within the committee system. Unlike in the US Congress, where individuals can initiate legislation that passes from committee to plenary votes, the EP system requires a selected *rapporteur* to

propose policy amendments, which are then recommended by the committees for passage onto the plenary ratification. Therefore, parties wishing to effect legislative change in the EP should not focus on controlling committees, but rather seek to gain rapporteurships from them.

The system of rapporteurship allocation has been examined to some extend by the literature, already. Kaeding (2004) illustrates the bias of awarding rapporteur assignments to "high demander" legislators—chosen because of their lobbying connections, profile in industry, or political characteristics. This system is further explored by Høyland (2006), who finds a bias towards MEPs whose national party is currently in national government receiving rapporteurships – mostly as a means of alleviating information costs between multiple EU institutions. Yet other scholars have confirmed the link between subject experts and rapports (Yordanova 2011; Yoshinaka, Mcelroy, and Bowler 2010). Thus, we might expect that parties have an incentive to nominate skilled politicians to the EP, in the hopes that they will receive rapporteurships and carry out party preferences.

Empirical Hypotheses

As we have seen, Austrian MEPs tend to be more highly educated than national MPs. Within the delegation, however, there exists variation. If rapporteurships are awarded based upon expertise, we might expect those MEPs with more advanced educations to receive more rapports.

H1. *The higher the MEP's most advanced degree, the more rapporteurships they will receive.*

Experience in the policymaking process is likely to matter as well. Academics cannot simply parachute into elected office and expect to make drastic changes to policy, as much as we may like to think it possible. Therefore, expertise must also be accompanied by previous experience. This could take one of two forms: previous experience at multiple levels of government or previous experience at the EP, specifically.

H2a. *MEPs with greater amounts of previous experience working at multiple levels of government will receive more rapporteurships.*

H2b. *MEPs having already served a previous term in the EP will receive more rapporteurships.*

Beyond these two sets of hypotheses, we might expect other personal and professional characteristics to matter. Following Høyland's (2006) discussion of MEPs from national governing parties receiving more rapports, we might expect Austrian MEPs hailing from governing parties to receive more rapports. Previous experience may also be a proxy for previous *national* experience, with those MEPs have specific *legislative* knowhow from the Nationalrat or Bundesrat receiving more rapports. Following the logic of Cox and McCubbins (2007), we might also expect important MEP leaders—committee chairs or party group leaders—to receive more rapports. The model considers these alternate explanations.

Data and Methods

To test for the effect of education and elected experience on rapporteurship allocation, I use the dataset on Austrian MEPs developed in the previous section. The unit of analysis remains individual mandate, with a total of 64 observations in the sample. Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maxium
Rapports	64	2.391	3.824	0	23
Seniority	64	0.422	0.498	0	1
Education	64	3.281	1.046	1	4
Prior Levels	64	1.109	0.838	0	2
Prior MP	64	0.516	0.504	0	1
Leadership	64	0.375	0.488	0	1
Majority	64	0.656	0.479	0	1
EPP	64	0.313	0.467	0	1
Female	64	0.313	0.467	0	1
1995-1999	64	0.391	0.492	0	1

The dependent variable, **Rapports**, is the number of rapporteurships allocated to an MEP over the course of an elected mandate. The main independent variables of interest are **Education, Seniority,** and **Prior Levels. Education** is the four-point index for highest degree earned, as described in the previous section. **Seniority** is a dummy variable coded positively for MEPs having already

served a previous term in the EP. **Prior Levels** is the three-point scale described in the previous section for levels of government at which the MEP has previous served.

The model also offers a range of control variables, to account for potential rival explanations and spuriousness. **Prior MP** is a dummy variable for MEPs with prior experience in the Nationalrat or Bundesrat. **Leadership** is a dummy variable for MEPs holding committee chairmanship, vice-chairmanship, or administrative position within the EP (Member of the Bureau, Quaestor, etc.). **Majority** is a dummy variable for MEPs hailing from a national party currently in government. **EPP** is a dummy variable for ÖVP politicians serving in the EPP political group, and accounts for the group's leadership status in the EP. Dummy variables also account for female MEPs and MEPs from Austria's first term in the EP.

Because the dependent variable is not normally distributed, I use a negative binomial specification. Roughly half of the observations received no rapports, with a steady decline in frequency, outward to the maximum of 22. The negative binomial estimation allows me to fit the model more efficiently to the distribution of the data. As the alpha term is greater than zero, I choose this model over a poisson estimation.[5] Poisson would not be appropriate in this case, because the dependent variable has a high rate of dispersion from zero.[6] Because there are multiple observations for those individuals having exercised more than one mandate, I robust cluster error terms for the individual. In the main results table, this yields a total of 37 clusters and 64 observations. Table 2 displays these results.

[5] For more information on these models, see Land, McCall, and Nagin (1996)

[6] A zero-inflated negative binomial estimation was also considered, but not employed, as the selection effect for rapporteurship allocations is not anticipated to occur from multiple data generating processes. Although the incidence of zeros in the data is quite high, we do not assume that the difference between receiving one rapport versus no rapports is theoretically distinct from receiving one versus many rapports. This choice is informed by theory and is in line with the recommendations of Yau, Wang, and Lee (2003).

Table 2. The Effect of Education and Experience on Rapporteurship Allocation

y = Rapports	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Seniority	0.667**	0.662**	0.664**	0.659**
	(2.44)	(2.47)	(2.36)	(2.39)
Education	0.564***	0.590***	0.547***	0.574***
	(3.68)	(4.75)	(3.35)	(4.35)
Leadership	-0.211	-0.200	-0.181	-0.148
	(-0.99)	(-0.87)	(-0.78)	(-0.53)
Female	0.166	0.213	0.145	0.192
	(0.65)	(0.72)	(0.62)	(0.72)
Prior Levels	0.081	0.099		
	(0.58)	(0.61)		
Prior MP			0.071	0.068
			(0.28)	(0.28)
Majority	0.161		0.195	
	(0.40)		(0.46)	
ÖVP (EPP)		0.073		0.078
		(0.28)		(0.32)
1995-1999	-17.910***	-18.810***	-17.160***	-18.810***
	(-52.91)	(-58.37)	(-50.67)	(-57.44)
Constant	-1.286**	-1.320**	-1.204**	-1.205**
	(-2.34)	(-2.30)	(-2.18)	(-2.25)
N	64	64	64	64
AIC	198.2	198.4	198.4	198.6
BIC	217.7	217.8	217.8	218.0
Alpha	0.459	0.462	0.462	0.466
t statistics in parentheses				
* p<0.1	** p<0.05	*** p<0.01		

Both education and previous service in the EP are shown to have strong and significant effects on the allocation of rapporteurships to Austrian MEPs, across multiple model specifications. This is consistent with both *H1* and *H2b*. Previous experience at other levels of government, including previous experience in the Nationalrat or Bundesrat, does not show an effect. Moreover, the 'majority' explanation is not supported by the data, nor is there a difference in rapporteurship allocations, based upon gender or leadership. One interesting, but expected, result is a strong bias against Austrian MEPs receiving rapporteurships during their first term in office. This is consistent across all models.

As the negative binomial estimator relies on a maximum likelihood process, we cannot interpret the parameter estimates directly. Using the CLARIFY package developed by Tomz, Wittenberg, and King (2001), we can generate predicted probabilities, which can help to shed more light on the substantive meaning of these results. Because of the model fit statistics (taken from the AIC and BIC results), I choose to substantively address the first model, although the nature of all four displayed models is very similar.

Table 3. The Increased Likelihood of Rapporteurship Allocation by Education

	Gymnasium	University	Postgrad
Technical	**86%**	**214%**	**443%**
Gymnasium		**69%**	**192%**
University			**42%**

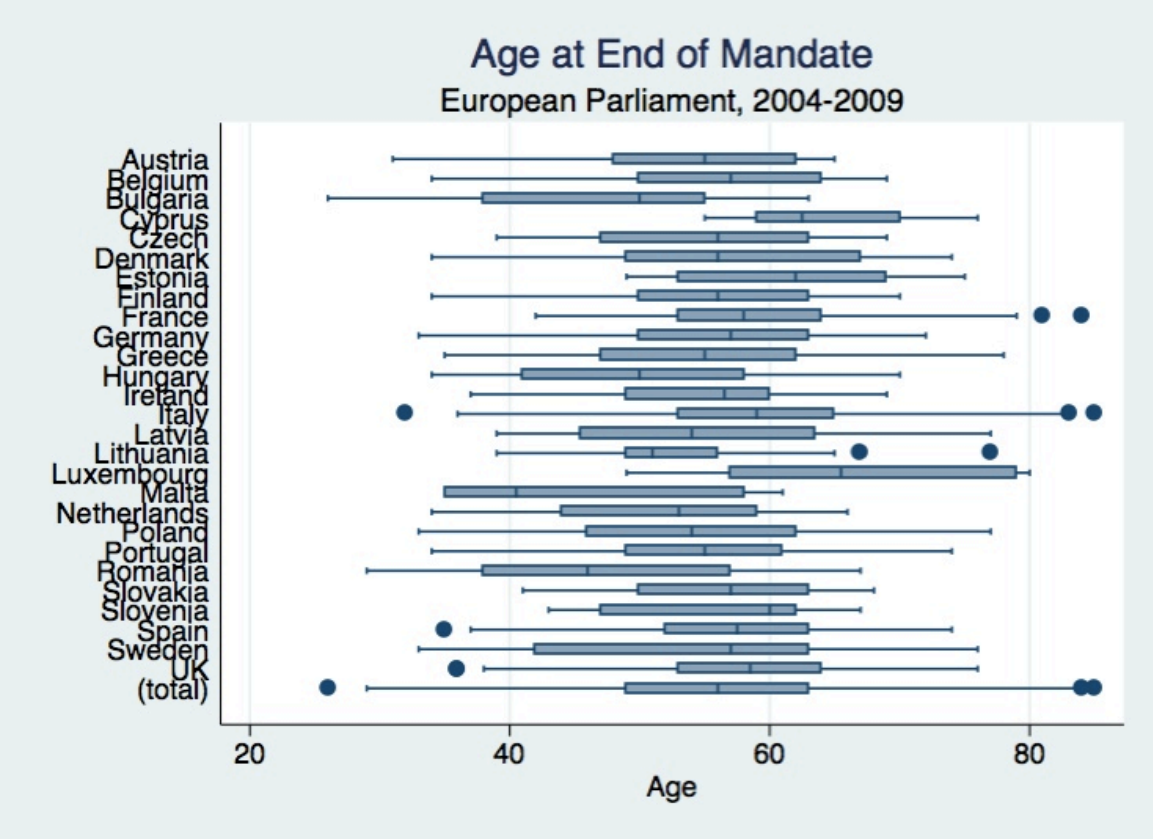
Table 3 displays the increased likelihood of receiving a rapporteurship, based upon an MEP's level of education. For example, an MEP who attended Gymnasium, as opposed to a technical or vocational school, is 86% more likely to have received a rapport. This gap jumps to over 443% more likely for postgraduate degrees. Seniority also matters, and a similar process shows that MEPs with at least one term of experience under their belt were twice as likely (100%) to receive a rapporteurship.

IV. Placing the Austrian MEPs in Context

I began this paper by discussing a provocative and complex puzzle in the literature on the European Parliament. Political parties control the fortunes of their elected politicians, via the use of recruitment and nomination procedures, across multiple levels of government. Given the popular bias against ascribing prestige and importance to the EP, however, it's possible that these same parties will have an incentive to restrict their best and brightest politicians to national positions. The Austrian example provides just one glimpse of this possibility.

Although the mainline parties, with the most central control over nomination and selection of candidates, actually over-perform in terms of education – sending a selection of highly educated MEPs to Brussels – they do not necessarily send their most politically experienced. The opposition FPÖ is even worse in this respect: many of its MEPs are first-time politicians. Interestingly, the popular conception of the EP as a 'retirement home' does not hold true for the Austrian delegation. But, how do we place these national findings in greater context?

Figure 8.



An analysis of the most recently complete term of the EP, 2004-2009, paints an interesting story of these concepts – particularly as it applies to the age of MEPs. Figure 8 displays the age distribution for the 6th EP, by country delegation. By comparison, Austria's MEPs are actually quite close to the EP average. The global trend reflects and interesting disparity between 'old' members from the EU-15 and 'new' members from the 2004-2007 expansion countries, however. In general, the oldest delegation comes from Luxembourg, whereas the youngest are from Bulgaria and Romania. By comparison, Austria fits more in line with the major EU powers of France, Germany, and the UK.

Although age is only one of many possible indicators of an MEP's professional profile, it does suggest that Austria is contributing to the EP in a serious way; it is sending neither pensioners, nor debutants, to Brussels. As we saw in the third section, it can be politically advantageous for political parties to send 'real' practitioners of politics to the EP. If we examine the allocation of rapporteurships by party, we see for example that the FPÖ managed to receive only one rapport in nearly 15 years of participation in the EP!

Figure 9.

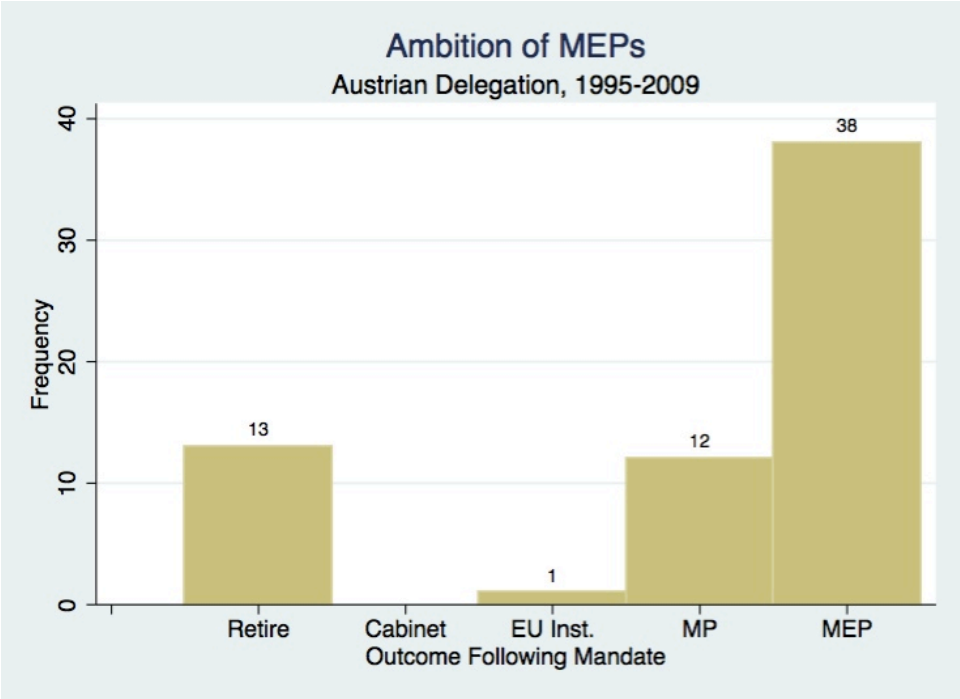
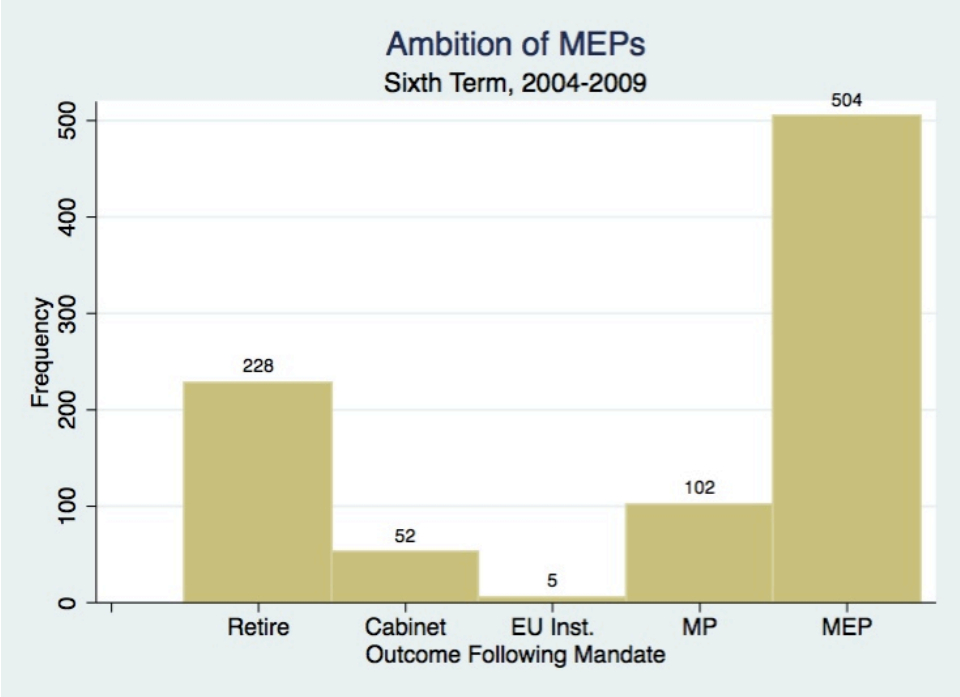


Figure 10.



It is important also to note that parties are not the only arbiters of professional careers in Europe. For a politician to succeed in his or her candidacy, he or she must also *want* the job. A comparative examination of the Austrian delegation's individual ambitions following the conclusion of a mandate in the EP shows a nice cohesion with the larger EU picture. Figures 9 and 10 display the individual ambitions of Austrian MEPs, 1995-2009, as well as all of the MEPs from the 6th EP, 2004-2009, following their respective mandates. As indicated, the gross majority of MEPs attempted (either successfully or unsuccessfully) to renew their mandates at the EP, with a healthy portion retiring from elected politics. Even fewer attempted to convert their experience into national runs – either as ministers, executives, or legislators – and a no Austrian MEPs have yet to bridge the divide between the EP and other EU institutions. Apparently it is not only the parties who realize that repeat service and extended careers at the EP are a useful growth industry—allowing politicians to specialize and gain power within the institution.

Conclusions

This paper has evaluated the 'second order' nature of the EP by questioning whether or not parties are sending quality candidates to the European Parliament. In doing so, it has sought to account for variation in candidate quality, as witnessed in the Austrian delegation to the EP, by examining the candidate selection and nomination procedures used by political parties. Treating parties as the essential gatekeepers to European political careers, I have shown that Austrian MEPs generally resemble their colleagues—both within the Nationalrat and in the EP. Not only is this a positive sign for advocates of an increasingly powerful EP, but also translates into the ability of political parties to accomplish policy goals at the EP by the securing on rapporteurships.

However, what does this mean for democracy in Austria? The empirical analysis conducted by this paper has shown that policymaking in the EP is increasingly dominated by a small set of highly educated specialists. If parties are recognizing this trend and sending a qualitatively 'different' group of legislators to Brussels—indeed, the evidence from this paper suggests that this may be the case—then it is worth considering how the premium being placed on such highly educated or specialized individuals impacts the democratic connection between voter and legislator. The EU institutions have already amassed a more than substantial amount of criticism for both their lack of democracy, as well as the pressure to legislate technocratically. A powerful EP can be a remedy to this democratic deficit, but only if the EP serves as a popular check to the other unelected institutions. The evidence of this paper suggests that, at least for Austria, this may not be the case.

The selection of quality candidates for the European Parliament should be of major interest to scholars, practitioners, and popular observers of the EU alike. As the main input for democracy into the EU institutions, the public has an interest in skilled practitioners representing them at the EP. However, one should also be careful as to question the implications for democracy, when only a specialty set of policymakers are selected as candidates. Moreover, political parties stand to benefit via the allocation of rapporteurships, which provide a direct and meaningful input into the policymaking process. For EU scholars, an increase in MEP quality can also lead to a decrease in the sorts of volatility explored by Scarrow (1997), but it may have normative implications for the quality

of democracy in the EU. The Austrian case presents just one insight into the balance of expertise, democracy, and party control in the EP. However, it can also contain broader implications for the other EU member states.

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