

# **Top-down or bottom-up? The selection of shadow rapporteurs in the European Parliament**

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## Introduction

This paper analyzes the assignment of shadow rapporteurships in the European Parliament (EP). Shadow rapporteurs (hereafter: shadows) represent their party groups in the EP's legislative process and monitor the work of the lead rapporteur. They have the capacity to influence decision-making inside their party groups, inter-party negotiations in the EP, the content of the EP's draft report, and the EP's inter-institutional bargaining process with the Council of Ministers. Hence, shadows are highly consequential actors in EU lawmaking, yet they remain understudied. This is due in large part to data on shadow rapporteurships not having been made available in any systematic fashion until recently, which left it to quantitative case studies (Jensen and Winzen 2012) and qualitative research (Judge and Earnshaw 2011; Roger and Winzen 2015) to highlight the role and influence of shadow rapporteurs. The EP website only began listing shadows for each legislative dossier starting in 2009, and these quantitative data have not been used extensively to date. Notable exceptions are research by Hurka, Kaeding, and Obholzer (2015), which finds that MEPs from the countries that joined the EU in and after 2004 are under-represented as shadows, and Häge and Ringe (2019), who investigate social networks composed of rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs and find that MEPs from small party groups are particularly central and have greater potential for brokerage in those networks.<sup>1</sup>

This paper seeks to address one major open question, namely what drives the process of shadow rapporteurship assignments inside EP party groups. We consider whether the process of choosing shadows is a bottom-up process of self-selection or a top-down assignment process. Regarding the latter, we apply a principal-agent framework to conceptualize the delegation logic of distributing rapporteurships. Our empirical data are two-fold. First, we rely on ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews we conducted in the EP with a carefully selected group of respondents from all but one party group and a large number of standing committees. The interview data allow us to gain insight into the practice of assigning shadows across parties and committees and to gauge the extent to which the process is bottom-up or top-down. Second, we statistically analyze quantitative data on rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs during the EP's 7<sup>th</sup> term (2009-14), using a novel dyadic research design that allows us to investigate the role of relational aspects in the shadow rapporteur appointment process.

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<sup>1</sup> Relatedly, Brandsma (2015) investigates the effect of shadow rapporteurship appointments on the number of informal dialogues held during the decision-making process using a quantitative approach.

Our analyses of both the qualitative and quantitative data suggest that the assignment of shadows involves elements of both bottom-up self-selection and top-down assignment. The qualitative data reveal that the basis of assigning shadows is self-selection by MEPs, but that party group coordinators can play an important role in managing the final selection, especially when more than one party colleague requests a given report. Our quantitative results show that party group members whose policy ideal points are more distant from the median member of their party group are less likely to be selected, while having similar levels of seniority as the rapporteur makes selection more likely. It does not, however, appear to be the case that party group leaders select shadows with a greater policy distance to the rapporteur, as they would if they were aiming to ensure that shadows extract maximal policy concessions from the rapporteur. We also find evidence in our quantitative data to indicate that the assignment of shadows is in part a process of self-selection. Specifically, our results show that MEPs from the same member state as the rapporteur are more likely to become shadows, suggesting that proposals touching on nationally salient issues incentivizes lawmakers to become involved in this type of committee work. MEPs with similar policy interests as the rapporteur are also more likely to become shadows, pointing to the importance of policy interests and policy specialization in the self-selection process. Finally, we find that MEPs who have less seniority than the rapporteur are more likely to become shadows, which indicates that they use shadow rapporteurships to establish their professional reputation and advance their career inside the EP.

### **Shadow rapporteur nomination: Top-down or bottom-up?**

Much existing research ex- or implicitly views the appointment of rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs through the lens of principal-agent theory (Hausemer 2006; Kaeding 2004; Obholzer *et al.* 2019; Yordanova 2011; Yoshinaka *et al.* 2010).<sup>2</sup> In a top-down process, leaders of the party group nominate members for these types of positions that, based on pre-existing characteristics, promise to best represent the leadership's interests. However, the uncritical application of principal-agent models to these types of hierarchical relationships in EU policy-making has also been criticised in recent years, because the assumptions of these models are a poor reflection of the actual decision-making processes involving the 'agent' and the 'principal' leading to the formulation of the latter's policy position (Häge 2011b; Ringe 2005; Ringe 2010). In particular, the assumption that the principal has pre-existing positions on

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<sup>2</sup> For an exception, see Benedetto (2005), who acknowledges the role of self-selection in rapporteur appointment processes.

specific policy proposals and selects agents on this basis is often empirically implausible. By default, it disregards the possibility that the agent does not only implement a principal's pre-existing policy position, but plays a major role in shaping the principal's policy position in the first place. If the principal's policy positions are only formulated through the work of the agent, differences in policy positions between the two can obviously not play a role in the appointment process. Thus, in the following, we first outline the top-down principal-agent perspective on shadow rapporteurship appointments, but then contrast it to a bottom-up perspective based on the self-selection of party group members into shadow rapporteurships that allow them to influence policy proposals they are interested in.

### *Top-down assignment*

From a principal-agent perspective, shadow rapporteurs fulfil a dual function. First, they represent their party group in collective decision-making processes of the committee. They formulate policy positions and negotiate on their group's behalf with the rapporteur and their counterparts from other groups to arrive at a collective committee decision. Second, they monitor the actions of the rapporteur. The tasks delegated by committees to rapporteurs, and the prerogatives and role expectations that come with them, put rapporteurs into influential positions in the EU's policy-making process. Of course, rapporteurs can potentially abuse these positions to promote their own personal or party political interests. Oversight by shadow rapporteurs limits the discretion rapporteurs have in that respect. However, both of these shadow rapporteurship functions can themselves be seen as being based on an ex- or implicit act of delegation. In the shadow rapporteur context, the principal is the party group as a collective actor – likely represented by the coordinator as the party group's leader in the relevant committee – and the agent is the member nominated as shadow rapporteur.

With regard to shadow rapporteurs' policy formulation function, the delegation logic underlying the development of legislative committees applies analogously (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987; Krehbiel 1992). Just like the establishment of legislative committees, appointing shadow rapporteurs to deal with different policy proposals is a form of legislative specialisation. Except that in this case, the specialisation occurs within the party group rather than the legislature as a whole. According to this logic, principals lack policy expertise. In particular, principals are unsure about how policy proposals translate into practical outcomes on the ground (Ringe 2010). In order to make better informed decisions, principals delegate the policy formulation task to agents. To incentivise agents to accumulate the necessary policy expertise, principals grant them a disproportionate amount of policy-making influence. In the

case of EP policy-making, shadow rapporteurs are largely put in charge of developing specific policy positions for their party group, as well as promoting and defending them in formal and informal decision-making arenas.

However, given the informational asymmetry between principals and agents, agents might abuse these prerogatives to pursue policy goals that differ from those of their principals. In other words, shadow rapporteurs might exploit their decision-making prerogatives to promote their own policy views rather than what is in the best interest of their party group. Given that the party group does not know which policy solution is in its best interest, it will find it hard to identify and sanction such behaviour. Thus, the most effective way for principals to prevent agency drift is to select agents that have similar preferences.<sup>3</sup> In the context of shadow rapporteurships, the party group leaders – in particular the party group coordinators in the EP's standing committees – are expected to appoint group members as shadows that hold policy positions that are representative of the group as a whole. The goal and the role of the group coordinator is to minimize agency loss by ensuring that the person selected as shadow does not deviate too far from the party group's median member, which leads to our first hypothesis:

*H1: The closer a party group member's policy position is to the median position of the party group, the more likely that party group member will be appointed as shadow rapporteur.*

It may be the case, however, that party groups are not only concerned with internal party group interests and agency loss when assigning shadows but prioritize more ambitious goals that take into account external strategic interactions with the rapporteur as well. In this scenario, it is not the policy distance of the member's position from the median member's position that matters, but the member's distance from the rapporteur's position.<sup>4</sup> Assigning a shadow whose ideal

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<sup>3</sup> The game theoretic model underlying this argument assumes a one-dimensional policy space and rational actors with strategic foresight. In the policy-making part of the game, the shadow rapporteur moves first and proposes a policy to its party group, which the party group median can then accept or reject. In contrast to the shadow rapporteur, the party group median is unsure about how the policy proposed by the shadow rapporteur translates into actual policy outcomes. In the preceding part of the game, which is concerned with the delegation choice, the party group compares the outcome of policy-making after delegation to the outcome resulting from its own choice under a higher level of uncertainty.

<sup>4</sup> Much of the following argument is based on Epstein and O'Halloran's (1995) model of strategic oversight. In the context of the US political system, they model the interaction of executive agencies, interest groups, and Congress. Under certain circumstances, interest groups provide valuable information about the policy consequences of executive acts, and help Congress to make better decisions about whether or not to overrule agency acts. The strategic interaction in the model is similar to the situation considered here, where shadows might provide valuable information about the policy proposed by the rapporteur to help the party group leadership to decide about whether or not to accept the rapporteur's proposal (where the rapporteur's proposal might also consist of an agreement negotiated between the rapporteur and the shadow).

point is distant from that of the rapporteur has several advantages from the party group's point of view, which relate both to minimizing agency loss and efforts to extract concessions from the rapporteur. First, it provides an incentive for the shadow to more carefully scrutinize the work of the rapporteur and to critically evaluate the content of the report. All else equal, therefore, greater distance between shadow and rapporteur makes it more likely that the shadow will fulfil one of its key responsibilities associated with the position: to monitor and serve as a check on the rapporteur. The shadow is also more likely to push for concessions from the rapporteur when participating in rapporteur-shadow rapporteur meetings, which is the second reason why party groups would have an interest in appointing a shadow who is more extreme from the rapporteur's point of view: such concessions would move the final agreement closer to the party group's median member.

Third, a shadow whose ideal point is more distant from the rapporteur's is more likely to provide credible information to the party group and is less likely to collude with the rapporteur. In the EU lawmaking process, the rapporteur drafts a report on the Commission's proposal or negotiates an inter-institutional text with the Council Presidency, the shadow recommends support of or opposition to the rapporteur's proposal to his or her party group, and, on the basis of this recommendation, the party group accepts or rejects the rapporteur's proposal. While the rapporteur and shadow rapporteur have private information about the practical implications of the policy proposal, other members of the party group – including its leadership – do not. For that reason, the party group must be concerned about collusion between rapporteur and shadow and wary of the shadow's recommendation. The likelihood that rapporteur and shadow collude decreases with greater distance between their ideal points, however, making the shadow's recommendation to his or her party group more credible. It is most credible when rapporteur and shadow hold positions on opposite sides of the party group median position, but even when this is not the case, greater distance between shadow and rapporteur increases the credibility of the information provided by the shadow.<sup>5</sup> Hence, a shadow whose policy position diverges from the rapporteur's is more beneficial to the party group than one whose position is tightly aligned with the position of the party group median once strategic interactions with the rapporteur are taken into account. A party group whose strategic objectives are not only

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<sup>5</sup> This expectation holds as long as the shadow is not further away from the party group median than the rapporteur. In this actor constellation, the party group median will ignore the shadow rapporteur's recommendation. Given that party group membership is based on similar policy preferences, this is an empirically unlikely scenario.

concerned with minimizing agency loss should, therefore, select a shadow rapporteur with policy positions that diverge as much as possible from those of the rapporteur.

*H2: The more distant a party group member's policy position is to the rapporteur's position, the more likely that party group member will be appointed as shadow rapporteur.*

Apart from policy preferences, or the willingness to pursue the goals of the party group, the ability to do so might also be a factor in the selection of shadow rapporteurs by the party group leadership. To advance the goals of the party group, the respect and social standing of an MEP, as well as his or her procedural knowledge of the decision-making process is also important. Thus, we would expect party groups to nominate shadow rapporteurs that match the rapporteur on these attributes. By this we mean that the party group assigns shadows whose seniority is similar to that of the rapporteur, because appointing a shadow rapporteur with considerably less experience than the rapporteur would put the party group at a disadvantage, while appointing a shadow with considerably more experience would unnecessarily waste scarce human resources that could be put to better use elsewhere, for example for full rapporteurships on other policy proposals.

*H3: The more similar the level of seniority of a party group member is to the level of seniority of the rapporteur, the more likely that party group member will be appointed as shadow rapporteur.*

#### *Bottom-up self-selection*

It is possible, however, that the assignment of shadows is much less of a top-down process than the preceding hypotheses suggest. If the process is more bottom-up and MEPs self-select into shadow rapporteurships, they will choose to cover proposals based on some combination of policy interests, policy salience, policy expertise, and career consideration. An indicator that policy salience drives self-selection would be that MEPs select to become shadow on proposals that are of particular salience to their member state, either because they have severe implications for nationally important economic sectors or because they receive much attention in public and political debate, which may enhance their chances of reelection. Shaping European policies that have important domestic ramifications is useful for credit-claiming during election campaigns and helps to maintain the support of important interest groups. Unfortunately, we cannot measure national interests directly. However, if national interests are an important factor in both becoming a rapporteur and in becoming a shadow rapporteur, then

the resulting coincidence of national interests at the dyadic level should see a high probability of rapporteurs being matched by shadow rapporteurs from the same member state.

*H4: Party group members with the same national background as the rapporteur are more likely to become a shadow rapporteur than party group members from other member states.*

Policy interests are also difficult to measure, but we can observe the types of policy proposals MEPs have been working on as rapporteurs or shadow rapporteurs and treat the content of these proposals as manifestations of MEPs' policy specialisms. If policy interests have a substantial effect on MEPs' choices in taking on rapporteurships and shadow rapporteurships, then we would expect rapporteurs to be matched with shadow rapporteurs that have a similar report and opinion portfolio in terms of policy content.

*H5: The more similar a party group member's policy interests are to the rapporteur's policy interests, the more likely that party group member will become a shadow rapporteur.*

Finally, MEPs may seek shadow rapporteurships in order to advance their careers inside the EP once they are (re-)elected. More junior MEPs might be less likely to be selected as rapporteurs (Obholzer *et al.* 2019; for contrary evidence, see Yoshinaka *et al.* 2010), so they have to find other ways to advance their careers within the institution. Serving as shadow rapporteur accomplishes that goal, since it offers an opportunity to gain recognition as a policy expert and skilled negotiator. If this characterization of the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurship selection processes is correct, we would expect shadow rapporteurs to be generally less senior than rapporteurs:

*H6: The lower the level of seniority of a party group member is relative to the level of seniority of the rapporteur, the more likely that party group member will become a shadow rapporteur.*

In sum, finding confirmation for H1-H3 would suggest that shadows are assigned in a top-down process that seeks to minimize agency loss and/or takes into account strategic interactions with the rapporteur; and confirmation for H4-H6 that the assignment of shadows is a bottom-up process driven by self-selection. Most hypotheses are not mutually exclusive, of course, and we may find support for some combination of factors that point to both top-down and bottom-up dynamics in the assignment of shadow rapporteurs.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

This is, in fact, what we would conclude on the basis of our qualitative data. A series of interviews we conducted in the EP suggests that the allocation of shadow rapporteurships in



the EP is a notably bottom-up process, but also that party group leaders in the responsible committee play an important role in coordinating the distribution of shadow rapporteurships – especially when more than one MEP requests a particular report.

We conducted ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews in the EP and exchanged several emails with one MEP who was not available to meet in person. Despite this relatively small number of interviews, our sample includes respondents from seven (of eight) political groups and ten member states who have been or are involved with ten (and thus half) of the EP’s standing committees. Among our respondents were MEPs, MEP legislative assistants, party group advisors, and members of the EP secretariat. The responses we received were highly consistent across interviews, in particular with regard to the selection process for shadow rapporteurs. Independent of each other and consistently across party groups and committees, respondents described a process whereby MEPs in the responsible committee indicate which reports they would like to cover and, much of the time, succeed in securing that responsibility. One political group advisor, for example, describes that “it is a bottom up approach, not top down, but it is a matter of self-organization where people turn up to do their job” (Respondent 3). To start, MEPs indicate at the beginning of a new legislative term which policy areas and topics they would generally prefer to focus on (Respondents 7, 8, 11). Then they “come forward to express their interest” in particular reports (Respondent 2), either in response to lists of upcoming reports that are shared in advance (Respondent 3; also Respondents 9, 11, 10) or when they are “asked who is interested to become the shadow” in meetings of committee members from the same party group (Respondent 10; also Respondent 8). On this basis, a decision is made in a process that respondents agree is generally collaborative and “collegial,” as one MEP put it (Respondent 4). In making this decision, a number of different criteria are applied such as

“other files [MEPs] are working on to ensure a balance in workload, interest in the particular field, expertise in the relevant field, how much they participate in the working group – votes, attendance, etc. We try to strike a balance, also geographically and across member states” (Respondent 11).

Other respondents similarly listed some or all of these criteria: relative workload and the distribution of other reports (Respondents 6, 8, 10); previous level of engagement in legislative activities (Respondents 2, 3); and the geographic and national makeup of the negotiating team as a whole (Respondents 4, 6). Substantive expertise is a major consideration (Respondents 3, 6, 8, 10), and there are “definitely some ‘go to’ people for specific policy areas; for example, somebody is the ‘carbon capture guy’” (Respondent 7; also 1, 3, 9). These criteria are not

formal rules, however, but conventions that reflect best practices (Respondents 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10).

Another consideration is that everybody who wants to serve as shadow has to be given the opportunity at times, to “keep people happy” (Respondents 3, 11; also 8) and make sure nobody is “feeling like they are excluded” (Respondent 9, also 6). In other words, it would be seen as a major problem if the party group “ignore[d] [some] members or favor [others]; everybody has to be able to work” (Respondent 11). Ensuring this is one of the responsibilities of party group coordinators, who serve as their party groups’ leaders and main spokespeople in each committee. They are crucial in coordinating the bottom-up process of shadow allocation (Respondents 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11) – in which they are supported by party group advisors (Respondents 3, 11) – especially when more than one MEP requests a particular shadow rapporteurship and a choice has to be made. An MEP from the Greens explained that “if there are two or three members who show the same interest as well, there is a discussion and normally the coordinator ... comes up with a proposal, which he checks with the colleagues” (Respondent 10). A major consideration is, again, which reports members are already covering as either rapporteur and shadow and “what’s in the pipeline” (Respondent 3). And while it is not the case that coordinators simply declare “you get that, you get that” (Respondent 8), they can try to steer particular reports to specific MEPs. Especially when the report concerns “a big legislative file, we make sure we get the right person, how efficient a member might be” (Respondent 11). Similarly, a party group advisor explained that “if only some [committee members] are active and engaged, allocation is based on nature of dossier, but also if the coordinator thinks the person will actually work” (Respondent 3). Other respondents concurred, explaining that they consider “who I would like to have this done by” (Respondent 8) or if somebody is “not so good at negotiating” (Respondent 10). In other words, even though all respondents emphasized the bottom-up dynamic in the allocation of shadow rapporteurships, most also acknowledged that coordinators can and do influence who is put in charge of a particular report, especially when multiple MEPs explicitly request it. None of our respondents maintained, however, that shadows are selected in light of their ideological positions vis-à-vis the party group median or the rapporteur, as H1 and H2 suggest. Overall, they described the allocation of shadow rapporteurships primarily as a process of bottom-up self-selection, and secondarily as a top-down coordination process that is principally aimed at ensuring that shadows are competent and engaged.

## Quantitative Data and Methods

The dataset analysed in this study is based on information about characteristics of reports and MEPs in the EP's 7<sup>th</sup> term, which lasted from 2009 to 2014. Through a computer-automated data collection process, we downloaded, extracted, and merged information from two separate sources on the EP website: the 'Legislative Observatory' and the 'History of Parliamentary Service' pages of the MEP directory providing their biographical information. In total, we collected information on 4,021 reports.<sup>7</sup> From these, we dropped 797 reports that were developed in procedures that did not have the formulation of substantive policy as their goal, such as budget and discharge decisions, inter-institutional agreements, amendments of Parliament's rules of procedure, and the revocation of member's immunity. We also do not consider five reports drafted by temporary committees, and 29 reports jointly drafted by two rapporteurs from the same committee, resulting in a total number of 3,191 reports in our dataset. However, 14 of these reports were jointly written by two rapporteurs from different committees and 1 report was written by three rapporteurs from three different committees. Joint reports across committees do not pose any ambiguity about the identity of the rapporteur, whose characteristics might influence the appointment of shadow rapporteurs. Thus, we retain these reports in our analysis. As a result, we have 3,207 reports-by-committee contexts in which shadow rapporteurs could have been appointed. However, the analysis focuses on only those 2,488 reports-by-committee contexts in which at least one party group appointed a shadow.

Our dataset takes a dyadic format, where the two dyad members defining a row in the data matrix are the rapporteur and a potential shadow rapporteur from another party group. In principle, all full and substitute members of the relevant committee at the time of the adoption of the report are potential shadow rapporteurs. However, we exclude all non-aligned committee members, who are not a member of a party group, and committee members from party groups that did not appoint a shadow rapporteur for a particular report. The theoretical expectations derived from principal-agent theory are not applicable and the related explanatory variables are not defined for MEPs that are not members of a party group. The elimination of dyads including committee members from party groups that did not nominate a shadow rapporteur ensures that variation in the party group's choice of *whether* to nominate a shadow rapporteur is not conflated with variation in the choice of *who* to nominate.

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<sup>7</sup> In practice, the EP calls policy documents drafted by the responsible committee 'reports', and those drafted by other committees 'opinions'. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, we use the term 'report' to refer to both types of documents.

In addition, there is some uncertainty about the extent of underreporting of shadow rapporteurships in the EP's databases, with some interviewees suggesting that all party groups (with the exception of the EFD) always nominate a shadow rapporteurs. If that was indeed the case, any variation in the nomination of shadow rapporteurs across party groups would be an artefact of differential under-reporting. Excluding members of party groups that did not nominate a shadow rapporteur in a particular reports-by-committee context from the sample sidesteps this potential missing data problem. It is also conceptually more appropriate, as our theoretical arguments relate to the selection of shadow rapporteurs from a pool of potential rapporteurs, not to the decision to appoint or not appoint a shadow rapporteur at all. The inclusion of party group and committee fixed effects in the statistical model further ensures that the analysis focuses on within-party group and within-committee variation in explanatory and outcome variables. Based on these selection criteria, the sample consists of 125,266 'rapporteur-potential shadow rapporteur' dyads.

The dependent variable in the statistical analysis is a simple binary variable, indicating whether (1) or not (0) a committee member was nominated by his or her party group to shadow a particular rapporteur. The two explanatory variables testing different versions of the principal-agent argument relate to ideological differences between the rapporteur, the shadow rapporteur, and the party group median. In the absence of exogenous ideology scores for individual MEPs, we use data from the 2010 Chapel Hill Expert Survey about the ideological positions of their national parties (Bakker *et al.* 2015). Given the small size of many national party delegations, these data still provide considerable variation of positions within European party groups. In contrast to ideology measures based on roll call votes, estimates by experts is not endogenous to the EP's policy-making process. In particular, these expert estimates are unlikely to be affected by MEPs' activities as rapporteurs or shadow rapporteurs, while their voting behaviour most certainly is. We compute three versions of the position variables, based on different dimensions of party competition often identified in studies of EU politics: the general left-right dimension, the pro-/anti-European integration dimension, and the GAL-TAN dimension.<sup>8</sup>

If the shadow rapporteur plays an important role in formulating the position of the party group, we would expect party groups to select shadow rapporteurs that are ideologically close to the party group median. We operationalise this variable as the absolute value of the distance

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<sup>8</sup> GAL-TAN stands for the respective endpoints of the scale: Green-Alternative-Libertarian and Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist

between the ideological position of the national party of the potential shadow rapporteur and the ideological position of the national party of the party group median. If the shadow rapporteur fulfils important oversight and bargaining functions, party groups are better off selecting shadow rapporteurs with positions that are far away from the position of the rapporteur. Indeed, biased party group members with positions further away from the position of the rapporteur than the position of the median party group member are most preferable, as they do not have an incentive to collude with the rapporteur. This variable is operationalised as the absolute value of the distance between the ideological position of the national party of the rapporteur and the ideological position of the national party of the potential shadow rapporteur.

The variable measuring joint national background takes a value of 1 if the rapporteur and the potential shadow rapporteur come from the same member states and 0 otherwise. The variable measuring joint policy interests is based on the number of policy subject codes of reports the rapporteur and the shadow rapporteur worked on. The EP's legislative observatory assigns each decision-making process one or more hierarchically structured policy subject codes. The variable captures instances in which the rapporteur and shadow rapporteur worked on a report or opinion on the same policy proposal, even if they were members of different committees, and instances in which the rapporteur and shadow rapporteur worked on different proposals that were similar in terms of policy content. To capture the similarity of policy subject profiles of pairs of MEPs, we compute the concordance correlation coefficient between the two profiles (Lin 1989). The concordance correlation coefficient can be interpreted as a chance-corrected agreement index for valued data (Häge 2011a). It adjusts for the differential propensity of MEPs to be linked to a policy subject, and for the overall low propensity of all MEPs to be linked to any particular policy subject. The former feature makes sure that differences between the dyad members in the overall number of policy subjects they are linked to is not treated as dissimilarity in terms of policy content; and the latter feature ensures that the preponderance of the joint absence of links to policy subjects is not unduly treated as a form of similarity. As the original policy subject profile variable is highly positively skewed with most MEPs being linked to at most 3 policy subject codes but a small number MEPs having considerably larger scores, we transform the variable values to their natural logarithm before computing the concordance correlation coefficients.

We also include a range of monadic control variables used in previous research. The size of the national party delegation within the European party group might affect their members' chances of becoming a shadow rapporteur, with larger national parties expected to secure a

disproportionally larger share of shadow rapporteurships. This variable is operationalised as the total number of members of the national party delegation as a percentage of the total number of MEPs in the European party group. MEPs in committee leadership positions are also supposed to be in an advantageous position to obtain desirable rapporteurships for themselves. The committee leadership variable indicates whether or not an MEP was a committee chair or vice-chair during the 7<sup>th</sup> term. In contrast, party group leadership positions are supposed to make involvement in committee work less likely. The party group leadership variable indicates whether or not an MEP was a member of the bureau of a political group. Furthermore, substitute committee members might generally be less likely to get involved in committee work than full members. A dummy variable indicating whether or not an MEP was a substitute committee member captures this difference. In general, MEPs that engage in EP work more generally might also be more likely to become shadow rapporteurs. Thus, we include a variable for absenteeism, which measures the percentage of roll call votes missed by an MEP. MEPs that tow the European party group line might also be more likely to be nominated as shadow rapporteurs. The disloyalty variable measures the percentage of an MEP's roll call votes that did not correspond to how the majority of the European party group voted. As the distributions of both variables are concentrated near their minimum value and have a strong positive skew, we transform them by taking the natural logarithm.<sup>9</sup> Finally, to focus the analysis on the intra-party group selection of shadow rapporteurs within committees, we include two sets of dummy variables taking the value of 1 for a particular party group or committee, and zero otherwise.

### **Determinants of shadow rapporteur appointment**

Table 1 presents the results of a logistic regression with shadow rapporteur appointment as the dichotomous dependent variable in a dataset of dyads consisting of the rapporteur and potential shadow rapporteurs of other party groups within the committee. Model 7 provides the final and preferred specification. We present Models 1 to 6 to provide more transparency about the robustness of the results. In general, the results provide support for both the bottom-up self-selection and the top-down delegation perspective. However, in the case of the latter, the evidence relating to the role of strategic considerations is at best mixed.

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<sup>9</sup> Previous research has operationalised engagement in EP work as participation in roll call votes and European party group loyalty as the share of roll call votes in line with the European party group majority. However, reversing the polarity of the scale allows us to apply the log-transformation, which yields variable distributions that are more in line with model assumptions.

**Table 1**      **Logistic regression of shadow rapporteur selection**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>
Same Country	1.26*** (0.05)	1.11* (0.05)				1.09 (0.05)	1.12* (0.05)
Similar Policy Interests		1.05*** (0.00)				1.05*** (0.00)	1.05*** (0.00)
Higher Seniority			0.96** (0.02)			0.94*** (0.02)	0.93*** (0.02)
Seniority Mismatch			0.93** (0.02)			0.92** (0.02)	0.91*** (0.02)
Party Group EU Support				0.80*** (0.02)		0.86*** (0.02)	0.87*** (0.03)
Party Group Left- Right				0.92*** (0.02)		0.90*** (0.02)	0.88*** (0.02)
Party Group GAL/TAN				0.91*** (0.01)		0.96** (0.02)	0.94*** (0.02)
Rapporteur EU Support					0.99 (0.01)	0.98 (0.01)	0.98 (0.01)
Rapporteur Left- Right					1.00 (0.01)	1.00 (0.01)	1.00 (0.01)
Rapporteur GAL/TAN					0.98* (0.01)	0.99 (0.01)	0.99 (0.01)
Chair/Vice-Chair							0.89* (0.04)
Substitute Member							0.50*** (0.01)
National party size							0.95** (0.01)
Party Group Leader							0.92** (0.03)
Vote Absenteeism							0.84*** (0.02)
Party Group Disloyalty							0.90*** (0.02)
Num. obs.	125266	125266	125266	118049	110935	110935	110483
Log Likelihood	-29792.8	-27131.5	-29799.2	-27926.3	-26448.9	-24033.6	-23495.7
Deviance	59585.54	54263.01	59598.37	55852.52	52897.88	48067.25	46991.32
AIC	59639.54	54319.01	59654.37	55910.52	52955.88	48139.25	47075.32
BIC	59902.47	54591.68	59927.04	56191.21	53234.76	48485.45	47479.05

*Notes:* Statistical significance: \*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\* p < 0.01, \* p < 0.05; the dependent variable indicates the selection of an MEP as shadow rapporteur for a particular report or opinion; cell entries present odds ratios and standard error in parentheses; all model specifications include dummy variables for party group and committee; the sample consists of dyads of rapporteurs and potential shadow rapporteurs from other party groups in the same committee; the sample size varies due to missing information for policy positions and roll call voting for some MEPs.

With respect to the bottom-up perspective, having the same national background increases the odds of becoming a shadow rapporteur by 12%. As a comparison of Models 1 and 2 illustrates, the effect of this variable is considerably suppressed by the inclusion of the variable measuring the similarity of policy interests. As joint nationality cannot be caused by joint policy interests, the most likely interpretation is that joint policy interests is an intervening variable, whose inclusion in the analysis tends to reduce the originally observed correlation, just like a confounding variable would (Ray 2005). The finding suggests that similar policy interests are partially a result of having the same national background. However, besides this indirect effect on shadow rapporteur appointment via joint policy interests, having the same national background also still retains a direct effect, but its size is much reduced, resulting in a  $p$ -value just above the 5% level of statistical significance in some specifications (for example,  $p = 0.06$  in Model 6). However, the inclusion of a full set of control variables in Model 7 should yield the most accurate and precise estimate of the direct effect of this variable. Thus, we take Hypothesis 4 as supported: joint national background has a positive effect on becoming shadow rapporteur, even if it partially works through generating joint policy interests.

As mentioned already, having similar policy interests as the rapporteur has a large positive effect on becoming a shadow rapporteur, confirming Hypothesis 5. The results of Model 7 suggests that each one-unit increase in the policy interest similarity variable, which has an empirical range from -12.9 to 94.8, results in a 5% increase in the odds of becoming a shadow rapporteur. Finally, the relative seniority variable indicates that having a one percent higher seniority ratio between the MEP and the rapporteur reduces the MEP's odds of becoming shadow rapporteur by seven percent, thereby confirming Hypothesis 3.

However, differences in seniority, regardless of whether an MEP is more or less senior than the rapporteur, also seem to have a negative effect on shadow rapporteurship appointment, as suggested by Hypothesis 3. This finding supports the top-down perspective. Regarding the expectations about the effect of differences in ideological positions, the findings are mixed. In line with Hypothesis 1, diverging from the party group median has a negative effect on an MEP's odds of becoming shadow rapporteur, regardless on which dimension the MEP diverges. The odds reduce by 13% for each one unit increase in the distance between the position of the MEP and the party group median on the pro-/anti-EU dimension, by 12% on the left-right dimension, and by 6% on the GAL/TAN dimension. In contrast, Hypothesis 2 is rejected by the analysis. The ideological distance between the MEP and the rapporteur does not seem to affect the MEP's odds of becoming a shadow rapporteur. The odds ratios indicate the expected decrease in the odds, but the effects are generally too small to reach statistical



significance. Model 5 shows that the distance to the rapporteur on the GAL/TAN dimension is an exception, but the results for this variable are not robust to the inclusion of other types of explanatory variables.

The results for the remaining monadic explanatory variables are mostly as expected. Being a substitute committee member halves the odds of becoming a shadow rapporteur. In contrast to previous results of studies on rapporteurship allocation, which found a positive effect, the variable indicating that an MEP was a chair or vice-chair of the committee shows a negative effect on shadow rapporteur appointment. Occupying a leadership position in the committee reduces the odds of becoming a shadow rapporteur by 11%. Being a member of the party group bureau has a similarly negative effect. It reduces the odds of becoming shadow rapporteur by 8%. These findings further support the view that shadow rapporteurships are often used as entry-level positions for relatively junior MEPs to build a reputation and gain relevant policy and procedural experience. At the same time, the negative effect of the party group disloyalty variable also suggests that the party group leadership ensures that mainly members that tow the party line are nominated as shadow rapporteurs. For each percent increase in the share of roll call votes that an MEP voted differently from the party group majority, the odds of becoming a shadow rapporteur decreases by 10%. Not surprisingly, less active MEPs have also lower odds of becoming shadow rapporteur. Each percent increase in the share of roll call votes not taken part in decreases the odds by 16%.

Finally, the result for the size of the national party delegation as a share of the European party group is somewhat surprising. If shadow rapporteurships were allocated proportionally to national party size within European party groups, this variable would have no effect; and if the larger national party delegations were better able to secure these types of positions than smaller ones, that would show up as a positive effect. However, the results of the regression analysis indicate a negative effect, which suggests that MEPs from larger national parties have lower odds of becoming shadow rapporteurs. Each percent increase in the size of the national party relative to the European party group reduces the odds of becoming shadow rapporteur by 5%. Possible interpretations of this finding are that MEPs from larger national parties are more successful in becoming rapporteurs, so the less prestigious shadow rapporteurship positions are left for MEPs from smaller national parties; that members of smaller national delegations try to punch above their weights by seeking more shadow rapporteurships; or that smaller national delegation size mitigates potential collective action problems in terms of who volunteers for shadow rapporteurships.

## Conclusion

In summary, the quantitative analysis provides consistent support for the bottom-up perspective and mixed support for the top-down perspective. Regarding the bottom-up perspective, party group members are more likely to become a shadow rapporteur if they share the nationality of or have similar policy interests as the rapporteur. They are also more likely to become a shadow rapporteur the more junior they are compared to the rapporteur. Overall, these findings suggest that party group members self-select into shadow rapporteurships to promote their policy and career goals, and indirectly their re-election chances.

At the same time, the analysis also provides some support for the top-down perspective. Party group members whose national party is ideologically closer to the national party of the median group member have a generally higher probability of becoming a shadow rapporteur. This finding holds regardless of the ideological dimension under consideration. Similarly, party group members with levels of seniority similar to the rapporteur are more likely to become shadow rapporteurs than party group members whose seniority level diverges from that of the rapporteur. These findings suggest that the party leadership plays an influential role in selecting shadow rapporteurs with views representative of the party group and with experience and standing adequate for overseeing the work of the rapporteur. However, the analysis does not support the view that the policy position of party group members relative to the rapporteur play a role in the selection process.

The qualitative data, for the most part, tell a similar story. They highlight that the assignment of rapporteurs is a bottom-up process in which MEPs volunteer for particular reports on the basis of policy interests and policy expertise and generally receive those reports if nobody else claims them. If there is a choice to be made, shadow rapporteurships are assigned in a “collegial” process that takes into account factors such as policy expertise, relative workload, overall engagement in legislative activities, and a geographic balance in the EP’s negotiating team. Despite being acknowledged by our respondents as collegial, however, they also highlight that party group coordinators play an important coordinating role in the process and help shape outcomes. Hence, as is the case for our quantitative analysis, the qualitative data reveal a top-down element in the assignment of shadow rapporteurs.

The quantitative data suggest that this top-down dynamic is focused on minimizing agency loss by ensuring assignment of shadows who do not deviate too far from the party group median. Here, however, we observe an intriguing disconnect between qualitative and quantitative data that calls for further investigation (in future iterations of this paper), because

not a single respondent as much as suggested in interview that ideology is a consideration in the assignment of shadows. It is possible that this omission is strategic, in that respondents might want to avoid admitting that members of some national parties, whose ideal points are closer to that of the party group as a whole, are systematically favoured in the assignment of shadow rapporteurs. However, respondents across the EU institutions tend to be quite blunt in these regards, and such hedging would be unusual. Our future efforts will thus focus, in part, on reconciling these divergent insights from the qualitative and quantitative data. One potential alternative explanation is that coordinators are, in fact, able to shape the assignment process such that shadows are more representative of the party median, but that there are sufficient constraints on their ability to simply pick and choose (such as MEPs' willingness to take on a given report; relevant expertise, experience, and skill; existing and expected workload; the need to "keep everyone happy," etc.) that their success is not recognized by our respondents. Another explanation may be that it is not that shadows are selected because of their proximity to their party groups' ideal points, but that shadows in fact help shape those ideal points. Ringe (2010) shows that party group positions regarding particular legislative proposals are endogenous to the decision-making process and largely reflect what comes "out of committee." It is thus possible that the proximity we observe between the positions of shadows and parties is due not to a top-down principal-agent dynamic, but to the influence wielded by shadows once they are selected. Our current data and research design do not allow us to test this possibility, but future iterations of this paper may well be able to tell a more coherent story.

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