Abstract

At the end of its sixth legislative term the European Parliament adopted a rule change subjecting all final passage votes on legislative matters to roll call votes. Some studies use this rule change to assess whether roll call votes are characterized by more or less party discipline. Cautioning against such simple comparisons I propose to estimate in this article the extent to which members of the European parliament are subject to party pressure. Comparing the results from the beginning of the sixth and seventh legislative term shows that in final passage votes the average party pressure has decreased considerably after the rule change.
1 Introduction

In the final part of the European parliament’s (EP) sixth term this body adopted new rules of procedure for the seventh term (EP 7). Since the election of the EP 7 (i.e., the first EP being subject to these new rules) the members of the new parliament vote on all final passage votes on legislative proposals by roll call vote. As a consequence, citizens, interest groups, etc. do now have a more systematic way to monitor members of the European parliament (MEPs) and gain knowledge about who supports or opposes particular legislative proposals.

As the recent literature on legislatures surmises, transparency and monitoring possibilities are central elements in establishing accountability relationships (e.g., Carey 2009). With the new rules of procedure, the EP in one single step increased these possibilities for improved accountability relationships quite substantially. More information on MEPs’ voting behavior is now available to all their principals in the long chain of delegation, from their party groups, their national parties, their voters and even interest groups. It will probably take some time until all these principals use this newly available information in their decisions. It is likely, however, that party groups in the EP will be the first to adapt to these new rules. This may affect the way in which MEPs follow the recommendation for specific votes given by their respective party groups. Thus, the parliamentary voting data available from the seventh EP allows to explore how MEPs are affected by this rule change (see also Hix et al. 2012, Mühlböck and Yordanova 2015). It also allows assessing to what extent MEPs are subject to pressure from their respective party groups in voting decisions.

Consequently, the present article offers an analysis of the effect of these rule changes by focusing on the question how party pressure differs between final passage votes on legislative proposals, the remainder of the legislative votes and non-legislative ones. As the rule changes from the sixth to the seventh EP affect these differences, I study comparable periods in these two
parliaments. The results suggest that MEPs behave on average quite differently in final passage votes in EP 7 than they did in those votes requested as roll call votes in EP 6. More specifically, the average party pressure exerted on MEPs seems to be lower in the former votes than in the latter. These results cast an even darker shadow on research on parliamentary voting, as it is an additional illustration that the process leading to roll call votes affects the results we obtain from analyses of such votes.

2 Voting in the EP and beyond

Voting records from parliaments allow for important insights into many different research questions (for recent reviews see Collie 1984, Uslaner and Zittel 2006, Clinton 2012, Hug 2013, Carroll and Poole 2014). Recently, scholars have emphasized the important principal-agent relationships in which members of parliaments (MPs) find themselves (e.g., Strøm 2000, Kam 2008, Carey 2009). These relationships depend, however, on transparency and information available on the behavior of MPs and (in most parliamentary democracies) of political parties. The level of transparency across parliaments varies, however, quite considerably. Following up on earlier systematic assessments by the Interparliamentary Union (1986) (see also Union Interparlementaire 1966, Middlebrook 2003), Saalfeld (1995), Carey (2007, 2009), Hug (2010), Crisp and Driscoll (2012), and Hug et al. (2015) have all documented considerable variations in the voting procedures used in parliaments. Quite clearly, roll call votes, where each MP has to clearly state her vote in favor or against a proposal, are far from being the rule in most parliaments.

Many parliaments envision, however, that either some specific votes are systematically voted upon as roll call votes or that some actor(s) may request such a vote. In both of these cases, obviously, the transparency is limited to those votes where a roll call vote has occurred. Consequently, we must expect
variations in the relationship between the agent (MP) and her principals (parties, interest groups, citizens, etc.) as the monitoring possibilities differ. Such variations are also likely to influence the behavior of the agents (MPs), as long as the various principals wish different things. Few studies, however, are able to assess the effect of these variations (for similar attempts based on experiments, resp. an MEP survey, see Hix et al. 2011, Trumm 2015 (forthcoming)). Roberts (2007) takes advantage of a rule change in the US Congress to demonstrate that roll call votes lead to changed behavior of Congressmen (for similar strategies based on the rule change in EP7, see Hix et al. 2012, Mühlböck and Yordanova 2015). Similarly, Hug (2010) offers a systematic comparison based on the Swiss parliament and can show that transparent votes differ from those carried out by an electronic voting system but not publicly available (see also Hug and Wüest 2014, Traber et al. 2014).

To understand how these different levels of transparency affect the behavior of MPs, we need, however, to draw on theories explaining why roll call votes occur. Obviously, if they are required for specific or even all votes, then our explanations are pushed back one level, namely to assess the reasons why MPs introduce such rules. Most of the literature on roll call vote requests, however, postulates specific reasons why actors might be tempted to make a vote public. In an early study Fennell (1974) discusses a set of explanations for roll call vote requests in the Argentinian parliament (for a related general discussion, see Carey 2009). Thiem (2006, 2009) and Finke (2015 (forthcoming)) assume that in the EP party groups use roll call votes for signaling purposes, while Thierse (2016 (forthcoming)) considers them as weapons of minorities having lost in the committee stage. Stecker (2010), focusing on German regional parliaments, argues that roll call vote requests are mostly a tool for the minority parties (for a similar study on the German Bundestag, see Bergmann and Saalfeld 2015). While these accounts are interesting, given that roll call vote requests are likely to be the outcome of strategic interactions, game-theoretic models might offer more leverage to
account for open votes. Carrubba et al. (2008) and Ainsley and Maxwell (2012) offer such theoretical accounts for roll call vote requests (for a related theoretical approach, see Wüest 2013). While the former study offers, under the assumption that roll call votes are requested for disciplining purposes, insights on the circumstances under which roll call votes should occur and how the latter affect the MPs’ behavior, the latter study concludes that roll call votes should be requested on each and every vote and thus always influence the MPs’ behavior, if signaling positions is the motivation for more transparent votes.

These models cast some doubts on general findings on parliaments in general (including the well-studied US Congress, see Clinton and Lapinski 2008, Clinton 2012, Lynch and Madonna 2013) and the EP in particular. Early work by Attina (1990) and Brzinski (1995) simply assessed the cohesion of party groups in the EP based on the available vote information. Similar, but much more comprehensive studies, were carried out by Hix et al. (2006, among many other contributions by these authors) and Kreppel (2002), for instance.

All these studies face the problem that the relationship between the behavior in roll call votes and all other votes is poorly understood. While Carrubba et al. (2006) and Thiem (2006, 2009) both demonstrate that the characteristics of the proposals subject to a roll call vote in the fifth, respectively sixth, EP are quite different from those proposals voted upon electronically or by show of hands, this does not yet tell us whether the MEPs’ behavior differs as well in these two types of votes. As Carrubba et al. (2006) and Thiem (2006, 2009) show, however, that roll call votes are much more frequent on non-legislative matter, using information from these votes to assess general characteristics of the EP in the legislative arena seems fraught with difficulty. Thus, Høyland (2010) finds that MEPs and party groups vote quite differently in legislative votes than on proposals without any legislative content. More specifically, he adopts Clinton et al.’s (2004) model that es-
timates an item-response theory (IRT) model with two cutpoints. The first applies to non-legislative votes, as the author assumes, based on Hix et al.’s (2006) findings, that party groups do not exert pressure on their members in these largely inconsequential votes. The second set applies to legislative votes and, as he can show, these latter differ systematically. Consequently, he demonstrates that in the latter votes party groups appear to exert more pressure on their members and thus affect their voting behavior (for a similar attempt focusing on the Taiwanese legislature, see Chiou 2012).

This, however, still does not address the question how information from roll call votes relates to the unobserved voting behavior of MEPs in secret votes (and also in signal votes). As in Roberts’s (2007) study on the US Congress, both Hix et al. (2012) and Mühlböck and Yordanova (2015) attempt to use the change in the rules of procedure in the EP to assess how roll call votes affect the behavior of MEPs. In both studies, however, the issue why roll call votes are requested are side-stepped. Mühlböck and Yordanova (2015) employ matching techniques to compare party discipline across the two legislatures. These techniques assume, however, that the selection of roll call votes is completely determined by observable (and known) variables. Thierse’s (2016 (forthcoming)) study, showing that losers from the committee stage often request roll calls, highlights a pertinent variable not taken into account by Mühlböck and Yordanova (2015) in their matching approach, thus undermining their claims regarding the likely level of party cohesion in unrecorded votes. Hix et al. (2012), using a difference-in-difference approach assess whether the difference in party discipline between final passage and amendment votes in EP 6 differs from the same difference in EP 7. Again, this approach does not directly account for the strategic nature of roll call vote requests that has been modified by the rule change introduced in EP 7.

Not surprising then, these two studies come to divergent conclusions. Based on their results based on matching techniques Mühlböck and Yordanova (2015, here forth MY) use their findings to suggest that party co-
Hesiation is likely to be higher in votes that are not roll called. Hix et al. (2012, here forth HNR), with their difference-in-differences approach come to the conclusion that party cohesion is on average similar in roll call votes than in other votes. Each of these (contrasting) findings rely on strong (and untested) assumptions amongst others about the way in which roll call votes are requested. Only if these contrasting assumptions were correct, could the proposed approach to study the effect of the rule changes be used to make the inferences these two sets of authors wish to make.

In this study I sidestep these issues of whether observed party cohesion is an over- or underestimate of the true level in all votes, by only considering differences in terms of party pressure. I will offer two hypothesis which, however, will not be evaluated empirically to establish causality, but merely a correlation. My aims are more limited, because if the hypotheses presented below are correct, the strategies proposed by HNR and MY fail, as they presume comparability of voting data from EP 6 and EP 7, either in the absolute sense (HNR), or once controlling for a limited set of observable variables (MY). A recent study, showing that party cohesion in votes on early agreements is different, which have become much more prevalent in EP 7, underlines this problem even more forcefully (Bressanelli et al. 2016 (forthcoming)).

This change in the rules of procedure was proposed by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and presented to the parliament by the rapporteur Richard Corbett. The main change that interests us here is that in an amendment proposed by this committee rule 159a was introduced, which has as a consequence that all final passage votes on legislative acts are voted upon by roll call. The committee justified this change in the rules of procedure as follows:²

Accountability towards citizens would be increased if all final votes on a piece of legislation were taken by roll call vote without prejudice of additional request under rule 160.
EP 6 adopted these new rules of procedure on May 6, 2009\textsuperscript{3} to apply with the first day of sittings of EP 7. According to Mühlböck and Yordanova (2015) this change in the rules of procedure is linked to the fact that the Independence/Democracy party group started to request roll call votes on all plenary votes towards the end of the legislative period of EP 6. As a consequence voting took much longer, and the new rule was adopted as a compromise offered to this party group.

This rule change increases quite substantially the level of transparency. In EP 6 there were 58 roll call votes on final passage of legislative proposals (see Table 1 below). The overall number of final passage votes in EP 7 is 152, which is approximately an increase by 200 percent compared to first 18 months in EP 6.

The main question, however, is whether this rule change affects MEPs and what this can tell us about MEPs more generally. The two existing studies on this rule change, namely HNR and MY, assume implicitly that party pressure may be exerted in legislative roll call votes. They find themselves in accord with Høyland (2010) who analyzes in detail roll call votes on legislative matter and on resolutions (which are non-legislative). He finds that in legislative roll call votes party groups exert significantly more pressure on their members than in non-legislative votes.\textsuperscript{4} He thus confirms the results by Hix et al. (2006, 123ff) who find that the main party groups are less cohesive in legislative votes than in non-legislative resolutions. An example for such a non-legislative vote is a resolution on the ‘Situation in Belarus’ adopted on 16 September 2004 adopted in one of EP 6’s first session.\textsuperscript{5} This resolution asked the government of Belarus to hold free and fair elections and was accepted in a roll call vote by 499 votes in favor, 20 against and 26 abstentions. The European parliament passes numerous such resolutions with no legislative consequences.

Over the time, the EP has obtained increasing powers and is now in many areas a legislative chamber on equal footing with the European Council,
which reunites ministers from the EU member countries (for more details see Hix and Høyland, 2011: 49ff) ordinary legislative procedure, both the European parliament and the Council have to approve legislative matters that apply in all EU countries. Thus, towards the end of EP 6, namely in February 2006, the EP debated the hotly contested Service directive, which aimed at liberalizing the service sector across all EU member states. The Guardian discussed this directive under the tile ‘Services without a smile’ (17 February 2006) and the EP debated and voted on more than 400 amendments related to this directive. Clearly, compared to such an important legislative matter resolutions are much less consequential. The former also, as the case of the service directive nicely illustrates, attract media attention.

Based on this, the often implicit assumption in many studies and Høyland’s (2010) finding that party groups in the EP exert more pressure in legislative votes, I formulate the following first hypothesis to be evaluated (for related studies demonstrating vote-specific effects in different parliaments, see Coman 2012, Crespin et al. 2013, Stecker 2015):

**H1:** Party groups exert more pressure in roll call votes on legislative matters than in roll call votes on non-legislative matters.

This hypothesis assumes implicitly that in non-legislative matters less (or none at all) pressure will be exerted, and in votes that are not roll called the same should hold. The theoretical model proposed by Carrubba et al. (2008), however, is premised on the assumption that party groups request a roll call vote to increase party pressure to make sure a proposal passes. If this assumption is correct, then on average party pressure should be higher in roll call votes that are requested than those that are automatically roll called (as in EP 7). Based on this I propose the following, second hypothesis:

**H2:** Party groups exert more pressure in requested roll call votes on legislative matters than in votes that are roll called automatically.
3 Data and empirics

The data used to evaluate the two hypotheses and assess what has happened with EP 7 and its new rules are all roll call votes from the first 18 month of its legislative session. I combined this data with information on roll call votes from EP 6 made available by Hix et al. (2006). As the data on EP 7 cover the first 18 months I also selected from EP 6 only the first 18 months (HNR, MY proceed similarly. Table 1 reports the distribution of votes across the two periods under scrutiny. While in EP 6 the share of roll call votes on legislative matter was approximately 19% independent of whether the votes were final passage votes or votes on amendments, this changes dramatically for EP 7. By the newly adopted standing order all final passage votes have become roll call votes, while votes on amendments are less frequently roll called.

\begin{table}
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\begin{tabular}{l|cc}
\hline
Final passage votes & 19.3 % (58) & 100.0 % (152) \\
Non-final passage votes & 18.9 % (353) & 12.3 % (197) \\
Total & 19.0 % (411) & 20.0 % (349) \\
\end{tabular}
\caption{Share of roll calls among legislative votes.}
\end{table}

The votes at the basis of Table 1 form the empirical data for the analyses that follow. To assess how the changes in the rules of procedure change the effect of party pressure I rely on Clinton et al.’s (2004) suggestion to estimate ideal-points of MPs based on roll call vote data with the help of item-response theory (IRT) models (for a more general discussion of roll call vote models, see Poole 2005). Such models (at least the two parameter version) assume that the probability of a yes vote by MP $i$ on proposal $j$ ($\pi_{ij}$) can be modelled as follows:

\begin{equation}
\pi_{ij} = Pr(y_{ij}|\theta_i, \beta_j, \alpha_j) \\
= F(\theta_i \beta_j - \alpha_j)
\end{equation}
In equation (1) $\theta_i$ corresponds to MP $i$’s estimated ideal-point on one or several policy dimensions, while $\beta_j$ and $\alpha_j$ correspond to the estimated discrimination and difficulty of proposal $j$. This model assumes that the observed roll call vote behavior is only determined by proposal characteristics and the ideal-point of an MP. The latter is supposed to reflect the ‘true’ policy positions of the MP. More specifically, for each vote the item difficulty and the item discrimination determine a cut-point along the dimension on which the ideal-points are located. MPs with ideal-points to the left of this cut-point are predicted to vote one way, while those to the right will vote the other way. The item difficulty parameter will move this cut-point up and down as a function of its value, while the item discrimination parameter first determines whether a yes or a no vote is expected to the left, resp. right of the cut-point, and second how well the ideal-points discriminate among yes and no voters.

While equation (1) assumes that only these components matter for MPs in their decisions, it is likely, however, that in most parliaments they are influenced by their various principals, most obviously by the parties to which they belong. To take this party influence into account Clinton et al. (2004) propose a modified IRT-model that allows directly to estimate this pressure. Applied to the context of the EP this model looks as follows:

$$\pi_{ij} = Pr(y_{ij}|\theta_i, \beta_j, \alpha_j, \gamma_j, \delta_j) = F((\theta_i + \gamma_i)\beta_j - \alpha_j - \delta_j EPG_i) \quad (2)$$

In equation (2) the additional terms compared to those appearing in equation (1) reflect the differences in the overall ideal-points in legislative votes ($\gamma_i$) and in final passage votes, as well as a change in the item difficulty parameter for members of in party group $i$ ($EPG_i$, a vector) compared to a baseline category (MEPs without party group affiliation in my case). To be able to estimate these last two sets of parameters we need, however, to assume that
for some proposals \(j\) both \(\gamma\)s and the \(\delta\)s are zero (Clinton et al. 2004), i.e., that for some votes the correct model is the one appearing in equation \([1]\). This implies that we have to assume that for a set of roll call votes there is no party pressure at all. Clinton et al. (2004) assume that party pressure is absent in lop-sided votes, while I follow Høyland (2010), and implicitly much of the literature on voting in the EP, by assuming that in votes on resolutions parties exert no pressure on their members. \((\text{equation } 1)\) applies. For all legislative votes I assume that \((\text{equation } 2)\) applies. In addition, as from EP 6 to EP 7 a change in rule concerning final passage votes of legislative proposals was adopted, I assume that an additional shift in ideal-points \((\eta_i)\) might occur in final passage votes. Consequently, the final model can be written as follows, where \(A_j\) is an indicator variable that is equal to 1 for votes on amendments to legislative proposals and \(F_j\) is equal to 1 for all final passage votes:

\[
\pi_{ij} = \Pr(y_{ij}|\theta_i, \beta_j, \alpha_j, \gamma_i, \eta_i, \delta_j) = F\left(\left(\theta_i + (A_j + F_j)\gamma_i + A_j\eta_i\right)\beta_j - \alpha_j + (A_j + F_j)\delta_jEPGi\right) \tag{3}
\]

Thus, while the model relies on voting data stemming from MEPs belonging to different party groups, the proposed model estimates how the behavior of the former differ systematically in legislative roll call votes. This difference (more specifically in the party-specific item-difficulty parameter \(\delta_j\)) allows us to infer how much (additional) party pressure is exerted on MEPs belonging to a specific party group.\(^8\)

I estimated the model presented above both for EP 6 and EP 7.\(^9\) As a first step I depict in figure \([1]\) the density of estimated ideal-points for the main parties in EP 6 and EP 7 for resolution votes. Moving from left to right one finds the leftist GUE/NGL followed by the Greens and the PSE, resp. S&d to end up with the PPE (see Table \([2]\) for a list of all party groups and the abbreviations of their names). This order corresponds largely to
conventional wisdom concerning the location of party groups on a left-right dimension.

As the estimated model also allows for shifts in ideal-points from amendment votes compared to votes on final passage, it is interesting to note that for a fair share of MEPs there is a notable shift. More specifically, in EP 6 I find that the credible intervals for this additional shift exclude the value of zero for 15% percent of the MEPs, while this percentage increases to 36 in EP 7. Consequently, not only do legislative votes differ from non-legislative ones as demonstrated by Høyland (2010), it appears that final passage votes are distinct from those on amendments as well.\textsuperscript{10} Also important to note is the fact that these latter differences have increased considerably from EP 6 and EP 7.Obviously, as the process leading to roll call votes on final passage has changed from EP 6 to EP 7, this already suggests that the rule change has not only led to an increased set of observable votes but has also affected the behavior of MEPs in this additional set of observable votes. These two findings also make the empirical strategy proposed by Mühlböck and Yordanova (2015) problematic. Final passage votes differ from other legislative votes, and this difference has increased in EP 7. Matching, therefore, is unlikely to allow us inferring how strong party discipline is in non-roll called votes. This even more so as Bressanelli et al. (2016 (forthcoming)) show different levels of party cohesion in early agreement votes.

To assess the two hypotheses stated above the relevant information is the change in the item difficulty parameter, which assesses the extent of party pressure exerted on MEPs. In Figures 2 (EP 6) and 3 (EP 7) I depict the distribution of these parameters for the two sets of legislative votes, namely final passage votes and votes on amendments. For the results stemming from EP 6 the two densities for each of the parties seem to suggest that on average the effect of party pressure is centered around the value of zero. For some parties, however, like the PPE, the IND, ALDE and PSE, in final passage votes there appears a rather considerable effect due to party pressure. The
results reported in Figure 3 on the party pressure effects in EP 7 suggest that for amendment votes the distribution is much wider than it is for final passage votes. The figure also clearly shows that the different party groups are affected in different ways.

While Figures 2 and 3 provide some suggestive evidence regarding changes in party pressure from EP 6 to EP 7, Table 2 summarizes the information from the estimations in a more direct way. More specifically, for each party group in each parliament I determined the share of votes on final passage and on amendments in which the posterior distribution of the party pressure parameter excluded in its 95 % credible interval the value of zero. Consequently, this Table in some sense reports the share of votes in which ‘statistically significant’ party effects appear.

From this table transpires first that in EP 6 the share of votes with party pressures is quite similar in amendment and final passage votes. The largest difference appears for the PPE, for which party pressure is much more notable in final passage votes than in amendment votes (a difference of 24 %). For the PSE the difference is also rather large, but only 14 %, and in addition, this party appears to exert more pressure in amendment than in final passage votes. These results relate in part to findings discussed by Hix et al. (2006: 126). They find, however, that ‘the main parties are less cohesive on whole reports [i.e., final passage votes] than on amendments. . . ’ When moving to the results for EP 7, what is striking is that with a single exception, party pressure seems more prevalent in amendment than in final passage votes. The single exception is the PPE for which I find similar shares of votes with party pressure across EP 7 votes as in final passage votes in EP 6. For all other party groups there is a sharp drop from amendment to final passage votes, with the smallest appearing for the GUE/NGL with a difference of 18.2 %. For all other parties the difference is systematically larger to reach almost 80 % for the ALDE.
Figure 1: Distribution of ideal-points in EP 6 and 7.
Figure 2: Distribution of party pressure effects in EP 6 as a function of type of vote.
Figure 3: Distribution of party pressure effects EP 7 as a function of type of vote.
Consequently, as overall for the two parliaments we find quite a considerable share of legislative votes for which the item difficulty parameter is different for members of party groups than for those MEPs without party group affiliation, \( H1 \), finds considerable support in the empirical analysis. \( H2 \) can obviously only be directly evaluated on the basis of the results stemming from EP 7. These results suggest that party pressure is exerted to a much lesser extent in automatically roll called final passage votes than in requested roll call votes on amendments. This lends considerable support to \( H2 \), namely that party pressure is exerted most strongly in requested roll call votes.

Additional support for this conclusion comes from the comparison with the results from EP 6. According to the results for the first 18 months of EP 6 there are only minor differences in terms of party pressure exerted in final passage votes and votes on amendments. As in EP 6 both of these sets of roll call votes had to be requested according to \( H2 \) we would not expect any major differences. This is also what the estimates for the changes in the item difficulty parameters suggest.

**Table 2:** Party pressure and roll call votes

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>amendment (n=353)</td>
<td>final passage (n=58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUE/NGL</td>
<td>37.4 %</td>
<td>34.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>38.8 %</td>
<td>32.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE/ S&amp;D</td>
<td>79.3 %</td>
<td>65.5 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>IND</td>
<td>36.3 %</td>
<td>31.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALDE</td>
<td>81.3 %</td>
<td>69.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFD</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>44.5 %</td>
<td>56.9 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECR</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>69.1 %</td>
<td>93.1 %</td>
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4 Conclusion

In one of its last meetings the members of the sixth EP introduced a significant change in its rules of procedure, namely that all final passage votes on legislative proposals had to be roll call votes. These new rules allow the principals of the MEPs, namely citizens, parties etc., to monitor systematically their agents’ behavior in the final stage of their legislative work. This increased transparency is, however, also likely to affect the behavior of MEPs. The present article offered a glimpse at these effects and thus also dealt implicitly with a pernicious problem linked to roll call votes.

The analyses presented in this article suggest that under the new rules, party pressure exerted on MEPs differs systematically, first between non-legislative votes and legislative votes. Second, however, the analyses focusing on EP 7 suggest that it is not only whether a vote occurs by a roll call that matters, but also whether such a vote is requested by a party group. More specifically, the analyses presented in this article clearly demonstrate that on average party groups exert much less pressure on their members in final passage votes if they are automatically roll called. Critics might argue that this is due to the fact that all these automatic roll call votes are final passage votes. The results from EP 6 suggest, however, that if roll call votes on final passage votes are requested the average party pressure exerted is very similar to the one exerted in votes on amendments. Consequently, it appears that it is the request for a roll call vote that increases the party pressure exerted on MEPs, and less the fact that a vote is automatically held publicly.

This result suggests that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to infer on the basis of the roll call record from the EP characteristics of the general voting behavior of MEPs. Ignoring the mechanism that leads to a roll call vote, as done implicitly by HNR and MY is unlikely to give us any leverage to address the question whether party groups are more or less cohesive in votes that are not roll called than in those subject to a roll call vote. This also suggest that roll call vote analyses and inferences we draw from them
need to be much more attentive to the reasons for which such votes occur. If they are mandated by the standing order, we cannot simply assume that the behavior of MPs is identical in these votes compared to the votes that are not roll called. Thus for analyses on parliaments that have at least some votes that are not recorded and published, much more attention has to be paid to the way in which roll call votes are requested.

At the substantive level the analyses presented in this article suggest that having automatic roll call votes on final passage votes allows principals of MEPs (e.g., parties, interested groups, voters) to have more information on the latter’s behavior. As the results reported upon here suggest that in the votes that are automatically reported less party pressure is exerted, this may even allow for a more unbiased view on the legislative behavior of MEPs.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Simon Hix for sharing his roll call vote data and Doru Frantescu for helping me using it, as well as to the Swiss National Science Foundation (Grant-No 100012-129737) for greatly appreciated partial financial support. The results of some early analyses on which this paper is based were presented with Brian Crisp and Matthew Gabel at the ‘Open Legislative Data in Paris: A Conference of the Third Kind with Hacktivists and Academics’ (Sciences Po, Paris (July 6th and 7th, 2012) and earlier versions were presented at the International Conference on ‘Beyond Lisbon Treaty: Re-examining EU Institutions and Governance’ (Institute of European and American Studies (IEAS), Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan, September 7-8, 2012), the EUDO 2012 Dissemination Conference ‘The Euro Crisis and the State of European Democracy’ (San Domenico di Fiesole, Italy, 22-23.11.2012), and in seminars at the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship (Université de Montréal, McGill University) and the FSI Stanford. Questions and feedback from the participants at these conferences as
well as helpful email conversations with and comments by Fang-Yi Chiou, Jean-François Godbout, Simon Hix, Bjørn Høyland, Monika Mühlböck, Reto Wüest and anonymous reviewers are gratefully acknowledged.

Notes

1I use here the term ‘roll call vote’ as synonymous with ‘open voting,’ i.e., voting methods where information on individual voting decisions is freely available to everyone.


3Interesting to note is that there were a series of roll call votes on these changes, none, however, on the amendment introducing the automatic roll call vote in final passage votes. The final decision to adopt the new standing order was, however, reached by roll call vote with 522 in favor, 101 against and 51 abstaining (source: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+PV+20090506+RES-VOT+DOC+PDF+VO//EN&language=EN).

4He also finds that in his estimations of an item-response theory (IRT) model that the ideal-points in legislative and non-legislative votes differ, but do still lie on the same ideological dimension. The ideal-point estimates for MEPs in the sixth EP based on resolution votes correlate with those estimated on the basis of legislative votes at a level of 0.8.


6This data was provided by Simon Hix. I coded based on the minutes of the EP (‘Results of votes’ files obtained at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/minutes.html) the identity of the roll call vote requester. This latter data in addition to r-code combining the two datasets is available at http://www.unige.ch/ses/spo/static/simonhug/tipel.html. As the data on the EPs website is not complete a few roll call vote requesters are missing. For the analyses carried out in this paper, namely focusing on legislative votes exclusively, I miss 17 observations because of this. On the same webpage replication code for the jags-models used for the analysis in this paper are available.

7HNR (33) report for the votes in the four cells of Table 1 almost identical average cohesion scores, namely 0.781 and 0.760 or EP 6, and 0.797, and 0.785. I thank Jean-François Godbout for alerting me to this important information. Note, however, that the number of cases appearing in HNR (33) and in Table 1 and as well as those reported in MY differ slightly.

8It has to be noted that the shifts in the item-difficulty parameter might also be due to other factors that come into play in legislative votes, compared to votes on resolutions. As Høyland (2010) convincingly argues in his study, it is however very likely that these differences are due to pressure exerted by the party group.

9Høyland (2010) employs a similar setup to study the differences between legislative and non-legislative roll call votes. I built on his replication code and estimated the model with JAGS (Plummer 2010) in a Bayesian framework with 10,000 burnins followed by 50,000
iterations thinned by 10 to generate 5000 draws from the posterior distribution. I chose for all parameters diffuse proper priors centered on the mean value of zero. In the appendix I report some very cursory summaries of convergence statistics of the models presented in the main text and together with additional ones they suggest that the sampling has converged on the target distribution.

As a robustness check I estimated both for the EP 6 and EP 7 a model that assumes no differences in ideal-points between final passage and amendment votes. Comparisons of the deviances across the two models (EP 6: 346408.1 resp. 344857.8, EP 7: 252456.7, resp. 250875.9) with 58, resp. 121 additional estimated parameters. This shows that improvement is achieved with the more encompassing model.
References

Ainsley C and Maxwell L (2012) What can we learn from roll call votes? strategic signaling incentives and the decision to call roll call votes. Department of Political Science, Emory University, unpublished paper.


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Finke D (2015 forthcoming), Why do european political groups call the roll?, *Party Politics*.


Appendix

Table A-1 lists the party groups and the abbreviations of their names, while in Table A-2 I report a summary of the distribution of the Geweke-diagnostics of all estimated parameters for the sixth and seventh EP. Despite the rather short MCMC-chains, few values are outside the \([-1.96, 1.96]\) interval.

Table A-1: Party groups and their abbreviation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALDE</td>
<td>Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>European Conservatives and Reformists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFD</td>
<td>Europe of Freedom and Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUE/NGL</td>
<td>European United Left/Nordic Green Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND-DEM</td>
<td>Independence/Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>European People’s Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Party of European Socialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;D</td>
<td>Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verts/ALE</td>
<td>Greens/European Free Alliance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A-2: Distribution of geweke statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>parameters with</th>
<th>parameters with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(</td>
<td>z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 6</td>
<td>6969 (94.4%)</td>
<td>412 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 6</td>
<td>6676 (94.2%)</td>
<td>410 (5.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>