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A political disconnect? Evidence from voting on EU trade agreements

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) has long been accused of suffering from a “democratic deficit.” The European Parliament (EP), the only EU institution directly elected by citizens, is seen as having limited powers. Moreover, its members (MEPs) are often portrayed as unresponsive to the interests of their constituents due to the second-order nature of European elections: instead of being shaped by EU policies, they are driven by domestic politics. In this paper, we provide evidence against these Eurosceptic arguments using data on a key policy choice made by MEPs: the approval of free trade agreements. First, we show that MEPs are responsive to the trade policy interests of their electorate, a result that is robust to controlling for a rich set of controls, fixed effects, and employing an instrumental variable strategy. Second, we carry out counterfactual exercises demonstrating that the EP’s power to reject trade deals can help explain why only agreements with broad political support reach the floor. Finally, against the idea that European elections are driven solely by domestic politics, we find that the degree of congruence between MEPs’ trade votes and their electorate’s interests affects their re-election chances.

Keywords: EU democratic deficit, European Parliament, roll-call votes, trade agreements.

JEL codes: F13; D72

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1 Introduction

Many studies argue that public engagement in democracies has declined over the last decades due to a growing disconnect between citizens and their representatives (e.g., Flinders, 2015; Foa *et al.*, 2016; Fisher, 2018). These views are also commonly invoked by populist politicians, who uphold a denigratory vision of elites and depict them as corrupt and detached from the people’s wishes (e.g., Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022; Bellodi *et al.*, 2023).

The European Union (EU) is a prominent example of an institution seen as suffering from a “democratic deficit.” A key argument is that the European Parliament (EP), the only EU institution directly elected by its citizens, has limited powers relative to other EU institutions (e.g., Follesdal and Hix, 2006). Moreover, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are often portrayed in the media and the academic literature as unaccountable and unresponsive to the interests of their electorate.¹ Political scientists argue that this disconnect results from the second-order nature of European elections: instead of being shaped by EU policies, they are fought in the shadow of (first-order) national elections (e.g., Hobolt and Franklin, 2011).² These arguments can have important political implications, as illustrated by the Brexit campaign.³

In this paper, we provide systematic evidence against these widespread Eurosceptic arguments. We first show that, far from being disconnected and unaccountable, MEPs are responsive to the economic interests of their electorate when voting on important EU policies. Second, we refute the argument that the only directly elected EU institution lacks real power and demonstrate that only legislation that has broad support among MEPs reaches the EP’s floor. Finally, we show that MEPs’ re-election probability depends on the congruence between their EU policy choices and their voters’ interests. This contradicts the idea that EU elections are driven entirely by domestic politics within the member states.

¹See, for example, the article “Elected, yet strangely unaccountable” (*The Economist*, May 15, 2014). That said, the authors point out that “the desire for more democratic accountability has meant that every successive treaty has increased the European Parliament’s powers. [...] As much as 90% of what the EU does requires the parliament’s assent. And since the EU is involved in as much as half of all legislation in Europe, that makes the European Parliament more powerful than most national legislatures.”

²Scholars also emphasize the low turnout and the lack of a common “demos” (shared interests and identity) (Weiler *et al.*, 1995). On the other hand, it has been claimed that European citizens have much in common — sharing similar constitutional and democratic principles — and that the EP features the same left-right divide that exists in all the member states (Hix, 2008).

³“Britain’s self-ejection from Europe is the culmination not just of four months of heady campaigning but four decades of latent Euroscepticism. (...) It has become a tenet of Euroscepticism that the union is too remote from the people it is governing” (“How did UK end up voting to leave the European Union?” *The Guardian*, June 24, 2016). See De Vries (2018) for an extensive analysis of the different forms Euroscepticism can take. Figures A-2 and A-1 in the Appendix illustrate the coverage of the EU democratic deficit and Euroscepticism in the media and the academic literature during the last decades.

We focus on a key policy of EU legislators: the approval of EU trade agreements. Four main reasons justify this choice. First, the Common Commercial Policy is an exclusive competence of the EU, enshrined in Article 207 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Second, since the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the entry into force of trade agreements requires the approval of the EP.⁴ Third, while many studies show that trade shocks matter for politics (e.g., Colantone and Stanig, 2018a,b; Autor *et al.*, 2020; Che *et al.*, 2022), the question of whether representatives’ policy choices reflect the trade interests of their constituencies has received less attention. Finally, trade agreements are increasingly salient to EU citizens: the volume of internet searches on trade agreements, their coverage in the media, and the share of European parties that mention trade policy in their electoral program have all increased significantly in recent years (see Figure A-3 in the Appendix).⁵

To carry out our analysis, we collect information from a variety of sources (many of which are in the various official languages of EU member states). We construct a dataset that contains all roll-call votes cast by MEPs between 2009 and 2020. We focus on votes on the approval of 16 free trade agreements (FTAs) signed by the EU during this period and study their determinants. To capture the interests of an MEP’s electorate, we first compute the share of a region’s employment in sectors that are export-oriented relative to the partner(s) of an FTA. This variable captures the extent to which workers stand to gain or lose from a specific trade agreement.⁶ Because EU elections are based on a proportional system, we then aggregate regional export shares at the MEP-constituency level, using as weights the fraction of votes obtained by the MEP’s national party in the previous European elections. We employ the same aggregation method to measure other socio-economic and political characteristics of MEPs’ constituencies (e.g., education, unemployment, ideological position, trust in political parties and EU institutions). We also collect information on several characteristics of EU legislators that may affect their voting behavior on trade agreements (e.g., gender, age, tenure, affiliation to EP political groups, career in national or regional parliaments). Finally, we code whether MEPs retain their seats at the end of an term, and different potential drivers of their re-election probability (congruence between their trade

⁴“Mixed” trade agreements, which include provisions outside the EU’s exclusive competences, must also be approved by the member states using national ratification procedures (see Conconi *et al.*, 2021).

⁵The salience of EU trade agreements is also apparent when considering the emergence of anti-trade movements. In Europe, they include the “Stop CETA and TTIP!” campaign organized during the negotiations with Canada and the United States or the 2024 protests against the EU-Mercosur agreement.

⁶Economists have long emphasized the gains in allocative and productive efficiency that trade integration can bring. However, an ample economic literature also points out that lowering trade barriers generates winners and losers, stressing the importance of mechanisms to compensate the latter to avoid the “backlash of globalization” (Colantone *et al.*, 2022).

votes and their electorate’s interests, overall legislative effort, and party loyalty).

When we study the determinants of votes on trade agreements, we find that EU legislators respond to their electorate’s interests: MEPs are more likely to vote in favor of a trade agreement when a higher share of their electorate is employed in export-oriented industries. In terms of magnitude, our baseline estimates imply that a 10 percentage point increase in the bilateral export share raises the probability of a vote in favor of a trade agreement by 0.92 percentage points. Using data from Conconi *et al.* (2014), we find that MEPs are not significantly different from US legislators in terms of their responsiveness to the interests of their electorate when voting on trade agreements.

The results are robust to including a rich set of controls and different types of fixed effects (e.g., European political group, year, constituency, MEP). We also implement an instrumental variable (IV) strategy to address any remaining concerns about the endogeneity of the export share of an MEP’s constituency. The instrument exploits data on the evolution of employment allocation in non-EU OECD countries and is meant to capture exogenous industry shocks (e.g., technological shocks) that have shifted employment levels across sectors. The IV estimates support a causal interpretation of our baseline findings.

We interpret the positive effect of the export share on the probability of voting in favor of an FTA as evidence that MEPs are responsive to their constituents’ trade policy interests. We rule out alternative explanations of our findings. We show that these are not explained by local favoritism (e.g., Brollo and Nannicini, 2012; Hodler and Raschky, 2014; Burgess *et al.*, 2015): EU legislators’ support for a trade agreement increases in the export share of their constituency, even when this is constructed excluding the region of birth of MEPs, the region they ran to represent in national elections, or the region they represented in their national/regional parliaments. We also rule out lobbying by large firms as a potential mechanism: while there is evidence that large firms dominate lobbying on trade policy (e.g., Kim, 2017; Blanga-Gubbay *et al.*, 2024), our estimates are unaffected when we control for the presence of large firms in MEPs’ constituencies.

As already mentioned, since the Lisbon Treaty, the EP plays a key role during trade negotiations: an agreement negotiated by the Commission and signed by the Council can only enter into force if the EP approves it; during the negotiation process, the Commission anticipates the need for parliamentary consent and works in close cooperation with the EP’s International Trade (INTA) committee. The latter scrutinizes the Commission’s work and co-decides on the legal framework.⁷ As a result, agreements that reach the floor of the EP

⁷See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/inta/about>.

tend to pass by a large margin. Counterfactual experiments based on our model confirm the legislative powers of the EP. First, we use our estimates to predict how EU legislators would vote on EU-Mercosur, an agreement that was finalized in June 2019 but has not yet been presented to MEPs for approval.⁸ Based on our estimates, the outcome of a vote would be a close call. This result can help explain why there has not been a vote on this agreement. Second, we explain why some agreements are not (yet) being negotiated. For example, our model shows that an agreement with China would be opposed by a wide majority of MEPs.⁹

Finally, we show that the probability that MEPs are re-elected at the end of a term depends on whether their trade votes are congruent with the trade policy interests of their constituency, i.e., they vote in favor (against) a trade agreement when the majority of their electorate is expected to gain (lose) from it. These findings imply that MEPs have a direct incentive to represent the interests of their constituency. They also go against the idea that European elections are solely driven by domestic politics.

Our paper contributes to two main strands in the literature. The first examines whether elected representatives are sensitive to the wishes of their electorate. This has been a central concern in normative democratic theory (e.g., Arrow, 1963; Sen, 1970). Several studies examine the relationship between public opinion and policies in the United States (e.g., Page and Shapiro, 1983; Stimson *et al.*, 1995; Lax and Philips, 2012). Some studies show that low clarity of responsibility and limited information imply that elected representatives are less responsive to public preferences (e.g., Besley and Burgess, 2002; Snyder and Strömberg, 2008). Notwithstanding the widespread Eurosceptic arguments, little is known about the congruence between MEPs' decisions and their voters' interests. A few studies examine votes in the EP before the Lisbon Treaty (e.g., Hix *et al.*, 2006; Hix and Noury, 2007),¹⁰ while others consider votes in the European Council (e.g., Mattila, 2009; Hagemann *et al.*, 2016). We are the first to study MEPs' votes on trade agreements, a policy issue of exclusive EU competence, in which the EP has played a fundamental role since the Lisbon Treaty.

We also contribute to the literature on the political economy of trade. Most empirical

⁸See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_3396.

⁹We can also use our estimates to predict how MEPs would have voted on trade agreements in our sample under a different distribution of export shares. For example, if we consider the trade agreement between the EU and Canada, a 50% decrease in the export share would lower the share of MEPs predicted to vote in favor of the agreement by 8.2% (from 0.61 to 0.56).

¹⁰In this literature, the closest paper to ours is Hix and Noury (2007), who study the determinants of MEPs' votes on six pieces of EU legislation on migration policy in the fifth European Parliament (1999-2004). They find that MEPs only respond to the economic interests of their constituents when voting on legislation directly related to the economic rights of migrants. We study votes on a different policy (the approval of trade agreements) during a different period (after the Lisbon Treaty, which greatly expanded the powers of the EP) and find systematic evidence that MEPs respond to economic interests of their constituents.

studies focus on political determinants of trade policy in the United States, including lobbying (e.g., Goldberg and Maggi, 1999; Kim, 2017; Blanga Gubbay *et al.*, 2024), electoral incentives (e.g., Conconi *et al.*, 2014) and ratification procedures (e.g., Conconi *et al.*, 2012). Data availability has so far prevented systematic work on the EU, a key player in international trade, with the largest network of FTAs in the world. We overcome this limitation by compiling a large dataset that allows us to study the determinants of MEPs' votes on trade agreements and of their probability of re-election.

2 Data and variables

2.1 Geographic areas

NUTS regions. The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) divides the EU member states into three hierarchical levels. First adopted in 2003, the nomenclature has been revised several times. Our study uses the second level of the 2016 classification (i.e., areas with a population between 800,000 and 3 million). We aggregate several NUTS-2 regions to account for changes in administrative boundaries (see Appendix A-2 for more information). The final sample includes 262 constant geography regions.

EP constituencies. A majority of member states operate as single constituencies that elect their MEPs in nationwide elections. Several countries have, nonetheless, divided their territory into sub-national constituencies: Belgium, France (until 2019, when it became a national constituency), Ireland, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom (before leaving the EU). Figure A-4 in Appendix A-3 illustrates the EP constituencies during the seventh (2009-2014), eighth (2014-2019), and ninth legislatures (2019-2024).

National and regional parliament constituencies. We also establish a list of the constituencies represented in national parliaments and, for Belgium, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom, those represented in regional parliaments. Most of the time, these constituencies are contained within or overlap with a NUTS-2 region.¹¹ Appendix A-4 provides more information on the data used to identify the national constituencies.

¹¹The Slovakian and Dutch Parliaments operate as a unique, national constituency. National constituencies in Slovenia are not perfectly contained within NUTS-2 regions. Due to the absence of data at a lower level of aggregation, we treat Slovenia as a single-constituency country.

2.2 Roll-call votes on trade agreements

We use web automation to collect the official documents reporting the outcome of all roll-call votes between July 14, 2009 and July 23, 2020. For each vote, we extract the names of the MEPs attending it, how they voted (i.e., in favor, against, or abstained), and the European political group with which they were affiliated.¹² We restrict the analysis to the roll-call votes on the 16 FTAs displayed in Figure 1.¹³ The final sample comprises 10,542 votes (580 of which were abstentions) and 1,715 MEPs (14 of whom always abstained).¹⁴

Figure 1
Roll-call votes on the approval of EU trade agreements

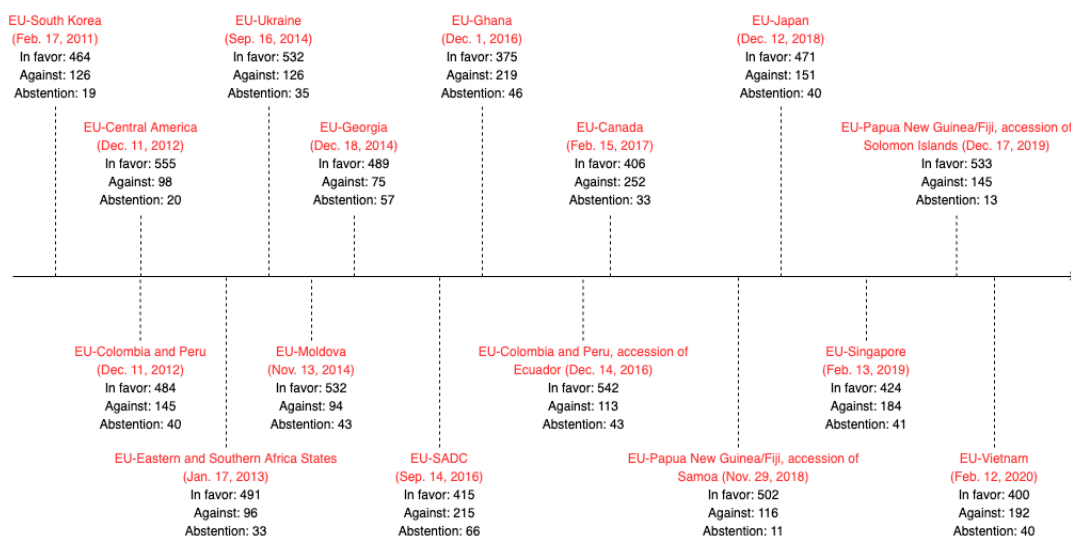


Figure 1 highlights the broad support for trade agreements in the EP: 76.4% of the votes cast (excluding abstentions) were in favor of approving an FTA. This pattern aligns with the strong pro-trade views of EU citizens, as shown below. Furthermore, MEPs within a European political group tend to vote alike, as seen in Figure 2a. There are, however, deviations from the party line: out of 9,962 votes, 990 (9.9%) do not conform to the majoritarian view of the European political group of the MEP casting the vote. Lastly, there is variation in the voting behavior of individual MEPs over time: 1,010 always voted in favor, 280 always voted

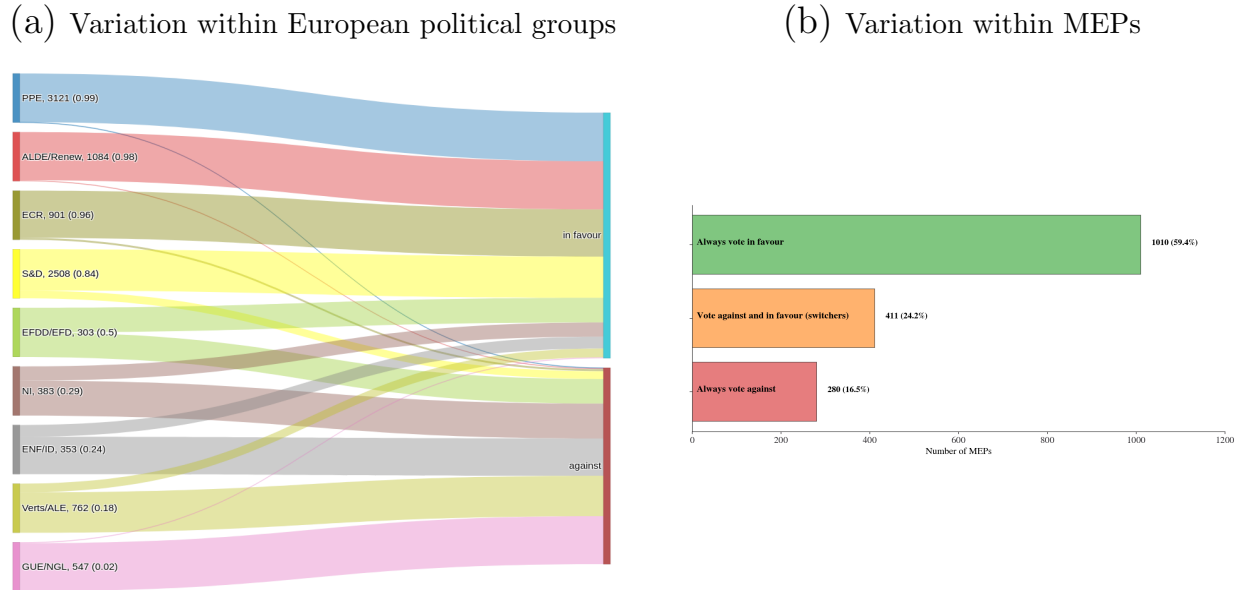
¹²We use the Python library *Scrapy* to iterate over all EP webpages that report roll-call votes. An example of a report can be accessed [here](#). We also use the library *Pandoc* to convert the downloaded documents into a format compatible with the library *BeautifulSoup*. We use the latter to parse the documents and extract the necessary information.

¹³We exclude trade agreements that were voted by show of hands: Serbia (January 19, 2011), Papua New Guinea/Fiji (January 19, 2011), and Cameroon (June 13, 2013).

¹⁴We drop legislators who were elected in different countries during the sample period (2 MEPs) and those who represented constituencies for which we lack socio-economic and political covariates (4 MEPs).

against, while 411 switched (see Figure 2b). In our analysis, we exploit both cross-legislator and within-legislator variation in voting behavior when analyzing MEPs’ responsiveness to the trade policy interests of their constituents.

Figure 2
Roll-call votes on the approval of EU trade agreements



Notes: Figure 2a shows how European political groups vote on FTAs (excluding abstentions). The numbers next to the party name indicate the number of votes, while the numbers in brackets indicate the share of votes in favor of FTAs. The acronyms used stand for: European People’s Party (PPE), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR), Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), Non-attached members (NI), Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), Identity and Democracy (ID), Greens/European Free Alliance (Verts/ALE), European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). Figure 2b shows how individual MEPs vote on FTAs (excluding abstentions).

2.3 Bilateral export share

In what follows, we describe the procedure to construct the export share of an MEP’s constituency. This variable captures the share of his or her electorate that would benefit from the entry into force of a given FTA.¹⁵

Sector classification In the first step, we classify sectors as export-oriented or import-competing relative to the partner(s) of trade agreement a . To this end, we use information

¹⁵This variable is similar to the export ratio used by Conconi *et al.* (2012, 2014) to capture the trade policy interests of U.S. constituencies. The main difference is that our measure is constructed at the bilateral level, allowing us to study constituencies’ preferences vis-à-vis specific trade partners.

on trade flows from the BACI dataset (Gaulier and Zignago, 2010) covering 230 countries from 2007 to 2020. Trade flows are reported at the six-digit level using the 2007 Harmonized System (HS) classification. We use correspondence tables to match the HS codes to two-digit industries in the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community nomenclature (NACE Rev. 2).¹⁶

As a robustness check, we also collect data on trade in services from the WTO-OECD Balanced Trade in Services dataset.¹⁷ This exercise is, nonetheless, subject to two caveats: i) while data on trade in goods are collected through customs, data on trade in services are compiled through surveys; they are thus more likely to be measured with error; ii) employing these data requires manually matching the Extended Balance of Payments Services classification (EBOPS) to the NACE Rev. 2 classification (see Table A-4 in the Appendix); this procedure may amplify measurement error biases.

We use the trade data to construct the per-capita net exports of EU member state k and those of agreement partner(s) a , respectively:

$$NX_{j,k,t} = \frac{Exports_{j,k,t} - Imports_{j,k,t}}{Population_k},$$

$$NX_{j,a,t} = \frac{Exports_{j,a,t} - Imports_{j,a,t}}{Population_a},$$

where $Exports_{j,k,t}$ ($Imports_{j,k,t}$) are the aggregate exports (imports) of country k in sector j and year t ; $Population_k$ is the population of country k in 2008. To account for potential measurement error and better gauge trends in trade flows, we fit linear time trends to $Exports_{j,k,t}$ and $Imports_{j,k,t}$ and use the predicted values to construct $NX_{j,k,t}$ and $NX_{j,a,t}$.¹⁸

We finally define the indicator variable $X_{j,k,a,t}$ to identify comparative advantage sectors at the bilateral level.¹⁹ Specifically, the variable takes the value 1 if sector j in country k is

¹⁶We proceed in several steps. First, we match 2007 six-digit HS codes to their counterparts in the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) Rev. 3 (the correspondence table is available [here](#)). We then use correspondence tables from ISIC Rev. 3 to ISIC Rev. 3.1 and from ISIC Rev. 3.1 to ISIC Rev. 4. Finally, we map ISIC Rev. 4 codes to two-digit NACE Rev. 2 codes (the correspondence tables for the different ISIC revisions and from ISIC Rev. 4 to the NACE Rev. 2 are available [here](#)). We further use Malgouyres (2017)’s correspondence tables for products that cannot be matched in the previous steps.

¹⁷We use the 2021 version of the dataset available [here](#), which covers more than 200 countries between 2005 and 2019. We use linear extrapolation on the available service data to construct trade flows for 2020.

¹⁸For FTAs involving multiple partners, we use the sum of exports (imports) and population.

¹⁹Like the well-known Balassa (1965)’s index of “revealed comparative advantage” and its theoretically consistent alternative by Costinot *et al.* (2012), this classification abstracts from trade in intermediate goods.

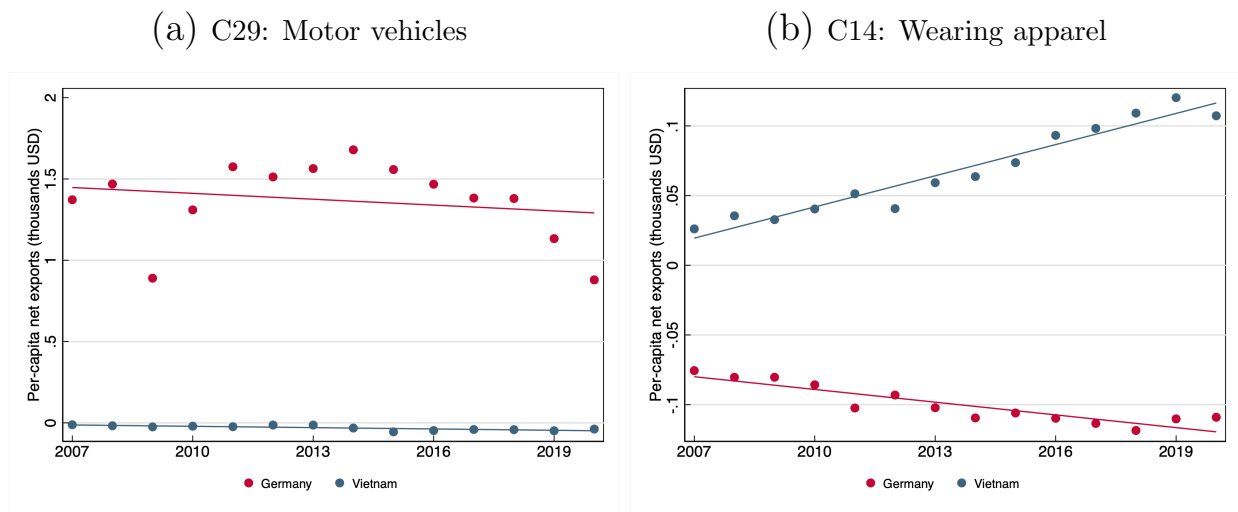
export-oriented with respect to partner a in year t and 0 if it is import-competing:

$$X_{j,k,a,t} = 1 (j \text{ is export-oriented}) \text{ iff } NX_{j,k,t} > NX_{j,a,t},$$

$$X_{j,k,a,t} = 0 (j \text{ is import-competing}) \text{ iff } NX_{j,k,t} < NX_{j,a,t}.$$

Figure 3 provides two examples of the indicator variable $X_{j,k,a,t}$ using bilateral trade flows between Germany (DE) and Vietnam (VT) in two manufacturing sectors. In sector C29 (motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers), the predicted per-capita net exports of Germany are always higher than Vietnam's, implying that $X_{C29,DE,VT,t}$ is equal to 1 for all t . In sector C14 (wearing apparel), the predicted per-capita net exports of Germany are always lower than Vietnam's, and thus $X_{C14,DE,VT,t}$ is always equal to 0.

Figure 3
Examples of industry classification



Notes: The figure plots per-capita net exports of Germany and Vietnam in two manufacturing sectors. The dots are the actual per-capita net exports, while the lines represent predicted trends in per-capita net exports. In sector C29 (motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers), predicted per-capita net exports of Germany always dominate those of Vietnam. In sector C14 (manufacture of wearing apparel), predicted per-capita net exports of Vietnam always dominate those of Germany.

Tariffs Article I of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/WTO forbids members to discriminate between trading partners: the same tariffs — the so-called most favored nation (MFN) tariffs — must be applied to all imports, irrespective of their origin. An exception to this principle of non-discrimination is Article XXIV, which allows members

to conclude preferential trade agreements (FTAs or customs unions).²⁰ However, members of these agreements must reciprocally eliminate “duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce” on “substantially all the trade.”

The entry into force of an FTA between the EU and trading partner(s) a thus implies the following: when exporting to a , EU producers no longer face the MFN tariff applied by a to other WTO members; similarly, when exporting to the EU, producers in a no longer face the MFN tariff applied by all EU member states k to other WTO members.²¹ Using data from the WITS-TRAINS database, we construct the following pre-agreement tariffs:²²

$\tau_{j,k}$: average MFN tariff applied by all EU member states k on imports in sector j ,

$\tau_{j,a}$: average MFN tariff applied by non-EU partner a on imports in sector j .

In some sectors, these tariffs are equal to 0. This is, for example, the case for the EU in sector B05 (mining of coal and lignite) and for Singapore in sector C10 (manufacture of food products). In these cases, the entry into force of the FTA does not affect EU producers: when considering export-oriented sectors ($X_{j,k,a,t} = 1$), producers only gain from the agreement if $\tau_{j,a} > 0$; when considering import-competing sectors ($X_{j,k,a,t} = 0$), they only lose if $\tau_{j,k} > 0$.

Sector employment We collect data on employment in each region r . From Eurostat’s Structural Business Statistics (SBS) series, we extract the number of persons employed in 67 two-digit NACE Rev. 2 sectors.²³ Because the SBS series does not report data for all sectors of activity, we also use employment data in ten aggregate sectors from the Labor Force Survey’s (LFS) regional series.

To harmonize the two datasets, we apply two-digit SBS sector shares to LFS aggregates.

²⁰The other exception is the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), legalized in the Enabling Clause of 1979. This allows GATT/WTO members to offer lower-than-MFN tariffs to developing countries without extending the same treatment to developed trade partners.

²¹Some countries were already granted preferential tariff treatment in some sectors before signing an FTA with the EU. For example, Vietnam participated in the EU’s GSP program. Unlike FTAs, GSP programs do not cover all sectors. Moreover, while FTAs lead to the permanent removal of tariffs, GSP preferences are uncertain: beneficiary countries can lose them in sectors in which they are considered to be sufficiently competitive or when they do not fulfill the conditions set out by the donor countries. Our baseline results are robust to restricting the analysis to FTAs between the EU and developed trading partners.

²²Tariffs are expressed as ad-valorem duties (i.e., as a percentage of the value of the imports) and are reported at the six-digit HS level. To obtain a measure at the two-digit NACE Rev. 2 level, we take the simple average of the tariff rates across all products in that sector. We use pre-sample data from 2008 (2007 for Seychelles and Zimbabwe, due to the lack of data in 2008) to construct the tariff variables. For FTAs involving multiple trade partners, we compute the average tariff weighting each member by its GDP in 2008.

²³The original dataset has an important number of missing values (17.9%). Whenever possible, we use linear interpolation to fill in the gaps, reducing the share of missing observations to 1.7%.

Specifically, the level of employment in sector j in region r (in country k) is:

$$L_{j,r(k),t} = \frac{L_{j,r,t}^{SBS}}{\sum_i L_{i,r,t}^{SBS}} L_{j,r,t}^{LFS},$$

where the summation is over all two-digit SBS sectors contained within a given LFS sector. Overall, we compute employment in 67 two-digit sectors and 4 aggregate sectors.

Export share The number of employees in region r (in country k) working in export-oriented sectors that would experience tariff reductions following the entry into force of an FTA with partner(s) a in year t is:

$$\Omega_{j,r(k),a,t}^X \equiv \sum_j X_{j,k,a,t} \times L_{j,r(k),t} \times 1\{\tau_{j,a} > 0\}. \quad (1)$$

Similarly, the number of employees in region r (in country k) working in import-competing sectors that would experience tariff reductions due to FTA a in year t is:

$$\Omega_{j,r(k),a,t}^M \equiv \sum_j (1 - X_{j,k,a,t}) \times L_{j,r(k),t} \times 1\{\tau_{j,k} > 0\}. \quad (2)$$

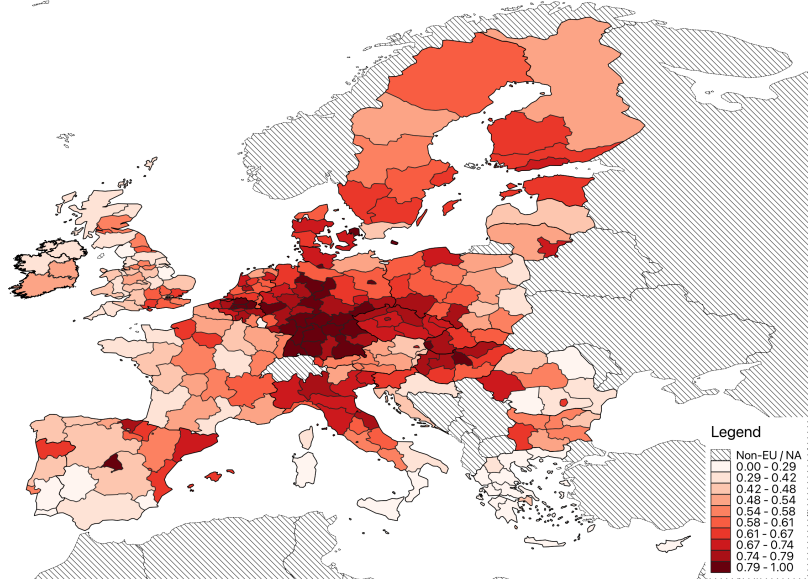
The trade policy interests of the voters in region r relative to an agreement with a are then given by:

$$\text{Regional Export Share}_{r(k),a,t} \equiv \frac{\Omega_{j,r(k),a,t}^X}{\Omega_{j,r(k),a,t}^X + \Omega_{j,r(k),a,t}^M}. \quad (3)$$

The higher the export share defined above, the higher the share of employment in region r that may benefit from the entry into force of an agreement with trading partner a .

Figure 4 illustrates the spatial distribution of the export share relative to Canada in 2016 (i.e., the year before the vote on the ratification of CETA). Central Belgium and the south of Germany typically exhibit the highest export shares in our sample. More than two-thirds of workers in these regions are employed in export-oriented industries. By contrast, Luxembourg and the regions in southern Europe have the smallest export shares, with less than a third of employment working in export-oriented sectors.

Figure 4
Regional variation in export share vis-à-vis Canada



Notes: The figure illustrates the spatial distribution of *Regional Export Share* $_{r(k),a,t}$ across all EU NUTS-2 regions vis-à-vis Canada in 2016 (the year before the vote on the ratification of CETA).

In the final step, we aggregate the regional export shares at the level of MEPs' electorate. By EU law, all member states are required to use a proportional electoral system in European elections (see Table A-1 for details of how this system is implemented across EU member states). As a result, all EP constituencies are represented by multiple MEPs, potentially from different national parties. Proportional representation encourages national parties to maximize the total number of votes across all areas. Taking these considerations into account, an MEP's effective constituency is determined by the citizens who vote for his or her national party across the different regions within the relevant EP constituency. For each MEP i , belonging to national party np and elected in EP constituency c , the interests of his or her electorate are thus captured by the average of the regional export shares, weighted by the share of votes obtained by his or her party in the most recent elections:

$$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t} \equiv \sum_{r \in c(k)} Regional\ Export\ Share_{r(k),a,t} \times \phi_{np,r(k),T}. \quad (4)$$

The party share variable $\phi_{np,r(k),T}$ is constructed using data on the results of all EP elections

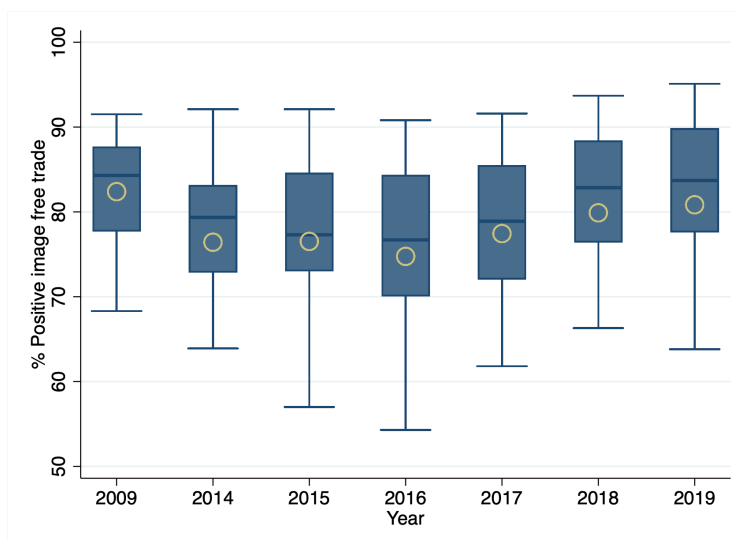
that took place at the start of each EP term T .^{24,25}

This variable captures the share of an MEP’s electorate that would benefit from the entry into force of agreement a . Table A-5 presents descriptive statistics for this variable.

2.4 Trade opinions

We employ survey data from the Eurobarometer to measure citizens’ opinions on trade liberalization. Specifically, we use the answers to the question of whether the term “free trade” brings to mind something very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative, or very negative to code the trade preferences of voters in different areas. Note that the data do not allow us to measure preferences at the bilateral level (i.e., the opinions of voters on specific trade agreements). Moreover, the question only appears in a select number of years (2009 and 2014 through 2019).

Figure 5
Pro-trade opinions of EU citizens



Notes: This figure illustrates the share of EU citizens for whom the concept of “free trade” brings to mind something very positive or fairly positive. The yellow circle indicates the population-weighted average, the dark blue line indicates the median, the sides of the box indicate the 25th and 75th percentiles and the two whiskers indicate the maximum and the minimum.

Figure 5 shows the average share of respondents for whom the term “free trade” brings

²⁴Specifically, $\phi_{np,r(k),T} \equiv \frac{\text{Party Votes}_{np,r(k),T}}{\sum_{r \in c(k)} \text{Party Votes}_{np,r(k),T}}$. For ease of exposition, we omit the subscript denoting the EP term T from the notation of the export share variable.

²⁵We could not find electoral data at the regional level for Ireland. As a result, we use aggregate constituency export shares for Irish MEPs, irrespective of the national party with which they are affiliated.

to mind something either very positive or fairly positive.²⁶ We find strong support for free trade throughout the sample period. The average share of positive opinions is 78.6%, in line with the overwhelming support for FTAs in the EP.

Similarly to the export share variable defined in equation (4), we construct the measure *Pro-Trade Opinions* $_{np,c(k),t}$ by combining regional data on opinions with the share of votes obtained by national parties in the previous EP election. Whenever opinion data are unavailable, we use the values from the most recent Eurobarometer wave. As a result, the opinion measure does not vary over time during most of the seventh legislature.

2.5 Other characteristics of MEPs’ constituencies

We construct a series of socio-economic and political variables at the level of MEPs’ constituencies that could affect their trade votes. Specifically, we aggregate information on pre-determined (i.e., measured in 2008) regional characteristics using the vote shares of national parties in the most recent EP elections.²⁷ Table A-5 presents descriptive statistics.

We employ Eurostat publications to calculate the share of residents who have completed some form of tertiary education. This variable aims at measuring the local supply of skilled workers. To capture the efficiency of labor markets, we compute unemployment rates. We also use the share of households who live in cities, towns, and suburbs as a measure of urbanization. In some specifications, we control for the number of large firms as a proxy for their lobbying effort.²⁸

Lastly, we use Eurobarometer surveys to construct several political covariates. First, we measure the ideological positioning of voters on the left-right political spectrum. Every Eurobarometer survey asks respondents to place their political views on a left-right political scale, with “1” denoting the most left-wing views and “10” the most right-wing views. We compute the average position of an MEP’s electorate. Second, the Eurobarometer tracks whether respondents trust political parties and the EU (among other institutions). We use the answers to these questions to calculate the share of individuals who tend to trust political parties and the EU, respectively.

²⁶The numbers in the figure correspond to the weighted average of the share of respondents in favor of free trade, with each member state being assigned a weight proportional to its population.

²⁷For example, $Unemployment_{np,c(k),T} \equiv \sum_{r \in c(k)} Regional\ Unemployment_{r(k),2008} \times \phi_{np,r(k),T}$.

²⁸The data for this variable come from Eurostat’s SBS at the country level. Firms are defined as large if they employ more than 250 (or more than 50) workers. Unlike the export share, this variable is constructed at the country rather than the national party-constituency level. It also does not include data for three sectors: agriculture, forestry, and fishing.

2.6 MEP variables

We collect data on a large set of MEP characteristics. The top panel of Table A-6 provides summary statistics for the main variables of interest. First, we use Gender API to construct an indicator variable, $Female_i$, that takes the value 1 if MEP i is female.²⁹ Second, we scrape official EU websites to collect data on MEPs' date of birth. This allows us to compute their age at the time of each FTA vote, $Age_{i,t}$. Third, we use information on an MEP's previous experience in the EP from Michon and Wiest (2021) to calculate his or her tenure, which we denote by $Tenure_{i,t}$.

We also extract from Michon and Wiest (2021) the place of birth of each MEP. We geocode them using Google's API service and match each location's geographic coordinates to a NUTS-2 region. We note that the region of birth cannot be coded for MEPs born outside the EU. Overall, we identify the region of birth for 1,468 MEPs (see Table A-2 for a breakdown by member state).³⁰

We use different sources to determine whether MEPs had a previous career in national politics. Specifically, we consult the official website of each EU member state's electoral office and compile an exhaustive list of the politicians who ran in a general election since the late 1990s.³¹ We can thus identify 682 MEPs (i.e., 51.43%) who sought to represent a specific constituency in a national parliament. Among them, 470 (i.e., 27.4%) were elected. Lastly, we gather data on the MEPs who held office in regional parliaments and the constituencies they represented.³² Incorporating this information, we find that 543 MEPs (i.e., 31.7%) were members of national or regional Parliaments.

In Section 5, we examine whether the probability that an MEP is re-elected depends on his or her trade votes' congruence with the electorate's interests. To this aim, we define the indicator variable $Re-elected_{i(np,c(k),ep),T}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c in country k , from national party np , affiliated with the European political group ep) is also an MEP in term $T + 1$. The bottom panel of Table A-6 provides descriptive statistics of the re-election probability and its determinants.³³

²⁹Gender API is an AI-powered service that takes as inputs the first and last names and the two-digit ISO code of a country of birth to return a gender prediction and an associated accuracy score. The service is available [here](#). We manually checked the results of the process.

³⁰This figure does not include MEPs from countries that consist of a unique NUTS-2 region.

³¹When available, we use already existing election data from Kollman *et al.* (2019).

³²We collect information on the member states with important regional parliaments: Belgium, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

³³When studying MEPs' probability of re-election, we exclude UK legislators in the 8th and the 9th legislatures as their career prospects in the EP were severely limited after the 2016 Brexit referendum. We further exclude MEPs not affiliated with an EP political group for whom we cannot construct a measure of

We measure congruence as follows. For each MEP i who voted on agreement a , we define $Congruence_{i,np,c(k),a,t}$ as the share of the electorate whose interests align with his or her vote. For example, when considering agreement a , if 60% of MEP i 's constituency is employed in export-oriented industries, then $Congruence_{i,np,c(k),a,t}$ is 0.6 if i voted in favor and 0.4 if he or she voted against. We compute an aggregate measure of congruence at the MEP-term level, $Congruence\ Trade\ Votes_{i,T}$, by averaging across all votes cast by MEP i during term T . To account for the heterogeneous impact and salience of trade agreements, we weight each vote by the size of the trading partner (i.e., its GDP).³⁴

Using our dataset on all roll-call votes between 2009 and 2020, we construct two additional variables capturing other potential determinants of the probability of an MEP's re-election. We focus on final votes on legislative and budgetary issues.³⁵ First, following earlier studies (e.g., Dal Bó and Rossi, 2011), we construct a measure of legislative effort using information on MEPs' participation in roll-call votes. The variable $Legislative\ Effort_{i,T}$ is the (log of the) number of votes cast by MEP i during term T .

Second, we measure the extent to which an MEP has been loyal to his or her "national political group" (i.e., MEPs from the same member state who are affiliated with the same European political group). To this purpose, we follow a methodology similar to Frech (2016): we identify a set of "controversial" votes,³⁶ for each of these votes, we code whether an individual MEP votes in line with his or her national political group; we compute the variable $Party\ Loyalty_{i,T}$ as the share of controversial votes in which MEP i has sided with his or her national party group.

2.7 Agreement variables

We use Conte *et al.* (2022)'s gravity database to obtain information on FTA partner(s) a (GDP, population, and WTO membership). We further extract bilateral characteristics of the relationship between EU member state k and agreement partner(s) a (distance between their capitals, contiguity, colonial linkages, common language, and diplomatic disagreement

party loyalty (the results on the effects of congruence are robust to including these legislators in the analysis).

³⁴Specifically, $Congruence\ Trade\ Votes_{i,T} = \sum_{a \in A_i(T)} w_{i,a} Congruence_{i,np,c(k),a,t}$, where $A_i(T)$ is the set of agreements on which MEP i voted during term T and $w_{i,a} = \frac{GDP_a}{\sum_{a \in A_i(T)} GDP_a}$. We measure GDP using data from 2008. For multi-country agreements, we sum the GDP of all contracting parties.

³⁵These are identified using the dataset of Hix *et al.* (2022). We exclude votes on amendments, as well as the FTA votes used to construct $Congruence\ Trade\ Votes_{i,T}$.

³⁶These are votes in which the position of the majority of a national political group differs from that of the majority of the remaining legislators in the EP. We exclude cases in which there is no clear majority within a national political group (ties and instances in which only one MEP casts a vote).

in the UN General Assembly). For all variables, we use pre-sample data (from 2008). Table A-7 displays summary statistics.

Note that some of the characteristics are continuous: GDP and population, distance, and diplomatic disagreement. For FTAs that include multiple trade partners, we sum GDP and population across all participants to the agreement. Concerning distance and diplomatic disagreement, we compute the simple average. The remaining variables are dichotomous. When aggregating at the level of a multi-country FTA, we compute the share of partners for whom the indicator variables are equal to 1.

3 Are MEPs responsive to their electorate’s interests?

3.1 Identification strategy

Regression model We study the responsiveness of MEPs to the trade policy interests of their electorate by estimating the following logit model:

$$P\left(\text{Vote}_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t} = 1\right) = F\left(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Export Share}_{np,c(k),a,t-1} + \beta_2 Z_{i,t} + \beta_{3,t} Z_{np,c(k),T} + \beta_4 Z_{k,a} + \delta_t + \delta_{ep} + \delta_c + \varepsilon_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}\right), \quad (5)$$

where $\text{Vote}_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$ is an indicator variable equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to EP political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if he or she votes against it. In the baseline specification, we disregard abstentions. Given that the dependent variable is binary, we estimate a standard discrete choice logit model (F denotes the cumulative standard logistic distribution). We report robust standard errors clustered at the MEP level in all specifications.

The independent variable of interest is $\text{Export Share}_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$, the export share of the national party of MEP i in the constituency in which he or she was elected relative to the partner(s) of agreement a . We use the value of this variable in the year preceding the vote on the agreement to mitigate concerns about reverse causality.³⁷

We address concerns about omitted variable bias by controlling for various characteristics (of the MEPs, their constituencies, and the trade agreements), as well as a rich set of fixed effects. $Z_{i,t}$ is a vector of MEP characteristics that include age, gender, and tenure in the EP. $Z_{np,c(k),T}$ is a vector of pre-determined socio-economic characteristics (the share of the population with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, the urbanization rate) and

³⁷The lagged export share is constructed as $\sum_{r \in c(k)} \text{Regional Export Share}_{r(k),a,t-1} \times \phi_{np,r(k),T}$.

political characteristics (ideological positioning, trust in political parties, trust in the EU) of the constituencies, interacted with year-specific fixed effects. As described above, the socio-economic and political controls are constructed by combining pre-determined (in 2008) regional characteristics with the shares of votes obtained by national parties across different regions in the previous European elections. $Z_{k,a}$ is a vector of agreement controls measured before the start of the sample period. Some are defined at the a level (GDP, population, WTO membership), while others are defined at the $k - a$ level (distance, contiguity, colonial ties, common language, diplomatic disagreement).

Including year-specific fixed effects (δ_t) accounts for time-varying macroeconomic and political conditions. Including fixed effects for EP political groups (δ_{ep}) allows us to control for their overall stance on trade policy.³⁸ The EP constituency fixed effects (δ_c) account for time-invariant characteristics of EP constituencies (e.g., the type of proportional electoral rule used in European elections) that may affect their representatives' voting behavior on trade agreements. In robustness checks, we consider specifications that include MEP fixed effects to account for the role of time-invariant characteristics of individual legislators (e.g., their personal policy preferences), and FTA fixed effects to fully capture the heterogeneity of agreement partners.³⁹

Instrumental variable Even though we include a rich set of covariates and fixed effects, we cannot rule out the possibility that export shares are correlated with unobserved characteristics of MEPs' constituencies that may shape their voting patterns. To address this concern, we adopt an instrumental variable (IV) strategy.

To understand our approach, recall that the export share of an MEP's constituency defined in equation (4) is constructed by combining four variables: $X_{j,k,a,t}$, which is used to classify industries into export-oriented or import-competing; $L_{j,r(k),t}$, which measures industry-level employment; the indicator variables $1\{\tau_{j,k} > 0\}$ and $1\{\tau_{j,a} > 0\}$, which identify sectors in which the FTA would lead to tariff reductions; and $\phi_{np,r(k),T}$, the national party vote shares. The tariff indicators can be taken as exogenous since they are constructed using data on non-discriminatory MFN tariffs before the start of our sample period. The same is true for the party shares, as they are computed based on the EP elections before the approval of an FTA. As discussed below, one may instead be concerned about the other two

³⁸If we replace δ_{ep} with δ_{np} , the logit model does not identify the fixed effects for 161 of the 285 national parties due to lack of switchers. In turn, this results in a substantial reduction in the number of observations used for identification (6,621 instead of 9,848) in the specification of column 5 of Table 1.

³⁹When we include MEP fixed effects, the vector of legislator characteristics $Z_{i,t}$ is dropped due to collinearity. The a -specific controls are dropped when we include FTA fixed effects.

components of the export share variable.

Concerning the indicator $X_{j,k,a,t}$, one potential concern is that the net export variables $NX_{j,k,t}$ and $NX_{j,a,t}$ are computed using aggregate exports and imports and thus include flows between EU member state k and FTA partner(s) a . Given that the negotiation of trade agreements usually lasts several years, our bilateral classification of comparative advantage sectors may thus be confounded by anticipatory effects.⁴⁰ We construct an alternative industry indicator, $\tilde{X}_{j,k,a,t}$, excluding bilateral trade flows between k and a .

The allocation of employment across sectors can be subject to local shocks, which MEPs may consider when deciding whether to vote in favor or against a trade agreement. To address this concern, we follow an approach similar to Autor *et al.* (2013) and Colantone and Stanig (2018b) and use data on changes in the allocation of employment in other OECD countries. The underlying assumption is that these changes capture trends in the global economy (e.g., technological shocks), which are unlikely to be correlated with local shocks in the EU. We restrict the list of non-EU OECD countries to Iceland, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States, for which employment data are available at the required level of aggregation from the International Labour Organization.

For each region r , we construct the counterfactual employment variable $\tilde{L}_{j,r(k),t}$ by multiplying the aggregate regional employment ($L_{r(k),t} \equiv \sum_j L_{j,r(k),t}$) with the employment share of sector j in the non-EU OECD country that is closest to r in terms of pre-sample GDP per-capita.⁴¹ In other words, we assume that the sectoral allocation of employment in r is the same as that of a similarly developed OECD country.⁴²

We can then construct an instrument for the export share of region r :

$$\text{Regional Export Share IV}_{r(k),a,t} \equiv \frac{\tilde{\Omega}_{j,r(k),a,t}^X}{\tilde{\Omega}_{j,r(k),a,t}^X + \tilde{\Omega}_{j,r(k),a,t}^M}, \quad (6)$$

where $\tilde{\Omega}_{j,r(k),a,t}^X$ and $\tilde{\Omega}_{j,r(k),a,t}^M$ are defined as:

$$\tilde{\Omega}_{j,r(k),a,t}^X \equiv \sum_j \tilde{X}_{j,k,a,t} \times \tilde{L}_{j,r(k),t} \times 1\{\tau_{j,a} > 0\},$$

⁴⁰ Another confounder may be the use of post-FTA trade flows when fitting linear time trends.

⁴¹ For example, Northern Ireland (UKN0) and Cheshire (UKD6) are matched to Japan and Iceland, respectively.

⁴² Data on GDP per-capita of OECD countries (in USD) is from the [World Bank](#). We obtain data on GDP of EU-27 regions from [Eurostat](#), and on UK regions from [here](#), which we convert to USD using annual exchange rates from [Eurostat](#). We then obtain per-capita GDP values using population data from [here](#). Sectoral shares for non-EU OECD countries and total EU regional employment are computed using data on tradable good sectors (i.e., from A to C33 of NACE Rev. 2).

$$\tilde{\Omega}_{j,r(k),a,t}^M \equiv \sum_j (1 - \tilde{X}_{j,k,a,t}) \times \tilde{L}_{j,r(k),t} \times 1\{\tau_{j,k} > 0\}.$$

Variation over time in the instrument comes both from changes in the allocation of labor across industries (i.e., $\tilde{L}_{j,r(k),t}$) and changes in the industry classification (i.e., $\tilde{X}_{j,k,a,t}$).

As in equation (4), we use vote shares in the previous European elections to construct the instrument at the level of an MEP’s constituency. For a legislator affiliated to national party np elected in constituency c , the IV for the export share of his/her constituency is:

$$\text{Export Share } IV_{np,c(k),a,t} \equiv \sum_{r \in c(k)} \text{Regional Export Share } IV_{r(k),a,t} \times \phi_{np,r(k),T}. \quad (7)$$

Our baseline model features a non-linear outcome equation. We thus implement our IV strategy using a control function approach: we first estimate a linear regression of the potentially endogenous export shares on the instrument and the set of covariates and fixed effects; we then add the residuals from the first step to equation (5).⁴³

3.2 Results

Table 1 reports the marginal effects of the export share when we estimate equation (5) by logit (the results obtained using a linear probability model can be found in Table A-8).

The point estimate in column 1 corresponds to the most parsimonious specification and includes only year and European political group fixed effects. We find that higher export shares are associated with a higher probability of voting in favor of an FTA. The specification in column 2 adds MEP controls (age, gender, and tenure). In column 3, we include pre-determined socio-economic controls (share of high-skill workers, unemployment rate, urbanization rate) that are interacted with year fixed effects. In column 4, we further add pre-determined political controls (trust in political parties and the EU, and the ideological positioning) interacted with year fixed effects. Column 5 is our baseline specification and includes constituency fixed effects.⁴⁴ In all models, the marginal effect of the export share is positive and statistically significant at 1%. In terms of magnitude, our baseline specification in column 5 implies that a 10 p.p. increase in the export share raises the probability of a vote in favor of an FTA by 0.9 percentage points.

⁴³In robustness checks, we estimate a two-stage-least-squares (2SLS) model in which we instrument export shares with $\text{Export Share } IV_{k,a,t}$.

⁴⁴The number of observations is smaller than in columns 1-4. This is because the logit estimator drops EP constituencies that have no variation in the voting patterns of the MEPs representing them.

Table 1
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.081*** (0.019)	0.080*** (0.019)	0.071*** (0.018)	0.075*** (0.017)	0.092*** (0.019)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,848
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.751	0.751	0.751	0.752	0.749

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np , belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

To mitigate concerns about confounding factors, the baseline specification includes a rich set of covariates and fixed effects. Nevertheless, the point estimates could still suffer from omitted variable bias if the variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ is correlated with other unobserved, time-varying constituency characteristics that influence MEPs' votes on trade agreements. To address this possibility, we use the variable defined in equation (7) as an instrument for the observed export shares. Table A-9 shows that the two variables are highly correlated, reducing the likelihood of weak instruments.

The results reported in Table 2 confirm that MEPs are responsive to the trade policy interests of their electorate. All marginal effects are positive and statistically significant at the 1% level. We further conduct Wald tests to verify whether these coefficients are

significantly different from their logit counterparts. We do not find evidence of statistically significant differences.⁴⁵ These comparisons suggest that our baseline estimates do not suffer from an omitted variable bias.⁴⁶

Table 2
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate (IV)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.098*** (0.024)	0.096*** (0.024)	0.076*** (0.023)	0.076*** (0.023)	0.114*** (0.027)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,848
Estimation method	IV logit	IV logit	IV logit	IV logit	IV logit
Pred. probability	0.751	0.751	0.751	0.752	0.749

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share estimated using an IV logit model and evaluated at sample means. In the first step, we regress $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ on $Export\ Share\ IV_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$, as defined in equation (7), and the remaining control variables specified in each column (the results can be found in Table A-9). In the second step, we use the residuals from the first stage as an additional control in equation (5). $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$ is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np , belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

⁴⁵We further compare the marginal fixed effects implied by the two sets of coefficients using the procedure described in Mize *et al.* (2019) and fail to find statistically significant differences.

⁴⁶By the same token, the 2SLS point estimates reported in Table A-10 are not statistically different from their OLS counterparts (Table A-8).

3.3 Additional robustness checks

In this section, we discuss a series of additional robustness checks. In Table A-11, we report the results from conditional logit regressions that include MEP fixed effects. This approach allows us to account for any characteristic of an EU legislator (such as personal policy preferences or background) that may affect their voting behavior. In these regressions, the coefficient of the export share is identified only by within-MEP variation over time. The sample thus includes only the 411 MEPs who voted both in favor and against an FTA during our sample period. Despite the significant reduction in sample size, the coefficients on the export share remain positive and statistically significant at the 1% level. Kwak *et al.* (2021) argue that the conditional logit estimator is not robust in setups where the conditional serial independence assumption is violated. In Table A-12, we re-estimate the specification with MEP fixed effects using a linear probability model. The point estimates remain positive and highly significant.

Table A-13 shows that the results hold even when including FTA fixed effects as an effective way of controlling for any agreement-specific determinant of MEPs' trade votes. Notice that, in these specifications, the a -specific controls and the year fixed effects are absorbed by the agreement fixed effects.

Another robustness check is related to abstentions, which are excluded from our baseline analysis. Our main findings are robust to including abstentions and coding them either as negative votes (Table A-14) or positive votes (Table A-15).

In our main analysis, the trade policy interests of an MEP's constituency are defined using only tradable goods (i.e., agriculture, mining, and manufacturing), for which reliable data are available. As an additional robustness check, we re-construct the export share and include service sectors that can be traded internationally. As shown in Table A-16, the coefficient of $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ is significant in all specifications but the one that includes constituency fixed effects. This is not surprising, given the challenges faced when using data on trade in services (see Section 2).

Finally, in Table A-17 we use citizens' stated trade opinions from the Eurobarometer survey to capture the trade policy preferences of an MEP's constituency. Recall from Section 2 that the variable $Pro-Trade\ Opinions_{np,c(k),t-1}$ suffers from two limitations compared to the export share variable: it cannot be defined at the bilateral level; and it features limited within-constituency variation due to missing data in the first years of our sample. Notwithstanding these limitations, the coefficient of the opinion variable is positive and statistically significant in columns 1 to 4, indicating that MEPs' trade votes are in line with

their electorate’s trade preferences.

3.4 Ruling out alternative interpretations

Against widespread claims that European legislators are bureaucratic and unresponsive, the results above show that MEPs’ votes on the approval of trade agreements are sensitive to the interests of their electorate. In this section, we discuss and rule out two alternative interpretations of our findings.

Regional favoritism

A large literature shows that politicians tend to favor the regions to which they have some form of attachment — for example, the regions in which they were born or where they held previous political office (e.g., Brollo and Nannicini, 2012; Hodler and Raschky, 2014; Burgess *et al.*, 2015). One may be concerned that, rather than responding to the interests of their electorate, MEPs’ voting behavior reflects the “parochial” interests of some specific regions within them. To address this concern, we construct versions of the export share variable that exclude the regions an MEP may be connected with. Notice that, in this case, the export share variable becomes MEP-specific rather than national-party specific.

We first consider the region in which an EU legislator was born. Anecdotal evidence suggests that MEPs’ votes may reflect the interests of their birthplace.⁴⁷ To rule out such a possibility, we define the indicator variable $Birth_{i,r(k)}$ that takes the value 1 if MEP i was born in NUTS-2 region r and 0 otherwise. We then construct a version of the export share variable that excludes the NUTS-2 region for which $Birth_{i,r(k)} = 1$.⁴⁸ That is, the export share becomes:

$$Export\ Share_{i,np,c(k),a,t} \equiv \sum_{r \in c(k)} Regional\ Export\ Share_{r(k),a,t} \times (1 - Birth_{i,r(k)}) \times \zeta_{i,np,r(k),T}, \quad (8)$$

where $\zeta_{i,np,r(k),T}$ is the share of party votes obtained by national party np in region r after

⁴⁷Claudio Morganti, an MEP elected on the list of the Lega Nord (part of the EFD political group) in the Central Italy EP constituency, declared after voting against the EU-South Korea FTA: “I come from Prato, a town that was once considered one of the most important textile areas of Europe. Today, unfair competition from Asia has turned it into a ghost town, because business in Prato has been utterly devastated” (from the minutes of the debate in the European Parliament on February 17, 2011).

⁴⁸Most of the time, this region is contained within an MEP’s EP constituency. This is always true for countries that have a single EP constituency; for the other countries, it is true in around 65% of the cases. Going back to the example of Claudio Morganti, his region of birth (Toscana) is contained within the EU constituency he represented in the European Parliament (Central Italy).

excluding MEP i 's region of birth.⁴⁹

Similarly, MEPs' votes may reflect the interests of the regions within their EP constituency to which they are politically attached.⁵⁰ As previously mentioned, around 51% of the MEPs in our sample ran in national elections and 32% held a seat in a national or regional parliament. As before, we define two indicator variables: $Candidate_{i,r(k)}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i ran to represent region r in the national parliament of country k ; and $Elected_{i,r(k)}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i represented region r in the national/regional parliament of country k . We then construct versions of the export share variable that exclude these regions by replacing $Birth_{i,r(k)}$ in equation (8) with $Candidate_{i,r(k)}$ and $Elected_{i,r(k)}$, respectively.

Table A-18 shows that the results of Table 1 are not driven by “parochial” interests. Column 1 reproduces the baseline specification of Table 1 using the export share variable that discards an MEPs' region of birth. The export share in columns 2 and 3 excludes the region an MEP sought to represent in national elections and represented in national/regional parliaments. The coefficient of $Export\ Share_{i,np,c(k),a,t-1}$ is always positive and significant at the 1% level, indicating that our baseline findings are not driven by regional favoritism.

Lobbying by large firms

Another possible concern is that our results are driven by lobbying pressure from large firms. Several studies show that these dominate lobbying on trade policy (e.g., Kim 2017; Osgood, 2017; Blanga-Gubbay *et al.*, 2024). These studies exploit detailed information available under the US Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA), which requires individuals and organizations to file semi-annual reports providing detailed information on their lobbying activities at the federal level.

Unfortunately, lobbying data in the EU are much more limited.⁵¹ As an alternative, we check whether our results are robust to controlling for the number of large firms in an MEP's

⁴⁹In this case: $\zeta_{np,r(k),T} \equiv \frac{Party\ Votes_{np,r(k),T}}{\sum_{r \in c(k)} Party\ Votes_{np,r(k),T} \times (1 - Birth_{i,r(k)})}$.

⁵⁰Esteban González Pons, an MEP elected on the list of the Partido Popular (part of the PPE political group) in the Spain EP constituency and who previously represented Valencia in the Spanish parliament, declared after voting against the EU-South Africa FTA: “I am pleased to say that all the Valencian MEPs voted against the agreement with South Africa. And, I would add that *in all matters that affect us, the MEPs representing the Valencian Community have always voted putting the interests of the people of Valencia before those of our parties*” (interview for Valencia Plaza on 16/05/2019, translated from original language).

⁵¹The EP, the EU Council, and the European Commission have adopted an inter-institutional agreement to make certain lobbying activities conditional upon registration. However, this agreement does not have a formal basis in EU treaties and the registration itself remains voluntary. This limits the collection of systematic data on lobbying within EU institutions.

constituency. Table A-19 indicates that our results are unaffected by including the number of firms as an additional covariate.

3.5 Comparison with US votes on trade agreements

Lastly, we compare the voting behavior of MEPs to that of US legislators. To this purpose, we use data from Conconi *et al.* (2014) on the approval of trade agreements in the US Congress. To facilitate the comparison between our analysis and theirs, we define the variable $Export\ Share_{c,t}$ as the share of jobs in export-oriented sectors in constituency c of each US legislator (i.e., a state for senators or a congressional district for house representatives).⁵²

Table A-20 reports the regressions results for US legislators (column 1) and MEPs (column 2). Both regression models include legislator-specific controls, as well as party, constituency, and agreement fixed effects.⁵³ The results are qualitatively and quantitatively similar across the two legislative bodies: a 10 percentage point increase in the export share of a constituency increase the probability that a legislator votes in favor of an FTA by 1.28 percentage points in the US Congress and 0.93 percentage points in the EP.

4 Do MEPs have effective legislative power?

A key argument in the literature on the EU democratic deficit is that the EP, the only EU institution directly elected by its citizens, has no effective legislative power. For example, it does not have the right to formally initiate a legislative procedure in the way that national parliaments do.⁵⁴

We argue that MEPs have nonetheless real power when it comes to a key EU policy: the negotiation of trade agreements. Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, an FTA negotiated by the Commission and signed by the Council goes into effect only after the EP

⁵²There are two main differences between this variable and the export share we construct for MEPs. First, unlike MEPs who are elected using a proportional system, elections to the US Congress are based on a majoritarian system. As a result, the trade policy interests of US legislators can be directly mapped to their state or congressional district. Second, Conconi *et al.* (2014) classify sectors into export-oriented/import-competing using data on aggregate trade flows. This study, on the other hand, compares the per capita net exports of the EU member states to that of their FTA partners.

⁵³While the dataset from Conconi *et al.* (2014) includes our baseline legislator controls (gender, age and tenure), it does not contain the same socio-economic, political and FTA-specific covariates. To obtain comparable estimates, we thus discard MEP constituency controls and replace the agreement variables with FTA fixed effects. In column 1, the agreement fixed effects are defined at the FTA-chamber level (given the bicameral structure of the US Congress) and the constituency fixed effects are at the state level.

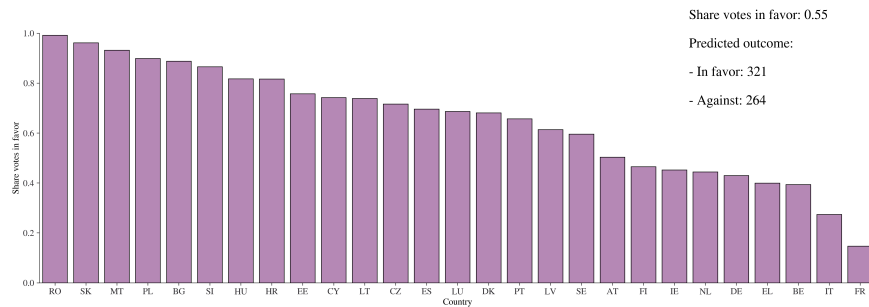
⁵⁴The right of initiative is a prerogative of the European Commission. However, the EP and the Council have the right to request the Commission to initiate a legislative procedure.

has approved it. Moreover, during the negotiation process, the Commission works in close cooperation with MEPs from the International Trade Committee, thus anticipating the need for parliamentary consent.

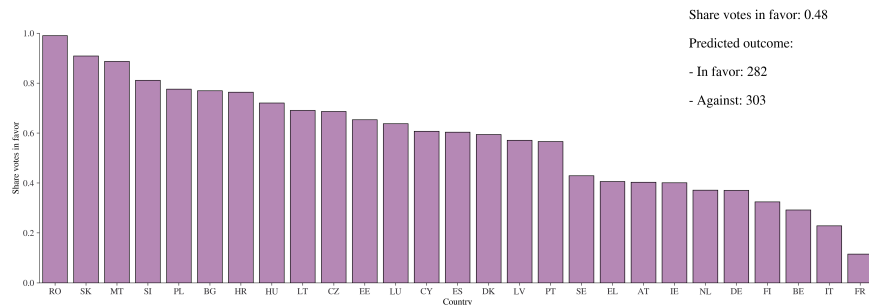
In what follows, we show that the EP’s power to reject trade deals can help explain why only agreements that have broad political support among MEPs reach the floor. To this purpose, we carry out counterfactual exercises to predict how MEPs would vote on agreements that are not in our sample. We consider two examples: an agreement that has already been negotiated, but has not been put forward for ratification; and another that is not even being negotiated.

Figure 6
Counterfactual vote on EU-Mercosur and EU-China in 2020

(a) EU-Mercosur



(b) EU-China



Notes: The figure illustrates the counterfactual outcomes of votes on two trade agreements, assuming they were cast on the same day as the vote on the EU-Vietnam FTA. The top figure illustrates the counterfactual outcome of a vote on an FTA between the EU and the four founding member countries of Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). The bottom figure illustrates the counterfactual outcome of a vote on an FTA between the EU and China. The bars represent the share of MEPs predicted to vote in favor by country, computed using our baseline estimates (from column 5 of Table 1). The notes to the right of the plot report the share of votes in favor across all countries, and the number of MEPs that would vote in favor or against based on the predicted probability of each legislator.

Specifically, we use the baseline estimates from column 5 in Table 1 to compute the counterfactual outcomes for the following agreements: the EU-Mercosur FTA, which was

finalized in June 2019 but has not yet reached the ratification phase; and a potential FTA with China, which is not currently under consideration. For both exercises, we predict the outcome assuming that the votes on the agreements took place in 2020 and were cast by the same MEPs who voted on the EU-Vietnam FTA (the last agreement in our sample).⁵⁵

Figure 6 shows the expected share of votes in favor of these agreements by member state. Concerning the EU-Mercosur FTA, we predict a close outcome: 321 votes would be in favor, and 264 against. The significantly lower approval rate (54.9%), especially when compared to the FTAs in Figure 1, may help explain the delay in its ratification. An EU-China FTA, on the other hand, would be rejected by a majority of MEPs: 303 would vote against it, and only 282 in favor. It is perhaps not surprising that such an agreement is not currently under negotiation. These results mitigate claims that the EP lacks real power: only legislation that has broad support among MEPs reaches the floor for a final vote or is considered by the European Commission.

We can also use our baseline estimates to investigate how a shock to export shares would affect voting patterns on FTAs in our sample. To this aim, we take the estimated coefficients from column 5 in Table 1 and predict the probability that an MEP would approve an FTA if the export share he or she faces is either equal to its observed value or subject to a negative shock. Under both scenarios, we hold the remaining variables constant. We then aggregate across all MEPs, and compute the change in the expected outcome. For example, in the case of the EU-Canada agreement, we find that a decrease of 20% (50%) in the export share of all MEPs would be associated with a 2 (5) percentage point decline in the share of votes in favor of the agreement, respectively. Given that, in the absence of the shock, the expected approval rate is 0.61, these figures imply a 3.3% and 8.2% fall. The expected number of MEPs voting in favor would also fall by 13 (34).⁵⁶

5 Does MEPs' responsiveness affect their re-election?

The results presented in Section 3 demonstrate that EU legislators are responsive to the interests of their electorate when voting on the approval of FTAs. In this section, we show that MEPs' re-election probability depends on the extent to which their votes on trade agreements are in line with the interests of their electorate.

⁵⁵We compute predicted probabilities only for MEPs who did not abstain. We also exclude MEPs from constituencies without switchers, as we cannot compute predicted probabilities (see footnote 44).

⁵⁶For other agreements, the predicted effect of a negative shock is smaller. In the case of the EU-Vietnam FTA, a 20% (50%) decrease in all export shares would reduce the average predicted probability of a vote in favor from 0.67 to 0.66 (0.64). The expected number of MEPs voting in favor would decline by 8 (20).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that MEPs whose trade votes are more in line with their constituency’s interest are more likely to get re-elected. For instance, Sergio Cofferati and Mario Pirillo were elected on the Democratic Party’s list in 2009 and represented Italy’s North-West and South constituencies, respectively. At the end of the term, the variable *Congruence Trade Votes*_{*i,T*} described in Section 2.6 was 0.62 for Cofferati and 0.29 for Pirillo.⁵⁷ While both legislators ran for re-election, only Cofferati succeeded in keeping his seat in the EP.

To assess whether MEPs’ voting behavior on trade agreements affects their re-election probability, we estimate the following logit model:

$$P(\text{Re-elected}_{i(np,c(k),ep),T} = 1) = F(\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{Congruence Trade Votes}_{i,T} + X_{i,T} + X_{np,c(k),T} + \delta_T + \delta_{ep} + \delta_{c(k)} + \varepsilon_{i(np,c(k),ep),T}). \quad (9)$$

The dependent variable is an indicator variable equal to 1 if MEP *i* (elected in constituency *c* of country *k* on the list of national party *np*, belonging to European party *ep*) is re-elected at the end of EP term *T*. Note that, to be re-elected, an MEP must first be included on a party list or run as an independent. Conditional on running, the party or the candidate has to obtain a sufficiently high number of votes. The coefficient α_1 thus captures the effect of congruence on the overall probability of re-election.

The MEP controls, $X_{i,T}$, include gender, as well as age and tenure at the end of the term. The socio-economic and political controls ($X_{np,c(k),T}$) are constructed by aggregating at the MEP constituency level pre-determined regional characteristics, using as weights the share of votes obtained by national parties in the previous European elections. We include fixed effects for EP terms, δ_T , EP political groups, δ_{ep} , and constituencies, $\delta_{c(k)}$. In some specifications, we also include proxies for two other factors that may affect MEPs’ re-election chances, namely legislative effort and party loyalty.

Table 3 presents the results. The specification in column 1 includes MEP controls and European party and term fixed effects. Columns 2 and 3 sequentially add socio-economic and political controls. Column 4 also includes constituency fixed effects. In all specifications, the coefficient on *Congruence Trade Votes*_{*i,T*} is positive and significant. These results indicate

⁵⁷Cofferati voted in favor of four FTAs (EU-Central America, EU-Colombia and Peru, EU-Eastern and Southern Africa States Interim EPA, and EU-South Korea). His constituency’s export share was approximately 0.60 relative to all trade partners. Pirillo voted in favor of two agreements (EU-Central America and EU-Colombia and Peru) and against one (EU-South Korea). The export shares relative to the first two agreements were 0.38 and 0.42, respectively, while the export share was 0.78 relative to South Korea. Whereas all of Cofferati’s votes aligned with the interests of a majority of his constituents, Pirillo systematically voted against the interests of the majority of his constituents.

that MEPs have a higher chance of being re-elected at the end of a term if their voting on EU trade agreements has been in line with their electorate’s trade policy interests. In terms of magnitude, the estimates in column 4 imply that increasing congruence by 10 percentage points leads to a 1.84 percentage point increase in the probability that an MEP retains his/her seat. This effect accounts for 4.18% of the average probability of re-election in the sample (44.02%).

Table 3
MEPs’ trade responsiveness and re-election

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Congruence Trade Votes</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}	0.136** (0.064)	0.163** (0.065)	0.186*** (0.065)	0.184** (0.072)	0.213*** (0.078)
<i>Legislative Effort</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}					0.389*** (0.061)
<i>Party Loyalty</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}					0.507*** (0.162)
MEP controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Term FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,083	2,083	2,083	2,077	1,971
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.441

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is an indicator variable equal to 1 if MEP *i* (elected in constituency *c* of country *k* from national party *np*, belonging to European political group *ep*) is re-elected at the end of the term. *Congruence Trade Votes*_{*i,T*} is the share of the electorate whose interests align with *i*’s trade votes during term *T*, as described in Section 2.6. *Legislative Effort*_{*i,T*} is the log of the number of final votes cast by MEP *i* during term *T*. *Party Loyalty*_{*i,T*} captures the extent to which an MEP has been loyal to his/her national party group. The legislator controls include age, gender, and tenure in the MEP. The socio-economic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

In Column 5, we control for additional drivers of the re-election probability. The variable *Legislative Effort*_{*i,T*} is the (log of the) number of votes cast by MEP *i* during term *T*.⁵⁸ The coefficient of this variable is positive and highly significant, indicating that legislators who exert more effort in the EP are more likely to be re-elected. This provides further evidence that European elections are not entirely driven by domestic politics. The variable *Party Loyalty*_{*i,T*} measures the extent to which the MEP has been loyal to his or her national party group during the term. The coefficient of this variable is positive and highly significant, indicating that MEPs who side with their national political group are more likely to retain their seats.

Our baseline measure of congruence takes into account differences in the importance of trade agreements (i.e., a vote on an FTA with a small trading partner like Ghana matters less to the electorate than a vote on an FTA with a larger trading partner like Canada). Table A-21 reports the results when we disregard such heterogeneity.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, the coefficients on *Congruence Trade Votes*_{*i,T*} are less precisely estimated compared to Table 3.

These findings provide further evidence against the argument that EU legislators are not accountable due to the second-order nature of European elections, contested in the shadow of (first-order) national elections. We show that MEPs' votes on trade agreements — a policy of exclusive competence of the EU — and their overall legislative effort significantly impact the outcome of European elections.

The results in Table 3 also suggest that voters reward representatives who have made policy choices in line with their preferences. As shown by Cho (2009), this behavior can be rationalized in an incomplete information model in which voters are prospectively rational and strategic, even when a legislator's vote may not be decisive in determining the policy outcome. The results are also compatible with a model of reciprocal behavior, i.e., voters may want to reward politicians who have been kind to them and punish politicians who have been unkind (e.g., Hahn, 2009; Finan and Schechter, 2012; Conconi *et al.*, 2017), irrespective of whether they believe their vote is going to matter for future policy outcomes.

⁵⁸As mentioned in Section 2.6, the variable *Legislative Effort*_{*i,T*} is based on all final votes on legislative and budgetary issues, excluding votes on approval of FTAs used to construct *Congruence Trade Votes*_{*i,T*}.

⁵⁹In this table, *Congruence Trade Votes*_{*i,T*} is the simple average of *Congruence*_{*i,np,c(k),a,t*} across the agreements voted by MEP *i* during term *T*.

6 Conclusions

Much of what the EU does requires the approval of the EP, whose members are directly elected by European voters. MEPs are often portrayed as powerless and disconnected from their electorate due to the second-order nature of European elections, seen as driven by domestic politics within the member states. These Eurosceptic arguments are widespread in the media and scholarly debates, are an integral part of the populist rhetoric, and have played an important role in the Brexit campaign.

In this paper, we provide three sets of results against these arguments, focusing on a key policy choice made by MEPs: the approval of EU trade agreements. We construct a novel dataset of MEPs' roll-call votes on 16 trade agreements negotiated by the EU since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. We collect systematic information on the trade policy interests of the constituencies of EU legislators and other variables that may affect their voting behavior, some defined at the MEP level (e.g., party affiliation, tenure, gender, age, domestic political career), others at the constituency level (e.g., unemployment, education, ideological position, trust in political parties and EU institutions).

We first show that rather than being disconnected and unaccountable, EU legislators are responsive to the economic interests of their electorate when making decisions on key EU policies. We find that MEPs who represent constituencies with a higher share of jobs in export-oriented industries are more likely to vote in favor of trade agreements. The results are robust to controlling for a rich set of covariates, including different types of fixed effects, and using an IV strategy to address any remaining endogeneity concerns. They also hold when we account for more "parochial" trade policy interests (those of the regions in which the MEPs were born or which they have run to represent/have represented in national parliaments) and for the presence of large lobbying firms. When comparing the voting behavior of EU legislators with those in the US Congress, we find that the effects are qualitatively and quantitatively similar.

Second, we carry out counterfactual exercises demonstrating that the EP plays a key role in the negotiations of EU trade agreements. We use our estimates to predict how MEPs would vote on agreements not in our sample (because they have been negotiated but not yet been put forward for ratification in the EP or have not been negotiated). The results suggest that the EP's power to reject trade deals negotiated by the European Commission can help explain why only agreements with broad political support among MEPs reach the ratification stage.

Finally, we show that the probability that MEPs are re-elected at the end of a term

depends on the extent to which their votes on the approval of EU trade agreements have been congruent with the trade policy interests of their electorate. This finding goes against the idea that European elections are entirely driven by domestic politics within member states.

Overall, our analysis provides evidence against the idea that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit. In our analysis, we have focused on one of the policy areas exclusively set at the EU level.⁶⁰ An important avenue for future research is to study whether MEPs are equally responsive to their constituencies' interests when deciding on policies that are not of exclusive competence of the EU (e.g., migration, environment). One could also exploit the fact that many trade agreements cover policies that are outside the EU's exclusive competencies (e.g., investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms). These trade agreements are considered "mixed" and must be ratified following not only the procedures set out in the EU treaties (Article 218 TFEU) but also the national ratification procedures of the member states. These are extremely complex, as they may require the approval of all member states in their national parliaments, as well as regional parliaments in the case of Belgium (see Conconi *et al.*, 2021). It would be interesting to collect data on these votes and compare the responsiveness of EU and national legislators to their constituencies' interests.

⁶⁰See https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/role-european-commission/law/areas-eu-action_en.

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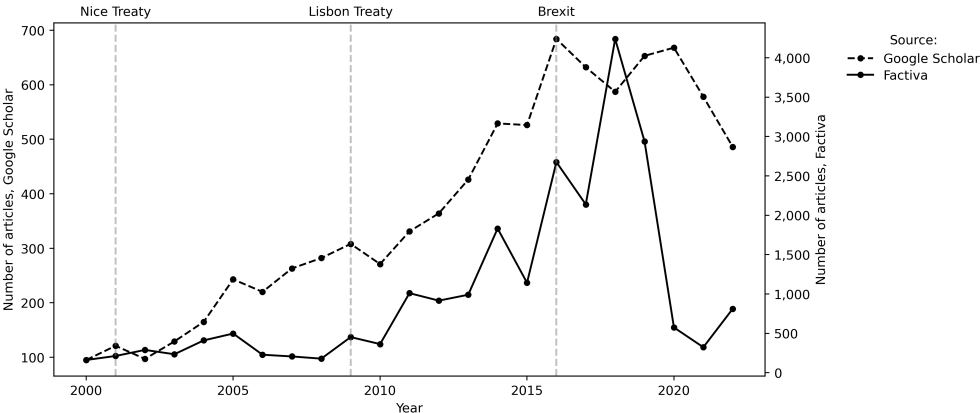
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Appendices

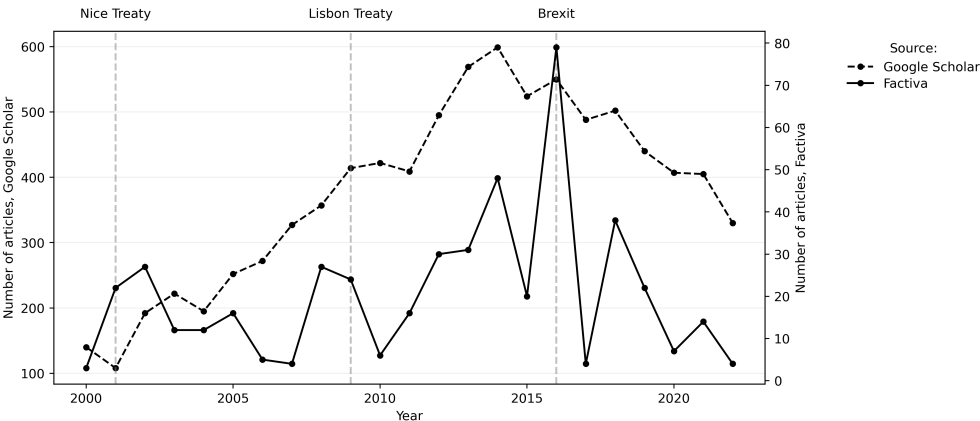
A-1 Figures

Figure A-1
Articles on Euroscepticism



Notes: This figure shows the number of articles on Google Scholars and Factiva mentioning at least one of the following phrases: “Eurosceptic,” “Euroscepticism,” “Euro-sceptic,” or “Euro-scepticism.”

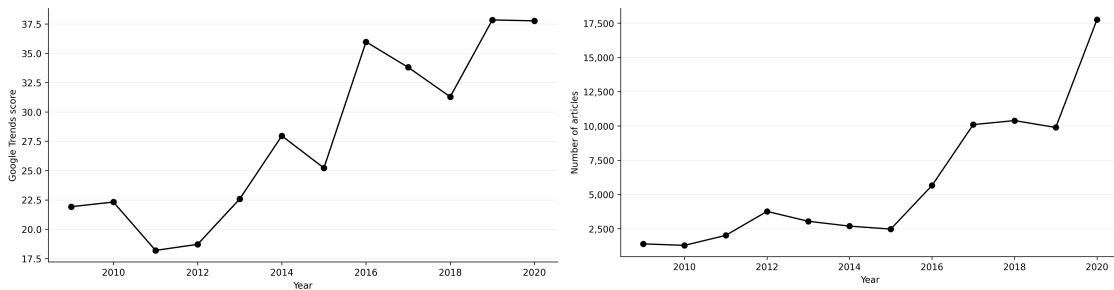
Figure A-2
Articles on the democratic deficit of the EU



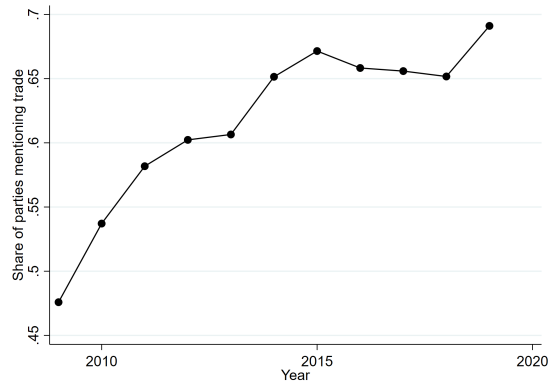
Notes: This figure shows the number of articles on Google Scholars and Factiva mentioning at least one of the following phrases: “Democratic deficit of the EU,” “Democratic deficit in the EU,” “EU democratic deficit,” “Democratic deficit of the European Union,” “Democratic deficit in the European Union,” or “European Union democratic deficit.”

Figure A-3
Salience of trade policy

(a) Internet searches on trade agreements (Google Trends) (b) Media coverage of trade agreements (Factiva)



(c) Coverage of Trade in Parties' Manifestos (Manifesto Project)



Notes: Panel (a) reports the volume of internet searches on trade agreements in EU member states. This is a weighted average of the yearly Google Trends score for each member state (using population as weights). Panel (b) shows the media coverage of trade agreements in EU member states, using data from Factiva. Panel (c) plots the share of European parties that mention trade in their electoral program, using data from the Manifesto Project. This figure is constructed using information on the trade-related codes of the Manifesto Project (406 and 407). To smooth electoral cycles, we report the 5-years moving average of the share of European parties that mention trade in their program.

A-2 NUTS regions

The NUTS classification has three levels. NUTS-1 regions correspond to major socio-economic regions with a population between 3 and 7 million, NUTS-2 regions to basic regions with a population between 800,000 and 3 million, and NUTS-3 regions to small regions with a population between 150,000 and 800,000. As most data are only available at the NUTS-2 level, we use this level of aggregation. Not all member states have distinct regions for every NUTS level. Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg, Latvia, and Malta, for instance, consist of one NUTS-2 region only. For the remaining member states, the number of NUTS-2 regions varies from two (Croatia and Slovenia) to 38 (Germany). Overall, our dataset includes 262 NUTS-2 regions.

Eurostat and Eurobarometer publications report data at different levels of aggregation over time. For consistency, we fix the boundaries of NUTS-2 regions over time:

- The capital regions of Hungary and Poland were split into two NUTS-2 regions in 2016. Because data for these sub-regions are unavailable prior to this date, we use pre-2016 NUTS-2 regions.
- In Eurobarometer publications, several Italian NUTS-2 regions are reported jointly. We use the same aggregation in our analysis.⁶¹
- Ireland went from dividing its territory into two NUTS-2 regions to three NUTS-2 regions in 2016. In both versions, NUTS-2 regions are aggregates of historical counties. We thus use county-level population data to construct fixed-boundary NUTS-2 regions over time.⁶²
- Slovenia’s NUTS-2 borders changed in the 2013 version of the NUTS classification. There is no clear method of converting 2010 NUTS-2 regions into 2013 NUTS-2 regions, so we treat Slovenia as a single NUTS-2 region.
- Several NUTS-2 regions are not covered in the Eurobarometer data and are dropped from the sample.⁶³

⁶¹The aggregation concerns the following regions: Piemonte (ITC1) and Valle d’Aosta (ITC2), Abruzzo (ITF1) and Molise (ITF2), Puglia (ITF4) and Basilicata (ITF5), Trentino (ITH1) and Alto Adige (ITH2).

⁶²We first use Census data to obtain population counts at the county level. We then compute the share of every old NUTS-2 region that belongs to a new NUTS-2 region. We finally use these shares to split old NUTS-2 regions across new NUTS-2 regions.

⁶³The following NUTS-2 regions are not included in Eurobarometer surveys: North Aegean (EL41), South Aegean (EL42), Ionian Islands (EL62), Ceuta (ES63), Melilla (ES64), Åland (FI20), Corsica (FRM0), the French Overseas (FRY1-FRY5), Açores (PT20), and Madeira (PT30).

A-3 EP constituencies and elections

In European elections, most member states choose to operate a single, national constituency. There are only six countries that, during the period we study, are divided into sub-national constituencies.

Belgium has three constituencies organized by linguistic community: a Dutch-speaking electoral college, a French-speaking electoral college, and a German-speaking electoral college. The German-speaking college elects only one representative and is fully contained within the Liège Province (the corresponding NUTS-2 region is BE33). Residents of the Brussels-Capital Region can vote either for the Dutch- or the French-speaking candidate list. When constructing measures for these constituencies, we split Brussels using the vote share allocated to each list.

France is divided into eight constituencies during the seventh and eighth legislatures, before becoming a national constituency in 2019. All French sub-national constituencies are aggregates of NUTS-2 regions. As Eurobarometer is not conducted in the Overseas Territories, we drop the Overseas constituency.

Italy is divided into five sub-national constituencies, which are aggregates of NUTS-2 regions. Poland is divided into 13 constituencies which correspond to or are aggregates of NUTS-2 regions.

Poland is divided into 13 constituencies. Given that Eurobarometer and Eurostat (until 2016) report only aggregate data for the Masovian Voivodeship (NUTS-1 region PL9), we treat the Warsaw and Masovian constituencies as one constituency.

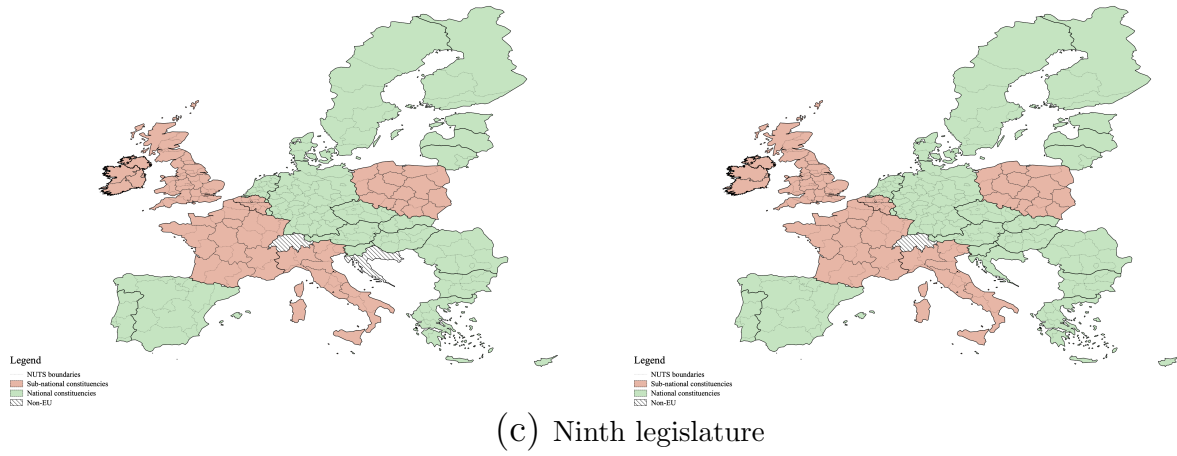
Ireland is divided into two constituencies during the seventh legislature and three constituencies during the eighth and ninth legislatures. The boundaries of the constituencies change from one legislature to another, and they do not correspond to NUTS-2 regions. We construct measures at the constituency level in several steps using the same procedure as for creating fixed-border NUTS-2 regions.

While it a member of the EU, the United Kingdom was divided into 12 constituencies, all of which were aggregates of NUTS-2 regions.

Figure A-4
EP constituencies and NUTS-2 regions

(a) Seven legislature

(b) Eighth legislature



Notes: The figure shows the constituencies in which MEPs were elected during the seventh, eighth, and ninth legislatures of the EP. Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Poland, the United Kingdom, and France (until the ninth legislature) were divided in sub-national constituencies; all other member states had a national constituency. With the exception of Ireland, all EP constituencies are aggregates of (or overlap with) NUTS-2 regions.

Table A-1
Organization of EP elections across member states

Country	Constituencies	Electoral system	Allocation method	Threshold	Source
Austria	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	5%	link
Belgium	Three sub-national constituencies	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Bulgaria	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	Hare quota method	None	link
Croatia	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	5%	link
Cyprus	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	Hare quota method	1.8%	link
Czech Republic	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	5%	link
Denmark	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Estonia	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Finland	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
France	Eight sub-national constituencies (2009-19); Single constituency (2019-)	Closed-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	5%	link
Germany	Single constituency	Closed-list proportional representation	Sainte-Haguë method	5%	link
Greece	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	Hare quota method	3%	link
Hungary	Single constituency	Closed-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	5%	link
Ireland	Two sub-national constituencies (2009-14); Three sub-national constituencies (2014-)	Single-transferable voting	Droop quota, random apportionment	None	link
Italy	Five sub-national constituencies	Open-list proportional representation	Hare quota method	4%	link
Latvia	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	Sainte-Haguë method	4%	link
Lithuania	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	Hare quota	5%	link
Luxembourg	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Malta	Single constituency	Single-transferable voting	Droop quota, random apportionment	None	link
Netherlands	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Poland	Thirteen sub-national constituencies	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	5%	link
Portugal	Single constituency	Closed-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Romania	Single constituency	Closed-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	5%	link
Slovakia	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	Droop quota method	5%	link
Slovenia	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Spain	Single constituency	Closed-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link
Sweden	Single constituency	Open-list proportional representation	Scandinavian method	4%	link
United Kingdom	Twelve sub-national constituencies	Closed-list proportional representation	D'Hondt method	None	link

Notes: The table presents information on how EP elections are organized across EU members states.

A-4 MEPs' birthplace and domestic political career

Table A-2
MEPs' birthplace and political attachment

Country	# MEPs	Birthplace available	Candidate national parliament	Elected national parliament	Elected regional parliament
Austria	45	44 (97.78%)	30 (66.67%)	13 (28.89%)	–
Belgium	48	41 (85.42%)	26 (54.17%)	11 (22.92%)	20 (41.67%)
Bulgaria	42	39 (92.86%)	30 (71.43%)	22 (52.38%)	–
Croatia	20	15 (75.00%)	10 (50.00%)	9 (45.00%)	–
Cyprus	15	–	–	–	–
Czech Republic	49	47 (95.92%)	33 (67.35%)	19 (38.78%)	–
Denmark	29	29 (100%)	20 (68.97%)	15 (51.72%)	–
Estonia	16	–	–	–	–
Finland	33	33 (100%)	32 (96.97%)	27 (81.82%)	–
France	176	157 (89.20%)	96 (54.55%)	27 (15.34%)	–
Germany	190	181 (95.26%)	70 (36.84%)	19 (10.00%)	57 (30.00%)
Greece	57	49 (85.96%)	23 (40.35%)	15 (26.32%)	–
Hungary	44	37 (84.09%)	34 (77.27%)	18 (40.91%)	–
Ireland	26	–	–	–	–
Italy	176	171 (97.16%)	95 (53.98%)	49 (27.84%)	–
Latvia	19	–	–	–	–
Lithuania	24	21 (87.50%)	21 (87.50%)	13 (54.17%)	–
Luxembourg	13	–	–	–	–
Malta	13	–	–	–	–
Netherlands	56	52 (92.86%)	–	–	–
Poland	116	113 (97.41%)	98 (84.48%)	87 (75.00%)	–
Portugal	50	40 (80.00%)	27 (54.00%)	18 (36.00%)	–
Romania	72	71 (98.61%)	46 (63.89%)	35 (48.61%)	–
Slovakia	30	29 (96.67%)	–	–	–
Slovenia	17	–	–	–	–
Spain	134	123 (91.79%)	66 (49.25%)	40 (29.85%)	62 (46.27%)
Sweden	52	45 (86.54%)	39 (75.00%)	26 (50.00%)	–
United Kingdom	153	131 (85.62%)	86 (56.21%)	7 (4.58%)	11 (7.19%)
Total	1,715	1,468 (85.60%)	882 (51.43%)	470 (27.41%)	150 (8.75%)

Notes: We drop from the final sample MEPs who were elected in different countries during their tenure in the EP (2 MEPs), and MEPs who were only elected in the French Overseas constituency (4 MEPs). In identifying the region of birth, we discard MEPs who were born in a different country than the one where they were elected in the EP (117 MEPs), MEPs born in regions for which we lack data on covariates (11 MEPs), MEPs born in the French Overseas constituencies (2 MEPs), MEPs from countries that are not divided into several NUTS-2 regions, including Slovenia (88 MEPs), MEPs born in Ireland (24 MEPs), and MEPs born in Brussels (5 MEPs). In identifying the region where MEPs ran and/or were elected to national parliaments, we do not consider countries that are not divided into several NUTS-2 regions, including Slovenia. We exclude from the sample Ireland due to NUTS-2 border changes over time and the MEPs with a political career in Brussels. We further discard the Netherlands and Slovakia as their national parliaments have a single national constituency. We also drop MEPs who ran or were elected in regions for which we lack data on covariates.

National parliaments

Country	Chamber	# seats	Electoral rule	Constituencies	Election years	Source
Austria	The National Council (Nationalrat)	183	Open-list proportional representation	39 (43 before 2013) local electoral districts contained within NUTS-2 districts; seats not allocated at the local level are allocated to candidates running on 9 state lists, each corresponding to a NUTS-2 region; any remaining seats are allocated to candidates running on national lists	1999, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2013, 2017, 2019	link
Austria	The Federal Council (Bundesrat)	61	Appointment by the state legislatures according to proportional representation	9 states	Not collected	–
Belgium	Chamber of Representatives (Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, Chambre des Représentants)	150	Open-list proportional representation	11 electoral districts: 10 provinces (5 Dutch-speaking, 5 French-speaking) and Brussels; the electoral districts overlap with NUTS-2 regions	2003, 2007, 2010, 2014, 2019	link1 ; link2
Belgium	Senate (Senaat, Sénat, Senat)	50	Since 2014, 50 senators are appointed by and from the Parliaments of the federated entities; 10 are co-opted by their peers; before 2014; 40 senators were directly elected	4 federated entities	Not collected	–
Bulgaria	National Assembly (Narodno sabranie)	240	Open-list proportional representation; in 2009, 31 MPs were elected in single-member constituencies using first-past-the-post voting	31 constituencies: 27 provinces that overlap with NUTS-2 regions; Sofia is divided into three constituencies, and Plovdiv into two	2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2021 (Apr), 2021 (Jul), 2021 (Nov), 2022, 2023	link
Croatia	Croatian Parliament (Sabor)	151	Partly open-list proportional representation	10 electoral districts in continental Croatia: none districts are contained within a NUTS-2 region; one district spans over both NUTS-2 regions; 3 seats are reserved for Croatians living abroad, and 8 seats are reserved for minorities	2015, 2016, 2020	CLEA
Cyprus	House of Representatives	80	Open-list proportional representation	6 electoral districts	Not collected	–
Czech Republic	Chamber of Deputies (Poslanecká Sněmovna)	200	Open-list proportional representation	14 multi-member constituencies, which correspond to NUTS-3 regions	2002, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2017, 2021	link
Czech Republic	Senate (Sénát)	81	Two-round system	81 single-seat constituencies that may span over distinct NUTS-2 regions	2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022	link
Denmark	Danish Parliament (Folketing)	179	Open-list proportional representation	10 constituencies (17 before 2007) that overlap with NUTS-2 regions, with the exception of Aarhus (DK04 and DK05), Vejle (DK03 and DK04), and Viborg (DK03 and DK04)	2001, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, 2022	link
Estonia	Parliament of Estonia (Riigikogu)	101	Open-list proportional representation	12 constituencies	Not collected	–
Finland	Parliament of Finland (Suomen eduskunta)	200	Open-list proportional representation	13 multi-member districts and Åland; constituencies are contained within a NUTS-2 region, with the exception of South-Eastern Finland (FI1C4, FI1C5, and FI1D1) and Vaasa (FI1D5, FI195, and FI194)	1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019	link
France	National Assembly (Assemblée nationale)	577	Two-round system	577 constituencies contained within a département (NUTS-3 region)	1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2017, 2022	link1 ; link2 ; CLEA
France	Senate (Sénat)	348	Indirectly elected 150.000 officials (<i>grands électeurs</i>) using both a two-round system and proportional representation	109 constituencies	Not collected	–
Germany	Bundestag	598 nominal members	Mixed-member proportional representation: 299 (328 in 1998) seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by open-list at the federal level	Most single-member constituencies are contained within NUTS2 regions, with some exceptions; party lists are submitted at the state level (NUTS1 regions)	1998, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2017, 2021	link
Germany	Bundesrat	69	Appointed by state governments	Federal states	Not collected	–

National parliaments (cont.)

Country	Chamber	# seats	Electoral rule	Constituencies	Election years	Source
Greece	Hellenic Parliament (Ellinikó Koinovούlio)	300	250 seats by open-list proportional representation; 50 seats are allocated as a bonus to the party receiving the largest share of votes	56 constituencies overlapping with NUTS-3 regions	2007, 2009, 2012 (May), 2012 (June), 2015 (January), 2015 (September), 2019	link
Hungary	National Assembly (Országgyűlés)	386 (1998-2014); 199 (2014-)	Mixed-member proportional representation; 1998-2010: 176 MPs elected in single-member constituencies; 210 MPs elected on territorial and national lists; 2014-2022: 106 MPs elected in single-member constituencies by plurality; 93 MPs elected on party lists	Single-member constituencies and territorial lists are contained within NUTS-2 regions	1998; 2002; 2006; 2010; 2014; 2018; 2022	link ; CLEA
Ireland	Lower Chamber (Dáil Éireann)	166 (2002-2016); 158 (2016-2020); 160 (2020-)	Single-transferable voting	Most constituencies are contained within NUTS-2 regions with the exception of Longford-Roscommon (IE04 and IE06)	2002; 2007; 2011; 2016; 2020	link ; CLEA
Ireland	Upper Chamber (Seanad Éireann)	60	Single-transferable voting; not directly elected	–	Not collected	–
Italy	Senate (Senato)	315 (2001-2006); 307 (2006-2018); 315 (2018-2022); 200 (2022-)	2001-2006, 2018 - : Mixed member proportional representation: 232 (116 between 2018 and 2022, 74 since 2022) seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats are allocated to minority parties by a proportional method between 2001 and 2006; between 2018 and 2022, the remaining seats are elected in 37 (30 since 2022) multi-member constituencies; 2006-2018: Closed-list proportional representation, 1 seat by first-past-the-post voting in Aosta Valley	2001-2006: 232 single-member constituencies; 2006-2018: 22 multiple-member constituencies, 7 single-member constituencies; 2018-2022: 116 single-member constituencies, 37 multi-member constituencies; 2022 - 74 single-member constituencies; 30 multi-member constituencies; all constituencies are contained within a unique NUTS-2 region	2001; 2006; 2008; 2013; 2018; 2022	link
Italy	Chamber of Deputies (Camera dei deputati)	630 (2001-2006); 617 (2006-2018); 630 (2018-2022); 400 (2022-)	2001-2006, 2018 - : Mixed member proportional representation: 475 (232 between 2018 and 2022, 147 since 2022) seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats are elected in 26 (67 between 2018 and 2022, 53 since 2022) multi-member constituencies; 2006-2018: Closed-list proportional representation, 1 seat by first-past-the-post voting in Aosta Valley, 12 seats by open-list proportional representation for Italians living abroad	2001-2006: 475 single-member constituencies, 26 multiple-member constituencies; 2006-2018: 30 multiple-member constituencies, 1 single-member constituency; 2018-2022: 232 single-member constituencies, 67 multi-member constituencies; 2022 - 147 single-member constituencies; 53 multi-member constituencies	2001; 2006; 2008; 2013; 2018; 2022; all constituencies are contained within a unique NUTS-2 region	link1 ; link2
Latvia	Parliament (Saeima)	100	Open-list proportional representation	5 constituencies	Not collected	–
Lithuania	Parliament (Seimas)	141	Mixed member proportional representation: 71 seats are elected in single-member constituencies; 70 seats are elected at the national level by open-list proportional representation	71 electoral districts; their boundaries may not overall with NUTS-2 regions	2000; 2004; 2008; 2012; 2016; 2020	CLEA
Luxembourg	Chamber of Deputies	60	Open-list proportional representation	4 constituencies	Not collected	–
Malta	Parliament (Il-Parlament ta' Malta)	65+	Single-transferable voting; additional seats may be allocated to achieve proportional representation	13 electoral districts	Not collected	–
Netherlands	House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal)	150	Open-list proportional representation	Unique constituency	Not collected	–
Netherlands	Senate (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal)	75	Elected by the members of the States-Provincial and electoral colleges in the Caribbean Netherlands by proportional representation	Unique constituency	Not collected	–
Poland	Lower Chamber (Sejm)	460	Open-list proportional representation	41 electoral constituencies, contained within NUTS-2 regions	2001; 2005; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019	link ; CLEA
Poland	Upper Chamber (Senate)	100	2001-2011: plurality bloc voting – two or more candidates with the highest support are elected from each constituency; 2011 - : senators are elected in single-member constituencies by first-past-the-post voting	2001-2011: 36 multi-member constituencies; 2011 - : 100 single-member constituencies; all constituencies are contained within a unique NUTS-2 region	2001; 2005; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019	link ; CLEA

National parliaments (cont.)

Country	Chamber	# seats	Electoral rule	Constituencies	Election years	Source
Portugal	Assembly of the Republic (Assembleia da República)	230	Closed list proportional representation	22 electoral districts; some electoral districts spread over several NUTS-2 regions: Aveiro (PT11 and PT16), Guarda (PT11 and PT16), Lisboa (PT16, PT17, and PT18), Santarem (PT16 and PT18), Setubal (PT17 and PT19), Viseu (PT11 and PT16)	2005, 2009, 2011, 2015, 2019, 2022	link
Romania	Chamber of Deputies (Camera Deputaților)	345 (2000-2004); 332 (2004-2008); 334 (2008-2012); 412 (2012-2016); 329 (2016-)	2000-2008, 2016-2020: Closed-list proportional representation; 2008-2016: Mixed member proportional representation (a candidate wins a seat in his constituency is (s)he won more than 50% of votes; non-allocated seats are allocated using the d'Hondt system); additional seats may be added	2002-2008: 42 multi-member constituencies; 2008-2012: 315 single-member constituencies; 2012-2016: 316 single-member constituencies; 2016 - : 43 multi-member constituencies	2000; 2004; 2008; 2012; 2016; 2020	link1 ; link2 ; link3 ; link4 ; CLEA
Romania	Senate (Senat)	140 (2000-2004); 137 (2004-2012); 176 (2012-)	2000-2008, 2016-2020: Closed-list proportional representation; 2008-2016: Mixed member proportional representation (a candidate wins a seat in his constituency is (s)he won more than 50% of votes; non-allocated seats are allocated using the d'Hondt system); additional seats may be added	2002-2008: 42 multi-member constituencies; 2008-2012: 315 single-member constituencies; 2012-2016: 137 single-member constituencies; 2016 - : 43 multi-member constituencies	2000; 2004; 2008; 2012; 2016; 2020	link1 ; link2 ; link3 ; link4 ; CLEA
Slovakia	National Council (Národná rada Slovenskej republiky)	150	Open-list proportional representation	Unique constituency	Not collected	–
Slovenia	National Assembly (Državni zbor Republike Slovenije)	90	Open-list proportional representation	11 constituencies, that may not overlap with NUTS-2 boundaries	Not collected	–
Slovenia	National Council (Državni svet)	40	Indirectly elected by local council and functional constituencies	–	Not collected	–
Spain	Congress of Deputies (Congreso de los Diputados)	350	Closed-list proportional representation	52 constituencies that are contained within NUTS2 regions	2000; 2004; 2008; 2011; 2015; 2016; 2019 (Apr); 2019 (Nov)	link1 ; link2 ; link3
Spain	Senate (Senado)	266	208 senators directly elected by closed-list proportional representation; 58 additional senators designated by regional legislatures	52 constituencies that are contained within NUTS2 regions	2000; 2004; 2008; 2011; 2015; 2016; 2019 (Apr); 2019 (Nov)	link1 ; link2 ; link3
Sweden	Riksdag	349	310 MPs are elected through open-list proportional representation on multi-member party lists that are either regional or national; remaining seats are elected by proportional balancing	29 constituencies that are contained within NUTS-2 regions	2002; 2006; 2010; 2014; 2018; 2022	link
United Kingdom	House of Commons	659 (1997-2001); 646 (2005); 650 (2010-2019)	First-past-the-post voting method	Constituencies may spread across several NUTS-2 regions	1997; 2001; 2005; 2010; 2015; 2017; 2019	CLEA
United Kingdom	House of Lords	Varies	Spiritual and Temporal Lords, not directly elected	None	Not collected	–

Notes: We also collect data on substitutes.

Regional parliaments in Belgium

Region	# seats	Electoral rule	Constituencies	Election years	Source
Brussels	75 (1999-2004); 89 (2004-)	Open-list proportional voting	Single constituency	1999; 2004; 2009; 2014; 2019	link
Flanders	124	Open-list proportional voting	12 constituencies (1999-2004); 6 constituencies (2004-)	1999; 2004; 2009; 2014; 2019	link
German-speaking region	25	Open list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2004; 2009; 2014; 2019	link
Wallonia	75	Open-list proportional voting	13 constituencies (1999-2019); 11 constituencies (2019-)	1999; 2004; 2009; 2014; 2019	link

Notes: We also collect data on substitutes.

Regional parliaments in Germany

Region	# seats	Electoral rule	Constituencies	Election years	Source
Baden-Württemberg (DE1)	120+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 70 seats in single-member constituencies; 50 seats by proportional representation; additional leveling and overhang seats	70 constituencies	1996; 2001; 2006; 2011; 2016; 2021	link
Bavaria (DE2)	204 (1998-2003); 180+ (2003-)	Mixed-member proportional representation: 91 (102 in 1998, 92 in 2003) seats in single-member electoral districts; remaining seats using open lists in seven constituencies; additional leveling and overhang seats	91 (102 in 1998, 92 in 2003) electoral districts; 7 constituencies	1998; 2003; 2008; 2013; 2018	link
Berlin (DE3)	130+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 78 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using regional or state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	78 electoral districts; 12 (23 in 1999) regional lists	1999; 2001; 2006; 2011; 2016; 2021	link
Brandenburg (DE4)	89 (1999-2004); 88 (2004-)	Mixed-member proportional representation: 44 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists	44 electoral districts	1999; 2004; 2009; 2014; 2019	link
Bremen (DE5)	83	Open-list proportional representation	2 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019	link
Hamburg (DE6)	121+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 71 seats in multi-member constituencies via open lists; 50 additional seats elected at the state level via open lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	17 electoral districts	1997; 2001; 2004; 2008; 2011; 2015; 2020	link
Hesse (DE7)	110+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 55 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats at the state level via closed lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	55 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2008; 2009; 2013; 2018	link
Lower Saxony (DES)	135+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 87 (100 before 2008) seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	100 constituencies (1998-2008); 87 constituencies (2008-)	1998; 2003; 2008; 2013; 2017; 2022	link
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE9)	71+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 36 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	36 constituencies	1998; 2002; 2006; 2011; 2016; 2021	link
North Rhine-Westphalia (DEA)	181+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 128 (151 before 2005) seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	151 constituencies (2000-2005); 128 constituencies (2005-)	2000; 2005; 2010; 2012; 2017; 2022	link
Rhineland-Palatinate (DEB)	101+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 52 (51 before 2021) seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	51 constituencies (1996-2021); 52 constituencies (2021-)	1996; 2001; 2006; 2011; 2016; 2021	link
Saarland (DEC)	51	Proportional representation	3 constituencies	1999; 2004; 2009; 2012; 2017; 2022	link
Saxony (DED)	120+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 60 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	60 constituencies	1999; 2004; 2009; 2014; 2019	link
Saxony-Anhalt (DEE)	83+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 41-49 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	49 constituencies (1998-2006); 45 constituencies (2006-2016); 43 constituencies (2016-2021); 41 constituencies (2021-)	1998; 2002; 2006; 2011; 2016; 2021	link
Schleswig-Holstein (DEF)	69+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 35 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	45 constituencies (1996-2005); 40 constituencies (2005-2012); 35 constituencies (2012-)	1996; 2000; 2005; 2009; 2012; 2017; 2022	link
Thuringia (DEG)	88+	Mixed-member proportional representation: 44 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using state lists; additional leveling and overhang seats	44 constituencies	1999; 2004; 2009; 2014; 2019	link

Notes: We also collect data on substitutes.

Regional parliaments in Spain

Region	# seats	Electoral rule	Constituencies	Election years	Source
Andalusia (ES61)	109	Closed-list proportional representation	8 constituencies	2000; 2004; 2008; 2012; 2015; 2018; 2022	link
Aragon (ES24)	67	Closed-list proportional representation	3 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Asturias (ES12)	45	Closed-list proportional representation	3 electoral districts	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2012; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Balearic Islands (ES53)	59	Closed-list proportional representation	4 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Basque Country (ES21)	75	Closed-list proportional representation	3 constituencies	1998; 2001; 2005; 2009; 2012; 2016; 2020	link
Canary Islands (ES70)	60 (1999-2019); 70 (2019-)	Closed-list proportional representation	8 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Cantabria (ES13)	39 (1999-2015) 35 (2015-)	Closed-list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Castile–La Mancha (ES42)	47 (1999-2011); 49 (2011-2015); 33 (2015-)	Closed-list proportional representation	5 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Castile and Leon (ES41)	83 (1999-2003); 82 (2003-2007); 84 (2007-2019); 81 (2019-)	Closed-list proportional representation	9 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2022	link
Catalonia (ES51)	135	Closed-list proportional representation	4 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2006; 2010; 2012; 2015; 2017; 2021	link
Extremadura (ES43)	65	Closed-list proportional representation	3 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Galicia (ES11)	75	Closed-list proportional representation	4 constituencies	1997; 2001; 2005; 2009; 2012; 2016; 2020	link
La Rioja (ES23)	33	Closed-list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Madrid (ES30)	102 (1999-2003); 111 (2003-2007); 120 (2007-2011); 129 (2011-2019); 132 (2019-2021); 136 (2021-2023); 135 (2023-)	Closed-list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2021; 2023	link
Region of Murcia (ES62)	45	Closed-list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	NA
Navarre (ES22)	50	Closed-list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	NA
Valencian Community (ES52)	89 (1999-2007); 99 (2007-)	Closed-list proportional representation	3 constituencies	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	link
Ceuta (ES63)	25	Closed-list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	NA
Melilla (ES64)	25	Closed-list proportional representation	Single constituency	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2015; 2019; 2023	NA

Notes: PDFs with the results in each region are also available at this [link](#). Whenever possible, we also collect data on substitutes, except for the following regions: Navarre, Ceuta, and Melilla.

Regional parliaments in the United Kingdom

Region	# seats	Electoral rule	Constituencies	Election years	Source
Northern Ireland	108 (1998-2017); 90 (2017-)	Single transferable vote	18 constituencies	1998; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2016; 2017; 2022	link
Scotland	129	Mixed-member proportional representation: 73 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using regional lists	73 constituencies and 8 regions	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2016; 2021	link
Wales	60	Mixed-member proportional representation: 40 seats in single-member constituencies; remaining seats by proportional representation using regional lists	40 constituencies and 5 regions	1999; 2003; 2007; 2011; 2016; 2021	link

Notes: We also collect data on substitutes.

A-5 Additional datasets

Table A-3
Eurostat datasets

Dataset	Variables	Sample	Notes	Source
Population by educational attainment level, sex and NUTS 2 regions (%)	% Population with tertiary education	Both genders, age 25-64	Missing values for the UK in 2020	link
Employment by sex, age, economic activity and NUTS 2 regions (NACE Rev. 2)	Employment levels in aggregate sectors	Both genders, age 15-74, 10 industry groups	394 missing values	link
SBS data by NUTS 2 regions and NACE Rev. 2	Persons employed in two-digit sectors	67 two-digit industries	13,388 missing values out of 72,628	link
Unemployment rates by sex, age, educational attainment level and NUTS 2 regions (%)	Unemployment rate	All educational levels, both genders, age 15-74	15 missing values	link
Number of households by degree of urbanisation and NUTS 2 regions (1 000)	Urbanization rate	Degrees of urbanization: cities, towns and suburbs, rural areas	15 missing values	link
Eurobarometer	Favorable opinion on trade	Eurobarometer surveys 65.2, 67.2, 72.4, 82.3, 84.3, 85.2, 86.2, 87.2, 88.3, 89.1, 90.3, 91.5;	Classify “very positive” and “positive” images of trade as favorable opinions. Nuts regions not included: EL41, EL42, EL62, ES63, ES64, FI20, FRM0, FRY1-FRY5, PT20, PT30.	link
Eurobarometer	Trust in political parties	Eurobarometer surveys 65.2, 66.1, 66.3, 68.1, 69.2, 70.1, 71.3, 72.4, 73.4, 74.2, 76.3, 77.3, 78.1, 79.3, 80.1, 81.2, 81.4, 82.3, 83.3, 84.3, 85.2, 86.2, 87.3, 88.3, 89.1, 90.3, 91.2, 91.5, 92.3, 93.1	NUTS regions not included: EL41, EL42, EL62, ES63, ES64, FI20, FRM0, FRY1-FRY5, PT20, PT30.	link
Eurobarometer	Trust in the EU	Eurobarometer surveys 65.2, 66.1, 67.2, 68.1, 69.2, 70.1, 71.1, 71.3, 72.4, 73.4, 74.2, 75.3, 76.3, 77.3, 78.1, 79.3, 80.1, 81.2, 81.4, 82.3, 83.1, 83.3, 84.3, 85.2, 86.2, 87.2, 87.3, 88.3, 89.1, 90.3, 91.2, 91.5, 92.3, 93.1	NUTS regions not included: EL41, EL42, EL62, ES63, ES64, FI20, FRM0, FRY1-FRY5, PT20, PT30.	link
Eurobarometer	Ideological positioning on a left-right scale	Eurobarometer surveys 65.1, 65.2, 66.1, 66.3, 67.2, 68.1, 69.2, 70.1, 71.1, 71.3, 72.4, 73.4, 74.2, 75.3, 78.2, 79.5, 81.2, 81.4, 82.3, 83.1, 83.3, 84.3, 85.2, 86.2, 87.1, 87.2, 87.3, 88.3, 89.1, 90.3, 91.2, 91.5, 92.2, 92.3, 93.1, 94.2	NUTS regions not included: EL41, EL42, EL62, ES63, ES64, FI20, FRM0, FRY1-FRY5, PT20, PT30.	link

Table A-4
Matching service sectors in EBOPS2010 to NACE Rev. 2

EBOPS2010 codes	EBOPS2010 description	NACE Rev. 2 codes	NACE Rev. 2 description
SC	Transport	H49	Land transport and transport via pipelines
SC	Transport	H50	Water transport
SC	Transport	H51	Air transport
SC	Transport	H52	Warehousing and support activities for transportation
SC	Transport	H53	Postal and courier activities
SD	Travel	I55	Accommodation
SD	Travel	I56	Food and beverage service activities
SE	Construction	F41	Construction of buildings
SE	Construction	F42	Civil engineering
SE	Construction	F43	Specialised construction activities
SF	Insurance and pension services	K	Financial and Insurance Activities
SG	Financial services	K	Financial and Insurance Activities
SI	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	J58	Publishing activities
SI	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	J59	Motion picture, video and television programme production, sound recording and music publishing activities
SI	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	J60	Programming and broadcasting activities
SI	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	J61	Telecommunications
SI	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	J62	Computer programming, consultancy and related activities
SI	Telecommunications, computer, and information services	J63	Information service activities

Notes: The table shows how we manually match the Extended Balance of Payments Services classification used in the WTO-OECD Balanced Trade in Services to the NACE Rev. 2 classification used in the Eurostat's Structural Business Statistics.

A-6 Descriptive statistics

Table A-5
MEP-constituency variables

	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>Export Share</i> _{<i>np,c(k),a,t</i>}	6,332	0.41	0.24	0.00	0.95
<i>Export Share</i> _{<i>np,c(k),a,t</i>} (with services)	6,332	0.55	0.16	0.16	0.94
<i>Tertiary Education</i> _{<i>np,c(k),T</i>}	1,152	24.80	7.19	11.59	39.32
<i>Unemployment</i> _{<i>np,c(k),T</i>}	1,152	6.97	2.52	2.87	17.32
<i>Urban</i> _{<i>np,c(k),T</i>}	1,152	70.56	19.86	10.40	99.98
<i>Left-Right Index</i> _{<i>np,c(k),T</i>}	1,152	5.38	0.53	3.51	6.51
<i>Trust in Political Parties</i> _{<i>np,c(k),T</i>}	1,152	17.84	11.61	2.50	55.22
<i>Trust in EU</i> _{<i>np,c(k),T</i>}	1,152	56.02	15.38	16.41	79.98
<i>Pro-Trade Opinions</i> _{<i>np,c(k),t</i>}	3,864	80.66	9.03	45.94	100

Notes: See Section 2 for details on the sources of the data and the construction of the variables.

Table A-6
MEP variables

	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>Vote</i> _{<i>i,a,t</i>}	9,962	0.76	0.42	0.00	1.00
<i>Female</i> _{<i>i</i>}	1,715	0.37	0.48	0.00	1.00
<i>Age</i> _{<i>i,t</i>}	10,542	53.37	10.93	21.81	92.31
<i>Tenure</i> _{<i>i,t</i>}	10,542	5.94	5.57	0.00	38.70
<i>Re-elected</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}	2,083	0.44	0.50	0.00	1.00
<i>Congruence Trade Votes</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}	2,083	0.53	0.18	0.02	0.98
<i>Legislative Effort</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}	2,083	6.13	0.77	1.10	6.90
<i>Party Loyalty</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}	1,981	0.95	0.10	0.29	1.00

Notes: See Section 2 for details on the sources of the data and the construction of the variables.

Table A-7
Agreement variables

	N	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>log GDP</i> _{<i>a</i>}	16	18.13	2.54	13.32	22.30
<i>log Population</i> _{<i>a</i>}	16	9.69	1.90	5.21	11.76
<i>WTO membership</i> _{<i>a</i>}	16	0.92	0.26	0.00	1.00
<i>log Distance</i> _{<i>k,a</i>}	448	8.81	0.76	5.88	9.77
<i>Common Language</i> _{<i>k,a</i>}	448	0.06	0.23	0.00	1.00
<i>Colonial Ties</i> _{<i>k,a</i>}	448	0.03	0.16	0.00	1.00
<i>Diplomatic Disagreement</i> _{<i>k,a</i>}	448	1.01	0.65	0.00	2.90

Notes: See Section 2 for details on the sources of the data and the construction of the variables.

A-7 Additional results and robustness checks

Table A-8
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(linear probability model)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.080*** (0.016)	0.078*** (0.016)	0.069*** (0.017)	0.085*** (0.017)	0.104*** (0.023)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962
Estimation method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS
R-squared	0.599	0.599	0.607	0.613	0.628

Notes: This table reports the coefficients of a linear probability model. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-9
First stage IV

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Export Share</i> $IV_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.835*** (0.014)	0.836*** (0.014)	0.851*** (0.014)	0.850*** (0.013)	0.721*** (0.015)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,848
Estimation method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS

Notes: This table reports the first step of the IV logit specification. The dependent variable *Export Share* $IV_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ is defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The control variable *Export Share* $IV_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ is defined in equation (7). The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-10

MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(2SLS)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.088*** (0.019)	0.086*** (0.019)	0.072*** (0.019)	0.091*** (0.020)	0.122*** (0.030)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962
Estimation method	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS	2SLS
KP F-statistic	3,363	3,403	3,766	3,984	2,228

Notes: This table reports the coefficients on the export share estimated using a two-stage-least-squares model. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The instrument $Export\ Share\ IV_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ is defined in equation (7). The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-11
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(including MEP fixed effects)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Export Share</i> _{<i>np,c(k),a,t-1</i>}	3.046*** (0.563)	3.621*** (0.661)	3.623*** (0.674)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
MEP FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,324	3,324	3,324
Estimation method	c. logit	c. logit	c.logit

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share estimated using a conditional logit model and evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-12
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(including MEP fixed effects, linear probability model)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Export Share</i> _{<i>np,c(k),a,t-1</i>}	0.125*** (0.022)	0.114*** (0.023)	0.123*** (0.023)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
MEP FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,773	9,773	9,773
Estimation method	OLS	OLS	OLS
R-squared	0.725	0.730	0.732

Notes: This table reports the coefficients of the export share estimated using a linear probability model. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-13
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(including FTA fixed effects)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Export Share</i> _{<i>np,c(k),a,t-1</i>}	0.066*** (0.018)	0.064*** (0.018)	0.057*** (0.017)	0.061*** (0.016)	0.067*** (0.016)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
FTA FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,848
Estimation method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS
Pred. probability	0.751	0.751	0.750	0.751	0.749

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-14
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(abstentions as negative votes)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.101*** (0.027)	0.098*** (0.027)	0.090*** (0.028)	0.112*** (0.028)	0.152*** (0.037)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	10,542	10,542	10,542	10,542	10,501
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.722	0.722	0.722	0.722	0.721

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it or abstains. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socio-economic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-15
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(abstentions as positive votes)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.057*** (0.016)	0.056*** (0.016)	0.051*** (0.016)	0.059*** (0.015)	0.072*** (0.017)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	10,542	10,542	10,542	10,542	10,426
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.777	0.777	0.777	0.777	0.775

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t or abstains, and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socio-economic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-16
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(including tradable services)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.056** (0.024)	0.050** (0.024)	0.078*** (0.025)	0.060** (0.023)	-0.001 (0.023)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,848
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.751	0.751	0.751	0.752	0.749

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the trade policy interest of MEP i 's EU electorate vis-à-vis the FTA with a in the year before the vote. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-17
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade opinions of their electorate

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Pro-Trade Opinions</i> $s_{np,c(k),t-1}$	0.003*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Legislator controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,962	9,848
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.751	0.751	0.751	0.752	0.749

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Pro-Trade Opinions_{np,c(k),t-1}$ captures pro-trade opinions of the electorate of national party np in country k in the most recent Eurobarometer survey. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-18
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(excluding domestic regional interests)

	Region of birth (1)	Region of candidacy (2)	Domestic constituency (3)
<i>Export Share</i> $_{i,np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.092*** (0.020)	0.099*** (0.021)	0.100*** (0.022)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
MEP controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,472	8,677	8,738
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.742	0.740	0.737

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$, which is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. $Export\ Share_{i,np,c(k),a,t-1}$ captures the trade policy interests of the MEP's constituency as defined in equation (4), but excludes regions to which the legislator may be attached. In column 1, the variable excludes the MEP's region of birth; in column 2, it excludes the region he/she ran to represent in national elections; in column 3, it excludes the region he/she represented in the national or regional parliament. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-19
MEPs' responsiveness to the trade interests of their electorate
(controlling for large firms)

	Employment > 250 (1)	Employment > 50 (2)
<i>Export Share</i> $_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$	0.092*** (0.019)	0.092*** (0.019)
<i>Large Firms</i> $_{k,t-1}$	0.069 (0.049)	0.116** (0.056)
Agreement controls	Yes	Yes
MEP controls	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	Yes	Yes
Political controls	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	9,848	9,848
Estimation method	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.749	0.749

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of the export share from logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$ is equal to 1 if MEP i (elected in constituency c of country k from national party np belonging to European political group ep) votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$ defined in equation (4) captures the interest of national party np in constituency c vis-à-vis agreement a in the year before the vote. The variable $Large\ Firms_{k,t-1}$ is the logarithm of one plus the number of firms with more than 250 employees (column 1) or above 50 employees (column 2) in country k and year $t - 1$. The agreement controls capture characteristics of the trading partner(s) in agreement a (GDP, population, and an indicator for WTO membership) and of the relationship between EU country k and the partner(s) of agreement a (distance, common language, common border, colonial ties, and UN diplomatic disagreement score). All the agreement variables are measured in 2008. The legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the MEP. The socioeconomic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections, and are interacted with year-specific fixed effects. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-20

Responsiveness of US and EU legislators to the trade interests of their electorate

	(1)	(2)
$Export\ Share_{c,t-1}$	0.128* (0.077)	
$Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t-1}$		0.093*** (0.019)
Legislator controls	Yes	Yes
Agreement FE	Yes	Yes
Party FE	Yes	Yes
Constituency FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,664	9,848
Estimation method	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.687	0.748

Notes: This table reports marginal effects of a logit model evaluated at sample means. In column 1 (column 2), the dependent variable is the indicator variable $Vote_{i(c,p),a,t}$ ($Vote_{i(c(k),np,ep),a,t}$), which is equal to 1 if US legislator (MEP) i , elected in US state (EU constituency of country k) c , and belonging to party p (national party np belonging to European political group ep), votes in favor of agreement a in year t , and 0 if (s)he votes against it. The variable $Export\ Share_{c,t}$ is the share of jobs in export-oriented industries for constituency c , obtained using data in Conconi *et al.* (2014). In column 2 the $Export\ Share_{np,c(k),a,t}$ is defined as in our baseline specification (Table 1). In all columns, the legislator controls include gender, age, and tenure of the US legislators and MEPs. In column 1 (2), the agreement fixed effects are defined at the FTA-chamber (FTA) level, given the bicameral (unicameral) structure of the US Congress (EP). In column 1 (2), the constituency fixed effects are at the US state c (EP constituency c of member state k) level. Robust standard errors, clustered at the legislator level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

Table A-21
MEPs' trade responsiveness and re-election
(abstracting from differences in the size of trade agreements)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Congruence Trade Votes</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}	0.115*	0.127**	0.146**	0.126*	0.146*
	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.076)	(0.083)
<i>Legislative Effort</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}					0.389***
					(0.061)
<i>Party Loyalty</i> _{<i>i,T</i>}					0.502***
					(0.162)
MEP controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political controls	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Term FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Political Group FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
EP Constituency FE	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,083	2,083	2,083	2,077	1,971
Estimation method	logit	logit	logit	logit	logit
Pred. probability	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.440	0.441

Notes: This table reports the marginal effects of logit regressions, evaluated at sample means. The dependent variable is an indicator variable equal to 1 if MEP *i* (elected in constituency *c* of country *k* from national party *np*, belonging to European political group *ep*) is re-elected at the end of the term. *Congruence Trade Votes*_{*i,T*} is the simple average of the shares of the electorate whose interests align with *i*'s trade votes during term *T*. *Legislative Effort*_{*i,T*} is the log of the number of final votes cast by MEP *i* during term *T*. *Party Loyalty*_{*i,T*} captures the extent to which an MEP has been loyal to his/her national party group. The legislator controls include age, gender, and tenure in the MEP. The socio-economic controls include the share of people with tertiary education, the unemployment rate, and the urbanization rate, while the political controls include the ideological positioning of the constituents and trust levels in political parties and the EU. Socio-economic and political controls are constructed combining pre-determined (measured in 2008) regional characteristics with the vote shares of national parties in the previous European elections. Robust standard errors, clustered at the MEP level, are reported in parentheses. * significant at the 10% level, ** significant at the 5% level, *** significant at the 1% level.

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