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Impact of career paths on MEPs' activities

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Abstract¹

The increasing powers of the European Parliament (EP) in recent decades have made the EP a more attractive institution for ambitious politicians keen to build their political career in the EU's multi-level system. A key contribution to the debate about the career paths of MEPs is Scarrow (1997). Her work, which identified three different career paths taken by MEPs, has been widely cited and used as a basis for other studies on this topic. Building on Scarrow's work, this paper describes two additional categories of MEPs – former national politicians and 'one-off' MEPs – and links MEPs' careers with their activities in Parliament. It finds that over and above the factors that have previously been identified as influential on an MEP's behaviour, his or her career path and ambitions are relevant in explaining certain legislative behaviour across member states and party groups.

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Introduction

Politicians are not only focused on reaching desired policy outcomes; they also consider how their legislative participation can enhance their individual career ambitions. In *Ambitions and Politics*, Schlesinger (1966) observed that politicians change their behaviour in accordance with their career ambitions. Politicians are not only interested in serving the needs of their current constituents but are also forward-looking in identifying the constituents that they would like to serve in the future. A multi-level governance system, such as the EU, provides an interesting laboratory for examining politicians' ambitions.

The new powers granted to the EP from the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s placed MEPs on an equal footing with the Council in most policy areas, making the EP a more attractive institution for ambitious career politicians. MEPs can be at very different stages of their career when they enter the EP. This has also changed over time. At the beginning of the 1980s, many MEPs had political experience at the national level, something that was less the case in the 1990s (Beauvallet & Michon, 2010). A key contribution to the debate about the career paths of MEPs is Scarrow (1997). Her work, in which she focuses on how EP membership fits into the political career paths of MEPs, has been widely cited and used as a basis for other studies on this topic. Scarrow captures the different types of career paths in three categories: 1) the young 'stepping-stone' politicians aiming for a career in domestic politics; 2) the long-term 'EP-careerists'; and 3) the short-term MEPs close to retirement or looking for a career outside politics.

Building on Scarrow's work, and that of those who have followed her, this paper considers whether Scarrow's approach of using a politician's career background as an indicator for predicting future career ambitions is sufficient. It is likely that a politician's career background, combined with age, does not provide enough information to identify all

the different career trajectories of MEPs. Adding observed behaviour to the analysis should improve our understanding of a politician's career ambitions. It is argued that linking past experience with observed behaviour and career ambitions identifies two other categories of MEPs in addition to the three already described by Scarrow, and would improve our understanding of the different career ambitions of MEPs. The first new category is of MEPs who have already had a political career at national level, but are not close to retirement. Because of the increase in powers of the EP over the past few decades, building a career in the EP has become an interesting alternative option for these politicians. The second new category is of 'one-off' MEPs who only stay in the EP for a short period of time. They have no political experience, nor do they pursue one after their time in the EP. This category covers a range of different profiles, for example party loyalists who have been rewarded by their national party or non-political public figures. It may also include politicians who were expected to be promising candidates but turn out to be poor quality politicians.

As Hall (1996) argues for the representatives in the US Congress, parliamentarians face two decisions on every issue that comes up: which position to take and how active to be. This paper will examine whether the career paths of MEPs can explain their level of legislative activity and whether using observed behaviour can provide a better indication of career ambition than considering past experience alone. For this paper an original dataset is used which includes data of MEPs who were active in the first half of the sixth EP (2004-07). The impact of the different types of MEPs on behaviour is analyzed in a number of OLS regression models where certain types of activities were included as dependent variables. The empirical findings broadly confirm the existence of different types of MEPs, and their associated career trajectories in the multi-level EU context. Those MEPs interested in developing a career in the EP are generally more active, in particular in those areas which fit within their career paths. MEPs who are not aiming for – or able to secure – a long-term

career in the EP, focus their activities on other areas, some of which are probably outside the EP. This is in line with Schlesinger's finding of politicians who change their behaviour in accordance with their career ambitions.

The career paths of MEPs are relevant to their level of engagement and should not be ignored in future studies on their activities. The analysis in this paper shows that there are types of MEPs that can be identified across countries and across party groups, and that this can in certain situations explain an MEP's behaviour. Therefore, over and above these factors of influence that have already been identified to have an impact on the legislative activity of an MEP and the ambition they demonstrate, career paths are a further relevant factor that should be taken into account. This paper shows that combining past career activities with observed activity in Parliament, leads to better predictions about a politician's career ambitions than looking at someone's career background in combination with age alone.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, existing literature on political ambition theory and the career paths of MEPs is discussed and it is explained why the categorization developed by Scarrow should be expanded. Second, the link is made with the activities of MEPs, and hypotheses are put forward which set out the possible expected differences in activities between the different types of MEPs. After an explanation of the operationalization of the variables, the empirical results are presented and discussed.

Different types of MEPs and their levels of activity

In contemporary politics, where becoming a politician is considered to be a profession in itself, it is important to understand the career ambitions of politicians. Career politicians not only focus on policies that aim to benefit society, they also consider how their legislative participation can enhance their individual ambitions. It can be expected that politicians adjust

their behaviour to increase their chances of being promoted to their preferred political position. Some politicians will look to move to a higher political office whereas others wish to pursue a career in the legislature they are currently in, or leave politics altogether. These career ambitions are expected to impact the choices politicians make in their current position. Schlesinger (1966), in one of the first comprehensive attempts to study political career ambitions, identified that political ambitions can manifest themselves in three different forms: discrete, static and progressive. Discretely ambitious politicians only seek to be in office for a limited period of time whereas politicians with static ambitions aim to stay in office for as long as possible. The third category of progressive politicians describes those who seek to obtain a *higher* political office.

Careers influence the way politicians behave and participate; a key incentive here is the desire to get re-elected. Politicians aiming to be re-elected, or elected to a different office, can be expected to direct their activities towards achieving that goal. Hibbing (1986) showed for example that Representatives in the House of Congress alter their voting behaviour in line with the constituency that they hope to serve in the future. Russo (2011) identified that re-election incentives can have a significant influence on the behaviour of MPs in the Italian Parliament. He found that seeking re-election, either as a constituency MP or as a local politician, incentivizes parliamentarians to engage in constituency service. Concerns of re-election have an impact on politicians' activities as is also shown by Bernacker (2014) in his analysis of activities of MPs in the German Bundestag, where he found that MPs from opposition parties competing in marginal seats are significantly more active in Parliament than colleagues who are more secure of keeping control of their seat. In the UK context Allen (2012) proved that the political experience a politician obtains prior to becoming an MP can influence his behaviour once elected and impact his future career trajectory. This shows that re-election, or election to a different office, affect the behaviour of politicians in the

institution they are active, which explains the importance of linking the different types of politicians to their activities in Parliament.

Schlesinger's political ambition theory has been widely applied in the US (see e.g. Black, 1972, Rhode, 1979, Hibbing, 1986), but less so in the EU context, while its multi-level governance system provides an interesting opportunity to consider political career ambitions (Borchert & Stolz, 2011). In the EU, national political office is still considered to be the highest political office and elections to the EP are therefore still seen as 'second-order' (Hix & Marsh, 2011). However, for professional politicians, the creation and the development of the EP has provided new career opportunities and various ways of moving between territorial levels have become possible (Borchert & Stolz, 2011). It can be assumed that in this multi-level setup, politicians optimize their behaviour in pursuit of their career goals.

Scarrow (1997) studied the political experience and career paths of MEPs from the four countries with the largest delegations in the EP (France, Germany, Italy and the UK). She considered MEPs' previous elective office experience, both at national and sub-national level, and identified three different categories. First, a group of MEPs who use their EP membership as a stepping-stone towards election to national political office. Second, a group of MEPs who are committed to their European role for a longer period of time, which she calls the 'European careerists'. Third, a group of MEPs who stay in the EP for only a short space of time following retirement from national elected office, or who use their brief EP membership as a stepping-stone towards a position in non-elective public office or in the private sector. The direct election of the EP and its increase in powers has made this institution an interesting career opportunity for politicians. It has been argued that for a growing number of actors, the EP provides for a route to political professionalization and development (Scarrow, 1997; Stolz, 2001). Evidence suggests that it is indeed the case that more and more MEPs build a

career in the EP (Whitaker, 2014) and develop as an elite with a European political career (Verzichelli & Edinger, 2005).

Scarrow has not been the only contributor to the academic literature on the career paths of MEPs. Apart from more descriptive information about the background of MEPs which is available in some textbooks (e.g. Corbett et al., 2011), a limited group of scholars has focused in more detail on EP candidates' experience in national or regional politics, or MEPs' post-EP career (e.g. Beauvallet & Michon, 2010; Hobolt & Høyland, 2011; Meserve et al., 2009; Gherghina & Chiru, 2010; Hix et al., 2012). The overall number of studies on career paths and ambitions of MEPs covering pre- and post-EP positions is, however, small, in particular in comparison with the number of studies available on US Congressmen's career paths. For those studies which are available, Scarrow's categorization is often still, at the very least, a point of reference. An example of the application of Scarrow's categorization is Poguntke et al. (2007), who use Scarrow's typology to describe the development of a distinctive EP career path and the impact that such a path might have on national parties' policy positioning. In Hix, Raunio & Scully (2003) too, which takes stock of fifty years of research on the EP, Scarrow is the main author mentioned in the context of career paths of MEPs. Given that Scarrow's work dates back nearly twenty years, it is important to assess the extent to which her work is still applicable or needs to be updated. It can be questioned whether a politician's career background, combined with age, is a sufficient indicator of future career ambition and provides enough information to identify all the different career trajectories of MEPs. Analyzing career background and its effect on observed behaviour could provide a better explanation and prediction about a politician's career ambitions. This paper aims to connect the career paths of MEPs with observed behaviour in order to reach more credible conclusions about the different career ambitions that politicians demonstrate.

In this paper, it is argued that the expansion of the powers of the EP has attracted a new type of politician. These are politicians who have already had a career at national level, either as an MP or a member of government, whose political life at national level has come to an end. For these politicians, a career in the EP has now become an interesting alternative. It could be argued that these MEPs simply become EP careerists as already described by Scarrow. However, there are a few reasons why these two categories are distinct from each other. An MEP with a previous domestic political career can be expected to have closer connections with the national party and have a greater network among politicians who are still active in domestic politics. Given the importance of inter-institutional connections for example with the Council (Høyland, 2006), an MEP with a domestic political background might be better positioned to take on certain rapporteurships which could enhance his ability to build a career in the EP compared with an EP careerist. MEPs with a domestic political background are more likely to enter at a higher level in the EP with a better chance of obtaining high-profile rapporteurships or senior positions. National experience means that a politician has already proven his qualities. This is likely to give these politicians an advantage over EP careerists.

It is also thought that the category of retiring politicians and those who are an MEP for only a short period of time, as described in Scarrow's analysis, in fact encompasses two different types of MEPs who behave differently and have different career ambitions. This category should therefore be split into two: one for EP retirees and another for MEPs who are elected for a short period of time and who are not career politicians; a category which could be referred to as 'one-off' MEPs. This type of MEP does not typically have a domestic political career either before or after his time in the EP, and typically stays in the EP for two terms at most. It is important to separate this new category of 'one-off' MEPs from the retiring MEPs as these two groups have very different interests in participating in the EP's

work. The former group includes party loyalists who have been rewarded by their party with one or two terms in the EP for service to the party, but who do not pursue a political career there. It also includes MEPs who are public figures outside of politics and who are able to appeal to certain parts of the electorate. Finally, this category also includes MEPs who turn out to be poor-quality politicians and who are deemed unfit for a political career at either the European or domestic political level. For this last group of ‘one-off’ MEPs, their ambition might never be truly revealed as they are considered to be poor-quality politicians. It must be admitted that this category is difficult to operationalize and may consist of further subcategories. This category is heterogeneous which makes it difficult to develop a theoretical expectation. The results of any analysis of this category will therefore need to be interpreted with caution as the theoretical expectations for this group can be multiple. However, the fact that the ‘one-off’ MEPs have very different backgrounds, as well as very different career ambitions from the retiring MEPs has an impact on the activities they are expected to show and justifies their existence as a distinct category.

In this paper, it will be tested whether the different types of MEPs show different levels of activity in the Parliament. The activities and participation of MEPs can be measured in many different ways. In his study of the US Congress, Hall (1996) identified two modes of legislative participation of Congressmen: formal and informal. Much of MEPs’ work takes place in formal committees and the plenary, while informal work often takes place behind the scenes without any official note-taking. Formal participation can, however, often be seen as a good indicator of who has participated behind the scenes (Hall, 1996). An MEP who takes up a rapporteurship can be expected to spend considerable time not only on drafting a report, but also talking to EP colleagues, other EU institutions and lobbyists. The formal participation of a rapporteur is thereby an indication of considerable informal participation as well.

Hypotheses

As discussed, one could expect that different types of MEPs would display different levels of activity, as they are at different stages of their career, are of different ages, and have different work experience and career goals. For the first type, the young and unexperienced MEPs, it could be expected that they would try to use their time in the EP as a training period for a career in domestic politics and to build up a profile for the national party leadership. They could therefore be expected to be less actively involved in the detailed legislative work of the EP, but rather to spend a considerable amount of time with the national party and their constituency. These lower levels of activity by young and unexperienced politicians was also found Bailer and Ohmura (2013) in their analysis of the German Bundestag, where they showed that young politicians had lower levels of activity at the beginning of their political career than the average Member of the Bundestag.

For the second type, the MEPs who are close to retirement, it could be expected that, although they have domestic political experience, they are in the process of winding down their political life, and this should be noticeable in their activities. It could be expected that these MEPs have little or no interest in engaging actively in the day-to-day work of the Parliament in terms of tabling motions, asking questions or writing reports. The effect was found elsewhere as well, for example, in the German Bundestag (Bailer & Ohmura, 2013).

The EP-careerists, the third type of MEP, on the other hand, are focused on a long-term career in the EP and could be expected to be particularly keen to develop good relationships with the EP and European party group (EPG) leadership. They would therefore be expected to participate actively in the Parliament's work. The idea that politicians who are member of a legislature for a longer period of time are more actively involved in the institution's work, is also found at national level legislatures, for example in Poland where experienced MPs are

more deeply involved in the legislative process than newcomers (Shabad and Slomczynski, 2002).

For the fourth type of MEPs, the new category of politicians with national experience, who are looking to build a career in the EP, it could be expected that they would show levels of active engagement similar to that of the EP-careerists. However, they are likely to enter at a higher level given their national experience and are more easily able to build up a senior profile in the EP relatively quickly than the EP careerists. This should help them in obtaining, for example, relevant rapporteurship positions while not necessarily displaying the same level of effort in being involved in the day-to-day work of the EP (e.g. attending plenary voting sessions) as EP careerists do. This fourth type of MEPs is more likely to acquire certain privileges from early on.

The fifth type of MEPs, those who only stay in the EP for a relatively short period and who are not career politicians, could be expected to have limited interest or capability in impressing the political leadership of either their national party or EPG. They would therefore not show significant levels of activity or involvement in the Parliament's work. This group also includes MEPs who turn out to be of poorer quality than expected and are therefore given less responsibility than other MEPs. This should be visible, for example, in the number of rapporteurships they are awarded, which should be relatively lower. At the same time the poor quality MEPs might still show activity levels similar to national or EP careerists in areas over which they have complete control and for which they do not need the support from their political leadership, such as attending plenary sessions. As discussed before, this group is heterogeneous and consists of a number of subcategories which makes the development of theoretical expectations difficult. It is therefore important that this category is set up as a separate group, distinct from the other categories of MEPs. Although desirable, breaking up

this category further into subcategories would be very complicated and an analysis of the MEPs' characteristics at such individual level would go beyond the scope of this paper.

MEPs' activity levels are, however, unlikely to be explained by their career trajectory alone, and other factors should therefore also be taken into account by including them as control variables in the analyses; these are mentioned in the operationalization section of this paper. Finally, the committee that an MEP belongs to could also be expected to have an impact on the level of that MEP's legislative activity. For instance, members of a more powerful committee which can have a significant impact on policy outcomes could be expected to be more active than those working on committees whose work has hardly any influence on legislation.

Operationalization

The assertions set out above are tested in this paper by means of a new dataset covering those MEPs who served the full period of the first half of the sixth EP from July 2004 to January 2007, which compiles information on the member states that MEPs represent and on the characteristics and career paths of the individual MEPs. The sixth EP was selected as it is one of the most recent Parliaments on which sufficient data about post-EP careers could be collected at the start of this study. The EU15, rather than the EU25, was selected, as the MEPs from the ten accession states in 2004 had not been able to develop certain career paths and would therefore distort the analysis. The population size of the member state an MEP represents is included in the dataset in millions of inhabitants in 2004; this information was obtained from Eurostat. The first half of the sixth EP was selected (rather than the full sixth EP) as a number of MEPs normally moves to a different committee halfway an EP term. As this could lead to a drop in perceived activity (e.g. these MEPs joining a new committee are

not likely to table motions straightaway), it was decided to focus on the first half of the sixth EP to avoid a distortion of the data on this point. Data on committee membership was obtained from the EP website; the classification of EP committees in more or less powerful was devised by Yordanova (2009). Information about gender, age and national party of the MEPs, as well as the number of days in Parliament, was obtained from online sources such as the EP, MEPs' personal and national party websites.

The dataset also includes information on how many MEPs are from the same national party and whether the national party is represented in the Council. This information came from the ParlGov database (Döring and Manow, 2015). Bigger groups in the EP could dominate the work as they are better resourced and are better able to spread the workload among their members. Therefore the dataset includes information about the size of the national party and EPG of an MEP. Data on whether the national party is represented in the Council is included as well, as Høyland (2006) found that this could have an impact on an MEP's activity level in the form of rapporteurships obtained. The analysis does not include further data on political parties, such as their ideological positioning, although by including the EPGs as control variables, these effects are indirectly captured in the analyses. The MEP-specific variables focus in particular on Parliamentarians' professional background. Information on the career paths of MEPs was sourced from the EP website, MEPs' personal websites and, in some cases, from interviews given by MEPs in national and international media. This includes information about the careers of MEPs before the 2004 elections and after the 2009 elections. Career paths were coded by indicating whether an MEP had had a national political career as MP, senator, Minister or Prime Minister. It was also recorded whether MEPs had had careers outside of politics, for example as doctors, engineers or education professionals. The data used in the analyses of this paper does not cover whether an MEP has been a local or regional politician even though politicians who were active at these

levels might have developed an experience similar to those active at national political level. Based on Schlesinger's assumptions about progressive career ambitions and the fact that the national political office is still considered to be the highest political office, it is assumed that the regional political level is not the main level competing with the European level. It might however be the case that career patterns at the European level are similar to those at a regional level. Further research should be conducted to establish whether this is the case. The five types of MEPs described above were constructed using career background information. For the first type, the young 'stepping-stone' politicians, a dummy variable was created, with all those MEPs under the age of 41 and no previous domestic political career being selected. They also all had a career in national politics after the 2009 EP election. The second type of MEPs, the 'retirees', are all those MEPs over the age of 60, who had a career in domestic politics prior to their election as an MEP. The EP-careerists, the third type, were selected by considering those with no previous domestic career who served at least two terms in the EP and who are now either in their third term or have been an MEP since 1999 and were re-elected in the 2009 EP elections (i.e. having started their third term in 2009). The new, fourth, category of MEPs of former national politicians were selected as those between 40 and 55 years old with a previous career in domestic politics, or between 55 and 59 years old with national political experience and more than one term in the EP (in order to distinguish them from the EP-retirees). The other, newly-identified, category of 'one-off' MEPs was selected by taking those MEPs who did not have a political career at national level or at EP level prior to 1999. MEPs in this category also did not get re-elected to the EP in 2009 and did not embark on a senior domestic political career after their time in the EP (i.e. they were active in politics for a maximum of two EP terms). The remaining group, that of MEPs whose career path could not yet be identified, was omitted from the empirical analysis in order to avoid

distortion of the data. This leaves 433 out of the 539 MEPs from the dataset included in the analysis.

MEPs' level of activity can be measured in a number of different ways; the data for this was provided by Votewatch.eu. Attendance rates are based on attending roll-call votes in plenary. The simple use of roll-call votes for studying the behaviour of MEPs has previously been criticized (see Carrubba et al., 2006). Nevertheless, it can be expected to provide a solid indication of how often MEPs attend the plenary, as roll-call votes are used in around one-third of all votes (Hix et al., 2007). Two other measures of activity which are used in this paper are the number of reports amended and the number of motions tabled. These three measures of activity are included in the analyses as continuous dependent variables.

These measures of activity were selected as they provide an indication of the overall level of activity in the Parliament. They are similar to the operationalization of 'activity' as used elsewhere (e.g. Bailer & Ohmura, 2013). Nevertheless, it is recognized that these measures are not exhaustive, given the wide range of activities that MEPs can be involved in (Corbett et al., 2011). However, as the attendance at plenaries and motions are indications of activities in the plenary and the number of reports amended indicate how active an MEP is in his committee, the three measures selected should provide a realistic indication of an MEP's overall level of participation in the EP's work. Attendance in plenary has also been found to be a predictor of the allocation of rapporteurships in committees (Yoshinaka et al., 2010) so these three types of activity should provide a reasonable indication of the dependent variable 'activity' overall that is used in this paper.

Empirical analyses

In this section, we consider the empirical findings of the analyses conducted. Table one shows the impact of the different types of MEPs on their attendance rates in plenary roll-call votes. Column one in the table shows a basic model of the impact of some variables such as gender and age on the attendance of MEPs. Here, it seems that both the population size of the member state that an MEP represents and the size of the EPG he or she belongs to should have an effect on attendance rates. The explanatory power of this model is, however, limited. The question therefore arises how much this basic model can be improved by adding more information about the different types of MEPs. These effects are shown in column two, where the retiring MEP is left out as baseline variable. It was decided to use the group of retiring MEPs as baseline variable, as it is generally expected that these MEPs will be the least active MEPs.

Table one shows that adding the different types of MEPs, as well as the other control variables to the basic model, significantly improves the explanatory power of the model. In this analysis, it is shown that EP careerists, former national politicians and one-off MEPs attend significantly more plenary votes than their colleagues. In particular, EP careerists attend more votes with nearly ten per cent higher attendance rates which equals to about one week per year in Strasbourg. Young MEPs do not attend significantly more votes than retiring MEPs from the baseline category and seem to be less active in this respect than colleagues from the above-mentioned categories.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Table two shows the same set-up as for the analysis of testing the attendance rate. In this table, the number of reports amended in the committee is used as the dependent variable and analyzed in order to assess MEPs' committee activity, which constitutes an important part of Parliamentary work. The basic model in column one shows that gender, age and population size have a significant impact on the number of reports amended. On average, men amended

nearly five fewer reports over the period 2004-07 than women. MEPs from bigger member states are also less likely to amend reports. Including the different types of MEPs and other control variables in the analyses again improves the explanatory power of the basic model. It finds that MEPs who do not have a long-term career in the EP, are more likely to submit amendments to reports than MEPs who do pursue a career in the EP, such as the EP-careerists and the former national politicians. Young MEPs and one-off MEPs submit on average amendments to around three to four more reports than their peers. This could be explained by the fact that possibly the MEPs pursuing a career in the EP are more often the rapporteurs themselves. They would therefore logically be less likely to submit amendments to reports.

With regard to the other variables included in the analysis, it is interesting to note that an MEP who is a member of a powerful committee will submit amendments to a significantly higher number of reports. It finds that an MEP who is a member of a powerful committee amends at least two reports more than colleagues who are member of a less powerful committee. This could be explained by the fact that for MEPs on a more powerful committee, amending a report has an actual impact on policy outcomes. For this type of activity, it seems therefore that not only the type of MEP can go some way to explaining the variance, but also the influence that a committee has on policy decisions.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The third type of activity analyzed here is the number of motions tabled by an MEP. Again, the basic model, which only finds EPG size to be of significant impact on the number of motions tabled, is significantly improved by adding the MEP types and other control variables. It finds that EP-careerists are much more active in this type of activity than their peers, with around seven motions more tabled in the period analyzed. The young MEPs, former national politicians and one-off MEPs do not show significantly high number of motions tabled in Parliament. The dominance of EP-careerists for this type of activity could

be explained by the fact that this group try to make themselves more visible among the party and Parliament leadership in order to promote the development of their career in the EP. Young, retiring and one-off MEPs have much less interest in doing so. Former national politicians could also be expected to show similar levels of activity as EP careerists, but as discussed above, they are likely to face less pressure to be visible as they have already proved their qualities as national politicians.

Another interesting and significant effect found here is the number of motions tabled by members of a powerful committee. MEPs who are members of a powerful committee table significantly fewer motions than their colleagues; around eleven fewer in the period 2004-07. This could be explained by the fact that these MEPs are able to achieve their policy aims by influencing the relevant legislation directly through rapporteurships or by tabling amendments (as is shown in Table two), whereas MEPs from less powerful committees need to table motions to be heard.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Discussion

The empirical findings broadly confirm the expectations about the career ambitions and activities of different MEPs. Young and unexperienced MEPs who after a short period of time in the EP pursue a career in domestic politics, were not expected to be interested in getting involved too much in the work of the EP. The relatively lower attendance rate, as well as the limited number of motions tabled in Parliament, confirm these expectations. The only type of activity they seem to be more active in than many of their peers is submitting amendments to reports. This could be explained by the fact that these stepping-stone MEPs are less likely to be able to obtain rapporteurships and therefore tabling amendments to reports is their main

way of seeking to influence legislation. It could also be that this is a way by which they can at least show their national party leadership that they are able to conduct some of the parliamentary work that will also be required at national level, even though submitting amendments is not as significant as obtaining a rapporteurship position.

The EP careerists are very active in the EP's work. They attend more plenary votes than any of the other types of MEPs and also table more motions than any of their colleagues. By doing this, these static career ambitious politicians want to make themselves visible to their EPG leadership who decides about the prospects for developing a career in the EP. The fact that EP careerists table fewer amendments to reports could be because they are more often the rapporteurs themselves – also given that higher plenary attendance rates are associated with more rapporteurships (Yoshinaka et al., 2010) – but this assumption needs to be confirmed by further research.

The former domestic politicians, who have had a senior career in domestic politics and thereafter look to build a career in the EP – which makes them distinct from retiring MEPs – are overall also found to be more active in the EP's work than many of their colleagues. They attend slightly fewer plenary meetings and table fewer motions than the EP careerist though. They probably face less pressure to conduct a lot of the groundwork, such as tabling motions, as they have proved their qualities in the national political arena.

The one-off MEPs are found to be more active than would actually be expected from these discrete career ambitious politicians. However, they turn out to be active in areas which do not require significant qualities or previous political experience, such as attending plenary voting sessions and tabling amendments to reports; the latter can be expected to require less political “quality” than being a rapporteur. This would confirm the idea that the one-off MEP category is composed of people who turn out to be of less quality or ambition. Also, given the heterogeneous nature of this group, these findings need to be interpreted with caution.

Overall the career ambitions of the different types of MEPs seem to be broadly confirmed by their observed behaviour. Those MEPs pursuing a career in the EP are generally active, in particular in those areas which fit with their career ambitions. MEPs who are not aiming for, or able to get, a long-term career in the EP, focus their activities on other areas, some of which are probably outside the EP.

Conclusion

Politicians change their behaviour in accordance with their career ambitions (Schlesinger, 1966) and the EU provides an interesting multi-level context to study politicians' career ambitions and legislative behaviour. Even though the national political level in the EU can still be considered to be the 'highest' political office, the gradual expansion of powers of the European Parliament has provided career politicians with an interesting additional opportunity to pursue a political career. MEPs are at a wide variety of different stages in their career when they enter the EP. Some have only just started their political career, whereas others are about to retire after serving many years in politics. A key contribution to the study of the career paths of MEPs is Scarrow (1997), who identified three types of MEPs. The techniques used by Scarrow and others to identify career paths mainly look at the past experience of MEPs in combination with age, from which they claim to be able to identify a future career trajectory of politicians, for example as a national or a retiring politician. It can be questioned whether Scarrow's approach of basing a politician's career ambitions on their career background is sufficient. Analyzing career background and its effect on observed behaviour could provide a better explanation and prediction about someone's career ambitions. Scarrow's categorization is limited in scope and does not seem to cover the full range of career paths and ambitions present in the EP.

A new type of MEP that seems to have emerged is of politicians who previously had a senior domestic political career and decide to pursue a further career at European level. These MEPs do not move to the EP arena in order to bridge the gap between the domestic career and retirement but are looking to build a truly European career. Another group of MEPs that can be identified is what one might call ‘one-off’ MEPs. This is a group of MEPs who are not career politicians and who do not have a domestic or European career in politics either before or after their time in the EP, either because they are not interested or because they lack quality. They usually stay in the EP for only a short period of time and do not build a political career. This group is however heterogeneous of nature and its findings need to be interpreted with caution. Further analysis on this specific group in future studies would be recommended.

It could be expected that MEPs who are in different stages of their career, and who therefore have different levels of experience and career goals, show different levels of activity in the EP. This paper has, within the broader framework of political career ambitions in multi-level systems, built on Scarrow’s work and shown that over and above the factors that have already previously been identified to have an influence on an MEP’s behaviour, such as member state of origin and EPG membership, the career path of an MEP can be a relevant factor in explaining certain legislative behaviour across member states and party groups. Those MEPs interested in developing a career in the EP are overall found to be more active, particularly in the key areas of the EP’s work, whereas those who only stay in the EP for a short period of time are either less active or active in areas of less importance. Other control variables were included in the analyses which showed that membership of a powerful legislative committee also makes MEPs' significantly more likely to be actively involved in tabling amendments to legislative reports than their colleagues who sit on less powerful committees. MEPs on powerful committees are, however, less actively involved in tabling motions.

The findings in this paper could be of relevance beyond the EP and have broader implications for our understanding of politicians' career ambitions and their legislative behaviour in a multilevel system. The different types of careers found in this paper can be used when studying other political levels, for example national or regional. This paper also gives an insight into how legislative careers of politicians can change when the balance of power between different levels of government changes. When a particular level of government becomes more powerful, it creates new interesting career opportunities for politicians. A similar effect could possibly be found at regional levels in the case of decentralization.

The conclusions reached in this paper provide a number of suggestions for further research. First, it would be interesting to see whether MEPs from the EU member states that joined in the last ten years are developing the same or different career patterns and ambitions as described in this paper and whether the analyses could be repeated for other EPs. Second, the dependent variable in this paper of 'activity' could be strengthened by testing other types of activities (e.g. rapporteurships and questions asked) in future research. Third, to extend the analysis from this paper beyond the EP, it could be considered whether the different types of politicians as described here are also present in other 'second-order' legislative institutions such as regional parliaments. Finally, the basic models in the analyses include population size and the size of the EPG as control variables. For further research it would be interesting to analyze whether differences in the types of MEPs can be found between member states and political groups.

As Scarrow has also previously shown, MEPs' career paths are relevant and differ between member states and should not be ignored in future studies on the activities of MEPs. The analysis in this paper shows that, across countries and party groups, it is possible to

identify types of MEPs with different backgrounds and career ambitions which can in certain situations explain an MEP's behaviour. Therefore, over and above these factors of influence that have already been acknowledged to have an impact on an MEP's activities in the EP, career paths are a further relevant factor to be taken into account when studying the legislative behaviour of MEPs.

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Table 1. Attendance rates²

	(1) Attendance	(2) Attendance
Young MEP		0.908 (2.448)
EP careerist		9.458*** (1.654)
Former national politician		6.537*** (1.745)
One-off MEP		7.504*** (1.692)
Male	0.500 (1.220)	1.713 (1.134)
Age	-0.114* (0.0593)	
EPG size	0.0307*** (0.00847)	
Member state size	-0.0433** (0.0204)	
Memb. powerful cmte		1.209 (1.083)
Constant	90.45*** (3.422)	76.93*** (2.970)
EPG controls included	No	Yes
Member states controls included	No	Yes
Observations	433	433
R-squared	0.044	0.283

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.
The baseline for the four different types of MEPs is the retiring MEP.

² Other models were controlled for. These include models where data on the member state, EPG and national party size was included and whether the national party was represented in government and thereby in the Council

Table 2. Number of reports amended³

	(1) Reports amended	(2) Reports amended
Young MEP		3.885** (1.929)
EP careerist		2.079 (1.303)
Former nat'l politician		0.866 (1.375)
One-off MEP		3.096** (1.333)
Male	-4.575*** (0.913)	-3.856*** (0.894)
Age	-0.0854* (0.0444)	
Member state size	-0.0332** (0.0152)	
EPG size	0.00894 (0.00634)	
Mem. powerful cmte		2.454*** (0.853)
Constant	17.71*** (2.562)	9.869*** (2.340)
EPG controls included	No	Yes
Member states controls included	No	Yes
Observations	433	433
R-squared	0.086	0.242

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. The baseline for the four different types of MEPs is the “retiring MEP”.

³ Other models were controlled for. These include models where data on the member state, EPG and national party size was included and whether the national party was represented in government and thereby in the Council

Table 3. Motions tabled⁴

	(1) Motions	(2) Motions
Young MEP		-0.279 (4.423)
EP careerist		7.083** (2.988)
Former nat'l politician		2.161 (3.152)
One-off MEP		-1.683 (3.057)
Male	-0.830 (2.154)	-1.449 (2.049)
Age	-0.0441 (0.105)	
EPG size	-0.0633*** (0.0150)	
Member state size	0.0483 (0.0360)	
Mem. powerful cmte		-11.47*** (1.956)
Constant	18.92*** (6.042)	14.06*** (5.365)
EPG controls included	No	Yes
Member states controls included	No	Yes
Observations	433	433
R-squared	0.044	0.250

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. The baseline for the four different types of MEPs is the “retiring MEP”.

⁴ Other models were controlled for. These include models where data on the member state, EPG and national party size was included and whether the national party was represented in government and thereby in the Council

Appendix

Table 1A. Attendance rates, with results for dummy variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Attendance	Attendance	Attendance	Attendance	Attendance	Attendance	Attendance	Attendance
Young MEP		3.394	3.056	0.980	3.181	2.854	1.179	0.908
EP careerist		11.35***	11.10***	9.581***	9.856***	9.421***	9.507***	9.458***
Former nat'l politician		8.235***	7.746***	6.961***	8.725***	8.272***	6.910***	6.537***
One-off MEP		6.630***	6.714***	7.192***	6.335***	6.374***	7.163***	7.504***
Male	0.500	1.069	1.634	1.350	0.892	1.424	1.255	1.713
Age	-0.114*							
Member state size	-0.0433**	-0.0617***	-0.0660***					
National party size					0.0672	0.0782	0.0740	0.104
EPG size	0.0307***	0.0246***		0.0191**	0.0176*		0.0134	
Nat'l party in gov't		2.450*	2.841**	1.194	3.952***	4.511***	1.342	1.742
Mem. powerful cmte		1.176	1.129	1.460	1.370	1.336	1.400	1.209
Austria				8.043***			9.292***	9.222***
Belgium				-2.340			-1.084	-0.926
Denmark				4.378			5.491	7.384*
Finland				6.976**			8.202**	9.315***
France				-1.791			-1.548	-1.141
Greece				3.330			4.456	4.933
Ireland				1.416			2.442	4.872
Italy				-10.90***			-9.813***	-9.144***
Luxembourg				2.131			3.494	4.025
Netherlands				-0.374			0.659	1.662
Portugal				1.160			2.471	3.328
Spain				-0.130			0.209	0.310
Sweden				-2.030			-0.696	1.488
United Kingdom				-1.038			-0.602	0.218
PES			0.778			0.886		0.786
ALDE			-3.980**			-3.099*		-2.551
Greens			1.988			3.430		2.765
GUE			-2.958			-2.180		-0.590
UEN			-7.723**			-6.318*		-3.432
Independents			-10.81***			-8.866***		-10.31***
Non attached			-1.519			-0.553		1.252
Constant	90.45***	77.20***	81.21***	76.88***	74.48***	76.87***	76.12***	76.93***
Observations	433	433	433	433	433	433	433	433
R-squared	0.044	0.146	0.180	0.250	0.132	0.165	0.252	0.283

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. The baseline for the four different types of MEPs is the "retiring MEP", the baseline for the EPG controls is the EPP, and the baseline for the member states controls is Germany.

Table 2A. Number of reports amended, with results for dummy variables

	(1) Reports amended	(2) Reports amended	(3) Reports amended	(4) Reports amended	(5) Reports amended	(6) Reports amended	(7) Reports amended	(8) Reports amended
Young MEP		5.797***	4.975***	4.451**	5.668***	4.884**	4.236**	3.885**
EP careerist		3.149**	2.635**	2.250*	2.934**	2.331*	2.330*	2.079
Former nat'l politician		1.520	1.112	1.096	1.810	1.406	1.152	0.866
One-off MEP		4.591***	4.279***	3.358**	4.518***	4.173***	3.390**	3.096**
Male	-4.575***	-4.264***	-3.858***	-4.295***	-4.235***	-3.853***	-4.192***	-3.856***
Age	-0.0854*							
Member state size	-0.0332**	-0.0385**	-0.0377**					
National party size					-0.0801*	-0.0655	-0.0802	-0.0571
EPG size	0.00894	0.00967		0.00188	0.0157**		0.00812	
Nat'l party in gov't		0.871	1.191	0.394	1.292	1.648	0.233	0.369
Mem. powerful cmte		2.096**	2.243***	2.372***	2.176**	2.314***	2.437***	2.454***
Austria				2.700			1.345	2.697
Belgium				-1.960			-3.322	-2.417
Denmark				-1.931			-3.138	-2.320
Finland				0.648			-0.681	-0.276
France				-1.662			-1.925	-0.488
Greece				9.298***			8.077***	8.825***
Ireland				-3.358			-4.471	-3.455
Italy				-1.431			-2.613	-1.465
Luxembourg				4.055			2.576	2.616
Netherlands				4.722**			3.601	4.092*
Portugal				-0.155			-1.577	-0.679
Spain				2.825			2.457	2.755
Sweden				0.712			-0.734	0.495
United Kingdom				-1.128			-1.602	-0.715
PES			-1.362			-1.452		-1.207
ALDE			-1.876			-2.506*		-1.226
Greens			3.866**			3.133*		3.421*
GUE			0.888			-0.121		0.622
UEN			-4.643*			-5.127*		-1.763
Independents			-4.457*			-4.807**		-3.808
Non attached			-7.852***			-8.830***		-7.621***
Constant	17.71***	8.672***	10.73***	8.367***	7.020***	10.02***	9.194***	9.869***
Observations	433	433	433	433	433	433	433	433
R-squared	0.086	0.128	0.186	0.193	0.123	0.180	0.196	0.242

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. The baseline for the four different types of MEPs is the "retiring MEP", the baseline for the EPG controls is the EPP, and the baseline for the member states controls is Germany.

Table 3A. Motions tabled, with results for dummy variables

	(1) Motions	(2) Motions	(3) Motions	(4) Motions	(5) Motions	(6) Motions	(7) Motions	(8) Motions
Young MEP		-0.284	-2.010	1.287	-0.257	-1.968	0.865	-0.279
EP careerist		6.097**	5.713**	7.177**	7.336**	6.795**	7.334**	7.083**
Former nat'l politician		2.330	1.250	2.733	2.260	1.234	2.842	2.161
One-off MEP		-0.606	-1.069	-1.219	-0.407	-0.922	-1.156	-1.683
Male	-0.830	-2.211	-1.357	-2.742	-1.981	-1.151	-2.540	-1.449
Age	-0.0441							
Member state size	0.0483	0.00580	0.000458					
National party size					-0.194*	-0.180*	-0.157	-0.128
EPG size	-0.0633***	-0.0665***		-0.0617***	-0.0499***		-0.0495**	
Nat'l party in gov't		-1.494	-1.654	-0.0204	-2.425	-2.477	-0.334	-0.809
Mem. powerful cmte		-11.10***	-11.16***	-11.52***	-11.18***	-11.24***	-11.39***	-11.47***
Austria				-0.0130			-2.659	1.313
Belgium				2.658			-0.00355	3.866
Denmark				-4.758			-7.116	-3.852
Finland				1.313			-1.284	0.872
France				-2.322			-2.836	1.962
Greece				-2.902			-5.287	-3.737
Ireland				3.196			1.023	0.281
Italy				9.834***			7.525*	9.008**
Luxembourg				-2.395			-5.283	-3.896
Netherlands				2.463			0.275	2.265
Portugal				-0.567			-3.345	-2.017
Spain				0.377			-0.342	0.850
Sweden				-1.490			-4.317	0.223
United Kingdom				-1.893			-2.818	0.736
PES			0.150			-0.0979		-0.130
ALDE			4.061			2.203		1.819
Greens			19.02***			16.47***		17.31***
GUE			25.48***			23.10***		22.46***
UEN			22.57***			20.46***		18.07***
Independents			-4.285			-6.684		-5.275
Non attached			-5.473			-7.978*		-9.260*
Constant	18.92***	25.08***	13.49***	24.00***	25.40***	16.42***	25.62***	14.06***
Observations	433	433	433	433	433	433	433	433
R-squared	0.044	0.126	0.224	0.157	0.133	0.230	0.159	0.250

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10. The baseline for the four different types of MEPs is the "retiring MEP", the baseline for the EPG controls is the EPP, and the baseline for the member states controls is Germany.

Table 4. Types of MEPs by Member State⁵

Member state	Number of MEPs							Percent of MEPs				
	Young MEP	Retiring MEP	EP careerist	Former national politician	One-off MEP	Total	Not yet identified ¹	Young MEP	Retiring MEP	EP careerist	Former national politician	One-off MEP
Luxembourg	0	4	1	1	0	6	0	0	66.7	16.7	16.7	0
Denmark	1	3	3	1	1	9	3	11.1	33.3	33.3	11.1	11.1
Ireland	1	2	0	6	2	11	2	9.1	18.2	0	54.5	18.2%
Finland	1	5	1	5	1	13	2	7.7	38.5	7.7	38.5	7.7
Austria	1	2	2	7	3	15	2	6.7	13.3	13.3	46.7	20.0
Sweden	4	3	0	5	3	15	2	26.7	20.0	0	33.3	20.0
Portugal	0	3	0	10	2	15	7	0	20.0	0	66.7	13.3
Greece	0	2	2	4	9	17	7	0	11.8	11.8	23.5	52.9
Belgium	0	5	4	6	3	18	5	0	27.8	22.2	33.3	16.7
Netherlands	3	0	5	1	11	20	7	15.0	0	25.0	5.0	55.0
Spain	3	7	13	8	7	38	16	7.9	18.4	34.2	21.1	18.4
Italy	0	12	8	7	27	54	10	0	22.2	14.8	13.0	50.0
France	1	14	12	10	23	60	17	1.7	23.3	20.0	16.7	38.3
United Kingdom	4	9	36	5	9	63	11	6.3	14.3	57.1	7.9	14.3
Germany	10	4	46	10	10	80	14	12.5	5.0	57.5	12.5	12.5
Total	29	75	133	86	111	434	105	6.7	17.3	30.6	19.8	25.6

Note: 1. The career paths of these MEPs could not be identified yet, mainly because these MEPs have only been in the EP for a short period of time. It could therefore be that this category is composed of starting EP careerists, one-off MEPs and others that do not fall within any of the other five categories

⁵ Table 4 shows the five categories described and the residual group of MEPs whose career path has not yet been identified, mainly because they were only elected in 2004. The countries in the table are ordered by total number of MEPs. These numbers may differ slightly from the total number of MEPs, as MEPs who left within the first half of the sixth EP have been omitted from the dataset to avoid a distortion of the analysis. The table shows that there are relatively few young MEPs. Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden have, relatively, the most young MEPs who use their EP career as a stepping-stone to national politics. For retiring MEPs, a relatively large number are from Denmark, Luxembourg or Finland. The EP-careerist category seems to be dominated by Germany and the UK, and - to a lesser extent - Denmark and Spain. The newly-identified category of former national politicians seems to be relatively dominated by MEPs from smaller member states. Significant proportions from member states such as Austria, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Portugal and Sweden fall within this category. The one-off category is dominated by MEPs from France, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands.