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European Parliament: Electoral, Party  
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# **An Investigation of Career Tenure in the European Parliament: Electoral, Party and Individual Considerations**

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Abstract:

What explains the length of a Member of the European Parliament's career? Little evidence of careerism has been uncovered in the European Parliament, particularly when compared to studies of legislator tenure in the U.S. Congress. Due to the different historical contexts in which these two legislatures developed, it seems reasonable to rule out many of the explanations used to account for increasing careerism in Congress in searching for the influences on legislator tenure in the European Parliament. This paper therefore proposes three potential models of careerism in the European Parliament: an electoral systems model, a party model, and an individual model. While the data necessary to test these models has not been fully compiled, this paper outlines the major hypotheses of each model and details plans for the operationalization of all independent and control variables. These models are not intended to be mutually exclusive alternatives, but rather each explanation is expected to influence each MEP in varying degrees.

## Introduction

What explains the length of a Member of the European Parliament's career? Studies of the U.S. Congress have demonstrated dramatic growth in the length of tenure of congressmen since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most members of Congress develop professional congressional careers. Much less work has been done investigating legislator tenure in the European Parliament (EP), though members of the EP (MEPs) clearly do not exhibit the same level of careerism as their partners in Congress. The lack of evidence of careerism in the EP as well as the lack of studies of careerism in the EP may be due in part to the relative youth of the EP as a legislature. Patterns of careerism or tenure are more difficult to uncover given that the EP is currently in just its sixth parliament since direct elections were instituted in 1979. Others, notably Scarrow (1997), have also highlighted the alternative career options open to MEPs who may treat service in the EP as either a stepping stone to a national political career or as a retirement home for former national politicians. Acknowledging the difficulties of tracing patterns of careerism in the EP, this paper seeks to build upon the work of Scarrow, who noted that levels of careerism are increasing gradually, by taking a more systematic approach to determine the institutional factors that may influence tenure rates of individual MEPs.

## Overview of the EP and Existing Literature

What is recognized today as the European Parliament has its roots in the "Common Assembly" of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC),

holding its first meeting on September 10, 1952 and dubbing itself the “European Parliament” as the ECSC transitioned into the European Economic Community (EEC) with the title becoming official in 1985 under the Single European Act (SEA). This body was referred to as a consultative assembly, having no legislative powers. In fact, until 1979, members of the EP were chosen by their respective national parliaments, not through direct elections. Over time, both the size and powers of the EP have grown. In 2007, David Farrell noted that, “for much of its life, the European Parliament could have been justly labeled a ‘multi-lingual talking shop’. But this is no longer the case: the EP is now one of the most powerful legislatures in the world both in terms of legislative and executive oversight powers.” It is this growing power that makes an understanding of MEPs’ career patterns increasingly important. As the power of the institution as a whole grows, so does the power of those legislators serving within the Parliament.

As mentioned, for most of its existence, the European Parliament held a merely consultative role in the legislative process. In the 1980s, after the implementation of direct election of MEPs, the EP gradually began accumulating power in terms of a positive role in the legislative process as well as the ability to exercise some forms of control over the executive institutions of the European Union. This accumulation of power meant that MEPs gained power as part of the institution. Table 1, borrowed from Hix, Noury & Roland (2007), provides a brief overview of the events through 2004 that led to significant changes in the power of the European Parliament. The original table has also been updated to reflect changes in the EP’s power since 2004. It is clear from the historical record of

institutional changes to the EP's formal powers that both its legislative role and its ability to check the executive have increased substantially over time, resulting in the strong parliament referred to by Farrell. These growing powers have helped develop the legitimacy and prestige of the European Parliament and could have ramifications for the career aspirations of MEPs.

Table 1

Event (date)	Control of the executive	Making legislation
Treaty of Rome (1958)	<i>Commission censure procedure.</i> EP can remove Commission by a “double majority”; an absolute majority of MEPs plus two-thirds of votes cast	<i>Consultation procedure.</i> Council must consult EP before passing most legislation
Budgetary Treaties (1970 & 1975)		<i>New budgetary procedure.</i> EP can reject EU budget and can amend certain budget lines (mainly excluding agriculture and regional spending)
First EP Elections (1979)	<i>EP has a source of legitimacy that is independent from national governments and national parliaments</i>	
Single European Act (1987)		<i>Cooperation procedure introduced.</i> EP has two readings of bills before Council passes law (for most single-market legislation)
Maastricht Treaty (1993)	<i>New Commission investiture procedure.</i> European Council must “consult” EP on nominee for Commission President <i>Commission term of office reformed</i> to coincide with EP’s five year term	<i>Co-decision procedure introduced.</i> “Conciliation committee” convened if EP and Council disagree, but council can make a new proposal if still no agreement (replacing cooperation procedure)
Opening session of Fourth Parliament (July 1994)	<i>EP votes on Commission President.</i> EP votes for Jacques Santer (260 in favor vs. 238 against), setting the precedent that the EP can vote on the governments’ nominee for Commission President	<i>EP rejects Voice Telephony Directive.</i> EP rejects a piece of EU legislation for the first time, setting the precedent that the Council cannot act unilaterally under the co-decision procedure
Censure of Commission (March 1999)	<i>Commission resigns.</i> Whole Santer Commission resigns after an EP report criticizing the Commission and before an EP censure vote that is likely to pass	

Amsterdam Treaty (1999)	<i>Investiture procedure reformed.</i> EP has vote on European Council's nominee for Commission President and on the Commission as a whole	<i>Co-decision procedure reformed.</i> Establishes a genuine bicameral system between the EP and Council (covers most socio-economic policies)
Nice Treaty (2003)	<i>Investiture procedure reformed.</i> European Council chooses Commission President and whole Commission by qualified-majority (instead of unanimity), which increases the EP influence in the process	
Rejection of Commission (October 2004)	<i>Team of Commissioners withdrawn.</i> Barroso withdraws proposed Commission on day of EP investiture vote because the EP is likely to reject the Commission	
Treaty of Lisbon (2009)		<i>Ordinary legislative and consent procedures.</i> Formerly known as the co-decision procedure and assent procedure, extends the use of these procedures, enhancing the strength of the EP <i>Increased policy influence.</i> EP is granted increased power over trade policy and the budget process

Elections to the European Parliament are held every five years. As stated above, the constituents of each member state directly elect their MEPs. While the members states of the EU were able to agree on direct election of MEPs and five-year terms, they were unable to reach consensus on other aspects of the electoral process, such as the electoral system used, the structure of constituencies within each member state and the precise timing of elections.

Ultimately there is significant variation across the member states in the number of citizens that MEPs represent, voting age, the structure of constituencies and the general electoral system (proportional representation is used throughout, but some states have preferential voting or single transferable vote systems as well as varying PR thresholds). Electoral characteristics obviously have an impact on MEP tenure rates, as MEPs must be re-elected to develop long careers.

While there are many discrepancies between the electoral systems of each member state, literature on the European Parliament has been quite clear that citizens across the board treat EP elections as “second-order elections”, which has led to a lack of electoral connection between EU citizens and their MEPs. Many have argued that this is a contributing factor to the EU’s democratic deficit, which could potentially be solved through the enhancement of the powers of the EP. This argument loses a lot of steam when the increases in the power of the European Parliament outlined in table 1 are compared to voter turnout rates, which have “declined in every election since the first direct elections in 1979”. There are several factors that contribute to low turnout, and therefore a weak electoral connection: 1) EP elections are not viewed with the same level of importance as national elections, because they do not determine the composition of the government or changes in policy platforms; 2) EP electoral campaigns tend to lack focus; and 3) the major players in national elections do not put nearly as much effort into EP elections. There is not much at stake in terms of the direction and governance of the EU as a whole because the composition of the EP does not in turn determine the composition of the Council or the Commission, and that



fact contributes to disinterest in the electorate. Add to the general lack of enthusiasm amongst voters the fact that EP candidates rarely campaign on European issues, and the result is a European-level position contested over national concerns, which only serves to muddy the water and confuse and alienate voters. The lack of big name candidates and the hesitance of national parties to expend resources on EP campaigns have also contributed to the low salience of EP elections. Some governments even “play down the importance of the elections because they are frequently interpreted as being in part at least, ‘mid-term’ national elections, or unofficial referendums on the government’s performance in office”. Recent scholarship has set out to challenge some of these accepted characterizations of EP elections, finding that voters do respond favorably to parties that nominate the most experienced candidates. While this finding does not reverse the impact of low-salience among the electorate and declining voter turnout, it does suggest that there is some semblance of an electoral connection that exists between EU citizens and their MEPs.

The central work on careers in the European Parliament is that of Scarrow’s “Political Career Paths and the European Parliament” (1997). In fact, it is one of the only studies to examine EP careers. She notes that prior literature on EP careers has been “either anecdotal (Corbett, Jacobs, Richardson 1995), or confined to a single country (Westlake 1994)”. Scarrow moves beyond those studies by analyzing the career paths of MEPs from the French, German, British and Italian national delegations. The case selection depended primarily on the availability of the necessary biographical data on MEPs. By tracking the length of

individual MEP careers and the prior offices held by MEPs Scarrow determines that there are three career paths in the EP. MEPs either use their service in the EP as a stepping-stone to gain experience before returning to national politics; as a means to pursue a purely *European* career; or as a retirement home after services in the national arena no longer is feasible.

### The Models

Given the lack of literature on careerism in the European Parliament, despite some evidence that “the European Parliament is beginning to attract delegates who serve long European careers”, this paper suggests looking for potential sources of variation in tenure rates between MEPs. It seems likely that this variation could be found in three broad areas: the electoral system and the qualities of the electorate of a MEP’s member state; the characteristics of a MEP’s political party; and the qualities of the individual MEP.

I therefore propose three distinct, though not mutually exclusive, explanations of an MEP’s length of tenure: 1) an *electoral systems* model; 2) a *party* model; and 3) an *individual* model. In outlining these three models I do not intend to suggest that any one model is better at explaining MEP career lengths than the rest. Rather, I expect that all three models have an effect on tenure rates, but that the relative influence of each model will vary across delegations. I shall now turn to a more detailed account of the three models, their hypotheses and the proposed operationalization of independent and control variables. Throughout all of these models, the dependent variable, *MEP career tenure*, is the length of an individual MEP’s service in the European Parliament measured in months. The

decision to measure career tenure in months instead of years is to make this project more suitable to event history analysis and increase each model's precision. Many MEPs do not serve full terms. Particularly in the early terms just after the implementation of direct elections, it was common for MEPs to leave their posts months, if not years before the end of their terms. Therefore, measuring career length in months seems the most appropriate unit for MEPs.

### *Electoral Systems Model*

This explanation suggests that certain characteristics of a MEPs member state, specifically the electoral system and features of the electorate, will significantly influence an individual MEP's career length. As mentioned above, electoral processes can vary significantly across member states. This model seeks to tap that variation to determine its impact on individual MEP tenure rates.

There are three hypotheses associated with this model.

H1: *Electoral Rules Hypothesis*. MEPs elected through systems using preferential voting, or single transferable vote are more likely to have longer careers than MEPs elected from proportional representation systems that use party lists.

This hypothesis assumes that preferential voting systems allow candidates for the European Parliament more control over their electoral fortunes than the party list system. An electoral system that allows for preferential voting takes control away from parties that would likely prefer to use a party list. Therefore, it will be necessary to code the electoral system of each member state according to whether preferential voting or party list systems are employed for European Parliament elections. Preferential voting and party lists are not the only differences one might see between member states' electoral systems, however.

Some states also employ vote percentage thresholds that parties must meet in order to be considered in the allocation of seats in the European Parliament. Therefore, in addition to the *electoral rules hypothesis*, it would be expected that as a country's vote threshold increases, the tenure rates of MEPs from that state are likely to decrease. This could become a separate hypothesis, or for the sake of keeping the model as simple as possible, a country's vote percentage threshold could be treated as a control variable. The next two hypotheses are closely linked and concern characteristics of each member state's electorate.

H2: *Voter Turnout Hypothesis*. The higher the level of voter turnout in a given member state, the more likely an MEP from that member state will have a longer career than MEPs from states with lower voter turnout.

Those who turn out to vote can usually be assumed to be the most politically interested members of the electorate as a whole. Strategic voting calculus, though an oversimplification, does suggest that there are many costs and obstacles that individuals must overcome just to cast a vote. Therefore, a high level of voter turnout could be an indication of high levels of interest in the electoral outcomes, or increased issue saliency. The *voter turnout hypothesis* suggests that the extra attention paid to elections that is often accompanied by high level of voter turnout may lead to more incumbent MEPs being elected (assuming they have disproportionate access to media and other campaign resources compared to their challengers). Voter turnout will be operationalized using the percentage of the voting age population who voted in the last European Parliament election. Because voter turnout has many facets, adding a couple control variables should help keep things clear. The first should control for voter

turnout from the most recent national (not European Parliament) election. The second is a dummy variable that codes whether or not a member state employs compulsory voting laws.

H3: *Political Awareness Hypothesis*. The more politically aware a member state's electorate is, the more likely an MEP from that state will have a longer career than an MEP from a state with lower political awareness.

Along the same lines as voter turnout, the *political awareness hypothesis* suggests that a more politically aware electorate will be more likely to elect quality candidates, and will subsequently re-elect MEPs that meet their expectations. While most studies have shown that voters in general are not particularly aware, it would be interesting to see if national variation in political awareness influences the career lengths of individual MEPs. Operationalizing political awareness is typically a difficult task, which is compounded in this case by the need for a cross-national measure of political awareness. Luckily, there are sources of EU-wide public opinion polling, such as the Eurobarometer, which could be used to piece together a measure of political awareness for each member state. Specifically, the base Eurobarometer survey includes a section on EU awareness, which asks respondents if they are aware of various EU institutions, and it contains a section on objective knowledge of the EU, which asks respondent general knowledge questions about EU law, institutions, electoral practices etc. By compiling the responses to these questions by member state, it would be possible to compute an overall awareness score for each country.

Some additional control variables for this model are the length of the state's EU membership, the member state's region, and the number of citizens

represented by each MEP, and a measure of party competition. Keeping in line with the operationalization of the dependent variable, the length of a state's membership in the European Union will be measured in months. To control for potential regional variation, the model will include a regional dummy variable. The member states will be divided into four regions: North, South, East and West. The Northern region will include Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom; the southern region will include Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain; the eastern region will include the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania; and the western region will include Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. These are the same regional classifications used by the United Nations. The number of citizens represented by an MEP will be calculated for each member state by dividing the population total by the number of MEPs for the given country. And finally, the model will also control for the level of party competition in each electoral system. Following Sartori's lead, each member state will be coded based on the number of political parties competing in European Parliament elections. This measure is rather crude, but for a control variable it should more or less accurately account for the level of party competition in each member state for European Parliament elections.

### *Party Model*

This explanation suggests that characteristics of a MEP's national party, or party group may affect the career length of individual MEPs. As noted above, political parties play a central role both within the European Parliament, as well as

in the EP election process of each member state. In general the two primary characteristics of parties that are expected to influence MEP tenure rates are the party's ideology, and its control over the EP electoral process.

H4: *EU Integration Stance Hypothesis*. A MEP from a party that with strong views on European Union integration will be more likely to serve a longer career than a MEP from a party with moderate views on EU integration.

This hypothesis suggests that MEPs from parties with extreme views on European Union integration, whether positive or negative, are more likely to have a consistent base of electoral support than those whose parties have more moderate views on integration. There are many reasons to expect this to be true. Extreme views tend to be better understood by the electorate than subtle, nuanced views, which may provide a party with extreme views more support than a moderate party. These parties with more extreme integration views are also more likely to be small parties, meaning the number of available politicians to be nominated for MEP position is less than a larger party might have. This could mean there is less competition for EP seats, so if the party is allocated any seats in the Parliament, the same people are likely to be given those position in consecutive elections.

It may seem counterintuitive that MEPs from parties that oppose European Union integration may be in a position to serve longer careers than some of their more moderate peers. In fact, some anti-EU integration parties would be less likely to have MEPs that serve long careers. It is my contention, however, that these parties are overall less likely to participate in European Parliament elections. The anti-EU integration parties to which the *EU Integration Stance*

*hypothesis* refers, are those that choose to work toward their anti-system goals from within the system, rather than from the outside.

To operationalize a party's stance on EU integration would require the coding of each party's electoral platform, looking for specific mentions of their position on EU integration. To begin with, I would use a rather rudimentary three-point scale (anti-integration, neutral/no mention, and pro-integration) to see if there are any broad trends, but this variable could be broken down into a more detailed scale as well. An analysis of party platforms could also be supplemented by a content analysis of the statements or publications of party leaders, legislators or other members. This would be particularly useful in situations in which a party has either not specified their EU integration preferences in their platform, or if the preference stated in their platform does not seem to line up with their general ideology or the actions of their members.

H5: *Party Ideology Hypothesis*. A MEP whose party's platform falls on either extreme of the left/right ideological spectrum will serve a shorter career than an MEP from a more moderate political party.

Because European Parliament elections do not receive a lot of attention from most voters or the media and are not seen as politically significant in much of the electorate, fringe parties may have a greater chance of winning seats in the European Parliament. By this same token, however, fringe parties may also have a greater chance of being replaced by competing fringe parties from election to election, which would prevent their MEPs from developing careers within the Parliament.

To test this hypothesis, each party's position on the left/right ideological



spectrum would need to be coded. This could be done on variety of different scales, such as a 100-point thermometer scale, or a five- or seven-point ordinal scale. Several possible sources exist for compiling this measure such as Nominate scores, and the Comparative Manifestos Project. It also would make sense to divide party ideology into two separate variables, one for the party's ideological position relative to the other parties in their national electoral system, and another for the party's ideological placement within the European Parliament.

H6: *Electoral Connection Hypothesis*. A MEP from a party that has established an electoral connection with voters will be more likely to serve a long career.

As mentioned above, Hobolt & Hoyland (2011) have demonstrated that some parties are more adept than others at establishing an electoral connection with their constituents and are rewarded when they nominate experienced and qualified candidates. It therefore stands to reason that the parties that have mastered this electoral connection will be more likely to have MEPs that serve longer careers than MEPs of parties that do not have a strong electoral connection.

H7: *Nomination Process Hypothesis*. A MEP from a party that follows a centralized nomination process will serve a shorter career than a MEP from a party that uses a decentralized nomination process.

Because the national political parties have rather tight control over nominations to the European Parliament, and therefore control who has the opportunity to become an MEP, individual party nomination processes are likely to have an effect on MEP career rates. Here the U.S. congressional literature may be able to shed some light on the logic of this process. If one conceives of the national European parties as Europe's political machines, which I believe is a

reasonable jump to make, the relative centralization of nomination processes may have an impact on the length of MEP tenure. Congressional tenure rates did not increase dramatically until after the decline of machine politics in the United States. The stranglehold that the machines had on the nomination of congressional candidates allowed them to replace congressmen as they saw fit, preventing any one person from gaining too much power within the institution. But once this power over nominations diminished, congressmen were able to mold their institution to facilitate the development of congressional careers. I therefore believe that a national party with a highly centralized EP nominations process, in which only a few key party leaders make the ultimate decision on candidate nominations or lists, will be less likely to have MEPs that develop long European careers. Those parties who nominate EP candidates through a more decentralized process, such as allowing all party members to cast a vote on nominees, will be more likely to have MEPs that develop long European careers, taking advantages of the resources offered to them by the Parliament. This hypothesis rests upon the assumption that a smaller group of decision-makers will expect more control over MEPs and will have a better chance of making changes to candidate lists if dissatisfied with MEP behavior. Conversely, an MEP would be expected to have a better chance of securing the requisite portion of party member votes in a more decentralized nomination process.

To operationalize the nominations process variable will require extensive coding of party statutes to uncover their specific rules and regulations regarding nominations for the European Parliament. It would be important to note whether

party leaders, parliamentary groups, party congress, general membership etc. control the nomination process. This coding should be supplemented by a follow-up analysis to determine whether the party actually abides by its statutes regarding. Studies have suggested that some political parties have “democratized” or decentralized their nomination processes in name only, opening them up to the entire party membership, but using mail-in ballots for instance, to discourage participation and the formation of alliances that would occur more naturally at a membership meeting. It would also be important to add a variable to control for countries that allow individuals to nominate themselves, to be nominated through petitions, or those systems that require deposits from nominees.

The control variables for this model are the size and age of a given MEP’s political party, the number of consecutive terms the party has been present in the EP, the presence of a MEP’s national party in their national parliament, and whether the national party is a member of the national government. The size of a party will be measured by the number of members the party has. Often membership requires a formal application, and most parties keep track of their membership statistics. In some cases, political parties may give special status to some members over others based on their contributions to the party (financial or otherwise) or their length of membership in the party. All effort will be made to find more general membership totals, but if none exist, the members with special status will be counted instead.

The age of a party will be measured in months, and national party registers

will be used to track the dissolution and reformation of parties over time. A party's presence in the European Parliament will be measured by the number of consecutive months at least one MEP from that party has been present in the Parliament. This model will also control for a party's presence in their national parliament as well. This variable will be a simple dummy variable coded 1 if the party currently has legislators in the national parliament, and 0 if it does not. In addition to whether the party is merely present in the national parliament, this model will also control for whether or not the party is part of the national government coalition, or a member of the parliamentary opposition.

#### *Individual Model*

This individual explanation suggests the characteristics of a given MEP that may influence their career length. While the above discussion has tried to argue that characteristics of the electoral system and the qualities of an MEP's political party will have an impact on their career tenure, perhaps the most obvious source of variation in MEP career lengths is the individual legislators themselves. As with political parties, ideology is expected to play a prominent role in this model, as are the institutional positions held by the individual within the Parliament.

H8: *Individual Ideology Hypothesis*. A MEP with ideologically extreme political views will serve a shorter career than a MEP with more moderate political positions.

This hypothesis is similar in expectation to the *Party Ideology hypothesis*. Due to the flippancy in which many EU voters treat European Parliament elections, some ideologically extreme candidates will surely win seats in the

Parliament. These same candidates, however, will also be less likely to maintain careers within the European Parliament because of the same ideological extremity that may have gotten them elected in the first place. The only possible exception to this hypothesis is if there was a single extreme political party within an electoral system with a constant base of support, so that the party won either a single seat or only a small amount of seats from election to election, allowing for the possibility that one of their MEPs could develop a lengthy European career.

Individual ideology is probably best operationalized through Nominate scores, or through MEP surveys like those carried out by the European Legislative Politics Research Group (though their surveys only go back to the Fifth Parliament). While the ELPRG surveys are only available for the Fifth and Sixth Parliaments, they could be extremely useful in judging the overall accuracy of Nominate scores in assessing individual MEP's ideology.

H9: *Leadership Position Hypothesis*. A MEP with a leadership position within the EP will serve a longer career than a MEP without an EP leadership position.

Legislative leadership positions bestow upon individuals a higher level of policy influence and control over certain aspects of legislative activity, depending on the status of their leadership position. Thus, not only should holding a leadership position provide a greater incentive for MEPs to remain in the European Parliament, since *individual* MEPs in such positions can exert more influence over legislative affairs, but political parties may also encourage their MEPs to stay in the EP once they have attained such positions as a way of enhancing the role of the *party* within the institution as well. To test this hypothesis, MEPs would need to be coded based on their leadership positions,

such as president, vice president, committee chairman, committee bureau member, or committee secretariat member.

H10: *Committee Membership Hypothesis*. A MEP that serves on a committee with either high levels of budgetary discretion and/or high levels of policy influence will serve a longer career than a MEP on a committee with low levels of budgetary discretion and/or policy influence.

As in the U.S. Congress, not all committees in the European Parliament are created equal. Certain committees will be more coveted by MEPs than others due to their greater legislative or budgetary influence. If an MEP serves on a powerful committee, they would be expected to serve longer careers compared with MEPs that serve on less powerful committees. This hypothesis would require the coding of all EP committees based on their budgetary influence or discretion as well as their overall policy influence. This policy influence variable may be developed even further by ranking committees based on the relative importance of their policy domain. An additional variable controlling for the number of consecutive months an MEP has spent on the same committee should also be included in this model.

The proposed control variables for this model are the individual MEP's age, and the salary trade off between a career as a legislator in the European Parliament and a career as a legislator in the national parliament of the MEP's member state. The operationalization of these variables will be straightforward, with age measured as each MEP's age in years and the salary trade off measured as the difference between the salary for a rank-and-file MEP and the salary of the average MP from their member state. These variables will help control for the age-related career patterns Scarrow noted as the EP as a

stepping-stone for younger politicians or a retirement home for older politicians. It will also control for the influence of material incentives on an MEP's career decisions.

### *Conclusion*

While this paper is concerned with variation in careerism between individual MEPs, there also appears to be potential in uncovering structural influences that would affect overall patterns of careerism within the EP. In general, I expect careerism in the European Parliament to increase over time, though perhaps not to the same levels seen in the U.S. Congress. In particular, changes in the power or prestige of the European Parliament, or in the saliency of European Union issues that fall under the purview of the EP may influence rates of careerism. I would propose the following hypotheses.

*Structural Hypothesis 1: As the institutional influence and prestige of the European Parliament increases, so will general trends of careerism increase for MEPs overall.*

It is expected that as the European Parliament gains strength and influence as an institution, careers within it will become more appealing and encourage many to pursue purely European careers. Many scholars of Congressional careerism note that one of the main drivers encouraging the professionalization of congressmen was the growing size and importance of the federal government.

*Structural Hypothesis 2: As the salience of European Union issues under the purview of the European Parliament increases, so will general trends of careerism increase for MEPs overall.*

Clearly related to the prior hypothesis concerning the reputation and

influence of the EP as an institution, as the European Parliament continues to gain both legislative and executive oversight powers, service in the EP will have a greater impact and therefore be viewed as more rewarding. This too has been noted in the Congressional literature. As the federal government grew, Congress began gaining control over many issues, which had previously been the purview of state legislatures and local governments.

Overall, the research agenda of EP careerism seems promising and ripe for both qualitative and quantitative study. While this project will be tested through a large-N quantitative study, it could easily benefit from case study supplements from either individual MEPs or whole national delegations. It is also my hope that the dataset needed to test the above hypotheses would lend itself to many more interesting research questions. European Union scholars have largely ignored the European Parliament, but I think it is clear that as the power of the EP grows, its relevance to EU scholars should increase as well.



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