Björn Lindberg

Fit for European Democracy?
Party Discipline in the European Parliament
Abstract

This study evaluates the ‘fitness’ of political parties for the democratisation of the European Union. In representative democracies political parties have successfully functioned as transmission belts between voters’ preferences and political outcomes. Some scholars, therefore, argue that an increase in party competition at the European level could make the European Union more democratic; other scholars claim that European political parties could collapse under the public pressure, which would arise from an increase in political competition.

Since cohesive voting behaviour of political parties is a prerequisite for a functioning representative democracy, this study analyses how the transnational party groups of the European Parliament are able to generate voting cohesion. Drawing on rational institutionalist theories of political parties and theories of collective action, the study outlines two competitive scenarios for explaining party group voting cohesion in the European Parliament. The ‘party group disciplinary scenario’ holds that the party group leadership is able to enforce voting cohesion through its disciplinary powers. The ‘national party discipline scenario’, on the other hand, stipulates that party group voting cohesion depends on the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations.

The empirical analysis of party disciplinary effects in the European Parliament corroborates, to some extent, the ‘party group disciplinary scenario’: The party group leadership of the two largest party groups is able to discipline individual members for disloyal voting behaviour. The findings do, however, also show that the party group leadership is not able to sanction national party delegations if they fail to toe the party group line. Party group voting cohesion is also depended on the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations. The study, therefore, concludes that it will be difficult for the party groups to maintain voting cohesion if public pressure on Members of the European Parliament increases through a more open form of political contestation at the European level. The responsibility for a successful democratisation of the European Union through party competition lies in the hands of national political parties.

Keywords: European Parliament, democracy, political parties, collective action, legislative decision-making, party discipline, party voting cohesion

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To Ann-Charlotte
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Abbreviations

AFCO  Committee on Constitutional Affairs
AFET  Committee on Foreign Affairs
AGRI  Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
ALDE  Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
BUDG  Committee on Budgets
CDU   Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands
CONT  Committee on Budgetary Control
CULT  Committee on Culture and Education
DEVE  Committee on Development
ECON  Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
EDD   Europe of Democracies and Diversities
ELDR  European Liberal Democratic and Reform Party
EMPL  Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
ENVI  Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
EPP-ED European People's Party-European Democrats
EU    European Union
FEMM  Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
Greens-EFA Greens-European Free Alliance
GUE-NGL European United Left-Nordic Green Left
IMCO  Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection
ITRE  Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
JURI  Committee on Legal Affairs
LAB   Labour Party
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIBE</td>
<td>Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td>Nea Dimokratia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Non-attached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEIL</td>
<td>Legislative Observatory European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASOK</td>
<td>Panellinio Socialistiko Kinima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECH</td>
<td>Committee on Fisheries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETI</td>
<td>Committee on Petitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Partido Popular</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRG</td>
<td>Parti radical de gauche</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Partido Socialista</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Party of European Socialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETT</td>
<td>Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Socialdemokratiska arbetarepartiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>Union for Europe of Nations</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>ÖVP</td>
<td>Österreichische Volkspartei</td>
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</table>
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Björn Lindberg
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1. Introduction

One of the most dominant trends in the history of European integration has been the increasing strengthening of the European Parliament. Through consecutive revisions of the European Treaties, the member states have increased its legislative, budgetary and executive oversight powers and have increased the powers of the European Parliament in the nomination process of the Commission. Today, the European Parliament is even identified as one of the most powerful legislatures in the world (Farrell 2007; Hix, Raunio, and Scully 2003).

Rittberger has documented that the member states established European Parliament and continuously increased its powers in order to address concerns about the lack of procedural legitimacy of the European Union (EU) and its predecessors (Rittberger 2005). According to the principle of procedural legitimacy, policy outcomes are legitimate if the procedural mechanisms of democratic participation and accountability are applied and outcomes reflect the will of the majority of the people (Scharpf 1999). Thus, in their attempts to make the EU more democratic, the member states have tried to mirror the success story of representative democracy at the nation state level. Since the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century representative democracy based on universal suffrage has been the dominant system of governance in most European countries (Müller, Bergman, and Strøm 2003:8-9).

Prominent democratic theorists have argued that political competition is indispensible for democratic governance and that representative democracy is essentially built on the competition between political parties (Barry 1991; Dahl 1971; Downs 1957; Powell 2000; Schattschneider 1960; Schumpeter 1976; Shapiro 1996). Through competing against each other in elections, political parties present different policy packages to voters. Voters then vote for the policy package – that is, the political party – which most closely resembles their personal policy preferences. The party, or coalition of parties, which receives the majority of the votes forms a government and gets to implement the promised policies for one legislative term. In order to be able to keep their promises to voters, political parties need to be able to maintain cohesive voting blocks in the legislature. Without party voting cohesion proposed policies do not find majority support in the legislature and fail to be implemented. Party voting cohesion in the legislature has therefore been
identified as a necessary condition for a functioning party democracy (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999:3; Sartori 1994:189-195). In elections voters can evaluate the performance of the governing parties against the policy packages offered by the other political parties (Powell 2000). Thus, electoral competition between political parties is necessary in representative democracies to ensure that voters have a choice between different policy packages and that they can keep the governing parties accountable for their actions. Party voting cohesion in the legislature is the basic prerequisite for effective policy-making, and for allowing voters to identify political parties with their actions. Only if implemented policies can be linked to the legislative action of political parties can voters hold them accountable in the subsequent election.

Without a functioning party system the mere strengthening of the European Parliament does not contribute to the democratic legitimation of the EU. The party groups represented in the European Parliament need to exhibit high levels of voting cohesion and need to be competitive in order to be able to function as transmission belts between voters’ preferences and political outcomes and to guarantee a minimum level of democratic accountability. Based on the current legitimacy crisis of the EU (Hix 2008) and its enhanced decision-making competences (Hörl, Warntjen, and Wonka 2005), it is important to assess how far the member states’ efforts to enhance the EU’s procedural legitimacy have succeeded, that is, whether a competitive and cohesive party system has developed in the European Parliament.

The status of the European Parliament as the representative chamber of the European people has for decades attracted researchers wishing to study the development of its party system. The general tenor of current research is that the party groups have increased their voting cohesion since the first direct election of the European Parliament in 1979 and are currently able to maintain it to a fairly high degree. Analyses of the voting behaviour of the party groups have also revealed that the party groups compete against each other on the left-right dimension, which also structures political contestation at the national level (Attina 1990; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2006; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007; Kreppel 2003; Kreppel 2002; Raunio 1997).

Following the notion of competitive party democracy outlined above, some scholars have interpreted the emergence of a cohesive and competitive party system in the European Parliament as a positive sign for democracy at the European level (Føllesdal and Hix 2006; Hix 2006; Hix 2008; Thomassen and Schmitt 2004; Zürn 2006). These scholars are optimistic that a further increase in political competition between the party groups of the European Parliament will increase the democratic quality of the EU. The argument was recently summarised by Simon Hix:
More Left-Right politics at the European level is not only inevitable but is also healthy, as it will allow the EU to overcome institutional gridlock, will encourage policy innovation, will produce a mandate for reform, and so will increase the legitimacy of the EU. (Hix 2006:2)

Other scholars are sceptic about the prospects of a democratisation of the EU through increasing party competition (Bartolini 2006; Majone 2005; Scharpf 1999). Bartolini’s objection against a further politicisation of the EU rests on the observation that the party groups of the European Parliament would not be able to handle the increased public pressure. Considering the institutional setting of the European Parliament in the EU and the internal diversity of the transnational party groups that bring together Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from a multitude of national parties, it is quite surprising that the party groups are able to achieve high levels of voting cohesion (Bartolini 2006; McElroy 2003). Bartolini has argued that the party groups are able to generate such high degrees of voting cohesion only because the political decision-making process in the European Parliament is isolated from electoral pressures and public opinion:

The differences over the economic, religious and European issues are overcome by national delegations precisely because the EP [European Parliament] activities are so invisible to public opinion, inconsequential for domestic alignments, and irrelevant for electoral rewards and punishments. (Bartolini 2006:37, parentheses added)

From this point of view increasing public competition of the transnational party groups would diminish party group voting cohesion and would risk the stability of the political decision-making process in the European Parliament. Whether increasing public awareness of party group competition in the European Parliament would increase the accountability of MEPs and lead to further democratisation of the EU, or overburden the party groups and decrease the stability of the legislative decision-making process, depends on how the party groups generate voting cohesion in the European Parliament. The general aim of this research project is therefore to find an answer to the question of why the party groups of the European Parliament vote cohesively.

If the party groups vote cohesively because all party group members share identical policy preferences, voting cohesion will prevail even if competition between the party groups becomes more public. It is, however, highly unlikely that the party groups have coherent policy preferences. Party group members are not elected to the European Parliament on grounds of their membership in the transnational party group. It is their national party that selects them as candidates in the European elections. As the party groups combine MEPs from many national parties, the policy preferences of party group members are likely to diverge. National parties have their own
historical traditions and draw their electoral support from different constituency bases, both of which increase the likelihood of party group preference heterogeneity.

Previous research has therefore argued that the high levels of voting cohesion in the European Parliament rest on the disciplinary powers held by the party groups (McElroy 2001; Yoshinaka, McElroy, and Bowler 2006). Compared to political parties at the national level, the party groups do, however, have a limited amount of disciplinary mechanisms at their disposal. The party groups cannot use electoral sanctions because they do not have the prerogative of appointing candidates for the European elections. The party groups are not able to promise their members future appointments to executive offices because the EU is not a parliamentary system in which the executive is recruited from the majority of the Parliament. Thus the disciplinary mechanisms that are available to the party groups can be derived only from appointments inside the European Parliament. But scholars disagree about whether the party groups are able to utilise these disciplinary mechanisms to encourage their members to support the party group in plenary voting. Some scholars have presented evidence that supports the notion that the party groups are able to discipline their members (McElroy 2001; McElroy 2003; Yoshinaka, McElroy, and Bowler 2006). Other researchers, however, have pointed out that it is the national party delegations that apply disciplinary actions to sanction MEPs’ voting behaviour (Hix 2002; Kreppel 2002).

The previously presented evidence of party discipline in the European Parliament is ambiguous and it cannot definitely be stated that the party groups are able to increase voting cohesion through the application of disciplinary tools. The failure to arrive at a definite conclusion about whether party groups or the national party delegations control disciplinary mechanisms inside the European Parliament might stem from the fact that the two scenarios have never been tested comparatively by previous researchers. In order to arrive at a possible answer to the question of how the party groups generate voting cohesion in the European Parliament, I will therefore test the two previously outlined notions of party discipline in the European Parliament comparatively. Thus, the study aims to test whether the party groups have established a genuine and powerful party group leadership with disciplinary powers or whether the party groups are no more than empty shells dependent on the voluntary cooperation of their national party delegations.

Besides trying to solve a contradiction in the scholarly debate about the disciplinary strengths of the party groups in the European Parliament the results of this study will also have repercussions for the debate on the role of political parties in resolving the EU’s legitimacy crisis. If the national party delegations control the disciplinary whip inside the European Parliament, increased public contestation between the party groups might decrease party group voting cohesion and the stability of the legislative decision-making process in the European Parliament. If public awareness of the political con-
flict at the European level increases, the national parties might control their MEPs more tightly. They could threaten not to reappoint their MEPs in the upcoming election, or to foreclose a continuation of their political career at the national level. If the party groups do not possess disciplinary mechanisms to counteract these threats the party groups might break apart or at least achieve lower levels of voting cohesion. Historical evidence has shown that a weak and ineffective party system has had negative consequences for the passing of legislation and for government stability (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007:49-50). Increased instability of the party system in the European Parliament might therefore also endanger the stability of the EU as a political system. If the party groups were to control the disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament, they could more easily endure public pressure and could demonstrate their effectiveness in solving social and economic problems by producing good public policy.

Outlook

The study is divided into seven chapters and proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the development of the party groups in the European Parliament through a review of the existing literature. It is highlighted that the party groups have been able to increase their voting cohesion since the first direct election and have achieved a level of voting cohesion surpassing that of the political parties in the US Congress, but lower than in most parliamentary systems. Then, I demonstrate that the high levels of voting cohesion of the party groups are not simply caused by a coherence of the policy preferences of party group members. Since party group preference homogeneity is not the underlying explanation of party group voting cohesion, I present a definition of party group discipline that establishes a causal relationship between applied disciplinary mechanisms and party group voting cohesion. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the results of previous research on party group discipline in the European Parliament. I present the most commonly available disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament and show that the previous literature has produced antithetical results due to a failure to control simultaneously for the application of party group discipline and national party delegation discipline.

Based on the previous literature’s view that the party groups or the national party delegations are able to discipline MEPs, Chapter 3 develops two scenarios of party discipline in the European Parliament: the party group discipline scenario and the national party delegation scenario. In the first section of Chapter 3 I review the theoretical literature that explains the existence of political parties through the utility that they produce for legislators in the electoral and legislative arena. The literature is based on rational institutionalism (Hall and Taylor 1996; March and Olsen 1983). Legislators are assumed to be rational utility maximisers that establish political parties as
institutional solutions for solving collective action problems in the electoral and legislative arena of politics (Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993). Thus, legislators create political parties because they benefit from membership. This conceptualisation of political parties underlies much of the current research on the party groups of the European Parliament and will subsequently be used to derive the two scenarios of party disciplinary. Since the theoretical literature is borrowed from research on the political parties of the US Congress, I will identify the most important assumption of these theories and adapt them to the context of the European Parliament. I highlight that MEPs are likely to be policy-seekers and become party group members in order to enhance their influence over outcomes of the legislative decision-making process in the European Parliament. The last section of Chapter 3 presents two scenarios of party discipline in the European Parliament. The party group discipline scenario assumes that party group members have institutionalised the party group leadership as a central agent and endowed it with disciplinary powers to solve the collective action problem of voting cohesion for the party group. The national party discipline scenario assumes that the party group leadership facilitates the party group internal decision-making process by creating focal points, but is not endowed with disciplinary powers. In this scenario the collective action of joint voting behaviour is explained through the gains of iterated cooperation and is dependent on the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations. Hypotheses about the application of party disciplinary mechanisms are derived from both scenarios. The comparative testing of these hypotheses will be the main task of this research project. The chapter further derives three hypotheses about the party group leadership appointment process in the party group discipline scenario.

Chapter 4 delineates the research design of this study and presents the operationalisation of the independent variables, which will be applied in the empirical analyses of Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Deriving measures of voting loyalty in order to assess the disciplinary powers of the party group leadership and the national party delegations, I show why it is indispensable to control for both party group voting loyalty and national party delegation voting loyalty within the same statistical model. The inclusion of both these measurements in statistical models that are applied in the empirical chapters will allow me to distinguish between the effects of party group discipline and national party delegation discipline. Since this distinction can be made only if the national party delegations are sufficiently large, the empirical chapters concentrate on studying applied discipline in the two biggest party groups of the European Parliament: the Christian Democratic and Conservative European People’s Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED) and the Party of European Socialists (PSE). The empirical analyses are further limited to the fifth term of the European Parliament (1999–2004). During this legislative term the European Parliament acquired wide-reaching legislative powers,
which supports the underlying assumption of this research project that MEPs are policy-seekers.

Chapter 5 functions as a first, albeit not direct, test of the two disciplinary scenarios presented in Chapter 3. At the beginning of this chapter I describe the internal hierarchy and the distribution of decision-making competences within the EPP-ED and PSE groups. This descriptive analysis is based on the party group internal rules of procedure and gives a first impression of whether the leadership characterisation of the party group or the national party discipline scenario is more fitting. Using multivariate statistical models, I then analyse the party group leadership appointment process in both party groups at the beginning and the middle of the legislative term. Finally, I conduct a qualitative analysis of the control mechanisms that the EPP-ED and PSE groups apply to keep their party group leaders in line.

Chapter 6 compares the disciplinary powers of the party group leadership and the national party delegations in the committee assignment process at the parliamentary midterm. In order to classify the committee transfers of party group members as demotions or promotions I establish a rank order of the committees of the European Parliament. Compared to earlier research that uses measurements that are endogenous to the committee transfer process itself, I use legislative activity as an exogenous measure to derive a ranking order for the EP committee system. In a second step I use a multivariate statistical model to test whether the voting loyalty of party group members towards the party group leadership or the national party delegations has any effect on the likelihood of being promoted or demoted in the committee assignment process.

Chapter 7 also deals with the comparison of applied disciplinary mechanisms, but focuses on the allocation of legislative reports in the European Parliament. First, I use descriptive evidence to show that legislative reports are allocated proportionally between party groups within the parliamentary standing committees. Further, I present interview evidence that singles out the Committee Coordinators of each party group as the most pivotal actors in the distribution of reports, both between and within the party groups. As in the previous chapter, I analyse whether voting loyalty towards the party group leadership or towards the national party delegation leads to sanctions in the report allocation process. The disciplinary actions are assessed through a panel analysis of the allocation of co-decision reports throughout the whole fifth term of the European Parliament.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the study with a summary of the results derived from the empirical analyses of Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Thereafter I outline suggestions for future research and conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study for the democratic legitimisation of the EU.
2. Explaining Party Group Voting Cohesion

The European Parliament has become a powerful institutional actor in the European Union. The member states have increased the powers of the European Parliament continuously throughout the history of European integration. Successive Treaty revisions have given the European Parliament budgetary powers and veto powers in the nomination of the Commission and have increased its legislative powers to the extent that it is currently a co-equal legislator with the Council for more than half of the legislative output of the European Union (Hix 2005; Hörl, Warntjen, and Wonka 2005). At the same time, the European Parliament differs from legislative chambers in regular parliamentary or presidential systems. Unlike in parliamentary systems, the Executive of the European Union, the Commission, is not recruited from a majority coalition of MEPs but nominated by member state governments. In addition, the Commission cannot threaten to dissolve the European Parliament. Therefore, the European Parliament comes closer to a legislature in a system based on the separation of powers, like the US presidential system. In contrast to the US, however, the European Parliament has veto powers in the nomination of the President of the Commission and the Commission as a whole. The Parliament can also vote the Commission out of office, which distinguishes it from the US Congress. These differences should be taken into account when applying the analytical and theoretical tools provided by the comparative literature on legislative politics.

The differences between the European Parliament and other legislatures become even more apparent when one looks at its political party system. Whereas members of national parliaments are members of a single national political party, MEPs are members of their political party at the national level, members of a national party delegation in the European Parliament and also members of one of the European Parliament’s transnational party groups. National party delegations bring together all MEPs who belong to the same national party. The transnational party groups consolidate national party delegations from different countries, which belong to the same party family or share similar policy preferences. At the beginning of the fifth term (1999–2004), the period closely examined in the empirical chapters of this thesis, the European Parliament was composed of seven transnational party
groups, comprising a total of 626 MEPs from 129 national party delegations (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1 The party groups of the fifth European Parliament (1999-2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party group name</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Party family</th>
<th>Size in 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European People's Party-European Democrats</td>
<td>EPP-ED</td>
<td>Christian-democratic &amp; Conservative</td>
<td>233 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of European Socialists</td>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>180 29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Liberal Democratic and Reform Party</td>
<td>ELDR</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>51 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens-European Free Alliance</td>
<td>Greens-EFA</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>48 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European United Left-Nordic Green Left</td>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>Radical-Left</td>
<td>42 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union for Europe of Nations</td>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>National Conservative &amp; Anti-EU</td>
<td>30 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe of Democracies and Diversities</td>
<td>EDD</td>
<td>Anti-EU</td>
<td>16 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-attached</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>26 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>626 100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:64-65; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007:24-25)

Although the European Parliament does not function like the legislature in a parliamentary or presidential system, and although the structure of its party system is complex and differs from national legislatures, that does not mean that the European Parliament should be analysed as something sui generis (Hix 1994; Hix 1998). Rather researchers must be acquainted with the assumptions of these theories, as developed in other contexts, and carefully adapt them to the environment of the European Parliament. This study follows the line of earlier comparative research (Hix 1999; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007; Kreppel 2002; McElroy 2003; Raunio 1997) and applies common theories of political parties and legislative politics to study the relationship between MEPs, their national party delegations and their transnational party groups.

The primary aim of this study is to determine whether the transnational party groups or the national party delegations control the legislative disciplining tools within the European Parliament. Finding an answer to this

1 The information about the number of national party delegations present in the fifth European Parliament was derived from the roll-call vote data set provided by Simon Hix and his collaborators (Hix et.al. 2007).
question has important implications for our understanding of the legislative decision-making process inside the European Parliament and for the democratic nature of political representation at the European level. In section 2.1 of this chapter I will discuss previous research that has revealed that the party groups of the European Parliament have achieved remarkably high levels of voting cohesion. Any democratic system in which political parties function as the main transmission belt between voters’ preferences and government output has to be built on a party system with cohesive political parties. If political parties are not internally cohesive in their legislative voting behaviour, parliamentarians run the risk of having to invest a considerable share of their time in looking for legislative coalitions that might be prone to break down and thus fail to produce the political outcomes for which they were elected. Given its stability-inducing effects, the high level of voting cohesion of the transnational party groups in the European Parliament thus sounds like good news for democratic interest representation at the European level.

There are, however, two caveats. First, the transnational party groups do not campaign in European elections (Schmitt 2005). Moreover, it is national parties that select MEPs and largely determine their electoral prospects by assembling voting lists (Hix 2004). These electoral characteristics disconnect political decision-making in the European Parliament from the electoral arena. Secondly, it is far from clear how the party groups are able to generate such high levels of voting cohesion. One common explanation of the voting cohesion of political parties is coherent policy preferences. This explanation is rejected for the party groups of the European Parliament in section 2.2 of this chapter; I show that the party groups are heterogeneous in their policy preferences and able to achieve much higher levels of voting cohesion than their preference coherence would suggest.

In the absence of preference homogeneity, party discipline is frequently referred to as an explanatory factor in voting cohesion. In section 2.3 of this chapter I therefore discuss how party discipline might explain the voting cohesion of the party groups of the European Parliament. I define party discipline as party voting cohesion generated through a sanctioning system, in the absence of preference coherence. Following previous research on party group voting cohesion and discipline I show that the only disciplinary mechanisms able to explain party group voting cohesion are derived from the legislative organisation of the European Parliament. The evidence presented by previous research on legislative party discipline in the European Parliament is ambiguous. Some studies support the notion that the party groups are able to sanction the voting behaviour of their members through rewards or punishments in the committee assignment process and the distribution of the authority to write legislative reports. Other studies, however, do not find any supporting evidence that the party groups are able to apply legislative disciplinary mechanisms. Instead, they conclude that all legislative disciplinary actions are administered by the national party delegations.
It is the task of this study to test which of these two party discipline scenarios is more likely to apply in the European Parliament. The goal of this thesis is not only to resolve an empirical anomaly in the empirical research, but also to further our understanding of how party group voting cohesion is generated in the European Parliament. If the party groups are able to discipline their members to overcome conflict due to differences in policy preferences and to vote cohesively, the root of a future transnational party system might be indicated. If it is found, however, that the national party delegations still hold the legislative disciplinary powers in their hands, party group voting cohesion is explained by the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations. Such a party system would become a lot more fragile if public awareness, dissatisfaction with and contestation of European policy-making were to rise, or if the party groups were ever given the opportunity to compete against each other in European elections.

2.1 Party group voting cohesion

The first party activities inside the European Parliament can be traced back to the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952. In these early days the European Parliament was called Common Assembly and its delegates consisted of 78 national parliamentarians. When electing its president at the constituent meeting of the Common Assembly, the delegates from the six founding member states already voted according to ideological affinity. After six months they began to arrange the seating order according to ideological lines and within the first year three transnational party groups - Christian Democrats, Socialist and Liberals - had emerged (Kreppel 2002:55; Murray 2004:106). The two common explanations of why the delegates decided to organise themselves according to ideological affiliation, rather than along national lines in the Common Assembly are historical and sociological (Kreppel 2002:185). Historical interpretations of the first transnational formation of party groups, argue that the delegates wanted to overcome the national conflicts that had divided Europe in two world wars. The sociological line of reasoning is based on the argument that the past political experience of the delegates determined their political actions in the Common Assembly. Since the delegates were national parliamentarians they had gained previous political experience at the national level and were used to partisan politics. When the delegates organised themselves in the Common Assembly, the formation of transnational party groups based on ideological proximity and party family tradition, was a natural continuation of their political experiences from the national level. Beyond the fact that party groups formed, seated according to ideology, and determined the election of the President of the Common Assembly, very little is known
about the actual activity and influence of the party groups in the early period of the European Parliament. Up until the first direct election in 1979 the development record of the transnational party groups was rather unimpressive (Hix and Lord 1997:14).

The directly elected Parliament

Our understanding of the development of political parties in the European Parliament has increased considerably since the European Parliament came to be directly elected in 1979. Since then the Parliament has collected information on all plenary votes that were submitted to a roll call. A roll call can be requested either by the party groups or a group of legislators of at least 37 MEPs (European Parliament 2004:Rule 160). The voting behaviour of all MEPs and information about the substance of the vote are then recorded. Roll-call votes are one of the most frequently used sources of information for political scientists studying political parties in legislative settings around the world.2 Studies of roll-call votes allow scholars to draw a wide range of conclusions concerning party politics, such as the voting cohesion and discipline of political parties, their coalition behaviour and competition between political parties, as well as about the conflict dimensions on which political parties compete. Although roll-call votes are frequently adduced, however, their use has not been without criticism; the general argument is that the recorded votes are an unrepresentative fraction of the whole population of all votes taken in the plenary, and that studying roll-call votes can thus lead to biased inferences (Carrubba et al. 2006; Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers 2004).3

Studies of roll-call voting behaviour in the European Parliament confirm the transnational trend established by party group formation in the Common Assembly. Scholars have shown that MEPs are more likely to vote according to ideology following their transnational party group than according to national lines – that is, than to vote with other MEPs from the same member state (Hix and Lord 1997; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007; Høyland 2006a; Noury 2002; Raunio 1997). Also, this trend of party group voting cohesion has increased over time. The most comprehensive study analysing party group cohesion with the help of roll-call votes is by Simon Hix and his collaborators (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007); they analyse all roll-call votes in the European Parliament 1979–2004 (see table 2.2).

2 see VoteWorld: The International Legislative Roll-Call Voting Website of the Institute of Governmental Studies at Berkeley University, at (consulted 08.08.2007): http://ucdata.berkeley.edu:7101/new_web/VoteWorld/voteworld/index.html.
3 For a more detailed discussion of the problems of using roll-call votes see Section 4.2 in Chapter 4.
Table 2.2 Average voting cohesion of party groups in the European Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.831</td>
<td>0.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPP-ED</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.850</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDR</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.759</td>
<td>0.726</td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>0.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>0.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>0.817</td>
<td>0.804</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>0.756</td>
<td>0.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens-EFA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hix, Noury and Roland (2007:94)

Their findings support Amie Kreppel’s argument that changes in the legislative powers of the European Parliament have affected how the party groups of the European Parliament vote (Kreppel 2002). The legislative powers of the European Parliament were strengthened by the introduction of the cooperation procedure with the enactment of the Single European Act (1986). The introduction of the revised co-decision procedure with the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999 made the European Parliament a co-equal legislator with the Council with regard to all first-pillar legislation (Tsebelis and Garrett 2000).

The comparison of voting cohesion in the first European Parliament (1979–1984) and the fifth European Parliament (1999–2004) displayed in Table 2.2 shows that the increases in the European Parliament’s legislative competences coincided with an aggregated increase in voting cohesion of 8 percentage points. Yet voting cohesion increased differently amongst the party groups. The Socialist PSE group and the Greens were able to increase their voting cohesion records by 18 and 22 percentage points respectively, while the liberal ELDR group increased its voting cohesion by 9 percentage points. The voting cohesion of the EPP-ED, the UEN and the GUE-NGL group, however, basically remained unchanged between the first and fifth parliamentary terms. It is worth noting that the EPP-ED group already had a fairly high degree of voting cohesion in the first European Parliament and that the voting cohesion of the Liberals increased first sharply between the fourth and fifth European Parliaments.

What is generally surprising about the European Parliament’s voting cohesion levels is that they have remained stable or increased over time despite several rounds of EU enlargement, which have added countries with consid-

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4 The voting cohesion scores are based on the Agreement Index, which was developed by Hix, Noury and Roland to analyse voting cohesion in the European Parliament. The Index differs from the frequently applied Rice Index, as it also is able to take into account voting abstentions. The Index ranges from 0 to 1. If all party group members always vote in the same way the score is 1. If the party group is completely divided, e.g. 50% of the members vote yes and 50% no, the index score is 0 (Hix et al. 2007:91-95). The measure is strongly correlated with the Rice Index which underlies the calculated cohesion scores of Table 2.3, which makes a comparison of the results of the two indices possible.
erably different economic and political conditions, thus most likely increasing the heterogeneity of MEPs’ interest in and preferences for particular EU policies. For party groups, enlargement has meant that they have had to integrate new members and new national party delegations into their groups, increasing their fractionalisation and preference heterogeneity (McElroy 2003; Hix et al. 2007). From the standpoint of increased preference heterogeneity, not least due to successive enlargement rounds, the relatively high degree of party group voting cohesion in the European Parliament is puzzling.

The fact that party voting cohesion in the national parliaments of the EU member states is generally higher than the party group voting cohesion in the European Parliament can be traced back to the EU’s constitutional structure (Hix 1999; McElroy 2003). The fusion of a parliamentary majority with the executive has been dubbed the efficiency secret of parliamentary systems of governance (Bagehot 1865; Cox 1987). In parliamentary systems, government parties are highly cohesive in their voting behaviour as government can threaten to attach a confidence motion to any legislative proposal (Diermeier and Feddersen 1998; Huber 1996); the government can threaten its fellow party members in the parliament that it will end the governmental coalition or call for new elections if a particular government proposal does not find majority support. In a system based on the separation of powers, such as the US presidential system, the executive is not recruited from a majority of the legislature and does not have the power to discipline legislators through a vote of confidence. In the EU, the relationship between the Commission and the European Parliament can best be compared to a separation of powers system (Hix 1999). The Commission is not recruited from a majority coalition of the European Parliament and does not have the possibility to attach a confidence motion to its legislative proposals (Wonka 2007).

Party groups in a parliamentary democracy show higher levels of voting cohesion than their counterparts in the European Parliament or the US Congress (Jensen 2000; Pajala, Jakulin, and Wray 2006; Saalfeld 1995; Sieberer 2006). This is confirmed by the aggregated voting cohesion levels of the party groups in 11 parliamentary democracies in the 1990s, presented in Table 2.3. In their study of voting behaviour in the Finnish Parliament – the Eduskunta – Pajala and his collaborators found support for the notion that voting cohesion in parliamentary democracies depends on the government’s power to threaten a vote of confidence; whereas the government parties achieved a joint voting cohesion score of 0.87 in 2003, the opposition party groups had a considerably lower joint voting cohesion record of 0.57 (Pajala, Jakulin, and Wray 2006).5

5 The voting cohesion scores are based on the Agreement Index developed Hix et al. (2005).
Table 2.3 *Party voting cohesion averages in parliamentary democracies (1990s)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Party voting cohesion averages&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>98.33 (1.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>99.00 (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>98.25 (1.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>99.83 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>88.63 (2.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>96.60 (1.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>96.93 (2.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>94.75 (0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>98.72 (0.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>96.57 (1.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>99.31 (0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All systems</strong></td>
<td><strong>96.76 (3.75)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Sieberer 2006); Note: standard errors in parenthesis

Voting cohesion in the House of Representatives of the US Congress has experienced significant changes over time. In the period from the 1930s to the 1950s voting cohesion for the Republican and Democratic parties was above 80, but fell to 70 between the 1950s and the 1970s. Since 1983, the Democratic Party has achieved voting cohesion levels over 80 again, with a high of 88 in the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress (1987–88). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the voting cohesion of the Republican party remained below 80 (Cox and McCubbins 1991:562).<sup>7</sup>

Comparison of the voting cohesion scores presented in Table 2.2, Table 2.3, as well as in the above paragraph shows that the European Parliament’s party groups are less cohesive than their counterparts in parliamentary systems, but more cohesive than the parties of the US Congress. It is not surprising that the party groups in the European Parliament display somewhat lower cohesion levels than their counterparts in parliamentary systems as the European Union resembles a system based in the separation of powers. But it is surprising that most party groups are more cohesive than the political parties of the US Congress since they were formed much more recently and have to consolidate members from many national parties with different traditions and policy positions.

In their analysis of party group voting cohesion Hix, Noury and Roland found several explanatory factors in respect of party group voting cohesion, besides Parliament’s increased legislative powers (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007). According to them, an increase in

---

<sup>6</sup> The party voting cohesion scores are country averages and are based on the Rice Index of voting cohesion, which is calculated as follows: Yes-No/Yes+No.

<sup>7</sup> The voting cohesion scores are based on the Rice Index.
group size also increases party group voting cohesion. ‘This thus confirms the idea that an increase in the size of the party group makes it more likely to influence policy outcomes and thus bigger stakes in votes’ (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007:101). The trend can be observed for the PSE, the EPP-ED, the Liberals and the Greens, as they have all increased in size over the years.

They found further that an increase in national delegations, which are members of the national government, increases voting cohesion. Surprisingly, Hix and his collaborators discovered that the increasing ideological heterogeneity of party groups, measured in terms of the left-right preferences of the national parties, does not have an effect on party group voting cohesion. However, an increase in the fractionalisation of the party group, measured in terms of national diversity – that is, the sheer number of national delegations that make up a party group – reduces voting cohesion. The authors draw the following conclusion:

We find instead that variations in ideological diversity are successfully buffered by the discipline of the transnational party organisations. But the ability of European parties [party groups] to discipline their members is limited by national fractionalisation. (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007:102, parenthesis added by the author)

Thus, because party groups are able to increase their voting cohesion, despite the increase in preference heterogeneity, the authors conclude that they are able to discipline their members.

An analysis of the structure of competition established by MEPs’ voting behaviour also confirmed the predominance of ideology in the European Parliament. No matter which methodology researchers applied, and which of the different roll-call vote samples they investigated, all studies confirm a left-right dominance in the voting behaviour of the European Parliament (Hix 2001; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2006; Kreppel 2003; Kreppel 2002; Kreppel and Tsebelis 1999; Noury 2002); in other words, the voting behaviour of MEPs is not determined by their nationality, but by transnational party group affiliation. On average, the left-right dimension of politics is able predict about 90% of the votes cast by MEPs (Noury 2002: 40). A second dimension is also significant in the European Parliament; it captures government-opposition patterns of national parties and, since the late 1990s, it has begun to correspond to national parties’ positions on European integration (Hix et al. 2006:509).

The importance of ideology has also been shown for coalition behaviour between the party groups in the European Parliament (Hix et al. 2005, 2007). Ideological proximity between party groups explains coalition patterns more accurately than the possible size of coalitions. In addition, coalition behaviour has become more competitive, as the grand coalition of the EPP-ED
and PSE group has continuously decreased since 1996; in the fifth period of the European Parliament, the Socialists were more likely to vote with the Greens and the Liberals than with the EPP-ED, and the EPP-ED coalesced more often with the Liberals and the UEN group than with the Socialists (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007:151). Thus, European Parliament behavioural patterns show not only that cooperation among individual MEPs is based on their party group affiliation, but also that coalition behaviour between party groups is most strongly affected by parties’ ideological positions.

The evidence presented so far paints a compelling picture of the importance of the transnational party groups in structuring the legislative decision-making process of the European Parliament. At the same time, previous research showed that the national party delegations cannot be neglected in the European Parliament (Blomgren 2003; Faas 2003; Hix 2002; Hix 2004; Kreppel 2002). MEPs are frequently assumed to hold policy preferences similar to their national parties or at least to behave accordingly. The explanation of the preference accordance is twofold. First, MEPs have self-selected to choose a certain national party, usually due to closeness in policy positions. Secondly, MEPs have been socialised within their national parties and most have previously held local, regional or national office in the name of the party; Taggart and Bale have shown that freshmen MEPs are seldom ‘political virgins’ (2006). Hix and Lord (1997:84) report that in 1994 only 5% of EPP-ED and PSE members did not report prior political experience.

Even if MEPs did not share similar preferences there are structural reasons why they should act according to their national parties’ preferences. Firstly, national parties are important gate-keepers for politicians who want to be elected to the European Parliament. Secondly, MEPs are dependent on the support of their national party for a political career when they re-enter the national political arena. Thirdly, the national party delegation could also act as a gate-keeper for MEPs in their pursuit of influential positions within the European Parliament.

MEPs from national parties that hold policy preferences close to the party group median are less likely to defect than MEPs who belong to national parties with more extreme policy preferences (Hix 2002; Faas 2003). Differences in the sophistication of national parties’ communication and monitoring strategies towards their MEPs also affect MEP voting behaviour (Blomgren 2003:289; Faas 2003). MEPs who are more closely monitored by their national party are more likely to defect from their party group. At the member-state level, differences of electoral institutions have repercussions for MEPs’ voting behaviour. A more party-centred electoral system, centralised candidate selection and a small district magnitude all increase the control of national parties over their MEPs, which is why these MEPs are more likely to vote against their party group (Hix 2004:212; Faas 2003:859).

Supporting the notion that the national parties are important determinants of MEP voting behaviour it has been shown that the national party delega-
tions are the most cohesive partisan actors in the European Parliament; Faas (2003:855) has calculated that the voting cohesion of most national party delegations is well above 90%. Both the party groups and the national party delegations show high cohesion records. Disagreement between the two actors is rare, however. In the fifth Parliament the party groups and their national party delegations took different voting positions in only 8% of the votes. If the party group and the national party delegation of an MEP do take different positions in a vote, MEPs are overall more likely to vote with their national party delegation (Hix et al. 2007:137–138).\(^8\) Whether due to a higher degree of preference homogeneity or to structural disciplinary powers, overall national party delegation membership is a stronger predictor of MEP voting behaviour than party group membership.

In sum, the review of the literature on political party activity in the European Parliament reveals a puzzling picture. Although MEPs come from many different member states, the main conflict pattern in the Parliament is one of transnational party group competition on the left-right dimension and not a division along national lines. The party groups of the European Parliament have also been able to achieve astonishingly high levels of voting cohesion, surpassing the voting cohesion levels of the political parties in the US Congress. These patterns are even corroborated for the first two years of the sixth European Parliament after the 2004 Enlargement, which added 10 new member states – including eight from Central and Eastern Europe – to the European Union (Hix and Noury 2008).

These findings are surprising, as the European Parliament is a fairly young institution compared to the national parliaments of EU member states and the US Congress, and MEPs and their parties consequently had to adapt quickly to this new institutional environment. In addition, the party groups of the European Parliament have to integrate MEPs from many different national parties into their groups. MEPs have usually been socialised into their national parties for a longer period of time, they have similar policy preferences to their national parties and they are likely to be dependent on the support of their national parties at European elections and when they re-enter the national political arena. Together with the high turnover rates in the European Parliament this impedes a process of socialisation within the party groups through which MEPs become increasingly like-minded, ‘go native’ and shift their loyalties to the transnational party groups. MEPs remain national politicians in their attitudes and loyalties (Scully 2005), so making it very difficult for the party groups to find common ground and formulate party group positions, which are later supported through a high degree of voting cohesion in the plenary.

Despite these difficult circumstances the European Parliament’s party groups seem to have been able to establish a high degree of party group vot-

\(^8\) These results are aggregated for all party groups.
ing cohesion, which is essential for the functioning of any competitive party
democracy. Yet our understanding of why and how these party groups have
been able to reach such high levels of voting cohesion is still obscure. Prefer-
ence coherence and party discipline are the two most general explanations
of why parties in legislatures vote cohesively (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz
1999; Krehbiel 1993; Ozbudun 1970). It is important to understand how
party group cohesion is generated because it affects the parliamentary legis-
lative decision-making process and interest representation in the European
Parliament (Carrubba and Gabel 1999). In the remainder of this chapter, I
will therefore follow earlier research and investigate whether preference
coherence or party discipline can account for the high voting cohesion levels
of the party groups of the European Parliament (McElroy 2003).

2.2 Party group preference coherence

How can the high levels of party group voting cohesion in the European
Parliament be explained? The simplest explanation of high levels of voting
cohesion of legislative party groups, in general, is that party group members
share common policy preferences. Keith Krehbiel has criticised much of the
literature, which tries to identify partisan effects in legislative politics by
analysing party groups’ voting cohesion (Krehbiel 1993); he states that the
crucial question of whether parties matter boils down to the following:

In casting apparently partisan votes, do individual legislators vote with fellow
party members in spite of their disagreement about the policy in question, or
do they vote with fellow party members because of their agreement about the
policy in question? (Krehbiel 1993:238, emphasis in original)

High levels of voting cohesion are not sufficient evidence that party
groups affect their members’ voting behaviour, that is, that the party group is
more than an empty shell. If members vote with their party despite dis-
agreements about the policy, political parties may significantly affect and
change policy outcomes. Thus, according to Krehbiel, the simplest explana-
tion of a high level of voting cohesion on the part of party groups in legisla-
tures is the coherence of their policy preferences. If party members think
alike, it is also likely that they will vote the same way.

This explanation of voting cohesion is unlikely to explain party group
voting cohesion in the European Parliament, however. As already men-
tioned, previous research has shown that party groups’ policy preferences are
Based on the expert survey by Laver and Hunt, McElroy (2003) uses the
economic and environmental policy positions of the national parties within
the EPP-ED and PSE group in 1992 to display the preference heterogeneity within these two party groups (Laver and Hunt 1992). Hix, Noury and Roland apply kernel density plots to compare the individual left-right policy preferences of EPP-ED and PSE members with their aggregated voting behaviour in the fifth European Parliament, and also conclude that political groups in the European Parliament are marked by a fairly heterogeneous preference distribution (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007).

Following Hix and his collaborators I compare party groups’ policy preferences and voting behaviour. I extend their results by plotting additional graphs of the individual left-right preferences for other party groups (Figure 2.2) and adding a kernel density plot of the preference heterogeneity in the EPP-ED and PSE group measured by their constituent national parties’ left-right policy preferences (Figure 2.1). Comparison of party groups’ policy preferences and voting behaviour is conducted for the fifth parliamentary term. This is the Parliament with the highest level of voting cohesion, which is why the party groups should display a high degree of preference coherence, if preferences alone explain party group voting cohesion.

The differences between party groups’ policy preference coherence and their voting cohesion record are illustrated in Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. Both the policy preferences and the voting behaviour in these figures are based on the left-right dimension. This measure is used for two reasons: first, to ensure the comparability of policy preferences and voting behaviour; secondly, because the left-right dimension is the most dominant conflict dimension at the national level (Gallager, Mair and Laver 2006) and in the European Parliament (Noury 2002).

Figure 2.1 presents the kernel density plots of the aggregated left-right preferences of the two biggest party groups, the EPP-ED and PSE group. The policy preferences are measured by their national parties’ positions on the left-right dimension. This measure is taken from the dataset of the Party Manifesto Research Group (Volkens et al. 2007). The policy preferences are derived by computerised content analysis of political parties’ electoral manifestos.

Figure 2.1 shows that both the EPP-ED and the PSE group are fairly heterogeneous in their policy preferences on the left-right dimension; the mean policy position of the EPP-ED group is 5.27, whilst the mean EPP-ED is positioned more to the right, at 2.30. The EPP-ED group is less coherent than the PSE group; its left-right preferences spread out over the whole scale and the standard deviation of its preference distribution is 2.27. The range of the left-right preferences of the PSE group, on the other hand, is smaller and

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9 All measurements were rescaled to fit a 0–10 scale to simply comparison of the results; 0 describes the most leftward position and 10 the most rightward position.

10 Kernel density plots are smoothed-out histograms. I used the same halfwidth (0.3) for smoothing the kernel density plots displayed in Figures 2.1–2.3.
its standard deviation is only 1.35. There is still considerable preference overlap between the two party groups. The most leftist position held by a national party which is a member of the EPP-ED group is 1.2, whilst the most rightward position of national party within the PSE group is 4.8. An analysis of variance revealed further that only 37% of the variation in left-right policy preferences is explained by differences between the groups, the remaining 63% being explained by preference heterogeneity within the groups.

Figure 2.1 EPP-ED and PSE policy preferences on the left-right dimension, measured by the positions of MEPs’ national parties (1999)

Source: The Left-right preference measure of the national parties is taken from the party manifesto research group data (Volkens et al. 2007).

The same picture develops if the individual left-right policy preferences of MEPs are analysed. The graphs displayed in Figure 2.2 are based on MEPs’ self-assessed left-right preferences; the data are taken from the MEP survey conducted by David Farrell and his colleagues (Farrell et al. 2006).\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11} The survey was conducted in 2000 and 2006. The response rates were 31% and 37%, respectively. I merged the two datasets and used mean imputation to fill in missing values, where possible, that is, where I had enough MEPs from the same national party to make a conclusive judgement of the mean value. Thereby, I increased the availability of MEPs’ left/right preferences to 40%. The missing values of the dataset are, however, not missing at
Figure 2.2 Party group policy preferences on the left-right dimension, measured by MEPs’ self-assessment (2000&2006)

Figure 2.2 confirms the preference heterogeneity for all party groups and shows that there is a considerable preference overlap between party groups. Again, the mean position of the PSE group lies to the left of the EPP-ED group and the PSE group is more coherent than the EPP-ED group. The liberal ELDR group is situated between the PSE and the EPP-ED group. The GUE-NGL group, which compromises the non-socialist left parties, and the Green-EFA group are positioned left of the PSE group.

Figure 2.3 displays MEPs’ individual voting behaviour aggregated for the party groups of the European Parliament. The voting behaviour is based on the left-right dimension of the NOMINATE scores derived from all roll-called votes in the fifth legislative term (1999–2004). The left-right dimension captures about 90% of MEPs’ voting behaviour (Noury 2002:40).

A comparison of the left-right policy preferences distribution of the party groups in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, with the left-right voting behaviour displayed in Figure 2.3, shows that MEPs from the same party group are much more closely aligned in their voting behaviour than in their preferences. The me-
The median position of the PSE group (3.86) still lies to the left of the EPP-ED group (8.24), but the distance between the two party group means has increased. Party group internal variation in voting behaviour has decreased. The standard deviation of the PSE group is reduced to 0.311 and the standard deviation of the distribution of EPP-ED voting behaviour is 0.598.

**Figure 2.3 Voting behaviour of MEPs on the left-right voting dimension (1999–2004)**

The two biggest party groups are also much more clearly distinguishable from each other in their voting behaviour than in their policy preferences. An analysis of the variance of the voting behaviour of the EPP-ED and the PSE group empirically confirms this impression. Party group membership explains 95% of the voting behaviour of EPP-ED and PSE members and only 5% of the differences in voting behaviour are due to party group internal differences.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show that there is considerable overlap in policy preferences between all party groups. The overlap in party groups’ aggregated voting behaviour is minimal, however; only the EPP-ED and the ELDR
group and the GUE-NGL and the Green-EFA group display patterns of overlapping voting behaviour.

Comparison of the left-right policy preferences of MEPs and their national parties with the voting behaviour of MEPs on the left-right dimension clearly shows that the party groups of the European Parliament are much more cohesive in their voting behaviour than they are coherent in their policy preferences. Thus, the high levels of party group voting cohesion are not generated by the party groups’ preference homogeneity. In Section 2.3 I will therefore discuss the second explanatory factor of voting cohesion: party discipline. The section contains a general discussion of party discipline and presents evidence from previous research on patterns of party discipline in the European Parliament.

2.3 Party group discipline

In order for party groups to achieve voting cohesion in the absence of common agreement on a policy the general conclusion of the literature is that they need to be able to discipline their members (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Krehbiel 1993; McElroy 2003; Owens 2004). Although party discipline is a widely used concept in the literature, it is not applied consistently; some scholars refer to party discipline as the outcome of the voting process, whilst others identify the application of sanctioning mechanisms as party discipline. The two meanings of party discipline are already apparent in an early and frequently referred to definition in the literature; in a comparative study of party cohesion in Western Europe, Ozbudun argued that

Party discipline refers either to a special type of cohesion achieved by enforcing obedience or to a system of sanctions by which such enforced cohesion is attained. (Ozbudun 1970:305)

The first part of Ozbudun’s definition refers to the widely used equation of party discipline with obedient voting behaviour; if political parties are able to achieve high levels of voting cohesion in legislatures, despite hetero-

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12 In a more recent publication Cox and McCubbins claim that cohesion in the US Congress is more likely to be ensured by the agenda control powers of the majority party; that is, the majority party can keep divisive issues off the agenda and thereby increase its voting cohesion (Cox and McCubbins 2005). In the European Union, however, the legislative agenda is not controlled by the European Parliament. The agenda is set externally by the Commission, comparable to the workings of a parliamentary system. In addition, no party group has ever held a majority in the European Parliament and a group of 37 can propose amendments to a legislative act (European Parliament 2004:Rule 150); thus, no party group can keep divisive legislative issues off the agenda in the European Parliament.
geneity in their policy preferences, party discipline is said to exist. In this way, party discipline is defined as an outcome. This definition of party discipline has two drawbacks: first, party discipline is not clearly distinguished from party voting cohesion; analytically, the two concepts are often used interchangeably in the literature; second, this definition does not specify the mechanisms through which party discipline generates party cohesion. The party groups of the European Parliament could achieve high degrees of voting cohesion without being forced to vote against their own policy beliefs. Party group members could, for example, vote with their party group and against their own policy beliefs, if they were engaging in log-rolling, trading less salient votes for votes on more salient issues (Buchanan and Tullock 1962; Coleman 1966), or reaping the long-term benefits of voluntary cooperation (Axelrod 1984), or obeying social norms (Crowe 1983).

Ozbudun’s second definition of party discipline highlights the fact that it is a system of sanctions by which voting cohesion can be enforced. Here party discipline is defined as a process. This specifies that parties need to be able to apply selective incentives to influence their members’ voting behaviour. Disciplinary actions in themselves do not need to alter the voting behaviour of party group members. A legislator who has been punished by the party for voting against the party line will not have to be more supportive of the party in future votes in order for individual disciplinary actions to have a positive collective effect on voting cohesion. In a way, a party’s internal sanctioning system works like a judicial system; it might not alter the behaviour of truly rebellious party members, but it deters potential rebels from failing to toe the party line.

In my opinion, these two definitions of party discipline need to be merged, incorporating both the outcome and the process aspects of party discipline. I define party discipline as cohesive party voting behaviour, if party members do not share the same policy preferences and a sanctioning system is applied within the party which rewards loyal voting behaviour and penalises disloyal voting behaviour. Thus, party discipline exists if cohesive voting behaviour is not explained by preference homogeneity and there is a causal relationship between party members’ voting behaviour and an applied sanctioning system. In other words, voting cohesion without applied sanctions is just voting cohesion; a system of applied sanctions without voting cohesion just amounts to sanctions. Only if sanctions are applied to reward or punish party members for their voting behaviour, and voting cohesion is more than the sum of coherent preferences, does party discipline exist. In the remainder of this section I describe the disciplinary tools that are available in the European Parliament and review the results of previous research on party group discipline.

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13 I would like to thank Gelu Calacean for pointing this out to me.
Tools of party discipline

Political parties in regular political systems have several disciplinary tools at their disposal. At national level political parties can use the electoral arena, the legislative arena and government positions to sanction and reward their members (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007; McElroy 2003; Owens 2004). The level of control that political parties have over their members through electoral sanctions depends on the electoral system, district size and the candidate nomination process (Cox 1997; Faas 2003; Hix 2004; Katz 1980; Rasch 1999). Electoral systems that apply list-voting put parties in the driver’s seat when it comes to determining a candidate’s electoral prospects, so allowing for a greater degree of party discipline. Electoral systems with a personal vote, on the other hand, enforce closer ties between the constituency and the legislator since the former are able give their vote directly to a particular candidate (Bowler and Farrell 1993). In the electoral arena, political parties can also discipline their members by withholding financial support for electoral campaigns (McElroy 2003; Rasch 1999) or denying public campaign support from prominent party members and party leaders.

Inside legislatures, political parties derive disciplinary instruments from the internal institutional make-up of the legislature; appointment to or removal from important offices inside the legislature is one of the most important disciplining instruments available to parties (Damgaard 1995:312). Such offices can be party internal offices or offices in the legislature, such as regular committee seats and Committee Chairs and the office of the President of the legislature. The importance of the committee allocation process has been emphasised by many scholars (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Frisch and Kelly 2006; Krehbiel 1991; McElroy 2001; Shepsle 1978).

If political parties are in government, they can add two additional disciplinary tools to their portfolio. They can use their control over the government to allocate government positions selectively to party members (Blondel and Cotta 1996). Also, in parliamentary systems, in which the government is connected to the majority in the legislature, party leaders in government can discipline their fellow party members in the legislature by threatening to attach a vote of confidence to the passage of any item of legislation (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005; Huber 1996; McElroy 2003). The threat that the government will resign if it does not get the support of a parliamentary majority for its legislative proposal forces legislators from government parties to vote for the government bill.

The repertoire of sanctioning tools for the parties of the European Parliament, however, is limited and derives solely from the legislative organisation of the chamber. Governmental party discipline cannot be enforced in the European Union. The political composition of the Commission is not based on a political majority of the European Parliament (Wonka 2007) and the
Commission cannot attach a vote of confidence to its legislative proposals, nor can it threaten to dissolve the European Parliament or call for early elections.

Disciplinary tools connected to the electoral arena are not available to the party groups of the European Parliament either. The power to nominate candidates for the European elections lies exclusively in the hands of the national parties, as does financial campaign support. Nor is MEPs’ electoral success dependent on their party group’s support in the electoral campaign. European elections have been dubbed second-order national elections in which national, not European issues dominate. Participation in EU elections is considerably lower than in national elections, and governing parties and big parties do worse than in the national election because there is less at stake, which encourages voters to express their dissatisfaction through voting for opposition and smaller parties instead of basing their vote choice on a genuine concern for EU policies and politics (Reif and Schmitt 1980).

This leaves disciplinary mechanisms derived from the chamber’s legislative organisation as the only sanctioning tool available to the party groups of the European Parliament. It is most commonly assumed that the party group leadership controls these disciplinary tools in the European Parliament (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999:211; Bowler and Farrell 1995:241; Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:104; Faas 2003:846; Hix 2002:696; Hix 2004:203). Simon Hix summaries the sources of disciplinary power that are attributed to party group leaders:

> The European party group has more influence than the national party over MEPs’ likelihood of securing their policy goals and obtaining higher office inside the European Parliament because the European party group leaderships control the allocation of committee assignments and rapporteurships (reports on legislative dossiers), the parliamentary agenda, access to parliamentary group leadership positions and other offices in the parliament, and speaking time. (Hix 2004:203)

The party groups’ seemingly predominant position is supported by a strong norm of proportionality in the European Parliament; almost all office positions are distributed proportionally according to size of party group. This norm is entrenched and is both a formal requirement and an informal rule for many appointments. The European Parliament’s rules of procedure stipulate that the leadership of the Parliament – that is, its President, the Vice-Presidents and Quaestors (Rule 12.2.) – are to be distributed proportionally amongst the party groups (European Parliament 2004). The President, the 14 Vice-Presidents and the Quaestors are elected for a period of two and half years at the beginning and the middle of each legislative term. The President of the Parliament presides over the chamber and represents the European Parliament in international relations, legal and financial matters. The duties of the Vice-Presidents include heading the parliamentary delegation to the
conciliation committee in the codecision procedure, representing the European Parliament externally and a variety of procedural aspects. The five elected Quaestors are responsible for financial and administrative matters (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:109-113).

In the fifth legislative term the European Parliament had 17 standing committees. The distribution of seats to one of the parliamentary committees (Rule 177.1) and plenary speaking time (Rule 142.2) are also allocated proportionally amongst the party groups. The nominations to all of these offices and for plenary speakers are made by the party groups. Party group leaders do not, however, control access to the party group leadership; the latter is elected at a plenary meeting of the whole party group (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005; EPP-ED 2006; PSE 2003).

The distribution of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs (Rule 182.1) and the allocation of rapporteurships (Rule 42.2) are formally decided by the committee without having to embrace a proportional distribution. Informally, however, the distribution of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005) and the allocation of rapporteurships (Benedotto 2005; Hörl 2005; Lindberg 2006; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003) also adhere to the norm of proportionality. Committee Chairs are important actors in the day-to-day business of the parliamentary committees; they convene and set the agenda for committee meetings (Rule 183.1) and propose the procedure for the adoption of legislative reports in the committee (European Parliament 2004: Rule 42, 43). Vice-Chairs take over the duties of the Committee Chairs when the latter is absent. Each legislative proposal discussed, amended and voted on in the European Parliament is allocated to a Rapporteur at the committee stage. After having received a legislative proposal from the Commission, the committee with jurisdiction appoints a Rapporteur who has the task of writing a report advocating which amendments the European Parliament should adopt to the legislative proposal. This makes Rapporteurs influential actors in the legislative decision-making process of the European Parliament, as they are able to shape focal point around which the discussion and amendments evolve (Ringe 2005).

The Conference of Presidents, which is composed of the President of the Parliament and the Chairs of the political groups, is responsible for the broad political direction of the Parliament. It sets the agenda for each plenary session (European Parliament 2004: Rule 130.1), decides on the competences of parliamentary committees and adjudicates on conflicts between committees (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:118). The plenary agenda setting power of the party group Chairs, which is invested in them through their membership of the Conference of Presidents, could theoretically help them to ensure party group voting cohesion (Cox and McCubbins 2005). There are, however, two caveats: first, party group leaders cannot keep legislative

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14 See Table 6.1 in Chapter 6.
issues off the agenda, as the Commission has the monopoly of initiating all legislative proposals in the European Union policy-making process (Wonka 2007); second, no party group holds majority status in the European Parliament, making it impossible for any party group to keep a proposal, which divides the party group internally, of the parliamentary agenda. Party groups have more agenda control over non-legislative issues. The issuing of non-legislative reports, such as own initiative reports, has to be approved by the Conference of Presidents (European Parliament 2004: Rule 45). Hix and his colleagues found evidence that the EPP-ED and the Socialist party group are able to increase voting cohesion on these reports through their agenda control (Hix et al. 2007: 127). Party group voting cohesion on legislative proposals is still very high (Høyland 2006a) and cannot be derived from agenda control, leaving party discipline enforced through the legislative organisation of the European Parliament as the explanatory factor.

At first glance, the parliamentary rules of procedure, which delegate power over most office appointments to the party groups, and informal application of the norm of proportionality for the appointment of Committee Chairs and Rapporteurs, strengthen the general assumption in the literature that the party group leadership is able to use these appointments to discipline its party group members. Nevertheless, such a scenario is not self-evident. The rules of procedure state only that offices are to be distributed proportionally between the party groups, but it does not give any indication of who in the party group determines the distribution of offices and what kind of criteria are used to allocate office positions within the party groups. Given their important role, it seems equally plausible that the national party delegations control the appointment process within the party groups. In what follows I review the evidence provided by the literature on party discipline in the European Parliament and show that it is far from clear who within the party groups control the legislative disciplinary mechanisms.

**Party discipline in the European Parliament**

There have been few studies of party discipline in the European Parliament so far and their results present an ambiguous overall picture. Some studies find support for the claim that party group leaders can discipline their party group members; others reject this notion, arguing that legislative disciplinary powers are in the hands of the national party delegations. Previous studies have focused on the committee assignment process and on the allocation of rapporteurships as disciplinary mechanisms (Hausemer 2006; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007; Kreppel 2002; McElroy 2001; McElroy 2003; Whitaker 2001; Yoshinaka, McElroy, and Bowler 2006).

An early study that indirectly tested for party group discipline in the European Parliament was Simon Hix’s analysis of MEP voting behaviour with two parliamentary principals. Presenting a model in which the party
groups act as the parliamentary principal of MEPs and the national parties as their electoral principals, he rejects the view that MEP voting behaviour is driven by the transnational party groups (Hix 2002:696). His findings show that national parties’ policy positions are better predictors of MEPs’ voting behaviour than their individual policy preferences or party group membership. These findings are corroborated in his later studies that show that MEPs are more likely to vote with their national party if the two principals take different positions (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007:137). Yet, the results do not disprove that the party groups are able to discipline their members, since the studies do not test for the direct application of party group disciplinary mechanisms.

The first study of the application of party group disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament was conducted by Gail McElroy. In her quantitative study of committee transfers in 1991 she demonstrates that the EPP-ED and the PSE party group leadership were able to sanction party group members who frequently defected from the party group line in plenary voting by appointing them to less popular committees (McElroy 2001). In his study of the committee assignment process in the European Parliament Whitaker (2001) comes to a different conclusion. Based on interviews with MEPs and evidence drawn from an MEP survey (Farrell et al. 2006) he finds that the committee assignment process is not controlled by the party group leadership, as most MEPs receive a seat on their first-choice committee. The interview evidence, however, also reveals a trend towards the increased influence of the national party delegations in the committee appointment process (Whitaker 2001:82-83). It is unclear what conclusions can be drawn about the committee assignment process from this study. Even if most members self-select onto their committees, it might still be possible that the ones who are not allowed to sit on their first-choice committee make up a substantial proportion of a group’s MEPs and are those disciplined by the party group leadership or the national party delegations, a proposition which Whitaker (2001) does not test.

Studying report allocation in the fourth European Parliament, Yoshinaka and his collaborators find that MEPs who are far away from the party group median on the left-right voting dimension are less likely to receive rapporteurships (Yoshinaka, McElroy, and Bowler 2006). However, when only rapporteurships with a legislative impact are controlled for, the results become insignificant. Hauser examines similar conclusions studying the distribution of rapporteurships in the first half of the fifth parliament. He finds that MEPs who vote more often against their party group are less likely to receive rapporteurships that are salient to their national party (Hauser 2006:523). It is, however, not clear from these studies whether voting behaviour affects the receiving of rapporteurships, or vice versa, as the data is not time ordered. The studies of Yoshinaka et al. and of Hauser apply NOMINATE scores to measure the voting loyalty of MEPs. The application
of these scores to the measurement of MEPs’ voting loyalty to their party groups is fraught with problems. NOMINATE scores are sound measurements for determining the dimensionality of the voting space and for discriminating between the voting behaviour of party groups, but NOMINATE scores are not distinctive enough to discriminate between the voting records of individual MEPs (Høyland 2006a). Furthermore, the correlation of aggregated NOMINATE scores from a whole parliamentary term with the aggregated amount reports distributed in the same period of time inhibits the researchers from drawing any causal inference as regards whether rapporteurship allocation follows the voting loyalty of a MEP: the data are not time ordered and therefore cannot establish this causal mechanism.

In her study of the European Parliament’s party system, Kreppel (2002) analyses whether the EPP-ED and PSE groups are able to discipline their members by controlling the selection of Committee Chairs and Rapporteurs. She finds that MEPs who have received a disproportionately high share of rapporteurships or have who have been Committee Chairs several times in their parliamentary career do not exhibit more loyal voting behaviour than the average party group members (Kreppel 2002: 201). She argues that the result corroborates the strong position of the national party delegations within the party groups, which stems from the proportional distribution of offices to the national party delegations within each group. Yet Kreppel did not test whether the voting loyalty of MEPs towards their national party delegation has an affect on the appointment of Committee Chairs and Rapporteurs. Thus, there is no direct evidence that the national party delegations are able to discipline their members. Since the party group leadership does not have any disciplinary powers, Kreppel asserts that the ideological coherence of the party groups explains their voting cohesion (Kreppel 2002:208). Both previous research and the evidence presented in Section 2.2 of this chapter refute this notion. A theoretical understanding of how party group voting cohesion is generated if the national party delegations control the legislative disciplinary mechanisms of the European Parliament is not presented.

The current literature on legislative party discipline in the European Parliament does not present a coherent picture. Some studies emphasise the disciplinary powers of the transnational party groups, while others argue that the national party delegations control the legislative sanctioning system in the European Parliament. This study will therefore follow up on previous research and test whether the party groups or the national party delegations control the European Parliament’s legislative disciplinary mechanisms. The operationalisation of party group voting loyalty and national party delegation voting loyalty in Chapter 4 shows that it is essential to control for both effects of party discipline in the same statistical model. So far, this has not been attempted. I will conduct this comparative test in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis. Applying statistical models previously used by McElroy (2001,
2003) and Yoshinaka et al. (2006), I will test in these two chapters whether the committee appointment process and the allocation of rapporteurships in the European Parliament is controlled by the national party delegations or the transnational party groups. I will focus on evaluating these two disciplinary tools because they are central to controlling the legislative decision-making process in the European Parliament. The following chapter will show that MEPs are policy-seekers, which is why the application of disciplinary mechanisms directly affecting MEPs’ legislative power is likely to have the greatest impact on their behaviour.

2.4 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter a review of the literature revealed that the party groups of the European Parliament have been able to achieve fairly high levels of voting cohesion. Building on previous research I have shown empirically that party group voting cohesion is not a result of party groups’ preference homogeneity. In the absence of party group preference coherence party group discipline is frequently forwarded as an explanatory factor in party group voting cohesion. I defined party group discipline as cohesive voting behaviour in the absence of preference homogeneity and the existence of an applied sanctioning system of voting behaviour. Unlike in parliamentary systems, party group voting cohesion cannot be explained through disciplinary action derived from the European Union’s constitutional structure because the Commission cannot threaten to attach a vote of confidence to its legislative proposals. In contrast to national political systems, applied electoral sanctions do not account for party group voting cohesion since the political decision-making process in the European Parliament is disjunctive from the electoral arena. This leaves disciplinary mechanisms derived from the legislative organisation of the European Parliament as the only disciplinary cause of party group voting cohesion.

The review of the current literature on legislative party discipline in the European Parliament shows that there is no clear-cut evidence that disciplinary mechanisms are applied and which partisan actors are able to execute party discipline in the European Parliament. Some studies find that party group leaders are able to discipline their members through the committee appointment process and the allocation of rapporteurships. Other studies argue that the disciplinary powers for committee appointments and/or the allocation of rapporteurships lie in the hands of the national party delegations. Besides some of the noted methodological shortcomings, current studies fail to test for the application of disciplinary mechanisms by the party groups and the national party delegations in the same model. In order to assess which of these partisan actors holds the disciplinary whip, it is essential
to incorporate both the national delegations and the party groups into one research design.

The following chapter will show that the literature on political parties and collective decision-making provides theoretical plausibility to both the notion of legislative party group discipline and national party discipline. Using the principal-agent approach I will derive hypotheses underlying both of these scenarios of party discipline in Chapter 3. These hypotheses will be tested against each other in Chapter 6, which studies party discipline in committee assignment process and in Chapter 7, which analyses whether the allocation of rapporteurships is used as a legislative disciplinary tool. In the next chapter I will further show that the party group leadership plays a fundamentally different role in both of these scenarios and I will derive hypotheses about the appointment and control of party group leaders. The analysis of party group leadership structures and responsibilities, as well as the appointment and control of party group leaders in Chapter 5 will serve as a first test of the two scenarios of party discipline in the European Parliament.
3. Conceptualising Political Parties

Legislative party discipline has been identified as a possible explanation for party group voting cohesion in the European Parliament, but previous research has failed to provide unambiguous evidence concerning which partisan actors are able to apply disciplinary mechanisms. Empirical investigations have identified both the party groups and the national party delegations as possible disciplinary actors. Although many of these studies draw on the same theoretical background, a common understanding of how party group voting cohesion is generated if either the party groups or the national party delegations hold the legislative disciplinary whip is missing. It is the aim of this chapter to provide a common theoretical framework that explains both how party group cohesion is generated in a scenario in which the transnational party groups control the legislative disciplinary mechanism of the European Parliament and how the party group will be able to maintain voting cohesions in a scenario in which the national party delegations use the legislative organisation of the Parliament to discipline their members. These two scenarios will be derived from the principal-agent approach, which inspires much of the current research on the political parties of the European Parliament.

The first section of this chapter will introduce the reader to theories of political parties that have influenced much of the previous research on the European Parliament’s party groups. These theories have been developed for the US, explaining the role of political parties in a legislature with strong committees in a presidential system. The European Parliament resembles the US Congress because it is also a legislature with strong committees (Bowler and Farrell 1995; Neuhold 2001), within the framework of a system based on the separation of powers (Hix 2005). Yet, the institutional context and the partisan landscape differ in the case of the European Parliament. In Section 3.2 I will therefore adapt these theories’ assumptions to the context of the European Parliament. I will show that MEPs act as policy-seekers in the European Parliament and that the party groups’ policy influence in the parliamentary decision-making process increases with their size. If these two adjustments are made, the US theories may be applied to explain party politics in the European Parliament.

Section 3.3 outlines the general characteristics of the principal-agent approach since this theoretical framework underlies the political party theories
that are applied in this chapter. Based on this approach I then derive two scenarios of party discipline in the European Parliament. The party group discipline scenario is presented in Section 3.4.1 and follows the well-established notion in the literature that MEPs can be disciplined by two partisan actors; the national party controls disciplinary mechanisms tied to the electoral arena, while the transnational party group administers the disciplinary mechanisms derived from the legislative organisation of the European Parliament. While previous research has portrayed the transnational party group leadership as the legislative principals of MEPs, I show that the party group acts as an agent for the party group when it implements disciplinary actions. Through the delegated disciplinary powers, the party group leadership functions as a central agent of the party group that solves the collective action problem of party group voting cohesion.

The national party discipline scenario, which is presented in Section 3.4.2, is based on the notion that the national parties are the exclusive principal of MEPs. As in the previous scenario the national parties control the electoral arena, but all disciplinary actions inside the European Parliament are assumed to be administered by the national party delegations. According to this scenario the party groups’ cohesive voting behaviour is explained by the voluntary cooperation of national party delegations. Hypotheses will be derived for both of these scenarios, which will be tested in Chapters 6 and 7.

Section 3.5 focuses on the delegation of power from the party group members to their leadership. It pinpoints the differences in the role of the party group leadership in the two outlined scenarios. In the party group discipline scenario, party group members delegate considerable power to their party group leadership. In order to continue to realise their policy goals, party group members have an incentive to control how their party group leaders perform their leadership functions. Consequently, I derive hypotheses about party group leaders’ ex ante and ex post control. In the national party discipline scenario, the party group leadership is only able to construct focal points, furthering a party group position which is accepted by all members of the group. Control of the leadership by the party group is therefore not needed in this scenario. Chapter 5, which tests the appointment and ex ante control of party group leaders, can be seen as a first test of the relative plausibility of the two disciplinary scenarios driving party group voting cohesion in the European Parliament. Section 3.6 concludes the chapter with a short summary.

3.1 Theories of political parties

What is the purpose of political parties? The rational institutionalist strand in political science has explained the existence and purpose of political parties
in terms of their roles in the electoral and legislative arenas (Aldrich 1995; Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Downs 1957; Duverger 1954; Sartori 1976): in the electoral arena, political parties help legislators to get elected by communicating policy positions to the voters with the help of party labels; in the legislative arena, political parties help legislators to stabilise the decision-making process, increase the benefits from good public policy and obtain important office positions.

Early theories of political parties emphasised their utility for individual legislators in realising their electoral ambitions, that is, getting elected to the legislature (Downs 1957; Mayhew 1974). The underlying assumption is that politicians seek to maximise the amount of votes in elections and, once elected, they aim for re-election. More recent contributions to the study of political parties have emphasised the importance of political parties in the legislative arena, applying a more differentiated incentive structure for legislators (Cox 1987; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Rohde 1991; Sinclair 1995). Richard Fenno (1973:1) was one of the first to distinguish between three possible goals of legislators: re-election, good public policy and influence within the legislature – also known as vote, policy and office.

Today, vote maximisation is often regarded as an instrumental goal in achieving office and influencing policy outcomes (Stroom and Müller 1999:9). Office positions such as Committee Chairs in legislatures or ministerial posts in parliamentary governments, may be intrinsically valued by legislators or because they increase the ability to influence policy outcomes (Budge and Laver 1986: 490 quoted in Stroom and Müller 1999:8). Seeking re-election, legislators need to produce policy outcomes that are favoured by their electorate. Politicians are likely to care about the policy positions that they represent and not only view them as re-election facilitating devices, since politicians choose to become members of political parties with a given policy platform, indicating some intrinsic valuation of that party’s policy stances (Aldrich 1995).

This shows that policy, office and vote cannot be seen as separate goals of legislators as they are interlinked and dependent on each other. This is also the reason why, in any functioning representative democracy, political parties fulfil important roles in both the electoral and the legislative arenas. In the next two sections I discuss in more detail the utility that politicians derive from joining political parties: the first section highlights the gained utility in the electoral arena; the subsequent section takes up the benefits of political parties in the legislative arena.
The electoral connection

The electoral utility of political parties is based on the idea of competitive party democracy, in which political parties compete for voter support, like firms compete for customers in a market. The party or coalition of parties which gains a majority of the votes in an election forms a government and implements its policies for one legislative term. In the election the past performance and future policy promises of the government are compared to the policy positions of the opposition parties (Powell 2000). Thus, voters need to be informed about the electoral candidates’ policy positions. Collecting information about the policy positions and previous behaviour of all electorate candidates would, however, be an immensely costly enterprise for voters. The payoff for voting in elections is minimal for voters, as the likelihood of determining the outcome is infinitesimally small. Anthony Downs dubbed the fact that voters still turn out the ‘paradox of voting’ (Downs 1957).

Electoral theories of political parties assume that politicians are rational actors who want to maximise their chances of getting re-elected (Mayhew 1974). To achieve this goal, politicians need to be able to solve the problem of voters to get informed about the policy positions of all the candidates. To this end, entrepreneurial politicians create political parties (Cox and McCubbins 1993). They facilitate the communication of policy positions to the electorate through their collective reputations. Political parties function as brand names with which voters can associate different policy ideas (Snyder and Ting 2002). These brand names are fostered by the reputation of the political parties and are collective goods for all party members. All party members benefit from a good reputation among the electorate, as it increases their electoral chances.

The legislative arena

In order to maximise their chances of re-election, legislators need their political parties to foster a positive reputation. They need to proof themselves as effective policy-makers who pursue the policy positions, which they advocated in the electoral arena. In order to be influential in the policy-making process it is indispensable for political parties that their members toe the line and vote cohesively in the plenary. The same is true if legislators are assumed to be policy-seekers instead of pure vote-maximisers.

Aldrich (1995) exemplifies how political parties serve the advantage of policy-seeking legislators. He argues that political parties are institutional solutions created by rational utility maximising legislators to solve the social choice and collective action problems they face in the legislature (ibid.:19). The fundamental social choice problem is that every proposal which has the support of a majority can be confronted with a new proposal that is supported by a different majority. This leads to cycling majorities and indeci-
siveness. Analysing the history of the US Congress, Aldrich shows that a party that holds the majority of the seats in the legislature functions like an institutional solution stabilising majority decision-making processes. Parties drastically reduce the set of possible equilibrium outcomes that can defeat the status quo and thereby reduce the chances of cycling majorities. The formation of a majority party produces structure-induced voting equilibria and makes majority decision-making possible (ibid.:41).

He shows further that the formation of a majority party group in a legislature not only facilitates majority voting, but also solves collective action problems for legislators. The formation of a majority party group makes members of the majority party group better off compared to a situation in which each member had to propose and support his or her own policy proposals. To illustrate this argument I borrow an example from Aldrich (1995; see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Collective action and incentives for party formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Proposals</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Z</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislators: A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Aldrich (1995:30, Table2.1)

In his example Aldrich uses a legislature with three legislators – A, B, C – each of whom wants to maximise his or her payoff by passing legislation. The pay off structure is symmetric and a legislator receives an individual payoff of 4, 3 or –9, depending on the bill passed; if no bill is passed the payoff is 0 for all legislators.

If legislators vote independently of each other, all bills will pass with a 2 to 1 majority, but the total pay off for each legislator will be 4 + 3 – 9 = –2. The equilibrium outcome of independent voting behaviour will always lead to the passage of all three bills, as each bill benefits two legislators. Thus, a collective action problem exists as individual behaviour leads to an equilibrium outcome which is Pareto-inferior to other outcomes (Aldrich 1995:31). Even defeating all bills would produce a Pareto-superior outcome of 0 which, although it does not create any benefits, at least does not produce a loss.

An alternative course of action, yielding an even higher outcome, would be if two legislators, for example, A and B, coalesce and form a majority party. They would commit each other to passing bill X, and defeat bills Y
and Z. This would secure a payoff of 4 for legislator A and a payoff of 3 for legislator B, while the non-party members C would receive a payoff of –9. Thus, A and B receive higher payoffs by forming a majority party than either one of them could have received through unilateral action.

The policy gains that they receive through collective action can, however, be endangered as both A and B have incentives to defect from their previous commitment. After proposal X has been adopted with the support of A and B, A has the incentive to increase his or her payoff through also supporting the adoption of bill Y, which would give A a total payoff of 7. Legislator B’s payoff would thereby, however, be reduced to –6. Therefore, legislator B would have an incentive to support the adoption of bill Z, which would lead to the worst possible outcome for all legislators: the adoption of all bills and a payoff of –2. Instead of reaping the benefits of majority party status in the legislature, A’s and B’s individually rational behaviour would therefore lead to a Pareto-inferior outcome.

Mancur Olson has shown that all collective action in large groups that produces collective goods – that is, goods whose value does not decrease by an increase in the number of consumers and from whose consumption no one can be excluded – are prone to free-riding (Olson 1965). Organisations are established by their members because they deliver selective benefits, which makes members contribute their share to the collective production of the organisation’s good. But members of an organisation have a rational incentive to renege on commitments to the organisation and to refrain from contributing to the collective production of a collective good as they cannot be excluded from the collective goods that the organisation produces.

For legislative parties, voting cohesion is essentially a collective good. By voting together party members increase the likelihood that they will be able to determine the policy outcomes of the legislative process and maintain a positive brand name in the electoral arena (Aldrich 1995:31). But no legislator can be excluded from enjoying the benefits of a policy that his or her party has enacted; thus, a legislator might favour a policy that is also favoured by his or her fellow party members, but might still refrain from supporting his or her party in the plenary vote. If the legislator faces pressure from his or her constituency or special interest groups, he or she has a rational interest in voting against the legislative proposal. He or she cannot be excluded from the enjoying the policy benefits once the bill is passed, but could bear the cost of losing the support of his or her constituency or a special interest group by voting for the bill. Thus, depending due to opportunity costs party members can have incentives to free-ride on the collective action of party voting cohesion.

Olson suggested that organisations face collective action problems and cannot be sustained without sanction mechanisms, so that all individuals will ‘help to bear the burden of maintaining the organization’ (Olson 1971:16). In this way, scholars have argued that political parties establish party leader-
ships as an institutional solution to avoid collective action problems (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Aldrich 1995; Sinclair 1995). The party leadership has two options in attempting to solve the collective action problem of party voting cohesion. It can either use its agenda control power to keep divisive issues off the legislative agenda, minimising the incentives for free-riding; or it can discipline party members who fail to vote with the party by means of sanctions, such as blocking advancement in the committee hierarchy or threatening to withhold re-election support (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005).

In sum, in any functioning representative democracy political parties fulfil both electoral and legislative functions for their members. Political parties solve external collective action problems for legislators in the electoral arena through their brand name functions. In order to foster a positive brand name parties need to act cohesively in the legislative arena to produce positive policy outcomes for the electorate. Inside the legislative arena political parties reduce the risk of cycling majorities and increase the likelihood that their party members will be able to determine policy outcomes. In order to ensure decision-making stability and positive policy outcomes party members need to act collectively. Potential free-riding, which could endanger the collective action, is overcome through the institutionalisation of a strong party leadership.

3.2 Adapting the assumptions to the European Parliament

The following section tests the extent to which the theoretical explanations of the existence of political parties can be adapted to context of the European Parliament. It will highlight the differences in the assumptions that have to be made about the utility of the party groups for MEPs.

*The electoral disconnection of the European Parliament*

The first theoretical explanation, presented in Section 3.1, presents the rationale for the existence of political parties in terms of their utility in the electoral arena. If this logic is applied to the European Parliament, the party groups inside the Parliament should serve as recognisable brand names with distinguishable policy records. Unlike in national democracies, where the electoral and legislative functions are fulfilled by the same political party, the European Parliament faces the dilemma that its internal politics are not connected to the electoral arena. The electoral and legislative roles are divided and executed by different party actors; national parties control the
elections to the European Parliament, whilst the transnational party groups are assumed to organise the legislative process and office appointments inside the European Parliament.

The party groups of the European Parliament are not formally engaged in European elections as they do not have a say in candidate selection or campaigning. The party groups are connected to the European party federations, which have issued election manifestos since 1979 and display the same left-right division as at national level (Gabel and Hix 2002). The European transnational party federations act as policy coordinating arenas for political parties of the same party family (Hix and Lord 1997). Nevertheless, the elections to the European Parliament are generally depicted as second-order national elections, in which national parties campaign on national agendas (Hix and Marsh 2007; Reif and Schmitt 1980; Schmitt 2005). The performance of the national government and the current phase of the national electoral cycle have a more significant impact on MEPs’ chances of getting re-elected than the legislative performance of either the national party delegations or the transnational party group in the European Parliament. The legislative accomplishments of the party groups seldom reach voters, as coverage of European politics in national media is poor and mostly refers to European institutions as unitary actors. There is therefore no direct link between the political parties and the electorate evaluating their performance in the upcoming election. This shows that the party groups were not established to channel or signal policy positions to the electorate via their brand names; due to the second-order nature of European elections and their prerogative in selecting candidates, the brand name function is rather fulfilled by MEPs’ national parties. The electoral theory of political parties fails to explain the existence of the transnational party group in the European Parliament.

The missing majority status in the legislative arena

Theories that explain the utility of political parties in the legislative arena are based on the assumption that legislators are office- and policy-seekers. These theories have been developed to explain the existence of political parties in the US Congress. Due to the two-party and majoritarian electoral system in the United States, one party always holds the majority of seats in the House of Representatives. The beneficial effects of political parties with regard to policy and office seeking is usually derived from the prerogatives of majority-party status (Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Rohde 1991; Schlesinger 1994). Following these theories, these goals are frequently also assumed for MEPs; scholars have argued that MEPs derive the utility of their party group membership from policy (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007; Kreppel 2002) and office gains (McElroy 2003). But in the European Par-
liament no party group has ever held a majority of the seats; are the assumptions of policy and office seeking and party group utility still reasonable?

From an office-seeking perspective party group membership makes sense. All offices in the European Parliament are distributed proportionally between the party groups according to group size. Office positions are distributed at the beginning and at the mid-point of each legislative term. Due to the size of the party groups, party group members always have a higher chance of obtaining an important position than individual MEPs or members of national party delegations. A purely office-seeking perspective, in which legislators attach value to holding office as such, does not explain why the party groups exist throughout the whole legislative term. Office positions in the European Parliament are allocated only at the beginning and in the middle of each parliamentary term; after allocation the party groups would lose their purpose from a purely office-seeking perspective. But MEPs may also value office positions because they give them increased influence over policy outcomes.

Previous studies have provided evidence that MEPs have become policy seekers and use the party groups to increase their power over policy outcomes. Amie Kreppel has shown that the party groups have served to maximise MEPs’ gains from the policy-making process and that their importance has increased with the extension of the European Parliament’s legislative powers. In the early years the European Parliament acted like a unitary actor; MEPs joined forces to pressure the member states to delegate more power to the European Parliament. Once the legislative powers of the European Parliament had been extended, however, the party groups began to pursue their own policy goals and to manipulate the parliamentary rules of procedure to further their advantage in the legislative decision-making process (Kreppel 2002:102).

The work of Simon Hix and his collaborators supports the notion that the party groups have gained in importance as the European Parliament’s legislative powers have increased; Hix et al. have demonstrated that the party groups’ voting cohesion has increased by more than 15% through the introduction of new legislative powers (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007:103). Furthermore, their results prove that the more the party groups increased in size, the more often party group members voted in common, suggesting a link between party group size and incentives for influencing policy outcomes (ibid.:101). Further evidence for the policy-seeking interest of MEPs is the finding that they are more likely to participate in plenary voting when the European Parliament has a strong policy influence and when winning majorities in the Parliament are rather narrow (ibid.: 82–86). The evidence suggests that MEPs are increasingly likely to care about policy outcomes and act accordingly. Thus, the assumption that MEPs are policy-seekers can be sustained and policy-making influence seems to be central to explaining the utility of party groups for MEPs. However, the question remains whether it
is reasonable to assume that the party groups of the European Parliament generate policy benefits for their members, even though they do not hold a majority status in the legislature.

Individual MEPs and national party delegations on their own would be too numerous and too small for the purpose of stabilising majority decision-making, reducing transaction costs of coalition formation and influencing policy outcomes in the European Parliament. Party groups, on the other hand, are few in number and considerably bigger in size, which has a stabilising effect on policy-making and increases party members’ influence over policy outcomes. Hix and his collaborators argue that the party groups have reduced policy volatility and have avoided the adoption of extreme policies in the European Parliament. Through their position formation on policy issues they also tend to reduce the dimensionality of political space and make the decision-making process more stable (Hix et al. 2007:40–46).

Besides the stabilising effect on the legislative decision-making process, political parties do also decrease the transaction costs of forming a majority coalition in the legislative decision-making process. If each majority coalition were to be formed between individual MEPs or between over 100 national party delegations, the transaction costs of forming a majority coalition would be immense, since all MEPs or the national party delegations would need to know the policy positions of each other. If the bargaining process for the formation of a majority coalition, takes place between just two or three party groups the informational transaction costs are strongly reduced (Aldrich 1995:36).

Irrespective of whether a party group holds a majority status in the legislature, the size of a party group determines its influence in the legislative decision-making process. Coalition theories and voting power indices show that size is a strong determinant of an actor’s power in negotiations and voting (Riker 1962; Shapley and Shubik 1954). By joining forces with other national party delegations with similar preferences they increase their size in the legislature and are thereby able to increase their influence in the legislative process. This is confirmed by studies which apply voting power indices to the European Parliament (Faas, Raunio, and Wiberg 2004; Hosli 1997; Lane, Maeland, and Berg 1995; Nurmi 1997).

The following example illustrates how the size of different party groups in the fifth European Parliament affected their ability to influence policy outcomes. I am applying a voting power index to demonstrate the significant advantage of party group size in plenary voting. Power indices are ‘measures of the a priori influence the actors have on the outcomes of decision making in voting games’ (Nurmi 1997:319). Thus, voting power indices determine actors’ influence in the policy-making process under certain voting rules due to their size. The applicability of power indices, in particular in the study of
the European institutions, has been critically debated. The main criticism is that power indices cannot take into account the EU’s complex decision-making structure when analysing the inter-institutional decision-making process between the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. Secondly, a general criticism of power indices is that they ignore actors’ preference ordering in the assessment of coalition formations (Garrett and Tsebelis 1999). The purpose of applying a power index here is not, however, to analyse the inter-institutional bargaining process in the EU nor to make predictions about coalition formation in the European Parliament. The point is simply to demonstrate the a priori power that can be attributed to different actors in the European Parliament’s decision-making process. Following Fehlsenthal and Machover, I apply the Banzhaf index of voting power, as it fits my purpose best. Describing the Banzhaf index, Felsenthal and Machover state:

The first notion is that of power as influence: a voter’s ability to affect the outcome of a division of a voting body – whether the bill in question will be passed or defeated … According to this notion, voting behaviour is motivated by policy-seeking. (Felsenthal and Machover 2001:84)

Thus, the Banzhaf index analyses power as policy-making influence and does not make any assumption about strategic bargaining. I used the power-slave Mark II program developed by Pajala and his colleagues (Pajala, Meskanen, and Kause 2002) to derive the voting power of the party groups of the fifth European Parliament.

Table 3.1 Voting power of the party groups in the European Parliament (1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party group</th>
<th>Weight¹⁶</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Normalised Banzhaf power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPP-ED</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>0.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>0.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDR</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens-EFA</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUE-NGL</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDD</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI (individual MEP)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Source: own calculation with Powerslave Mark II (Pajala, Meskanen, and Kause 2002).

Voting power was calculated for a voting threshold of 50%, representing the absolute majority voting requirement in the European Parliament in the second reading of the co-decision procedure, in which its policy influence is

¹⁶ Number of seats per party group in 1999.
the largest. The normalised Bahnzaf voting power scores in Table 3.1 display the a priori probability that a party group will be decisive in tipping the balance between a bill’s passage or failure (Felsenthal and Machover 2001:85).

Application of the Bahnzaf voting power index to the party groups of the fifth European Parliament shows the considerable influence of size of party group on policy outcomes; the more seats a party group holds in the European Parliament, the greater its a priori voting power. Individual MEPs are almost powerless; an individual, unattached MEP has a probability of 0.002 of being the decisive voter in the European Parliament, whilst, for example, the EPP-ED group has a probability of 0.385. The correlation between size of party group and voting power is high (0.95). Based on the seat distribution in 1999, the PSE and the EDD group, as well as the 26 individual MEPs, have a voting power lower than their amounts of seats might suggest. The results make it clear, however, that joining a party group is advantageous for MEPs from a policy-seeking perspective, since their policy influence increases with party group size.

There is a caveat, however; the calculations of voting power are based on the assumption that all party group members are present and support their party group in plenary voting. This is a strong assumption in the European Parliament, however; in the fifth European Parliament the average attendance rate was 72% and the average voting cohesion of the party groups was 89% (Hix et al. 2007:78, 94). Faas and his colleagues have shown that absenteeism and voting defection had considerable influence on party groups’ voting power in the fifth European Parliament. Taken into account party group voting cohesion and participation both the EPP-ED and PSE group had a voting power of 0.45 under the absolute majority requirement. Under the simple majority voting threshold, the results are very similar to those presented in Table 3.2 (Faas, Raunio, and Wiberg 2004:20-21). The effects of absenteeism and voting defection serve as a reminder that although voting power is one of the main advantages of the party groups, it is a collective action endeavour and so prone to free-riding.

In summary, it is fruitful to use US theories of political parties to study the functioning of the party system in the European Parliament, although it is necessary to adapt them. The most striking difference between the European Parliament and national parliaments is the disconnection between the electoral and the legislative arenas. In national representative democracies, political parties solve voters’ informational voting problem by means of brand names, which simplify the identification of different policy positions. In order to maintain these brand names, political parties need to be able to act cohesively in the legislative arena as well. The party groups of the European Parliament, however, are not represented in the electoral arena. Thus, party group voting cohesion cannot be deduced from the electoral need to maintain a clearly identifiable brand name. If MEPs’ re-election-seeking incentive is
substituted with office-seeking and, especially, policy-seeking motives, the party groups of the European Parliament can be said to increase MEPs’ utility. Although no party group holds majority status in the legislature, party group membership still enhances the likelihood of MEPs’ obtaining important positions within the European Parliament and increasing their influence over policy outcomes.

By joining party groups, MEPs increase their voting power considerably, allowing them to be more influential in the policy-making process. In order to maintain their voting power, party groups need to be able to maintain a cohesive voting record. Party group voting cohesion is a collective action of all party groups and, like all collective action, is exposed to free-riding. Free-riding can become especially problematic in the European Parliament when the party group and the national party have different stands on a policy issue. In such cases MEPs are torn between two antithetical forces. The need for party group cohesion to obtain policy influence acts as a centripetal force towards voting with the party group, whereas a divergent position on the part of the national party delegation act as a centrifugal force, since MEPs risk not to be re-nominated as a candidate in the European elections if they depart from their national party delegation too often. Due to the separation of the electoral and the legislative arenas in the European Parliament, MEPs are faced with a double pressure to ensure their re-election and their policy-influencing goals. In the words of Simon Hix, MEPs have two principals, the transnational party group to which they belong in the European Parliament and their national political party (Hix 2002).

In the following sections I use the principal-agent approach as an analytical tool to derive hypotheses about the application of party disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament. Two scenarios will be presented. The first scenario builds on the two-principal model advanced by Simon Hix and reflecting the standard assumption of the literature that national parties are electoral principals and party groups are MEPs’ legislative principals (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999; Bowler and Farrell 1995; Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005; Faas 2003; Hix 2002; Hix 2004; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007). In contrast to previous research I show that the party group leadership’s disciplinary functions are derived from its status as the party group’s agent. The group leadership’s main function is to establish cohesive voting among the group’s MEPs. I also derive a hypothesis about the disciplinary relationship between the party group leadership and the national party delegations that has not been taken into account in previous analyses.

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Even though the empirical results of several of Hix’s studies indirectly reject the notion that the party groups are able to discipline their members, he still portrays the party groups as the legislative principals of MEPs in his theoretical contribution (Hix 2002, Hix 2004, Hix et. al. 2004).
The alternative scenario presents national parties as the sole principal of MEPs. National parties, as has been shown, control the candidate selection process and are assumed to have monopoly control over the disciplinary mechanisms provided by the way in which legislative decision-making is organised inside the European Parliament. This scenario is based on the reservations that some scholars have voiced against the empowerment of strong party group leaders. Aldrich and Rhode have argued that legislative parties will endow their party leadership with strong disciplinary powers only if the party has a high degree of preference coherence and is distinct from other political parties (Aldrich and Rhode 2001; Rohde 1991). Due to the assumption of missing disciplinary powers on the part of the party group leadership in this scenario, party group voting cohesion is explained through the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations within each party group. Voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations arises from the benefits of cooperation in reiterated games (Axelrod 1984; Hardin 1982; Taylor 1987). The inference that party group voting cohesion is based on the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations was first made by Simon Hix, based on his finding that national parties’ policy preferences are a better predictor of MEP voting behaviour than party group membership (Hix 2002).

Both scenarios are tied to previous research on party discipline in the European Parliament. Previous studies have found support for both the importance of the party groups and the national party delegation as possible legislative principals. The presentation of the two scenarios of partisan discipline in the European Parliament explains the assumptions that underlie much of the previous research and leads to a theoretical clarification of the debate.

3.3 The principal-agent approach

Since I am applying the principal-agent approach to outline two scenarios of partisan discipline in the European Parliament in the remainder of this chapter, this section will present the approach’s general components. After outlining why principals delegate power to agents and describing the institutional design structuring principal-agent relations, I show that principal-agent relations in legislative parties have a characteristic that sets them apart from regular principal-agent relationships. Most principal-agent relationships are unidirectional; for example, citizens delegate decision-making powers to party representatives and hold them accountable in elections. The relationship between parliamentary backbenchers and their party group leaders is bilateral; party group members delegate the power to formulate and maintain support for the party group position to the party group leadership, whilst the
party group leadership re-delegates the power to formulate the party group position to its committee members (Davidsson 2006).

The principal-agent framework was first developed in the realm of business administration, law and organisational economics to model and analyse contractual relationships in markets and organisations. Early principal-agent approaches dealt with the analysis of market relations between insurance companies and their customer (Rothschild and Stiglitz 1976), company shareholders and management (Jensen and Meckling 1976), or between patient and doctor (Arrow 1985). The approach was later also adopted by political scientists to study congressional oversight of bureaucratic agencies (McCubbins and Schwartz 1987; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Epstein and O’Halloran 1999); the delegation from party backbenchers to party leaders (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 1994, 2006; Sinclair 1998; Aldrich 1995); explaining MEP voting behaviour in the European Parliament (Hix 2002; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007); the delegation of power from the member states to the supranational institutions of the European Union (Pollack 1997; Pollack 2003); and the chain of delegation from voters to parliamentarians, the government, cabinet ministers and bureaucrats (Stroom et al. 2003).

All these approaches share a fundamental framework of analysis in characterising delegative relationships between principals and their agents. Delegation is an act in terms of which either a person or group of persons called the principal relies on another person or group of persons to act on its behalf (Lupia 2003). Principals delegate power to agents in order to reduce the transaction costs of decision-making. But once agents have received their delegated power, they might also renege on the goal intended by the principal and use their power to further their own interest if it conflicts with that of the principal. The key aspect of the principal-agent approach is therefore institutional design, which shapes the relationship between the principal and the agent and provides the principal with ex ante control powers to select an agent for a specific task and ex post powers to exert control over the agent’s behaviour after delegation. Thus, the primary focus of the principal-agent approach is the analysis of the ex ante and ex post control mechanisms that principals have at their disposal.

Reasons for delegating

Majone distinguishes between two rationales to explain why principals delegate power to agents, namely to reduce the costs of decision-making and to make credible commitments (Majone 2001). The former relationship is the classical relationship between principal and agents, in which the agents are supposed to enact outcomes preferred by the principals. The other relationship can be better described as a fiduciary relationship between a principal and a trustee. Trustees are not supposed to comply with the preferences of their principals. Independent central banks and courts are good examples
of trustees. Acting as principals, the EU member states established the European Central Bank as a credible commitment to keep inflation low and the European Court of Justice as an independent arbitrator that settles disputes and fills in incomplete contracts (Pollack 2003).

The reduction of decision-making costs is essential in principal-agent relationships. Transaction costs are all costs associated with the decision-making process such as gathering policy information, bargaining, monitoring of commitments and enforcing these commitments (Epstein and O’Halloran 1999:35). Agents can reduce the costs of decision-making for their principals, through providing them with expertise and policy-relevant information. Through delegating power to a regulatory agency, legislators are for example able to reduce informational shortcomings about the likely consequences of different policies through the expertise provide by the agency (Pollack 2003:29).

Other transaction costs arise from problems of collective decision-making amongst principals. In their effort to make collective decisions, all groups face problems of collective action, social choice and coordination (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991:22-24). Groups have to deal with collective action problems because group members who do not contribute to the maintenance of the collective good cannot be excluded from enjoying that good (see Section 3.1). In order to solve the problem of collective action amongst the principals, an agent receives the power to monitor and enforce the compliance of party group members; if group members do not comply, the agent has selective incentives to enforce compliance.

Social choice problems arise when groups need to make decisions by majority and the agenda setting power is not regulated. In such instances each new proposal can find the support of a new majority, and voting ends up in a endless cycling of majorities (Arrow 1951). If the agenda is manipulated by a group member, for example, by structuring the agenda in pairwise votes, the outcome of the voting process can lead to the manipulator’s preferred outcome (McKelvey 1976; Riker 1982). In order to avoid agenda manipulation and cycling majorities, a group delegates agenda setting power to an agent. The agent can then force group members to vote on some proposals and disregard others, terminating the opportunity for cycling majorities and manipulating the agenda.

Coordination problems occur when groups are faced with multiple efficient equilibria in the collective decision-making process. In this case no group member has a unilateral incentive to defect from any of the possible outcomes; instead the problem lies in the coordination of which outcome the group members should pursue (Müller and Strøm 2004:430). Members can be uncertain about the strategies their colleagues will pursue and coordination may not be achieved (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991:23). One example of this is the convention of driving on a given side of the road; drivers are indifferent about whether it is the left or the right, as long as everyone does
the same in order to avoid accidents (Müller 2003:14-16). Agents can help principals to overcome coordination problems by choosing one of the multiple equilibria and presenting it as a focal point to the group (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991:24).

Thus, depending on the problem that principals need to solve they have different incentives for establishing and delegating certain powers to an agent. Such delegation of power can reduce the transaction costs of decision-making through the provision of expertise or by solving problems of collective decision-making. These benefits are achieved only if the agent acts according to the principal’s preferences, however.

Agency loss and control

Problems can arise in principal-agent relationships, when the agent(s) have different preferences or start to develop preferences that differ from the preferred output of the principal. Lupia (2003:35) defines agency loss as the difference between the actual outcome of the delegation process and what the outcome would have been if the principal would have acted herself, given full information and unlimited resources. From the perspective of the principal the goal of the delegation is to reduce the agency loss as much as possible, but any delegation can be said to be successful if the principal derives more benefit from the outcome produced by the agent minus the cost of monitoring, than from the outcome, which the principal could have achieved without delegation. The central properties of the principal-agent approach deal with how to avoid detect and correct situations of agency loss. Possessing and gathering information about the agents is crucial for principals to avoid agency loss (Kiewit and McCubbins 1991:25). Within the principal-agent framework both ex ante and ex post tools are analytically considered to be of value when it comes to combating agency loss.

The problem, which arises ex ante, is one of adverse selection. It characterises the dilemma of delegating to agents, who have preferences, which differ from the preferences of the principals. In order to avoid adverse selection principals have different ex ante control mechanisms at their disposal. Principals might use an individual’s past behaviour to draw inferences on that individual’s preferences and reliability (Lupia 2003:45-48). Another possible ex ante control mechanism is the establishment of a particular design of the agency relationship: The principal specifies the delegation of tasks and responsibilities through designing a contract that defines the compensation to motivate the agent in the best possible manner, e.g. through a particular distribution of benefits resulting from an agent’s actions (Kiewit and McCubbins 1991:28-29). Through offering different contracts to possible agents, the principal can learn about the incentive structure of the principals (Lupia 2003:48). These measures help to principals to force agents to
reveal information about their preferences and ability to perform the tasks which are to be delegated.

Ex post, moral hazard problems can arise once agents have been installed and start to renege on promised policies. If the information about the consequences of enacted policies is asymmetrically distributed to the benefit of the agent, principals face the problem of agency loss. Principals might have incentives to monitor their agents’ behaviour constantly. But such direct ‘police patrol’ monitoring by principals is costly (McCubbins 1984). The cost of constant monitoring has to be weighed against the benefits derived from delegation to the agent. An alternative to constant monitoring are so-called fire-alarms that rely on third parties affected by an agent’s actions making it known to the principals if agents start to drift away from their preferred policies (McCubbins 1984). Another solution is to establish reporting procedures through which agents are forced to disclose the results of their actions to the principals. However, this does also entail costs for both the agent, who has to provide the information, and the principal, who has to receive and analyse the information. Principals can also establish multiple agents that serve as institutional checks on one another as long as they have competing interests; their competition allows the principal to obtain information on the agents’ actions, at relatively low cost (Kiewiet and McCubbins 2001:31–34). Once reneging on contracts is detected, principals have several ex ante options to sanction their agents; they can veto or overrule policies which the agent has proposed, or rewrite contracts and limit delegation; they can also cut the budget of agents or refuse to reappoint them.

Bilateral principal-agent relationships in legislative parties

I mentioned at the beginning of this section that the principal-agent relationship within parliamentary party groups differs from regular unidirectional delegations between principals and agent, since both party group members and their leadership act as principals and agents vis-à-vis each other. This notion was forwarded in a study of party discipline and loyalty in the Swedish Riksdag (Davidsson 2006). With slight modifications, this model underlies the party group discipline scenario of this study.

Based on the work of Cox and McCubbins (1993) Davidsson presented a theory of parliamentary parties in which the party group members and their leadership both act as principals and agents. His point of departure was that the societal and economic problems that legislators have to solve are so complex that party groups cannot deal with them collectively. Therefore, power to formulate the party group position is broken down into different policy areas and distributed amongst the party group members in order to increase specialisation. This amounts to circular delegation in which party group members function as principals and agents and delegate power to themselves (Davidsson 2006:293). Since circular delegations suffer from a
high risk of agency loss, party group members establish a party group leadership to which they delegate the power to formulate the party group position and maintain voting cohesion. Agency loss is minimised since it is easier for the party group members to monitor the party group leadership’s performance than to monitor each other (Davidsson 2006:295).

As an agent of the party group, the party group leadership needs to promote the party group’s collective interest. That means that the party group leadership needs to ensure the formation of median party group positions and the maintenance of support for them in plenary voting (Cox and McCubbins 1993:131; Davidsson 2006:57; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991:43, 48). The first task of the party group leadership is to ensure the formation of median party group positions in the legislative decision-making process. A group position proposal is formulated and voted on within the party groups before it becomes the official party group position for the plenary vote. If the party group position on a given piece of legislation corresponds to the party group’s median position, it benefits a majority of the party group members and makes it easier to generate party group voting cohesion. In order to ensure the formation of median party group positions the party group leadership needs to control the agenda at party group meetings to avoid agenda manipulation or the loss of a party group position in endless cycles of alternating majorities. Yet the party group leadership is not able to single-handedly determine the party group position on each and every issue on which a Parliament has to vote. It does not have the time or the expertise to engage in all relevant policy proposals (Müller and Strom 2004, quoted in Davidsson 2006). The party group leadership therefore re-delegates the agenda-setting power in the party group position formation process to its party group members in the parliamentary committees.

Once a party group position is established, party groups have a collective incentive to achieve high levels of voting cohesion in order to maximise their influence in the legislative decision-making process. By joining a party group legislators commit themselves to voting with it, supporting its collective interests. The party group leadership must therefore ensure high levels of party group voting cohesion. In Davidsson’s model the duty to uphold the party group position in plenary voting is re-delegated to party group members because the party group leadership is not allowed to vote for the party group as a single voting block (Davidsson 2006:58).

At this point I depart from Davidsson’s model. He argues that the duty of supporting the party group position in plenary voting is re-delegated to the members of a party group. If this duty is not fulfilled by the party group members, the leadership will use its disciplinary powers to punish the defectors. I argue that the theoretical re-delegation of the duty to maintain voting cohesion is not backed up by an empirical act of delegation. As in every Parliament, the right to vote in the plenary is the individual right of each party group member in the European Parliament and cannot be delegated to
or re-delegated from the party group leadership (European Parliament 2004: Rule 158). Therefore, I prefer to model the party group leadership as an agent when it disciplines its party group members for their voting behaviour. When the party group leadership re-delegates the agenda-setting power in the party group position formation process to a particular individual who acts as Rapporteur, on the other hand, I think it is well warranted to model the party group leadership as a principal. The theoretical delegation of agenda-setting power coincides with the party group leadership’s power to appoint party group members to parliamentary committees (European Parliament 2004: Rule 174). This bilateral principal-agent relationship between party group members and their leadership underlies the party group discipline scenario outlined in the following section and is summarised in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 *Delegation and re-delegation in parliamentary party groups*

This section has shown that the principal-agent relationship between party group members and their leadership can be characterised as bilateral delega-
tion. I have further demonstrated that the party group leadership acts as an agent when it applies ex post disciplinary mechanisms to sanction its party group members’ voting behaviour. The party group leadership acts as a principal to the party group when it delegates the agenda-setting power in the party group position formation process to its party group members on the parliamentary committees.

3.4 Two scenarios of legislative party discipline

This section applies the tools of the principal-agent approach presented above to derive two scenarios of legislative party discipline in the European Parliament. In Subsection 3.4.1 I will outline the properties of the party group discipline scenario. It builds on the standard assumption of the literature that MEPs can be disciplined by two partisan actors: their national parties, which control the electoral arena and the re-election chances of MEPs, and their transnational party group, which controls the legislative disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament, such as committee assignments and the allocation of rapporteurships. The assumption that the party groups control the legislative disciplinary powers in the European Parliament is frequently made because party groups face the collective action problem of voting cohesion (see Section 3.1) and the party group leadership is assumed to act as an institutional solution to solve this problem through the enforcement of party group discipline. Whereas previous research only takes into account the disciplinary relationship between the party group leadership and the individual party group members, the party group disciplinary scenario also predicts that the party group leadership monitors and sanctions the collective voting behaviour of the national party delegations.

The alternative scenario of party discipline in the European Parliament, the national party discipline scenario, is presented in Subsection 3.4.2. The scenario is based on two standard objections to the establishment of a centralised party group leadership with disciplinary powers. First, legislators are unlikely to empower a leadership with strong disciplinary powers unless the party group is very homogeneous and has distinct preferences from other party groups. Secondly, collective action problems of legislative decision-making can be solved by other means than establishing a party group leadership as a legislative leviathan. The national party discipline scenario assumes that the national party acts as the electoral principal of MEPs and that the national party delegation applies legislative disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament. Since the application of legislative disciplinary mechanisms by the national party delegation explains only the voting cohesion of the national party delegation, the voting cohesion of the transnational
party groups is explained through voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations in this scenario.

The primary interest of this study is to test whether the disciplinary mechanisms derived from the European Parliament’s legislative organisation lie in the hands of the party group leadership or the national party delegations. In what follows I will therefore derive only hypotheses about legislative party discipline in the European Parliament, disregarding the electoral disciplinary powers of the national parties.18

3.4.1 The party group discipline scenario

In the introduction to Section 3.4 I stated that the party group discipline scenario rests on the assumption that both the national party and the leadership of the transnational party group are able to discipline MEPs. The notion is best summarised by Simon Hix’s two principal model, which displays both the national parties and the transnational party groups as the disciplinary principals of MEPs (Hix 2002; Hix 2004). The national parties administer the electoral disciplinary mechanism, whilst the party group leadership executes the legislative disciplinary mechanism in the European Parliament. Gail McElroy conducted the first direct test of legislative disciplinary powers of party groups in the European Parliament (McElroy 2001). Although she does not explicitly frame her analysis in principal-agent terms, it is based on the application of the principal-agent model by Cox and McCubbins (1993), which explains the disciplinary powers of the political parties in the US Congress. They model the party leadership as an agent that is institutionalised by the party to solve its collective action problems.

This line of reasoning is also adopted for the party group disciplinary scenario presented in this section. The party group leadership is assumed to have disciplinary powers vis-à-vis its members in order to maintain voting cohesion, but it acts as an agent of the party group in its execution of party group discipline. Following the model of bilateral delegation outlined in Section 3.3 and summarised in Figure 3.2, the party group leaders act as a principal of the party group only when it re-delegates the agenda-setting power in the party group position formation process to its committee members. Thus, in accordance with previous research it is assumed that the party group leadership controls the legislative disciplinary powers in the European Parliament. By distinguishing between the maintenance of voting cohesion and the formation of the party group position as the two main tasks of the party group leadership, the party group discipline scenario distinguishes

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18 It would be extremely fruitful and interesting to use a single model for comparing the strength of the electoral and legislative disciplinary mechanism available to the political parties. This task, however, goes well beyond the scope of this study.
between the agent and the principal role of the party group. In addition to earlier research the party group discipline scenario also takes into account the relationship between the party group leadership and the national party delegations. It shows that a different loyalty logic is at work in this relationship: national party delegations that frequently vote against the party group are unlikely to face negative sanctions because the occasional decrease in voting cohesion is less important than the maintenance of overall voting power through party group size. Before outlining the principal and agent functions of the party group leadership, I will briefly describe the national parties’ disciplinary powers.

*The role of the national party as electoral principal*

As the primary principals, national parties delegate the power to their MEPs to make decisions on their behalf in the European Parliament. This is done for practical reasons, as the whole national party leadership cannot hold a seat in the European Parliament and national party leaders have obligations at the national level that they need to attend to. MEPs might also have special expertise and experience in dealing with issues of European politics and can make decisions at lower costs (Müller and Strøm 2004). A perfect delegation is achieved if MEPs actively work to pursue the policy goals of the national party and vote according to its policy preferences. In order to ensure a minimum of agency loss the national party has ex ante control and ex post control mechanisms vis-à-vis their MEPs. Most MEPs have had a political career within their national party before they are elected to the European Parliament (Bale and Taggart 2005; Hix and Lord 1997). Through ex ante control mechanisms the national party is therefore likely to choose candidates who have proven themselves as loyal party members with policy preferences closely aligned to the party.

In order to control their MEPs ex post, national parties can engage in direct monitoring, establish reporting requirements for their MEPs or rely on third parties, such as journalists, interest groups or administrative personal to monitor their MEPs. Some national parties are also known to issue negotiating and voting instructions to their MEPs. Once the monitoring of the MEPs reveals an agency loss, it is assumed that national parties cannot punish their agents during the legislative term. The national party can threaten MEPs that it will not re-nominate them as candidates in subsequent European elections or end their prospects for a future career in national politics, but they cannot affect the careers of their MEPs inside the European Parliament during the

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19 Most member states have a centralised candidate selection system in which the national party leadership selects candidates for election to the European Parliament (Hix 2004: 202). For reasons of simplicity I therefore refer to the national party leadership as the principal of the MEPs, but the logic of delegation remains the same even if candidate selection is decided by the local or regional party leadership.
present legislative term, according to the party group disciplinary scenario. This is assumed to be a prerogative of the transnational party groups.

The role of the party group leadership as legislative agent and principal

The most fundamental problem of collective decision-making within the party groups is free-riding in plenary voting. It undermines party group voting cohesion and thereby reduces the utility of the party groups. I have demonstrated in Section 3.2 that MEPs are policy-seekers and join party groups to obtain increased leverage in the legislative decision-making process. The size of the party group increases the a priori voting power of the group members collectively, which allows them to exert more influence in the policy-making process. The collective benefit of party group size will be sustained, however, only if party group members support the party group position in plenary voting. As collective action problem arises in the achievement of party group voting cohesion. MEPs can be exposed to pressure from many actors concerning how to vote on a given legislative proposal. The national party, constituency members, the national government, a supportive lobby group, industry representatives and many other actors may influence an MEP to vote against a proposal that the party group favours. Thus, MEPs may face costs for supporting their party group in plenary voting. On the other hand, MEPs also know that it is highly unlikely that their individual vote will be pivotal for the outcome of the vote. Furthermore, they cannot be excluded from enjoying the policy benefits once a legislative proposal is passed. Thus, instead of opting to support the party group in plenary voting they vote against the proposal, still reaping the policy benefits and the benefits of maintaining the support of outside actors. If all party group members try to maximise their personal gains and engage in free-riding in plenary voting, party group cohesion would be impossible to achieve and the benefit of party group membership would be lost.

The most commonly proposed solution to solving collective problems in the social sciences is the establishment of a central institution that monitors and sanctions the behaviour of disobedient group members (Bendor and Mookherjee 1987; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Hardin 1968; Hardin 1982; Hobbes 1970; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Olson 1965; Ostrom 1990).

20 It would be interesting to test whether the voting loyalty of MEPs to their national party delegation has an effect on their likelihood of being re-elected to the European Parliament or the success of their political career, when they leave the European Parliament. This is, however, beyond the scope of this study, as it only deals with the internal party politics of the European Parliament. Such an assessment would also be difficult, as the re-election chances of MEPs are dependent not only on loyalty to their national party, but also on other factors, such as the overall popularity of the national party among the electorate, its success in the European election, the electoral cycle at the national level, the government or opposition status of the national party or changes in the national party leadership, which would be difficult to control for.
Comparisons are frequently made with Thomas Hobbes’s strong state, the Leviathan, which is necessary to enforce the social contract and circumvent the ‘war of all against all’. Based on principal-agent theory Cox and McCubbins (1993) applied this reasoning to political parties. They argue that political parties can overcome the collective action problem of party group voting cohesion through establishing a party group leadership as its central agent. The party group leadership monitors the behaviour of its members and possesses disciplinary tools with which it can apply positive and negative sanctions for cooperative and non-cooperative behaviour on the part of its members (Cox and McCubbins 1993:93). Thus, party group members who are not loyal to the party group jeopardise the collective voting power of the party group and are likely to be sanctioned. This leads to the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: The more often a party group member fails to support the party group in plenary voting, the more likely it is that the party group member will be disciplined by the party group leadership.22

The party group leadership acts as agent of the party group when it applies disciplinary mechanisms to sanction its members’ voting behaviour. It monitors voting behaviour to check whether members honour their commitment to vote with the party group. Once the party group leadership detects that a party group member frequently defects from the party group line, the party group leadership will administer negative sanctions against them. But there is no reason to believe that the party group leadership administers only negative sanctions in its effort to maintain party group voting cohesion. The party group leadership can also use positive sanctions to encourage party group members to support the party group position in plenary voting. Both positive and negative sanctions not only have an effect on the sanctioned members, but also encourage other party group members to toe the party line. Sanctions are unlikely to alter the voting behaviour even of the most extreme members. Loyalists who receive a positive sanction can probably only increase their voting loyalty marginally; rebels who vote against the

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21 Although their theory was developed in the context of the US Congress, I have shown in Section 3.2 that it can be applied to the party groups of the European Parliament, if the re-election seeking goal is substituted with the policy-seeking incentives of MEPs.
22 This hypothesis was first stated and tested in the context of the European Parliament by McElroy (2001).
23 Every party group member will be allowed to defect from party group line on occasion, and the majority of party group members also defect from the party group position from time to time. In 1352 co-decision votes roll-called in the fifth European Parliament, no party group member of the EPP-ED and PSE group supported their party group leadership in all votes. Since party group leaders are elected by a majority of the party group members and need their support they will punish only party group members who frequently vote against the party group.
party group line frequently might change their voting behaviour even if they are sanctioned, just as many criminals are not deterred from committing new crimes after they are released from jail. Yet, as long as evidence for the application of party group disciplinary mechanisms is uncovered in the empirical analysis, party group discipline will be an explanatory factor of party group voting cohesion, since anticipated sanctions are just as likely to have an effect on the voting behaviour of MEPs as applied sanctions.

So far the outlined scenario concurs with the two principal model of Hix (2002, 2004); the national parties control the disciplinary sanctions of the electoral arena, while the transnational party groups control the disciplinary tools of the legislative arena. If only hypothesis 1 is corroborated in the empirical analyses of this study, the party group leadership acts as a legislative leviathan vis-à-vis each party group member and might be able to fend off public pressure, which could arise from a further politicisation of the EU.

Party groups do, however, not only exist of individual MEPs, but are also composed of national party delegations. Thus, the party group leadership does also need to take into account the position of the national party delegations, when it disciplines its party group members. If the notion of hypothesis 1 is applied to the relationship between party group leadership and the national party delegations, party group members from national party delegations who frequently vote against the party group line will be more likely to be punished. A different loyalty logic is, however, at play between the national party delegations and the party group leadership. While it is still the goal of the party group leadership to maintain the highest possible voting cohesion level, it will not pursue this goal at all costs. If the party group leadership disciplines members from a national party delegation that is often dissatisfied with the pursued party group positions, the likelihood that the whole national party delegation will exit from the party group increases. The reduction in size through the exit of a national party delegation will hurt the party group more than if the delegation stays in the party group but frequently votes against the party group line.

The loyalty logic behind the relationship between the national party delegations and the party group leadership is best captured by Hirschman’s concept of ‘exit, voice and loyalty’ (Hirschman 1970). Hirschman combined the economic exit option with the political option of protesting and derived a theory of the sustainability of groups, organisations and states. An individual who is increasingly dissatisfied with the performance of the organisation can exit from the organisation or he or she can voice his or her discontent. According to Hirschman, an individual is loyal to an organisation if he or she remains a member of the organisation despite dissatisfaction with the organisational output (Hirschman 1970:38). The effectiveness of voice within an organisation depends on available exit options (Hirschman 1970:83). If exit is a viable option the organisation will pay more attention to the uttered voice of its members and compensate them for their reduced utility as re-
gards organisation membership. In the party groups of the European Parliament, this means that voting against the party group line is a form of voicing discontent with the produced output.

The difference between the individual voice uttered by MEPs and the aggregated voice uttered by national party delegations is the possible impact of the exit option and the credibility of the exit threat. Since the loss of a national party group delegation has a sensible impact on the party group’s voting powers, the voice of national party delegations is much more likely to be taken seriously and will be compensated through positive sanctions of the party group leadership. The threat of exiting the party group voiced by national party delegations is credible because party groups have overlapping policy preferences (see Section 2.2). The exit option of individual MEPs can be coped with far more easily and the threat of individual exit is less powerful, since MEPs lose the future support not only of the party group, but also of their national party, which endangers their re-election chances. Thus, voting defection on the part of national party delegations will be treated as voice by the party group leadership and is likely to be compensated through positive sanctions.

Hypothesis 2: The more often the national party delegation of a party group member fails to support the party group line, the more likely it is that the party group member will be rewarded by the party group leadership.

If both hypothesis 1 and 2 of the party group disciplinary scenario find support in the empirical evidence of this study, party group voting cohesion will be partly explained by the disciplinary actions of the party group leadership, but will also depend on the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations. In this case it would be much more difficult for the party group leadership to maintain voting cohesion in the likely event of a further politicisation of the EU. The party group leadership could still discipline individual MEPs for their voting defections, but it would have to issue positive sanctions to MEPs from the most rebellious national party delegations. Since the supply of positive sanctions in the legislative decision-making process is not limitless and since dissatisfaction with the pursued party group position is likely to increase due to pressures from national parties, the party group leadership might not be able to uphold its sanctioning system through which it is able to maintain voting cohesion.

The bilateral principal-agent model of legislative parties, which was presented in Section 3.3 outlined that maintaining party group voting cohesion by monitoring and sanctioning its members’ voting behaviour is not the party group leadership’s only task. In the party group position formation process, the party group faces the problems of cycling majorities and manipulated agendas. Party group positions on all legislative matters voted on in the European Parliament have to be adopted by majority vote at a party
group meeting (EPP-ED 1999; PSE 2003); if the agenda is uncontrolled, the formation of a party group position might become impossible, as members can at any time introduce new proposals that might find support from a different party group majority, replacing the previous proposal. Alternatively, if the agenda is manipulated the outcome of the party group formation process can deviate from a median position (Riker 1982).

Through control of the agenda at party group meetings, the party group leadership can avoid cycling majorities and agenda manipulation, which could lead to the adoption of party group positions that deviate from the party group’s median policy position. Agreement on a median party group position is important for achieving high support levels in plenary voting, and it is also decisive for meeting the expectations of party group members; MEPs join the party group with which their preferences coincide most closely. If the party group policy position changes from the left to the right wing of the party, then party group switching is likely to increase and the maintenance of party group voting cohesion in the plenary will be more difficult. Regular shifting of party group positions will also reduce the credibility of a party group in bargaining with other party groups.

Only in cases in which the party group leadership possess unlimited resources and full information should we expect it always to present median policy positions at party group meetings, or to structure the agenda in such a way that median party group positions succeed. But the party group leadership cannot possibly possess all relevant information on each and every legislative proposal which is discussed in the European Parliament; nor does it have unlimited time and resources to gather this information by itself. This is why the party group leadership needs to delegate the power of forming the party group position back to its members (Davidsson 2006). This is done through the appointment of party group members to committees and legislative rapporteurships. Committee members and Rapporteurs are able specialise and become policy experts at lower cost because they need only to deal with legislation that falls within their committee’s jurisdiction (Krehbiel 1991).

In committee appointments and the allocation of rapporteurships, the party group leadership acts as a principal to its party group members. Due to its informational and resource constraints, the party group leadership needs to delegate agenda-setting power back to its party group members. This is why the delegation relationship between party group leaders and their ‘backbenchers’ is bilateral. In the re-delegation of agenda setting to the party group members, deviations from the party group median position constitute an agency loss. In order to minimise the chances of agency loss, the party group leadership tries to select and appoint party group members with policy preferences close to the party group median to important positions in the legislative decision-making process, for example, legislative committees and co-decision rapporteurships.
Hypothesis 3: The closer a party group member’s policy preferences are to the party group median position, the more likely it is that the party group leadership will grant that member access to important positions in the legislative decision-making process.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 constitute ex post control behaviour on the part of the party group leadership. Acting as an agent it disciplines party group members in response to their individual voting behaviour and the aggregated voting behaviour of their national party delegations. The predicted behaviour of the party group leadership in Hypothesis 3 is an ex ante control mechanism. Before the party group leadership delegates access to an influential position in the policy-making process to a party group member, it takes into account the closeness of the MEP’s policy preferences to the party group median in order to avoid agency loss in the process of party group position formation.

Concerning legislative disciplinary powers, the party group discipline scenario that I have presented here assumes that party group disciplinary mechanisms are employed by the party group leadership to promote party group voting cohesion. The party group leadership employs both negative and positive sanctions vis-à-vis its party group members and their national party delegations. The fundamental difference is that the party group leadership classifies non-supportive voting behaviour on the part of MEPs as disloyalty, issuing negative sanctions against rebellious party group members, whereas the non-supportive voting behaviour of national party delegation is interpreted as the voicing of dissatisfaction with the party group positions, which is compensated through positive sanctions. If only the first hypothesis of the party group disciplinary scenario is corroborated, the party groups of the European Parliament have established themselves as genuine transnational parties, which are able to control the voting behaviour of its members. If both hypothesis 1 and 2 find support in the empirical chapters of this study, the party group leadership is constrained by the national party delegations in its effort to uphold voting cohesion through the application of disciplinary tools. Section 3.4.2 presents the alternative party discipline model, which could explain voting cohesion in the European Parliament.

3.4.2 The national party discipline scenario

In the national party discipline scenario the national party is the only partisan actor, which has disciplinary power vis-à-vis MEPS. The national party fulfills the same electoral disciplinary role as in the party group discipline scenario, it controls the candidate selection for the European Parliament elections and it determines campaign issues and financial support.

Within the European Parliament MEPS of the same party group do not delegate disciplinary powers to the party group leadership to solve the col-
lective action problem of party group voting cohesion. The legislative disciplinary powers remain in the hands of the national party delegations. Analytically, I do not distinguish between the national party and its national party delegation in the European Parliament. In section 2.1 of the previous chapter I have shown that it is very likely that MEPs hold very similar policy preferences as their national party, since they choose to join the party, which most closely approximates their own policy preferences. MEPs are also likely to have adapted themselves to their national party through socialisation in their previous career as national, local and regional politicians. Furthermore, it is also technically impossible from a measurement point of view to detect voting defections from the national party, as national parties do not publicly issue their positions on legislation voted on in the European Parliament.

A number of scholars have shown that legislators are unlikely to delegate disciplinary powers to their leadership unless certain preconditions are met (Aldrich and Rohde 2001; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Ozbudun 1970; Rohde 1991; Sinclair 1995). In their theory of conditional party government, Aldrich and Rhode state that only if parties are internally homogeneous with regard to their policy preferences and only if the party system is polarised, so that there is no preference overlap between political parties, will party group members empower their leadership with disciplinary powers (Aldrich and Rhode 2001:275). Likewise, Ozbudun (1970) has argued that party discipline is not a substitute for political parties’ preference heterogeneity. Party leaders will not be able to discipline their members to achieve higher levels of voting cohesion if their policy preferences are widely dispersed. In Chapter 2 I showed that the policy preferences of the party groups are heterogeneous and that there is considerable overlap among them (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2). MEPs’ socialisation within their transnational party groups is also more difficult due to the European Parliament’s high turnover rates; in every legislative term about 50% of legislators are freshmen MEPs. Roger Scully has shown that MEPs are not likely to alter their attitudes and behaviour due to the length of party group membership in the European Parliament and remain in close contact with their national party (Scully 2005). Following the conditional party government theory, MEPs will therefore not accept discipline from the leadership of the transnational party group; since the national party is MEPs’ original principal, the legislative disciplinary powers lie in the hands of the national party delegations of the European Parliament.

Hypothesis 4: The more often an MEP votes against the national party delegation, the more likely it is that the MEP will be disciplined by the national party delegation.

Besides using the allocation of committee seats and rapporteurships as a sanctioning tool, the national party delegations do also have incentives to
appoint national party delegation members that hold policy preferences close to the national party delegation median to important committees and rapporteurships. Due to the lack of sufficient data on the individual policy preferences of MEPs, however, I cannot test this notion.24

I showed in Chapter 2 that the European Parliament’s rules of procedure stipulate that the party groups control the committee assignment process in the European Parliament, and that previous studies have shown that the distribution of rapporteurships follows a proportional distribution between party groups. This does not necessarily mean that the party group leadership controls these two disciplinary mechanisms. In the national party discipline scenario, the allocation process is assumed to be controlled by the national party delegations inside each party group. Once a party group has received a certain proportion of committee seats or a rapporteurship on a committee, these positions could also be distributed proportionally amongst the national party delegations of the party group, making the party group leadership dispensable. In the following I will show why party group membership is still attractive for MEPs and their national party delegations, and how party group voting cohesion can be maintained without the disciplinary whip of the central party group leadership.

Solving collective action problems without a central agent

Does the missing disciplinary power of the party group leadership render the party groups obsolete in the national party discipline scenario? No, MEPs still join party groups for the same reason as outlined above. The national party delegations are too small to be influential in the internal decision-making process of the European Parliament and by joining forces with like-minded national party delegations MEPs increase their voting power and influence on policy outcomes. But MEPs can enjoy the benefits of party group membership only if the party group votes cohesively. The national party delegations’ legislative disciplinary power is an explanatory factor in their high levels of voting cohesion, but it fails to explain why the aggregated voting behaviour of all national party delegations within a party group – that is, party group voting cohesion – is high.

In the national party discipline scenario, the explanation of party group voting cohesion is derived from the general literature on collective action. Michael Taylor, Robert Axelrod and Elinor Ostrom have each shown that cooperation can emerge amongst rational actors facing problems of collective action without the establishment of a centralised authority (Axelrod 1984; Ostrom 1990; Taylor 1987). Two central requirements must be met in

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24 The available data on the individual left-right preferences of MEPs (Farrell et al. 2006) covers less than 40% of the MEPs included in my datasets and the missing values are non-random.
order that decentralised cooperation emerges in collective decision-making processes; first, the decision-makers need to interact repeatedly; second, they need to value the benefits of future cooperation. Each individual attaches a discount factor to future outcomes of reiterated interaction. The discount factor can take into account the value of future interactions and the probability that future interactions will occur (Axelrod 1981:308). The smaller the discount factor, the less value is attached to benefits from future cooperation. Axelrod’s theorem states that

*If the discount parameter, w, is sufficiently high, there is no best strategy independent of the strategy used by the other player.* (Axelrod 1981:309)

Thus, as long as individuals consider it likely that they will interact in the future, and as long as they attach sufficient value to the gains from future cooperation compared to short-term gains from present defection, cooperative behaviour is likely to emerge. Axelrod proved that this behavioural pattern is likely to emerge in two-person prisoner’s dilemma situations. Bendor and Mookherjee (1987) extended Axelrod’s reasoning to collective action situations with multiple players. They argue that groups tend to establish thresholds below which cooperative behaviour of the group is not allowed to fall. As no central authority is established, members can observe only the total group performance and not the defection of individual members. Once the predetermined threshold of cooperation is not achieved, the group reaction will be to defect as a group for a predetermined period of time. If the punishment phase is sufficiently long and the group members do not discount future cooperation too heavily, cooperation among rational individuals is likely to arise (Bendor and Mookherjee 1987:133). In situations in which group behaviour can be perfectly monitored and all defections are due to a conscious choice and not a lack of ability to contribute to the group goal, the cooperative behaviour is stable and ‘Hobbesian solutions of centralized authority are unnecessary’ (ibid.: 134).

The gains from voluntary cooperation in reiterated interactions help to explain how national party delegations manage to maintain high levels of group cohesion without establishing the party group leadership as a legislative leviathan. The national party delegations within each party group have learned to coordinate their policy positions so as to establish a common party group position that they can sustain in plenary voting. The long-term gains of cooperation within the party group transcend the short-term losses that each national party delegation experiences through a compromise on a common position, since party group voting cohesion gives the party group increased power in the policy-making process. Policy coordination is assumed to take place between national party delegations because transaction costs are considerably lower if only a few national party delegations interact
than if all party group members have to be involved. This assumption is again warranted by the national party delegations’ preference coherence and their twofold disciplinary powers vis-à-vis their members.

The sustainability of non-hierarchical solutions for solving collective action problems has also been criticised, however. The two main caveats in the literature are the problems of multiple equilibria and the group punishment feature (Cox and McCubbins 1993:100ff; Morrow 1994:267ff). Since multiple efficient outcomes are possible in reiterated games, a coordination problem exists. Group members are uncertain about the strategies that the other members are likely to pursue and coordination may never be achieved (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991:23). The first caveat of multiple equilibria is overcome with the help of the party group leadership. Although the party group leadership acts neither as a disciplinary agent nor as a principal who is setting the party group’s agenda, the leadership can still help the national party delegations to overcome their coordination problems. I pointed out in Section 3.3 that party group leaderships can create focal points in order to facilitate the party group position formation process. The purpose of focal points is ‘to increase the likelihood of legislators choosing one equilibrium over another’ (Ringe 2006:30). Thus, by shifting the focus of party group members towards one of many possible alternatives the party group leadership helps the national party delegations to coordinate themselves in the decision-making process and rallies support for one efficient equilibrium outcome. Since the equilibria from which the party group leadership chooses one as focal point are assumed to be efficient – that is, no party group member would unilaterally choose to defect from any of these outcomes – the party group leadership does not influence the chosen policy content and is not able to create winners and losers within the party group. Thus, in the national party discipline scenario, the party group leadership is weaker than in the party group discipline scenario, in which the leadership can shape party group policy positions through its agenda-setting power.

The second caveat, the group punishment feature, refers to the problem that the only way for a group to sanction its members’ voting defections is for all members to defect at a later point in time. This behaviour hurts not only the original defector, but also all other members of the group, making its application as a disciplinary mechanism unlikely (Cox and McCubbins 1993:102). The necessity of total group defection depends on the threshold of cooperation below which the group agreed not to fall. If the group tolerates a certain amount of defection, group punishment might not have to be applied. The Socialist party group of the European Parliament, for example, included a rule in its procedures that allows members to defect from the party group line on serious political grounds:
Those members who, prior to the vote, have given notice of serious political reasons which may cause them to dissent from a majority decision, shall not be bound by that decision. (PSE 2003:Art.36.2)

The national party discipline scenario has shown that it is possible for national party delegations of a party group to solve their collective action problem of voting cohesion without the empowerment of a party group leadership that sanctions voting defections. The legislative disciplinary power lies in the hands of the national party delegations since MEPs resist delegating disciplinary powers to the party group leadership due to party group preference heterogeneity. The party groups are nevertheless able to maintain high levels of voting cohesion because the national party delegations value the long-term gains of cooperation more than their short-term benefits from present defections. The sustainability of this non-hierarchical solution for solving the collective action problem is increased through the party group leadership’s creation of focal points and the setting of a realistic threshold of cooperation.

The notion of the national party delegation scenario will be tested comparatively against the party group disciplinary scenario in Chapters 6 and 7 of this study. Since these two scenarios build on different logics of how the collective action problem of party group voting cohesion can be resolved, I expect to find evidence for only one of these scenarios. If the national party disciplinary scenario is corroborated, party group voting cohesion will be more difficult to sustain in the likely event of a further politicisation of the EU. Increasing pressure from the national parties will lead to an increase in voting defections of the national party delegations. Party group voting cohesion will fall under the agreed minimum threshold and will trigger the collective group punishment feature. The frequent application of group punishments undermines the purpose of the party groups and might even lead to a breakup of the party group.

In Section 3.5 I present hypotheses about the appointment and control of the party group leadership, which will be tested in Chapter 5. I show that the role of the party group leadership is fundamentally different in the two scenarios of legislative party discipline. Due to these differences party group members have different incentives for controlling the actions of their party group leaders in the two scenarios. The party group leadership is powerful and influential in the party group discipline scenario; since the party group leadership can impose agency loss on the party group, MEPs have incentives to control their party group leadership in this scenario. In the national party discipline scenario, the party group leadership cannot affect office appointments or the policy content of the formed party group positions, which is why it is not warranted that the party group members control the appointment of the party group leadership.
3.5 Controlling party group leaders

The crucial difference between the two scenarios of party discipline outlined above is the role attributed to the party group leadership. In the party group discipline scenario, party group members establish a party group leadership in order to solve the collective action problem of voting cohesion and to avoid the social choice problematic of cycling majorities and agenda manipulation. This requires that the party group members delegate disciplinary and agenda-setting powers to the party group leadership. As in all principal-agent relations, agency loss can arise in the relationship between the party group and its leadership; for example, the party group leadership might use its disciplinary powers for other purposes than enforcing voting cohesion, or it might use its agenda-setting powers to promote its own preferred policy position that might deviate from the party group median. Party group members have ex ante and ex post control mechanisms at their disposal to avoid and remedy agency loss.

In order to avoid situations of adverse selection in which party group leaders have policy preferences that deviate from the median party group policy position, the party group discipline scenario predicts that party group leaders have to undergo a selection process before they are elected. This means that party group members try to draw inferences from the past behaviour and actions of leadership candidates concerning their future behaviour. Party group members who frequently depart from the party group line will be less likely to be entrusted with party group leadership positions.

**Hypothesis 5:** The more often a party group member defects from the party group line in plenary voting, the less likely it is that he or she will be elected as a party group leader.

As the party group leadership is responsible for ensuring that median party group positions are formed, party group members will also take into account the policy preferences of their party group colleagues in the party group leadership appointment process (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991:48; Sinclair 1995:66). In order to avoid agency loss in the party group formation process, party group members will opt for moderate members as their party group leaders.

**Hypothesis 6:** The closer the policy preferences of a party group member are aligned to the party group median, the more likely it is that the party group member will be elected as a party group leader.

Hypotheses 5 and 6 summarise the ex ante control mechanisms that party group members have at their disposal when they appoint party leaders as
their agents. But party group members can combat not only adverse selection problems in the relationship with their party leaders, but also problems of moral hazard that arise after delegation has taken place and the agent reneges on the agreed contract with the principal. The likelihood that agency loss will be discovered depends on the information about the actions of the party group leadership that party group members have at their disposal. The decision-making process in the European Parliament is very open and involves a multitude of actors. This makes the threat of verification of the credibility of the party group leadership’s actions and application of fire-alarms very effective tools for monitoring the party group leadership (Lupia 2003). However, party group leaders might also enjoy informational advantages vis-à-vis their party group members, due to its prominent position in the party group position formation process.

Once defections are detected party group members have two major opportunities to combat agency loss: they can veto the proposed policies of the party group leadership or they can oust party group leaders from their position. Although the party group has a strong influence on the party group position formation process in the party group discipline scenario, it still needs to obtain approval for all party group positions, as the rules of procedure of the EPP-ED and the PSE group reveal:

The Plenary Assembly shall take decisions on all political matters dealt with inside or outside the European Parliament. (EPP-ED 1999:Rule9)\(^{25}\)

The Group is the highest political authority: … it adopts a position on any text to be put to the vote in plenary sessions of Parliament. (PSE 2003:Rule17)

These rules give the party group the possibility to counteract party group leadership proposals that are not accepted by a majority. Depending on the location of the status quo and the preference distribution within the party group, the leadership can, however, still have much leeway in choosing a favoured policy position through its agenda-setting powers (Tsebelis 2002).

The strongest control mechanism that principals have at their disposal is the removal of the agent from office. Party group members have the opportunity to oust disloyal party group leaders from their position. Party group leaders can be removed from office after two and half years, at the mid-term office reshuffle in the European Parliament.

Hypothesis 7: Party group leaders who do not act in accordance with the collective interest of the party group are more likely to be ousted from their position.

\(^{25}\)The EPP-ED rules of procedure refer to meetings of the party group as a whole as the plenary assembly.
Party group members can, however, also use a no-confidence motion to vote their leadership out of office at any point during the parliamentary term. The PSE rules of procedure stipulate:

A motion of no confidence in the Bureau may be tabled in writing by a national delegation or by a group of Members representing at least ten percent of total Group membership. (PSE 2003:Rule14)

Although the threat of a no-confidence vote hangs over the party group leadership like the sword of Damocles during the whole parliamentary term, it is unlikely to be used since the party group leadership would have to be punished collectively. This strong control mechanism nevertheless helps to ensure that party group leaders act according to the preferences of party group members.

Due to the delegation of considerable power to the party group leadership in the party group discipline scenario, party group members are likely to employ both ex ante and ex post control mechanisms vis-à-vis their leadership. In the national party discipline scenario, however, the importance of the party group leadership is more limited and cannot lead to agency loss; the role of the party group leadership in this scenario is to solve coordination problems in the party group internal decision-making process. Since the leadership emphasises only one of many possible efficient equilibrium outcomes to avoid decision-making failures and does not propose its own party group position, its role is purely efficiency enhancing and cannot lead to any agency loss. In the national party discipline scenario, the party group leadership therefore does not need to be controlled by the party group members.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that the US theories of political parties that I presented in Section 3.1 can be adapted for studying the party groups of the European Parliament. As rational utility maximisers MEPs increase their utility by joining a party group, since it increases their influence in the legislative decision-making process. In two-party, separation-of-powers systems as in the US, political parties have been shown to benefit legislators by solving collective action problems in the electoral and legislative arenas. In the electoral arena, political parties solve the problem of informing voters about policy positions by establishing brand names. In the legislative arena, the majority status of the legislature gives the majority party the power to determine the outcome of the legislative decision-making process. Political parties play the same role in multi party parliamentary systems; instead of
single majority party, the governing coalition of parties acts as a majority voting block in the legislature.

Due to the electoral disconnection of the European Parliament, party groups do not exist for the purpose of generating electorally useable brand names for MEPs. Neither does a majority party or a governmental majority coalition exist in the European Parliament, which could control the legislative agenda and determine legislative outcomes. Through their size the party groups do increase the voting power and legislative influence of MEPs, however. In addition, the party groups also stabilise the legislative decision-making process and decrease the transaction costs of legislative bargaining. Since the policy-seeking incentives for MEPs have increased dramatically over the years due to the empowerment of the European Parliament in the EU policy-making process, it is not unrealistic to assume that MEPs are policy-seekers who increase their influence in the legislative decision-making process by establishing party groups in the European Parliament.

In order for MEPs to reap the benefits of party group membership, the party groups need to vote cohesively. In Chapter 2 I showed that previous research has revealed that the party groups of the European Parliament tend to vote cohesively, but that the explanations of party group voting cohesion diverge. Since party group preference coherence cannot explain party group voting cohesion, party group discipline has been outlined as a possible explanatory factor. Previous research has, however, presented divergent results on the existence of party discipline in the European Parliament; while some researchers uncovered evidence that the party groups are able to discipline their members, other scholars refute this idea, arguing that the national party delegations hold the disciplinary whip.

In order to find theoretical explanations of these divergent results, this Chapter has presented two scenarios of party discipline. The *party group discipline scenario* follows the general notion of the literature that national parties control disciplinary mechanisms tied to the electoral arena, whereas the party groups administer legislative disciplinary mechanisms inside the European Parliament, such as committee assignments and the allocation of rapporteurships. MEPs establish the party group leadership as an institutional solution for solving the collective action problem of party group voting cohesion. To this end the party group leadership needs to ensure the formation of median party group positions through agenda control and needs to sanction the voting behaviour of party group members to promote voting cohesion. Expanding on previous research I have further shown that the party group leadership will not be able to act as an all-powerful legislative leviathan within the party group, but will have to pay off national party delegations, which frequently vote against the party group, by means of positive sanctions.

The *national party discipline scenario* assumes that MEPs will hesitate to equip their party group leadership with strong disciplinary powers, due to the
preference heterogeneity in the party group. Legislative disciplinary tools are more likely to lie in the hands of the national party delegations, since the national parties are the ultimate principals of MEPs and because the latter are more likely to accept discipline from them. In this scenario, party group voting cohesion is not derived from disciplinary action; it is rather achieved through the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations. Whether the national party discipline scenario or the party group discipline scenario underlies partisan politics in the European Parliament will be tested in Chapters 6 and 7: Chapter 6 analyses the disciplinary role of the party group leadership and the national party delegations in the committee assignment process, while Chapter 7 tests whether the allocation of rapporteurships serves as a disciplinary tool for one of these actors.

The empirical evidence presented in Chapters 6 and 7 will also reveal the prospects of party group voting cohesion, if the politicisation of the EU increases. If only hypothesis 1 of the party group disciplinary scenario finds support, the party groups have established themselves as truly transnational parties, which could possibly sustain party group voting cohesion through the application of legislative disciplinary mechanisms. If hypothesis 2 of the party group discipline scenario is also corroborated, the sustainability of party group voting cohesion will be more doubtful. In this case the party group leadership can only sanction party group members with a higher degree of voting defections than the average voting defection of his or her national party delegation. Rebellious national party delegations will even have to be paid off by the party group leadership to remain within the party group. Although a functioning system of sanctions exists in the party group discipline scenario, the party group leadership cannot force the national party delegations to comply with the party group position, which makes the maintenance of party group voting cohesion difficult. If the results of Chapters 6 and 7 prove that the national party discipline scenario applies to the European Parliament, the maintenance of party group voting cohesion will become impossible. Once the electoral costs of legislative decision-making in the European Parliament start to increase, it will become very difficult for the national party delegations within the party groups to coordinate themselves and find efficient equilibria from which no delegations has an incentive to defect. As the finding of compromise solutions becomes more difficult and free-riding incentives start to increase, party group cohesion will brake down.

The role of the party group leadership in these two scenarios is very different. In the party group disciplinary scenario, the party group leadership is equipped with disciplinary and agenda-setting powers and the party group can suffer from agency loss through the delegation of these powers to its leadership. In the national party discipline scenario, the party group leadership has the task of coordinating the party group internal position formation process, so that one of many efficient equilibria will be chosen as the party
group position. In order to fulfil this task the party group leadership does not have to have formal agenda-setting power or disciplinary powers; by emphasising a focal point that no party group members has an incentive to deviate from, the party group leadership is only able to improve the payoffs received from the outcome of the collective decision-making process but cannot impose agency loss on the party group. Thus, party group members have strong incentive to control their party group leadership in the party group discipline scenario, whereas this is not necessary in the national party discipline scenario. Analysing the structure and competences of the party group leaderships of the EPP-ED and PSE group, as well as their appointment process, Chapter 5 will serve as a first test of which of these scenarios is more likely to apply to the European Parliament.
4. Research Design and Operationalisation

The present chapter explicates the research design that underlies this study and presents the operationalisation of the dependent (Y) and independent variables (X) that will be applied in the statistical analyses of the following three chapters. The presented research design guides the empirical analyses of Chapters 6 and 7. These two chapters aim directly at testing the main research question of this project, which is whether party discipline in the European Parliament is administered by the party group leadership or by national party delegations. As the first empirical chapter of this study, Chapter 5 has an exploratory character and functions as a first test of the two party discipline scenarios, as presented in Chapter 3; it will analyse whether the party group leadership fulfils the functions that the two disciplinary scenarios attribute to it, and whether the party groups use ex ante and ex post mechanisms to control their party group leaders. Section 4.1 of this chapter outlines the underlying research design for Chapters 6 and 7, and presents additional independent variables that will be used in the statistical analyses. Section 4.2 presents the operationalisation of all explanatory variables and discusses the applied data sources; the section also presents an overview of the exploratory interviews that I conducted within the framework of this study.

4.1 Research design

De Vaus states that ‘the function of a research design is to ensure that the obtained evidence enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible’ (de Vaus 2001:9). The question underlying this research project concerns whether party discipline exists in the European Parliament and which partisan actor, the transnational party group or the national party delegations, is responsible for the administration of disciplinary actions. In Chapter 2, party discipline was defined as voting cohesion, which parties are able to achieve through disciplinary actions and not by mere homogeneity of policy preferences. In concordance with previous research I showed in Chapter 2 that party group voting cohesion cannot be derived from the policy preference composition of the party groups. Even though such policy preferences are heterogeneous, the party groups manage to obtain high levels of
voting cohesion. The party group disciplinary scenario presented in Chapter 3 outlined the notion that voting cohesion could be achieved within the party groups if the party group leadership were able to apply disciplinary powers within the European Parliament in order to sanction the voting behaviour of their members. The fundamental question is therefore whether the voting loyalty of party group members (X), triggers a response by the party group leadership to impose sanctions on the party group members (Y).

The research design underlying this study is clearly X-centred, that is, the analytical emphasis is put on the independent and not the dependent variable. I am not interested in explaining as much as possible of the variation in promotions and demotions of the committee assignment process, the dependent variable in Chapter 6, or the variation in the allocation of co-decision rapporteurships, the dependent variable in Chapter 7. Instead, I am interested in whether the sanctions derived from the committee assignment process and the allocation of rapporteurships can be traced back to the party group leadership. In order to prove that the party group leadership applies sanctions vis-à-vis its party group members, I test whether members’ individual voting loyalty towards the party group leadership (X) have an effect on the likelihood that a party group member will be sanctioned (Y). If a causal relationship between party group voting loyalty and received sanctions can be identified, it is not the exact magnitude of the sanctions that are of interest; if the party group leadership has established a functioning system of sanctions, its mere existence can increase party group voting cohesion. The deterrent effect of a party group sanctioning system motivates members to support their party group in plenary voting. Thus, the ultimate goal of this thesis is to discover whether such a sanctioning system exists within the EPP-ED and PSE groups.

In order to establish a causal relationship between an independent and a dependent variable research needs to prove three things. First, the researcher needs to establish that the two variables co-vary, that is, that the dependent variable either increases or decreases as the explanatory variable increases. Second, a time-order or cause-and-effect relationship needs to be established, that is, the independent variable must come before the dependent variable in time. Third, the researcher has to conduct a multivariate analysis controlling for other potential explanatory variables in order to avoid spurious correlations (de Vaus 2001: 34-39). Spurious correlations between variables exist if a background variable Z co-varies with both X and Y, and causes an apparent correlation between the two. A commonly used example is the apparent correlation between the number of storks (X) living in an area and the increased birth rate (Y); this correlation is explained not by the fact
that storks are causally responsible for delivering babies, but by the fact that storks live in rural areas (Z), where birth rates are higher.\textsuperscript{26}

Thus, in order to arrive at a causal explanation of party group discipline, three criteria need to be identified. First, I need to prove that voting loyalty towards the party group leadership (\textit{loyalty PGL}) correlates with the received sanctions in the committee assignment and report allocation process (Y). Second, I need to make sure that the applied measure of voting loyalty captures the voting behaviour of MEPs, before the sanctions are issued. Last but not least, I need to control for other explanatory factors that could account for the application of disciplinary actions.

Not all explanatory factors that will be included in the following statistical analyses are independent variables that control for spurious correlations with the applied disciplinary sanctions. The party group disciplinary scenario outlines also that the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation (\textit{delegation loyalty PGL}) would have an effect on the application of disciplinary mechanisms by the party group leadership. These disciplinary actions by the party group leadership do, however, not aim at increasing party group voting cohesion, but at keep dissatisfied national party delegations from leaving the party group.

The national party discipline model was outlined as an alternative scenario for achieving party discipline in the European Parliament. I will therefore simultaneously test whether an MEP’s voting loyalty towards the national party delegation (\textit{loyalty NPD}) will have an effect on the applied sanction in the distribution of legislative resources in Chapters 6 and 7.

Besides the voting loyalty variables, the party group discipline scenario predicted further that the proximity of an MEP’s policy preferences to the party group median (\textit{preference proximity}) would also serve as an explanatory factor for receiving positive and negative sanctions in the distribution of legislative resources. Because the party group leadership cannot formulate all party group positions itself, hypothesis 3 predicted that the party group leadership would re-delegate agenda-setting powers in the party group internal decision-making process to its committee members. In order to ensure the adoption of median party group positions, the party group leadership will delegate agenda-setting powers to committee members who hold policy preferences close to the median party group position. Preference proximity to the party group median could, however, also be an underlying variable that co-varies with both the voting loyalty of a party group member and the

\textsuperscript{26}If the correlation between an independent and a dependent variable disappears if a third variable is controlled for, a previously identified correlation does not have to be spurious, but could also be indirect, that is, X is still causally related to Y, but indirectly via Z*(de Vaus 2001:38). Whether the original correlation was spurious or is indirect depends on the time order between X and Z. If the background variable Z precedes X, the original correlation between X and Y is spurious; if X precedes the intervening variable Z* in time, X still causes Y, but only indirectly via Z*. 
sanctions issued against the member. It is, therefore, also necessary to include preference proximity in the statistical analyses as a control for a possible spurious correlation between voting loyalty and applied sanctions.

**Alternative explanations of legislative organisation**

The hypotheses of the party group discipline model that were derived in Chapter 3 build on the insights of theories of political parties developed in the context of the US Congress. The literature on the US Congress has, however, also derived other explanations for the allocation of resources within legislatures. Keith Krehbiel highlights the role that information plays in the distribution of resources in the legislature. He argues that legislators are uncertain about the relationship between policies and outcomes (Krehbiel 1991:20). Due to the uncertainty that legislatures face about the consequences of different policies upon their enactment, they will empower policy experts with different resources in the legislative decision-making process. Policy experts can specialise at low cost and provide information about the relationship between policies and their consequences (ibid:5). Krehbiel distinguishes between two kinds of information that legislators can provide to the legislature: political information, which ‘refers to what outcomes various political actors want’, and policy information that ‘refers to what policies result in desired outcomes’ (ibid:67). Policy information is also referred to as policy expertise. A legislator who has expertise in a certain policy area is much more likely to receive resources to specialise further in the area and reveal his or her private information to the legislature.

In the European Parliament policy expertise can also be an explanatory factor in why an MEP receives a seat on a certain committee or why an MEP will be appointed as a Rapporteur for a certain policy proposal. The assessment of the level of policy expertise of individual MEPs is a difficult task, especially in quantitative studies. Previous research has used the professional background and previous political experience gained outside the European Parliament as measurements of policy expertise (Bowler and Farrell 1995; Kaeding 2004; McElroy 2006). This research, however, focused only on a few specialised committees. Deriving an accurate policy expertise measure for appointments to all committees and for appointments to important rapporteurships, which is the aim of this study, is close to impossible. Thus, I will refrain from assessing the effects of policy expertise in my empirical analyses. Since the goal of the study is not explain all promotions and demotions in the committee assignment process or all rapporteurship appointments in the European Parliament, the success of the study is not lowered by not taking into account the level of policy expertise of MEPs in the statistical evaluations of party discipline. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe that policy expertise is correlated with voting loyalty and would act as a background variable which unmask a spurious correlation between voting
loyalty and applied sanctions. This is not to say that policy expertise does not play any role in the appointment of committee seats and rapporteurships. Through not taking into account policy expertise as an explanatory variable I will decrease the explained variance of important legislative appointments, but I will not lessen the purpose of this study, which is to identify patterns of party discipline.

The second type of information that is of relevance in the legislative decision-making process is easier to measure. Krehbiel (1991:67) stated that political information can help legislators to make more accurate decisions in the legislative decision-making process. Members who have information about the political outcomes that other members prefer have more success in guiding a proposal through the legislative decision-making process and are therefore more likely to receive important resources and positions in the legislature. Previous research has captured the political experience of MEPs by adding seniority and previous legislative experience as independent variables in the assessment of committee transfers and the allocation of rapporteurships (McElroy 2001; Yoshinaka, McElroy, and Bowler 2006). I will therefore include party group seniority and legislative experience as independent variables in the empirical analyses of the following three chapters. In Chapter 5 I will also test whether previous leadership experience has an effect on the appointment of party group leaders in the EPP-ED and PSE groups. All these measures of political experience can also function as possible background variables that could explain both why MEPs exhibit a high degree of party group voting loyalty and why they receive positive sanctions. With increasing party group seniority MEPs could shift their loyalty focus from their national party to the transnational party group through a socialisation process (Scully 2005). If more senior party group members were also more likely to receive positive sanctions, the correlation between voting loyalty and received sanctions would be spurious if the voting behaviour of party group members were altered through a socialisation process within the party group.

In Chapter 7 I will add three additional independent variables to evaluate the distribution of rapporteurships. I will test whether Committee Chairs and Committee Coordinators are more likely to receive important rapporteurships, and I will control for the number of reports that were available for the party group members on each committee (report availability).

By correlating individual and aggregated voting loyalty towards the party group leadership with the sanctions that MEPs receive at a later point in time, while controlling for other possible explanatory variables, I will try to make an accurate assessment of whether party group discipline exists in the European Parliament. In Section 4.2, I explain the operationalisation of all explanatory variables applied in the statistical models of the following three chapters and present the data sources used for measuring the variables.
4.2 Operationalisation and data sources

*Voting loyalty*

As outlined in Chapter 3 I apply voting loyalty as a measurement to assess the loyalty of MEPs towards their party group leadership and their national party delegation. Party loyalty can also take on many other forms, such as actively working for the formation of a median party group position, accepting less rewarding and less prominent shadow-rapporteurships and draftsmenships in the committee working process, publicly supporting party group positions or simply attending committee and party group working group meetings.\(^{27}\) In the legislative context, however, loyalty is most often measured by the frequency with which a legislator supports the party group (Coker and Crain 1994; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Leighton and Lopez 2002; McElroy 2001). Voting loyalty is one of the most important and public forms of loyalty. It is also probable that voting loyalty correlates with other loyalty behaviour. It was outlined in Chapter 3 that party group voting cohesion is the driving force behind the utility of party group membership. Through its size the party group increases the legislative influence of policy-seeking MEPs. The voting powers of the party groups can, however, be maintained only if the party group votes cohesively. Because voting defections endanger the collective action goal and the purpose of party groups, voting loyalty is one of the most important forms of loyalty. This is why loyalty is conceptualised as voting loyalty in this study.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 stated that the voting loyalty of MEPs and their national party delegations would have an effect on the disciplinary sanctions that the party group leadership applied to their MEPs. Hypothesis 4 stated that voting loyalty towards the national party delegation would determine which legislative sanctions MEPs would receive. In order to assess the voting loyalty of MEPs and their national party delegations, I use voting data registered during roll-call votes taken in the European Parliament. These data were gathered and provided by Simon Hix and his colleagues (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007).

If a roll-call is requested in the European Parliament, the voting of all legislators is registered electronically and is later published in the minutes of the plenary session. A roll-call has to be requested prior to the plenary vote, either by a party group or a group of at least 37 MEPs (EuropeanParliament 2004: Rule160). On average, about a third of all plenary votes are registered

\(^{27}\) Members who write reports on non-legislative dossiers, such as own-initiative reports and resolutions, are called draftsmen. Every party group issues shadow-rapporteurships for each legislative proposal concerning which the party group does not hold the rapporteurship. These shadow-Rapporteurs are less publicly noticeable and do not generate as much political capital for MEPs.
as roll-call votes (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005). Although roll-call studies are frequently used to study the behaviour of legislators and political parties, these studies have recently been criticised (Carrubba et al. 2006; Clinton, Jackman, and Rivers 2004).

The criticism of roll-call studies of the European Parliament is twofold. It takes up the problem of pooling different kinds of votes and the problem of selection bias (Carrubba et al. 2006). First, regarding the pooling problem roll-call studies in the European Parliament frequently fail to distinguish between the different types of procedures. Such distinctions are very important, however. Whereas resolutions, own-initiative reports or the consultation procedure have few policy consequences as they are non-binding, voting under the cooperation, co-decision and budgetary procedures can have a significant policy impact. Carrubba and his collaborators show that roll-call votes of the European Parliament are not a random sample of all votes held, and votes under the most important procedures are strongly underrepresented (Carrubba et al. 2006: 699). Høyland, however, has shown that the pooling of roll-call data does not change the cohesion scores of the party group, as the party groups exhibit the same cohesion scores if only co-decision roll-call votes are used for the assessment of voting cohesion (Høyland 2006a).

The second problem of roll-call analysis in the EP is the problem of selection bias that affects the representativeness of the sample of votes. Roll-call votes are disciplinary measures mostly used by the party leadership in order to achieve voting cohesion (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999:11). Thus, roll-call votes are not exogenous to the phenomena that researchers are studying, for example, party group voting cohesion or voting loyalty (Carrubba et al. 2006: 694).

The abovementioned problems with roll-call data are, however, less problematic for this study. Pooling problems are avoided as the applied loyalty scores are here based on co-decision votes only. Co-decision votes were chosen because they give the European Parliament the greatest impact on European policy outcomes that the MEPs are assumed to care about. The possible selection bias that might be induced through the strategic use of roll-call votes is not problematic for this study. If the party group leadership or national party delegation sanctions its members’ voting behaviour, recorded roll-calls are the most obvious and objective indicator in making such decisions. Even if party group leaders or national party delegations had additional information about voting defections that are not recorded by roll-call, the loyalty scores derived from the roll-call sample underestimate rather than overestimate voting defection, as MEPs are more likely to defect if their voting behaviour is not recorded.

Some studies of the European Parliament rely on NOMINATE scores to assess the voting loyalty of MEPs. The NOMINATE scaling technique was developed by Poole and Rosenthal (1997) for analysing the dimensionality of political space in the US Congress. The method estimates the Cartesian
ideal points of legislators on multiple voting dimensions. Previous research used the distance from these points to the party group means as a measure of voting loyalty (Hausemer 2006; Yoshinaka, McElroy, and Bowler 2006). NOMINATE scores derived from roll-call votes in the European Parliament are valid for assessing the dimensionality of the issue space of the European Parliament, but should not be used for drawing conclusions about the individual voting behaviour of MEPs (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2007:166). Høyland has tested the validity of NOMINATE scores in the European Parliament by comparing NOMINATE scores with estimates from Makrov Chain Monte Carlo simulations. He comes to the conclusion that ‘[t]he uncertainty around the point estimates should caution researchers against the use of ideal points estimated from roll-call votes to distinguish between representatives from within the same party group’ (Høyland 2006a:4).

Other researchers used the frequency with which a member votes with the party leadership to determine the voting loyalty of legislators (Coker and Crain 1994; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Leighton and Lopez 2002; McElroy 2001). In her study of the committee assignment process in the European Parliament, McElroy (2001, 2003) used the voting loyalty index applied by Coker and Crain (1994). This loyalty index measures the frequency between voting support and voting defection and is transformed using a weighted logit technique (Coker and Crain 1994). Although this voting loyalty index is well suited to assessing the individual voting loyalty of MEPs, its application to the European Parliament has a fundamental drawback. It does not allow the researcher to distinguish between the effects of voting loyalty towards the party group leadership and towards the national party delegation. I illustrate this in the following example.

In the first half of the fifth European Parliament (July 1999–December 2001) 631 co-decision votes were covered by roll-calls. One MEP exhibited the voting behaviour presented in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Example of MEP voting behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National party delegation</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Defect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party group leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defect</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>545</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She supported both the party group leadership and the national party delegation in 500 of the 631 votes. In 7 cases she defected from the national party delegation but voted with the party group leadership. In 45 votes she supported the national party delegation and voted against the party group leadership. She rebelled and voted against the party group leadership and the national party delegation in 79 out of the 631 co-decision votes.

Using the Coker and Crain loyalty index, party group loyalty would be calculated as the frequency of the party group supporting votes encircled in Figure 4.1 and the corresponding defections from the party group = 507 / (631–507). The scores would then also be weighted using the logit technique presented above. The problem with using this technique is that it is impossible to distinguish between party group loyalty and loyalty towards the national party delegation. In the above calculation, 500 of the 507 votes that are counted as supporting votes for the party group are also votes in favour of the party group leadership because the national party delegation and the party group leadership agree on the issue. This calculation partly blends the voting loyalty of the national party delegation and the party group leadership, making it impossible for the researcher to distinguish between the two forms of voting loyalty. If only the voting loyalty towards the party group leadership is entered into a statistical model, the researcher might draw erroneous conclusions about the effects of party group voting loyalty since a large part of the effect could equally be associated with voting loyalty towards the national party delegation.

Therefore, I disaggregate the voting behaviour of MEPs into two voting loyalty variables: loyalty PGL and loyalty NPD. I use the voting loyalty measure applied by Cox and McCubbins (1993:170) that measures the frequency with which a legislator supports the party in plenary voting. It allows me to compare the effects of voting loyalty because the loyalty variables share a common denominator. In the voting example presented above, loyalty PGL captures the frequency with which an MEP votes for the party group leadership, divided by the total number of votes (507/631).28 The party group leadership position is identified as the majority position held by the party group leadership, that is, its Chair, Vice-Chairs and Treasurer. Loyalty NPD29 measures how often an MEP votes with the national party delegation.

---

28 I multiply the frequency of all loyalty measures by 100 in order to facilitate the interpretation of the results derived from the statistical analyses. Voting loyalty can then be interpreted in percentages.

29 The voting position of the national party delegation was defined as the majority position of the national party delegation. National party delegations as defined in this study compromise all MEPs within the party group who come from the same country. For example, within the EPP-ED group, Swedish Christian-Democrats (Kristdemokraterna) and Swedish Conservatives (Moderaterna) are collapsed into one national party delegation. This allows me to retain almost all national party delegations in the dataset. National delegations with fewer than three MEPs were not retained in the dataset (EPP-ED: Denmark and Luxembourg; PSE: Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg). This definition also coincides with the internal practise of the party
divided by the total number of votes (45/631). In order to compare the
effects of the different loyalty scores, I do not standardise the scores, but use
the simple frequencies of voting support compared to the total number of
plenary votes. The inclusion of both voting loyalty variables allows me to
assess whether loyalty towards the party group leadership or towards the
national party delegation is more important as regards the likelihood of fac-
ing sanctions in the legislative decision-making process of the European
Parliament.

In Chapter 5, I will also use voting loyalty measures in the assessment of
the party group leadership appointments. Applying the loyalty variables to
study the party group leadership appointment process, I do not use the party
group leadership position as a reference point for comparison, but the major-
ity position of the party group. The whole party group appoints the party
group leadership as its agent, which is why voting loyalty towards the major-
ity group position is more meaningful than voting loyalty towards the party
group leadership. I will therefore refer to loyalty _PGM_ instead of loyalty
_PGL_ in Chapter 5.30

Roll-call votes in the European Parliament are recorded as voting yes, no,
abstaining, being present but not voting and absent in the European Parlia-
ment. For the calculation of the voting loyalty variables of MEPs, I dis-
counted absenteeism. In the example outlined in Figure 4.1, the MEP sup-
ported neither the party group nor the national party delegation in 79 of the
votes. If the MEP was absent during 50 of these votes, I reduced the de-
nominator for coding the loyalty variables from 631 to 631–50 = 581. Thus,
the loyalty variables measure the loyalty of MEPs when they are present in
the European Parliament. The effect of absenteeism is captured by an addi-
tional variable, _participation_, which captures how often an MEP participated
in plenary voting. Participation can be seen as a second, albeit weaker form
of loyalty. The rules of procedure of the Socialist group require, for example,
the active participation of party group members in the party group and com-
mittee meetings and in plenary voting (PSE 2003:Rule4).

Besides the effect of the individual voting loyalty of MEPs, hypothesis 2
predicted that the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation
will affect the likelihood that an MEP will be sanctioned by the party group
leadership. The explanatory variable _delegation loyalty PGL_ measures the

30 The party group leadership position and the majority position of the party group are identi-
cal 98% of the time, but the distinction makes theoretical sense.
frequency with which a majority of the national party delegation members support the party group leadership in plenary voting.

To derive voting loyalty scores for the variables loyalty PGL, loyalty NPD, delegation loyalty PGL and to measure the level of participation, I used all recorded co-decision votes of the fifth Parliament. Co-decision votes were applied because the European Parliament has the greatest policy influence under this procedure. The incentives for punishing voting defections should be greatest under this legislative procedure. For the analysis of the midterm appointment of party group leaders and the midterm committee assignment process I coded the loyalty variables using the 631 roll-called co-decision votes of the first half of the fifth Parliament. In Chapter 7 I shall apply loyalty variables in a panel study of rapporteurship allocation, for which I used all 1352 recorded co-decision roll-call votes.

Preference proximity

The party discipline scenario predicted further that the party group leadership would re-delegate agenda-setting power in the party group position formation process to its committee members. Hypothesis 3 stated that party group leaders would be more likely to appoint members with policy preferences close to the party group median to important committee seats and important rapporteurships. This reduces the risk of agency loss and facilitates the party group position formation process and the maintenance of voting cohesion at a later stage of legislative decision-making. The measurement of MEPs’ policy preferences is based on the policy positions of national parties derived from the party manifesto research project (Budge et al. 2001; Volkens et al. 2007). I use the aggregated left-right policy position because the left-right dimension is the most important political conflict dimension at the national level and in the European Parliament (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair 2006; Hix, Noury, and Roland 2006). About 90% of the voting behaviour in the European Parliament is captured by the left-right dimension (Noury 2002:40). 31 The measurement captures the policy positions exhibited

31 The second dimension, which characterises the voting behaviour of MEPs, relates to policy position of the national parties on EU integration and to government-opposition patterns at the European level. This dimension is, however, less salient, less stable and its importance has decreased over time (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007: 222, 231). In addition to the low salience of the European integration dimension in the European Parliament, it is also unclear what kind of implications the EU integration positions have for the policy-seeking behaviour of MEPs. Therefore, I refrain from adding preference proximity on the European integration dimension as an explanatory variable. The inclusion of preference proximity on different policy dimensions, such as environment or internal market, is meaningful if the distribution of committee seats and rapporteurships is analysed for individual committees, but cannot be taken into account if the analysis is aggregated over all committee in the European Parliament, which is the case in this study.
by MEPs’ national parties in the closest national election. To derive the scores I added up all the policy positions within the party group, weighted them by size of national party delegation and located the party group median policy position. Then I subtracted the policy position of the national party from the party group median to arrive at the policy distance measure preference proximity for each MEP.

Ideally, I would have been able to use the individual left-right policy preferences of MEPs to assess the effect of preference proximity on the appointment of legislative rapporteurships. David Farrell and his colleagues recently conducted two surveys of MEPs that also asked them to indicate their policy position on a left-right scale (Farrell et al. 2006). However, I had to refrain from using these individual preferences since they covered less than 40% of the MEPs included in my dataset, and since the pattern of the missing values was non-random in my dataset (Tabachnick and Fidell 2001: 58-65). Therefore, I used the left-right policy preferences of the national parties to approximate MEPs’ individual policy positions. The assumption that MEPs who come from the same national party share identical policy positions might not be as strong as one would think. I showed in Section 3.4.2 that MEPs are likely to share the policy preferences of their national parties.

I will include preference proximity not only as an independent variable in Chapter 7 to analyse whether it affects the likelihood of MEPs receiving important rapporteurships, but also in the empirical analyses of Chapters 5 and 6. MEPs who hold more extreme policy preferences are more likely to defect from the party group line in plenary voting. Thus, I have to include preference proximity as an independent variable to control for possible spurious correlations between voting loyalty and leadership appointments, as well as sanctions in the committee assignment and rapporteurship allocation process.

In order to test for the effects of political experience, I presented three independent variables in Section 4.1. Party group seniority captures the length of party group membership in years. The variable was derived from a data set on party group membership covering the time period from the first to the fifth European Parliaments, which I received from two administrators of the European Parliament.32 The variable leadership experience was derived from the same dataset and measures how often an MEP held the position of President of the European Parliament, Party Group Chair, Vice-Chair or Committee Chair between 1979 and 1999.

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32 I would like to thank Michel Loreng and Guy Backaert from the European Parliament who derived a dataset on the committee assignments, party group membership and report allocation in the European Parliament by running a query on the original databases that feed the homepage of the Parliament and are used as a source for all official publications.
Table 4.1 *Coding of dependent and explanatory variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive leadership</td>
<td>0 = Backbenchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Party Group Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad leadership</td>
<td>0 = Backbenchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Group Chair &amp; Vice-Chair, President &amp; Vice-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President EP, Committee Chair &amp; Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee sanctions</td>
<td>1 = Promotion in the committee assignment process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 = No committee transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>−1 = Demotion in the committee assignment process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapporteur sanctions</td>
<td>0 = No co-decision report received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Received a co-decision report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGL</td>
<td>Measures how often an MEP has supported the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>party group leadership in plenary voting (0–100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD</td>
<td>Measures how often an MEP supported the national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>party delegation in plenary voting (0–100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Measures how often an MEP participated in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plenary voting (0–100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation loyalty PGL</td>
<td>Measures how often the majority of a national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>party delegation supported the party group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leadership in plenary voting (0–100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>Measures the distance between the policy position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the national party of the MEP and the party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group median on the left-right dimension (0–37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>Number of years of party group membership (0–23.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>Number of co-decision reports received in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fourth European Parliament (1994–1999) (0–9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>Number of times an MEP held leadership offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in a previous European Parliament (1979–1999),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i.e. position as Committee Chair, EP President,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group Chair or Vice Chair (0–3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Chair</td>
<td>0 = Not a Committee Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Committee Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Coordinator</td>
<td>0 = Not a Committee Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Committee Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report availability</td>
<td>Number of available reports on the committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dummy variable *Committee Chair*, which is used as a control variable in Chapter 7, measures whether a party group member held the position of Committee Chair. The information was gathered from the data set provided by Bjørn Høyland, who together with colleagues has established an
online database that allows researchers to run queries on various kinds of information about MEPs (Høyland, Sircar, and Hix 2007). Committee Coordinator is a dummy variable and measures whether a party group member held the position of Committee Coordinator on a parliamentary committee. The data were gathered from consecutive membership guides of the EPP-ED and PSE groups (EPP-ED 1999a; PSE 1999). The independent variable legislative experience measures how many rapporteurships for co-decision reports an MEP received in the fourth parliamentary term (1994–1999). The information is also taken from the database provided to me by the two administrators of the European Parliament. Table 4.1 summarises the coding and content of the variables, which will be applied in the later empirical analyses. The next section briefly presents additional data sources that will be applied in the empirical chapters.

Other data sources

I conducted eleven interviews in the European Parliament in Brussels during March and June 2005. The interviews were carried out at an early stage of the research project and were semi-structured, exploratory interviews. My interviewees were Party Group Vice-Chairs, National Party Delegation Leaders and high-ranking Party Group Officials from different party groups. I followed up one interview (no. 11) through email correspondence and requested information from a high ranking party group via email. Since I asked my interviewees sensitive questions about party group internal procedures and party group disciplinary mechanisms, confidentiality was guaranteed to all participants. The dates and the positions held by the interviewees are presented in Table 4.2. I will use quotes from the interviews in my empirical chapters to outline details of the committee assignment and rapporteurship allocation process and office appointments in the European Parliament in general.

Besides the data material collected for the statistical analyses and the interview evidence, I will use the party group internal rules of procedure of the EPP-ED and PSE groups in Chapter 5 to describe the internal hierarchy and the decision-making process within the two party groups. In Chapter 7 I will use a study carried out by the Secretariat of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) of the European Parliament to demonstrate how reports are distributed in the standing committees of the European Parliament.

33 The online queries will be available at: http://folk.uio.no/bjornkho/ in the near future.
Table 4.2 *Interviews conducted in the European Parliament, Brussels, March to June 2005*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview number</th>
<th>Position of interviewee</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Former MEP: Leader of National Party Delegation, Committee Chair and Party Group Vice-Chair (EPP-ED)</td>
<td>29.04.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Party group Vice-Chair (PSE)</td>
<td>25.05.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>National Party Delegation Leader (ALDE)</td>
<td>25.05.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>National Party Delegation (PSE)</td>
<td>25.05.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Party Group Official (PSE)</td>
<td>26.05.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Party Group Vice-Chair (EPP-ED)</td>
<td>31.05.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Head of Unit, EP Committee Secretariat</td>
<td>31.05.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Two Party Group Officials (EPP-ED)</td>
<td>02.06.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Party Group Official (GUE/NGL)</td>
<td>15.06.2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Party Group Vice-Chair (ALDE)</td>
<td>16.06.2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>National Party Delegation Leader (PSE)</td>
<td>16.06.2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email correspondence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Party group official (EPP-ED)</td>
<td>15.06.2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>National Party Delegation Leader (PSE); follow up on interview 11</td>
<td>28.06.2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. The Party Group Leadership

Although the party group leadership plays a pivotal role in many theories of party politics that are applied to the European Parliament, very little is known about the composition, appointment, competences, and control of the party group leaderships. The purpose of this chapter is therefore twofold. First, through a descriptive analysis of the party group internal rules of procedure the chapter furthers the understanding of the structure and power distribution within the party groups. Secondly, the chapter serves as a first test of the two party disciplinary scenarios; if I find that the party group leadership has advanced to become a significant and powerful actor within the party group, and if the party groups apply ex ante and ex post control mechanisms to avoid agency loss in the delegation of power to their leadership, the party group disciplinary scenario is more likely to apply to the European Parliament than the national party discipline scenario.

The first section of this chapter describes the leadership structure and decision-making process within the EPP-ED and PSE groups. I show that the both party groups operate according to a double leadership structure, employing an executive and a broad party group leadership, both of which play a central role in the party group’s internal decision-making process. Section 5.2 describes how the party group leadership offices are distributed within the EPP-ED and PSE groups, and demonstrates that almost all leadership positions are distributed proportionally between the national delegations. Section 5.3 analyses whether the ex ante control mechanism derived from the principal-agent approach in Chapter 3 influences the party group leadership appointment process. I analyse the appointment of the executive and broad leadership for the EPP-ED and PSE party groups at the beginning and at the mid-point of the fifth parliamentary term. Using multivariate statistical models, I test for the influence of preference proximity, voting loyalty, and political experience in the appointment process. Section 5.4 takes a closer look at the application of ex ante control mechanisms vis-à-vis the party group leaderships of the EPP-ED and PSE groups. I analyse how many party group leaders left their leadership office prematurely and why. Section 5.5 concludes the chapter with a short summary of the results.
5.1 Leadership structure and competences

Studying how the institutional evolution of the European Parliament has affected its internal structure and its party groups, Amie Kreppel analysed the development of the internal rules of procedure of the EPP-ED and PSE groups between 1979 and 1996. She states that the party group internal rules of procedure remained remarkably stable over time and that the basic organisational structure of the two party groups differed (Kreppel 2002: 195); the EPP-ED group employed a double leadership structure, which consisted of a Bureau and a Presidency, while the PSE leadership consisted only of a Bureau. Whilst this organisational difference still exists, the following analysis of the party group leadership structures in the EPP-ED and PSE groups reveals that de facto both party groups employ a similar leadership system. Looking beyond organisational structure, analysis of the decision-making process in both party groups reveals that each involves a small executive leadership and a broader leadership in the preparation of party group positions.

The EPP-ED group

The 1999 version of the internal rules of procedure identify four organs of the party group: the Plenary Assembly, the Bureau, and the Presidency and the Conference of the Group Presidency and Heads of National Delegations, (EPP-ED 1999:Rule8). The Plenary Assembly consists of all party group members and is the main decision-making body; it takes decisions on all political matters dealt with inside and outside the European Parliament (Rule 9). A quorum exists when at least half the members are present and decisions are made by simple majority (Rules 20, 21). Due to the majority voting requirement at meetings of the Plenary Assembly, the EPP-ED group faces social choice and coordination problems in its group position formation process.

From an organisational point of view the party group leadership of the EPP-ED group consists of three bodies: (i) the Presidency, which consists of a Group Chair, a maximum of eight Vice-Chairs and a Treasurer (Rule 13); (ii) the Bureau, which includes the members of the Group Presidency, the Leaders of the national delegations34 and an additional member for every tenth delegation member, as well as the President or Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament, Chairs of committees or interparliamentary delegations, former Presidents of Parliament and the Chairs of party group internal working groups (Rule 10); and (iii) the Conference of the Group Presidency and Heads of Na-

34 In both the EPP-ED and PSE groups all party group members from the same member state are grouped into national delegations. The rules of procedure of both groups do not distinguish between national party delegations from a member state, but aggregate them, for example, the Swedish Moderate Party delegation and the Swedish Christian-Democratic delegation are counted as one national delegation within the EPP-ED group.
The Presidency consists of the Chairman a maximum of 8 Vice-Chairs and a Treasurer

**Decision-making competences:**
1. Convening and presiding over Plenary Assembly and Bureau meetings
2. Leading the Group in parliamentary plenary sittings
3. Informing the Group on strategic and political decisions it has taken at its meetings
4. Taking decisions in urgent cases instead of the competent body
5. Functioning as Chairmen of the party group working groups

The Bureau consists of: Group Presidency, National Delegation Leaders, plus one member for every tenth delegation member, President and Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament, Committee and Interparliamentary Delegation Chairs, Former Presidents of Parliament, and since 2004: Committee Coordinators

**Decision-making competences:**
1. Prepare the Group's decisions on political matters and monitor their implementation

Conference of the Group Presidency and Heads of National Delegations consists of the Group Presidency and the Heads of the National Delegations

**Decision-making competences:**
1. Discuss key guidelines and to prepare decisions of major importance for the political strategy of the Group

German MEP Hans-Gert Pöttering was the Chair of the EPP-ED group for the whole fifth parliamentary term (1999–2004). The Presidency consisted further of a Treasurer and six Vice-Chairs. The Presidency’s main competence in the party group position formation process is its power to convene and preside over the meetings of the Plenary Assembly and the Bureau. National party delegations or one-third of the party group members can, however, demand that the Presidency convene a Plenary Assembly meeting (Rule 16). The agenda of Plenary Assembly meetings has to be adopted by majority vote of the present members (Rule 20). Although the EPP-ED rules of procedure are not specific, it appears that the Presidency controls the agenda of Plenary Assembly meetings. Due to its prominent position in the party group position
formación process, I will refer to the Presidency as the executive party group leadership of the EPP-ED group.

Beyond setting the agenda at Plenary Assembly meetings, the Presidency can also influence the party group position formation process more indirectly, through its chairing of working groups. Party group internal working groups are established by the Plenary Assembly in order to prepare group deliberations more effectively (Rule 18). Through its participation in Bureau meetings and meetings of the Conference of the Group Presidency and Heads of National Delegations the Presidency can also influence the party group position formation process. The purpose of the Bureau is to prepare political decisions and monitor their implementation (Rule 11). At the beginning of the fifth legislative term the EPP-ED Bureau had 52 members. Together with the 15 National Delegation Leaders, the Group Presidency discusses guidelines and prepares decisions of major importance for the group (Rule 12). Thus, the informal agenda-setting power and the shaping of focal points for deliberations in the party group position formation process is shared by a broad party group leadership, which includes all Bureau members, that is the Presidency, the Heads of National Delegations and all other Bureau members.

Descriptive analysis of the party group internal rules of procedure has shown that the EPP-ED has established three leadership organs, the Presidency, the Bureau and the Conference of the Presidency and the Heads of National Delegations. Looking at the powers of the different leadership organs in the internal decision-making process, however, it might be said that the EPP-ED group has two kinds of leadership. The Presidency forms the executive party group leadership, which has agenda-setting powers in Plenary Assembly meetings and can thereby help the party group to solve problems of cycling majorities and agenda manipulation. The informal agenda setting that structures the debate within the party group and creates focal points for the party group decision-making process is held by a broader party group leadership, which includes all members of the Bureau.

The Socialist party group

The leadership of the Socialist party group formally only consists of the executive party group leadership, which is called the Bureau. The Bureau includes the Chairs, Vice-Chairs, a Treasurer and regular members. The rules of procedure state that each national delegation shall be represented by one Vice-Chair and that each national delegation with at least 11 members shall be entitled to two representatives in the Bureau, with no voting rights (PSE 1994:Rule14). The gender balance within the Bureau may not fall below 40/60 on either side (Rule 10a). At the beginning of the fifth parliamentary term, one member of every national delegation of the PSE group held a position as either Vice-Chair or Treasurer in the Bureau. The Spanish MEP Enrique Barón Crespo held the position of Group Chair for the whole legislative term. Besides the
Chair, the Treasurer and the 14 Vice-Chairs, the Bureau had only six additional members without voting rights.

Figure 5.2 *Structure and decision-making competences of the Socialist leadership*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Bureau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consists of the Chairman, one Vice-Chair for each delegation, a Treasurer and regular members without voting rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Decision-making competences:**
1.) Coordinating all party group activities (Chair)
2.) Drafting the agenda for Group meetings (Chair)
3.) Presidenting Group meetings (Chair)
4.) Coordinating different Community policies areas (Vice-Chairs)
5.) Considering matters referred to it for decision or for preparing a proposal for the group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad party group leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consists of the Bureau and the National Delegation Leaders, Committee Coordinators, Committee Chairs, Vice-Presidents and the President of the Parliament</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Decision-making competences:**
1.) Being involved in Bureau meetings for all items relevant to their areas of responsibility
2.) Working closely together with Vice-Chairmen of the Group in policy coordination

As in the EPP-ED, in the PSE group the party group as a whole is the highest political authority. The Plenary Assembly of the PSE is simply called ‘the Group’; the Group adopts a position for each text voted on in plenary sessions of the Parliament (PSE 2003:Rule17). A quorum exists when more than one-third of the members are present and decisions are made by simple majority (PSE 1994:Rules 31–32). Thus, the PSE faces the same majority voting problems at its group meetings as the EPP-ED Plenary Assembly.

The Chair of the PSE group coordinates all party group activities and drafts the agenda for caucus meetings (PSE 1994:Rules 16,21). The agenda has to be adopted at the Group meetings. At group meetings, the Chair further defines the closing time of debates and may ask for an immediate decision (Rule 27.4). The Chair also gives the final ruling on the order of amendments (Rule 33.3). The rules of procedure state further that it is the responsibility of the Bureau to ‘prepare group meetings and consider matters referred to it by the Group for decision or preliminary examination and to draw up proposals to be submitted to the Group’ (Rule 15). Thus, the Bureau of the PSE group has agenda-setting power at Group meetings and can help the party group members to avoid cycling majorities and manipulated agendas. Thus, the PSE Bureau fulfils the same functions as the EPP-ED Presidency and is therefore also identified as the executive party group leadership of the PSE group.

Although the Socialist rules of procedure do not provide for a second leadership organ, I would assert that a broad party group leadership can also be identified within the PSE group. The 1994 version of the rules of procedure
stipulates that Committee Coordinators shall also be involved in all Bureau meetings in their area of responsibility and that the Bureau shall be regularly informed about the committee business (PSE 1994: Rule 35). In 2003 the Socialist party group revised its rules of procedure, streamlining the Bureau structure and extending the consultations that the Bureau needs to conduct with other important party group members. The non-voting membership of the Bureau was abolished and it was reduced to the Group Chair, the Treasurer and seven Vice-Chairs. One Vice-Chair acts as a parliamentary secretary, another as party group spokesperson and the remaining five Vice-Chairs preside over the five internal working groups of the PSE group to coordinate the party group internal policy making process (Rule 31). The new rules also include a provision that forces the Bureau to cooperate with other prominent party group members; Rule 33 prescribes that the Bureau work closely together with National Delegation Leaders, Committee Coordinators, Committee Chairs and the Vice-Presidents and President of the European Parliament in their area of expertise. Thus, the informal agenda-setting power and the shaping of focal points is also more widely dispersed in the Socialist party group. Due to their participation in the party group position formation process, these actors together make up the broad party leadership.

Several actors included in the broad party group leadership of the EPP-ED and PSE groups are also important actors in the parliamentary decision-making process. Besides a variety of representative functions that the President has to fulfil externally, the President presides over the plenary meetings of the Parliament. The President’s procedural powers in the plenary are wide-ranging and include: the power to open, suspend and close sittings, rule on the admissibility of amendments, change the voting order of texts, call upon speakers and close debates (EuropeanParliament 2004: Rule 19). The 14 Vice-Presidents of the Parliament divide amongst themselves a multitude of tasks such as relations with national parliaments, budget, enlargement, organisation of question time, internal reform and other issues of a more administrative nature (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2000: 97). Three Vice-Presidents are appointed as permanent members to the parliamentary conciliation committee delegation. The conciliation committee is convened if the European Parliament and the Council cannot come to an agreement after the second reading of the co-decision procedure (König et al. 2007).

Together, the President and the Vice-Presidents form the Bureau of the European Parliament, which is one of the main parliamentary leadership bodies. Amongst other things, the Bureau draws up the preliminary draft estimates in the budgetary process, lays down rules for implementation of the regulations governing political parties at European level and authorises committee meetings outside the Parliament (EuropeanParliament 2004: Rule 22). The President also presides over the political leadership body of the European Parliament, the Conference of Presidents, which consists of the President and the Party Group Chairs. The Conference of Presidents drafts the agenda for the plenary sittings,
decides on the jurisdictional competences of committees and the allocation of legislative dossiers to committees and allows committee to draw up non-legislative own-initiative reports (ibid.:Rule 24).

Committee Chairs and Coordinators are influential actors in the parliamentary committees, where all legislative reports are discussed and voting recommendations for the plenary sittings are prepared. Committee Chairs have a prominent position on the committees. They convene and preside over committee meetings (European Parliament 2004:Rule 183.1) and propose the procedure for the adoption of legislative reports in the committee (Rule 42, 43). Through the Conference of Committee Chairs they mediate in cases of jurisdictional conflicts between committees (Rule 179.2) and make proposals to the Conference of Presidents on how to resolve those conflicts. The Conference of Committee Chairs also makes proposals for the plenary agenda to the Conference of Presidents (Rule 26). Chairs can speak on their committee’s behalf in the plenary (Rule 143.4). Committee Chairs are asked by the President to represent the Parliament in Council meetings (Rule 38).

The position of Committee Coordinator is not an official committee position and it is not mentioned in the rules of procedure of the European Parliament. Their position is nevertheless central for the decision-making process in the committee and within the party group. In fifth parliamentary term the EPP-ED Committee Coordinators are nominated at caucus meetings (EPP-ED 1999:Rule9), whereas the Committee Coordinators of the PSE group are elected in decentralised fashion by the Socialist members of the committees (PSE 2003: Rule 39). Rule 39 of the Socialist party group’s rules of procedure states further that,

The coordinators elected in the parliamentary committees shall exercise specific responsibility with regard to the coordination of the activities, viewpoints and duties of the socialist members in the committee in question. … The coordinators shall be responsible for coordinating the activities of the members of their committee, for overseeing the allocation of reports and for proposing to the Group the list of speakers for the plenary session.

This confirms that Committee Coordinators are central figures in the legislative decision-making process of the parliamentary committee. Interview evidence from earlier research corroborates the prominent position of Committee Coordinators in the European Parliament (Whitaker 2001).

Thus, members of the broad party group leadership play an important role not only in the party group internal decision-making process, but also in the general legislative decision-making process of the European Parliament. This increases the need for the party groups to control also whom they appoint to these powerful positions.

35 The Conference of Committee Chairs brings together the Chairs of all standing and temporary committees in the European Parliament (European Parliament 2004:Rule 26).
Summary

From the analysis of the internal rules of procedure of the EPP-ED and PSE groups, I conclude that both party groups delegate agenda-setting power to their executive party group leadership in order to solve the social choice problems of majority decision-making at party group meetings. The executive party group leadership, however, has to share its powers to coordinate the party group formation process with a broader party group leadership, which involves Committee Chairs and Coordinators, the Vice-presidents and the President of the European Parliament, as well as the Heads of National Delegations. The fact that both party groups have delegated agenda-setting power to their executive party group leadership supports the notion of the party group discipline scenario that the party group leadership plays an active and important role in the formation of party group positions. The delegation of agenda-setting power to the executive party group leadership circumvents social choice problems, but also inherits a potential for agency loss. If the party group leaders use their agenda-setting power to further their own policy preferences, the gained benefits from delegation might be reduced or even lost. In Section 5.3 I will therefore test whether the EPP-ED and PSE party group members control the appointment process of their party group leadership to avoid adverse selection. Section 5.2 will first show how executive and broad leadership positions are generally distributed in the European Parliament, before I turn to the statistical analysis of party group leadership appointments.

5.2 Distributing leadership positions

At the beginning and midterm of each parliamentary term positions are distributed in the European Parliament. The allocated offices can be divided into two groups: official positions of the Parliament and internal party group offices. Parliamentary offices include the President of the Parliament and its 14 Vice-Presidents, as well as positions on committees and interparliamentary delegations36 (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2000:94). The official parliamentary positions on committees and interparliamentary delegations are Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs, regular seats and substitutes. In the fifth legislative term, the European Parliament had 20 committees and 27 interparliamentary delegations (Corbett et al.:116, 132-33). The rules of procedure of the European Parliament stipulate that committee seats (Rule 177), seats on interparliamentary delegations (Rule 188) and the positions of President and Vice-President are to

36 Interparliamentary delegations exist in the European Parliament ‘to ensure a continuous dialogue and a network with parliamentary bodies in third countries or in regional organisations’ (Corbett et al. 2000:134). Their direct policy influence is minimal.
be distributed proportionally according to party group size (European Parliament 2004). The candidates are nominated by the party groups and are adopted under closed rule by the parliamentary plenary. The Committee and Delegation Chairs and Vice-Chairs are formally elected from amongst and by committee and delegation members at the constituent meeting under Rule (182). It is, however, common knowledge that these offices are also informally distributed according to party group proportionality (Corbett et al. 108–11, 13).

Party group internal offices include the Group Presidency, that is, Chair, Vice-Chairs and Treasurer, as well as the Committee Coordinators and Working Group Chairs. The Working Group Chairs of the EPP-ED and PSE groups are occupied by the Vice-Chairs of the party group. So far, I have shown that the party groups not only decide on the allocation of offices within the party group, but are also involved in the distribution of official positions of the European Parliament. This leads to the question of how the party groups decide to allocate leadership positions within their party group.

The EPP-ED rules of procedure lay down only that the Plenary Assembly elects the Group Presidency and Committee Coordinators, and that any vacant position other than committee or interparliamentary delegation seat is to be allotted by the Plenary Assembly (EPP-ED 1999: Rule9). From this rule it can be deduced that all positions except for committee and interparliamentary delegation seats have to be approved by the Plenary Assembly. From the rules of procedure it is unclear whether the Group Presidency, the Bureau or other actors prepare the proposal for appointments to these positions. But interview evidence suggests that the distribution of all offices is discussed and prepared in meetings of the Group Presidency with National Delegation Leaders, which can last several days.37

The PSE rules of procedure are somewhat clearer about the party group internal office appointment process. Rule 13 states that the Plenary Assembly shall nominate all positions mentioned in the parliamentary rules of procedure, and that the Bureau shall make recommendations to the group (PSE 1994). Rule 13 stipulates further that the Presidency shall ensure a fair representation of national delegations and a balanced representation of men and women in all office appointments. The Presidency itself is also elected by the party group assembly, by secret ballot (Rules 8–10). The only position that is not formally elected by the Group is that of the Committee Coordinator. They are chosen in decentralised fashion amongst the Socialist members of each committee (Rule 35). In order to ensure the balanced representation of national delegations in the office appointment process, the PSE group has developed a points system on the basis of which it distributes important positions (see Table 5.1).

37 Interviews 1, 4 and 5.
Table 5.1 *Office appointment points system in the Socialist party group*\(^{38}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parliament</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of the EP</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President of the EP</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaestor of the EP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party group</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair of the PSE group</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Chair of the PSE group</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committees</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Chair</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Vice-Chair</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full committee position</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitute committee position</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Delegations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation Chair</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation Vice-Chair</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full delegation member</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitute delegation member</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Coordinators</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The positions requiring the most points are all influential in the legislative decision-making process and belong to the broad party group leadership: the President of the Parliament (6), the Vice-Presidents (5), Group Chair (6) and Vice-Chairs (5) and Committee Chairs (5). All party group members in these positions can significantly influence the formation of the party group position.

Positions with less legislative influence are distributed on the basis of fewer points: Quaestors (4)\(^{39}\) Interparliamentary Delegation Chairs (3) and Vice-Chairs (1) and Committee Vice-Chairs (1). Although previous studies have attributed great legislative influence to Committee Coordinators (Whitaker 2001), these positions are not part of the office distribution points system, due to the decentralised nature of appointments. According to the PSE group’s

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\(^{38}\) The point distribution system of the PSE group was obtained through email correspondence from a national party delegation leaders (email correspondence 2).

\(^{39}\) Quaestors manage MEPs’ administrative and financial matters, such as office equipment, allowances and use of vehicles (Corbett et al. 2000:103). Their position is not relevant from a policy-making point of view.
rules of procedure and the internal points distribution system, party group leadership offices in the PSE should be proportionally allocated between the national delegations and display an equal gender balance (PSE 1994; PSE 2003).

With regard to gender representation, the goal can be said to have been reached in the fifth legislative term. Of all the broadly defined party group leadership offices, including the Group Presidency, Parliamentary Presidency, Committee Chairs and Coordinators, 40% were allocated to female party group members between July 1999 and June 2004. In the same period, 37% of Socialist party group members were female, although if non-voting positions are discounted, the percentage falls to 20%, since 4 of the 6 non-voting party group leadership positions were allocated to female MEPs.

The allocation of these leadership offices according to national delegation size, however, departs from a strict rule of proportionality. Table 5.2 weights the broad party group leadership appointments in 1999 according to the points distribution system displayed in Table 5.1. The Committee Coordinators are not included in the calculation of the total leadership offices because their position is allocated decentralised amongst the Socialist committee members.

In the PSE group the percentage difference between the size of the national delegation and the received percentage of offices varies from –9 to 4.3 percentage points (see last but one column in Table 5.2). It is interesting to note that the two largest national delegations, the British and the German, are the most underrepresented in the broad party group leadership office allocation. Nevertheless, these two delegations together held over 70% of all Committee Coordinator positions in 1999. Of the remaining five Committee Coordinators, three were held by Spain, the next biggest national delegation, one by Luxembourg and one by Denmark. This supports the conclusion that Committee Coordinators are important positions in the European Parliament. Of the Socialist Committee Coordinators 88% came from the three biggest national delegations and the large proportion of German and British Committee Coordinators could be seen as a payoff for German and British underrepresentation in the other party group leadership offices. Thus, although Committee Coordinators were not included in the proportional points system of office distribution in the PSE, the nomination of Committee Coordinators might still be informally linked to the distributional points system of party group leadership appointments.
Table 5.2 PSE leadership appointments (1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Delegation</th>
<th>National Delegation Size</th>
<th>Party Group Presidency</th>
<th>Parliament Leadership</th>
<th>Committee Chair</th>
<th>Committee Vice-Chair</th>
<th>Delegation Chair</th>
<th>Total Leadership Offices</th>
<th>Percentage Difference Size &amp; Office</th>
<th>Committee Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>7 (3.9%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.5%)</td>
<td>−0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>5 (2.8%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.5%)</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>3 (1.7%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.5%)</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3 (1.7%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.5%)</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>22 (12.2%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (9.3%)</td>
<td>−2.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>33 (18.3%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (9.3%)</td>
<td>−9.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>9 (5.0%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.5%)</td>
<td>−1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1 (0.6%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.5%)</td>
<td>+2.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>17 (9.4%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17 (9.9%)</td>
<td>+0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2 (1.1%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9 (5.2%)</td>
<td>+4.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>6 (3.3%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9 (5.2%)</td>
<td>+1.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>12 (6.7%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14 (8.1%)</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>24 (13.3%)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26 (15.1%)</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>6 (3.3%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13 (7.6%)</td>
<td>+4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>30 (18.3%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16 (9.5%)</td>
<td>−8.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton (2000); Høyland, Sircar, and Hix (2007); PSE 1999.

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40 Does not include party group leaders without voting rights.
41 Does not include Committee Coordinators.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Delegation</th>
<th>National Delegation Size</th>
<th>Party Group Presidency</th>
<th>Parliament Leadership</th>
<th>Committee Chair</th>
<th>Committee Vice-Chair</th>
<th>Delegation Chair</th>
<th>Total Leadership Offices</th>
<th>Percentage Difference Size &amp; Office</th>
<th>Committee Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>7 (3.0%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (3.2%)</td>
<td>+0.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>6 (2.6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (1.9%)</td>
<td>–0.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>–0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>5 (2.1%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (3.2%)</td>
<td>+1.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>21 (9.0%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14 (8.9%)</td>
<td>–0.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>53 (22.8%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37 (23.4%)</td>
<td>+0.6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>9 (3.8%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (3.2%)</td>
<td>–0.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>5 (2.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (2.5%)</td>
<td>+0.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>34 (14.6%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23 (14.6%)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2 (0.9%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>–0.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>9 (3.8%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.8%)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>9 (3.8%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (3.8%)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>28 (12.1%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26 (16.5%)</td>
<td>+4.4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>7 (3.0%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>–3.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>37 (15.9%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24 (15.2%)</td>
<td>–0.7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton (2000); Høyland, Sircar, and Hix (2007); EPP-ED 1999a.

Does not include the Committee Coordinators.
In the EPP-ED group gender representation works almost equally well, although the rules of procedure do not lay down any gender equality measures. Between 1999 and 2004, the EPP-ED group had a female share of 28%, and of all broadly defined party group leadership positions 25% were allocated to women. If the PSE point distribution system were applied to the party group leadership appointment process in the EPP-ED group, the results suggest a higher degree of proportionality between national delegation size and received percentage of leadership offices (see last but one column in Table 5.3). The Swedish delegation is the most underrepresented delegation with –3 percentage point difference between delegation size and office share. The Spanish delegation is the most overrepresented with +4.4 percentage points. With regard to Committee Coordinator, the situation is the same as in the PSE group. The British, German and Spanish delegations control 66% of all Committee Coordinator positions.

The results show that party group leadership offices in the EPP-ED and PSE groups are distributed according to a gender balance and a broad, albeit somewhat flexible, norm of proportionality. The question that arises is whether the appointment of party group leaders within the EPP-ED and PSE groups is distributed purely on a proportional basis between national delegations, or whether other factors derived from the principal-agent approach have an additional effect on the appointment process, which will be investigated in the following section.

5.3 Appointing party group leaders

In Chapter 3 I stated that the control of the party group leadership can be seen as a first test of the two disciplinary scenarios. If the party group members delegate significant power to their party group leaders and control their appointment, it might be a first indication that the party group leadership scenario is more likely to apply in the European Parliament. The descriptive analysis of the party group internal rules of procedure in Section 5.1 revealed that the executive party group leadership has agenda-setting powers at plenary meetings that can lead to potential agency loss for the party group as a whole. Even if the party group leadership re-delegates the power to formulate the party group position to its committee members for practical reasons, it could still use its agenda setting at group meetings to further its favoured policy position. Thus, both EPP-ED and PSE party group members have incentives to control the appointment of their executive party group leadership.

The party groups also have an incentive to control the appointment of their broad party group leadership because these actors work closely together with the executive party group leaders in shaping the policy positions of the
party group. I further showed in Section 5.1 that the members of the broad party group leadership occupy offices that give them a prominent position in the legislative decision-making process of the European Parliament. I will therefore analyse both the appointment of the executive and the broad party group leadership in the EPP-ED and PSE groups.

In the broad EPP-ED party group leadership I include the Group Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Treasurer, Committee Chairs and Coordinators, President and Vice-Presidents of the Parliament. Although the Heads of the national party delegations are formally included in the broad party group leadership, they are excluded here, as they are not appointed by the party group as a whole, but through their respective national delegations. In the broad party group leadership of the PSE group I include the same actors, except for the Committee Coordinators, as they are not elected centrally in the PSE group.

5.3.1 Leadership appointments at the beginning of the term

This section analyses party group leadership appointments within the EPP-ED and PSE groups at the beginning of the fifth legislative term. Since the party group members do not have an established voting record at the beginning of the legislative period, I can test only how preference proximity affects the odds of being appointed as party group leader. Preference proximity measures the distance of MEPs’ national party from the party group median position on the left-right dimension. As additional explanatory variables I add variables that measure the political experience that party group members have gained as MEPs; party group seniority is a general measure of the political experience of MEPs. Legislative experience captures the amount of co-decision rapporteurships that a party group member held in the previous parliamentary term. Leadership experience accounts for how many times a party group member has served as Party Group Chair or Vice-Chair, Committee Chair or President of the Parliament.

The outcome of the dependent variable is binary: being appointed as party group leader vs not being appointed as party group leader. Therefore, I apply binary logistic regression models for the evaluation of the hypotheses (Long 1997). The b coefficients displayed in the results of the statistical analyses are raw coefficients, displaying log odds of being elected as party group leadership vs not being elected as party group leader. The associated standard errors, which are shown in parentheses, are computed as robust standard errors in order to avoid problems of heteroscedasticity. I tested the models against influence from high-leverage points by using Cook’s distance dbeta scores (Long and Freese 2003:128).

Since log odds have little substantive meaning, I am using the exponential of the b coefficient, the odds, to interpret the effects of the explanatory variables (Long and Freese 2003:145). Table 5.4 presents the association be-
The relationship between the more commonly known concept of probability and odds and log odds.

### Table 5.4 Comparing probabilities, odds and log odds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability</th>
<th>Odds</th>
<th>Log odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>–2.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>9.000</td>
<td>2.197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Jaccard 2001:10).

Odds can be expressed in terms of probability:

\[
\text{Odds (event)} = \frac{\text{probability}}{1-\text{probability}}
\]

Probabilities range from 0 to 1, odds from 0 to infinity and the log odds from negative infinity to infinity. A probability of 0.5 characterises the equal likelihood of occurrence or non-occurrence of an event. For probabilities lower than 0.5 and odds lower than 1, events are less likely to occur and for probabilities larger than 0.5 and odds larger than 1, events are more likely to occur (Jaccard 2001).

The odds ratios presented in the statistical results display the odds of being appointed as party group leader vs the odds of not being appointed as party group leader, at a one unit increase of the explanatory variable, ceteris paribus. An odds ratio of 1 denotes that the explanatory variable does not have an effect on the odds of being appointed as party group leader, holding all other variables constant. An odds ratio smaller than 1 means that a one unit increase in the explanatory variable decreases the odds of being appointed as party group leader, ceteris paribus. An odds ratio larger than 1 increases the odds of being appointed as party group leader at a one unit increase of the independent variable, holding the other variables constant.

---

43 Let me illustrate the relationship between odds and odds ratios, using an example. Assume that 55% of all men like to drink beer while watching a soccer game, but only 35% of all women like to do so. If you walk into a pub on Wednesday night during a Champions League game the odds that the first man you see sitting in the pub is drinking beer are: 0.55/0.45 = 1.22; the odds that the first women you see will be drinking beer are 0.35/0.65 = 0.54. Thus, the odds that the first person you meet in the pub will be drinking beer increase by 22% if that person is male and decrease by 46% if she is female. The male to female odds ratio is 1.22/0.54 = 2.25. Thus, the odds of drinking beer while watching a Champions League game are 2.25 higher for men than for women. Or in other words, being male vs female increases the odds of consuming a beer while watching soccer by 125%.
**EPP-ED appointments**

The result of the executive party group leadership appointments in the EPP-ED group at the beginning of the fifth parliamentary term is displayed in Table 5.5. *Preference proximity* to the party group median position does not seem to play a role in the appointment of the executive party group leaders of the EPP-ED group at the beginning of the fifth parliamentary term; the effect fails to achieve any conventional level of statistical significance.

Table 5.5 *EPP-ED executive party group leadership appointments (1999)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>–0.010 (0.031)</td>
<td>0.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>–0.022 (0.111)</td>
<td>0.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>2.224*** (0.826)</td>
<td>9.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.049 (0.231)</td>
<td>1.050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R2 = 0.253


Note: number of observations 244;
rse = robust standard errors
Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%

The only variable which has a statistically significant effect is an MEP’s previous *leadership experience*. With each additional term of previous leadership experience, the odds of being appointed as executive party group leader at the beginning of the legislative term increase by 824%, holding all other variables constant. The strong effect is explained by the fact that five of the eight executive leaders of the EPP-ED group had previously held leadership positions in the European Parliament.

The results for the appointment of the broad party group leadership of the EPP-ED group show that increasing political experience, measured through *party group seniority* and *legislative experience*, increases the odds of being appointed as a party group leader (see Table 5.6). A one-year increase in party group seniority increases the odds of being elected as party group leader by 14.2%, when all other variables are held constant. Each co-decision rapporteurship which a party group member received in the previous parliamentary term increases the odds of being appointed as a member of the broad party group leadership by 56.9%. The effects are even more pronounced if the executive party group leaders are excluded from broad
party group leadership appointments. Thus, the appointment of Committee Chairs, Committee Coordinators and the President and Vice-Presidents in the EPP-ED group requires a different kind of political experience than the appointment of executive party group leaders. Whereas executive party group leaders need to have had previous leadership experience in the European Parliament the remaining members of the broad party group leadership need to have general political experience and experience in handling important legislative dossiers.

Table 5.6 EPP-ED broad party group leadership appointments (1999)\textsuperscript{44}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>–0.020 (0.017)</td>
<td>0.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>0.133*** (0.042)</td>
<td>1.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>0.857 (0.525)</td>
<td>2.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.450* (0.253)</td>
<td>1.569</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R2 = 0.182
Log pseudolikelihood = –89.048

Note: number of observations 244;
rse= robust standard errors
Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%

\textit{PSE appointments}

As in the EPP-ED group, preference proximity does not affect the appointment of the executive party group leaders in the PSE group, but previous leadership experience does play a significant role (see Table 5.7). Having held a party group leadership position in previous parliamentary terms increases the predicted odds of being elected as party group leader in the fifth parliamentary term by 1777%, ceteris paribus. The strong effect can again be explained by the fact that half of the Socialist executive party group members had gained previous leadership experience in the European Parliament. \textit{Party group seniority} has a negative effect on being appointed as an executive party group leader. A one-year increase in party group seniority

\textsuperscript{44} If the Committee Coordinators are excluded from the broad party group leadership appointment analysis the results remain the same.
decreases the odds of being appointed as executive party group leader by 15.2%, ceteris paribus. If the variable *Leadership experience* is dropped from the model, party group seniority has a positive, albeit not statistically significant effect. Thus, only the party group seniority effect, which is not already explained by previous leadership experience, has a negative effect on being appointed as executive party group leader.

Table 5.7 *PSE executive party group leadership appointments (1999)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>-0.049 (0.068)</td>
<td>0.953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>-0.165** (0.075)</td>
<td>0.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>2.932*** (0.772)</td>
<td>18.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.149 (0.364)</td>
<td>1.161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R2 = 0.227
Log pseudolikelihood = -40.920

Note: number of observations 196; rse = robust standard errors
Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%

The appointment of the broad party group leadership of the Socialist party group reveals similar results to the appointment of the executive party group leaders. Previous *leadership experience* increases the odds of being appointed as member of the broad party group leadership, but the effect is not as pronounced (see Table 5.8). *Party group seniority*, however, loses its statistical significance. If the executive party group leaders are excluded from the broad party group leadership, party group seniority has a positive effect and is statistically significant. Thus, each additional year of party group membership increased the odds that a Socialist party group member was appointed as Committee Chair or Vice-President of the European Parliament at the beginning of the fifth parliamentary term.

Summarising the results from the party group leadership appointments at the beginning of the fifth legislative term, it has to be noted that the preference proximity of the national parties of EPP-ED and PSE members to their party group median did not have a statistically significant effect on leadership appointments. The proximity of the policy preferences served as a measure of potential agency that party group members might take into account in leadership appointment to avoid adverse selection. But although party group members might experience agency loss through the empowerment of their party group leadership, they did not seem to apply ex ante con-
control mechanisms in the appointment of the executive and broad party group leadership. Instead, the analyses revealed that previous leadership experience gained in the European Parliament is a powerful predictor of the appointment of executive party group leaders. For the appointment of members of the broad party group leadership party group seniority and legislative experience from the previous parliamentary term proved to be important.

Table 5.8 PSE broad party group leadership appointments (1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>-0.018 (0.044)</td>
<td>0.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>0.004 (0.052)</td>
<td>1.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>1.571*** (0.544)</td>
<td>4.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.078 (0.219)</td>
<td>1.081</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R2 = 0.106
Log pseudolikelihood = -72.298
Note: number of observations 196; rse= robust standard errors
Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%

5.3.2 Leadership appointments at the parliamentary midterm

Besides preference proximity, voting loyalty was also singled out as an indicator of potential agency loss in the party group leadership appointment process. Hypothesis 5 in Chapter 3 predicts that the more often a party group member has voted with the party group, the better the odds that he or she will be appointed as party group leader. The descriptive analysis of the party group appointment process in Section 5.2 revealed that both the EPP-ED and the PSE groups employed a proportional distribution system for allocating party group leadership positions between their national delegations. In order to capture possible effects of the proportional distribution, I also include the voting loyalty of the national party delegations and of MEPs to their national party delegations as possible explanatory variables. Since the appointment of party group leaders at the parliamentary midterm can be explained by the fact that a member was elected as a party group leader in the first half of the term, I will also test for incumbency status.
Midterm analysis of executive party group leadership appointments in the EPP-ED group reveals similar results to those at the beginning of the parliamentary term (see Table 5.9). Preference proximity does not have a statistically significant effect and previous leadership experience is a strong predictor of executive party group leadership appointment; having held a party group leadership position in previous parliamentary terms increases the predicted odds of being elected as party group leader in the fifth parliamentary term by 847%, ceteris paribus.

Table 5.9 EPP-ED executive party group leadership appointment (2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGM</td>
<td>0.048* (0.028)</td>
<td>1.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD</td>
<td>–0.023 (0.027)</td>
<td>0.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>0.016 (0.027)</td>
<td>1.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation loyalty PGM</td>
<td>–0.021 (0.027)</td>
<td>0.979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>–0.027 (0.043)</td>
<td>0.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>–0.033 (0.103)</td>
<td>0.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>2.248*** (0.763)</td>
<td>9.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.024 (0.251)</td>
<td>1.024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R2 = 0.246
Log pseudolikelihood = –28.542

Note: number of observations 227; rse = robust standard errors
Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%

Of the newly added voting loyalty variables, the voting loyalty of EPP-ED members towards the party group majority position in the first half of parliamentary term is statistically significant (loyalty PGM). As hypothesized in Chapter 3, voting loyalty increases the odds of being appointed as a
party group leader. A 1% increase in voting loyalty towards the party group majority position increases the odds of being appointed as executive party group leaders by 5%, holding all other variables constant. The effect is displayed graphically in Figure 5.3 Voting loyalty towards the national party delegation (loyalty NPD) and the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation towards the party group majority position (delegation loyalty PGM) do not have a statistically significant effect on executive party group leadership appointments in the EPP-ED.

Figure 5.3 Effect of MEP voting loyalty towards the party group majority position on the predicted probability of being appointed as a member of the executive party group leadership in the EPP-ED group

The y-axis specifies the predicted probabilities of being appointed as executive party group leader in the EPP-ED group. The x-axis displays the voting loyalty of EPP-ED members to the party group majority position, measured in percent. The graph shows that the more often an EPP-ED member supports the party group majority position, the higher is his or her predicted probability of being appointed as party group leader. The predicted probability of being appointed as executive party group leader is 0.003 if the party group member supported the party group majority position only 30% of the time in the plenary voting. This was the lowest level of voting loyalty that an EPP-ED party group member displayed in plenary voting in the first half of the fifth parliamentary term. The predicted probability of being ap-

45 All effects displayed in the graphs of this study are calculated holding all other explanatory variables constant at their means.
pointed as executive party group leaders increases to 0.073 if the party group member always voted with the party group majority. Although the graph demonstrates a positive correlation between voting loyalty towards the party group majority position and being appointed as a party group leader, the effect is not very pronounced, since 100% voting loyalty does not increase the predicted probability of being appointed as party group leader by more than 7%.

Finally, it should be mentioned that all the effects displayed in Table 5.9 lose their statistical significance and the adjusted Pseudo $R^2$ increases to 0.66 if incumbency leadership status is added to the regression model. The strong effect is explained by the fact that all but two executive party group leaders were also members of the executive party group leadership in the first half of the fifth parliamentary term. I associate the disappearance of the statistical significance of the other explanatory variables with the strength of incumbency status as a predictor variable. Incumbency leadership status is not significantly correlated with loyalty PGM\textsuperscript{46}, which is why I draw the conclusion that the previously identified relationship between voting loyalty and executive party group leadership appointment is not spurious. However, once the variable delegation loyalty PGM is dropped from the regression model, loyalty PGM looses its statistical significance. The individual voting loyalty towards the party group does only have an effect, once the aggregated voting of the national party delegation is controlled for. Thus, the evidence that voting loyalty matters for being appointed as an executive party group leader of the EPP-ED group is rather weak.

The midterm appointment of the broad party group leadership reveals similar results to their appointment at the beginning of the legislative term.\textsuperscript{47} Again, preference proximity does not seem to play a role in the broad leadership appointments of the EPP-ED group, but party group seniority proves to have a positive effect. A one-year increase in party group seniority increases the odds of being elected as a member of the broad party group leadership by 11.4%, ceteris paribus. Two of the voting loyalty variables have a significant effect on broad party group leadership appointments. Whereas individual voting loyalty towards the party group majority, loyalty PGM, increases the odds of being appointed as a party group leader, the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation towards the party group majority position, delegation loyalty PGM, decreases the odds. A 1% increase in the voting loyalty of the national party delegation towards the party group majority decreases the odds of being appointed as party group leader by 4.4%. A 1%

\textsuperscript{46} Regressing incumbency on loyalty PGM revealed a t-value of 0.39 for the b-coefficient.

\textsuperscript{47} If the executive party group leadership is subtracted from the broad party group leadership, the analysis of appointments presents similar results to those presented in Table 5.11. The only difference is that loyalty PGM loses its statistical significance and that legislative experience becomes statistically significant. This concurs with the reduced broad party group leadership appointments at the beginning of the legislative term.
increase in individual voting loyalty towards the party group majority increases the odds of being appointed as party group leader by 2.7% (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5 for a graphical presentation of these effects).

Table 5.10 *Broad party group leadership appointment in the EPP-ED (2002)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef.</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(rse)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGM</td>
<td>0.027*</td>
<td>1.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>1.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>1.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation loyalty PGM</td>
<td>-0.046***</td>
<td>0.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>1.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.024)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>0.108**</td>
<td>1.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.045)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>1.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.475)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.290</td>
<td>1.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R2 = 0.098
Log pseudolikelihood = -97.979

Note: number of observations 227; rse = robust standard errors
Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%

The magnitude of the effects of *delegation loyalty PGM* and *loyalty PGM* can be compared since both variables are measured on the same scale (0–100). In order to compare the effects of a negative and positive odds ratio it is, however, necessary to take the inverse of the negative effect (Long and Freese 2003:184). The inverse of the odds ratio of *delegation loyalty PGL* is 1.046, which translates to an odds change of 4.6%. Thus, the effect of a 1% increase in national party delegation voting loyalty has a considerably

---

48 If the Committee Coordinators are excluded from the broad party group leadership appointment analysis the results remain the same, except that previous *leadership experience* also becomes statistically significant.
stronger effect on being appointed as a member of the broad party group leadership (4.6%) than a 1% increase in the voting loyalty of individual party group members (2.7%).

Figure 5.4 *Effect of MEP voting loyalty towards the party group majority position on the predicted probability of being appointed as a member of the broad party group leadership in the EPP-ED group*

The graph shows that the individual voting loyalty of an EPP-ED member towards the party group increases his or her predicted probability of being appointed as party group leader. The predicted probability of being appointed as a member of the broad party group leadership is 0.056 if the party group member voted with the party group only 30% of the time. The predicted probability increases to 0.280 if the party group member always voted with the party group majority.

The effect of aggregated voting loyalty is displayed in Figure 5.5. The support that a national party delegation gives to the party group majority position in plenary voting has the opposite effect on party group leadership appointments to individual voting loyalty. The lowest level of support given by a national party group delegation towards the party group majority position was 54%. At this level the predicted probability of a member of that national party delegation receiving a broad party group leadership position was 0.360. The predicted probability is reduced to 0.067 if the national delegation always supported the party group leadership position.
Controlling for the incumbency status of the broad party group leadership members all other variables lose their statistical significance, except for delegation loyalty PGL.\(^{49}\) If aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation is, however, dropped from the regression model, loyalty PGM looses its statistical significance. Thus, as in the executive party group leadership appointment, the individual voting loyalty of EPP-ED there is only weak evidence to support the notion that voting loyalty towards the party group increases the odds of being appointed as a party group leader.

Summarising party group leadership appointments within the EPP-ED group it can be noted that appointment to the two party group leaderships requires different kinds of political experience: while previous leadership experience is very important for the appointment of executive party group leaders, Committee Chairs and Coordinators and the Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament require general party group seniority and legislative experience with writing co-decision reports. This requirement makes sense since Committee Chairs, Committee Coordinators and Vice-Presidents are much more involved in the legislative decision-making process at the committee stage, and executive party group leaders need to have experience in the coordination of policy positions within and between party groups.

The evidence with regard to the prevention of agency loss is ambiguous. Preference proximity does not play a role in the party group leadership appointment process. The voting loyalty variables reveal two contradictory effects. Whilst the individual voting loyalty of EPP-ED members towards the party group majority has a positive effect on the likelihood of being ap-

\(^{49}\) The adjusted Pseudo R2 increases to 0.56.
pointed as party group leader, the aggregated voting loyalty of a national party delegation has a negative effect for its members. Once the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegations is dropped from the regression models, the individual voting loyalty is no longer statistically significant. My interpretation of these results is that the voting loyalty of MEPs matters only marginally, because the proportional distribution system of office positions in the EPP-ED group assures that also members from outlying delegations have to be appointed as party group leaders. Due to the proportional office distribution system the possibility of EPP-ED members controlling agency loss in party group leadership appointments through screening is very limited.

*PSE midterm appointments*

The results for the executive and broad party group leadership are identical for midterm appointments in the Socialist party group. I therefore display only the results for executive party group leadership appointments in Table 5.11.

**Table 5.11 PSE executive party group leadership appointment (2002)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGM</td>
<td>−0.040 (0.120)</td>
<td>0.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD</td>
<td>0.055 (0.092)</td>
<td>1.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>0.075 (0.050)</td>
<td>1.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation loyalty PGM</td>
<td>−0.025 (0.129)</td>
<td>0.976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>−0.012 (0.038)</td>
<td>0.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>−0.061 (0.073)</td>
<td>0.940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>1.726*** (0.567)</td>
<td>5.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>−0.047 (0.303)</td>
<td>0.954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pseudo R² = 0.134
Log pseudolikelihood = −44.280

*Note: number of observations 174; rse = robust standard errors
Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%*
The only variable that has a statistically significant effect on midterm leadership appointments is *leadership experience*. Having held a party group leadership position in previous parliamentary terms increases the predicted odds of being elected as party group leader in the fifth parliamentary term by 462%, ceteris paribus.

If incumbency status from the previous half is added to the regression model it proves to be strongly correlated with the appointment of executive party group leaders, *leadership experience* loses its statistical significance and the adjusted Pseudo $R^2$ jumps to 0.73. The results remain stable if the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation is dropped from the regression model.

Summarising the results from the analysis of the party group leadership appointment process in the EPP-ED and PSE groups in the fifth European Parliament, I find that the evidence for the application of ex ante control mechanisms is weak. Although both party group leaderships have considerable powers to influence the party group position formation process and the legislative decision-making process in the European Parliament, party group members seem unable to restrict the appointment of party group leaders to loyal and median party group members. Whereas no loyalty or preference proximity effects were detected in PSE appointments, voting loyalty played a role in the EPP-ED party group leadership appointment process. The individual loyalty effect detected in executive party group leadership appointments was, however, minimal and disappears once the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation is not controlled for; the individual voting loyalty effect in the nomination process to the broad party group leadership was offset by the negative effect of the national party delegation voting loyalty. The underlying cause of the limits on control agency loss is the proportional office distribution applied in both party groups. Thus, voting loyalty and preference proximity do not transcend the proportionality rule in the leadership appointment of the two biggest party groups of the European Parliament.

Another point worth mentioning is that appointment to the two different types of party group leadership requires different types of political experience. Executive party group leaders need to have gained previous leadership experience as Party Group Chairs or Vice-Chairs, Committee Chairs or as President of the European Parliament. In these leadership positions the party group members have learned to coordinate the intra- and inter party group decision-making process, which is an important quality for executive party group leaders. This finding also supports the notion that the leadership systems of the two party groups are reinforcing. Once a party group member has been appointed to a leadership position, he or she will be likely to be (re)-appointed as an executive party group leader. Appointments as Committee Chair, Committee Coordinator or Vice-President of the Parliament demand that the MEPs in question be senior members of their party group and
that they have gained experience in writing legislative reports. Their established network in the European Parliament and their legislative experience facilitate their work as important actors in the legislative decision-making process. Finally, if a party group member has been elected either as a member of the executive or the broad party group leadership, he or she has a very good chance of being re-elected as party group leader in the second half of the parliamentary term. This finding points to a system in which it is difficult to unseat a sitting party group leader. Section 5.4 takes a closer look at the ex post control mechanisms vis-à-vis party group leaders.

5.4 Controlling party group leaders

Principals not only have the opportunity to avoid agency loss before they empower an agent to act on its behalf; after having delegated power to an agent, principals may monitor the agent’s behaviour and hold it accountable for its actions. It is difficult to determine to what degree party group members as the principals of the party group leaders are able to monitor the latter’s agency behaviour. On the one hand, party group leaders may have informational advantages due to their prominent position in the party group internal decision-making process; on the other hand, the position formation process within the party group involves a multitude of actors, such as Rapporteurs and Shadow-Rapporteurs from different committees and members of the corresponding party group internal working groups. Even if it is not always possible to determine whether party group leaders always act in the best interests of the party group, party group members are able to draw inferences about their loyalty from their recorded plenary votes. Hypothesis 6 stated that party group leaders who frequently vote against the party group line would be more likely to lose their party group leadership position. This notion is tested in Tables 5.13 and 5.14 through a comparison of the voting loyalty record of the demoted party group leaders with average party group voting loyalty and the voting loyalty of the members who replace them as party group leaders.

In the EPP-ED group 46 members held a party group leadership position in the fifth European Parliament. Of these 46 members 33 held a party group leadership throughout the parliamentary term; only seven members lost their position as party group leader before the end of the term. Of these seven MEPs, Nicole Fontaine, Ana Palacio Vallelersundi and Carmen Fraga Estevez left their party group leadership positions when they retired from the European Parliament. Thus, of the 46 EPP-ED members who held party group leadership positions in the fifth term only four members lost their party group leadership position while remaining in the European Parliament.
All these MEPs were Committee Coordinators and lost their position at the parliamentary midterm.

In the Socialist party group 55 members held a broad party group leadership position in the fifth period of the European Parliament. Ten members terminated their leadership before the end of the term. Of these ten members who left their leadership position, six left the European Parliament at the same time. Thus, only four Socialist party group members could have been demoted; three of these changes took place at the parliamentary midterm. Only the executive party group leadership change between the two UK Labour MEPs Murphy and Titley took place in 2003.

Table 5.12 *Broad party group leadership voting loyalty (1999-2002)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEP</th>
<th>Member state</th>
<th>Loyalty PGM</th>
<th>MEP</th>
<th>Member state</th>
<th>Loyalty PGM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>JACKSON</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VARELA SUANZES</td>
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<tr>
<td>FORD</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>ELLES</td>
<td>UK</td>
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<td>PROVAN</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>57</td>
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<td>HUGHES</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>PERRY</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>KATIFORIS</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>CHICHESTER</td>
<td>UK</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THEORIN</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sweden</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>JARZEMBOWSKI</td>
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<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td>HATZIDAKIS</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEDINA ORTEGA</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>QUISTHOUDT ROWOHIL</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>WALTER</td>
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<td>GOEPEL</td>
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<td>PACK</td>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>Spain</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>THEATO</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.12 presents the voting record of the ten most and least loyal EPP-ED and PSE members of the broad party group leadership\textsuperscript{50}, the four EPP-ED members and the four PSE members who could have been removed from their leadership positions are highlighted and cursive. It is evident that not all the members, who left their leadership position, belonged to the least loyal party group leaders. I will now take a closer look at the careers of these MEPs in order to test whether they can be said to have been removed from their leadership position.

In Table 5.13 the voting loyalty of the EPP-ED members who lost their leadership positions is compared to the average voting loyalty in the EPP-ED group and the voting loyalty of the members who replaced them (highlighted in grey).

Table 5.13 \textit{Ex post control of EPP-ED party group leaders}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEP Last name</th>
<th>National party</th>
<th>Member state</th>
<th>Position\textsuperscript{51}</th>
<th>Seniority</th>
<th>Previous leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JARZEMBOWSKI</td>
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<td>Greece</td>
<td>RETT</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>PECHE</td>
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<td>CONT</td>
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<td>VARELA SUANZES-CARPEGNA</td>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>CONT</td>
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</tr>
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<td>von WOGAU</td>
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<td>ÖVP</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>ECON</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEP Last name</th>
<th>Legislative experience</th>
<th>Preference proximity</th>
<th>Loyalty PGM</th>
<th>Loyalty NPD</th>
<th>Delegation loyalty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>95</td>
</tr>
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<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>LANGENHAGEN</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<td>95</td>
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<td>19</td>
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</table>

Party Group Mean 0.2 9.5 73 87 79

\textsuperscript{50} MEPs Murphy (PSE) and von Wogau (EPP-ED), who left their party group leadership position early, were not amongst ten least or most loyal party group leaders, which is why they are placed in the middle in Table 5.12.

\textsuperscript{51} The party group leadership position changes involved only Committee Coordinators. The abbreviations indicate on which committees there was a change in the Coordinator position.
A comparison of party group seniority, previous leadership experience and the amount of co-decision rapporteurships held in the fourth parliamentary term shows that the dismissed party group leaders (white) were not replaced by more senior or more experienced party group members (grey). Neither are the replaced party group members preference outliers compared to the party group mean nor to those colleagues who replaced them.

The voting loyalty of two MEPs who were replaced as Committee Coordinators might explain their demotion. The voting behaviour of MEP Ruiz towards the party group and the national party delegation was below the party group average and below the voting loyalty of his replacement. His replacement by MEP Varela Suanzes-Carpegna could also have been initiated by the national party delegation. Both MEPs are members of the Spanish Partido Populare and Varela Suanzes-Carpegna exhibited more loyal voting behaviour towards the national party delegation. The replacement of MEP Ruiz could have been a demotion, but it is unclear whether he was demoted by the party group or by the national party delegation.

Although his voting loyalty was above the party group average, German CDU member von Wogau was replaced by the more loyal Austrian ÖVP member Karas. At the same time, von Wogau obtained a seat on the Foreign Affairs Committee, one of the most prestigious in the European Parliament. The loss of the Committee Coordinator position in the Economic Affairs Committee might also be explained by the fact that the German delegation had held five of the 14 Committee Coordinator positions in the first half term of the fifth Parliament. Thus, I do not consider von Wogau’s loss of the Committee Coordinator position a demotion.

Four members of the broad party group leadership of the PSE group left their party group leadership positions before the end of the term without leaving the European Parliament at the same time. They are compared to the average party group member and the party group members who replaced them as party group leaders (grey) in Table 5.14. None of the measures of political experience indicates that the demoted members were replaced by more experienced party group members. Preference proximity to the party group mean does not seem to play a role in the replacement of party group leaders, especially since two members, Hänsch and Murphy, were replaced by members of their national party delegation. Of the replaced party group members only Marinho displays a voting loyalty record that departs from the party group average. He supported both the party group and the national party delegation less often than the party group or leadership average. Luis Marinho lost his office as a Vice-President of the European Parliament at the parliamentary midterm, but he was compensated by becoming one of the European Parliament representatives on the European Convention that drew up the Constitutional Draft Treaty of the European Union and began work in
Due to the importance of the European Convention at the time, Marinho cannot be said to have been demoted from his Vice-President position. The only other MEP who had below average voting loyalty towards the party group and was replaced by a more loyal member was Swedish MEP Theorin. In addition to her below average voting loyalty, Theorin is an outspoken EU sceptic, which could also have contributed to her demotion.

Table 5.14 *Ex post control of PSE party group leaders*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEP Last name</th>
<th>National party</th>
<th>Member state</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Seniority</th>
<th>Leadership experience</th>
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<td>PGL</td>
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<td>Vice-President</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>MEP Last name</th>
<th>Legislative experience</th>
<th>Preference proximity</th>
<th>Loyalty PGM</th>
<th>Loyalty NPD</th>
<th>Delegation loyalty</th>
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</thead>
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<td>88</td>
<td>95</td>
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</table>

| Party Group Mean | 0.2 | 8 | 86 | 91 | 92 |

Overall, both the PSE and the EPP-ED groups do not frequently demote their party group leaders. Less than 10% of all party group members had to give up their position as a member of the broad party group leadership. Almost all these demotions occurred at the midterm re-election of the party group leadership. The evidence suggests further that one EPP-ED and one PSE member might have lost their party group leadership position due to below average voting loyalty towards the party group. This confirms the strong effect of party group leadership incumbency status, discovered in the analysis of the appointment of party group leaders. Once MEPs have been elected as party group leaders they are unlikely to be demoted and will likely be re-elected as party group leaders in the next parliamentary term.

In Table 5.12 I show further that a considerable number of party group leaders in both party groups displayed poor voting loyalty towards the party group. From a principal-agent point of view, the party groups had an incentive to demote several of their group leaders, but failed to do so. This suggests that the EPP-ED and PSE groups did not apply ex post control mechanisms to sanction the agency loss that their party group leaders had inflicted on them. The proportional system of office distribution is again one of the most likely explanatory factors as regards why the party groups cannot punish their leaders for disloyal behaviour. The uncovered lack of leadership control might, however, also depend on the validity of the measurement of agency loss. Even if party group leaders vote against the party group ever so often, they could still perform the tasks that were delegated to them, namely setting the agenda at party group meetings to ensure median party group positions and discipline disloyal party group members for their voting behaviour to ensure voting cohesion. Thus, the presented evidence cannot rule out that the EPP-ED and PSE groups are able to sanction their party group leaders, if they detect agency loss related to these performances.

5.5 Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the empirical investigation of the structure, appointment and control of the party group leadership of the two biggest party groups of the European Parliament. First, the EPP-ED and the PSE groups have very similar leadership structures. Both party groups have a dual leadership consisting of an executive and a broad party group leadership. The executive party group leadership consists of the Chair, Vice-Chairs and Treasurer; it sets the agenda at party group meetings, where party group positions are decided by majority voting. The executive party group leadership, however, works in close cooperation with a broader range of prominent party group members, such as Committee Chairs, Committee Coordinators and Heads of National Delegations, as well as with the President and Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament, who belong to the same party group. Together these actors make up the broad party group leadership. The broad party group leadership coordinates the party group internal decision-making process and monitors implementation of political decisions.

There are two differences between the PSE and the EPP-ED groups in terms of leadership structure: in the EPP-ED party group, the leadership is institutionalised through the Bureau, while the cooperation of the broad party group leadership of the PSE group is not formalised; second, except for the National Delegation Leaders, all broad party group leadership offices are appointed centrally at a Plenary Assembly meeting of the EPP-ED group, while the PSE group lets the party group members on each committee decide
whom amongst them they want to nominate as Committee Coordinator. Thus, both party groups delegate important decision-making powers to their party group leadership and employ a similar leadership structure, which differs only in the degree of institutionalisation.

The delegation of significant powers to the party group leadership entails a potential for agency loss for the party groups. In Section 5.4 I therefore analysed whether the party groups employed ex ante control mechanisms in the party group leadership appointment process. Preference proximity and voting loyalty were applied as measures for evaluating potential agency loss. The results revealed that preference proximity to the party group median did not have an effect on a party group member’s odds of being appointed as party group leader. Voting loyalty towards the party group did not have an effect in Socialist party group leadership appointments. In the EPP-ED voting loyalty proved to be statistically significant, but party group voting loyalty had only a very small effect on executive party group leadership appointments and was limited by the proportional office distribution system governing broad party group leadership appointments. Thus, neither party group seems to employ strong ex ante control mechanisms in the appointment of their party group leaders.

Statistical analysis revealed further that different kinds of political experience drive the appointment of the two types of party group leaderships. While MEPs who have gained previous leadership experience in the European Parliament have a higher probability of being appointed as party group leaders, party group seniority and legislative experience are important for becoming a member of the broad party group leadership. The appointment process also revealed that incumbency status as party group leader was the most powerful predictor of party group leadership appointments in the second half of the parliamentary term.

Testing for the containment of agency loss through ex ante control mechanisms, Section 5.3 did not find strong evidence that the party group were demoting their party group leaders for disloyal voting behaviour; few party group leaders left their leadership position before the end of the parliamentary term. Of those who left their leadership position early, most at the same time ended their career in the European Parliament. Only one party group leader in each party group can be said to have been demoted at the parliamentary midterm, although several party group leaders in both party groups displayed disloyal voting behaviour. Thus, the party groups are also unlikely to be able to use ex post mechanisms to control their party group leaders.

The evidence suggests that party group leaders are powerful but unconstrained actors within the EPP-ED and PSE groups. The fact that they have considerable powers in the party group position formation process supports the party group discipline scenario outlined in Chapter 3 that highlighted the importance of the party group leadership. The fact that the leadership of both
party groups is not controlled ex ante or ex post challenges the party group discipline scenario, since it predicts that the party groups have incentives to control their party group leaders in order to avoid agency loss. It might, however, be the case that preference proximity and voting loyalty are not the best indicators for predicting possible agency loss. Agency loss occurs if the party group leadership abuses its disciplinary or agenda-setting powers. The party group might use other indicators of previous behaviour, such as working for the achievement of a median party group positions in committees and working groups or having a conciliatory style of problem solving, for assessing the potential agency loss, which party group leaders could cause. Thus, the lack of ex ante and ex post control of the party group leadership that was indentified in this chapter is not evidence enough to discard the party group disciplinary scenario; party group leaders do hold significant powers as predicted by the party group disciplinary scenario and party group members might use other indicators for evaluating potential and actual agency loss in the appointment and control of their party group leaders.

Chapters 6 and 7 will test whether the party group leadership or the national party delegations are able to discipline MEPs for their voting behaviour. These empirical studies will provide further evidence about the applicability of these two scenarios in the European Parliament.
6. Committee Assignments

The central aim of this chapter is to evaluate whether the transnational party groups or national party delegations have disciplinary powers in the committee assignment process of the European Parliament. I will put the previously derived disciplinary scenarios to a first direct empirical test in order to evaluate their explanatory power. The party group disciplinary model predicted that the executive party group leadership would punish individual voting defection on the part of party group members, but would offer rewards to MEPs from national party delegations that frequently vote against the party group line. Applied to the committee assignment process in the European Parliament, this means that individual party group members who vote against the party group leadership will be demoted by means of committee transfers. If this sanctioning system is applied in the committee assignment process, it can be said to be an explanatory factor in the high levels of party group voting cohesion in the European Parliament. The party group disciplinary scenario predicted, however, also that MEPs from delegations that frequently voice their dissatisfaction with the pursued party group position through defections in plenary voting will be promoted in the committee assignment process. The party group leadership has to offer rewards to these members to avoid the delegations’ exit from the party group. If this notion also does find support in the empirical evidence it will be more difficult for the party group leadership to maintain voting cohesion, because disciplinary actions by the party group leadership are buffered by the national party delegations.

According to the national party discipline scenario, both the individual voting loyalty of MEPs and the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegations towards the party group leadership should not have an effect on the committee assignment process, since it is assumed that the party group leadership does not have any disciplinary powers. It is rather assumed that all disciplinary actions within the European Parliament will be applied by the national party delegations. If the evidence provided in this chapter supports this scenario, party group voting cohesion will depend on the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations.

Section 6.1 introduces the functioning of the committee system and the committee assignment process of the European Parliament. I will present descriptive statistical evidence of 180 committee transfers that took place
within the EPP-ED and PSE groups in the fifth European Parliament. In Section 6.2 I will rank-order the committees of the European Parliament and show how committee promotions and demotions can be identified in the committee assignment process. The sanctioning system of committee promotions and demotions serves as dependent variable in the multivariate statistical analyses of Section 6.3. In this section I will analyse whether the voting behaviour of MEPs and their national party delegations in the first half of the fifth parliamentary term had an affect on the midterm committee assignment process in the EPP-ED and PSE groups. Section 6.4 concludes the chapter with a summary.

6.1 The committee system and the assignment process

The first directly elected European Parliament had 16 standing committees. In the fourth parliamentary term the number of standing committees was increased to 20, but again reduced to 17 in the fifth parliamentary term (1999–2004). The restructuring of the committee system between the fourth and fifth parliamentary terms was due to an adjustment to the increased policy competences with the enactment of the Amsterdam Treaty in May 1999 (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2000:106).

At the beginning of each legislative term the size and jurisdictional competences of each committee are decided upon (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2000:106). The size of the standing committees of the fifth parliamentary term is displayed in Table 6.1. The European Parliament’s rules of procedure stipulate that committee assignments take place at the beginning and at the halfway stage of each parliamentary term, after two and a half years (European Parliament 2004:Rule174). Each committee has a fixed number of full and substitute members. Full committee members can hold the position of regular committee member, Vice-Chair or Chair. In general, each party group member can only be a full member of a single committee. However, some committees would not attract any members if the committee contingents were not allowed to serve as full members on other committees as well. These committees are called neutral committees (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2000:107).

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53 Excellent reviews of the development of the committee system can be found in McElroy (2003), Whitaker (2000) and Corbett et al. (2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbrev.</th>
<th>Committee on:</th>
<th>Size(^{54})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFCO</td>
<td>Constitutional Affairs</td>
<td>30/35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFET</td>
<td>Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Security and Defence</td>
<td>64/69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGRI</td>
<td>Agricultural and Rural Development</td>
<td>38/39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUDG</td>
<td>Budgets</td>
<td>44/41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>Budgetary Control</td>
<td>21/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>Culture, Youth, Education, Media and Sport</td>
<td>34/37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVE</td>
<td>Development and Cooperation</td>
<td>35/33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON</td>
<td>Economic and Monetary Affairs</td>
<td>44/42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPL</td>
<td>Employment and Social Affairs</td>
<td>56/51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVI</td>
<td>Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy</td>
<td>59/60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMM</td>
<td>Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities</td>
<td>38/39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JURI</td>
<td>Legal Affairs and the Internal Market</td>
<td>34/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITRE</td>
<td>Industry, External Trade, Energy and Research</td>
<td>61/56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBE</td>
<td>Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs</td>
<td>43/49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETI</td>
<td>Petitions</td>
<td>30/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECH</td>
<td>Fisheries</td>
<td>21/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETT</td>
<td>Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism</td>
<td>59/58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own calculations based on (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005; Høyland, Sircar, and Hix 2007).

In the fifth European Parliament the Fisheries (PECH), Women’s Rights (FEMM) and Petitions committees (PETI) were neutral committees in both the PSE and the EPP-ED groups. The EPP-ED group further allowed 60% of its members on the Budget Control committee (CONT) to serve as a full member on a second committee.

Rule 177 specifies that ‘[t]he composition of all committees shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament’ (European Parliament 2004: Rule 177). Thus, full committee positions are to be distributed proportionally between the party groups. Previous research has shown that the committee seat distribution between the party groups follows the norm of proportionality fairly closely (McElroy 2006: 11). The results displayed in Table 6.2 also corroborate adherence to the proportionality principle in the committee seats assignment process. The strong underrepresentation of the PSE group on the Petitions committee can be explained by the committee’s ‘neutral’ status; PSE members who sit on this committee are allowed to have a full seat on another committee as well. The PSE group is, furthermore, somewhat overrepresented on the Cultural Affairs (CULT) and Women’s Rights (FEMM) committees.

\(^{54}\) Size refers to the number of full committee members on each committee. The first figure gives the number of full committee members in 1999 and the second figure the number of members in 2002.
Table 6.2 *EPP-ED and PSE committee representations in 1999*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PSE chamber</th>
<th>EPP-ED chamber</th>
<th>PSE committee</th>
<th>EPP-ED committee</th>
<th>PSE difference</th>
<th>EPP-ED difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>AFCO</td>
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<td>30.0%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
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<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGRI</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUDG</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONT</td>
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<td>37%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVE</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>-5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPL</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVI</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMM</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITRE</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JURI</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBE</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECHE</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETI</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
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<td>16.7%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>-11.9</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
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<td>RETT</td>
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<td>37%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own calculations based on (Høyland, Sircar, and Hix 2007).

The underrepresentation of the EPP-ED group on the Budget Control (CONT) and Fisheries (PECHE) committees can also be explained by the fact that both these committees are neutral in the EPP-ED. Overall, the PSE and EPP-ED groups tend to be overrepresented in committee assignment, except for the neutral committees, which are of lesser importance. The underrepresentation of the EPP-ED group on the Development committee (DEVE) is the only exception. This confirms results from earlier research that the two biggest party groups generally tend to be somewhat overrepresented in the committee assignment process (Whitaker 2000).

Rule 177 specifies further that each party group must submit proposals to the Conference of Presidents concerning how the committee seats are to be distributed amongst its members (EuropeanParliament 2004). These proposals are then submitted to a final vote in the plenary. This appointment process, however, does not formally specify which position full members are to hold on the committee. Rule 182 states only that the positions of Chairs and Vice-Chairs are to be elected at the first constituent meeting of each committee from amongst the committee contingents. However, in practice these positions are also distributed proportionally between the party groups before they are formally elected at the first committee meeting (Corbett, 55 The Conference of Presidents is the leadership body of the European Parliament and consolidates the President and the Chairs of the party groups.)
Jacobs, and Shackleton 2000:108). Each party group has the right to appoint a substitute member for each full committee and has to notify the President of the Parliament of this appointment. If a full member is absent, the substitute member is able to speak and vote on his or her party group colleague’s behalf (Rule 178). Thus, the rules of procedure of the European Parliament suggest that the party groups determine the allocation of committee seats. This leads to the common assumption that it is the party group leadership that controls the committee appointment process (Bowler and Farrell 1995; Faas 2003; Hix 2002; Whitaker 2001). The fact that all committee positions are distributed proportionally between the party groups, and that the party groups draw up the lists of full committee members that are voted on in the plenary, does not automatically mean, however, that the party group leadership is able to control the committee appointment process. In practice, it is unclear who within the party group decides on the allocation of committee seats.

Evidence from interviews that I conducted with executive party group leaders, national party delegation leaders and party group officials from both the PSE and EPP-ED party groups suggests that the national party delegation leaders meet at the beginning and in the middle of each parliamentary term to distribute all available office positions within the party group. The distributed office positions include the executive party group Chair and Vice-Chairs, President, Vice-President and Quaestor of the Parliament, Committee and Delegation Chairs and Vice-Chairs. All these office positions are distributed between the national party delegations of the party group through a proportional points system that corresponds to the size of the national party delegations. Even though the regular committee seats are also determined at these meetings, they are not part of the proportional points system. As these meetings take place behind closed doors, it is unclear whether committee seats are distributed by the newly elected executive party group leaders or whether the national party delegation leaders have a strong say in the appointment of committee seats. The EPP-ED rules of procedure do not state which organ within the group prepares the list for the distribution of committee seats. The rules only state that:

The Plenary Assembly shall: … appoint members to fill any vacancies set aside for the Group on committees, sub-committees and interparliamentary delegations. (EPP-ED 1999:Rule 9)

The PSE rules of procedure provide more detailed information on the distribution of committee seats within the party group. Rule 15 regulates the nomination of candidates to parliamentary bodies:

56 Interviews 1, 2, 5, 8, 11.
57 Email correspondence 1 and 2. For the office point distribution system in the PSE see Table 5.1.
At the beginning of each constituent sitting of Parliament, the Group shall nominate the candidates for the posts laid down in Parliament's rules of procedure. The Bureau shall make proposals to the Group to this end. … The Bureau shall, in its proposal to the Group, take account of the need to ensure fair representation of the national delegations. The Bureau shall also seek to bring about balanced representation of women in all parliamentary bodies … The Bureau shall decide who is to replace members on parliamentary committees and interparliamentary delegations. (PSE 2003:Rule 15)

Thus, the rules of procedure of the EPP-ED and PSE groups state that the nomination for different committee seats needs to be approved at plenary meetings of the group. But the rules of the Socialist party group give the executive party group leadership, the Bureau, a bigger say in the committee assignment process. The Bureau prepares the list for the distribution of office positions at the beginning of the parliamentary term and decides which party group members replace other members on the parliamentary committees. Although the executive party group leadership of the Socialist party group has to take into account fair representation of all national delegations and of women, it has agenda-setting powers in the committee assignment process. Thus, the PSE leadership seems to have stronger control over the committee assignment process than the EPP-ED leadership. The following empirical analyses will show whether this first impression can be sustained.

**Committee transfers**

A first impression of the committee transfers within the PSE and EPP-ED groups is presented in Table 6.3. A committee transfer characterises a situation in which one committee member is replaced by another. Table 6.3 presents the number of committee transfers on each committee and distinguishes between committee transfers that take place within national party delegations and those that take place between national party delegations. In the fifth parliamentary term 115 committee transfers took place in the EPP-ED group and 65 in the PSE group.

In both the PSE and EPP-ED groups it is evident that most committee transfers take place within and not between national party delegations. In the EPP-ED group 81% of all committee transfers in the fifth European Parliament took place between two party group members from the same national party delegation. In the PSE group the percentage was 79%. Thus, the opportunities for disciplinary actions by the party group leadership seem limited. It is, however, not possible to draw the conclusion that the party group leadership is not able to discipline rebellious party group members. The transfer of loyal committee members could be determined by the national party delegations and the party group leaders could still control the transfers of disloyal members.
Table 6.3 Committee transfers between and within national party delegations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee transfers</th>
<th>EPP-ED</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>PSE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within national delegation</td>
<td>Between national delegations</td>
<td>Within national delegation</td>
<td>Between national delegations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUDG</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>51</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: own calculations based on (Høyland, Sircar, and Hix 2007).

Since neither the interview evidence nor the descriptive statistics allow a clear-cut interpretation of who controls the committee assignment process in the European Parliament I follow the previous work of McElroy (2001, 2003) by taking a quantitative look at committee appointments in the European Parliament. The following analysis concentrates on the midterm committee assignment process within the EPP-ED and PSE party groups in the fifth parliamentary term.58 I will test whether voting behaviour in the first half of the fifth parliamentary term (1999–2001) has any effect on the odds that a party group member will be promoted or demoted in the midterm committee assignment process (2002).

My approach differs from previous research in several respects. First, I will test for the effects of loyalty towards both the party group leadership and the national party delegation in order to determine which party actor is more influential for MEPs in the committee assignment process. The inclu-

---

58 The midterm committee assignment process covers 65% of all EPP-ED and 75% of all PSE promotions and demotions in the committee transfer process. The remaining committee transfers are scattered throughout the whole legislative term. The variation on the dependent variable is too small to conduct any meaningful analyses of the non-midterm committee assignments.
sion of both voting loyalty measures is not only theoretically interesting, but also methodologically warranted for reasons pointed out in Chapter 4. I also control for the effect of the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegations, which has not been tested previously. Secondly, I cover a more recent time period in which the Parliament has gained more policy influence, making control of the legislative decision-making process more important for the party group leadership. Thirdly, I will not only test for the effect of transfers between different committees, but also between different committee positions. Finally, I will use a theoretically justified measurement to rank-order the parliamentary committees.

6.2 Variables and measurement

*Dependent variable: committee assignment*

In order to assess whether the party group leadership or the national party delegations possess disciplinary powers in the committee assignment process, a measurement needs to be constructed of what constitutes a demotion and a promotion. A straightforward way of studying promotions and demotions in committee assignment processes is to compare the committee request record of party group members with their received committee assignments (Frisch and Kelly 2006; Shepsle 1978). Unfortunately, such data are not available for the European Parliament.

In her study of the committee assignment process in the fourth European Parliament, McElroy (2001, 2003) followed earlier research on the US Congress (Groseclose and Stewart III 1998; Munger 1988) and rank-ordered the committees of the European Parliament in order to analyse whether a committee transfer constituted a demotion. The exclusive focus on committee demotions does not capture the whole range of sanctioning capabilities. The two disciplinary scenarios outlined in Chapter 3 did not predict that sanctions would have to be exclusively negative; positive sanctions can be equally effective in inducing preferred agency behaviour. The dependent variable of this study therefore includes both committee demotions and promotions.

Before committee transfers can be divided into demotions and promotions a rank order of the committees needs to be established. There are two ways to derive such rank orders; one relies on the committee transfers themselves to rank-order committees, while the other is based on an exogenous measurement. In her study of the committee assignment process in the European Parliament, McElroy (2001, 2003) applied different techniques that use the amount of transfer from and to committees to derive ranking orders. Bullock states, that the higher the ratio of the number of transfers to a committee
divided by the total number of transfers to and from a committee, the higher the committee will rank in the committee order (Bullock 1973). McElroy (2003:69–73) also applied two more recent committee rank ordering techniques based on committee transfers, which not only focus on transfers from and to individual committees, but also capture the differences in the transfers between different committees (Groseclose and Stewart III 1998; Munger 1988). The Grosewart-index, developed by Groseclose and Stewart III (1998) has several advantages over earlier ranking methods, as it encompasses all transfers between different committees.

I tested this index on all committee transfers in the fifth European Parliament, but the rank order was far from being statistically significant at any conventional level, so it could not be applied. The drawback of this technique is that it has to be based on a large number of committee transfers to derive a stable rank order. A second shortcoming of all committee ranking techniques that are based on committee transfers is that the rank ordering is not exogenous of the transfers that are used to determine whether an MEP has been demoted or promoted. The underlying assumption of the techniques is that all committee transfers are voluntary, and that the resulting rank order captures the popularity of committees. If all committee transfers were forced, then the highest-ranking committee would be the most unpopular (McElroy 2003:72).

Due to these caveats I use an exogenous measure to rank-order the committees of the European Parliament. In their seminal work on political parties in legislatures Cox and McCubbins use the classification of committees into exclusive, semi-exclusive and non-exclusive committees to study committee transfers in the House of Representatives (Cox and McCubbins 1993:20,169). The categorical division of the committees was defined by the Legislative Reorganisation Act in 1946 and specifies on how many committee legislators are allowed to serve; for example, members of exclusive committees are allowed to serve on only one committee. No such regulation exists for the committees of the European Parliament. Neither do the party groups informally adhere to such a uniform classification (see Table 6.4).

Since the exclusiveness of the standing committees in the European Parliament is not predetermined and varies between party groups, I use a different exogenous criterion to rank-order committees. The underlying assumption of this research project and of much of the current research on the European Parliament is that MEPs are policy-seekers and want to influence the outcomes of the legislative decision-making process. Thus, I will use the legislative activity of the parliamentary committees to arrive at a committee rank order.
Table 6.4 Exclusiveness of EP committees in the PSE and EPP-ED groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PSE single seat members</th>
<th>EPP-ED single seat members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFCO</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFET</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGRI</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUDG</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEVE</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPL</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVI</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMM</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITRE</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JURI</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PECH</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETI</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETT</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own calculations based on Høyland, Sircar, and Hix (2007).

Table 6.5 presents the legislative activity of all committees of the fifth European Parliament. The committees are ranked according to the number of co-decision reports that they adopted. The amount of co-decision legislation per committee is used to classify the committees, as the European Parliament is most influential in the legislative decision-making process within the framework of co-decision: under the consultation procedure the legislative amendments of the Parliament can be disregarded by the Council, whilst the Council and the European Parliament are co-equal legislators under the co-decision procedure (Hörl, Warntjen, and Wonka 2005; Tsebelis and Garrett 2000). The assent procedure is primarily used for international association agreements with third countries and the accession of new member states, but also for institutional questions such as the organisation of the structural and cohesion funds, the uniform procedure for European Parliament elections and the tasks of the European Central Bank. A decision in the assent procedure requires agreement from both the Parliament and the Council (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2000:203f). The European Parliament and the Council both need to agree to the annual budget of the European Union. The Parliament makes the final allocation for all non-compulsory expenditure, whereas this is the prerogative of the Council for compulsory expenditure. Both categories account for 50% of the EU’s budget, making the Parliament...
and Council also co-equal partners in the budgetary process (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:251).

Table 6.5 Rank-ordering committees by legislative activity (1999–2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Co-decision</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Assent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>ENVI</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RETT</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>JURI$^{59}$</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ITRE</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>ECON</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EMPL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CULT</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>DEVE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BUD</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AGRI</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>FEMM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AFCO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AFET</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CONT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PETI</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PECH</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data were gathered from the Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament (OEIL).$^{60}$

Based on the number of co-decision reports, the committees can be divided into categories according to their legislative activity. I use four categories to rank-order the committees instead of a continuous committee ranking order based purely on the amount of codecision legislation. Thereby, I leave room for the different policy preferences of MEPs. An MEP might, for example, prefer to sit on the Legal Affairs committee (JURI) instead of sitting on the more legislatively active Environment committee (ENVI) because he or she has policy experience and/or interest in Legal Affairs matters. Thus, I follow McElroy’s advice to use few categories in the rank ordering of committees to avoid an overstatement of the differences between committees (McElroy 2003:73–74).

I make two adjustments to the rank order presented in Table 6.5. First, both the Foreign Affairs (AFET) and the Budget (BUDG) committees are moved to Rank 1 committees with the highest number of adopted co-

$^{59}$ Co-decision reports which re-codify existing legislation were not included.

$^{60}$ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/, consulted 08.02.2007.
decision reports. This is adjustment is made for several reasons. First, through the budget procedure and the assent procedure the Parliament is indirectly able to influence policies; as under the co-decision procedure the Parliament is also a co-equal legislator with the Council. AFET and BUDG have the highest degree of assent and budgetary reports, which is why they are included in the first category. Second, previous research on the rank ordering of committees has included these two committees amongst the most popular and prestigious committees of the European Parliament (McElroy 2003; Whitaker 2000). Third, in the interviews conducted for this study, the interviewees who agreed to name the most important committees of the European Parliament all included the Foreign Affairs and the Budget committees.\(^{61}\) A further indicator of their importance is their large size (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.6 Adjusted committee rank ordering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AFET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BUDG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ENVI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RETT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JURI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ITRE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ECON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EMPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DEVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AGRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second change to the previous committee ranking is the exclusion of neutral committees. Out of the six committees in category 1 of Table 6.5, three committees were identified as neutral committees, namely the Women’s Rights (FEMM), Petitions (PETI) and Fisheries (PECH) committees. Almost all the EPP-ED and PSE members on these committees have been allowed a full seat on an additional committee (see Table 6.4). These committees were excluded from the committee ranking because their seats are filled by MEPs who hold a seat on other committees as well. Thereby,\(^{61}\) Seven out of eleven interview partners agreed to list the most important committees of the European Parliament (Interview 1,2,3,4,5,8,11).
the ranking order is reduced from four to three categories of committees. The final committee rank order is presented in Table 6.6.

Having established the committees’ rank order I am able to code transfers between committees at the parliamentary midterm of the fifth Parliament (2002). The transfers are coded as promotions, demotions or no change in committee status. The coding scheme is displayed in Table 6.7. If a member transfers from one to two committees the rank of the old committee is compared to both values of the new committees. Thus a transfer from a Rank 3 committee to two Rank 2 committees is actually a promotion, since the added value of the two Rank 2 committees is higher (4) than the value of the Rank 3 committee (2). The reverse logic is applied if a member transfers from two committees to one. I consider not only actual transfers between committees, but also the loss or gain of committee seats for the coding of the dependent variable. Coded this way the dependent variable takes on values of −3 to 3 in the EPP-ED group and −3 to 2 in the PSE group. The value can also be recoded so that all negative values are coded as −1 and all positive values are coded 1. I will test both the trichotomous and the extended categorical coding of the dependent variable.

Table 6.7 Coding committee transfers at the parliamentary midterm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee transfers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank 1 to 3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank 1 to 2 and Rank 2 to 3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No transfer, transfer between same categories</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank 2 to 1 and Rank 3 to 2</td>
<td>−1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank 3 to 1</td>
<td>−2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their study of the committee assignment process in the US Congress Leighton and Lopez argue that studies of committee transfers might miss a substantial part of the committee transfer process if the committee internal rank order of different committee positions is not taken into account as well (Leighton and Lopez 2002:13). A legislator might, for example, give up a seat on a higher ranking committee to become Committee Chair on a lower ranking committee. I include the committee internal rankings by creating an additional weighted dependent variable. The dependent variable is weighted 5 for gaining a position as Committee Chair or Coordinator, and 2 for gaining the position of Committee Vice-Chair. These weights are borrowed from the assessment of the importance of office positions by national party delegation leaders of the PSE group (see Table 5.1).62

62 Committee Coordinator positions were not included in the points system for PSE office distribution, but Committee Coordinators are at least of equal importance as Committee Chairs to committee work (Whitaker 2001), which is why they received the same weight.
Independent variables

Following the hypotheses presented in Chapter 3, I test how different voting loyalty measures affect the likelihood of being promoted or demoted in the midterm committee assignment process. The party disciplinary model predicted that voting loyalty towards the party group leadership increases the odds of being promoted in the committee assignment process. The model further predicted that decreasing support for the party group leadership on the part of a national party delegation will increase the odds that a member of the national party delegation will be promoted in the committee assignment process. Finally, the party group discipline model predicted that preference proximity to the party group median position would increase the likelihood of being promoted in the committee assignment process. In the national party discipline scenario promotions in the committee assignment process depend on an MEP’s voting loyalty towards his or her national party delegation. I also test whether political experience affects the odds of being promoted or demoted in the committee assignment process.

6.3 Results

Due to the categorical and ordered nature of the dependent variable I apply ordered logistic regression models in the statistical analysis of the committee assignment process. The displayed results are based on regression models with the unweighted trichotomous dependent variable, capturing demotions, no change and promotions in the committee assignment process. The results remain unaltered if the extended categorical coding of the dependent variable is used. The effects of the explanatory variables also remain the same if the weighted dependent variable, which includes changes in committee positions, Chair, Vice-Chair and Coordinator, is applied.

63 In Chapter 5 I tested how voting loyalty towards party group majority positions affected the likelihood of being appointed to the party group leadership. In this chapter I apply voting loyalty towards the party group leadership as a measure of party group voting loyalty because disciplinary actions are assumed to be administered by the party group leadership. The results presented in Section 6.3, however, did not differ when voting loyalty towards the party group majority position was used as a measure of party group loyalty. The accordance is not surprising since the party group majority position and the party group leadership position almost always coincide.

64 All variables were introduced in Chapter 4 and the coding of the variables can be found in Table 4.1.
Committee assignment in the EPP-ED group

The results from the analysis of the midterm committee assignment process in the EPP-ED group are displayed in Table 6.8. First, I applied an ordered logistic regression to analyse the committee assignment process because of the trichotomous outcome of the dependent variable. The parallel regression assumption of the ordered logistic regression model was violated, however. The ordered regression model builds on the assumption that the effects of the explanatory variables are equal across all outcome categories of the ordered dependent variable (Long 1997:140). The test for the parallel regression assumption revealed that this was not the case. Therefore, I estimated two binary regressions, with the dependent variables no promotion (0) vs promotion (1) and no demotion (0) vs demotion (1). The results are identical to the results derived from a multinomial logistic regression model and are more easily interpreted. The results from the two binary logistic regressions are presented in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8 Comparing the effects of demotion and promotion in the midterm committee assignment process of the EPP-ED group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Demotion model</th>
<th>Promotion model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b coef. (rse)</td>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGL</td>
<td>-0.037 (0.031)</td>
<td>0.964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD</td>
<td>0.006 (0.018)</td>
<td>1.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>0.009 (0.022)</td>
<td>1.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.026)</td>
<td>0.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>-0.024 (0.037)</td>
<td>0.976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>-0.022 (0.099)</td>
<td>0.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.058 (0.252)</td>
<td>1.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudolikelihood</td>
<td>-63.559</td>
<td>-59.328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: number of observations 218;
Significance level: *** 1% ** 5% * 10%

---

65 Outcome of dependent variable committee assignment: –1 = demotion, 0 = no change, 1 = promotion.
66 Violation of the proportional odds assumption: $\chi^2 = 18.24$, Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.011$. 
Comparing the results of the demotion and promotion models presented in Table 6.8 it becomes evident that the executive party group leadership of the EPP-ED group has the power only to promote party group members in the committee assignment process. None of the explanatory variables in the demotion model is significant, revealing that EPP-ED members are not demoted in the committee assignment process due to their voting behaviour. The executive party group leadership’s power to promote EPP-ED members in the committee assignment process are limited to the promotion of MEPs who come from national party delegations that frequently vote against the party group line. A 1% increase in the voting loyalty of the national party delegation towards the party group leadership decreases the odds that a member of that delegation will be promoted in the committee assignment process by 4.2%. None of the other explanatory variables – neither the variables that measure voting loyalty at the individual level, or the variables measuring political experience – have a significant effect on the odds of being promoted or demoted in the committee assignment process.

Figure 6.1 Effect of delegation voting loyalty towards the party group leadership on the predicted probability of being promoted in the midterm committee assignment process of the EPP-ED group

Figure 6.1 shows how the predicted probabilities of being promoted in the committee assignment process decrease as the voting support of the national party delegation increases. Whilst MEPs from a national party delegation that supports the party group leadership only 50% of the time have a predicted probability of 0.18 of being promoted in the committee assignment
process, MEPs from national party delegations that always toe the line have a predicted probability of 0.025.67

The party group discipline scenario predicted that the party group leadership is able to punish individual MEPs for their voting defections, but will promote MEPs from national delegations that frequently defect from the party group line. In the EPP-ED group, only the latter part can be supported by the evidence uncovered in the committee assignment process. Thus, a functioning sanctioning system does not exist in the EPP-ED committee assignment process.

**Committee assignment in the PSE group**

Table 6.9 presents the results of the committee assignment process in the PSE group. In the ordinal regression model underlying the results, the sanctioning system in the committee system assignment process is treated as a continuous latent variable \( y^* \), with an observable ordered trichotomous dependent variable \( Y \) (Long 1997:116).68 A positive sign on a \( b \) coefficient reflects an increase of the probability that an MEP will be promoted in the committee assignment process due to an increase of the corresponding explanatory variable.

**Table 6.9 Midterm committee assignment process in the PSE group (2002)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty_PGL</td>
<td>0.196** (0.087)</td>
<td>1.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD</td>
<td>-0.134** (0.065)</td>
<td>0.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>0.009 (0.022)</td>
<td>1.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation loyalty PGL</td>
<td>-0.167** (0.070)</td>
<td>0.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>-0.045 (0.047)</td>
<td>0.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>0.040 (0.043)</td>
<td>1.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>-0.033 (0.136)</td>
<td>0.968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2 =</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudolikelihood =</td>
<td>-66.261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: number of observations 159; Significance level: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%

---

67 The aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegations towards the EPP-ED party group leadership ranges from 51% to 92%.
68 The proportional odds assumption, \( \chi^2 = 6.06 \) Prob > \( \chi^2 = 0.533 \), is not violated.
The results reveal that all voting loyalty measures have a statistically significant effect on the applied sanctions in the midterm committee assignment process. None of the other explanatory variables that measure political experience reaches any conventional level of statistical significance. The effects of the voting loyalty variables are presented in Figures 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4.

Figure 6.2 Effect of voting loyalty towards the party group leadership on the predicted probability of being promoted and demoted in the midterm committee assignment process of the PSE group

A Socialist party group member who voted with the executive party group leadership in 50% of all co-decision votes in the first half of the fifth term of the European Parliament had a predicted probability of 0.98 of being demoted, and a predicted probability of 0.00005 of being promoted in the committee assignment process.\(^69\) A party group member who always supported the party group leadership in plenary voting had a predicted probability of 0.48 of being promoted in the committee assignment process, and one of 0.03 of being demoted. Thus, voting with the party group leadership pays off in the midterm committee assignment process of the PSE group. The effect supports the party group disciplinary scenario since the executive party group leadership uses its disciplinary powers to sanction the individual voting behaviour of party group members.

\(^69\) The individual voting loyalty of MEPs towards the Socialist party group leadership ranged from 37% to 99%.
Figure 6.3 *Effect of voting loyalty towards the national party delegation on the predicted probability of being promoted and demoted in the midterm committee assignment process of the PSE group*

Supporting the national party delegation in plenary voting, however, does not pay off for Socialist party group members. A member that always supported the national party delegation in plenary voting had a predicted probability of 0.15 of being demoted and a predicted probability of 0.014 of being promoted. Thus, it seems unlikely that the national party delegations hold the disciplinary whip in the committee assignment process of the PSE group.

Like individual voting loyalty, the effect of the aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation is also predicted by the party group discipline scenario. MEPs who belong to the least supportive national party delegation, which voted with the party group leadership only 80% of the time, have a predicted probability of 0.26 of being promoted in the committee assignment and a probability of 0.007 of being demoted. MEPs from the most loyal delegations, however, have a predicted probability of 0.16 of being demoted and 0.012 of being promoted in the committee assignment process. The party group leadership rewards MEPs from less loyal national party delegation with committee promotions in order to prevent these delegations from leaving the party group. Thus, the results from the midterm committee appointment process in the PSE group reveal strong evidence that the party group discipline scenario applies. The party group has established a

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70 The individual voting loyalty of MEPs towards their national party delegation ranged from 33% to 99%.
71 The aggregated voting support of the national party delegations towards the party group leadership ranged from 84% to 99%.
sanctioning system whereby the party group leadership punishes individual voting defections, but promotes members from national party delegations that have voiced dissatisfaction with the party group position in plenary voting.

Figure 6.4 Effect of delegation voting loyalty towards the party group leadership on the predicted probability of being promoted and demoted in the midterm committee assignment process of the PSE group

6.4 Conclusion

Previous research has suggested that control of the committee assignment process is a crucial disciplinary tool for political parties. This chapter tested whether the party group leadership or the national party delegations were able to utilise the committee assignment process to discipline party group members. Interviews conducted with party group leaders and national party delegation leaders from the EPP-ED and PSE groups did not reveal any differences in the committee assignment process. The interviewees suggested that committee assignments are negotiated and decided upon at lengthy meetings of the executive party group leadership and the national party delegation leaders at the beginning and in the middle of the parliamentary term. The party group internal rules of procedure, however, pointed to differences in the committee assignment process between the EPP-ED and PSE groups: whilst the EPP-ED rules of procedure do not specify which organ of the
EPP-ED group prepares a proposal for committee assignments, the Socialist rules of procedure stipulate that the executive party group leadership has agenda-setting power in the committee assignment process.

A first look at the empirical evidence revealed that the EPP-ED and PSE groups allow a fairly large number of committee transfers; around 80% of the transfers between parliamentary committees were identified as transfers between members from the same national party delegations. This descriptive evidence suggests that the national party delegations control the committee assignment process in the European Parliament. This impression was, however, not corroborated in the multivariate statistical analysis of committee promotions and demotions.

In order to identify committee transfers as either promotions or demotions I had to establish a rank order of the European Parliament’s standing committees. I used the legislative activity of the parliamentary committees to derive a rank order, warranted by the fact that MEPs are policy-seekers. Using sanctions in the committee transfers process as a dependent variable, I compared the predictive power of the party group discipline scenario and the national party discipline scenario. The national party discipline scenario did not find any confirmation in the empirical evidence. In the EPP-ED group, voting loyalty towards the national party delegation did not have a statistical effect on the odds of receiving a promotion in the committee assignment process. In the Socialist party group voting loyalty towards the national party delegation even proved to have a negative effect on being promoted.

In the EPP-ED group the party group discipline scenario could be confirmed only partly for the midterm committee assignment process; the party group leadership did not have the power to demote party group members. Furthermore, promotions in the committee assignment process were not awarded according to MEPs’ individual voting behaviour, but rather based on the aggregated voting behaviour of the national party delegation. The lack of individual sanction powers on the part of the party group leadership not only prohibits the punishment of rebellious members, but also fails to deter those members would not have voted against the party group if a sanctioning system had been in place. Thus, the EPP-ED leadership is not able to increase voting cohesion through the application of disciplinary actions in the committee assignment process.

The party group disciplinary scenario does, however, find support in the PSE group. Both individual and aggregated voting loyalty behaviour are sanctioned by the party group. A party group member who frequently voted with the party group leadership in plenary voting had a higher chance of being promoted and a lower chance of being demoted in the midterm committee assignment process. The voting loyalty effect on the aggregated level worked the other way around: the party group leadership awarded committee promotion to members from national party delegations that frequently voted against the party group line. In contrast to the EPP-ED group, the PSE party
group leadership is able to further the collective goal of party group voting cohesion due to its disciplinary power vis-à-vis individual party group members, but the Socialist party group leadership is restricted in its disciplinary actions by the national party delegations. Chapter 7 tests whether the established differences between the EPP-ED and the PSE groups in the application of disciplinary tools also apply to the allocation of legislative reports.
7. Legislative Report Allocation

In this chapter I analyse whether the party group leadership or the national party delegations are able to use the allocation of important legislative reports as a disciplinary tool to sanction the voting behaviour of party group members. The control of access to these reports is crucial for two reasons. First, the party group discipline scenario predicted that the party group leadership is likely to re-delegate the agenda setting power in the party group position formation process to its committee members. Committee members who receive the assignment to write a report on an important legislative dossier are likely not only to influence the report produced by the committee for plenary voting but also the position, which the party group is going to pursue. Secondly, access to these reports can also be used as a disciplinary tool to punish or reward party group members for their voting behaviour. Unlike the committee assignment process, which only takes place twice during a legislative term and is organised centralised within the party, the access to important reports is more difficult to control, since the reports are continuously distributed decentralised within the committees of the European Parliament. Thus, it is the aim to test whether the party group leadership, the national party delegations or none of these actors is able to control the allocation of reports in the committees.

The first section of the chapter presents a short introduction to the decision-making processes of the European Parliament and introduces the reader to the different kinds of reports, which are distributed in the parliamentary committees. Section 7.2 describes how legislative reports are distributed between the party groups. The descriptive evidence confirms the findings of earlier research that legislative reports are allocated proportionally in the European Parliament according to party group size. Section 7.3 uses interview evidence and descriptive statistics to analyse the allocation of reports within the party groups. Committee Coordinators are identified as central actors in the report allocation process. The influence of the party group leadership on the report allocation process cannot be definitely identified from the collected interview evidence. At the aggregated level, descriptive evidence shows that the party groups do also follow an internal rule of proportional distribution, since reports are allocated proportionally according to the size of the national delegations within the party group. Section 7.4 deals with methodological questions and outlines additional explanatory variables,
which will be used in the individual analysis of rapporteurship appointments. Section 7.5 presents the results of the statistical analyses and section 7.6 summarises the results derived in this chapter.

7.1 The legislative process

Due to the increase in its legislative powers and the continuous extension of its competences in different policy-fields, the European Parliament is engaged in wide array of legislative activities on which it has to form an opinion. The main legislative procedures during the fifth term of the European Parliament were the consultation and codecision procedure. The consultation procedure has been applied since the Treaties of Rome (1958) and gives the European Parliament opportunity to express its opinion on legislative bills proposed by the Commission and passed into law by the Council. Under this legislative procedure, the position of the Parliament is fairly weak, since the Council can disregard Parliament’s opinion. Under the rules of the Nice Treaty the procedure is still used in many Community policy areas, such as agriculture, regulation of state aid, private sector competition, indirect taxation anti-discrimination matters and adoption and implementation of police and judicial cooperation matters, as well as for institutional questions, i.e. the appointment of the President and Board of the Central Bank and the calling of an intergovernmental conference to modify the Treaty and for budgetary measures such as the decision about the Community’s own resources (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:203f).

The codecision procedure was introduced with the enactment of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. The changes of codecision procedure with the Amsterdam Treaty have made the European Parliament a co-equal legislator to the Council since 1999 (Tsebelis and Garrett 2000). Currently the procedure is used in policy areas such as citizenship, transport, worker health and safety, environment, consumer protection, public health, structural funds, research programmes, asylum and illegal immigration, as well as the freedom of movement of workers, services, capital and goods (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:212). In the fifth parliamentary term the European Parliament adopted and discussed 1198 legislative reports. Of these reports 37.3 % dealt with codecision legislation, the remainder was covered by the consultation procedure (see table 1).

Besides its strong legislative role under the codecision procedure the European Parliament is also a co-equal legislator to the Council under the assent procedure, which mostly deals with international agreements, and in the budgetary process (see Chapter 6.) 54 assent reports and 63 budgets reports were distributed during the fifth parliamentary term. All legislative proposals and the budgetary process are initiated by the Commission,
whereas the Council initiates the assent procedure (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:197, 209, 223, 249).

Table 7.1 *Distribution of legislative and non-legislative reports (1994-2004)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Legislative</th>
<th>International Agreements</th>
<th>Budgetary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Codecision</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 5</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 4</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inter-</th>
<th>Own</th>
<th>Strategic</th>
<th>Rules of</th>
<th>Immunity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>document</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP 4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data was gathered from the Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament (OEIL).

In addition to legislative, budgetary or assent reports different kinds of non-legislative reports are voted on in the European Parliament. In the fifth legislative term, the committees of the European Parliament prepared 748 non-legislative reports. Most non-legislative reports originate from within the European Parliament and do not directly influence policy outcomes. The types of non-legislative reports include own-initiative reports, reports on strategic documents, inter-institutional agreements, changes of the rules of procedure and reports on the immunity of certain MEPs. The most frequently used procedures are the own-initiative report and report on strategic documents (see table 7.1).

7.2 Report allocation between party groups

When the European Parliament receives for consideration a legislative or budgetary draft proposal from the Commission, the President of the Parliament announces at the subsequent plenary session which committee(s) shall

73 Reports on strategic documents are reports on Commission communications, Commission Green or White papers.
be entrusted with drawing up a report. Decisions on the allocation of reports are challengeable and conflicts are resolved in the Conference of Committee Chairs, the Conference of Presidents or, as a last resort, by a vote at the next plenary session (Corbett et al. 2005: 129). Each committee does also have the right to draft a limited amount of own-initiative reports and reports on strategic documents, but the committee has to have prior approval of the Conference of Presidents (Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton 2005: 130-132).

Once a committee has obtained responsibility for a legislative proposal or the right to draw up a non-legislative report, the allocation of reports to Rapporteurs within the committee follows the same process in all committees, with slight variations. The main principle is that reports are distributed proportionally according to party group size within the committee. A study conducted by the Secretariat of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection committee (IMCO) showed that all committees distribute points according to the number of members each group has on the committee (EuropeanParliament 2004a:6-15). In order to acquire a report in the committee a party group has to ‘pay’ a certain number of points. The study showed that only the Constitutional Affairs committee used a pure auction system in which group Coordinators engaged in bidding for each report. All other committees adopted fixed point ‘prices’ for legislative reports and non-legislative reports. Non-legislative reports are generally less ‘expensive’ than legislative reports. Co-decision reports are generally more costly than other reports. The group with highest number of remaining points receives first choice on a report. The rule of proportionality is not always strictly applied. The internal study of the IMCO secretariat emphasises that ‘[d]ecisions are taken by the Coordinators by consensus’ and that ‘[t]he process hinges upon political assessments and choices, and when no agreement can be reached a vote is taken’ (EuropeanParliament 2004a:7-8). Thus, in general all committees apply a rule of proportionality to allocate reports amongst the party

74 The Conference of Committee Chairs consists of the Chairs of all parliamentary committees, and the Conference of Presidents is composed of the President of the Parliament, the 14 Vice-Presidents and the Chairs of all party groups.

75 Since 2002 committees may deal with only six own-initiative reports concurrently. Between 1994 and 2002 legislative committees were allowed to deal with two own-initiative reports at the same time and non-legislative committees three. Committees were also allowed to deal with three follow-up reports on adopted legislation and five reports on strategic documents (Corbett et al. 2005: 129–133).

76 The remaining points are calculated according to different formulas in the committees. Some committees, such as the Legal Affairs committee, count the number of remaining points of party groups, whereas other committees employ more complicated formulas; for example, the Economic and Monetary Affairs committee employs the following formula as indicator for calculating the amount of remaining points:

\[
\begin{array}{c c c}
\text{Group Members} & \text{used points} \\
\hline
\text{ECON points:} & \text{--------------------------} & \text{--------------------------} \\
\text{Committee Members} & \text{total points allocated} \\
\end{array}
\]
groups. Focusing on earlier parliamentary terms other scholars found that reports are generally distributed proportionally in the European Parliament, with a slight overrepresentation of the two biggest party groups (Benedotto 2005; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003). These studies compared party group size to all reports that were distributed in the European Parliament and identified correlations of 0.95 and 0.97 between size of party group and the number of reports that a group received. The pooling of important reports, such as co-decision, budgetary and assent reports, with reports that are less significant for policy outcomes could mask an unequal distribution of the most important reports.

Table 7.2 shows the distribution of co-decision, assent and budgetary reports in the fifth Parliament, broken down by party group. Party group size and the distribution of important reports correlate with 0.99 and the correlation is statistically significant at the 1% level. Thus, it is corroborated that reports are distributed proportionally between the party groups. However, with regard to the distribution of co-decision and budget reports, the three largest party groups – the EPP-ED, PSE and ELDR groups – are somewhat overrepresented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party group</th>
<th>size 1999</th>
<th>Co-decision</th>
<th>Assent</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EPP-ED</td>
<td>233 (37%)</td>
<td>205 (43%)</td>
<td>28 (44%)</td>
<td>35 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>180 (29%)</td>
<td>139 (30%)</td>
<td>27 (42%)</td>
<td>31 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDR</td>
<td>51 (8%)</td>
<td>52 (11%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>17 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens/EFA</td>
<td>48 (8%)</td>
<td>38 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (8%)</td>
<td>7 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUE/NGL</td>
<td>42 (7%)</td>
<td>19 (4%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEN</td>
<td>30 (5%)</td>
<td>4 (1%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDD</td>
<td>16 (2%)</td>
<td>10 (2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-attached</td>
<td>26 (4%)</td>
<td>5 (1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>626 (100%)</td>
<td>472 (100%)</td>
<td>64 (100%)</td>
<td>91 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The report data were gathered from the Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament (OEIL).77


The importance of party group membership is particularly evident in light of the fact that non-attached members are the most unsuccessful group of MEPs in obtaining any kind of rapporteurship. Thus, the rule of distributing
reports proportionally between party groups is applied fairly accurately in the European Parliament. The main focus of this chapter, however, is not to analyse how reports are allocated between the party groups, but rather how they are distributed within each party group. In the following sections, I will provide descriptive statistics and describe the distribution of rapporteurships within the party groups. I will also present evidence from interviews with party group officials, national delegation leaders and party group leaders to test for party disciplinary actions. Secondly, I will test statistically whether the national party delegations or the party group leaderships of the PSE and the EPP-ED are able to control the allocation of co-decision and other important reports in the European Parliament.

7.3 Report allocation within party groups

Tables 7.3 and 7.4 show the distribution of co-decision and important – that is, co-decision, assent and budget – reports in the EPP-ED and PSE groups.

Table 7.3 Report distribution within the EPP-ED group (1999–2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National delegation</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Co-decision</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Co-decision</th>
<th>Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The report data were gathered from the Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament (OEIL).78

In the EPP-ED group the correlation between the size of a national delegation and the amount of received reports is 0.93 for co-decision reports and 0.95 for important reports. Thus, adherence to the proportionality rule is somewhat lower in the EPP-ED group than it is for the allocation of reports between the party groups. Whereas the German and Luxembourg delegations received an above-average number of reports, the Italian and French delegations received fewer reports than the party group average.

The picture is broadly corroborated by the PSE group, although with a greater observance of the proportionality rule. The correlation between the size of the national delegations and the amount of allocated co-decision and important reports is 0.97, thus higher than in the EPP-ED group. The UK and German delegations are overrepresented in the report allocation process in the PSE group, Portuguese and Belgian delegations are most underrepresented.

Table 7.4 Report distribution within the PSE group (1999–2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National delegation</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Co-decision</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Co-decision</th>
<th>Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The report data was gathered from the Legislative Observatory of the European Parliament (OEIL)79

The application of the proportionality rule for the allocation of co-decision and important rapporteurships in the EPP-ED and PSE groups that if the party group leadership controls the report distribution process it has to take into account the national party delegations. But the evidence does not rule out the possibility that the party group leadership steers the allocation of

rapporteurships within the party groups. In the following paragraphs I use evidence drawn from interviews with high-ranking party politicians and party group officials to describe the allocation process within the party groups more closely.

Practitioners with insight into the decision-making process of the European Parliament have pointed out that Committee Coordinators play a decisive role in the report distribution negotiations between the party groups and within each group (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:126-7). They negotiate the points system, decide on bidding strategies and distribute the reports amongst the party group committee members. The leading role of Committee Coordinators was also confirmed in an interview with a two high-ranking party group officials of the EPP group. One of the administrators explained that:

Committee Coordinators hold one of the key positions in the European Parliament to influence policy. They decide on the bidding strategies and on who gets what kind and how many reports.

Nevertheless, the party group administrator qualified the statement and argued that Committee Coordinators were not policy dictators, as they needed to follow certain norms and to accommodate the specific interests of the party group contingents of the committee. The administrator declared that:

There is also an informal rotation system between members of the same party group concerning the distribution of rapporteurships in the committee. Additionally, a Committee Coordinator needs to satisfy special and national interests of MEPs when distributing rapporteurships.

The pivotal position of Committee Coordinators in the report distribution process was also verified in an interview with a national delegation leader and Vice-Chair of the EPP-ED group. Both also emphasised that criteria such as policy expertise and a rotation principle amongst party group members also played a role in the distribution of rapporteurships. The interview evidence on the involvement of the party group leadership in the appointment of Rapporteurs was ambiguous and is best summarised by the statement of a Socialist party group official:

The Bureau seldom gets involved in the appointment of Rapporteurs, but troublemakers will not be elected as Rapporteurs.

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80 Interview number 8.
81 Interviews number 4 and 6.
82 Interview number 5.
The internal study of the IMCO committee secretariat summarised the relationship between the party group leadership and the committee members as one in which the executive party group leadership is rarely consulted on the selection of Rapporteurs (European Parliament 2004:8). Based on this information one must draw the preliminary conclusion that the party group leadership is not always directly engaged in the bidding strategy for reports and the selection of Rapporteurs, and that the Committee Coordinators are the most influential actors in determining which report a party group should bid for and who amongst the party group colleagues should receive a rapporteurship. Thus, judging from the interview evidence the allocation of reports does not seem to be a direct disciplinary mechanism that is regularly used by the party group leadership.

Nevertheless, the party group leadership or the national party delegations could influence the distribution of rapporteurships indirectly if they are able to control the appointment of Committee Coordinators. The rules of procedure of the Socialist party group state that the Committee Coordinators are to be elected by the party group members of the respective committees. The Socialist interview partners also confirmed that in practice this was the case:

Within our party group the Committee Coordinators have always been elected by our committee members and it has been very rare that the party leadership has gotten involved in the nomination of the Committee Coordinators.83

The EPP-ED group, however, applied centralised selection of its Committee Coordinators in the fifth parliamentary term (EPP-ED 1999:Rule9). The Committee Coordinator positions were distributed together with the other office positions by the party group at the beginning and midterm of the parliament. In the fourth parliamentary term, the EPP-ED group had also applied decentralised Committee Coordinator appointments via the committee members. They reverted to this system in the sixth parliamentary term without a change in the internal rules of procedure.84 A former member of the executive party group leadership of the EPP-ED group expressed the frustration of his colleagues with this procedure in the sixth parliamentary term:

Today, Committee Coordinators are chosen by the party group members of the committees. The party group leadership dislikes this very much because it makes it more difficult for them to control the committee process. However, this is a way for committees to generate trust and expertise.85

83 Interview number 11.
84 Email correspondence number 1, with EPP-ED party group official.
85 Interview number 1.
Summarising, the interview evidence revealed that the Committee Coordinators seem to be the central actors in the inter- and intra-party group bargaining process concerning committee reports. Only in rare cases does the party group leadership seem to get directly involved in the selection of reports and Rapporteurs. However, both the party group leadership and the national party delegations are able to exert some influence on the committee business through their involvement in the nomination of Committee Coordinators. Based on the evidence presented so far it seems reasonable to expect that the EPP-ED party group leadership is able to control the appointment of Rapporteurs through their Committee Coordinator. Based on the fact that the Committee Coordinators of the Socialist party group are appointed decentrally the PSE party group leadership will be less likely to be able to control the appointment of Rapporteurs.

7.4 Variables and measurement

The information derived from interviews and the IMCO committee’s internal study does not provide a clear-cut picture of whether the executive party group leadership or the national party delegations are able to use the distribution of rapporteurships as a disciplinary mechanism. I will therefore test statistically whether the party group discipline or national party discipline scenarios explains the allocation of legislative reports to EPP-ED and PSE members. I focus on the distribution of co-decision reports, as the co-decision procedure is the legislative procedure in which the Parliament is most influential and where the policy implications of parliamentary action is the greatest. The results remained unaltered when I pooled budgetary and assent procedure reports with co-decision reports and analysed their joint allocation. Information about the distribution of reports to all EPP-ED and PSE party group members was collected from OEIL, the Legislative Observatory Database of the European Parliament.86

Since co-decision reports are distributed throughout the legislative term, I use a panel design to analyse their allocation. The parliamentary term is divided into five one-year periods. I lag all explanatory variables that measure voting loyalty by one year in order to establish a causal order between these independent variables and the dependent variable. Thus, the voting loyalty record of the first year is correlated with the number of co-decision reports received in the second year, and so forth. I coded the dependent variable dichotomously according to whether an MEP did receive (1) or did not receive (0) a co-decision report. Very few MEPs received more than one co-decision report within the same year. If an MEP received more than one co-

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decision report within the same year, the reports were usually interrelated; for example, the Italian Socialist Guido Sacconi received the rapporteurship for the REACH proposal and the establishment of the REACH agency on 16 June 2003. The results are virtually identical if count models are applied instead.

In addition to the explanatory variables used in Chapter 6 I also test whether Committee Coordinators and Committee Chairs are more likely to receive co-decision rapporteurships. Due to their outstanding position in the report allocation process, Committee Coordinators themselves could possibly hold many rapporteurships. Furthermore, it has been noted that if Rapporteurs lose the confidence of the committee or if they feel they are unable to complete a report, often Committee Chairs take over and finish writing the report (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005:137). I also include the lagged dependent variable to test whether MEPs who have already received a co-decision report are more likely to receive a second co-decision report in the following year.

Since the committees of the European Parliament do not receive an equal number of co-decision reports, party group members do not compete on an equal footing for co-decision rapporteurships; for example, members of the Environment committee (ENVI) have a higher chance of receiving a co-decision report than members of the Budget Control committee (CONT). Therefore, I include an independent variable that controls for the amount of co-decision reports that each party group received on the parliamentary committees (report availability).  

The unequal distribution of co-decision reports between committees has a second methodological caveat. MEPs do not compete with all party group members to obtain a co-decision report once the party group has obtained a report in a committee; they compete only with their party group colleagues who have a seat on the same committee. If policy preferences or voting loyalty differ between committees an analysis of the distribution of co-decision reports aggregated over all committees might present the wrong impression of the effect of voting loyalty or preference proximity.

In order to test how much of the variation in policy preferences and voting loyalty in the party group can be explained by committee membership, I used a one-way analysis of variance model (Tabachnick and Fidell 2001:36). Controlling for differences in voting loyalty and policy preferences between committees, the F-test did not reveal any statistically significant differences in the variance between the different committees. On average, the variance

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87 For example, for each Socialist party group member who sat on the Environment committee in the first year the variable report availability is coded 6, since the PSE group received six co-decision reports on the Environment committee during the first year.
in voting loyalty and policy preferences was accounted for to over 95% by party group membership, whereas committee membership accounted for only about 5% of the variance in voting loyalty and preference proximity. It is safe to say that voting loyalty and policy preferences are equally distributed between the different parliamentary committees for EPP-ED and PSE party group members. Thus, the analysis of co-decision report distribution on the aggregated level – that is, across all committees – is possible.

7.5 Results

Report allocation in the EPP-ED group

Table 7.4 presents the results for the allocation of co-decision rapporteurships in the EPP-ED group. The voting loyalty variables generate support for the party group discipline scenario. Voting with the party group leadership increases the odds that an EPP-ED member will receive co-decision reports (loyalty PGL). A 1% increase in voting loyalty towards the party group leadership increases the odds of receiving a co-decision rapporteurship in the following year by 2.8%, ceteris paribus. The aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegations also affects the allocation of co-decision rapporteurships (delegation loyalty PGL). A 1% increase in aggregated voting loyalty of the national party delegation towards the party group leadership decreases the odds of the delegation members receiving a co-decision rapporteurship in the following year by 2.5%, holding all other variables constant. Thus, the executive party group leadership punishes individual party group members for voting defections by denying them access to co-decision rapporteurships, but delegates co-decision reports to MEPs from national party delegations that frequently vote against the party group leadership. In contrast to the interview evidence, the results of the statistical analysis confirm that the executive party group leadership of the EPP-ED group gets involved in the committee allocation process. Whether the party group leadership gets directly involved or applies the disciplinary sanctions through its Committee Coordinators cannot be answered by means of this analysis. But the sanctioning system that underlies the party group discipline scenario drives the co-decision report allocation process in the EPP-ED group.

The party group disciplinary scenario predicted not only that the party group leadership would use its disciplinary powers in the committees to sanction party group members ex post for their voting behaviour, but also that it would also use ex ante control powers in the appointment of Rapporteurs. The leadership cannot formulate the party group position for all policy proposals, which is why the party group discipline scenario predicted that the leadership would (re)-delegate agenda-setting power in the party group
position formation process to its committee members. Since the party group leadership has to ensure the adoption of median party group positions, it was further predicted that it would delegate agenda-setting powers to median party group members on the committee.

Table 7.5 Allocation of co-decision reports in the EPP-ED group (1999–2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-decision report (lag)</td>
<td>0.291 (0.218)</td>
<td>1.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGL (lag)</td>
<td>0.027** (0.011)</td>
<td>1.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD (lag)</td>
<td>0.002 (0.011)</td>
<td>1.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (lag)</td>
<td>0.049*** (0.015)</td>
<td>1.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation loyalty PGL (lag)</td>
<td>-0.025** (0.012)</td>
<td>0.975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>-0.020* (0.012)</td>
<td>0.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>0.041 (0.025)</td>
<td>1.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.276*** (0.105)</td>
<td>1.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Chair</td>
<td>0.879 (0.614)</td>
<td>2.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Coordinator</td>
<td>0.109 (0.488)</td>
<td>1.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report availability</td>
<td>0.132*** (0.021)</td>
<td>1.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2 =</td>
<td>0.146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudolikelihood =</td>
<td>-266.221</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

number of observations: 864
rse = robust standard errors
Significant at: *** 1% level, ** 5% level, * 10% level

Preference proximity to the party group median did play a role in the appointment of co-decision Rapporteurs. A one-unit increase in the distance from the party group median position on the left-right dimension decreased
the odds of a party group member receiving a co-decision report by 2%, holding all other variables constant. These results show that the party group discipline scenario applies to the report allocation process in the EPP-ED group.

Furthermore, participation in plenary voting plays a significant role in the appointment of rapporteurships. A 1% increase in participation in plenary voting increases the odds of receiving a co-decision rapporteurship in the following year by 5%, ceteris paribus. Previous legislative experience also has a positive effect on rapporteurship appointments. The odds of receiving a co-decision rapporteurship increase by 31.8% for every co-decision rapporteurship an EPP-ED has held in the previous parliamentary term, ceteris paribus. Legislatively experienced MEPs have both learned the rules of the game and have proven themselves as ‘legislative entrepreneurs’, which is why they were also entrusted with rapporteurships in the fifth parliamentary term. Since the lagged dependent variable is not statistically significant, however, there is no evidence that the odds of receiving a co-decision rapporteurship increase for an EPP-ED member once he or she has received a co-decision rapporteurship in the same parliamentary term. This does not mean that EPP-ED members cannot be Rapporteurs twice or more during a parliamentary term; it shows only that these members are not more likely to receive a new co-decision report than their colleagues who have not previously received a co-decision report. As predicted, the control variable report availability also had a positive significant effect since an increase in the availability of reports also increased the odds that an EPP-ED member received a co-decision report.

Report allocation in the PSE group

Table 7.4 presents the results for co-decision report allocation in the Socialist party group. A first glance reveals that the party group scenario does not drive the report allocation process in the PSE group. None of the voting loyalty variables has a statistically significant effect on the odds of receiving a co-decision rapporteurship. As noted in Section 7.3, this might be due to the fact that the Committee Coordinators of the PSE group are not appointed centrally at the plenary meeting of the Group, but decentrally by the Socialist members of each committee. Stronger adherence to the proportionality rule of distributing reports according to the size of the national delegations within the party group might also be an explanatory factor as regards the party group leadership’s difficulties in using the report allocation process as a disciplinary tool.

Even if the party group leadership is not able to use the distribution of co-decision reports as an ex post disciplinary mechanism, the results reveal that preference proximity to the party group median has a significant effect on the allocation of co-decision reports. The further away the policy position of
an MEP’s national party is from the party group median on the left-right dimension, the less likely it is that the MEP will be appointed as a Rapporteur. Each one-unit increase in the distance from the party group median position decreases the odds of a Socialist party group member receiving a co-decision rapporteurship by 8.1%, ceteris paribus. This finding fits the party group discipline scenario, but it is unclear why the party group leadership would use ex ante control mechanisms to appoint median Rapporteurs, but refrain from using the report allocation process to discipline party group members for their voting behaviour. Thus, the party group disciplinary scenario cannot be corroborated for the report allocation process in the PSE group.

Table 7.6 Allocation of co-decision reports in the PSE group (1999–2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>b coef. (rse)</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-decision report (lag)</td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>0.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty PGL (lag)</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>1.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty NPD (lag)</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>1.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (lag)</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>1.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation loyalty PGL (lag)</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference proximity</td>
<td>-0.084***</td>
<td>0.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party group seniority</td>
<td>-0.072*</td>
<td>0.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative experience</td>
<td>0.640***</td>
<td>1.897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Chair</td>
<td>1.405***</td>
<td>4.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Coordinator</td>
<td>-0.258</td>
<td>0.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report availability</td>
<td>0.236***</td>
<td>1.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R2</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log pseudolikelihood</td>
<td>-179.895</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

number of observations: 592
rse = robust standard errors
Significant at: *** 1% level, ** 5% level, * 10% level
As in the EPP-ED group, *legislative experience* from the previous parliamentary term pays off in the Rapporteur appointment process. For every co-decision rapporteurship which a PSE member has held during the previous parliamentary term, the odds of receiving co-decision rapporteurship increase by 89.7%, ceteris paribus. General political experience, measured by the *party group seniority* of PSE members, had a negative effect on Rapporteur appointments. A one-year increase in party group seniority reduced the odds of being appointed as a co-decision Rapporteur by 6.9%, holding all other variables constant. The negative effect of party group seniority could be explained by the fact that a large part of the seniority effect is already controlled for through the explanatory variable of previous legislative experience.

The Socialist Committee Chairs were also more likely to become co-decision Rapporteurs; being a *Committee Chair* increased the odds of receiving a co-decision report by 307%, all else being equal. The effect was also very strong in the EPP-ED group, albeit not statistically significant. Thus, Committee Chairs are either more likely to receive co-decision rapporteurships in general or they take over co-decision reports from Rapporteurs who hand back their rapporteurship due to political differences with the majority of the committee members, as suggested by Corbett and his fellow practitioners (Corbett, Jacobs, and Shackleton 2005). A closer analysis of the co-decision reports received by the Socialist Committee Chairs showed that they took over several reports from other committee members, and that most of the remaining reports handled by the Committee Chairs were adopted with few or no amendments at all. Thus, Committee Chairs take over reports from other committee members or deal with relatively uncontroversial proposals that are barely amended in the committee. The Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament support the impression that Committee Chairs function as mediators in the committee decision-making process and not as partisan actors. The rule which regulates the voting process on the parliamentary committees states that:

> The chairman may take part in discussions and may vote, but without having a casting vote. (European Parliament 2004:Rule 185.4)

Thus, Committee Chairs are more likely to play the role of conciliator on committees than as policy dictators that receive many important reports and implement their own policy positions.
7.6 Conclusion

The appointment of co-decision Rapporteurs in the fifth European Parliament revealed both differences and similarities between the EPP-ED and PSE party groups. Both party groups allocated co-decision, budget and assent reports proportionally amongst the national delegations within their party group. The interview evidence revealed that the Committee Coordinators are central actors in the allocation of committee reports. They decide on the bidding strategy of the party groups for committee reports and distribute the reports obtained amongst party group members on the committees. The interviewees from both party groups suggested that the leadership generally does not get involved in the allocation of reports between and within the party groups.

In order to obtain a more detailed understanding of the distribution of reports within the EPP-ED and PSE groups, I analysed the appointment process for co-decision reports in the fifth parliamentary term. The statistical analysis revealed that both party groups strongly favoured appointing Rapporteurs who had held a co-decision rapporteurship in the previous parliamentary term. What counted was the experience gained with the legislative decision-making process and their skill in handling the intra- and inter-party group bargaining process. Committee Chairs were identified as receivers of multiple rapporteurships. But Committee Chairs do not use their prominent position on committees to obtain many rapporteurships, but function rather as mediators in the legislative decision-making process, taking over rapporteurships from committee members who fail to reach a political agreement in the committee.

Statistical analysis further revealed that the executive party group leadership of both groups utilised the allocation of co-decision rapporteurships as an ex ante control instrument in the party group position formation process. Both party group leaderships were more likely to allocate co-decision reports to party group members who hold policy preferences close to the party group median position. Since Rapporteurs become specialists concerning the legislative dossier for which they write a report, often they become quite influential in the party group internal position formation process. Thus, the distribution of important rapporteurships such as co-decision reports to median party group members facilitates the formation of a median party group position at the later stages of the decision-making process. This supports the notion of the party group discipline scenario that both party group leaderships had an incentive to control the allocation of rapporteurships to party group members.
when they re-delegated the agenda-setting power in the party group position formation process to their committee members.  

The party group discipline scenario predicted further that the allocation of co-decision reports can also be used as an ex post disciplinary mechanism by the party group leadership to sanction the voting loyalty of party group members. The application of this disciplinary mechanism can, however, only be identified in the report allocation process of the EPP-ED group. The more often an EPP-ED member supported the party group leadership in plenary voting, the higher were his or her chances of receiving a co-decision rapporteurship. MEPs from discontented national party delegations – that is, delegations that frequently voted against the party group leadership – were also more likely to receive co-decision rapporteurships. This confirms the notion that the party group leadership uses positive sanctions to keep discontented national party delegations from exiting the party group.

None of the voting loyalty variables proved to be statistically significant in the report allocation process of the PSE group. Thus, the Socialist party group leadership is not able to use the allocation of co-decision reports as a disciplinary tool for sanctioning the voting behaviour of its party group members. It is unclear why the Socialist party group is not able to use the report allocation process as a disciplinary mechanism. The decentralised nomination of Committee Coordinators might be one possible explanation; another might be the stronger adherence to the proportionality rule in the party group internal distribution of rapporteurships. These ad hoc suggestions need to be tested against new empirical evidence to prove its explanatory value, however (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994).

The voting cohesion of the Socialist party group is not derived from the disciplinary powers of the party group leadership in the report allocation process. But the results of the committee assignment process presented in Chapter 6 showed that the Socialist leadership was able to discipline party group members for their voting behaviour through committee transfers at the parliamentary mid-term. Thus, if the results of Chapters 6 and 7 are combined, both the EPP-ED and the PSE groups have established a functioning sanctioning system within their party groups, as predicted by the party group discipline scenario. The party groups are, however, not able to act as legislative leviathans, punishing all deviant voting behaviour. The disciplinary powers are limited, because the party group leadership has to take into account the aggregated voting position of the national party delegation, when it

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88 The notion is supported for the appointment of Rapporteurs. In order to make a complete assessment of whether preference proximity matters in the re-delegation of agenda-setting power to committee members, I would have had to include all shadow-rapporteurships as well. Each party group that does not hold the rapporteurship on a legislative proposal nominates so-called shadow-Rapporteurs who coordinate the party group internal position formation process. These positions are, however, not official positions of the European Parliament and are not readily accessible to researchers.
disciplines party group members for their voting behaviour. The party group leadership can discipline party group members that display a higher voting defection average than their colleagues from the same national party delegation. Thus, voting cohesion in the EPP-ED and PSE party group can only be partly be generated through the disciplinary powers of the party group leadership and is partly dependent on the voluntary cooperation of the national party delegations.
8. Conclusion

At the beginning of this study I showed that member state governments have attempted to increase procedural legitimacy of the EU by strengthening the powers of the European Parliament in the legislative decision-making process and by promoting the role of political parties in the representation of European citizens. Based on the finding that the party groups of the European Parliament vote cohesively and compete against each other on a left-right dimension some scholars have supported the argument for more representative democracy at the European level. Other scholars, however, have warned that the party groups of the European Parliament are not in a position to handle the increased public pressure that would arise from further politicisation of the EU. I have taken this debate as the normative starting point of this thesis to investigate how the party groups of the European Parliament generate voting cohesion. Since preference coherence did not prove to explain the high levels of party group voting cohesion, I developed two scenarios of party discipline that explain how MEPs solve the collective action problem of party group voting cohesion. The party group discipline scenario rests on the common theoretical notion that the establishment of a central agent can solve a group’s collective action problems. The national party discipline scenario predicts that the national party delegations maintain control over disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament, and that party group voting cohesion is derived from the gains that national party delegations secure from reiterated cooperation in plenary voting. To test the hypotheses derived from these two scenarios, I analysed the appointment of the party group leaders and compared the disciplinary powers of the party group leadership and the national party delegations in the committee assignment and report allocation processes. All empirical analyses were conducted for the EPP-ED and PSE groups during the fifth parliamentary term.

In what follows, I will summarise the results from the empirical analyses of this study and draw a final conclusion about the causal relationship between the applied disciplinary sanctions and party group voting cohesion. Based on these results I will also discuss the implications for further research and propose possible research questions. I will conclude with a discussion of the ramifications of this study for the debate on the democratisation of the EU by means of an increase in partisan politics.
Summary of the empirical results

The analysis of the party group leadership structure, competences and appointment process in Chapter 4 served as a first indirect test of the two disciplinary scenarios. The party group disciplinary scenario predicted that party group members would delegate disciplinary and agenda-setting powers to their party group leadership. As the delegation of these powers inherits the potential for agency loss, it was further predicted that the party group would appoint party group leaders who exhibit loyal voting behaviour and who share policy preferences close to the party group median. Ex post it was predicted that party group leaders would be removed from their leadership position if they proved to be disloyal to the party group. According to the national party discipline scenario, these control mechanisms would not need to be applied since the party group leadership would be given only the Pareto-improving task of coordinating the decision-making process within the party group.

The descriptive analysis of the party group internal rules of procedure revealed that the EPP-ED and PSE groups employed a similar leadership structure. The smaller executive party group leadership, which consists of the Party Group Chair, Vice-Chairs and the Treasurer, controls the agenda at the plenary meetings of the whole party group. The broad party group leadership, which consists of the executive party group leadership, the Heads of the National Party Delegations, the Committee Chairs and Coordinators, as well as the President and Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament, coordinates the party group internal decision-making process and holds influential positions in the legislative decision-making process of the European Parliament. Thus, both party groups have empowered a double leadership structure that can impose agency loss on the party groups.

A descriptive analysis of the distribution of these leadership offices showed that they were generally distributed proportionally according to the size of the party groups’ national delegations. Statistical analyses of the party group leadership appointment process showed that the individual voting loyalty of party group members, or their preference proximity to the party group median, did not have an additional effect on the distribution of these leadership offices in the PSE group, and only a marginal effect in the EPP-ED group. The analyses rather revealed that leadership experience from previous parliamentary terms and legislative experience were strong predictors of party group leadership appointments. It was also shown that the removal of party group leaders from office is a highly unlikely event in both party groups. Analysis revealed that incumbent leadership status was the strongest predictor of party group members being appointed as party group leaders at the parliamentary mid-term. A qualitative analysis of the ex post control of party group leadership confirmed this result. In brief, therefore, the party group leadership is powerful and seems to be uncontrolled.
The party group leadership fulfil the functions that the party group disciplinary scenario predicted. But the hypothesised control of the party group leadership could not be corroborated. A possible explanation for the failure of the party groups to control their leadership is the strong proportionality rule that underlies the leadership office distribution process in both party groups. Party group leaders could be shielded from ex ante and ex post control through the protection of their national party delegations. This notion has to be re-evaluated by future research, however. Another explanation for why this study only found weak evidence of party group leadership control might be that party group members use other indicators, than tested in this study, to predict future leadership performance and to evaluate possible agency loss. Thus, the presented evidence of Chapter 5 is not definite enough to discard the party group disciplinary scenario for the party group leadership appointment in the EPP-ED and PSE group.

**Party discipline**

The main task of this study is the comparative evaluation of the party group discipline and national party discipline scenarios. Whether the disciplinary mechanisms in the European Parliament were applied by the party group leadership or the national party delegations was tested in Chapter 6 through the analysis of committee transfers in the mid-term committee assignment process and in Chapter 7 by analysis of the allocation of legislative reports. Combining the results of the empirical analyses of these two chapters, the party group disciplinary scenario is corroborated. The executive party group leadership of both party groups has disciplinary tools at its disposal by means of which it can sanction its party group members’ voting behaviour. The EPP-ED party group leadership can sanction voting behaviour by denying rebellious party group members access to co-decision reports and rewarding loyal party group members by appointing them as Rapporteurs for co-decision reports. The Socialist party group leadership, on the other hand, has the power to discipline its party group members through demotions and promotions in the midterm committee assignment process of the European Parliament. Since both party groups have established a functioning system of sanctions, party group discipline exists in the EPP-ED and PSE groups. Applied disciplinary sanctions are therefore a causal explanation of party group voting cohesion in the European Parliament.

This does not mean that the disciplinary actions applied to individual party group members account for all the voting cohesion of the party groups. In contrast to previous research, I have shown in this study that the party group leadership cannot act as a legislative leviathan that is able to sanction all voting behaviour that deviates from the party group line. By controlling for the frequency with which the national party delegations support their party group leadership, I was able to show that a reverse loyalty logic is at
work in relations between the national party delegations and the party group leadership. Frequent voting defections on the part of national party delegations are interpreted as the voicing of dissatisfaction with party group positions. The loyalty of the national party delegations consists of their non-exit from the party group, despite their dissatisfaction with the group performance. The party group leadership issues positive sanctions to members of these national party delegations as pay-offs for the reduced gains that these delegations receive from the enacted party group positions. The party group leadership needs to adhere to this reverse loyalty logic because the exit of a national party delegation would reduce the party group’s voting power permanently, while voting defections by the national party delegation lead to only a temporary loss of voting power. The ability of the party group leadership to discipline its members is buffered by the national party delegations. The leadership can discipline party group members only after it has taken into account the aggregated voting loyalty of their national party delegations.

The strength of rebellious national party delegations to defy being disciplined by the party group leadership is the most important finding of this study. The party groups are more than just loose associations of national party delegations that are totally dependent on each other’s voluntary cooperation. They have established a powerful party group leadership which has agenda-setting powers at Plenary Assembly meetings of the party group and is able to re-delegate agenda-setting powers to median party group members on the parliamentary committees. But although the party group leadership can discipline individual party group members for their voting behaviour, it does not have the disciplinary powers to punish the voting defections of its national party delegations. The party group leadership cannot pressure national party delegations to vote with the party group line. The party groups are therefore partly dependent on the voluntary voting support of the national party delegations to achieve voting cohesion. In sum, the party group leadership can increase voting cohesion by ensuring the adoption of median party group positions, disciplining individual party group members and offering positive sanctions to members from rebellious national party delegations. The repercussions of this finding for the role that political parties can play in the democratisation of the EU will be discussed in the final section of this concluding chapter.

Here, I shall only briefly point towards the future prospects of party discipline in the European Parliament. Due to the two rounds of Eastern European enlargement in May 2004 and January 2007, which introduced 12 new member states to the EU, the number of MEPs temporarily increased to 785, but it will be reduced to 750 after the next election. The latest research shows that the party groups have largely been able to maintain their high cohesion levels in the first half of the sixth parliament (2004–2006), despite an increase in preference heterogeneity (Hix and Noury 2008:8). But this might become increasingly difficult to achieve for the EPP-ED group. This
study has shown that the EPP-ED group has disciplinary powers through the allocation of legislative reports, while the Socialist party group leadership is not able to discipline its members by denying access to legislative reports. The differences in the disciplinary powers of the two party groups might be explained by the fact that the EPP-ED Committee Coordinators were appointed centrally at party group meetings, while the Socialist party group members were appointed by the party group members on the respective parliamentary committees. If this explanation is correct, the EPP-ED might find it increasingly difficult to apply disciplinary mechanisms at all in future because it has reverted to a decentralised system of Committee Coordinator appointments.\textsuperscript{89} The loss of influence over the committee process through the decentralised appointment of Committee Coordinators was pointed out as a source of frustration for the EPP-ED party group leadership by one interviewee.\textsuperscript{90} But the conclusion that party group discipline in the EPP-ED group was administered through the centrally elected Committee Coordinators is only tentative and must be evaluated against new empirical evidence.

The results of this study, however, still point towards the pivotal role that Committee Coordinators play in the parliamentary committees. Although Committee Coordinators are not recognised as official positions in the rules of procedure of the European Parliament, they play a decisive role in the distribution of reports between the party groups and within their own party group. Previous research has pointed out the centrality of Committee Chairs in the working process of the committees. This study has corroborated that Committee Chairs receive a disproportionately large number of co-decision rapporteurships. But by following up what kinds of report Committee Chairs received it could be shown that most were of low salience or continuations of failed rapporteurships. Thus, Committee Chairs are more likely to act as mediators than as strong partisan actors within the committees. According to the findings of this study, the most important partisan actors on the committees are the Committee Coordinators. This is of particular importance for studies of legislative decision-making in the European Parliament, as well as for lobbying and interest intermediation studies.

\textit{Suggestions for further research}

Research on the European Parliament has room for improvement when it comes to predicting differences between the party groups. This is also true for this study. From the outset the two disciplinary scenarios presented in Chapter 3 made the same theoretical predictions for the EPP-ED and PSE

\textsuperscript{89} The change in the Committee Coordinator nomination process was not noted in the new rules of procedure (2004). However, email correspondence and interview evidence have confirmed the de facto change in procedure (Interviews 1 and 8, and email correspondence 1).

\textsuperscript{90} Interview 1.
groups. The members of both party groups were believed to have the same incentives to join a party group and to delegate disciplinary and agenda-setting powers to the party group leadership. But the results of this study have revealed differences between the party groups. Most markedly, these differences appear in the way in which the party group leadership disciplines party group members for their voting behaviour. While the Socialist party group disciplines its members by means of promotions and demotions in the committee assignment process, the EPP-ED group uses the allocation of legislative rapporteurships. The blindness to the differences between party groups might derive from the frequent application to the European Parliament of American theories of political parties. The goal of these theories is to outline the differences between the majority and minority party in the US Congress. Matters such as party family and differences in party organisational structure do not figure prominently in these theories. Thus, future research could derive a better understanding of the differences between the party groups of the European Parliament by applying comparative theories of political parties that highlight differences in organisational structure and take into account historical and party family traditions.

A further interesting avenue for future research would be to analyse the party group internal decision-making process in greater detail. I have shown that the party group leadership appoints committee members who have close policy preferences to the party group median as Rapporteurs for important legislative proposals. But it is unclear whether the party group leadership trustingly accepts a Rapporteur’s proposal as the party group position, or whether it uses its agenda-setting power at the plenary meeting of the party group to manipulate the proposed party group position. It might also be the case that other actors within the party group have a prominent influence on the legislative decision-making process, for example, Committee Coordinators or internal working groups. Through case study research and interviews with key decision-makers future research could trace the development of party group positions throughout the legislative process in the European Parliament. Co-decision legislation would function as an excellent testing ground because it has to go through several readings in the legislative decision-making process. At the first reading all MEPs can propose amendments to a legislative proposal at the committee stage: for example, at the first reading of the services directive proposal the Internal Market and Consumer Protection committee (IMCO) received over 1100 amendments and adopted 151 of them (Lindberg 2007). At the plenary stage amendments may be tabled by the responsible committee, a party group or a group of 37 MEPs (EuropeanParliament 2004:Rule 150). At the committee stage of the second reading the Parliament’s rules of procedure stipulate that ‘only members or permanent substitutes of that committee may table proposals for rejection and amendments’ (EuropeanParliament 2004:Rule59.4). Thus, by means of a content analysis of the proposed amendments at the first reading of the co-
decision procedure researchers could identify possible conflict lines within and between the party groups. Tracing the success of the amendments throughout the legislative process – that is, their adoption at different stages in the committee and in the plenary – it should be possible to show which actors or factions within the party group were most successful in determining the final position of the party group. This would considerably increase the understanding of the legislative decision-making process and the party group internal position formation process.

**Implications for the democratisation of the EU**

The question which motivated me to conduct this research project was whether political parties could play a role in the democratisation of the EU. I outlined in the Introduction that some scholars – most prominent amongst them Simon Hix – have argued that political parties could and should play a greater role in the political process of the EU (Føllesdal and Hix 2006; Hix 2006; Hix 2008; Thomassen and Schmitt 2004; Zürn 2006). Others have pointed out the big risks to which the EU would be exposed if it were to allow more public competition between political parties (Bartolini 2006; Majone 2005; Scharpf 1999). Both sides agree that the EU is currently suffering a legitimacy problem, but they take different stances concerning whether political parties are the remedy or the cause of this problem. In what follows, I will briefly review the main arguments of this debate, before turning to the interpretation of the results of this study in light of the debate.

**The optimist view**

In their prize-winning article Føllesdal and Hix argue that European decision-makers should be held accountable for their actions through standard democratic procedures because European policies are redistributive, that is, they create winners and losers (Føllesdal and Hix 2006:542-543). Moravcsik, however, has argued that the EU is democratic since its outcomes respond to the European median voter due to the multitude of checks and balances in the European decision-making process (Moravcsik 2002, quoted in Føllesdal and Hix 2006:544). This criticism is countered by Føllesdal and Hix as follows:

> [T]he match between preferences and policies should not only occur as a matter of fact, but there should be mechanisms that reliably ensure that this power will indeed be so used. Democratic accountability is one such mechanism that sometimes at least serves to kick rascals out and sometimes serves to prevent domination and disempowerment. (Føllesdal and Hix 2006:545)
The electoral competition of political parties is the democratic procedure through which decision-makers are held accountable for their actions. Electoral competition also allows voters to form their own opinions about different policies, since they do not have fixed preferences about each and every policy issue; it also stimulates a public debate about policies, which may eventually create a common political identity (Føllesdal and Hix 2006:544). Summarising the current debate on the EU’s democratic deficit, Simon Hix shows that the EU shares all the procedural aspects of a representative democracy, but fails to function like a democracy due to the lack of party competition:

What is missing is the substantive content of democracy: a battle for control of political power and the policy agenda at the European level, between rival groups of leaders with rival policy platforms, where the winners and losers of this battle are clearly identifiable, and where the winners have a reasonable chance of losing next time round and the losers have a reasonable chance of winning. (Hix 2008:75)

He arrives at this conclusion because there is no electoral contest for the executive leadership of the EU and because the elections to the European Parliament are second-order national elections, in which national issues and the performance of the national government determine the electoral success of national parties. MEPs’ legislative performance in the previous term of the European Parliament has no effect on these elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Schmitt 2005). According to Hix, the solution to this problem is to increase the politicisation of the EU through more party competition (Hix 2008:75-76).

The future success of such an endeavour rests on the stability of the party system at the European level. As outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, a functioning party system is said to exist in the European Parliament because the party groups vote cohesively and compete against each other on the left-right dimension. Based on these findings and the first signs of partisan politics in the Council and the Commission, Hix claims that the EU is ready for more open party competition at the European level (Hix 2008:110-123). Instead of arguing that the EU needs to be developed into a full-blown democracy in which the transnational party groups selected the candidates for the European elections and in which the Commission, as the EU’s executive, would be recruited from the majority coalition in the European Parliament, he puts forward a proposal for a limited version of democracy that can be accomplished without any changes in the constitutional structure of the EU. In order to increase the political contestation for the European policy agenda at

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91 In fact, Hix argues that the EU is not only ready for more party competition, but that an increasing degree of politicisation is inevitable because the EU is engaging more and more in redistributive politics (Hix 2008:92–105).
the elections to the European Parliament, Hix suggests that the European Parliament should abandon its practice of distributing all internal office positions according to the rule of proportionality.\textsuperscript{92} He argues that

if the key offices inside the European Parliament were allocated on a less proportional basis, the stakes [in the European elections] would be considerably higher and there would be a much clearer connection between voters’ choices in European Parliament elections and the direction of the EU policy agenda. (Hix 2008:132, content in parenthesis added)

In sum, he recommends that the Presidency of the Parliament should be allocated to the largest party group for the full parliamentary term instead of the current half-term compromise solution between two party groups, and he proposes that Committee Chairs and Rapporteurs should be allocated in a way that favours the largest party groups.\textsuperscript{93} The consequences of these changes are predicted to be twofold. First, national parties would have incentives to explain to their voters that something is at stake in the European elections and their policy package would benefit voters if their political party had more influence in the European Parliament. Secondly, a broad coalition is likely to emerge as the largest party group in order to secure more benefits in the European Parliament. This large party group would be more visible to the public and its performance would be more likely to be evaluated in the upcoming election, which would increase accountability (ibid:131–135).

\textit{The sceptical view}

The implementation of representative democracy at the European level and the calls for an increasing politicisation of the European policy-making process are, however, not supported universally. Scharpf has argued that the implementation of majority decision-making at European level is inherently flawed because EU citizens do not form a European demos that shares historical, cultural and ethnic similarities, as well as a common language (Scharpf 1999:18). Due to the lack of a European demos, citizens from one member state would not accept losing out to citizens from another member state in a majority vote at the European level. Scharpf argues that the EU has been able to function so far precisely because its policies have remained below a threshold where they could have been perceived by the citizens. Politicisation of the EU would lower the threshold for the perception of European legislation and would create strong discontent amongst European citizens (Scharpf 1999:19).

\textsuperscript{92} I limit the discussion to the changes that Hix proposed for the European Parliament because the results of this study relate only to the party groups of the European Parliament.

\textsuperscript{93} Hix (2008) also makes suggestions for politicisation of the Council and the Commission, which will not be discussed here.
The most recent warning against an increase in the politicisation of the EU was voiced by Stefano Bartolini. He argues that the danger of more public contestation at the European level is that constitutive questions – that is, questions about the constitutional structure of the EU and the pace of European integration – would come to the top of the agenda and that the party groups of the European Parliament are too weak to endure the political pressure that would arise from more public forms of political contestation (Bartolini 2006). If public awareness of the EU policy-making process increased, it would be difficult for political parties to keep constitutive questions off the agenda because the losers in the majority decision-making process are likely to contest the EU as a legitimate political system. The increasing relevance of constitutional questions would also be difficult for parties to manage because the public in general is more eurosceptical than the party elites and the constituency base of many national parties is split on the issue of European integration (ibid:34–35). Furthermore, Bartoloni points out that feasibility of the proposal to increase party competition in the EU rests on the assumption that the party groups of the European Parliament can generate voting cohesion, which is surprising given the European Parliament’s unfavourable institutional setting in the EU’s political system (see Section 2.3). Bartolini draws the conclusion that the party groups have been able to maintain voting cohesion because the European Parliament is sheltered from electoral pressures and public scrutiny:

The low ideological intensity in the EP, due to its remoteness from partisan politics and electoral competition, allows for compromises and alliances to be made that do not generate political and/or electoral costs back home. … If this is true, then ‘politicisation’, rather than strengthening Euro-parties can make their life far more problematic. (ibid.: 37)

Concluding remarks

The perils or virtues of increasing politicisation of the EU hinge on the role that the transnational party groups of the European Parliament might be able play in the process. If the party groups could maintain their voting cohesion and competitiveness despite increasing public pressure much might be gained from limited democratic politics, since voters could formulate opinions on European policies; also, a public discourse and a European identity might arise and decision-makers could more easily be held accountable by their voters. But party group voting cohesion might decrease or the party groups could even collapse under public pressure from an electorate that is not ready to accept being on the losing side in a majority decision-making process at the European level. Thus, the risk of more public party competition is a loss of decision-making capability in the EU because voting cohesion is an important prerequisite for stability in the policy-making process.
In order to predict the fate of the party groups in a more politicised EU it is important to understand how party group voting cohesion is currently generated in the European Parliament.

The small contribution made by this study to the outlined debate is the finding that the party groups are not able to generate voting cohesion against the will of their national party delegations. It is true that the party groups in the European Parliament have become more than just the sum of their national party delegations. They have established a party group leadership that has agenda-setting power in the party group internal decision-making process and is able to discipline individual party group members who vote against the party group line. But the party group leadership cannot pressure national party delegations to support the party group; on the contrary, the party group leaders have to buy the support of the most rebellious national party delegations by promoting their members in the committee assignment process and providing them with important rapporteurships. Thus, arising electoral and public pressures could not be offset by any disciplinary actions that the party group leadership could apply against national party delegations in the European Parliament. If further politicisation of the EU led to more public discontent and electoral pressures from national parties, before the positive democratic aspects could come into effect the party groups could not fend off such public pressure.

My suggestion is therefore that the politicisation of the EU should be built from below through a dialogue of national parties with their voters, before any further politicisation, through either limited or full-blown democracy, is imposed at the European level. National parties need to start to explain to voters why it is necessary for them to join with other national parties and why they need to reach compromises in the European policy-making process. This amounts to asking their voters for a real European mandate to pursue their policies at the European level. The dialogue between national parties and their voters about European issues should occur not only within the framework of elections to the European Parliament, but also in national elections because the government represents voters in the Council. If the dialogue could be undertaken on a continuous basis, voters could even evaluate the decisions taken at European level and hold the European decision-makers accountable for their actions. Thus, in the end I agree with the optimistic view that political parties should play a more pronounced role in the European policy-making process in order to establish legitimacy and accountability in the EU, but I would advocate a politicisation of European policy-making that begins at the national level.
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