Bridge over troubled voters?

Coordination between EU governments and European Parliamentarians

Rebecca Wolffberg

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute

Florence, February, 2016 (defence)
European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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Rebecca Wolffberg
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Abstract

The project explores, maps and analyzes the coordination that takes place between national governments of the EU member states and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in parallel with the legislative processes of the EU. Starting from a descriptive section depicting coordination in a broad selection of member states, France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Denmark, Slovakia, and Poland, and their MEPs, the questions are posed: 1) Why do EU member states’ governments coordinate with their MEPs in the EU legislative process? 2) Why does coordination vary between the member state governments? 3) How do MEPs perceive and receive the coordination efforts by the governments? With the point of departure in rational choice institutionalism, the project assesses the extent to which the efforts by the national governments to coordinate with the MEPs, are a direct function of the institutional changes to the EU legislative process that have shifted the balance of power between the Council and the European Parliament. The project proceeds to seek to determine the main factors influencing the extent and mode of coordination between the actors, and the reasons member states differ in their approach to coordination. Supplemented with a sociological institutionalist perspective, and based on the contrasting characteristics of the countries, the analysis focuses, in particular, on the sizes and political systems of the member states, as well as on the duration of their EU membership. Finally, MEPs’ receptiveness to coordination is investigated, and the effect of national and political affiliation on MEPs’ openness to the input they receive from the national governments is analyzed.

Through a qualitative analysis of empirical data gathered from semi-structured interviews with government officials, MEPs and MEP assistants from the selected countries, the project finds that while governments have reacted to the increased relative influence of the European Parliament by seeking to influence legislative negotiations via the MEPs, the development, in several countries, has been less linear than hypothesized. The duration of states’ EU membership and the overall amount of resources the governments allocate to influencing EU negotiations are among the main factors found to affect the governments’ level of coordination. The political system of the member states is found to have little influence on the extent or manner of coordination efforts by the governments. In general, MEPs are found to have a positive view of engaging with, and receiving input from the governments of both a political and technical nature. This positive view largely cuts across the domestic party political divide and, albeit to a lesser extent, across national lines. It is even found that, among some MEPs, an increased effort by the national governments to engage bilaterally with the MEPs, simultaneously with the formal legislative negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament, would be welcomed.
List of abbreviations

- European Parliament………………………………………………………………………………EP
- National government…………………………………………………………………………….NG
- Member of the European Parliament…………………………………………………………MEP
- Member of the European Parliament Assistant………………………………………………MEPA
- European Parliament Political Group…………………………………………………………EPG
- Permanent Representation………………………………………………………………………..PermRep

National government interviewees:

- Danish national government interviewee.................................................................DK-NG1
- French national government interviewee...............................................................FR-NG
- German national government interviewee.............................................................G-NG
- Polish national government interviewee.................................................................PL-NG
- Slovakian national government interviewee...........................................................SL-NG
- Spanish national government interviewee...............................................................SP-NG
- United Kingdom national government interviewee...................................................UK-NG

European Parliament interviewees:

- Danish European Parliament interviewee...............................................................DK-EP
- French European Parliament interviewee...............................................................FR-EP
- German European Parliament interviewee.............................................................G-EP
- Polish European Parliament interviewee.................................................................PL-EP
- Slovakian European Parliament interviewee............................................................SL-EP
- Spanish European Parliament interviewee...............................................................SP-EP
- United Kingdom European Parliament interviewee...................................................UK-EP

1 For all interviewees, the number of the interviewee is indicated after the indication of nationality and institutional affiliation, for instance DK-NG1, DK-NG2/DK-EP1, DK-EP2...
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1. Introduction

1.1. How the research began – signs of change

Since its inception, the EU has been at the center of intense discussions about what form of democratic system it should have and what type of structure would be most appropriate for the tasks the EU should aim to take on in the future. Scholars and politicians have offered many very diverse visions of a future EU democracy ranging from aspirations to a fully federal Union to a dismantling of EU powers and the Euro. A central issue in the debate about which competences should be delegated to the EU institutions and how these powers should be administrated has been the role of the European Parliament (EP).

The EP’s competences have gradually been expanded over time both in terms of policy areas covered and the degree of influence which the EP exerts over these policy areas. One of the most recent examples of this has been the coining of the title “Ordinary legislative procedure” in the Lisbon Treaty in place of the previous title of “co-decision procedure”. In the Lisbon Treaty the national governments of the member states (NGs) agreed to elevate the EP to co-legislator with the Council in nearly all legislation passed in the EU, putting it on equal footing with the Council in the majority of EU legislative negotiations, and at the same time further widening the policy area of competences managed at EU level.

While working in the EP and in the Danish Parliament, and during my studies of the EU legislative procedure, I became aware of the occurrence of, and apparently substantial influence of the coordination between member state governments and the MEPs of the member state on specific pieces of legislation. Though the legislative procedures themselves have been the focus of numerous studies and analyses, this particular interaction which I believe is highly important for many national government representations and which is gaining momentum and awareness among those involved in the EU’s legislative processes, has yet to be analyzed systematically (for examples of literature mentioning the interaction see e.g. Kassim et al:2001, Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton:2011, Rasmussen in Wivel:2014, Wolffberg:2014, and Roederer-Rynning:2015, who provide samples of such information). With this research project I set out to do just that.
Despite having agreed to the institutional developments that have considerably increased the EP’s power relative to the Council, efforts by the NGs to coordinate informally outside the legislative processes occur alongside the formal procedures. This indicates that the NGs are not going to remain within the formal system of legislative interaction, thus complicating the EU’s legislative process and democratic structure. Through explorative preliminary fieldwork, I found that this form of contact between NGs and MEPs on specific EU legislative proposals has become a normal mode of interaction for many member state representatives, cutting across political affiliation and even geographical borders. Coordination has become a regular practice by the member state governments and their PermReps, albeit with variation in terms of the extent and mode of the practice. Coordination in some form or other seems to exist in most member states’ NG-MEP relations, varying between activities such as government officials sending voting recommendations to the MEPs, providing MEPs with technical information and amendment suggestions, engaging in ongoing bilateral communication regarding the status of the legislative negotiations and discussing potential compromise agreements.

This development is puzzling for two reasons. Firstly, the member states all agreed to delegate sovereignty to the EU level by gradually elevating an increasing number of policy areas to the EU level, and they gave up even more national power with the Lisbon Treaty’s promotion of the co-decision procedure to become the “ordinary legislative procedure”, i.e. the procedure predominantly used at EU level. This included increasing the application of qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council. With these developments, mutually agreed upon by the NGs it would seem at first glance paradoxical that the same NGs then turn around and seek to circumvent this very process by influencing the EP informally. My preliminary research seems to indicate that while a delegation of power from national governments to the supranational level was adopted by Treaty, carrying this out in practice is not as straightforward a process. Legislators will, to a certain extent, invariably seek to exert influence in ways they expect they may achieve the greatest outcome.

Secondly, a puzzling aspect of coordination is that the various NGs do not conduct their interaction with the MEPs in similar ways, or to the same extent. Though preliminary research shows that coordination is perceived across the member states’ NGs to be advantageous, the NGs’ approaches to coordination differs notably, both in terms of mode and extent of coordination. Why is that?

From these puzzling developments a third point of interest emerges: how does the effort by the NGs to engage with MEPs and influence the legislative negotiations through the European Parliament look in the eyes of the MEPs, and how is the input from the NGs received in the EP? These questions spur the research questions outlined below.
1.2. Research questions and purpose of the research

Under the ordinary legislative procedure MEPs and member state governments produce legislation that affects all EU citizens. Examining the nature and extent of the bilateral coordination between members of two of the three main legislative institutions of the EU is essential for a complete knowledge and understanding of the EU legislative system. In this project the nature and development of this interaction is analyzed, focusing on the following research questions:

1. **Why do EU member states’ governments coordinate with their MEPs in the EU legislative process?**

2. **Why does coordination vary between the member state governments?**

3. **How do MEPs perceive and receive the coordination efforts by the governments?**

The aim of this project is two-fold. In the first part of the project, question 1 and 2, the reason for the development of the various modes of NG-MEP interaction is investigated. Based on a hypothesis that the previously described institutional developments of the EU legislative process have fostered this practice, the first two research questions deal with the problem of the viability of establishing a supranational democratic system in which certain actors are intended to act not as agents of their member state but as geographically detached political representatives. The question of “why do they all coordinate differently?” follows closely the question of why the governments seek to coordinate with the MEPs. One might have expected a high degree of similarity in the efforts to coordinate, given that the institutional developments at EU level affect all member states and their governments equally. In answering this question, the analysis is therefore broadened beyond including just EU institutional rules to also include differences at national level.

The second dimension of the project is an investigation of the effect on the MEPs of coordination with the NGs. This second part of the project (research question 3) emerged as the research advanced. It is therefore less comprehensive in nature and, in some aspects, the data is only sufficiently substantial to support conclusions on an anecdotal basis. The 3rd research question addresses the perception of the interaction by the MEPs, the extent to which they include and rely on the input from the NGs in their
work. It is not intended to be a strict causal analysis of the effect of coordination on a specific legislative outcome, but rather an attempt to gain an understanding of the causal mechanism that drives the interaction from the EP actors’ side and how the activity is viewed from this perspective.

Understanding the effects of coordination on the work of the MEPs is essential for understanding the MEP’s relations with their negotiation counterparts in the Council. The analysis of the perspective of the MEPs can be viewed as an exploratory investigation into the effects of coordination. The answers to research question 3 will indicate to what extent coordination should be considered a factor to be reckoned with in the EP and whether it requires further research in terms of measuring more comprehensively the effect of the interaction. Consequently, this has implications for how coordination, de facto, affects the possibility of MEPs to serve as directly elected representatives of the EU constituents rather than the extended arm of their national government, which is already represented in the Council.

With this project, I intend to shed light on this interaction which has, so far, been neglected in the large body of literature concerning the EP’s relation with the Council and the individual members of the two institutions; an interaction that potentially has significant impact on the EU legislative negotiations, and for achieving a transparent and accountable legislative system in the EU.

Over time, MEPs’ relation to their national party has been thoroughly studied in various analyses of roll call votes, MEP surveys and more (e.g. Katz:1999, Hix and Gabel:2007, Ringe:2010, Mühlböck:2012). The relation between the NG and the MEP is not, however, the same as the relation between the MEP and the national party, even if the MEP belongs to a government party. The staff of the party and the staff of the government are not identical. There is, of course, a greater likelihood of overlap of political positions in cases where the MEP belongs to an NG party, and MEPs may be more likely to be motivated to be open to the input from the national government in this case. Coordination on specific legislative cases between NGs and all MEPs, irrespective of and outside the context of party affiliation, has yet to be mapped.

In addition to the analysis of these issues and the assessment of the hypotheses, the project therefore also consists, to a significant extent, in the exploration and mapping of this hitherto sparsely explored activity. The project will thus allocate a substantial share of attention to this descriptive purpose.
1.3. Setting the scene for coordination

Before getting to the heart of the matter – what coordination is and how to study it – it is useful to briefly review in more details the context within which coordination takes place, namely the main legislative institutions and processes of the EU, as they have evolved over time.

Much has been written about the political system of the EU and many analyses aim to explain how we can best understand the development and constellation of the EU institutions that create the foundation for – and shape – the relation between the member states. Some essential features of the EU system have been identified by scholars, who subscribe to different perceptions of the EU and its institutional construction and how this affects the NG-MEP relation. These perspectives address different but significant aspects that will form the contextual background for my analysis of the interaction between the central actors of the project, including structural aspects of the EU legislative process from national level to EU level, the pooling of competences at EU level versus the checks and balances of the system, the key arenas for interaction, and central factors of intra institutional and inter institutional power dynamics that shape the arena for the NG-MEP coordination.

1.3.a. The member states – in new and unfamiliar circumstances

As a system in a state of constant evolution, and with no stated goal of a final fixed form, the EU has by some been described as a system “sui generis” – one of a kind institutional setup, incomparable with other international organizations but also not the same as a nation state (Mény:2003). A recent example of this was given by the ECJ itself in connection with the question of the EU accessing the European Convention of Human Rights\(^2\), and whether the EU was a system that qualified to enter into this relation. As such, the classification of the EU remains an issue of contention and contestation among politicians and scholars alike. Further, the perceptions of what the EU is and what it should be differs greatly between and within the member states. One need only look at the different member state positions on how to handle the financial crisis and the Eurozone in the future to see the very different perceptions of the future of the EU and its institutional setup. Other examples of contention are the internal domestic political debates, e.g. in connection with the UK’s impending referendum on whether to leave the EU altogether and the ongoing Danish debates\(^3\) on whether to abolish or change the

\(^2\) http://www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-priorities-2020/court-justice-rejects-draft-agreement-eu-accession-echr-310983

\(^3\) And its, at the time of writing, upcoming referendum on at least one of these opt-outs
conditions for its opt-outs. Furthermore, for many actors it is unclear exactly where, when, how and by whom EU decisions are made. Scrutiny of the EU legislative procedure at national level remains difficult (Novak:2011, Dagnis and Martinsen:2014, Wolffberg:2008).

In this ongoing political experiment the member states continuously venture into new territories of governance, and are faced with a type of union with which the actors have little prior experience. It is in this context that actions of the member states and MEPs and reactions to the institutional developments must be understood: as the product of a highly complex system with novel allocations of competences, checks and balances, in which actors develop new “un-charted” constellations of interaction. Many actors are not aware of exactly where decisions are made, and which actors cooperate and when.

Without “familiar” national or international institutional patterns, the legislative process is not guaranteed to follow traditional dynamics or even formal processes. This has created space for new and unexpected modes of legislative activities that are not in line with the process member states intended to develop (Farrell and Héritier:2007). Trialogues and early reading agreements are a particularly apt example, and coordination between the NGs and MEPs is another. Furthermore, this environment enables alliances and cooperation – and opposition – between actors which would have been unlikely in “normal” settings. An example is the notion of the MEPs having “two principals” – two party affiliations to whom MEPs owe their allegiance, and which do not always agree on policy positions – making the work of the MEPs who, as regular MPs, are elected through national parties but carry out their work through the EPG framework, a complicated and not easily predictable affair (Hix:2002). I return to this in chapter 2 and go into greater detail about the developments of the relation between the Council and the EP. Here there is room for innovation and changes within the existing legislative system.

1.3.b. Different, yet familiar features

While unique in its construction, the EU bears resemblance to aspects of other institutional constructions. EU literature is abundant with comparisons between the EU and various other political entities, be it parliamentary democracies, federal states, or international organizations. In one of the larger strands within this field of research, the EU has been described as a system of multi-leveled governance. Observing the EU through the lens of multi-level governance, the multifaceted nature of the EU decision making process and the dispersion of power is underscored (Hooghe and Marks:2003). Decisions are made in many different forums at subnational, national and supranational level, and a
variety of new actors are included in the decision making process, e.g. by including a wider amount of experts and stakeholders when drafting Commission proposals. Competences within the EU are divided among several levels (EU, national, regional, local) in “a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers” (Marks:2003, p. 392). The result is a decentralization of decision-making, removed some distance from the NGs. The institutional construction of the EU grants new actors access to several different loci for the decision making process which they would previously not have had, rendering decision making highly diffuse and more difficult to manage for the NGs. The member states are just one (albeit central) actor competing for their interests along with other member states, regional governments and interest organizations, as well as EU institutions which compete with them for influence to ensure that the decisions made at central level will have the best possible outcome for themselves.

While multi-level governance can be perceived as a quite loose, umbrella-like concept seeking to encompass the variety of actors in the political process in the EU, a particular strand of research addressing the multi-leveled nature of the EU has gone so far as to classify the EU as a (quasi) federal state. This perspective presents certain elements that are very helpful in understanding the way the EU member states participate in the supranational level of decision making, by drawing on similar patterns of experience from federal states and their sub-central levels of government.

A primary feature of the EU that is also characteristic of federal states, is the allocation of certain powers to a central “federal” (supra-national EU) level, while other powers are retained at sub-central (national member state) level. Here one can see a clear parallel to the EP and the Council as a two-chamber construction, and the phenomenon of political representatives drawn from lower levels to make communal solutions at a higher level affecting the collective area of representation. The EU has a bicameral-like structure in which the NGs and MEPs – both actors drawn from the national level – meet in a new institutional context in which new rules apply, old alliances are less predetermined, and the actors are far removed from the national arena and public (and parliamentary) scrutiny. The EPGs are by definition large groupings consisting of delegations drafted from member states’ national parties, rather than actual EP political parties (Wallace, Wallace and Pollack:2005), and the likelihood that certain national parties take a different position at national level than the EPG does at EU level is reasonable. Negotiations with MEPs at EU level can take turns which would not necessarily have been the case at national level (e.g. Mühlböck:2013).
NGs have surrendered sovereignty to the EU level, and by giving up their veto power in the majority of the policy areas delegated to the EU level, they have effectively relegated themselves to the role of sub-central governments in these areas. Subsequently, the institutional rules of the EU have been agreed to by all member states. Controlling distribution of power has, however, turned out to be harder in practice than in principle. Informal and unexpected changes have occurred in the EU decision making procedures which reflect this tension between interests seeking to push for a development in the direction of centralizing power with the MS and those which seek a centrifugal development channeling power away from the NGs. I return to this and elaborate on the *unintended developments* in chapter 2. This “tug and pull” between levels and domains of power bears great resemblance to the struggles that can be seen in federal states, as e.g. in the USA, where the debate about division of competences between the federal and state level is ongoing. The EU has, in fact, from several perspectives been compared to a federal system (Trechsel and Glencross:2010). Remembering that when NGs go to the Council they are part of this competition for power and are seeking to gain advantages for their own sub-unit (member state), is key to understanding the NGs’ strategic interaction with other actors. The push by Southern European member states to alleviate the debt crisis of the southern member states in opposition to the Northern European member states’ (Germany in particular) requirements of austerity reforms is a clear example of NGs fighting for national interests in a larger political arena of which they are not fully in control.

The notion of a federal state of Europe is challenged, however, for several reasons. Central among these is that there is no separate centralized level of independent directly elected government, and the competences of the supra-national level are, fundamentally, contingent upon consent at the national level (Moravcsik:1998), just as the actors of both of the EU institutions that have the power to adopt legislation - the Council and the EP – are derived directly from the member states. Hence, though a centralized decision making forum has been created, in which (following the Lisbon Treaty) no country has a veto power in the majority of the legislation that is passed, there is a strong sub-central system of member states’ governments in which is retained the power to amend the “constitution” (the EU treaties) and the power to approve or reject EU treaty changes. This must be kept in mind when analyzing the member state government’s reactions to their agreement to increase the power of the EP relative to the NGs in the Council.
1.3.c. Member states in charge

Though the member states’ sovereign influence on domestic policy has thus been challenged in a way that yields much power to rival sub-central units, these entities cannot restrain the member states by coercion in the same way a federal state can. “Unlike most classic federations, such as the United States, the European Union will most likely continue to be marked by the presumption of freedom of exit.” (Stepan:1999). Liberal intergovernmentalists have made a strong point of maintaining that the member states are in the driver’s seat.

Generally it must be assumed, that although member states agree to surrender a certain amount of sovereignty with an uneven representation at EU level, they will keep fighting for legislative outcomes that suit their preferences (as illustrated for instance in the reluctance to abandon the principle of having a Commissioner from each member state). The common acceptance of the validity of the member states’ preferences is also reflected in the, still persisting, tradition of seeking consensus in the Council, so as not to go too far against the will of any member state. The role of the NGs as national representatives when in Brussels, which seek to maximize their output at EU level has been regarded as central by those emphasizing the intergovernmental aspect of the EU. It is the mission of each NG to “bring back as much bacon” as possible to their own domestic electorate, to whom they are ultimately accountable.

The work of numerous scholars, from liberal intergovernmentalists to neo-functionalists, illustrates that the EU is a complex entity with many different dynamics and interrelated actors at play simultaneously. It is within this unique setting that the efforts of the member state governments’ to coordinate with MEPs must be understood. The EU is a political organization under constant development that has fostered new and unfamiliar patterns of interaction (Hooghe and Marks:2008). Relations between national politicians have been deconstructed and reconstructed at EU level. At the same time, the legislative negotiations and institutional (“constitutional”) constructions continue to demonstrate strong features of national identity and the promotion of national interests, which anchor the multi-leveled policy making process in the member states and, as will be elaborated in the following chapter, continues to link the activity of the MEPs in the EP to their member states.

One of these new patterns of interactions, brought about by the reconfiguration of interrelations of the actors, but at the same time heavily influenced by the nation state element of the EU, is the coordination between the NGs and the MEPs. The institutional developments that have particularly
influenced this mode of interaction between the actors will be addressed in the beginning of the following chapter, in connection with a conceptualization of the specific activity of coordination. Following this, and closely linked to the analysis of the consequences of the institutional changes, the preferences, behavior and general interrelation of the central actors are presented. This lays the foundation upon which the hypotheses are built and the causal mechanisms to be assessed are developed.

1.4. Institutional changes: formal and informal, intentional and unintended

As previously described, the NGs and the MEPs operate in a dense institutional setting of several layers, with multiple actors and both formal and informal institutional factors. The main actors of this analysis – MEPs and NGs – must take all of these into account when deciding how to act in a given legislative situation – what Lake and Powell (1999) refer to as “strategic settings”. The changes that have happened in the EU’s institutional structure over time have added to the complexity (Kassim et al:2000). The changes both between and within the Council and the EP require that the actors reconfigure their strategies, and their preferred – and their ultimately chosen – course of action. A closer look at the actors in their institutional settings is therefore necessary to understand the context within which coordination takes place.

1.4.a. Inter-institutional changes

The EU has become an increasingly dominant arena of policy making for its now 27 member states, covering a continuously growing number of policy areas. Over time, changes in the institutional setup and the legislative procedures of the EU have shifted power within the EU, significantly strengthening the national executives while the influence of the national parliaments has gradually been diminished (Raunio:1999, Hix and Follesdahl:2006). In the EU the national executives have, to a significant extent, taken the place of the national legislatures, as they negotiate legislation to be implemented at national level in a realm far removed from the scrutiny of the national legislatures. This will be revisited later.

At the same time, the EP has been catapulted to the forefront of the legislative process (Hix and Follesdahl:2006). Originally an institution of largely symbolic value, the EP has assumed power effectively. By acting proactively, stretching the interpretation of the treaties to the fullest, the EP has strived to push the process further than the NGs might have taken it (Steunenberg and
This was done e.g. by adopting a target oriented interpretation of the rules of procedure of the Treaties as well as by asserting the democratic strength and legitimacy of the institution qua its property of being the major directly elected legislative institution of the EU. Voices in favor of a stronger EP have also promoted a strengthening of the institution as a way to increase the EU’s democratic legitimacy, which has been a priority in connection with debates on the persisting EU skepticism, demonstrated among other things in the French and Dutch referenda on the EU Constitutional Treaty.

The Council and the EP now work as equal co-legislators on the majority of the legislation passed at the EU level, following the Lisbon Treaty’s expansion of and renaming of the co-decision procedure as the Ordinary legislative procedure and following the member states’, willing or reluctant concessions of power to the EP. The Commission remains the agenda setting institution of the EU, and with its commitment to accommodate a wide group of stakeholders, the NGs are not the only voices the Commission listens to (COM(2001)428). Following the perspective of Tsebelis’ (Tsebelis:2002) focus on veto players and agenda setting power, the Council is strong because, in agreement with the EP, it can change the content of legislative proposals from the Commission. However, this still leaves the Council in need of the EP’s approval, and thus more than ever in need of an “advantageous” position by the EP.

The introduction of trialogues and the possibility of fast tracking legislation have heightened the importance of the processes that take place in the EP in the early stages of the legislative procedure, thus affecting the inter-institutional shift in balance of power even further. It has become increasingly commonplace for representatives from the EP and the Council to meet in smaller groups to hammer out a deal on a legislative proposal before the proposal reaches the floor of the plenary. What is more, negotiations are not always kept in the formal trialogues; a parallel practice has developed in the form of informal trialogue meetings, in which only an even smaller group of representatives including, at minimum, rapporteurs and representatives of the Council presidency meet. The practice of reaching agreements on legislative proposals in trialogues has grown in frequency and significance. In the period of the 7th European Parliament (2009/2014), 85% of legislation was passed at first reading, 8% at early second reading, 5% at second reading and only 2% of the legislation was subjected to a third reading (EP Conciliations and Codecision website). Legislative power has, thus, shifted not only towards the EP but to a particularly narrow arena of the EP, in a way which was not prescribed in the Treaty negotiations. This rising trend of conducting the main legislative negotiations in secluded arenas with limited participants in the attempt to reach an early agreement before the first reading in the EP has been described by Héritier and Farrell (2007) as an interstitial institutional change – the notion that actors
react to institutional constructions in a manner that changes the de facto legislative process from the formal institutional setup, enabled by incomplete contracts.

The EP’s increasing power has not escaped the attention of scholars and practitioners alike, and the EP has become a primary target for interest groups from both within and outside the EU (Wallace, Wallace and Pollack:2005), as well as of the governments of the member states. The multi-leveled structure of the EU allows alternative actors to influence legislation in part through the EP, and the race to influence the EP is a highly competitive one. With the substantial shift in the power balance between the Council and the EP has come the awareness of the importance of winning the favor of the EP and, as follows below, the influencing of key actors of the EP in formal as well as informal meetings, on a given legislative proposal is essential for any party to gaining a favorable legislative outcome.

1.4.b. Intra-institutional changes

In addition to this profound change of the inter-institutional power balance, significant intra-institutional changes and shifts in power have taken place, concentrating influence and information in the hands of certain actors who hold a privileged position of influence in the negotiations. Within the Council, an extended use of QMV has challenged the relative power of each NG vis-a-vis the other NGs. As representatives of their own national interests, each bringing their own agenda to the Council, the increase in number of EU member states increases the risk of diverging preferences in the Council. The gentleman’s agreement of the Luxembourg compromise still exists in practice, in that consensus is sought within the Council, and efforts are made to avoid leaving NGs strongly dissatisfied with the legislative outcome. However, cases of disagreement and outcomes unfavorable to NGs are no longer unheard of (Novak:2011). Adding to the difficulties of each NG of controlling the outcome of the Council is the distortion between access to information of the relais actors, particularly the Presidency, and the other NGs. Thus, while NGs that are effective at bargaining and building alliances within the Council on a certain legislative proposal may have an advantage over those who are not, the NG that holds the Council Presidency remains as the only clear winner of this development.

In the EP, the introduction of “fast track” negotiations, conducted in close cooperation with the Council in trialogue meetings, and concluded already after the first reading, has likewise strengthened the position of a select group of pivotal MEPs who are responsible for working out compromise agreements with the Council before the first plenary session in the EP (Farrell and Héritier:2004). These “relais
actors”, present in the EP, the Council, and the Commission alike, represent their institutions externally when dealing with the other institutions, and as such are the gatekeepers of information and access to negotiations. Key agreements in the production of EU legislation are often made in a forum where few individual MEPs can have a significant impact on the legislative outcome, and relatively few MEPs may shape the position of the relevant EP Committee and following plenary vote (Farrell and Héritier:2004).

While there are several advantages to the current institutional setup, among other things greater legislative efficiency, it has increased the complexity of the legislative process. Transparency of the legislative negotiations between the Council and the EP has been significantly reduced through the use of informal trialogue meetings, which has increased the discrepancy between those actors who are part of the negotiations and those who are on the sidelines. Deals struck in informal meetings yield limited access to information and to participation for the majority of the actors from both the EP and the Council. NGs cannot assume to have the same degree of influence on legislation produced at EU level today as they had prior to the surge in the use of fast tracked co-decision and the increased use of QMV in the Council. Many MEPs cannot be sure of influencing the negotiations before they come to a vote on a draft, which has already been thoroughly worked through, even often presented as a “fait accompli” agreement reached with the Council.

NGs are therefore looking to maximize their influence in new ways and, at the same time, MEPs are increasingly in need of rapid access to large amounts of information.

1.4.c. Empirical basis for the hypothesis formulation

In the years preceding this research project, this author’s experience and preliminary research had indicated that coordination is a growing phenomenon. While coordination existed prior to the Lisbon Treaty, the shift of institutional power to the EP and the development of the legislative procedures have increased the sense of urgency for the member states of affecting the position of the EP. Member states are aware of the potential for influence that resides in the EP and, in different ways, seek to access this channel of influence (Kassim:2001). Some NGs even seek to learn from each other and inform each other about their practices regarding coordination (Interviews with Danish and German diplomats, fall 2012, and Wolffberg:2009). There is a tendency among the NGs towards seeking to coordinate with those MEPs who are likely to have a say in the legislative negotiations in the EP. In fact, at least for some member states, an MEP who has the potential to sway the EP’s position is attractive for the NG,
irrespective of the individual’s policy position and party affiliation. This, however, seems to be a point on which there is some variance among the member states. Of course, this does not guarantee that the MEPs will necessarily be equally open to engage with the NGs across political and national affiliation. Many factors may affect whether an MEP will be receptive to coordination with the NG. However, based on the above mentioned literature, as well as on my research so far, it seems clear that the practice of coordination is sufficiently fruitful for the NGs to consider it a worthwhile effort. Awareness is growing among the NGs that exerting influence early and at the right places in the EP is advantageous and, if done well, can be an effective way of channeling influence into EU legislation (DK-NG1, G-NG1, Roederer-Rynning:2015).

For instance, while Costello and Thomson (2010, p. 230) find that: “the EP’s opinion is most congruent with the position of the median MEP…” they also conclude that “…when there are early agreements within the co-decision procedure, the EP’s position is also related to the position of the home member state of the rapporteur.” and that “To the extent that rapporteurs influence the EP’s opinions, they appear to be motivated by national interests.” (Ibid, p. 236).

Though such efforts may not be guaranteed to succeed, given the competition for power which also takes place within the EP, there is incentive for the NGs to seek to circumvent the traditional process of preference aggregation in the Council which – now more than ever – is not guaranteed to reflect the desired policy outcome of individual NGs. Below, the object of investigation, coordination, will be conceptualized – what it involves, for the purposes of this project, and what it will not include.
2. Concepts, theoretical foundation, and hypotheses

2.1. Theoretical underpinning of research

The theoretical foundation of the project is rational choice institutionalism. Investigating how the institutions and changes in formal and informal rules affect the actors and their relations is pivotal and is the starting point for the analysis. The underlying premise which shapes the assumptions about actors’ preferences and behavior, is that actors act in a conscious and intentional manner seeking the best outcome of an interaction (utility maximization), albeit subject to bounded rationality and within the limits of the restrictions imposed by institutional rules (Hall and Taylor:1996). The conceptualization of coordination, and the hypotheses regarding what motivates the actors to initiate the activity and what they hope to gain, are based on a rational choice institutionalist theoretical perspective as well. At the same time, it is taken into account that relations may exist or form between the actors – the representatives of the NGs and the MEPs and their assistants – which can alter the default predictions of behavior based purely on a rational choice approach. Hence, a perspective of institutionally conditioned socialization and relationship building supplements the analysis.

The concrete expression of the central assumption, that actors engage with each other to maximize their utility within the given institutional setup, is that the NGs engage with MEPs to influence the legislative process in the way the relation with the MEP best allows. If the MEPs have access to the legislative process in a way which allows them to provide detailed information, the NG will seek this out; if the two actors share policy position, or if the NG expects to be able to influence the MEP’s position, the NG will seek to make the MEP bring the NG’s policy wishes to bear upon the EP treatment of the legislative proposal; and if the MEP can open doors for the NG within the EP in terms of access to key arenas and actors, or help the NG build coalitions, the NG will aim to get the MEP to do that. These different types of coordination can be carried out by the same actor at different times and when dealing with different MEPs. Thus, this is central to the conceptualization of “coordination” as well as to the hypotheses presented in this chapter.

At the same time, it is a premise of the project design that actors are not exempt from influence by the existing norms within an institutional context, as sociological institutionalism would postulate (Ibid). Socialization is a factor to be reckoned with in the arena of EU legislation; an example of this is the socialization the PermReps undergo due to the dual role they play in the EU legislative process as representatives of their member state while engaging in collective problem solving at EU level (Kassim
et al:2001). To get a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of why coordination takes the form it does, and also a better anticipation of what outcome we might expect from coordination as regards the MEPs’ receptiveness to coordination, a sociological institutionalist perspective to the analysis of the actors’ motivations and behavior is included. This is elaborated in section 2.4.a. when discussing the causal mechanisms underlying the hypotheses. It is also a perspective added to the context of coordination, namely the aspect of “setting the scene for coordination” through ongoing relations even when no legislative case is being treated by the MEP in question.

2.2. Coordination – context and conceptualization

The conceptualization of coordination is abductively4 formed. Hence, the concept is derived from a combination of data from exploratory interviews, and theoretically derived assumptions about the actors’ behavior within the given institutional setting. As such, and in order to capture the full picture of coordination and the ways NGs may seek to go about reaching the goal of maximizing influence on EU legislation, the concept of coordination encompasses several different ways in which coordination is carried out. In connection with the conceptualization of coordination below, the manner in which coordination relates to the general relations between NGs and MEPs is also presented.

Conceptualization of Coordination:

The choice of “coordination” as the term describing the analyzed interaction study is based on several considerations. First, the term allows for the analysis to encompass the multifaceted interaction that is characteristic of coordination, including the potential for a more cooperative understanding of the interaction than a “one way communication” effort by the NGs to influence MEPs. Second, the term coordination is frequently used by the actors involved in the interaction to describe their engagement with the MEPs. In order to employ a vocabulary in harmony with the NGs’ description of their work so as to minimize misunderstandings and to increase the likelihood of obtaining information, the term of coordination was used when contacting the interviewees to ask for interviews, and it was used during the interviews, unless the interviewees themselves offered different terms and descriptions. Third, although the activity of coordination shares traits with traditional definitions of lobbying as carried out

4 Abduction, form of inference originally coined by Charles Sanders Peirce (1838-1914), and developed in his work over time. For an overview, see e.g. Plutynski:2011.
by private and public interest groups seeking to influence the political process (e.g. Baumgartner and Leech:1998), the activity is carried out by member states and, as such, differs in kind from lobbyism.

Coordination in this project shall be defined as:

“National governments seeking to inject policy preferences into negotiations on a specific legislative proposal through bilateral interaction.”

**Operationalization:**

Operationalization of the concept is manifested in the following three analytically distinct categories of coordination:

- *Informational coordination (from the NG → to the MEP):* Coordination for the purpose of providing technical information regarding a legislative proposal to the MEPs

- *Policy preference coordination (from the NG → to the MEP):* Informing MEPs about the NG’s position on a legislative proposal, including informing about specific amendments and votes

- *Strategic negotiation coordination (from the NG to the MEP ↔ and from the MEP to the NG):* Exchanging information regarding progress of negotiations in the respective institutions in order to strategically enhance the approach to said negotiations; exchanging information regarding which actors are likely to be most advantageous for the NG and MEPs to engage with; organizing a common approach to legislative negotiations.

In the corresponding definition regarding the MEPs’ share in the interaction, the analysis of MEPs’ receptiveness to coordination is defined as:

“The extent to which MEPs are willing to include information from the categories of national government coordination in their work in the EP.”

**Context of coordination and distinction from general interaction between NGs and MEPs:**

As MEPs run for election on platforms drawn from the national parties, relations between MEPs and national parties are, by definition, a pre-existing factor underlying the contact between NG and MEPs, since MEPs will be part of either the government or the opposition at national level, and must refer to this at least in relation to seeking (re-) election. As such, the national political arena from which the
MEPs are elected constitutes a significant part of the strategic setting for the actors engaged in coordination, from which their preferences and relations are partly derived. The concrete activity of coordination between NGs and MEPs in connection with specific legislative negotiations takes place outside of, but not detached from, the context of national party relations. MEPs’ relations with their NGs must be understood within this context – as being, to a certain degree, an extension of the dynamics of the national party arena. MEPs are not as subject to close scrutiny by their national party as national MPs because they do not take part in the everyday activities of the national party; just as MEPs are up for election less frequently than their national counterparts, giving MEPs more freedom to act and interact as they please. Additionally, MEPs and MEP assistants (MEPAs) find themselves in an arena with less historically and country-specific traditional norms and habits regarding whom to cooperate with, and consequently an arena in which the dynamics of the relations present in the national settings have the potential to be more flexible and reshaped.

Coordination exists alongside the general interaction among MEPs and national parties. MEPs run for election on a national party platform, which links them to their national party to some extent. Their relations with the NG will, therefore, for some MEPs, overlap if they belong to the NG. For other MEPs, their party affiliation and contact with the NG will cross these national party lines. The two types of interaction cannot be completely separated, and indeed may mutually affect each other, as national parties are by definition either directly linked to or in active opposition to the national ministries. The two different types of interaction are, however, carried out by different actors (government staff and ministers vs. party staff and national MPs) and shall, for analytical purposes, be distinguished in this project. This is the case for both MEPs belonging to the governing parties and those belonging to the opposition. In addition to the contact in practice consisting of different actors, interview data suggests that both groups of actors involved in the interaction make a distinction between the role of the NG representatives, emphasizing their capacity as representatives of the NG, as opposed to the role of representatives of national parties. More on this follows in the analysis chapters.

Coordination does not take place in a vacuum. The conceptualization of coordination in this project also distinguishes between general interaction between the actors (which would happen irrespective of the specific coordination in connection with the treatment of a concrete piece of legislation) and coordination. It must be expected that pre- or simultaneously existing relations as well as habits and patterns of interaction in other political realms (e.g. national political parties) will affect actors’ anticipation of other actors’ behavior in a strategic interaction. MEPs and NGs may build relationships
over time at national level and at EU level, and this can influence the type, frequency and effectiveness of coordination in specific instances of legislative negotiations. Just as coordination can be hypothesized to be facilitated and strengthened by a frequent and/or close relationship between the MEPs and the NG representatives, it can also be hypothesized from a sociological institutional perspective that coordination can be hampered by lack of trust or continuity of the relation.

Therefore, when analyzing coordination in the selected cases of this project, “general interaction” between the two actors (MEPs and NGs) is taken into consideration and is included as a factor that may influence the occurrence and manner of coordination and is regarded as part of the strategic setting.

2.3. Actors – preferences and context

The strategic settings - the contexts in which the actors’ engagement in coordination takes place - are a central element in forming the hypotheses. The preferences of the actors are ranked and expressed according to the premises of the given strategic settings. The concept of “strategic settings” as described by Lake and Powell (1999) and how it is used to understand the actors’ behavior in this project is presented here, after which the assumptions regarding the actors’ preferences are presented.

Institutional rules affect actors’ behavior, constraining and organizing actions, thereby making it possible for the actors involved to anticipate possible behaviors of other actors and situational outcomes. Added to this, other actors’ behavior – and even one actor’s expectation of other actors’ likely behavior – affects the choices of action and how a given actor seeks to attain his or her goals. An actor may have a certain set of ranked preferences and preferred outcomes in any given situation, but the action this actor carries out will depend on what the actor expects will most likely lead to success in the specific situational context – the strategic setting. If the actor knows that there are institutional rules that make certain actions untenable, or if the actor anticipates that other actors in the specific interaction will act in a certain way, the actor will adjust his activity according to this knowledge, and seek the best possible outcome. When analyzing coordination this becomes particularly significant, as coordination is, by definition, an action that seeks to affect the outcome of negotiations by taking advantage of 1) an informal, non-rigid institutional setting, 2) an evolving role of one of the actors involved (the MEPs) and 3) a developing interrelation between individual Council and EP members that consequently does not follow clear a line of behavior similar to that which might be found between members of the executive and legislature at national level. In this evolving climate, actors’ anticipation of other actors’ preferences and behavior becomes highly significant, and – it is hypothesized here – affects the NGs’ likelihood of
expecting gains from the interaction of coordination, as well as their perception of how to interact with MEPs to obtain the best outcome of coordination.

Specifically, if the NGs expect their preferences not to be represented sufficiently in the Council, but believe there is a chance that some MEPs might be more susceptible to their message, this will affect the way NGs strategically approach a round of legislative negotiations. Moreover, this will be influenced by the extent to which the NGs expect the individual MEPs to be receptive to engaging with the NG representatives.

This also applies to the setting in which the MEPs carry out their legislative work in the EP – the context in which the NGs seek to insert themselves and their political messages. It is essential to understand the role of the individual MEP and MEPA in the internal EP decision making process, and the interplay between different institutional roles within the EP that are central to the negotiations of the individual legislative proposals. The significance of the EP committees, the trialogues and, within them, particularly the rapporteur, shadow rapporteurs, and the committee chairperson who make up what can be called the key nodes in the fabric of EP decision making must be taken into consideration in a rational choice based analysis of actors’ choices of action. Other MEPs of importance, such as the EP President, EPG leaders, and MEPs who may be able to sway the opinion of other MEPs, such as politically prominent MEPs with significant name recognition, e.g. former heads of state, ministers, and MEPs who are known experts in their field must be included (Ringe:2010). Also committee dynamics must be considered, since there is likely to be a significant difference between a) legislative and non legislative committees, b) committees that have long been under co-decision and committees recently moved to co-decision, c) committees with issues that are highly nationally divisive (such as the AGRI committee) and committees known to be less so. And, of course, it is necessary to consider the different stages of the cycle of a legislative proposal being dealt with in the institutions: when are the critical moments of negotiations in the committee? When are decisions made in the EPGs? When are crucial votes taken in committees and the plenary? All of this must also be taken into consideration when identifying the strategic settings of the actors of both institutions.

Not discarding the complexity of the phenomenon under study and the many theoretical perspectives which may hold some explanatory value, analytical parsimony is sought by drawing mainly on the two strands of institutionalism, rational choice and sociological institutionalism, to guide the investigation and data collection. This focuses the analysis on institutional factors and how actors with a set of identified preferences pursue these within the given institutions. However, in view of the notion that
differing theoretical perspectives may yield different interpretations of the data, the interview questions will be constructed in a broad and exploratory manner, leaving the questions sufficiently open to allow for alternative explanations by the interviewees rather than those anticipated in the hypotheses, and for other theoretical perspectives to be revealed as more relevant if this turned out to be the case. As such, the project seeks to capture as much, and explain as much, of the variation as possible.

2.3.a. Actors and their preferences
The theoretical foundation for the analysis of the project, the rationality of the actors combined with the socialization they are subject to, can lead to several interpretations of the interplay of utility maximizing and socialization. Do the NG representatives or the MEPs and their assistants, for instance, act primarily out of utility maximizing motives with an eye to what the “appropriate action” in a given situation is? Do they promote their self interest by not acting in a way that might yield unfavorable reactions and outcome in the given context? Or do the norms and traditions influence actors to the extent that they only consider goals and options for behavior that would be in coherence with the normative context? It is the assumption of this project that the actors have a specific set of preferences and that they will not act in ways which go against these basic interests. They may, however, be influenced by contextual norms and expectations, and a certain degree of logic of appropriateness, which can temper and direct this pursuit. Though two actors may both have the same basic preferences, e.g. to maximize influence (NGs in particular) or maintain their job (MEPs), the course of action they end up taking to achieve this may vary from actor to actor. From MEP to MEP and from member state to member state, it will depend on the strategic setting they operate within, including their normative frame of reference. What one actor believes to be an advantageous or appropriate action which will advance their interests best vis-a-vis the other actors may be different from that of other actors with whom they interact, who are in a different strategic setting, e.g. from the opposite side of the political aisle or from a different national party political system.

In the following chapters, the definition of the individual actors is further developed, including the manner in which the concept of composite actors will be approached analytically.

As rational actors, it is assumed that NG representatives engage in coordination with the anticipation of gaining something. Additionally, relations between actors may lead them to make choices as to which actors to engage with based on personal relations, rather than criteria based on the most advantageous institutional roles and rules. On what basis do they expect this, and what do they expect to gain?
Likewise, the way MEPs engage (or do not engage) with NGs in coordination must reflect how they determine they are most likely to get the best outcome of the situation they are in – by engaging closely, engaging partly, or entirely evading contact. What determines their choice of (re)action? The concrete preferences of the actors are examined in greater detail below, drawing on the essential and most recent findings in the literature regarding how we can best understand the actors and their interrelationship in the context of their respective and shared institutional settings. This will form the basis for the hypotheses.

2.3.b. The NGs and the Council

As the NGs have become part of the legislature at EU level and have, de facto, gradually taken over a considerable part of the role of the legislature from the national legislatures, they have a unique opportunity to influence the legislation that will be implemented at national level in a forum far removed from parliamentary scrutiny – what has been described by some as “escaping to Europe”. However, NGs are also facing pressure from institutional reforms that have reduced their relative influence within the Council as well as vis-a-vis the EP. The process which can safely be said to have transformed the EP from a “Mickey Mouse parliament” to a “Mighty Mouse” legislative institution has not gone unnoticed by the NGs who have seen the power of the MEPs increase in contrast to the lessening of their own legislative influence in the Council. Some scholars have gone so far as to describe the Council as now being one of two legislative chambers in a bicameral-like construction with the EP as an equal legislative partner (Wallace, Wallace and Pollack:2005) – a far cry from the original conception of the Council as the central dominant power of the EU. Formally, as well as informally, the Council has lost influence vis-a-vis the EP, and consequently the member states have lost part of the influence they could previously exert via the Council.

The influence of the NGs on the legislative outcome of the EU has diminished not only in terms of the Council as a whole relative to the EP, but also internally in the Council. With 28 member states all fighting to promote their preferences in the Council, and with a continuously growing number of policies decided by qualified majority voting (QMV) rather than by unanimous voting, there is now a genuine risk of NGs being outvoted in the Council. The consensus oriented culture of negotiations is still, to a certain degree, present in the Council, and great efforts are being exerted to find solutions which all member states can accept and not to adopt legislation NGs are strongly against (Wallace, Wallace and Pollack:2005). Novak (2001), among others, has found, however, that it happens more often now that
situations occur, in which NGs feel compelled to agree with the majority position in the Council to avoid losing face in public by being revealed as the losers in Council negotiations or to avoid being marginalized within the Council by opposing a deal unless it is of major importance for the member state.

While liberal intergovernmentalists may argue that the member states can simply refuse to comply with EU regulation they are dissatisfied with (or that they can ultimately decide to leave the Union), the price for this has – so far – been found too high to pay, as the avoidance of a Grexit has (at the moment of writing) illustrated. Adding to this, the steep increase in the use of trialogue negotiations and informal trialogues, in which key negotiations and decisions are made with very few participants from the Council Presidency, the EP or the Commission, has made the necessity to exert influence early and in a strategically targeted manner essential for the NGs.

In cases of trialogue negotiations most representatives of the NGs are not present during the key negotiations among the relais actors, which creates a considerable informational advantage for the Council Presidency over the other NGs (Farrell and Héritier:2004). The NGs may not know whether the Presidency is defending their respective interests as much as possible, or whether the preferences of some NGs are being promoted at the expense of others’. In cases of first reading agreements in particular, the possibility for each NG to influence the legislative outcome is challenged by the informal nature of the negotiations. With decreased transparency in the informal negotiations, influence is skewed in favor of the presidency and majority coalition. Adding to this, when early first reading agreements are sought, changes to the legislative draft must, per definition, effectively take place before the responsible committee in the EP votes on its amendments and sends the amended text to the plenary, limiting the window of opportunity for the NGs to influence the legislation. Successful influence is contingent upon access to information, which can be very sparse, as well as on effective persuasion of those conducting the legislative negotiations and those responsible for drafting the amendments to the Commission’s proposal.

In spite of the relative advantage, which NGs hold in their relationship with the national legislatures, NGs thus have to fight harder for their position at EU level, and seek to place themselves and insert their policy preferences strategically vis-a-vis the other key players. Access and information are key resources. To bolster both, it is hypothesized, NGs have turned to the EP with increased interest and a sense of urgency. In manners that vary among the member states both in terms of mode and frequency, NGs engage the MEPs with a view to gaining information on the progress of the legislation being passed and,
more importantly – to provide input to the MEPs on the NGs’ policy positions.

**Inequality in diversity – differences between the countries:**

The conditions under which the NGs operate within the EU differ among the various countries. The larger member states have the advantage of the institutional features that come with large populations, i.e. a proportionally higher number of votes in the Council and higher number of MEPs than the smaller member states. The older member states have a relative advantage over the newer member states due to greater experience and potential for having up institutional knowledge and memory.

“Firstly, the majority of the countries that joined the Union in the 2004 and 2007 enlargements face a relative shortage of resources (Christiansen et al. 2008: 248) and expertise relating to EU affairs. Besides financial constraints and limited capacity, the lack of specific skills among civil servants has frequently been emphasized (e.g. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005: 24.).” (Gärtner, Hörner and Obholzer:2011, p. 80)

Furthermore, difference in political systems between the countries may provide a competitive advantage for some member states (Dür, Mateo and Thomas:2013). Countries which are used to a consensus oriented political culture may have an advantage when negotiating in the consensus style of the EU, and be better able to engage optimally and get the most out of the negotiations at EU level than their counterparts from political systems with a majoritarian tradition.

There are also both advantages and disadvantages to holding the Council Presidency. The advantages are a) that the member state holding the Presidency has significantly greater access to information about the status of negotiations, and b) the member state is present at the negotiations and gets to interpret the direction the negotiations are going/can go as well as exploring which options there are for finding compromises – the advantage of being a relais actor. One potential disadvantage is that the country holding the presidency must be the neutral arbiter of the negotiations, and as such cannot formally promote its own agenda too strongly. However, the choice of which legislative agenda to pursue, as well as the efforts exerted to conclude cases during a country’s presidency in order to get credit for accomplishing significant achievements are also important factors.
2.3.c. The EP and the MEPs

In its quest for influence, the EP has been successful in gaining competences, pushing for more power in its capacity as the only directly elected institution at EU level. As statements by MEPs arguing for more power to the EP indicate, the EP is a highly self-conscious institution with interest in advancing its own power relative to that of the Council, not eschewing activism and hard-line bargaining with the member state governments to get it (Steunenberg and Thomassen:2002). Since its inception, the EP has continuously gained power relative to the council; a development which, however, has not come about without a price as the development has not unequivocally benefitted the EP at the Council’s expense. Nor has it evenly benefitted all MEPs within the EP.

With the introduction, in the Lisbon Treaty, of the ordinary legislative procedure, the EP now, for the first time in its history, holds powers equal to those of the Council in almost all of the policy areas transferred to the EU level, and it can introduce amendments and block adoption of legislation in the same manner as the Council. Thomson and Hosli (2006) point out, however, that there is a de facto inequality of the Council and the EP in spite of their formally equal status, in that the power of the EP is impeded by the lack of information the MEPs have due to the limited internal information resources of the EP. This is supported by the data from the interviews of this project. This point is also made by Ringe (2010) who points to the MEPs’ lack of possibility of knowing all legislative proposals sufficiently in depth when having to take a policy position. MEPs must now take positions on legislative proposals in a very broad range of policy areas, and often of a quite technical nature, and all within a very short time span (Ringe:2010). The introduction of first reading agreements and the ensuing rise in “fast track legislation”, triilogue negotiations and informal triilogue negotiations have sped up the legislative process even more (Farrell and Hérité:2007), requiring MEPs to take a position on cases as early as possible, preferably already in the early stages of the responsible committee’s work, if they wish to get their amendments adopted into legislation. Though EPGs may have members “whipping” votes in the committees and the EP plenary, indicating the position of the EPG, the committee stage is a volatile and less tangible process, which offers greater potential for changes of substance in the legislative draft, but also leaves the MEPs with less guidance at the point in time when the substance of the legislative draft is most malleable. During the period of 2009-Feb 2013, legislation adopted by the first reading under the co-decision procedure increased to 80% of legislation adopted from 72% in the previous Parliament (EP

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5 This is revisited later in the project, when the work currently under way to boost the EP’s internal information capacity is discussed
Conciliations and Codecision website). This leaves MEPs in increasing need of quick access to information and often with little chance of gathering a broad, solid base of information on a case when determining their policy positions. MEPs thus risk being poorly equipped to negotiate with the Council (and the other MEPs), a factor which could be seen to some extent as counterbalancing the loss of power of the Council.

In addition to this inter-institutional difference of “competitive advantages”, the increase in power has not been equally empowering for all within the EP. As the EP has gained power, conditions within the EP have changed, consequently skewing the internal power balance among the MEPs. The locus of key decision making within the EP has shifted and now often resides in the trialogues, and much greater power is held by the select MEPs who are at the center of trialogue negotiations or who hold key positions in the committees and EPGs, i.e. particularly rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs, and committee chairpersons – who have also been referred to as “relais actors” because they constitute the external links between the legislative institutions (Costello and Thomson:2010, Farrell and Héritier:2004). These actors are in the privileged position of having access to valuable information and key decision making processes reserved for a minority of actors in the legislative institutions.

The EP remains an institution with great potential for substantial influence, but it is also an institution whose internal dynamics makes it highly susceptible to input from outside parties, including national parties and NGs. The EP is still, to this day, a highly heterogeneous institution with members elected on national platforms that retain a significant influence on the MEPs, loosely constructed political groups (EPGs) and a very amorphous and penetrable structure in terms of access and provision of information from outside interests made up of interest groups, organizations and political actors from other institutions. Analyses of voting patterns in the EP have shown a rise in EPG cohesion. However, although MEPs within an EPG may end up voting in a coherent manner, this does not necessarily imply that the EPGs are successful at whipping their MEPs to act in a cohesive manner. Nor does it mean that the majority of MEPs – not even those closest to the legislation – take their position on a basis of good information about the technical content of the legislation (Ringe:2010, Thomson and Hosli:2006).

These internal dynamics of the EP complicate the image of the EP as a strong self contained actor competing for influence with the Council in a unified manner. This prompts the question of how well the EP is equipped to handle its increasingly active role, both in terms of its ability to be a strong negotiation
partner relative to the Council and in terms of resisting pressure from outside forces. As the power of the EP has increased, the stakes have risen in the EP in term of agenda setting for the MEPs, their EPGs and the national parties in the member states in which the MEPs are elected.

MEPs, in particular the select few MEPs who are mainly responsible for treating the legislative proposal (e.g. rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs, committee chairpersons), have gained considerable influence and agenda setting powers, which has made them key players in the legislative procedure. As several other external actors have a great interest in the activity of the MEPs, such as lobby groups and national parties, the question arises as to what conditions this creates for interaction between NGs and MEPs from both national parties in the government and of the opposition. An analysis of the MEPs’ relations with the NGs thus requires a closer look at the MEPs and their preferences, relations and restraints.

As a starting point for analyzing the behavior of the MEPs, one must begin with the recruitment of the candidates; the MEPs are selected on a national platform, through national parties. There are some differences in how much the national party controls the selection of the candidate. Common for all MEPs is, however, that in order to seek election and reelection, they need to be attentive to their national electorate. Following their election and taking their place within the EP, MEPs come to take part in a kind of two-level game, in which the interests of both their national party and their EPG play a role in the policy position the MEP takes, the national party due to the role it plays in the future electability of the MEP at EU or national level and the EPG due its prerogative to allocate or withhold benefits within the EP (Hix:2002). Though the EPGs have no formal influence on the election of MEPs, they do have means to allocate positions and opportunities within the EP, which can affect the visibility and career of the MEP, and in turn affect their electability later on. Furthermore, if the EPG plays its cards right, it can gain significant influence on legislative outcome. The EP is primarily divided between the center left and center right, and if the rapporteur can build a coalition during the first reading, he or she can get a proposal passed with a smaller majority than after second reading. Studies have found that MEPs conform more to the EPG line than they did in the past (e.g. Hix, Noury and Roland:2007). This can be attributed to socialization taking place within the EPG parties or a common utility maximization by MEPs, acknowledging that they stand stronger when cohesive within their party. Literature on MEPs’ behavior which has focused on the voting patterns in EP roll call votes (Ibid) has shown a substantial increase in cohesion within the EPGs over time.

The development is tempered, however, by a tendency of the MEPs to defect from the European Parliament Group (EPG) line when their national party strongly disagrees. This has led some to
characterize MEP behavior as shaped by a “one agent - two principals” relationship, an interpretation which assumes that MEPs’ activities are mainly determined by their EPGs and national parties who each have “carrots and sticks” they can use to make MEPs toe the party (group) line; EPGs can reward or sanction MEPs through the (denial of) allocation of e.g. favorable positions in the EP (e.g. Hix and Gabel:2007). National parties can ultimately determine the future of the MEPs’ career by selecting who is put on the EP ballot at the next election, as well as on the national ballot (Hix, Noury and Roland:2007). This rests upon the notion that MEPs essentially are self-promoting rational actors, behaving according to what will best further their careers.

Recently, however, scholars have questioned just how strong the Principal-Agent relationship is between the MEPs and their principals (Ringe:2010, Poguntke:2008, Mühlböck:2012, Cicchi:2013). Cicchi finds that EPG cohesion, which Hix, Noury and Roland (2007) emphasize, is dependent on salience of the case, and national affiliation tends to count more, and EPG cohesion less so, when legislative cases are of high national salience. Poguntke (2008) shows how there is, de facto, very limited influence from national parties on MEPs. In his study, Ringe (2010) finds that EPGs have very few actual possibilities for either rewarding or sanctioning their MEPs. Based on questionnaires to MEPs, Ringe suggests that the process of policy formation actually should be understood conversely; rather than the EPG or even the national party dictating policy positions to their MEPs from “above”, policy positions are transmitted upwards from the EP committees to the EPG leadership. Before a clear-cut national party or EPG position exists, MEPs who are not themselves experts on the legislative content (which is increasingly frequent, given the vast amount of legislation passed) tend to emulate the policy position of those with whom they perceive themselves having the greatest political agreement and whom they perceive as more expert on the specific matter— a mechanism Ringe refers to as Perceived Preference Coherence (PPC) (Ringe:2010). MEPs want to vote “the right way” and are thus open to input from those with whom they perceive they share policy position. Rose and Borz (2011) suggest that EPGs primarily serve a strategic aggregative function for MEPs, as the MEPs gain more power in the legislative process by acting cohesively.

Finally, and in connection with the PPC, ideology plays a role for MEPs in their choice of national parties and accordingly leads them to a position within the EPG and, according to Ringe, to which sources they rely on for information. According to Hix and Gabel (2007) it also influences their policy positioning in general in the EP.
Mühlböck (2012) finds that national parties do not define how MEPs behave. MEPs, though linked to their national party for their career and elected on a national platform, do not necessarily take their positions with reference to their national parties. Rather, according to several scholars (e.g. Ringe:2010, Poguntke:2008) and according to this author’s practical experience from working with MEPs and national parties, national parliamentarians are frequently unaware of what goes on in the EP, which gives considerable freedom to MEPs to position themselves with limited oversight from the national parties, at least on the less than highly salient issues.

Though MEPs are not completely bound by party (group) affiliation, and though they are subjected to many influences from outside the EP, it continues, however, to appear from existing literature that MEPs are influenced by their party affiliation to both their national party and their EPG, and that ultimately, if forced to choose, they will follow the policy line of preserving their career and not risking their re-electability (Hix, Noury and Roland:2007). The preferences that MEPs must seek to balance against their given strategic settings are, first and foremost, to protect their job. However, depending on circumstances, i.e. e.g. how salient an issue is to their national party, the EPG and their constituency, how salient it is to the MEP personally, and the extent to which the MEPs are familiar with the content of the legislative proposal, they may choose to deviate from the position of one of the aforementioned parties. The behavior of each MEP can of course be affected differently by many factors, personal affiliations and convictions, and their relation to their NG is likely to be affected by this., wherefore it can be difficult to establish whether the MEPs are affected by their national party, or whether their preferences happen to overlap (the same point can be made regarding the impact of NGs on the MEPs) (Krehbiel:1993).

In conclusion, NG-MEP relations exist within a highly complex institutional structure, in which policy positions are drawn up early in the legislative process, significant decisions can be made by a narrow selection of actors in informal meetings, and both NG reps and MEPs and MEPAs operate with a certain degree of freedom from their national context of relations. In the following, we look at how these conditions for the NGs and MEP affect the relationship between two sets of actors; in particular, how the above factors lead to coordination, what manifestation of coordination emerges, and what results it leads to. Giving the EP more power vis-a-vis the Council has placed the EP prominently on the radar of the NGs and has fostered a new axis of actor interaction between the NGs and the MEPs in the EU legislative procedure expressed in the form of coordination. On the basis of the above literature and my preliminary research, the hypotheses about coordination, and the causal mechanisms they are based
on, are presented below.

2.3.d. Conditions, context and competition for coordination

Coordination between NGs and MEPs takes place within a complex web of interactions in which a substantial amount of decision making power is channeled into the hands of a narrow selection of directly elected and non-elected representatives, who hold considerable influence and information relative to more peripheral actors. In this contrast between the formal legislative procedures which was prescribed in the Treaties, and the system of informal institutional rules supplementing the formal ones, coordination has developed, as NGs seek to bypass the formal channels, fighting for influence in the corridors of, among other places, the EP.

The NGs are not alone in this venture. The EP is contacted daily by a plethora of external actors, especially lobby groups. With MEPs depending on external information on the many topics debated in the EP, the presence of lobby organizations in the EP has become an institutionalized element in the daily work of the MEPs (among many others Bouwen and McCown in Coen ed.:2007, Klüver:2013, Bunea and Baumgartner:2014). Thousands of accredited lobbyists visit the EP and, in spite of some very public scandals (in the so-called “cash-for-amendments” case6), the reliance on lobbyists for information has become an incontrovertible part of EP functioning. Lobbyists seek to influence legislation through providing information to the MEPs. Though interest groups can be perceived as being in the same position as the NGs, several essential aspects set NGs and interest groups apart. NGs have a different kind of access to negotiations and relations with the MEPs, in some ways lesser and in some ways greater. NGs participate in Council negotiations and get information they can use vis-a-vis the EPs (supplying it to MEPs, and also use it strategically to try to nudge the EP decision making in a certain direction), just as they can use information from the EP in the Council. At the same time, their contact to MEPs may be affected by party – and by country – affiliation. Still, it is useful to keep the comparison with interest groups and lobbyism in mind, as the findings of this project contribute another piece of the puzzle to understanding comprehensively the flow of information to, and external influence on, the EP.

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6 https://euobserver.com/justice/118325
2.3.e. Strategic settings and actor preferences

Building on this, the following main assumptions regarding actors’ preferences in connection with coordination in concrete strategic settings guide the research hypotheses:

- NGs representatives will seek to exert the biggest possible amount of influence on policy outcome in a given round of legislative negotiations. When faced with changes in the strategic settings under which they operate, NGs representatives will seek to maximize their political influence in the way which will be most effective. They will adapt to the changes and develop new patterns of behavior and interaction in the way that best enables them to obtain their most desired policy outcome, including changing or establishing new relations with alternative actors if relevant.

- MEPs and NGs engage in two institutional contexts – the EU level and the national level. The national level will have an impact on the strategic settings of the actors, and will shape the habits of interaction of the actors as well as the anticipation of one actor as to how another actor will act.

- MEPs seek to further their career as best they can and they, and their assistants, will act in the way, which best serves this goal. This entails making sure that they do not act in a way which puts them at great odds with their principals (their national party as primary reference point, and European party group as secondary reference point). However, when not compromising these guiding factors, there is a measure of flexibility and within this, other circumstances may affect the course of action of MEPs and their assistants.

Further, the following premises are assumed:

1. Positions on legislative cases are not always clear cut from the outset, including the fast tracked legislative negotiations, and opinions are formed over time. MEPs may not from the outset have a guideline from their “principals” (EPG and national party) on what position to take and which amendments to propose.

2. The importance of MEPs’ activities for the two MEP-principals may vary due to the salience of the political content of a case, or due to the particular role played by the individual MEP, and
the political affiliation and/or potential influence the MEP might have on the case

2.4. Hypotheses
Addressing research question 1: “What causes the member state national governments to coordinate with MEPs?”, the following hypotheses are formed:

2.4.a. Part 1 of the analysis
The general trends of changes in coordination over time are analyzed by asking interviewees at which points in time coordination has been increased (if at all) by the NG. Comparison of these times of change with timing of the changes in institutional rules indicates whether coordination has increased following EU Treaty changes or whether other factors have led to the increase in coordination. The development of the manner of engagement from all country cases (France, Germany, Spain, UK, Denmark, Poland, and Slovakia) is compared, using interviews with government staff at the PermReps and the national ministries.

**Hypothesis 1**

**Actor preferences**
Hypothesis 1 relates to preferences linked to changes in the NGs macro-settings. Had no institutional changes occurred, the NGs would not be expected to be interested in coordinating with the MEPs, whereas they would be expected to want to coordinate with the EP in a situation where this change has taken place. In this case, the actors are expected to prefer to coordinate over not coordinating.

- **Hypothesis 1**: Institutional changes decreasing the relative power of the NGs vis-a-vis the EP have led to increased efforts by NGs to influence the EP

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**
NGs will seek to maximize their influence on the legislative outcome by channeling their efforts to where they expect they will have the greatest effect. As the European Parliament acquires more power relative to the Council, influencing the MEPs becomes increasingly profitable for the NGs and, accordingly, the NGs will prioritize contact with MEPs as the EP becomes more influential.
Following the institutional changes which have led to the NGs losing relative power within the Council and vis-à-vis the EP, the NGs have been faced with a challenge to exert influence on EU legislative negotiations. As rational actors, the NGs will channel their efforts where they expect to gain the most within the institutional setup in which they operate.

A disconfirmation of the hypothesis would imply that the analysis finds that there are no changes to the NGs’ efforts to approach the EP over time in reaction to the institutional changes increasing the power of the EP, or if changes that have occurred are not connected to changes in institutional rules increasing the EP’s power.

To strengthen the assessment of whether the NGs’ involvement with MEPs is indeed driven by a utility maximization-based conscious evaluation of where the largest potential rewards for the governments’ efforts lie, rather than the contact to the EP being defined by other considerations such as path dependent relations with own party MEPs, I compare the NGs’ choice of which MEPs to engage with. To assess this, I look for whether the NG interviewees express considerations regarding their choice of MEPs corresponding to or refuting hypothesis 2, based on the same interviews as with hypothesis 1.

For all following hypotheses (Hypotheses 2-9) the macro level premise, which frames the strategic setting, is that the actors involved operate with the awareness of the legislative process of co-decision as being the institutional rule.

**Hypothesis 2**

To further assess whether the NGs’ involvement with MEPs is driven by a conscious evaluation of where the largest potential rewards for the governments’ efforts lie, I examine the NGs’ choice of which MEPs to engage with. To assess the hypotheses, I look for whether the NG interviewees express considerations regarding their choice of MEPs corresponding to or refuting the hypotheses below. This is supplemented with an analysis of the patterns of the NGs’ interaction with the MEPs in practice.

**Actor preferences**

The preferences of the NGs, depends on their expectations of the preferences and activity of the other actors, the MEPs. The NGs choice of which specific actors to reach out to depends on which MEPs the NGs anticipate have the greatest potential for exerting influence in the EP, and who is most likely to be inclined to promote the preferences of the NG. More concretely, the NGs are expected to prefer to
coordinate with MEPs according to the three variables presented in sub-hypotheses 2.a. (MEP’s nationality), 2.b. (MEP’s political affiliation) and 2.c. (MEP’s institutional role). Thus, NGs will prefer contact with MEPs from their own nationality to MEPs from other member states; they will prefer contact with MEPs from their own governing parties to MEPs of the opposition; and they will prefer to coordinate with MEPs with a central institutional role in the specific EU legislative negotiations in question rather than coordinating with MEPs who hold no position of significance for the process.

The three factors of sub-hypotheses 2.a., 2.b. and 2.c. are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are variables that separately, and even more when combined, will increase the likelihood of particular MEPs being targeted by the NGs, contributing to a “hierarchy” of MEPs that are more or less profitable for NGs to engage with.

➢ **Hypothesis 2:** Within the EP, NGs will establish contact with those MEPs they expect will have the greatest impact on the legislative negotiations

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**

As in hypothesis 1, as utility maximizing actors the NGs will seek to maximize their influence on the legislative outcome by channeling their efforts where they expect it to have the greatest effect, i.e. by coordinating with those MEPs who are most likely to promote the message of the government in the EP. MEPs will thus be targeted according to how likely they are to be receptive to the message of the government and how likely they are to be able to have an effect on the outcome of the legislation.

As an overall hypothesis, Hypothesis 2 combines these three variables into an overall prediction of how likely an MEP is to be targeted by the NGs. Hypothesis 2 will therefore be found to be disconfirmed if the combined findings in sub-hypotheses 2.a., 2.b., and 2.c. do not show that MEPs are targeted according to the three criteria hypothesized as yielding the greatest potential for influence for NGs on the legislative process through the EP.

**Sub-hypothesis 2.a.**

**Actor preferences**

As with Hypothesis 2, the preferences of the NGs, depends on their expectations of the preferences and activity of the other group of actors, the MEPs. In this sub-hypothesis it is predicted that, ceteris paribus, NGs will prefer to contact MEPs from their own country over MEPs from other member states.
Sub-hypothesis 2.a: NGs will seek to coordinate more with MEPs of their own nationality than with MEPs from other member states.

Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence
The NGs will expect a greater reception from MEPs of the same nationality as the government, as there still exists a national preference dimension in the EU political system. MEPs are likely to either share policy priorities or at least be concerned with the same policy areas as their NG as both actors are elected by the same electorate. Thus MEPs are, ceteris paribus, more likely to be open for input from their government than MEPs of other member states.

Disconfirming evidence of this hypothesis will be if the analysis finds that NGs do not prioritize coordinating with MEPs/MEPAs with the same nationality over those with different nationalities than the NG.

Sub-hypothesis 2.b.
Actor preferences
As in sub-hypothesis 2.a., the preferences of the NGs depends on their expectations of the preferences and activity of the MEPs. NGs will prefer to coordinate with MEPs with whom they share political party affiliation over MEPs from opposition parties.

Sub-hypothesis 2.b: NGs will seek to coordinate more with MEPs from same parties as the NG than with MEPs from opposition party affiliation

Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence
The extent of coordination is affected by party affiliation. The government is likely to expect a greater reception of its message by MEPs who are part of the government than of the opposition due to 1) greater probability of shared policy preferences, and 2) the P/A relation between national parties and MEPs; MEPs have to seek reelection from their national party, either nationally or at EU level. Disconfirming evidence of this hypothesis will be if the analysis finds that MEPs/MEPAs belonging to the national parties in government are not prioritized for coordination over those belonging to the opposition.
**Sub-hypothesis 2.c.**

**Actor preferences**
As in sub-hypotheses 2.a. and 2.b., the preferences of the NGs depends on their expectations of the preferences and activity of the MEPs. Beyond the parameters of party affiliation and nationality, ceteris paribus, NGs will prefer to seek out MEPs who hold influential positions in the negotiation process relating to the legislative case in question\(^7\) over contact with those MEPs who are peripheral to the process.

- **Sub-hypothesis 2.c:** The more influential a role an MEP has in the legislative negotiations, the more they will be targeted by the NGs

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**
The institutional role of MEP matters as the NGs will channel their efforts to where they believe they will have the greatest effect on the legislative negotiations. Hence, the more potential for influence an MEP has, the more likely he/she is to be targeted by the NGs.

Disconfirming evidence of this hypothesis will be if the analysis finds that MEPs/MEPAs with influential institutional roles in the EP are not prioritized for coordination over those with less influential roles.

As all member states in principle stand to gain the same from coordination with MEPs, it is therefore puzzling that we observe variation in the extent and modes of coordination among the countries? The following three hypotheses (3-5) address research question 2: “Why and in which ways do the NGs vary in their coordination with the MEPs?”

Addressing research question 2, to explain the variation among the member states’ modes and extent of interaction with the MEPs, hypotheses 3, 4 and 5.

**Hypothesis 3**
It is hypothesized that the size of the member state an NG represents has an impact on the pattern of coordination.

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\(^7\) Primary among these rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs, committee chair persons, EP Group leaders and coordinators of national delegations.
Actor preferences
The size of a member state directly affects the amount of power the member state has in the Council, and the potential for influence in the EP. The difference in advantages and disadvantages, due to country size, in terms of relative influence in the EU legislative process, will affect how the member states interact with the EP. This overall hypothesis, presented below, is further examined through two contradictory sub-hypotheses, with differing causal mechanisms predicting different reactions by the actors to the same macro-conditions.

➤ **Hypothesis 3:** The institutionally defined relative influence of a member state in the Council and the EP affects the country’s efforts to influence the EP

Disconfirming evidence
There can be both “push” and “pull” factors driving the member states, which may be imagined to lead to opposite (or identical) outcomes, as outlined in the causal mechanisms for the respective sub-hypotheses. Hypothesis 3 is disconfirmed if neither sub-hypotheses 3.a. nor 3.b. are confirmed.

Sub-hypothesis 3.a.

Actor preferences
The preferences of the two groups of actors, the large NGs and small NGs, are assumed to differ, in that the smaller member states’ NGs are expected to have a stronger preference for coordination than NGs of the larger member states.

➤ **Sub-hypothesis 3.a.:** Smaller member states make more efforts to influence the EP than large member states

Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence
With less potential for influence in the Council due to smaller size, NGs from smaller member states will perceive the need for additional efforts in the EP through coordination as greater than the perceived need by NGs from large member states. The smaller member states are therefore more likely to engage with the MEPs as an alternative vehicle for influence in an effort to compensate for their relatively lower potential for influence in the Council.
For the sub-hypothesis to be disconfirmed, the analysis should find that one or all of the larger member state NGs seek to coordinate more than or equally much as the smaller member states’ NGs.

**Sub-hypothesis 3.b.**

**Actor preferences**

The preferences of the two groups of actors, large and small member states’ NGs, are assumed to differ in that the NGs from the larger member states will have a strong preference for coordination, while NGs from the smaller member states will prioritize coordination less.

- **Sub-hypothesis 3.b.:** Larger member states make more efforts to influence the EP than small member states

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**

Large member states have a higher number of MEPs of their nationality who are likely to cover a larger amount of significant posts and committees in the EP. This relatively larger base of MEPs that are potentially receptive to the message of their NG provide a greater incentive for the governments of large member states to engage with MEPs than governments of small member states whose access into the EP is less easy. For the larger member states there may thus be a “pull-factor” towards the EP as a new venue for potential significant influence.

For the sub-hypothesis to be disconfirmed, the analysis should find that one or both of the smaller member state NGs seek to coordinate more than the larger NGs.

**Hypothesis 4**

In addition to the size and capacity of the member state, a division between old and new member states is expected to be found, albeit potentially with a waning effect over time. The building of interactions, and institutional learning of NG staff has been found to affect the capability of the member states to operate fully and effectively in the EU.

**Actor preferences**

NGs of older member states are assumed to have a strong preference for extensive coordination with MEPs, while NGs of the newer member states are assumed not yet to have reached this level of
preference for coordination and, as such, will make less effort to coordinate.

- **Hypothesis 4:** Governments of old member states are more extensively engaged with the MEPs than governments of the new member states

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**

It is hypothesized that the duration of membership of member states has an effect on the level of activity the NGs exert towards the EP. New member states have not had the same time or experience to plan and build up relations between the NGs and MEPs as the old member states have. Therefore, new member states do not have the same level of coordination in place as old member states. But they stand to potentially gain just as much from coordination as the older member states, and might currently be in a phase of seeking more coordination and developing their coordination. Thus, in addition to the hypothesis above, in support of hypothesis 4, a change over time – a “learning curve” – in line with duration of EU membership, could be expected to be observed.

For Hypothesis 4 to be disconfirmed, the analysis should find that there is no difference between the old and new member states in this regard, or that one or both of the new member states seek to coordinate to the same extent as the older member state NGs.

In the following two hypotheses, the theoretical scope of the analysis is broadened, incorporating a perspective of sociological institutionalism in the analysis of the governments’ behavior. Based on the notion that national political systems restrain/enable different kinds of behavior of the actors from different member states (Dür, Mateo and Thomas:2013), it is hypothesized that a country’s style of organization and collaboration in the political system affects how the actors will engage at EU level and how they will expect their advances will be received by the MEPs and MEPAs in the EU arena. To investigate this, as a starting point, I rely on Lijphart’s distinction between a “Consensus model” and a “Majoritarian model” of democracy (Lijphart:1999). The central aspect of this is the partisanship and the extent to which the actors will be used to maintaining strict party allegiance and an adversarial approach to interaction, or whether there is a tradition for cooperation and seeking consensus among the parties and across the aisle.
Hypothesis 5

Actor preferences
The two groups of actors, NGs from consensus oriented political systems and from majoritarian political systems, are assumed to differ in their preferences regarding party affiliations for which NGs and MEPs to coordinate with. “Consensus oriented NGs”, used to a setting in which there is more cooperation across the aisle, will have a lesser need to distinguish and will be more likely to be open to coordinating with MEPs from the opposition parties as well as from their own parties. NGs from majoritarian systems will be expected to prioritize contact with MEPs from their own party over MEPs from opposition parties.

➢ Hypothesis 5: Governments from “consensus oriented” political systems will engage more with MEPs across the aisle than governments from majoritarian systems

Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence
The hypothesis rest on a sociological institutionalist perspective in addition to the rational choice perspective. As previously described, establishing good relations between actors affects the likelihood for actors to prefer to seek out one actor over another, from both a rational choice perspective and a sociological institutionalist perspective. From a rational choice perspective it matters for anticipating that it might be possible to sway the other actor. From a sociological perspective it matters for the likelihood of there being a mutual understanding of how to interact with one another across the institutions, and an expectation of a degree of trust and familiarity among actors from the same member states. The main assumption underlying this hypothesis is that NGs will coordinate more if they find it likely that the coordination will yield results and they will do it with those MEPs and in the way they find most likely to pay off. NGs from consensus systems are hypothesized to anticipate getting more out of contact that includes MEPs across the aisle and contact based on the expectations and habits of both actors that there might be an overlap in preferences and that cooperation can lead to compromises and the establishment of common positions. NGs and MEPs from majority systems will be more likely to expect to be able to influence the vote of the MEPs of their own party, while not being able to influence the opposition MEPs as the gap between the parties is considerable at national level and will be expected to remain so at EU level.
A disconfirmation of this hypothesis would entail that there is no detectable difference in extent of coordination across the aisle between the two political systems – or that it is found that there is more coordination across the aisle by majoritarian NGs.

**Hypothesis 6**

**Actor preferences**
The preferences of the two groups of actors, as in the previous hypothesis, are assumed to differ. It is expected that “consensus oriented NGs” will prefer to employ an interactive form of communication with the MEPs, rather than a one way transmission of their point of view. Alternatively, NGs from majoritarian systems will be expected to prioritize contact characterized by informing about the NGs’ policy preference and recommended votes, without engaging more extensively with MEPs, rather than frequent interactive communication across the political aisle.

- **Hypothesis 6:** Governments from “consensus oriented” systems will take a more interactively communicating approach to coordination with the MEPs

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**
Due to their different domestic systems, the governments will take different approaches to their contact with the MEPs. Representatives from countries that are used to a system of coalition building, contact that is cooperative and consensus seeking in nature with MPs across the political aisle will also expect this approach to be possible with MEPs at EU level. These government representatives will therefore engage more interactively and with MEPs across the political groups than representatives from majoritarian member states, who, on the other hand, are hypothesized to take a more “top-down” approach to the interaction, rather than engaging in reciprocal communication and relation building. These representatives are hypothesized to not expect that contact with opposition MEPs will have a sufficiently profitable outcome to justify investing the same amount of resources in the contact as with representatives of governments from consensus oriented countries. Majoritarian member state governments will rely less on broad cooperation with MEPs from other national parties.

A disconfirmation of hypothesis 6 would require that no difference in mode of coordination between consensus and majoritarian NGs is detected, or if majoritarian NGs are found to coordinate more interactively than NGs from consensus oriented political systems.
2.4.b. Part 2 of the analysis

I now proceed from these hypotheses regarding the behavior of the NGs, to address how these attentions are received in the EP. When addressing research question 3, many hypotheses would have been interesting to investigate. The ones included are the most essential in terms of contributing to a greater understanding of the internal political dynamics of the EP. They are, however, to be taken more as guiding “axes of focus” rather than strict hypotheses to be tested in a very rigorous manner.

The analysis of MEPs’ receptiveness to the input from the NGs starts with an assumption that MEPs would not engage in contact with governments if they did not benefit from the contact in some way themselves, and that NGs would not engage with MEPs if they did not believe the interaction would be profitable. The NGs can supply the MEPs with the technical information they need regarding policy substance. In a competitive advantage vis-a-vis the interest groups, NGs can furthermore provide information about Council proceedings which might be of interest to the MEPs, as well as a thorough perspective on the impact of the legislative proposals in the domestic context of the MEPs. The NGs can thus offer information that the MEPs need. Hypotheses 6-8 addressing research question 3, “How and to what extent are MEPs receptive to the input they receive from the NGs?” are based on the expectation that MEPs, ceteris paribus, are receptive to input from the NGs. The following three hypotheses and sub-hypotheses elaborate this general assumption.

**Hypothesis 7**

Hypothesis 7 addresses the differences in receptiveness that are hypothesized to take place within the domestic arena regarding the receptiveness of the MEPs to the input from the NGs.

**Actor preferences**

The differences between the MEPs belonging to the national governing parties and those belonging to the national opposition parties are examined here. Sub-hypotheses 7.a. and 7.b. involve the manner in which the difference in party allegiances is expected to manifest in terms of the actors’ preferences for types of input to receive from the NGs through coordination.

➢ **Hypothesis 7:** MEPs’ receptiveness to coordination with their national government depends on their national party affiliation
**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**

Three complementary causal mechanisms combine to substantiate this hypothesis and the sub-hypotheses. Firstly, MEPs must pay attention to the preferences of – and to a certain extent cater to – their domestic political party and constituency. Consequently, MEPs belonging to government parties are hypothesized to feel obliged to accommodate – and be more receptive to the information they receive from their government – for the principal/agent motives laid out previously in this chapter.

MEPs from national governing parties are likely to have a greater interest in listening to the political input from their government representatives, as they would have to defend their actions at EU level to the same electorate as the NG; the NG might be more in tune with the national perception of the legislative proposals, than the MEP is able to be. MEPs from other parties and other nationalities would have no such P/A-relationship obligation, and their receptiveness to the NG input would thus depend on whether the information from the NG would serve them in their work in the EP, and vis-a-vis their national constituency.

The disconfirming evidence required to dismiss or partially dismiss hypothesis 7 would be, respectively, the disconfirmation of both or either of the two sub-hypotheses.

Specifying Hypothesis 7 further, the different types of input from coordination are brought to the forefront. The NGs offer several types of information – “technical information”, “policy preference information” and “strategic negotiation information” regarding developments of the negotiations and positions of other actors – to the MEPs. These different forms of information are likely to be received differently by the MEPs depending on whether they belong to the NG parties or national opposition parties.

**Sub-hypothesis 7.a.**

**Actor preferences**

It is assumed that the preferences of the two groups of actors, MEPs belonging to the national government or opposition parties, differ as regards their receptiveness to receiving input regarding the policy positions of their NG through coordination. It is hypothesized that government MEPs will prefer to receive input from the NG regarding its policy preferences rather than not receiving them. MEPs from opposition parties will have a smaller preference for receiving this input.

This leads to sub-hypothesis 7.a.:
➢ **Sub-hypothesis 7.a.:** MEPs who belong to a national government party will be more receptive to policy preference coordination with their national government than MEPs belonging to a national opposition party

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**

The sub-hypothesis builds on Ringe’s concept of perceived preference coherence (Ringe:2010) and the notion that the MEPs’ lack of resources and capacity to determine their position on each legislative proposal causes them to look to other actors with whom they identify politically and whose position they expect to share. Applying this to the framework of contact with the NGs (in the place of fellow MEPs) as the actors of perceived preferences cohesion, the dynamics would predict that MEPs are more likely to be interested in policy positions of their own NG if they themselves belong to the incumbent government.

The sub-hypothesis is disconfirmed in the case that it is found that there is no difference in the receptiveness to policy input of MEPs belonging to government or opposition parties, or if opposition MEPs are more receptive to NGs’ policy input.

**Sub-hypothesis 7.b**

The second sub-hypothesis deals, in turn, with the MEPs’ receptiveness to technical information from the NG. The technical information could be perceived as being in direct competition with the other external sources of information from which the MEPs receive their knowledge about the legislative cases, such as interest groups and the EP’s research center.

**Actor preferences**

The group of actors in this hypothesis is further narrowed down. MEPs from national opposition parties are expected to prefer receiving technical information from the NG over receiving the policy preferences of the NG.

It is hypothesized that:

➢ **Sub-hypothesis 7.b.:** MEPs who belong to a national opposition party will be more receptive to technical coordination than policy preference coordination with their national government
Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence

There are also advantages for the MEPs of opposition parties to receiving information from the NG. The technical information which NGs can furnish can be useful for MEPs from both government and opposition parties, and opposition MEPs are more likely to find this form of coordination relevant. While interest groups and other external actors providing MEPs with information will typically have a particular area of focus on which they are in touch with the MEPs, they are unlikely to be in contact with MEPs on all issues. NGs can offer information on all policy areas and, additionally, they can offer information that is already adapted to the political context as the NGs, themselves, are used to participating in the same political process as the MEPs.

The hypothesis will be found to be disconfirmed if the analysis does not show that there is a difference in opposition MEPs’ receptiveness to technical input and policy preference input, or if opposition MEPs are more receptive to information regarding the NG’s policy preferences than to technical information.

MEPs are contacted by the NG representatives of other member states as well as by their own NGs. Hypotheses 8 and 9 address the distinction hypothesized to exist between the receptiveness of MEPs to input from their own NG and foreign governments, across party affiliation.

Hypothesis 8

Actor preferences

It is hypothesized that MEPs of the same nationality, across party affiliation, will prefer contact with their own NG to engaging in coordination with NGs from other member states. This preference is expected to hold irrespective of whether MEPs belong to the national government or the opposition.

➢ Hypothesis 8: MEPs will engage more with their own national government than foreign governments, irrespective of being part of the national government or opposition

Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence

Just as MEPs are likely to be contacted more by their own NG, MEPs are also hypothesized to be more likely to seek out information from their own NG; MEPs are more likely to share an understanding of the political context with their own NG, the technical information from their own NG is likely to be more
accessible to the MEP/MEPA, both linguistically and with regard to content, as well as in terms of establishing long running inter-personal relations based on frequent interaction. As the primary reference point of the MEPs is their domestic constituency, the NG of the MEPs is more likely to be able to provide relevant information that will benefit the MEPs work in relation to their own electorate, wherefore MEPs across the political spectrum are more likely to find it relevant to engage with government representatives from their own country.

Disconfirming evidence of hypothesis 8 is, therefore, if the analysis finds that MEPs from the NG and/or opposition parties engage equally or more with NGs from other member states than with their own.

**Hypothesis 9**

The final hypothesis adds an additional layer to be assessed – namely whether the links between the MEPs and their own NG is likely to be stronger in terms of rendering MEPs more likely to take more of the input on board which they receive from their own NG, than the input they receive from the representatives of other member states’ NGs simply due to being of the same nationality. Are MEPs predisposed to listen to their own NG by default, or will MEPs use the information they receive from any NG irrespective of whether they share nationality, depending only on whether they agree with the information or find it useful?

**Actor preferences**

MEPs are expected to be more receptive to messages conveyed through coordination with their own NG than to messages conveyed by NGs from other member states. This preference is expected to hold irrespective of whether MEPs belong to the national government or opposition – receptiveness will be greater to input from the MEPs’ own NG.

- **Hypothesis 9**: MEPs will be more receptive to input from their national government than foreign governments, irrespective of belonging to the national government or opposition

**Causal mechanism and disconfirming evidence**

It is hypothesized that the MEPs have a significant interest in knowing how a legislative proposal will affect their home country (and thereby their electoral base). Whether belonging to the government or not, this will be relevant information from the MEPs, more so than information from other member states. Furthermore, when issues are of sufficiently high salience nationally, MEPs tend to align
nationally (e.g. Hix, Noury and Roland:2007, and Cicchi:2013). In extension of this point, MEPs are more likely to have a perceived preference coherence with their own NG than with other member states’ NGs (Ringe:2010), wherefore they are more likely to be open to – and to seek out themselves – information from their own NGs.

The disconfirming evidence of hypothesis 9 is if the analysis finds that MEPs from the national government and/or opposition parties express more receptiveness or more towards the with NGs from other member states than towards their own.

With these hypotheses the project aims to answer the research questions. In the following chapter the methodology employed to investigate whether these hypotheses accurately depict the causes and reception of coordination is laid out.
A brief overview of the findings of the project for each of the hypotheses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Hypothesis supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. More EP power leads to more coordination</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. MEPs with greater potential for influence targeted more than MEPs without potential influential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.a. NGs prefer MEPs of same nationality</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.b. NGs prefer MEPs of same party</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.c. NGs prefer MEPs with central EP role</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Member state size affects extent of coordination</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.a. Small countries coordinate more</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b. Large countries coordinate more</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Older countries coordinate more</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Consensus style NGs coordinate more across the aisle</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Consensus style NGs coordinate more interactively</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Party affiliation affects reception to coordination by MEPs</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.a. Govt. MEPs more receptive to policy pref. input than opp. MEPs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.b. Opposition MEPs more receptive to technical input vs. policy pref. input</td>
<td>Partially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. MEPs coordinate more with own NG than foreign NGs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. MEPs more receptive to input from own NG than foreign NGs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Methodology

In this chapter the research design of the project is developed, the method of choice and the data used to assess the accuracy of the hypotheses are presented, and the internal and external validity of the findings are discussed.

As the project analyzes a scarcely studied interaction, the first step of the research process consists in gathering the necessary data, upon which most of the analysis rests. This also implies creating the hypotheses abductively. Exploratory interviews are combined with existing state of the art literature in order to form hypotheses that best allow for the exploration of the interaction, so that an in depth understanding of the patterns and dynamics of coordination can be achieved. Consequently, some of the data collected was used to inform the hypotheses, while the major part of the data was used to assess the hypotheses. Furthermore, the exploratory nature of the project led to the analytical element of the project being divided into two parts, with the second part of the analysis building on the findings of the first part. The analysis of the reactions of the MEPs to the interaction directed at them by the NGs builds upon the findings of the analysis of the efforts by the NGs to interact with MEPs.

Before proceeding to the empirical analysis of the data, the project begins with a descriptive chapter that maps the coordination as it takes place in the different member states, based on interviews with representatives from both the NGs and the EP. This chapter subsequently forms the basis for the comparative analysis of the coordination as carried out by the NGs. The analysis of the NGs’ activities is followed by a description of the MEPs’ patterns of behavior when engaging with the NGs in coordination, whereupon follows an analysis of how coordination is received by MEPs. As such, the causal relations analyzed in the project are consecutive. Coordination is the dependent variable in the first part of the project, the investigation of what leads to coordination, where after the analysis evaluates the effect of coordination as the independent variable when addressing the effect of coordination and how it is received by the MEPs.

In the following, the research approach is presented first, after which the approach to each part of the project is presented, including the descriptive part, and how the three research questions are answered. This includes a discussion of how the challenge of dealing with actors that are diverse (MEPs and MEPAs; NG representatives from different parts of the governments’ organizational structure) and, in the case of the NGs, combine to constitute a complex composite actor is handled, how the cases are selected,
how the hypotheses will be assessed, the method employed and the selection of interviewees, and what limitations to this approach are expected.

3.1. Research design – a qualitative comparative case study analysis

As Plümper, Troeger and Neumayer observe, “...identifying causal effects...is distinct from understanding causal mechanisms.” (Plümper, Troeger and Neumayer:2010, p. 7). It is one thing to establish that one event leads to another. It is quite another task to understand why this is the case. Understanding why coordination occurs, why it takes the particular form it does, and what effects the phenomenon itself causes is the goal of this research project. Investigating what causes coordination, what shapes it and which effects coordination may have, rests on the premise that causality can be identified through carefully designed research.

There will always be idiosyncratic factors at play when zooming in closely on an individual case, which can complicate and confuse the matter. It is impossible to completely avoid “contamination” of both large and small population samples and causation will always remain a matter of interpretation of the data and selection of what to include. It is, however, possible to identify regularities, patterns and general trends of behavior in populations, beyond identifying correlations.

Furthermore, coordination is carried out by actors in countries that are very different though they are faced with the same challenges at EU level. The actors therefore do not start from the same background conditions when facing these challenges. Interactions that appear to differ from country to country may in fact potentially be traced back to the same causal mechanism, and may be different expressions of the same phenomenon, only varying according to their respective contexts. And alternatively – similar interactions may stem from different causal mechanisms, due to varying background settings.

When analyzing the empirical data the idiosyncratic or insignificant factors must be filtered from the central ones. As Plümper, Troeger and Neumayer (2010, p. 8) state: “The fundamental challenge to causal inference stems from the fact that factual observations cannot be compared to counterfactual observations. Causal inferences therefore require the comparison of different units of analysis at the same or another point in time or the same unit of analysis at different points in time.” The manner in which it is attempted to meet both of these criteria is briefly laid out in this chapter and elaborated further in the empirical chapters 5 and 6.
The occurrence of coordination has been confirmed by existing research of other scholars, as mentioned previously, but it has so far not been clearly conceptualized or comprehensively described. It is therefore not a matter of establishing whether the NGs are interested in or actively involved in coordination, but rather what caused it, what shapes it, and what form it takes. The in-depth description of coordination as it is carried out by the selected country cases follows in chapter 4. As regards the MEPs on the other hand, the initial question is to determine whether they are in fact receptive to the NG’s input to a significant degree or whether the NGs input falls on deaf ears. Following this, the question of how the MEPs and their assistants themselves perceive this interaction is addressed.

The research project is designed to provide an understanding of the causes and motivations of the member states that have led to coordination and how it is perceived by the actors involved. Why do the NGs decide to coordinate? What makes them choose their respective mode of coordination? In what ways do the MEPs perceive and incorporate the input from coordination? The purpose is to get as thorough and detailed knowledge about the cases as possible; to be able to move beyond a general understanding of the patterns of activity and to explain the interaction as fully as possible, including how it relates to the other relations the two sets of actors are part of.

To achieve these goals and to maximize the explanatory strength of the analysis, a comparative qualitative analysis is carried out. Closely examining the details of the interaction between the actors in a few selected case studies in a qualitative, in-depth study, has distinct advantages in this case. First of all, the conceptualization and full description of the forms of interaction are made on the basis of an understanding of, not only, the actors’ activities, but also their own understanding of the activity, their purpose behind it and their perception of its significance. How important do the actors find it? Is it an integral part of their negotiation repertoire in the EU? In which cases can it be expected to be most predominant, and in which cases is it likely to be most effective? In which ways, if at all, is it controversial or challenging for the actors involved? The NGs may report that they employ an equal number of representatives to be in touch with the MEPs on an equally frequent basis and in identical manners. However, the nature and the content of the communication may vary in substantive ways, just as the reception of it by the MEPs may vary, meaning that the two cases of coordination cannot be considered equal. An additional layer of complexity that strengthens the call for a qualitative approach is that coordination is an informal activity, and a politically sensitive one at that. As such, it is difficult to

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8 Due to the fact that a) the EP emphasizes its independence as a legislative institution vis-a-vis the Council, and b) relations across the political spectrum and national divides can have sensitive implications.
obtain a sufficiently accurate overview of the activities of the member states to allow for categorization and comparison of the interactions. What is more, the EU member states are part of a system which itself is under constant development, where formal and informal rules change continuously, and where a great variety of actors participate. This makes the identification and isolation of key independent and dependent variables a complex process.

3.1.a. A Small N Case Study
The project investigates coordination between the governments of seven EU member states and MEPs and MEPAs. The member states were selected from the universe of cases in which the phenomenon may occur – the 28 EU member states. Interviewees from the NGs were selected from ministries and PermReps from seven member states. The EP interviewees – MEPs and MEPAs – were selected from the same seven member states out of the 766 MEPs in the 7th parliament. As with any methodological approach, this approach has potential shortcomings. A qualitative small N case study analysis faces the challenge of external validity. The possibility for generalization could arguably have been improved by adding more country cases. However, understanding the logic behind the actors’ choice to coordinate to the extent and in the manner they do and assessing whether the causal mechanisms proposed are accurate and not idiosyncratic do not require a large N. By selecting the cases in a systematic manner according to the specific selected variables, it is possible to assess whether these variables are indeed the main explanatory ones (King et al.:1994). A qualitative analysis can provide a more nuanced and accurate pool of data for assessing the hypotheses than a quantitatively larger but less in-depth analysis. Finally, assessing the hypotheses with a small sample to find commonalities and patterns can help provide more substantiated hypotheses, which can then in turn be used for future research that may increase generalizability.

The principle guiding the research of this project reflects that “...more complicated case selection algorithms outperform the best simpler algorithms, but not by much. This promises that qualitative researchers will not endanger causal inferences too much if they select cases on the basis of simply maximizing variation in the explanatory variable of interest and minimizing variation in a confounding variable or variables.” (Plümper, Troeger and Neumayer:2010, p.4)

The countries chosen were selected according to the concept of most similar cases (Seawright and Gerring:2008), so that the cases are, to the greatest extent possible, similar on all variables except for
the variable being assessed. When assessing the hypotheses, the country cases analyzed are then grouped in accordance with the variables assessed. Furthermore, to avoid idiosyncrasy as much as possible, the project seeks to gather as much detailed information as possible on each of the NGs’ pattern of coordination, to be able to compare the countries and sift the country specific from the general patterns. Additionally, the project gathers data from a varied selection of interviewees in several different key positions in the NGs, in order to illuminate as many aspects of coordination and perspectives on the practice of coordination as possible, and to be able to isolate the relevant variables from the irrelevant ones.

The countries selected as case studies are: France, Germany, the UK, Denmark, Spain, Poland, and Slovakia. The countries are placed in the categories which best fit, based on the most relevant criteria. In each category, the countries that are placed in the same column are compared with the countries in the opposite column.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Political system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

9 In the category of “Political system” the cases are selected as representative of these categories based on the classification by Lijphart of consensus vs. majoritarian systems (Lijphart:1999). The main indicator used for the categorization is whether the countries have a proportional representation (PR) or a majoritarian system. While these categorizations of country cases are not completely unambiguous, the countries are placed in the category found to be most representative for the respective country.
3.1.b. Interviewee selection

The data of the project is based primarily on interviews with representatives of the NGs, as well as MEPs and MEPAs. The specific interviewees are presented and discussed in more detail in the following chapter. When working with such composite actors as these, certain aspects must, in particular, be taken into account. Both MEPs and NGs are represented by several different actors. In the case of the NGs, the governments are represented in their relations with the EP by both staff at the national ministries and the PermReps in Brussels. Representatives from both are interviewed in this project, and are all considered equal representatives of the government, albeit with different functions and different specific knowledge.\(^\text{10}\)

As regards the actors of the EP, MEPs are interviewed and a recent survey of MEPs’ attitudes towards lobbying by the EP’s Committee on Constitutional Affairs, “Institutional & constitutional aspects of special interest representation” (Coen and Katsiatis:2015), is used to analyze the MEPs’ perspective. In addition to this, MEPAs are included and treated as representatives of MEPs’ office. In relations with the NG the MEPAs are considered as representing the MEPs’ office.

The premises for considering these representatives of the actors is further discussed and defined in the empirical chapters, where the reason the analysis concludes that in some cases this assumption does not hold is discussed, in particular as regards the interviewees representing composite actors.

Additionally, interviews with Commission staff, selected EP staff and other EU civil servants provided background information on the general context of coordination, as well as providing an impression of the interaction as it is perceived by external actors working in the institutional setting in which coordination takes place, and which coordination is aimed at influencing. These interviews were particularly instrumental in the exploratory phase, providing background information to the topic, and helping determine which interviewees would be most relevant, and which stages in the legislative process to focus on – and to get an impression of the general awareness in the EU legislative system of this interaction.

\(^\text{10}\) While it could be hypothesized that EU staff in Brussels will be likely to be more involved with the EP than national ministry staff, this is not borne out in practice in all country cases (DK-NG1, G-NG1). Some NGs have national ministry staff employed which is very involved with the EP, while other NGOs leave this more to the PermRep staff. Thus, it is a decision made by the NGOs and the model they chose for their coordination with the EP. It is not found that geographical distance to the EP lessens the interaction with the EP, and therefore both the national and the Brussels based staff are considered central to the analysis.
3.2. The three steps of the research project

3.2.a. Mapping coordination

Due to the scarcity of information and, to this author’s knowledge, lack of systematic analysis of coordination between NGs and MEPs the project has a significant exploratory and descriptive element. The first step of the research project is the gathering and mapping of the empirical data on how coordination is carried out in the different selected member states, upon which the analytical part of the research rests.

In chapter 4, where the descriptive empirical data on the patterns of coordination carried out by the different member states is presented, the findings are structured according to the main variables and empirical indicators that will be used to assess the hypotheses.

The empirical indicators that are used to operationalize the variables were developed gradually, and they provide a focal point for the interviews. To achieve the highest validity possible of the operationalization of the variables the indicators were taken as a starting point, and were then adjusted based on the development of the empirical findings presented in chapter 4.

When determining the empirical indicators, inspiration is drawn from Kassim’s (2003) categories of styles of coordination in the NGs of the EU member states concerning their EU policies (Kassim:2003). Kassim analyses “...the institutional arrangements they have put in place to manage their participation in EU decision making...[to coordinate]...between at least two levels, the domestic and the European, so that proposals in Brussels are consistent with national imperatives.” (Kassim:2003, p. 83-84). This definition of coordination is adapted to the context of the bilateral type of coordination analyzed in this project – a two-level coordination effort to gain consistency between NGs (domestic level) to MEPs (EU level). Inspired by this, the project includes both the national (ministry) and the EU level (PermRep) of government activity, and analyzes the NGs’ efforts from both of these levels combined.

In his analysis of types of coordination, Kassim points to two main classifications. He distinguishes between coordination that is centralized, in which the NG has a central body in charge of coordination which has the power to ultimately determine the course of action of that member state, and coordination which is decentralized, in which the sub-units can decide their preferred course of action more freely. A second distinction is made between the level of “coordination ambition”, which is classified as being either comprehensive or selective. A comprehensive ambition to coordinate is one in which “…states have far-reaching, strategic, and directive conceptions that are comprehensive in
The selective ambition is characterized as one in which governments have a “...more modest ambitions and are selective in their approach.” (Kassim:2003, p. 92). Although these classifications were designed for an analysis of internal NG coordination in relation to Council negotiations, the differentiation between centralization and decentralization, and levels of ambition to coordinate, provides useful distinctions for the present analysis. The categories are useful when assessing the main dependent variables addressed by research question 1 and 2, regarding the nature and extent of coordination exerted by the NGs. Observing changes in the NGs’ ambition to coordinate, relative to each member state’s specific way of coordinating, helps to make it possible to determine and compare the intended level of coordination, even if this may take different forms in the various member states, thereby enabling a comparison of diverse country cases. This allows for an analysis of not only practical expressions of coordination, but of the efforts by each country with their idiosyncratic specificities, and for an analysis of how the mindset of each NG has changed within this context. Kassim’s distinction between centralized and decentralized coordination is also interesting for the analysis regarding different modes of coordination. The individual government representatives’ activities can be more or less left up to the official to decide for themselves. There can be different degrees of efforts to monitor, direct and further these efforts from a central level. This is an underlying consideration when weaving together the full understanding of the seven different NG modes of coordination. It is, furthermore, kept in mind with regard to the relation between the two groups of NG interviewees, namely sectorial attachés of the NGs and the NG officials responsible for the horizontal coordination within the NGs of their dealings with the EP, who typically function as coordinators for the sectorial attachés of the NG and their relations with the EP. The different approaches, in and of themselves, do not indicate a trade off in ambition as regards the extent of coordination. Different degrees of centralization can be combined with different degrees of ambitions as to how much to coordinate. It is, however, necessary to keep this aspect in mind, in order to be sure that the analysis includes a) all the areas of the NG in which coordination is taking place, an b) the potential strengths and limitations the different approaches can have.

Following the descriptive sections presenting the empirical data in chapter 4 (NGs) and 6 (MEPs/MEPAs) respectively, the specific empirical indicators used for assessing the hypotheses are presented in the analytical chapters 5 and 6 in the sections pertaining to the assessment of each of the hypotheses.

When exploring coordination, and assessing the hypotheses, the hypotheses are taken as guiding focal points, to target the analysis and increase parsimony. These variables are expected to have the greatest
significance in terms of shaping the coordination, and are thus the most relevant variables in terms of understanding in what ways coordination follows or cuts across traditional patterns of interaction between the groups of actors.

The size of the member states is, of course, a given. It is currently reflected in the relative influence each member state has in the EU’s legislative system, both in terms of Council votes and number of MEPs, and, as such, it is consequential for the intra-institutional dynamics in both legislative institutions, wherefore it must be taken into account when comparing the NGs’ respective ambitions for influence. The member states’ political systems may shape the way the actors interact. This is highly relevant to investigate due to the plausible effect this would have on how NGs may develop and grow their relations with MEPs – the limits and the possibilities for the interaction. This may shed new light on how the differences of member states systems at national level may translate into different conditions for the member states at EU level. As regards the effect of duration of membership on the NGs’ efforts to coordinate, if the hypothesis is found to be supported by the data, it would prompt an expectation that the process of institutional adaptation among the newer member states will eventually lead them to adapt in the same manner as the older member states, and that the differences in efforts to coordinate thus may “even out” over time. Hence, these independent variables are considered both theoretically plausible, and practically consequential for the impact of coordination on the EU’s legislative output.

When assessing the hypotheses the attempt is to describe as much of the phenomenon as possible, with the most essential explanatory factors, while seeking to balance the explanatory strength of the analysis with analytical parsimony. In the analysis, it is therefore emphasized to what extent the variables of the hypotheses contribute to understanding the interaction, as the hypotheses, in some cases, are found to be only partially confirmed, and may contribute with certain elements to explain the phenomenon but are not in themselves fully sufficient to explain the findings. For the same reason, the interviews were kept as open as possible to include other explanatory factors.

3.2.b. Answering research question 1 - Why do EU member states’ governments coordinate with their MEPs in the EU legislative process?

The modes of coordination are compared across the member states at the same point in time (the interviews were carried out in the period of fall 2012 to the fall of 2014). The data is based on interviews with NG representatives placed in parallel positions, and within the same policy area (covering EP
relations within Agriculture or overall EP relations, within the national agriculture ministries and foreign ministries as well as the PermReps). Assessment of the hypothesis is thus conducted from two perspectives: one from a case study of how the move of the CAP to co-decision led NG representatives to change their interaction with the EP in this “limited setting” of a single policy area; and one from a more general study of how the NGs have changed their approach to the EP over time. By focusing on a single policy area when analyzing changes caused by institutional rules that affect the power balance between the NGs and the MEPs, the intention is to limit the “noise” from variations across policy areas. By incorporating these changes into a broader general set of observations about NG coordination with the EP, that includes both a cross-policy area view and a longer time perspective, the analysis additionally aims to be able to capture incremental developments, and earlier trigger points for coordination, that may have contributed to the NGs reacting as they do in the specific CAP-context. Furthermore, it is sought to ensure that potential bias of the CAP policy area in the NGs and in the AGRI committee in the EP is detected.

**The Case of the CAP**

The CAP is the policy area used in the analysis to investigate changes in coordination over time and identify the reasons for these. It is also the specific policy area which is analyzed to exemplify how the member states coordinate. To prevent obtaining results that are particular to this particular policy area, the findings from the analysis of the policy area of the CAP are combined with the findings from the interviews with the generalist staff.

Several factors combine to make this the most relevant policy area to analyze. It is a legislative policy area in which the co-decision procedure has been instituted, which means that the NGs and the EP are negotiating legislation on the policy area which will have a direct impact on the member states nationally. As such, it is more likely to be salient than an area where the EP has less influence. Adding to this, the CAP is the policy area receiving the largest amount of the EU’s budget, and it is generally considered a high salience policy issue for the EU member states, rendering it a highly likely target for coordination (Roederer-Rynning:2015, Wallace, Wallace and Pollack:2005).

The CAP is among the policy areas that have most recently gone through the major institutional change from the consultation to the co-decision procedure. Thus, with regard to the collection of data regarding the NGs’ change of procedures, the changes in connection with the CAP are more likely to be fresh in the minds of most people dealing with the CAP. Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty expanded what was a
pre-existing structural set-up of how the NGs deal with the EP. Thus, in all member states the premises for being aware of the current status of the institutional rules and the manner in which these affect the legislative process between the EP and the Council already exists, leaving a more leveled playing field in terms of the NGs’ possibilities of reacting to the institutional change. The implications of the use of the CAP in the analysis will be further elaborated in the empirical analysis of the project.

3.2.c. Answering research question 2 - Why does coordination vary between the member state governments?

To identify patterns of difference in how NGs coordinate, the project seeks to hold as many of the deductively founded main relevant variables as constant as possible, while comparing the selected independent variables. Concurrently, the individual country differences are taken into account. For each hypothesis, the countries are grouped and compared according to the independent variable that is assessed.

In answering both research questions, the abductive approach to the hypothesis formation implies that the exploratory interviews conducted for background information were used for the construction of the hypotheses, while the interviews conducted afterwards (the majority of all interviews conducted) were used to assess the hypotheses. The exploratory interviews are not included in the assessment of the hypotheses, with a few exceptions that must be mentioned. The exploratory interviews with the NG representatives from Denmark and Germany contain information regarding how coordination is carried out in practice in the countries. Part of this information, which was not used as a basis to form the hypotheses, was later found to be relevant for the assessment of the hypotheses, in the process of forming the empirical indicators. As this information was not part of the data informing the hypotheses, its inclusion in the creation of the empirical indicators does not compromise the analysis of the data and assessment of the hypotheses.

3.2.d. Answering research question 3 – How do MEPs perceive of and receive the coordination efforts?

Finally, shifting the focus to the MEPs and how they receive the attempts from the NGs to coordinate, the extent to which MEPs and their assistants are open to and receptive to coordination is compared. The second analytical part of the project evolved as a function of the previous research section.
Interviews with MEPs and MEPAs were conducted at the outset in parallel with interviews conducted with NG representatives. This was originally done with the intention of mapping the interaction of coordination, and gaining as nuanced as possible an overview of the coordination from the perspective of both actors. It was also done to prevent interview bias on the part of the NGs who are one of the parties in the study while being the main informants of the phenomenon being studied. Interviews with MEPs and MEPAs were conducted with questions derived in part from existing knowledge about MEP activity and institutional theory, and in part from my own preliminary data from exploratory interviews with NGs. As sufficient information from the MEPs and MEPAs was accumulated to make possible a meaningful analysis of the receptiveness by the MEPs, the analysis was extended to include this part as well, in combination with additional data from other research projects regarding MEPs’ relations with NGs, as is presented in chapter 6. A more detailed overview of the interviews with the MEPs and MEPAs is presented and discussed in chapter 6.

The following empirical indicators are used for the analysis of the patterns of coordination by the NGs, to capture the modes and extent of coordination, and for the analysis of the reception by MEPs and MEPAs of the input from the NGs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 1: Triggers for creating/upgrading relations with the EP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAP (Lisbon)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(Are they chosen fully or in part according to nationality, political affiliation, or institutional role?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Only</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEPs pro NG’s pol. position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Yes (have staff to deal with the EP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 4: Number of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>“Broad” points, general lines</td>
<td>NG → MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendment assistance</td>
<td>Amendment suggestions</td>
<td>MEP → NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early does the government establish contact on a case for the first time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
<th>After rapporteur’s report is out/Leading up to votes in committee</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Indicator 7: Is there contact with the NGs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Own NG</th>
<th>Foreign NG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 8: Who initiates contact?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primarily MEP/MEPA</th>
<th>Primarily NG</th>
<th>Both equally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Indicator 9: Does the recipient find the contact with NGs helpful?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information</th>
<th>Political information</th>
<th>Strategic information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A brief overview of hypotheses, indicators of (in)dependent variables, and disconfirming evidence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>Disconfirming evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. More EP power leads to more coordination</td>
<td>Institutional rule change</td>
<td>Increase in coordination</td>
<td>Co-decision does not lead to increased coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Co-decision vs. no co-</td>
<td>vs. no increase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>decision)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. MEPs with greater potential for influence targeted more than MEPs</td>
<td>MEP nationality</td>
<td>MEPs of same nationality</td>
<td>MEPs not prioritized according to nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(shares vs. does not share</td>
<td>preferred vs. not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NG nationality)</td>
<td>preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.a. NGs prefer MEPs of same nationality</td>
<td>MEP national party affiliation</td>
<td>MEPs of same party</td>
<td>Government MEPs not prioritized by NGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(government vs. opposition)</td>
<td>preferred vs. not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.b. NGs prefer MEPs of same party</td>
<td>MEP institutional role</td>
<td>MEPs w. influential role</td>
<td>MEPs with central EP role not prioritized by NGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(does vs. does not hold</td>
<td>preferred vs. not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>influential EP role)</td>
<td>preferred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.c. NGs prefer MEPs with central EP role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Member state size affects extent of coordination</td>
<td>Size of member state</td>
<td>NGs make extensive vs.</td>
<td>Small member states do not coordinate more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(large vs. small member state)</td>
<td>limited coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.a. Small countries coordinate more</td>
<td>Duration of membership</td>
<td>NGs make extensive vs.</td>
<td>Large member states do not coordinate more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(old vs. new member states)</td>
<td>limited coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b. Large countries coordinate more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Old member states do not coordinate more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Older countries coordinate more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Consensus style NGs coordinate more across the aisle</td>
<td>Political system of NG</td>
<td>Coordination vs. no</td>
<td>Not more coordination across the aisle by consensus NGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Consensus vs. majoritarian)</td>
<td>coordination across the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aisle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Consensus style NGs coordinate more interactively</td>
<td>Political system of NG</td>
<td>NGs employ extensive vs.</td>
<td>Not more interactive coordination by consensus NGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(consensus vs. majoritarian)</td>
<td>limited interactive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Party affiliation affects reception to coordination by MEPs</td>
<td>Type of input</td>
<td>Opposition MEPs more vs.</td>
<td>Opposition MEPs not more receptive to technical input than</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(technical input vs. policy</td>
<td>less receptive to</td>
<td>policy preference input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>preferences)</td>
<td>technical than policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preference input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.a. Govt. MEPs more receptive to policy pref. input than opp. MEPs</td>
<td>MEP national party affiliation</td>
<td>MEPs receptive vs. not</td>
<td>Govt. MEPs not more receptive to policy pref. input than</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(government vs. opposition)</td>
<td>receptive to policy</td>
<td>opposition MEPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preference input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.b. Opposition MEPs more receptive to technical input vs. policy pref.</td>
<td>Type of input</td>
<td>Opposition MEPs more vs.</td>
<td>Opposition MEPs not more receptive to technical input than</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>input</td>
<td>less receptive to</td>
<td>policy preference input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>technical than policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>preference input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. MEPs coordinate more with own NG than foreign NGs</td>
<td>MEP contact with NGs</td>
<td>More vs. less coordination</td>
<td>MEPs not more in contact with own NG than foreign NGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(own vs. foreign NGs)</td>
<td>with MEPs’ own NG than</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>foreign NGs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. MEPs more receptive to input from own NG than foreign NGs</td>
<td>Source of input</td>
<td>More vs. less receptiveness by MEPs’ to input from own NG than</td>
<td>MEPs not more receptive to input from own NG than foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(own vs. foreign NGs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>foreign NGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research on this topic – as is clear from this research project and also from the additional sources included in the analysis of the MEPs’ use of NG input – is far from exhausted, and leaves room for much further research, in particular on the effect of coordination on the policy output of the EP. A broader, or more in depth, analysis targeted at the MEPs’ side of the interaction was, however, beyond the scope of this research project.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.a. Semi-Structured interviews

The main method used for gathering the empirical data of the project is through semi-structured interviews with central actors involved in, or working close to, the process of coordination. The purpose of employing this method is to get as close as possible to the (perception of the) activity of coordination by the actors involved, in order to be able to analyze it in relation to the institutional variables of my hypotheses. Due to the informality of the process of coordination and the scarce amounts of information that exists about coordination, it is essential to use a method which makes it possible to gather as much and as detailed information about coordination as possible. A face-to-face “open ended” interview with central actors about coordination, during which it is possible to explore the details of the activity and ask follow-up questions to the interviewee, is likely to reveal a fuller picture of coordination. Furthermore, importantly, it is much more likely to elicit an answer than e.g. sending out a questionnaire would be. Furthermore, it may be that interviewees are unwilling to reveal certain details about coordination in writing, due for instance to the potentially sensitive nature of the interaction on legislative cases. A conversation in which there is the possibility of ensuring the interviewee anonymity on those aspects can build a higher level of trust and thereby lead to more information being revealed.

As mentioned previously, it is very difficult to determine with certainty whether an MEP has changed position due to a single factor such as coordination. When analyzing the output of coordination, the goal is therefore rather, as described, to capture the MEPs perception of coordination and the input they receive from the NGs. To this end, semi-structured interviews with MEPs and their assistants are carried out in order to probe their perception of coordination: to what extent do they find it useful as a source of information for their work and potentially solicit the information or, alternatively, are they averse to engage in coordination, and to what extent, if at all, do they find that the NGs try to convince the MEPs to use its information. This method is combined with an analysis of the behavior of the MEPs, as
analyzed in existing literature, in order to – with these two sources combined – approximate an understanding of the effect of coordination. Based on this information combined with the MEPs’ own accounts of the extent to which they incorporate the input from the NGs in their work, and the opinions of their assistants and the NGs on the same matter, the analysis aims at evaluating the likely effect of coordination on the MEPs, and the extent to which it can be concluded that coordination is a source of input to be reckoned with in the EP, and should call for further future studies.

3.3.b. Bias

Intentionally selecting cases implies the risk of selection bias and overrepresentation of certain variables (Plümper, Troeger and Neumayer:2010). Focusing on the effects of certain formal and informal institutions carries the risk of overlooking other factors, or of overestimating the effect of institutions. An NG may coordinate in a certain way for many reasons, determined by both internal and external factors, that may just happen to coincide with the changes in institutional rules investigated in this project; the person interviewed is selected on the basis of their role in relation to what I find to be theoretically relevant, thereby potentially emphasizing the role of this actor and his/her perception of the phenomenon.

One way to attempt to overcome the theoretical bias stemming from basing hypotheses and case selection solely on a deductive background is by carrying out exploratory interviews before formulating the hypotheses to eliminate the most immediate misconceptions regarding the causal mechanisms. The project thus takes an abductive approach to the construction of the hypotheses. By keeping the questions to the interviewees open-ended, it was sought to ensure that through the interviews it would also be possible to detect and include relevant additional (or indeed contrary) information, beyond what was originally anticipated to be the essential information. Hence, semi-structured interviews were conducted, including questions of a sufficiently broad nature, to be able to capture alternative factors and perceptions of the interviewees. By making a qualitative analysis based on open-ended interviews, the gathering of data allows for including additional factors that may contradict the assumptions of the hypotheses and causal mechanisms.

It is difficult to assert with confidence whether the perceptions of the two parties involved in the interaction – the NG representatives and the MEPs/MEPAs – are completely consistent. The NGs may have been referring to contact with MEPs and MEPAs other than the ones who participated in the
interviews. Thus, the generalizability and complete match of the two sets of interviews must be viewed with a certain measure of reserve.
4. Country Presentations

Descriptions of the country cases that form the basis for the analysis of the how the NGs coordinate with the EP are presented below, focusing on the following aspects:

1. The structure of government relations with the EP, including the organization within both national ministries and the PermReps.

2. The mode of coordination of each NG.

3. Which MEPs are prioritized by each of the NG.

4. When and why the NGs initiated and developed their contact with the EP. What were the main factors that prompted the changes?

5. The “key features” of the countries’ approach – a description of the central concepts delineating the NGs’ approach to the EP, and the NGs’ perception of their coordination with the EP. The distillation of the “key features” for each NG is made in order to capture the essential model of coordination, even if the NG were to change practical details in the number of staff employed, amount of cases they engage in etc.

Before the country case descriptions are presented, the selection of interviewees whose statements provide the information for the country descriptions is discussed.

4.1. Presentation of interviewees from the national governments

4.1.a. The representation of actors through selected interviewees

The NG interviews seek to incorporate interviews with government officials who can represent the four different perspectives of the NGs’ dealings with the EP: the foreign ministries, the agriculture ministries and, at the PermReps, a generalist and an official responsible for the agriculture policy\(^\text{11}\). Generalists present the general approach of the government towards the EP. Specialists are spokespeople for specific coordination within a policy area, bearing in mind that specific features of coordination may differ across policy fields. National ministries in some countries are more directly involved with the MEPs, and in other countries the contact goes through the PermReps to the EP. In order to capture the

\(^{11}\) For a more detailed overview, see appendix 8.1
full picture of the contact to the EP the project therefore includes both, contact to the MEPs by the national ministries and by the PermReps. If some countries have more contact with the EP via national ministries, this should “count just as much” in the general overview of the coordination as contact at PermRep level. However, the kind of interaction that takes place via the national ministries in comparison to the PermRep, should also be considered, including whether both segments of the NG staff are in touch with MEPs across party lines and whether in the same manner or in different ways.

The NG representatives who are in touch with the MEPs are understood as having the same function as representatives, ambassadors and ministers who represent the NG in Council negotiations. They are understood as two actors with different functions but with the same mandate, representing the same interests, seeking to promote the same standpoint – the standpoint of the NG – via two different avenues. Not infrequently the activity is even carried out by the same actor in the form of the PermRep’s representatives who represent the government in the Council and also maintain relations with the EP.

The statements of the NG interviewees are, as a starting point, taken as representative of the governments’ intentions as regards extent, mode and purpose of coordination. The interviews aim to tease out and distill the general logic behind the different government approaches. Thus, although the interviewees may have their individual approaches to dealing with MEPs, their answers are compared within each country case, and also compared to answers from MEPs and MEPAs across policy areas, in order to identify potential differences and deviations in the interviewees’ responses.

No “political representatives” (ministers or ambassadors) of the NG are interviewed, although these are also in touch with MEPs, and often there will be a tendency for the “political representatives” to be in touch directly with the MEPs, whereas the civil servants are typically more in touch with MEPAs, but may cross over and be in touch with MEPs directly. However, this interaction is described by the interviewees at civil servant level, including the type of interaction there may be between MEPs and ministers or ambassadors. As such, the interviewees make up a certain segment of the NG representatives – often considered as neutral, and not directly affiliated with a party, which must also be expected to affect their perspective on their interaction with MEPs and MEPAs, and their statements in this connection (they have to maintain their role as mandated by the NG). However, as this contact is the most frequent, it is considered particularly relevant. Furthermore, the NG civil servants are aware of and describe the contact between the political level NG representatives and the MEPs, so this form of contact is included in the project, in spite of it being obtained through “second hand” descriptions by
the civil servants.

An additional complication when dealing with actors speaking on behalf of a larger organization (in this case the NGs), is that the NGs might have civil servants who would want to coordinate more, but the system is slow or lagging behind in making changes, or there are differing opinions within the institution on whether to prioritize the EP or not. In other words – the NGs can be understood as organizations comprising a multitude of actors, and when searching for the NGs’ decision to coordinate the way they do, it should be taken into account that there can be several combined reasons for the final outcome of coordination. Additionally, there might be differences between some countries in which the system can easily be changed but actors do not want to change it, and systems in which some actors want to change it, but the system is rigid or biased against these changes. Thus – what the interviewees say may not reflect the general system’s perspective, and there may also be differing positions within the system.

4.1.b. The distinction between national parties and the NG

NG representatives are understood as separate from national political party staff. They operate as actors that, while not unconnected to the national incumbent parties, are – in their capacity of representing the NG to the EU – removed from the national party political arena. The party affiliation of the MEPs is considered likely to be a highly significant factor in the relation between the actors under study (Mühlböck:2012, Hix:2002). The difference between the NG representatives and staff from the national parties must therefore be taken into consideration, as it can be expected that there is a difference in terms of the kind of relation that is possible to establish between MEPs from opposite sides of the aisle and NG representatives. The distinction is expected to somewhat even out the difference in party politics, as the NG staff is more likely to be considered in a representative of the member state by all MEPs, and more like a diplomatic character than a party representative.

The extent of the link is investigated in the exploratory part of the project. It is included in the description as well as in the analysis of the patterns of interaction, in the balancing of responses by MEPs and MEPAs from both the government and the opposition, as well as in the evaluation of the answers as regards receptiveness by the MEPs and MEPAs. As a starting point, however, the NG representatives as actors are considered to be separate from, though not neutral or completely unaffiliated with, the national political parties.
In the analysis of the NGs, the MEPs and the MEPAs perception of coordination, as well as in all the assessments of the hypotheses I include, to the extent it is relevant, “the other side of the story”, i.e. when NGs are examined using the NG interviews, their statements are compared with information from the MEP/MEPA interviews, to ascertain whether the two parties contradict each other and to evaluate the reliability and accuracy of the interview statements. Through semi-structured interviews, the project furthermore seeks to take as many answers and varied nuanced perspectives into account as possible, by posing the same interview questions to NG staff placed in different departments of the NGs.
4.2. Slovakia

4.2.a Structure of government relations with the EP.12

The overall domestic coordination of EU affairs in the Slovakian government takes place in the Foreign ministry’s EU affairs section, the “Department of general affairs and relations with EU Institutions”, presided over by the minister of foreign and EU affairs. All the sectorial ministries’ affairs related to the EU pass through here. Each sectorial ministry has a coordination unit for EU affairs, which meets in the Foreign Ministry, where differences between the ministries are discussed. This includes preparing the positions of the government on legislative dossiers, maintaining relations with all EU institutions and covering the developments in the EP.

Almost every week a coordination session is held in the Foreign Ministry during which the government’s positions on various EU issues are prepared. Representatives from all ministries participate in these sessions in which different political positions are negotiated and the government’s position on the cases is decided. All ministries are responsible for their own policy areas, but when it comes to the relations with EU institutions, this goes through the Foreign Ministry, including contact with the EP. The sectorial ministries can still contact the EP on a bilateral basis, for instance to provide Slovakian MEPs with the position of the respective sectorial ministries on relevant policy issues. National ministries and MEPs are also in direct contact on specific issues related to the ministries’ policy areas. Furthermore, if an issue is of high importance for a ministry, the ministry will typically arrange an event with the Slovakian MEPs to present its position, and when ministers visit Brussels they will take the opportunity to arrange events in order to meet with the MEPs. However, this is not a very frequent occurrence, and in general national ministries’ coordination and contact with EU institutions goes through the Foreign Ministry.

The Slovakian PermRep, however, is the main contact link between the Slovakian government and the MEPs. At the PermRep, one official is in charge of monitoring the EP, keeping an overview of the status of the main priorities of the government in the EP and reporting on the activities of the EP to the rest of

12 The Slovakian Agriculture Ministry representative did not provide a response to the interview questions in writing. In its place, as an alternative perspective that still sheds light on the NG’s approach to the EP, a government official familiar with the Ministry of Labor’s contact with the EP was interviewed. As this is also a policy area which has been subjected to co-decision, but which has been so for a longer time, it is expected that this Ministry has more established relations with the EP and, thus, that its staff will show at least the same level of awareness of relations with the EP as the Agriculture Ministry. Additionally, this policy area is also a salient policy at EU level, and therefore functions as an alternative to the policy area of agriculture. The additional interviews with the Slovakian government representatives did, however, also involve the policy area of agriculture, and thus, the general trend found in the interviews can be compared on the same lines as the other country cases.
the PermRep and the national ministries. This official is also responsible for maintaining general relations with EP, and is the primary government contact for MEPs and their assistants. The PermRep partially determines for itself what areas to cover in the EP, and the NG offices at home also request certain areas to be covered according to their needs. In addition to this, each of the sectorial attachés at the PermRep – the subject experts that also take part in the Council working groups – cover relations with the EP in their own area and will usually contact the MEPs themselves on the subject specific cases they deem relevant.

4.2.b. Type of coordination

Contact between the PermRep and the EP is regular, on a weekly or daily basis, depending on the agenda of the EP. The PermRep seeks to keep contact with all Slovakian MEPs, and as there are only 13 Slovakian MEPs it is manageable for the PermRep to host joint meetings for all MEPs (as opposed to what is possible e.g. for Germany).

The PermRep is in contact with MEPs on issues the MEPs are interested in and on cases of great importance for Slovakia. The most regular contact between the government and the EP is between the PermRep EP official and the MEPAs. This contact takes place on a daily basis (though not necessarily with all 13 MEP/MEPAs), regarding the positions and interests of the MEPs and the cases the MEPs are following.13

Depending on the situation, the contact can involve phone calls, emails and face to face meetings. During committee weeks contact consists mostly of meetings, as the PermRep official goes to the EP for the committee meetings, whereas contact during the plenary session, due to the hectic schedule of all involved, tends to consist of emails and phone calls. The PermRep contacts the Slovakian MEPs to get updates about developments within the EP and about the direction negotiations are taking on cases of interest to the government. The trialogues are mainly followed by the case attachés, supplemented by the PermRep EP official in cases of particular importance.

MEPs also contact the PermRep for information about the position of the government on specific issues, or to confirm information they have received from other sources, e.g. the media, regarding cases that

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13 Contact to the EP goes beyond just MEPs and their assistants; in cases of high priority for Slovakia the PermRep will usually contact the administrators responsible for the dossiers as well as administrators from the EPGs.
are being dealt with in the EP. MEPs do not, however, as a general rule tend to contact the government in order to get technical information.\textsuperscript{14}

The government seeks to begin covering the EP’s treatment of the selected legislative cases found to be important as early as possible, preferably when the proposal is first sent to the EP, while noting that some issues only turn out to be salient at a later stage in the negotiations. The PermRep aims at contacting the relevant Slovakian MEPs at the beginning of the process, sometimes even before the rapporteur is chosen, but more typically when a legislative proposal is going to be discussed in the EP committee, and in the time leading up to deadlines for tabling amendments. As the government finds that the Slovakian MEPs are closely linked to their EPGs, the government seeks not to contact the MEPs excessively with requests. On selected sensitive issues in specific pieces of legislation the NG provides MEPs with arguments outlining the position of the NG, of the significance of the topic and why the legislation should be written in a certain way in order to benefit Slovakia the most. The government will primarily give MEPs the general political views of the government, rather than work with them on draft amendments in a technically detailed way. The government also refrains from “overburdening” the MEPs with technical details, except on the rare occasions in which MEPs request this from the government. In such cases, the MEPs can contact the sectorial ministry directly for information.

In the contact, which is primarily initiated by the PermRep, the PermRep of Slovakia will send information to the MEPs by email, organize informal dinners for the MEPs to discuss relevant issues, and may be asked by the government at home to find a way to contact the EP. On issues of a more technical nature, it is likely that it will not be the PermRep but rather the EP responsible attaché at the PermRep who contacts the MEPAs. Additionally, the PermRep sends the NG’s position on cases of priority before the votes in the plenary and the committee. At the time the interviews were conducted, the government was working on establishing a system that will make the forwarding of government positions to the EP regular and systematic but, at the time of the interviews, Slovakia’s government was selecting priorities and important cases and was only sending information to the MEPs on these.

\textbf{4.2.c. Choice of MEPs}

Generally the government mainly contacts the Slovakian MEPs and MEPAs to present its views, and it knows in which EP committees each of the 13 MEPs sit, and who might have a chance to influence an

\textsuperscript{14} Though this may be the general rule, it is not the perception of all MEPAs interviewed (SL-EP1 and SL-EP3)
issue. The PermRep staff does not distinguish between whether the Slovakian MEPs they contact belong to the NG or the opposition due to the low number of Slovakian MEPs in the EP. The choice of whom to contact depends on the issue, and the government contacts the MEPs and MEPAs who are most involved in the ongoing relevant cases.

For the Foreign Ministry, however, the question of who to contact is less clear-cut. The question of party affiliation comes more into play here, and the ministries in the capital are generally more careful regarding who it contacts on issues. MEPs from the government party are most open to listen to the government, and if government party MEPs sit on a certain committee, it is easier for the government to contact them than to contact opposition party MEPs. Still, the government also provides MEPs from opposition parties with the arguments of the government.

The PermRep will also occasionally reach out to MEPs from other member states, for instance if the rapporteur on a case of specific interest for Slovakia is from another country. On certain issues in which Slovakia has strong interests, where it looks like negotiations in the Council will be difficult, the PermRep also contacts MEP rapporteurs from other EPGs and nationalities to know the EP’s perspective on the case. Usually, in such cases, the PermRep does not seek out very detailed information but rather aims to get an overview of how the case progresses in the EP.

Furthermore, Slovakia’s government works to establish some coordination between the Visegrad countries, although this has proven to be a challenging task, just as the government finds it challenging to straddle the political division between the EPGs. There are links between MEPs across nationalities within the same EPG; there can for instance be links between Slovakian, Hungarian, Czech and Polish MEPs, but these links remain within the political fractions. The Slovakian government tries to establish links between countries across political lines, and intends to make it a priority of the upcoming Slovakian presidency of the Visegrad group to strengthen the Visegrad links within the EP. Although this may be difficult to achieve on issues in which the interests of the EPGs are strong, on some more general issues, such as the future of Europe and the role of the EP, the Slovakian government finds that there is potential for more coordination. Within the Visegrad group the main purpose is to share the general views of the government, and it is possible to discuss general issues and to explain the background for the position of the government to provide the other Visegrad MEPs with alternative views and with the perspective of the Slovakian government.
The nature of the contact the government finds that it can establish with the MEPs also depends a lot on the MEPs’ personality, and some MEPs take advantage of the contact with the PermRep more often than others. However, in the PermRep’s experience, all Slovakian MEPs are interested in having contact with the PermRep, and all MEPs will meet all together with the PermRep at least once every 2-3 months. Though the government would prefer that these meetings take place more frequently, e.g. every 3-4 weeks, scheduling difficulties make this hard to achieve.

4.2.d. When and why was contact with EP initiated/increased?

As the EP gained more power following the Lisbon Treaty the government found it necessary to be more attentive to what goes on in the EP (SL-NG2). The low number of Slovakian MEPs (13) poses a challenge to the government in terms of following all proposals passing through the EP, so the government found that it has to choose which cases are most important to follow. The current system of government-EP relations was recently (in 2013) adapted somewhat from the previous system, which had been put in place before the Lisbon Treaty was adopted. The changes that were made, though not substantial, were intended to take the Lisbon treaty and the strengthened role of the EP into account, making the system more effective and helping to coordinate EU affairs better within Slovakia. At present, the interviewees expressed differences in their satisfaction with the current status of the coordination system, and differing opinions on whether sufficient resources are allocated to the relations with the EP. The impression of one interviewee was that, although the changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty are significant, it has come as a bit of a surprise for the Council how much has changed. Even though the change in institutional equilibrium was arguably not a change that should have been surprising for the member states (since they themselves adopted the Treaty and knew what it implied), the interviewee found that the NGs are still, years after the Lisbon treaty went into force, in the process of getting used to it. This corresponds to statements from MEPA interviews, confirming that the NG often comes to the EP too late and with too little (e.g. SL-EP1, UK-EP1). In addition to the changes made in 2013, at the time the interviews were conducted (spring 2013 – spring 2014) the PermRep was working on improving coordination with the MEPs, MEPAs and other contacts in the EP, as part of the preparations for the Slovakian EU Presidency in 2016. The anticipation of the Presidency played a big factor in the reorganization of the PR’s relation to the EP.
4.2.e. Summarizing the key features of the Slovakian approach

Of all the countries investigated, the Slovakian government takes the narrowest approach to the EP, notably more limited than the similarly small member state, Denmark, or the fellow newer member state, Poland. The government prefers primarily to contact its fellow national MEPs, in spite of the small group of Slovakian MEPs present in the EP. The small number does, however, according to the NG representatives, allow the government to maintain a closer ongoing contact with these MEPs. Although the government does not seek out MEPs across the political spectrum of national ministries, the PermRep does reach across the aisle. However, occasions on which the government reaches across the national divide mainly occur in situations of great importance to the government. In these cases, rapporteurs are sought out, even across nationality and party differences.15 A general characteristic of the Slovakian government, however, is that representatives do not contact MEPs broadly on all cases passing through the EP, but rather focus their energy on a limited selection of cases of particular importance to Slovakia. The contact is mainly focused on pointing out political positions, and less on providing specific technical information or amendments. In the cases of highest salience the government tries to make its points as early as possible in the process, on occasion even before the rapporteur has been named, or at least before amendments are tabled in the EP committees.

The Slovakian NG matches the empirical indicators as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indicator 1: Reasons for creating/upgrading relations with the EP – triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slovakia</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAP (Lisbon)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers primary trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers primary trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers primary trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers primary trigger</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
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<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers primary trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 The Slovakian government also contacts administrators.
### Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection criteria</th>
<th>Prioritizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ONLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same Nat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same nat/pol. Affil.</td>
<td>X (plus a bit Visegrad. Only in very rare cases other natl.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Also administrators are contacted*

### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
<th>Other collective effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
<td>Yes (have staff to deal with the EP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 of: 82 political (incl. 3 ambass), 15 admins&lt;sup&gt;16&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>For. Min. coordinates between nat. ministries on EU affairs. Though ministries can have bilateral contact with EP, most contact to the EP goes through FM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 4: Amount of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(X) High importance cases and cases of interest to the MEPs to not overburden the MEPs</td>
<td></td>
<td>(X)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>16</sup> For 2016 EU Presidency, Slovakian PermRep will increase its staff to a total of 200, 170 attachés and 30 administrative staff
### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>Amendment assistance</td>
<td>&quot;Broad&quot; points, general lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X If MEPs request it? - Foreign ministry</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X Positions sent before votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>NG → MEP</td>
<td>MEP → NG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
<th>After rapporteur’s report is out /Leading up to votes in committee</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(X rarely) On important cases</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. Germany

4.3.a. Structure of government relations with the EP

Every German ministry has a section that deals with EU affairs. The foreign ministry has a section that deals specifically with the EP.

The ministries have regular meetings with each other in Berlin and Bonn which i.a. include how to deal with the EP. The question is approached from the more general perspective of what is important for the government to achieve in Brussels, rather than from a specific focus on the EP. There is contact to the EP by the PermRep, the national ministries, and the Foreign Ministry directly.

In addition to the people sent from the PermRep to report from Strasbourg, some ministries, among others the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Agriculture Ministry, each send one person to Strasbourg for every plenary session to monitor the session and potentially meet with MEPs. Additionally, there is a meeting every month of the secretaries of state for European affairs of each ministry.

At the PermRep a coordination team of 4 people works to support contact between PermRep and the EP horizontally and to institutionalize the EP-government relations. The coordination team works to raise awareness of EP activities and the importance of the EP within the PermRep, and assists the sectorial attachés in building relations with the relevant people in the EP. This also takes place in a bilateral manner. Due to the frequent staff changes at PermRep and also in the EP this is an ongoing process. The civil servants are mainly in contact with the MEPAs, although this is not a strictly followed formal rule.

4.3.b. Type of coordination

When determining what institutional venues to focus most on when a legislative case has been drafted by the Commission, the PermRep first evaluates whether a legislative proposal is likely to pose problems in the Council or in the Commission, and if it is, then the PermRep turns its attention to the EP. In a majority of the cases, contact with the EP does not become necessary. On a weekly basis and especially during EP committee weeks the PermRep writes a short note (about 2 pages, 5 topics on average) to the ambassador and to the government in Berlin about the main important ongoing issues in the EP, and what is expected to happen in the EP in the coming weeks. Additionally, a longer, more formal report from the plenary session and committee sessions in Strasbourg is produced. Also the sectorial ministries go to meet the MEPs and MEPAs in Strasbourg, just as they are present in Brussels, seeking to make
themselves constantly available for the MEPs and MEPAs for any type of information they would be interested in, and sitting in on the committee meetings to make sure to be up to date about the progress of the EP, particularly when it comes to the trialogue phase. The MEPs also contact the NG, depending on the situation and on which of the two actors needs more information or cooperation more. Both the NG and MEPs and MEPAs seek to coordinate to strengthen their preferred political position.

It is the priority of the German PermRep that the MEPs receive the relevant information from the government at a sufficiently early stage in the negotiation process to ensure that the government’s position is taken on by the MEPs, so that it will not be necessary to fight positions that have already been adopted later in the process when it is more difficult to change the legislative text. As the Slovakian government, the PermRep attempts to not send too much information, so as not to “overload” the MEPs. If MEPs ask for information, or if the PermRep has specific information to give which is considered of importance to the government, they will provide this to the MEPs’ office. Should a case later turn out to become particularly problematic, the ambassador may step in and contact the MEPs to promote the views of the government.

Officially, the NG does not to try to persuade MEPs. Generally, the PermRep will be aware of who among the MEPs is in favor of the government’s position, and may give these MEPs more information, but the officially stated aim is not to go further in trying to persuade MEPs – as opposed to e.g. the stated aim of the Polish government.

The timing of the contact depends on the schedule and developments within the EP. The German government monitors negotiations and dossiers as they pass through the EP, and seeks to anticipate which topics are likely to become important in the future and will require the government to take action. The PermRep thus works from a “putting out brush fires” model, continuously evaluating the progress of negotiations, while seeking not to waste resources on issues that may not end up being problematic for the government.

MEPs generally contact the PermRep if they are looking for information from the government. Some MEPs, however, have bilateral individual contact with the government offices in Berlin and Bonn on a regular basis. Furthermore, MEPs may ask the government for information about developments of negotiations in the Council in order to be better able to adopt a position within their EPGs and
committees. The ambassador of the PermRep can provide this, albeit with an eye to what can be disclosed without risk of leaking sensitive information from the Council.

The MEPAs are of central importance for the PermRep, since they are responsible for gathering information for the MEPs. The German PermRep has, in this connection, taken the initiative to strengthen relations between the PermRep and the EP and to facilitate future initiation of contact by giving parties for German MEPAs. Making sure that the government staff and the MEPAs know each other is intended to facilitate contacting them in the future when it becomes relevant, and to enable sectorial attachés at the PermRep to develop their own contacts within the EP and, in time, take over managing their own relations with the MEPs and MEPAs. The ambassador also has meetings and dinners with the MEPs.

4.3.c. Choice of MEPs

The PermRep and ministries (ministers and officials) mainly seek out MEPs who work on files of importance for the government, and who hold influential institutional roles such as committee chairpersons, rapporteurs or MEPs who are on a relevant committee and are particularly interested in the legislative case at hand. The PermRep’s “coordination team” for the EP maintains an overview of which MEPs are in which positions in the EP, and advises their colleagues in the PermRep about which MEPs to contact. German MEPs are prioritized, but MEPs from other member states are targeted as well, depending on their role in the specific negotiations. Some topics, such as energy policy, and MEPs working on this, are always of priority for the government.

4.3.d. When and why was contact with EP initiated/increased?

The NG has increased and deepened its contact following the Lisbon Treaty. For the PermRep and the agriculture ministry, based on a formal decision by the NG, a considerable ramping up of the effort towards the EP was made. The system of having the 4 person coordination team was established after the Lisbon treaty took effect, as the government sensed it would be necessary to invest more resources in managing relations with the EP. The team was given rather free hands in determining how to best organize its work, so it was not a formal decision by the government to get the team to act in a certain way. Rather, it was recognition of the increased powers of the EP, and a move to allocate resources to this new institutional situation.
4.3.e. Summarizing the key features of the German approach

The NG seeks to be aware of all developments that could be of importance for the German government, in order to be ready to act on these cases when necessary. The NG keeps an ongoing contact with the MEPs who are involved in cases of importance for the government, and some areas in particular are constantly in focus. When issues suddenly and unexpectedly become important (as for instance happened with the case of ACTA), the German government has ensured that it has the means to be able to take a “putting out brush fires” approach to coordination. The government allocates substantial resources at that point in the process, seeking to influence the EP heavily, rather than being proactive on all cases passing through the EP to prevent them going in a direction the government does not approve of. The government also focuses on maintaining ongoing relations with the EP.

The German NG matches the empirical indicators as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator 1: Reasons for creating/upgrading relations with the EP – triggers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAP (Lisbon)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted** |
| **Selection criteria** | **Prioritizing** |
| **ONLY** | **Instl. role (irrespective of natl.)** |
| Same nat /pol. Affil. | Same Nat. | Pol. affil. | Same nat. + pol. affil. | MEP proposition | MEPs contra | Pro/con/unsaid |
| Same natl. | Inst. role | (X)? | MEP pro position | (X) less (inform, not persuade) | | |
### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
<th>Other collective effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td>Yes (have staff to deal with the EP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 of: **140 “policy related questions”/50 administrative functions**

Coordination among the Foreign Office and the Sectorial Ministries towards the EU includes approach to the EP

### Indicator 4: Number of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only very salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X (but ongoing contact on policy areas)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>Amendment assistance</td>
<td>NG → MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendment “Broad” points, general lines</td>
<td>Amendment suggestions</td>
<td>MEP → NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(X) not much, if MEPs ask

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
<th>After rapporteur’s report is out /Leading up to votes in committee</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X PermRep: tends to monitor cases and step in where necessary. Germany is relatively late in the game, troubleshooting approach</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4. Spain

4.4.a. Structure of government relations with the EP

All sectorial counselors at the PermRep have to follow developments in the EP on cases within the policy area they are responsible for, in addition to following and engaging with the Council and the Commission. In addition, the PermRep has one person with one assistant in charge of EP relations, following the plenaries and going to Strasbourg every month, distributing information to the rest of the relevant parts of the government ministries and PermRep. Because sectorial counselors are the technical experts in their areas they are supposed to have direct links with the EP. The sectorial counselors can determine how much they want to engage with MEPs. If the sectorial counselors need information they can go to the EP official, and they inform the EP attaché about the contact they have with the EP.

Furthermore, the EP official follows developments in horizontal issues that are of importance to the government. Cases are followed on an ad hoc basis, depending on how important the government deems a case to be.

The contact between the national ministries and the MEPs is bilateral, determined by each ministry on its own. The national ministries also comprise the channel for the regional ministries. Some regional ministries also contact the EP directly, as they have regional MEPs who represent them, and their links may be stronger than to the NG (SP-EP4), wherefore the regional minister for agriculture e.g. can contact their MEP and coordinate. This does not, however, take place on a regular basis as with the NG but more on a case by case basis.

The EP official of the PermRep is often in touch with the national ministries, but the connection with the national ministries is mainly maintained by the sectorial counselors. When contacting the PermRep, the sectorial ministries typically communicate via the staff member at the PermRep who is working in their respective policy areas, as this person is the technical expert on the area and the ministry staff knows this person already. Through this connection, the ministries coordinate which MEPs to contact. The EP official of the PermRep generally does not contact the national sectorial ministries, but occasionally the sectorial ministries contact the EP official at the PermRep, e.g. to ask for information. In the case of the Agriculture Ministry, the ministry is more frequently directly in touch with the MEPs than the PermRep. The PermRep follows the work of the EP and may point out important topics to the agriculture ministry, but the attachés are not in contact with the MEPs all the time, but rather function like the “eyes and
ears” of the agriculture ministry, helping the ministry determine who it would be best to be in touch with, and what approach will be best.17

4.4.b. Type of coordination

The contact with MEPs and MEPAs is ad hoc and varies between meetings, phone calls, and emails, depending on the situation. The contact can consist of the government sending voting suggestions, political positions, draft amendments, concrete regulations and assistance in drafting amendments.

The PermRep and the national ministries follow developments in the EP. In committee weeks the PermRep’s EP official follows committee meetings, and also covers important policy areas if the responsible sectorial counselor is prevented from following it, so as to ensure that all important cases are covered.

The government assists MEPs in drafting amendments, and also suggests amendments to MEPs. The information to the Spanish MEPs is often about the government’s position on a policy question. The PermRep seeks to inform the MEPs about the Spanish government’s preferences in connection with the trialogues, in the hope that they will promote the government’s standpoint in the EP. The NG also seeks information from the MEPs.

Contact between MEPs and ministries is conducted by each ministry as well as by the PermRep, and varies in extent. There are, for instance, ongoing relations between the agriculture ministry and the EP, and also through the PermRep to the EP. The ministry always seeks to be aware of what goes on in the EP, and aware of which topics are important for the ministry, and to maintain good relations with the AGRI committee (and PECH and ENVI, but mostly AGRI). On very important cases the minister may deal with the EP personally. The agriculture minister has, for example, dealt with highly salient issues personally, e.g. by meeting with high profile MEPs such as the EP President.

The frequency and the extent of the contact depend on the cycles and activities of the EP. For the agriculture ministry for example, the primary contact tends to be with the spokespeople from the two major Spanish parties in the AGRI-committee. It is the experience of the government, that the MEPs lack sufficient information on the topic being treated in the EP. Therefore, the government sends

17 Additionally, it is worth mentioning that EP officials meet weekly in a working group, a so-called “General affairs working group”. At these meetings “institutional questions” are discussed, such as agreements that the Council and the EP have to sign, regarding rules about how they interact etc.
information to these two MEP representatives so that they may distribute it within their groups. The same information is sent to both representatives. This information can be information about what is important for the government, it can e.g. be crucial for the government to make sure that the positions of the government are reflected in a report. At such moments, the government may send draft amendments, in particular to these two persons. The committee drafts the report, but since the report has to be adopted in plenary later, other MEPs also have to be aware of the government’s position. E.g. Catalan MEPs may be primarily interested in regional affairs, but these MEPs who are not involved in agriculture affairs, still have to be aware of matters of relevance for the government.

There is an ongoing interaction between the government and the MEPs, but when there is a specific important topic being dealt with, the government acts more intensively, sending information to all MEPs, and conducting meetings between members of the relevant committees and the secretary of state. The government provides the MEPs with both, technical information and political points, the position of the government, its priorities and preferences, while making sure that the information is presented as the government’s position, not as “political party information”. The government also seeks to ensure that the MEPs know that the government is ready to provide them with information if they need it.

The timing of the contact depends on the topic, but sometimes it takes place even before it arrives in the EP, before rapporteur is chosen. If a case in a committee stage, the government only contacts the MEPs who are in the relevant committee, so there is no point in sending information to a wider selection of MEPs. More information can be sent to more MEPs later in the negotiations, e.g. in the plenary stage.

Contact changes over time as the government staff and the MEPs and MEPAs get to know each other better, and the building up of relations over time facilitates this contact. The Spanish government makes a conscious effort to not use up all its diplomatic capital so that it is not possible to ask for help when it really matters.

4.4.c. Choice of MEPs

There is contact with both MEPs and MEPAs, depending on what is deemed necessary. The government mainly sends a lot of information to the Spanish MEPs, though there can also be contact with non-Spanish MEPs.
There is more contact with the MEPs who are part of the government than the opposition MEPs, but in the majority of the cases the same information is sent to all MEPs. In the same way, the NG does not distinguish between which MEPs and MEPAs can contact the NG, but Spanish government MEPs and MEPAs tend to contact the NG more than the opposition.

In the area of agriculture there is constant ongoing contact with Spanish MEPs from all political parties, not only government parties (EPP). The government staff will typically contact the spokespersons of the two big parties who work on this area/on the specific dossier. For all the other political parties (outside EPP and S&D) who do not have an MEP in the AGRI committee, the government contacts the head of the Spanish national delegations in the various EPGs.

The selected MEPs are chosen according to topics they deal with and there is contact with MEPs from the relevant committees dealing with the topic. Contact is frequent with the coordinators of the Spanish delegations of the two big groups (conservatives and socialists), due to their role in the national delegations. The same is the case for the rapporteurs and committee chairpersons, if the topics are important for the government. If the topic is not important for the government, it is not crucial that an MEP is a Spanish rapporteur and the government will not spend the resources on the contact.

It often happens that the Spanish socialist and conservative MEPs share interests, e.g. on the area of cohesion funds. This facilitates cross-party interaction.

The NG is also in touch with MEPs from other countries. This is a bit more difficult because the MEPs do not know the NG staff very well but over time, as with Spanish MEPs and MEPAs, once relations are built and the two parties get to know each other, this becomes easier.

4.4.d. When and why was contact with EP initiated/increased?\(^18\)

The Lisbon Treaty resulted in a lot of change for the government’s relations with the EP. The shift to co-decision made a big difference for the way in which the government deals with the EP. The more co-decision there is, the more work there is for the PermRep.

---

\(^{18}\) It should be noted in this section, that the institutional memory of the interviewees on this point may be limited. One interviewee was from the agriculture ministry, which, for good reason, would find the Lisbon Treaty a turning point. A second interviewee volunteered that the statements made for the interview were based on a limited amount of years this interviewee had worked in the NG.
As one interviewee said, the EP is becoming so important that it is another way of working in addition to the Council. The government can try to promote Spanish positions through the EP if it looks like the Council compromise position will not reflect the Spanish position, but the EP is not just a plan B anymore. The Agriculture Minister, who places particularly great significance on relations with the EP, always looks both to the Council and the MEPs, and always works on two parallel tracks. The EP is seen as a second chamber.

Additionally, it was pointed out by a government interviewee, that since the EP has now gained a lot of power in a very short time that not everyone is aware of yet, the EP is trying to increase the awareness of its influence. Furthermore, trialogues are still a relatively new phenomenon in certain policy areas, and they are very difficult to navigate, as there are not many formal procedures, which makes it difficult to arrive at agreements in the trialogues. It has taken time for everybody to recognize this, and the interviewees did not completely agree on whether everyone in the government has realized it equally much (SP-NG1, SP-NG3). Though there was disagreement as to whether all ministries are equally focused on the EP at this point in time, awareness about the significance of EP relations, interviewees agreed (SP-NG1, SP-NG3), has grown in the sectorial ministries.

4.4.e. Summarizing the key features of the Spanish approach

There is a permanent ongoing relationship between the NG PermRep and the national ministries and the EP, ranging from civil servant contact to the ministers getting involved personally and in important cases contacting the EP directly.

Contact is mostly with Spanish MEPs, but it can also be with MEPs of other nationalities. Normally, mostly Spanish MEPs are contacted, as this is perceived to respect the institutional concept. In other words, the Spanish NG views the institutional setup as based on nationality and, as such, contact will initially be made to all Spanish MEPs, followed by potentially reaching out to MEPs and MEPAs from other countries.

MEPs are contacted irrespective of whether they agree or disagree, but the most useful MEPs to be in contact with are typically the Mediterranean MEPs, as they share the same priorities as Spain. Also, there is less contact with MEPs from other countries, as it is likely that they are already in touch with their own government.

The Spanish NG matches the empirical indicators as follows:
### Indicator 1: Reasons for creating/upgrading relations with the EP – triggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAP (Lisbon)</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Several Spanish interviews mention being made aware of EP increased power in connection with Morocco fisheries deal – indicates “organic learning”.*

### Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection criteria</th>
<th>Prioritizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLY</strong></td>
<td><strong>MEP proposition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same nat/pol Affil</td>
<td>(X) Not much, some tendency towards govt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same nat</td>
<td>X Mainly in relevant coms, mainly Mediterranean in addition to Spanish as they tend to agree more with Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same pol affil</td>
<td>MEPs contra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inst. role</td>
<td>Pro/con/unsaid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Especially Spanish spokespers from 2 big EPGs (and heads of delegations from other EPGs)*

### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
<th>Other collective effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Yes (have staff to deal with the EP)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediu (2-3)</td>
<td>X Representative for all ministries?</td>
<td>EU focused coordination/communication between Foreign Ministry and the ministries and PermRep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1+1 (1 ass.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Indicator 4: Number of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>Amendment assistance “Broad” points, general lines Amendment suggestions Voting recommendations</td>
<td>NG → MEP MEP → NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Can be variance between ministries</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X To all Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
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<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5. Denmark

4.5.a. Structure of government relations with the EP

In general, the Danish government’s contact with the MEPS and their assistants is characterized by an informal and decentralized approach. Much of the contact between the government and the EP is via the PermRep in Brussels, where there is contact to the EP at several levels, from the case attachés to the level of ambassador. Case attachés are primarily in contact with the MEPAs, while ministers are generally in contact with MEPS. When ministers are in Brussels, or MEPS are in Copenhagen they meet face to face (Among other things, they are invited once a month to participate in meetings with the Parliament’s EU affairs committee). This does not preclude, however, that the attachés contact MEPS, and informal contacts are also built across these lines.

At the PermRep there is an ongoing informal contact with MEPS and MEPAs, rather than scheduled recurring meetings. Civil servants determine for themselves when and to what extent coordination with the EP will be most prudent for the best promotion of the government’s interests. The general tendency is to follow the rhythm of the EP. Case attachés report all activity with the EP to the ambassador, seeking to maintain an overview of the development of cases and how these might affect other cases.

The PermRep has one person responsible for the horizontal coordination in the PR, maintaining an overview of issues in the EP and making sure that case attachés do not work on something which might go against the interest of other parts of the government due to lack of awareness of other cases in the EP.

The specific dossiers are generally handled by the PermRep in cooperation with the sectorial ministry in charge of the policy area in question. Should the case attaché in Brussels need more information, the sectorial ministry will provide this and support the work of the attaché. With respect to dealing with the EP, the Foreign Ministry is involved on a more general basis, setting the overall framework for the Danish government’s activities at EU level. The Foreign Ministry also maintains a horizontal overview of the developments at EU level, as well as assisting e.g. with connecting an attaché from the PermRep with the right people elsewhere in the government.

When a proposal is released by the Commission, the NG begins to determine where efforts should be made. Here, focus on the Council is only half of the process – the other half is focus on the EP.
4.5.b. Type of coordination

Through its relations with the MEPs and their assistants, the government seeks to ensure that MEPs are always aware of the Danish government’s position on the cases treated in the EP and, as much as possible, tries to promote Danish government interests in the EP. This is done based on the perception that, with the EP now being an equal co-legislator with the Council, negotiating in the Council is not sufficient to ensure a desired outcome of the negotiations, and if something should not go according to the government’s preferences in the Council, it may be gained through the EP.

Contact between the government and the MEPs’ offices is typically initiated by the government (generally the PermRep), with the purpose of informing MEPs about the Danish government’s position on policy dossiers, providing specific amendment suggestions or voting recommendations, exchanging information about the status of negotiations in the Council and the EP, and the potential challenges and opportunities that are shared by the two actors. The government finds that the more concrete and directly implementable the information given is, the more MEPs are likely to (be able to) use the information from the government and therefore, the PermRep tries to make the information as specific and simple to use as possible for the MEPs. Additionally, on a more general level, prior to every European Council meeting, all Danish MEPs are invited for dinner at the ambassador’s place (an event that is possible to arrange thanks to the small number of Danish MEPs).

When the government wishes to discuss a specific issue with an MEP, the ambassador will typically go to the EP with the PermRep’s EP responsible staff member as well as a case attaché working on the topic who will typically have briefed the MEPA prior to the meeting. Following this initial meeting, contact can be followed up by the attachés more freely. The government is generally interested in establishing continuous ongoing relations, so that the links to the MEPs are already established when they will be needed in a specific situation, in order to avoid the NG having to suddenly contact the MEPs or MEPAs, asking for their attention and assistance in promoting a certain case, without knowing them and without having established some level of rapport.

Danish MEPs also reach out to the government to get technical information about legislative cases treated in the EP, as the MEPs have substantially less resources to provide this information than the government. Furthermore, MEPs contact the government to make sure they know the government’s position on sensitive issues in order to avoid going unawares against the government’s position (DK-EP1, DK-EP2).
When it comes to contact on specific dossiers, the moment of engagement with the EP depends on the case at hand. In cases that are likely to be highly problematic for the government, contact is initiated “as early as possible” and the government will go “all out” in efforts to promote its positions as broadly as possible in the EP. In cases of particularly great significance to the government, the PermRep, in fact, seeks to influence the process already before the rapporteur is chosen, to try to make sure the rapporteur who is selected is sympathetic to the position of the government, or at least is not completely against the position of the PermRep. In cases that are likely to be concluded quickly, the PermRep seeks to approach the EP very early as well. With cases that are likely to require longer processes, such as the CAP, it may take longer to configure a position and start to engage with the EP. In the time leading up to the vote in the committee and, in the case of the CAP, up to the vote in the plenary, the government will point out (or reiterate) to the MEPs what votes are important.

A particular trait of the Danish activities at EU level is the high degree of consensus on EU policy in the Danish Parliament (Rasmussen:2014), which facilitates organizing a united effort among the Danish MEPs in the EP. Therefore to a significant extent the challenge also lies in persuading other member states’ MEPs. This can be done either bilaterally through contact from the government to these MEPs’ offices, or through Danish MEPs or other MEPs who the Danish government is already in closer contact with.

An alternative approach the government can take, as also mentioned by the British government, is to try to create cooperation with other member states’ representations, and through these have the possibility for transmitting commonly shared messages to the EP. If the government knows that it shares the views of certain other governments, it will try to coordinate with these and reinforce their shared efforts by coordinating the messages they transmit to their MEPs.

4.5.c. Choice of MEPs

The Danish MEPs are all kept informed by the government of the government’s priorities. Even if MEPs have their own opinion, they often understand the NG’s position, and share (aspects of) the government’s position. And even when they do not share the NG’s position, it is the impression of the NG that the MEPs value the information they receive from the NG.

But also MEPs from other member states are contacted, not least since Denmark does not have so many MEPs, and therefore cannot cover the many committees and cases very closely. Influencing other MEPs
is necessary. Assistants to the rapporteurs, committee chairs and people centrally placed within the EPGs are prioritized. The MEPs who participate in the trialogues play a pivotal role in influencing the process. Also, they are crucial to the NG’s getting information about the trialogue negotiations to supplement the Presidency’s reports from the negotiations. MEPs in committees, in which the government has the power to block decisions in other ways than in the EP, are not important to contact.

The NG tries to identify the MEPs whose position the NG thinks can be moved, as it does not see a point in trying to convince MEPs who disagree and who are unlikely to change opinion. The government representatives attempt to influence those MEPs who have a say in the general position of other MEPs (political “heavyweights”). Since Denmark is a small country with few MEPs who cannot alone sway the EP aggregate position, and since influencing the MEPs “one vote at a time” will probably not make a difference in the overall picture, affecting the position of an MEP who can then in turn affect other MEPs’ positions, has the likelihood of paying off in a more significant way.

The PermRep does not discriminate between Danish government and opposition MEPs, although civil servants do remain cautious about which MEPs they share sensitive information with, so as to avoid exposing a minister to having information used against him or her. Not all MEPs are equally interested in being in contact with the government, just as not all MEPs are equally important for the government to communicate with. The national ministries do not have as easy interaction with MEPs across the aisle as the PermRep does.

4.5.d. When and why was contact with EP initiated/increased?

The current system of EP coordination – the informal decentralized interaction with MEPs handled by individual case attachés, predominantly at their initiative – was established in connection with the previous Danish EU Presidency in 2001. Although several new policy areas have changed from conciliation to co-decision, which has affected the manner in which case attachés in these areas deal with the EP, the general concept of government contact with the EP has not altered significantly. The task of a central staff member of the PermRep to ensure a horizontal overview, however, is a newer creation. It was established as it became clear to the government that there was a risk of decisions made with the EP in some areas, which might have adverse effects on future – or parallel – negotiations

19 (This is a bit different from the UK, that would also talk to MEPs who disagree – to point out aspects that may have been overlooked by the MEPs, or to seek to come up with alternative solutions that could be approved by these MEPs.)
in other policy areas. The increase in efforts to influence the EP that has developed since then has happened more “organically”, as a reaction to the need for contact with the EP as perceived by the civil servants involved in the day-to-day work of Council and EP negotiations. The format and growth of the Danish government’s attentions towards the EP are thus not imposed in a top-down manner by the government, but are rather the result of an incremental process in which the government staff has adapted to the institutional changes and the EP’s evolving modus operandi. This is not to say that the government does not work to spread awareness of the importance of contact with the EP within the government. For instance, at the PermRep, new attachés will be introduced to the ways the EP works and how the government is in contact with the EP, and the same is the case in the capital (DK-NG1, DK-NG2, DK-NG3).

4.5.e. Summarizing the key features of the Danish approach

Due to the particular structure of the government’s relations with the Danish Parliament, according to which the government must obtain a negotiation mandate from the Parliament’s EU Affairs committee prior to participating in negotiations in the Council, the government is forced to establish, rather quickly, a Danish position on each legislative case, which, interviewees (DK-NG2, DK-NG3) note, helps speed up the process of raising awareness and targeted strategic action in the EP (as opposed to e.g. Germany, which often takes longer, in part owing to the highly decentralized system).

There is a limit to how much each civil servant can do, as they have to spend their time where it will be best invested. Also, there is still a tendency to focus more on “getting everything right” in the Council, which remains the main corresponding institutional venue for the government at EU level, than investing equally much time and energy in the EP. Although the awareness of the EP being a key player and a potential forum for the government to get things through that would not be possible in the Council is growing, the EP is also a more difficult actor to predict (DK-NG3).

However, as a general principle, the Danish government seeks to be involved as early as possible on all cases (cases of substance, i.e. not cases that are merely e.g. technical re-labeling), and this occurs on an informal and continuous, reciprocal, basis, meaning that there is an exchange of knowledge between

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20 This resonates with the observation made by one of the British government interviewees regarding the development of relations with the EP; that these developments are the product of reactions “on the ground” by the practitioners to their changing work conditions as regards influencing the EP and the Council, rather than being part of a comprehensive, systematized approach imposed top down from the a central point in government.
the government and the MEPs’ office; whereas the two parties have different information to offer, the asymmetry complements the different information needs of the two actors.

The Danish NG matches the empirical indicators as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Indicator 1: Reasons for creating/upgrading relations with the EP – triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CAP (Lisbon)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(X) But “organic” change, from experiences in day-to-day on the ground work – rather than direct reaction to formal treaty change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selection criteria</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same nat/pol. Affil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same natl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same pol. affil.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
<th>Other collective effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Yes (have staff to deal with the EP)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td>Call to check if agriculture/all ministries have this</td>
<td>Foreign Min. works to set the overall framework for govt’s activities in EU. Foreign Min. keeps horizontal overview of EU developments, and assists with connecting PermRep attachés with people elsewhere in the govt. Has person to focus on EP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 (down from 2 during Presi) of: ca. 70 (72)/44 political staffs

### Indicator 4: Number of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X except when completely unnecessary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>“Broad” points, general lines</td>
<td>NG → MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendment assistance –</td>
<td>Amendment suggestions</td>
<td>MEP → NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (X?) Check also MEPs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen/Before report is issued</th>
<th>After rapporteur’s report is out /Leading up to votes in committee</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6. Poland

4.6.a. Structure of government relations with the EP

The Polish government has created a system of relations with the EP designed to ensure that national ministries, the Foreign Ministry and the PermRep are all kept connected and up to date about developments in the EU. In each national ministry a liaison officer is appointed to be in charge of maintaining contact with the EP on behalf of the ministry. The liaison officer, in turn, is in close contact with the Foreign Ministry, which is in charge of coordinating contact with all liaison officers, as well as with the PermRep.

Liaison officers meet once a month, and discuss what is going on in the EP in each area, they report on developments in the EP as well as their own activities and engagements with the EP. A coordinator of the liaison officers is responsible for contact with MEPs, and each month a list is produced with relevant topics for Poland regarding decisions to be made in the EP. The aim is to ensure that information can flow between the different sections of the government and that the Foreign Ministry, when promoting the government’s position at the EU level, has taken all the sectoral ministries’ positions into account.

Though the national ministries can, on occasion, have their own direct contacts with the EP, the contacts take place mainly through the PermRep. Also, ministers who come to Brussels for Council meetings try to meet with MEPs. The MEPs they try to meet will be the heavyweights. Some ministers also have previous acquaintances or friends who are now MEPs and this will also occasion meetings even if the MEPs are not heavyweights.

There is a general preference for maintaining the distinction between political and non-political contact, i.e. contact from minister to MEP, and from civil servants of the government to MEPAs and different EP staff. Although these formal structures are in place, informal contacts between the EP and experts on specific cases take place as well, and across the political/civil servant divide. In general the NG officials perceives the MEPs and MEPAs as being “quite open to contact” with the government.

At the PermRep two “EP coordinators” are in charge of monitoring the EP and facilitating the contact between the EP and the staff of the PermRep as well as the national ministries. In addition to this the PermRep’s sectorial experts have their own direct links to contacts within the EP. These experts cooperate with the two EP coordinators to ensure consistency in the general message the Polish

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21 E.g. the Agriculture Ministry has decided to let all its contact to the EP go through the PermRep
The sectorial experts at the PermRep are in close contact with the liaison officers and act as their “eyes and ears” on behalf of the respective national ministries.

4.6.b. Type of coordination

The Polish government’s general approach to the legislative negotiations is, first and foremost, to seek to resolve potential issues with the draft legislation within the Council, and to rely, to a great extent, on the country that holds the Presidency to defend the position of the Council in the negotiations with the EP (PL-NG1). This includes getting information about the status of the negotiations from the trialogues, where Poland will rely on the Presidency, rather than MEPs, to get information. While the PermRep might ask MEPs for a sense of how the negotiations are going in the EP, this is considered supplementary, not as a primary source of information about negotiations.

The Polish government, mainly through the PermRep, monitors the legislative activities in the EP, particularly focusing on the main priorities of the government, and tries to have discussion with MEPs while the MEPs are preparing their report. The Polish government tries to inform MEPs about how it will affect the Polish state and the general consequences of the proposal.

Every second month the government sends a large document with information about the government’s priorities on ongoing legislative cases to all Polish MEPs, which also contains key information such as the name of the rapporteur, the current status of negotiations on the document and the position of the government. The document is usually sent to the MEPAs, who can use the information that is relevant for the cases they are involved in.

In addition to the information transmitted directly to the MEPs, the government has created a database which the MEPs can access to see the Polish government’s positions on all legislative cases. The positions posted are the government’s original positions to the draft legislation proposed by the Commission, and although the positions are not always updated, they do provide a basis for the MEPs who are interested in knowing the government’s position on legislative proposals.

Typically then, on specific cases, the PermRep will seek to contact MEPs once a rapporteur has been chosen in the EP, and when the committee is dealing with the proposal. The PermRep will seek out the relevant MEPs who disagree with Poland to explain the Polish position and problematic issues with the legislative draft.
Furthermore, if a case being treated in the plenary is of great importance for Poland, the government prepares information for the MEPs about the topic and the amendments tabled, along with suggestions for changes in amendments. In highly important cases, the government contacts the Polish MEPs of the government (i.e. at time of the interview the delegation in EPP) to consult them about the case and suggest the government’s positions. In particularly important cases the national minister in charge of the area will contact the MEPs. In less critical cases the government simply prepares information to the MEPs before the plenary session in which the more important amendments are noted and the NG points out whether they are or are not in accord with Polish interests.

4.6.c. Choice of MEPs

Contact with Polish MEPs is more frequent than with MEPs from other member states, though contact is also made with foreign MEPs, as well as with other “relevant” actors in the EP. The actors who are considered relevant contacts in the EP are MEPs (mainly, though not exclusively Polish), MEPAs, administrative staff of the EPGs and of the committees. Among MEPs rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and EPG leaders are most sought out, as well as MEP “heavyweights”. “Heavyweights” may include MEPs who play a formal role in negotiations, or e.g. is a coordinator for the EPG in committees, deciding with other coordinators who will be given a draft report, who will be shadow rapporteur, who will decide on the position of a political group on a dossier which will be presented in a political group, or rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs. It can also be MEPs with significant personal political influence who do not necessarily have a formal role of importance.

Direct contact is made only to those MEPs and other actors who are involved in the specific case at hand, so as not to waste energy contacting MEPs who are peripheral or completely unaffiliated with the topic.

For instance, during the negotiations for the CAP reform, the government focused on contact with the three rapporteurs responsible for the reform and the shadow rapporteurs who worked closely with the reports that were prepared.

4.6.d. When and why was contact with EP initiated/increased?

Upon accession to the EU the government first began focusing on the task of ensuring that they were completely well prepared and fully engaged in the Council negotiations. This required a lot of effort, and
was the main institutional priority of the government at the time. As time passed, the government began to also focus on what the possibilities were of affecting legislation through the Commission. Only after becoming familiar with these two institutions did the Polish government turn its attention to the EP, and not until they were obliged to invest in the EP due to taking over the Presidency in 2011 did they invest seriously in relations with the EP. The system of liaison officers was established in 2010 as part of the preparation for taking over the presidency.

Although Poland was naturally aware of the role of the EP in the institutional structure of the legislative negotiations, and also was well aware of the changes the Lisbon Treaty brought to the EP, this did not have a major impact on how the government acted in Brussels. As described by one Polish interviewee (PL-NG1), understanding of the institutional system came gradually, and it was a learning process for the government to discover how best to allocate resources to the EU legislative process. This could be seen as a logical process. The Council is the direct formal venue for the governments in the EU arena in which they take part without question, and to which they have to allocate significant resources in the beginning of their membership in order to understand and to integrate. Contact with the EP outside of that which is handled by the Presidency, on the other hand, is optional. Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, the dynamics of negotiations in the Council are still geared towards seeking to find a compromise the governments can all agree to, whereas this is not guaranteed in the EP, and so for a government which is not experienced in dealing with the EP, it can seem a safer choice to invest in the Council in terms of expectations of return for invested efforts. This also seems to reflect the Polish approach of seeking primarily to resolve its problems within the Council. It testifies to the importance of institutional knowledge and familiarity, and to the role that time can play in the adaptation of actors to a new mode of interaction. In other words, it is one thing to be aware of formal institutional structures, but another thing to adapt the functioning of an organization accordingly.

4.6.e. Summarizing the key features of the Polish approach

The PermRep is the main contact point with the MEPs. The PermRep tries to contact influential MEPs, including both those with institutionally important roles and MEPs considered to have informal influence.

The PermRep primarily seeks to invest in contact with MEPs who do not share its view and others in the EP who might be of help in altering the position of the EP. The purpose is to not waste time on talking to
MEPs who already agree with the government, but rather to contact those who do not and seek to explain the Polish position on issues and persuade MEPs to support Poland’s position.

The Polish NG matches the empirical indicators as follows:

### Indicator 1: Reasons for creating/upgrading relations with the EP – triggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAP (Lisbon)</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X**

**X Presidency has triggering effect.**
Can effect of EU Presidency be separated from post-Lisbon Treaty? Close in time → What might otherwise have happened?

### Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection criteria</th>
<th>Prioritizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same nat/ pol. Affil.</td>
<td>Same Nat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same natl.</td>
<td>Pol. affil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same pol. affil.</td>
<td>Inst. role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**X** All Polish get basic info

*Also EP officials are contacted*
### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
<th>Other collective effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 of: 100 "policy related questions"/ approx. 50 support staff

X Up to individual ministries – Polish agriculture ministry has decided only to go through the PR, but other ministries can chose differently

### Indicator 4: Number of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(X database) MEPs can find info on all cases. Every 2 months release “info-book” on all cases</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
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<td>NG → MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendment suggestions</td>
<td>“Broad” points, general lines</td>
<td>MEP → NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*According to MEP

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
<th>After rapporteur’s report is out /Leading up to votes in committee</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(X) On very important cases</td>
<td>X Mainly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7. The United Kingdom

4.7.a. Structure of government relations with the EP

While communication with MEPs takes place in both national ministries and the UK PermRep, the bulk of the actual coordination between the British government and the MEPs is carried out at the UK’s PermRep. At the PermRep, a team of 5-6 people is responsible for the overall coordination with the EP. The team seeks to get to know MEPs from across the UK parties and the EPGs, and deals with the larger institutional questions of EP’s relations with Council and MS. The EP team follows the different EP committees as well, in parallel with and complementing the policy teams of the PermRep, that each work on different policy areas and cover the respective committees, and who have more policy expertise. The EP team provides a wider political context to the policy area-teams, and has broader links to people in the EP, so the EP team can help to establish links between the policy area teams across policy area (e.g. between teams working on agriculture and environment to AGRI and ENVI in the EP).

The PermRep is also the main connecting point between the government in London and the MEPs. Although National ministry staff can, in principle, be in contact with MEPs and MEPAs, contact with the MEPs and their assistants is handled, for the most part, by the PermRep on behalf of the national ministries. This setup is created in light of the advantage the PermRep has in building relationships with the MEPs and their assistants by engaging with them face-to-face. It also facilitates ensuring that contact with the MEPs happens in a coherent manner as regards government positions, and without too much overlap of contact to the same MEPs.

In London, the FCO and the national ministries (Departments) all have teams working on EU relations and in this context the EP is increasingly becoming a significant locus of attention of the government. Although there may be inter-departmental variation, all Departments are aware of the need to include attention to the EU in their work. In the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), for instance, one team deals with the overall approach to the EP, and seeks to facilitate the department’s relations with the EP. Additionally, each policy area has a team allocated to dealing with the EU approach in the given policy area.

The “lead Department”, the Department in charge of a specific policy area or dossier, works to build up relations with the most relevant MEPs. Depending on the salience of the dossier, Ministers or officials are in charge of this. This takes place in the context of a more ambitious aim of building up, over time, relations in a more consistent manner with key MEPs, e.g. committee chairs, so as to ensure good basic contact, rather than sporadic contact from dossier to dossier in order to facilitate contact on specific
dossiers when this is needed. Each ministry (department) will liaise with their own EP committees. Also at the highest level of the EP, e.g. the President and heads of the main groups – the aim is to engage at all levels.

In general, the PermRep keeps in touch with MEP primarily via the PermRep civil servants during the treatment of legislative dossiers. When the government seeks to build links with “high profile” MEPs, not least from other member states, the PermRep typically begins by establishing the link at the ministerial level after which the contact is followed up and maintained at civil servant level at the PermRep. Generally speaking, the higher the level approached in the EP, the higher the level of involvement in the Department. The department will involve the minister or senior civil servants on important contacts with the EP, whereas the “lower level” or lower salience contacts will be carried out by civil servants in the “lower levels” in the Department or at the PermRep. Also, the more important or difficult a case is, the higher the level of the representative from the government that will contact the MEPs to establish the contact with the MEPs office. While it is possible for the PermRep civil servants to contact British MEPs and some MEPs from other member states, having an important Minister rather than a civil servant initiate the contact is considered, by the government, more likely to have an effect, due to the great degree of lobbying that the EP is exposed to. Sometimes the contact is also elevated to ministerial level to indicate the importance for the government of the contact with the EP.

From a cross-Departmental perspective, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) also has staff working on promoting the focus on the EU in all Departments, and working to establishing best practices among the Departments, as well as ensuring that all MEPs are briefed about the UK government’s position before plenary votes. This is done in addition to the FCO’s general focus on EU institutional matters and foreign policy – an area otherwise generally considered out of the EP’s reach. The British government finds that the EP has been expanding its soft power in certain foreign policy areas significantly enough to require the government’s attention.

4.7.b. Type of coordination
Looking more closely at the manner and extent of the British government’s contact with MEPs, a clear distinction can be made between contact with the national ministries and the PermRep’s contact with MEPs:

The British government’s efforts at EU level are aimed at where it is deemed to be most relevant to further the UK government’s interests in the EU. This logic also applies to the EP. In DEFRA, for instance,
the Department would look at which upcoming political “milestones” are going to be dealt with – and then the staff involved will “count back” from that, evaluating who should be contacted at all layers and all areas of the EU (countries, EU institutions etc.). Depending on where the greatest potential for influence lies, the Department looks at which of all the possible actors at EU level are most likely to benefit the UK to be in touch with. From DEFRA’s perspective, contact with the corresponding EP committees ENVI, AGRI and PECH is most relevant. Depending on how tight the vote in Committee looks, the Department might feel a need to make a significant effort to influence the EP, whereas less effort is needed if the vote looks to be to the UK’s favor. This varies from issue to issue, and the PermRep continuously evaluates which issues are most important to allocate resources to. Furthermore, on cases that are not under the co-decision procedure the government would likely send an info-note to the MEPs and offer to discuss the case further if the MEPs should wish to, but there will be far less contact than on these proposals than on those that fall under co-decision.

Building relations with the MEPs and with their assistants is a central part of the PermRep’s work with the EP. The PermRep will have at least some form of contact with the British MEPs and MEPAs on all cases. At minimum they will get a briefing from their government on all legislative proposals. Government staff in London produce ‘info-notes’, which are sent to the MEPs by the PermRep. For instance, before every meeting of the AGRI committee the government sends MEPs info-notes on all dossiers that will be discussed at the meeting. A note can contain such information as a description of the individual dossier and an evaluation of whether or not it is important for the government. This is done in the knowledge that MEPs’ offices often do not have the resources to obtain sufficient information on the legislative cases.

It has been the government’s experience that a broad selection of MEPs across party lines (including UKIP members) find the technical information useful, regardless of the extent to which they choose to follow the government’s line. Although it is the ambition of the government to provide this extent of contact and input, it is not uniformly confirmed by the interviews with the MEPs/MEPAs that the government is as successful in carrying this out as it aims to be (UK-EP1 and UK-EP2). It is furthermore the experience of the government that MEPs are positive towards contact with officials, as it is important for them to know the positions of the UK.

On important dossiers the PermRep will point out precisely which points are important for the UK in the committee report, what the government is in favor of and what it does not support in the proposal. The government will, furthermore, draft amendments for the MEPs, which the interviewees emphasized is
intended to provide suggestions that could be helpful for MEPs who would want to table these amendments but might lack the capacity and resources to draft the amendments themselves.

MEPAs also contact the government, often in the context of the trialogues. When they seek contact with the British government, MEPs and MEPAs generally go through the UK’s PermRep. In these cases, the MEPAs contact the PermRep to get information about the Council’s position and to know whether the focal points of the Council are important to the UK. The MEPAs may also ask for input or help to table amendments, but usually the PermRep will seek to provide this anyway.

Contact with MEPs is typically initiated in advance of the rapporteur’s report coming out. Prior to the presentation of the report in the EP committee, the PermRep will have already sent at least an information note to the British MEPs. Once the rapporteur’s report has come out and amendments can begin to be made, the government’s contact with MEPs and MEPAs will intensify, with face-to-face meetings or other closer, more targeted contact. Whereas normally contact primarily consists in the PermRep providing information to the MEPs’ offices, during the trialogues the PermRep in turn relies substantially on the MEPAs for information about developments in the trialogues, since the PermRep does not have direct access to the trialogues, as opposed to the MEPAs (depending, of course, on the legislative dossier). The government focuses on contact in the trialogue phase as it is found more difficult to influence the outcome of a legislative case once it reaches the plenary.

To strengthen the promotion of its interests, the government often tries to encourage cooperation between British MEPs from different EPGs by, for instance, signing and supporting each other’s amendments. To influence the plenary results, however, the government finds it necessary to influence the political elites which, in turn, is more difficult.

In the AGRI committee, for instance, the PermRep tries to have one staff member present at all AGRI meetings to observe the mood and the reactions of the committee members. The PermRep works closely with several British MEPs and MEPAs and in the process, the two parties get to know each other well, which facilitates the government’s efforts to ensure that the British MEPs know the government position.

The PermRep does not host general meetings with the MEPs, but recently (at the time the interviews were conducted from 2013-2014) they did invite all British staff and all staff working for UK MEPs for drinks. This was the first time such an event was hosted in that format, for the purpose of enabling a more informal and socializing contact (UK-NG1).
An additional effort the government makes to approach the EP is of a more indirect nature. As was the case for the Danish government, the PermRep communicates with colleagues at other member state PermReps that share the British government’s view on policy issues. By coordinating their messages with the other PermReps whose position they share, and then bilaterally communicating this to “their own” fellow national MEPs, the governments have a better likelihood of success in having an impact on the EP’s internal negotiations.

4.7.c. Choice of MEPs
The British government is generally more in contact with British MEPs, but British MEPs are not the only ones targeted. Typically, the government will seek out influential MEPs, i.e. MEPs with a significant institutional role such as rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs, but also MEPs with political clout. As a general rule, the government will try to establish relations both with MEPs who are sympathetic to the British position and with MEPs who are opposed to the British position, if these MEPs are found important to persuade.

The PermRep tends to work more with MEPs from the government party/parties, but is also in contact with MEPs and MEPAs from the opposition. It might be more difficult for the PermRep if an EP committee only has British MEPs from the opposition. However, the NG officials find that it often to be the case that British MEPs from the national opposition have more in common with the British government than with their fellow EPG MEPs from other member states. In such cases, although there is no guarantee that the MEPs will follow the government’s position, especially if they are from an opposition party, it is easier to work with MEPs from different political groups in Brussels than nationally in Whitehall. In Whitehall, it would be easy for the government administration to be in contact with MEPs from the government parties, whereas before establishing contact to MPs from the opposition one would need the minister to sign off on this. In Brussels this division is less strong; contact is more easily and freely established and, the British NG interviewees note, there is a good likelihood that a British “opposition MEP” shares the government’s position or is closer to the view of the British government than to MEPs from other member states in the same EPG. Some MEPs are more open to engaging with the government than others, which the government/PermRep finds to a large extent depends on the personality of the MEP.

In addition to British MEPs, the PermRep will also contact MEPs from other member states if these are relevant for dealing with the concrete case at hand, e.g. when the rapporteur or committee chairman
are of other nationalities, the only exception being racist or extremist parties (as was also previously the case with the BNP). There is less value in engaging with MEPs that have very little to say in terms of influencing other MEPs (e.g. UKIP). Instead, the government tries to talk to MEPs who are important in the negotiations, or who can successfully bring forward the British perspective to other MEPs.

4.7.d. When and why was contact with EP initiated/increased?
Contact with the EP is not a new phenomenon for the British government, “There has always been contact” (UK PermRep interview). However, over the last couple of years, the contact has increased significantly, as has the efforts by the government to boost EU awareness and proactivity amongst the government staff, with staff employed specifically to work on improving the UK’s engagement with the EP on a broader government level, both in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and within the sectorial Departments. While, as one interviewee noted, “Everyone is still learning about the EP’s role” (UK-NG2), there is an ambition to encourage more systematic thinking about engaging with the EP, especially following the Lisbon Treaty which brought substantial changes to the legislative process, just as the EP has begun to “flex its institutional muscles” more in the legislative negotiations. Staff in the FCO works with the other Departments to encourage deeper and broader engagement with the EP. “Lisbon changed everything for everyone” (UK-NG3). Adding to this, the EP has begun to “flex its muscles” more.

The upcoming British Presidency in 2017 has added to the government’s “ramping up” its EU focus. At the time the first interview with one of the British government officials was conducted (spring 2013), attention was being turned to the future “8th EP”, what to do in advance of the upcoming EP election and what the potential changes in the EP’s composition this might bring, among other things, the predicted increase in UKIP’s representation in the EP.

As regards the policy area of agriculture specifically, contact with the EP is a newer phenomenon following the submission of the policy area to the ordinary legislative procedure with the Lisbon Treaty. The PermRep was also in contact with the MEPs in AGRI, but the opinion of the MEPs did not ultimately play a role in the government’s decision making. This changed completely with the ordinary legislative procedure, and the PermRep staff working on the CAP is now engaging with the EP in the same way as their PermRep colleagues who are working on policy areas that have been subject to co-decision for a longer time.
One interviewee noted that the growing emphasis on and engagement with the EP has not been arranged to correspond directly with the changes in the EP’s influence. It was not a reaction prompted by an awareness of the increase of the EP’s institutional power and a conscious deliberate and coordinated decision to ramp up attentions towards the EP. Rather, the interviewee noted that the increased focus on the EP came about because the government has had to participate in an increasing amount of co-decision procedures. In other words, the increased efforts towards the EP stem from learned experiences, from a realization of the role of the EP in each specific case of legislative negotiations, and an ensuing decision to adapt the government staff’s efforts towards the EP – not a product of a government decision to change relations with the EP following an institutional analysis of the EP’s role in the EU legislative process.

4.7.e. Summarizing the key features of the UK approach

The UK seeks to ensure that all British MEPs are informed at least at a basic level of the British government’s position on all dossiers passing through the EP. Furthermore, the government assists MEPs who inquire about information or other kinds of assistance in the process of the legislative negotiations. When necessary, in cases of great importance, sensitivity or complexity, the government will engage more actively with the MEPs, in particular – but not limited to – the British MEPs. Staff at the Departments and the PermRep form an apolitical civil service and, bearing this in mind, they contact MEPs and MEPAs on the basis of an evaluation of their relevance to the legislative process and the likelihood of their being helpful for the UK, irrespective of political affiliation and nationality.

The government primarily seeks to make an impact in the early stages of negotiations, while the case is being treated in the EP committee. The committees are not the exclusive focus, however, and voting recommendations are also sent out in advance of the plenary meetings.

The EP is now equally as important as the Council, and while the government’s focus is not equally divided between the Council and the EP in practice, it is getting closer to this although the degree to which the government representatives work closely with the EP varies among Departments and among ministers.

The guiding principle of the government’s approach to coordination is that the government can try to get things through in the EP which it might not be able to get through the in Council. It is also necessary to focus on the EP from the beginning of the legislative negotiations on a dossier, even if things look to go the UK’s way in the Council, as things can still go “wrong” in the EP which can then cause problems
for the UK’s position in the Council. But the EP can also compensate for things going “wrong” in the Council and the Commission. Furthermore, if another member state’s government might pose a problem for the UK’s interests in the Council, the British government staff might try to advance their case in the EP to try to solve the problem in the EP.

The British NG matches the empirical indicators as follows:

### Indicator 1: Reasons for creating/upgrading relations with the EP – triggers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAP (Lisbon)</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>X</strong> (also a bit organic change from experiences in day-to-day on the ground work – rather than direct reaction to formal treaty change)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection criteria</th>
<th>Prioritizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same nat/ pol. Affil</td>
<td>Same Nat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same natl.</td>
<td>Pol. affil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same pol affil</td>
<td>Same nat +pol. affil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inst. role</td>
<td>MEP pro/con/unsaid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*UK’s all get a minimum of info. They’re often likely to agree with govt.*
### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
<th>Other collective effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 of total staff of 170</td>
<td>Yes (have staff to deal with the EP)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X Staff in ministries (all?) to promote and assist focus on the EP</td>
<td>Foreign Min. has EP person to promote and coordinate government focus on the EP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 4: Number of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X A minimum of contact/information sent to all UK MEPs on all cases (but not equally much on all cases)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>Amendment assistance</td>
<td>“Broad” points, general lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X To all UK’s MEPs</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X To all UK’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
<th>After rapporteur’s report is out /Leading up to votes in committee</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X (info-note) Generally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.8. France

4.8.a. Structure of government relations with the EP

The General Secretariat for EU Affairs (SGAE) coordinates all national ministries, along with the prime minister’s office, when determining the government’s position and the SGAE works closely with the minister of European affairs. All ministries can send staff and ministers to Brussels, but the main minister in charge of the relationship with EP is the EU minister, whose civil servants work with all MEPs. Depending on their importance, ministries may have several people in charge of EU relations, and in each ministry a person is in charge of EP relations. The EP responsible official maintains contact with the EP, goes to Brussels and Strasbourg often and reports back to the government from the EP. About twice a month, the SGAE holds a meeting with all of the ministry EP representatives to discuss the progress of different issues in the EP, and to decide on how to deal with the EP and to prepare the plenary session. The EU minister participates in every plenary session and seeks to hold meetings with many MEPs that are rapporteurs, as well as with political leaders, the EP President, and leaders of EPGs. The government emphasizes the significance of maintaining these relations. When ministers go to Brussels for the Council meetings they also meet with MEPs.

Alternatively, contact can go via the PermRep, typically either through the PermRep or the staff responsible for the EP at the PermRep. PermRep sectorial counselors do normally not have direct contact with MEPs, and if they do, they first consult with the PermRep’s EP delegate. Sectorial attachés meet with MEPAs and sometimes with MEPs. Delegates meet with MEPs. Ministers meet with chairs, coordinators, and the president of the EP. Counselors cannot ask for meeting with EP president or EPG leaders. France tries to make sure that the message from the government is united, and the delegate is the person who can transmit that.

The national ministries point out what the PermRep should make sure the MEPs are aware of.

4.8.b. Type of coordination

The government finds that France has significant interests vested in all policy areas of the EU as opposed to some member states with less comprehensive interests (e.g. due to geographic location) and seeks to have links with the MEPs to discuss the issues that are important for the government. 10-20 years ago, the French government tried to have a position on all issues, but this is no longer possible. The government finds it has to choose the main issues that are the most sensitive and of high priority for the government. With every new EU Presidency the government holds a meeting to list the main issues for
the government (40-50 issues). On these issues the ministries have the mission to do as much as they can to engage the EP, to meet the MEPs in charge of the issues, French or not.

There is in some way contact every day between the government and the MEPs or MEPAs, and the secretary of the committees. The government seeks to inform the French MEPs of French positions and decisions, and also tries to influence the EP by explaining why the government is in favor of a certain position in the Council.

Rather than holding regular meetings with the MEPs, meetings between the two parties depend on issues and availability and whether the MEPs are interested in engaging with the delegate, just as it depends on the delegate’s activities in the Council and the general availability of the delegate.

Generally, the earlier that information can be given to the MEPs, the better. The best possible scenario is to provide information even before the rapporteur is chosen. The government tries to get certain MEPs chosen, and to push specific MEPs to become rapporteurs. When the government knows that the Commission is going to adopt a draft, they will alert the MEPs of its salience and of the importance of becoming rapporteurs.

Typically, however, the process is that the SGAE, when wanting to inform MEPs on particular issues, send notes to the MEPs on the key issues that will be on the agenda of the EP committees and the plenary. This is done early, if possible already when the draft is adopted by Commission. The government sends a note with preliminary thoughts/positions about the draft incl. “the red line” – what the government can accept and what it cannot accept.

Later, the government seeks to initiate discussions with the MEPs, and sends notes about its position on the report of the rapporteur. The timing of this can vary. In the case of the CAP, for instance, it was necessary to start contact with the EP quickly. Usually the government starts discussions in the Council and waits for the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs to be assigned, and then begins discussions. Although political discussions can start early with the rapporteurs, the real discussion starts when the rapporteur has made the first committee draft, and there is a concrete draft text to discuss. The contact, which is to be used during the process, is established early to make contact later easier. If one does not start contact with the EP rapporteur early in the process it can be hard to see him afterwards. Before the votes in the plenary the EU ministry is in contact with the heads of delegations in the EPGs.

For example, on the topic of agriculture, the government tries to have relations with French MEPs involved in the area. They send the MEPs notes in which the government tries to make the MEPs aware
of important points that will have consequences for France. First of all, the object is to provide information about the aim of the reports. MEPs lack the technical skills, which the government has, thanks to the experts in the national ministries, and the targeting of the EP can come from the individual ministries, which can help MEPs with technical aspects, as the EP does not have the capacity to assist the MEPs with enough technical information. Also, France makes propositions, e.g. proposing specific amendments. The government can “inform, propose and discuss”, but is careful not to pressure the MEPs, as MEPs want to be free and decide for themselves.

MEPs also approach the PermRep to get information about legislative cases, due to their lack of knowledge, and in order to get the point of view of the French government. MEPs from other countries will also contact the French government, just as French MEPs will also contact other member states’ governments to get different points of view in order to understand cases fully. It is the government’s impression that MEPs find it helpful to get input from ministries, including help to form amendments. It is, however, challenging for the government to give information sufficiently early.

A facilitating factor mentioned by interviewees (FR-NG1, FR-NG3) is the personal relations that can exist between the MEPs and ministers, for instance if they have previously been in the EP or worked closely together nationally. This facilitates relations with the EP.

4.8.c. Choice of MEPs

Sometimes MEPs from other countries can also have meetings with French ministers.

The government representatives are in contact with all French MEPs and, in general, with other MEPs depending on the issue and irrespective of nationality, as well as with all MEPs who are interested in contact with the French PermRep.

The government makes an “identity card” of the important legislative cases in order to know which ca. 10 MEPs it will be necessary to talk to. This depends on the potential for influence of the MEPs. Nationality is not an issue, but the government does have a policy of informing French MEPs, so therefore there is more contact with French MEPs. But for seeking influence on the EP, nationality does not matter. The government has to work with the four big EPGs, due to the necessity of building a majority in the EP, and in particular cooperation with the EPP and the S&D is important.
The government first tries to talk with MEPs of the majority, but this depends on whether France has an MEP who has a role in negotiations. If an MEP just belongs to a committee but does not have a significant role, contact with this MEP is not important for the French government. Thus, the government first considers whether there is a French MEP with a role in the negotiations. Finally, if there is no French MEP with a role, the government tries to work with the French MEPS who are just in the committee. And the government always tries first of all to influence the rapporteur. After that they go to the shadow rapporteur, committee chairs and political leaders, the coordinators and in the EPGs try to contact the MEP in charge of the issue. When there is a big issue France tries to work with “technical MEPS” (from the committee) and “political MEPS” (coordinators and head of delegations), and leaders of the EPGs. The government also contacts the committee secretariats to know what is going on and what the committees are going to do.

While the EU ministry may be more politically oriented in terms of whom they target for coordination within the EP, the administration works with all MEPS. The government contacts MEPS across the political aisle. The approach of the French Administration is that it does not have a political a color, and the PermRep represents France as a whole. Whether the rapporteurs want to talk to the PermRep also does not depend on the MEPS’ political affiliation and which national party is in power in the government. Later in the negotiation stages there may be consequences of political affiliation in terms of policy preferences and on working on the substance of the legislative proposal, but in the beginning MEPS are open to contact with the government across the aisle.

4.8.d. When and why was contact with EP initiated/increased?
Originally, when co-decision was first introduced in 1993 France did not approach the EP very much, and the government believed sending a limited amount of information to the EP was sufficient. Then, as the French government saw other governments approaching the EP more intensively, providing amendments to MEPS, the government decided at the election of 2004 to follow their example. Co-decision has changed the way the French government works with the EP, as the EP is now seen as a venue for a potential second chance to pursue France’s preferences.

2004 marked the main turning point for the government’s relations with the EP. This was the time when the government accepted that it also had to work to influence the EP, and that it needed to work on promoting its position both in the Council and in the EP, instead of just providing a smaller amount of
information to the EP. It can even be more important to work with the EP than e.g. to work with a small member state, though it is easier to operate in the Council than in the EP. The challenge is greater in the EP as things can move very quickly and there can be big differences between the way the EP committee deals with the text and the way the EPGs will deal with the text. So it is necessary to always monitor how the cases develop in both the committees and the EPGs.

The French government’s relations to the EP have changed over time. About every second year the manner of coordination with EP changes. The EP gets more and more power, so France has to adapt. The government always tries to “catch up”. The Lisbon Treaty resulted in substantially more work for the government. Procedures and trialogues have changed with Lisbon. Potentially this has also strengthened the institutional opposition to the Council: After Lisbon political groups decided to be more present and to “seize” the issues early. It is more difficult to get information and to follow what is going on in the EPGs compared to what is going on in the committees. It is necessary to be aware of the EPGs because it might not be efficient to focus on the committees if the EPGs decide something else. The committee is not as interested in the conflict with Council as the EPGs are.

The French government considers itself to be one of the most active countries in terms of contact with the EP, as France is one of the 6 countries with many MEPs. The government compares itself to the other big member states (Germany, UK, Italy, Spain) to see what their benchmarks are for contact with the MEPs. The government did the same in 2004, and finds that it is now time to have a new evaluation meeting of this kind, so see whether the countries have changed how they work, e.g. due to Lisbon Treaty.

At the time of the interviews, it was planned that after the 2014 EP election the government would have a meeting with all French MEPs to tell them about French priorities, and make them aware of this when they choose in which committees in the EP to sit.

4.8.e. Summarizing the key features of the French approach

The French government seeks to ensure that there is cohesion in its message to the MEPs by setting up a system of channels of communication that is a) coordinated among the ministries, and b) channeled through particular staff at the government and PermRep.

The government is in contact on all policy areas, but selects certain main topics on which to focus more attention. There is a conscious process of identifying and selecting the most relevant MEPs to be in touch with, across the political continuum and irrespective of nationality. French MEPs are, however,
prioritized, just as the French MEPs are informed about the government’s position on significant dossiers.

The French NG matches the empirical indicators as follows:

**Indicator 1: Reasons for creating/upgrading relations with the EP – triggers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAP (Lisbon)</th>
<th>General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers underlying, not direct trigger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
<td>Increase in EP powers no effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>France</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X But it did not bring so much change, as France’s position is close to the position of AGRI</td>
<td>(X) System adapted in reaction to EP’s power gain. But also as a reaction inspired by other MS’ approaches /activities. And also as a…→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But: on important cases France sends notes in 3 diff. languages</td>
<td>(X) …→ result of a systematized regular ongoing evaluation and adjustment of the govt’s strategy towards EU’s legislative process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection criteria</th>
<th>Prioritizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ONLY</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instl. role (irrespective of natl.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same nat/ pol. Affil.</td>
<td>MEP pro position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same natl.</td>
<td>MEPs contra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same pol. affili</td>
<td>Pro/con/unsaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inst. role</td>
<td>(X) Always rapporteur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | |
| | X | X |
| | Somew hat, first tries to get French majority |
| | | |
| | | X |
| | | |
| | | (X) |
| | | Always rapporteur |
| Administrators and heads of the secretariats most important, as they (heads?) control the agendas |
### Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
<th>Other collective effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4?22</td>
<td>Total 183/policy staff 125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**All ministers can go to EU/EP but EU minister is mainly in charge of EP relations. SGAE venue for coordinating EU position between ministries**

### Indicator 4: Number of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information on cases</th>
<th>Government’s positions/preferences</th>
<th>Information on negotiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>Amendment assistance</td>
<td>“Broad” points, general lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
<th>After rapporteur’s report is out /Leading up to votes in committee</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>(X) Intensified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5. Analysis of coordination part I: modes and motivations of the national governments

Before assessing the hypotheses 1-5 to answer research question 1 “Why do EU member states’ governments coordinate with their MEPs in the EU legislative process? and 2 “Why does coordination vary between the member state governments?”, the empirical indicators used to assess the efforts, extent, and the manner of governments engagement with the EP, are here presented and discussed.

The indicators do not occur independently of each other, but all make up a part of the greater picture of how the NGs coordinate with the EP. As such they must be understood as interrelated indicators that should be analyzed within the broader context of the member states’ different models for EP coordination. In this connection it must be kept in mind that different approaches to coordination might lead governments to make different choices for coordination, e.g. in terms of the amount of cases they coordinate on and the number of staff hired to deal specifically with the EP at the PermRep.

The indicators used are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 1: Triggers for creating/upgrading relations with the EP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAP (Lisbon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in EP powers main direct trigger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 2: Which MEPs are contacted? (According to nationality, political affiliation, or institutional role)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEPs pro NG’s pol. position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Indicator 3: Staff hired to deal specifically with the EP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At Permanent Representation</th>
<th>Sectorial ministries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High (4+)</td>
<td>Medium (2-3)</td>
<td>Low/none (0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes (have staff to deal with the EP)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicator 4: Amount of cases where contact is initiated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All cases</th>
<th>Ad hoc when deemed relevant/beneficial</th>
<th>Only highly salient/problematic cases</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Indicator 5: Nature and level of detail in contact

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>“Broad” points, general lines</td>
<td>NG -&gt; MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendment assistance</td>
<td>Amendment suggestions</td>
<td>MEP -&gt; NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting recommendations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicator 6: Timing – how early the government establishes contact on a case for the first time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before or as soon as rapporteur is chosen /Before report is issued</th>
<th>Leading up to votes in committee /After rapporteur’s report is out</th>
<th>Before votes in plenary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

All indicators together make up the larger picture of the NGs’ coordination. Some combinations of indicators in particular, however, call for elaboration.

Number of staff as indicator

This indicator is aimed at determining the investment of resources by a government in monitoring and influencing the EP by focusing on the number of staff allocated solely to this task. It speaks to the significance an NG places on monitoring the EP, and making sure that there is a coordinated effort by the NG towards the EP. Staff is either allocated directly to dealing with the EP as the main focus area, or the EP can be part of the portfolio of a government official. When the EP is the primary focus of a government official, the work typically includes horizontal issues within the EP, institutional questions involving the EP, and ensuring a coordinated effort across government sections. When the EP is part of a government official’s portfolio, it is typically the case that the official is in charge of a policy area, on which the official seeks to advance the government’s position in the EU. Coordinating with the EP then makes up part of the strategy of promoting the government’s position. Allocating staff to dealing with the EP is thus an indicator, but a potentially illusive one.
One could imagine two opposite models of coordination, one in which a highly decentralized government only has 1 staff member at the PermRep assigned to deal with the EP, but where all sectorial attachés are instructed to work very proactively with the MEPs; and another in which the government has several attachés focusing exclusively on the EP, but with less emphasis on the decentralized efforts by the sectorial attachés. In these two models, it would not be possible to evaluate the effort of the NG based on the number of specific “EP staff” alone, as the two approaches might be equally intensive in terms of hours of manpower the government allocates to dealing with the EP.

Indeed, Denmark had an additional official assigned to monitor the EP specifically during the latest Danish Presidency in 2012, while the interaction with the EP was particularly intensive, but then scaled back to one attaché after the term of the Presidency ended. Interviews with Danish government officials would indicate that NGs may have the perception that a decentralized effort by all sectorial attachés is still an extensive effort (DK-NG2, DK-NG3), in spite of a lesser allocation of staff to exclusively monitor the EP.

At the same time, however, interviews with government officials from the UK (UK-NG1) and Slovakia (SL-NG1) indicate that the opposite can also be the case; the choice to allocate a large number of staff is seen by some NGs as both helpful to the work of overall engagement with the EP and as an indication of priority by the NG, irrespective of the degree of centralization of the NG’s EP approach.

Additionally (and as shall be taken up again later in the chapter when analyzing the reasons for the variation between the NGs’ efforts), one Danish official mentioned Denmark’s relatively small size as a contributing factor to having fewer EP employees than the large countries with the larger EP teams (DK-NG2). This suggest that the allocation of staff to monitoring the EP by the Danish NG may reflect more than simply what the NG deems to be the optimal allocation of resources. Although not in itself sufficient to determine a government’s investment in dealing with the EP, this suggests that the number of staff allocated to monitoring the EP contributes to the composite picture of a government’s level of prioritization of dealing with the EP.

However, it is necessary to analyze the numbers in the context of the general system of coordination each NG has in place to understand how the task of engaging with the EP is distributed across the NG staff.

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23 Representing a large and small number of staff appointed to monitoring the EP respectively
Number of cases as indicator

In continuation of this, it is necessary to further qualify coordination by both of these groups of staff by incorporating the choice of legislative cases the NGs coordinate on in the analysis. Do the government representatives only coordinate on the most salient cases? Do they also coordinate on the moderately salient ones, or do they coordinate on all legislative proposals? Ceteris paribus, being in touch on all cases (depending on the type of contact) will be considered as a more intensive effort to coordinate. This must, however, be further qualified. Although a high number of staff actively monitoring developments in the EP does not, by itself, indicate a high level of interaction with MEPs, monitoring a high number of cases does enable a government to better evaluate in which cases to engage the MEPs. Monitoring a high number of cases and getting involved in the cases that are deemed significant could be viewed as a high degree of ambition for influence in the EP. Acting only when this is deemed relevant, on an ad hoc basis, does not necessarily imply a lesser perception of EP significance by a member state. This is not least the case given that NGs, e.g. from member states with a high number of staff and/or high proportion of power in the Council and the EP, may find it sufficient to carry out coordination this way. Briefly, if a government has a lot of manpower, and expects that it will have easy access to many ears in the EP – due to e.g. a large national MEP base or an expectation that MEPs in general will be interested in its position and in reaching a common understanding – the government staff can take a more reactive approach, targeting cases as they become problematic. From this perspective, being highly proactive becomes less critical than it might be for a country with fewer resources, and taking a “brush fire” approach can be sufficient. This indicator should thus be viewed in the context of the amount of staff potentially involved in coordination, as a high number may offset some of the consequences of getting involved later in the legislative process. On a different but related note, several government officials point to the risk of overloading MEPs with government material, using up your “quota” of political capital by being too frequently in contact with MEPs. Therefore, government officials consider whether a case is sufficiently important for them to be in touch with MEPs. Still, this does not apparently deter Denmark from getting involved in virtually all cases, nor does it deter France and the UK from this. Although one could find reasons why a country would not find it urgent to act on all cases, this analysis thus takes as point of departure that the greater number of cases a country is involved in, and the earlier in the process, the larger the evaluation will be of their ambition to leave a “footprint” on the EP.
**The nature and level of detail of the contact**

Inseparable from this is the question of the nature of coordination. Indicator 5 addresses the extensive mode of the efforts to coordinate by the governments. The previous two indicators cannot be evaluated independently of the manner in which the coordination occurs, i.e. the level of detail and the degree of intensity of the contact. Coordinating with a high degree of details on the legislative case, e.g. by proposing amendments to the MEPs, will naturally yield a different type of outcome than coordinating by making voting recommendations. The former activity will potentially leave a fingerprint on the formulation of the legislative content, while the latter will only have the possibility of approving or rejecting the legislative proposal in its finalized form. Thus, contact on many cases but in a less comprehensive manner, could be just as ambitious as extensive coordination on fewer cases. The two indicators must thus be regarded as complementary.

In assessing hypothesis 5 and 6 (whether political systems affect mode of coordination), this indicator, together with indicator 2 (selection of MEPs) are particularly central in order to examine whether the member states have different preferences for which MEPs to contact, and whether their anticipation of well received input differs across political systems. Together these two indicators reflect the kind of information the governments provide to the MEPs, and the kind of relationship this reflects – the degree of close contact and cooperation versus “one-way communication”.

**The timing of coordination as indicator**

Closely linked to the nature of coordination is, necessarily, the timing of coordination, as the manner of coordination is likely to vary according to the stage of the legislative process the interaction takes place at. At what point does the NG get involved in the coordination process? The sooner coordination is initiated, the greater the likelihood of influencing the wording of the legislative proposal which in the end will reach the plenary for a vote. Once the proposal reaches this point, it may often be too late for MEPs to influence the proposal. Therefore, an early effort to coordinate will be taken as an indicator of a greater extent of coordination, and of greater assignment of importance by the NGs to influencing the negotiations through the EP.

The timing of the input is closely linked to the type of contact between the actors. Sending policy positions and technical information prior to a plenary vote is likely to have less effect at this stage in the negotiations, while voting recommendations could have an effect on the votes of the MEPs. However,
amendment suggestions and technical information sent at a more opportune moment in the early stages of the negotiations might have an effect on the actual text that will end up being voted on in the plenary. In that sense, sending voting recommendations to the MEPs ahead of a plenary vote can be classified as a blunter instrument.

Initiating coordination on fewer cases but early on would potentially offset acting on a large amount of cases in the later stages of the negotiations, e.g. by sending out voting recommendations before plenary votes. Assessing the combination of choices (number of cases and timing of cases) by the NGs is thus significant for the evaluation of the level of NG ambition for coordination. Ceteris paribus, however, the earlier coordination is initiated the more it will be regarded as an indication of high ambitions by the NG to coordinate.

The type of information the NG sends to the MEPs is analyzed in connection with assessing the hypotheses regarding the effect of the political system of the member states on the mode of coordination (hypothesis 6). As such, the relevance of this aspect must also be considered when observing the timing of coordination by the NGs.

Furthermore, the successful delivery of the different types of information from the NG is closely linked to the timing of the delivery, as will be delved into more deeply when analyzing the EP interviews. In determining the efforts and ambitions of a government, this is less relevant. However, when evaluating the MEPs’ reception of the governments’ attentions, this aspect will be revisited.

The timing of coordination cannot be taken out of the context of comparing small vs. large states. A large state may expect to have more clout in the Council (in terms of votes) and in the EP (qua their number of MEPs). This shall be addressed in connection with the assessment of hypothesis 3.

These factors enable a more accurate understanding of the extent of coordination the numbers and division of staff amount to in practice.

5.1. The effect of institutional change on NG-MEP relations

In this section, the first two hypotheses are assessed and research question 1 is answered. Have the changes in institutional rules of the EU legislative process, to the advantage of the EP, led to the efforts by the NGs, as described in the country cases, to influence the legislative negotiations through the EP?
And have they led to the particular targeting of specific MEPs according to the hypothesized criteria of party affiliation, nationality and institutional roles in the EP? Interviews with staff from PRs and national ministries are analyzed to determine whether NGs’ establishment of coordination with the MEPs is directly triggered by the aforementioned changes in institutional rules, or whether other factors were instrumental in shaping the current structure of interaction.

To examine the manner of the NGs’ establishment of bilateral relations with the MEPs, it was hypothesized that institutional changes to the power balance between the Council and the EP were the root cause of the coordination we see at present, aimed at influencing EU legislation through the EP:

**Hypothesis 1:** Institutional changes decreasing the relative power of the NGs vis-a-vis the EP have led to increased efforts by NGs to influence the EP

The NGs, represented by the civil servants charged with the task of promoting the position of their government in the legislative negotiations, were expected to direct their efforts to where they expect them to yield the most favorable outcome. The hypothesis implies that government representatives, monitoring the institutional power balance at EU level, will make informed intentional adjustments to their respective government’s relations with the EP, so as to continue to match the given institutional equilibrium of the EU legislative process. In assessing the explanatory value of this hypothesis, a confirmation of the hypothesis does not require that all the governments should react in the same way to the institutional changes, nor that all governments end up with an identical system of coordination with the EP. The evaluation is based on an analysis of if and why governments change their approach, relative to the status quo of each of the governments, and whether their reactions stem primarily from being faced with the institutional changes.

Indicators of independent and dependent variables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 1.</th>
<th>Independent variable Indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More EP power leads to more coordination</td>
<td>Institutional rule change (Co-decision vs. no co-decision)</td>
<td>Increase in coordination vs. no increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data used for assessing the hypothesis is derived from the interviewees listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PermRep staff and national ministry staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6 (*2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (*1)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates share of total number of interviewees that are exploratory interviews, and are therefore not included in the assessment of the hypothesis.

To investigate this dynamic of NG-EP relations further, hypothesis 2 addresses the interaction in greater depth from an intra-institutional perspective as regards the EP. With focus on the disaggregated interactions between government officials and the individual MEPs and MEPAs, hypothesis 2 and sub-hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c address the issues of whether NGs follow the same logic as when targeting the EP institution as a whole, or whether other factors play a role in the establishment and formation of the interactions between the individual actors. In other words, how strong is the mechanism of utility maximization in determining the relations established between governments and MEPs, and are there rival factors that play a role in shaping the relations:

**Hypothesis 2:** Within the EP, NGs will establish contact with those MEPs they expect will have the greatest impact on the legislative negotiations

**Hypothesis 2.a.:** NGs will seek to coordinate more with MEPs of their own nationality than with MEPs from other member states

**Hypothesis 2.b.:** NGs will seek to coordinate more with MEPs from same parties as the NG than with MEPs with opposition party affiliation

**Hypothesis 2.c.:** The more influential a role an MEP has in the legislative negotiations, the more they will be targeted by the NGs

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24 In all schematic overviews, total numbers of interviewees are listed, rather than numbers of interviews, as some interviews were conducted with several interviewees at the same time, and the interviewees often contributed with complementary information. For an elaborated overview, see Appendix 8.1.
The variables and indicators used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 2</th>
<th>Independent variable Indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.a. NGs prefer MEPs of same nationality</td>
<td>MEP nationality (shares vs. does not share NG nationality)</td>
<td>MEPs of same nationality preferred vs. not preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.b. NGs prefer MEPs of same party</td>
<td>MEP national party affiliation (Government vs. opposition)</td>
<td>MEPs of same party preferred vs. not preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.c. NGs prefer MEPs with central EP role</td>
<td>MEP institutional role (does vs. does not hold influential EP role)</td>
<td>MEPs w. influential role preferred vs. not preferred</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data for assessing the hypothesis and sub-hypotheses is derived from the interviewees listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees for assessing hypothesis 2, 2.a., 2.b. and 2.c.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Countries</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PermRep staff and national ministry staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates share of total number of interviewees that are exploratory interviews, and are therefore not included in the assessment of the hypothesis.

The analysis addressing the first research question comprises two perspectives, an analysis of change in the policy area of agriculture, and an analysis of change, in general, over time among the countries. A focus on agriculture enables assessing specific reactions to a major institutional change, and a general perspective enables assessing other potentially significant changes and dynamics, as well as compensating for potential differences in pre-existing patterns among the member states and possible effects this may have for findings of changes in the specific case of agriculture which may build on previous developments.

All policy areas have particular features that set them apart from other areas, and the CAP is no exception. It is possible that the CAP, a policy area which for decades has been an integral part of the EU legislative portfolio, has patterns of decision making which are particularly strong and specific to the CAP, which may influence the research findings. While this is an aspect to be aware of in the empirical
and analytical phases of the project, the fact that the CAP has been an area with actors with strong interests and firmly established patterns of cooperation (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig:2009), makes it even more useful for this analysis. The project focuses on changes in the established patterns of interaction caused by exogenous institutional changes. Thus, evidence that pre-existing patterns, as strong as those in the area of the CAP, are changed leading to coordination, would only lend strength to the confirmation of the hypothesis that the institutional changes brought about coordination.

The EP has not been known to hesitate to use the powers it is granted to the fullest (Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton:2011) and so, the assumption is made that there has not been an institutional lag of implementation of the new powers by the EP. Whether awareness of this has permeated throughout the NGOs’ ministries and departments is unknown. What can be assumed, however, is that the NGOs have known full well the extent of the institutional changes allocating more power to the EP. What is less certain is the extent to which NGOs are already aware of the informal institutional changes that have taken the extent of early reading agreements in the trialogue negotiations to such a high level. Even without being able to assume ministry wide knowledge in all the member states’ governments of the current de facto mode of EU negotiations, knowledge of the EP's formal gains of new powers is commonly available to all government branches. Determining the effect of institutional change thus implies determining whether or not formal institutional rule-change has sparked an immediate strategic adaptation (or decision to adapt) by the governments to the new institutional situation, or whether other factors led the governments to coordinate with the MEPs as they do.

Due to the substantial variation in the political systems of the NGOs, the developments of the NGOs’ different patterns of coordination with the MEPs are not compared in a symmetric manner. Rather, the aim is to observe whether changes from status quo in each member state can be detected, to ascertain to what extent changes have occurred, and to understand why they happened. For the same reason, the CAP as a case study, despite its advantages for the analysis, also poses a challenge. On the one hand, the CAP is a clear example of an institutional rule change, from one time cycle to another. This makes it possible to observe how NGOs react to the shift of power from one actor to another, thereby providing an indication of how the NGOs perceive the necessity to coordinate with the MEPs. Whether an NG reacts directly and proactively to an institutional change will be observable in this context. On the other hand, it could be posited that it may take some time for institutional changes to stabilize, thus the manner in which the CAP is dealt with at the time of the interviews may be different now from how it will be dealt with once the actors settle into a new system. The current practice may not reflect the NGOs’ perception
of the optimal way to engage with the EP, and changes may be under way which the current analysis may not detect. On the other hand, the CAP case is an example of a power transition that has occurred recently, at a point in time at which the member states’ coordination systems were already in place. The institutional change took place at a sufficiently late point in the EU’s legislative history for the actors to have been aware of the implications of the policy area moving to co-decision and to have reacted to it if they had wished to. Thus, the absence of adaptation can be seen as an indication of how the process of change works within an NG, and may (depending on the specific case) be interpreted as indication that knowledge of a power change is not enough to guarantee that NGs’ adapt their coordination.

If the country is already active in coordinating with the EP it will naturally need a lesser increase of its efforts, and thus, a finding of a limited change does not accurately tell the whole story. To ensure that I understand the actual reasons for the changes the NGs made when they made them, I therefore look for “triggers” for changes, not only at one specific point in time, and ask, in the interviews, questions aimed at uncovering the cause of changes. I seek to tease out whether, and how much, the NGs realized the extent of the change needed, and what thoughts were behind their decisions to develop their coordination with MEPs. Looking at when significant changes took place in each NG’s approach to the EP, and analyzing the dynamics behind these changes will lead to an understanding of the changes based not on a completely identical comparison of reactions by the member states, but rather on a comparison and understanding of the underlying dynamics – the causal mechanisms – that have led each member state to change their approaches towards the EP. Countries with different ways of organizing their relations with the EP may have had to adapt at different points in time, in different ways and to different extents, depending on how well their systems were adapted to the specific inter-institutional changes occurring at various points in time. Hence, different reactions by the NGs at different points in time can still express the same causal mechanism. As such, each NG’s reactions and the logic behind them will be the basis for the comparison, rather than concrete examples of changes.

Comparing concrete expressions of differences among the member states, and comparing their relative efforts, will be more in focus when answering research question 2 regarding the national differences.

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25 The assessment of hypothesis 1 will therefore approach the question as a case in which the NGs should know what they are dealing with. Still, the interview questions in the data collection process are sought kept sufficiently open to assess whether there are considerations regarding the adaptation to the institutional change which are not reflected in the current state of affairs of coordination, or whether there are initiatives pending that will change the pattern of coordination.
Still, also here it applies that the countries’ patterns of coordination must be understood within their own systems and their own traditions.

The dependent variable of the analysis is “extent of coordination” and the independent variable is the “relative power of the NGs” as defined by institutional rules (the EU legislative procedure applied). As agriculture was recently shifted from consultation to co-decision, it is an example of an institutional change which directly led to a change of balance between the Council and the EP granting more power to the EP. Agriculture is also a policy area of high salience and with institutional patterns of negotiations built up over a long time (Hix and Høyland:2011). These factors contribute to the relevance of the policy area as a case study. The potentially entrenched relations between the actors’ within the policy area will lessen the probability of changes in the actors’ behavior, so that it is likely to occur only in cases of perceptions of significant necessity, and thus the case presents a “least likely” scenario. If a change in behavior is detected, the dynamics of change must be significant. Furthermore, the high salience of the policy area makes it highly likely to provide an example of how actors, pursuing their interests, will react to institutional change. I investigate how the NGs coordinate with the MEPs, and whether/to what extent this has changed over time (pre/post Lisbon Treaty).

5.1.a. Assessing hypothesis 1: Awareness of and reaction to institutional changes

**Agriculture perspective:**
Beginning with the perspective of changes in the area of agriculture, the 14 interviewees from across all member states, who addressed the question from this angle, whether from PermReps or national ministries, all agreed that the transition of agriculture policy from consultation to co-decision changed the manner in which government staff deals with the EP. Only one interviewee of the French government added that the degree of change in their interaction with the EP had not been so noticeable because the position of the AGRI committee was already quite close to that of the French government and, hence, the need for involvement was less significant (FR-NG1).

The preparations for the CAP reform of 2013 began already in 2010\(^{26}\), not long after the Lisbon Treaty had entered into force in December 2009. For the EP this presented a good opportunity to flex its muscles, as could be seen with the over 8000 amendment suggestions that were put to the draft

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Also for the member states, the CAP reform thus indicated clear and significant importance attached to dealing with the policy area of agriculture at this point in time, involving a broad area of government policies which the NG officials were aware they had to deal with. It would be a hypothetical exercise to try to determine whether the awareness and immediate reaction of the government officials in agriculture stemmed from a “practical reaction” to the work they needed to do in connection with a specific salient legislative case, that might have been different if the political agenda had been less salient at that point in time, or whether it was a decision to increase focus on and engage with the AGRI committee based more on a “matter of principle”. What is certain, however, is that the change from the consultation procedure to co-decision affected the government officials’ perception of the need to deal with the MEPs, and it provides a solid example of governments’ reactions to how they engage with the MEPs on an issue of salience.

**General government perspective:**

When it comes to reactions to the EP’s power surge by the governments at large, the picture is less consistent. All interviewees, of both national ministries and PermReps, attributed their respective NG’s decision to increase efforts to engage with MEPs to the growing influence of the EP, as an underlying reason. Still, there are differences in the degree to which government staff of the member states are aware of the need for engaging with the EP. One Spanish and one British government representative (SP-NG1 and UK-NG2) noted that it had taken some time to spread awareness of the significance of the EP, but that this seemed to have been achieved by now. Another Spanish interviewee (SP-NG3) noted that this awareness was not evenly dispersed throughout the NGs and sectorial ministries. A Slovakian interviewee’s evaluation of the level of government awareness and involvement with the EP was that parts of the government were still to some degree lagging behind (SL-NG1). Furthermore, from interviews with the Slovakian NG, it was expressed that not all sectorial ministries are equally interested in focusing on the EP, irrespective of the significance of the EP in the ministry’s policy area (SL-NG2, SL-NG3). This is in considerable contrast to the fact that the Slovakian government had introduced changes to the relations with the EP as recently as 2013, and that one interviewee anticipated that further changes might take place in the near future in connection with the upcoming Slovakian Presidency in 2016, highlighting the difference between government departments (SL-NG1).

The notion that governments are not all equally aware of the potential gains from engaging with the EP

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28 With just one exception, notably from a different national ministry than the others
was supported by interviews with several MEPs/MEPAs, as is elaborated in chapter 6.

It should be noted that the different structures and centralization of government systems might affect the degree to which awareness of the role of the EP is spread throughout the whole government. This, however, need not be determinant for the degree of involvement of the government with the EP. If the government has channels set up to engage with the EP that encompass the relevant policy areas for coordination, the actual number of people who are aware of and deal with the EP in their daily work in the government is of little relevance.

It can thus be established from the interview data that at least parts of all the NGs are cognizant of the potentially advantageous impact the MEPs may have on EU legislative negotiations for those NGs that understand how to engage successfully with the MEPs, as well as an apprehension of the possible problems an adverse position of the MEPs can pose for the NGs. As the country descriptions showed, the Lisbon Treaty marked a significant turning point for their contact with the EP, in spite of the EP having been involved in co-decision on several policy areas long before the Lisbon Treaty. This is perhaps not surprising, considering that this treaty change was most recent in the minds of the interviewees, and the interviewees had often rotated within the government and had been working on different issues when earlier treaty changes took place. Three interviewees (DK-NG2, DK-NG3, FR-NG2) point to earlier points in time where their governments took notice of the change in power relations between the Council and the EP, and reacted to these changes. These interviewees are, however, in the minority. As the assessment of the hypothesis revolves around the causal mechanism, rather than the specific point in time and specific treaty change, detecting and evaluating the governments’ reaction is the main point of the analysis. The fact that these changes may not be unique to the Lisbon Treaty, and may have manifested themselves differently in earlier years when other government officials were at the helm is therefore of minor importance.

Thus far, hypothesis 1 is confirmed. The NGs’ contact and attempts to coordinate with the MEPs are indeed interactions that have arisen in correspondence with the institutional reconfiguration of the legislative process of the EU and the considerably increased influence yielded to the EP.

However, this does not provide the full picture of why the member states have organized coordination with the EP as they have. Interestingly, in spite of the shared recognition by NGs of the significance of
these changes in institutional rules, only some of the NGs have responded directly to the changes by setting up structures to engage with the EP as a consequence of these changes. Germany, the UK, Spain, and to a certain extent France and Denmark characterize their choice to coordinate with MEPs as a direct response to the treaty-induced increase of EP power, the Lisbon Treaty in particular. Other NGs have taken a less proactive approach and did not adapt their relations with the EP as a direct response to the institutional changes. Poland and, in part, Slovakia, Denmark and France do not list this as the primary turning point that impelled them to rearrange their relations with the EP. Although the power increase of the EP was the underlying reason for the changes implemented by the governments, what triggered the considerations and decisions to change their approach to the EP was not an institutional analysis of how best to react to the formal treaty changes increasing the power of the EP. While treaty changes thus directly caused some countries to upgrade their efforts towards the EP, this factor alone cannot explain the development of all countries’ relations with the MEPs. With the knowledge of the institutional changes equally available to all NGs, this discrepancy in reactions to the institutional changes suggests that there are additional dynamics that play a role in the decision of NGs to change their approach to the EP. On the ministerial level of the countries, the move of the policy area of agriculture from one decision making rule to another had a direct impact on how these national ministries view and deal with the EP. Why did this change then not have an equally immediate and direct effect on all governments’ general approach to relations with the EP? If they were not affected at all, one might have assumed that they simply found their system to be adequate despite the changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty. What triggered the decisions of the countries to change at different points in time? This question will be further explored below.

**Countries that react directly**

NG interviewees of Germany state that they have set up their current system as a direct response to the increase of power of the EP with the Lisbon Treaty. They have employed government staff for the specific purpose of promoting the focus and awareness of the EP within the government, and they have stepped up this effort following the Lisbon Treaty (G-NG4). The same is to a certain extent the case for the French government, which has periodically evaluated the EU legislative system, including looking to their fellow NGs, in order to determine whether their efforts at EU level are appropriate and up to speed with the current state of affairs of the EU system. What distinguishes the French system a bit from the German and the British systems is that the periodic checks are not necessarily in direct correlation with the Treaty changes and developments of the institutional balance of power. Also, France originally
lagged behind other member states in terms of engagement with the EP as a matter of principle (based on an older perception of the EP) (FR-NG2). Still, the logic of the French government’s approach is to monitor institutional developments and adjust the governmental processes accordingly. Thus, France is primarily in the category of “direct reaction”.

The reason that Denmark falls into both this category and the category of indirect reactions is that the system which the Danish government follows was established in connection with the previous Danish Presidency in 2002. Since then the system has not been altered. The logic of the system is that each case attaché in the government with responsibility of handling a case determines for him/herself the extent to which they should engage with the EP – and they are informed about the great significance of this effort by the government when they take on the responsibility for a case. The system has been adapted to the Treaty changes by adding the new policy areas as they changed from one decision making procedure to the next. The process has been “organically adapting” so to speak, based on the perceived need of the cases in the day to day activities (DK-NG3). This has also been the case, to some extent, for the UK, although the government in general has made more new direct efforts to adapt to the Lisbon Treaty. It is thus a less “obvious” and softer version of institutional adaptation than e.g. the German government’s reaction.

It should be noted, for good measure, that while Denmark already had an “EP person” at the PermRep prior to the Lisbon Treaty, Germany did not have this coordinated effort. Therefore, for Germany the need for an upgrade was more pressing. However, Germany so far exceeds Denmark in their allocation of staff (4 EP staff members to Denmark’s 1) that one can deem this a reaction that sets Germany apart from Denmark in terms of extent of efforts as a direct response to treaty changes.

While the process of adapting to the new status of the EU legislative process, as brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, is still ongoing for some countries, this is not the first time changes in the institutional power balance between the Council and the EP has led several of the governments to reevaluate their activities in Brussels and reorganize to match the power of the EP. The earlier member states, Germany, France, the UK, and Denmark were actively engaging with the EP already prior to the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, and even before the 2004 enlargement. For instance, already with the changes brought about by the Maastricht Treaty the French and Danish governments became aware of the importance of influencing the EP (FR-NG2, DK-NG3). The introduction of co-decision, granting the EP powers which the member states could not ignore, was, for these countries, what originally set the process into motion of
governments seeking to influence the legislative process through the EP. Coordination is thus not a new phenomenon for the governments, and exactly this factor of building relations with the EP over time has an effect on the comprehensiveness of the relations; the process is incremental. This is something the new member states have not had in their favor. This supports the hypothesis that institutional change affects governments’ coordination with the EP. The governments build increasingly comprehensive relations with the EP as they see the institution becoming relatively more powerful vis-a-vis the Council.

Where does this leave the new member states? We now turn to the second category – member states that reacted indirectly, where different factors triggered the adoption of approaches to the EP.

**Countries that react indirectly**

With regard to the countries for which the process was less linear, to fully understand the causal mechanism behind the governments’ decisions to allocate more resources to targeting the EP, the moments when these changes were introduced must be looked at more closely.

The interviews with government representatives from several countries, e.g. Poland and Slovakia, reveal that, rather than strategic institutional analysis, more “functional” causes have prompted their organizational rearrangements towards the EP. One key factor mentioned is having the EU Presidency. For Denmark in 2002 taking over the presidency was a key moment for the country to establish a system of monitoring of and coordination with the EP. With the latest Danish Presidency in 2012 more manpower was added during the Presidency, which was then scaled back again after the Presidency, but the system established for the 2002 Presidency remains in place to this day. The Polish government describes how they took notice of the changes the Lisbon treaty brought to the division of power between the Council and the EP in the legislative process, but this was not sufficient cause for them to adjust their model of interaction with the EP. For Poland, taking over the Presidency in 2011 made the government realize the need to step up efforts towards the EP, and triggered their substantial reorganization and expansion of focus on the EP. Although they have scaled back their efforts after the Presidency, their attention is now still very keen regarding taking the EP into account in the government’s efforts to influence the legislative negotiations. Having the Presidency and being responsible for finding agreement with the EP and, increasingly, being responsible for representing the Council in the informal trialogue meetings and finding early agreements, has led the governments to
become aware of who in the EP they need to deal with, and to try to understand how the internal dynamics of the EP work so that they can build the necessary alliance to obtain the best possible deals for the Council. Similarly, at the time the interviews were carried out (spring 2013 – spring 2014) the Slovakian government, which has a relatively low scale system in place for coordinating with the EP, had begun considering how to increase its organization vis-a-vis the EP, looking to their fellow member states for inspiration.

In addition to the boost that having the Presidency can give to a government’s investment in establishing relations with the EP, learning from each other can also prompt governments to change their approach to the EP. In the early phases of the increase in EP influence, France lagged behind its fellow large member states in terms of extent of influence sought through the EP. Having originally had a more hesitant approach to the EP, France had restricted its contact to the EP to consist of merely providing a limited amount of information to the MEPs without advocating specific positions. However, when observing the higher activity level of the other larger member states (e.g. UK, Germany) which mirror France’s conditions in the EU legislative system, the French government decided to step up its activities. France has since adjusted its efforts “en courant”, and indeed France is the only country which mentions making fine tunings “en courant” to its activities to be sure they are optimized, even without major treaty reforms. It was mentioned in interviews with the French government that France has not adjusted its method of coordination post-Lisbon. However, it was also noted that, as the Lisbon Treaty brought more policy areas under co-decision, this has caused more EP related activities for the government on the areas in question, and also – France is now, at the time of the interviews being conducted, planning to once again look to its fellow member states to see whether they are more forward in their relations with the EP, and whether France should increase its EP efforts accordingly. Furthermore, the Danish government has given presentations to other governments about the Danish approach to the EP, and interviews with British and French government representatives (UK-NG1, FR-NG2) also show that the governments do indeed discuss their approaches to the EP with each other – and also that they discuss and coordinate common “campaigns” towards the EP (UK-NG1, DK-NG2).

One of the more unexpected findings from the interviews is that learning from each other is not guaranteed to happen within governments. In several cases countries’ knowledge and approaches to the EP do not permeate the entire governmental organization in a coherent manner, as seen for instance in the cases of Spain and Slovakia, where the focus on the EP differs between the EU and the
domestic national arena, as well as between ministries (SP-NG3, SL-NG3). While this could be explained by simply noting that the staff in Brussels deals with the EP on a daily basis, which the national ministries do not, this cannot be sufficient to fully explain the finding.

While some national ministries have developed systematic approaches to the EP and have institutionalized the contact, others are less attentive to the EP, both within the governments and, as is described in more detail in chapter 6, also within the EP, in spite of dealing with areas under co-decision. In the case of Spain and the UK, for instance, despite reacting directly to the increase in power of the EU, the developments have not been immediate on all fronts. Officials of both the Spanish and French governments mentioned there can be a notable effect on a ministry if the minister puts great emphasis on dealing with the EP (SP-NG4, FR-NG2). As is the case of Spain, a high level of involvement with the EP in one ministry does not necessarily spread to other ministries within the government. NG interviewees from Spain (SP-NG3), the UK (UK-NG2), Slovakia (SL-NG1, SL-NG2) and France (SL-NG2) noted that this learning process is still ongoing. Some ministries still appear to be lagging behind (Slovakia being the most noteworthy), having not yet attributed the priority to dealing with EP relations which others attribute to this. In the UK this awareness also develops “organically” according to one interviewee, more by day to day activities than actual decrees of how to engage (UK-NG2).

It must be noted that this is an evaluation based on the perception of actors who are themselves part of the process, and who might not be in a position to evaluate the extent or motivation of other government officials for the way they establish their relation to the EP. MEPAs – not infrequently – express “wonder” about the poorly executed or low level of coordination with the EP. The collective data presents a picture of a less than consistent approach to the EP, and a non-linear causal relation between increase in power and activism of the EP and the governmental response by the member states.

The asymmetric spread of awareness of the importance of relations with the EP across countries, ministries and PermReps yields an institutional “stickiness”, a lag in adaptation and only a gradual change in approach to relations with the EP. Even taking bounded rationality’s allowance for limited knowledge into account, this is surprising. The awareness of the power of the EP – and the significance of this – was expected to be broader and more consistently spread through all the parts of the governments affected by it, given that the powers and activities of the EP are either formal and very
publicly addressed, or informal but clearly identifiable in the statistics (i.e. the rapidly growing number of early agreements made). The importance of influencing the political negotiations at EU level, as well as the emphasis placed on the Council by the NGs – following complete rational choice institutional evaluation – should have been matched better by a larger focus on the EP. This also challenges the image of the NGs as unified actors, and highlights that NGs and their process of adaptation must be more nuanced than assuming that the NGs are composite unified actors.

The resulting picture is that awareness of institutional change and reaction to it is an uneven and in some cases slow process. Institutional change of the power balance affecting the individual member state alone does not necessarily prompt changes in activity. Awareness has to grow, in some cases through other more “practical and structured” experiences, before habits and old patterns can change.

5.1.b. Assessing hypothesis 2 - On the MEPs that are targeted

The interviews show that NGs’ outreach to the MEPs is influenced by an understanding of the great influence of the EP on the legislative negotiations, as well as of the possibilities created by its multifaceted nature and its interwoven composition of actor relations. What is more, the interviews seem to largely confirm hypothesis 2 – that “Within the EP, NGs will establish contact with those MEPs they expect will have the greatest impact on the legislative negotiations”.

All governments prioritize contact with MEPs of their own nationality. A primary motive for contacting the fellow national MEPs, as e.g. the country cases of the UK, France, and Denmark showed, is that these MEPs are expected to either share the government’s view or at the very least be open to receiving the input from the government and listening to the positions of the government. Moderating this image a bit, a certain degree of systematic contact by default is also observed, and the sense that the government civil service in many countries exists to serve all fellow national MEPs the same way, irrespective of national party affiliation, as the civil servants of a government represent the whole country in the EU.

Sub-hypothesis 2.a. is thus confirmed – governments “seek to coordinate more with MEPs of their own nationality than with MEPs from other member states”.

Furthermore, in support of hypothesis 2, no government rules out contacting MEPs from other member states if they find it relevant. In fact, most governments, except Slovakia, consider it more the rule than an exception to do so when deemed relevant. Rather than being guided only by nationality, the role the MEPs play in the negotiations is also an important factor determining which MEPs the governments contact. MEPs who may be influential in the legislative negotiations, due to the institutional role they
play in the negotiations (all governments), due to the political influence they have over their fellow MEPs, which may help sway other MEPs (Poland, Denmark, and the UK) or due to the possibility that the MEPs might help the government reach out to other MEPs within the EP, which might be difficult for the EP to do on its own (Denmark) are sought out by the governments. Hypothesis 2.c. is therefore also confirmed – “The more influential a role an MEP has in the legislative negotiations, the more they will be targeted by the NGs”.

Additionally, governments look to the political position of the MEPs when selecting who to approach. This finding deviates a bit from the anticipated behavior of hypothesis 2.b. which predicted that “NGs will seek to coordinate more with MEPs from same parties as the NG than with MEPs from opposition party affiliation”. Rather than selecting MEPs according to political party affiliation as a guiding principle, the possibility of seeing eye to eye with the MEPs is mentioned. The likelihood or possibility of finding common ground, in other words, is more important than the political affiliation, while still reserving a bit of information and exhibiting a bit of care as to what kind of information can be shared with MEPs that are not typical political allies (i.a. DK-NG1, SP-NG1). Naturally, the anticipation that an MEP will agree with the government on a political issue will often coincide with party affiliation. This, however, is not always the case. This results in a potential of contact patterns that traverse the normally expected channels of communication. By having this approach to the MEPs, governments open up for a much broader pool of potential actors who might work to promote the government’s position from inside the EP. Furthermore, although most governments prioritize engaging with MEPs who are likely to share their convictions, a large proportion of the governments also look to other MEPs who might not share their views, seeking either to convince them of the position of the government, or at least to try to find the areas where there might be common ground.

However, for the NGs, party affiliation can be an indicator of political agreement with MEPs – and also in general there can be more agreement – and party loyalty – expected by these MEPs than MEPs from “opposition parties”. Hypothesis 2.b. is thus only partially confirmed, as the contact is not initiated according to the logic of party affiliation, although this factor does play a partial role for the governments. Also, the causal mechanism cannot be confirmed.

Governments do not only contact those MEPs that are most likely to agree with them. However, the underlying causal mechanism of hypothesis 2 still stands, as the deviation from the hypothesis 2.b. – the seeking out of MEPs opposing the government’s view – is based on an evaluation by the NG that contact with precisely these MEPs will help the government achieve its goal. As a Danish interviewee notes, there is no point in talking to MEPs who are completely against the NG’s position and who will never
support the government (DK-NG2). However, you might be able to point out aspects that some MEPs had not considered, and which might be unproblematic for them to include in the legislative amendments. Also, the UK government in some cases contacts MEPs who, despite being completely against the position of the government, might still be necessary to cultivate, if these MEPs are believed to be key to the outcome of the legislative negotiations.

In conclusion, the governments’ officials are aware of the possibilities provided by the fluid political process in the EP, and the potential for establishing “alternative alliances”, not following national or party political lines just as they are aware of the importance of engaging with the EP and the risks involved with being sidelined in the process. The choice of which MEPs to contact supports the conclusion from the assessment of hypothesis 1.

5.1.c. Summary of findings for research question 1

In response to research question 1, it is thus confirmed that the growing power of the EP has made countries invest more in influencing the EP, and thus that the change in formal and informal institutional rules does have a direct effect on how the staff on the ground deals with the EP. Also, for a couple of the countries, their approach to the EP has been directly linked to the increase in power of the EP following treaty change. However, it has not been a purely linear rational calculated process of institutional adaptation on the part of most of the governments. Rather, the causal mechanism that is behind the active move towards a more active approach towards the EP has been more event or even person-driven, and increased coordination has come about as a functional reaction to external factors or micro level work experiences of individual government officials.

While there have been different trigger points that have caused the member states to step up their activity in relation to the EP, it seems that the newest treaty based promotion of the EP to its now predominantly equal status to the Council, including the indicatively denominated “Ordinary legislative procedure” has heightened the member state governments’ sense of the importance of monitoring and influencing the EP. All governments mention the Lisbon treaty as a significant moment of institutional change increasing the power of the EP, and agree that the Treaty – and the EP’s very proactive interpretation of its new role – has made it clear that the EP is now an institution to be reckoned with. This agreement across all country cases poses the question of why, then, the countries’ approach to the EP differ so significantly? Is it due to differences in political systems? Is it due to differences in the
amounts of power the countries have in the Council, and the channels of influence they have into the EP? Is it linked to the duration of membership of a country of the EU? Or are there other factors that play a role in determining the course of action the governments take? Can it be the difficulty of re-orienting the attention of government staff which has been used to dealing with the institutions in a certain way? Can it be that this process of re-socialization takes time to change and that reorganization is therefore an uneven process which at one point will lead all countries to catch up to each other? Are there different perceptions of useful interactions? This section looks to answer these questions.

5.2. Explaining variation in coordination between the countries

In chapter 2, three hypotheses were proposed as the main explanations of what lies behind the variation among the countries’ approach to dealing with the MEPs. In this section, hypotheses 3-5 are assessed, some additional explanatory factors are brought in and discussed on the basis of the information obtained from the interviews and, finally, a conclusion will be drawn as to what explanatory factors may cause the difference of engagement of the NGs with the EP.

5.2.a. Assessing hypothesis 3

Assessing whether the size of a member state affects the NGs’ efforts to engage with MEPs, including the ambition and extent of engagement, is done by comparing Denmark and Slovakia to see whether these two country cases show similar trends. Then the two countries are compared with the rest of the countries, to see whether the differences are consistent in accord with the independent variable of member state size.

The variables and indicators used are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 3</th>
<th>Independent variable Indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.a. Small countries coordinate more</td>
<td>Size of member state (Large vs. small member state)</td>
<td>NGs make extensive vs. limited coordination efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b. Large countries coordinate more</td>
<td>Size of member state (Large vs. small member state)</td>
<td>NGs make extensive vs. limited coordination efforts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data for assessing the hypothesis and sub-hypotheses is derived from the interviewees listed below:
Hypothesis 3 concerns whether the institutionally defined relative influence of the member states in the EU affects the extent to which they decide to engage with the EP: “The institutionally defined relative influence of a member state in the Council and the EP affects the country’s efforts to influence the EP.”

Two opposing sub-hypotheses were proposed. Hypothesis 3.a. suggested we might see either “Smaller member states make more efforts to influence the EP than large member states” due to their relatively smaller influence in the Council, with increased QMV and a small share of the votes compared to the larger member states. The hypothesis implied that these member states would seek to balance this “deficit of influence” in the Council by promoting their message in the other institutional half of the legislative process – the EP. This can be perceived as a “push-factor” of sorts – small member states seeking to compensate for what is lost in one institution, by looking to alternatives. In an opposite logic, hypothesis 3.b. suggested, following a “pull-factor” logic, that larger member states, with more MEPs in the EP, would be more likely to believe they have an opening for contact into the EP, and a possibility for gaining an advantage on the other member states, and thus that “larger member states would make more efforts to influence the EP than small member states”. In other words – with more ears likely to be open to the input from the government, due to the national (and likely party political) affiliations, these larger member states’ governments would be more likely to perceive of interaction with the EP as a potentially “profitable” activity, and thus they would be more likely to allocate resources to it.

In both cases the finding should be that there would be a noticeable difference between the large and the smaller countries. However, when looking at the indicators, this is not found to be the case.
The hypothesis of the size of the member state is only (very) partially confirmed\textsuperscript{29}. In terms of feeling the need for coordination and the efforts to reach broadly and influence frequently within the EP, the indicators show no shared pattern that distinguishes the small countries, Denmark and Slovakia, from the large remaining member states. On the contrary – Denmark’s sense of urgency e.g. matches that of the UK, France and Germany in terms of the importance of dealing with the EP.

The government of Slovakia has restricted itself to a more minimalist approach to the EP, rather than thinking more broadly and expansively about who in the EP to contact and how to best maximize its potential for influence. This is partly due to the low number of MEPs they have. Slovakian NG representatives mention that they only seek to reach out to their own MEPs, and though this may change with time (SL—NG1), for now they are focused only on a narrow set of MEPs at a lower level, due to their having only 13 MEPs. Denmark, on the other hand, takes a much more proactive and broad approach in terms of which MEPs to seek out, irrespective of the low number of staff allocated to deal solely with the EP at the PermRep which the Slovakia and Denmark share. The allocation of resources at the PermRep in the form of manpower – is shared between the two small countries which have only one person in charge of coordination with the EP, while the other member states all have at minimum two (Spain and Poland) or several government officials (UK, Germany, France) employed for this purpose.

This gives reason to look at resources available as an explanation for the countries’ approach to the EP. Is the size of the country’s PermRep an explanation for the amount of staff allocated by the NG to dealing with the EP following a zero-sum-style logic? Is it only a matter of preferences and perception of relevance that determines the NGs’ efforts, or is it rather a matter of capacity of the member states’ government apparatus that defines the extent of coordination. As mentioned previously, a low allocation of staff to deal directly with the EP could be compensated for/balanced out by a large number of activities with the EP by the rest of the PermRep staff, as well as a lot of activity in the ministries at national level. But the larger member states, with more staff at their PermRep\textsuperscript{30}, have all hired more

\textsuperscript{29} Although, as mentioned by e.g. the Slovakian NG, a government’s number of MEPs can affect the NG’s ability to stay informed about EP developments and, as such, size makes a difference for the NG’s ability to be active with regards to the EP

\textsuperscript{30} Germany: 140 staff members dealing with “policy related questions” and 50 with administrative functions

Spain: the Spanish PermRep was the only PermRep which did not agree to give out this information, but interviewees generally noted that it is a large organization

The UK: 170 staff members. Information regarding the division between administrative and political staff was not given out, as a matter of principle
staff than the two small member states to deal exclusively with the EP (UK 5-6, Germany 4, France 3-4, Spain 1+1 assistant, Poland 2, Denmark 1, Slovakia 1). The tendency thus seems to be that the total number of staff available at the PermReps is linked to the allocation of resources to dealing with the EP. While the size of the member state does not affect the perception of the importance of dealing with the EP by the government staff, the size of the member state does to an extent go hand in hand with the amount of resources (manpower) the government allocates specifically to EP coordination. The larger countries have more staff allocated to the task of EP coordination, which in turn defines the extent of monitoring of the EP and horizontal coordination that the government staff can engage in. The staff allocated to dealing with the EP can be illustrated to some extent as a zero sum game, in which the governments allocate staff to the task of the EP focus relative to the total pool of staff at the PermRep. Thus, resources in terms of manpower available at the PermReps – rather than the size of the member state – becomes a relevant independent variable for determining the actual efforts of a member state government.

However, at the overarching governmental level, resource allocation is also an indicator of the government’s prioritization of coordination, as the government could allocate more resources to the task if it felt this was needed. The decision of the NGs to invest in coordination to the extent they do must therefore be looked at more closely. Why does Denmark choose to allocate less staff to the EP than the other ambitious member states? Does the Danish NG simply feel it has a good enough coordination system in place? Is it an expression of a moment in time, reflecting an institutional lag in change? Or are there other factors involved?

5.2.b. Assessing hypothesis 4

**Hypothesis 4:** Governments of old member states are more extensively engaged with the MEPs than governments of the new member states

Poland: 100 staff members dealing with "policy related questions" and approximately 50 “support staff” employees
France: A total of 183 staff members, out of which the “policy staff” makes up 125 employees
Denmark: Around 70 employees, out of which 44 are “political staff members”
Slovakia: 82 political staff members (incl. 3 ambassadors), and 15 administrative employees
The empirical indicators for assessing whether the independent variable, learning time, affects the dependent variable – extent of coordination – are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 4</th>
<th>Independent variable Indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Older countries coordinate more</td>
<td>Duration of membership (old vs. new member states)(^{31})</td>
<td>NGs make extensive vs. limited coordination efforts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data for assessing hypothesis 4 is derived from the interviewees listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees for assessing hypothesis 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PermRep staff and national ministry staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates share of total number of interviewees that are exploratory interviews, and are therefore not included in the assessment of the hypothesis.

To investigate whether the duration of membership of a member state affects the government’s evaluation of priority of involvement, I compare the efforts to engage with MEPs – the extent and ambition of engagement – by comparing the country cases as they differ on the variable “duration of EU membership”, comparing Poland and Slovakia with each other and with the “old member states”.

The data confirms that the length of time a country has been a member of the EU has an impact on the countries’ coordination with the EP. The NGs of both Poland and Slovakia first focused little on the EP at the outset of their membership. At this point the main focus of both governments was on the Council and on managing the negotiations with the other Council members. They had very little focus on the EP compared to the already well developed relations older member states had with the EP at the time. One interviewee described the process of the government as a sudden inclusion into a large political

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\(^{31}\) “Old countries” are defined as countries who became EU member states before the 2004 enlargement, and that have had a longer period of learning and adaptation to the EU legislative process as it has developed. “New countries” are defined as member states that joined the EU in 2004 (or later).
structure, in which one seeks to get the most pressing business in order first – in this case business with the Council which is the formal venue for the governments. Once the NG representatives gain a footing in the Council, they begin to look to the Commission, and only after that can the government begin to turn its attention to the more unofficial and complex relations with the EP (PL-NG1).

Since then, Poland in particular has ramped up its efforts to engage with the EP. Slovakia, on the other hand, has not to the same extent increased its efforts, although there are signs are that also Slovakia is moving towards organizing an increase in activities. Thus, the difference between the member states is not static, and though it may account for the member states’ actions in the initial phase of their EU membership, the impact of the variable appears to diminish over time.

What then prompted the increase in the newer member states’ attentions towards the EP?

For Slovakia, and to some extent for Poland, the EP still ranks lower in estimation and prioritization than it does for the older member states. A Polish NG representative explicitly notes that the Polish government has gone through a period of learning, and that simply entering into the EU and from this point beginning to evaluate how to organize the resources of the country was not sufficient to cause a significant effort vis-a-vis the EP. Of the two countries, Slovakia still has the more narrow and rigid interpretation of the division between Council and EP, and is more restrictive in terms of the extent to which it finds that it is possible and advisable to bridge the institutional divide by allocating staff to deal with the EP, as well as with regard to how broadly to contact MEPs within the EP. Poland is farther ahead in both respects; the government has hired an additional staff member at the PermRep to handle EP relations, and the Polish government also contacts MEPs on a broader transnational basis than Slovakia, whereas the Slovakian NG mainly continues to contact Slovakian MEPs and MEPAs.

For Poland, the time after accession has been different from Slovakia, as the country held the EU Presidency in 2011, shortly after the Lisbon Treaty took effect. Poland was therefore already increasing its resources and work at EU level, and as described by a Polish government representative (PL-NG1), it became clear to the government during the preparations for the EP Presidency and during the actual Presidency, that an emphasis on the EP side of the negotiations was necessary. Hence, Poland increased its efforts vis-a-vis the EP in connection with the general increase in activities brought about by having the Presidency, and once this knowledge was gained, it remained a prompter for keeping close and active relations with the EP.
It took the Presidency to induce Poland to put a higher “focus” on the EP – something which Slovakia has yet to experience. Slovakia’s increase in attentions towards the EP has so far been modest, with only a slight change enacted in 2013 relative to the system that was in place from before the Lisbon Treaty took effect. However, as Slovakia is looking towards taking over the Presidency in 2016 this might change. The Slovakian PermRep is planning to increase its staff from the current number 82 (in 2014) to a total of 200 of which 30 will be political staff. Most likely this will also include an increase in the attention and efforts towards the EP (SL-NG1). It is, of course, uncertain whether this will lead to an increase in involvement with the EP in the long run, but if the Polish and Danish cases are any indication, one might expect the lessons learned from having the Presidency to lead to maintaining a level of increased attentions towards the EP in the future.

When differentiating even more between the member states, separating the original member states (France, Germany) from the countries that joined later (Denmark, UK and Spain), no pattern is found, except for the fact that Spain has somewhat fewer staff employed at the Spanish PermRep than the other large member states. However, as it still has more than Denmark, the time factor does not seem to be a satisfactory explanation. Furthermore, only the latest newcomer countries point to the learning process they have gone through with regard to the EP. The other countries’ governments can thus be assumed to have either had their “period of acclimatization” earlier, or they have followed the gradual increase in the EP’s power as it happened, having had time to adapt to the changes gradually, and thus have not experienced the adaptation as a particularly significant development. Rather, when the “learning over time” factor is mentioned, what is referred to is the spreading of awareness throughout the various ministries and departments of the governments. Keeping up with the changes the Lisbon Treaty brought has been the challenge for the older countries, not the general realization of the importance of dealing with the EP. The Lisbon Treaty has reinforced the perception of importance of EP relations, but the knowledge and interaction with the EP were there ahead of the Lisbon Treaty.

5.2.c. Assessing hypotheses 5 and 6
To investigate whether the political system (culture) of a member state affects the NG’s evaluation of how to prioritize its involvement with MEPs, I compare the efforts to engage with MEPs of two country cases that differ on the variable “political system”, while holding constant the other selection criteria (size of member state and duration of EU membership). For the definition of political systems, Lijphart’s
Consensus and Majoritarian models of democratic systems (Lijphart:1999) are used, I compare the NGs’ efforts to engage with MEPs across the aisle as well as the type of interaction they choose. The NGs’ modes of coordination with MEPs and their choice of which MEPs to engage with indicate whether the political system influences the NGs’ mode of coordination.

I investigate the significance of the domestic institutional factors of the political systems of the member states by comparing France and the UK, as cases of Majoritarian systems, and comparing the manners of these two NGs’ interactions with the manners of interaction of the rest of the NGs that belong to the consensus category. These two countries, though different in many ways, are similar in the main aspects necessary to allow me to keep the main competing independent variable of “duration of membership” constant, as both countries are “old members”. The variable “political system” is used in these hypotheses as a proxy for the organizational culture and structure of interaction between the actors at national level of the member states. Again, for the purpose of obtaining as encompassing an understanding as possible of which aspects of the member states’ systems generate the different patterns of coordination, using open ended interviews to gather data is the central method.

I compare the NGs’ efforts to engage with MEPs across the aisle as well as the type of interaction they choose. The NGs’ modes of coordination with MEPs and their choice of which MEPs to engage with, indicate whether the political system influences the NGs’ mode of coordination.

Beginning with Hypothesis 5: “Governments from “consensus oriented” political systems will engage more with MEPs across the aisle than governments from majoritarian systems“, the variables and empirical indicators for assessing whether institutionalized patterns of behavior and traditions within the respective nationally political systems affect the governments’ mode of interaction with the MEPs are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 5</th>
<th>Independent variable indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Consensus style NGs coordinate more across the aisle</td>
<td>Political system of NG (Consensus vs. majoritarian)</td>
<td>Coordination vs. no coordination across the aisle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data for assessing hypothesis 5 is derived from the interviewees listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PermRep staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6 (*2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (*1)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and national</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministry staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total N</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates share of total number of interviewees that are exploratory interviews, and are therefore not included in the assessment of the hypothesis.

For the hypothesis to be confirmed, a pattern distinguishing the UK and France from the rest of the country cases as regards how they choose to engage with the MEPs. Germany, Denmark and Poland and Slovakia should be found to be reaching out more to MEPs across the aisle than their majoritarian counterparts, which, on the other hand, should tend to be engaged primarily with “their own” MEPs, belonging to the national government party/parties. This should certainly be the case as regards MEPs with the same nationality and potentially also as regards MEPs from other member states.

When looking beyond the governments’ shared preference for MEPs of their own nationality, most governments, as a guiding principle when seeking out MEPs, contact those who might make a difference in terms of affecting the legislative outcome (Slovakia is the only exception, doing this very rarely). Most of the member states would not tend to directly seek out MEPs who clearly disagree with the government, Poland and the UK being of the main exceptions. That is not to say that the governments will refrain from contacting MEPs that are in opposition to their position, but rather that they would seek to avoid spending resources on a lost cause (e.g. G-NG4, DK-NG2). However, the general notion is that the role of the MEPs and their willingness to listen to the government is the guiding principle – not shared party color or even necessarily agreement.

On the national ministerial level, government representatives of France and Spain and, to some extent, the UK mention there is some preference for engaging with MEPs from their own party (UK-NG3, FR-NG3, SP-NG3). They do not state that this is an official government policy or a dominant trend in the contact to the EP, but they do mention having the expectation of the increased likelihood that government MEPs will agree with them. Spain generally tends always to communicate with at least the
spokespersons of the Spanish delegations in each of the two largest EPGs, and normally also with the heads of delegation from the other EPGs. For France, some interviewees (FR-NG1, FR-EP2) point to the fact that it is not infrequent that French MEPs and the French government agree on policy issues, and so there is often the possibility of finding common ground between the NG and both “government” and “opposition” MEPs. This experience is shared by the UK’s government; British MEPs are often likely to agree with the British government on many issues, and therefore the difference between government and opposition is not the same as at national level. This has implications for the analysis of the receptiveness by the MEPs to the input they receive from the governments, and it will be explored further in the following chapter. And in all three cases the governments share the position that they are in contact with all MEPs, irrespective of party affiliation, when this is found to be beneficial to the promotion of government interests. There is an expectation from all three governments that their attentions will be well received by the MEPs across the political aisle.

How does this compare with the perception of the consensus style countries? The interview data shows that this attitude is in fact not much different from that of Denmark and Slovakia. Slovakia’s government has a preference for contacting “government MEPs”. The Danish government’s civil service, as a matter of principle, does not distinguish between MEPs on political grounds and government officials tend to seek out MEPs that might be able to further the government’s interests, irrespective of their political affiliation. When party affiliation does have an effect, it is more likely in cases where national ministers, rather than civil servants, seek out MEPs that they are more closely linked to politically in the national context. This, it is worth noting, was echoed by government officials from Poland (PL-NG3) and Spain (SP-NG1, SP-NG3) indicating that there can be a difference in the way the political and the civil servant levels interact with the EP. Indeed, most countries’ officials explained that contacts between the political and the civil servant level differ. A minister or ambassador will typically be in contact with MEPs, and civil servants will be in contact with MEPAs. For most countries, this distinction is not set in stone, and once a contact is established at political level, frequently it can be maintained by civil servants from the government side. It is, thus, more likely to be – albeit not exclusively – a differentiation that is significant at the political level, rather than in the daily work of the government officials. For the civil servants, it matters more whether they have a good relationship with the MEPs and their assistants than whether they work for a government with the same political affiliation as the MEP/MEPA.
On another note of similarity to the UK and France, Danish MEPs very often share a political position with the Danish government, which is also the case among political parties at national level, reflected in the generally high degree of consensus on EU policies in the Danish.

Turning to the aspect of the nature of interaction, **Hypothesis 6** predicted that: “Governments from “consensus oriented” systems will take a more interactively communicating approach to coordination with the MEPs”, the variables and empirical indicators are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 6</th>
<th>Independent variable Indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Consensus style NGs coordinate more interactively</td>
<td>Political system of NG (Consensus vs. majoritarian)</td>
<td>NGs employ extensive vs. limited interactive communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data for assessing hypothesis 6 is derived from the interviewees listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees for assessing hypothesis 6</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Denmark</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PermRep staff and national ministry staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6 (*2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (*1)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* indicates share of total number of interviewees that are exploratory interviews, and are therefore not included in the assessment of the hypothesis.

Looking at whether the contact between majoritarian member states and MEPs is more unidirectional and whether consensus oriented countries engage in more dialogic interaction, and exchanges of information and opinions – the interview shows an interesting finding. Most of the data does not differ on the independent variable – except when it comes to sending voting recommendations to the MEPs. The UK, France and Spain all say they send voting recommendations to the MEPs, as opposed to Denmark, Germany and Poland. Slovakia also does this, but Slovakia tends to be somewhat of an outlier in this context, as Slovakian officials predominantly contact Slovakian MEPs. In all other respects the countries engage in the same types of interaction with the MEPs, and – as will also be taken up again later in this project, it is questionable whether the effect of this factor creates a meaningful difference.
between the two groups of countries. Does a thorough discussion of one country’s preferences on specific amendments in practice equal sending voting recommendations to MEPs? Additionally, it could be argued that the amendment proposals and political indications (which are revisited in the sections below) given by the NGs to the MEPs to try to shape the EP’s draft policy proposal will, if successful, result in the proposal containing the same aspects that the voting recommendations might alternatively have sought to remedy.

As this research project does not carry out a comparative impact analysis of the different approaches to contact with the MEPs, this will be left for future research to investigate. However, for Hypothesis 6: “Governments from “consensus oriented” systems will take a more interactively communicating approach to coordination with the MEPs” to be confirmed, the countries would have had to differ in terms of whether they meet with the MEPs, assist them with writing amendments, answer questions and provide the information MEPs need, and discuss points of common interest.

As the majoritarian countries engage with MEPs across the aisle just as the consensus countries do, the fact that they have a slight preference for engaging with their own MEPs, if this is possible and potentially beneficial, does not make them less likely to engage with opposition MEPs. In this regard, they are as open to crossing the political aisle as the consensus countries are. And as regards the nature of the contact, the fact that there is an occurrence of one type of interaction in the majoritarian member states that is less likely to be found in consensus countries, does not make the other modes of interaction which the two groups of countries share irrelevant.

The analysis concludes that the hypothesis is disconfirmed. There does not appear to be a significant difference between the type of interaction a government from a majoritarian system and a government from a consensus oriented system has with the MEPs. Denmark, a proportional representation member state with a strong tradition of consensus oriented politics and in addition a significant consensus on EU related issues, and the UK, the classic example of the majoritarian, partisan political system, both engage with MEPs from across the aisle and across nationality, they both seek to engage with the MEPs as early as possible and to a significant level of detail through personal contacts.32

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32 Additional specification of finding: there are some “national political culture” derived idiosyncratic variances that affect the countries’ manner of engaging with the MEPs, but not in the way I hypothesized.
5.3. Analysis of the hypotheses combined

This underscores a surprising finding from the empirical data. As described in chapter 4, the governments expressed an unaffectedness of political affiliation when interacting with the MEPs, frequently disregarding party differences when deciding which MEPs to contact, and did not attribute much importance to it. This is not to negate the significance of the link between the MEPs and their national parties and EPGs. Rather, it shows how these links are not considered insurmountable by the governments. As a general rule, the governments expect that their message will be listened to by MEPs across the political (and national) spectrum – although, of course, not by all MEPs they approach, as some MEPs will hold more exclusively to their political affiliation, just as there will be other factors influencing who an MEP listens to. But the finding goes further than this. More than expecting to just be listened to, governments are quite optimistic about the prospect of having their input taken into account and being included in the work of the EP, in spite of the complex and often unpredictable internal decision making processes of the EP.

This leads to an important aspect as regards the impact of coordination between governments and MEPs when looking at the factors of the content of coordination, the timing of coordination, and the selection of which MEPs to engage with combined.

The interviewees addressed the difficulties and implications of delivering the different kinds of information to the MEPs. Information of a technical “non-political” nature has certain advantages in terms of deliverability. Firstly, as MEPs need reliable technical information, which they often have to get from external sources due to lack of resources internally; governments can supply this. Technical information and help with formulating amendments from governments can provide MEPs and their assistants with 1) quick and easy access to ample information with a high degree of detail, 2) information, which has a more credible claim to “neutrality” than information from lobby organizations, and, as such, can be used as a “reality check” as regards other information received from external sources (e.g. G-EP8), and 3) “politically adapted” technical information, e.g. in the form of amendments or assisted amendment writing in a language which is easily implementable for the MEPs, as the government staff is likely to be accustomed to formulating political texts. Secondly, as one interviewee noted, there may be aspects of the legislative proposal which can be changed in the direction of an NG’s preference without it making a difference for other NGs or MEPs – a technical detail which might have a significant impact on one country but which, if changed, would not affect the other actors’ preference or goals (DK-NG2).
Information served to the MEPs at the right time in the legislative process, may end up being included in the opinion formation process – in the circles of the MEPs most involved in the negotiations, or e.g. if successfully delivered to effective opinion shapers of the EP. For this to happen, information would have to be injected in the process quite early in the negotiations, depending also on the MEPs that are targeted – whether it is the rapporteur or the committee members of the rest of the MEPs of the EP. For the information to be used in the phase where it will have the greatest likelihood of successful inclusion in the EP reports, it should be provided to the rapporteur (and/or the shadow rapporteurs) while the rapporteur is drafting the original report, or to these MEPs and the rest of the EP Committee members who are able to put amendments to the committee report before the committee vote. In this process, given that the majority of the legislative proposals are now adopted in the first reading following a first reading agreement with the Council, i.e. agreement reached while the proposal is still in the EP Committee, this phase will be crucial for NGs who wish to put their fingerprint on the legislative proposal.

In more challenging cases, where the negotiations continue to 2nd or even 3rd reading, this is of course a bit different. However, this was not addressed by the government interviewees. One could, of course, assume that, since no new amendments can be introduced in the 2nd reading, it would only become really relevant again in the 3rd reading, which by now happens only in very rare cases.

Another type of input that can be injected at the very end of the process is plenary voting recommendations. Voting recommendations can also be made earlier in the legislative process, prior to the Committee votes. However, the governments can also, by means of voting recommendations, exert influence at the end of the process, in the plenary vote. This input, which is of a more political nature, can also be disseminated to more MEPs than just those involved in the committee work. In addition to voting recommendations, other information of a political nature can also be given to the MEPs. The strength of this kind of information is that 1) In general MEPs are interested in striking a deal with the Council, and thus, they are interested in satisfying the NGs to such an extent that they will accept a compromise proposal – the MEPs would not refuse to talk to an NG; 2) For MEPs of the same political “color” as the NG, the input from the NG is likely to be of interest to them, 3) For MEPs with the same nationality as the government, the MEPs would be interested in knowing the policy implications from the national perspective, in order to make sure they do not act counter-productively (i.a. DK-EP1). For the political input, the timing is also essential. All NGs agree that being active early in the process rather than at the last minute is important, albeit they do not all agree on exactly what is necessary and what is optimal. Here the approach of Germany departs from the majority of the other NGs in that the
government finds that a substantial effort on a case, when it becomes problematic, is a better use of resources than making a great effort on a case proactively and potentially superfluously. This is to a large extent also contingent on Germany having a lot of MEPs in the EP, which a) carries a significant proportion of votes in the EP, and b) means that the German government is much more likely to have a fellow countryman strategically placed in the legislative process than, for instance, Denmark. The other NGs generally take a less self described late-in-the-game “brush fire” approach to the negotiations, even if they are not all interested in such early steps as trying to influence the appointment of the rapporteur.

When informing MEPs of the political position of the government on a legislative dossier – be it very general outlines which all countries do, or specific amendment suggestions, which all countries except Slovakia do – the crucial phase, according to the NGs, is primarily the time leading up to the tabling of the amendments of the Committee and the ensuing vote.

Knowing when the information should be distributed is vital for a successful delivery of the information. Several EP interviewees (4 of 30) note that it is often the case that the government contacts them too late in the legislative process (UK-EP1, UK-EP2, SL-EP1, G-EP2). Disregarding for a moment the efforts to sway the final plenary vote, getting involved with MEPs at a time when they can use the information is crucial to successful implementation – whether this is ensured by keeping all case attachés on their toes about when to engage with MEPs, whether it means pushing information as early as possible, or whether it means investing heavily in staff monitoring the EP. Although, naturally, the final vote on a legislative document is crucial, it is a rather blunt instrument, with which there is little room for maneuvering for an MEP, having to make a choice irrespective of whether there are aspects of both a yes and a no-vote that are unfavorable to the MEP casting the vote. Getting involved early in the process, where the actual alternative policy choices are developed and the final legislative draft that will be up for a vote is adopted, brings more possibilities for fine tuning and tailor made solutions to match the preferences of the actors involved, that is – the actors who play their cards right.

Knowing to whom the information should be distributed is equally significant. For countries like Slovakia and Denmark, which have only 13 MEPs, the chance of these countries having an MEP placed in a relevant committee, is often low, and much less so in a strategic position in the negotiations, and the number of MEPs they choose to contact outside their own national affiliation can mean the difference between having a voice or having no input into the EP position. However, since the governments differ as regards exactly what kind of information or contact is most helpful to their efforts to influence the EP, the MEPs they seek out are also different. The countries that provide voting instructions to their MEPs
and therefore attribute importance to the later stages of the process broaden their focus in this phase to include a broader sample of MEPs. Even here, some MEPs are more helpful to target than others. As NG interviewees from Denmark and Germany agree, just affecting the votes of the Danish MEPs is unlikely to have a decisive effect, but if you can affect the vote of the German delegation in the EPP or S&D this may actually have an impact on the final voting outcome. This puts the larger member states in an advantageous position vis-a-vis their smaller counterparts in the Council.

In continuation of this – knowing how to broaden the base of who it is possible to contact is mentioned as a key factor of success for by NG several interviewees (6: UK-NG1, FR-NG1, DK-NG2, DK-NG4, SP-NG1, SP-NG3), as they find NG representatives cannot just “out of the blue” approach the MEPs and ask a favor without having established prior relations to the MEPs’ office. Cultivating relations with MEPs on a continuous basis is a tool consciously used by the NGs to increase the likelihood that, when they need to deliver their message, they will have the ear of the MEPs/MEPAs. It is also a factor which several (8 of 30) EP interviewees mention as significant for their choice of whom they solicit information and assistance in their work from (DK-EP1, DK-EP3, DK-EP5, UK-EP2, FR-EP2, FR-EP3, SP-EP2, SP-EP3). As will be elaborated on in the next chapter, relations of regularity and trust in many cases lay the foundation for the likelihood that a MEP will seek out and rely on the input from NG officials.

When examining the above findings of the variation among the countries in terms of exactly who they target, when they target them, and how they do it, as well as the common denominators of governments reaching out to the MEPs across political and national lines, the following questions emerge: which countries will be the “winners” in the context of coordination? Who will be most effective in establishing contact with MEPs? Who will profit most from the possibility of this contact? How can we expect the balance of power between the member states to be affected?

To look closer at this, we must turn to the other side of the interaction. But first, the findings of this chapter are summed up.

5.4. Partial Conclusion

All NGs contact the EP, but some countries allocate more resources to coordination than others, and some take a more proactive approach in their efforts than others. Over all, the perception in the governments regarding allocation of attention and resources to either the Council or the EP seems to be changing from a zero sum to a plus sum situation. - Though the size of the member state may have an
effect on the NG’s approach to the EP, the approach that NGs take is not shared by the member states according to their size - The new countries are behind in the efforts to organize their relations with the EP, but they are trying to catch up.

This, perhaps, does not account for all the nuances of why the countries’ have developed as they have, but it goes some way to describe the trajectories of development of the countries’ modes of interaction with the MEPs.

Additionally, it should be considered that there may be national differences of a more idiosyncratic nature that might affect the choice of how and how much to engage with MEPs across the different dividing lines. In some countries the civil servants are considered more neutral than in others, and in some countries civil servants act in a more politicized manner when promoting the government’s positions.
6. Analysis of coordination part II: MEPs’ receptiveness to coordination

How do the MEPs and their assistants experience this contact with the NGs? Is it consistent with the perception of the NGs? Do the hypotheses hold?

Identifying how coordination with the NGs is incorporated in the work of the MEPs and their assistants and, indeed, whether the message of the NGs is considered by the recipients at all, is the focus of this chapter. Determining what impact coordination has on the EP’s legislative work is a complicated question as such an impact could be expressed in many ways. An effect might be an MEP voting in agreement with the government in a case where the MEP would otherwise be expected to have voted differently. Another example could be an MEP voting differently than expected on certain amendments in the Committee due to partial changes in the MEPs’ opinion. Other examples could be an MEP introducing opinions or amendments of the NG in the EP committee, an MEP abstaining from a vote due to uncertainty of position after input from the NG, an MEP ignoring input from other sources due to input from the NG. Furthermore, these actions might be caused entirely by, or in combination with, other variables. Therefore, distinguishing what, precisely, is the isolated effect of coordination would be highly contestable and a comprehensive project in its own right and therefore best left for future studies. Rather than looking for a dichotomous expression of causality (“effect” or “no effect” of coordination on MEPs) or seeking to measure the effect of coordination on policy output, the approach of this chapter is therefore to work with a nominal variable to categorize various forms of interaction as it is perceived by the MEPs and their assistants, and operate with such distinctions as interviewees being “more/less open to using technical information provided by the NGs in their work”, being “more/less interested in knowing the political positions of the NGs”, and being “more/less open to strategic cooperation with the NGs in order to promote a certain position in the legislative negotiations”. The nominal variable distinguishing the different forms of interaction specifically aims at identifying the variations of contact in a nuanced way, in line with the categories of interaction that emerged as the main ones from the NG interviews.33

In this chapter, the ways in which the MEPs and their assistants perceive coordination with the NGs, the different aspects of coordination they are open to, and the extent to which they are receptive to the

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33 The variable is designed in this manner in order to trace the reception of the different forms of coordination as accurately as possible in accordance with the manner in which it is perceived by the by the MEPs and their assistants, thereby emphasizing the analysis’ informative value regarding the role coordination plays according to the experience of the MEPs, rather than e.g. how NGs expect it to impact their work.
input they receive is first categorized. It is then compared across political party affiliation (government vs. opposition parties) and across nationalities, in order to capture the potential outcomes of the different expressions of coordination on the work of the “recipients” of coordination in the EP. With this approach to understanding the mindset of the MEPs and MEPAs and how they perceive and use their interaction with the NGs, including in the context of their interactions with other actors inside and outside the EP, the chapter intends to expand what is already known about MEPs’ behavior and motivations, and hereby contribute to a more comprehensive general understanding of the intra-institutional dynamics of the EP.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the perception of coordination from the EP perspective, here follows first an overview of the interviewees selected for the empirical analysis of the MEPs’ and MEPAs’ reception of coordination, and an elaboration on the limitations and ensuing considerations that follow from the present sample of interviewees and the methods employed for the interviews.

6.1. Presentation of interviewees from the European Parliament

Both MEPs and MEPAs are interviewed for the analysis of how coordination is received in the EP, as MEPs are often represented by their assistants both in their relation to external actors, and even in certain trialogue meetings. MEPAs are often the main link between the MEP and NG representatives, and in the case of the contact with the NGs MEPAs are frequently more in contact with government civil servants than are the MEPs themselves. MEPs are more typically in touch with the political level of the NG. However, as representatives of the NG, civil servants can also in certain cases “cross over” and be in touch with MEPs.

The majority of the interviewees (24 of 30) are assistants of MEPs. MEPAs are an integral part of the MEPs’ work process, and are assumed to represent the MEPs’ office equally as the MEPs (though from a different angle). There may be differences between MEPs’ and MEPAs’ perceptions of their interaction with the NGs qua their different functions and the different links NGs are likely to establish with the two actors. Though MEPAs have a different function than the MEPs, and do not formally have the final say on the MEPs’ positions and activities, it is often the MEPAs that collect the information that MEPs base their standpoints on, and who help formulate the amendments for the MEPs (Corbett, Jacobs and Shackleton:2011). As such, and given that the exploratory NG interviews found that much of the coordination between NGs and MEPs’ offices consisted in the civil servant level interaction, MEPAs are considered as central to the final outcome in terms of policy position and activities, as the MEPs are, and
therefore they will be taken as representatives of the MEP office. Finally, MEPAs are more likely to be accessible for interviews and, thus, it is more likely to be possible to obtain a broad sample of answers from the MEPAs.

MEPs and/or MEPAs from all 7 country cases were interviewed, and in each case the interviewees were selected according to several criteria. To assess whether belonging to the government or national opposition party made any difference, there are interviewees from both government and opposition parties from each member state. In the German interviewee pool there is a majority of interviewees from government parties (7 vs. 2), and in the Spanish interviewee group the majority of interviewees are from the opposition (4 vs. 1). However, as the interview responses confirm, this does not have a significant impact on the findings, as many of the interviewees from both the government and opposition side make the same observations regarding the effect of party affiliation on the view on coordination with the NGs. Government and opposition interviewees both address the difference it makes for them whether they are in government or opposition in determining whether there is contact with the NG (there is in all cases) and the extent to which the interviewees find it useful (interviewees from both sides concur that political affiliation matters, but that it is not a determining factor for whether there is contact). To strengthen the validity of this assessment, the interviewees were chosen on the basis of their likely importance in the EP in the eyes of the NG as well as the national parties. MEPs, or MEPAs working for MEPs who were ranked on top of their party list for the upcoming 2014 EP election, or MEPs in leading EP Group positions were chosen. This ensured that the MEPs being interviewed would likely be under greater pressure domestically, increasing the likelihood of party loyalty, and thus making it easier to assess the dynamics of cross-party line interaction.

The interviews were obtained in different ways, which yields different conditions for the answers they produced. Some interviews were conducted in person with MEPs and MEPAs, while the majority of interviews were conducted over the phone in a briefer format. Originally, a survey had been constructed and sent to selected MEPs from the country cases, with the goal of obtaining a broader overview of patterns of interaction from the perspective of the MEPs, and with a view to strengthen the generalizability of the findings. However, due to a poor response rate, this approach was abandoned in

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34 Due to variation in the response rate, there is a majority of respondents from Germany (9), Denmark (6) And Spain (4).
favor of the short telephone interviews, posing the same questions as the survey had contained, increasing the response rate albeit from a more narrow group of respondents.35

The longer interviews yielded a comprehensive and detailed overview of the coordination activities as well as an understanding of the underlying logic of the contact between the two actors. The data from the in depth interviews was added to the existing research on MEP activities and NG interviews to form the basis for the condensed and more targeted questions that were then later presented to a broader selection of MEPs over the phone. The questions evolved over the course of the time spent interviewing MEPs and MEPAs, as new information made these changes necessary so that the optimal amount of information could be extracted from the interviews. This included sensitivity to terminology and emphasis by interviewees.36 The briefer format of the phone interviews limited the amount of questions that could be put to the interviewees. Suggesting a brief telephone conversation increased the success rate of acceptance of MEPs and MEPAs to participate in interviews, but also set a natural limitation for the interviews, and made it easier for the interviewees to finish the interviews quickly. For this reason, and due to an increased knowledge of which questions were in fact essential to the interviews – greater generalizability of the patterns of interaction and whether the interviewees found the input from the NGs relevant for their work, and used it in their work – a shortened selection of questions was made. While there is an asymmetry between the two sets of interviews, and a larger amount of information was yielded from the interviews carried out face to face, this procedure made it possible to pose the central critical questions in a targeted manner to a larger group of interviewees.

35 Four interviews were answered in writing by email (DK-EP6, G-EP9, PL-EP1 and PL-EP2).
36 Looking, for instance, to avoiding such term as lobbyism, and phrases conveying a power relation between the two actors in favor of the NGs.
The table below provides an overview of the interviewees, as divided across nationality, political affiliation and role of the interviewee (MEP or MEPA), as well as the format of the interviews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEP and MEPA interviewees (7th EP)</th>
<th>According to nationality and government/opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Gov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * 1; ***2

* Indicates number of interviewees that are MEPs (where nothing is indicated, all interviewees are MEPAs)
** Indicates number of interviews that are longer, comprehensive interviews
*** Indicates number of interviews that were conducted in writing by email

Hypotheses 6-8 regarding the receptiveness of the MEPs are assessed in section 6.3. on the basis of the MEP and MEPA interviews. Following this, in section 6.4. the scope of the analysis is widened, to address the research question 3 more broadly, based on additional literature and research regarding the contact between MEPs and NGs. Before proceeding to the analysis, however, the main findings from these interviews depicting how MEPs and their assistants experience coordination with the NGs are presented below.

6.2. How MEPs and MEPAs perceive coordination with national governments

6.2.a. Main mode of contact:
All MEPs and MEPAs selected for this study are in contact with their NG in one way or another. This finding is consistent with the expectation based on the findings in the interviews with the NGs as well as the fact that the EP interviewees, as described above, were selected according to the criteria of their having a central institutional role. Having a central role is defined as an MEP (or the MEP an assistant works for) being either highly ranked within their national party, within their national EPG delegation, or a central position in an EPG. This criterion was chosen in order to maximize the likelihood that the MEP would also be a valuable candidate for the NGs to seek out for coordination. This way, the

37 Indicated by a high ranking on the national party’s EP election voting list
probability is greater that the EP interviewee is likely to experience a significant amount of pressure to comply to both the national party in case of being in opposition to the NG, and to the NG in cases where other NGs seek to engage with the MEP. It confirms, as well, the notion that MEPs with potential for influence will be targeted by their NGs, irrespective of their national party affiliation. While the interviews do show a trend for MEPs and MEPAs to be more in contact with their NG when belonging to a national government party than when belonging to the national opposition, no interviewee reported not being in touch with their government in one way or another.

The predominant form of contact, in which all interviewees engage, consists of receiving technical information from the NG. Depending to some extent on whether the interviewee is part of the national government or opposition, this also manifests in the extent to which MEPAs chose to reach out to the NGs for technical information. Most interviewees (24 of 30), are also in contact with their NG regarding their NG’s policy positions, and 18 of the 30 are in touch with the NGs about information regarding negotiation developments and strategies. MEPs tend to mainly be in touch with NGs about policy positions and strategic coordination about legislative negotiations. MEPAs are interested in all three categories, but particularly in technical information followed closely by learning about the policy positions of the NGs.

The majority of the interviewees (24 of 30) also reported being in contact with other member states’ governments as well, albeit to a lesser extent (16 of 24 who answered this question), often in cases of high salience for the other member states. This corresponds to the interview data of the NGs, who would, as a general rule, prioritize their fellow countrymen, but also reach out to MEPs of other nationalities, in keeping with the importance they play in the legislative negotiations. This would lead to a less frequent contact with foreign nationals, as MEPs will not be in the center of activities on all cases and, consequently, not in the obvious center of attention of foreign NGs. It should be kept in mind that this could also be related to the selection of the EP interviewees, as they were selected more according to their role in their national delegation/EPG/national party ranking, rather than from a consideration of their importance to the other member states’ governments.

Contact is mainly initiated by the government or by the two parties equally (24 MEPs of the 28 responses). Only 4 of the 30 MEPAs reported that they typically are the ones who reach out to the NGs first (G-EP4, SL-EP1, SL-EP3, DK-EP4), but this is rather the exception.
6.2.b. Attitudes towards receiving information from the NGs

29 of the 30 MEPs and MEPAs interviewed find contact with NGs helpful in their work, though they distinguish significantly between the forms of contact they have with the NGs, in particular between contact consisting in technical information and contact focusing on policy preferences. The interviewees have a predominantly positive attitude towards receiving technical information from the NGs, with 22 of 30 agreeing largely to the usefulness of the information (and 7 interviewees not addressing the question); also, there is some variation across national party affiliation depending on whether the MEPs belong to the government or opposition, as stated by interviewees belonging to both the government and opposition (G-EP5, G-EP4, G-EP8, UK-EP2, DK-EP6). This difference in contact depending on whether the MEP belongs to the government or opposition was also mentioned by 4 interviewees in the context of “government MEPs” to some extent being under more pressure to include the input in their work (SP-EP4, G-EP5, UK-EP1, FR-EP3). 3 interviewees furthermore stress the importance of policy agreement rather than party affiliation (UK-EP1, G-EP5, PL-EP2). Many (19 of 30) also affirm the added value of being informed specifically about their own government’s position, but also knowing the other countries’ positions in the Council was mentioned (G-EP3, FR-EP1, FR-EP2), more specifically as it e.g. facilitates the process of finding compromises (FR-EP3), identifying problematic issues (DK-EP3) and finding common allies within the Council (G-EP4). MEPs and MEPAs belonging to national government parties, in particular, mention the importance of this, but also opposition MEPs and MEPAs are interested in knowing the government’s position on a legislative case, as well as being made aware of the potential problematic implications nationally of legislative proposals (FR-EP3, PL-EP1). Similarly, they find it helpful for their work to have their attention drawn to technically problematic issues they might otherwise not have been aware of (DK-EP3) and to not risk appearing to contradict the government in public (DK-EP1). Additionally, several interviewees (6 of 30) mentioned the potential for making a combined effort with the NGs – either by finding common points of agreement (FR-EP3), reaching compromises (FR-EP1), finding “allies” in the Council while seeking to prevent opposing alliances to build (G-EP4) or by profiting from the synergy effect of joined efforts (PL-EP1, DK-EP3, SL-EP2).

Though by nature less overtly political, it should be noted in this connection, that technical negotiations can have real political impact and, as such, technical input the MEPs use in their work is of importance.

Some interviewees (4 of 30) also made a strong point of noting that they would not be pressured into merely “doing the bidding” of the NGs (SP-EP4, G-EP4, G-EP6, UK-EP3). The MEP’s office might work
with the NG if they find that they share preferences and priorities, or they might try to find common ground with NGs to establish a legislative compromise likely to gain broad acceptance. However, the interviewees emphasized their independence from the national arena and political pressure related to the national political realm and their autonomy in terms of which parts of the information they receive from the NGs they chose to use and the extent to which they include it in their work (DK-EP3, UK-EP3). When it comes to the general tendency among their colleagues, on the other hand, some interviewees noted that there are MEPs who are under more significant pressure by their NG to further the interests of their government and that these MEPs are more likely to be swayed by the will of their NG (SP-EP4, FR-EP338). This echoes the statements by several government interviewees (5 interviewees: G-NG1, DK-NG2, DK-NG4, UK-NG1, SP-NG1), who were careful to point out that they, themselves, did not pressure the MEPs into complying with the government’s view – but that they knew of other member states’ government officials who would put substantial pressure on their MEPs.39 This manner of describing other actors’ contact while rejecting the idea of conducting this behavior themselves must be expected when interviewing actors involved in central political activities about a sensitive topic such as this. Rather than accepting the statements as completely accurate, fully rejecting them or interpreting them as statements meant to deflect from the actors’ own participation in these activities, the statements shall be taken as confirmation that the activity referred to does take place and that, following the “no smoke without a fire”-logic, it may be assumed that the statements are accurate concerning at least a segment of those actors they claim to describe. The statements will, however, not be taken as a completely accurate and reliable narrative as such, but shall instead be interpreted as an expression of how things are, describing activities that do take place, and that these statements are as far as the interviewees can go without compromising their positions or restraints of confidentiality. The statements may correctly refer to other actors – or they may refer to the interviewees themselves – but they are reflective of actual occurrences of interaction between the NG and EP actors.

Receptiveness can thus manifest in two ways, or somewhere along the spectrum between these two ways: 1) as the mutually profitable exchange of information and political views by the two groups of actors, with the purpose of finding common ground, promoting shared views and strengthening the arguments used in the legislative negotiations to further this purpose. In this form of interaction, the

38 It is worth noting that these interviewees were from member states which the NG interviewees (see footnote below) would name as the ones likelier to be pressured by their NG.

39 It was noted that some national systems are more “disciplinary” in their relation with the MEPs. Generally, the governments referred to as being more controlling and MEPs being more complying, was Spain in particular and to a certain degree France. This was, however, not mentioned as an exhaustive list of member states.
input provided by the governments must be targeted to the MEPs and their assistants in a way which is most likely to be useful for them. To successfully convince an MEP of furthering a political position of the NG, the NG must raise the MEP’s or MEPA’s interest in listening to its message; 2) alternatively, as a more strict one-way relation with the characteristics of a Principal/Agent type power structure in which the MEP is obliged to adopt the preferences of his/her NG and promote these in the EP. This scenario does not preclude that the MEP might very well happen to share the position of the NG. It does, however, signify that the outcome – the receptiveness of the MEP or MEPA to the NG’s message – depends not only on the content of the input from the NG, or the manner in which the message is delivered, but also on the pre-established power relation of the NG and the MEP, balanced against the personal ambitions and the insistence on independence of the individual MEP, corresponding to the notion of 1 agent having 2 principals.

MEPs and their assistants who would likely be under pressure to be in line with their national party, even when they politically are in opposition to their NG, are in touch with their NG and are open to at least taking the input into account they receive from their NG. Thus – the channels of communication are open on a continuous basis.

6.2.c. The significance of informal relation building:

Setting aside the occasions of direct government pressure on MEPs and their assistants, a factor which was mentioned frequently by interviewees as having a significant effect on the MEPs’ receptiveness to the message of the NGs was the establishment of personal links between the NG representatives and the MEPs/MEPAs. 8 out of the 30 EP interviewees mentioned that positive relations between the two concrete actors involved in the interaction is conducive to the likelihood that MEPs and their assistants will seek out and include the input of the NGs in their work (DK-EP1, DK-EP3, DK-EP5, G-EP8, UK-EP2, SP-EP2, SP-EP3, FR-EP2). Familiarity and trust established through regular interaction between MEPs and MEPAs and the NG officials (and between MEPs and ministers who know each other, most likely in cases where MEPs are part of the government parties), and the experience of the usefulness of information provided by the NGs, can induce MEPs and MEPAs to choose the NGs as a reliable and easily available source for information. As noted by most NGs (Denmark (DK-NG1, DK-NG2), UK (UK-NG1, UK-NG2), Spain (SP-NG1, SP-NG3), France (FR-NG1), and Germany (G-NG1)), “putting in the time” in building a relationship is worth the effort, as it is much harder to approach an MEP with whom there has not been contact before and expect them to work with the NG and on the NG’s behalf in the EP. This bridging of
the gap between national government and opposition is of course more easily furthered when dealing with nationally consensus oriented policy issues (DK-EP5, G-EP8, FR-EP3), as is e.g. the policy area of agriculture for Spain (SP-EP3).

Related to nationally shared priorities and the effects of relation building, which might contribute to facilitating the interaction between government and opposition MEPs, is the notion that the PermReps are not national parties, or even national ministries. Based on a general picture drawn from the interviews, and specific mentions of the fact in some interviews (e.g. DK-NG3, SL-NG2, SP-EP1), the PermReps may benefit from the “image” of being “one level removed” from the national political arena.

The PermReps, based in Brussels and physically close to the MEPs and MEPAs, with representatives present in the EP, function as entities more akin to an embassy than a sectorial ministry, representing the whole member state with civil servants (rather than politicians), and as such, their staff has less party political connotations for MEPs and MEPAs.

6.2.d. Room for more

Interestingly, this leads to a curious point – namely the fact that several EP interviewees (5 of 30) actually found the contact with NGs less intensive than what they would prefer, and expressed a desire for more input from the NGs than they were receiving at the time the interviews were conducted (DK-EP4, DK-EP5, UK-EP1, UK-EP2, SL-EP1). Indeed, several interviewees (6 of 30) found the NGs’ approach to the EP less effective than it could be in view of the NGs’ ambitions to influence the work of the EP (DK-EP4, DK-EP5, UK-EP1, UK-EP2, SL-EP1, FR-EP3). A point made by several interviewees (4 of 30) was also that the outreach from the NGs would often come too late for the MEPs to be able to use it in their work, even if they would have been open to this. In fact, several interviewees (6 of 30) were of the opinion that the NGs had not properly understood the importance of engaging with the EP, or did not realize the potential for influence the NGs were currently missing out on (DK-EP4, DK-EP5, UK-EP1, UK-EP2, SL-EP1, FR-EP3). This is the primary disagreement between the EP interviewees and the NG interviewees: several EP interviewees perceive the governments as coordinating sub-optimally, either coming to the MEPs and MEPAs too late (3 of 30; UK-EP1 and UK-EP2, SL-EP1), even if the MEPA would have been open to working with the NG to promote the NG’s position (G-EP2) or too rarely (DK-EP4, DK-EP5 – notably, interviewees of the national opposition). Apart from this, the interviewees are mostly in agreement about the extent of and manner in which coordination takes place.
Some NGs (Germany, Slovakia, and Spain) exercise a conscious restraint in order to not use up their political capital and thereby risk losing the possibility of influencing the negotiations when it is really important for them. For some NGs it has thus been a conscious choice to make a less than the maximum possible effort, while some NG representatives (i.a. from Poland, Slovakia and Spain) expressed in the interviews that they felt that (parts of) the NGs could do more (PL-NG-1, SL-NG1, SP-NG3).

It is worthwhile in this connection to consider whether this should also be seen in the context of the general perception the EP has held, that it has not been taken sufficiently seriously by the Council, and in general as an institution, that the EP has worked continuously to claim an equal place in the decision making process with the Council. Thus, the observations that the NGs do not sufficiently consider the EP as a venue for influence could also be partly due to a lingering perception of the EP being underestimated by the NGs.

From the interviews it can be inferred that not all of the NGs are yet as active as they could be towards the MEPs and MEPAs. There is still room for more coordination within the limits of which the NGs’ attentions would be welcomed. If the NGs were to increase their efforts, or adjust them better to the needs and working rhythm of the EP, there is potential for the input being well received in the EP. Based on the interviews, such an increase in communication, however, would depend on growing awareness, skill and timing of the efforts on the part of the NGs as the initiating party, rather than an increased outreach by the MEPs and MEPAs, in light of the fact that only four interviewees note that they take the main initiative in reaching out to the NGs for contact. Even though the MEPs and MEPAs could be more proactive in engaging with the NGs if they wished to, and contact with the NGs is overall viewed positively, either to an adequate or an insufficient level, yet the initiative remains overwhelmingly with the NGs.

This opens the question of the direction this interaction will take in the future; with an opening among MEPs for more potential contact, and with some NGs still not having reached their full level of coordination, will the NGs increase their attentions towards the EP and will coordination (including the positive reception of it by the MEPs and MEPA) thus increase over time? If new member states increase their efforts, or if more powers are allocated to the EP, will the member states reach an equal level of contact efforts, or will differences persist? Will the NGs remain a unique source of information for the MEPs and their assistants due to their particular characteristics, and will they hereby ensure an advantage unrivalled by other external actors in this regard? It is also worth considering whether different policy areas will promote different levels of a sense of national unity and, consequently,
whether the interaction and MEP/MEPA receptiveness to NG input will depend on the policy areas affected by EU legislation in the future.

6.2.e. The logic of the MEPs and MEPAs’ engagement with the NGs

In sum, based on the interview data, MEPs’ and their assistants’ adoption of input from the NGs is based to a large extent on how useful MEPs find it to be for their work. MEPs and their assistants are receptive to technical, political and negotiation/strategy-oriented input from the NGs and they are open to interacting with government officials in so far as it assists them in their work in the EP, and contributes to helping them stay in tune with the national dimension of the impact of the legislative proposal, and the perception of this nationally. Due to the benefits it provides in terms of information, MEPs and MEPAs have to take their NG’s position into account to some extent. Ignoring the position of the NG might have political ramifications for the MEPs’ standing with the voters, as well as the governing parties; the latter being of particular importance for MEPs who belong to the incumbent NG, as they are more likely to be expected to follow their NG’s lead (e.g. SP-EP2, DK-EP1). Due to the sensitive nature of this question, and the unlikely case that MEPs would volunteer information about their being pressured by the NGs to act in a certain way, the extent to which this is relevant cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of the interviews, but must be seen in the broader context of existing data on MEP behavior. This includes factors such as the national election cycles and voting coalitions within the EPGs and between national EP delegations.

Allowing for the actual pressure from NGs on the MEPs, the general manner in which the NGs have to adapt their approach in order to profit from the interaction supports the notion that the coordination between the two actors is more akin to lobbying than to a principal-agent style relationship.

What can thus be concluded about the MEPs receptiveness? How does the data from the interviews fit hypotheses 6, 7 and 8 regarding the receptiveness of the EP actors? And in a broader perspective, what can these findings, combined with existing research on MEP behavior, tell in answer to research question 3?

6.3. How receptive are MEPs and MEPAs to input from the NGs

The interviews conducted for the project are the main data source for assessing the hypotheses 6-8. There is an asymmetry in the interviews, which must be taken into account when evaluating the
generalizability of the answers, due to the aforementioned differences in number and distribution of EP interviewees across nationalities and political affiliation, as well as the difference in format of the interviewees, allowing for different extents of elaboration on the questions. The interviews are listed in the tables before each of the hypotheses. In the evaluation of the answers in this chapter it is, additionally, noted which interviews are extensive face-to-face interviews, and which are shorter phone interviews, in which there was less opportunity to delve deeply into the issues. As a consequence, it should not be assumed that, because there is not an in-depth answer to a question, that this can be taken as confirmation or disconfirmation of the hypotheses. Thus, a priority in the analysis is to refrain from over-interpreting the brief answers to the phone interviews when these appear to support or disconfirm the hypotheses, and to make sure not to rely disproportionately on the fuller (but not necessarily more representative) answers to the in depth interviews.

6.3.a. Empirical indicators

The empirical indicators used to assess the accuracy of the hypotheses are indicators 7, 8 and 9. The distribution of answers to each of the indicators by the 30 interviewees are presented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 7: Occurrence of contact with the NGs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator 8: The actor that initiates contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primarily MEP/MEPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40 For the schematic overviews of the indicators, where the total number of answers amount to less than 30, it is due to some interviewees not answering all the interview questions, or answering them only partly.
Indicator 9: Whether the recipient finds contact with the NGs helpful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answers ranging from “very helpful” and “necessary” to “sometimes helpful” and “helpful when in government”

Specific types of coordination considered helpful/useful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical information</th>
<th>Political information</th>
<th>Strategic cooperation and /or information on Council positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 of 29</td>
<td>19 of 29</td>
<td>15 of 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 of the 22: only moderately helpful or depending on party affiliation or agreement with govt.</td>
<td>4/19: Helpful when in govt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviewees’ answers do not necessarily refer to every case dealt with by the EP or the MEPs. They address the general pattern of interaction as described by the MEPs and MEPAs.

So – what factors shape MEPs’ and MEPA’s receptiveness to coordination?

6.3.b. Assessing hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 anticipates that “MEPs’ receptiveness to coordination with their national government depends on their national party affiliation”. More specifically, hypotheses 7.a predicts that “MEPs who belong to a national government party will be more receptive to policy input from their national government than MEPs belonging to a national opposition party.” Focusing more closely on the group of the MEPs whose positions are expected to be more difficult for the NGs to sway, hypothesis 7.b. anticipates that “MEPs who belong to a national opposition party will be more receptive to technical information than policy input from their national government.”
When assessing the sub-hypotheses, the indicators of the independent and dependent variables are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 7</th>
<th>Independent variable indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.a. Govt. MEPs more receptive to policy pref. input than opposition MEPs</td>
<td>MEP national party affiliation (government vs. opposition)</td>
<td>MEPs receptive vs. not receptive to policy preference input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.b. Opposition MEPs more receptive to technical input vs. policy pref. input</td>
<td>Type of input (Technical input vs. policy preferences)</td>
<td>Opposition MEPs more vs. less receptive to technical than policy preference input</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data used for assessing the hypothesis is derived from the interviewees listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEP and MEPA interviewees (7th EP)</th>
<th>According to nationality and government/opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov</td>
<td>Opp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of the existing data, hypothesis 7.a. is found to be confirmed. Not all MEPs address the question of the extent to which they find the policy preference input they receive from their NG useful (19 of 30 express that they find the input useful). Among those 19 interviewees that hold a positive view of receiving input regarding policy preferences from the NG, MEPs and MEPAs belonging to government parties tend to attribute more value to this information than their counterparts from the national oppositions. 4 of the 19 interviewees specifically note that they primarily find the input relevant when they are in government. However, an important aspect to note is that many of the opposition MEPs and MEPAs also expressed that they found this information useful for their work, regardless of whether they agreed with the position of the NG. Hence, it is not a matter of pure division into camps of government MEPs being open to NG input and opposition MEPs not being open to NG input. Still, frequency of interaction on political positions and the extent to which these are taken on board does trend a bit towards the government MEPs’ side.

How, then, does this compare to the reception of technical data which all EP interviewees confirmed that they were receiving? The mere fact that MEPs all note that they receive technical information does
not necessarily mean that they take it on board. As was described in the previous chapter, several member states send technical information to all the MEPs of their nationality – and on important cases even to MEPs from other nationalities – and thus, just the fact that there is more contact on technical matters does not imply that the technical information will be used more by the MEPs and MEPAs than political input.


A consideration in this regard is that the MEPs that are central to their parties might be under more pressure to conform to their national party and EPG. This, in itself, would tend to make it more likely that they would not seek out the positions of the NG. On the other hand, because the MEPs have to defend their actions in the EP to a national electorate (though arguably to a limited extent) and to their own party leadership, and the responsibility of an MEP who is more directly and centrally involved in the legislative negotiations is greater than MEPs more peripheral to the negotiations, learning as much as possible about the national repercussions and political positions would be helpful for the MEP to navigate the negotiations, and avoid potential pitfalls that might cause unnecessary damage to the MEP’s member state, or risk that the member states misses out on potential benefits of a new piece of legislation.
When analyzing receptiveness it must be taken into account that an MEP or MEPA showing interest in hearing the opinion of the NG does not necessarily imply that he or she will follow the indications of the NG. 3 interviewees mention explicitly that the information about their NG’s position (and other NGs’ positions as well) is useful to have, but that it will not dictate their actions (SP-EP4, UK-EP1, UK-EP3). It is, however, useful for determining their own position in the negotiations. Just being in contact – about technical matters and political positions – might change the positions of the MEPs. Therefore, being open to receiving the political positions of the NG may affect the MEPs. However, at present this report cannot make conclusions about this matter, but can only ascertain the frame of mind the MEPs and their assistants have regarding input they receive from the NGs, and thereby set the scene for future research on the question.

In conclusion, therefore, hypothesis 7.a. is confirmed, hypothesis 7.b. is disconfirmed, and hypothesis 7 is partially confirmed, with the caveat that the difference is less than what might have been expected in light of much of the existing literature and theory on MEP behavior and EP consensus.

6.3.c. Assessing hypotheses 8 and 9

To assess the hypotheses I analyze whether MEPs’ and MEPAs’ interaction with the NGs differs depending in whether the they belongs to a national government party or to the national opposition; additionally I investigate whether the interviewees answer the question of “whether the coordination is helpful” differently according to their national party affiliation. Naturally, when interviewees address the question directly, this is also included.

For the assessment of Hypothesis 8 “MEPs will engage more with their own national government than foreign governments, irrespective of being part of the national government or opposition”, the indicators for the independent and dependent variables are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 8</th>
<th>Independent variable Indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. MEPs coordinate more with own NG than foreign NGs</td>
<td>MEP contact with NGs (Own vs. foreign NGs)</td>
<td>More vs. less coordination with MEPs’ own NG than foreign NGs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data used for assessing the hypothesis is derived from the interviewees listed below:

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov</td>
<td>Opp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses 8 is easily confirmed, albeit with a few noteworthy exceptions. 23 of the 30 interviewees are in touch with the foreign NGs, and out of these 23, 16 interviewees – divided evenly across political affiliation – note explicitly that their contact is less than their contact with their own NG.

For the assessment of Hypothesis 9: “MEPs will be more receptive to input from their national government than foreign governments, irrespective of being part of the national government or opposition”, the indicators for the independent and dependent variables are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 9</th>
<th>Independent variable Indicator</th>
<th>Dependent variable Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. MEPs more receptive to input from own NG than foreign NGs</td>
<td>Source of input (Own vs. foreign NGs)</td>
<td>More vs. less receptiveness by MEPs’ to input from own NG than foreign NGs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data used for assessing the hypothesis is derived from the interviewees listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEP and MEPA interviewees (7th EP)</th>
<th>According to nationality and government/opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov</td>
<td>Opp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23
The hypothesis is confirmed to some extent, though it must be noted, that comments in which receptiveness to contact with foreign NGs is directly addressed by the MEPs and MEPAs are very scarce. As such, though consistent, the data specifically addressing the question is of a more anecdotal nature and should be viewed accordingly. What can, however, be deduced from the interviews is that MEPs and MEPAs are less in touch with foreign NGs. 23 interviewees, belonging to both government and opposition nationally, report being in contact with foreign NGs whereas all interviewees note that they are in contact with their own NG, beyond the automatic reception of information that some NGs send to all MEPs of the same nationality. Often this contact to foreign NGs only takes place in cases of particularly high salience to the foreign NG, and the interviewees do not seek out the input from – and are not contacted by – other NGs as much as from their own (16 of the 23 interviewees who are in contact with foreign NGs report to being in less contact with these NGs than with their own government). The relations to the foreign NG representatives is less widely built up, and one of the main motivations for the reason information from their own NG is relevant (knowing how legislation affects their country) does not apply to the same extent to the foreign NGs. However, when interviewees do address the usefulness of being in touch with other NGs (6 of 23: FR-EP2, FR-EP3, G-EP3, G-EP4, G-EP5, SP-EP3), they are generally not unfavorable to the input they receive. Furthermore, many interviewees (14 of 30) note that they find it useful to be informed of the positions of the member states in the Council. However, the interviewees seek contact with foreign NGs to a lesser extent, and express less preference for receiving the input than they do as regards receiving the input from their own NG.

6.4. Research question 3 – conclusions and discussion

6.4.a. Perspectives from additional research
Looking beyond the hypotheses, and addressing research question 3 more broadly, this section draws in and discusses additional research conducted recently, to help shed more light on the analysis of MEPs’ and MEPAs’ contact with the NGs and their perception of this contact. First, the recent study requested by the EP’s Committee on Constitutional Affairs, “Institutional & constitutional aspects of special interest representation” (Coen and Katsiatis:2015), conducted for the purpose of mapping the EP’s relations with special interest groups, provides information supplementing the interviews as regards the frequency and timing of the MEPs’ contact with the NGs, and their perception of the appropriateness and usefulness of the contact. The survey is based on answers from MEPs and, as such, it provides a
complementing perspective to the present interviews in terms of actors questioned. Before delving into
the findings of the survey, it should be noted, that: “The survey received 59 responses from 751 MEPs
which translates into a 8% response rate. This is a representative sample of the population following
analysis of the respondents’ characteristics, such as Political Group, Committee, Member State and
experience.”(Coen and Katsaitis:2015, p.59)42

As is the case with the interviews, with a limited number of participants, there are certain limitations to
the generalizability of the survey, which must be kept in mind when drawing conclusions on the basis of
its findings. However, the survey is representative across several traits including nationality and party
political affiliation, which are the central variables for the hypotheses 6-8. Furthermore, the survey
provides relevant information as regards perceptions of the usefulness of – and degree of acceptability
of – the interaction with the NGs, including the usefulness and unproblematic nature of engaging in the
interaction, as well as factors that are significant for the general understanding of the concept of
coordination, as well as for future research.

One aspect that is especially worth noting is the timing of the contact during the trialogues as a
particular feature of MEPs’ contact with the member state representatives. The results of the
comparison of the ways the various external actors differentiate the member state governments from
the other actors who seek to influence the legislative negotiations with regard to the timing of the
contact. The survey shows the period of the EP Committee amendment stage to be the primary stage of
interaction with external actors, with the plenary voting phase as the second busiest stage in the
legislative cycle in terms of the MEPs’ being contacted by outside sources. However, according to the
survey, one external actor – the member state representatives – focuses nearly a quarter of its energy
on the trialogue phase (Coen and Katsaitis:2015,figure 25, p. 63). 23% of the contact sought by the
member state representatives occurs during this phase (while 36% takes place in the amendment stage,
and 26% in the plenary voting stage). All other external actors are listed as investing 4% or less of their
time in being in touch during the trialogue phase. As the interviews with the NGs indicated, the NG
representatives who are charged with negotiating on behalf of their government in the Council and in
the EU in general, find it the most significant to be in touch in the early stages of the legislative
negotiations. This is corroborated by the survey. However, it is during the trialogue negotiations that the

41 “This excludes double responses and opt-outs.” (Footnote part of quote)
42 “The survey was sent out on the 8th of October 2014 and then sent out at regularly timed intervals until March
2015...[the authors] see value in repeating the survey at the end of the 8th EP to observe for changing attitudes and
learning by new MEPs.” (Coen and Katsaitis:2015, p.59)
NGs would be supposed to be represented by the Presidency. However, as the survey indicates, combined with the degree to which the NGs expressed in their interviews that they do (not) rely on the Presidency to represent their preferences sufficiently strongly in the trialogue negotiations, the NGs set themselves apart by being active on the sidelines while the deals are being hashed out – deals which often take place in informal settings which are less monitored.

This raises several questions. How does this potentially affect the outcome of the legislative negotiations? With an overwhelming proportion of the legislative negotiations now being concluded in the first reading trialogue negotiations, how does this parallel form of bilateral contact play out side by side with the trialogue? While many analyses have been done on the voting patterns within the EP, it must be considered that an effect from the NGs’ engagement with the MEPs and MEPAs might be discernable prior to the votes taken in the EP. To what extent does it interfere with the role of the Presidency in representing the united Council position? Moreover, what consequences does it have for the relative influence of each member state respectively on the EU legislative output, if the NGs’ contact with the MEPs differs in mode and extent during this critical phase in the negotiations?

The survey was constructed primarily with the analysis of MEPs’ contact with interest organizations in mind. Looking beyond the Council, to the other external stakeholders taking part in the EU legislative process, it is worth investigating how MEPs’ and MEPAs’ use of information from the NGs affects the possibility for other stakeholders to promote their positions in the EP during the legislative negotiations. Interest groups’ strength lies to a great extent in their capacity for providing information of a technical nature (Klüver:2013; Bouwen and McCown in Coen ed.:2007). To what extent does the difference in timing of contact between the two actors, with the NGs focusing more heavily on the trialogues, affect the balance of strength between the two groups of actors? In which situations are the interest groups better able to gain the ear of the MEPs than the NGs and vice versa?

The prominence of NGs’ activity, in general and particularly in the trialogue phase, eventually raises the question of the possibility of holding negotiators accountable for other stages of the legislative negotiations, such as the committee and plenary votes. The discussion of future implications for the EU legislative process is continued in chapter 7.

These questions are all the more relevant to ask given that the survey supports the findings of the interviews in the previous sections, it is clear from the survey’s respondents that the input received from the NGs is being taken on board to a substantial extent. 81% of the respondents find the information to
be either “somewhat useful” (49%) or completely useful (32%) – a score only superseded by NGOs/SMOs (52% and 36% respectively) (Coen and Katsiatis:2015, figure 28, p. 66). Indeed, only 4% consider it completely/mostly useless.

The survey supports the image portrayed by interviews with both MEPs and MEPAs and the representatives of NGs supplying both technical and political information to the MEPs, and indeed, it reinforces the view that this occurs also to a high degree with MEPs, which the interviews did not have the possibility of collecting so much data on.

Member state representatives are considered to be “very influential” by 39% and extremely influential by 16% of the respondents. 36% considers them moderately influential, and 9% consider them slightly influential. Member state representatives are the only external actors included in the survey who are not considered by any respondents to be completely without influence. Indeed, it is the category of external actors to which the highest number of respondents attribute at least a level of “moderate influence”, if not more (Coen and Katsiatis:2015, figure 26, p. 64).

In this connection, the notion of appropriateness is interesting. In the attempt to boost the EU’s democratic credentials the EP has become central to the efforts of promoting European (as opposed to nationally oriented) representation. Research has pointed to both the strong fight for independence by the EP vis-a-vis the member states in the Council, as well as the attempt to make the EP more of a “traditional” parliament with a left/right political dimension as the primary divide, and cohesion building around this axis. However, only 4% of the total number of respondents find that the contact is (either absolutely or just plainly) inappropriate. 82% find it either appropriate (51%) or absolutely appropriate (31%) – the highest score of all the categories of actors. Though some other external actors score lower on the inappropriate-scale, the result of the survey is an image of a normalized and broadly accepted form of interaction, with a high degree of interest in the interaction on the part of the recipients within the EP (Coen and Katsiatis:2015, p. 93).

Although the survey is based in part on responses from new MEPs, there were also many “old” members participating who have had longer time to build up EP experience and thus, combined with the interviews that were conducted during the 7th EP, the results show coordination to be a solid pattern of interaction that is not a waning phenomenon. The results further lend support to the notion that the national dimension of the work of the MEPs and MEPAs remains not only strongly present and relevant, as literature on the national voting systems would predict, but is largely uncontroversial. Though the majority of those interviewed from both the NGs and the EP did not literally equate the interaction with
lobbyism, and it was a priority for some (SP-EP2, SP-EP4, G-EP6, UK-EP1, DK-EP3) to underline their independence from the NG or to voice their concern over engaging too much with the NGs, no interviewees outright opposed the notion of being in contact with the NGs; to the contrary, as previously mentioned, many would prefer more contact than they have at present.

In his PhD thesis of 2013, Lorenzo Cicchi looks closer at the role of the dimension of national preferences within the EPGs, specifically as it manifests in EP voting behavior. Cicchi takes up the analysis by Hix and Noury (2009) in which they conclude that cohesion within the EPGs is rising, and that the MEPs are increasingly self-aligning according to the left/right dimension, rather than a national dimension. By disaggregating the findings and focusing on individual policy areas, Cicchi finds that: “...national alignments are more likely if: the vote is cast in one of the main five committees pinpointed by MEPs’ assistant survey; the vote is legislative; the margin is thinner, expectedly indicating a more controversial issues where there is no “grand coalition” between the bigger groups; the vote is not budgetary issue. Finally, this regression proved that these alignments are not more likely to emerge in bigger country delegation, or in countries belonging to the recent eastwards enlargement...”(Cicchi:2013, p.113)

Cicchi continues: “[by]...transforming survey data into votes... This gives some information on how MEPs would actually vote if they were following their sheer preferences, which in turn can be useful to speculate on how MEPs vote in non-[Roll Call Votes]; the analysis is performed for the last two legislatures, EP6 and EP7. The results firstly show that cohesion by party group would be much lower if MEPs were voting according to their preference, in respect to what emerges from roll-call votes. A second interesting finding is that cohesion by preference is much higher than expected if MEPs are grouped by member state, demonstrating that nationality can influence how MEPs perceive certain issues." (Cicchi:2013, p.113-114)

These findings lend further support to the notion that MEPs are likely to be receptive to messages from a national perspective, and that NGs can appeal to such a shared set of preferences. As such, there is also an increased potential for MEPs to be open to promoting “national preferences” in the legislative process on issues of national importance. It therefore becomes significant to what extent NGs are able to show how a legislative proposal has cross-party political implications nationally, or convey successfully how aspects of legislative proposal to the MEPs as a matter of national importance. This
perspective - the effect of shared preferences between NGs and MEPs, and the strength of the element of national interests for the MEPs in high salience policy issues – must be taken into account when working with the existing research on EPG cohesion.

The conclusion to be drawn based on this is therefore not that EPGs do not matter, nor that national parties are not important for the MEPs, and that it is the NGs that control the agenda of the EP. Rather, the purpose of this discussion is to point to two factors of relevance: 1) MEPs take in and use information of both technical and political nature when working on legislative texts in the EP, and 2) the input and position of the NGs must therefore be seen as a serious competitor to other voices of opinion in the EP, even across the left/right divide, and even in countries with normally staunch left/right divisions, or strong divisions on the dimension of EU skepticism. Understanding how the EP treats legislative cases requires close consideration of the “national aspect”, and an analysis of what an MEP bases his/her position on must include the technical and political input from the NG.

6.4.b. Conclusion

As the findings of the interviews show, supported by the results of the EP survey by Coen and Katsiatis, contact between MEPs, MEPAs and the NGs is frequent, takes place across nationalities and party affiliation, and exists as a generally accepted and appreciated source of input for the legislative process in the EP. MEPs and MEPAs are open to the input from the NGs, as it helps them in their work by providing needed technical information in a targeted and comprehensive manner43 by providing political input which helps the MEPs and MEPAs navigate the political spectrum of the legislative proposals, as well as by providing information regarding the Council proceedings, and potentially constructing common negotiation strategies. Contact with the NGs is not perceived as a problematic or controversial interaction with an external stakeholder in the EP, rather, it is seen as a useful – in many cases even necessary – interaction.

Personal relations and trust are a strong underlying factor determining whether an MEP/MEPA will seek out information from an NG representative, and facilitating the NG’s gaining the ear of the MEP/MEPA of choice.

In general, but particularly in connection with coordination beyond technical information, it is also of importance whether the MEPs/MEPAs belong to the NG nationally or find themselves in agreement with

43 Packaged in a politically easily applicable way by NG staff who are part of the legislative process and know the “political language”
the NG. As NGs, particularly the new member states, potentially develop their strategies for interaction with the EP going forward, and coordination may consequently increase, it will be worth following the developments of these trends – and with an eye to Cicchi’s findings, particularly in the policy areas with a strong element of redistributive legislation.

In the following chapter, these and other potential future developments and strands of research that would be relevant to pursue are discussed, and the overall picture of coordination between the two actors is summed up.
7. Conclusions, future research and further perspectives

A defining characteristic of the EU’s institutions and legislative system has always been their high capacity for change, and for dynamically adapting to the changing priorities and needs of the EU. One of the central developments, and an illustrative example of this, is the evolving nature of the relations between the EP and the Council, as these have changed from being one of complete inequality and domination by the Council to an equal cooperative institutional construction.

And it is exactly in this light – as an ongoing process of institutional adjustments – actions, reactions and adaptations – that the coordination between NGs and MEPs must be understood. When formal institutional changes are adopted, informal institutional changes and adaptations are likely to follow. Consequences of such institutional changes for the actors whose activities lie within the institutional framework may, in turn, lead the actors to adapt their activities in a way, which the formal institutional changes had not anticipated. Coordination is an example of this.

An effect of the formal and informal institutional changes that have led the EU’s legislative system to its present form is that the NG representatives, operating “on the ground” with the aim of promoting the respective governments’ preferences at EU level, have turned their focus in part to the EP. As the member states agreed to let the EP grow into an increasingly powerful institution through consecutive EU Treaties, it simultaneously grew more attractive for the NG representatives as a target to influence. On the EP side, a consequence of the broadened political scope and increasing legislative activity in the EP is that demand for information regarding the legislation being passed has grown substantially. MEPs must deal with a growing number of technically complex and politically significant issues. Additionally, the electoral system remains such that the MEPs have to keep one eye on how the legislation affects their domestic constituency, and as such requires the MEPs, in part, looking to home. For the MEPs and MEPAs, coordination with NGs has the potential to meet these needs. Coordination itself is an interaction undergoing change and adaptation to the political system of the EU. It has expanded and spread to new policy areas, and it is likely that it will continue to adapt in accordance with any changes to the EU’s legislative system in the future.

On the background of the analysis of coordination in the previous chapters, below the answers to all three research questions will first be summed up, thereby providing a conclusion to the combined image this renders of the interaction of coordination. The limitations of the research project are then
discussed, followed by recommendations for relevant future research building on the research of this project. Then, questions raised by the research that remain unanswered are presented. Following this, consequences of how potential future changes in the EU’s system will affect coordination are discussed where after, finally, considerations regarding the main normative consequences of the research findings are laid out.

7.1. Main conclusions of the research project

In answer to research question 1 “Why do EU member states’ governments coordinate with their MEPs in the EU legislative process?”, the data shows that changes in the legislative process of both a formal and informal nature, that have boosted the power of the EP and have increased the challenge for each NG to influence the EU legislative output, are the underlying reasons why we find that coordination occurs to an increasing extent. The analysis also showed that the responses by the member states have not all come about at the same time and have not been triggered by the same events. This adds to the understanding of how the member states perceive and adapt to institutional changes. As this project found, treaty changes, and the Lisbon Treaty in particular, have had the effect of heightening awareness of the power of the EP, as it formally promoted the EP to a prominent role of equal status to with the Council in a majority of the EU legislative policy areas. While it may not have come as a surprise to the member states that the EP gained power, given that they unanimously agreed to the treaty changes that brought it about, it has, however, taken time for the practical implications of this to manifest, and for the adjustment of the actors involved in the practical expression of the new rules to adjust and organize accordingly.

However, the main factors that have triggered the NGs’ adjustment to the changing EU legislative system have not solely been the monitoring of, evaluation of and consequently targeted adjustment to the gradual changes to the EU’s institutional power balance. Rather, it has been other factors, such as having the EU Presidency, or incremental learning from practical experiences during the legislative process as the process has developed, that have prompted the NGs to increase their efforts towards the EP. Also, many NGs have changed their behavior towards the EP partly due to learning from each other. Additionally, intra-governmental factors have had an effect on the timing and pace of adaptation to the legislative treaties. Internally in the member states, having NG staff or Ministers with particular focus on the EP can result in different paces of the spreading of knowledge within the NGs, which in some cases has resulted in an uneven development within the NGs.
Thus, the reactions from the member states (and indeed, different sections within the NGs) have been less uniformly direct and immediate as was anticipated at the start of this project. The gradual development of coordination in the NGs has not been a conscious decision by each member state to increase efforts towards the EP after conscious thorough institutional analysis. Though the answer to research question 1 is, indeed, that institutional changes which altered the inter-institutional balance of power between the Council and the EP were the underlying reasons that led the NGs to seek to influence the legislative process by coordinating with the MEPs and MEPAs, the process was found to be less than a direct response to the official expression of these changes. Rather, it has been an asymmetric incremental process in which time lags between the member states’ expansions of their efforts and even sometimes among ministries within same member states are found, beyond what is due to differences in which EU decision making procedure applies to the respective policy areas.

Similarly, the general logic, underlying hypothesis 2, is borne out. The interviews generally confirm the dynamics suggested by the causal mechanism, namely that NGs target the MEPs and MEPAs in accordance with what they expect will yield the greatest benefit. However, the findings of the project suggest that an accurate picture requires a more nuanced understanding than this, and that the targeting of MEPs occurs less than stringently along the expected lines. To a full understanding of what shapes the NG-MEP-relationship, must be added that personal relations matter – and that formal party affiliations matter less than the anticipation of benefitting from the interaction. The latter is interesting, not least in connection with hypothesis 5 and 6 regarding differences between member states with different political systems, and different traditions for bridging the gap across the political aisle.

It had been anticipated that the member states’ traditions for reaching across the aisle and seeking consensus, versus a more partisan majoritarian tradition, would manifest itself in the relations to the MEPs and MEPAs at EU level. However, this was found not to be the case. The data shows, instead, that political party affiliation matters, but is not definitive for the contact between NGs and MEPs/MEPAs at EU level. Removed from the context of the national political arena, new constellations of interaction can form, beyond what would occur nationally.

In addition to the above mentioned variations in how the NGs arrived at coordination at the present level, the analysis looked at whether the factors of size and resources, as well as duration of EU membership matter for the NGs’ manner of coordination, answering the 2nd research question: “Why does coordination vary between the member state governments?”.
Overall, the perception in the governments seems to be all moving in the same direction – increasing the attention to the EP. The allocation of attention and resources to either the Council or the EP seems to be changing from what can be illustrated as a zero sum to a plus sum situation; NGs are beginning to channel more resources to this area, rather than simply requiring the staff involved with the Council to allocate a share of their time to the EP, which automatically would limit the amount of efforts these officials can allocate to coordination, irrespective of their perception of the ideal extent of involvement with the EP.

Though the size of the member state may have an effect on the NG’s approach to the EP, a clear line cannot be drawn between the size of a member state and its mode of coordination, nor to its ambition to coordinate. Rather, the capacity of the diplomatic service – the resources – may have an impact “on the ground”, when decisions are made as to the scale of ambition of coordination. What this may reflect of the level of ambition at the higher national governmental level is a degree of inertia in terms of realizing that more resources should be allocated, and a certain slowness in institutional change – or just an unawareness that more resources could be needed on the ground. Finally, it might, of course, also mean that the NG is satisfied with the level of activity as it is.

Additionally, the newer member states are lagging behind older member states in the efforts to organize their relations with the EP, but there are signs that they are trying to catch up. Also in this case, learning over time is a factor of importance. As the member states get more and more familiar with the EU legislative process, and as they go through the experience of having the Presidency, as the Polish government already had, and as the Slovakian government is preparing to have, their attention is likely to turn more towards the EP, and their efforts to coordinate with the EP are likely to grow.

The overall picture that presents is that of a general direction, shared logic and understanding among the member states – a group of actors that do, however, have different contexts and trajectories within the EU, leading them to different patterns of coordination.

Turning to the EP, answering research question 3: “How do MEPs perceive of and receive the coordination efforts?”, the analysis showed that MEPs and MEPAs generally find the contact with NGs helpful in their work, both as regards being able to receive and seek out technical assistance, and as regards knowing the political position of the NGs and the potential national implications of legislative proposals. This goes for MEPs who, at the national level, are affiliated to both the government and the opposition parties.
Networking between the two actors contributes to building a platform upon which ad hoc coordination can take place more easily. The NGs can hereby establish something akin to a “back-up” civil service for the MEPs and their assistants, a “go-to” source that guarantees substantial, arguably neutral, and easily applicable information. In return, the NGs get the possibility for access to the legislative negotiations bypassing the regular channels of inter-institutional communication, and thereby potentially getting a competitive advantage vis-à-vis the other actors in the negotiations, including the other Council members. For coordination to be productive, it must be based on an understanding of mutual benefit and interest. There may be pressure from the NGs on the MEPs and MEPAs to promote the message of the NG. Unless, however, the MEP is part of the government at national level, and the matter is sufficiently politically salient for pressure to be exerted and acquiesced to, the NGs fare better by contributing with input – technical, political or strategic – to the work of the MEPs, which the MEPs or MEPAs would benefit from receiving.

7.2. Limitations of the findings and considerations for developing this research further

The project sheds light on an important interaction that, until now, has been sparsely described and analyzed. From the interviews presented and the analyses of the project, it can be concluded that coordination is a form of interaction that must be reckoned with when analyzing the legislative process of the EU, and a topic which merits further studies.

Firstly, due to the limited sample of interviewees in this project, the topic would benefit from being studied in a broader context. Expanding the number of country cases would strengthen the assessment of the patterns of variation between the different groupings of countries according to which hypotheses 3-5 were formed. Increasing the number of interviewees from each member state, and broadening the longitudinal scope of the analysis to include NG representatives employed in the government spanning several government cycles over time would serve to strengthen the generalizability of the findings.

Secondly, due to the focus on a single policy area, there might be variation among the sectorial ministries and EP committees, that was not detected by the interviews. Comparing coordination across more policy areas would provide further insight into what might be idiosyncratic institutional features related to specific policy areas in the NGs and in the EP Committees. Including policy areas that were already subject to co-decision prior to the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty would help to illustrate how the development of coordination took place earlier. The area of agriculture was chosen as a case due to the recent developments caused by the Lisbon Treaty. Expanding the scope to include more policy areas
would help address such questions as whether the learning curves and competition among the member states previously were different, and whether awareness is spreading faster, as more attention is now paid to the role of the EP following its rise in power. It would also shed more light on whether the manner of coordination in the member states has developed much over time. In the project, emphasis is on the manner in which the NGs seek to coordinate at present. Although the question of development over time is addressed in the interviews and the analysis, most of the descriptive elements as regards the exact nature of the interaction (as opposed to the extent) serve more as a description of the current status quo.

As previously mentioned, the possibility of accurately measuring the effect of coordination on MEPs’ activities is, at best, a methodologically highly challenging task. Furthermore, due to its sensitive nature, the process can only be uncovered to a certain extent through interviews. The research design of this project addresses the concept of MEP and MEPA receptiveness from the perspective of how they perceive the interaction, and the evaluation of the extent to which they state that they include the information is deduced from the interviews with MEPs, MEPAs and NG representatives. To complement the knowledge of the communication between the two actors, and how it may affect the legislative outcome of the EU, a broad process tracing analysis of several cases in which coordination took place would make a significant contribution to the understanding of the effect of coordination on the EP’s work and the final legislative outcome.

It would be particularly interesting to focus on what takes place during the phase of the legislative process in which the legislative document is still malleable. As the survey by Coen and Katsiatis showed, the NGs, more than the other external actors, focus in particular on the triilogue phase. NG views or positions might be presented here by MEPs and MEPAs, even if this national preference bias should not show up clearly in the voting phase where other preferences may overlap with the national ones, obscuring the degree to which information, provided early on by the NGs, helped shape the final draft legislation. Additionally, should the MEP be successful in introducing the NG preference into the position of the EPG, this might end up contributing to facilitating increased EPG cohesion, as the MEPs who managed to get their amendments incorporated into the common position of the EPG would then not risk having to vote against the EPG later.

The negotiations between the Council and the EP have been widely studied, both as regards the formal and the informal aspects of the negotiations. The bilateral coordination between NGs and MEPs must be included in this picture, as one of the informal channels of communication that can affect the legislative
process. This project has thus provided a descriptive platform and analytical starting point for future research on the topic of coordination, but has far from exhausted the topic.

7.3. Future developments and further perspectives

In addition to these points for future research, some currently ongoing developments and discussions regarding potential future institutional changes with relevance to coordination must be mentioned. The EP’s investment in the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services is of substantial relevance to the study of coordination. As the EP has continued to gain influence as one of the two legislative chambers of the EU, understanding what MEPs base their positions on is of substantial importance. The bolstering of the EP’s ability to provide in-house information challenges not only the role of the Commission as the central EU institution providing technical knowledge in the trialogues, and the other external actors who strive to lobby EU legislation. It potentially weakens one of the main selling points the NGs have with the MEPs and, in particular, the MEPAs. Technical information makes up a substantial part of the coordination between the two actors, and arguably depoliticizes and lends legitimacy to the overall contact. How will the EP’s buildup of the information service affect the future of coordination, if this aspect becomes of less critical importance for the MEPs to engage in? Will the trust of national civil servants, and the need for nationally adapted information persist and trump the EP’s own delivery of information? Or will the possibility of getting information more readily from within the EP itself hollow out one of the main services the NGs can offer MEPs, which is key to forming a foundation for the ongoing NG-MEP/MEPA relations? It will be significant to see how the build-up of the EP Research Service, and the extent to which it will fulfill the function of provider of information to the MEPs and MEPAs, will affect coordination in the future.

Another interesting dimension to observe in the coming years will be how the new composition of MEPs will affect the two dimensions that have been at the focus of this research project, namely nationality versus political affiliation. The 8th EP brought a more fragmented and EU skeptical cohort of MEPs than the previous parliament. How will EPG cohesion be affected by this, and will this have an impact on the NGs’ ability to build relations with the MEPs and MEPAs? Will information exchange with emphasis on national interests be easier for the NGs to promote in the new EP? Moreover, how will this factor measure up to the effect of the EP Research Service? For this reason (among plenty of others) the new EP will be interesting to observe.
7.4. Questions that arise from the research

The findings of the research project and the suggestions for further research raise further questions; questions that go to the heart of the construction of the EU legislative process and that – though they cannot be answered in this research project – nonetheless need to be voiced.

With the NGs operating in parallel with the Council Presidency, which member states dominate the legislative process? Does the Council accurately reflect the de facto power-division between the member states? To what extent – if at all - does coordination, under the current EU legislative rules, distort the balance of influence between the member states, as was intended in the Treaties? The question of how coordination affects the accountability of the EU legislative process cannot be overlooked. The increased activity of the informal trialogues has already been criticized for being less than optimally transparent. Does coordination add to this, by creating an additional strand of informal interactions that feed into the negotiations without the voters’ knowledge, and without a system of scrutiny to monitor its impact? If MEPs are influenced by the input they receive from the NGs – by either being affected by the political stands of the government, or simply by having the governments affecting how the discussions are framed by providing the technical references on the basis of which the MEPs negotiate – does this obscure what the voters “get for the ballot they cast”? If voters expect MEPs to act according to the party they were elected for, does contact across the aisle at EU level obscure this distinction, not least for member states with majoritarian political systems? This also translates to the EPGs, and goes to the core of a problematic aspect of the EP’s work, which was recently addressed in a draft paper by the EP’s Secretary General, Klaus Welle, to EP President Martin Schultz, regarding possible future developments of the EP’s institutional setup (Palmeri:2015). The draft paper, which builds on years of debate about the impact of the national electoral platform of the MEPs, addresses a concern that the national attachment of the MEPs hampers the work of the EP as an independent legislative EU institution with its own agenda, rather than dominated by individual member state national agendas. Expanding on this, does the NGs’ input weaken EPG cohesion by emphasizing national angles to policy issues, and thereby diminish the strength of the EP as the bicameral counterpart to the Council? Or, conversely, does this interaction in fact improve the legislative system by increasing the MEPs’ and MEPAs' technical understanding of the legislative proposals as well as their awareness of national consequences of legislation across the EU member states and across party political affiliations, enabling them to carry out their work on a more informed basis, with an eye to representing their national constituency as well?
Are MEPs as free to choose the extent to which they use the input they receive from their NG? Do voter expectations meet the reality of MEP and MEPA behavior? Or does the system that plays out in reality diverge to an extent of consequence from that which the official institutional system depicts?

What can be stated on the basis of the present research project is that coordination should be understood as a natural reaction in response to the institutional developments of the EU’s legislative system over the years. As such, the interaction can be expected to continue, and even to grow, as long as the legislative system maintains its current form. Whether this is preferable to other patterns of interactions and constellations of alliances among actors will not be considered. However, awareness of the interaction should be spread, so that it is understood to what extent the institutional division remains as intended, and to what extent the formal division of actors reflects the practice in reality. It must then be up to future decision makers and voters to deem whether this is a desired state of EU affairs.
8. Appendices

8.1. Overview and additional information about interviewees

Wherever possible, a total of 4 NG officials from each member state were interviewed, to obtain the NG perspective on coordination. Interviewees were chosen who were either directly involved with EP coordination, or situated close enough to the interaction to be able to answer the interview questions. The interviewees were chosen, as much as possible, according to the following criteria:

- 1 attaché at the PermRep who deals with agriculture and the EP
- 1 attaché at the PermRep who deals with general relations and horizontal issues related to the EP
- 1 NG official from the national agriculture ministry (to provide information about activities directly between ministry and EP, and also cooperation with the PermRep regarding the EP);
- 1 NG official from the national Foreign Ministry in charge of relations with the EP (to provide a general overview of the NG’s approach to and organization of relations with the EP).

Exceptions to this are:

- At the British, French, Spanish and the Slovakian PermRep, only one NG official was available for an interview. The interviewees were, however, familiar with both the general contact with the EP at the PermRep and the agriculture perspective.
- The Slovakian Agriculture Ministry is not represented by an interview. Instead, as mentioned in chapter 4, interviews with the Foreign Ministry and the PermRep also included questions regarding the area of agriculture, and an interview was conducted with the Ministry of Labor to obtain a comparative sectorial ministry perspective.
8.2. Questions for interviews
The following appendices show a general version of the questions put to the interviewees, as well as those sent in writing. To ensure the most accurate understanding of the premises and perspective of each interviewee, situational adaptations of the questions were made, as the specific interviews were carried out according to the information provided by the interviewees.

8.2.a: Questions put to the national government representatives.

1. How has the PermRep/Ministry organized its work relating to the EP?
   1.a) How do you organize your work with the EP within the PermRep/Ministry? (In general and in connection with specific legislative cases? - Who handles the contact?)
   1.b) How do you organize your work with the PermRep in Brussels/sectorial ministries in terms of contact with the EP? (Is there a division of labor? Do you coordinate your efforts? Who decides how the contact should be carried out? – Do the PermRep and ministries decide for themselves, does the national government decide on behalf of all ministries as well as the PermRep, other..?)

2. How would you characterize the PermRep’s/Ministry’s relations with the MEPs?
   2.a) Is your contact with the MEPs regular or ad hoc – or both?
   2.b) What does the contact consist of?
      - informing MEPs of government policy positions on specific legislative cases
      - providing MEPs with technical information regarding legislation
      - providing MEPs with voting recommendations
      - providing MEPs with suggestions for amendments
      - getting information about progress of negotiations in the European Parliament from MEPs
      - other..?
   2.c) What is the format of the contact?
      - Sending information, phone calls, meetings, other..?
   2.d) Who typically initiates the contact – the PermRep/Ministry or the MEPs? And, more specifically, who within the PermRep/Ministry and among the MEPs?
   2.e) What is the purpose of the contact for the PermRep/Ministry?
      - seeking to convince MEPs of the government’s position
      - coordinating with MEPs to make united effort at influencing legislation
      - obtaining information from MEPs about the negotiations in the European Parliament
      - other..?
3. Which MEPs is the PermRep/Ministry in contact with?

3.a) Are you in contact with some MEPs more than others?
   - in connection with votes in the European Parliament
   - in connection with specific/important legislative negotiations
   - in connection with general/official meetings
   - other..?

In which situations are you in contact with just some of the MEPs?
   - in connection with specific votes in the European Parliament
   - in connection with specific/important legislative negotiations
   - other..?

3.b) Which MEPs do you typically prioritize contact with, in connection with legislative negotiations in the European Parliament?
   - only MEPs from national government parties // also from national opposition parties
   - only from your member state // also MEPs from other member states
   - MEPs who share govt. policy position // who do not share govt. policy position
   - MEPs with central roles in negotiations (rapporteur, relevant Committee member or Chairperson, Coordinators or national delegation leaders of EP Party Groups, other..?)
   - other..?

3.c) Do MEPs also contact you?
   - to get technical information regarding legislation
   - to hear government's position on a specific legislative case
   - to know about progress of negotiations in the Council
   - to get help with formulating amendments
   - to coordinate negotiation strategy with the PermRep/Ministry
   - other..?

3.d) Which MEPs are typically more open to having contact with your PermRep/Ministry?
   - only MEPs from national government parties // also from national opposition parties
   - only from your member state // also MEPs from other member states
   - MEPs who share govt. policy position // who do not share govt. policy position
   - MEPs from relevant committees
   - MEPs with central roles in negotiations // MEPs with more peripheral roles
   - other..?

4. How does the contact on a specific legislative proposals take place?

4.a) Are you in contact with MEPs on all legislative proposals, only on selected cases or not at all?
   - policy area
- importance of the legislative case for the PermRep/ministry
- risk of disagreement between the PermRep/ministry and the majority of member states in the Council
- other..?

4.b) What would you say are the most effective ways of being in contact with MEPs?

4.c) Could you give an example of a legislative proposal that you had close contact with MEPs on?

4.d) In which types of legislative cases do you have more difficulties working with MEPs?

5. Have the PermRep/ministry’s relations with the MEPs changed over time? If so:

5.a) In what way have the relations changed?

5.b) What was the reason for these changes?

5.c) When have the more significant changes happened? (In a particular context?)

5.d) For agriculture representatives: Has the work process on the most recent CAP reform been different for you compared to the “CAP health check” in 2008? If so, how?

6. Evaluation of contact with MEPs:

6.a) What do you find to be challenging aspects of the contact between the PermRep/ministry and the MEPs?

6.b) What do you do to try to overcome these difficulties?

6.c) What changes in the contact between the PermRep/ministry/the government and the MEPs, if any, would benefit your work?

6.d) Do you discuss within the PermRep/ministry, and with the other ministries ways to develop/change the contact?

6.e) Is it your impression that you have more/less/the same contact with MEPs as the other member states?
8.2.b: Questions put to MEPs and MEPAs

1. How would you describe your contact with the Permanent Representation?

1.a) Who, if any, at the Permanent Representation are you typically in contact with?
(Ambassadors, Attachés, Other)

1.b) What is the nature of the contact?
(Meetings, Emails, Phone calls, Other)

1.c) Is the contact regular or ad hoc?
(Regular, Ad hoc. How often? Specify)

1.d) In which situations do you usually contact the Permanent Representation?
(To get technical information regarding legislation, To hear government’s position on a specific legislative case, To know about progress of negotiations in the Council, Other)

1.e) In which situations does the Permanent Representation usually contact you?
(To suggest amendments, To supply technical information regarding legislation, To give voting recommendations, To inform about government’s position on a specific legislative case, To know progress of negotiations in the European Parliament, Other)

2. How would you describe your contact with your national ministries?

2.a) Who, if any, in the national ministries are you typically in contact with?
(Ministers, Subject specialists, Other)

2.b) What is the nature of the contact?
(Meetings, Emails, Phone calls, Other)

2.c) Is the contact regular or ad hoc?
(Regular, Ad hoc. How often? Specify)

2.d) In which situations do you usually contact the national ministries?
(To get technical information regarding legislation, To hear government’s position on a specific legislative case, To know about progress of negotiations in the Council, Other)

2.e) In which situations do the national ministries usually contact you?
(To suggest amendments, To supply technical information regarding legislation, To give voting recommendations, To inform about government’s position on a specific legislative case, To know progress of negotiations in the European Parliament, Other)

3. Which types of legislative cases are you usually more in contact about?

Cases you are directly responsible for, Cases treated in EP committees you are in, Cases of particular national interest, Cases of particular technical complexity, Other?
4. Do you find the contact helpful in your work in the EP?
If Yes, what kinds of contact do you find more helpful?
(Technical information, Information regarding government's view on specific legislative cases, Information regarding developments in Council negotiations, Other?)
If No, why?

5. Has the contact with your national government changed over time?
If Yes, how?
What was the reason(s) it changed?

6. Are you also in contact with representatives from other member state governments?
If yes, is this contact similar to, or different from the contact with your national government? Describe
9. Bibliography


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**Websites**


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**Interviews**

• Exploratory interviews with government officials
  
  • Danish, September 2012 (DK-NG1)
  
  • German government officials, September 2012 (G-NG1 (2 interviewees))

• Interviews with government officials in the period of April 2013 – February 2015
  
  • Danish (DK-NG2, DK-NG3 and DK-NG4)
  
  • German (G-NG2, G-NG3 and G-NG4 (2 interviewees)
  
  • Polish (PL-NG1, PL-NG2, PL-NG3 and PL-NG4 (in writing))
  
  • French (FR-NG1, FR-NG2 and FR-NG3)
  
  • Spanish (SP-NG1, SP-NG2 and SP-NG3)
• British (UK-NG1, UK-NG2 and UK-NG3 (2 interviewees))
• Slovakian (SL-NG1, SL-NG2 and SL-NG3)

• Interviews with MEPs and MEPAs in the period of April 2013 – September 2014
  • Danish (DK-EP1 - DK-EP6)
  • German (G-EP1 - G-EP9, (1 in writing))
  • Polish (PL-EP1 and PL-EP2 (both in writing))
  • French (FR-EP1 - FR-EP3)
  • Spanish (SP-EP1 - SP-EP4)
  • British (UK-EP1 - UK-EP3)
  • Slovakian (SL-EP1 - SL-EP3)

• Background interviews:
  • Informal interviews with national Parliament and Government staff connected to the work of the British, Finnish and Danish Permanent Representations, conducted during internship in the European Parliament 2006-2007, as well as regular follow-up discussions.
  • Background interviews with EP and Commission staff, conducted to provide information to inform the formulation of the hypotheses, conducted in the period of September 2012 – April 2013