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Information Supply and Interest Groups' Success in the European Parliament

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Abstract

The European Parliament (EP) has become an important venue for interest groups seeking to influence EU policy. However, little empirical evidence exists regarding the determinants of lobbying success in this institution. To address this gap, this paper tests the expectation that lobbying success in the EP is a function of information supply and demand, based on a new dataset on interest groups' preferences with regard to 29 legislative proposals (comprising 56 unidimensional issues). The analysis indicates that, *ceteris paribus*, the rapporteur's draft legislative report, the report adopted by the responsible EP committee at first reading, and the final outcome reflect the preferences of groups that provide more technical information to the EP. The provision of political information also increases success at the draft report stage. However, I do not find support for the theoretical expectation that information supply has a stronger effect on success when the demand for information is high.

Keywords: interest groups, lobbying success, interest group influence, European Union, European Parliament

Introduction

Information is often regarded as the main currency for interest group influence in the EU political system, but its effect on lobbying success in the European Parliament (EP) has

so far not been tested in a large-N study. This paper adapts the theoretical expectations formulated in the broader interest group literature to the case of the EP and examines empirically whether interest group success in this institution is a function of information supply and demand. The relative importance of technical and political information for securing success is also assessed. Whereas influence generally refers to an actor's ability to obtain "policies that are more closely aligned with their preferences than would have been the case without their participation in the policy process" (Bernhagen et al., 2014, 203), I use the term *success* since we cannot completely exclude the possibility that some interest groups attained their preferences for reasons unrelated to their lobbying efforts.

To date, the relationship between information and interest groups' preference attainment with regard to EU decision-making has been analysed in relatively few empirical studies. Klüver (2013) measures information supply by counting the number of words in an interest group's submission to the Commission's public consultation and finds that the information supplied by a lobbying coalition increases its chances of influencing the Commission's proposal and the final outcome. However, in counting the number of words, the author does not distinguish between policy recommendations (or the expression of preferences) and the information provided in support of those recommendations.

Dür et al. (2013) test the effect of interest groups' technical knowledge with respect to a legislative proposal (as appraised by the Commission official responsible for the dossier) on their success levels. The results indicate that groups possessing more technical knowledge have a higher chance of attaining their preferences over final outcomes.

Based on survey and interview data, Chalmers (2011) shows that six interest group types (companies, professional associations, NGOs, trade unions, public authorities, and consultancies) have similar information-processing capabilities. The author postulates that information supply is a measure of influence and concludes based on these findings that no group type is systematically more influential than others. However, the assumption that information-processing is equivalent to influence is not tested empirically.

Kluger Rasmussen's (2013) four case-studies of lobbying in the EP suggest that information provision does play a role in influencing the EP's position, but it is difficult to disentangle the partial effect of this variable from that of other factors.

This paper advances our understanding of informational lobbying and interest group success in the EP by analysing a sample of 29 legislative proposals comprising 56 policy issues. I use spatial measures of success derived from data obtained through interviews with

rapporteurs and their staff. The paper's empirical contribution to the existing literature is twofold. Firstly, I introduce a proposal-specific measurement of information supply and demand in the EP, based on interviews with rapporteurs and their staff. Decision-makers' assessment of how informative different actors were during a specific procedure provides a more accurate measure of this variable than the number of words contained in organisations' submissions. Secondly, this is to my knowledge the first quantitative study analysing the partial effect of information on lobbying success in the EP.

The first section of the paper reviews the existing information theories of lobbying influence and explains their applicability to the EP. I then derive several hypotheses regarding the effect of information supply and demand on interest group success in this institution. The third section presents the study's research design, followed by the empirical analysis and a discussion of results.

1 Theoretical arguments: the role of information in the EP

The importance of information provision for interest group influence has been extensively highlighted in previous theoretical literature. The formal-modelling literature on lobbying generally argues that informational asymmetries between policy-makers and interest groups provide an opportunity for the latter to influence policy output (Austen-Smith, 1993; Potters and van Winden, 1992). Due to capacity constraints, decision-makers often lack the knowledge required to fully comprehend the nature of the problems under consideration and to foresee the likely consequences of proposed measures (Austen-Smith, 1993; Broscheid and Coen, 2007; Bernhagen, 2007; Crombez, 2002). In the absence of complete information about the relationship between policies and consequences, policy-makers cannot be certain that their preferences over policies are consistent with their preferences over consequences. Thus, they seek information from external sources in order to minimize this uncertainty (Austen-Smith, 1993, 799-800). Interest groups are said to enjoy an informational advantage vis-à-vis policymakers since they routinely conduct research on issues that are of relevance to their members (Bernhagen, 2007, 58) and may also acquire "costless information as a by-product of their specialized activities" (Lohmann, 1998, 825). Lobbying is therefore conceived of as a "mutually beneficial exchange of resources" whereby groups

trade their privately-held information for political influence (Dür, 2008, 1215). The level of influence interest groups may gain over outcomes is thus dependent upon both their ability to supply relevant information and decision-makers' demand for such resources (ibid.).

A number of authors conceptualise information supply as a means of persuasion: influence occurs when policy-makers update their beliefs about the relationship between policies and consequences on the basis of information received from interest groups, therefore changing their preferences over policies (Austen-Smith, 1993; Potters and van Winden, 1992; Bernhagen and Brauninger, 2005; Grossman and Helpman, 2001).

By contrast, the theory of legislative subsidy maintains that gaining influence via information supply is not about changing legislators' preferences, but assisting "natural allies in achieving their own, coincident objectives" (Hall and Deardorff, 2006, 72). In this perspective, interest groups provide a service to like-minded but resource-constrained policymakers in the form of technical expertise or political intelligence, enabling them to make progress towards a shared policy goal. Organised interests thus 'subsidise' the resources of political actors who already support the group's cause (ibid.).

I expect these insights to apply to the EP at three different stages of the legislative process, as explained in the remainder of this section.

Once a legislative proposal is received by the EP, it is referred to one of its 20 standing committees, which appoints one of its members as rapporteur in charge of steering the proposal through Parliament. Rapporteurs have only a few months to prepare a draft legislative report amending the proposal and few staff members to assist them in this task. Rapporteurs are often not experts in the particular topic under consideration (Earnshaw and Judge, 2002, 63), yet they need an understanding of the proposal's technical details and likely consequences in order to ensure that any proposed amendments (preferences over policies) are consistent with their preferences over consequences. Moreover, a high-quality report can enhance rapporteurs' reputation and political leverage within their committee and political group (Marshall, 2012, 1384).

Having limited own resources at their disposal, rapporteurs welcome information that alerts them to possible deficiencies in the Commission proposal and enables them to evaluate the implications of available policy options in order to draft a sound report. Interest groups avail themselves of the opportunity to provide the rapporteur with information that can shift the Commission proposal in their preferred direction (or maintain it unchanged when it coincides with their position). The information supplied by interest groups can

serve to either convince the rapporteur that the interest group's policy prescriptions are desirable, or to strengthen the position of a like-minded rapporteur in the parliamentary and inter-institutional negotiations, in line with Hall and Deardoff's (2006) theory of lobbying as 'legislative subsidy'. This is particularly relevant in the case of the EP, where amendments put forward in the report need to be accompanied by written justifications, as well as defended in the committee and plenary. Interest groups may furnish a rapporteur who already shares their preference with the facts and arguments that the latter needs in order to convince fellow decision-makers. In the absence of information on the rapporteur's preferences prior to being lobbied, we cannot determine which causal mechanism - persuasion or the provision of a 'legislative subsidy' - translates information into influence, but the observable implication would be the same: if information is the currency for influence, the draft report should reflect the preferences of groups that provide more information to the rapporteur.

At the subsequent stage of the parliamentary process, committee members can propose further amendments to the proposal, before the committee votes on each draft amendment and adopts a final report to be tabled in Plenary. During this phase, interest groups that were successful at the draft report stage continue to provide information to the rapporteur, shadow rapporteurs and other committee members in order to ensure that favourable draft amendments are maintained in the final committee report. Draft amendments which are not supported by sufficient information are less likely to survive committee scrutiny. Interest groups that did not succeed in having their preferences reflected in the draft report provide information to the rapporteur and other committee members in order to convince them to table their preferred amendments at this stage or to vote against amendments that run contrary to the interest group's position.

Information provision is also expected to play a role during the rest of the legislative procedure, as interest groups attempt to influence the inter-institutional negotiations and the plenary vote. Again, from a 'legislative subsidy' perspective, information provided to key players (such as the rapporteur, committee chairman, and political group coordinators) may strengthen these actors' negotiating position within the EP, as they will have more arguments at their fingertips to convince other MEPs to vote in a certain way. Information also enables the rapporteur to better defend the EP position in negotiations with the Council. From a persuasion perspective, information provision would be aimed at countervailing pressure from opponents and convincing MEPs to vote in a certain way.

Previous literature also formulates expectations concerning the types of information transmitted by interest groups. Groups' informational resources can consist of technical expertise on the probable impacts of policy, or political information related to stakeholders' preferences (Austen-Smith, 1993; Warntjen and Wonka, 2004; Bernhagen, 2007). Warntjen and Wonka (2004, 19) define the latter as information related to "the societal support of or resistance to a certain policy as well as to the interest groups' willingness to persuade their members to accept the outcome of the policy-making process", thereby facilitating the policy's implementation. Bouwen (2004, 340–341) distinguishes between expert knowledge, i.e. technical know-how required to understand the market, and information about the 'encompassing interest', i.e. knowledge about the aggregated needs and interests of a sector. Hall and Deardoff (2006, 74) refer to 'policy expertise' and 'political intelligence'; the latter is defined as "information necessary to anticipate other players' reactions, generate headcounts, proffer procedural advice, and otherwise enable legislators to more fully approximate informed strategic actors in seeking policy progress." The different labels employed in the existing literature denote, roughly, the same dichotomy of technical and political information. Pulling together the different definitions proposed to date, I define technical information as detailed expertise on the substance of the proposed policy, its technical feasibility, and its likely consequences, while political information will refer to information on the preferences of major stakeholders, public opinion, and potential resistance by certain actors.

The relative potential of different types of information to translate into influence depends on the specific goals and information needs of legislators: they may require information about the way decisions will translate into outcomes (policy consequences) or about the strength of different constituencies (electoral consequences) (Dür, 2008, 1214). Both types of information should be useful with respect to the EP. Since they are directly elected, MEPs will try to avoid not only the adoption of a technically deficient report, but also opposition from their constituency and major stakeholders. In other words, the EP requires information about both policy consequences and electoral consequences.

2 Hypotheses

Based on the above considerations, we can expect interest groups that provide more information to the EP to have a higher chance of having their recommendations incorporated

in the legislative reports and the final act. However, actors that provide little information to the EP may still find themselves on the winning side when their policy goals are shared by more informative interest groups. I posit that one highly informative interest group is sufficient to convince the rapporteur to incorporate that group's preference in the legislative report. What we should observe, therefore, is a relationship between an individual group's success and the amount of information supplied by the most informative group on its lobbying side. A lobbying side is defined as a set of actors who share a policy goal, regardless of whether or not they coordinate their advocacy activities (Baumgartner et al., 2009, 6). Furthermore, it is not the absolute amount of information that should make a difference, but the information advantage (or disadvantage) of one side relative to its opponents. In terms of information types, I expect both technical and political information to affect organisations' success levels to some extent. These considerations lead to the following two hypotheses:

> H1: The higher the technical information advantage of a lobbying side, the higher the success levels of groups belonging to that side.

> H2: The higher the political information advantage of a lobbying side, the higher the success levels of groups belonging to that side.

The hypotheses will be tested with respect to success at the draft report stage, the committee stage, and the final outcome.

Measuring technical and political information supply separately also allows us to determine which of the two types plays a more important role in the EP.

In a second step, I examine whether the effect of interest groups' information supply varies at different levels of information demand. The value placed by MEPs on interest groups' information resources should decrease when they have access to a high amount of information from alternative (lower-cost) sources (Dür, 2008, 1215), such as in-house sources and other institutional actors.[1] Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

[1]The alternative sources are also lobbied, hence the information received from them may in fact be coming from interest groups, indirectly (see Marshall, 2012 on indirect information provision to MEPs via the committee secretariat). Several interviewees also pointed this out. However, this does not constitute a problem for the present analysis in so far as I am testing the effect of direct information provision to the rapporteur.

H3: The effect of technical information supply is stronger when the availability of technical information from alternative sources is low.

H4: The effect of political information supply is stronger when the availability of political information from alternative sources is low.

3 Research Design

3.1 Sample of cases

The analysis is carried out on a sample of 29 legislative proposals introduced by the European Commission between 2008 and 2010 and decided by the codecision procedure, or Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) following the Lisbon Treaty. The sample represents a subset of the legislative proposals included in the INTEREURO project (*Comparative Research on Interest Group Politics in Europe*). The overall INTEREURO sample comprises 125 proposals selected by means of a stratified random sample based on the type of legislative act and public salience.[2] From these proposals, I initially retained the 79 cases decided by codecision/OLP since the EP's role - and hence lobbying activity in this institution - is more limited under special legislative procedures.

Nine cases had to be excluded from the sample because the EP rapporteur in charge of the dossier was no longer an MEP in the seventh Parliament and it was not possible to arrange an interview with an alternative respondent. Similarly, for 30 cases my interview requests were refused due to time constraints by all the potential respondents approached. Three proposals were also excluded from the analysis after interviews with the rapporteurs' assistants revealed that no lobbying had taken place. Eight interviews did not yield sufficient data to be included in the final analysis. The final sample therefore comprises

[2]Directives and regulations were sampled separately by the INTEREURO project since a simple random sample would have resulted in the selection of few directives. The public salience of each proposal was coded by checking its media coverage in five news sources: *Agence Europe*, *European Voice*, *Financial Times*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Le Monde*. The project then retained a sample of 48 proposals for directives and 38 proposals for regulations that were mentioned in at least two newspapers. Nineteen randomly-selected proposals that had not met the public salience criterion were also added to the sample, together with all the remaining proposals for which public consultations had been held and consultation responses were available. This procedure resulted in a final INTEREURO sample comprising 64 proposals for directives and 61 proposals for regulations (Beyers et al., 2014).

29 legislative proposals (22 directives and 7 regulations) falling under the responsibility of 10 different EP committees. The majority of cases are drawn from the committees on: Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; Internal Market and Consumer Protection; Economic and Monetary Affairs; and Transport and Tourism.

Out of the 29 cases included in the analysis, 17 procedures were concluded at first reading, 9 at second reading, and one proposal was adopted at the conciliation stage. Two procedures were still ongoing at the time of writing, including a proposal blocked in the Council and likely to be withdrawn by the European Commission as a result.

3.2 Operationalization of lobbying success

I measure interest groups' success at three key stages of the parliamentary process: the adoption of the draft legislative report by the EP rapporteur, the final report tabled by the responsible committee at first reading, and the final legislative outcome issuing from the Plenary vote, regardless of whether the procedure concluded at first, second, or third reading.

Each proposal was first disaggregated into unidimensional policy issues that sparked conflict among stakeholders. To indentify the main issues raised by each proposal and the actors that expressed a position thereon, I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the rapporteurs responsible for the proposal (17 cases of the final sample), the rapporteur's assistant involved in the dossier (10 cases), and shadow rapporteurs (two cases).

Given its key role in steering a legislative proposal through Parliament, the rapporteur is the actor who has contact with most, if not all, stakeholders lobbying the EP on the respective proposal. The rapporteur also has detailed knowledge of the conflict dimensions characterising a proposal, as well as insights into the policy positions of other institutional actors. Similarly, their assistants are closely involved in the policy negotiations and often in charge of drafting the legislative report. Assistants have a good overview of the interest groups that participated in the legislative process since they are in charge of setting up every meeting between the MEP and stakeholders and often participate in such meetings themselves. Moreover, most written documents submitted by interest groups to the rapporteur pass via the assistant. The rapporteurs and their assistants are therefore

well-placed to provide information on the legislative process and actors' positions and I do not differentiate between the two actors in terms of the quality of responses provided.

For two cases where it was not possible to obtain an interview with the rapporteur or the assistant, an interview with the shadow rapporteur from the S&D group was conducted. Shadow rapporteurs are designated by the political groups to advise them on the proposal in question and to ensure that the group's position is taken into account by the main rapporteur when preparing the legislative report. As such, shadow rapporteurs have a role both in shaping the political group's position and in defending that position within the EP and in inter-institutional negotiations. Interest groups are aware of the need to secure support from the largest political groups and usually lobby the respective shadow rapporteurs in addition to the main rapporteur. The responses obtained from the shadow rapporteurs of a large political group can therefore be considered equivalent to those obtained from the main rapporteurs.

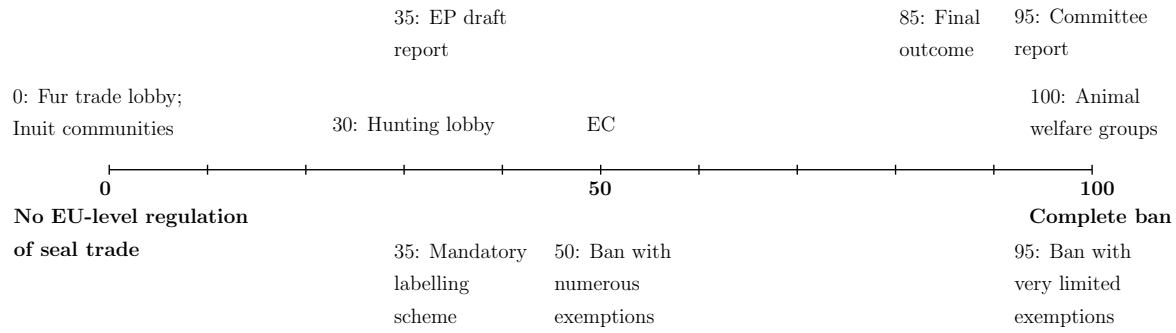
One limitation is that we must rely on the interviewees' ability to recollect interactions with stakeholders; some groups that lobbied the EP may simply be overlooked. Nevertheless, this approach allows us to identify most, if not all, of the groups that were highly active on a given dossier and gained access to the legislators. Conversely, we are filtering out groups that were less visible or sought access without gaining it, in order to explore under which conditions access translates into influence.

For a majority of cases, an interview with the Commission official responsible for the proposal was conducted by the INTEREURO team prior to the EP interview. The Commission official was asked to identify up to three distinct issues within the proposal on which there was disagreement between stakeholders and that involved at least one interest group. The EP respondents were subsequently presented with the issues identified by the Commission official and asked whether they agreed that those were the key issues when the proposal came to be considered in Parliament. The EP respondents could suggest alternative issues that they considered to have been more salient or add issues to the list. A total of 56 issues were identified with regard to the 29 proposals, including 22 issues that had been mentioned by the Commission interviewees.

Once the key issues within a proposal were established, most of the remaining questions were aimed at constructing a spatial model of the policy conflict in question, following the approach of Thomson (2011) and INTEREURO (Bernhagen et al., 2014). For each issue mentioned, the respondent was asked to identify the two actors (or sets of actors) that had

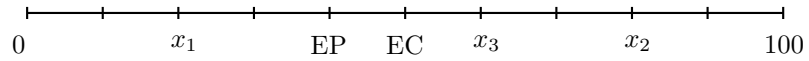
taken the most divergent policy positions. The policy alternatives favoured by these actors then defined the endpoints of a policy continuum ranging from 0 to 100 used to represent the issue. Next, the respondent was asked to name the other interest groups which had taken a position on the respective issue and to locate those positions on the same continuum. The interviewee was also asked to place on the continuum the position of the Commission and the Council majority at the start of the negotiations, as well as the position reflected in the draft legislative report, the committee report tabled at first reading, and the final outcome. Throughout this exercise, the respondent was also asked to give brief explanations of the actors' positions and justifications for the numerical estimates. An example of the spatial models resulting from the interviews (without specific group names) is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Should there be a ban on trade in seal products?



To measure success spatially, it is assumed that actors have single-peaked and symmetric preferences, i.e. an actor has only one ideal point on an issue and prefers an outcome that is closer to its ideal point to one that is further away from it (Bernhagen et al., 2014).

Based on the spatial models, a most basic approach to calculating success is to look at the absolute distance between an actor's ideal point and the decision-making outcome (Bernhagen et al., 2014). The closer an outcome is to an actor's ideal point, the more successful has the actor been in achieving its preferences. For example, denote by x_i the ideal point of interest group i on a given issue, EC the position of the European Commission as reflected in its legislative proposal, and EP the position of the Parliament (be it the draft report, the Committee report, or Plenary outcome):



The degree of success can be calculated as

$$s_i = 100 - |x_i - EP|.$$

However, a more accurate assessment of lobbying success should also take into account the starting point of the parliamentary negotiations, namely, the Commission proposal. Once the proposal is sent to the EP, the goal of lobbyists is to have the proposal amended in line with their preferences or to maintain unchanged the articles that already coincide with their preferred alternatives. In other words, we can define influence in the parliamentary arena as the extent to which groups succeed in shifting the Commission proposal towards, or maintaining it close to, their ideal point. This is not captured by the measure of absolute distances alone; in the example above, both x_1 and x_3 are 20 units away from the EP outcome, but x_1 'gained' 10 units relative to the Commission proposal, whereas x_3 'lost' 10.

To capture both the 'gains' or 'losses' relative to the proposal stage and the proximity to the EP outcome, I apply the following formula, adapted from Bernhagen et al. (2014, 208)[3]:

$$s_i = \frac{|x_i - EC| - |x_i - EP| + 100}{|x_i - EP| + 100}.$$

The policy positions' range (100) is added to the numerator to ensure that it is positive and 100 is added to the denominator to avoid divisions by 0 and large differences in success values between groups which are located very close to each other.

In the example above, x_1 obtains a slightly higher success value ($s_1 = 0.92$) than x_3 ($s_3 = 0.75$). Group x_2, which also loses 10 units but is located even further away from the outcome, has a lower success value ($s_2 = 0.64$).

The minimum value of 0 is obtained when the Commission proposal EC is identical to the group's position but the outcome is as far away as possible ($|x_i - EP| = 100$), i.e. the

[3]The original formula is identical to the one used here, except that it considers the reversion point (i.e. the situation that would have prevailed in the absence of agreement) instead of the EC proposal, and the final outcome instead of the EP position.

group has incurred the maximum possible loss. The maximum of 2 is attributed to groups located at the opposite end from the EC but whose position coincides with the EP, i.e. groups that have had the maximum possible gain. When EP, EC and x_i coincide, $s_i = 1$.

3.3 Explanatory and control variables

For each interest group identified as having taken a position on the given issue, the EP interviewee was asked to rate its importance as a source of 1) technical information and 2) political information on a scale from 0 to 4, where 0 was attributed to actors that had not supplied that type of information at all and 4 meant that the actor had been a very important source of information.[4] By asking decision-makers to assess how informative each group was, the measure captures not only the quantity of information supplied, but also its quality.

Very few interest groups identified in the interviews (3.4%) did not provide any technical information to the rapporteur, whereas about a third of the actors mentioned were deemed to have been a very important source of technical information. For political information, the mode is 0 and about a quarter of the groups mentioned were considered a very important source of political information by the interviewee.

As explained in the hypotheses section, at the individual group level, actors who provide little or no information to the EP may still be associated with high success levels if they benefit from the information-provision efforts of other groups pulling the proposal in the same direction.[5] Therefore, entering the individual groups' information scores into the

[4]The exact wording was: "Looking back at this proposal, who - among the non-state advocates you have mentioned, as well as the Committee Secretariat, European party groups, your national party, national governments, and Commission staff - do you consider to have been your most important sources of technical information? By technical information, we mean detailed information on the substance of the proposed policy, its technical feasibility, and likely consequences. Please indicate the importance of each source on a scale from 0 to 4, where: 0 = the actor did not provide such information at all; 1 = of low importance; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; 4 = very important." The question was then repeated for political information, defined as "information on the preferences of major stakeholders, public opinion, or potential resistance by certain actors." The ratings of institutional sources were used to gauge the extent of information demand, as explained below.

[5]Note that this may, but need not, imply 'free-riding' on the part of groups which provide little or no information *directly* to the EP. Interest groups may co-operate with one-another, pool their information resources, and transmit their expertise to the EP via one of the actors in an advocacy coalition. For

models would not generate an accurate picture of the impact of information. Hence, information supply is measured at the level of lobbying sides.

Since the goal of lobbying the EP is to maintain unchanged or to pull in a preferred direction the legislative proposal, lobbying sides were defined with reference to the position occupied by the Commission proposal in the policy space. Any issue could thus involve up to three sides: interest groups to the left of the Commission proposal, interest groups to its right, and interest groups whose position coincides with the proposal. However, on only two issues were three lobbying sides involved.

I posit that one highly informative group is sufficient to convince the rapporteur and other MEPs to pay heed to that group's preference in the legislative report. Accordingly, I attribute to a lobbying side the maximum information score of interest groups belonging to that side.[6] To measure the technical and political information advantage or disadvantage of a lobbying side relative to its opponents, I subtracted the information score of one side from that of the other. For issues where all policy advocates lobbied in the same direction, 0 was subtracted. The resulting value was then assigned to each of the actors on the respective side. The variable is treated as continuous in the statistical analyses. Political information values are missing for 17 observations in the dataset.

In a second set of models, I test whether the effect of information supply is moderated by information demand. The availability of information from other sources is used as an indicator of demand. I expect information supplied by interest groups to have a stronger effect when the rapporteur can rely on little information from alternative sources. The interviewed rapporteurs and assistants were asked to indicate the importance of five in-

example, when stating that she had not received any technical information directly from certain individual companies, a rapporteur added that the aforementioned companies had probably contributed to the information she received from the business association of which they were members. In other cases, however, a non-informative group may indeed be merely 'lucky' to find itself in proximity to a more informative group and enjoy favourable policy outcomes as a result. Groups sharing the same goal may be 'lobbying friends' who purposely co-operate in the advocacy game, or mere 'neighbours' on the policy space. The available data does not allow us to systematically distinguish between the two scenarios. This is another reason why I refer to *success*, rather than *influence*, in the present analysis.

[6]Klüver (2013) assumes that the information provided by the individual groups in a lobbying coalition is cumulative and therefore aggregates information supply at the coalition level. However, different groups may be supplying the same information; a small amount of information repeated by multiple sources would not necessarily have a higher value for the policy-maker than a higher amount of information transmitted by one source alone. Thus, I use the maximum value rather than the sum of individual scores.

stitutional sources of information they had at their disposal with regard to the legislative dossier in question, namely: the committee secretariat, EP political groups, the European Commission, their national party, and Member State governments. The question was posed separately with respect to technical and political information. The importance of each source was evaluated by the respondent on the same 0 to 4 scale applied to the interest groups identified as active on an issue. In addition, the interviewees could indicate (and rate on the 0-4 scale) any other actors that provided them with technical, respectively political, information. Few interviewees indicated such additional sources. Among the actors mentioned were scientific experts, the EP legal services, and international organisations. Since MEPs' demand for information from interest groups is assumed to be inversely related to the supply of information from alternative sources, technical information demand (*Tech. demand*) and political information demand (*Pol. demand*) were obtained by taking the median score across the five institutions and other actors mentioned, and then dichotomising this value, with demand being considered low (coded as 0) if median information supply from alternative sources was greater than or equal to 2 and high (coded as 1) otherwise.

A set of control variables are also included in the analysis. Firstly, the effect of actor type is controlled for. The existing literature is divided over the relative chances of success of business and non-business actors (cf. Dür and De Bièvre, 2007; Mahoney, 2007; Klüver, 2012; Dür et al., 2013; Kluger Rasmussen, 2012). In line with Dür et al. (2013), I distinguish between three types of organisations: business (comprising individual companies and business associations), citizen groups (defined in INTEREURO as associations whose members have a selective interest in group goals, or share a common sport or leisure, or whose members have no selective interest in group goals, but work for the protection of the environment, human rights, etc.), and other types of actor (including professional associations, labour unions, international organisations, think tanks, and foreign government actors). The group types were coded based on the organisations' websites and are included as dummy variables in the analysis, with business as the reference category.

The variable *Staff* – representing the number of full-time equivalent employees engaged in activities related to interest representation at EU level – is included as a proxy for resources allocated to EU policy advocacy. For a majority of groups in the dataset, staff numbers were obtained from the European Transparency Register (ETR). Organisations that had not registered in the ETR were contacted directly and asked for this information.

Nevertheless, it was not possible to obtain this data for 14 unique actors in the dataset; consequently, 16 observations are omitted from the analysis when this variable is included in the models.

Since the final outcome is the result of negotiations with the Council, I also control for the distance between an interest group's ideal point and the Council's position in models estimating success at this stage of decision-making. Data on the Council's position is, however, missing for 33 observations.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for these variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Median	Max
Success (Draft Report)	298	0.96	0.52	0	1	2
Success (Committee Report)	298	0.83	0.55	0	0.74	2
Success (Final Outcome)	272	0.78	0.51	0	0.67	2
Tech. Info	298	1.20	1.65	−3	0	4
Pol. Info	281	0.70	1.38	−3	0	4
Business	298	0.50		0	0.50	1
Citizen group	298	0.32		0	0	1
Other actor	298	0.18		0	0	1
Staff	282	10.35	9.45	0.40	7	69
Dist. Council	265	57.54	40.39	0	60	100
Tech. Demand	298	0.28		0	0	1
Pol. Demand	284	0.48		0	0	1

4 Empirical Analysis

In order to take into account the fact that interest groups are nested in policy issues, I estimate multilevel linear models with random intercepts at the issue level. Since technical and political information supply are highly correlated ($r = 0.76$), I estimate separate models including each of the two information variables. The results are summarised in Table 2. Models denoted with the letter *a* include technical information, whereas those marked with

b test the effect of political information. The two model specifications are applied, in turn, to success at the draft report stage, success in committee, and success in terms of the final outcome.

The results provide support for the first hypothesis; a group's technical information advantage relative to its opponents has a significant positive effect on success across all three stages of the parliamentary process. At the draft report stage, a one-unit increase in the relative supply of technical information increases an actor's success by 0.146 units (on the 0 to 2 scale). In the models estimating success in committee and in Plenary, success increases by 0.114 and 0.085, respectively, for every one-unit increase in relative technical information supply. The provision of political information has the expected effect at the draft report stage; for every additional unit of relative political information, a group's success increases by 0.063. However, its effect is not statistically significant at the two subsequent stages of decision-making.

At the draft report stage and in Committee, citizen groups and other actors turn out more successful than groups representing business. This suggests that the EP is still "a champion of the environment, consumers, women, and other diffuse but electorally popular causes" (Pollack, 1997, 581), but may also be attributable to the fact that the EP and citizen groups generally share a preference for more regulation or further integration.

The number of staff involved in EU affairs, taken as a proxy for lobbying resources, does not affect success levels in any of the model specifications. As expected, the higher the distance between an interest group's ideal point and the Council, the lower its preference attainment regarding the final outcome.[7]

Hypotheses 3 and 4 suggest that the effect of information supply on success levels varies with the level of information demand. The effect of interest groups' informational advantage was expected to be stronger, the lower the supply of information from in-house sources and other institutions. Accordingly, the models presented in Table 3 include an interaction term between technical information supply and technical information demand, and between political information supply and political information demand.

[7]As a robustness check, I estimated a second set of models with the dependent variable *Success* calculated as the absolute distance between an actor's position x_i and the decision-making outcome EP: $s_i = 100 - |x_i - EP|$. The results are largely similar to those described above. The only notable differences are that the effect of political information at the draft report stage is no longer significant and the effect of being in the category *Other* is also significant in the two models estimating success over final outcomes.

Table 2: Statistical Analysis (I)

	Draft		Committee		Final	
	M1a	M1b	M2a	M2b	M3a	M3b
(Intercept)	0.658***	0.781***	0.579***	0.667***	0.965***	1.017***
	(0.066)	(0.064)	(0.076)	(0.072)	(0.086)	(0.089)
Tech. info	0.146***		0.114***		0.085**	
	(0.024)		(0.028)		(0.028)	
Pol. info		0.063*		0.030		0.008
		(0.025)		(0.028)		(0.040)
Citizen group	0.141**	0.220***	0.149*	0.279***	−0.005	0.093
	(0.054)	(0.057)	(0.060)	(0.062)	(0.067)	(0.071)
Other	0.172*	0.235**	0.169*	0.267**	0.064	0.143
	(0.071)	(0.073)	(0.080)	(0.080)	(0.084)	(0.084)
Staff	0.004	0.002	0.004	0.001	0.001	−0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Dist. Council					−0.005***	−0.004***
					(0.001)	(0.001)
AIC	265.193	254.772	334.772	305.422	230.379	209.046
BIC	290.686	279.856	360.265	330.507	257.778	235.861
Log Likelihood	-125.596	-120.386	-160.386	-145.711	-107.189	-96.523
Observations	282	266	282	266	227	211
No. of issues	56	53	56	53	45	42
Variance (Issue)	0.111	0.109	0.152	0.143	0.134	0.138

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table 3: Statistical Analysis (II): Interaction Effects

	Draft		Committee		Final	
	M4a	M4b	M5a	M5b	M6a	M6b
(Intercept)	0.644***	0.727***	0.543***	0.658***	0.941***	0.995***
	(0.076)	(0.083)	(0.089)	(0.095)	(0.100)	(0.126)
Tech. info	0.178***		0.139***		0.132***	
	(0.030)		(0.035)		(0.036)	
Tech. demand	0.056		0.119		0.136	
	(0.124)		(0.146)		(0.158)	
Tech.info*Tech.demand	−0.097		−0.071		−0.124*	
	(0.053)		(0.061)		(0.063)	
Pol. info		0.078*		0.001		0.011
		(0.031)		(0.035)		(0.056)
Pol. demand		0.106		0.019		0.037
		(0.109)		(0.125)		(0.151)
Pol.info*Pol.demand		−0.029		0.096		0.002
		(0.054)		(0.059)		(0.084)
Citizen group	0.109	0.220***	0.131*	0.284***	−0.029	0.093
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.064)	(0.062)	(0.068)	(0.071)
Other	0.143	0.236**	0.155	0.267***	0.045	0.144
	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.082)	(0.080)	(0.084)	(0.085)
Staff	0.004	0.002	0.004	0.002	0.000	−0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Dist. Council					−0.006***	−0.004***
					(0.001)	(0.001)
AIC	265.529	257.765	337.292	306.190	230.361	212.955
BIC	298.306	290.017	370.070	338.442	264.611	246.474
Log Likelihood	-123.765	-119.883	-159.646	-144.095	-105.181	-96.478
Observations	282	266	282	266	227	211
No. of issues	56	53	56	53	45	42
Variance (Issue)	0.108	0.105	0.155	0.144	0.137	0.137

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$

This expectation is not confirmed in any of the models. The interaction between technical information supply and demand does not attain statistical significance in models estimating success at the draft and committee stages, and has a counterintuitive significant effect with regard to the final outcome: technical information supply has a positive effect on success, but this effect appears to be weaker when the availability of information from alternative sources is low. The demand for political information does not moderate the effect of political information supply at any of the three stages. These results could reflect the inadequacy of this indicator as a measure of demand; the provision of information by institutional actors such as the Commission and EP secretariat might not diminish MEPs' responsiveness to information from interest groups. For example, the expertise interest groups provide may be different from the information rapporteurs receive from institutional sources, which would explain the absence of an interaction effect at the draft and committee stages. The negative effect observed in Model 6a could be attributable to the higher credibility decision-makers place on interest groups' technical information when they already have some information of their own allowing them to assess the validity of lobbyists' claims. At this stage, the information interest groups provided to the rapporteur and committee members comes under scrutiny from other MEPs, as well as the Council. If information from other sources (such as the Commission, national governments, political groups) is available, decision-makers can assess the evidence received from interest groups in light of the information they already possessed. Conversely, if there is little institutional information, MEPs and Member States take with caution the information supplied by interest groups, hence its effect on success levels is weaker than in the former scenario.

5 Conclusions

The European Parliament has become an important target for groups seeking to influence EU policy. However, little empirical evidence exists regarding the determinants of lobbying success in this institution. This paper has addressed this gap by examining interest goups' positions, their information supply, and parliamentary outcomes on 56 policy issues decided by codecision/OLP. The results indicate that interest groups' preference attainment in the EP is partly attributable to the technical information advantage of their lobbying side relative to their opponents. The rapporteur's draft report, the committee report, and the final plenary outcome tend to reflect the preferences of actors who provide more technical

information to the EP. This confirms the importance of evidence-based decision-making in the EP, as well as interest groups' positive contribution to the policy-making process through the provision of expertise.

By contrast, the provision of political information was found to affect success levels only at the draft report stage, and the size of its effect was lower than that of technical information supply. This might be explained by the fact that the electoral link to the public is relatively weak in the case of the EP, rendering information on public opinion and constituency support of little value to MEPs. More likely, the lower importance of political information in securing success may be due to the nature of the policy issues under consideration. A large majority of the issues included in this dataset are regulatory. Hence, the data does not allow us to verify the proposition that the relative importance of technical and political information depends on the type of issue being decided upon (Coen and Katsaitis, 2013). The provision of political information might in fact make a considerable difference for success with regard to issues that are (re)distributive and less technical in nature.

Contrary to the theoretical expectation, the availability of technical information from alternative sources does not influence the effect of interest groups' information supply at the draft report and committee stages. This might in fact reflect the inadequacy of this indicator as a measure of information demand. Regarding success over final outcomes, the effect of technical information supply appears to be weaker when the availability of such information from other sources is low. Arguably, this could imply that decision-makers are more reluctant to act on information received from interest groups when they do not have sufficient information from other sources to evaluate the interest groups' claims. Further research should consider the effect of other demand-side factors, such as the dossier's complexity and other issue characteristics.

The analyses of success at the draft report stage and in committee also show that groups representing business are, on average, at a disadvantage compared to citizen groups and other types of actors. In addition, the number of staff working on EU affairs - taken as an indicator of resources allocated to lobbying - does not affect groups' success levels. These findings suggest that the EP is not biased in favour of business or groups endowed with more material resources.

Since we cannot know what the outcome would have been in the absence of lobbying by a particular interest group, this study speaks of lobbying *success* or *preference attainment*

rather than *influence*. For example, it is unclear whether citizen groups manage to shift an outcome in their preferred direction, or turn out successful by merely sharing the EP's preference (generally, in favour of more regulation or integration) in a majority of cases. Nevertheless, in the case of information supply we can be more certain that influence is at play: if information displays a significant effect on preference attainment, this suggests that the information provided by a lobbying side helped ensure that its recommendations were taken into account by MEPs. However, since information supply was measured at the level of lobbying sides, some actors may have been simply 'lucky' to succeed due to the efforts of more informative like-minded advocates. Moreover, the present study does not elucidate which causal mechanism - persuasion or 'subsidising' the work of like-minded legislators - translates information into influence. Future research should address these issues, as well as account for other potential determinants of lobbying success.

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