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You Have Got Mail! How Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations Shape Constituency Service in the European Parliament[1]

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Abstract
For representative democracy to work, legislators need to be responsive to the concerns of citizens. One way in which this can be achieved is through constituency service. Two factors drive constituency service: extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Research to date suggests that extrinsic motivations are crucial for constituency service. Yet, this evidence stems primarily from the US context characterized by a personal ballot structure and campaign content which may bias findings in favor of extrinsic motivations. We present evidence from the first ever field experiment conducted in the European Parliament (EP) in which we vary both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivations of legislators. What is more, we are able to examine the way in which intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact, an aspect largely ignored in the literature. Our findings suggest that while intrinsic motivations matter most for constituency service in the EP, they are dampened by the presence of extrinsic motivations.

Word Count: 9998 words

[1] The authors would like to thank Eirk Loning for his excellent research assistance as well as many academic colleagues who aided in translating voter messages and legislator responses in 28 languages. Moreover, they would like to thank David Farrell, Simon Hix and Roger Scully for sharing their 2010 survey data as well as Simon Hix and Bjørn Høyland for sharing data on the background characteristics of the members of 2009-2014 European Parliament with us. Finally, they are grateful to Dan Butler, Ed Fieldhouse, Don Green, Christian Grose, Sara Hobolt, Sara Hagemann, Chris Jensen, Peter John, Mark Kayser, Heike Kluever, Peter Loewen, Jon Slapin, Chris Wlezien for their comments on previous drafts of the paper.

Responsiveness to voter needs and preferences is an important part of legislators' activities (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987). Yet, legislators can only represent voter preferences when they are aware of them, or put differently "the constituency that a representative reacts to is the constituency that he or she sees" (Fenno 1978: 883). The notion that legislators know the preferences of their constituents underlies most classical theories of political representation. Surprisingly, however, recent research suggests that in today's world of constant information and professional polling, legislators often know only very little about voter preferences and what they do seem to know is often biased (Butler and Broockman 2011, Butler and Nickerson 2011, Broockman and Skovron 2013). Incomplete information about voter preferences has important consequences for political representation. A study by Butler and Nickerson (2011) suggests that providing legislators with more information about voter preferences makes them more likely to vote in line with constituents while work by Grose (2010) shows that information even increases participation rates in roll-call voting. Taking together this recent evidence suggests that information about constituency preferences matters a lot for shaping legislative behaviour.

This raises the question of when legislators are likely to be responsive to information from their constituents. The literature provides two different answers to this question (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1984, Searing 1985a, 1985b, see also Grose 2014). One body of work suggests that legislator responsiveness is primarily driven by *extrinsic motivations* (Fenno 1978, Mayhew 1974, Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, more recently see Grose 2010, Butler and Nickerson 2011, Dropp and Peskowitz 2012). Extrinsic motivation refers to a tendency for individuals to perform activities based on the anticipation of external rewards (Deci and Ryan 2000: 60). Legislators are expected to first and foremost be vote seekers and respond to voters when they think this will increase their changes to be re-elected. Another body of work points out that responsiveness of legislators may be largely driven by *intrinsic motivations* (Searing 1985a, 1985b, Norris 1997, more recently see Butler and Broockman 2011, Broockman, 2013). Intrinsic motivation refers to behavior that is driven by an internal desire to act rather than for some separable consequence (Deci and Ryan 2000: 56). Applying this to legislator responsiveness, legislators are expected to be responsive based on an internal desire to connect to voters, a sense of duty or because they derive satisfaction from constituency service. The debate about which motivations drive constituency service has made a revival in recent years as researchers started conducting field experiments in which simple constituency service requests were sent to legislators via email or letters (for a discussion see Butler 2014, chapter 3 or Grose 2014). Most of this recent

field experimental evidence stems from the US context characterized by a highly personalised ballot and campaign environment, an environment that makes constituency service crucially important for securing re-election. This case selection may bias evidence in favor of extrinsic motivations (for an overview of the work see Grose 2014: 364-66).

This study adds to the existing body of work by exploring the degree to which intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of legislators matter for constituency service. It does so by providing evidence from the first ever field experiment conducted with members of the European Parliament (EP). The EP is the only directly elected institution in the European Union (EU) and home to over 766 legislators from 28 different countries that represent almost 500 million eligible voters. There are several reasons to revisit legislator responsiveness and the role of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations and in the context of the EP. First, the EP provides us with a "laboratory setting" to examine the role of extrinsic motivations as its members are elected under a variety of electoral rules. The EP is a unique legislature in that each member state of the EU is allowed to adopt its own electoral rules and thus members of the same parliament are elected for the same time-span while facing starkly different electoral incentives to be responsive (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007).

Second, our results have a bearing on the debate about the democratic deficiencies of EU politics (Moravcsik 2002, Føllesdal and Hix 2006). Over the past decade the EU has invested enormous efforts in making its institutions "more democratic and transparent" (see Treaty of Lisbon, 2009). In doing so EU officials aimed to combat claims that European politics suffers from a democratic deficit, which commonly refers to a perceived lack of accessibility of institutions to European citizens and a lack of political accountability (Rohrschneider 2002, Hobolt, 2012, Hobolt and Tilly 2014). Against this background, it is interesting to explore constituency service in the EP as well as the role of intrinsic motivations.

Third, we currently have a very limited understanding about the way in which intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact. Especially social psychologists (such as Deci, 1975, Wilson, Hull and Johnson 1981) and increasingly behavioural economists (such as Fehr and Falk 1999, Gneezy and Rustichini 2000) demonstrate that extrinsic motivations "crowd out" intrinsic motivations. The presence of external rewards shifts the justification for an action from an internal desire to perform to an external one, something that is coined the *overjustification effect* (Leppner, Greene and Nisbett 1973). Our experiment allows for an examination of this effect in the context of legislator behaviour.

Finally, the responsiveness of legislators to voters through email or other online activity deserves

attention in its own right. Survey evidence suggests that MEPs find it extremely important to be in contact with ordinary voters, 75.1 percent of MEPs claim this to be one of their most important aspects of their work, and 81.8 percent of MEPs consider online and email activity crucial to do so (Farrell, Hix and Scully 2010). Although we lack official statistics on the number of email or tweet messages MEPs receive, it seems fair to assume that responding to voter messages online is an important way in which members can communicate directly to their constituents.[2] Evidence from the US context suggests that members of Congress indeed receive an enormous amount of emails and letters, 200 million in 2004 alone for example, and that they respond to these messages seriously by spending time and staff resources to do so (Fitch and Goldschmidt 2005). Consequently, exploring the degree to which EP legislators are willing to respond to voter messages is crucial for assessing the representative links between MEPs and voters in a way that avoids possible problems of social desirability bias associated with surveys.

We conducted a field experiment in which short, simple constituency service requests were sent via email from voters from the 28 different member states to an MEP from their own country. The content of the messages were randomized in terms of the voters' concerns raised which allows us to get at the intrinsic motivations of legislators. Extrinsic motivations were captured by comparing response rates of MEPs from different member states who face re-election or not under vastly different electoral rules. Specifically, we ask three questions. First, do legislators respond to voter messages? Second, to what extent can intrinsic and extrinsic motivations account for the variation in constituency service? And finally, how do intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact?

Our results indicate that compared to US legislators responsiveness within the EP is rather modest with roughly 28 percent of MEPs responding to voter messages while on average roughly 50 percent of US local, state or congress representatives respond (see for example Butler and Broockman 2011, Faller, Nathan and White 2014). This might not be entirely surprising given that the personalised ballot and campaign context in the US should trigger extrinsic motivations more than PR elections within the EU where often parties rather than candidates dominate the campaign. On average therefore constituency service should carry less weight for EU legislators compared to their US counterparts, and this is indeed what we find.

[2] From media reports about the number of emails MEP receive in response to specific legislation they propose or reports they write, we know that the volume of voter email messages is large. For example, Portuguese Social Democrat MEP Edite Estrela received over 200.000 emails in December 2013 about her report on the sexual and reproductive rights of women (https://euobserver.com/justice/123001 accessed 05.02.15).

Second, our results indicate that intrinsic motivations seem to matter most for responsiveness. This finding is in line with the idea that the possible electoral returns for constituency service are lower in the EP compared to the US due to weaker constituency ties. Indeed, we also show that a response in our experiment did not make re-lection in the subsequent May 2014 EP election more or less likely. Third, our findings suggest that extrinsic motivations matter in that they partly crowd out intrinsic motivations to be responsive. Intrinsic motivations matter less when the electoral incentives to be responsive are high. These findings present important new insights about how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations may matter for legislator responsiveness, how both sets of motivations interact as well as for the popular debate about the possible democratic deficit in EU politics.

We proceed as follows. First, we discuss the importance of studying legislator responsiveness and present our theoretical conjectures. Next, we introduce our experimental design and the ethical considerations involved in this study. Finally, we present our results and discuss their implications for the study of legislator responsiveness generally and representation in the EP specifically.

The Role of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations in Constituency Service

What drives legislators to be responsive voters? Why do legislators spend hours of valuable time to respond to voters' emails or letters, listen to their complaints or reach out to them using via social media? In their seminal work on the topic, Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1984) suggest that legislators do it largely for the votes. Electoral incentives play a major role in all aspects of legislator behavior, including constituency service (Fenno 1977, Mayhew 1974). This explanation of constituency service is challenged by authors who suggest that although electoral incentives might be present, constituency service is better explained by internal motivations of legislators, such as a sense of duty or level of inner satisfaction (Searing 1985a, 1985b, Norris 1997). These two sets of explanations are representative of a much larger debate amongst psychologists and economists about which motivations drive human behavior: *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* ones (see Deci and Ryan 2000, Bénabou and Tirole 2003). Activity based on intrinsic motivation refers to behavior that is driven by internal rewards and an innate desire to fulfil psychological needs such as competence or a desire for relatedness. An intrinsic motivation to engage in an activity originates from inside the individual in order to enhance personal satisfaction or fulfilment (see White 1959, Deci and Ryan 2000). Legislators may wish to respond to voters based on internal norms and beliefs that this is how a legislator is

supposed to act or with the aim of achieving some degree of job satisfaction (Searing 1985a, 1985b, Norris 1997). This contrasts with activities based on extrinsic motivations. These are driven by instrumental considerations and the prospect of external rewards or punishments. Extrinsic motivation relates to reasons to act in order to attain some separable outcome (Deci and Ryan 2000). Applied to legislator responsiveness, legislators are expected to respond to voters because it may enhance their chances of re-election would constitute extrinsic motivations for response (Mayhew 1974, Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1984, 1987).

Both sets of motivations refer to two different ideas about the nature of legislative activity. A large body of empirical work suggests that electoral incentives are crucial for understanding legislators' roll-call voting and other legislative activity (Kousser, Lewis, and Masket 2007, Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987). Especially responding to voter queries may be one of the easiest ways for legislators to connect to voters, cultivate a personal vote and enhance their reputations and electoral prospects (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987). In their classical study on the US and the UK, Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1987: 213-4) suggest that especially in marginal districts legislator responsiveness is primarily driven by electoral incentives. Echoing this conclusion, recent experimental evidence by Dropp and Peskowitz (2012) from the Texas state legislature suggests that electoral incentives affect legislators' provision of legislative public goods and increases the number of bills legislators author.

Other work suggests that legislative activity might also be intrinsically motivated. Studies of representation have demonstrated that legislators' beliefs, role perceptions or personal backgrounds are important for understanding their legislative activities (see for example Searing 1985a, 1985b, Norris 1997Miller and Stokes 1963). Surely, intrinsic motivations are extremely difficult to capture as they refer to motivations that originate within the individual (see Deci and Ryan 2000, Bénabou and Tirole 2003). An intrinsic motivation to engage in an activity originates from inside the individual in order to enhance personal satisfaction or fulfilment based on feelings of duty and competence or a desire for relatedness (see White 1959, Deci and Ryan 2000). Recently, some authors have conceptualized intrinsic motivations as those relating to an expression of group norms based on theories of descriptive representation (Butler and Broockman 2011, Broocknman, 2013, Faller, Nathan and White 2014). The idea is that politicians act on the basis of internal norms and beliefs and with their activities aim to demonstrate certain group loyalties or compliance to certain group norms (see also Mansbridge 1999). For example, female legislators might be more responsive to appeals to women's interests due to a belief in gender equality. Yet, the crux in deciding

that motivations are intrinsic is that actors perform a task in the *absence* of external rewards or punishment (Bénabou and Tirole 2003). Recent experimental work from the US context aims to capture this contrast by demonstrating that non-black state legislators in the US are less likely to respond to requests of black constituents compared to others even when constituents are not from their own district (Broockman 2013). If a legislator is equally responsive to messages of voters residing within her district compared to outside, the behaviour of this legislator can be characterized as intrinsically motivated as only in-district voters can affect her re-election prospects. Yet, one could imagine that it could still well be the case that these black legislators are more responsive to black constituents' interests even when these constituents do not reside in their district due to extrinsic motivations. For example because responding more to black constituent interests could help secure donations of sympathetic donors or spill over to their district and help secure the 'black vote'. Ideally, we would be able to vary both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations in one and the same experiment whilst at the same explore the interaction between the two sets of motivations. Our field experiment within the EP aims to do exactly that.

Experimental Design and Expectations

We conduct a field experiment to examine if and how European legislators respond to short, simple constituency service requests via email (see for a similar design in the US context, Butler 2014). In our experiment voters from the 28 different member states send an email in their respective language to a MEP from their country. The voters were nationals from 28 member states who were all eligible to vote in the May 2014 EP election. Voters volunteered to participate in this experiment and received 10 pounds to compensate their time. The experiment was conducted on the 29th of November 2013 at several universities in different EU member states to ensure the inclusion of voters from 28 different nationalities. All emails were sent on the same day within a three hour period from personal Gmail accounts at six different locations: University of Oxford, University of Nottingham, the European University Institute, the University of Southern Denmark and the University of Tartuu. All the 766 members of the 7th European Parliament (2009-2014) received one email message. Responsiveness is captured through whether the MEP responded within a four weeks period excluding the holiday season (until the 10th of January 2014).[3] Two things are important to note in this

[3] Some readers may object that what we are capturing here is not the response of the MEP per se, but rather a response from her staff. We found that in a third of response cases it was indeed the MEP assistants who responded on behalf of the MEP. We believe that this

respect. First, when we measure whether a legislator responds, we need to also consider the quality of the response (see Butler 2014). This means that we do not include automatically generated responses, but only messages that present a content-based response to voter requests. In the case of an MEP first sending an automatic reply, but subsequently providing a response to the concerns raised by the voter, we count this second content response as a response. Second, it is important to point out that election campaigns in the European context are rather short compared to what one might be used to in the US. This is important as timing the experiment within the context of an election campaign might bias our study in favour of extrinsic motivations. The start of the 2014 EP election campaign was not until late March or early April as the leading candidates and manifestos of the key parliamentary groups were not officially ratified until the beginning of March 2014, a considerable time after our experiment was conducted.[4]

How do we operationalize extrinsic and intrinsic motivations? With respect to the former, we employ two measures. First, we identify those MEPs who are up for re-election in the 2014 election. Re-election is expected to increase extrinsic motivations for constituency service. Second, we utilize a unique feature of the EP, namely that its members are elected under different electoral rules (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007). Each of 28 EU member states decide on their own electoral rules as long as it is a form of proportional representation (PR). While some countries employ closed list systems where parties present lists of candidates and voters can only choose between parties (for example in France, Greece, Italy, Romania or the UK), other countries employ open list systems where voters express candidate preferences (for example in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands or Slovenia). This distinctive feature of the EP allows us to study the effect of electoral incentives on constituency service. Specifically, we expect that open- and closed-list PR systems create different types of incentives for legislators (see Carey and Shugart 1995, Chang 2005). While open list systems foster both inter- and intra-party competition, closed list systems promote mainly inter-party competition as voters have no influence on which candidate gets elected from the party list in these systems (Carey and Shugart 1995). As a result, open list systems are empirically associated with more private membership bills (Bräuniger, Brunner and Däubler 2012), personal vote (Carey

captures legislator responsiveness nonetheless. Even if the responses come from staff, the results of our experiment still provide important insights into constituency service because the responses are made on behalf of the public official. What is more, elected officials rely on staff in many aspects of their work and if they instruct their staff to pay close attention to voter requests, it tells us something about their legislative priorities.

[4] For example the winner of the 2014 EP election, the European People's Party, chose its leading candidate Jean-Claude Junker and adopted its electoral manifesto not until 6-7 of March during their party congress in Dublin (see http://www.epp.eu/6-7-march-epp-hold-congress-dublin-heads-state-and-government-2000-participants-process-select-epp accessed 1/4/15).

and Shugart 1995) and intra-party defections (Hix 2004). Against this backdrop, we expect legislators who are up for re-election in in open list systems to be more responsive to voter messages compared to those within closed list systems as the electoral incentives to respond so are higher. Only in open list contexts can MEPs realistically expect to be rewarded for their constituency service as voters can express their candidate preferences. We also interact our two measures, open versus closed list and up for re-election or not, to generate variation in the intensity of extrinsic motivations that MEPs might face.

In order to capture intrinsic motivations for constituency service, we vary the message content. Specifically, the content of the messages is randomized in terms of the issues voters raised: public debt versus social expenditure and Europe versus national concerns. In total our experiment consisted of four treatment conditions: 1) a social inequality-national message, 2) a social inequality-EU message, 3) a public debt-national message and 4) a public debt-EU message. The text of email is presented in the box below and the words that are underlined reflect the different treatment conditions.

Dear *[Name of MEP],*

My name is *[Name of Voter]*. I am trying to decide who to vote for in the upcoming EP elections and would like to get some more information. I am well aware that there are many challenges that face us today, but I am particularly worried about the growing social inequality/ public debt in the UK/ EU. I think that the Cameron Government/ Barroso Commission should do something about it. For example, it should increase social expenditure/ tighten the budget in the coming years. I would like to know if you have taken any actions to do so recently or if you have plans to do so in the future. Thank you very much in advance.

Best wishes,

[Name of Voter]

We randomly assigned each MEP to one of these different treatment groups with block randomization on left/right ideology. Half of either the left-wing or right-wing MEPs received a public debt message and the other half a social inequality message. The content of the message captures the two-

dimensional nature of party and electoral in the EP. Competition in the EP although dominated by left/right considerations is two-dimensional in nature consisting of: 1) a pro/anti state intervention in the economy, and 2) a pro/anti pooling of more national competences to the EU level dimension (Hix, Noury and Roland 2007). Varying the voter messages in terms of social inequality and public debt captures the first dimension while the references to the level of government relate to the second.

The distinctive feature of intrinsic motivations is that the actor should perform an action in absence of any external reward or punishment (Bénabou and Tirole 2003).[5] Given that intrinsic motivations are based on internal rewards they are very difficult to capture. Here we capture intrinsic motivations for constituency service by exploring the bias in response rates due to message content, i.e. public debt/inequality and EU/national, which was randomized. If constituency service is intrinsically motivated, we expect legislators to display no bias due to message content. In other words, MEPs should respond equally to all voter constituency service requests regardless of the specific concerns being raised. If MEPs respond based on intrinsic motivations, they respond based on an internal reward, a sense of duty or satisfaction, so they should not strategically select which voter messages to respond to and which to ignore. Conversely, when strategic motivations drive legislators' responsiveness to voter concerns, we would expect to find a bias in response rates based on the message content. As Butler (2014:12-15) suggests legislators have limited resources, such as time, money, staff or cognitive ability, to shape their activities and priorities. As a result, legislators who engage in constituency service based on the prospect of some external electoral reward, will "strategically concentrate their efforts in areas yielding the greatest electoral return while expending the least amount of effort." (Butler 2014: 13) That is to say, MEPs who are extrinsically motivated will strategically pick to be responsive to voters' concerns that take the least possible effort. Responding to voter messages that are closest to legislators' own legislative activities and priorities about which they have the most information readily available will take up much less time and effort than responding to those that are further

[5] A recent study by Broockman (2013) aims to capture this idea by manipulating the district from which the voter who sends the message resides. One set of messages stem from voters within the district of the legislator whilst another set is from voters residing outside the legislator's district. If a legislator is equally responsive to messages of voters residing within her district compared to outside, the behaviour of this legislator can be characterized as intrinsically motivated as only in-district voters can affect her re-election prospects. Within this study we could not realistically vary the district from which voter messages originate as a means to distinguish intrinsic from extrinsic motivations as this would almost always imply changing the language in voter messages are written. As such one would not be able to disentangle intrinsic motivations from differences in response due to language. Moreover, we maintain that responding due to intrinsic motivations does not need to be a result of being more responsive to voters with whom one shares a group identity. One could imagine that black legislators in the US context were more responsive to black constituents' interests even when these constituents do not reside in their district due to extrinsic motivations. Responding more to black constituent interests could help secure donations of sympathetic donors or spill over to their district and help secure the 'black vote'.

removed. As a result, if extrinsic motivations guide constituency service we would expect MEPs display bias in their responses based on message content and respond more often to messages that coincide with their own policy priorities and activities.[6] If we find no bias based on message content, this indicates that response to voters' constituency service requests is most likely the result of MEPs intrinsic motivations.

Finally, our field experiment does not only allow us to examine how varying degrees of extrinsic as well as intrinsic motivations shape constituency service, but also how these two sets of motivations interact. Especially social psychologists (such as Deci, 1975, Wilson, Hull and Johnson 1981) but also behavioural economists (such as Fehr and Falk 1999, Gneezy and Rustichini 2000) demonstrate that extrinsic motivations "crowd out" intrinsic motivations. The presence of external rewards may shift the justification for an action from an internal desire to perform to an external one. This is coined the *overjustification effect* (Leppner, Greene and Nisbett 1973). Indeed, a substantial body of experimental evidence suggests that the presence of external rewards or punishments can sometimes be in conflict with intrinsic motivation. In what is now a classical social-psychological experiment Deci (1975) shows that college students who were paid to work on an interesting puzzle worked significantly less often than those students who did not receive a reward. This finding has been substantiated in many other contexts and most importantly for us also in the political realm. In a study on Switzerland, behavioural economists Frey and Oberholzer-Gee (1997) surveyed ordinary citizens in Swiss cantons where the government was considering to locate a nuclear waste repository. Their findings demonstrate that the proportion of respondents who were willing to support such a repository in their own community was halved when a public compensation was offered. Against this backdrop, we expect that intrinsic motivations to respond to voters decrease as the extrinsic motivations to do so increase. In the context of our experiment, we would find evidence for extrinsic motivations crowding out intrinsic ones if the differences in response rates based on message content are greater for MEPs who face higher electoral incentives, who are up for re-election in open list systems, compared to those of MEPs facing lower electoral incentives who run in closed list systems. If this is the case, it would indicate that MEPs who face higher electoral incentives display more bias in their response to specific voter concerns compared to MEPs facing lower electoral incentives. More bias indicates that performing the act of

[6] One objection here could be that the content of the message might prompt MEPs of opposing ideological views to be more responsive in order to convince the sender of an alternative viewpoint. This could also be evidence of extrinsic motivations. This expectation, however promising it may sound, finds little empirical support in the data. We hand-coded the content of each reply received to capture if the reply was either generic in nature, in line with issues raised in the email message, or aimed at trying to convince the sender of an alternative view. Our findings indicate that roughly 95 percent of all replies were either generic in nature or in line with the issues raised in the email (see Table A.1 in the Supporting Information).

responding is most likely not due to an internal motivation to respond, but due to the possibility of an external electoral reward.

Ethical Considerations

Our experiment was ethically approved by the Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford (C1A13-278). In every field experiment there were many ethical concerns to consider in terms of the design of the study and its implications for future work. First, field experiments should ideally aim to avoid deception. Although some previous studies on legislator responsiveness use emails with fake aliases (see for example Broockman 2013, Carnes and Holbein, 2013), scholars have raised concerns about deliberately deceiving legislators (see Butler, Karpowitz and Pope 2012 for example). A study by Butler and colleagues (2012) uses a research design that avoids deception in that it uses real voters (college students who were eligible to vote for the legislators in the study) who sent letters to their own legislators. We decided to follow a similar experimental set-up compared to Butler, Karpowitz and Pope (2012) in order to avoid deception. We designed a truthful experiment in which real voters registered and eligible to vote in the 2014 EP elections send emails to their MEPs. These voters participated on a voluntary basis using their own names. In addition, they were free to communicate further via email (or otherwise) with the MEP they contacted, but asked not to disclose the fact that the initial email was part of an experiment. By using real voters we do not have to invent aliases and mislead elected representatives. As Dickson (2011) suggests there is a real difference between withholding information from and actively deceiving subjects, our approach withholds but does not deceive. Using real actual voters that write to MEPs of their country about real problems they face is of course much more demanding in terms of organisation, yet it does not jeopardize the use of field experiments in tackling important societal issues like legislator responsiveness that fake emails with false aliases would. This is important, as we do not wish to aggravate MEPs.

In addition, our study aims to minimize any harm to our study participants as our experimental database does not include any information that could identify individual MEPs or voters. In this way, we cannot derive any inferences about individual MEPs, yet we warrant that no individual MEP can be singled out and be harmed by the results of the study. The same argument holds true for political parties. Thus we will not refer to specific national or European parties in our results. Broockman (2013: 527) mentions the

importance of this approach as it also limits negative effects for future studies or funding for field experiments. Elected officials, he mentions, "have so not shown signs of reacting negatively to this work in debates over support for political science." What is more, they have actively decided to fund it.

Finally, we also aimed to limit the time burden placed on MEPs as much as possible. Although it is clearly important to examine constituency service in the EP, we as researchers have an obligation not to overburden legislators' time. The emails sent in the context of our experiment were short and asked legislators for information about their own activities. Therefore they should be straightforward to answer if an MEP wished to do so.

Empirical Results

We first explore differences in response rates among EU member states based on Figure 1. Roughly 28 percent responded to voter messages compared to more than 50 percent of U.S. representatives in similar studies. We do find considerable cross-national variation in response rates. Whilst in Luxembourg or Slovenia, roughly three-quarters of members of the EP responded, less than a quarter of Lithuanian or French MEPs replied. No clear regional patterns emerge from the response rates. Note that small countries have small delegations and thus small sample sizes; making both positive and negative outliers more likely due to sheer randomness. Interestingly, there is significant variation in the response rates of the bailed-out member states, with Ireland, Cyprus and Spain displaying relatively high response rates and Greece relatively low. Although it seems difficult to theoretically account for these differences across countries, the differences are substantial so we include country fixed effects in our analyses.

The fact that we find an overall rather modest response rate contrasts results from past surveys that show that members of the EP report that they are frequently in contact with ordinary, 75.1 percent of members claim to be a frequent contact with ordinary voters, and 81.8 percent of members consider online and e-mail activity crucial to do so (Farrell, Hix and Scully 2010). Although many may well work hard and conscientiously for their constituents, in direct communication with voters they lag behind their US counterparts.

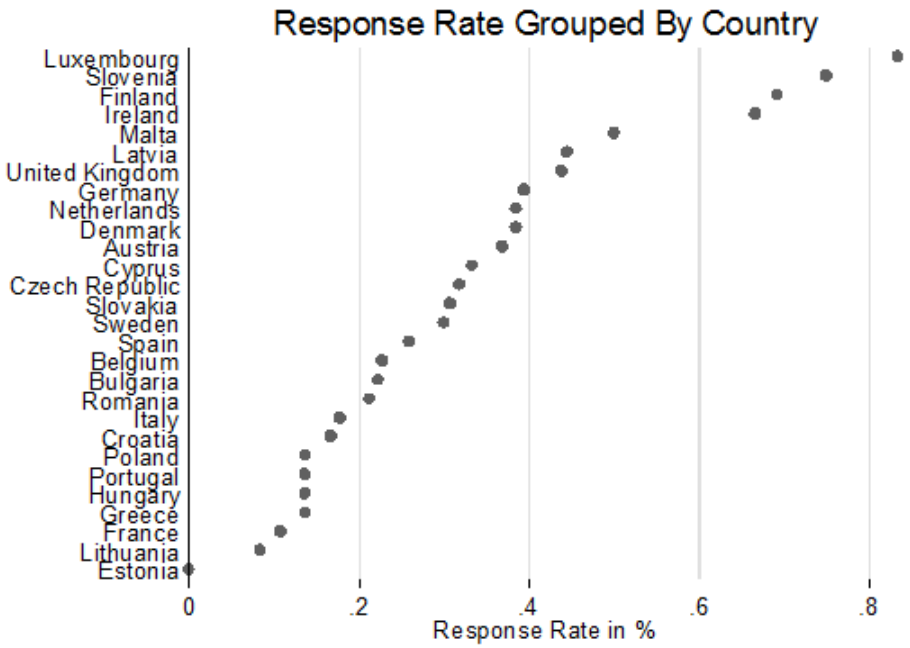

Figure 1: Response Rates Grouped by Country

Note: The dots indicate the proportion of MEPs that replied to the email message as a percentage of all MEPs from the same country.

In a second step we examine the effect of each of the two types of motivations on responsiveness of MEPs separately. We start with extrinsic motivations and then go on to explore intrinsic motivations. Recall that we capture extrinsic motivations using two types of electoral incentives: open vs closed list systems and standing for re-election or not. We thus use two binary variables as predictors: one denoting MEPs who stood for re-election in 2014 and another denoting the countries that use an open-list system.[7] We also include their interaction as a way to capture any moderating effect of the electoral system on the role of re-election.

Since neither the decision to continue one's career as an MEP nor the electoral system in the EP election is randomly assigned, we need to consider potential confounding factors. First, we believe that a crucial source of unobserved heterogeneity stems from the degree of path dependence behind the decision to stand for re-election. We try to account for this by controlling for the number of previous terms served. In so doing we aim at capturing both fatigue, aging effects and unobserved taste for this role relative to alternative career paths in politics. To further control for the fact that re-election aspirations might signal differential level of engagement with the European Parliament, as a second control we also include a counter of the

[7] Each of 28 EU member states decides on their own electoral rules as long as it is a form of proportional representation (PR). While some countries employ closed list systems where parties present lists of candidates and voters can only choose between parties (for example in France, Italy, Romania or the UK), other countries employ open list systems where voters express candidate preferences (for example in Austria, Bulgaria,, the Netherlands or Slovenia) (see the articles 20, 22 and 223 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the European Parliament Electoral Procedures).

number of different positions each MEP held during the 2009-2014 term. Third, we add a dummy that switches on for female MEPs. Combining all these elements, the following model is estimated:

$$P(Response_{ij}=1)=\alpha_j+\beta_1 Open-List+\beta_2 Re-election+\beta_3(Open-List)(Re-election)$$
$$+\gamma_1 Female+\gamma_2 Positions+\gamma_3 TermsEP+u_i$$

where *i* indexes MEPs, *j* denotes countries and β's and γ's are constants to be estimated from the data. In all our analyses we use a Linear Probability Model with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Results remain substantively identical when using a binary response model for the estimation of the parameters of interest (results available upon request).

Table 1: Explaining Constituency Service in the EP: Extrinsic Motivations and Response Rate

	P(*Response*=1)
Re-election	.035 (.061)
Open-List	-.022 (.074)
(Re-election)□(Open-List)	.078 (.102)
Female	.075 (.044)
Positions in EP	.011 (.015)
Terms in EP	.022 (.007)
Effect of Re-election in Open-List Systems: $\beta_2+\beta_3$	.112 (.079)
n	766
R-Squared	.022
Mean Squared Error	.447

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients, heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at the country-level.

The results appear in Table 1 and are displayed graphically in Figure 2. We see that whereas standing for re-election hardly any difference in whether MEPs within closed-list systems respond, it increases the chances of responding by about 10% in open-list systems. Although the effect size could indicate that extrinsic motivations matter for responsiveness, the degree of uncertainty accompanying this estimate is very high. Hence, it seems safe to conclude that we do not find clear evidence that extrinsic motivations can account for differences in response rates amongst MEPs.

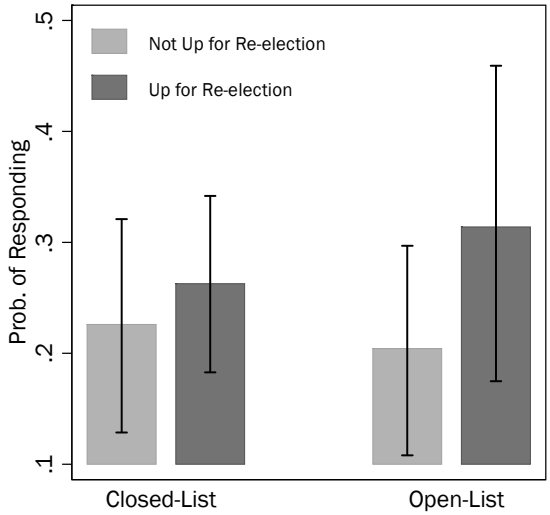

Figure 2: Probability of Responding Conditional on Extrinsic Motivations

Note: Predicted values and associated 95% confidence intervals stem from simulations (using CLARIFY, Tomz et al. 2002) based on Table 1, setting all control variables at their median values and gender at its modal (male) category.

We now move to the role of extrinsic motivations in responding to a particular type of message. Recall that we theorized that if we do not find differences in response rates due to the type of message, response is likely due to an internal desire (intrinsic motivation) to be responsive no matter which issues a voter raised. In a next step we explore the average treatment effects based on different message content. Table 2 shows that on average we find no differences in the probability of responding based on differences in message content. MEPs are equally likely to respond to an EU versus national or a debt-reduction (henceforth *Debt*) versus a reducing-inequality (henceforth *Inequality*) message. These results lend further credence to the idea that constituency service in the EP is largely based on intrinsic motivations. When MEPs respond, they are equally likely to respond to all voters no matter the specific content of their concerns.

Table 2: Explaining Constituency Service in the EP: Intrinsic Motivations and Response to Specific Message Content

	Coefficients
Debt-National message	.046 (.045)
Debt-EU	.042 (.045)
Inequality-EU message	.010 (.044)
Female	.063 (.033)*
Positions in EP	.019 (.017)
Terms in EP	.015 (.007)
Country Fixed Effects	Yes
n	702
R-Squared	.130
Mean Squared Error	.429
Average Treatment Effects	
Debt vs Inequality	.040 (.031)
EU vs National	.003 (.037)

Note: Inequality-national message is the reference category. Entries are OLS coefficients with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. * significant at $p \leq .05$ level.

We explore the effect of message content even further as we want to be able to rule out that the lack of differences based on messages content may be due to the policy positions of MEPs. It could be the case for example that pro-redistribution MEPs respond more to *Inequality* messages and less to *Debt* messages and the reverse is true for MEPs who want to reduce taxes. Any evidence of this kind of differential response would indicate that legislators do respond strategically to their own constituents.

In order to explore this possibility, we interact the message content with the policy stance of the MEP. Although we do not have full information on the attitudes of individual MEPs towards the EU or redistribution/taxation, we can still test this hypothesis by using information about their party stances on this issue. We obtain this information from the 2010 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (henceforth CHES, for more information see Bakker et al 2015), which provides an overall measure of EU stances, ranging from 1 (anti-EU) to 7 (pro-EU) as well as two measures tapping into Debt/Inequality positions: taxation and redistribution. We will explore the results for the EU versus national messages first. We expect that the higher the party score is the more likely legislators are to respond to the EU message. By the same token, the lower this value is the more likely are MEPs to respond to the national message. We test this expectation by interacting this variable with a binary indicator that denotes EU messages.

The results appear in the first column of Table 3 and are displayed graphically in Figure 3. There is no indication that holding more pro-EU stances increases the likelihood of responding to a European rather than a national message. The results again cast doubt on the role of extrinsic incentives for MEP responsiveness.

Table 3: Explaining Constituency Service in the EP: Extrinsic Motivations and Response to Specific Message Content, EU-National Messages

	EU-Position	EU-Salience
EU message	.033 (.124)	.030 (.224)
EU-Position	.028 (.017)	
EU Salience		.033 (.062)
(EU Message)□(EU Position)	-.006 (.022)	
(EU Message)□(EU Salience)		-.011 (.074)
Female	.056 (.035)*	.066 (.035)*
Positions in EP	.019 (.017)	.021 (.018)
Terms in EP	.015 (.007)*	.015 (.008)*
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
n	702	702
R-Squared	.136	.132
Mean Squared Error	.430	.431

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. * significant at $p \leq .05$ level.

One criticism against the analysis performed above, could be that extrinsic motivations based on EU versus national message content might manifest themselves not only via convergence. Rather, MEPs who are opposed to the EU might also feel extrinsically motivated to respond if they hold strong views on the issue. In more general, it could be that extrinsic incentives are driven more by the salience of the issue rather than the exact position of party on this issue. To test this expectation, we use two different measures. First we fold the original 1-7 scale so as to capture intensity of preference rather than direction (Proksch and Lo 2012). The new measure ranges from 0 (centrist position in the original scale) to 3, which clusters together strong anti- and pro-EU stances (1 and 7 respectively). Second, we also use the Chapel Hill item on EU salience, which ranges from 1 (very low salience) to 7 (EU highly salient). Following the previous analytical strategy, each of these items is interacted with the EU message binary indicator. The results from these analyses are shown in the second and third columns of Table 3. None of the two measures seems to confirm the idea that salience matters. The salience of the EU as an issue within the party of the MEP does not seem to enhance the chances of responding to the EU message. Combined, these two sets of results suggest that extrinsic motivations are less pivotal than intrinsic motivations in MEP responsiveness, at least when it comes to EU versus National messages.

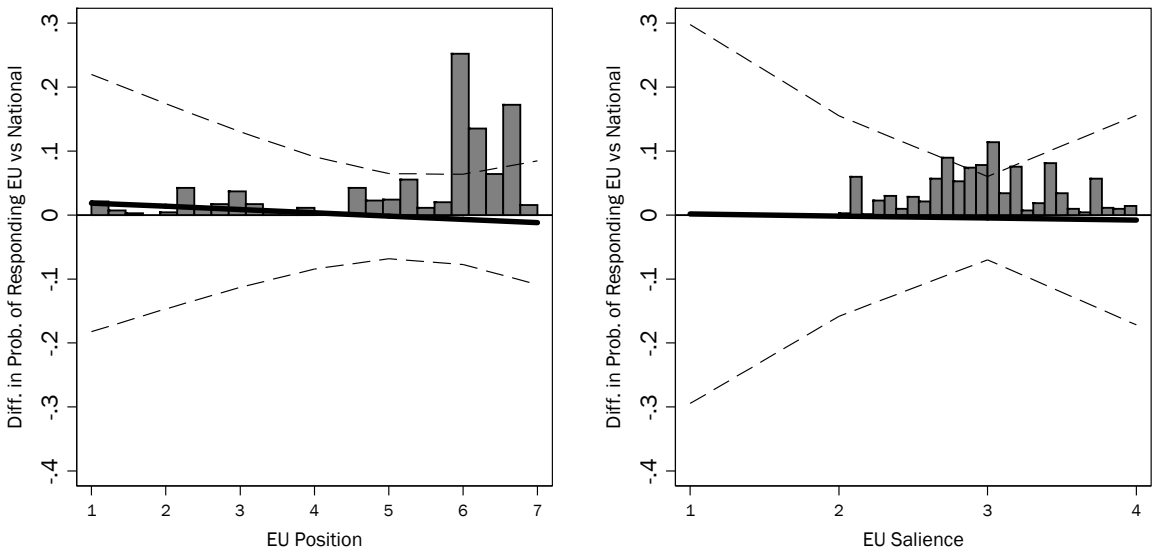

Figure 3: Explaining Constituency Service in the EP: Extrinsic Motivations and Probability in Responding to EU vs National Message

Note: The solid line denotes the difference in the probability of responding to an EU versus a National message based on Table 3, conditional on the legislator's position in the EU-related variable shown in the horizontal axis. The histograms present in the form of fractions the density of the moderating variable, i.e. EU-position, EU position-folded, and EU salience in the first, second and third panel respectively. The dashed curves capture the 95% CIs.

We now turn to the role of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations with respect to the Debt/Inequality messages. We follow the same logic as with the EU versus National messages in that we expect that convergence between the message and legislator's views will increase the chances of responding to the email. The recipients of the mail were asked to comment on two problems: either balanced budget or inequality. We use two indicators provided in the 2010 round of CHES to capture such preferences: redistribution and taxation. Both indicators range from 0 to 10 and are coded so that higher values denote more free market opinions (pro-tax reduction and anti-redistribution stances). We interact each of these measures with a binary indicator switching on for those MEPs who received the *Fighting-Debt* message. We expect that as the party is more against taxation and redistribution the probability of responding to this message compared to the *Inequality* message should increase. The results appear in Table 4 and Figure 4. The evidence suggests that there is no change in the probability of responding to a message closer to one's views. This is the case for both indicators used to measure MEPs' policy stances. Taken as a whole, the results are in line with the intrinsic motivations hypothesis and provide little support for the extrinsic hypothesis.[8]

Table 4: Explaining Constituency Service in the EP: Extrinsic Motivations and Response to Specific Message Content, Debt vs Inequality Message

	Tax-Spending	Redistribution
Right message	.045 (.082)	.016 (.083)
LR-Position		
Tax-Spending Position	.003 (.011)	
Redistribution		.002 (.012)
(Right Message)□(Left-Right)		
(Right Message)□(Tax-Spending)	-.001 (.015)	
(Right Message)□(Redistribution)		.004 (.016)
Female	.066 (.034)*	.067 (.034)*
Positions in EP	.021 (.018)	.022 (.018)
Terms in EP	.014 (.007)*	.014 (.008)*
n	702	702
R-Squared	.133	.133
Mean Squared Error	.430	.430

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. * significant at $p \leq .05$ level.

[8] In the case of the Debt/Inequality message, the logic of salience does not apply because it can generate response for either type of message: MEPs strongly against inequality are probably equally likely to respond to a message referring to balanced budgets as to inequality. The same logic holds for MEPs in favor of redistribution.

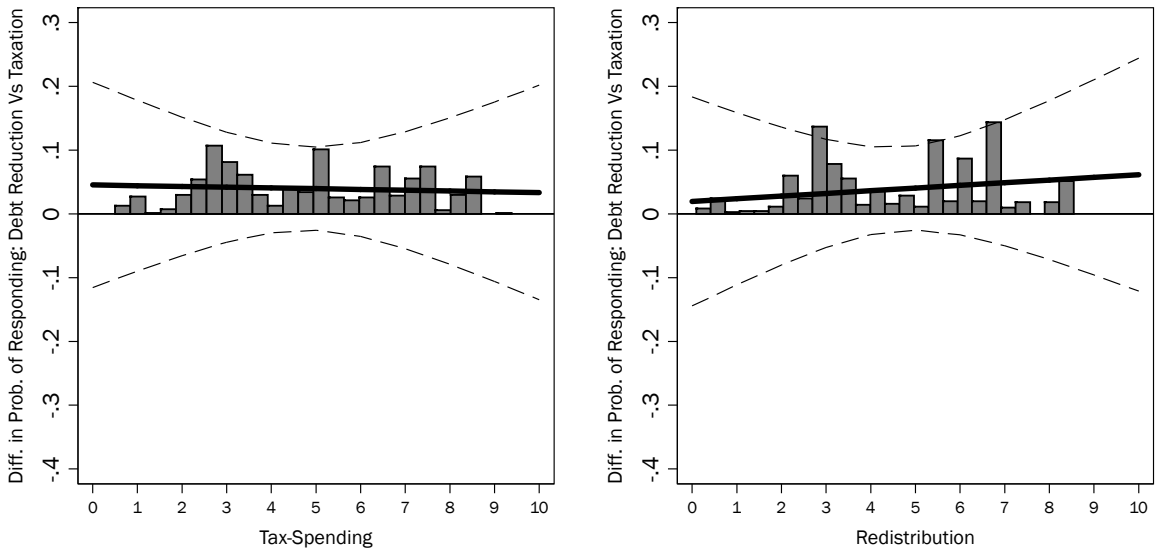

Figure 4: Explaining Constituency Service in the EP: Extrinsic Motivations and Difference in the Probability of Response to Debt vs Inequality Message

Note: The solid line denotes the difference in the probability of responding to a debt-reduction versus an inequality message (i.e. fighting deficits versus combatting inequalities), conditional on the legislator's ideological position, measured through: a) a scale on reducing taxes versus spending on welfare; and b) a scale measuring attitudes towards redistribution. Both scales are taken from the Chapel Hill expert survey and range from 0 (strongly in favor) to 10 (strongly against). The histograms present in the form of fractions the density of each of these variables. The dashed curves capture the 95% CIs.

Finally, we turn to the last hypothesis by exploring how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact and shape constituency service in the EP parliament. In the line with the work on the overjustication effect (see Deci, 1975, Wilson, Hull and Johnson 1981, Fehr and Falk 1999, Gneezy and Rustichini 2000 for example), we expect extrinsic motivations to crowd out intrinsic ones. Specifically, when extrinsic motivations are absent, intrinsic ones should find more room to influence the decision of the legislator to be responsive. Yet, when extrinsic motivations are apparent the need for intrinsic incentives becomes less pivotal in determining response. We test this hypothesis by interacting our treatments with the electoral incentives MEPs face. Figure 5 below shows the differences in probabilities of responding to an EU versus National message for different electoral incentives, that is to say for MEPs who are up re-election or not versus those running within open versus closed list systems, and we do this for MEPs who are either pro-, anti- or neutral when it comes to the EU.[9] If extrinsic motivations indeed crowd out intrinsic motivations, we should find that the differences in the probabilities of responding to an EU versus National message should be statistically significantly different for closed versus open list systems and for those MEPs who are up for re-election versus those who are not.

[9] Full results are shown in the Supporting Information document, see Tables A.2 and A.3.

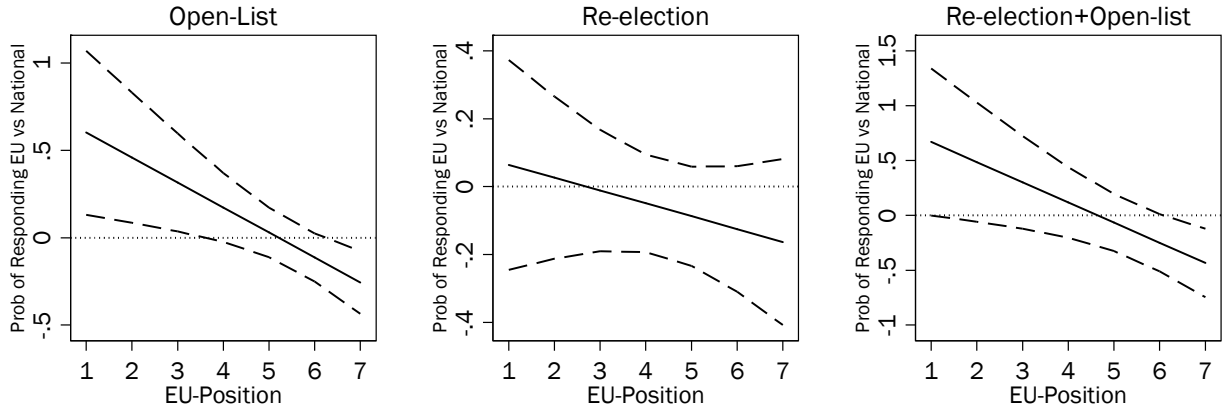

Figure 5: Difference-In-Differences between Treatment and Type of Electoral Incentives, EU vs National Message

Note: The solid lines present the change in the probability of responding to the EU vs national message according to a) the ballot structure (column 1); whether MEP is up for re-election (column 2); both the ballot structure and re-election (column 3); and the level of national party support to the EU project. National party EU position is taken from the Chapel Hill 2010 expert survey and ranges from 1 (strongly against) to 7 (strongly in favor). The dashed curves enclose the 95% confidence intervals.

The results in Figure 5 show that we find partial evidence for the overjustification hypothesis. While the differences-in-differences in responding to EU versus national messages across MEPs within more pro-, anti-EU or EU-neutral stances are indeed significant for re-election but not for open versus closed systems, they are not for re-election. This indicates that MEPs are more likely to respond differently to specific voter concerns when they face higher electoral incentives for constituency service, but only due to the electoral rules they face. MEPs within open list systems are more likely to respond to voter messages in line with their ideological stance whilst ignoring voter messages that conflict with their stances. This indicates that extrinsic motivations at least partially crowd out intrinsic motivations to respond, and corroborates work from social psychology and behavioral economics demonstrating an overjustification effect.

Figure 6 replicates the same analysis, using the Debt/Inequality message. The results are not equally supportive of the crowding-out hypothesis. MEPs less favorable to either taxation or redistribution do not seem to be more likely to respond to a *Debt* versus an *Inequality* message when electoral incentives are higher.

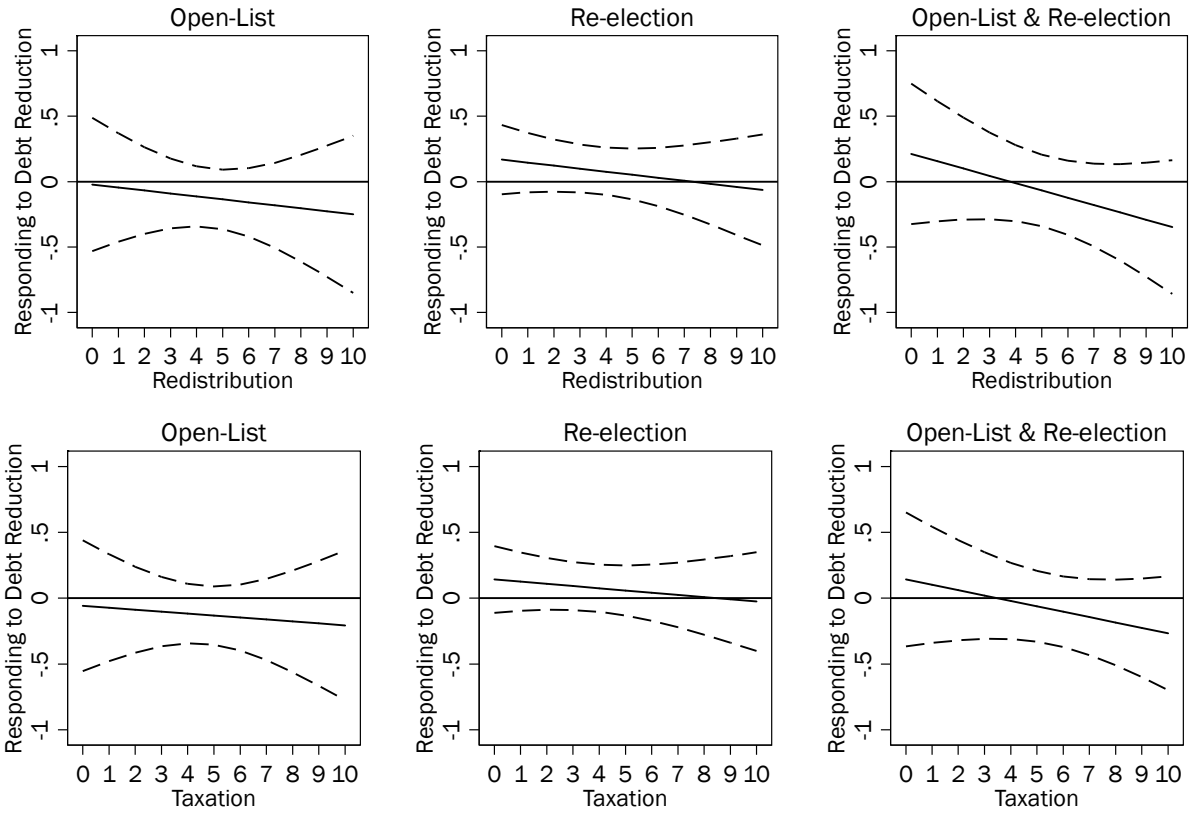

Figure 6: Difference-In-Differences between Treatment and Type of Electoral Incentives, Debt vs Inequality Message

Note: The solid lines present the change in the probability of responding to the Debt Reduction vs Inequality message according to a) the ballot structure (column 1); whether MEP is up for re-election (column 2); both the ballot structure and re-election (column 3); and the level of national party support to redistribution (row 1) and taxation (row 2). National party positions on both issues are taken from the Chapel Hill 2010 expert survey and range from 0 (strongly in favor) to 10 (strongly against). The dashed curves enclose the 95% confidence intervals.

These different results for EU vs national and debt vs inequality messages could at least partially be explained through the fact that in the time-frame of investigation the EU integration issue was particularly salient and divisive within the electorate especially in the context of EP elections. Given that many mainstream parties in Europe are internally divided over the issue (see Van Der Wardt, De Vries and Hobolt 2014), it might not be entirely surprising that MEPs that face higher electoral stakes might especially aim to respond strategically to EU vs national message. The issue of balancing budgets and fighting inequality represents the core of most national rather than European debates over the state of the economy, especially in the wake of the financial crisis, and thus might be less of a strategic concern for MEPs. To explore this possibility, Figure 7 shows the importance and divisiveness of the European integration and economic left-right for voters in May 2014 shortly after our experiment was conducted. Using data from the 2014 European Election Study, the graph shows scatterplots with the divisiveness over European integration (x-axis) and the

economic left-right (y-axis) as well as the proportion of respondents in each country who think the most important problem is the EU (x-axis) or pensions (y-axis). Any observation above the diagonal 45-degrees line indicates that divisiveness over European integration exceeds divisiveness over the left-right or the salience EU integration exceeds the salience of pensions respectively. This is the case in the vast majority of countries included in the survey. Response to an EU vs national message seems thus more sensitive to electoral incentives compared to a message about left-right issues. Consequently, crowding out seems more likely in the case of voters' EU concerns.

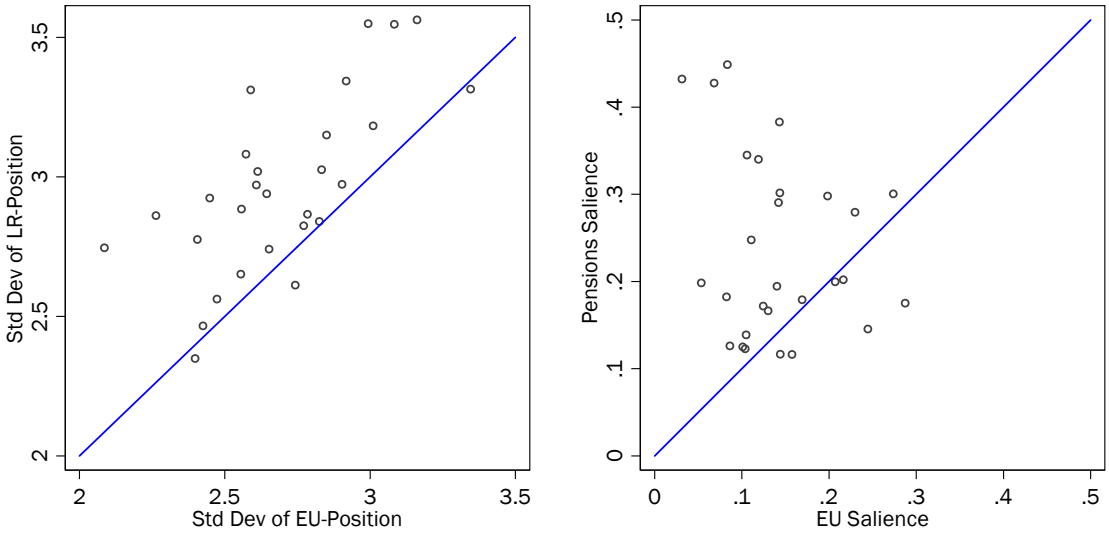

Figure 7: Polarization and Salience of EU vs Economic Left-Right, 2014 EES Voter Study

Note: Dots represent country averages whereas the diagonal 45-degree line is shown in blue. The first panel measures the standard deviation of EU and LR 0-10 scales, whereas the second panel denotes the proportion of respondents within each country who think of the Pensions scheme/EU as the most important issue in their country.

The Importance of Intrinsic Motivations for Constituency Service in the EP

In a last step, we delve deeper into role of intrinsic motivations for constituency service in the EP. First, we explore the content of the legislator responses to examine if these responses include appeals to voters to cast a ballot in favor of the legislator or not. If we find little evidence of legislators appealing to voters, this would underline the importance of intrinsic motivations for constituency service in the EP. We have coded the content of each legislators' response to discern if any of the legislators make vote appeals to the sender. If the legislator lays out different reasons to vote for her, explicitly appeals the voter to cast a ballot for her, or inquires about the voting intentions of the sender, we code the response as a vote appeal (1, otherwise the

response is coded as 0 entailing no vote appeal). Of the 217 responses we received in total from the 766 MEPs, only 14 included a vote appeal. In the vast majority of the responses, MEPs addressed the issues raised by the voter without any reference to aiming to secure their electoral support.[10] This corroborates the idea that intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations are the main drivers of constituency service in the EP.

Second, we explore if the MEPs who responded in our experiment are also more likely to self-report that they are in frequent contact with ordinary voters in a survey. In order to explore differences in self-reported intrinsic motivations for constituency service based on responding in our experiment or not, we utilize the 2010 round of an MEP Survey conducted by Farrell, Hix and Scully. We can rely on only a small subset of MEPs for this comparison as the response rate to the survey was below 30 percent, and because the survey was conducted early in the parliamentary period and some MEPs were no longer in the EP by the end of 2013 when our experiment was conducted. We can analyze the responses of 147 MEPs in total. If we compare the mean response on a five-point scaled item tapping into the extent to which MEPs are in frequent contact with ordinary citizens (1 not very frequent, 5 very frequent) between MEPs who responded to those who did not, we find that those who responded are statistically significantly more likely to report that they put frequent effort into constituency service (mean of 3.87 compared to a mean of 3.53, $p=0.026$). This difference provides some external substantiation for our claim that a response in our experiment is largely driven by intrinsic motivations.

Finally, given that our results indicate that MEPs on average display no bias in their response to voter messages, we can use the response in our experiment as an instrument for re-election prospects in the May 2014 EP election. We constructed a new database with all MEPs who were up for re-election in 2014 and examined if responding to voter messages affected their chances of re-election. It does not. The two groups of MEPs, those that responded in our experiment and those that did not, are equally likely to get re-elected. Roughly two-thirds of MEPs in both groups were re-elected in 2014 (66 and 67 percent respectively). This evidence suggests that MEPs who responded to voter messages in the context of our experiment were no more likely to be re-elected in the subsequent EP election. Taken together, this additional evidence corroborates the idea that constituency service in the EP is shaped by intrinsic motivations.

[10] For more information on the content of legislators' responses, see Table A.4 in the Supporting Information document.

Discussion

Constituency service is an important part of legislators' activities. The reason why some legislators are more responsive to voters than others is therefore an important topic of debate amongst political scientists. Recent evidence using field experiments in the US context suggests that legislators are primarily vote-seekers and are responsive based on instrumental concerns relating to re-election (Grose 2010, Butler and Nickerson 2011, Dropp and Peskowitz 2012). Yet given the personal character of the US electoral rules and campaign structure, this recent evidence might be biased towards extrinsic motivations. This study aims to add to the current debate by presenting evidence from the first ever field experiment conducted in the context of the EP. The institutional features of the EP and the design of our experiment allowed us to go beyond the current state of the art in two distinct ways. First, we were able to harvest a unique feature of the EP namely that its legislators are elected under starkly different electoral rules, namely open list versus closed list PR. Second, our experiment was able to capture the way in which intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact, a feature largely unexplored in the literature on legislative behaviour thus far.

We report three key results. First, our findings suggest that compared to US legislators, constituency service of MEPs is rather modest. Given that the personalised ballot and campaign context in the US increases extrinsic motivations for constituency service, this finding may not be entirely surprising. Elections to the EP are based on various forms of PR where often parties rather than candidates dominate electoral campaigns. As a result, constituency service should on average be less extensive in the EU context compared to the US. This is indeed what our findings seem to suggest. Second, our analysis shows that intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations shape constituency service in the EP. We do not find evidence that MEPs who face higher electoral incentives, who are up re-election in open-list systems, are more responsive than legislators in closed-list systems. Third, when MEPs respond, they do not display any kind of bias due to the concerns raised by voters. This we argue again underscores the importance of intrinsic motivations for responsiveness in the EP.

The latter finding seems "good news" for the EP as while response rate overall is modest, voters can expect legislators to respond in an unbiased fashion to any concern they might have. Third, our findings suggest that extrinsic motivations do matter in that they crowd out MEPs' intrinsic motivations to be responsive, especially within open list systems. This result is especially interesting in light of the fact that open list PR systems are increasingly popular amongst constitution makers. It argued that open list PR

empowers voters by giving them the opportunity to make more fine-grained choices than closed list systems.[11] Yet, the results of this study showing that constituency service within open list systems displays more biased responsiveness partially qualifies this enthusiasm about open list PR systems.

Our findings also inform the popular debate about the possible democratic deficiencies of EU institutions. Due to the fact that EU politics is often characterized by low voter interest and scant media attention, receiving a response from one's MEP might carry a significant weight for perceptions about the parliament or decisions to participate in European elections (Rohrschneider 2002, Føllesdal and Hix 2006, Hobolt, 2012, Hobolt and Tilly 2014). Consequently, the overall lack of responsiveness that seems to characterize the EP might dampen citizen engagement. That being said, our finding that when MEPs respond, they are largely unbiased in terms of to which concerns they respond, might provide some relief for defenders of democracy in the EU.

[11] For example in 2009 Indonesia changed from closed to open list PR and Iraq did the same in 2010 (Case 2015, O'Sullivan and Al-Saiedi 2014).

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