

Name of the student:	Carl Schüppel
Title of the thesis:	Nationality Matters: How Member of the European Parliament Decide on Citizens' Petitions
Reviewer:	Javier Arregui

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

This thesis tries to understand policy-making and working of the Petitions Committee of the European Parliament (EP). Particularly, the thesis test the relevance of nationality as explanatory variable of petition success. The understanding of internal dynamics within this committee is certainly a relevant topic and by doing so from a narrative and empirical perspective enriches our understanding of how the petition committee works in the EP and how different actors frame their political strategy.

In my opinion, the thesis has a relevant research question insofar it helps to understand better a committee that although it is not clearly the most relevant one, it is a committee from which very little research has been made so far. This clearly provides an added value to this research. In fact, the paper provides interesting insights on how the decision-making of this committee works and which are some of the most important determinants when explaining the policy outputs produced by this committee.

Thus, the thesis has clear research objectives, it is an ambitious research given that the author has collected his own dataset in Brussels and although the research is mainly focus on the impact of nationality on the petition success (clearly while there could be other relevant explanatory variables) the thesis is clear, with a compelling structure a with nice design and execution.

Furthermore, the research question and the strategy developed in the master thesis is theory driven, which provides a nicely added value to the research. Both, the main dependent and independent variable are nicely defined and contextualized in the literature. This makes the reading very enjoyable and also provides a solid and compact main building blocks of the research paper.

Perhaps in the literature review I have miss more information on legislative decision-making from an institutionalist perspective. The literature review section is mainly focused on theories related to voting behavioiur but less on the main variables that structure the legislative decision-making in the EP. I guess this approach has been selected since the main independent variable is nationality and theories of voting behaviour have explained better the role of nationality, however, it would have provided a more profound view focusing on broader theories of institutional and RCT.

Beyond that, the theoretical framework is nicely developed with the best sources in the literature and with a brilliant critical discussion of both the dependent (petition success) and independent variables (nationality).

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The theoretical framework is well developed on pages 16-19. It includes a formulation of a substantive hypothesis which relates the overrepresentation of MS within the Committee with a higher petition success. Perhaps what I have missed here is the explicit recognition that other variables beyond nationality may play a role for success. In any case this is a good hypothesis and it is a rather original argument that had not been fully developed previously by the literature within the context of this committee.

The research design in my opinion is one of the strongest points of the paper. It uses an original dataset with 875 petitions that has been made by the author. They are very nicely defined and operationalised. The research design also include a number of relevant control variables. Discussion of the methods applied is also good. The data used for the analysis are in fact quite good and generate a more than sufficient amount of 'data' for the analysis to yield strong conclusions.

The author also discussed quite extensively and in a rather convincing way the appropriateness of the data sources in a rather critical and persuasive way. The analysis is well excuted according to the existing data and it developes both a descriptive empirical analysis testing the central hypothesis of the thesis but also a more qualitative analysis (that goes beyond the hypothesis test): the author uses qualitative and sustantive information (collected from interviews in Brussels) in order to explain what determinants and mechanisms there are behind the reason on why some MS are overrepresented and they are more successful. This is in my view the most appealing contribution of this research in theoretical terms.

I believe it is also important to recognise the amount of descriptive information of all the data collected by the author which is presented graphically in the Appendix. All this information clearly helps to understand much better the context of the data analysed. This clearly reinforces the high quality of this research.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

The conclusions are nicely developed. The hipothesis formulated has been backed by the empirical analysis and some tentative explanations have been developed to explain the relationship between petition success and nationality. Perhaps what I have missed in the conclusions is to develop more the main implications of these findings both in normative and empirical terms. For example, in normative terms the research has clearly showed that poor design of this committe ... is this applicable to other committees? In empirical terms we clearly need further research to identify better why some MS are often overrepresented on this committee. At the moment we have some tentative answers but we need further analysis on those mechanisms, which are clearly related to the structural domestic conditions of MS. These sort of argument should have been developed in the conclusions and discussion section.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The thesis is nicely written and uses scholarly language.

The thesis uses a list of abbreviations which are clearly explained at the beginning of the Thesis.

The author uses a reasonable number of footnotes and all citations are included within the main text. The style is consistent across the paper.

The author has also provided an Appendix with additional descriptive analyses which clearly offer and added value to the Master Thesis. Furthermore, the supplementary information about the research design contributes to understand in a systematic way the rationale of the dataset collected by the author as well as it provides key information on the experts survey and the contents of the interviews.

All the formal aspects of the thesis are just brilliantly presented and developed.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The thesis has many strong points:

- Original research question (is the first time this question is answered in a systematic way)
- Original dataset (collected by the author)
- Nice theoretical framework
- Nice research design
- Good analysis that complement descriptive empirics with convincing qualitative arguments developed from interviews with experts
- Superb formal aspects and language of the thesis

Two minor weak points:

- Scarcity of literature review on legislative decision-making
- Little discussion of the main implications that the petition committee case could entail for a broader range of committees in the European Parliament both in normative and empirical terms.

Grade (A-F)	A (9,2)
Date	Signature
24/06/2023	

