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Kampschöer, Mattheus

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Activating and Shifting Conflicts

Analysing MEPs' Voting Patterns in Relation to Climate Change Salience
in the EU Member States

Name: Mathis Kampschöer

Student number: 3833097

Supervisor: Dr. S.P. Otjes

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1. Introduction

The importance of robust energy and climate policy (ECP), especially in the context of a rapidly changing global climate, cannot be understated when it comes to humanity's commitment to safeguarding our planet. At the European level, this commitment remains strong, despite overarching challenges faced by the European Union (EU), often referred to as the 'polycrisis' (Zeitlin et al., 2019). Namely, while challenges to European integration persist, the EU has demonstrated surprising resilience in advancing ambitious ECP goals, exemplified by the ECP framework set for 2030 (Oberthür, 2019).

This article explores the role of the European Parliament (EP) in formulating European ECP by analysing patterns in the voting behaviour of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) when voting on such policy. In particular, it seeks to uncover a potentially overlooked determinant in the general voting calculus of MEPs: public issue salience, and study it within the energy and climate dimension. Indeed, the increasing public salience attached to the issue of climate change in Europe might be moderating the influence of MEPs' traditional left-right stance (Hix et al., 2007; Ripoll Servent & Roederer-Rynning, 2018) and increasingly influential anti-/pro-EU stance (Treib, 2019) on voting behaviour.

The public salience of an issue often plays a crucial role in determining the policies on which politicians will focus (Pralle, 2009) and has been linked with policy outputs (Wlezien, 2016; McGann et al., 2022). However, even though public salience influences which issues are at the front of the minds of elected policy-makers, Dennison (2019) argues that there is an underutilisation of its predictive power. Besides, while the above literature recognises the importance of public salience, the relation between public salience and its influence on policy-making in the EP is more contested. Many have debated the so-called 'democratic deficit' of the EP (Føllesdal, 2006; Hix, 2008). In this debate, the legitimacy of the EP is questioned, and it is said that there is a disconnect between MEPs and the citizens they represent. As such, the EP is often described as being 'insensible' to public opinion and salience. Counterarguments do emerge, however; Bølstad (2015) argues that policy on European integration is influenced by public opinion. Similarly, Williams and Spoon (2015) argue that EP groups do respond to public salience in the context of Euroscepticism.

An increase in issue salience is often followed by issue politicisation (De Wilde et al., 2015; De Bruycker, 2017), a phenomenon which is increasingly influencing European policy (De Bruycker, 2019). Several studies have, therefore, investigated the influence of issue politicisation in the EP (Koop et al., 2017; Migliorati & Vignoli, 2021; Basedow & Hoerner, 2023). Koop et al. (2017), for example, find that the share of legislative behaviour by MEPs that is shaped by politicisation has significantly grown. However, even though issue salience has been described as a necessary component for issue politicisation, the two are still distinctively different concepts, and it is important to differentiate between the two. The concept of issue salience itself, and its influence on EU decision-making, has been studied in prominent literature but in these studies, a focus on the EP is often missing (Franklin & Wlezien, 1997; Steenbergen & Scott, 2009). Studies that do focus on the influence of issue salience on the EP have often been focused on the national party level, pointing out that the salience attached to a particular issue by a national party can influence the voting behaviour of MEPs (Klüver & Spoon, 2013; Costello & Thomson, 2016). Research focussing on the direct influence of public issue salience on the voting behaviour of MEPs is lacking. Therefore, more research is needed to shed light on whether the EP is still as insensible to the public, and in particular public salience, as has been argued in the past.

Following the ratification of the Paris Agreement (United Nations, n.d.-a), the birth of the European Green Deal (EGD) (European Commission, 2021), and the approval of the European Climate Law (ECL) (European Commission, n.d.-a), the political salience of the issue of climate change has increased considerably in the EU. In line with this increased salience, climate matters have become increasingly politicised (Fisher et al., 2022). Bromley-Trujillo and Poe (2018) find that, in the US, climate change's increasing salience and politicisation have significantly influenced climate policy adoption. Similar studies within the realm of the EU, however, seem absent. Consequently, the issue of climate change functions as a compelling case to study within the European context of public salience and its influence on the voting behaviour of MEPs. This drive is further exacerbated by the fact that the level of public salience attached to the issue of climate change can differ substantially across Member States (MS) (McCright et al., 2015; Crawley et al., 2021). Research is needed on the extent to which MEPs' voting behaviour reflects the differences in salience attached to climate change by the public in different MS. As such, this article aims to answer the following question: *how does the public issue salience of climate change within an MS correlate with its MEPs' voting behaviour on EU energy and climate policy?*

Answering this question also adds to the literature on the legitimacy and responsiveness of the EP. Namely, in light of the increasing powers of the EP after the Lisbon Treaty (European Parliament, n.d.-a) and the EP's alleged democratic deficit, the EP has set out to increase its legitimacy when it comes to representing the European citizen. This effort is reflected by initiatives such as citizen initiatives and consultations (European Commission, n.d.-b; European Union, n.d.) and, more recently, the Conference on the Future of Europe (European Commission, n.d.-c). Thus, this article contributes to the debate on whether the EP's efforts to become more responsive are fruitful, as it indicates whether there is a relation between public salience and MEPs' voting behaviour (and associated policy output). In doing so, this article hopes to shed light on the changing dynamics of legislative behaviour in the EP, while also gauging the success of the EU's efforts towards more inclusive governance.

In the following sections, this article will delve into relevant theories that underpin the main concepts (2), outline the rationale behind the case selection (3), elucidate the chosen research design (4), present the empirical results (5), and end with a comprehensive conclusion (6).

2. Theory

2.1 Issue salience

Issue salience is a pivotal concept within the literature of EU politics and policymaking, underscoring its significance in studies on public opinion and voting in the EU. Historically, the prominence accorded to the concept of issue salience stems from its association with vote choice. Namely, as Niemi and Bartels (1985) and Dalton (1996) articulate, citizens' political preferences are formed through a solitary vote, thus emphasising that issues which resonate strongly with voters are the ones most influential in guiding their electoral decisions.

Literature on the concept of issue salience reveals varying motivations for its deployment, and the encompassed interpretations vary notably. An exploration of part of these diverse interpretations reveals differing nomenclatures: Fournier et al. (2003) refer to issue salience as 'issue importance', Kvaløy et al. (2012) as 'public concern', and Miller et al. (2016) as 'policy issue salience'. Further complexity arises from the framing of salience, with some scholars framing it as public opinion (Crawley et al., 2021), while others nest it within the

confines of issue politicisation, perceiving it as a sub-dimension next to ‘polarisation’ and ‘actor expansion’ (De Wilde et al., 2015; De Bruycker, 2017). From the latter perspective, issue salience is seen more as a prerequisite for politicisation. Even though many definitions of politicisation exist, most of them contend that politicisation represents “the demand for, or the act of, transporting an issue or an institution into the sphere of politics – making previously unpolitical matters political” (Zürn, 2019).

The focus of this article is distinctively set on issue salience, diverging from concepts like issue politicisation, public opinion, or belief. This choice is driven by several key reasons. Firstly, salience uniquely carries a sense of priority or urgency. Unlike issue politicisation, which often entails strategic framing by political actors, salience provides a direct measure of what concerns the public most. It goes beyond merely capturing public beliefs, delving into what the public deems most pressing. Furthermore, the link between issue salience and policy outputs is well-established in the literature, both in older (Kuklinski & McCrone, 1980) and contemporary research (Wlezien, 2016; McGann et al., 2022). However, this link is predominantly explored within national settings. Studying the influence of salience in the European transnational context allows for testing whether the same dynamics hold within the more complex arena of EU politics. Another compelling aspect of salience is its dynamic nature. The importance the public places on an issue usually changes more rapidly than underlying beliefs or ideologies. This makes it especially interesting to study salience in relation to real-time political actions, such as MEPs’ voting behaviour. It offers a lens to observe how MEPs respond and adapt to evolving public concerns, highlighting the responsiveness of MEPs to the immediate and shifting priorities of their constituents. Consequently, studying salience offers valuable insights into the dynamics of representative democracy within the EU, furthering the understanding of the interaction between public sentiment and political action at the EU level.

The concept of issue salience itself, however, also has varying definitions. Krosnick (1990) defines issue salience as ‘the degree to which a person is passionately concerned about and personally invested in an attitude’. Bernstein (1995) advances a slightly different angle, characterising it as ‘the weight that each person applies to the perceived distance from each candidate on each issue when making electoral choices’. In contrast, Oppermann (2010) perceives issue salience as ‘the relative importance and significance that an actor ascribes to a given issue on the political agenda’. In line with the purposes of this research, this article

follows the perspective of Oppermann (2010), which emphasises the importance of relativity of issue salience. Specifically, this article follows Crawley et al. (2021) by defining issue salience as ‘the perceived importance of an issue among the public relative to other issues’. Unlike definitions that look at the absolute importance of an issue, this definition allows for differentiation of how the public ranks the importance of various issues. People often deem many issues as 'important,' but since only a few topics can truly fit on the political agenda and affect how someone will vote (Pralle, 2009), it is useful to know which ones people think are the most crucial (Moniz & Wlezien, 2020). So, figuring out how people rank issues and where they put climate change can expand knowledge on climate opinions and how they might steer MEPs’ voting behaviour. In adopting the above definition of issue salience, it is important to discern between salience on the personal and national fronts. Given that national salience can be swayed by media narratives (Paul & Fitzgerald, 2021), this article focuses on the personal level of issue salience. Nevertheless, by combining data on personal issue salience from a broad set of citizens within MS, the capability to draw distinctions between MS based on the salience sentiments of their general populace is retained.

Finally, emphasising the scope of this article, it is important to note that the focus is trained on ‘public’ issue salience, diverging from studies like that by Klüver and Spoon (2013) which centre on party-affiliated salience perspectives. This distinction serves as a critical framework for the ensuing discussions and analyses.

2.2 MEPs: Role and Responsiveness

MEPs occupy a critical function in the architecture of the EU's governance. As Ripoll Servent (2017, p. 156) articulated, “MEPs form a direct link between citizens and the EU’s political system - they are the main transmission belt between their demands and the final outputs.” Nonetheless, the nuances that shape these final outputs, such as whether they are steered more by the MEPs’ affiliations with EP groups or their national contexts (the focus of this article), remain debatable.

Drawing from one strand of this debate, scholars like Hix et al. (2007) underscore that MEPs predominantly vote in line with their respective EP groups. Frantescu (2015) further extends this line of thought, positing that EP group ideologies are more important than national considerations in the legislative process. However, counter-arguments do emerge. Meserve et al. (2017) demonstrate that surges in electoral volatility have reduced the cohesion within EP

groups, causing legislators to lean more towards their national parties' stances, especially when they clash with their EP group. Cencig and Sabani (2017) add to this perspective, asserting that national interests can, in numerous instances, shape the voting trajectories of MEPs. Furthermore, the complexity of conflicts between EP group inclinations and national party interests often leads to MEPs opting for abstention during plenary votes (Mühlböck & Yordanova, 2017). Possibly capturing the essence of this intricate interplay, Ripoll Servent (2017, p.169) deduces that an MEP's allegiance is context-sensitive, noting that "...when a vote is highly salient at the domestic (or even local) level [...] MEPs tend to defect from their EP political group or abstain from the vote...". An example of this is how issue salience tends to moderate the impact of Euroscepticism on MEPs' voting behaviour (Vestergaard, 2020). These changes in MEPs' loyalties, particularly in the context of domestic issue salience, accentuate the importance of delving deeper into the interplay between public salience and MEPs' voting behaviour.

One concept is particularly important when it comes to the interplay between public salience and MEPs' voting behaviour: responsiveness. In prominent literature such as by Weiler et al. (1995) and, more recently, Føllesdal (2006) and Hix (2008), the EU has been described as an unlikely case for responsive policy-making as citizens do not have sufficient possibilities for influencing the direction of European integration or daily EU decisions. This democratic deficit has supposedly led to a disconnect between MEPs and European citizens and the absence of a 'European identity' amongst European citizens (Vesnić-Alujević & Nacarino, 2012). However, in the past decade, counter-arguments have been emerging. Bølstad (2015), for instance, suggests that public opinion does play a role in shaping policies related to European integration. Also, when it comes to EP particularly, Lo (2013) finds that the Irish electorate's rejection of the Treaty of Nice caused Ireland's EP delegation to vote more conservatively. Similarly, Williams and Spoon (2015) contend that groups within the European Parliament do respond to the public's emphasis, particularly concerning scepticism towards the EU. In line with these findings, Meijers et al. (2019) point towards an increasing alignment between EU policy outputs and the general preferences of European citizens. Interestingly, this increasing responsiveness is more likely to be the result of dynamics within the EP than within the European Commission (EC) or the Council. Namely, across EU political elites, MEPs emerge as the most prominent representatives of public interests in the legislative arena, surpassing elites in the EC and Council in this regard (De Bruycker, 2017). This theoretical proposition aligns with Scully and Farrell's (2003) findings that MEPs, in

their roles as representatives, embrace their duties with considerable commitment. Furthermore, De Bruycker (2017) underscores that MEPs tend to foreground public interests especially when issues are charged with high public salience and witness robust mobilisation by civil society groups. The above findings reveal signs of a possible shift to increased responsiveness within the EP considering high salience issues, accentuating the need for more research on the direct link between MEPs and public salience.

2.3 The Displacement of Conflict

Drawing from the above assertion by De Bruycker (2017), that MEPs increasingly foreground public interests in contexts of high public salience, an intriguing question arises: what mechanism drives this process of prioritising one issue over another, and how does this influence an MEP's vote? A look into Schattschneider's (1975) theory on the displacement of conflict helps in defining which aspect of MEPs' responsiveness this article zooms in on. Namely, Schattschneider posits that the 'game of politics' is all about the interplay of certain 'conflicts' representing political cleavages in society and that political outcomes often depend on which of a multitude of possible conflicts gains the dominant position. Every time a new conflict gains the dominant position, this creates new winners, losers, and outcomes. In the context of the current article, the outcome of the 'game of politics' might be illustrated by the MEP vote, and the conflicts can be seen as the dimensions and factors that influence the MEP vote (e.g. the left-right dimension, the anti-/pro-EU dimensions, the environmental dimension, etc.). Following this interpretation, the direction of an MEP's vote depends on which of these conflicts assumes a dominant position.

Schattschneider (1975) also noted that the emergence of one conflict might suppress another, as a significant shift in alignment only occurs at the expense of changing relationships and priorities among all participants. This aligns with more recent work by De Vries et al. (2013), who, in the context of left-right identification among voters, argue that the introduction of new issue considerations often leads to a 'crowding out' process. In this process, traditional issues central to left-right identification, like state intervention in the economy, may diminish in importance. Similarly, when MEPs prioritise a new conflict, previously eminent conflict in their voting calculus might be 'crowded out' and recede into the background.

However, both Schattschneider (1975) and De Vries et al. (2013) acknowledge that it is feasible to maintain old conflicts while cultivating new ones, necessitating a choice among conflicts. In this article, it is suggested that this process of choosing or prioritising conflicts by MEPs is influenced by the level of public salience attached to these conflicts in their home countries. In this framework, public salience is seen as a determinant of conflict displacement and which conflict assumes a dominant position, which in turn is seen as a determinant of MEPs' voting behaviour. By extending the work by Schattschneider (1975) and De Vries et al. (2013) to the level of MEPs, this article adopts a novel approach to utilising the concept of salience. The unique aspect here is that input at the electorate level (the level of public salience attached to an issue) is being connected to output at the MEP level (the MEP vote) by highlighting the role of conflict displacement. It is argued that the heightened salience of an issue 'activates' the conflict an MEP holds over that issue while 'shifting' conflicts they hold over other issues to the background. This approach presents a distinctive perspective on how public salience at the national level can sway voting behaviour in a supranational body like the EP.

2.4 Hypotheses

Drawing from the discussed theory, a broad hypothesis emerges about MEPs' approach to the various conflicts they encounter. This article hypothesises that in countries with heightened public salience on a particular issue, an MEP's stance on the conflict they hold over that issue becomes more influential in their voting behaviour than in countries where such salience is lower. Essentially, MEPs 'solidify' their position on an issue when that issue becomes more prominent in their minds. Concurrently, the importance of other conflicts diminishes, leading to a partial displacement of these conflicts. Salience is, therefore, posited to significantly influence MEPs' prioritisation of conflicts when voting. The specific hypotheses derived from this broad theoretical framework, focusing on the concrete impact of salience on MEP voting behaviour, are detailed in section 3.3, following the case selection.

To investigate the above hypothesis, the analysis incorporates a few moderating factors. The two most prominent determinants of voting patterns in the EP, which will be included as control variables at the MEP-level, are the left-right ideological divide and the anti-/pro-EU divide. The former has been described as a premier indicator of MEP voting patterns (Hix et al., 2007), whilst the latter is increasingly influencing votes, and is not expected to fade any

time soon (Treib, 2020; Wunsch & Bélanger, 2023). As such, both will be accounted for in the analysis. Another pre-eminent moderator at the MEP-level is the EP group to which an MEP belongs. Thus, based on the premise that internal decision-making structures and EP party group compositions can significantly alter MEP votes (Klüver & Spoon, 2013), this research will control for EP party groups. Finally, the MEP's national party, and more pointedly, whether it is currently in government, also commands attention as a crucial moderating variable (Finke, 2013).

3. Case selection

3.1 The issue of climate change

The current article focuses on the issue of climate change, which can be seen as one of the many 'conflicts' that MEPs have to take into consideration when voting. The relevance of focussing on the issue of climate change, and not any other EU policy issue, emanates from the varying salience attached to it across EU countries, as can be underscored by analysing Eurobarometer 92.3 survey data (European Commission, 2020). This survey posed the question "What are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment?" with the two notable issues tagged as '1' and unselected issues as '0'. In line with this question, Table 1 below depicts the standard deviations across countries in the EU per issue. It reveals that among a diverse set of issues, environment/climate/energy distinctly stands out, being one of the top 3 issues demonstrating considerable variation across countries, superseded only by 'rising prices/inflation' and 'health & social security'. The variation across countries linked to the issue of climate change can, therefore, be considered relatively high.

These outcomes are in line with the findings by Crawley et al. (2021), who observe a high degree of cross-country variation of public salience on climate change. Particularly, they find robust evidence that individuals in wealthier countries exhibit a higher likelihood of perceiving climate change as of high salience when contrasted with individuals from poorer countries. This variability in the salience of climate change across countries is substantiated throughout academic literature (Kim & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2014; Lee et al., 2015; Arıkan & Günay, 2020). Poortinga et al. (2019) also note that findings on perceptions of climate change from one country do not invariably generalise across other EU national landscapes, thereby highlighting the substantial variability in salience perceptions pertaining to climate change

across EU nations. For instance, as outlined by McCright et al. (2015), salience attached to climate change diverges significantly throughout Europe, where, notably, 11 former communist countries attributed a relatively low level of political salience to climate change issues. Given that varying levels of salience are attributed to climate change across EU countries, the issue of climate change serves as a compelling case for exploration, especially concerning MEPs' voting behaviour and their possible resonances with the public in their home countries.

Table 1.

The standard deviation in issue salience across countries in the EU per issue

Issue	Standard deviation
Rising prices/inflation	0.120
Health & Social Security	0.108
Environment/climate/energy	0.089
Unemployment	0.066
Pensions	0.064
Taxation	0.063
Financial situation	0.059
Economic situation	0.044
Housing	0.042
Crime	0.037
Immigration	0.031
Terrorism	0.030
Educational system	0.027

Note. Adapted from Eurobarometer 92.3, by GESIS Data Archive, 2020

While the study of MEPs' responsiveness to public salience on climate change is illuminating, extrapolating these findings to other issues calls for caution due to the diverse nature of policy issues in the EU. Climate change, known for its universal and cross-border impacts requiring collective action, shares some similarities with immigration, another cross-border

issue (Morag, 2020). Both have garnered significant media attention and public visibility, as seen in the case of immigration's rising profile in the past decade (Eberl et al., 2018). However, comparing the issue of climate change to other issues becomes more complex when considering the level of urgency and the long-term goals of the EU. Climate change, while urgent, may not seem immediately pressing to citizens compared to issues such as inflation, which directly and quickly impacts their finances. Inflation rates, which are subject to significant fluctuations (Campolmi & Faia, 2011), can escalate swiftly to evolve into a very urgent issue to citizens. As such, inflation might demand more immediate solutions than the relatively stable, albeit critical, issue of climate change. Moreover, the level of complexity of EU issues varies. Climate change is a multifaceted and long-term challenge, often termed a 'wicked' problem due to its complex nature (FitzGibbon & Mensah, 2012). It affects numerous sectors and requires intricate, cross-country, long-term planning. Climate change policy is, consequently, heavily guided by international agreements and EU-wide mandates. However, not every EU issue is equally shaped by international and EU mandates.

It is crucial to recognise that the unique characteristics of each EU policy issue might evoke varied levels of responsiveness in MEPs' voting patterns as these issues gain in salience. Nonetheless, due to the constraints of time and research capacity, this article centres on the issue of climate change.

3.2 The European Green Deal

In the EU, ECP holds a critical position in the overarching strategy of the EU to combat climate change. Indeed, as noted by Selin and VanDeveer (2015), the EU stands as an essential entity in the realm of energy and climate governance, not only within its confines of the 28 MS but also at the global front. This pre-eminence has increased the attention to European ECP, which can, for example, be reflected in the rise of climate policy evaluation since the 1990s (Schoenefeld & Jordan, 2019).

Among the plethora of EP votes on ECP, this article focuses on votes related to the European Green Deal (EGD). This legislative initiative, mostly driven by the EC and the EP, underscores the EU's commitment to a sustainable future (Bäckstrand, 2022). Sikora (2020) suggests that the EP, particularly within the context of the EGD, is likely to become a crucial actor in the green transition. However, even though the EGD appears sufficiently ambitious, efficient decision-making is hindered by a divide between EU countries (Grabbe & Lehne,

2019; Kinski & Servent, 2022). Therefore, studying the influence of public salience on climate change and its potential influence on MEPs across MS, especially in the context of the emerging EGD, becomes all the more pertinent.

Unlike many other climate policies, the EGD encompasses a wide array of sectors and dimensions (Szpilko & Ejdys, 2022). Hence, a study centred around the EGD could offer a comprehensive look into MEPs' approaches toward complex, intertwining climate and energy issues. Additionally, the EGD is formulated in the context of an urgent and escalating need for decisive action on climate issues, aligning with the international urgency articulated in the Paris Agreement (United Nations, n.d.-a) and the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d.-b). With its recent inception, exploring the EGD offers a valuable opportunity to analyse theoretical assumptions in light of the actualities of policy-making and implementation, thus allowing for timely insights into the dynamic between theory and policy feedback. Centering the analysis on the EGD means this article conducts a singular-policy analysis, offering a controlled examination of variables and reducing confounding factors associated with multi-policy comparisons (Skelly et al., 2012). This approach allows for a comprehensive within-case analysis due to the EGD's multifaceted nature (Amaral, 2022), enhancing the understanding of nuanced MEPs' voting behaviour that might be obscured or lost in a broader, multi-case analysis.

3.3 Hypotheses

Following the decision to focus on the issue of climate change, this article formulates two hypotheses. In these hypotheses, a differentiation is adopted between 'green' and 'grey' MEPs. Green MEPs are defined as typically advocating for stringent environmental regulations, even at the cost of economic losses. Grey MEPs are defined as prioritising economic and industrial concerns over environmental protections. This article theorises that greener MEPs are more likely to vote in favour of ambitious ECP. Although this might seem self-evident, it is crucial to define this effect in the current data to allow for the second hypothesis to be tested.

H1: The greener an MEP's policy preferences, the more likely they are to vote in favour of ambitious energy and climate policy

Complementary to H1, this article postulates that in MS where public salience on climate change is high, green MEPs will be more inclined to vote in favour of ambitious ECP, whereas grey MEPs will be more inclined to oppose it, compared to their counterparts in states demonstrating lower salience on the issue.

H2: H1 is stronger for MEPs from MS where the level of public salience on climate change is higher than in MS where this level of salience is low

If the article finds support for H2, it finds support for the premise that when public salience on climate change is high in an MEP's home country, the MEP will attribute greater weight to environmental considerations when casting their vote on ambitious ECP. In other words, when salience on the issue of climate change is high, the conflict an MEP holds over that issue increases in importance in their voting calculus. As such, the MEP's stance on the issue of climate change becomes more influential in their voting behaviour, while previously important conflicts in their voting calculus recede into the background. Simultaneously, when public salience on the conflict of climate change is low, the MEP will attribute less weight to environmental considerations and foreground other conflicts such as their left-right ideological stance or their anti-/pro-EU stance.

4. Research design

The research design has been divided into two sections: one outlining the selection of votes and one defining the statistical analysis.

4.1 Selection of votes

To make sure that the results of the analysis were relevant for testing the hypotheses, there was a focus on policy text that could be classified as either green (ambitious) or grey (not ambitious). Thus, a distinction between votes on the original text of the resolution and votes on proposed amendments to this text was necessitated. Namely, while the original text of the resolution often embodies the 'middle-ground' in terms of ambition, amendments typically represent 'extremes'. Given the aim to analyse green or grey votes, this article conscientiously centred on amendments proposed to the initial resolution of the EGD, side-stepping the moderate or semi-ambitious original text.

In total, 73 amendments were proposed to the original joint motion for a resolution on the EGD, of which a roll-call vote was requested for 52 of them. From these 52 amendments, 5 were proposed by the EPP, 4 by the S&D together with the Greens, 7 by the Greens alone, 11 by the ECR, 21 by the GUE/NGL, and 4 by MEPs from mixed EP groups. In line with the objective of this article, these amendments needed to be categorised as either green or grey. This has been done by composing two groups; one group for amendments intending to enhance the ambition of the EGD, and one group for amendments intending to reduce the ambition of the EGD. Tables 4 and 5 in Appendix A depict the resulting two lists of green and grey amendments per EP group, including a justification per amendment and a relevant citation when deemed necessary.

4.2 Specification of the statistical analysis

This section outlines the steps preceding and during the statistical analysis of the selected amendments.

4.2.1 Multilevel modelling

The procedure in section 4.1 resulted in 52 amendments. The votes on these amendments were analysed according to a multilevel regression analysis. Multilevel modelling (MLM) addresses a hierarchical data structure, accommodating the nested nature of individual votes within amendments and countries. It facilitates an examination of the influence of MEP- and country-level variables on voting behaviour, while reducing estimation error (Greenland, 2000).

4.2.2 Data collection

Data regarding the MEP votes on the EGD were collected using the openly accessible data sources on roll-call votes by the EP. Specifically, a document was used containing all votes on the EGD on the 15th of January listed by individual MEPs (European Parliament, 2020).

This document provided the needed information on which MEPs have voted yea or nay. All votes on the respective amendments were merged so that a ‘pooled’ analysis could be conducted. In addition, to allow for easier interpretation, all the votes on grey amendments have been switched (0 became 1 and 1 became 0).

Data needed to differentiate between green and grey MEPs was derived from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) 2019 (Jolly et al., 2022). The CHES contains information on the

position towards environmental sustainability for parties across the EU. The position of the MEP's national party was ascertained to reflect the MEP's individual position. Similarly, data on the MEP's left-right ideological stance and pro-/anti-EU stance was retrieved from the CHES. Data on the MEP's EP group was retrieved from the official EP website (European Parliament, n.d.-b) and data on whether the MEP's national party is in government was retrieved from the ParlGov dataset (Döring et al., 2022).

Additionally, at the country level, a distinction was made between countries according to the level of salience attached to the issue of climate change by their public. This was done using the Standard Eurobarometer Survey 92.3 (also mentioned in section 3.1). This survey, based on face-to-face interviews, was conducted at the end of 2019, just before the EP vote on the EGD. The dataset includes information on the public salience attached to the issue of climate change by respondents and includes a variable indicating the country the respondent is from. The data incorporates respondents from all MS. The focus is on one of the questions; namely, "what are the two most important issues you are facing at the moment?", where the two most important issues are ranked as '1' and the issues not chosen as '0'. The responses to this question are used to calculate the average relative level of salience attached to the issue of climate change among the public for every MS.

4.2.3 Operationalisation

The dependent variable in question is the MEP vote, referred to as 'Vote'. This is a dichotomous variable that measures the vote of the MEP in question, the options being 'in favour', and 'against' ('+' or '-'). The abstain votes were neglected in this analysis, as the number of abstain votes was relatively low, and the current article is focussed on MEPs voting either in favour or against ambitious ECP.

Next are the independent variables at the MEP-level. The variable indicating whether the MEP is green or grey is referred to as 'Environment'. This variable is ordinal but was treated as an interval variable given that there are enough categories and there is a stable step size. The variable uses a scale from 0 to 10 (11-point scale), where 0 (grey) means the MEP strongly supports economic growth, even at the cost of environmental protection, and 10 (green) means the MEP strongly supports environmental protection, even at the cost of economic growth. The variable illustrating the MEP's ideological stance is referred to as the 'Left-right stance' and was also treated as interval. The variable uses a scale from 0 to 10 (11-

point scale), where 0 means the respondent identifies as extremely right, and 10 means the respondent identifies as extremely left. Additionally, the variable specifying the MEP's anti-/pro-EU stance is referred to as 'European integration' and was also treated as interval. This variable uses a scale from 1 to 7 (7-point scale), where a value of 1 means the respondent strongly opposes European integration and 7 means the respondent is strongly in favour of European integration. Next, the variable concerning the MEP's EP group is referred to as the 'EP group'. This is a nominal variable with eight categories: EPP (1), S&D (2), Renew (3), Greens/EFA (4), ECR (5), ID (6), GUE/NGL (7), and NI (8). Finally, the variable describing whether the MEP's national party was in government is referred to as 'Government party'.

The independent variable at the country level, representing the level of public salience attached to climate change per MS, is referred to as 'Salience climate change'. This is a scale variable for which the value can range between 0 and 1. The higher the value the higher the public salience on climate change in that MS.

4.2.4 Statistical analysis

The statistical procedure can be divided into two analyses, Model 1 and Model 2. In Model 1, a multilevel logistic regression was run including the dependent variable 'Vote' and all the independent variables. In Model 2, the same multilevel logistic regression was run; however, this time an interaction effect between the variables 'Environment' and 'Salience climate change' was included. As such, Model 2 can help test H2 as formulated in section 3.3, namely whether public salience at the national level indeed reinforces the relationship between green MEPs and their votes on green amendments and vice versa. For both models, random intercepts were included for the different amendments voted on and the countries MEPs are from.

5. Results

The results section has been divided into three sections for discussing the fixed effects, the random effects, and an interpretation of the results in light of the hypotheses.

5.1 Fixed effects

The results of the fixed effects of Models 1 and 2 have been summarised in Table 2, depicting

the individual effects, contextual effects, and interaction effects.

Table 2

Multilevel logistic regression model of voting in favour of green amendments

	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	-4.805**	-4.603**
<i>Individual effects (MEP level)</i>		
Environment	0.256*** (0.028)	0.223*** (0.033)
Left-right stance	0.221*** (0.031)	0.212*** (0.032)
EU position	0.120*** (0.036)	0.115*** (0.036)
EP group (Ref. = EPP)		
S&D	2.433*** (0.097)	2.457*** (0.098)
Renew	1.477*** (0.068)	1.491*** (0.068)
Greens/EFA	5.775*** (0.186)	5.745*** (0.187)
ECR	0.923*** (0.133)	0.896*** (0.134)
ID	0.468** (0.179)	0.442* (0.180)
GUE/NGL	5.162*** (0.221)	5.201*** (0.222)
NI	2.756*** (0.138)	2.766*** (0.138)
Government party (Ref. = Not in government)		
In government	-0.091* (0.047)	-0.086* (0.047)
<i>Contextual effects (country-level)</i>		
Salience climate change	1.259 (1.094)	2.968* (1.422)
<i>Interaction effects</i>		
Interaction environment & salience		0.299* (1.438)
N levels	31504	31504

*Note: Dependent variable: MEP vote. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.*

5.1.1 Model 1

The variable 'Environment' has an odds ratio of 1.292, meaning there is a positive relationship (>1) between 'Environment' and voting in favour. Hence, the greener an MEP's policy preferences, the more likely they are to vote in favour of ambitious ECP. A unit increase in 'Environment', in this case one point on the 0-10 grey/green scale, increases the odds of voting in favour by 29.2%. This effect is significant for the 99.9% level.

The first control variable, 'Left-right stance', has an odds ratio of 1.248, indicating a positive relationship (>1) between 'Left-right stance' and voting in favour. Therefore, if the overall ideological stance of the MEP moves towards the left side of the spectrum, he/she is more likely to vote in favour of green amendments. An increase in one point on the 0-10 right/left scale, increases the odds of voting in favour by 24.8%. This effect is also significant for the 99.9% level. The second variable, 'EU position', has an odds ratio of 1.128, signifying a positive relationship (>1) between 'EU position' and voting in favour of green amendments. Thus, the more the MEP supports European integration, the more likely he/she is to vote in favour. A unit increase in 'EU position', in this case one point on the 1-7 opposing/supporting integration scale, increases the odds of voting in favour by 12.8%. This effect is again significant for the 99.9% level. For the third control variable, 'EP group', the reference category is the EPP. The EPP also appears to have voted against green amendments the most all EP groups. Namely, the S&D, Renew, the Greens/EFA, ECR, ID, GUE/NGL, and NI, respectively have odds ratios of 11.395, 4.378, 322.251, 2.516, 1.597, 174.592, and 15.732, each of which is significant for the 99.9% level, except for the odds ratio of ID, which is significant for the 99% level. Each EP group, therefore, shows a positive relationship (>1) with voting in favour of green amendments, compared to the EPP. This means that when an MEP is a member of, for example, the Greens/EFA, the odds of voting in favour increase by 32,225.1% compared to an MEP who is a member of the EPP. However, it is important to realize that the relatively high odds ratios for the Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL are partly caused by the large number of amendments proposed by the GUE/NGL, for which the Greens/EFA and the GUE/NGL itself are often the only two EP groups voting in favour. The fourth and final control variable, 'Government party', has an odds ratio of 0.913. As this is lower than 1, this means there is a negative relationship; MEPs whose national party is in government are less likely to vote in favour of green amendments compared to MEPs whose national party is not in government. It also means that when an MEP's national party is in

government the odds of voting in favour decrease by 8.7% compared to when an MEP's national party is not in government. This effect is significant for the 95% level.

Moving on to the country-level effects, Table 2 depicts that the variable 'Salience climate change' has an odds ratio of 3.521. However, this effect is not significant. The lack of significance in Model 1 could be due to the variable not having a strong independent effect on MEPs' voting behaviour.

5.1.2 Model 2

The odds ratios for the MEP-level variables in Model 2 show no substantial changes when compared to Model 1. The odds ratio for the country-level variable 'Salience climate change', however, changes from 3.521 to 19.448 and from not being significant to being significant for the 95% level. This suggests that the impact of national climate change salience on MEPs' voting behaviour is more pronounced when controlled for the interaction between the variables 'Environment' and 'Salience climate change'. Given that the variable is measured on a continuous scale, a unit increase refers to a change from 0.00 to 1.00. Thus, if the public from the MEP's respective home country rates climate change as the most salient issue (1.00), the odds that the MEP vote in favour of green amendments increases by 1,944.8% when compared to when the public from the MEP's respective home country rates climate change as the least salient issue (0.00).

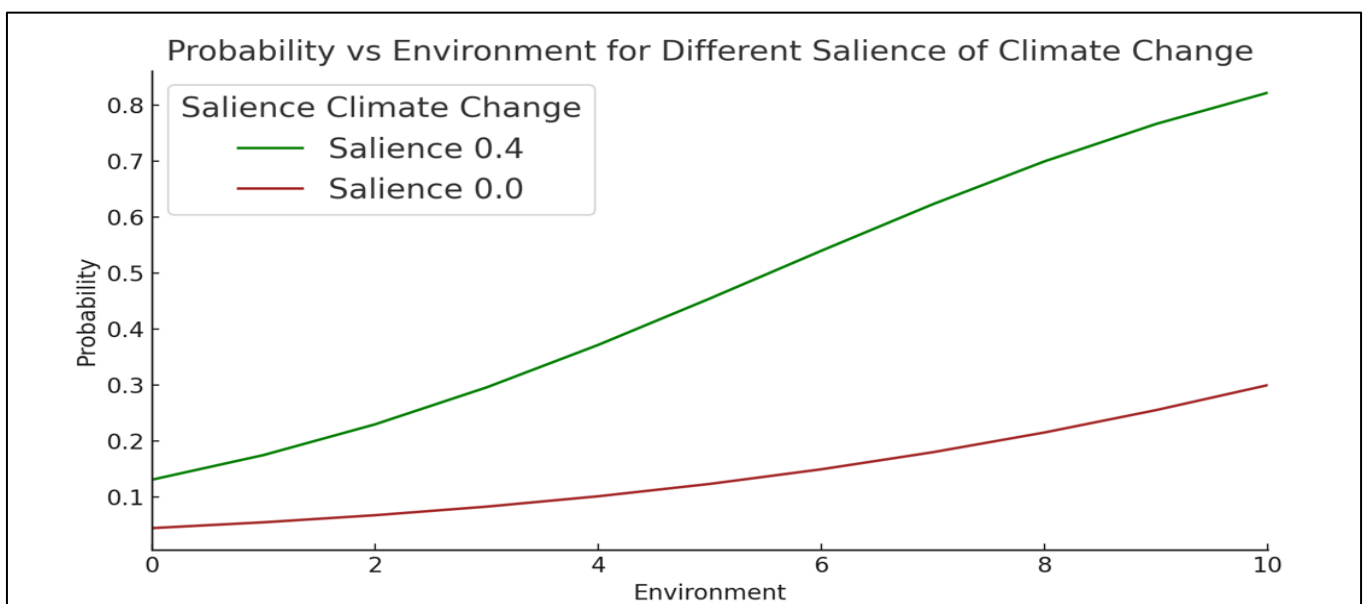
Model 2 depicts that the interaction variable 'Interaction environment & salience' has an odds ratio of 1.349. As the odds ratio is greater than 1, this indicates that the effect between an MEP's environmental stance and their likelihood to vote in favour of green amendments is amplified as public salience on climate change increases in their country. The interaction effect has been visualised in Figure 1, which displays the predicted probabilities of MEPs voting in favour of green amendments as a function of their environmental stance, stratified by the public salience of climate change in their respective countries. The two lines represent the highest and lowest levels of public salience, ranging from 0.0 to 0.4. The upward trajectory of the lines across the 'Environment' spectrum confirms that as MEPs become greener—that is, as they place more emphasis on environmental protection over economic growth—their likelihood of supporting green amendments increases. This effect is consistent across both levels of salience, indicating that a greener MEP is consistently more inclined to vote in favour. Additionally, the line representing the higher salience level (0.4) is steeper

compared to the line representing the lower salience level (0.0). This indicates that the probability of voting in favour of green amendments not only increases with an MEP's 'greenness' but does so more sharply in countries where public salience on climate change is higher. This interaction effect is significant for the 95% level.

A remarkable contrast is evident when comparing the salience level of 0.0 to 0.4. At a salience of 0.0, the probability of voting in favour of green amendments increases modestly, by about 25%, across the environmental engagement spectrum from 0 to 10. Conversely, with a salience of 0.4, this probability increases by roughly 70% over the same environmental scale. For MEPs positioned at the high end of the environmental scale (10), but who are from a country where climate change lacks salience (0.0), the probability of a favourable vote stands at a mere 30%. However, in contexts where climate change is highly salient (0.4), an MEP with an environmental score as low as 3 already has an equivalent 30% chance of voting in favour. It is noteworthy that the probability of voting in favour of green legislation does not exceed 50% at all if the MEP's country displays low salience (0.0) towards climate change. It is only when climate change bears substantial salience (0.4), coupled with an MEP's environmental score of approximately 5.5 or above, that the probability surpasses the 50% threshold. This underscores the critical influence of climate change salience on MEPs' voting behaviour.

Figure 1

Visualisation of the interaction effect between 'Environment' and 'Salience climate change' for the probability of voting



5.2 Results random effects

The results of the random effects of Model 1 and 2 have been summarised in Table 3, depicting the variance component estimates.

Table 3

Estimates of the random effects

	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Variance components (Amendments)</i>		
Intercept residual variance	1.224	1.224
Respondent residual variance	3.174*** (0.692)	3.174*** (0.692)
Residual intra-class correlation (%)	76.04	76.04
<i>Variance components (Countries)</i>		
Intercept residual variance	1.234	1.234
Respondent residual variance	0.270*** (0.082)	0.273*** (0.082)
Residual intra-class correlation (%)	21.46	21.46

*Note: Variance component estimates with standard errors in brackets. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, * p < 0.05*

As can be seen, there is no difference between the random effects of Models 1 and 2. This was expected, as the interaction term is a fixed effect, and these are random effects. The random effects capture variance at the level of the amendments and countries that is not explained by the fixed effects, including the interaction. The intra-class correlation (ICC) for amendments is 76.04%, indicating that a large proportion of the variability in the outcome (voting behaviour) is attributable to differences within amendments. There is a substantial clustering effect of the voting behaviour by amendments. This suggests that when considering an MEP's likelihood to vote in favour of amendments, it is important to consider which specific amendment is being voted on, as this seems to play a significant role in their voting behaviour. The ICC for countries is 21.46%, signifying that a smaller but still notable proportion of the variance is due to differences between countries. Therefore, country-level factors also account for some variability in MEP voting behaviour, though it is less pronounced than the variability by amendments.

5.3 Interpretation of the results

The aforementioned results support H1, namely that ‘the greener an MEP’s policy preferences, the more likely they are to vote in favour of ambitious ECP’. As mentioned earlier, this effect is significant for the 99.9% level. This high degree of significance suggests a very strong likelihood that the observed effect is not due to random chance, providing strong support for H1. Additionally, the results support H2, namely that ‘H1 is stronger for MEPs from MS where the level of public salience on climate change is higher than in MS where this level of salience is low’. This effect is significant for the 95% level.

These results support the premise that, when public salience on climate change is high in an MEP’s home country, the MEP will attribute greater weight to environmental considerations when casting their vote on ambitious ECP. This suggests that higher salience causes MEPs to foreground the conflict they hold over the issue of climate change when voting, while other conflicts diminish in importance. Simultaneously, when public salience on the issue of climate change is low, the MEP will attribute less weight to environmental considerations and foreground other conflicts such as their left-right ideological stance or their anti-/pro-EU stance.

It should be noted that an increase in the salience of climate change, or its continued prominence over time, does not guarantee progress in addressing the issue. Namely, if the number of grey MEPs outweighs that of green MEPs, a lower public salience of climate change could paradoxically be more beneficial for advancing green legislation. This is because, with higher salience, grey MEPs will strengthen their opposition to environmental considerations, potentially impeding legislative progress on environmental issues.

6. Conclusion

According to Schattschneider (1975), political strategy deals with the exploitation, use, and suppression of conflict. Extending this perspective to the current article's findings offers a fresh lens through which to interpret the dynamics influencing MEPs' voting behaviour. Namely, MEPs' voting behaviour is influenced by the conflicts at the front of their minds, such as their stance on the left-right spectrum, their position on EU integration, or their environmental views. Essentially, one could argue that the crux of MEPs' voting behaviour

lies in how they arrange these conflicts, determining which become more prominent and which diminish in importance. To speak in Schattschneider's terms: understanding MEPs' voting behaviour is all about understanding the exploitation, use, and suppression of conflict. Although the concept of MEPs managing conflicts in their voting behaviour is not entirely new, the current study brings a novel perspective by highlighting the role of salience in this process. The results suggest that the salience of issues in an MEP's home country influences how much weight is attached to conflicts in their voting calculus. High public salience of a specific issue in an MEP's home country appears to amplify the MEP's pre-existing stance on that issue when voting. This means that MEPs tend to solidify their position on highly salient issues, as these issues are propelled to the forefront of their considerations. At the same time, when the salience of an issue is high, other conflicts seem to decrease in importance, demonstrating the displacement of conflicts. The salience of an issue is, thus, seen as an important factor in 'activating' and 'shifting' the conflicts in an MEP's voting calculus.

These findings extend the existing literature on MEP voting behaviour, which has traditionally emphasised the influence of dimensions such as the left-right spectrum, the anti-/pro-EU stance, MEPs' EP group affiliations, and the role of national parties in government (Ripoll Servent and Roederer-Rynning, 2018; Treib, 2020; Finke, 2013). While the current study does not negate these factors, it underscores that the influence of these traditional determinants on MEPs' votes diminishes when they are voting on issues of high salience among the public in their home countries. This observation aligns to some extent with Klüver and Spoon (2013) and Vestergaard (2020), who found that issue salience can moderate the influence of MEPs' EP group affiliations and anti-/pro-EU stances. Altogether, the results are indicative of an underutilization of domestic public issue salience as a determinant of MEPs' voting behaviour. This also resonates with Dennison (2019), who has observed an under-exploitation of the predictive capabilities of issue salience.

Initially, the results seem to align with Ripoll Servent and Roederer-Rynning's (2018) findings that, even though the EP is polarised along a left-right divide, MEPs still exhibit characteristics of national representatives in their voting. Yet, Ripoll Servent and Roederer-Rynning mainly emphasise the influence of MEPs' national party affiliations, and not the influence of the public. This is not uncommon; in examining the role of MEPs' nationality in their voting patterns, the scholarly discourse frequently leans towards an emphasis on their affiliations with national political parties. The findings of this article suggest, however, that

part of the influence attributed to MEPs' nationality on their voting behaviour can be traced back to the public in their home country, rather than just their national party affiliations. As such, this article not only contributes to the literature on MEP voting behaviour in relation to issue salience but also highlights the unique link between MEPs and the public.

The findings of this study also contribute to the literature on the responsiveness of the EP. As discussed, MEPs demonstrated sensitivity to public salience. This observation does not necessarily imply that MEPs are wholly responsive to general voting preferences, but it does suggest a certain level of responsiveness to what the public in their home countries deems important. This finding challenges the view presented in prominent literature on the EP's responsiveness, such as Weiler et al. (1995), Føllesdal (2006), and Hix (2008), who argue that the EP is detached from the opinions of European citizens and suffers from a democratic deficit. Instead, the findings align more closely with divergent works like those of Lo (2013) and Williams and Spoon (2015), which demonstrate the EP's responsiveness to public emphasis in the Irish Treaty of Nice scenario and regarding EU scepticism. Similarly, De Bruycker (2017) finds indications of MEPs being sensitive to public interests, especially when issues are highly salient and actively mobilised by civil society groups. Broadening the scope, the results are in harmony with Bølstad (2015) and Meijers et al. (2019), who observe a growing trend of responsiveness within the EU. Thus, it appears that over the past decade, both the EP and the EU have displayed increasing signs of responsiveness to public concerns. The current article contributes to this evolving narrative by demonstrating that MEPs are indeed receptive to the public salience of issues when casting their votes, furthering our understanding of the complex dynamics at play within the EP.

The practical implications of these results are multifaceted. Firstly, acknowledging that the salience of an issue plays an important role in the displacement of conflicts in MEPs' voting calculus, those aiming to influence MEP votes might need to adapt their strategies. Specifically, they might focus more on increasing or decreasing the salience of an issue. This approach reflects Mair's (1998) insights in "Party System Change," who, while extending on Schattschneider's theory on the displacement of conflict, stated: "the real essence of a party system may be seen [...] in the competition between those who wish to maintain that principal dimension of competition, on the one hand, and on the other hand, those who [...] are trying to establish a wholly different dimension" (p. 14). Extending this line of thought from party systems to MEPs' voting behaviour, competition among actors, such as lobby groups, could

increasingly revolve around attempts to either amplify or diminish the salience of particular issues as a means to displace or maintain conflicts at the front of the minds of MEPs. Secondly, the study reveals that as the salience of an issue intensifies among the public, MEPs tend to further entrench their pre-existing stance on that issue when voting. In practical terms, this suggests that an increase in the salience of a given issue is likely to lead to more pronounced polarisation in MEPs' voting patterns on that issue. As public attention and concern over specific matters heighten, MEPs' votes could reflect more extreme positions, aligning more strongly with their established views. Thirdly, the increased influence of issue salience in the EP could also change how the EP interacts with other EU institutions. For instance, the EC might give greater consideration to issues that are salient among the public in its legislative proposals, knowing that the EP might examine (and vote upon) these proposals differently.

The strengths of the current article lie in its research design. The statistical analysis was performed according to a generalised linear mixed model (GLMM), allowing for the study of a large set of votes embedded in both amendments and countries. Additionally, the analysis included all MS, which means that differences in institutional factors at the national level, such as the different MEP electoral systems, were accounted for. The most important strength, however, is that the selected votes have been sorted qualitatively. In doing so, this article distinguishes itself from most quantitative EP roll-call vote analyses. Namely, in the research design, a distinction was made between green (enhancing ambition) and grey (reducing ambition) amendments based on their content. By focusing on the content, the analysis is tailored specifically to the intricacies of environmental policy, providing a more accurate reflection of MEPs' stances on this issue. This method has reduced the risk of interpreting votes based solely on broad policy categorizations, leading to a more precise analysis of MEPs' voting behaviour.

Despite the evident design strengths, there are a few limitations to take into consideration when interpreting the results of the analysis. First of all, the analysis focuses on the EGD to infer patterns in MEPs' voting behaviour on ECP as a whole. However, it could be that the studied votes on the EGD do not function as an adequate representation of all votes on ECP. Additionally, it could be that the issue of climate change, and associated ECP, functions as a unique case when it comes to the influence of issue salience on MEPs. Perhaps the influence of increasing issue salience on MEPs' voting behaviour is different for other issues. As

mentioned in the case selection, it is crucial to recognise that the unique characteristics of each EU policy issue might evoke varied levels of responsiveness in MEPs' voting patterns as these issues gain in salience.

The above limitations call for further analysis of votes within the domain of ECP other than votes on the EGD to strengthen the claims made about the influence of issue salience on MEPs' voting behaviour. Similarly, further analysis is needed into other EU policy issues to determine if the results can be extrapolated to other issues. Moreover, future research has to focus on the specific causal mechanism underlying the observed effect. Are MEPs showing signs of responsiveness to public issue salience due to internal pressures by EU institutions to counter the supposed EU democratic deficit? Or do MEPs respond to public salience signals because they fear the loss of their position in subsequent European elections? Alternatively, could it be that national parties are increasingly reacting to public salience by either disciplining their MEP delegations or providing incentives to ensure that their voting aligns more closely with what the public perceives as salient? Finally, more research is needed to determine if the observed effect extends beyond MEP behaviour during roll-call votes. Will MEPs also adjust their positions and coalition-building efforts based on the shifting salience of various issues among their electorates? All in all, the results of this study underscore the need for ongoing investigation into the evolving relationship between MEPs and the public across various policy realms, both at the MEP level and in the broader European political landscape.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Table 4. Amendments that aim to enhance the ambition of the EGD

Am number	Requested by	Justification
10	S&D / Greens	Calls for the Renewable Energy Directive to have designated binding national targets for each Member State, instead of not binding.
11	S&D / Greens	Underlines that no pricing system (such as the EU ETS) should replace or weaken existing or future CO2 standards for cars and lorries. Namely, moving emissions from road transport to the EU ETS would have adverse environmental impacts (Cambridge Econometrics, 2020).
12	S&D / Greens	Calls for the increased involvement of the European Investment Bank (EIB). This is in line with the premise that Public development banks, such as the EIB and other national public finance institutions, need to be involved more actively to make the EGD work and to be able to finance the transition to a more sustainable Europe (Claeys et al., 2019).
13	S&D / Greens	Underlines that breaches of environmental commitments must be penalised (as by general dispute settlement mechanisms).
14	Greens	Proposes that all people living in Europe should be granted the fundamental right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment and to a stable climate.
15	Greens	Calls on the Commission to work on alternatives to GDP as a way of measuring prosperity and well-being in the Union and its Member States. In GDP as a measure there is a lack of focus on environmental degradation, steering economic

		reliance on fossil fuels and growing inequality (United Nations Environment Programme, n.d.).
16	Greens	Calls for a European Framework Directive for a minimum income, as poverty eradication empowers people to adapt to climate change (Kramer, 2007).
17	Greens	Intends to increase the GHG emissions reduction target from 55% to 65%.
18	Greens	Calls for binding energy efficiency standards for data centres instead of just monitoring, as data centres are large energy users and need to be greened (Uddin & Rahman, 2011).
19	Greens	Proposes far-reaching reform of the CAP such as a capping for direct payments, which have been found to incentivize unsustainable farming practices (Scown et al., 2020).
20	Greens	Calls on the Commission to promote gender-responsible climate action in the EU and globally.
31	ECR	Opposes attempts to extend the EU ETS to road transport and building. Such an extension would have an adverse impact on emissions from these sectors, and would significantly increase living costs for poorer households (Cambridge Econometrics, 2020).
46	GUE/NGL	Calls for a significant reduction in inequalities among the European citizen. Reduced inequality and, as such, the process of poverty eradication, empowers people to adapt to climate change (Kramer, 2007).
47	GUE/NGL	Promotes the decoupling of the EGD and a focus on economic growth as economic growth has been connected to environmental degradation (Cumming & Von Cramon-Taubadel, 2018).

49	GUE/NGL	Calls for an increase in the GHG emissions reduction target from 55% to 70%.
50	GUE/NGL	Stresses that overstating the difficulties in decarbonising between 50 % and 55 % does not constitute leadership on the global stage and instead creates the space for more justifications of low ambition NDCs (UNFCCC, n.d.).
52	GUE/NGL	Calls for a change to EU State aid rules from favouring coal-and-nuclear power to favouring renewable energy, rail transport, and the refurbishment of buildings.
54	GUE/NGL	Demands a deep reform of EU agricultural policy (mainly the CAP) to reinforce production and markets regulation instruments and to promote short food supply chains and local food systems (Jarzębowski et al., 2020).
55	GUE/NGL	Calls for legally binding targets for the EU Member states when it comes to halting biodiversity loss.
56	GUE/NGL	Calls for legally binding targets and regulatory measures to halt deforestation associated with products imported into the EU.
58	GUE/NGL	Calls for a withdrawal from the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT), which has been argued to conflict with the commitments under the Paris Agreement (Behl & Arora, 2021)
59	GUE/NGL	Underlines the need to stop tax dodging by the different MS so that these financial resources can be invested in the ecological transition.
60	GUE/NGL	Stresses that the solutions to the climate crisis already exist and that the main blocking point is a lack of political will.
64	GUE/NGL	Requests the Commission to propose a rule mandating parent companies' responsibility for environmental, labour, and

		human rights infractions in their international supply chains (Gurzawska, 2019).
65	GUE/NGL	Urges the EU to support the creation of a 'climate refugee' status with an international definition of climate asylum.
69	GUE/NGL	Calls on the Commission and the Council to strengthen existing funds that are needed in financing the investments needed for fighting climate change.
72	GUE/NGL	Calls on the Commission to amend the EU directives on public procurement to ensure that large public buyers design, publish and enforce due diligence plans throughout their supply chains (Villiers, 2019).
73	GUE/NGL	Expresses concern about the use of nuclear energy; nuclear energy, cannot adequately lead the sustainability transition (Leman, n.d.).

Table 5. Amendments that aim to reduce the ambitious of the EGD

Am number	Requested by	Justification
4	EPP	Intends to reduce the GHG emissions reduction target from 55% to 50%.
5	EPP	Intends to move building emissions to the EU ETS. However, this would have an adverse impact on emissions from these sectors, and would significantly increase living costs for poorer households (Cambridge Econometrics, 2020).
7	EPP	Supports the increased use of environmental impact assessments. However, these impact assessments are often used as an attempt to stall legislative processes, postponing the adoption of energy and climate legislation (Greens/EFA,

		n.d.).
8	EPP	Calls for the adoption of the Single European Sky (SES). However, the SES has been exposed to delays in implementation and there is slow progress of the policy scheme. The SES is often seen as a way to avoid significant reductions in aviation emissions (Efthymiou & Papatheodorou, 2018).
9	EPP	Intends to move emissions from road transport to the EU ETS. However, this would have an adverse impact on emissions from these sectors, and would significantly increase living costs for poorer households (Cambridge Econometrics, 2020).
21	ECR	Refuses to accept that global warming needs to be limited to 1.5° C and questions the plan to make Europe climate neutral by 2050.
27	ECR	Urges that the 2014 40% GHG emissions reduction target is reinstated instead of the proposed 55% target.
28	ECR	Refuses to accept the 55% GHG emissions reduction target.
29	ECR	Promotes the use of nuclear energy. Nuclear energy, however, cannot adequately lead the sustainability transition (Leman, n.d.).
30	ECR	Promotes the use of natural gas projects. However, climate targets cannot be achieved via natural gas use in the long term (Brauers, 2022).
32	ECR	Tries to secure polluting industries, such as steel manufacturers, from having to undergo significant changes to adapt to the sustainability transition.
35	ECR	Tries to secure polluting coal- and-carbon-intensive regions,

		from having to undergo significant changes to adapt to the sustainability transition.
36	ECR	Calls for the EU own resources system to remain focussed on gross national income (GNI), while this metric has been described as unfair and unable to guide the sustainability transition as the EU's largest own resource (Cieślukowski, 2016).
39	ECR	Calls for a revitalisation of coal- and carbon-intensive transition areas.
42	Mixed EP groups	Attempts to extend the EU ETS to the heating of buildings. However, this would have an adverse impact on emissions from these sectors, and would significantly increase living costs for poorer households (Cambridge Econometrics, 2020).
43	Mixed EP groups	Proposes economic safeguards for carbon-intensive industries such as the steel-manufacturing industry to avoid these industries from having to scale down.