

## **Policy Evaluation in Parliament: Interest Groups as Catalysts**

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**Abstract:** Members of parliament (MPs) ask for policy evaluations and use the related findings to inform law-making and to hold the government accountable. Since most elected representatives have developed strong ties to specific interest groups, one might wonder if these privileged relationships have an influence on their parliamentary behavior. This study addresses this question and investigates how MPs' affiliations to interest groups affects their demand of policy evaluations. Empirical evidence shows that, regardless of their respective political party and individual characteristics, MPs are more likely to submit parliamentary requests to evaluate a public policy in those policy domains in which they have an interest group affiliation. Furthermore, MPs having ties with citizen groups display a higher attention for policy evaluations on social issues (e.g. health or education), whereas MPs affiliated to economic groups are more likely to demand policy evaluations on economic issues (e.g. economy or welfare). These innovative findings suggest that ties between MPs and specific types of interest groups should be considered when explaining parliamentary behavior.

**Keywords:** Parliament, policy evaluation, economic groups, citizen groups, policy domains

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## **Introduction**

Elected members of parliament (MPs) are both legislators and controllers of the government. MPs require information to fulfill these law-making and oversight functions. Policy evaluation is one potential source of such information, since an evaluation aims at delivering new insights about the quality of a policy design, the progress of its implementation and, eventually, its final impacts on economy and society. Speer et al. (2015) even argue that MPs are the stakeholders "*par excellence*" of policy evaluations, whose results should reduce MPs uncertainty about policy effects and, furthermore, the information asymmetry between the government and the parliament.

A few empirical studies have indeed demonstrated that MPs are interested in policy evaluation and activate different parliamentary instruments (e.g. questions, interpellations, motions) to initiate an evaluation, to monitor an evaluation process and to ask about concrete evaluation findings. In addition, MPs directly use the evaluation knowledge provided to improve their own decision-making and to hold government accountable (Jacob et al. 2015; Speer et al. 2015; Bundi 2016; Zwaan et al. 2016). However, the relationships between evaluation information at disposal and evidence-based policy-making still remain rather limited (Politt 2005; Frey 2012; Rissi and Sager 2013).

Previous research has mainly focused on the factors explaining why a MP will (or will not) demand and/or use a policy evaluation report. There is a broad consensus among scholars on three major findings. First, MPs' attention to evaluation is unequally distributed between policy sectors (e.g. high attention in education or health policy versus low attention in public finance or defense policy). Second, MPs belonging both to the opposition and to the political parties forming the government (coalition) request evaluations: the former need evaluative evidence to scrutinize and challenge the government, and the latter instrumentalize evaluation

to highlight and publicize the policy activities and performance of their own ministers. Finally, socio-economic as well as partisan characteristics of MPs (e.g. age, education, seniority in parliament, party membership) seem to have little to no influence at all on a MP's evaluation activity. In contrast, a membership in an oversight committee as well as a positive attitude towards evaluation in general increases his/her motivation to request evaluation reports (Bundi 2016).

To the best of our knowledge, the role of interest groups as a factor explaining the parliamentary requests of policy evaluations remains unexplored. This seems to be an important research gap since evaluation reports are by no means the only source of policy-relevant information for representatives. Interest groups, which often represent target groups of the policies to be evaluated, are a valued source of expertise for MPs. For instance, interest groups deliver information through lobbying activities targeting individual MPs, actively participate to official consultations procedures, and present testimonies during the hearings organized by parliamentary committees. By means of these advocacy strategies interest groups provide their expertise as an "exchange good" to access the parliamentary venue (Bouwen 2002). At the same time, interest groups also encourage MPs to evaluate a specific policy. Evaluation might be highly rewarding for an interest group if the resulting evaluation allows keeping an issue --that is important for the group constituency-- on the parliamentary agenda, revising a law in a policy direction that better fits the group preferences, or (re)legitimate the implementation tasks that are formally delegated to the group. Various motivations may thus lead interest groups to get involved in parliamentary evaluation practice.

This study considers the ties between MPs and interest groups and investigates the following research question: *What is the impact of interest groups on MPs' behavior related to evaluation request?* This question is not only relevant from an empirical and theoretical

point of view. It is also highly sensitive from a normative stance. If interest groups do have a significant impact on the parliamentary evaluation practice, then this could also have major implications for the democratic accountability of policy processes (i.e. interest- or evidence-based policy-making?) and elected officials (i.e. responsiveness towards sectional or electoral constituencies?).

The article is structured as follows. The theoretical section introduces the research hypotheses. The methodological section explains why the Swiss parliament is selected as an empirical setting to test these hypotheses and shows that the survey data collected are representative. It also presents the operationalization of the main variables. The results section focuses on one major empirical finding: MPs having ties with citizen groups foster policy evaluation on social issues whereas MPs tied to economic groups are more likely to demand evaluation studies on economic issues. Finally, the concluding section put this study into a broader perspective and identifies the next research steps.

### **Theoretical framework**

Political parties and interest groups have in common that they represent a (more or less important) share of citizens. Furthermore, both try to influence policy-making in order to realize the policy preferences of their respective constituencies. However, one major difference among them is that interest groups do not compete for office, cannot make binding decisions and, by definition, must cooperate with MPs to be able to influence legislative processes and outputs. By contrast, MPs hold a formal decision power, but they recurrently interact with interest groups to increase their information resources and to secure their reelection. The party-group linkage is frequently understood as an exchange relationship, characterized by repeated interactions. Groups provide technical expertise about the policy

issue at stake and political information about the policy position of their constituency to elected MPs, and/or pays a substantial contribution to his/her electoral campaign. As counterpart, MPs grant groups a privileged access to an institutional venue (e.g. hearing in a legislative committee) where binding decisions are made, or even commit themselves to actively support policy proposals promoted by groups (see Berkhout 2013 for an overview of exchange models).

*Policy evaluations as legislative subsidies:* Hall and Deardorff (2006) specify further these linkages between MPs and groups. They argue that groups will lobby their allies --and not their enemies or uncommitted MPs-- and provide them with three types of information: (1) signals about citizens' positions, (2) in depth policy analysis, and (2) political intelligence about the law-making process such as for instance procedural advice to monitor the strategic move of other MPs or groups. These information, which are delivered in a user-friendly form, help MPs to reach their own policy goals. They can thus be interpreted as "legislative subsidy": "Lobbyists freely but selectively provide labor, policy information, and political intelligence to likeminded but resource-constrained legislators. Legislators, in turn, should seek policy-relevant services from likeminded lobbyists" (Hall and Deardorff, 2006:75). In other words, the policy expertise and legislative intelligence are a kind of "matching grant" (Hall and Deardorff, 2006:75) for MPs who have to invest some of their own resources to take advantage of a group's subsidy.

Indeed, the importance of ties between groups and parties is corroborated by empirical evidence in many democracies. Surveys of both interest groups (e.g. Rasmussen and Landboom, 2013) and MPs (e.g. Wonka, 2016) indicate that such partnerships are reported as crucial by both sides. Previous scholarship has also demonstrated that the information transmitted by groups to MPs predominantly concern (problems with) the feasibility and implementation of public policies (Baumgartner et al. 2009:132-133). Furthermore, when

groups deliver policy-relevant information, they target political parties which share their ideological preferences and policy positions. In other words, linkages are established between likeminded groups and MPs (i.e. policy allies) as postulated by Hall and Deardorff (2006). Business groups seem to predominantly support the legislative activities of MPs belonging to right parties, while unions and public interest groups primarily help MPs from left parties to design workable policies. A few studies relying either on survey-based attitudinal data (in Germany, see Wonka, 2016; in Denmark, see Otjes and Rasmussen, 2015) or behavioral data (in Switzerland, see Gava et al. 2016) tend to confirm this theoretical expectation. The present study contributes to this literature by looking more in depth at the impact of MPs-groups links on parliamentary evaluation practice.

Policy evaluation is a very good candidate as "legislative subsidy" since it lies precisely at the cross-road of policy expertise and legislative intelligence. On the one hand, an evaluation shall deliver factual information about which policy design and which implementation arrangements work (or not) in a specific domain. On the other hand, evaluation is also a strategic tool to monitor and influence all stages of the policy cycle. Evaluation requests may concern the (*ex ante*) regulatory impact assessments of intended policies, the (*in itinere*) monitoring of implementation outputs or the (*ex post*) measurement of policy effects. The political use of evaluation reports may support the continuation, the revision or the termination of an existing policy. Evaluation activities are thus an important tool for a MP's parliamentary work, particularly in the policy domain in which she/he specializes.

However, performing a policy evaluation is costly. On the one hand, individual MPs suffer from resource scarcity (i.e. time, personal, money, expertise) to monitor developments in a policy field. On the other hand, groups do not always have the resources or the necessary access to produce their own expertise. However, through their policy monitoring work,

interest groups are likely to identify the lack of policy knowledge or the political interest of using existing evaluation results. For interest groups, evaluation knowledge produced by the state has two appealing characteristics. First, by piggybacking on the public sector, groups can outsource the cost of producing policy expertise. Second, policy expertise produced by the state can be presented as relatively authoritative and objective during policy struggles. Interest groups, acting as "adjuncts to staff" (Hall and Deardorff 2006:74), may thus encourage MPs to demand policy evaluation "to assist their natural allies in achieving their own, coincident objectives" (Hall and Deardorff, 2006:69). Our first hypothesis reads as follows: *The more MPs have affiliations to interest groups, the more they demand evaluation requests (H1).*

***Policy specialization of groups and MPs:*** This first hypothesis may be specified since most MPs specialize in one or a few policy domains. Indeed, MPs are members of legislative committees focusing on specific policy issues and negotiate legislative proposals that are then discussed and eventually adopted by the plenary assembly. Eichenberger and Mach (2016, forthcoming) have investigated the topical congruence between the competence area of a legislative committee, and the interest groups with whom MPs, who are committee members, are affiliated. Their study showed that MPs formal ties to groups strongly reflect the policy responsibilities of the respective legislative committee. Furthermore, the authors show that this substantive match is largely due to the strategic recruitment of legislative committee members by interest groups. Ties between groups and MPs develop to a large extent after MPs are assigned to specific committees. A MP seating in the board of a specific group has arguably a strong incentive to be proactive in the policy domain that is of interest for the constituency of "his/her" interest group. We can thus expect that *MPs with affiliations to interest groups of a specific policy domain demand more evaluation requests related to this policy domain than to other policy domains (H2).*

*Economics versus citizen groups:* Note however that interest groups are likely to differ in their incentives for relying on policy evaluations performed by the state. Economic groups (e.g. peak-level economic associations or professional groups) are probably better endowed with financial resources and political staff than citizen groups (e.g. public interest groups or identity groups). They are thus more likely to provide MPs with private expertise, privileging it over policy evaluations produced by the state. To counterbalance this comparative disadvantage, citizen groups may resort more often to the evaluation expertise produced by the state. The incentives for piggybacking on state resources is higher for citizen than for economic groups. In addition, evaluation reports are often discussed in the parliamentary arena and covered by the media. Evaluation reports may thus contribute to raise public attention towards policy effects, contributing to the outsider lobbying tactics privileged by cause groups rather than by sectional groups (Binderkrantz 2005:706; Kriesi et al. 2007:66). As also indicated by Culpepper (2011:178), the value of the private expertise provided by business groups declines as MPs, media and citizens care about the policy under evaluation. In short, we postulate that *MPs with affiliations to economic groups demand less evaluation requests than MPs with affiliations to citizen groups (H3)*. Furthermore, we also expect that the impacts of MPs-groups ties on parliamentary demands for policy evaluation will vary across policy domains. As already suggested above, a MP affiliated to an interest group will probably submit parliamentary requests related to policy issues which directly concern the stakes of the group's members. Accordingly, we expect different policy specialization of economic versus citizen groups: *MPs with affiliations to economic groups demand more evaluation requests on economic issues, whereas MPs with affiliations to citizen groups demand more evaluation requests on social issues (H4)*.

In a nutshell, the theoretical framework claims that interest groups do matter for MPs' evaluation practice. They function almost like a "service bureau" (Hall and Deardroff



2006:72), delivering technical expertise and procedural advice to MPs. Interest groups are likely to contribute to the demand of evaluation evidence. However, citizen groups are more willing than economic groups to offer what could be called "evaluation subsidies" to elected representatives and, furthermore, each group type concentrate on the policy issues that are of interest for their own members.

## **Research design**

The present empirical study is based on a survey of all federal MPs of Switzerland, who were asked to report on the importance of evaluation activities for their parliamentary work. This section discusses three issues raised by this research design: the selection of the Swiss case, the representativeness of the MPs survey, and the empirical measurement of the key variables.

*Case selection:* Focusing on the Swiss parliament as an empirical setting to test the research hypotheses is appropriate for three reasons. First, Switzerland is a hybrid case between presidential and parliamentary democracy. The Parliament cannot introduce a motion of no confidence to dismiss the government. Conversely, the government cannot dissolve the Parliament or call for new parliamentary elections before the end of the legislature. In comparative perspective, the Swiss parliament enjoys a strong institutional position *vis-à-vis* the government in terms of agenda-setting power, competences of parliamentary committees, decision rights and instruments to control the executive (Döring 1995; Lijphart 1999; Lüthi 2014; Siaroff 2003). Vatter (2014: 298-299) concludes that Switzerland is, together with the Scandinavian countries, the one where parliament's co-decision rights are strongest and where the government's control of the legislative agenda is weakest. Therefore, by focusing on Switzerland, we analyze a case in which the demands of policy evaluation might be highly

relevant for MPs and, more generally, for the balance of power between the executive and legislative venues.

Second, policy evaluation is strongly institutionalized in Switzerland, also in international comparison (Varone et al. 2005; Jacob et al. 2015). Indeed, a general evaluation clause was introduced in the constitution fifteen years ago: "The Federal Assembly shall ensure that federal measures are evaluated with regard to their effectiveness." (Article 170 of the Federal Constitution of April 1999). Additional, but sector-specific, evaluation clauses can be found in primary or secondary legislations, and urge federal MPs to request policy evaluations in various policy domains (Wirhth 2016). Furthermore, parliamentary Control Committees commission the Parliamentary Control of the Administration (created in 1992 already) to evaluate the legality, expediency and effectiveness of selected public policies. As in most other democracies, the Federal Audit Court is also habilitated to compare the costs and benefits of policy measures and programs. In a nutshell, the Swiss parliament is characterized by an advanced evaluation culture, which is among the most developed in all OECD countries (Jacob et al. 2015: 145). The present empirical study scrutinizes thus a well institutionalized and policy-relevant parliamentary practice.

Third, the Swiss parliament is also an interesting case due to its 'militia character'. For decades, the Federal Assembly was basically "composed of amateurs who combine their professional activities with their parliamentary duties" (Kriesi 2001: 60). The lack of MPs resources resulting from this "militia" system increases the MPs dependence on interest groups (Bailer 2011; Bütikofer 2013; Kriesi & Trechsel 2008; Z'ggragen & Linder 2004). In fact, the information resources that Swiss MPs have at their disposal are limited in comparative perspective (Schnapp & Harfst 2005; Vatter 2014). However, since 1992 ad hoc parliamentary committees have been replaced by permanent and specialized committees. Consequently, MPs have become increasingly interested and competent in the policy fields

covered by the committees they belong to (Lüthi 2007; Jegher 1999; Pilotti 2012). In addition, the remuneration of MPs has improved since the beginning of the 1990s. So, if MPs are nowadays more professional, then interest groups could be expected to invest more intensively in the parliamentary venue to influence them (Sciarini 2015; Eichenberger & Mach 2016, forthcoming).

Finally, Swiss MPs are requested to declare their formal ties (i.e. seating in a group's board) with interest groups. The resulting "register of interests" is a rich source of observational data that allows matching individual MPs with specific interest groups. Gava et al. (2016) showed that the average number of interest ties per MP has more than doubled in the last decade, from 3.5 in 2000 to 7.6 in 2011. Behind these values, there is considerable heterogeneity across individual MPs. Only 14 MPs did not declare any kind of ties to groups, whereas, at the other extreme, the ranking of interest affiliations was dominated by a single MP tied to 51 different groups. In sum, the Swiss parliament offers an ideal setting for investigating the relationships between interest groups and elected MPs, as well as the potential influence of groups' advocacy on evaluations requests and use.

**Survey:** The second methodological issue concerns the representativeness of the survey that we conducted in 2014 amongst the 245 federal MPs (Eberli et al. 2014). In total, 112 MPs participated in the survey. This response rate (45.7%) is relatively high for legislative surveys in Switzerland and abroad (Brun and Siegel, 2006; Bütikofer, 2014; Deschouwer and Depauw, 2014; Feh Widmer, 2014; Strelbel, 2014). To control for potential self-selection bias, we have compared the participants of the survey with all invited MPs regarding different characteristics (see Table 2 in the Appendix). The four major parties (Swiss People's Party, Social Democrats, Liberals, and Christian Democrats) are reasonably represented in the survey (80.4% in the survey to 80.8% in the parliament). The two pole parties are responsible for the highest deviation: While party members of the Swiss People's

Party are underrepresented, the MPs of the Social Democratic Party are overrepresented. Concerning MPs gender, the sample is relatively balanced, even if more female MPs participated than their male colleagues. The same is true for the language of the MPs, as German-speaking MPs are slightly underrepresented (68.8% to 72.2%). Moreover, the participating MPs do not vary strongly from the invited MPs regarding their age. Although we observe that younger and older MPs participated more often than their middle-aged colleagues from 50 to 64 years. As a consequence, MPs with a parliament seniority between 8 and 11 years are underrepresented in the survey sample (13.4% to 18.0%). In contrast, almost no differences can be observed regarding the committee memberships and the number of parliamentary interventions, which were submitted by the MPs. Hence, we conclude that the survey sample overall represents the investigated parliament quite well and that no self-selection bias invalidates the empirical analysis (Bundi et al. 2016).

***Measurement of variables:*** The survey data measure MPs activities related to policy evaluation. As MPs may have a broad understanding of what policy evaluation is, the survey introduced an explicit definition in its introduction: "In this survey, evaluations are interpreted as studies, reports or other documents, which assess a state's measure in a systematic and transparent way with respect to their effectiveness, efficiency or fitness for purpose." The dependent variable investigated is *the demand for policy evaluations*. MPs were asked to report whether they have requested policy evaluations by means of parliamentary interventions during the last four years (i.e. 1 March 2010 – 20 June 2014).

The main independent variables are the MPs affiliations to interest groups in ten specific policy sectors. To capture these MP-Group dyads, we exploit the official register of MP's interests: Swiss MPs have been required since 1985 to declare all their mandates (e.g. executive boards seats) with companies and interest groups (see Article 11 of the Federal Parliament Act). We rely on the annual versions of the register for the period 2012-2014. The

year-based 'raw' inventory of the register allow us to identify 602 dyads between the 112 MPs who participated to the survey and 544 interest groups. We capture two dimensions of interest groups. First, we assess the diversity of interest groups by means of four categories (Binderkrantz et al. 2015): (1) Business groups include private firms, trade associations (e.g. Industry and Trade Association) and professional groups (e.g. Swiss Medical Association); (2) Public interest groups correspond to associations whose members focus on the attainment and protection of common goods (e.g. environmental groups or humanitarian organizations); (3) Unions at the sector- and peak level (e.g. Federation of Trade Union); (4) A residual category labelled "Others" gather together identity groups (e.g. representing women, tenants, drivers, etc), leisure groups (e.g. Scout groups, orchestras' support associations, Swiss Olympic, etc.), religious groups (e.g. Swiss Evangelical Alliance or abbeys' support associations) and associations representing institutional actors such as Swiss cities. For the empirical models, we have grouped them into two different groups' types: Economic groups (category 1 and 3) and citizen groups (categories 2 and 4).

Second, the main domain of activity for each interest group was also coded. We rely on the twenty policy sectors of the *Comparative Agendas Project* (<http://www.comparativeagendas.net>) and then aggregate these data in ten broader categories: Foreign Affairs and Security, Public Finance, Welfare, Economy (i.e. economic issues) and Education, Energy, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Health (i.e. social issues) as well as Justice/Migration and State Affairs, which we have not allocate to of one of the main categories.

Finally, information about the control variables either stems from the MPs survey (e.g. gender, age, education, language region, occupational background<sup>1</sup>, party affiliation, parliament affiliation (Lower and Upper House), professionalization, oversight committee

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<sup>1</sup> Oesch (2006) distinguishes four different types of work logics: Independent (self-employed), technical work logic (work process determined by technical production), organizational work logic (bureaucratic division of labour), and interpersonal work logic (service-based on face-to-face exchange).

membership, and parliament experience). The operationalization of the variables can be found in Table 3 in the Appendix.

Since the study's focus lies on the distinction between the policy domains, the survey data has been stacked (Van der Eijk et al. 2006). In doing so, we have stacked the data set in a matrix that derives from a normal one, as the units of analysis do not represent a single MP, but a MP x Policy domain combinations. Hence, each MP is represented by as many cases as there are policy domains. An entry was generated for every policy domain that indicated whether a MP has submitted a parliamentary request in a certain policy domain. By using this approach, we can estimate which influence a policy domain has for the demand of an evaluation. Since the data is nested in two different levels (MP, policy domain), the study uses a multi-level analysis in order to estimate the models. Moreover, we assume that the variance of the second level is varying, which is why we use random intercept model to test variables on the two levels. As the outcome of the endogenous variable is binary, we use a logistic regression model. The following model is used to estimate the MP's likelihood to submit a parliamentary request:

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + u_{0ij} + e_{ij} \quad (1)$$

Where  $Y$  is likelihood of an MP ( $i$ ) to demand an evaluation in a policy field ( $j$ ), while  $\gamma_{00}$  stands for the random intercept and  $u_{0ij}$  for the overall regression slopes.  $e_{ij}$  refers to the random residual error term at two levels.

The empirical analysis follows the multi-level approach suggested by Hox (2010: 49-54). In doing so, model 1 will analyze the model with variables on the individual level, model 2 will add higher-level explanatory and model 3 will analyze cross-level interactions.

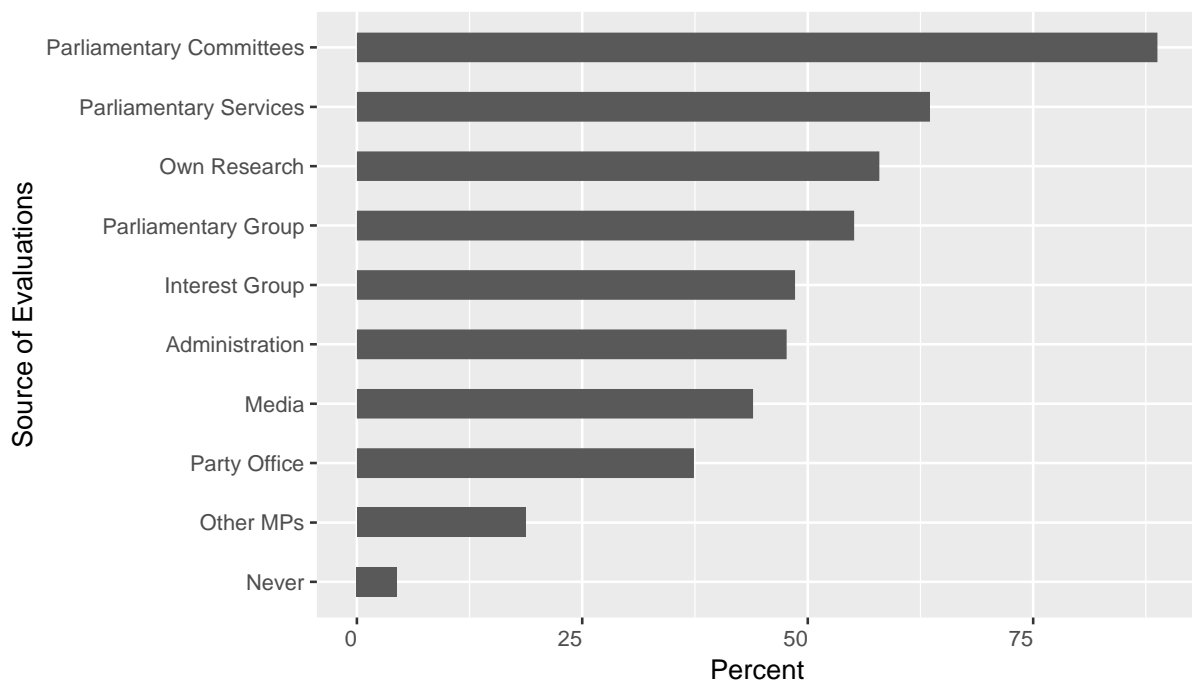
## **Results and discussion**

MPs face abundant and heterogeneous sources from which they obtain policy-relevant information. "Evaluation subsidies" directly provided by interest groups is one among these sources.

Figure 1 focuses on the channels through which MP get informed about policy evaluation findings. Almost half of Swiss MPs (49%) indicate that interest groups are key informants for their evaluation knowledge and practice. Groups' inputs are clearly less important drivers than personal exchanges within legislative committees (89%), parliamentary services (64%) and own research (58%). However, they are at least as important as the information delivered by public administrations in charge of formulating and/or implementing public policies (48%) or by media (44%). This first empirical finding corroborates the idea that interest groups might function as adjunct staff of MPs and play a non-negligible role in promoting parliamentary evaluations.

During the survey the MPs were asked whether they submitted a parliamentary request in the last four years in order to evaluate a policy measure. More than 50% of the federal MPs participating in the survey demanded an evaluation during this time period (Table 4 in the Appendix). About 20% of the MPs submitted one parliamentary request to demand an evaluation; every third MP even submitted several requests. However, the evaluation demand is unequally distributed amongst the policy domains. While the MPs frequently demanded an evaluation in the policy domains Welfare and Economy, the areas Education, Energy, and Public Finances were less often targeted by parliamentary requests.

**Figure 1: Source of Information for Policy Evaluations**



Survey question: Where do you find out about evaluations? (N=112). Multiple answers possible. Source: Eberli et al. (2014)

Model 1 tests the explanatory strength of individual level variables on general evaluation demand. Results indicate that some socio-economic characteristics influence the MPs' likelihood to submit parliamentary requests in order to evaluate a policy measure. Women are more likely to demand evaluations than men; so do MPs from the minoritarian French and Italian speaking regions. Moreover, MPs having an independent work logic (e.g. farmers, company owners) are less likely to demand evaluations than MPs with dependent work logic professions. In contrast, the parliamentary characteristics (i.e. professionalization, experience, oversight committee, party affiliation) do not seem to affect evaluation demand. The same holds for the number of ties to interest groups which do not influence the MP's likelihood to request an evaluation.

Model 2 investigates the extent to which MPs are active in particular policy domains that correspond to their interest group affiliation. In comparison to policy domains in which



MPs do not have any ties to interest groups, MPs with at least one tie have a more than 20% higher probability of demanding an evaluation.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Model 3 focuses on the interactions effects between types of groups and policy domains. It first shows that the type of group significantly impact parliamentary behavior. Furthermore, MPs-group ties have an influence on the policy domain in which elected representatives request evaluations. Concretely, MPs who have an affiliation to economic groups are more likely to demand policy evaluations on economic issues, whereas MPs formally tied to citizen groups are more likely to focus on social issues. Note however that those effects are more consistent for citizen groups than for economic groups. Regarding the different policy domains covering economic issues, MPs with ties to economic groups are more likely to demand evaluations in the domains of Economy, Foreign Affairs and Security, and Welfare. In doing, the likelihood increases about 8.9% (Economy), 9.0% (Foreign Affairs and Security) and 8.6% (Welfare) for a MP to submit a parliamentary request. In contrast, the interaction effect between economic groups and the Public Finances domain is not significant. The findings for the policy domains related to social issues indicate that the likelihood of MPs with affiliations to citizen groups increases about 8.6% (Education), 11.0% (Health), 13.1% (Spatial Planning and Infrastructure) and 6.8% (Energy). Figure 2 illustrates these empirical findings by showing the interaction effects. The horizontal axis refers to the product of the interaction, while the y-axis shows the predicted probability to demand an evaluation regarding different policy fields.

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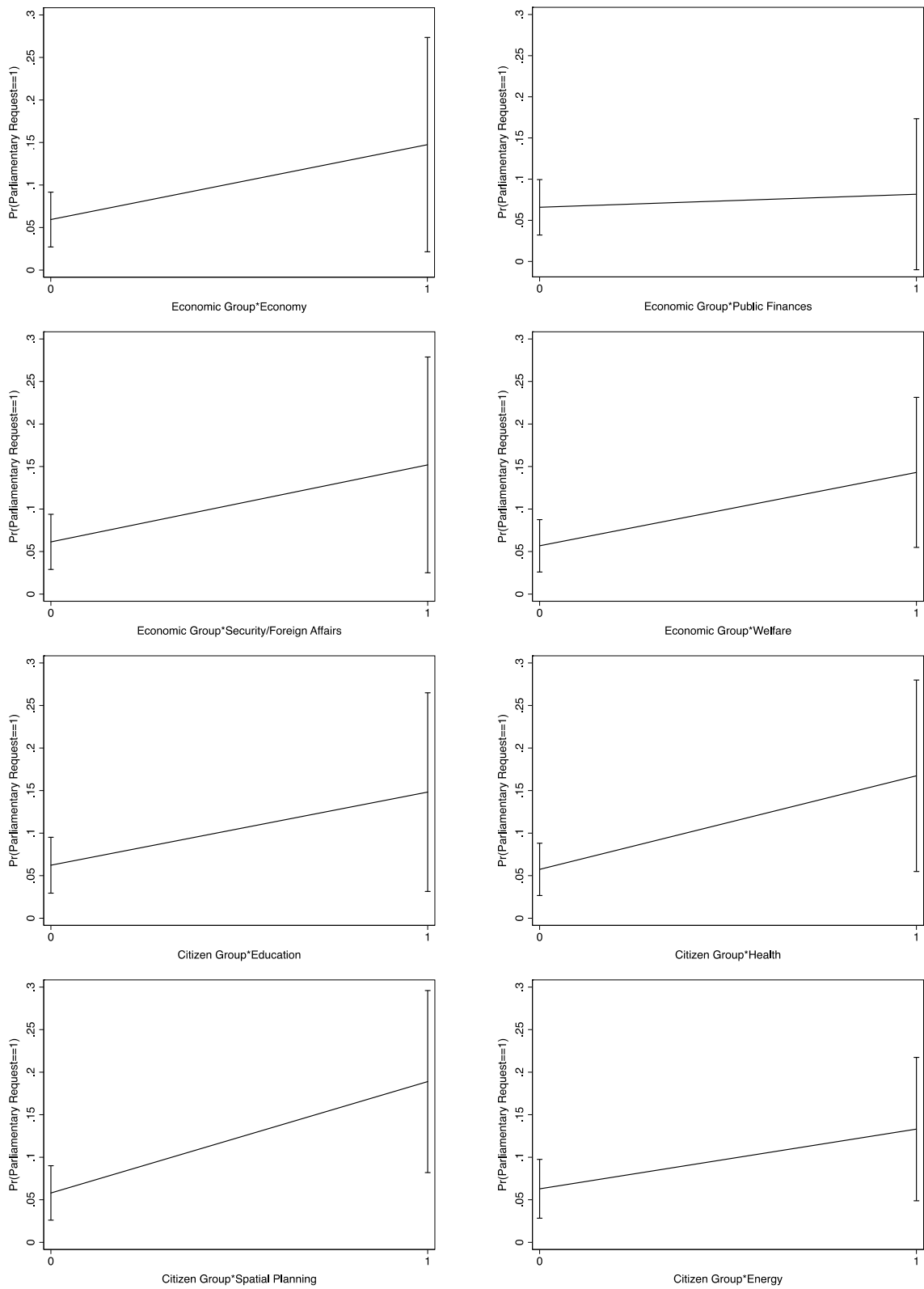
<sup>2</sup> MPs with the maximum ties of interest groups (n=15) have almost a 60% higher probability to demand an evaluation in this very policy field.

**Table 1: Individual and Policy Domain Random Effects Models**

	Models		
	(1) Individual	(2) Policy Domain	(3) Cross-Level Interactions
Women	1.280** (0.532)	0.548** (0.239)	0.524* (0.310)
Age	0.006 (0.024)	0.001 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.015)
Education	-0.028 (0.111)	0.016 (0.053)	-0.016 (0.068)
Latin	1.030* (0.533)	0.448* (0.238)	0.004 (0.308)
Independent Work Logic	-0.920** (0.461)	-0.255 (0.238)	0.193 (0.297)
Center-Right Party	0.445 (0.488)	0.222 (0.235)	0.163 (0.313)
Upper House	-0.492 (0.739)	-0.472 (0.392)	-0.545 (0.505)
Professionalization	-0.367 (1.536)	-0.227 (0.738)	0.890 (0.966)
Parliament Experience	-0.026 (0.052)	0.005 (0.025)	0.040 (0.030)
Oversight Committee	0.034 (0.495)	0.272 (0.239)	-0.110 (0.348)
Total Interest Group	0.069 (0.055)	-0.016 (0.029)	-0.097*** (0.036)
Economic Group		0.023 (0.311)	
Citizen Group		0.435 (0.416)	
Policy Domain		0.221*** (0.062)	0.307*** (0.074)
Economic Group*Economy			1.008** (0.494)
Economic Group*Public Finances			0.234 (0.538)
Economic Group*Foreign Affairs & Security			1.008** (0.442)
Economic Group*Welfare			1.021*** (0.298)
Citizen Group*Education			0.964** (0.396)
Citizen Group*Health			1.196*** (0.345)
Citizen Group*Spatial Planning & Infr.			1.332*** (0.338)
Citizen Group*Energy			0.828** (0.396)
Constant	-0.692*** (1.717)	-3.072*** (0.944)	-3.844 (0.997)
Residual Variance			
Between $\phi$ (Policy Fields)		0.219	0.317
Observations	95	950	870
Log Likelihood	-57.532	-319.267	-254.558
LR $\chi^2$	16.54		
Wald $\chi^2$		29.00***	103.03***

Note: \* p<0.1, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01; Regression coefficients shown with robust standard biases in parentheses. Reference category for Latin: German; Reference category for independent work logic: Technical profession, organizational and interpersonal service work logic; Reference category for center-right party: Left party. Model 2 has 950 observations (95 MPs X 10 policy domains) and Model 3 has 870 observations (87 MPs X 10 policy domains) as 8 MPs have indicated to demand evaluations but not specified in which policy field they have demanded evaluations. These missing values are not a problem to estimate Model 2, but a problem to build the interaction effects in Model 3.

**Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities for Cross-Level Interactions Effects**



*Note:* Predicted probabilities to demand an evaluation with a parliamentary request, as a function of the interaction between economic groups as well as citizen groups and different policy fields (full-line). The values are calculated for MPs with the following attributes: men, Center-right party, German-speaking, independent work logic, legislative committee, and Lower House. All other variables are at the median.

To sum up, the empirical analysis shows that MP-group ties influence parliamentary behavior. However, it is the combination of type of interest group and policy domains that are crucial for the relationship between MPs affiliations to groups and evaluation demand. Contrary to the first and third theoretical expectations, neither the numbers of ties to different groups nor the type of interest group determine whether a MP will demand an evaluation. MPs demand more evaluations in those policy domains in which they have an affiliation to an interest group. Moreover, MPs with ties to economic groups will more likely ask for policy evaluations on economic issues, while MPs with citizen group's ties tend to demand them on social issues. These results support the second and fourth hypotheses, which consider simultaneously the type of interest groups and the policy issues at stake.

## **Conclusion**

Previous scholarship on the parliamentary evaluation practice suggested that neither the individual characteristics of elected representatives nor party politics explain why some MPs are more likely than others to ask for policy evaluations (Speer et al. 2015, Bundi 2016). The present study largely corroborates these findings. Furthermore, it has an important added value by proposing an innovative explanation of MPs motivation to submit a parliamentary evaluation request, namely the linkages between likeminded groups and MPs. Building on the theoretical approach on “legislative subsidy” developed by Hall and Deardroff (2006), this study argues that MPs will interact with groups that share their political priorities and policy preferences. Interest groups offer a so-called “evaluation subsidy” to MPs who, in return,

demand an evaluation whose costs are to be borne by the state. Such a policy expertise is of crucial importance for both partners who focus on the same policy domain and, accordingly, monitor the legislative developments that affect their respective constituencies. Relative to MPs, who normally have to address many policy issues and also face resource scarcity, interest groups are probably more specialized (Hall and Deardroff 2006:73). They also have more policy-relevant information and time to assist MPs and, thereby, are able to work as catalysts of parliamentary evaluations.

Groups might also assist MPs to better perform their law-making and oversight functions. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that we do not observe a strong pluralism of interest groups within domains, but rather "a kind of Chameleon pluralism" as coined by Richardson and Coen (2009: 348). Some policy domains are characterized by a strong presence of economic groups, while citizens groups populate others (see also Coen and Katsaitis 2013). In sum, the very nature of policy domains affects the density and diversity of MPs-groups ties and, eventually, the parliamentary behavior related to policy evaluation. The importance of systematically comparing policy domains has been acknowledged by scholars working on the "ecology of groups population" (e.g. Gray and Lowery 1996); it should also be put high on the research agenda of parliamentary studies.

The present study has three limitations that could be overcome by upcoming studies. First, it was argued that the empirical case under investigation is suitable to test the four research hypotheses since, in Switzerland, the Parliament is institutionally strong *vis-à-vis* the government, the non-professional MPs interact strongly with interest groups, and the policy evaluation culture is well developed. The Swiss institutional context is thus probably a most likely case to demonstrate the impact of MP-group ties on parliamentary interventions asking for policy evaluations. To assess the external validity of the empirical results presented here,

this study should be replicated in Westminster systems, highly professionalized Parliaments and countries with a less developed policy evaluation practice.

Second, the survey data clearly indicates that interest groups are one information source among many for MPs. The policy evaluation expertise provided by parliamentary committees, MPs' party staff and civil servants is also relevant for the law-making and oversight functions that MPs fulfill. These additional information sources have not been included in the present study. At this preliminary research stage, the real influence of interest groups on the parliamentary evaluation practice should thus not be overestimated.

Finally, this study has only investigated under which conditions MPs rely on parliamentary instruments to initiate a policy evaluation process. The next logical step would be to scrutinize if these parliamentary requests translate into concrete evaluation mandates and, eventually, if MPs use the findings of the produced evaluation reports to improve legislation and/or to increase the government's accountability. MPs-group ties could also play an important role to foster or, on the contrary, to hinder such policy feedback loops. If the policy recommendations from an evaluation report run against the interests of a economic or citizen group, then one can reasonably expect this group to develop an advocacy strategy with counter-arguments to preempt the use of evaluation results. In one word, it would make sense to compare the relative strength of interest groups as evaluation entrepreneurs delivering "legislative subsidies" to MPs versus as veto players trying to block policy-making based on empirical evaluation evidence.

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## Appendix

Table 2: Representativeness of the MPs survey

	MPs invited to the survey (N=245)	MPs participated to the survey (N=112)
<i>Party</i>		
Swiss People's Party	58 (23.7%)	21 (18.8%)
Social Democrats	57 (23.3%)	32 (28.6%)
Liberals	41 (16.7%)	18 (16.1%)
Christian Democrats	42 (17.1%)	19 (17.0%)
Other	47 (19.2%)	22 (19.6%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	174 (71.0%)	74 (66.1%)
Female	71 (29.0%)	38 (33.9%)
<i>Language</i>		
German	177 (72.2%)	77 (68.8%)
French	57 (23.3%)	28 (25.0%)
Italian	11 (4.5%)	7 (6.3%)
<i>Age (in years)</i>		
< 35	15 (6.1%)	8 (7.1%)
35-49	62 (25.3%)	29 (25.9%)
50-64	141 (57.6%)	60 (53.6%)
> 64	27 (11.0%)	15 (13.4%)
<i>Parliament Seniority (in years)</i>		
< 4	91 (37.1%)	45 (40.2%)
4-7	61 (24.9%)	29 (25.9%)
8-11	44 (18.0%)	15 (13.4%)
> 11	49 (20.0%)	23 (20.5%)
<i>Committee</i>		
Legislative	152 (62.0%)	68 (60.7%)
Oversight	93 (38.0%)	44 (39.3%)
<i>Parliamentary Interventions</i>		
< 10	47 (19.2%)	23 (20.5%)
10-19	65 (26.5%)	31 (27.7%)
20-29	45 (18.4%)	20 (17.9%)
> 30	88 (35.9%)	38 (33.9%)

*Reading example:* 71 female MPs were invited to the survey, which refers to 29.0% of all contacted MPs. 38 female MPs have participated in the survey, which refers to 33.9% of all contacted MPs. Hence, female MPs are slightly overrepresented in the survey sample (29.0% < 33.9%)

Table 3: Operationalization of the Variables

Variable	Operationalization	Source
<b>Dependent Variable</b>		
Evaluation Demand	"How frequently did you propose a parliamentary request in order to examine a state measure with regard to implementation and impact?" Dummy: 0 (never) - 1 (at least once)	Legislative Survey
<b>Independent Variable</b>		
Ties to interest groups	Self-reported affiliation to interest groups Dummy for group type: Economic (Trade, Unions, and Professional associations) and Citizen (Public interest and others) Categorical scales for policy domain: Economic (Foreign Affairs and Security, Public Finance, Welfare, Economy) and Social Issues (Education, Energy, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Health).	Official register of MP's interests
<b>Control Variables</b>		
Gender	Gender of the MP Dummy: 0 for male, 1 for female	Legislative survey
Age	Age of the MP Continuous Scale	Legislative survey
Education	MP's highest degree of education Ordinal scale (1-8): Compulsory school, vocational school, vocational baccalaureat, higher vocational education, professional education and training college, pedagogical university, university of applied sciences, university	
Language	Spoken Language of the MP Dummy: 0 for German, 1 for Latin (French and Italian)	Legislative Survey.
Occupational Background (Oesch-Index)	Occupational Background of MP Categorical scale: Self-Employed, Technical work logic, organizational work logic, and interpersonal work logic. Classification based on employment situation, number of employees and occupational position.	Legislative Survey
Parliamentary Group	Parliamentary Group of the MP Dummy: 0 left parties (Social Democrats, Green Party) 1 for center-right parties (Liberals, Christian Democrats, Green Liberal Party, Conservative Democratic Party, Evangelical People's Party, Christian Social Party, Swiss People's Party, Ticino League, Geneva Citizens' Movement, Independent)	Legislative Survey
Upper House	Membership in the Swiss' Upper House Dummy: 0 for yes, 1 for no	
Professionalization	Over the last year, what is the amount of time spent for your parliament mandate, in percentage of a full-time job? Continuous scale	Legislative Survey
Parliament Experience	Years of a MP in a federal parliament Continuous scale	Legislative Survey
Oversight Committee	Membership in an oversight committee (control committee, finance committee)	Legislative Survey

Dummy: 0 for no, 1 for yes

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Table 4: MP's Evaluation Demand by Parliamentary Requests

Evaluation Demand	Mean	S.E.	Min	Max
Total	0.56	0.50	0	1
Welfare	0.21	0.41	0	1
Economy	0.16	0.36	0	1
Health	0.14	0.34	0	1
Security & Foreign Affairs	0.14	0.34	0	1
Spatial planning & Infrastructure	0.11	0.31	0	1
Public finances	0.08	0.28	0	1
Energy	0.08	0.28	0	1
Education	0.07	0.26	0	1

Question: In the last four years, in which policy fields did you propose a parliamentary request in order to examine a state measure with regard to implementation and impact? (N=112). Multiple answers possible.

Source: Eberli et al. (2014)