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**Working Paper**

## Do Parties Punish MPs for Voting Against the Party Line?

CESifo Working Paper, No. 6503

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

Ifo Institute – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich

*Suggested Citation:* Kauder, Björn; Potrafke, Niklas; Riem, Marina (2017) : Do Parties Punish MPs for Voting Against the Party Line?, CESifo Working Paper, No. 6503, Center for Economic Studies and Ifo Institute (CESifo), Munich

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/167489>

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# Do Parties Punish MPs for Voting Against the Party Line?

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## **Impressum:**

CESifo Working Papers

ISSN 2364-1428 (electronic version)

Publisher and distributor: Munich Society for the Promotion of Economic Research - CESifo GmbH

The international platform of Ludwigs-Maximilians University's Center for Economic Studies and the ifo Institute

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[www.cesifo-group.org/wp](http://www.cesifo-group.org/wp)

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# Do Parties Punish MPs for Voting Against the Party Line?

## Abstract

We examine whether parties punish politicians who vote against the party line in roll-call votes. Using data of German members of parliament over the legislative period 2009-2013, we take into account that the effect of punishment differs along the list of candidates because a candidate is punished more when he loses positions at the threshold of promising list positions. The dataset includes the voting behavior of 257 MPs in 218 roll-call votes. Our results do not show that parties account for the voting behavior by punishing politicians who have voted against the party line. Political parties may attract different groups of voters by tolerating politicians who vote according to their own credo. Qualities other than the voting behavior seem to matter to political parties when nominating candidates.

JEL-Codes: D720, D780, P160.

Keywords: voting against the party line, adherence to the party line, roll-call votes, proportional representation, party lists, selectorate.

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May 2017

This paper has been accepted for publication in CESifo Economic Studies.

We would like to thank Matz Dahlberg, Panu Poutvaara and two anonymous referees for helpful comments and Matthias Hänsel, Sebastian Kropp, Marian Scheffer, and Alexander H. Schwemmer for excellent research assistance.

## 1. Introduction

Voting decisions depend on how notable a candidate is for the electorate or for the delegates that select a party's candidate for public office (the "selectorate", henceforth "the party"). A candidate can distinguish himself from co-partisans by past performance and effort in office, political experience and even physical attractiveness, but also by defecting from the party line on roll-call votes. The bailout of Greece in the aftermath of the financial crisis which began in 2007 is an excellent case in point. German politicians' views on the issue differed within and across parties. Most party leaderships advocated the rescue packages. Some members of parliament (MPs) did however not toe the party line in roll-call votes on the rescue packages. Because German journalists lean towards a critical view on the European crisis management, and because it was a controversial issue in the public discourse, the media celebrated the MPs that made a martyr of themselves by using roll-call votes as low-cost signaling devices. Newspaper articles quoted how many MPs voted in favor or against the Greek bailout packages or if they abstained from voting, and hyped individual MPs who voted – against the majority of their political party – against the Greek bailout packages.<sup>1</sup>

A first question is what determines defection from the party line on roll-call votes. MPs behave strategically when announcing a position on a roll-call vote because they have the electoral implication of their vote in mind (Mayhew 1974, Bütikofer and Hug 2015).<sup>2</sup> MPs that are more dependent on the party's reputation are less likely to vote against the party line (Thames 2005, Kunicova and Remington 2008, Sieberer 2010).<sup>3</sup> In Germany, MPs with a high expertise in European policy were more likely to vote against the European bailout packages (Wimmel 2013). Directly elected MPs in the 2005-2009 period were more likely to

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, "Griechenland-Abstimmung im Bundestag: So hat der Bundestag bisher in Sachen Griechenland abgestimmt" (*Focus Online*, 27 February 2015) and "Abstimmungen im Bundestag: Rekordmehrheit für Griechenland-Hilfe" (*Wirtschaftswoche*, 27 February 2015).

<sup>2</sup> A candidate may also score with his attractiveness. Studies have shown that voters favor physically attractive candidates (Klein and Rosar 2005, Lawson et al. 2010, Berggren et al. 2010, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> On roll-call votes in the European Parliament, see Roland (2009).

defect than list MPs; the likelihood of defection decreased with higher vote margins of direct MPs (Neuhäuser et al. 2013, Sieberer 2010). Becher and Sieberer (2008), however, do not find that direct MPs are more prone than list MPs to defect during the period 1983-1994; the likelihood to defect however increased if electoral competition increased, and executive offices and party affiliation explain patterns of defection in roll-call votes.<sup>4</sup>

Another pertinent question is how voters react to MPs voting against the party line. While most roll-call votes occur outside of the electoral campaign, the electorate might not be aware of the representatives' voting behavior. The electorate indeed often lacks interest to be informed about the incumbents' voting records and relies mainly on party identity, therefore voters cannot hold their representatives accountable (Stokes and Miller 1962). In any event, Ansolabehere and Jones (2010) show for the United States that voters have preferences over important bills and use their beliefs about legislators' roll-call votes and parties' policy orientation to vote for their representatives. Citizens do not pay much attention to their representatives' parliamentary activities. Beliefs are rather formed from facts learned from the media and campaigns and are drawn from party labels. Incumbents, however, worry about their votes and suspect that some roll calls may become visible to the electorate, i.e. when due to media coverage some roll calls are being politicized (Arnold 1990). Roll-call votes hence can be transformed into electorally important political issues and can have an impact at the polls (Fiorina 1974). Constituents punish politicians for being too partisan (Canes-Wrone et al. 2002), but not for being ideologically too extreme (Carson et al. 2010). In the United Kingdom, policy accountability of MPs is relatively weak and general rather than issue-specific (Vivyan and Wagner 2012).

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<sup>4</sup> Politicians who ran in highly contested electoral districts were also more likely to attend parliamentary sessions (Bernecker 2014; on attendance rates and parliamentary activity see also Gehring et al. 2015 and Geys and Mause 2016). The vote margin may also influence tax policy and political rent extraction (Solé-Ollé 2003, Kauder and Potrafke 2016). Being directly elected also influenced committee membership in parliament and re-election prospects in the next election (Stratmann and Baur 2002, Stratmann 2006, Peichl et al. 2016).

Parties decide on direct candidates solely in the respective electoral district and hence only among a few fellow party members. List candidates, however, have to face elections in state party convents to be nominated and obtain one of the few promising party list positions (Schüttemeyer 2002, Oak 2006, Hennl 2014). List candidates therefore depend even more on the loyalty of their political party.<sup>5</sup> An intriguing issue is how parties punish MPs who voted against the party line. Empirical evidence is scarce. In Slovakia, defecting MPs received better pre-election list positions in the future (Crisp et al. 2013). Evidence from Italy suggests that parties allocate politicians who vote in line with the party to safe positions (Galasso and Nannicini 2015). In a descriptive study on European rescue packages, Wimmel (2014) portrays that some German MPs were punished for defecting from the party line.

Using German data for the legislative period 2009-2013, we empirically investigate whether German parties punished or rewarded list candidates that voted against the party line. The dataset includes the voting behavior of 257 MPs in 218 roll-call votes. As compared to previous studies we also take into account that the effect of punishment differs along the list of candidates because a candidate is punished more when he loses positions at the threshold of promising list positions. We acknowledge that parties would not react to list candidates not adhering to the party line when these list candidates have already deviated from the party line in the legislative period 2005-2009. The financial crisis, however, increased the public attention paid to roll-call votes and politicians who voted against the majority of their parties' MPs. The results do not show that parties account for the voting behavior in parliament by punishing politicians who have voted against the party line. We thus extend the literature that has mainly focused on how *voters* react to MPs not adhering to the party line.

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<sup>5</sup> In the German mixed electoral system most direct candidates further “collateralize” their candidacy by also being on a party list. It is hardly possible to differentiate between direct and list candidates as also direct candidates depend on their parties' loyalty in order to be placed on a promising list position, especially when direct candidates compete for unsafe districts (Manow 2012).

## 2. Institutional backdrop

Two major political parties characterize the political spectrum in Germany: the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU; in Bavaria: CSU; the CDU and CSU form one faction in the German federal parliament. In the following, we label CSU MPs as CDU). The much smaller Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) have played an important role as coalition partners. The Left Party has never been part of a federal government. In our period under investigation (2009-2013), a coalition of CDU and FDP was in office.

In federal elections, voters cast two votes in a personalized proportional representation system. The first vote determines which candidate is to obtain the direct mandate in one of the 299 electoral districts with a simple majority. The second vote determines how many seats the individual parties receive in parliament. Each party that received at least 5% of the second votes obtains a number of the 598 seats in the parliament that corresponds to the party's second vote share.<sup>6</sup> Candidates voted into the parliament with the first vote (direct mandate) obtain their seats first. Candidates from state-specific party lists obtain the remaining seats. Note that many candidates on party lists also run as direct candidates. The list position matters only for unsuccessful direct candidates and candidates that did not run for a direct mandate (we focus on these two groups in our analysis). When the number of direct mandates exceeds the party's vote share, the party obtains excess mandates. Because the other parties did not obtain equalizing mandates in the elections before 2013, excess mandates made it possible for an individual party to receive a larger number of seats as compared to the number of seats this party would have received based on the second vote result.

Before federal elections take place and voters decide on the direct candidates, each political party nominates candidates for their state-specific party list. The list position of each

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<sup>6</sup> Candidates obtain a direct mandate even if their party fails to reach the 5% clause. If a party obtains less than 5% of the second votes, but at least three direct mandates, the party obtains a number of seats in the parliament according to the party's second vote share.



candidate is determined during state party convents. The voting procedure differs between political parties and states. Some parties suggest only one candidate for a certain list position and the party members cast a vote approving the candidate for the specified list positions. In those nominations usually vote shares are very high for the candidates. For some parties several candidates run for a certain list position on the state-specific party list. The party members vote for the presented candidates until a clear winner is determined. In those nominations vote shares are usually notably lower for the candidates. The list position on the state-specific party lists and the number of seats a party obtained in federal elections determines who and how many of the list candidates become a member of parliament.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Parties' reaction to MPs voting against the party line**

#### **3.1 Descriptive statistics**

We use data from the website of the German federal parliament (Bundestag), from the federal election administrator, and the German newspaper “Die Zeit” for the 17<sup>th</sup> legislative period, 2009-2013. We use data for the legislative period 2009-2013 only because important control variables such as earnings from side jobs, MPs' speeches and oral contributions are fully available only since the legislative period 2009-2013. Out of 651 MPs of the German federal parliament, 298 MPs were direct candidates (we excluded one MP who left his party during the legislative period) and 353 MPs were list candidates. 257 of these list candidates were elected into parliament in the 2009 election and re-ran as list candidates in the 2013 election. To measure how individual MPs deviate from the party line, we rely on the only voting procedure that reveals the voting behavior of each MP: roll-call votes. Roll calls have to be explicitly demanded by a parliamentary party group or by 5% of MPs. Recorded votes are hence relatively rare in the federal parliament and the topics of the roll-call votes must be

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<sup>7</sup> To accurately measure if political parties punish or reward candidates we would preferably use vote shares from within-party elections. But as the nomination procedures differ between parties and states, vote shares are unfortunately not comparable. We thus simply use list positions.

important enough so that at least a group in the parliament requested a recorded vote. 218 roll-call votes took place between the beginning of the legislative period in 2009 and the end of the legislative period in 2013.<sup>8</sup> For each vote we record if the MP voted yes or no or abstained from the vote (note that MPs can choose “abstain” on the ballot paper; abstention is thus different from being absent). A deviating vote is recorded when the MP voted differently than the majority of his party. In our sample of 257 list MPs, 62 MPs never deviated from the party line. The remaining MPs had between 1 and 40 deviations. We measure how often an MP deviated from the party line over the entire legislative period from 2009 to 2013 by taking the ratio of the number of deviations over votes participated. Figures 1 and 2 indicate that deviations did not matter for the list position. In a similar vein, Figure 3 does not suggest that deviations have mattered for list positions close to the threshold of promising list positions (see below): if anything, politicians may have been punished for *not* deviating from the party line. A t-test on means does, however, not indicate a significant difference in deviation ratios between politicians that have been punished and those that have not.

The governing parties in the period 2009-2013 were the CDU and the FDP. Out of the 257 MPs in our sample, 64 were in the SPD, 64 in the FDP, 47 in the Left Party, and 62 from the Greens. Because most CDU politicians were elected into parliament as direct candidates, our sample includes only 20 MPs from the CDU. MPs are on average 8.66 years in parliament. 11 MPs held an office in their party and 6 MPs held the position of a minister during the legislative period. Individual MPs gave up to 140 speeches and 139 oral contributions, and did not attend up to 43% of the roll-call votes. MPs had earnings from side jobs of up to 724.000 euros during the period; 196 MPs, however, did not record any earnings from side jobs (see, for example, Arnold et al. 2014, Becker et al. 2009, and Geys and Mause 2013). Around 60% of MPs in the sample are male and married. MPs have 1.36 children on average. MPs are on average 46.63 years old at the beginning of the legislative period in

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<sup>8</sup> Over the legislative period 2009-2013, for example, there were 287 legislative initiatives and 208 promulgations.

2009. Individual MPs gained up to 12 or lost up to 37 positions on their party lists between 2009 and 2013. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the variables included in our analysis.

### 3.2 Empirical strategy

The baseline regression model takes the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Party's reaction}_i &= \alpha + \beta \text{Deviation ratio}_i \\ &+ \sum_k \gamma_k \text{Party}_{ik} + \sum_l \delta_l \text{Political}_{il} + \sum_m \varepsilon_m \text{Personal}_{im} + u_i \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{with } i=1, \dots, 257; k=1, \dots, 4; l=1, \dots, 7; m=1, \dots, 4$$

where *Party's reaction<sub>i</sub>* describes the change in party list positions of each candidate *i* between the elections in 2013 and 2009. We measure the change in party list positions in three different ways: in a first step, we take the difference of the party list positions of candidate *i* between the elections in 2013 and 2009 (*Number of list positions lost<sub>i</sub>*). The pool of candidates differs, however, between both elections. We thus use as a second measure the change in party list positions when we omit those candidates from the party lists that did not participate in both elections. We then calculate new party list positions for only those candidates that ran in both elections and calculate the difference of those new list positions (*Number of modified list positions lost<sub>i</sub>*). Our third measure takes into account that the effect of punishment differs along the list of candidates: a candidate is punished more when he loses positions at the threshold of promising list positions than when he drops from the first onto the second list position. We thus use a dummy variable which takes the value 1 if candidate *i* had a list position in 2013 (unmodified) that was worse than the last list position that got into the parliament in 2009 (*Punishment<sub>i</sub>*; note that our data set only includes politicians that were successful list candidates in 2009). To be sure, this variable cannot measure whether politicians were rewarded for voting against the party line; the variable rather measures

whether MPs were punished or not.<sup>9</sup> As main explanatory variable, we count how often MP  $i$  defected and voted in roll-call votes against the party line, i.e. against the majority of his party. *Deviation ratio<sub>i</sub>* describes the ratio of defected over total participated votes by MP  $i$ .<sup>10</sup> We include many control variables that are likely to predict our dependent variable and that might also be correlated with our main explanatory variable *Deviation ratio<sub>i</sub>* to deal with endogeneity concerns because of potentially omitted variables: *Party<sub>ik</sub>* describes dummy variables for the political parties CDU, SPD, FDP, and Left Party (reference category: Greens). The parties' reaction on MPs deviating from the party line may well differ across parties. For example, we expect a conservative party such as the CDU to punish deviating from the party line to a larger extent than the Greens, a party that experiences quite some discourse within the party and promotes grassroots democracy. In a similar vein, deviating from the party line is likely to be more common within the Green party than within the CDU. Seven control variables describe political characteristics (*Political<sub>il</sub>*). We measure the political experience of MP  $i$  by the years he was in parliament or held an office in his party (party leader, faction leader or party's secretary general) or was a minister. A prominent MP such as a (local) party leader is both less likely to be punished by the party and to deviate from the party line than MPs who are less prominent. Political characteristics also include an MP's activity in parliament as measured by speeches, oral contributions, absence rate (in roll-call votes), and earnings from side jobs. MPs who are active in parliament by, for example, giving many speeches are less likely to be punished than MPs who do not give many speeches. Parties often reward MPs' efforts. We believe that the MPs giving many speeches do not annoy their parties by discussing issues and expressing views who are not in line with the

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<sup>9</sup> Rewarding an MP would require him to jump from an unsuccessful list position to a successful list position. We can however obviously observe voting behavior only for politicians who have already been in parliament and thus have had a successful list position already in 2009.

<sup>10</sup> We also coded abstention as deviation when the majority of the party voted yes or no, and yes and no as deviation when the majority abstained. Inferences do not change when *Deviation ratio* is based on the value 1 for deviation, 0.5 for abstention, and 0 for no deviation in case the majority voted yes or no, and when *Deviation ratio* is based on the value 0.5 for yes and no and 0 for abstaining in case the majority abstained.

views the majority of the party holds. We therefore also conjecture that MPs who give many speeches are less likely to deviate from the party line than MPs who do not do so. Clearly, some MPs giving many speeches may also be inclined to deviate from the party line – sometimes party leaders may even advocate diverging positions to signal grassroots democracy to their voters. MPs’ outside earnings are likely to be positively correlated with parties’ punishment because many voters and also party members believe that “good” politicians should devote their entire time to political activities and not to outside activities. MPs having pronounced outside earnings seem to be more independent from political office than MPs with low outside earnings. The MPs’ independence, in turn, should make deviations from the party line more likely (independent MPs have to care less about potential punishment by the party to afford a living). We include four control variables  $Personal_{im}$  that indicate whether an MP  $i$  is male, married, how many children he has and his age in 2009. Age may predict the deviation ratio and parties’ reaction in manifold ways. For example, on the one hand, young MPs (freshmen) are less likely to deviate from the party line than older MPs when they believe in strict party discipline and fear to get punished for voting against the party line. Young politicians might be punished more than older politicians, because they had less time to build up strong networks within the party and the faction in the federal parliament. On the other hand, we would expect young politicians to be punished less than older politicians, because parties acknowledge young politicians’ efforts to run for office, and in times of lacking political talents, parties cannot afford punishing young promising MPs. Self-confident, young MPs might want to express independence and their own views by intentionally voting against the party line in individual roll-call votes. We also include age squared; inferences regarding the *Deviation ratio* do not change.  $u_i$  describes an error term. We estimate OLS and probit models with standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity (Huber/White/sandwich standard errors – see Huber 1967 and White 1980).

For robustness checks that do not turn out to change the inferences regarding the *Deviation ratio*, we also include fixed state effects and interaction terms between the party dummy variables and the fixed state effects. It is conceivable that habits regarding both punishment and deviation from the party line differ across states and parties within states. For example, the CDU in Hesse has been described to be stalwart. F-tests indicate however that the fixed state effects and the interaction terms between the party dummy variables and the fixed state effects do not turn out to be jointly statistically significant.

We acknowledge that there might be unobserved characteristics that we might still be worried about after including our control variables. An example is within party clashes across different regions within a state. Regional representation is one of the most important predictors of designing the party lists for the national parliament. In many states and parties, regional representation is balanced and the party lists reflect the balance of power within parties. Large and powerful regions are served first. For instance, clashes between MPs from different regions within the faction of the state parliament or on party conventions contesting influential offices within the party (positions such as local chairmen or general secretary of a party) translate into designing the party lists for the federal parliament. We are hesitant to predict the extent to which these clashes or other unobserved characteristics bias our estimate of the *Deviation ratio*. To be more explicit about whether our estimate of the *Deviation ratio* would be upward or downward biased, we would need to know the correlation between the unobserved characteristic and the deviation ratio and parties' punishment (do within party clashes make MPs more or less likely to deviate from the party line? This may well depend on the balances of power within the party and individual political career concerns. Also, parties' punishment of individual MPs depends on the balances of power within the party).

Another endogeneity concern is reverse causality. To deal with potential reverse causality we also focus on the roll-call votes which took place before the parties nominated their candidates. Inferences do not change.

### 3.3 Regression results

Column (1) of Table 2 shows the results of OLS regressions with our first measure of change in party list positions. The coefficient of *Deviation ratio* is negative, but does not turn out to be statistically significant (the p-value is 0.451). We believe that we have estimated a quite precise zero. The estimated coefficient of the coefficient of *Deviation ratio* in column (1) is -5.056; the mean of the *Deviation ratio* is 0.02, the standard deviation is 0.03. The mean of the number of lost list positions is -0.35 and the standard deviation is 4.65. Increasing the *Deviation ratio* by one standard deviation and taking the insignificant estimate literally would have been associated with decreasing list positions by around 0.15 – some 0.03 standard deviations. The coefficients of the political party dummies for the CDU, SPD, FDP and Left Party are all negative and statistically significant. How many years an MP was in parliament or whether an MP had a function in his party or was a minister, an MP's activities in parliament as measured by speeches and oral contributions, and the absence rate lack statistical significance. When an MP, however, had high earnings from jobs other than his parliamentary duties, he benefitted in terms of list positions. Older MPs lost in terms of list positions. The coefficient of *Age* is positive and statistically significant at the 1% level. Other personal characteristics of an MP lack statistical significance.

In column (2) of Table 2 we run the same OLS regressions, but use the measure of change in party list positions when we omit those candidates from the party lists that did not participate in both elections. The *Deviation ratio* coefficients do again not turn out to be statistically significant, indicating that how we calculate list positions does not matter.

Our first two measures of changes in list positions still include rather irrelevant shifts in list positions throughout the entire party lists (Table 2). Table 3 shows the regression results of a probit model where the dependent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether an MP – who was elected in 2009 via the party list – had a list position in 2013 which was worse than the last list position that got into the parliament in 2009. We thus focus on

changes in list positions where parties do not nominate MPs on promising list positions, describing actual punishment. The coefficient of *Deviation ratio* in column (1) is negative and statistically significant at the 5% level, indicating that politicians are punished for *not* deviating from the party line when it comes to whether politicians are placed on a promising list position or not. The numerical meaning of the marginal effect of *Deviation ratio* (not shown) is that the probability of punishment decreases by 1.02 percent when the deviation ratio increases by 1 percentage point. The result is, however, not robust to excluding the five MPs with the highest deviation ratio. The coefficient of *Deviation ratio* is no longer statistically significant when we exclude the outliers in column (2).<sup>11</sup> We do thus not arrive at the conclusion that MPs were punished for *not* deviating from the party line.

### 3.4 Robustness tests

We submitted all of our results to rigorous robustness tests using different specifications of our regressions and different samples. None of these robustness tests indicates any severe fragility of our results. Table 4 describes the individual robustness tests and indicates if and how inferences of our baseline models change. In the following, we describe only individual robustness tests in more detail.

In one of the robustness tests, we investigated whether parties punish male MPs differently than female MPs. We therefore estimated our regressions separately for male and female MPs. The coefficients of *Deviation ratio* are negative and significant for male MPs in all specifications. In the subsample of female MPs the coefficients of *Deviation ratio* lack statistical significance. It is conceivable that political parties react less to the voting behavior of female MPs because females are less active in politics, and parties often have quotas of how many females should be on their party lists.

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<sup>11</sup> Inferences regarding Table 2 do not change when we exclude the five outliers with the highest deviation ratio (results not shown).



In our baseline estimations we included MPs that entered the German parliament via a party list. In Germany, however, almost all of the candidates who run for a direct mandate are also on a party list. For politicians who run in a safe district where they are very likely to win the direct mandate the position on the party list is not relevant. We expect that there is still no effect of deviation when we include all MPs that were on a party list irrespective of whether they entered the parliament via a direct or a list mandate (or when we include only MPs who won a direct mandate). The coefficients of the *Deviation ratio* in the OLS models with our first and second measure of change in list positions are however negative and often (marginally) statistically significant for all MPs and only the MPs who won a direct mandate. The results thus indicate that MPs with a direct mandate and a good list position, i.e. MPs for whom the list position is not relevant, are rewarded for deviating from the party line. These MPs even gain positions. In a similar vein, the coefficients of *Deviation ratio* in the probit model for only MPs who won a direct mandate indicate that MPs are rewarded for deviating from the party line. The coefficients of *Deviation ratio* in the probit model for all MPs do not suggest an association between the Deviation ratio and parties' reactions.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Ample literature exists on the voters' reaction to political candidates' characteristics and behavior. Studies have shown that voters reward MPs voting against the party line in the next election. But little empirical evidence exists how parties themselves react to MPs voting against the party line. We examine whether German parties punished candidates for the parliament that voted against the party line. Using different measures for parties' reaction, our results do not show that politicians are punished for deviating from the party line when it comes to whether politicians are placed on a promising list position or not.

Our findings show that parties tolerate when politicians vote according to their own credo. Parties do not punish defecting MPs by giving them a worse list position in the future.

Our findings are in contrast to an empirical study for Slovakia, where defecting MPs received *better* pre-election list positions in the next election (Crisp et al. 2013). In Germany, the CDU – contrary to the public conjecture – did also not sanction defecting MPs; CDU MPs did thus not face any consequences when they deviated from the party line and voted against the European rescue packages. Many MPs from the FDP, by contrast, did not obtain any list position when they voted against the European rescue packages (Wimmel 2014).

Why is it that parties do not have a negative view on MPs that defect from the party line? It is conceivable that parliamentary indiscipline benefits the party because parliamentary indiscipline may increase electoral support (more voters find their individual views being reflected in the party) and poor policy outcomes are less clearly attributed to unitary actors (Powell and Whitten 1993).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In majoritarian election systems, party leaders anticipate voters' punishment and ask legislators in safe districts to take risks and support the partisan cause because safe seats can afford to lose a modest amount of votes (Carson et al. 2010). An increase in party unity on voting at the aggregate level has adverse electoral costs for both parties over time (Lebo et al. 2007). Parties may however also incur costs from nominating notable individually strong candidates which are less dependent on the political party leaders and are hence more likely to break party unity (Cantor and Herrnson 1997, Heidar 2006, Kam 2009, Tavits 2009, 2010).

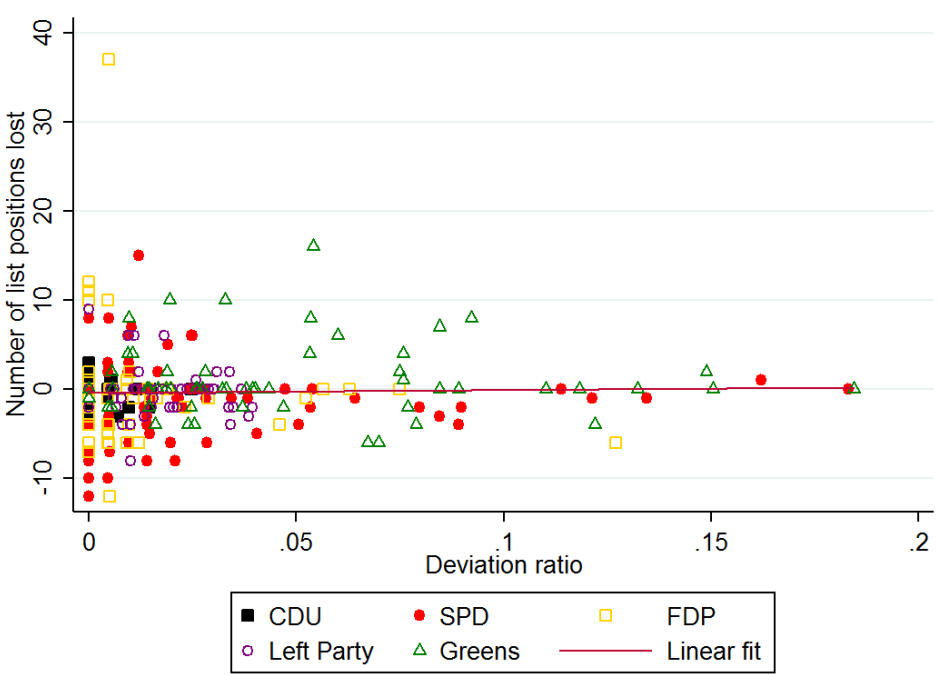
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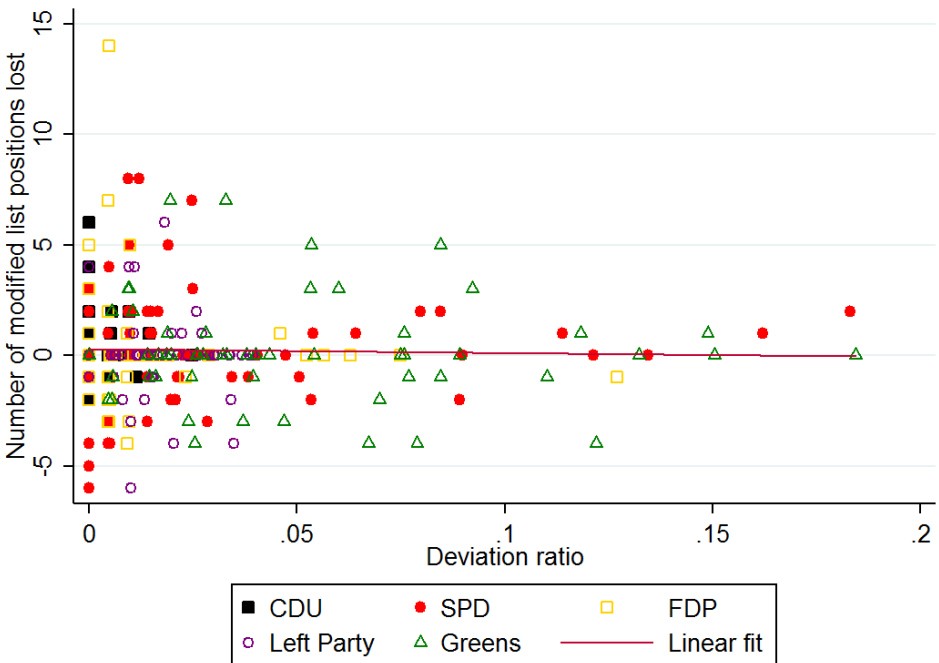
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Figure 1: Voting against the party line is not correlated with a change in the list position



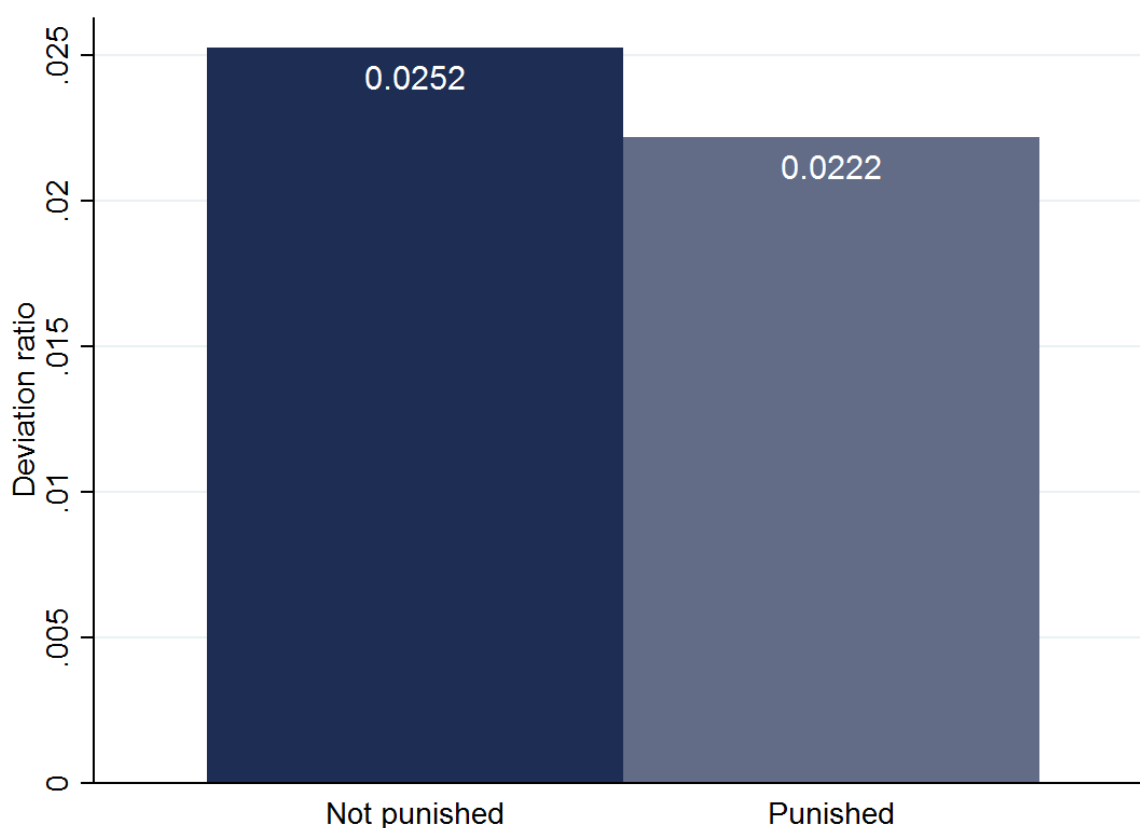
Note that negative values on the vertical axis indicate gained list positions.  
Source: Own illustration.

Figure 2: Voting against the party line is not correlated with a change in the modified list position



Note that negative values on the vertical axis indicate gained modified list positions.  
Source: Own illustration.

Figure 3: MPs who deviated more often from the party line were not more often punished



Source: Own illustration. A t-test on means does not indicate a significant difference between “not punished” and “punished” (t-value 0.41).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Number of list positions lost	257	-0.35	4.65	-12.00	37.00
Number of modified list positions lost	257	0.25	2.39	-6.00	14.00
Punishment	257	0.09	0.29	0	1
Deviation ratio	257	0.02	0.03	0.00	0.18
CDU	257	0.08	0.27	0	1
SPD	257	0.25	0.43	0	1
FDP	257	0.25	0.43	0	1
Left Party	257	0.18	0.39	0	1
Greens	257	0.24	0.43	0	1
Years in parliament	257	8.66	5.79	0.69	32.98
Function in party	257	0.10	0.55	0.00	3.98
Minister	257	0.08	0.52	0.00	3.98
Speeches	257	36.21	22.67	1	140
Oral contributions	257	13.33	13.72	0	139
Absence rate	257	0.08	0.08	0.00	0.43
Earnings from side jobs	257	16.67	62.01	0.00	724.00
Male	257	0.58	0.50	0	1
Married	257	0.62	0.49	0	1
Number of children	257	1.36	1.35	0	7
Age	257	46.63	9.91	23	69

*Years in parliament, Function in party, and Minister* measured in years; *Earnings from side jobs* measured in 1000 euros; *Age* measured in 2009.

Table 2: Regression results (OLS model).

Dependent variable: Number of list positions lost (column 1) and Number of modified list positions lost (column 2).

	(1)	(2)
Deviation ratio	-5.056 (0.451)	-2.462 (0.487)
CDU	-3.782** (0.018)	-0.213 (0.779)
SPD	-3.577*** (0.002)	-0.403 (0.430)
FDP	-1.687** (0.047)	0.272 (0.484)
Left Party	-1.526** (0.039)	-0.377 (0.389)
Years in parliament	0.173 (0.175)	0.077 (0.115)
Function in party	-0.405 (0.288)	-0.258 (0.108)
Minister	-0.557 (0.229)	-0.435** (0.034)
Speeches	-0.013 (0.418)	-0.001 (0.880)
Oral contributions	-0.030 (0.164)	-0.008 (0.513)
Absence rate	-1.040 (0.807)	-1.088 (0.624)
Earnings from side jobs	-0.009* (0.068)	-0.004* (0.086)
Male	0.381 (0.498)	0.195 (0.508)
Married	-0.704 (0.235)	-0.467 (0.145)
Number of children	0.097 (0.670)	-0.090 (0.463)
Age	0.120*** (0.000)	0.074*** (0.000)
Observations	257	257
R <sup>2</sup>	0.173	0.166

*Number of list positions lost* describes how many list positions an MP lost on the 2013 list compared to the 2009 list of his party. *Number of modified list positions lost* describes how many list positions an MP lost on the 2013 list compared to the 2009 list of his party after omitting those candidates from the party lists that did not participate in both elections. *Deviation ratio* describes the ratio of defected over total participated votes by an MP.

Standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity (Huber/White/sandwich standard errors).

*p*-values in parentheses; \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .



Table 3: Regression results (Probit model).  
Dependent variable: Punishment.

	Full sample	Outlier excluded sample
	(1)	(2)
Deviation ratio	-7.699** (0.018)	-6.493 (0.105)
CDU	-1.464** (0.019)	-1.411** (0.023)
SPD	-0.766** (0.027)	-0.736** (0.032)
FDP	-0.361 (0.332)	-0.320 (0.391)
Left Party	-0.383 (0.313)	-0.375 (0.321)
Years in parliament	-0.000 (0.988)	-0.000 (0.997)
Speeches	-0.012 (0.117)	-0.011 (0.125)
Oral contributions	0.004 (0.648)	0.004 (0.625)
Absence rate	-3.501 (0.154)	-3.375 (0.167)
Earnings from side jobs	-0.011** (0.039)	-0.011** (0.040)
Male	0.200 (0.431)	0.182 (0.479)
Married	-0.479* (0.084)	-0.481* (0.082)
Number of children	0.105 (0.286)	0.105 (0.287)
Age	0.059*** (0.000)	0.059*** (0.000)
Observations	257	252
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.214	0.212
Chi-squared	38.56	37.14
Prob > Chi-squared	0.000426	0.000701
Log likelihood	-62.66	-62.48

*Punishment* describes a dummy variable which takes the value 1 if a candidate had a list position in 2013 that was worse than the last list position that got into the parliament in 2009. *Deviation ratio* describes the ratio of defected over total participated votes by an MP. We exclude *Function in party* and *Minister*, because having a function in a party and being a minister predict failure perfectly.

Standard errors robust to heteroskedasticity (Huber/White/sandwich standard errors).

*p*-values in parentheses; \* *p* < 0.10, \*\* *p* < 0.05, \*\*\* *p* < 0.01.

Table 4: Robustness tests.

Robustness test	Do inferences change?
Separating roll-call votes into categories to investigate whether punishment depends on the different topics of the votes: general foreign policy, military actions, domestic policy in general, domestic policy during the financial and economic crisis, energy topics, European politics in general, European rescue packages, and in particular Greek rescue packages.	Weak evidence for general foreign policy and for domestic policy during the financial and economic crisis.
Identifying the ten most important roll-call votes using Google Trends and using deviating from the party line in these votes as dependent variable.	No.
Using the total number of deviations from the party line of an MP instead of <i>Deviation ratio</i> .	No.
Counting being absent as a deviation. <i>Deviation ratio</i> then describes the ratio of defected over <i>total</i> votes.	No.
Estimating the regressions separately for each political party.	In some regressions significant effects for the SPD, Greens and Left Party.
Running regressions separately for male and female MPs	Significant effect for male MPs in all models. No effect for female MPs.
Measuring a promising list position to enter the federal parliament by using (a) the average position in the 1998, 2002, and 2005 national elections that sufficed to enter parliament and (b) the position in the next (2013) election that sufficed to enter parliament.	No.
Including all MPs that were on a party list irrespective of whether they entered the parliament via a direct or a list mandate, or including only MPs who won a direct mandate.	<i>Deviation ratio</i> in the OLS models is negative and often (marginally) significant for all MPs and only the MPs who won a direct mandate, and in the probit model for only MPs who won a direct mandate. No effect in the probit model for all MPs.
Testing whether parties are more attentive to the voting behavior of MPs during the time party list positions are voted on inside the parties (usually two years before the election): including the ratio of deviating over participated votes separately for each year of the legislative period.	Significant effect of <i>Deviation ratio</i> only in the probit model, which is strongest in the years 2011 and 2012 (the two years before the election year).
Testing for a selection effect: MPs who feared that they would be punished with non-viable list positions may have retired.	Retiring MPs on average deviated less than MPs who ran in the next election (moreover, retiring cannot be explained by deviating from the party line).