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Explaining Patterns of Parliamentary Diplomacy: A Quantitative
Analysis of International Engagement by Austrian MPs

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Abstract

Parliaments around the world are stepping onto the international stage and are engaging in what is commonly referred to as parliamentary diplomacy. Their representatives participate for example in international negotiations, and there are institutional international associations, parliamentary exchange programmes and networks. Although parliamentary diplomacy has long become part of the institutional routine, the role of parliamentary actors in international affairs remains understudied. One aspect of this research gap concerns the question which parliamentarians do engage in parliamentary diplomacy, and which do not. The aim of this master thesis is to examine which factors contribute to international travel activity of parliamentarians. To address this question, the travel activities of Austrian parliamentarians are analysed over a period of 18 years (2007-2024). The analysis assumes that international travel represents a sought-after asset for parliamentarians and can therefore be considered comparable to other institutional resources within the parliamentary context, such as committee memberships. Based on this analogy and drawing on theoretical approaches from literature on allocation of committee memberships, the following factors for participation in parliamentary international travel are proposed as hypotheses: (H₁) prior experience, (H₂) relevant committee membership, (H₃) constituency characteristics, (H₄) party affiliation, (H₅) seniority and (H₆) gender. The empirical analysis is based on pooled mixed-effects negative binomial models as well as a within-person fixed-effects model. Hypotheses 1, 2 and 5 find empirical support, while hypotheses 3, 4 and 6 do not receive consistent empirical confirmation. The results show that parliamentarians with relevant prior experience exhibit a higher expected number of international trips than parliamentarians without such experience. A positive effect is also found for parliamentarians who hold memberships in relevant committees. The within-person analysis further shows that, for the same individual, the expected number of international trips increases when an additional relevant committee membership is acquired. With regard to seniority the effect postulates, that the longer a person has served in parliament the higher the likelihood of participation in international travel. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that institutional positions and parliamentary experience are stronger predictors for participation in international travel than constituency characteristics, party or gender.

Zusammenfassung

Parlamente auf der ganzen Welt betreten die internationale Bühne und engagieren sich in dem, was gemeinhin als parlamentarische Diplomatie bezeichnet wird. Ihre Vertreter:innen nehmen beispielsweise an internationalen Verhandlungen teil und engagieren sich in parlamentarischen Austauschformaten sowie internationalen Netzwerken. Obwohl parlamentarische Diplomatie längst Teil des institutionellen Alltags geworden ist, ist die Rolle parlamentarischer Akteure in internationalen Angelegenheiten nach wie vor wenig erforscht. Ein zentraler Aspekt ist die Frage, welche Parlamentarier:innen sich in parlamentarischer Diplomatie engagieren. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, Faktoren zu untersuchen, die zur internationalen Aktivität von Parlamentarier:innen beitragen. Um dieser Frage nachzugehen, werden die Reiseaktivitäten der österreichischen Parlamentarier:innen über einen Zeitraum von 18 Jahren (2007-2024) untersucht. Ausgangspunkt der Analyse ist die Annahme, dass internationale Reisen einen begehrten Vorteil für Parlamentarier:innen darstellen und somit vergleichbar mit anderen institutionellen Ressourcen, wie etwa Ausschussmitgliedschaften, sind. Aufgrund dieser Analogie werden sechs Hypothesen entwickelt, die sich an theoretischen Ansätzen zur Verteilung von Ausschussmitgliedschaften orientieren. Die dabei identifizierten Faktoren sind: (H₁) vorherige Erfahrung, (H₂) Ausschussmitgliedschaften, (H₃) Wahlkreischarakteristika, (H₄) Parteizugehörigkeit, (H₅) Seniorität und (H₆) Geschlecht. Die empirische Analyse basiert auf pooled mixed-effects Negative-Binomial-Modellen sowie einem Within-Person Fixed-Effects-Modell. Hypothesen 1, 2 und 5 finden empirische Unterstützung, während Hypothese 3, 4 und 6 keine konsistente empirische Bestätigung erhalten. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Parlamentarier:innen mit vorheriger relevanter Erfahrung eine höhere erwartete Anzahl internationaler Reisen pro Jahr aufweisen als jene ohne entsprechende Erfahrung. Auch für Parlamentarier:innen mit Mitgliedschaften in relevanten Ausschüssen zeigt sich ein positiver Effekt: Sie weisen eine höhere erwartete Anzahl internationaler Reisen pro Jahr auf als Parlamentarier:innen ohne eine derartige Mitgliedschaft. Die Within-Person-Analyse zeigt zudem, dass für dieselbe Person die erwartete Anzahl internationaler Reisen steigt, wenn eine zusätzliche relevante Ausschussmitgliedschaft hinzukommt. Für den Faktor Seniorität konnte ebenfalls ein positiver Effekt identifiziert werden: Mit zunehmender parlamentarischer Erfahrung steigt die Wahrscheinlichkeit, an internationalen Reisen teilzunehmen. Insgesamt deuten die Ergebnisse der Arbeit darauf hin, dass die Teilnahme an internationalen Reisen stärker durch institutionelle Positionen und parlamentarische Erfahrung und weniger durch Wahlkreischarakteristika, Parteizugehörigkeit oder Geschlecht beeinflusst wird.

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1 Introduction

In an era of increasing global interdependence and complex international challenges, diplomacy is no longer the exclusive domain of state governments. Classical intergovernmental diplomacy has undergone significant changes, driven by processes such as globalization, decolonization and the global spread of democracy. These developments have fundamentally reshaped the international arena, expanding both the number of relevant actors and the complexity of diplomatic practice (Pisarska 2016, 1-2). Among the new key actors within this broadened diplomatic landscape are for example parliaments, which are increasingly stepping onto the international stage and engaging in what is commonly referred to as *parliamentary diplomacy*.

The term parliamentary diplomacy originally referred to the use of parliamentary procedures within the framework of traditional state diplomacy. As the concept has evolved, it now refers to the “autonomous activity of parliaments worldwide” (Stavridis and Jančić 2017, 5), remains largely informal and is barely codified, neither at the national nor at the global level. While there is a wide range of definitions, with differing degrees of conceptual scope (Weisglas and de Boer 2007, 93-94; IPU 2005), all approaches share several core characteristics. These include flexibility, informality, the involvement of multiple levels and actors, as well as the consideration of whether parliamentary diplomacy serves as a complement to, or an alternative to traditional state diplomacy.

As parliamentary diplomacy has become more prominent in international affairs, it has also attracted growing academic attention. Although still a relatively young and previously contested phenomenon, there is an expanding body of research. Existing studies on parliamentary diplomacy range from conceptual analyses of the nature, definition and functions of parliamentary diplomacy to case studies on its practical application across different regions and institutions. However, as Stavridis and Jančić (2017, 4) point out, despite the growing academic interest in parliamentary diplomacy, many questions remain insufficiently explored. One of these neglected aspects is the question of who engages in parliamentary diplomacy on an individual level. A closer look at national-level practices reveals that engagement varies among members of parliament, both in terms of intensity and type. Yet little research has been conducted on why such differences arises and what conditions may lead to varying degrees of parliamentarians’ engagement. Although some authors do touch on foreign trips undertaken by parliamentarians, they tend to do so either in normative terms or with a focus on specific aspects – such as partisan composition, sponsored trips or questions of legitimacy and knowledge-related benefits of international travel (e.g., McGee and Theriault 2022; McGee and Moniz 2022; Alduncin et al. 2017; Flockhart 2004). While such studies have examined travel

activities, empirical research and scholarly attention to the connection between international travel and parliamentary diplomacy remain limited. This may reflect both the recent emergence of the topic as a field of study and a broader underestimation of parliamentary diplomacy in general. In line with this, there is also a strand of literature that addresses the common prejudice or negative perception of parliamentary diplomacy as so called „political” or “parliamentary tourism” (Malamud and Stavridis 2011, 106).

Therefore, the main aim of this thesis is to close this gap by examining the determinants of participation in parliamentary diplomacy. More specifically, the thesis seeks to explain why some parliamentarians engage in parliamentary diplomacy while others do not. Since parliamentary diplomacy is a broad concept and encompasses a wide range of activities (e.g., official visits, conferences, participation in interparliamentary assemblies, informal exchange), this analysis focuses specifically on parliamentarians’ participation in foreign delegations as a measurable indicator of engagement.

The thesis is structured into five main parts. The first one provides an overview of the relevant literature and outlines the development of the research question and hypotheses. The second part focuses on the research design, including case and data selection as well as the data preparation. In the third part, the hypotheses are empirically tested through a quantitative analysis. Finally, the thesis concludes with a summary and discussion of the results, followed by suggestions for future research.

This work is both relevant and novel as it addresses the evolving nature of international diplomacy in an era where global challenges increasingly require engagement at multiple levels and by multiple actors. Furthermore, it allows for the consideration of various factors that shape parliamentary diplomacy, considering individual differences between parliamentarians as well as party-specific dynamics. Understanding which factors lead to different forms of engagement in parliamentary diplomacy has the potential to further elucidate the diversification of diplomacy and foreign policy practices and moreover enhance our understanding of international travel as a component of parliamentary diplomacy.

2 Current State of Research

Although foreign trips have become an almost routine aspect of parliamentary work and an integral part of parliamentary diplomacy, their role within this field remains insufficiently explored. While international research addresses several topics related to the travel behaviour of parliamentarians, such as political socialisation, bipartisan cooperations or the cost-benefit analysis of such trips, there is a lack of systematic research specifically in the context of

parliamentary diplomacy. Nevertheless, the existing literature offers valuable and interesting findings that subsequently can be applied to the study of parliamentary diplomacy.

One of these literature strands focuses on the costs of foreign parliamentary travel and discusses its contested benefits. For instance, newspaper articles from the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., *Christian Science Monitor* 1977; *New York Times* 1982) but also more recent ones (e.g., Fritz 1992; Marshall 1997; Condon 2009) discuss fundamental scepticism towards such activities. Foreign trips undertaken by parliamentarians were portrayed as unnecessary, lavish or overly politicised, leading to the emergence of terms such as “junket” or “political/parliamentarian tourism”. This framing was also taken up and discussed in academic literature and policy papers (see, for example, Lupo 2016 or Sepp 2000). While early debates primarily criticised the financial and symbolic aspects of foreign travels, scholars have also recognised its diplomatic, institutional and political value. Likewise, Doug Bereuter (vice chairman of the American House International Relations Committee) expresses the importance of such travels in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* in 1997: “If you have a lot of members who’ve never been to an [American] embassy or consulate, it becomes easier to cut back on them because there’s less of an appreciation of exactly what they do” (Marshall 1997). Furthermore, he states that foreign travel is crucial for various reasons, such as helping to establish and support the development of new democracies for example in Eastern Europe.

Another literature strand emphasizes foreign travel as a means of political socialisation, democratic education and the acquisition of knowledge. Flockhart (2004), for instance, argues that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly serves as a space for learning and socialisation processes, where experienced parliamentarians (“old masters”) interact with less experienced ones (“novices”). Thus, while Flockhart does not articulate this claim directly, her argumentation reveals a clear conviction that international travel and parliamentary meetings function as instruments for the promotion of democratic norms and practices.

Similarly, Bliesemann de Guevara (2016) refers to parliamentary travel as an opportunity for information gathering and as an example of evidence-based policymaking, especially in conflict regions. She shows how these travel activities shape the policy knowledge through sensory and routinized experiences that reinforce humanitarian imaginaries rather than critically engaging with the reality on the ground. Yet she recognizes that the journeys also serve important political and affective functions such as agenda-setting, community-building and experiencing abstract political concepts in a sensory and emotional way (Bliesemann de Guevara 2016). Both authors thus acknowledge that foreign trips can fulfil a political function and offer significant value to the parliamentary process. However, they do not address the

structural conditions under which parliamentarians choose to engage in such activities and limit their analyses to specific occasions or frameworks (e.g., conflict and peace studies).

Further research on the travel behaviour of parliamentarians has been conducted in the context of sponsored trips, so called “gift travels”, offered by companies or private organisations. Although these studies (see for example McGee and Moinz 2022; Rosenson 2009) also examine which members of parliament (MPs) are more likely to participate in such trips and identify explanatory factors such as seniority or committee activity, they focus on a different type of travel and pursue a distinct analytical focus - namely the benefits and risks of sponsored trips and the motivation behind participation. Nevertheless, these studies demonstrate that the travel behaviour of parliamentary actors is shaped by both institutional and individual-level variables. For example, the studies show that MPs in prominent positions, such as committee chairs, are more frequently targeted for such trips, as they hold legislative influence over relevant policy areas. Furthermore, also individual characteristics such as ideology, ethnicity, age, electoral vulnerability and proximity to retirement have been identified to affect the participation likelihood. These findings highlight the complex interplay of structural and personal conditions and are therefore highly relevant for understanding other forms of parliamentary travel especially in the broader context of a diplomatic framework.

In the US-context, a growing strand of research is dedicated to the relationship between parliamentary travel behaviour and cross-party cooperation. McGee and Theriault (2022) as well as Alduncin et al. (2017) examine so-called bipartisan travels, referring to trips undertaken jointly by members of different political parties. These studies centre on the question which factors encourage participation in cross-party delegations and identify factors like seniority, committee membership or foreign policy interests (McGee and Theriault 2022, 935-938). They further show that parliamentary travel can contribute to rebuilding interpersonal trust and collegiality across party lines, function as a rare space for social interaction beyond partisan divides. However, they suggest that increasing ideological polarization reduces the likelihood of such trips, especially among more ideologically extreme members (Alduncin et al. 2017, 180-181). While their main emphasis thus lies on partisan polarisation, they nonetheless offer valuable empirical insights into individual and institutional determinants of parliamentary travel. These findings are hence also relevant for understanding parliamentary diplomacy and can be used for the analytical framework of this study.

A broader perspective on parliamentary travel can be derived from the research of Rakutienė (2025). Although this line of research does not rely on empirical travel data, it provides valuable theoretical insights into patterns of parliamentary engagement within the

context of parliamentary diplomacy, particularly in the context of the EU. Drawing on functionalist social theory, Rakutienė (2025) investigates why some parliamentarians display higher levels of engagement than others, identifying three explanatory models. She identifies social interaction, cultural patterns and individual motivation as factors for understanding individual political engagement. Although focusing on institutional participation within the EU, these models offer a useful lens through which the motivations and behaviours of parliamentarians in the context of international travel may also be explained.

Acknowledging this wide range of related literature and scholarly engagement with the travel behaviour of parliamentarians, two key limitations can be identified. First, it should be noted that there is a strong regional bias, with the majority of studies focusing on the EU or the United States (US). There is hardly any research conducted in national contexts beyond the US, nor are there systematic or cross-national studies. Moreover, the specific institutional characteristics of the EU make it difficult to make generalisations or to draw conclusions that can be applied to national cases. Second, and maybe even more crucial than the regional focus is a lack of conceptual work that systematically links parliamentary travel to parliamentary diplomacy. While existing studies examine travel behaviours in relation to other issues, such as political polarisation or conflict resolutions, they rarely frame it in the context of parliamentary diplomacy. As a result, the analytical potential as an instrument and expression of parliamentary diplomacy remains understudied.

3 Research Questions

The primary objective of this thesis is to analyse the engagement of parliamentarians in international trips, focusing on their participation and the factors influencing it. As explained in chapter 5.1 (“case selection”), Austria serves as the case study for this analysis. The central research question is therefore:

What factors influence the engagement of Austrian parliamentarians in international trips?

To answer this question, parliamentary diplomacy, more precisely the engagement of Austrian parliamentarians in international trips will be examined at two levels: the individual and the party level. The aim of the individual-level analysis is to examine the incentives and factors from an individual perspective by focusing on the perspectives of individual parliamentarians. The emphasis is on factors that distinguish parliamentarians and influence their participation in international trips based on their personal characteristics. In contrast, the analysis at the party level focuses on factors that influence the participation of different parliamentarians from the

perspective of political parties. Here, the focus is not on the considerations and characteristics of individual parliamentarians but rather on the strategies and priorities of the parties. Importantly, this dual-perspective approach aims to account for a broad range of potential explanatory factors. In addition, the current literature on committee assignments (see chapter 4) implies that at both levels incentives and influencing factors may affect the engagement of parliamentarians towards parliamentary diplomacy.

Thus, in the context of this thesis, the dependent variable is the participation of Austrian parliamentarians in international trips, operationalised through their travel behaviours. The independent variables include a range of personal and positional characteristics, such as committee experience, constituency focus, professional background, seniority and gender.

4 Theory and Hypotheses

This thesis is based on the premise that participation in official trips abroad represent a valuable and sought-after asset for parliamentarians. As demonstrated by the literature on interparliamentary cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy, meetings with other representatives yield significant positive effects such as enhanced international collaboration, the exchange of best practices (Bengtson 2007; Hefffler and Gattermann 2015), the chance to gain information independently of the executive and to interrogate the position of foreign parties (Lipps 2021; Krajewski 2011; Koenig-Archibugi and Bareis 2022) as well as the possibility to advance political dialogue (Stavridis and Jančić 2016; Nothelle 2007) and enhance the mutual understanding (Wagner 2013, 196).

Consequently, it can be assumed that participation in international trips is pursued by parliamentarians. Thus, the allocation to delegations and the actual decision to participate in these trips can be regarded as the distribution of an asset within the parliamentary process. For this reason, participation in international trips can be compared with participation and membership in parliamentary committees. According to the literature (Krehbiel 1992, 2; Hansen 2019, 204; Martin and Mickler 2018, 2-3), committee membership is also considered a desirable asset, as it is associated with the allocation of resources and power that are significant for the parliamentary process. Through committee assignments, parliamentarians, for example, gain informational advantages such as early access to relevant information and the opportunity to get involved in certain topics earlier compared to those who are not part of the relevant committee (Zubek 2015, 1022). In addition, further advantages are highlighted in the literature. For instance, parliamentarians tend to favour committees whose thematic discussions are relevant to their electorate or because they sense other benefits from special committees as for

example re-election, policy or prestige benefits (e.g., Shepsle 1978; Ryan 2021; Eichenberger and Mach 2017; Sprague 2008, 310). Due to these opportunities and the accompanying power, the distribution of committee seats is also highly relevant for political parties. For instance, Max (2001) argues that, depending on which parliamentarians are assigned to specific committees, parties can better pursue different goals or utilize existing connections more effectively. According to current research, committee assignments can be made based on both external and internal party-political considerations. An example from the internal side is that assignments to committees typically are used as a reward for loyal behaviour by parliamentarians (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 1993, 154-157 or Kanthak 2009). In summary, it can be assumed that committee assignments distribute resources and power among individual parliamentarians, making committee membership a significant asset in the parliamentary process. Since membership in both - committees and delegations for international trips - is of great importance to parliamentarians, the fundamental assumption of a valuable asset can be applied to both activities. This comparison enables the adaptation of theories on committee assignments to the phenomenon under investigation in this thesis: parliamentary diplomacy, specifically the travel activities of parliamentarians.

As noted in previous chapters, parliamentarians' participation in international trips serves as the dependent variable in this study. To operationalize this variable, a distinction is made between mere assignment to a delegation and actual participation in a trip – with only the latter being investigated (i.e., as dependent variable) in this research project. Since the focus of this work is on identifying the factors that influence the decision to participate in international trips, simple delegation assignment will not be considered.

Various factors that are expected to influence participation are included as the independent variables. Based on the literature on committee assignments, which is used as a foundation for theory development due to the parallels explained earlier, six different factors have been identified. The resulting six hypotheses correspond to these factors.

The first two hypotheses are based on the insights of the informational theory derived from research on committee assignments and address the factors of *expertise* and *prior committee membership*. The informational theory, which is rooted in the rational-choice institutionalism framework and introduced by Gilligan and Krehbiel (1987; 1990), posits that committees are primarily designed to enhance parliamentary efficiency and to weaken information asymmetries within the chamber. The latter theory is based on the assumption that parliaments must address a broad spectrum of policy issues, which in turn creates uncertainty among parliamentarians, as they cannot fully anticipate the potential outcomes of every policy.

To address this challenge, committees allow for the specialization of parliamentarians by assigning them to specific policy areas. This specialization fosters the development of expertise and curtails information asymmetries, which in turn reduces uncertainty in the drafting and evaluation of legislative proposals, programs and other actions. Furthermore, specialization allows for an increased workload of the entire chamber, as policy areas are distributed across multiple committees. Thus, specialization fosters the formation of numerous committees, thereby allowing a broader range of topics to be addressed. Another important observation of the informational theory introduced by Gilligan and Krehbiel (1990) is that specialisation creates a new information asymmetry. However, according to the latter authors, the information asymmetry does not exist between individual parliamentarians, but rather between the committee and the plenary itself. If the committee fails to ideologically embody the chamber, the committee's proposals are more likely to be rejected by the plenary. For this reason, the theory leads to a new assumption, namely that committees should, according to Gilligan and Krehbiel (1990, 549-552), represent a microcosm of the plenary. Upon considering the phenomenon under investigation, the following hypothesis can be formulated for the first factor, *expertise*:

H₁: Parliamentarians with a professional background and/or relevant prior knowledge participate more frequently in international trips.

At the individual level, the underlying assumption is that parliamentarians with specialized knowledge and competence in international matters feel better equipped to handle the demands of international trips and are therefore more likely to participate. This proposition rests on the observation that expertise and specialization reduce uncertainties, which in turn foster participation in international trips. At the party level, *expertise* is associated with a positive perception of competence, as international stakeholders are more likely to engage with competent counterparts. Furthermore, the positive effects for parties increase as parliamentarians with existing expertise are presumed to address complex issues more effectively during international meetings.

The second factor presumed to influence the participation of parliamentarians is also inspired by the informational theory and is called *prior committee membership*. According to the informational theory, parliamentarians with memberships in committees related to international topics (e.g., EU-Affairs Committee or the Committee on Foreign Affairs) are expected to have a strong knowledge of and interest in international affairs. In addition, participation in trips abroad provides parliamentarians with knowledge and skills that benefit them in their parliamentary work. Following this logic, a strong motivation to participate in

international trips is assumed for parliamentarians with relevant committee memberships. Consequently, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H₂: Parliamentarians who serve on committees for foreign affairs or related topics are more likely to participate in international trips.

At the party level, the hypothesis is consistent, as the specialization of parliamentarians is expected to lead to stronger substantive work. Participation in international trips and the associated committee membership enable the pooling of expertise and specialization among parliamentarians, which is presumed to benefit the entire party.

The next factor is derived from the distributive theory of research on committee assignments. This theory, grounded in the school of rational-choice institutionalism and largely shaped by Shepsle (1978) and Weingast (1979), conceptualizes committees as decentralized institutions that parliamentarians deliberately use to advance their own interests. Central to this theory is the goal of re-election, which depends largely on the parliamentarian's performance within their constituencies. As a result, parliamentarians focus primarily on securing benefits for their electoral districts. Committees, considered as decentralized bodies, therefore offer strategic advantages in shaping specific policies by dividing policy areas and granting committee members privileges tied to greater influence in those areas. This works because committees are understood as decentralized agenda control mechanisms that institutionalize negotiations and bargains (Weingast and Marshall 1988, 144-146; Tullock 1981), facilitating logrolling among parliamentarians to secure mutual benefits on issues of varying importance to their constituencies. According to this theory, parliamentarians from rural districts, for instance, tend to prioritize membership in agricultural committees, while MPs from constituencies with high unemployment rates may gravitate toward committees that focus on economic or social policy – resulting in committees that are not representative of the plenary but instead systematically biased (Krehbiel 1990, 149).

If this theory is applied to the case of parliamentary diplomacy under investigation, an additional influencing factor for participation in international trips can be identified. This factor, based on distribution theory, is the thematic *focus of the constituencies* from which parliamentarians originate. It is assumed that some constituencies benefit more from good international relations than others due to factors such as their predominant economic goods, geographical location (e.g., proximity to neighbouring countries) or resident minorities. Due to the possibility of obtaining a mandate in Austria directly through the constituency, it can be assumed that parliamentarians from constituencies that benefit greatly from international contacts have a greater interest and willingness to participate in international trips. This effect

is also relevant at the party level, since receiving direct mandates naturally benefits the overall strength of the party. Following the logic of both levels, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H₃: Parliamentarians from constituencies that benefit greatly from international relations (e.g., trade, tourism, or international partnerships such as tri-border regions) are more likely to participate in international trips.

The next factor considered in answering the research question is based on the partisan theory of research on committee assignments, first established by Cox and McCubbins (1993). Partisan theory suggests that party leadership has considerable decision-making powers within the framework of committee assignments. This theory fundamentally differs in its central assumption from the two previous theories (informational and distributive theory), as it does not view parties as weak or non-constraining. According to partisan theory, parties hold an influential position in the parliamentary process and leverage this power in the assignment of committees. Committee assignments are made strategically, for instance, serving as a tool and mechanism to better assess or influence the behaviour of parliamentarians (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Research within the framework of partisan theory has further explored whether holding government responsibility or being in opposition influences the allocation of committees (Hansen 2019, 207-209). It is presumed that there is a strong connection between committees and cabinet government, whereby committees could either function as support for the party's ministries on a parliamentary level or could be used as a shadowing entity (Martin and Vandberg 2011; Carroll and Cox 2012; Sieberer and Höhmann 2017). This assumption is rooted in theories and considerations regarding coalition governments, which necessitate a politics of negotiation, as at least two different coalition partners are involved. Furthermore, also parties that are not part of the government attempt to steer policy in their preferred direction. One of these possibilities is the use of parliamentary committees. Hansen (2019, 207-209) therefore, proposes the following considerations: Committee assignments in parliamentary systems align with government formation, as parties prioritize control over committees linked to their ministerial portfolios and use them strategically to consolidate legislative influence or seek to maximize representation on committees where the portfolio is held by another coalition partner in order to monitor and influence the policy of the other parties. In research on committee assignments, the following additional – and potentially influencing - factor has been identified at the party level: the tension between legislative and the executive. Applying these considerations to the research question of this thesis, a further hypothesis can be formulated:

H4: Parliamentarians from opposition parties participate more frequently in international trips than parliamentarians from governing parties.

This hypothesis follows the ideas regarding the influence of coalition governments on committee assignments by extending the control function of committees to parliamentary diplomacy. Parliamentarians from governing parties, due to their role access to executive power, have direct means for influencing foreign policy. Through party structures, ministries (especially the foreign ministry) and other government institutions they have established channels to formulate and implement foreign policies. In contrast, parliamentarians from parties in the opposition lack these extensive mechanisms and must therefore rely on alternative tools (such as committees or parliamentary diplomacy). Building on this need, international trips can serve as an instrument for exerting influence on foreign policy. At the individual level, international trips allow parliamentarians to increase their influence on foreign policy, even though their party do not hold government responsibility or the corresponding ministry. Furthermore, participation in international trips enables opposition parliamentarians to monitor the actions of their governing counterparts. These considerations reflect assumptions observed in research on committee assignments, where opposition parties are assumed to maximize their representation in committees that allow them to monitor or influence the governing coalition, which represents a highly appealing incentive for parties at the party level.

The next two factors are also derived from research on committee assignments but fall outside the scope of the three major theories: informational, distributive and partisan theory. A factor repeatedly highlighted in recent research is seniority. McElroy (2006) identified this in his research on committee assignments in the European Parliament and concluded that seniority plays a crucial role in committee assignments. His findings showed that parliamentarians with greater tenure in office are more frequently appointed to committees with greater prestige or visibility. This is confirmed by interviews with parliamentarians, who specifically mentioned high-profile committees like the Foreign Affairs and the Legal Affairs Committee, both of which predominantly include returning members (McElroy 2006, 10).

Building on this argument and considering McElroy's findings that foreign policy is perceived as high-profile, the hypothesis regarding participation in international trips and parliamentary seniority can be formulated as follows:

H5: Parliamentarians with longer tenures as members of the National or Federal Council are more likely to participate in international trips.

The underlying assumption here is that experienced parliamentarians possess certain behavioural norms, codes and a vast repertoire of prior knowledge from previous legislative

periods that are difficult to pass on to their successors. In addition, they often have an extensive network of international contacts that they build up during their time as parliamentarians. The longer parliamentarians serve in their role, the greater their advantage over newly elected colleagues. For parties, experienced parliamentarians represent a “safe” choice and offer a strategic advantage for participation in international trips due to their experience and competence. At the individual level, seniority in office also entails a certain positioning within the parliamentary process. According to the literature, incumbents have a higher probability of being re-elected in the next election or of receiving a place on the party’s list (Cox and Katz 1996; Gelman and King 1990; Hobolt and Høyland 2011, 481; Dano et al. 2022, 15-17; Smrek 2020, 7). This increased security regarding their political future allows parliamentarians to focus more on long-term issues and projects without immediate results. As theories on parliamentary diplomacy show (Weisglas and de Boer 2007, 96-98), this form of diplomacy is often lengthy and without immediate outcomes, making it less attractive for parliamentarians reliant on tangible results for their electorate and re-election. The more consistently parliamentarians assert their position within their party and as members of parliament, the more opportunities and scope they have for activities in the realm of parliamentary diplomacy. Thus, seniority can be considered a positive influencing variable on participation in international trips at both - individual and party - level.

Another frequently addressed factor in gender studies on committee assignments is the influence of *gender* on the appointment of political positions. According to the literature (Thomas 1994; Pansardi and Vercesi 2017, 64-65), women are usually appointed to committees dealing with issues that are traditionally associated with women according to stereotypical gender role expectations. This leads to an imbalance with women being generally underrepresented in committees traditionally dominated by men (such as finance, defense or foreign affairs committees), whereas they are overrepresented in committees dealing with “women-related” policy areas (e.g., social, health or cultural affairs committees). Often this selection is consistent with the allocation of prestige and popularity, as committees traditionally perceived as feminine frequently hold low prestige (Prihatini 2021, 214-218; McElroy 2006, 18). Therefore, committee assignments reflect the societal stereotypical distribution of gender roles, which in turn are influenced by various factors, such as cultural and institutional aspects. Accordingly, Espírito-Santo and Sanches (2020, 450-451) stress that political institutions (e.g., parties) are not gender-neutral. They embed gender norms that interact with individual factors such as expertise and seniority. These norms are likely to result in unequal perceptions of men’s and women’s qualifications by party leaders, with men often benefiting from preferential

appointments to prestigious committees even without relevant expertise. Likewise, also prior leadership experience or party ideology play a role (Heath et al. 2005). Such as, left-wing parties, due to their generally stronger commitment to gender equality, are more likely to implement measures that promote women's representation in political positions, as for example committee membership (Lovenduski and Norris 1993). At the structural level, additional factors like the incompatibility between work and family life and selection procedures have been reported to pose potential disadvantages for women in the committee assignment process (O'Brien 2012; Inglehart and Norris 2003, 7-8).

Furthermore, individual factors, such as self-perception and support within one's environment, contribute to this imbalance (Inglehart and Norris 2003, 8-10). These findings are for example supported by the research of Espírito-Santo and Sanches (2020, 466-467) on Portuguese committee assignment. It shows that women's overrepresentation in social issue committees might also stem from their self-selection preferences and educational backgrounds. Women are more likely to have expertise in areas related to health, education or social policies, whereas men often dominate fields like law, economics or defense. However, even when women lack specific expertise, they are still more likely to be overrepresented and appointed to social committees, thus stressing the influence of embedded stereotypes. Aligned with the research question introduced earlier, the following hypothesis can be formulated for parliamentary diplomacy:

H₆: Male parliamentarians are more likely than their female colleagues to participate in international trips.

The latter hypothesis is based on the assumption that female parliamentarians are considered less competent in the field of international politics because foreign policy is stereotypically viewed as a male policy area. Furthermore, women face structural disadvantages due to the societal inequalities that they still face in modern society (e.g., incompatibility between work and family and the perception of women's professional ambitions). In addition, women are also subject to intra-party barriers that often make it more difficult for them to participate in international trips. On an individual level, there are self-constraints rooted in cultural and societal circumstances that may overlap with women's perceptions, which is why the hypothesis is plausible on both levels.

5 Research design

5.1 Case selection

In the context of this thesis Austria will serve as the case to investigate the aforementioned research question. The case selection was guided by both theoretical relevance and practical considerations. The latter refers to the fact that the author was granted access to data from the Austrian Parliamentary Directorate due to her employment in the department “Global Development & Information Processing” of the Austrian Parliamentary Administration. As a result, the author was able to collect and process official travel data of Austrian parliamentarians in relation to their engagement in parliamentary diplomacy. Access to the data was granted by the Austrian Parliamentary Administration following the signing of a confidentiality agreement. All data were handled in accordance with strict data protection regulations, including anonymization of personal data prior to analysis to ensure confidentiality and prevent the identification of individual parliamentarians.

Beyond these practical considerations, Austria also presents as a compelling case from a theoretical perspective. Firstly, Austria has a strong practice of parliamentary diplomacy, is well connected with other parliaments around the world, maintains long-term collaborations and projects and has a notable history of individually engaged parliamentarians who were internationally active – especially given the country’s small size. Furthermore, the Austrian parliament and its projects enjoy a positive reputation and are internationally highly valued.

Besides its international engagement, Austria is also a very interesting case, as it has a strong parliamentary and democratic practice and the Parliament enjoys a high level of trust and prestige among the Austrian population (Demokratie Monitor 2024). This might also empower parliamentary democracy and detach it from traditional state diplomacy. As Zamfir (2019, 5-7) for example, postulates parliamentary diplomacy might not just be a complement to traditional state diplomacy but could also represent a distinct and potentially divergent form of external action. In light of these considerations, Austria represents an interesting case as its active parliamentarism provides a favourable environment for parliamentary diplomacy to unfold its full potential. Consequently, the factors that shape individual engagement in parliamentary diplomacy are likely to be especially visible in this setting.

A third aspect supporting Austria as the selected case is the observed political variation. The Austrian Parliament has undergone multiple power changes in the last years and thus allows for interesting variations in the empirical analyses. Austria features a multi-party system in which several parties share parliamentary power. Through gaining electoral power, parties not only achieve political influence but also obtain personal (and financial) resources. Thus, not

only one party but several parties have, at least theoretically, the necessary means to engage in parliamentary diplomacy. Moreover, the distribution of power becomes visible not only through the share of parliamentary seats, but also through the allocation of key positions, such as the presidency of the National Council or committee chairmanships, which change due to shifting parliamentary majorities.

Furthermore, parliamentary diplomacy in Austria is also financially and especially resource-bounded supported through the Parliamentary Administration, which provides an institutional framework for all parties and their parliamentarians to engage in parliamentary diplomacy. Through various departments within the Parliamentary Administration, parliamentarians receive relevant information, organizational and financial support and practical assistance when travelling abroad or participating in (international) conferences and meetings.

In summary, Austria offers an interesting and fruitful combination of conditions, which together with the data access, provide a robust empirical setting to analyse the determinants of engagement in parliamentary diplomacy.

5.2 Data

Data for this thesis were collected from several different sources. One source, providing the main dataset – representing the dependent variable (travel data of the parliamentarians) – was collected and processed by the author using information obtained from the Austrian Parliamentary Administration in accordance with a data protection agreement. This data covers all official trips undertaken by parliamentarians between 2006 and 2024 (spanning the 22nd to the 28th legislative periods) and contains the following information: duration and date of the trip, type/title of the trip, destination, participation-related information as well as anonymized data on which parliamentarians took part. Regarding the research interest of this thesis, the President of the National Council and the President of the Federal Council were excluded from the analysis due to their special role and representative duties, which could bias the results. As part of their presidency, it can be assumed that they have responsibilities which influence their travel behaviour and engagement in parliamentary diplomacy, differentiating them from regular parliamentarians (thus, their data are not representative for ordinary MPs and clearly would distort the data). Accordingly, the dataset contains only active parliamentarians (from both chambers) while excluding former members, even if they still participate in official trips.

The next source used to collect data for the independent variables (for a detailed list, see Annex 2: Variable Operationalisation) was the Austrian Parliaments' open data offer. Through this access to public parliamentary data the author was able to extract the relevant information

for the variables V_2 to V_7 (see Annex 2) and combine them with the aforementioned dataset on travel behaviour. In particular, the datasets “Parlamentarier:innen ab 1918” and “Ausschussmitgliedschaften” were used. Since two variables („professional background” and “prior committee membership”) require information from before the actual trip of the parliamentarian, the datasets generated by the author extends beyond 2006 and includes data going back to 1996.

As for the three remaining variables, data from Statistik Austria (STATcube) and official government sources were used. The variable “focus of constituency - tourism” and “focus of constituency – citizenship” is based on harmonized employment data (“abgestimmte Erwerbstatistik”) provided by Statistik Austria. The variable “focus of constituency – border region” is based on official information retrieved from different government sources, including the official website for National Council elections or the Federal Law Gazette. Due to changes in the structure and availability of the data over time, the specific sources vary across the years. Since these data were not available for every single year but only for the election years, the same values were applied to the subsequent years until the next election took place (or until a change within the data occurred – e.g., changes in the regional constituencies borders). This adjustment is based on the assumption that the variables (nationality, share of tourism (operationalized through employment data) and border proximity) are relatively stable with little change from year to year. Thus, this approximation seems methodologically appropriate.

5.3 Operationalisation

To quantitatively analyse the hypotheses mentioned above, it is necessary to operationalise the theoretical concepts. The aim is to make these concepts, particularly the variables, empirically measurable. For all hypotheses, the dependent variable (V_1) is defined as MPs “participation in international trips” which is operationalised by the number of trips undertaken by each parliamentarian. Therefore, V_1 is a discrete variable ranging from 0 to 78, counting all trips of each parliamentarian in the respective year. For the purpose of the present thesis, the data was compiled and pre-processed by the author based on raw data provided by the Parliamentary Administration.

For the first hypothesis, the independent variable “professional background” (V_2) is added. It describes the existence of a professional background related to international relations but is understood widely and includes, for example, previous studies in the field of international relations or a prior work experience in the area. The variable is operationalised using data from the open data project of the Parliamentary Administration, more precisely the parliamentarians’ short biographies. As these short biographies are self-submitted, the accuracy of the data

depends on the information provided by the parliamentarians themselves. For this thesis, the data has been transformed into a dichotomous variable, coded with 0 = no professional background and 1 = professional background. The identification of relevant experience is based on a keyword-based coding scheme developed by the author. The coding pattern was applied to three biographical fields in the provided short biographies: professional career, education and political functions. It includes German and English terms related to foreign policy, international relations, diplomacy, human rights, international law and development policy. Examples of keywords include “European External Action Service”, “Entwicklungspolitik”, “Human Rights”, “UNO”, or “multilaterale Beziehungen”. If at least one relevant keyword appears in any of these three fields, the variable is coded as 1 = professional background or 0 if otherwise.

For the second hypothesis, “prior committee membership” (V_3) serves as the independent variable. V_3 indicates if a parliamentarian has prior experience as a member of a committee related to international studies. Two versions of this variable were generated. First, it is operationalised as the total number of months with prior committee membership. Concurrent memberships in different committees are not counted separately. Thus, a parliamentarian can receive credit only for a maximum of 12 months per year, regardless of the number of committees they served on. Accordingly, V_3 is operationalised as a discrete variable ranging from 0 to ∞ . Second, V_3 is operationalised as a binary variable coded as 0 = no relevant committee membership and 1 = relevant committee membership. Again, the data was obtained through the open data project of the Parliamentary Administration.

For the third hypothesis, three independent variables are introduced: “focus of constituency - border” ($V_{4.1}$), “focus of constituency - tourism” ($V_{4.2}$) and “focus of constituency - nationality” ($V_{4.3}$). Since the aim of this hypothesis is to explore whether the structure and territorial characteristics of constituencies influence the level of engagement of their parliamentarians, three distinct parameters were identified to describe constituency profiles. The first parameter assesses whether a constituency is in a border region (e.g., shares an external border with a neighbouring country). This variable ($V_{4.1}$) is thus operationalized as a dichotomous variable with 0 = no border and 1 = external border. The second parameter measures whether a constituency has a high or low proportion of people employed in the tourism sector. Therefore, the corresponding variable ($V_{4.2}$) is a discrete variable ranging between 0 and 100, reflecting the percentage of people employed in the tourism sector within the constituency’s employed population. The third parameter evaluates whether a constituency has a high or low share of residents with a non-Austrian nationality. This variable ($V_{4.3}$) is also

operationalized as a discrete variable ranging between 0 and 100, reflecting the percentage of non-Austrian nationals in the total population of the constituency.

For the fourth hypothesis the independent variable “party affiliation” (V_5) is added. V_5 captures whether the parliamentarian’s party was part of the governing coalition or in opposition at the time of the trip. Accordingly, V_5 is a dichotomous variable with 0 = opposition and 1 = government. The variable is derived from the parameter “political party” which lists the party affiliation of each parliamentarian. Based on the date of the trip, it was determined if the party in question was in opposition or part of the government at that time. As in the previous case, the source for this data was the open data provided by the Parliamentary Administration.

For the fifth hypothesis, the independent variable “seniority” (V_6) is introduced. The variable describes how experienced a parliamentarian is in each observation year and is measured by the total number of months they have held a political mandate. For this purpose, all mandates held as a member or representative in either parliamentary chamber or at a higher level (e.g., European Parliament) are included and summed. If a parliamentarian held multiple mandates simultaneously, overlapping periods were only counted once. Therefore, V_6 is operationalised as a discrete variable ranging from 1 to 415. Once again, the data was collected through the open data project of the Parliamentary Administration.

For the final hypothesis, “gender” (V_7) serves as the independent variable. It is operationalized as a dichotomous variable, with 0 = female and 1 = male. Again, the data was obtained through the open data project of the Parliamentary Administration and subsequently generated using a coding pattern based on the names of the parliamentarians.

6 Empirical analysis

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

To be able to select the appropriate empirical methods for the data analysis, a descriptive overview of the dataset was obtained at the beginning. First, the dataset was cleaned and only data points from 2007 to 2024 were considered, since travel data were only available from 2007 onward.

Furthermore, the dataset was filtered based on mandate types, so that only data points from members of the National Council and delegates of the Federal Council were included.

As visible in Table 1, the number of parliamentarians varies between the years. While the first chamber of the Austrian Parliament, the ‘Nationalrat’, consists of a fixed number of seats (n=183), the composition of the second chamber, the Bundesrat, may change as its seats get allocated based on the population sizes of the federal states and is recalculated every 10 years. In addition, fluctuations in the number of MPs are due to entries and exits from parliament. Particularly high turnover can be seen in election years, which explains the peaks in the number of observed MPs.

In a next step, the travel activity of the parliamentarians was examined descriptively (see Table 1). First, the total number of travel participations per year was listed, indicating how many instances of participation in parliamentary trips by Austrian parliamentarians occurred in each year, while acknowledging that multiple parliamentarians can of course participate in the

International activities by year					
Descriptive overview of Austrian parliamentarians' international travel					
	MPs (n)	Total participations (Σ)	Total trips (T)	Avg. participations per MP ($\bar{O}$)	MPs with ≥ 1 trip in % (P)
2007	268	299	124	1.12	41
2008	333	266	114	0.80	26
2009	263	270	95	1.03	30
2010	264	267	116	1.01	30
2011	256	250	117	0.98	34
2012	255	287	128	1.13	36
2013	353	227	113	0.64	20
2014	253	266	113	1.05	36
2015	266	275	121	1.03	33
2016	251	319	136	1.27	41
2017	340	261	140	0.77	23
2018	282	290	136	1.03	31
2019	333	280	123	0.84	27
2020	266	277	141	1.04	23
2021	260	466	194	1.79	40
2022	252	467	194	1.85	43
2023	267	389	146	1.46	39
2024	334	339	121	1.01	28
Total	5 096	5 495	2 372	1.08	32

Note: Participations (Σ) count each MP per trip; Trips (T) count each trip once. The percentage (P) indicates the share of MPs who undertook at least one trip in a given year.

Table 1: Descriptive overview international travel activity, authors’ own illustration.

same trip. The highest number of participations ($n=467$) was recorded in 2022. This year is particularly noteworthy, as it represents the most marked increase compared to the preceding year and no similarly large year-to-year difference can be observed elsewhere in the panel. Also interesting is the fact, that the data do not indicate a substantial decline in participations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The years 2020 and 2021 do not differ from previous years in descriptive terms, suggesting that Parliamentary Diplomacy appears to be a relatively constant factor and is not easily disrupted by external shocks. In sum, the annual number of participations ranges from 250 and 467 with no clear up- or downward trend.

Second, the total number of trips was recorded, with each trip counted only once, regardless of how many parliamentarians participated. The highest number of trips was observed in 2021 ($n=194$), followed by 2022 with the same number of trips. The year with the lowest number of international travel activity is 2009 with only 95 trips. On average, approximately 132 trips per year were pursued over the observed period.

Third, the average number of participations per parliamentarian was calculated for each year. Here, considerable variation can be observed, with yearly averages ranging from 0.64 to 1.85 participations per MP. This suggests that in some years the travel activity is distributed among fewer parliamentarians than in other years.

Fourth, the percentage of parliamentarians per year who participate in at least one trip was calculated. With the exception of six years, this share remained above 30 %, reaching a peak with 43 % in 2022. Thus, in most years, roughly one third of all parliamentarians took part in at least one trip. This suggests that international activity is not limited to a small number of MPs but instead involves a broader segment of different parliamentarians. At the same time, the share varies strongly across years, ranging from 20 % to 40 %, without a clear trend or pattern over time.

Additionally, the dependent variable „participation in international trips“ was examined descriptively. As can be seen from Figure 1, the distribution of the variable is highly skewed, with a substantial concentration of observations at zero. This pattern however aligns with the author's expectations, as it is reasonable to assume that only a small share of parliamentarians regularly engages in international travel, while the majority do not undertake such trips at all. At the same time, Figure 1 shows some extreme values at the upper end of the distribution, indicating that a small subset of parliamentarians exhibits substantially higher levels of travel activity.

Travel participations per parliamentarian per year

y-axis: lower range 0–150 in steps of 10 (detailed), 200–300 (moderate), upper range 800–4000 strongly compressed

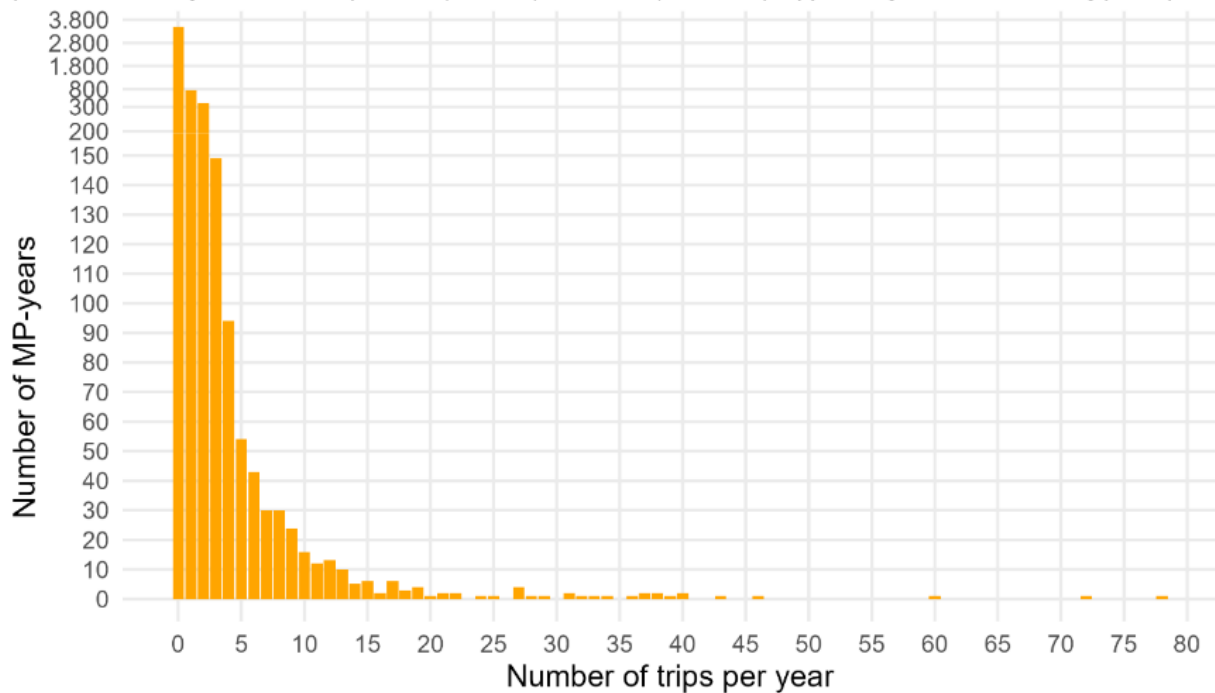


Figure 1: Distribution of the variable “participation in international trip” (travel), authors’ own illustration.

In the subsequent step, the presumed relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable were examined in greater detail. Beginning with *Hypothesis 1* (H_1)¹, initial bivariate analyses revealed a tendency that supports the hypothesis: Observations of parliamentarians without a foreign policy affiliation ($n = 4093$) record an average of 0.67 international trips per year, which is markedly lower than an average of approximately 2.76 trips per year for observations of MPs with a foreign policy affiliation ($n = 1003$). In addition, the share of travel years (i.e., years in which parliamentarians participated in at least one trip) is 46 % among parliamentarians with a foreign policy affiliation, whereas it is only 28 % among those without such an affiliation. Consequently, 54 % of the years in the former group and 72 % of the years in the latter group are years without any international travel. Notably, the dispersion of travel activity also differs substantially between the two groups. Among parliamentarians without a foreign policy affiliation, the rather low standard deviation of 1.67 indicates a relatively homogeneous level of travel activity. In contrast, parliamentarians with a foreign policy affiliation exhibit a considerable higher variance of 7.03, suggesting the presence of a small number of highly frequent travellers who substantially increase the group mean.

¹ H_1 : Parliamentarians with a professional background and/or relevant prior knowledge participate more frequently in international trips.

Turning to *Hypothesis 4* (H_4)², the initial bivariate overview does not reveal any substantial differences between the groups. On average, members of governing parties participate in approximately 1.08 international trips per year, which is identical to the average of approximately 1.08 trips per year observed among parliamentarians from opposition parties. The dispersion of travel activity is likewise very similar across the two groups, suggesting a similarly balanced mix of frequent travellers and non-travellers among government and opposition members. The only noteworthy, albeit modest distinction emerges in the proportion of travel years. Parliamentarians in opposition tend to record a slightly higher share of years with international travel (34 %) than their counterparts from governing parties, who reach a proportion of approximately 30 %.

Patterns between Independent Variables and International Travel					
Descriptive statistics by dichotomous subgroups (MP-years)					
Variable	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Share (≥ 1 trip)
H1: Prior professional background	No	4093	0.67	1.67	28.1%
	Yes	1003	2.76	7.03	45.5%
H4: Party affiliation	Government	2906	1.08	3.79	29.9%
	Opposition	2190	1.08	3.22	33.7%
H6: Gender	Female	1741	0.94	2.79	29.4%
	Male	3355	1.15	3.89	32.6%

Note: Values based on MP-years.

Table 2: Key descriptives statistics of dichotomous variables

With regard to *Hypothesis 6* (H_6)³, the initial bivariate findings suggest a modest gender difference in international travel activity (see Table 2). On average, male parliamentarians participate in more international trips per year (1.15), than their female colleagues, who undertake approximately 0.94 trips annually. Moreover, the higher standard deviation among male parliamentarians points to a greater within-group variation and more heterogeneity, implying the presence of a subset of particularly frequent travellers who elevate the overall mean. In contrast, travel activity among female parliamentarians appears comparatively more homogenous.

² H_4 : Parliamentarians from opposition parties participate more frequently in international trips than parliamentarians from governing parties.

³ H_6 : Male parliamentarians are more likely than their female colleagues to participate in international trips.

For the metric independent variables - prior committee membership (H_2), focus of constituency (H_3) as well as seniority (H_5) - Spearman rank correlations were calculated as an initial descriptive step to assess their relationships with the dependent variable (i.e., international travel activity, see Table 3). All correlations reach statistical significance.

Patterns between Independent Variables and International Travel	
Spearman rank correlations for continuous variables (MP-years)	
Variable	Spearman's ρ
H2: Prior committee membership	0.31
H3: Constituency focus: tourism (FC-T)	0.07
H3: Constituency focus: nationality (FC-N)	0.15
H3: Constituency focus: language (FC-L)	0.13
H5: Parliamentary seniority	0.25
Note: Values report Spearman rank correlation coefficients. All correlations are based on complete observations.	

Table 3: Spearman's ρ correlations of continuous variables.

However, given the large sample size, even small effects are likely to reach statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, emphasis is put on the magnitude of the correlation (i.e., effect size) rather than solely on their statistical significance. For *Hypothesis 2* (H_2)⁴ the results reveal a positive, moderate association ($\rho = 0.31$), thereby providing support for H_2 , indicating that involvement in foreign policy related committees is associated with higher levels of international travel activity. In contrast, the relationship between travel frequency and constituency characteristics (H_3)⁵ appears considerably weaker. Across all three indicators - employment in the tourism sector, nationality, and mother tongue - only very weak positive correlations are observed. In the case of *Hypothesis 5* (H_5)⁶, a positive association is evident according to the Spearman correlation ($\rho = 0.25$). This finding suggests a positive relationship between parliamentary seniority and travel activity, such that parliamentarians with longer tenures tend to participate in international trips more frequently.

⁴ H_2 : Parliamentarians who serve on committees for foreign affairs or related topics are more likely to participate in international trips.

⁵ H_3 : Parliamentarians from constituencies that benefit greatly from international relations (e.g., trade, tourism, or international partnerships such as tri-border regions) are more likely to participate in international trips.

⁶ H_5 : Parliamentarians with longer tenures as members of the National or Federal Council are more likely to participate in international trips.

In the next step, potential multicollinearity among the independent variables is considered and visualized using a heatmap (see Figure 2). Given that the independent variables differ in their data types and measurement scales, different correlation coefficients are employed depending on the variable combination. For pairs of metric variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient is used; for pairs of categorical variables, the polychoric correlation coefficient is applied; and for combinations of metric and categorical variables, the polyserial correlation coefficient is employed. As complete information was not available for all independent variables, missing values were handled using pairwise deletion. Consequently,

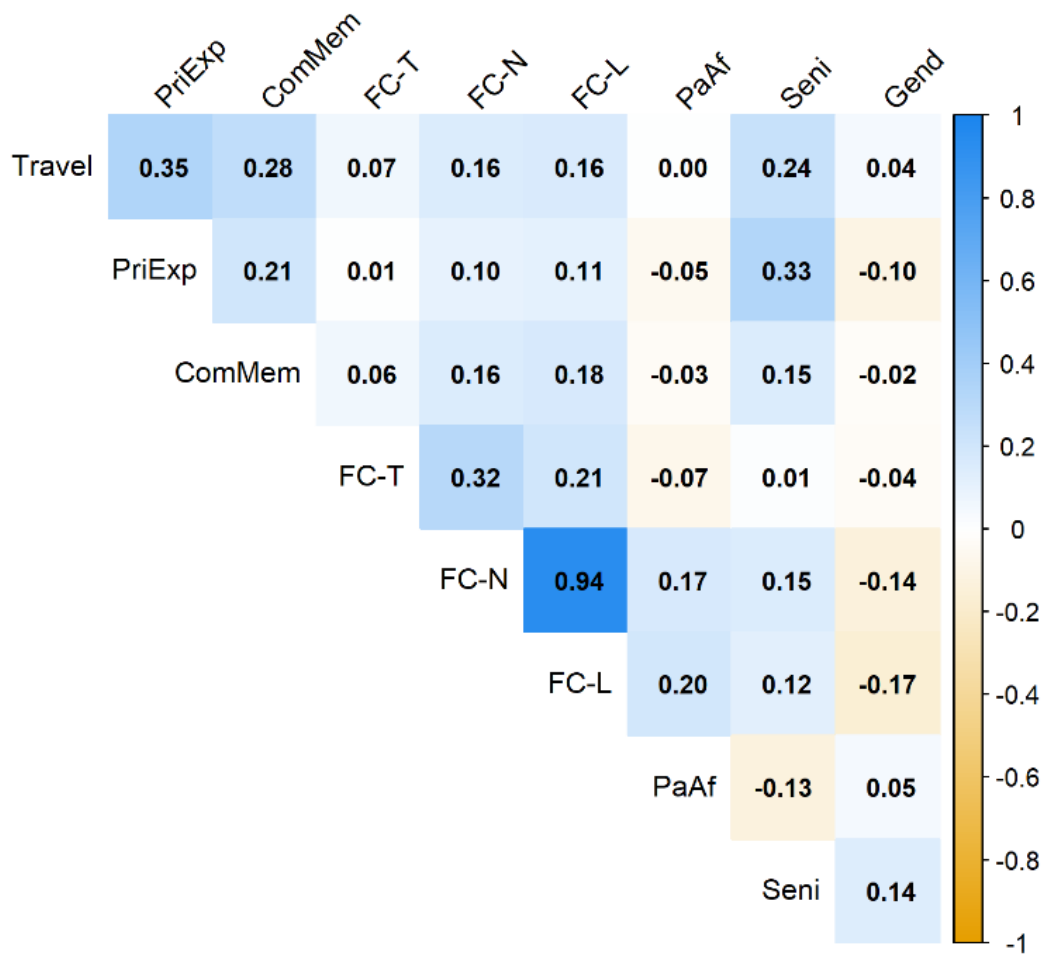


Figure 2: Heatmap, authors' own illustration.

each correlation is based solely on observations with non-missing values for the respective variable pair. No imputation of missing values was performed.

Overall, the heatmap results (see Figure 2) suggest that multicollinearity among the independent variables is not a major concern, as most correlation coefficients remain below 0.2. One notably high positive correlation can be observed between the independent variables FC-N (share of non-Austrian residents in the constituency) and FC-L (share of non-German native speakers in the constituency). This pattern is unsurprising and consistent with the author's

expectations, as both variables capture the same underlying factor in *Hypothesis 4* and therefore point to similar structural features of the constituency. To avoid multicollinearity in the subsequent empirical analyses, only one of the three variables used to operationalize constituency internationality in H_4 (FC-N, FC-L, FC-T) is included in the regression models. The variable FC-N (share of non-Austrian residents in the constituency) was selected, as it captures international embeddedness in a general and directly interpretable manner and furthermore, is less sector-specific than tourism- or education-related indicators. In addition to these theoretical considerations, empirical data quality was also taken into account, as FC-N displays sufficient variation and satisfactory data availability. The only variable pairing that can be classified as showing a moderately strong association in the heatmap is the one combining seniority and prior experience (Seni-PriExp). From a theoretical perspective, however, this relationship does not suggest problematic multicollinearity. This is due to the fact, that the variables capture distinct aspects: prior experience refers to political background before entering parliament, while seniority reflects tenure within parliament. Therefore, they do not provide redundant information.

6.2 Method Selection

The primary objective of this study is to address the question of what factors influence the engagement of Austrian parliamentarians in international trips. Accordingly, the hypotheses are explicitly formulated as between-person effects, focusing on differences across individual parliamentarians. Given that the dependent variable is a count variable and the data are organized in a panel structure, a panel count modelling approach is adopted.

The distribution of the dependent variable is strongly right skewed and marked by a substantial proportion of zero observations. Approximately 70 % of the observations reveal no international travel. Moreover, the variance of the dependent variable (12.08) considerably exceeds its mean (1.03), pointing to substantial overdispersion. In light of these distributional characteristics, at first a zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) model was selected. This modelling strategy allows the hypotheses to be tested within the count component of the model, while the zero-inflation component enables an additional examination of why a substantial share of parliamentarians does not engage in international travel at all ($x = 0$). This zero-inflation part of the model further enables the inclusion of variables that are theoretically relevant for explaining structural zeros. As the model is estimated as a mixed-effects ZINB (intended zero-inflated negative binomial) model, the panel structure of the data is appropriately accounted for. By incorporating random intercepts at both the individual and year levels, the

model accommodates the dependence arising from repeated observations and moreover, controls for unobserved time-invariant heterogeneity.

During the assessment of model fit, however, it became apparent that ZINB model does not improve the model fit despite higher complexity. In particular, the results reveal that the zero-inflation component is statistically insignificant and thus, could not be identified. Moreover, in comparison to the alternative negative binomial mixed-effects (NB) model, the ZINB specification performed worse according to the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) with $\Delta AIC = 1430$. Consequently, an NB mixed-effects specification was selected as the main model for hypothesis testing, while dropping the ZINB. Furthermore, because the NB-model that includes all six independent variables retains only 1450 observations due to missing information on the variable FC-N (constituency-level), this independent variable was excluded from the main model. Thus, the primary NB-model includes the independent variables *PriExp* (H_1), *ComMem* (H_2), *PaAf* (H_4), *Seni* (H_5) and *Gend* (H_6).

In total, 5096 observations covering 833 individual parliamentarians observed over 18 years are included in the main analysis (M1) (see Table 4). The original dataset contains all available parliamentarian-year observations for the period between 2007 and 2024. For the regression analyses, however, only those observations could be considered (and subjected to further data analyses) for which complete data on all model variables were available. Data on constituency characteristics was missing for a subset of parliamentarians and years, leading to incomplete observations in M2. Because the mixed-effects negative binomial model is estimated using listwise deletion, only complete cases are retained in the analysis. As a result, the effective sample of the second model (M2) consists of only 1450 parliamentarian-year observations, covering 220 individual parliamentarians observed over 16 years. Compared to the baseline sample ($n = 5096$) the sample size in M2 is reduced by approximately 72 %. This reduction reflects the limited availability of constituency-level data and may affect the statistical power and representativeness of the model. Results should therefore be interpreted with caution. The same limitation occurs in M3 and M4. Despite this reduction these models were estimated to incorporate all independent variables and thus, were used to examine *Hypothesis 2*.

To test for potential selection or representativeness issues arising from either the reduced model specification in M1 or the smaller sample size in M2, several model variations are estimated. In addition to the main model (M1) that excludes constituency-level variables (H_3) and the full model including all independent variables (M2), two alternative models incorporating different indicators of constituency characteristics (FC-T and FC-L) were fitted

(M3, M4). This approach allows to test whether the results of the main model remain robust despite the reduced sample size, or whether the inclusion of the structurally limiting constituency variables (FC-N/FC-T/FC-L) hampers the estimated relationships. Additionally, another model (M5) was introduced that replaces the binary indicator of committee membership (ComMem, H₁) with a count measure. Importantly, the latter model is intended to allow the differentiation between the two effects of the presence and the intensity of committee involvement.

In addition to the aforementioned models, within-person effects are estimated for those hypotheses whose independent variables vary over time. This supplementary analysis allows for the examination of time-varying effects that occur within the same parliamentarian across different points in time. Specifically, the analysis assesses whether an individual parliamentarian's travel activity changes over time when prior committee membership (H₂), party affiliation (H₄), or seniority (H₅) vary. For *Hypotheses 2, 4, and 5*, these within-person effects are estimated using fixed-effects Poisson models. This modelling strategy eliminates time-invariant individual-level characteristics by incorporating individual fixed effects and thereby allows for consistent estimation of the effects of time-varying covariates. The presence of overdispersion does not pose a consistency problem for this estimator. Importantly, these within-person analyses are not intended as a second round of hypothesis testing but rather complete the pooled mixed-effects models (NB-model) by isolating within-individual variation over time. This allows for a more nuanced interpretation of the relationships identified in the main model. The estimated FE-Poisson is based on 3642 observations covering 472 parliamentarians over 18 years and excludes 1554 observations and 361 parliamentarians in total, who are individuals without time variation (= singletons) or who have never participated in an international trip and thus have zero change, that could be interpreted in the within-person model (see Table 7).

6.3 Results

With regard to *Hypothesis 1*, M1 shows a positive and highly significant effect with $p < 0.001$. Based on model predicted values, parliamentarians with a professional background are expected to undertake around 0.51 trips per year, whereas those without such prior professional expertise are predicted to undertake approximately 0.28 trips annually. Thus, prior expertise increases the expected number of international trips by 0.23 per year, when holding all other variables constant. Substantively, this represents an increase of ~ 82 % in comparison to the baseline prediction. However as shown in Table 4 this effect is not robust across all five models. As soon as constituency characteristics are included, the coefficient is no longer statistically

significant in M3, while remaining statistically significant but with lower precision in M2 and M4. To assess whether these changes in coefficients between M1 and M2-M4 are driven by the inclusion of explaining variation or by the substantial reduced sample size, an additional robustness check was conducted. The results of this test disclose that the weakening of the effects is not due to a mediating effect of the constituency variables but is instead driven by the substantial reduction of the sample size ($n = 5094 \rightarrow n \approx 1405$). Re-estimating M1 using the restricted sample available for M2 revealed coefficients that are very similar to those obtained in M2 (see Table 6). The same pattern emerges when using the samples of M3 and M4. This suggests that the differences across the model specifications mainly reflect sample compositions effects. Consequently, the smaller sample size increases the estimation

Negative binomial mixed-effects models					
	Dependent variable: International travel (count)				
	(M1) NB binary	(M2) + FC-N	(M3) + FC-T	(M4) + FC-L	(M5) NB count
Constant	-2.481*** (0.142)	-2.889*** (0.319)	-3.385*** (0.513)	-2.854*** (0.297)	-2.300*** (0.144)
PriExp	0.597*** (0.158)	0.755* (0.378)	0.723 (0.394)	0.748* (0.329)	0.552*** (0.154)
ComMem (binary)	0.657*** (0.080)	0.324* (0.141)	0.408** (0.148)	0.433** (0.133)	
ComMem (count)					0.207*** (0.019)
PaAf	0.096 (0.070)	0.454*** (0.114)	0.476*** (0.115)	0.460*** (0.113)	0.105 (0.070)
Seni	0.007*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)
Gend	-0.035 (0.130)	0.028 (0.290)	0.042 (0.303)	0.020 (0.264)	-0.026 (0.126)
FC-N		1.945 (1.562)			
FC-T			9.573 (8.275)		
FC-L				0.917 (0.821)	
Observations	5096	1450	1372	1662	5096
MPs	833	220	220	253	833
Years	18	16	15	18	18
AIC	10143.386	3177.834	2950.650	3637.897	10087.196
BIC	10202.212	3230.627	3002.890	3692.054	10146.022
logLik	-5062.693	-1578.917	-1465.325	-1808.948	-5034.598

Notes: Negative binomial mixed-effects models with random intercepts for MPs and years. Coefficients are log incidence-rate ratios (log IRR); standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table 4: Results of all five negative binomial mixed-effects models.

Model-predicted annual counts of international trips							
Comparisons based on Models M1–M5							
Hypothesis	Variable	Model	Comparison	Predicted trips (Group A)	Predicted trips (Group B)	Difference	Relative change (%)
H1	PriExp	M1	No PriExp vs. PriExp	0.282	0.512	0.230	81.7
H2	ComMem (binary)	M1	No ComMem vs. ComMem	0.146	0.282	0.136	93.0
H2	ComMem (count)	M5	0 vs. 2 ComMem	0.173	0.261	0.089	51.3
H4	PaAf	M2	Opposition vs. Government	0.235	0.371	0.135	57.4
H4	PaAf	M3	Opposition vs. Government	0.220	0.354	0.134	60.9
H4	PaAf	M4	Opposition vs. Government	0.257	0.407	0.150	58.3
H5	Seni	M1	Q1 (27 months) vs. Q3 (118 months)	0.189	0.361	0.172	91.2

Notes: Entries report model-predicted annual counts of international trips based on substantively meaningful comparisons. Predictions are calculated on the response scale (expected counts) while holding all other covariates constant. For parliamentary seniority, the 25th and 75th percentiles (27 and 118 months) are used. For committee involvement as a count variable, predictions are shown for 0 and 2 committee memberships.

Table 5: Predicted values from pooled NB mixed-effects models.

Robustness check: Sample comparison			
Comparison of the full-sample model, restricted-sample model, and Model 2			
	Dependent variable: International travel (count)		
	(M1) Full sample	(M1) Reduced sample	(M2) + FC-N
Constant	-2.481*** (0.142)	-2.735*** (0.296)	-2.889*** (0.319)
PriExp	0.597*** (0.158)	0.726 (0.386)	0.755* (0.378)
ComMem (binary)	0.657*** (0.080)	0.341* (0.140)	0.324* (0.141)
PaAf	0.096 (0.070)	0.482*** (0.111)	0.454*** (0.114)
Seni	0.007*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)
Gend	-0.035 (0.130)	-0.004 (0.294)	0.028 (0.290)
FC-N	NA	NA	1.945 (1.562)
Observations	5096	1450	1450
MPs	833	220	220
Years	18	16	16

Notes: Model 1 is estimated using the full sample. In the second column is the re-estimated Model 1 using the restricted sample available for Model 2. The third column shows Model 2 including constituency characteristics.

Table 6: Robustness test.

uncertainty and likely explains the loss of statistical significance in some of the constituency models. Taken together, the results from the full-sample model M1 provide support for *Hypothesis 1*.

Regarding *Hypothesis 2*, M1 again shows a positive and highly significant effect ($p < 0.001$), thus suggesting a strong and positive association with international parliamentary travel. Since the independent variable committee membership is coded as a dichotomous variable, model-predicted values indicate that parliamentarians who are members of a relevant committee are expected to undertake approximately 0.28 international trips per year, compared to 0.15 trips for those without a committee membership (see Table 5). This corresponds to an increase of about 0.14 trips annually, holding other variables constant. In relative terms, compared to the baseline prediction, this indicates an increase of approximately 93 %. This effect remains robust over all five statistical models, regardless of the smaller sample sizes or the inclusion of further variables. However, as can be seen in M2, M3 and M4, the magnitude of the effect decreases once constituency-level characteristics are included. Nevertheless, as the additional robustness checks indicate, these changes in effect sizes are mainly caused by the reduced sample size rather than by mediation through constituency characteristics.

Importantly, the highly significant and positive effect for committee involvement as disclosed by M1 remains significant when operationalised as a count variable (M5). For interpretation, again model-predicted values were calculated. Since committee membership varies in intensity, empirically meaningful reference points were chosen. The 25 %-quantile of the distribution corresponds to zero committee memberships, while the 75 %-quantile corresponds to two committee memberships. These values therefore represent typical lower and higher levels of committee involvement and thus were used as references for the calculation of the predicted values. The predicted values indicate that parliamentarians without a committee membership are expected to undertake approximately 0.17 trips per year, whereas parliamentarians with one committee memberships about 0.21, and those with two relevant committee membership are expected to participate in about 0.26 international trips. Each additional committee membership thus increases the expected number of trips by approximately 0.04 to 0.06 trips per year, depending on the baseline level of committee involvement. Although the absolute increase in predicted trips appears modest, it represents a consistent and statistically robust effect across model specifications. Thus, the present findings support the authors assumption that not only the presence but also the intensity of institutional involvement (e.g., committee membership) contributes to a higher level of international engagement.

With regard to *Hypothesis 3*, none of the estimated models that include constituency characteristics reveal statistical significance. The postulated effect, that parliamentarians from constituencies that are influenced by international relations are more likely to participate in international trips, could therefore not be validated. Moreover, the model fit further suffers from variables with quite high standard errors ($Se_{M2} = 1.56$, $Se_{M3} = 8.28$, $Se_{M4} = 0.82$), extremely wide confidence intervals and substantially reduced sample sizes, all of which indicate considerable estimation uncertainty. As additional robustness checks suggest, the changes in coefficient sizes between M1 and M5 and M2–M4 are largely driven by the reduction in sample size rather than by the inclusion of constituency-level variables. Accordingly, the results of M2, M3 and M4 should be interpreted with caution, as the observed changes in the effects partly reflect data limitations rather than substantive differences in the underlying relationships. Consequently, *Hypothesis 3* does not find empirical support. Further research based on more comprehensive constituency-level data is therefore required to determine whether such effects exist and, if so to better understand them.

Regarding *Hypothesis 4* and the assumption of government status, i.e., if the party is in opposition or rather with government responsibility, the effect is only statistically significant in model specifications that control for constituency level characteristics (M2–M4). In these models the correlation coefficient is statistically significant and positive. In these models, depending on the chosen operationalisation of the constituency characteristic, model-predicted values indicate that parliamentarians belonging to governing parties undertake more international trips per year than those from opposition parties (see Table 5). In M2, MPs from governing parties are predicted to participate in approximately 0.37 trips per year, whereas those from opposition parties are predicted to undertake only roundabout 0.24 trip per year. Similar numbers were calculated for M3 and M4, where predicted values range from roughly 0.35 to 0.41 trips for governing party parliamentarians and about 0.22 to 0.26 trips for oppositions MPs. Overall, these results correspond to an increase of approximately 0.13 to 0.15 trips per year, or in relative numbers increase from 58 % to 61 % more international trips for parliamentarians belonging to governing parties (when holding all other variables constant).

However, this effect only occurs in M2–M4, which are estimated on substantially reduced samples and moreover, did not survive the robustness checks. Thus, the effects are not consistent and occur only because of these specific sample compositions. Since the effect is not statistically significant and not consistent across all models, *Hypothesis 4* must be rejected.

The results for *Hypothesis 5* show a strong and statistically significant effect for parliamentary seniority across all models and thus provide support for the postulated

assumption: Parliamentarians with longer tenures are more likely to participate in international trips than those with shorter tenures. To illustrate the effect of this relationship, model-predicted values were calculated for the 25th and 75th percentile of parliamentary tenure in M1, which serves as the baseline specification. The 25% quantile corresponds to MPs who have served in parliament for around 27 months (Q1), whereas the 75% quantile represents those with the longest tenures and around 118 months in parliament. The predicted values from M1, calculated for these quantiles, indicate that MPs with relatively low seniority (Q1) undertake approximately 0.19 international trips per year. In comparison, those with high seniority (Q3) are predicted to participate in around 0.36 trips per year. This difference of 0.17 trips per year corresponds to a relative increase of 91 % for more experienced parliamentarians (see Table 5). Each additional month in parliament increases the expected number of international trips. In longer tenures, this effect accumulates substantially, hence supporting the hypothesis that parliamentary experience facilitates international engagement.

With regard to *Hypothesis 6* and the question if gender affects the probability to participate in international trips, the findings of this thesis do not support the hypothesis. Across all models the effect is not statistically significant and thus leads to the rejection of the hypothesis. Whether a parliamentarian is female or male does not affect their probability to participate in international trips.

In addition to the results of the five pooled mixed-effects models, the within-person model provides complementary evidence on the effects of committee membership (H₂), party affiliation (H₄), seniority (H₅) on international travel. In contrast to the pooled models, the within-person poisson fixed-effects model does not allow for an interpretation of meaningful predicted counts, since the individual fixed effect absorbs the baseline levels of travel activity. Therefore, all effects are interpreted as incidence-rate ratios (IRRs). The results indicate statistically significant effects for committee membership and seniority. After clustering standard errors at the parliamentarian level, party government participation no longer reached conventional levels of statistical significance.

Focusing first on committee membership, the coefficient is positive and statistically significant (see Table 7 for exact results). This implies that - when all time-invariant characteristics are held constant - one additional committee membership relative to the same parliamentarian at an earlier point in time, increases the expected number of international trips by about 11 %. This finding confirms that the effect detected in the pooled models is also robust in a within-person model. Importantly, the persistence of a positive committee effect suggests that the effect is linked to the institutional role itself rather than solely reflecting self-selection

into relevant committees. Because the within-person model compares the same parliamentarians over time, while holding individual characteristics such as personality, motivation or interest, constant. Consequently, the positive effect provides strong evidence that committee membership itself facilitates participation in international parliamentary travel. Thus, *Hypothesis 2* is supported not only in the pooled models but also in the within-person specification, strengthening the interpretation that the effect reflects institutional responsibilities associated with committee membership.

Similarly, the results for seniority also show strong and statistically significant evidence (estimate: 0.0189, IRR = 1.019, $p = 0.004$, clustered by person). This indicates that per each additional month in parliament, the expected number of international trips roughly increases by 1.9 %, within the same individual. Accumulated over a year, this corresponds to an approximately 23 % higher chance to participate in international trips than the year before, underscoring the substantive relevance of experience for parliamentarians. The within-person model therefore provides strong support for *Hypothesis 5* and indicates that the effect of seniority reflects a dynamic experience-based mechanism rather than cross-sectional differences between parliamentarians.

Another finding of the within-person model that corresponds with the pooled model results are the non-significant results for H_4 , party affiliation (see Table 7). According to the present findings, the a-priori assumption that a change in party status (from opposition to

Within-person effects on international parliamentary travel			
Fixed-effects Poisson model; coefficients (log scale) with $IRR = \exp(\beta)$			
	(M6) β (IRR)	SE (clustered)	p-value
ComMem (count)	0.102** (1.108)	0.032	0.002
PaAf	-0.123 (0.884)	0.203	0.545
Seni	0.019** (1.019)	0.007	0.004
Observations	3642		
MPs	472		
Years	18		

Notes: β on log scale; $IRR = \exp(\beta)$ in parentheses. Significance: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Standard errors clustered by MP (id_random); MP and year fixed effects included.

Table 7: Results of the within-person model for H_2 , H_4 and H_5 .

government or vice versa) has an impact on the travel behaviour could not be supported on the individual level. Notably, the within-person results support the interpretation that the variation detected in M2-M4 is driven by selection processes rather than by causal effects of entering government. This suggests that party status does not systematically change the travel behaviour of individual parliamentarians over time.

7 Conclusion and Discussion

Taken together, committee membership, relevant prior experience and seniority can be identified as the most robust and substantively strongest predictors for parliamentary engagement in international trips. In contrast, party affiliation, constituency context and gender do not show consistent or statistically robust effects across the model specifications. These findings suggest that international parliamentary travel is primarily structured by institutional opportunity structures. One of the key contributions of this thesis is that two of the supported effects (committee membership and seniority) can also be demonstrated in a within-person analysis. These results emphasize that international parliamentary engagement is not merely a function of individual motivation or pre-existing foreign policy interest but is also shaped by institutional roles and opportunities. Even after controlling for stable personal characteristics, both factors remain significantly associated with higher participation in international travel. In particular, the effect of committee membership highlights the importance of parliamentary positions in structuring international parliamentary engagement.

Accordingly, *Hypotheses 1, 2 and 5* are supported, thus confirming that professional background, committee membership and seniority have a direct influence on parliamentarians engagement in international trips. This conclusion holds even though the results vary across model specifications, particularly in M2-M4. Robustness tests indicate that this variation is attributable to sample composition. As previously discussed, the reduced sample size does not allow for generalizable conclusions from M2-M4, meaning that the observed effects cannot be considered reliable or statistically significant. Nevertheless, these models remain useful for gaining initial insights into the potential effects of constituency characteristics.

On the contrary, *Hypothesis 3, 4 and 6* (examining potential effects of gender, party affiliation and constituency characteristics on the likelihood of parliamentary international travel activity) are not supported by the present data, thus indicating that neither factor exerts direct influence on parliamentarians participation in international trips. However, it should be noted that the latter conclusion is based on results derived from a substantially reduced sample

and should be tested again in a different context and with an alternative data set to check if the hypotheses remain unsupported.

Importantly, the additional within-person analysis further strengthens the interpretation derived from the pooled mixed-effects models, namely that international travel activity is structured by institutional opportunity structures rather than by individual characteristics. The results indicate a strong impact of seniority and committee membership on the participation in international trips. Additionally, it becomes evident that part of the effect of committee membership observed in the pooled models for *Hypothesis 2* is driven by cross-sectional differences between parliamentarians. This is reflected from the substantial decline in the magnitude of the coefficient from the pooled mixed-effects model ($IRR = 1.93$) to the within-person specification ($IRR = 1.11$). In other words, although committee membership has a positive effect on international parliamentary travel, part of the effect appears to reflect the fact that individuals who serve on relevant committees already tend to be more internationally active. By including stable individual characteristics, the within-person model provides a more precise estimate of the committee membership effect, indicating a more moderate increase by approximately 11 % ($IR = 1.11$). Consequently, the within-person analysis allows for a more robust interpretation, as it becomes clear that the observed effect persists even when controlling for individual predispositions. This therefore suggests that the observed effect is driven by institutional mechanisms that structure access to international parliamentary diplomacy.

In contrast, the effect of seniority is stronger in the within-model ($IRR = 1.019$) than in the pooled model ($IRR = 1.007$). Nevertheless, it aligns with the proposed hypothesis and suggests that seniority primarily operates as a dynamic, experience-based mechanism rather than reflecting cross-sectional differences between parliamentarians.

Hypothesis Results		
Hypothesis	Content	Result
H1	Prior professional background increases participation in international trips	Supported
H2	Relevant committee membership increases participation in international trips	Supported
H3	Constituencies who benefit from international relations directly increase parliamentarians' participation in international trips	Not supported
H4	Parliamentarians from opposition parties participate more in international trips	Not supported
H5	Seniority increases participation in international trips	Supported
H6	Gender affects participation in international trips	Not supported
Note: <i>Supported</i> indicates a statistically significant and robust effect across model specifications; <i>Not supported</i> indicates no statistically significant effect.		

Table 8: Hypotheses testing results.

Overall, the results of the present thesis are novel and provide important insights and contribute to the understanding of parliaments and their engagement in international politics by highlighting the central role of institutional positioning and experience. In the case of Austria, the findings suggest that access to international arenas is less dependent on individual characteristics and more a consequence of institutional embeddedness within parliamentary and party structures, underscoring the importance of institutional mechanisms and career trajectories for parliamentary internationalisation. Additionally, the findings raise important normative questions regarding the representation in international parliamentary diplomacy. If access to international parliamentary engagement is partly institutionally structured, this invites further inquiry about how representation in international parliamentary diplomacy is distributed, how institutional selection mechanisms shape this distribution and which actors systematically gain access to it.

Future research is needed to examine whether similar patterns and effects can be observed in other parliamentary systems, across different party landscapes or in the context of varying levels of parliamentary internationalisation. Additionally, replicating these analyses in other countries would provide valuable insights into the generalizability of the findings. Finally, comparative analyses (e.g., beyond Western democracies such as in Latin American democracies) could help to further elucidate whether the finding of the modulating effects of institutional patterns on MPs international travel indicates a general feature of parliamentary diplomacy or rather should be considered as a context-specific phenomena.

Annex

Annex 1: Model Diagnostic

The chosen method for this analysis is a pooled mixed-effects negative binominal model. It is capable of accounting for overdispersion and includes random intercepts to reflect the panel structure of the data, while demonstrating numerical stability across all analyses. Model fit was further assessed using simulated, uniformly distributed residuals (DHARMa, see Table 9), since conventional residual plots are unsuitable for the present data due to the non-normal distribution of the dependent variable. Overall, the diagnostic results (see Tabel 9) indicate a well-specified and adequately fitting model. The K-test for uniformity is only weakly statistically significant ($p = 0.014$), suggesting small systematic deviations from the model assumptions. Given the well-documented sensitivity of the DHARMa diagnostics in larger samples that may flag even slight deviations, these results are still interpretable as good model fit. The outlier test indicates no evidence of influential outliers ($p = 0.269$). Furthermore, the dispersion test indicates neither over- nor underdispersion ($p = 0.944$), implying that the model and its random effects effectively capture the variance in the data and that no residual dispersion remains.

Model diagnostic tests: DHARMa		
Test	Result	Interpretation
Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (uniformity)	$p = 0.014^*$	Indication of deviation from the expected uniform distribution of residuals
Outlier test	$p = 0.269$	No indication of systematic or extreme outliers
Dispersion test	$p = 0.944$	No remaining residual dispersion
Quantile test (residuals vs. predicted)	$p < 0.001^{***}$	Minor but systematic deviations (slightly tilted quantile lines)

Significance levels:
 $^{***} p < 0.001$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^* p < 0.05$

Table 9: Results of model fit diagnostics using DHARMa.

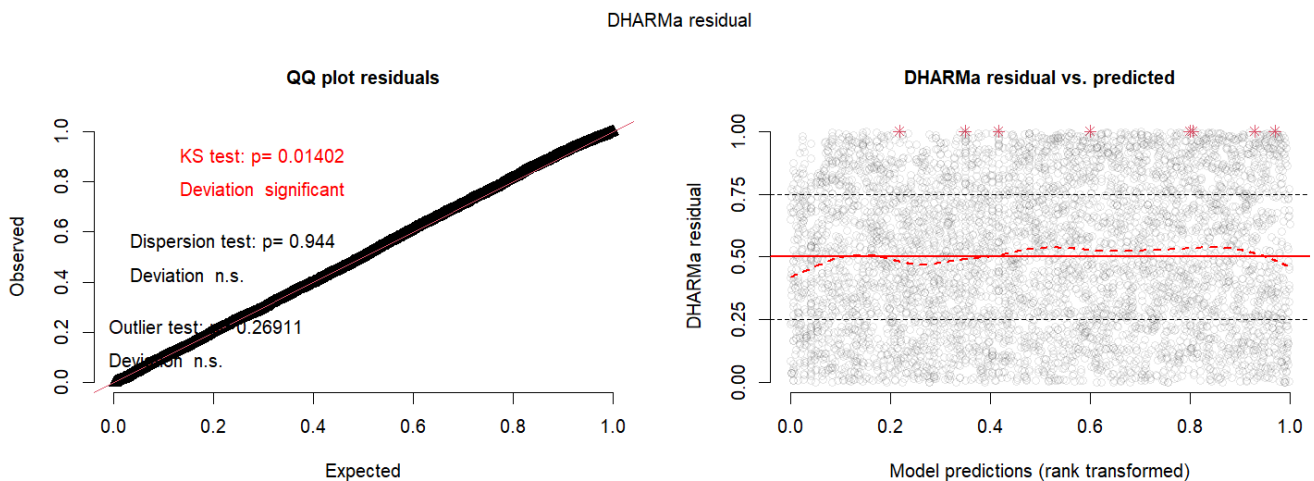


Figure 3: Model fit diagnostics using DHARMa residuals.

Minor deviations are visible in the quantile residual–prediction plot. However, as shown in Figure 3, the residual distribution does not exhibit strong clustering, funnel-shaped patterns, or U-shaped structures, and thus provides no indication of severe model misspecification. Overall, the distributional assumptions of the negative binomial mixed-effects model are satisfied, making it suitable for hypothesis testing.

Annex 2: Variable Operationalisation

For a better overview, all variables used in this thesis are listed below, along with their parameter values and corresponding coding variables.

	<i>label</i>	<i>description</i>	<i>variable-ID</i>	<i>hypothesis</i>	<i>characteristics</i>	<i>coding</i>
<i>dependent Variable</i>	V ₁	participation in international trips	travel	H ₁ -H ₇	discrete (number of participations)	0 - 78
<i>independent Variable</i>	V ₂	expertise (professional background)	PriExp	H ₁	dichotom	not existing (0) existing (1)
	V ₃	prior committee membership	ComMem	H ₂	discrete (number of committees) or binary	0 - ∞ , or no committee membership (0) committee membership (1)
	V _{4.1}	focus of constituency - language	FC-L	H ₃	dichotom	no border (0) border (1)
	V _{4.2}	focus of constituency - tourism	FC-T	H ₃	percentage (share of tourism in total employment)	0 – 100 %
	V _{4.3}	focus of constituency - nationality	FC-N	H ₃	percentage (share of non-Austrians in total population)	0 – 100 %
	V ₅	party affiliation	PaAf	H ₄	dichotom	opposition (0) government (1)
	V ₆	seniority	Seni	H ₅	discrete (number of months)	1 - 415
	V ₇	gender	Gend	H ₆	dichotom	female (0) male (1)

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