

Recent studies have suggested that MEPs give higher priority to their national parties and voters when making decisions than previously thought. To test this finding, this paper investigated whether and why MEPs' decisions on citizens' petitions in the petitions committee were influenced by petitioners' nationality. It employed a mixed-methods design combining statistical analysis of a new dataset of petitions from the 8th and 9th parliamentary term and thematic analysis of interviews with MEPs and administrative staff. The results show that MEPs favoured petitions from their own countries and that petitioners from countries that were overrepresented in the committee had a higher chance of success. The study identified three conditions at member state level that led to national overrepresentation: the possibility to achieve outcomes that can be "sold" to voters, a highly polarised party system, and media reporting on petitions. The paper thus supports the recent findings while also pointing to an unfair handling of petitions that could undermine citizens' trust in the process.