

Supplementary material: ‘Why do people like technocrats?’

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1. Appendix

1.1. Pooled regression models

Table A1 below reports regression models pooled across the two portfolio scenarios (economic affairs and education). The dependent variable is issue competence in the first three models and bargaining competence in the fourth and fifth. These models confirm the findings from the separate models presented in the main body of the paper: We find a negative effect of ministerial partisanship on issue competence (H1), but a positive one on bargaining competence (H4). We also find that the positive effect of expertise on issue competence is smaller for partisan ministers (H2), and that the negative effect of partisanship on issue competence is conditional on party support (H3). Finally, the pooled models show no support for H5 that posited a positive interaction between expertise and partisanship for the effect on bargaining competence.

Table A1: Pooled regression models

	Issue C.	Issue C.	Issue C.	Barg. C.	Barg. C.
Partisan minister	-0.27*** (0.06)	-0.13 (0.08)	-0.67*** (0.09)	0.34*** (0.06)	0.39*** (0.08)
Managing director / Headmaster	2.07*** (0.06)	2.22*** (0.08)	2.19*** (0.06)	0.76*** (0.06)	0.81*** (0.08)
Partisan minister × Man. dir. / Headm		-0.29** (0.12)			-0.10 (0.11)
PTV for party			0.05*** (0.01)		
Partisan minister × PTV for party			0.11*** (0.02)		
Education scenario	-0.09* (0.05)	-0.09* (0.05)	-0.08* (0.05)	0.26*** (0.04)	0.26*** (0.04)
Constant	3.81*** (0.06)	3.74*** (0.07)	3.57*** (0.08)	3.51*** (0.06)	3.49*** (0.07)
Observations	6,142	6,142	5,692	6,142	6,142
Adjusted R-squared	0.17	0.17	0.21	0.04	0.04

Note: Standard errors clustered by respondent; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

1.2. Distribution of respondents across conditions

Table A2: Number of respondents per experimental condition

Scenario	Condition	Respondents
Minister of Economic Affairs	Nonpartisan + office clerk	766
	ÖVP member + office clerk	775
	Nonpartisan + managing director	770
	ÖVP member + managing director	761
Minister of Education	Nonpartisan + office clerk	773
	ÖVP member + office clerk	770
	Nonpartisan + headmaster	757
	ÖVP member + headmaster	772

1.3. Descriptive statistics

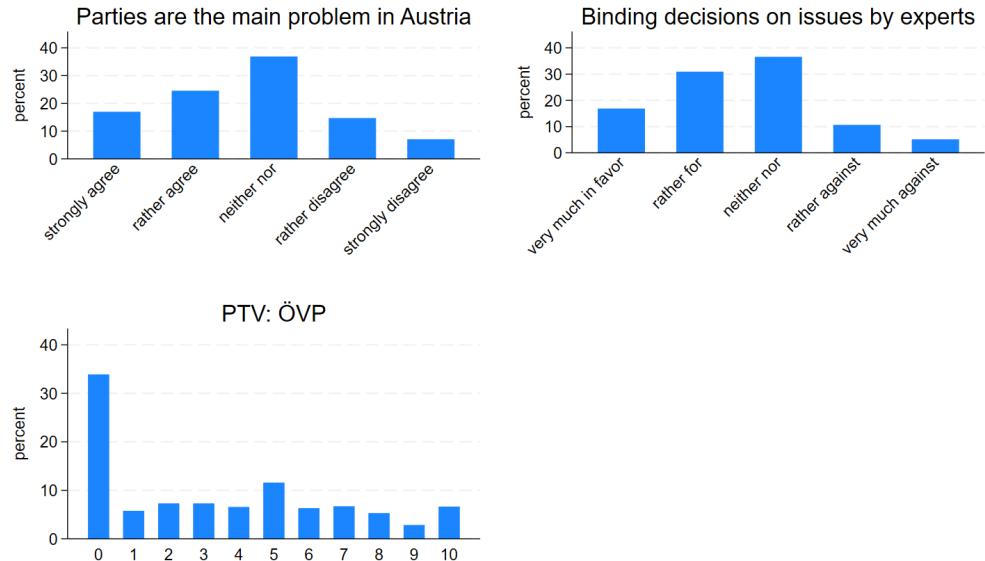
Table A3 displays summary statistics for the two outcome variables (issue competence and bargaining competence) in the economic affairs and education scenarios. Figure A1 provides additional information on the distribution of generic anti-party sentiment, voter support for binding policy decisions by experts and for the propensity to vote for the ÖVP.

Note that roughly 40 percent of respondents, respectively, strongly or rather agree with the statement that parties are the main problem in Austria and support a dominant role of experts in policy-making. In line with previous research, we also find a moderate correlation between anti-party and pro-technocracy attitudes ($\rho=.16^{***}$) (Bertsou and Caramani, 2022; Pilet et al., 2024).

Table A3: Summary statistics: competence perceptions

Scenario	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Issue competence: minister of economy	4.71	2.38	0.00	10.00
Issue competence: minister of education	4.61	2.74	0.00	10.00
Bargaining competence: minister of economy	4.06	2.19	0.00	10.00
Bargaining competence: minister of education	4.33	2.37	0.00	10.00
Observations	3,071			

Figure A1: Anti-party sentiment, support for binding policy decisions by experts and PTV for the ÖVP



Shares based on wave 15 of the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES). Note that the anti-party sentiment question is only available for a subset of respondents (N=751)

We also report the correlations (Pearson's r) between the four dependent variables in the Table A4 below. There is a moderately strong positive association between issue competence and bargaining competence in both scenarios (0.40 and 0.51, respectively), suggesting that respondents' evaluations of ministers on different dimensions go hand in hand (which may in part be driven by the fact that these evaluations are given under the same experimental conditions). By contrast, correlations within the same competence dimension across portfolio scenarios are considerably weaker (between 0.20 and 0.37).

Table A4: Correlations between dependent variables

	IC (econ.)	IC (educ.)	BC (econ.)	BC (educ.)
Issue competence (econ.)	1.00			
Issue competence (educ.)	0.25	1.00		
Bargaining comp. (econ.)	0.40	0.20	1.00	
Bargaining comp. (educ.)	0.20	0.51	0.37	1.00
Observations	3,071			

1.4. Power calculations

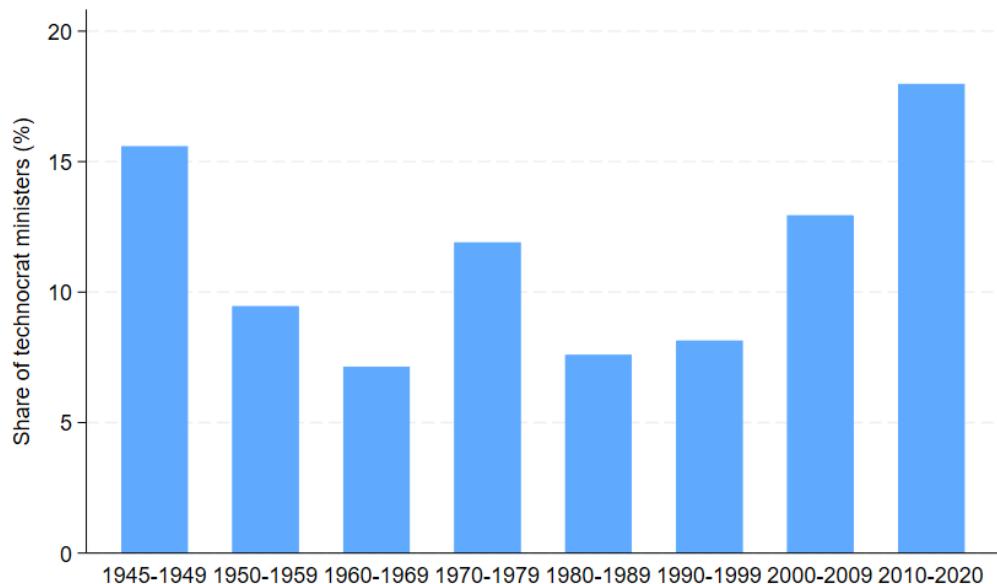
The power calculations were performed using the following tool: https://markhw.shinyapps.io/power_twoway/. The criteria used were sample N=3071, number of simulations N=100, and alpha = 0.05.

Table A5: Power calculations per dependent variables and portfolios

	Power
Issue competence (econ.)	1.00
Issue competence (educ.)	0.82
Bargaining comp. (econ.)	0.82
Bargaining comp. (educ.)	0.99
Observations	3,071

1.5. Technocrats in Austrian cabinets

Figure A2: Shares of technocrats among Austrian ministers by decade (1945-2020)



Note: Ministers with a) subject-matter expertise relating to their portfolio and b) no party affiliation before their appointment were coded as technocrats.

Figure A3 shows the total number of appointed technocrats per party. When in government, both major parties, the SPÖ and the ÖVP, have appointed technocrats at similar rates. Figure A4 shows the portfolios to which both parties have appointed technocrats. Both parties have appointed technocrats to the ministries of justice, foreign affairs, education and women's affairs at similar rates. While the ÖVP tends to appoint more in the finance ministry, the SPÖ tends to appoint more in the social policy and defense ministries.

Figure A3: Number of appointed technocrat ministers by Austrian parties (1945-2020)

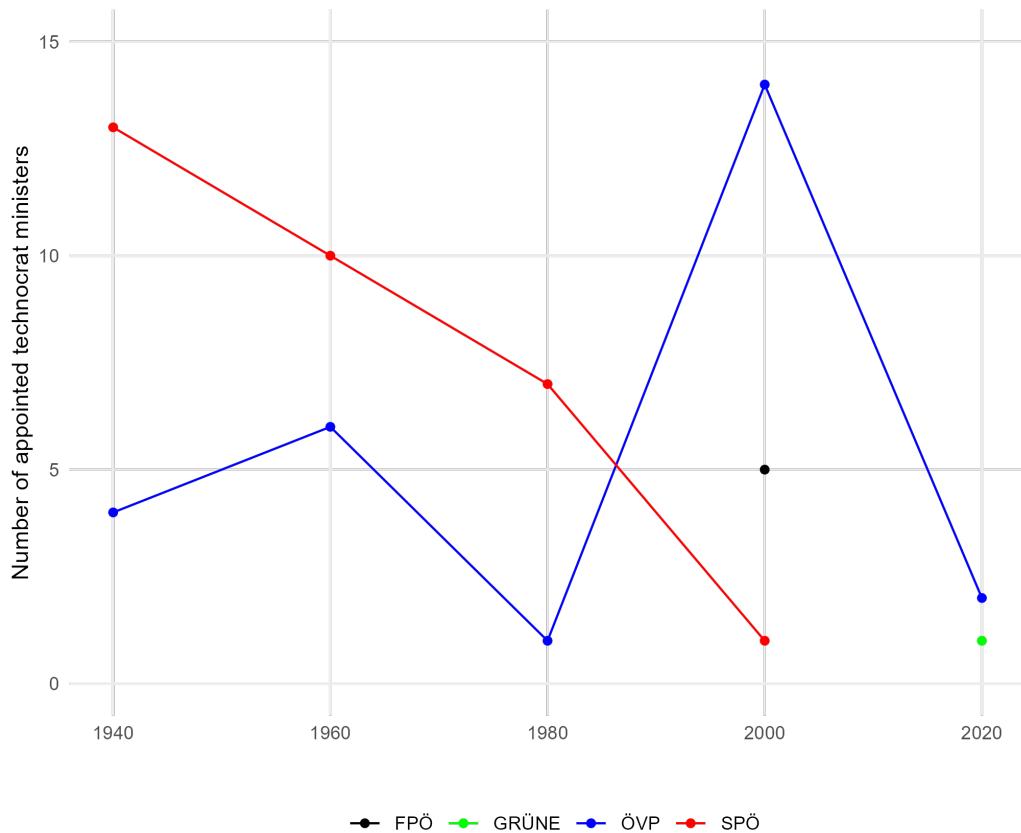
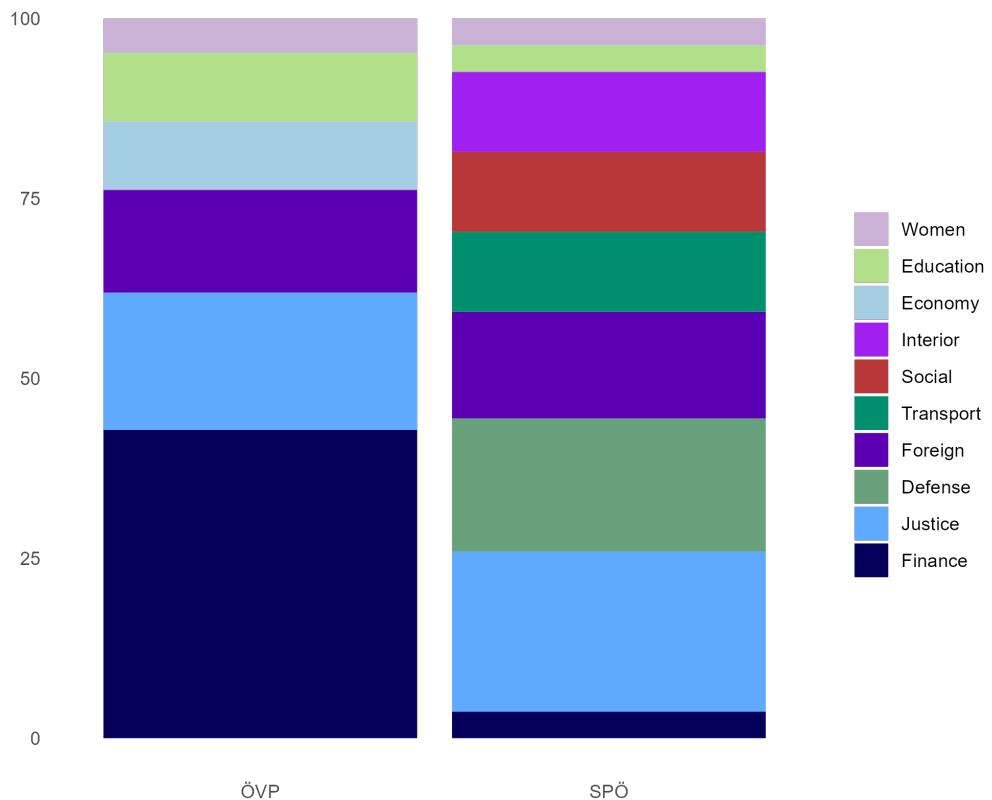


Figure A4: Shares of technocrat ministers in selected portfolios by Austrian parties (1945-2020)



From the late 1990s to today, Austria's ministers of the economy have been civil servants, entrepreneurs, or have a background in business administration. Non-partisan ministers in this portfolio have been economist Martin Kocher (2022-present) and top civil servant Elisabeth Udolf-Strobl (2019-2020). Education ministers have been school teachers and academics in various fields, including economics, biology, geography, and law. Non-partisan ministers in this portfolio have been academics Heinz Faßmann (2017-2019, 2020-2021) and Martin Polaschek (2021-present).

1.6. Technocrats in European cabinets

Figure A5 shows the average share of technocrat ministers in Europe between 1997 and 2022. While Austria (25%) is above the European average (11%), its experience with technocrats is similar to that of countries such as Poland, Italy, the Czech Republic, Portugal, and Cyprus, which all fall between an average of 21% and 29%. Austria's share of technocrats in government is therefore far from being an outlier.

Figure A6 shows the average share of technocrat ministers in right-wing European governments between 1997 and 2022. Since information on which party appointed each minister is often missing, and since parties vary over time in their classification as mainstream right-wing parties, we rely on the overall cabinet-level rating on the left-right scale. The scores are weighted averages of the parties' left-right ratings from expert survey data (CHES) (Vittori, Puleo, Pilet, Rojon, Paulis and Panel, 2023). Therefore, we only select cabinets that were rated between 6 and 10 on the left-right scale. Focusing on this subset of cases, Austria becomes more of an outlier (25% vs. overall average of 10%), but still has an average share of technocrat ministers similar to Bulgaria, Portugal, Hungary, and Cyprus. Thus, right-wing parties such as GERB in Bulgaria, Fidesz in Hungary, the PSD in Portugal, Forza Italia and the Lega Nord in Italy have appointed technocrat ministers to a similar extent as the Austrian ÖVP.

Figure A5: Average share of technocrat ministers in Europe (1997-2022)
 (Vittori, Puleo, Pilet, Rojon, Paulis and Panel, 2023)

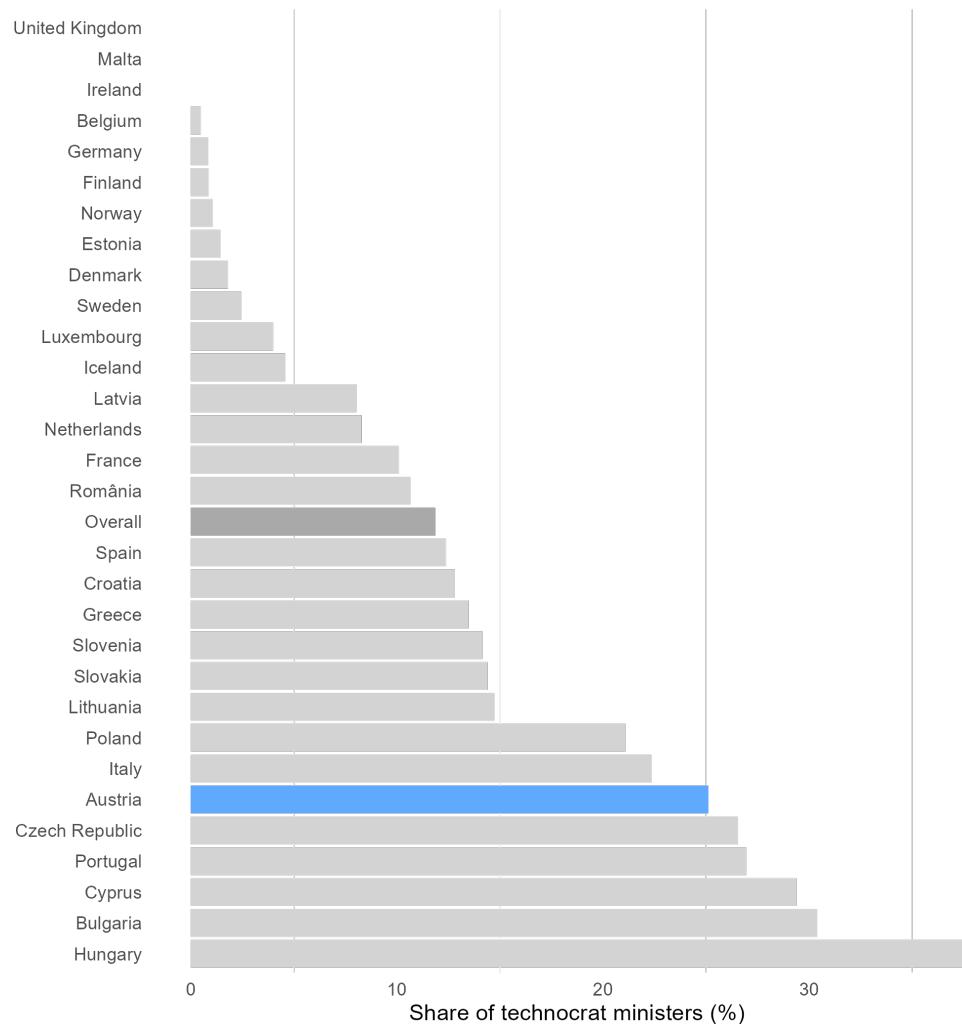
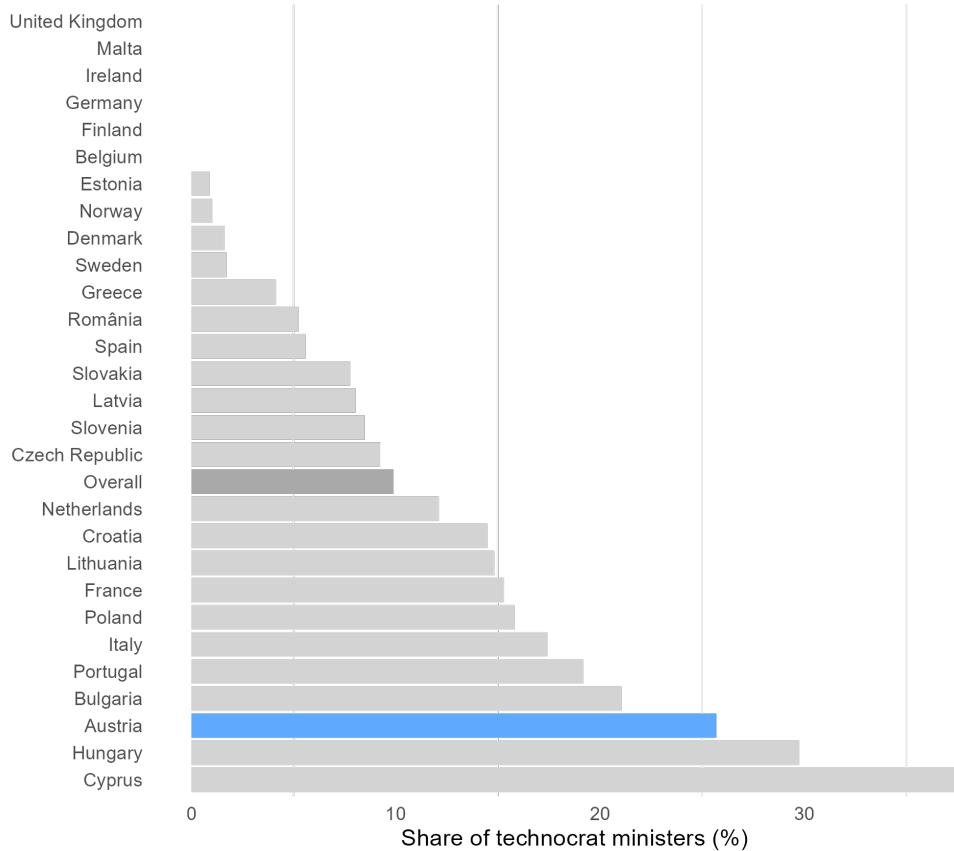


Figure A6: Average share of technocrat ministers in right-wing European government (1997-2022) (Vittori, Puleo, Pilet, Rojon, Paulis and Panel, 2023)



1.7. Party vs. technocrats: Anecdotal evidence on technocratic ministers' behaviour in Austrian cabinets

The assumption that non-partisan ministers (including technocrats) are less likely to toe the party line than partisan ministers are well established in the literature on party government and political delegation (Rose, 1974; Mair, 2008; Müller, 2000). For one, non-partisan ministers are less likely to be socialized into party norms and ideology. Secondly, the nominating party's ability to exercise ex-ante (e.g. screening) and ex-post (e.g. positive and negative career incentives) control over these ministers is more limited when compared to their partisan counterparts

(Müller, 2000). ¹ To be sure, this does not automatically imply that real-world technocrats are actually ideologically neutral. Most likely, parties also take such ideological leanings into account when appointing technocrats to ministerial office (e.g. by selecting technocrats whom they expect to be ideologically close to the party). Yet, in contrast to partisan-appointment scenarios, the nominating party likely has less information to judge the appointee's ideological leaning and – if conflict between the party and the minister occurs – the party's options to put pressure on the minister are limited.

This section seeks to further substantiate this assumption by providing anecdotal evidence on individual episodes where technocratic ministers in Austrian governments have acted contrary to the interests of the appointing party. Although such cabinet-internal conflicts are typically difficult to observe, as party actors will try to conceal them for electoral reasons, the following instances are documented for the Austrian case.

Egmont Foregger, a renowned party-independent criminal law expert, was appointed as minister of justice in the SPÖ-led Vranitzky II coalition government in 1987. Before that – although vaguely characterised by some accounts as a 'liberal-national' rather than a social democrat – Foregger had gained the party's trust, playing an important part in realizing one of the SPÖ's prestige projects (modernization of the Austrian criminal law) as a senior bureaucrat in the SPÖ-led justice ministry. During his tenure as minister, however, criminal investigations against formerly leading proponents of the SPÖ were ongoing and the party expected Foregger to avoid indictments via ministerial directive, much like his partisan predecessors had done it before in comparable situations. Foregger, however, refrained from exercising such political interventions in line with the rule of law principle. Subsequently, charges were filed and the corresponding cases were brought before the court, which naturally turned out to be very damaging for the party.

Karin Kneissl, foreign minister in the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition government Kurz I, was nominated by the FPÖ as a party-independent foreign-policy expert. Reportedly, Kneissl threatened to resign if the coalition parties insisted on voting against the UN-migration treaty. Eventually, Kneissl claims, her threat led to a compromise with Austria abstaining from the vote instead of voting against

¹By tendency, this is also supported by previous empirical work indicating that the strength of a minister's party ties affects their effectiveness in implementing the party's policy agenda (Alexiadou, 2016).

the treaty. Not least, Karin Kneissl also broke the FPÖ-ministers' united front when the government collapsed in 2019 in the wake of the so-called 'Ibiza' scandal. When chancellor Kurz initiated the removal of FPÖ heavy-weight Herbert Kickl as minister of the interior, all other FPÖ-nominated ministers – except for Kneissl – resigned out of protest, which de-facto ended the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition.

Other conflicts between technocrat ministers and their appointing parties have received less publicity and accounts mentioning their existence are primarily based on rumors among political insiders. SPÖ-nominated defense minister Johann Freihsler, for instance, officially resigned for health reasons in 1971 after holding this position for less than a year. Supposedly, however, the actual, 'inofficial' reason for his resignation had been his opposition to the party's plans of reducing mandatory military service to a duration of six months. While this reduction was eventually implemented, it was heavily opposed by the leadership of the Austrian military, where Freihsler had served for years before his appointment to ministerial office. This opposition from military leaders stemmed from concerns that the reduction would significantly hamper the country's self-defense capabilities.

1.8. Exploratory hypotheses

The pre-registration included a number of exploratory hypotheses regarding the following effects:

- The direct effect of expertise on bargaining competence perceptions (strong positive effect, see models IVa and IVb in Table 2 in the main text).
- How the interaction of ministers' partisanship and respondent partisanship affects perceived bargaining competence (null effect, see Table A6).
- How the interaction of anti-party attitudes and respondent partisanship affects perceived issue competence (anti-party attitudes moderate partisanship penalty but only in economic affairs scenario, see Table A7).
- How ministers' gender affects the impact of ministers' partisanship on both competence dimensions (no effect, see Table A8).
- How the impact of ministers' gender varies by respondents' age, gender, and partisanship (no effects, see Tables A9, A10, A11, and A12).

We examine these effects here in the appendix. First, we look at how the interaction between the partisan-minister treatment and the propensity to vote for the minister's party (ÖVP) affects perceptions of bargaining competence.

The models in Table A6 suggest that the positive effect of partisanship on a minister's perceived bargaining competence is not moderated by respondents support for the minister's party.

Table A6: Regression analysis: effects of partisan treatments on bargaining competence, conditional on propensity to vote (PTV)

	DV: Barg. C.	DV: Barg. C.
Partisan minister	0.26** (0.12)	0.41*** (0.12)
Managing director	0.47*** (0.08)	
Headmaster		1.12*** (0.09)
PTV for party	0.09*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
Partisan minister \times PTV for party	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)
Constant	3.35*** (0.09)	3.22*** (0.10)
Observations	2,847	2,847
Adjusted R-squared	0.04	0.08

Note: Coefficients and standard errors from OLS models; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Next, we examine whether partisanship effects on perceived issue competence are conditional on anti-party sentiment. To that end, we make use of a question asked in the panel wave preceding the one that included the experiment. Respondents were asked to evaluate the statement 'the parties are the main problem in Austria' on a five-point scale (from 'very true' to 'not true at all'). We interact the partisanship treatment with this variable in the models in Table A7.

The first model in Table A7 displays a strong moderation effect. Thus, in the managing-director scenario, the effect of the partisanship treatment is strongly conditional on anti-party sentiment. The average marginal effect of the treatment is insignificant for people with very low anti-party sentiment (0.21 ± 0.77), but negative and highly significant for respondents with very high anti-party sentiment (-0.96 ± 0.38). By contrast, no such moderation effect is found in the headmaster scenario.

Table A7: Regression analysis: effects of partisan treatments on issue competence, conditional on anti-party sentiment

	DV: Issue C.	DV: Issue C.
Partisan minister	0.75** (0.30)	-0.07 (0.32)
Managing director	1.54*** (0.10)	
Headmaster		2.87*** (0.10)
Anti-party sentiment	0.08 (0.06)	-0.11* (0.06)
Partisan minister \times anti-party sentiment	-0.34*** (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)
Constant	3.88*** (0.23)	3.71*** (0.23)
Observations	2,113	2,113
Adjusted R-squared	0.12	0.27

Note: Coefficients and standard errors from OLS models; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

The models in Table A8 examine whether the partisanship and the expertise effects in our experimental design vary with ministers' gender. This is not the case. The interaction of ministers' gender and their partisanship yields coefficients that are statistically insignificant. The same is true for interactions of ministers' gender and expertise.

Table A8: Regression analysis: effects of partisan treatments on issue and bargaining competence, conditional on ministers' gender

	DV: Issue C.	DV: Barg. C.
Partisan minister	-0.45*** (0.12)	-0.28** (0.12)
Managing director	1.35*** (0.12)	
Headmaster		2.80*** (0.12)
Female minister	-0.18 (0.14)	-0.10 (0.15)
Partisan minister \times female minister	0.16 (0.16)	0.18 (0.17)
Managing director \times female minister	0.08 (0.16)	
Headmaster \times female minister		-0.12 (0.17)
Constant	4.29*** (0.10)	3.39*** (0.10)
Observations	3,072	3,072
Adjusted R-squared	0.09	0.25

Note: Coefficients and standard errors from OLS models; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Next, we examine whether the effect of ministers' gender on issue competence and bargaining competence varies by respondent gender. To that end, Tables A9 and A10 report separate regression models for male and female respondents. We find no support for this conjecture. The female-minister coefficients are small and statistically insignificant in all models.

Table A9: Regression analysis: effects of partisan treatments and ministers' gender on issue competence, by respondent gender

	ECO (male R's)	ECO (female R's)	EDU (male R's)	EDU (female R's)
Partisan minister	-0.48*** (0.12)	-0.28** (0.11)	-0.10 (0.12)	-0.28** (0.12)
Female minister	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.06 (0.11)	-0.13 (0.12)	0.00 (0.12)
Managing director	1.64*** (0.12)	1.18*** (0.11)		
Headmaster			2.87*** (0.12)	2.62*** (0.12)
Constant	4.11*** (0.12)	4.33*** (0.11)	3.24*** (0.12)	3.51*** (0.12)
Observations	1,545	1,516	1,545	1,516
Adjusted R-squared	0.12	0.07	0.26	0.24

Note: Coefficients and standard errors from OLS models; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A10: Regression analysis: effects of partisan treatments and ministers' gender on bargaining competence, by respondent gender

	ECO (male R's)	ECO (female R's)	EDU (male R's)	EDU (female R's)
Partisan minister	0.35*** (0.12)	0.17 (0.11)	0.61*** (0.12)	0.20* (0.12)
Female minister	-0.02 (0.12)	0.04 (0.11)	0.05 (0.12)	-0.18 (0.12)
Managing director	0.48*** (0.12)	0.48*** (0.11)		
Headmaster			1.02*** (0.12)	1.10*** (0.12)
Constant	3.62*** (0.12)	3.75*** (0.11)	3.32*** (0.12)	3.93*** (0.12)
Observations	1,545	1,516	1,545	1,516
Adjusted R-squared	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.06

Note: Coefficients and standard errors from OLS models; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

We also investigate whether the effect of ministers' gender on issue competence and bargaining competence varies by respondent age. The regression models in Table A11 include interaction of the female-minister term with respondents' age. The models indicate no age-dependent variation in the effect of ministers' gender on either outcome variable (issue competence, bargaining competence).

Table A11: Regression analysis: interaction effects of ministers' gender and respondent age on issue and bargaining competence

	DV: Issue C.	DV: Issue C.	DV: Barg. C.	DV: Barg. C.
Partisan minister	-0.37*** (0.08)	-0.19** (0.09)	0.26*** (0.08)	0.41*** (0.08)
Female minister	0.05 (0.24)	0.30 (0.26)	-0.29 (0.23)	-0.22 (0.25)
Age (years)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.00)	-0.02*** (0.00)
Female minister \times age (years)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Managing director	1.39*** (0.08)		0.47*** (0.08)	
Headmaster		2.74*** (0.09)		1.05*** (0.08)
Constant	4.91*** (0.18)	3.60*** (0.19)	4.83*** (0.17)	4.64*** (0.18)
Observations	3,071	3,071	3,071	3,071
Adjusted R-squared	0.10	0.25	0.04	0.08

Note: Coefficients and standard errors from OLS models; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Finally, we study the interaction of ministers' gender and partisanship (measured by PTV scores for the minister's party). The results in Table A12 suggest that partisanship does not moderate the effect of ministers' gender on either issue or bargaining competence. All the interaction effects are close to zero and statistically not significant.

Table A12: Regression analysis: interaction effects of partisan and ministers' gender on issue competence, by respondent gender

	DV: Issue C.	DV: Issue C.	DV: Barg. C.	DV: Barg. C.
Partisan minister	-0.39*** (0.08)	-0.18** (0.09)	0.28*** (0.08)	0.47*** (0.09)
Female minister	-0.13 (0.12)	0.05 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.12)	-0.09 (0.12)
PTV for party	0.10*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.02)
Female minister \times PTV for party	0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)
Managing director	1.48*** (0.08)		0.47*** (0.08)	
Headmaster		2.91*** (0.09)		1.13*** (0.09)
Constant	3.84*** (0.10)	2.87*** (0.11)	3.38*** (0.10)	3.23*** (0.11)
Observations	2,846	2,846	2,846	2,846
Adjusted R-squared	0.13	0.29	0.04	0.08

Note: Coefficients and standard errors from OLS models; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$