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# AN AUDIT OF DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Edited by: Susan Banducci, Mark Franklin, Heiko Giebler, Sara Hobolt,  
Michael Marsh, Wouter van der Brug and Cees van der Eijk

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE FINAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN STUDY 'PROVIDING AN INFRASTRUCTURE  
FOR RESEARCH ON ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION',  
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# AN AUDIT OF DEMOCRACY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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## Preface

This eBook contains some of the first fruits of a large collaborative project funded by the EU's DG Research under their FP7 Programme: an "infrastructure design study" whose ultimate goal is "Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union" – a title that gives rise to the unlovely acronym PIREDEU, referred to repeatedly in the pages that follow.

The design study was complemented by a feasibility study conducted in the context of the 2009 elections to the European Parliament. While somewhat restricted in breadth of coverage (for example the numbers of questions asked in voter and candidate surveys were limited by available funds) this was still a fully-fledged election study that included all the component parts needed to address fundamental questions regarding the quality of democracy in the European Union at the time of elections to the European Parliament. It included five of these components.

- A voter study sought to interview about 1,000 respondents in each of the 27 EU member countries. The questionnaires were identical in each country, apart from unavoidable differences due to party system particularities and language differences;
- A candidate study sought to interview all candidates with any viable chance of actually gaining a seat in the European Parliament;
- A media study content-analyzed newspapers, television channels and radio stations during a three-week period leading up to the elections;
- A manifesto study coded all the campaign platforms published by parties seeking representation in the European Parliament;
- A contextual data study sought to collect all relevant statistical information regarding the outcome of the election in each of the 27 participating countries.

In addition to these PIREDEU components, the design study was conducted in close collaboration with a study of an internet-based Voter Advice Application (the EU Profiler), administered under the same umbrella – the European Union Democracy Observatory (EU DO) – that also housed PIREDEU (see below). EU profiler data includes profiles of the policy positions of all parties contesting the EP elections of 2009, data that was intended to be linkable to PIREDEU data, providing many research opportunities.

Less than a year after the elections (in April 2010), preliminary versions of the data resulting from these studies were released into the public domain for scholarly use. This release, apart from serving as a public demonstration of the viability of PIREDEU's data collection strategy, was intended to serve a deeper purpose: to provide the project's various stakeholders with the means to conduct actual research employing the released data. To stimulate the speedy completion of realistic examples of the type of research that could be conducted with PIREDEU data, scholars were invited to apply for funding to attend a conference in Brussels in November 2010. This was a widely-publicized high-profile conference that attracted the participation of some eighty academic researchers in addition to representatives of the media and political worlds. Some forty papers were presented at the conference, many of which were intended for later publication in peer-reviewed journals. However, some of the authors agreed to have their papers appear in a special-purpose publication, in very much the preliminary form in which they were presented at the conference.

This eBook is the publication concerned. It contains 15 chapters (rather more than a third of the total number of papers presented at the conference) showcasing the range of variation found in the conference as a whole. Some of the conference papers concerned voters, some candidates, and some focused on media coverage, but many employed multiple data sources, investigating such topics as whether voters were aware of party manifesto promises or of

candidate efforts to make themselves known; or the interaction between media content and educational attainment. The different ways in which the five PIREDEU components, together with EU Profiler data, could be fruitfully combined for academic research purposes is enormous, and our hope in organizing the conference was that scholars would employ a wide range of different combinations in addressing substantively important research questions. We were not disappointed.

This eBook can be read in several ways. It provides an outlet for cutting-edge research on electoral democracy in Europe, and can be employed as a source from which to sample the nature of this research. More importantly, in terms of PIREDEU objectives, it provides a series of demonstrations of the nature of the research questions that can be addressed employing PIREDEU data – demonstrations that make it clear how vast are the research possibilities that could be addressed by means of the infrastructure that PIREDEU designed. And, finally, it provides conclusive evidence of the feasibility of an infrastructure provided according to the PIREDEU design. The resulting data will not lie unused in some archive. They will provide hundreds, perhaps thousands, of researchers with raw material for answering research questions of major academic and public interest. The present eBook contains only a very small sample of what is possible on the basis of just the data collected at a single election – a tiny foretaste of what will become possible on the basis of a fully-fledged infrastructure.

I should not end this preface without a number of thank-yous. First I should thank all those who made possible the conference at which these papers were presented: the EU's DG research for providing funding; the European Union Democracy Observatory at the European University Institute's Robert Schumann Center for Advanced Studies, which provided administrative facilities (and some of the funding) for the conference's organization as well as paying for the publication of this eBook; and all the scholars who took advantage of the opportunity to present papers at that conference. A special thank-you goes to those scholars who agreed to include their papers in this volume. I should not fail to also thank my co-editors, who spent many hours reading these fifteen papers and providing suggestions that would help their authors make the changes needed to bring even preliminary research results to publication standard. Finally I should thank those who worked so hard to proofread and correct the eBook. Conor Little and Catherine Mcging did an excellent job in a very short space of time. The actual typesetting I did myself and I am conscious that errors may have been injected at that stage for which our proofreaders are not responsible.

Mark Franklin  
Cambridge, MA, and Florence, Italy, December 2011

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# **Investigating candidate selection strategies: the case of 2009 European Parliament elections**

Massimiliano Andretta and Nicola Chelotti<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

Candidate selection is widely recognized as a central feature in the life of every political party. If Gallagher (1988b: 276) defines it as “a key variable, not a peripheral factor” in the whole election process, Bille (2001) makes a clear link between the democratic credentials of a country and a widened participation in the candidate selection procedures. In the same vein, Rahat (2007) compares the candidate selection process to the devising of a menu, where democracy is the restaurant. Furthermore, as Cross (2008: 615) puts it, it can be argued that in several cases “party candidate selection processes may be equally or more determinative of who ends up in the legislature than are general elections”.

Candidate selection is also one of the key indicators to discover where the power lies within parties: “he who can make the nomination is the owner of the party” (Scattschneider in Gallagher 1988a: 3). In particular scholars have investigated at what level (national versus local) and by which body (leader, selected agency, members, voters, etc.) candidates are chosen. In an analysis of nine countries, Gallagher and Marsh (1988) find that in a slight majority of the parties it is the territorial (regional and local) level which plays the major part and the centre has little influence. A general widening of the participation in the candidate selection process has been distinguished over the years: reforms undertaken by political parties have increased the number of people involved in the decisions. A democratization, a greater inclusiveness of the selectorate – that is, the body that selects the candidates – thus seem a reality (Hazan 2002; Pennings and Hazan 2001; Rahat and Hazan 2001; Scarrow et al. 2000): in Western parties in general (and in Denmark in particular), the role of the individual party member was greater and the process more decentralized in the 1990s than it was in the 1960s (Bille 2001).

However, there is substantial variance in the degree of democratization of candidate selection procedures: parties greatly differ with regard to their selection methods, employing more or less inclusive strategies or involving to a greater or lesser extent the sub-national layers of the party. A few scope conditions have been put forward to explain these differences, among which the electoral system, party size, ideology and regional areas seem to play a major role (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Lundell 2004). Finally, it has been observed that different candidate selection mechanisms have different consequences for the nature and workings of the parliament: they have a relevant impact on the qualities of the members of the parliament, their backgrounds and political experiences as well as on their behaviour and voting choices. As a result, party cohesion and the possibilities of realizing party’s and government’s political agendas can be highly affected (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Rahat and Hazan 2001; Shomer 2009).

This notwithstanding, the field is still relatively understudied, and – in spite of its importance – there is relative paucity of writings on this topic (Hazan 2002). Comparative data and analyses are still few (Rahat and Hazan 2001), and the state of the art of the “comparative research of candidate-selection methods is still in its early stages” (Rahat 2007: 165). Our

<sup>1</sup> Massimiliano Andretta was mainly responsible for the preparation of the second part (on the consequences of nomination strategies), while Nicola Chelotti focussed more on the first part (candidate selection strategies). The introduction and conclusion are the work of both authors.

knowledge of the candidates in European Parliament (EP) elections is even more limited: large-scale, cross-national analyses on the determinants and consequences of EP candidate selection procedures are rare (Meserve et al. 2010). Faas (2003) has shown that Members of the European Parliaments (MEPs) selected through centralized methods tend to defect more from EP party group lines, while Hix (2004) reveals that more decentralized strategies lead MEPs to act more independently and follow the preferences of the voters rather than the party leaders. Meserve et al. (2010) – employing the biographies of the candidates for the 2009 EP elections – explore how patterns of EP candidate selection covary with political parties’ ideological positions, internal selection mechanisms, and electoral contexts. They find that parties with different attitudes toward European integration pursue differing strategies when selecting candidates for European office; and that candidates with more political experience follow specific patterns of selection procedures; and conclude that “the character of an EP national delegation is not formed in a vacuum, but rather is the end result of the domestic environment political parties operate within” (p. 25).

This chapter contributes to this literature and uses the data generated by the PIREDEU project to increase our knowledge on the candidate selection process in the EP. The PIREDEU data<sup>2</sup> are a welcome and useful addition to this literature for a number of reasons. In spite of some limitations (low response rate, and consequent doubts on how representative the data can be [see Meserve et al. 2010]), they offer a standard set of answers from all the candidates which allow a more precise investigation of candidate selection dynamics. Second, these data can be used to statistically explore candidate selection processes. Gallagher and Marsh (1988), employing qualitative case studies in their collective research, argued in favour of a quantitative strategy in order to have a clearer picture of the determinants and consequences of the candidate selection process (Gallagher 1988b).

Third, in most of the literature, the unit of analysis is the individual party (Rahat and Hazan 2001; Hazan 2002; Hazan and Rahat 2006; Meserve et al. 2010). However, as Gallagher (1988a) has aptly underlined, the selection of the candidates (in both dimensions, centralization and inclusiveness) may vary not only between parties but also within them; some actors within the parties may have more influence and leverage over some candidates than over others. This complicates the task of the researcher and makes the choice of the party (rather than the single candidate) as unit of analysis potentially problematic. Furthermore, in several cases the primary selecting agency may be difficult to locate, because several selectorates and levels may be involved in the process, as happens in mixed and in multi-stage candidate selection methods (Rahat and Hazan 2002). As a result, the single candidate is, empirically, in a very good position to know where her candidacy comes from.

The chapter is organized as follows. Consistent with the research design and objectives of the literature mentioned above, we first give evidence of the degree of inclusiveness/exclusiveness, and of centralization/decentralization in EP parties’ strategies. Next, we identify different strategies parties use to nominate candidates. The challenge is to find patterns which go beyond the indicator of the party territorial level. Using several indicators that consider also the importance of actors external and/or internal to the party structure in the nomination strategies, three strategies are proposed (Euro-societal; inclusive; co-optation). Moreover, we advance a few explanatory variables to explain the determinants of candidate selection. In the second part of the chapter, we focus on the consequences of different selection mechanisms on the qualities and voting behaviours of 2009 EP elections candidates: do different patterns of selection select different types of candidates? Do they have an impact on their (likely) voting behaviour? A concluding section summarizes our findings and briefly discusses further avenues of research.

<sup>2</sup> European Election Study, (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, [Voter Study and Candidate Study, and Contextual Data], [Advance Release], 24/10/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

## Candidate Selection Strategies

### *Inclusiveness/Exclusiveness and Centralization/Decentralization*

The first aim of this chapter is to describe and map the different party strategies in the nomination of the EP election candidates. The 2003/2004 Regulation in clarifying the respective competences of EP groups and political parties at the European level assigned to the latter the responsibility to conduct elections for the EP. National parties are the instruments through which the political parties at the European level campaign. As mentioned in the introduction, national parties adopt very different strategies when selecting their candidates (Cross 2008). These variations occur along two principal dimensions: centralization and inclusiveness of these selection procedures (Lundell 2004; Hazen 2002; Bille 2001). In other words, they refer to, and ask, the following questions: “who selects the candidates?” and “where are the candidates selected?” (Rahat and Hazan 2001).

First of all, the selectorate is the key feature of the selection process (Hazan and Rahat 2006). On a continuum of inclusiveness to exclusiveness, at one extreme, it is when the entire electorate has the right to participate in the process (American open primaries which can be more – for instance, Hawaii, Wisconsin, Michigan – or less open). At the other extreme, it is the case of a single party leader (in Mexico’s long-ruling Revolutionary party until 2000); or a special nomination committee composed of a few party leaders, or of the party founders (ultra-Orthodox Israeli religious parties), who select the candidates and ratify *en bloc* (Rahat 2007). Between these two extremes, it is possible to locate most of the parties: in some cases the selectors are dues-paying party members’ primaries (closer to the inclusive end of the continuum). In other cases, selected party agencies (closer to the exclusive extreme), where the selector is an agency of the party or an *ad hoc* convention of delegates, play the major role in the candidate selection process.

The second issue refers to the location of this selectorate: this can be highly centralized, when candidates are selected exclusively by a national party body. Or, vice versa, procedures are envisaged to allow for territorial (regional, local) and/or functional representation (trade unions, minorities, women, etc.). Significant numbers of cases fall between central party control and complete independence of the local levels (Cross 2008). Some parties in Israel fully centralize the selection procedures, whereas the US system represents full decentralization (Rahat 2007). In many parts of Europe (in Norway, for instance), the selectorate at the local level plays the major role in candidate selection strategies (Rahat and Hazan 2001).

However, as several scholars argue (Penning and Hazan 2001; Rahat 2007), local processes can equally be highly exclusive: potentially more voters might participate in a centralized rather than in a local selection. For instance, national primaries, despite their centralization, are extremely inclusive, whereas a few individual local leaders each choosing their favourite candidate/s represents a highly exclusive process.

The PIREDEU dataset<sup>3</sup> allows us to describe these strategies on a large scale. If we exclude the missing values, it emerges that 59 percent of our respondents declared they were nominated for the EP elections at the national level, while 34 and 7 percent respectively, at the regional

<sup>3</sup> For all the analyses of this chapter, we weighted the dataset by comparing our data based on respondents with the actual number of candidates for each party in each country. “Description: This weight corrects for the number of candidates of a party which were contacted in relation the number of candidates of the respective party in the dataset over all countries. Hence, the weight is calculated for each party in relation to the overall sample of all countries. For example, the candidates of Party A represent 1% of the candidates contacted in all countries. The proportion of the candidates of Party A in the dataset is .9%. For those candidates, this would result in a weight of  $1/.9=1.111$ ” (Giebler, Haus and Weßels, 2010: 205).

and local level. More than 45 percent of them were selected by their party executive board, 14 percent by appointed party members, 22 percent by elected party members, 15 percent by all party members and only 2 percent were directly elected by voters.

Voting versus appointment is another dimension usually employed to classify candidate selection methods (Rahat and Hazel 2001; Hazel 2002). When the list is appointed, its composition can be more easily controlled. On the other side, with a voting system, it is much more difficult for the party bodies to command the selection process. For 35 percent of the interviewees the selection procedures did not require a vote, while for about 18 percent a certain share of votes, for 21 percent a relative majority and for 26 percent an absolute majority, respectively, were necessary in order to get nominated. Members of the EP have been important (or very important)<sup>4</sup> for 35 percent of the respondents, national party officials for 67 percent, regional or local party officials for 59 percent. Individual party members were considered important by 47 percent of the interviewees, while non-party, minority organizations' and interest groups' members were relevant for only 12 percent of them. About 50 percent of respondents were encouraged to stand as a EP candidate by a national party official, about 46 percent by a regional/local official; 17 percent by a sitting MEP, 6 percent by a retired MEP, 24 percent by other community leaders, 13 percent by a representative of an interest group, 27 percent by their spouse/partner and 23 percent by other family members.

#### *Advancing a Few Explanatory Variables*

In order to reduce the complexity of these answers and better interpret this information, we factored the data relative to nomination strategies by using a Varimax method of rotation. All the items that have been mentioned and briefly described in the previous section are used, with the exclusion of the people who had encouraged respondents to stand as EP candidates. The factor analysis has isolated three main components which explain more than 60 percent of the variance. As we can see in table 1<sup>5</sup>, the first component isolates respondents for whom both the EU level and the societal level were more important than the national party organization ("Eurosocietal strategy"); the second component isolates candidates who have been appointed through decentralized and democratic procedures ("Inclusive party strategy"); finally, the third

*Table 1. Nomination strategies. Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax method – only variable scores loading more than ± .4 in each component are shown).*

<i>Strategies of nomination</i>	<i>Component 1</i>	<i>Component 2</i>	<i>Component 3</i>
Territorial (from local to national)	---	-.66	---
Degree of centralization (from voters to national party bodies)	---	-.66	---
EP members: important	.59	---	---
National party officials: important	---	-.58	.62
Local party officials: important	---	---	.87
Individual party members: important	---	.56	---
Non party members: important	.81	---	---
Minority organizations: important	.89	---	---
Interest groups: important	.82	---	--
<i>Type of strategy identified</i>	<i>Euro-societal</i>	<i>Inclusive party</i>	<i>Co-optation</i>

<sup>4</sup> The importance of different actors for the EP elections candidature are measured on a 5 points scale, ranging from 0 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). Here we report the percentage of those respondents who attached particularly high value to this variable (4 or 5).

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed explanation of these variables and their coding, see the Appendix – see the Appendix also for tables 3, 4, 5 and 7.

component isolates those interviewees who have been co-opted by both national and regional party's leaders ("co-optation strategy").

It thus emerges that political parties use different strategies to nominate their EP candidates: some are more centralized, others are more inclusive, or involve the participation of actors external to the party organization. In the rest of this section we test a few, preliminary, variables to explain the variance in selection strategies adopted by European parties for the 2009 EP elections. A first element is a) ideology. Lundell (2004) hypothesizes that more extreme parties employ more centralized selection mechanisms than other parties; and Gallagher and Marsh (1988) use the nature of the party (Rational-Efficient Party versus and Democratic Type) as one of their (five) independent variables. A second factor that can have an impact is b) region. Lundell (2004), for instance, makes a distinction between Northern, Central and Southern Europe, and – although recognizing some problems in studying regions as a separate variable because “they consist of several separate values that together explain more than single and separate variables” (*Ivi*: 40) – he finds that region is the most important determinant of candidate selection. In particular, he reveals that parties in Northern Europe apply decentralized selection procedures, while in South Europe centralization is the favourite strategy.

The last independent variable that can explain nomination strategy is c) the degree of proportionality of the EP electoral systems, measured by the Gallagher index. The electoral system is indeed said to affect the candidate selection procedures in several ways. Lundell (2004) tests both district magnitude and preferential voting. Decentralization occurs when the electoral system provides for small constituencies, and centralization in case of large multi-member constituencies, as, among other things, there is need for coordination in compiling party lists. Furthermore, preferential voting is assumed to have a decentralizing effect on candidate selection.

*Table 2. Nomination strategies: EU geographical areas and countries' type of EU*

	<i>Eurosocietal Mean</i>	<i>Inclusive party strategy Mean</i>	<i>Cooptation Mean</i>
North EU countries	.45	<b>.56</b>	.48
Continental EU	.45	<b>.51</b>	.51
South EU	.45	.36	.50
Central-East EU	<b>.54</b>	.39	.53
Total	.47	.50	.50
Eta	.09*	.26***	N.s.
Old EU (15) countries	.46	<b>.52</b>	.49
New EU countries	<b>.53</b>	.39	.52
Total	.47	.49	.50
Eta	.10**	.18***	N.s.

We saved the components of the factor analysis as variables and rescaled them from “0” to “1”. It emerges that there are differences in the strategies adopted to select EP candidates, among EU geographical areas and type of country membership<sup>6</sup> as well as among candidates', parties' and party voters' political positions (in terms of left and right). As table 2 shows, in fact, Eurosocietal strategies seem to be more associated with respondents coming from Central-East

<sup>6</sup> We classified the 27 countries as follows: North EU (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK); Continental EU (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg), South EU (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain) and Central-East EU (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia). Malta and Cyprus are excluded from this classification because their inclusion in South EU would be problematic. Finally we distinguish between the old (the 15 countries members of the EU before the 2004 enlargement) and the new EU countries.

EU countries, and from countries whose EU membership is new; while Inclusive party strategies are more widespread among candidates from North and Continental EU countries. Co-optation is instead equally used among all EU member states. Table 3 shows that the more candidates, parties and voters are leftist the more nomination strategy is inclusive, while the more they are rightist the more the strategy adopted is co-optation from party leaders. Regarding the degree of proportionality, PIREDEU data reveal (table 3) that, somewhat surprisingly, the more the electoral system is proportional the more the nomination strategy is inclusive and the less it is based on actors external to the national party organization (Eurosocietal strategy).

*Table 3. Bivariate correlations between nomination strategies, political positions (left-right) and proportionality (Gallagher Index) of the national EP electoral systems (Pearson coefficients)*

<i>Political position of</i>	<i>Eurosocietal</i>	<i>Inclusive</i>	<i>Cooptation</i>
Candidates	n.s.	-.90**	.11***
Candidates' party	n.s.	-.11***	.10**
Party' voters	n.s.	-.07*	.12***
Gallagher Index	-.10**	.17**	n.s.

In this first section of the chapter we have traced different nomination strategies and underlined three possible patterns. The first is external to national party organization, and implies that potential candidates find strong allies at the European level (for instance MEPs) and/or at the societal level (i.e. interest groups); the second is internal to party organization, but candidates are chosen by both local levels and party members (or directly by voters); finally, the third is the classic co-optation model in which party leaders decide the candidatures. We have revealed that inclusive strategies are less developed in Southern and Central-Eastern EU countries and in the new EU members; while they are associated with leftist political positions and more proportional electoral systems.

### **Consequences of Nomination Strategies**

Different candidate selection methods are said to have relevant consequences for the functioning of a parliament. They produce different candidates and lead to different political consequences, determining “much of how the party looks and what it does”, “more than its organisation or even its manifesto ... In short, candidate selection affects the essence of modern democratic governance” (Hazan and Rahat 2006: 367-368). Gallagher and Marsh (1988) and Hazan and Rahat (2006) focus, in particular, on the consequences of candidate selection for the composition of the legislature, the behaviour of the MPs, and party cohesion. Only for the latter outcome does Gallagher (1988b) find evidence that candidate selection played an important role.

What are, therefore, the implications for the selection of candidates of the three different nomination strategies? Are there any mechanisms of candidate selection which assure a better quality of candidate? What are the consequences on the voting behaviour of (once elected) MEPs? We attempt to give an answer to these questions, and explore the consequences of selection strategies, by looking at: 1) the candidates' political experience, 2) their attitude toward the EU and the EP, and 3) their degree of independence in their (potential) legislative behaviour in the Parliament.

#### ***MEPs Political Experience***

Meserve et al. (2010) reveal that parties with centralized selection mechanisms tend to choose candidates for the EP elections with national and party executive backgrounds, whereas more

decentralized parties are more likely to send people with more local experience. Parties' internal methods seem thus to have an influence on the type of MPs they select. In this part of the chapter we investigate similar dynamics and phenomena. As far as political experience is concerned, we look at three main dimensions: the experience in party organizations, in representative institutions and in the executive branch. The PIREDEU data show that (excluding missing values) about 50 percent, 23 percent and 20 percent of respondents have been (or currently are) members of parliaments/councils at local, regional and national level, respectively; 8 percent have direct experience of EP membership; and 27 percent, 9 percent and 5 percent have experience in executives at local, regional and national level, respectively. As far as party organization is concerned, as many as 85 percent and 80 percent of the interviewees report to have been, or to be members and/or to hold, or to have held in the past, an office in the local/regional and national party structure. We, then, built three indicators of political experience: a representative, an executive and a party experience index which range from 0 (no experience) to 1 (great experience). Table 4 reports, respectively, the means of these indexes by countries, classified according to the four EU geographical areas and the type of EU membership.

*Table 4. Indexes of political experience: EU geographical areas and countries' type of EU membership (means)*

	<i>Representative experience index</i>	<i>Executive experience index</i>	<i>Party experience index</i>
North EU	.22	.12	.84
Continental EU	.19	.09	.91
South EU	.35	.15	.64
Central-East EU	.20	.15	.71
Total	.22	.12	.81
Eta	.17***	.11**	.27***
Old EU (15)	.22	.11	.84
New EU	.20	.15	.71
Total	.22	.12	.81
Eta	n.s.	.07*	.15***

As we can see, experience in representative institutions is more widespread among respondents of Southern EU countries, experience in executive institutions comparatively lower in continental Europe, and party experience is greater among candidates of the North and Continental EU and of the old EU countries.

#### ***Attitudes Towards the EU Integration Process***

Attitudes toward the EU and the EP are measured by using several indicators. Some are related to the respondents' opinions on the power of the EP<sup>7</sup>: about 80 percent of them agree that the EP should have the right to initiate legislation, 73 percent that the EP should have equal power with the Council in all areas of EU legislation, 76 percent that the EP should have equal power with the Council to amend the budget, 75 percent that the Commission President should be nominated by the EP rather than the Council, and 84 percent that the EP should be able to remove individual Commissioners from office. Others are indicators of opinion toward the process of a European integration<sup>8</sup>: 57 percent sustain that integration should be pushed further,

<sup>7</sup> All the items concerning the EP range from 1 (strongly agree with the statement) to 7 (strongly disagree). In our analysis we report the percentage of respondents which answered from 1 to 3.

<sup>8</sup> These items vary between 0 (integration has already gone too far) to 10 (it should be pushed further): we report the percentage of respondents giving a high value (from 6 to 10).

but only 49 percent recognise that their party position – and 38 percent that their party voters’ opinion – are the same. Regarding the views on the EU as a whole, 56 percent of the interviewees have a great or a fair amount of confidence that decisions made by the EU will be in the interest of their country; 22 percent claim that European unity threatens their country’s identity; 53 percent believe that the EU has strengthened democracy, while about 50 percent affirm that the EU is over regulating in several sectors, and 20 percent state that the EU has greatly harmed their country’s economy. Finally, 49 percent trust EU institutions (strongly or enough), and 71 percent feel proud of being European. In order to make sense of, and to reduce the complexity of, all the information we get from these indicators, we run a factor analysis (Varimax rotation method) once again. We then identified two components which explain 63 percent of the variance of the 15 indicators used (see table 5). The first component identifies those respondents who strongly support the EU as a whole, while the second includes those interviewees who strongly oppose any further increase of the EP’s power. We rescaled the two variables so that they now range from 0 (low value for that component) to 1 (high value for that component).

*Table 5. Attitudes toward the EU and EP. Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax method – only the scores loading higher than  $\pm .4$  in each component are showed).*

	<i>Component 1</i>	<i>Component 2</i>
The EP: initiate legislation	-.42	.66
The EP: equal power in legislation	--	.84
The EP: equal power in budget	--	.85
The EP: nominate the President	--	.81
The EP: remove Commissioners	--	.71
European integration.: candidate	.84	--
European integration.: party	.10	--
European integration.: voters	.75	--
EU decisions in the country interest	-.83	--
EU threatens country’s identity	.71	--
EU strengthened democracy	-.75	--
EU subjects to too much regulation	.66	--
EU harmed country’s economy	.79	--
Trust in EU institutions	-.82	--
Feel proud of being European	-.63	--
<i>EU attitude identified</i>	<i>Strongly pro EU</i>	<i>Strongly against EP power</i>

Table 6 shows that candidates from Southern, Central-Eastern and new EU countries are more likely to support the EU but, at the same time, also oppose more strongly any increase of EP powers.

Table 6. Attitudes toward EU and EP: EU geographical areas and countries' type of EU membership (means)

	<i>Strongly Pro EU</i>	<i>Against EP powers</i>
North EU	.38	.56
Continental EU	.51	.40
South EU	.58	.48
Central-East EU	.60	.59
Total	.48	.51
Eta	.31***	.25***
Old EU (15)	.45	.49
New EU	.60	.58
Total	.48	.51
Eta	.20***	.12***

### ***What Legislative Behaviour?***

The last dimension we take into consideration in this section concerns the potential legislative behaviour of the candidates once they are elected to the EP. It is a common assumption in the literature that more decentralized and inclusive selection methods can lead more easily to instability in legislative behaviour (Pennings and Hazan 2001). The MPs are exposed to various and sometimes conflicting pressures; and will respond mainly to non-party mediators, or to the demands of their (more local, more inclusive) selectorates. As a result, they have more incentives to deviate from the party programme; and party cohesion is threatened as a consequence of low levels of party discipline. This lack of cohesiveness can lead to a decline in the ability of the parties to operate effectively in the parliamentary arena. On the other side, with more exclusive candidate selection strategies the MPs will be more likely to respond to party actors, as they owe their position to the party leadership. When lists and nominations are controlled at the central level, legislators are more inclined to follow party lines in parliament.

Consequently, some authors argue that there is a trade-off between inclusiveness and party discipline (Hazan 2002). The narrow personal interests of a MP chosen by a more inclusive selectorate may overcome the more general party (or even voters') interests. After a democratization of the selection process in three Israeli leading parties (Labour, Likud and Meretz), what has been witnessed was a breakdown of party discipline, and a decrease of the effective government control of the parliamentary agenda. In two legislatures (1992-96; 1996-99) the majority of the bills passed were private members' bills. Finally, a reverse process of democratization occurred: both Meretz and Likud adopted less inclusive selection procedures, "receding from the precipice" (Rahat and Hazan 2001: 316), and the behaviour of the MPs returned to being more disciplined and less independent.

In the case of the EP these views are confirmed: candidate selection mechanisms influence party cohesion: more exclusive strategies induce MEPs to vote closer to national party lines, while inclusive and decentralized selection procedures create greater incentives for legislators to raise their personal profile (Faas 2003; Hix 2004).

Using a different data set (with data at the individual rather than aggregate level), Shomer (2009) reveals that Israeli MPs selected through inclusive procedures do not act so as to enhance their personal reputations more than those chosen by less democratized methods. Instead, he advances an alternative explanation, arguing that it is the MPs' seniority which can explain legislators' vote-seeking behaviour both at the individual as well as the aggregate level.

In this case, therefore, Parliamentary efficiency seemed not so much affected (decreased) by candidate selection strategies.

Analysing the PIREDEU data, it emerges that 53 percent think that, in case of opinion divergence, MEPs should vote according to their voters' opinion rather than their party's one; about 63 percent according to their own opinion, and finally 68 percent think that MEPs should vote according to their country's interests rather than their party's. Next, we built an index of independent legislative behaviour which scores from 0 (no independence) to 3 (maximum independence; if they would vote according to their opinion even if in contrast to their party's, their voters' positions).

Table 7 examines, again, whether there are any country differences and reveals that candidates are potentially more independent in North and Continental Europe, while no difference can be observed as far as the type of EU membership is considered.

*Table 7. Independent EP legislative behaviour: EU geographical areas and countries' type of EU membership (means)*

	<i>Independence of legislative behaviour</i>
North EU	1.1
Continental EU	1.2
South EU	0.9
Central-East EU	0.9
Total	0.9
Eta	0.17***
Old EU (15)	1.1
New EU	0.9
Total	1.0
Eta	1.06*

### ***Advancing Some Explanations***

Once we have explored the variables related to respondents' attitudes, the objective of the chapter is to investigate whether the nomination strategies are relevant in selecting candidates with particular views and potential behaviour. We test this hypothesis by using bivariate correlations between the three nomination strategies and the three groups of variables considered in this section: political experience; attitude toward EU and the EP; and the potential independence of legislative behaviour in the EP.

Table 8 indicates that Eurosocietal strategies are more associated with a pro-EU attitude, but with a less (potentially) independent legislative behaviour; moreover, inclusive strategies often imply both more party experience and more independent candidates, while co-optation tends to 'produce' candidates with extensive party experience but with more negative attitudes towards any further increase of EP powers.

Table 8. Implications of nomination strategies: Pearson's coefficients

	<i>Representative Experience</i>	<i>Executive Experience</i>	<i>Party Experience</i>	<i>Pro-EU attitude</i>	<i>Against increasing EP powers</i>	<i>Independent Behaviour</i>
Eurosocietal	--	--	--	.11***	--	-.07*
Inclusive	--	--	.11***	--	--	.08**
Cooptation	--	--	.07*	--	.09**	n.s.

To draw more accurate and sound conclusions, these effects must be controlled for other variables; as a result, a linear regression analysis is performed using the “potential independent legislative behaviour” as dependent variable (table 9). We used an “enter” method to estimate different models in which, first, only control variables are tested; next, other relevant attitudes

Table 9. Linear Regression: the implications of nomination strategies for candidate selection (independent legislative behaviour). Standard errors and significance within parentheses.

Dep. Variable:	Independence of legislative behaviour		
	Beta (b)	Beta (b)	Beta (b)
Independ. Variables:			
<b>Control</b>			
Gender (dummy)	n.s.	n.s	n.s.
Education (categorical)	n.s	n.s	n.s
Under 45 (dummy)	n.s	n.s	n.s
Lower class (dummy)	n.s	n.s	n.s
<b>Attitudes</b>			
Exp. In re. inst.		n.s.	n.s
Exp. In Execut.		n.s	n.s
Exp. In party org.		.10 (.06**)	.09 (.06*)
Strong pro EU att.		.18 (.04***)	.18 (.04***)
Against EP att.		n.s	n.s
Left-right posit.		-.08 (.02*)	n.s.
<b>Nomination strategies</b>			
Eurosocietal			-.10 (.04**)
Inclusive			.09 (.04*)
Cooptation			n.s.
Gallagher index			n.s.
R	0.11	0.25	0.29
Sig. F change	0.09	0.00	0.00
N. of cases (dep. Var.)	1,220	1,220	1,220

and political views are added, and, finally, the three nomination strategies (obtained and discussed in the first section) are entered in the model controlled for the proportionality of the EP national electoral system. It can be noticed that the nomination strategy remains relevant even when other independent variables are controlled for: a potential independent legislative behaviour is associated with a good party organization experience, and a strong pro-EU attitude, but it also prevails when nomination strategies are less Eurosocietal and more inclusive.

Our analysis thus confirms that more democratized parties may bring about more independent MEPs; and that independence does not affect candidates' chances of being elected, as no correlation has been observed between our dependent variable, the candidates' position (safe, uncertain, implausible) in the lists and their actual election as MEPs.

## **Conclusion**

Candidate selection is an essential feature of modern politics: those who are elected will form the new parliament and shape its activities, policies and objectives. In this chapter we have analysed the 2009 EP candidates' responses to a set of questions on how, where and by whom their candidacy was decided. In this way, the objective is to contribute to a better understanding of an important, but somehow neglected, topic. Furthermore, PIREDEU data allow us to offer a large-scale, cross-national analysis of the candidates to the 2009 EP elections. In this concluding section we summarize our main findings and briefly indicate how to improve our analysis.

First, we have shown that 59 percent of the interviewees declared they were nominated at the national level; and that EP candidate selection procedures were, to a good extent, exclusive: more than 45 percent of them have been selected by their party's executive board, 14 percent by appointed party members, 22 percent by elected party members, 15 percent by all party members and only 2 percent directly by voters.

Second, we have run a factor analysis and distinguished three possible patterns: a "Eurosocietal"; an "inclusive party"; and a "co-optation" strategy, each representing a distinct selection method and logic: respectively, the influence of the EU and the societal level; decentralized and democratic procedures; appointment by both national and regional party's leaders.

Third, we have proposed a few, preliminary, explanatory variables, and underlined that inclusive strategies are less developed in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe and in the new EU member states. Moreover, they are associated with leftist political positions and more widespread in more proportional electoral contexts.

Fourth, we analysed whether different candidate selection methods have relevant consequences on the composition and functioning of the legislature. Experience in representative institutions is more widespread among respondents of Southern EU countries, while candidates from continental Europe spent a lower number of years in executive bodies, and those from North and Continental Europe and from old EU countries had more responsibilities and positions within the party. Eurosocietal strategies are more associated with a pro-EU attitude; and candidates are potentially more independent in Northern and Continental EU countries. Moreover, a potential independent legislative behaviour is associated with a strong party organization experience and a strong pro-EU attitude. Our analysis finally confirms that more democratized parties may bring about more independent MEPs. In order to further corroborate this finding, a useful strategy would be to cross-check the behaviour of the MEPs in the European Parliament, by looking at the number of private members' bills each MP proposed and enacted; the number of questions they introduced; and the number of speeches they gave in the plenum (Shomer 2009). Further variables can be employed to make our analysis more complete and meticulous. Although Lundell (2004) finds no correlation between the political structure of a country and candidate selection methods, in Gallagher and Marsh's (1988) study, the only strong association found is between federalism and decentralization: in national politics, the national party bodies often play a marginal role in the choice of candidates. Another factor that can be tested is the party size: large parties are said to adopt more centralized selection procedures, whereas small parties, relying often on the power of

well-known figures at the local level, are more open, more flexible and employ a decentralized approach. Finally, it can be argued that more pro-European parties tend to nominate candidates with deeper political experiences, as they place a greater value on EU politics (Meserve et al. 2010).

## **Appendix: List of variables used in this chapter.**

**Table 1**

*Strategies of nomination*

Territorial: from local to national

recoded from var. Were you Nominated as an Official Candidate for the EP election?

1. On the local level
2. On the regional level
3. On the national level

*Degree of centralization*

Recoded var. Who Officially Nominated You to run for the EP election?

1. Voters
2. All party members
3. Elected party members
4. Appointed party members
5. Party's executive board

*EP members: important*

Var. Importance for EP candidate selection: European Parliamentarians of your party

Likert ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

*National party Officials: important*

Var. Importance for EP candidate selection: National party officials

Likert ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

*Local party officials: important*

Var. Importance for EP candidate selection: Local party officials

Likert ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

*Individual party members: important*

Var. Importance for EP candidate selection: Individual party members

Likert ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

*Non party members: important*

Var. Importance for EP candidate selection: Non party members

Likert ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

*Minority organizations: important*

Var. Importance for EP candidate selection: Minority organizations

Likert ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

*Interest Groups: important*

Var. Importance for EP candidate selection: Interest groups

Likert ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

**Table 3**

*All variables related with political position:*

In terms of left and right what is (your, your party, your party' voters) position?

Likert ranging from 1 (left) to 10 (right)

*Gallagher index*: we attributed to each candidate the Gallagher degree of proportionality of their national electoral system for the EP elections

#### **Table 4**

*Representative experience index*:

Original variables:

Are you/have you ever be member of a local representative body?

Are you/have you ever be member of a regional representative body?

Are you/have you ever be member of a national representative body?

Are you/have you ever be member of the EP?

All variables: 1. Yes, at the moment, 2. Yes, in the past, 3. Never

All recoded as: 0. Never; 1. Yes, at the moment or in the past

Construction of the Index: normalized addition of the 4 recoded variables ranging from 0 to 1

*Executive experience index*

Original variables:

Are you/have you ever been a member of local government?

Are you/have you ever been a member of regional government?

Are you/have you ever been a member of national government?

All variables: 1. Yes, at the moment, 2. Yes, in the past, 3. Never

All recoded as: 0. Never; 1. Yes, at the moment or in the past

Construction of the Index: normalized addition of the 3 recoded variables ranging from 0 to 1

*Party experience index*:

Original variables:

Are you/were you member/held an office in local/regional party organization?

Are you/were you member/held an office in local/regional party organization?

Both variables: 1. Yes, at the moment, 2. Yes, in the past, 3. Never

Both recoded as: 0. Never; 1. Yes, at the moment or in the past

Construction of the Index: normalized addition of the 2 recoded variables ranging from 0 to 1

#### **Table 5**

*All variables related to the EP*: agreement with the statement, ranging from 1 (strongly agree with the statement) to 7 (strongly disagree)

*All variables related to the positions on the European integration process*: agreement with the statement, ranging from 0 (has already gone too far) to 10 (should be pushed further)

Confidence that decisions made by the EU will be in the country interest

Likert ranging from 1 (great deal of confidence) to 4 (no confidence at all)

*All other variables related to the EU*: agreement with the statement, ranging from 1 (strongly agree with the statement) to 7 (strongly disagree)

**Table 7**

*Independent Variable: Independence of legislative behavior*

Original variables:

How should a MEP vote if his opinion doesn't correspond with his party's voters position?

1. According to own opinion
2. According to voters' opinion

How should a MEP vote if his opinion doesn't correspond with his party's voters position?

1. According to own opinion
2. According to his party's opinion

Index assigns 0 if respondents answer in both "2"; 1 if in one of them answer 1; and 2 if in both answers 2

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# Misconstruing the European Project? How Welfare Issues Colour Attitudes Towards Europe.

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## Abstract

This chapter analyzes the impact of the welfare state on public opinion towards European integration at the time of the 2009 European elections. It has been established that citizens are increasingly aware of the social and political implications of European integration but the role of the welfare regime has been regarded mostly as contextual. Yet, the integration process challenges the social boundaries of nation states and the double relationship that binds citizens to their welfare state (economic dependence) and to the community (a sense of belonging). This phenomenon is not without consequences for individual attitudes. This study provides an empirical test of the relationship between support for Europe and the welfare state in a broad sense, using a multilevel approach and linking data from the Eurobarometer 71.3 (2009) and the 2009 European Election Media Study. I first investigate the importance of dependence on the welfare regime and welfare attitudes for individual support for Europe, and second the influence of the welfare regime and the salience of welfare issues in the media on these attitudes. This approach adds explanatory value to the customary models by accounting for the political dimension of support for Europe and by showing that attitudes regarding the welfare state have an independent significant effect in explaining public support for Europe.

## Introduction

It has been shown that economic concerns have been playing a role in support for European integration for a long time. Citizens are sensitive to whether integration benefits them (the main issue here being mobility and employment opportunity) and their country (especially in terms of economic conditions and trade). In a context of economic crisis and ongoing challenges to and reforms of welfare regimes in many European countries, social concerns are likely to affect support for Europe. The 2009 European Parliament elections offer a good opportunity to test whether the European project is viewed as a threat to social protection by its citizens.

Connecting attitudes to the welfare state on the one hand and support for European integration on the other can appear counter-intuitive as welfare provision is first and foremost a prerogative of the nation-state, a field in which the European Union (EU) has no direct authority. Yet, recent debates showed, first, that social protection appears to be a concern for elites as well as for citizens. The meaning of the European project is more frequently questioned, as fears concerning social protection arise among citizens. Social concerns have motivated to some extent the rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty in France and the troubles of the Bolkestein directive (Cautrès 2005; Sauger and Grossman 2007; Binzer Hobolt 2009). Second, various tendencies have been challenging national welfare states for two decades now, and the rise of a supra-national entity, as well as the increase in cross-border movements that are caused by the integration process, are definitely part of this phenomenon. Globalization, de-industrialization, ageing, migration and economic and monetary integration destabilize “this assumed unity of people, place and political institutions”, which is the basis of European welfare states (Oorschot, Opielka, Pfau-Effinger 2008:241). Scholars have long been claiming that European integration has an impact on national welfare states, an impact that is becoming more and more visible in public discourse and, even more importantly, in citizens’ everyday life (Dalton and Eichenberg 2007).

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This phenomenon has been extensively studied from a public policy perspective (Pierson 2001; Bartolini 2005; Ferrera 2005; Pierson and Castle 2005), but not so much from a public opinion perspective, and definitely not sufficiently from the perspective of public opinion regarding Europe. And yet, after a decade of using the integration process as, an incentive, a justification, and a scapegoat for economic modernization, labour market restructuring and welfare state reforms (Martin and Ross 2004), it seems justified to assess whether welfare regimes and individual attitudes towards welfare state have any impact on support for Europe. My argument is that the redistribution issue has been playing an ever growing role in European integration since the Maastricht treaty and thus the welfare state, understood both as a structural context and as an issue, plays a role in the way that individuals perceive Europe. In fact, large segments of the European population perceive the integration process as potentially threatening the material benefits they receive from their national welfare regimes<sup>2</sup>, but the mechanisms behind these opinions have not yet been extensively studied (Ray 2002).

Aside from the traditional theories of utilitarian support for Europe and identity issues, some hypotheses have been developed concerning the effect that the welfare state has on ideological positioning regarding European integration, a possibility that has been operationalized in particular by interacting individual ideology with the type of welfare state. Results are quite encouraging for this research path and various models show, without a doubt, an impact of the welfare state on support for Europe. In some studies, the welfare state dimension even explains more individual variance than individual-level predictors (Gabel 1998; Brinegar and Jolly 2004; Brinegar and Jolly 2005; Ray 2004; McLaren 2004). However, welfare issues as such have hardly been considered yet, and the contextual dimension of welfare itself could benefit from further operationalization and empirical verification.

This chapter complements existing work on contextual effects of the welfare state on support for Europe by investigating the cross-level and cross-national patterns that underlie this new explanation. This relationship between the welfare state (understood in the broadest sense)<sup>3</sup>, and individual opinions on Europe can be apprehended at two levels, first by focusing on the different welfare regimes, second by analyzing individual attitudes on both topics. The macro-level set of hypotheses assumes that nations constitute clusters depending on welfare regime characteristics, and that the members of a cluster share some similar opinions on Europe. From this perspective, individuals are considered first of all according to their nationalities and to the welfare features attached to national regimes. At the same time, a micro-level set of hypotheses underlines the differences regarding welfare that exist among individuals from the same country. Therefore, the analysis accounts for both individual situations in the welfare regime and attitudes towards the welfare state. It also includes media context data, in order to test for the salience of welfare issues in national public spheres and their impact on the above mentioned relationships.

The chapter is structured as follows. I first review existing theories of attitudes towards Europe and explain the rationale for considering welfare issues and welfare regimes to be part of the picture. I then present the research design and results of the analysis, which I discuss in the final part.

<sup>2</sup> Eurobarometer studies have been monitoring anxiety about social benefits for some years. Figure A1 in the Appendix displays the most recent results, from 2005 (Eurobarometer 64.2). As one can see, fears are the strongest among old member states, especially those that experience the strongest influence of the EU in economic and public finance domain, i.e. members of the Economic and Monetary Union.

<sup>3</sup> The general concept of “welfare state” stands in fact for two different explanatory dimensions:

- As context: the welfare regime. I identify two features in particular, the role of the state in welfare provision (i.e. the degree of involvement in welfare production and allocation) and the degree of social protection it provides.
- As political issue: the welfare issue is made of the individual attitudes towards the welfare state.

## Theorizing Attitudes Towards Europe

The focus on public opinion in European studies is not new. Since the early seventies, the “peoples of Europe” have been closely monitored by the European Commission through twice-yearly surveys; and early quantitative analysis characterized their attitudes towards Europe as passively positive. According to the *permissive consensus* hypothesis and employing a generational logic, support for Europe was predicted to increase as the general level of education went up and generational replacement reinforced the presence of post-materialist values among European publics (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970; Inglehart 1970; Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Reif 1991). Forty years on, the prognosis is not that clear. If one cannot speak of a drastic decrease of positive attitudes towards Europe, the contrary is not true either. More specifically, what has changed is the degree of homogeneity of individual attitudes in national public opinion. People have not stopped being supportive of Europe, they have simply started to care about it and be critical of it (Down and Wilson 2008).

Prior to 1992, the main logic for supporting Europe was purely sociological and based on two predictors: social group and age. The more educated, the wealthier and the younger you were, the more you would support European integration (Inglehart 1990; Inglehart and Rabier 1991). This dynamic is still visible in post-1992 empirical studies, but the most powerful explanations now combine economic issues and identity concerns. Indeed, the budgetary constraints, which came along with the EMU, made the EU more visible to individuals in their everyday life. In response to this, the rational theory of *utilitarian support* was developed in the early 1990s (Dalton and Eichenberg 1993; Gabel and Palmer 1995). It grounds support for European integration, at the aggregated level, on a cost/benefit assessment of membership for the country. This calculation varies according to two dimensions. First, public opinion on Europe fluctuates according to the perceived national economic situation (Gabel 1995). Second, it varies according to national trade balance and public budget. Dalton and Eichenberg showed that the more positive the national EU intra-communal trade balance is, the more national public opinion will support integration. Financial transfers through regional funds have a similar effect: net beneficiaries have a more positive perception of Europe than countries that are net contributors (Dalton and Eichenberg 1993). In spite of the fact that it is difficult for individuals to assess the added value of European integration, for themselves and for their countries (van der Eijk, Franklin, Demant and van der Brug 2007), this calculation migrated more recently from the national to the individual level, or at least to the group level (McLaren 2006). Individual attitudes towards Europe are positively correlated with the ability to personally benefit from the single market. Socio-economic conditions (in particular education level, professional skills and mobility capacity) now separate losers and winners from European integration (Tucker, Pacek, and Berinski 2002; Kriesi et al, 2008; Down and Wilson 2008).

At the same time, the Maastricht Treaty intensified the process of authority delegation to a supranational entity. The delocalization of some state prerogatives raises the question of individual loyalty and individual identification to this new polity. Multilevel governance thus brought identity issues in individual attitudes towards Europe (Marks et al 1996; Scharpf 1999; Hooghe and Marks 2004). The reallocation of loyalty and identification between local, national and European level depends primarily on how individuals consider their attachment to their country and how they define *others*: “for European proper, a key question is whether identity is always an identity ‘against’, i.e., whether it always serves to create a difference between members and non-members, and thus a boundary between who is included and who is excluded. (...) Social identity is interactional, and in collective identification the typified other is the defining point.” (Kohli 2000: 127). Therefore, the more inclusive the national identity, the stronger the support for Europe (Marks 1999).

National referendums on the Maastricht Treaty gave an indication of these shifts in public opinion, which has become more concerned about European integration in the post-Maastricht period, a change that did not remain unnoticed (Gabel 1998; Christin 2008; Binzer Hobolt

2009). The consequence of this evolution, from an academic perspective, has been a change in focus, from national opinions to individual support, as a response to this loss of permissiveness (Dalton and Eichenberg 2007; Hooghe & Marks 2007; Down and Wilson 2008). In particular, some studies point to a new category of European citizens, the “critical” ones, who are in favour of European integration but are concerned about *which Europe* is being built by their elites (Wessels 2005). Especially in the old member states, membership to the European Union is not an issue anymore. What is at stake now is the *direction* of the European project, with its policies and consequences. The values on which integration was grounded are now being put into question, and whereas the principle of democratic accountability, liberty and peace are taken for granted by European public opinions, economic and social values are much more controversial. Recent difficulties over the popular approval of the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty have reinforced this new path. Gaining public support on European questions has become, more and more, a high cost political action for elites (Hix 2005; McLaren 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2008).

In this regard, the French referendum on the Constitutional Treaty is archetypical. First, one third of those who rejected the Treaty were supportive of European integration. Second, the central axis of the campaign, and the main factor in rejection, was the social question: whether Europe was too liberal, not “social-minded” enough, and threatening the welfare state (Dalem 2005; Perrineau 2005; Perraudeau 2006; Sauger, Brouard, Grossman 2007; Binzer Hobolt 2009). These studies have underlined that social fears were the trigger for the French ‘no’. The European Union is perceived by large segments of the population as a constraining environment that challenges the French social model. Of course, the national context at that time partially explains the importance of this issue in the debate. Several reforms directly linked to social protection had been undertaken (the reform of health insurance system, of labour contracts and of employment policy), and the left was in opposition, both facts fostering the idea that social protection could no longer be taken for granted and was in fact diminishing. It appears that, in this context, the European Union is perceived by a growing number of individuals as potentially dangerous for social protection. The opposition against the Bolkestein directive, which was far from being exclusively French, is another example. The country of origin principle was the symbol of this supranational influence on a very national issue: social protection. Among governments, this policy domain has been at the centre of negotiations ever since the beginning of integration, because free movement of workers, already in 1957, was predicted to have huge effects on social protection, raising the issue of pensions, health insurance, work conditions, and the portability of social rights and benefits. However, in this domain the relevance of European integration relates mainly to the negative type of integration (Scharpf 1999) and the tools that benefit social cohesion and employment, such as the Open Method of Coordination and other instruments of normative *soft* integration, are little known to Europeans. There is no such thing as European social benefits or a common social policy; the sharing of social risks and protection is done, as it has always been, at the national level. The dynamic that led to the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France seems thus rather counter-intuitive and even irrational: of course the European Union is not *social*, because it was never meant to be so. Citizens still do link social protection and the European Union, helped by all too-frequent attempts by politicians to blame “Europe” for unpalatable policy developments, and the issue at stake here is not whether it makes sense or not, but whether this relationship will be found to exist in other countries and at other times than in France during the campaign for the Constitutional Treaty referendum, in May 2005. This question arises again in the context of the 2009 economic crisis, which might increase salience of the question for at least two reasons. First, social concerns arise much more during an acute scarcity of resources. It is especially the case when the economic situation increases pressure on the welfare system, by simultaneously reducing financial capacity for social protection and increasing the share of population that rely heavily on social protection. Second, public debates have been dominated in Europe by the supposed need for a common response of the EU members to this crisis, so that debate has focused on whether such a common response was feasible or even desirable.

## **Between Interests, Identity, and Ideology: How Does The Welfare State Fit In?**

The integration process is seen as threatening social protection, and more specifically social benefits, for a majority of European citizens, in a majority of member states (cf. Figure A1 in the Appendix). These concerns are not totally surprising given both the international context of retrenchment in European welfare states and the strategy of blame avoidance of the political elite (Scharpf and Schmidt 2000; Pierson 2001; Pierson and Castle 2005). Beyond the rhetorical argument, from a factual perspective, economic integration has been proven to have a constraining effect on national welfare state, through the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Leibfried and Pierson 1995; Leibfried and Pierson 2000; Saari and Kvist 2007).

More than that, from a theoretical perspective, connecting European integration and social protection makes sense in more than one respect. First and foremost, it is relevant because social protection is a central prerogative of the nation state and because social rights are one of the pillars of citizenship (Marshall 1949). From the cradle to the grave, social protection is the most present and direct link between the citizen and the national authority: health insurance, health care, pensions and unemployment benefits are the vectors of public regulation and redistribution in a citizen's everyday life (Rothstein 2008). Rokkan has shown the central role of social rights in the double dynamic of differentiation/consolidation during the process of nation building (Rokkan 1999). The institutionalized form of *social sharing* is vital for the building of a community, and is therefore of major importance for the state-citizen relationship. By formalizing the sharing of social risks and protection, the state creates a double bond, with individuals (an economic dependence) but also among them (a shared feeling of collective belonging) (Bartolini 2005; Ferrera 2005). Through direct and indirect pressures, the building of a European common market challenges national social boundaries, redistribution processes and state authority in a domain that is central for national identity and cohesion.

From an institutional point of view, European integration reduces the political options of national welfare states, but, even more important, it establishes a new level of decision-making to be held responsible for of the reconfiguration and retrenchment of welfare states. "What European integration challenges is not only a purely economic redistribution process, but something at the core of national identity, loyalty to the state and political attitudes" (Derks 2005:8). Second, following Rokkan's definition of welfare states as societal systems (Rokkan 1999; Lewis 2004; Bartolini 2004; Clarke 2004), the welfare state is a structuring agent, which influences individual interests and attitudes through redistribution. The position each individual occupies in the system (the personal costs and benefits of the welfare regime) structures individual opinion and in particular opinion about state and politics (Rothstein and Steinmo 2002; Kumlin 2002). It is thus likely that the welfare state structures attitudes towards European integration to some extent, as it structures other political attitudes. Finally, social protection appears entirely relevant when it comes to specific support for Europe. Indeed, the role of the state in protecting its citizens, national solidarity and redistribution are core values of the modern system of political values and cleavages (Rokkan 1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that individuals take this dimension into account when they evaluate the actions of the European Union and the values on which it is grounded. For these reasons, the socio-economic cleavage might be the most promising possibility for a politicization of the European issue (Bartolini 2006; Hix 2006; Ray 2004; Brinegar and Jolly, 2004).

This structuring role has been understudied in the research field of public opinion about Europe. The importance of education, occupation and income in attitudes towards Europe has been underlined as well as the influence of social expenditure on national public opinion (Gabel 1998; Belot 2002; Dalton and Eichenberg 2007; Hooghe, Huo and Marks 2007) but the gap between the two levels of analysis has not yet been fully bridged. Likewise, the challenging, and even threatening, dimension of integration for European welfare states and national provision of social protection has been investigated exclusively from an institutional perspective (Bartolini 2005; Ferrera 2005), and the implications of such phenomena for

individual support has been generally left aside, with the exception of a few studies (Brinegar *et al.* 2004; Brinegar and Jolly 2005; Ray 2004; McLaren 2006). From a slightly different perspective, the political allegiance mechanism, from de Vries and Kersbergen, provides a bridge between utilitarian and identity theories and a framework in which the welfare state problematic fits very well. Support for Europe is low when citizens see the EU as preventing their national elites from providing them with the security and well-being they are entitled to expect (de Vries and Kersbergen 2007: 313). More specifically, this analysis shows the negative impact of both constraining membership (EMU) and feelings of economic anxiety on support for Europe. I however argue that this logic might not exclusively rely on economic considerations, but that welfare issues are key in understanding this mechanism. The EMU has a clear impact on national social protection in terms of public deficit restrictions, labour wages and common good practices. It goes beyond mechanical financial logic, and deals with the organization of national solidarity and what this concept means EU-wide. The logic has to be taken one step further to empirically test if the EU is seen as endangering the national social model (and thus altering a fundamental bond between citizens and their national state). We can do so by slightly reformulating the argument as follows: support for Europe is expected to be low when individuals perceive the EU as threatening/reducing the ability of their governments to provide social security through the operation of their welfare states.

Two limits from past studies have to be overcome (Ray 2005; Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt 2004; Brinegar and Jolly 2005). First, the operationalization of the welfare state relies on a rigid categorization that is not precise enough to account for the complexity of welfare regimes. A single categorical variable or the only share of social protection in GDP does not account for the complexity and the variety of the object itself. Moreover, this kind of three-position index (universalist, corporatist, and residual welfare states) does not deal at all with the specificities of familialist welfare regimes and is not adapted to an analysis of the whole EU either, as the post-communist countries are excluded. The welfare state, as a structural variable, deserves further investigation. The ranking of welfare regimes, from the most redistributive to the least is not that straightforward and needs to take into account other indicators, such as private-public arrangements, the degree of de-commodification of the care function and the efficacy of the regime.

With regards to the individual level, the role that individual attitudes toward the welfare state might have on support for Europe has not yet been extensively studied (Brinegar *et al.* 2004). The common strategy of including the type of welfare state or varieties of capitalism acknowledges a well-known link between public opinion and the welfare state. Nevertheless, it seems quite reductive to implicitly assume that citizens are not able to have, first, a general opinion on social protection, and second, a specific opinion on their national regime, the way it works and its political and social consequences. If the question, with which people are concerned, is now “what Europe are we building?”, then social protection and redistributive issues have to be considered when we investigate support for Europe. Although the welfare state was acknowledged to have an impact on the way European matters are politicized (Ray 2004), it has not been assessed yet to what extent the role of the state and the degree of redistribution matters when it comes to defining a common European project in citizens’ minds. Numerous works have shown that welfare state influences individual positions by creating individual dependence on the state and such a politically sensitive topic should be investigated at the individual level, as well as at the societal level, to take into account all possible effects, whether they are aggregated or depend on one’s professional situation, financial situation or ideology. The next step is thus to provide a relevant theoretical framework to test the influence of specific opinions towards the welfare state on support for European integration and to empirically test this relationship.

## Hypotheses

My first set of hypotheses investigates the relationship between welfare and European integration at the individual level. I state that, in addition to the traditional explanatory variables of support for Europe, welfare issues play a role in the equation. Starting from a rational perspective, I expect first that the individuals who are the most vulnerable and dependent on welfare provision (i.e. people who do not get their main income from current employment, so who are retired, unemployed or not working because of illness) will have more fears regarding European integration and its influence on the national welfare regime (*hypothesis 1a*). Indeed, the more dependent on national redistribution one is, the more risky supranational convergence and delegation of power might seem; in other words, the higher the reluctance to see any change regarding the welfare regime. Second, I expect specific attitudes toward the welfare state to have an effect on individual support for Europe. When citizens are not satisfied with their own welfare state, supporting Europe could be an *exit* strategy (Hirschmann 1970; Rokkan 1977) and might represent a hope for improvement. Therefore, the less satisfied with national regime one is, the higher one's level of support (*hypothesis 1b*). At the same time, the stronger the faith in the national social model, especially when it has a strong identity dimension, the lower the support for any European action in this domain, and the lower the support for European integration in general, if the process is perceived as endangering this national model. Finally, I expect individuals to vary their support according to their ideological preferences on general welfare issues. I hold that social protection is a dimension that people take into account when assessing their position on European issues, and that these attitudes are based on a comparison between what the European Union might be thought to represent regarding social protection, and what the individuals' values are on that question. Therefore, the bigger the misfit between what the European Union represents for citizens on welfare issues and what they want, the lower the support (*hypothesis 1c*).

My second set of hypotheses deals with the welfare state as a contextual variable. Brinegar et al. (2004) ask the question in terms of convergence: if one lives in a regime which is close to the European mean (regarding redistribution), integration and its influence on national welfare regime is not seen as a threat. On the contrary, the further one's country is from this mean, the bigger the threat, whether it is for more or for less redistribution. What is central here is the reluctance to change. This approach in terms of mean can be fruitful, but it requires us to first assess which regime stands as the European mean, and more importantly, when do citizens from a given country consider themselves as being at the EU average regarding social protection. Furthermore, the assumption that the corporatist regime stands at the European average might have been correct before the two last enlargements, but it is not the case anymore: the twelve new member states introduced far more heterogeneity regarding social protection. My hypothesis is built on the notion of convergence as well, but instead of using the notion of convergence on the mean, I rely on the hypothesis of welfare values universality, which states that social protection is generally seen as positive by citizens (Oorschot, Opielka, Pfau-Effinger 2008). I hold first that the more extensive and the more efficient the national welfare regime is, the less supportive of European integration individuals are. Monetary integration and the liberalization of capital markets would lead to a lowering of taxation levels and potentially to a race-to-the-bottom regarding social protection standards. Then, the higher the protection offered by the national welfare state, the stronger the fears and the greater the reluctance regarding European integration. On the contrary, normative integration in terms of sustainability of public expenditures and bureaucracy, together with substantial financial help through accession and structural funds could be seen as a chance to improve the welfare regime and to raise social protection standards. So, the lower the protection offered at the national level, the more public opinion will support European integration. According to this hypothesis,

I expect the support for Europe to be negatively correlated to the efficacy of the welfare regime in reducing poverty risk by social transfer (*hypothesis 2*).<sup>4</sup>

My third set of hypotheses relates to the salience of welfare and economic issues in national public spheres. Here, salience is understood as a strong focus in public debate, indicated, for instance, by coverage in media and political discourse of issues related to social protection, such as welfare regime reform, the vulnerability of the pensions system due to population ageing, as well as when bad economic conditions increase pressure on the system. In these cases, it is expected that such high salience will increase the impact of welfare issues on support for Europe, and even alter the relationship, depending on how the question is framed by political elites and media. The 2009 economic crisis, with the debate about common EU response, provides a very good opportunity to measure this effect. Furthermore, the European Parliament elections guarantee some coverage of EU issues across countries, thus providing for more possibilities to document possible links between social protection and European integration. I hold that, at the time of the 2009 European Parliament elections, the more salient were social protection and economic issues, the stronger the relationship between welfare issues and features on one hand, and support for European integration, on the other (*hypothesis 3*).

*Table 1: Hypotheses*

MICRO	1a	The higher the dependence on the welfare system, the lower the support for Europe;
	1b	The better the opinion regarding the national welfare state, the lower the support for Europe;
	1c	The larger the misfit between what the EU represents for citizens (on welfare issue), and their ideological preferences, the lower the support for Europe;
MACRO	2	The higher the efficacy of a welfare regime in protecting its citizens, the lower the support for Europe;
	3	The higher the salience of welfare issues, the stronger the effect of dependence (H1a), welfare attitudes (H1b and H1c), and welfare regime on support for Europe.

### **Design of the Study: Data, Method, Variables**

In order to test the micro-level hypotheses on welfare attitudes, I use the Eurobarometer 71.3, from Spring 2009.<sup>5</sup> It is the most recent dataset with extensive questions on both attitudes towards Europe and welfare issues. It includes several variables on attitudes towards the national welfare regime in general, and the pensions system in particular.<sup>6</sup> Macro-level hypotheses related to welfare features are tested with data from the Eurostat database. The macro-level hypothesis related to issue salience is tested using data from the 2009 European Election Media Study that provides information about health care and economy related media

<sup>4</sup> In future research, the strength of this hypothesis will have to be tested depending on the actual level of social protection. One would expect that, in welfare regime with a high level of efficacy, very dependent individuals would be less likely to support European integration than their counterparts in less efficient regimes, as they have less to gain (and therefore would be expected to be more reluctant to change).

<sup>5</sup> Eurobarometer 71.3: Globalization, Personal Values and Priorities, European Identity, Future of the European Union, Social Problems and Welfare, and European Elections, June-July, 2009, Gesis archive #ZA4973.

<sup>6</sup> Though the question on feeling anxious about the pension system has been asked in a couple of other Eurobarometer, it is not the case for the other welfare-related questions. Thus, the scarcity of such measures of attitudes towards social protection does not allow for an over-time analysis.

content in the twenty-seven EU countries during the European election campaign.<sup>7</sup> The fieldwork of the Eurobarometer was conducted immediately after that of the media study (the former ran from the 12<sup>th</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, depending on countries, to the end of June or the beginning of July; the latter ran from the 14<sup>th</sup> or the 17<sup>th</sup> of May to the 4<sup>th</sup> or the 7<sup>th</sup> of June), so the two datasets are compatible with one another. Not using the pre-linked individual data from the EES raises only one big issue: it is not possible to control for individual media consumption (for instance how often the respondents watch or read news), as this variable is not included in the Eurobarometer. However, the aim of this chapter is not to analyze a direct effect of media content on support for Europe, or to explain the framing mechanism as such. Media data here are used as a proxy to account for the salience of economic and welfare issues in national public spheres.<sup>8</sup>

In order to account for the hierarchical nature of my hypotheses (individuals are assumed to be nested in national welfare regimes and more generally in a national context, while potentially showing heterogeneity in their personal attitudes towards the welfare regime), I use multilevel modelling with random intercepts and random slopes (Steenbergen and Jones 2002).<sup>9</sup>

### ***The Dependent Variable: An Index Of Support For Europe***

The Eurobarometer provides numerous questions on various aspects of individual attitudes towards Europe but no variable has been directly used as a general indicator on a regular basis in the literature. Some efforts have already been devoted to this issue and strategies vary between data reduction and the use of variables as they are given in datasets (Kopecky and Mudde 2002; Ray 2004; Brinegar and Jolly 2004; Scheuer 2005; McLaren 2006; Krouwel and Abts 2007). The present study does not intend to contribute specifically to this debate but rather seeks a measure of general support that enables comparison across studies and across time (i.e., that does not focus only on one aspect of attitudes towards Europe, such as the image of the EU, or the benefit from membership). It was not possible to compute the current evaluation of European integration index (Ray 2004) or the “overall European integration view” (Brinegar and Jolly 2004) as the question on efforts made towards unification and the ones on speed of unification were not included in the Eurobarometer 71.3. I thus relied on item-response theory to assess the best dependent variable to use based on the more widely spread variables on EU support. Most of the variables are ordinal or dichotomous, for this reason Mokken scaling appears to be the most appropriate method, as it accounts for the difference of items in popularity (van Schuur 2003; van der Eijk 2007). The four more general measures of support are included, together with the four available measures of trust in the EU.<sup>10</sup> Five of them form a very homogeneous scale (H coefficient = 0,64), meaning that they capture the same latent trait,

<sup>7</sup> It was not possible to use the 2009 European Election Voter study because it does not permit a full operationalization of my micro-level hypotheses. The set of questions on responsibility allocation and evaluation of health care and economic conditions may be very useful in this context but they are not available in the pre-release dataset.

<sup>8</sup> As a precaution, the effect of news consumption on the relationship between salience issues and support for Europe was tested, using the 2009 voter and media studies. The interaction term was significant in none of the models (results available on request) (in these analyses, the dependent variable was the unification index available in the 2009 EES study).

<sup>9</sup> Refusal and “don’t know” values were originally coded as missing in order to be imputed, using multiple imputation, to have a final dataset of 26805 cases (King 2001, Raghunathan 2004). Only the 25 observations that were missing on the multinomial occupation variable were definitely excluded, as the variable had too many values and prevented the imputation process. However, due to a technical problem, the imputed dataset was not ready in time for the present version. For this reason the average sample is here 14000 cases and results should be considered with caution. The analysis will be replicated in near future to benefit from the total sample.

<sup>10</sup> Opinion on membership, opinion on benefit from membership, image of the EU, opinion on how things are going at the EU level, trust in the European Union, trust in the European Commission, in the Council of the EU and in the European Central Bank. Wording details are in table 1A in appendix.

which can be labelled “general support for Europe”. Out of this single dimension an index is created and used, hereafter as dependent variable.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Independent Variables***

To test the hypothesis 1a on dependence, I rely on occupation retired and unemployed status to test for a specific lack of support from the ones that are the most dependent on welfare provision.<sup>12</sup> As an alternative for individual and family income indicator (not available in the dataset), I specified an indicator of vulnerability, for those who declare not being able to plan their household’s financial future, as financial insecurity increases the likelihood of having to rely on social protection. To test hypothesis H1b, I used three measures of specific opinion on national welfare regime: whether one thinks that national social welfare system provides enough coverage (positive evaluation about the amount of protection), whether one thinks that the system is too expensive (evaluation of its cost), and a measure of anxiety about pensions’ future, as a proxy for the evaluation of system sustainability. The hypothesis 1c about value misfit between citizens and the European project is operationalized with five variables. As there is no direct measure of whether a respondent is in favour or against social protection and extensive welfare state, I used proxies to measure their positions on the topic. Two questions capture two main values of the left-right dimension: state interventionism (in all domains), and free economic competition. I assume that respondents who are strongly attached to social protection tend to be more in favour of state interventionism and against free economic competition. To operationalize a possible misfit between these individual values and what individuals anticipate from the European project, I use two measures: whether they associate the European Union and the concept of social protection, and their evaluation of the EU in the domain of social rights.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding higher-level variables, hypothesis 2 (welfare regime) is operationalized with a measure of protection efficacy. It measures whether the welfare regime (understood as a whole, from a structural and financial point of view) is efficient at protecting its citizens from poverty. It is calculated as a ratio between the percentage of the population at risk of poverty before and after social transfer. Pressures on public deficit and therefore indirect pressures on social expenditures are strongly related to economic and monetary integration. Therefore I included as well a higher-level control variable for eurozone (coded 1 when respondent’s country is a member of the eurozone). Finally, issue salience (hypothesis 3) is measured by media content variables, from the 2009 EES media study. From the original (country-level) dataset, three variables are created, counting 1 for each topic related to social protection, economic conditions, and unemployment, respectively (whether it was the first, second, or third topic of the story); therefore, the higher the value, the more visible the issue was in national media. (Details about variables in tables A1 and A2 in the Appendix)

<sup>11</sup> This index of support was created out of the following variables: opinion on membership, the opinion on benefit from membership, the image of the EU, trust in European Parliament and in the European Commission. For technical reason, the index was created using factor analysis, all five items score on a same factor with an eigenvalue of 3.42, that capture 69% of the variance in average (pooled dataset), with only two border cases (Slovenia and Luxembourg for which the first factor only capture 45 and 50% of the variance) (results available on request).

<sup>12</sup> I distinguished “being retired or not able to work because of illness” and “being unemployed”. As control variables, I added occupation categories for the rest of the sample, with the following dichotomous variables: self-employed, professional/manager, employed, manual worker, house person, student (details of all variables are displayed in table A2 in appendix).

<sup>13</sup> Individual control variables are: age (continuous measure, in years), gender (dichotomous variable, 1=male, 0=female), ideology (10-point self-positioning scale, used as a continuous variable), education (age when education was completed, continuous measure, in years).

## Results

The three individual-level hypotheses are tested in a single model, together with the higher-level one about welfare regime, as they are not exclusive. The implications of these results are discussed in more details in the next session, but Table 2 already shows that welfare attitudes and dependence on welfare regime have a significant impact on support for Europe that holds when controlling for traditional socio-demographic characteristics and country. This model explains more than a third of the variance (out of these 32%, about two thirds are due to the variables of interest here, the remaining third being due to controls and country clustering).<sup>14</sup>

Table 2: The impact of welfare (dependence, attitudes, regime) on support for European integration.

<b>MODEL 1 – The impact of welfare on support for European integration</b>	
Micro level predictors	
<i>*H1a: Dependence on welfare regime</i>	
Unemployed	-0.086(0.028)***
Retired or illness	-0.071(0.023)***
Insecurity (household financial situation)	-0.138(0.017)***
<i>*H1b: specific welfare attitudes</i>	
Welfare system provides enough coverage	0.184(0.027)***
Welfare system is too expensive	-0.015(0.017)
Is anxious about pensions' future	-0.202(0.017)***
<i>*H1c: general welfare attitudes</i>	
Values: State intervenes too much	-0.181(0.015)***
Values: In favour of free economic competition	0.211(0.017)***
EU performance on social rights	0.154(0.004)***
Evaluation: The EU means social protection	0.297(0.022)***
Macro-level predictors	
<i>*H2: Welfare regime</i>	
Welfare regime efficacy	-0.290(0.131)**
<i>*Controls</i>	
Ideology	0.012(0.003)***
Education	0.017(0.002)***
Male	0.028(0.014)*
Age	-0.002(0.001)***
Euro zone	0.028(0.083)
Constant	-0.838(0.117)***
N	13002
Number of groups	27
Log-Likelihood	-15812.49
AIC	31658.98
BIC	31786.02
R <sup>2</sup> (lower and higher level together)	0,32
Standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1	

<sup>14</sup> I thank Lorenzo De Sio very much for his help and very useful Stata command (mlrsq) used here in the calculation of R<sup>2</sup> for multilevel models.

First of all, at the macro level, this first model provides significant evidence in favour of hypothesis 2 (the negative effect of welfare regime efficacy). Respondents from regimes with a high level of poverty reduction are much less supportive of European integration (the effect of welfare efficacy is -0.290, and the dependent variable ranges from -2.08 to +1.17) than respondents from less protective regimes.

Table 3: The impact of issue salience in national public spheres on support for European integration.

Issue salience	MODEL 2	MODEL 3
	Social protection	Unemployment
Micro level predictors		
<i>*H1a: Dependence on welfare regime</i>		
Unemployed	-0.138(0.054)**	-0.079(0.045)*
Retired or illness	-0.070(0.023)***	-0.071(0.023)***
Insecurity (household financial situation)	-0.138(0.017)***	-0.137(0.017)***
<i>*H1b: specific welfare attitudes</i>		
Welfare system provides enough coverage	0.183(0.028)***	0.179(0.028)***
Welfare system is too expensive	-0.013(0.017)	-0.013(0.018)
Anxiety about pensions' future	-0.201(0.022)***	-0.201(0.022)***
<i>*H1c: general welfare attitudes</i>		
Values: State intervenes too much	-0.181(0.015)***	-0.181(0.015)***
Values: In favour of free economic competition	0.211(0.017)***	0.211(0.017)***
The EU means social protection	0.154(0.004)***	0.154(0.004)***
Evaluation : EU performance on social rights	0.297(0.022)***	0.298(0.022)***
Macro-level predictors		
<i>*H3: issue salience</i>		
Social protection	0.299(0.189)	
Social protection*unemployed	0.158(0.141)	
Unemployment		0.423(0.196)**
Unemployment*unemployed		-0.024(0.114)
Controls		
Ideology	0.012(0.003)***	0.012(0.003)***
Education	0.017(0.002)***	0.017(0.002)***
Male	0.027(0.014)*	0.0270(0.014)*
Age	-0.002(0.001)***	-0.002(0.001)***
Euro zone	0.059(0.085)	-0.022(0.091)
Constant	-1.103(0.109)***	-1.082(0.010)***
N	13002	13002
Number of groups	27	27
Log-Likelihood	-15813.34	-15813.19
AIC	31684.69	31684.38
BIC	31901.4	31901.09
R <sup>2</sup> (lower and higher level together)	0,32	0,32

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

The first hypothesis is confirmed: individuals that are directly dependent on welfare regime (either because they are unemployed, retired, or not able to work because of illness) are less supportive of European integration than the rest of the population. If this difference is significant, the effect is very weak compared to welfare attitudes and values (being unemployed or retired decreases support for Europe by 0.089 and 0.071, respectively). Besides, in the case of unemployed people, the lack of support could be due to resentment for the EU regarding changes in labour market and economic conditions, more than fears about social benefits. On the contrary, in the case of the “retired/illness” variable, the effect here is likely to be directly linked to social protection, more than just to age, as age is controlled for. This is also the reason for having included a measure of financial insecurity (which is correlated to being unemployed, but not exclusively): the effect of this variable is twice as great and consolidates evidence in favour of hypothesis 1a. Insecurity decreases support for Europe.

Aside from this interest-based logic, I consider now the evaluation of the welfare regime. I hold, in hypothesis H1b, that if one is satisfied with this regime, one will not seek an exit and thus will be less likely to support European integration. First, satisfaction with the welfare regime (operationalized here in terms of coverage) does have an effect, but not the expected one. Positive evaluation of welfare regime increases support for Europe. In line with that, negative evaluation (regime costs too much) does not have any positive impact on support. In fact, anxiety about regime sustainability (in the specific case of pensions) has a strong, significant, negative impact. People who are satisfied with the protection they receive at home, and who are not particularly anxious about the future of the system, are more supportive of European integration. In light of these results, the exit hypothesis (H1b) is not confirmed. When people are dissatisfied with, or at least worried for, their welfare regime, they are less supportive of Europe. We cannot exclude the possibility that this effect hides a more simple “support for government” effect: people feel insecure and dissatisfied with their national government and therefore project this negative opinion on any other authority, in that case the European level. Settling this question is easy: controlling for support for government would be enough. Unfortunately, this variable is not included in the Eurobarometer dataset.

Another way is to test the effect of general welfare attitudes independently of national regimes evaluation. The question here is: do individuals take into account values of social solidarity when they form their opinion on Europe, and, when these values are core values, do individuals evaluate the EU on this issue? Hypothesis H1c conditions support for Europe to a value-fit. The dependence and satisfaction hypotheses might appear too mechanical to some extent. Hypothesis 1c brings in political values. The two first variables (opinion on state interventionism and on free economic competition) indirectly show that integration is first of all visible through its economic dimension (the single market): individuals who are in favour of free economic competition are more strongly supportive of Europe. But the de-regulative dimension of the EU is not captured here, as individuals against state interventionism express lower support. To narrow down these logics, I included two direct references to both social protection and the EU (evaluation of the EU performance on social rights, and does the EU mean social protection). This permits a test for potential direct exit logic (when one associates the EU with social protection or considers its action in this domain). Individuals do associate the EU and social protection in some cases, and doing so has a strong positive effect on support (+0.297). Similarly, the better one perceives EU performance on social rights, the higher one’s support for European integration.

Finally, Table 3 displays the models testing the salience hypothesis (H3). The salience measures have been rescaled to be comparable: they range from 0 to 1, 0 being the minimum value found, 1 being the maximum. I assumed that high salience in media of, respectively, social protection and unemployment, might increase the negative effect of welfare dependence on support for Europe. Figures 1 and 2 graphically display the marginal effect of being unemployed on support for Europe, as salience changes. The main conclusion here is that the

salience of social protection issues and unemployment have a very limited effects on the relationship between dependence and support for Europe.

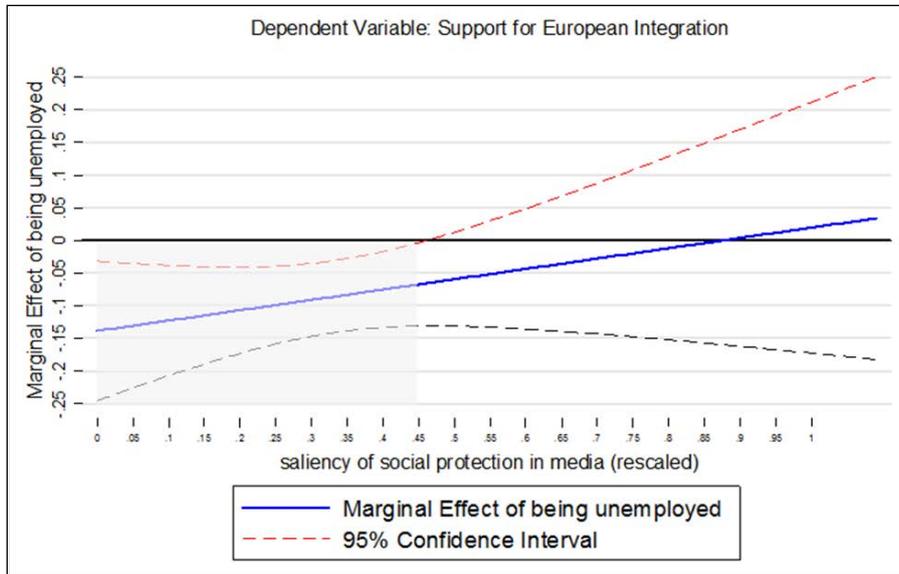


Figure 1: Marginal Effect of Being Unemployed on Support for Europe as Salience of Social Protection Changes.

There is a significant effect on the marginal effect of being unemployed only when salience ranges from 0 to .45 (so the first half of the scale) in the case of social protection issues, and from 0.07 to 0.64 in the case of unemployment (these areas are in grey on the

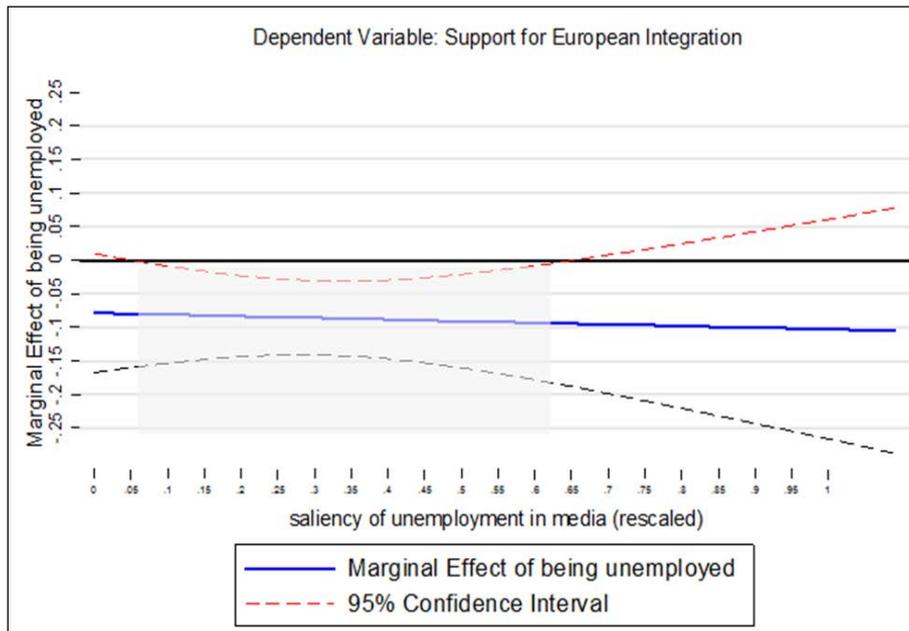


Figure 2: Marginal Effect of Being Unemployed on Support for Europe as Salience of Unemployment Changes.

graphs).<sup>15</sup> The effect of unemployment salience in media is as expected: when salience increases, the negative effect of being unemployed for support for Europe increases. However, this increase is very limited (the marginal effect increases from -0.07 to -0.09), one could say almost nonexistent. The effect of social protection salience is stronger (although still very weak as regard to the scale of the dependent variable): in that case, the marginal effect of being unemployed decreases from -0.14 to -0.04. This effect is the contrary of what was expected: a higher salience of social protection issues decreases the negative effect of being unemployed. The reason could be that the measure does not control for the tone of news stories and positive coverage of social protection which might affect individual anxiety regarding unemployment.

## **Discussion**

First of all, analysis showed an aggregate effect of welfare regimes on support for Europe. The greater the regime's efficacy in reducing poverty risks for its citizens, the lower the support for European integration. When the national regime works well at reducing the risk of poverty, there is no space for improvement through European integration. This process might even be seen as threatening the national welfare state, through delegation of competences and indirect pressures on social benefits and status quo. By contrast, when the welfare regime performs poorly, integration might be seen as a path of improvement, either towards higher standards of social protection or towards more efficiency and sustainability.

The European Union was never thought to be a substitute for national (or local) social protection, but the strong economic inter-dependence that the Single market and monetary union had induced opens the door to a full range of potential social consequences. The aim of the present study was neither to investigate what these consequences are, whether they are positive or negative for welfare state, nor to ask if they are even likely. The question was whether social protection played a role in support for Europe, whether integration was perceived as beneficial or threatening for social protection, and whether individuals even framed the question in these terms. It appears that national context (the type of welfare regime citizens are in) indeed shapes individual attitudes towards Europe to some extent. The efficacy in reducing poverty risk is not the only and exclusive way to describe welfare regimes and it surely has to be complemented with more detailed indicators, such as the coverage rate and the share between private and public provision. These measures will have to be detailed by type of social risks (unemployment, illness and ageing are the main ones), as situations drastically differ from one program to another. Nevertheless, this first measure enables me to point at a strong contextual effect on support for Europe. This effect is particularly strong for two categories of persons. First, citizens who are strongly dependent on social provision (whether they are unemployed, unable to work or retired) are less supportive of Europe than working individuals across countries. From a contextual point of view, no important effect of issue salience was found. There is an effect of social protection and unemployment salience in the media, but extremely weak. The operationalization of public debate on social protection and economic situation has to be improved, to better capture potential framing effects. Two additional measures could be included in further analysis: a macro-level variable on the tone of news stories and a micro-level measure of individual media exposure.

Having said that, one should not assume that neither the aggregate performance in social protection nor public debate on social protection are enough to explain individuals relation to their welfare regime, and it is essential to introduce in the equation three parameters: individual evaluation of national welfare regimes, political values (especially the ones related to social protection and solidarity), and evaluation/perception of the European Union on these issues.

<sup>15</sup> The marginal effect of being unemployed on support for Europe is statistically significant when both confidence intervals (here displayed as dashed lines) are below or above the zero line (Brambor, Clark, Golder 2006).

The exit logic is not confirmed by the analysis: dissatisfaction with the national regime does not increase support for Europe, nor does satisfaction decrease it. On the contrary, anxiety about national systems strongly decreases support. In this specific case, the higher the anxiety for pensions in the future, the lower the support for Europe, and this is regardless of the objective efficiency of the welfare regime (there is no positive interaction effect with low efficiency regimes)<sup>16</sup>. There is a link between regime evaluation and support for Europe, but it is not the one that was first thought. The question has to be reformulated in terms of a threatening environment: it seems that when citizens are confident in their own welfare state, attitudes towards integration are independent from social protection issues, whereas the same integration process appears negative and threatening when the regime is considered to be failing. That is not to say that individuals rely exclusively on the European Union to deal with this issue, or that they understand the full implications of integration for the restructuring of welfare states. But it proves that welfare issues and European issues are not thought of as being independent. The anxiety for pensions' future might also have an influence on support only because anxiety produces negative opinion on numerous objects, from government to European Union. However, when measures of this general level of pessimism and dissatisfaction are added (expectations for national and personal situation), anxiety for pensions' future is still significant.<sup>17</sup> Keeping these cautions in mind, and without inferring any direction in this causal relationship, this effect indicates nevertheless that individuals are likely to link their anxiety regarding the welfare system to their opinion on integration.

Finally, the analysis points out an ideological logic: to associate the European Union with social protection and to positively evaluate its action on social rights strongly increases support. In that case, the EU is likely to appear as an extra layer of social protection and/or as an opportunity to strengthen national social protection standards. It is not clear yet if citizens associate the European Union with social protection on the basis of its action, or on the basis of their beliefs about European project. Further investigation is thus needed on how they allocate responsibility for changes in social protection (between local, national and European levels), what orientation they want for the integration process, and whether this logic could lead to further politicization of the European issue - in particular, whether it was translated into an identifiable electoral behaviour during the last European elections.

To conclude, further operationalization of contextual effects is needed, but it is already possible to state, from the present results, that welfare regimes and welfare issues do have an impact on individual support for Europe. Concerns about the welfare state as a national resource exist and have a significant negative effect on individual support for Europe. This study was not intended to investigate whether individuals are fully aware of the implications and consequences of integration for their national welfare states. However, it shows that even negative opinion towards national welfare regimes (or at least anxiety) negatively influences individual support for Europe. Two ideas of Europe are in competition here. On the one hand, the EU can be seen as an economic environment that threatens an already challenged welfare state. The European Union is then perceived as an external condition that increases the difficulties of national welfare regimes, or as responsible for these very difficulties. On the other hand, some segments of the European population do positively associate the European Union with social protection. In this case, individuals seem to go beyond the traditional utilitarian and identity logics to condition their support for integration to a value fit, thus providing us with evidence of a politicization of the European issue.

<sup>16</sup> Results not shown here; available on request.

<sup>17</sup> Results not shown here. Adding the support for government might have been a complementary test, but the question was not available.

## Appendix

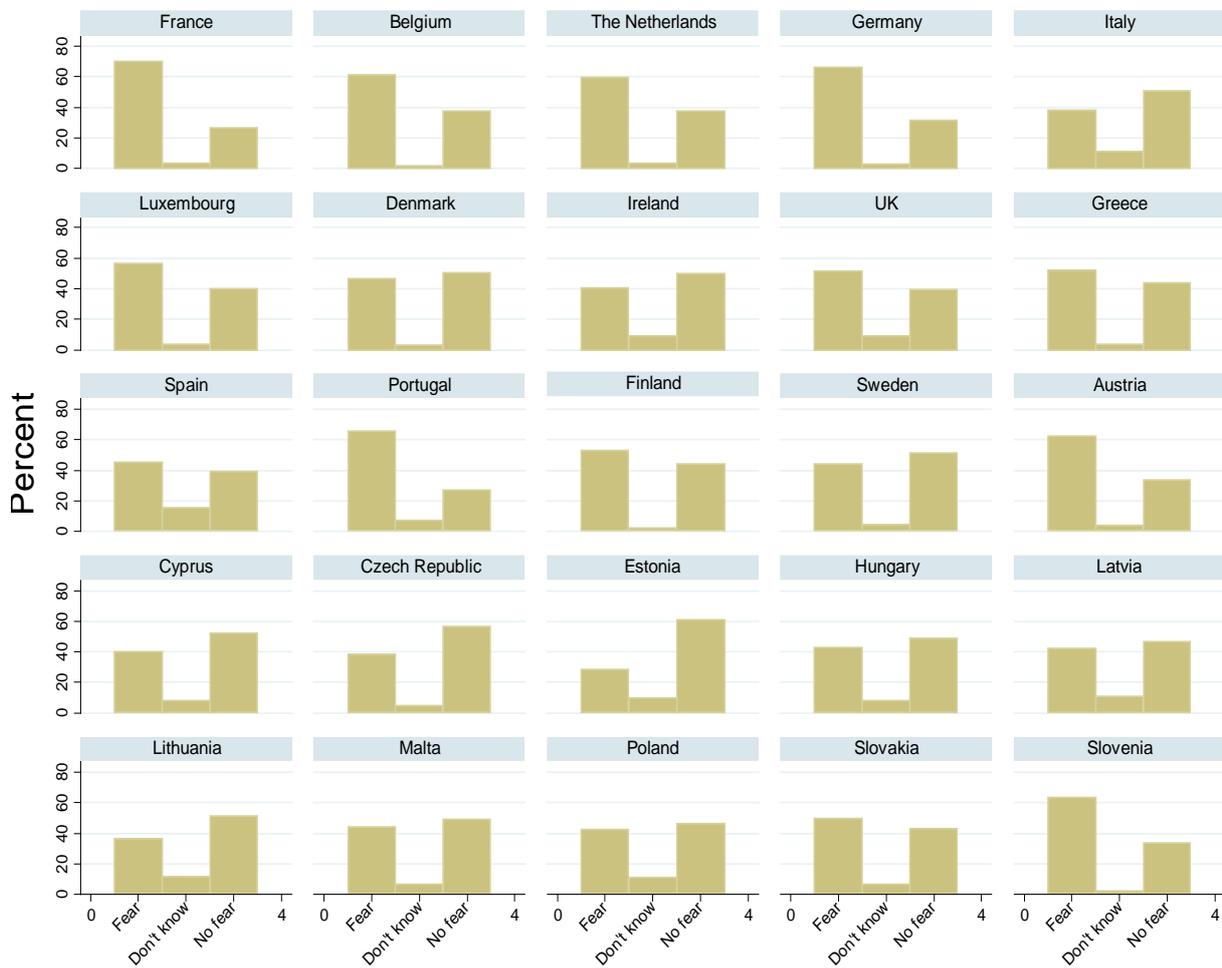


Figure A1: Fear for social benefits by country (Eurobarometer 64.2).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Eurobarometer 64.2: The European Constitution, Globalization, Energy Resources, and Agricultural Policy, October-November 2005, ICPSR dataset #4580.

Exact wording is “Some people may have fears about the building of Europe, the European Union. Here is a list of things which some people say they are afraid of. For each one, please tell me if you, personally, are currently afraid of it, or not? The loss of social benefits” (Question QA18\_8)

Table A1: Summary of variables.

Variable	Description
<b>Support</b>	Factor score "General support for European integration" created out of variable QA6A, QA7A, QA10, QA14_1 and QA14_2, centred. The higher the score, the higher respondent's support for European integration
<b>Opinion on the EU membership</b>	"Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is...? A good thing (1), a bad thing (2), neither good nor bad (3)." Recoded as : A good thing (1), a bad thing (-1), neither good nor bad (0)
<b>Benefit from EU membership</b>	"Taking everything into account, would you say that (OUR COUNTRY) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union? Benefited (1), not benefited (2)." Recoded as: Benefited (1), not benefited (0)
<b>Image of the EU</b>	"In general, does the European Union conjure up for you a very positive (1), fairly positive (2), neutral (3), fairly negative (4) or very negative image (5), don't know?" Recoded as: very positive (2), fairly positive (1), neutral(0), fairly negative(-1) or very negative image (-2)
<b>General trust in the EU</b>	" For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it (1) or tend not to trust it (0)." The European Union
<b>Trust in the European Parliament</b>	"For each of the following European bodies, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it." The European Parliament
<b>Trust in the European Commission</b>	The European Commission
<b>Unemployed</b>	1= being unemployed
<b>Retired or illness</b>	1= being retired or not working because of illness
<b>Insecurity (household financial situation)</b>	1="your current situation does not allow you to plan" (Household situation for planning for the future)
<b>Welfare system provides enough coverage</b>	1= "our social welfare system provides enough coverage" applies fairly well
<b>Welfare system is too expensive</b>	1=the statement "our social welfare system is too expensive" applies fairly well
<b>Anxiety about pensions' future</b>	1=is not very or not at all confident about pensions' future
<b>Values: State intervenes too much</b>	1=agrees with the statement "state intervenes too much"
<b>Values: In favour of free economic competition</b>	1=agrees with the statement "free economic competition is a good thing"
<b>The EU means social protection</b>	the EU meaning: 1= mentioned "social protection"
<b>EU performance on social rights</b>	Opinion on EU performance on social rights, from 1"not at all satisfactory" to 9
<b>Ideology</b>	Self positioning on the left-right scale (from 1 to "left" to 10 "right")
<b>Education</b>	Age when finished education (in years)
<b>Male</b>	Gender: 1=male
<b>Age</b>	Age (in years)
<b>Eurozone</b>	Member of the Eurozone
<b>Topic : social protection</b>	Number of topics related to social protection in general (this category includes topic about health care, national health care policy, welfare state, pensions, child care, nursing care, and social housing) (in media: news paper or television)
<b>Topic : economic conditions</b>	Number of topics related to economic conditions (in media: news paper or television)
<b>Topic: unemployment</b>	Number of topics related to unemployment (in media: news paper or television)

Table A2: Summary of variables (Table A1 continued).

Variable	Type	Original variable	Source	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Support</b>	Continuous			19373	0	1	-2.08	1.17
<b>Opinion on the EU membership</b>	Ordinal	QA6A	EB 71.3	25861	-	-	-1	1
<b>Benefit from EU membership</b>	Dichotomous	QA7A	EB 71.3	23819	-	-	0	1
<b>Image of the EU</b>	Continuous	QA10	EB 71.3	26208	.33	.89	-2	2
<b>General trust in the EU</b>	Dichotomous	QA9_5	EB 71.3	23909	-	-	0	1
<b>Trust in the European Parliament</b>	Dichotomous	QA14_1	EB 71.3	23005	-	-	0	1
<b>Trust in the European Commission</b>	Dichotomous	QA14_2	EB 71.3	21608		-	0	1
<b>Unemployed</b>	Dichotomous	C14	EB 71.3	26805	-	-	0	1
<b>Retired or illness</b>	Dichotomous	C14	EB 71.3	26805	-	-	0	1
<b>Insecurity (household financial situation)</b>	Dichotomous	QJ6	EB 71.3	25953	-	-	0	1
<b>Welfare system provides enough coverage</b>	Dichotomous	QJA1_1	EB 71.3	25319	-	-	0	1
<b>Welfare system is too expensive</b>	Dichotomous	QJA1_3	EB 71.3	23967	-	-	0	1
<b>Anxiety about pensions' future</b>	Dichotomous	QJ3	EB 71.3	25699	-	-	0	1
<b>Values: State intervenes too much</b>	Dichotomous	QC1A_1	EB 71.3	25717	-	-	0	1
<b>Values: In favour of free economic competition</b>	Dichotomous	QC1A_2	EB 71.3	24061	-	-	0	1
<b>The EU means social protection</b>	Dichotomous	QA11_4	EB 71.3	26805	-	-	0	1
<b>EU performance on social rights</b>	Continuous	QA17_2	EB 71.3	24183	4.75	2.04	1	9
<b>Ideology</b>	Continuous	D1	EB 71.3	20943	5.41	2.25	1	10
<b>Education</b>	Continuous	VD8	EB 71.3	26264	18.48	4.70	1	63
<b>Male</b>	Dichotomous	D10	EB 71.3	26805	-	-	0	1
<b>Age</b>	Continuous	VD11	EB 71.3	26805	48.14	18.18	15	98
<b>Welfare efficacy</b>	Continuous	Poverty risk ratio, net of transfers	Eurostat (2008)	26805	.52	.31	0	1
<b>Euro zone</b>	Dichotomous		Eurostat	26805	-	-	0	1
<b>Topic : social protection</b>	Continuous	V5a, V5b, V5c	EES'09 Media Study	26805	0.31	0.21	0	1
<b>Topic : economic conditions</b>	Continuous	V5a, V5b, V5c	ditto	26805	0.20	0.20	0	1
<b>Topic: unemployment</b>	Continuous	V5a, V5b, V5c	ditto	26805	0.29	0.22	0	1

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# Does Europe Matter in European Elections? A Composite Model of the 2009 European Parliament Elections.

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## Abstract

This chapter assesses the validity of different interpretative models of voting behavior in European elections in the light of the June 2009 results. We focus, on the one hand, on models linking the European vote to national political concerns (*second order* model) and the domestic electoral cycle (*electoral cycle* model); on the other hand, we assess the ability of a model based on the role of party positions and campaigning (*Europe matters* model) to explain those occurrences at odds with traditional interpretations. A composite model is advanced, with the aim of providing an account for the 2009 European election results.

## Introduction

European elections are at odds with traditional notions of representation and democratic accountability. At the national level, elections connect representation with democratic governance (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes 1999). Through them citizens elect their representatives and (directly or indirectly) a government. The peculiarity of European elections lies in the fact that these are *not* followed by the formation of a government. As a consequence, voters' choices are less likely to be guided by EU-related accountability concerns, and less likely to be expressed based on either prospective or retrospective evaluations of parties' performance in the EU arena. Moreover, the European party system is based on national parties, and electoral campaigns have traditionally been dominated by national issues (de Vreese *et al.* 2006). This has led political scientists to hold what can be qualified as the classical view of European elections, that is *second order* contests (Reif and Schmitt 1980). This perspective highlights the importance of domestic factors driving the European vote. Elaborating upon this consolidated view, some scholars have recently attempted to show the growing importance of an independent impact on electoral outcomes exerted by the specific supranational characteristics of these contests (Hix and Marsh 2007). The relevance of these rival interpretations lies in the different nature of the link between citizens, political actors and the supranational European arena they subsume – a mainly country-based one, as opposed to a more supranational European one.

In this study we compare the two perspectives in order to present a composite model based on the more relevant aspects of both. Our analysis focuses on the most recent elections for the European Parliament held in June 2009. These elections have been the widest ever, in terms of eligible voters and participating countries and, particularly interesting given our purpose, have recorded an unprecedented role played by 'Europe' within the parties' campaigns (Shuck *et al.* 2011). At the same time, a number of pan-European developments – such as the poor performance of socialist parties across the continent – have led some to the hypothesize the emergence of a new European element in the contest (Hix and Marsh 2011). Therefore, if

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supranational concerns are to be found as independent explanations of the vote, it is likely that these will show up in the 2009 European elections. The results of our analysis will be discussed after a brief review of the literature dealing with the major interpretative models of voting behavior in European elections.

## **Alternative Explanations of the Vote in European Elections**

### ***The ‘Second Order’ Model***

So far no ‘responsible’ party system at the European level has emerged (Kousser 2004). The lack of stable supranational cues means that European voters can only rely on cognitive heuristics usually employed in national elections. In this sense, it can be argued that European elections are held first and foremost on the basis of national political concerns (de Vreese *et al.* 2006). As Reif and Schmitt (1980) argue, the national arena is the most important in the eyes of both the parties and the public. Therefore, other elections, such as the European ones, are less important. These are second-order national elections, insofar “there is less at stake as compared to first-order elections” (*ibid.*: 8).

Turnout in second-order elections is lower than in national contests, because parties dedicate comparatively less time and resources to the former (Franklin, van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1996; Franklin 2001; Schmitt 2005). Without sufficient information on the position of parties about European issues, voters can only evaluate the competing parties on the basis of their performance and policy appeals at the national level. However, because governing parties are more visible than those in opposition, European elections usually become a *referendum* on incumbent governments’ performance (Lord 2001) – a referendum where governments get usually defeated. Furthermore, voters are thought to use *their hearts instead of their heads* in European elections, voting for the parties closer to their ‘real’ preferences and ideological outlook (Oppenhuis, van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). In turn, this makes larger parties lose and smaller parties gain votes with respect to national parliamentary elections.

Summing up, second order theory affirms that: (1) there is a lower turnout in European elections than in national parliamentary elections; (2) voters behave differently between types of election: some of them switch their vote in order to punish parties that are in government or to vote sincerely for the parties they like the most, instead of strategically choosing parties that can gain power at national level; as a result (3) larger and ruling parties lose votes to smaller and opposition parties.

### ***The ‘Electoral Cycle’ Model***

As a corollary to *second order* theory, it has been argued that parties’ fortunes in European elections depend on the national electoral cycle. Depending on when they take place within the national electoral cycle, citizens will show different patterns of voting behavior (Reif 1984; Marsh 1998). Governments facing European elections during the *honeymoon* with their electorate (e.g., within their first year of tenure) are most likely to register minor losses or even none at all (Hix and Marsh 2007). The switch is much more consistent when European elections occur at the mid-term of the national cycle, that is, when government parties’ popularity is at its lowest (on domestic electoral cycles, see: Miller and Mackie 1973), and when opposition parties make greater efforts to present the European vote as a test of governing parties’ performance. When European elections are held shortly before national elections, citizens have stronger incentives to act strategically, in order to influence upcoming national elections. Although there is always the opportunity to punish governing parties, these tend to lose less than they would if the elections were held at the middle of the electoral cycle. In other words, governing parties lose votes anyway (as postulated by *second order* theory), but they lose *less* if the European election is held at the beginning, or at the end, of the national electoral cycle.

Moreover, empirical evidence shows that the popularity of the government affects the electoral switch independently of the location of a European election in the national electoral cycle (Heath *et al.* 1999). Popular governments lose fewer votes than do less popular ones. By the same token, retrospective judgments of a government's macroeconomic performance help explain the magnitude of ruling parties' loss in European elections (Kousser 2004).

### ***The 'Europe Matters' Model***

Despite this classical view on European elections, a growing body of literature contends that *Europe matters*, and that its influence on voting has increased over time due to the strengthening of the Parliament's powers over the Commission (Schmitt 2005) and a somewhat greater visibility of European issues among the citizens (de Vreese *et al.* 2006). The political salience of Europe is exerted, first of all, through the position of the parties with respect to the issue of European integration. According to Ferrara and Weishaupt (2004), anti-Europeanist parties tend to perform better than those with more favorable orientations. The second dimension through which parties' policy positions affect voters is related to the ideological left-right continuum. According to Hooghe and Marks (2001), this dimension overlays that relating to a major/minor regulative role for the European Union. This entails that (a) centre-right parties perform better than centre-left parties and (b) extreme parties of both left and right, which are also supposed to be more anti-Europeanist (Taggart 1998; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002), are the most likely to gain votes at the expense of governing parties, which are generally located at more moderate positions (Ray 1999).

Campaigning on Europe may have been relevant in the 2009 elections, which were characterized by the unprecedented attention devoted to supranational concerns in parties' communication strategies (Shuck *et al.* 2011). Previous research has highlighted the impact of campaigning on both citizens' turnout and vote choice. Those parties and governments that campaign intensively for EU elections can raise citizens' interest in these elections (and influence turnout as a consequence). Also the tone of the campaign has an impact: an analysis of media coverage during the 1999 and 2004 electoral campaigns demonstrates that a negative presentation of Europe by television and newspapers has a mobilizing effect (Banducci and Semetko 2004). The relationship with turnout is, however, curvilinear: negative evaluations of the EU mobilize voters, but only up to a threshold above which turnout is depressed by more negative evaluations (*ibid*).

Recent works hypothesized that giving salience to Europe (either in a positive or a negative way) could also have a positive effect on a party's vote share in EP elections (Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004; Hix and Marsh 2007). Classic salience theory suggests that parties' choices to emphasize certain issues at the expense of others is based on strategic considerations (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994). Large parties or incumbent parties in particular can be thought to adopt this strategy in relation to European issues as a way to deflect attention from poor performance evaluations (Shuck *et al.* 2011). As to anti-European parties, a greater emphasis on Europe is related to their attempt to politicize European issues to attract those segments of the electorate that are discontent with the Union (Hooghe and Marks 2009), thus pairing saliency with a predominantly negative tone. Bellucci, Garzia and Rubal (2010) found that the electoral performance of government parties in the EU 2009 elections is negatively associated with voters' increasing interest in the electoral campaign, where citizens' interest in the campaign is used as a proxy for parties' communication strategies. They conclude that ruling parties' losses are due to the opposition's mobilization of voters, although this inference is only speculative in the absence of a clear link between parties' actions and campaign content. Actually, research connecting campaigning and media effects to voting at the European level is rather scant, and comparative structured data on media coverage is emerging slowly (de Vreese *et al.* 2006: 146). Therefore the 2009 PIREDEU database fills this important gap, and allows parties' campaign efforts to be studied, as we will discuss in the next section.

## Data and Hypotheses

We contend that each of the three models discussed above (e.g., *second order*, *electoral cycle* and *Europe matters*) is singularly valid and useful for understanding different aspects of voting behavior in European elections. We believe that both political concerns (*second order*) and the electoral cycle (*mid-term*) at national level are a necessary *explicans* of European citizens' choices. But we also believe that the parties' location on a pro/anti-Europe dimension matters, as well as their campaign strategies in relation to European Union issues. In our analysis we will test these expectations against the results from 2009 elections.

181 cases have been included in the analysis, corresponding to the parties from 27 states of the Union which have gained at least 1% of the vote at both 2009 EP election (*source*: [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)) and the previous national one (*source*: [www.parties-and-elections.de](http://www.parties-and-elections.de)).<sup>2</sup> Parties that contested the EP election as part of an electoral coalition while they ran separately in the previous national election have been treated as electoral coalitions in both instances. Similarly, parties in coalition in the previous national election have been considered as if they ran together also for the 2009 EP election (but in this case, we include only those national alliances whose partners jointly received at least 1 percent of the vote-share in 2009). Our dependent variable – which we term *Eurogap* – is for each party the difference between the percentage of valid votes polled at the 2009 European elections and that obtained at the most recent previous national parliamentary elections held in the country.

We follow Hix and Marsh (2007) and rely on aggregate-level data to resolve conflicting hypotheses about European elections and investigate why citizens switch votes from national to European elections. In fact, aggregate parties' outcomes are not marred by the problem of individual-level data that “must rely on each respondent's recall of past [voting] behavior, which is likely to understate change, particularly that from unpopular parties” (*ibid.*, 499). Therefore, the analyses include the following aggregate-level variables, organized according to the model they operationalize:

### ***'Second order' Model***

*Size* is the percentage of votes for each party in the last national election. This variable serves as baseline to calculate the vote-share gap between national and the European elections. As we expect large parties to lose votes in the latter, we hypothesize therefore a negative relationship ( $b < 0$ ).

*Government* is a dummy variable scoring '1' for all parties included in the national government at the time of 2009 European elections (*source*: [www.parties-and-elections.de](http://www.parties-and-elections.de)), and '0' for all others. Since second order theory postulates governing parties to lose votes, the hypothesis is of a negative impact ( $b < 0$ ).

### ***'Electoral cycle' Model***

*Early* is intended to capture the relationship between sitting in government and the national electoral cycle. The *Government* variable is thus multiplied by a dummy variable scoring '1' for all parties that are in the executive since a year or less. Since governing parties are assumed not to lose votes during their honeymoon, we expect that *Early\*Government* leads to a positive impact ( $b > 0$ ).

<sup>2</sup> This operational choice follows that employed by Hix and Marsh (2007; 2011) in a similar exercise, and it is meant to exclude primarily those *flash parties* whose electoral results can hardly be accounted for by general interpretations of European elections.

*GDP* is the percentage change in the gross domestic product in the quarter preceding the European election (*source*: Eurostat), with its value shared by all parties in a country. We expect that a positive state of the economy increases the votes of governmental parties, and thus that the interaction *GDP\*Government* be positive ( $b > 0$ ).

#### ***‘Europe Matters’ Model***

*Anti/Pro-EU* is an indicator that taps the position of the parties in relation to the European Union as derived from expert surveys: each party is assigned a score from 0 (completely against the EU) to 7 (completely in favor) (*source*: Benoit and Laver 2006; Hooghe *et al.* 2010). Based on the available literature, we hypothesize that Euro-skeptical parties poll better than Europhile ones ( $b < 0$ ).

*Left-Right* is the score assigned to each party on the continuum ranging between 0 (left) and 10 (right) as derived from expert surveys (*source*: Benoit and Laver 2006; Hooghe *et al.* 2010). Based on Hooghe and Marks (2001) we expect that centrist and right parties gain votes at the expense of more leftist ones ( $b > 0$ ).

*Extremism* measures the distance of each party’s left-right position from the midpoint of the scale. Based on the argument that extreme parties are also more Euro-skeptical, we expect extreme parties to be favored in EU elections ( $b > 0$ ).

*Saliency* represents the volume of news in national media mentioning the European Union during the 2009 campaign and in which the party is the main actor, divided by the total number of EU-related news in a country featuring any national party as main actor (the value for each party can range from 0 to 1; *source*: PIREDEU Media Study). This coding strategy aims to capture the relative extent to which each party campaigns on EU-related matters. If Ferrara and Weishaupt (2004) are correct in claiming that talking *more* about Europe has a positive impact on a party’s electoral outcome, we expect Saliency to be positively associated to parties’ vote shares ( $b > 0$ ).

*Tone* measures the content of a party’s campaign on Europe as deduced from media contents (*source*: PIREDEU Media Study). Explicit evaluations of Europe in the news are coded on a scale ranging from -2 (totally negative) to +2 (totally positive). The value assigned to each party is computed as follows. We first sum the scores for each message in which the party is coded as main actor and which contains an explicit evaluation; then, we subtract from each party score the mean value of all parties in a country on the same score. In this way, we express the tone of a party’s campaign as a contrast to the average tone across all parties in a nation (a party campaigning neutrally on the EU can therefore get a positive value if the average tone of the campaign in the nation is negative, and *vice versa*). We expect *Tone* to be positively related with *Eurogap* – that is, a positive tone should correspond to a better electoral performance ( $b > 0$ ) for governing parties, since both strategic considerations (as earlier argued) and a greater involvement of incumbent parties with EU should suggest a pro-EU campaign for ruling parties. We then include a Government interaction with *Tone* (and also Saliency) to assess a differential impact between ruling and opposition parties.

#### **A Preliminary Assessment of the Models: Bivariate Analysis**

As our analysis is concerned with vote shares, we will not dwell at length on the aspects of second order theory that relate to turnout. We limit ourselves to the observation that in each and every European country turnout was lower in June 2009 than in the most recent previous national election.

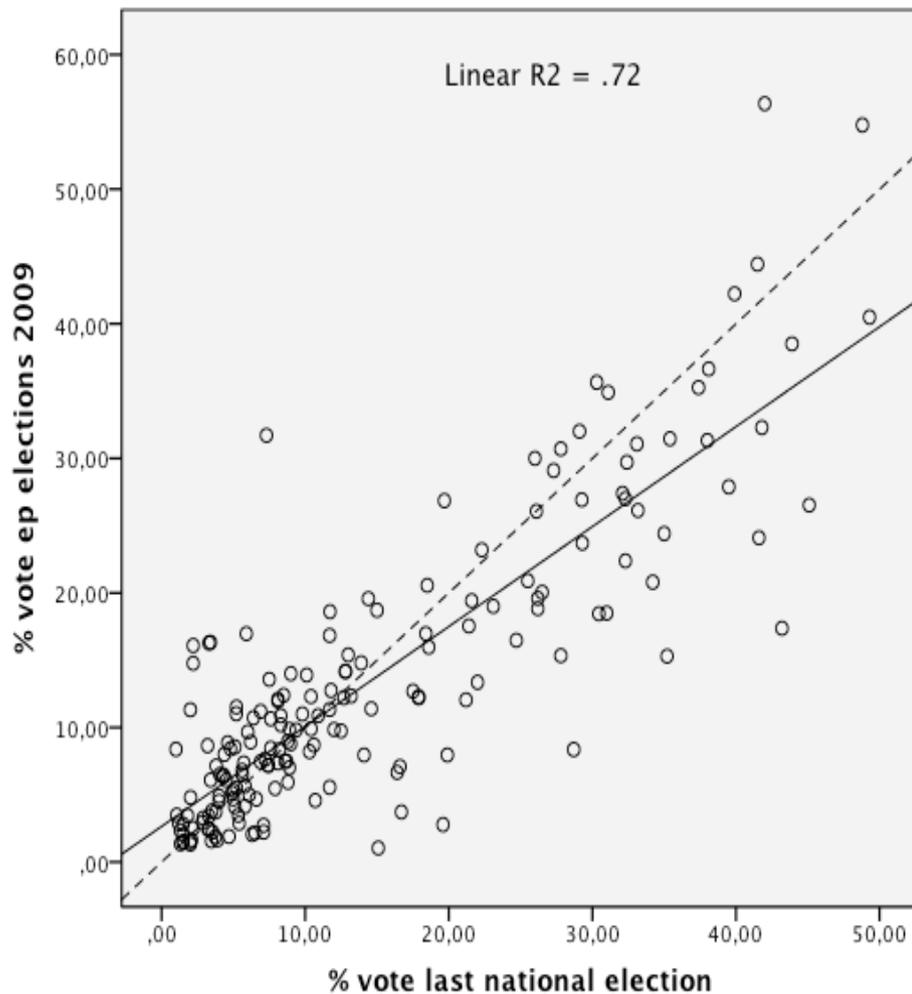


Figure 1: Vote-share in 2009 European Parliament elections as a function of party size

The expectation of second order theory that larger parties lose more votes than smaller ones is confirmed by the results of the 2009 European elections. Figure 1 plots the parties in our analysis in terms of its vote share in the EP election (vertical axis) and previous national election (horizontal axis). The regression line (solid) clearly shows the inverse relationship between previous size and vote-share in European elections, with bigger parties as the most penalized in the latter. The slope of the regression line is less steep than that of the 45 degree line (dashed) which describes equal vote shares in both elections, thus signaling a worse electoral performance at EP elections for larger parties.

A third expectation from second-order theory is that losses are greater for parties in government. We find that this was indeed the case in 2009 (see Table 1). However, we deem of particular interest the fact that contrary to 2004 (Schmitt, 2005) there is not much difference in this respect between old and new member states. Governing parties lose a bit less in old member states (3.5 percentage points vs. 4.4 percent in new member states) while the reverse is true for opposition parties which in older member states gain slightly more (.75 of a percentage point) than in new ones (.31). Overall, in 2009 structural differences between Western and Eastern Europe appear to have somewhat leveled off, at least with respect to aggregate patterns of electoral behavior.

Table 1: Average gain for governing/opposition parties (old vs. new member states)

	Old Members		New Members	
	Average gain	N	Average Gain	N
Government	-3.50	(35)	-4.38	(29)
Opposition	0.75	(67)	0.31	(50)

What does not seem to have worked as expected is the electoral cycle at the national level. By itself, the electoral cycle was a rather poor predictor of governing parties' gains or losses in 2009 compared to the previous national election. A visual inspection of the data plotted in Figure 2 shows a significant number of occurrences for which the theory cannot possibly account. Strong divergences are to be found, in particular, in the cases of Latvia (-14.7 percent for governing parties altogether after only three months from the national election), Sweden (+10.6 percent right in the middle of the electoral cycle), Portugal and Great Britain (losses of between 18.5 and 19.5 percent with new national election approaching). A second-order polynomial regression explains only 6 percent of variance in the relative performance of governing parties on the timing of EP election within the national cycle. Interestingly, excluding new member states from the analysis does not lead to better results – while it did so in 2004 (Schmitt 2005: 659).

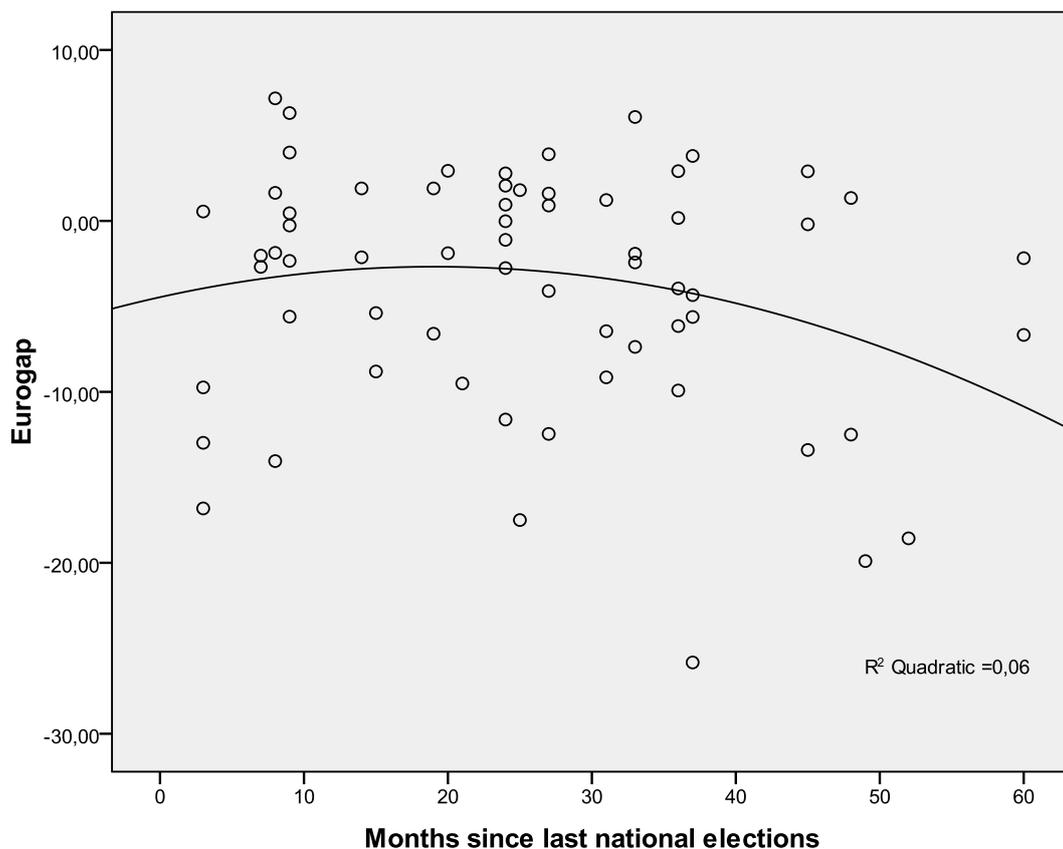


Figure 2: Results for governing parties according to the national electoral cycle

A further description of governing parties' losses in 2009 may be provided by less contingent factors, and in particular by the parties' political positions and campaign strategies. As to the first point, we observe that *Eurogap* is, although weakly, correlated with both *Extremism* on the left-right scale and parties' position in relation to the Union (*Anti/Pro-EU*) (Fig. 3).

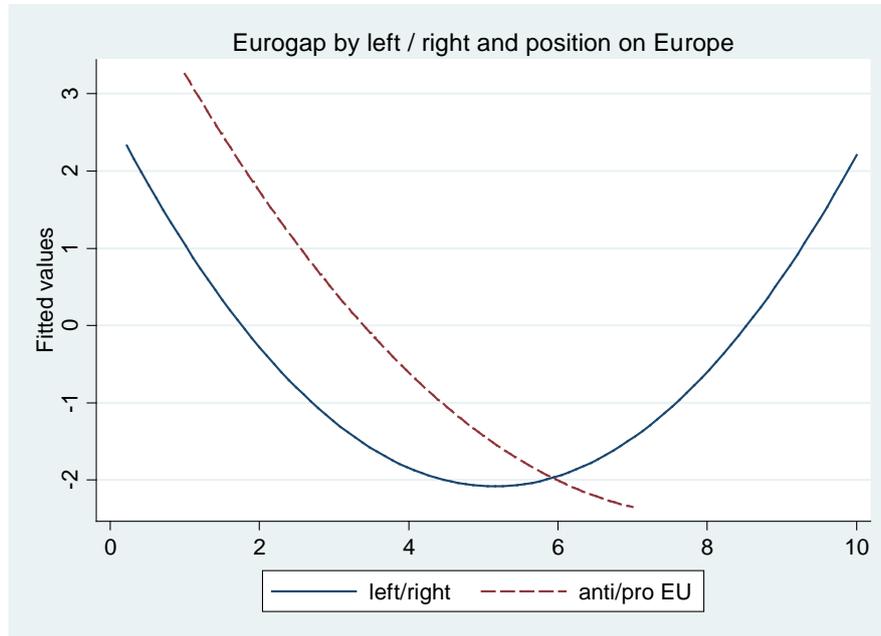


Figure 3: Eurogap according to parties' political positions

The data in Table 2 shows that more extreme parties are likely to gain votes compared to those at more moderate positions on the left-right continuum. At the same time, we observe that our dependent variable is negatively correlated with the parties' position towards the EU – that is, Euro-skeptic parties are those more likely to obtain better results. Furthermore, the strong relationship between *Extremism* and *Anti/Pro-EU* ( $r = .60$ ) seems to reinforce the association between extremism on the left-right scale and a negative attitude towards the EU – and hence with electoral gains/losses. The implications of these results for governing parties are clear, as they are generally located on more moderate left-right positions (Taggart 1998; Ray 1999).

Table 2: Linear correlation between Eurogap and parties' political positions and non-linear (quadratic) R-squared regressing Eurogap on parties' political position

	<i>Eurogap</i>	<i>Extremism</i>
<i>Extremism</i>		
Correlation	.17*	1
Quadratic R <sup>2</sup>	.03	
<i>Left-Right</i>		
Correlation	.01	.10
Quadratic R <sup>2</sup>	.03	
Correlation	-.18*	-.60**
Quadratic R <sup>2</sup>	.04	

Note: Correlations are Pearson's  $r$  coefficients (two-tailed), \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

They tend to lose votes to those parties whose Euro-skepticism is not constrained by governmental responsibilities. We must observe, however, that each of these factors is by itself

a poor predictor of electoral gains/losses, as is shown by the limited amount of variance explained by (polynomial) regressions of *Eurogap* on parties' political positions.

A second factor that may have affected the performance of governing parties in the last European election is their campaign strategies with respect to EU-related matters. Figure 4 shows that government and opposition parties campaigned quite differently, as indicated by the salience assigned to Europe in the news in which parties were actors. The salience of Europe in the electoral campaigns of government parties (average value: 19%) was twice as large as that of opposition parties (average: 9%). On the other hand, the tone of the campaign – that is the evaluative content of the news concerning Europe – does not show a significant difference between government and opposition, with the government parties being just slightly more positive than opposition parties (Figure 5).

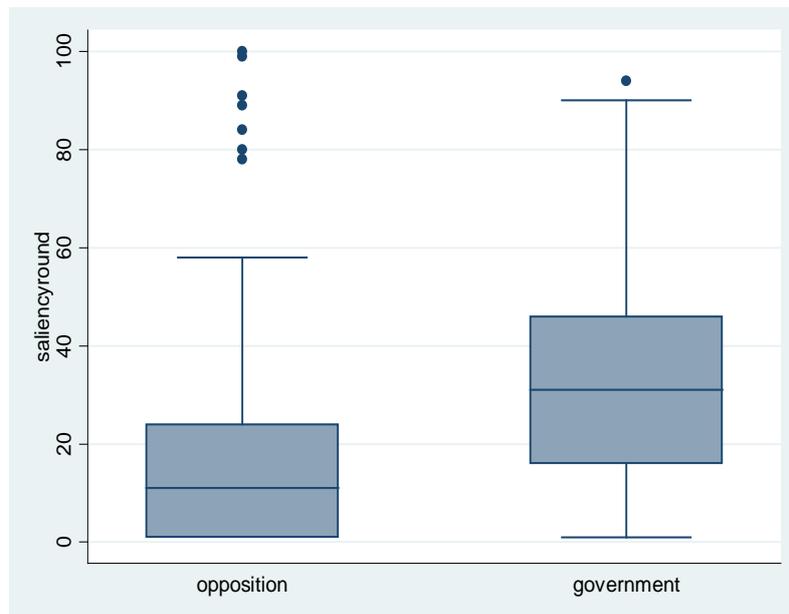


Figure 4: Salience of EU campaign according to government/opposition role

Unexpectedly, both campaign variables are inversely related with our dependent variable. The bivariate correlations between *Salience* and *Tone* with *Eurogap* in Table 3 show an inverse relationship. This implies that, on average, talking *more* about Europe during the campaign, as well as talking *more positively* about Europe, is moderately associated with electoral losses. However, if we concentrate on opposition and governing parties separately, the conclusions to be drawn would appear rather different. The relationships are in fact extremely weak in the case of opposition parties [Pearson's  $r_{\text{Eurogap-Salience}} = .00$  and  $r_{\text{Eurogap-Tone}} = -.03$ ].

Table 3: *Eurogap* and campaign strategies

	<i>Eurogap</i>	<i>Salience</i>
<i>Salience</i>	-0.15**	1.00
<i>Tone</i>	-0.14*	0.01

Note: Cell entries are Pearson's *r* coefficients (two-tailed), \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .10$

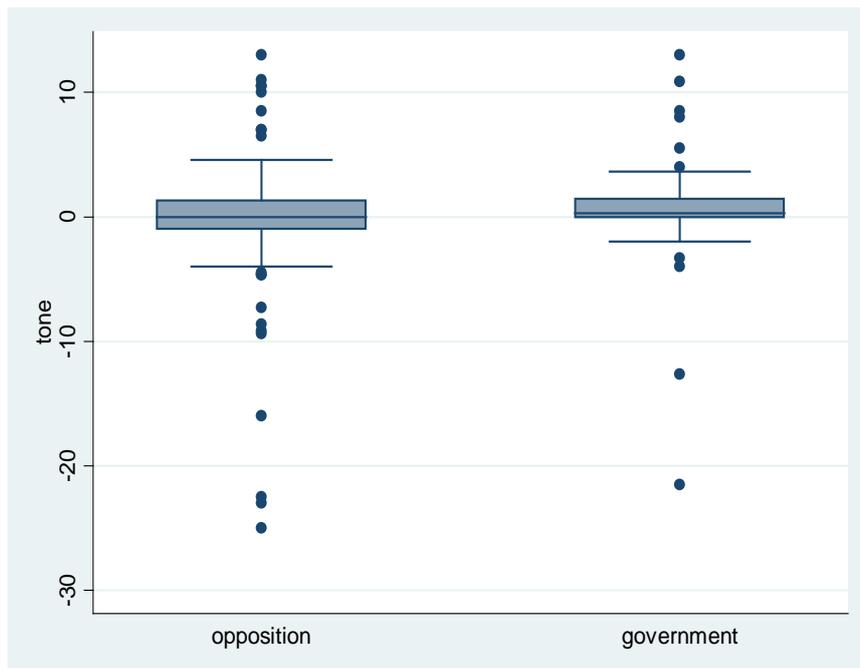


Figure 5: Tone of EU campaign according to government/opposition role

Conversely, governing parties' electoral results are more strongly related to both the saliency given to European matters within their campaign and the tone used. But, surprisingly, the relationship is still weakly negative: the more that government parties emphasize Europe the more they lose compared to the previous national election [ $r = -.15$ ]. With respect to the tone of the campaign on Europe, the relationship is once again negative: talking positively about the EU is moderately associated with worse results [ $r = -.20$ ]. These findings suggest that if campaigns matter, they do so first and foremost for parties in government which, contrary to our expectations, do not appear to benefit from engaging in positive campaigns on Europe. However, we must remember that all of the previous associations, albeit weak, are bivariate and therefore potentially spurious. Their actual impact needs thus to be assessed in a multivariate analysis.

### The Determinants of Vote Choice in European Elections: a Multivariate Analysis

In this section we discuss a multivariate model that is aimed at understanding the determinants of parties' electoral outcomes in the 2009 European election using all potentially relevant explanations. We estimate four OLS regression models with cluster correction and robust standard errors. The first includes only the variables relative to the classic *second order* theory (*Size*, *Government*); the second adds those from the *electoral cycle* specification of the former model (*Early*, *Early\*Government*, *GDP*, *GDP\*Government*); in the third model we also take into account the role played by a party's position on the left-right and anti/pro-Europe scales (*Left-Right*, *Extremism*, *Anti/Pro-EU*); finally, the *Saliency* and the *Tone* of the campaign are included, along with their effect in interaction with the government variable (*Saliency\*Government* and *Tone\*Government*). The regression estimates are presented in Table 4.

Model 1 confirms the core prediction of second order theory also for the case at hand. Larger parties, as well as those in government, lose votes to smaller and opposition parties (although the *Government* coefficient is not statistically significant here). Model 2 shows that being in an early phase of the domestic electoral cycle (e.g., the first year) restricts to a considerable extent the losses for governing parties. At the same time, the state of the economy provides us with a further specification of the conditions that affect ruling parties' electoral

performance: a positive macroeconomic performance is related to *Eurogap* regardless of the location of the European election in the national electoral cycle. In our opinion, this represents a valid explanation for those countries (see above) where the electoral performance of the government did not conform to the Mid-Term model predictions. More generally, these findings suggest that ruling is not in itself associated to electoral losses, which are contingent of the phase of national electoral cycle and the condition of the economy, which affects government popularity.

Table 4: The determinants of party performance in 2009 EP elections (OLS estimates)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	<i>Second Order</i>	<i>Electoral Cycle</i>	<i>Europe Matters</i>	<i>Europe + Campaign</i>
<i>Size</i>	-0.22 (.06)***	-0.24 (.06)***	-0.31 (.07)***	-0.43 (.08)***
<i>Government</i>	-1.96 (1.22)	1.12 (1.47)	2.73 (1.56)*	3.99 (1.29)***
<i>Early</i>	-	-0.42 (1.28)	-1.41 (1.64)	-0.99 (1.75)
<i>Early*Government</i>	-	4.74 (1.88)**	6.46 (2.12)***	5.63 (2.37)**
<i>GDP</i>	-	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.10 (0.13)	-0.05 (0.15)
<i>GDP*Government</i>	-	0.62 (0.19)***	0.90 (0.23)***	0.85 (0.23)***
<i>Left-Right</i>	-	-	0.40 (0.22)*	0.22 (0.17)
<i>Extremism</i>	-	-	0.79 (0.44)*	0.90 (0.42)**
<i>Anti/Pro-EU</i>	-	-	0.43 (0.41)	0.53 (0.43)
<i>Saliency</i>	-	-	-	18.15 (6.75)**
<i>Tone</i>	-	-	-	0.04 (0.04)
<i>Saliency*Government</i>	-	-	-	- 6.13 (8.81)
<i>Tone*Government</i>	-	-	-	-0.23 (0.15)
Observations	181	181	149	149
R-squared	0.26	0.30	0.38	0.44
SEE	5.64	5.52	5.55	5.32

Note: Dependent variable: Eurogap. Robust standard errors are in parentheses, clustered by country  
\*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .10$

In Model 3 we add parties' positions on the Left-Right and Anti/Pro-EU scales.<sup>3</sup> We also add *Extremism* – which emerges as the strongest coefficient in this block of predictors. Our expectations are thus confirmed, showing that mainstream parties are penalized at European elections. However, the insignificant contribution of the *Anti/Pro-EU* variable, although in the expected direction, leads us to think that a party's position in relation to the EU does not matter *per se*; rather, we believe that what matters is *how* this position is communicated to voters during the campaign. For this reason, we include in Model 4 the variables related to the saliency and tone of each party's campaign on Europe. Their direct effects are, in accordance with our expectations (and contrary to the earlier bivariate associations) positively related to electoral results (although *Tone* falls short of statistical significance). So, net of the other covariates, focusing heavily on European matters in the campaign does help a party's electoral fortunes. To ascertain whether the distinction between government and opposition makes a difference we also added two interactions with the Government variable. Although both their signs confirm the earlier bivariate associations - e.g., emphasizing European issues would appear to represent a liability for government parties, as increasing communication appears related to a poorer electoral performance as *Tone* also does, albeit with a considerably lesser magnitude – the lack of statistical significance means that the impact of government status remains uncertain, within the proposed model. Our conclusion is therefore that emphasizing Europe enhances the electoral prospects of all parties, both in government and in opposition. Giving salience to European issues in waging European Parliament electoral campaigns is therefore a positive asset. Contrary to our expectations, such enhancement would appear somewhat smaller for ruling parties. However, the size of the interaction coefficient for *Saliency\*Government* – besides its lack of statistical significance – is far smaller than that of the main effect of Saliency. Thus ruling parties are still greatly favored by assigning high salience to European issues. As to the tone of the campaign, its effects are not statistically significant in the model estimated. Further research will explore why this is so, and also explore different measures to tap this important dimension.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The 2009 European elections represent a further confirmation of the Second Order Model. We documented how the key aspects of the SOM found application in the 2009 European elections, and focused on the factors that drive the traditional tendency of large and ruling parties to lose votes compared to the preceding national elections. In particular, we ascertained how the impact of the timing of the EP elections within the national electoral cycle on the ruling parties' results is supplemented by the state of the national economy, with ruling parties presiding over positive economic conditions being electorally rewarded.

We also found confirming evidence that parties' ideological outlook impacts upon European election outcomes. However, and for the first time, we were also able to observe a sizable impact of parties' electoral campaigning on voting results, thanks to the research design of the PIREDEU Media Study. This adds to the explanation already provided by the Europe Matters model, whose preliminary findings from the modified model discussed in this chapter show that large parties' tendency to lose at European elections is also mildly counterbalanced by strong Europe-focused campaigning. Saliency of Europe in parties' campaign does therefore support positively parties' electoral fortunes. Although only indicative due to the lack of statistical significance, we observe hints that European salience may slightly favor the opposition more than government parties which, nevertheless, are in any case electorally advantaged by waging campaigns for the European Parliament elections focusing on Europe.

<sup>3</sup> The number of cases included in this model (n=149) is slightly lower as compared to Model 1 and 2 (n=181), the reason being that parties founded after 2006 – as well as those from Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta – are not included in the Chapel Hill expert survey (2006) from which we derive parties' placement on the left-right and anti/pro-EU scales.

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# Explaining the Second Order Effect: the Role of Issues and Institutions in Elections to the European Parliament<sup>1</sup>

Nick Clark<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Elections to the European Parliament have been unable to capture the public's interest – turnout remains far lower than most national elections and many who do vote appear more concerned with sending messages of approval to national political parties than electing representatives at the EU level. This chapter seeks to explain why the public does not take these elections seriously. The second order elections theory (Reif and Schmitt 1980) posits that the public simply does not care about EU politics. Disputing this 'issue-based' explanation, we argue that the public instead doubts the representativeness and influence of the European Parliament. Negative perceptions of the Parliament induce many individuals to abstain or to vote differently than they would in national elections. We expect this 'institution-induced' effect to be stronger in countries with empowered national parliaments, where the public is accustomed to and expects a representative body to have substantial influence over decision-making. Using data from the 2009 European Election Study and Eurobarometer 69.2, we find that negative perceptions of the EP lead many individuals to abstain from EP elections and prompt EP voters to focus more on national politics when casting their vote.

Elections to the European Parliament (EP) do not appear to be working as instruments of democratic accountability at the EU level. Turnout remains low by the standards of most national elections, and has declined in every EP election since 1979. EP campaigns receive little attention from the media (de Vreese, et al 2006), and largely focus on national-level politics (Franklin 2001, Weber 2007). Several scholars argue that EP elections serve as "second order" contests – voters do not perceive EP elections as important and use their vote to send messages of displeasure to national political parties (Reif and Schmitt 1980, Reif 1984, Marsh 1998, Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004, van der Brug, et al 2007, Hix and Marsh 2007). However, few studies seek to explain why the public holds such disregard for EP elections. The second order literature often suggests that Europeans simply do not care that much about the European Union, but more recent contributions find that EP voters are actually swayed by preferences on EU political issues (Hobolt, et al 2009, Clark and Rohrschneider 2009). Moreover, the higher turnout in referenda on EU questions indicates that the public takes an interest in EU affairs. Given that EP voters appear to hold preferences on European integration, why do they subordinate the EU to national-level politics in EP elections or choose not to participate at all? This chapter argues that many EP voters have a negative perception of the European Parliament and thus do not view EP elections as genuine opportunities to address EU politics.

To explain the public's behavior in EP elections, we distinguish between 'issue-based' and 'institution-induced' motivations for voting. According to the former, individuals choose whether and how to vote based on the salience of the political issues at the center of an election. Public apathy toward the EU constitutes an issue-based explanation for the second order effect in EP elections. Institution-induced citizens focus more on the perceived importance of the

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political actors at the center of an election. Individuals who doubt the influence or representativeness of a political body are not likely to take elections to that body seriously. We believe that this motivation offers a more plausible explanation for voting behavior in EP elections.

The public has been given ample reason to doubt the influence of the European Parliament. The Parliament did not have any decision-making power through the late 1980s – the Commission and Council were only required to consult with the Parliament on proposals for new EU legislation. The EU Treaties have since been revised to provide the Parliament with the right to approve proposals for new EU laws, but the EP does not have any power of legislative initiative and lacks some of the oversight powers held by most national parliaments – critics of EU democracy thus often call attention to the Parliament’s lack of power vis-à-vis the Commission and Council of Ministers (Schmitter 2000, Siedentop 2000, Mauer 2007). Given the limitations on the EP’s power, many Europeans may not view the Parliament as a viable arena for addressing EU political issues. This institution-induced motivation would explain why many individuals hold preferences on European integration and yet abstain from EP elections or only use these elections as opinion barometers on the performance of national parties. We expect that such institution-induced voting is more prevalent in countries with empowered parliamentary bodies, as individuals from these political systems are accustomed to a legislative chamber able to exert substantial influence over the decision-making process.

This chapter proceeds by first reviewing what we already know about the political conditions that shape EP voting behavior. We then develop our theory of institution-induced voting, explaining how perceptions of the European Parliament and national parliamentary bodies might influence the public’s attitudes toward EP elections. Using survey data from Eurobarometer 69.2 and the 2009 European Election Study, we next examine how the public’s views of the European Parliament affect both voter turnout and voting behavior in EP elections. To investigate whether more powerful national parliaments enhance the institution-induced effect, we incorporate Fish and Kroenig’s measure of parliamentary strength into our model of EP voting behavior. The concluding section discusses the implications of our results for the research on EP elections.

### **Issue-based Voting in the Second Order Research**

Much of the research on EP elections assumes that EP voting behavior is issue-based. Reif and Schmitt (1980) argue that EP elections are second order contests because the most important and visible policy areas are governed at the national level. As EP elections do not affect who holds power over the more important issues, there is not any risk of ‘wasting a vote’ in these elections. Some voters cast a ‘sincere vote’ in the EP elections, defecting from the large, centrist party that they supported in the last national election to a smaller, less-competitive party with which they more closely identify. Other ‘strategic’ voters defect in order to send a message of disapproval to the party they normally support in national elections. The small, niche parties thus perform much better in EP elections than in national contests, while large, centrist parties and governing parties tend to suffer disproportionately larger losses. A large body of subsequent research has confirmed Reif and Schmitt’s initial conclusions, suggesting that the perceived irrelevance of EU issues leads voters to behave differently in national and European-level elections (Reif 1984, Anderson and Ward 1996, Marsh 1998, Carrubba and Timpono 2005, Schmitt 2005, Koepke and Ringe 2006, Hix and Marsh 2007, Marsh 2007).

Despite the micro-level foundations of the second order argument, much of this research utilizes macro-level data. For instance, theorizing that strategic voting is more likely the longer it has been since the last national election, some scholars point to the greater losses of governing parties at the midpoint in national election cycles as evidence for the second order effect (Reif

and Schmitt 1980, Marsh 1998, Hix and Marsh 2007). Using survey data to identify the issue preferences of EP voters, more recent studies demonstrate that both national and EU-level issues prompt individuals to switch their votes across national and EP elections. Government supporters are more likely to support an opposition party in the EP elections if they perceive themselves as more Eurosceptic than the government (Hobolt, et al 2009) or if they do not approve of the government's performance on EU issues (Clark and Rohrschneider 2009).

Further research demonstrates that the availability of information about EU politics has a clear effect on the public's voting behavior. Examining the 1994 Norwegian referendum on EU accession, Hobolt (2007) finds that greater levels of EU knowledge improve voter competence – better-informed Norwegians were more likely to vote according to preferences about EU accession rather than support for the government. Political information has a similar effect in EP elections. EU preferences exert greater influence over EP voters as the EU achieves greater visibility in EP campaigns (Weber 2007, Hobolt, et al 2009) and media coverage of EP elections (de Vries, et al *forthcoming*), and as EP voters acquire more information about the positions of EP candidates on EU issues (Hobolt and Wittrock 2010). Greater media coverage of EU politics also increases voter turnout in EP elections (Banducci and Semetko 2003). This research identifies the political conditions that influence the salience of EU issues, but has yet to consider the potential effect of institutional trust on EP voting behavior.

This chapter contributes to the second order research by investigating how perceptions of the European Parliament shape participation in EP elections. Carrubba and Timpone (2005) offer the only study that includes a measure for attitudes toward the Parliament in a model of EP voting. Their findings support the institution-induced theory, but with a sample limited to individuals who switch their vote to a Green party in European elections. Given the evidence that trust in political institutions affects voter turnout (Nie et al 1976, Shaffer 1981, Powell 1986) and political engagement (Putnam 1994, Mishler and Rose 1997, Bernhard and Karakoc 2007), it is worthwhile to consider how negative perceptions of the European Parliament influence the wider European electorate.

Additionally, to better test the assumptions behind the second order model, this chapter investigates both voter turnout and vote switching in EP elections. While the second order argument assumes public apathy toward EP elections, much of the micro-level research focuses solely on individuals who switch their vote in EP elections – less than 13% of actual EP voters in the 1994 elections (Carrubba and Timpone 2005) and less than 12% in the 2009 elections. Taking reported EP voters together with abstainers, vote-switchers are a small proportion of the European public. By examining both why and how people vote in EP elections, we hope to better identify the attitudes shaping political behavior at the EU level.

### **The Public's Perceptions of the European Parliament**

EU critics argue that the Parliament lacks the powers to ensure democratic accountability in the EU (Schmitter 2000, Siedentop 2000). Of course, there was a stronger basis for this critique thirty years ago than today. The Parliament was only a consultative body with minimal influence over EU decision-making through the late 1980s. In 1992, the Parliament gained the right to approve Commission proposals for new EU laws in a limited number of policy areas. Successive treaties have widened the scope of the Parliament's jurisdiction, so that it currently shares decision-making authority with the Council over most EU policy areas. In that same period of time, the Parliament has used its limited oversight powers over the European Commission to full effect, including widely-covered rebukes of the Santer Commission in 1999 and the Barossa Commission in 2004. However, the public may still have reason to doubt the importance of EP elections.

The Parliament remains junior partner to the Council of Ministers in the EU decision-making framework, excluded from EU decision-making in a few important and visible policy areas (such as taxation and international trade) and the open method of coordination over economic, employment, and social policy. The EU treaties grant the EP significant oversight powers over the College of Commissioners, but the Parliament does not have a seat in the Council's 'comitology' system of committees that approve Commission proposals for new rules and policies (Mauer 2007). Most notably, the Parliament does not have the same legislative initiative granted to most national parliaments – it can only request that the Commission draft a proposal for a new EU law.

Perhaps more important for public perception, the Parliament has not effectively depicted itself as a capable representative body. National media outlets devote minimal coverage to EU politics (Anderson and Weymouth 1999, Meyer 2005, Peter, et al 2003, Peter and de Vreese 2004). When the media does take an interest in EU politics, it often frames European integration as having negative consequences for the public well-being (Norris 2000, de Vreese 2002, Anderson 2004, Maier and Rittberger 2008). The Parliament appears to receive the worst treatment – the media focuses more on national-level issues and actors even within stories on EP elections (de Vreese, et al 2006). As Peter, et al (2004) note, it is unclear if recent advances in the Parliament's power have actually been communicated to the public.

For their part, the EU institutions have not dedicated sufficient resources to overcoming media resistance to covering EU politics (Meyer 1999). Reviewing the Parliament's media communications, Anderson and McLeod (2004) find that the press units and national information offices are under-funded, under-staffed and lack any sort of coordinated media strategy. Additionally, the connection between the public and members of the European Parliament (MEPs) appears to have weakened in recent years. As the EP has assumed a greater role in EU decision-making, MEPs have had to devote more time to learning about policy and less to constituency work and public outreach (EPRG 2006, Mauer 2007). Given the remaining limitations on the Parliament's power and the weak communications between the EP and the public, many individuals may not perceive the Parliament as capable of influencing EU decision-making or as representative of the public's interests.

### **The Relationship between National Parliaments and Perceptions of the European Parliament**

We suspect that institution-induced voting is more prevalent in countries with empowered national parliaments. Executives have acquired much of the policy-making authority once delegated to parliaments (Laver & Shepsle 1996, Bergman, et al 2000). Parliaments, in turn, have increasingly assumed responsibility for monitoring and holding accountable national governments (Bagehot 1990, Lijphart 1992, Shugart and Carey 1992). The ex-ante and ex-post controls at a parliament's disposal determine its capability for influencing the government (Andweg 2007). In assessing parliamentary strength, Fish and Kroenig (2009) thus consider whether parliamentary approval is required to declare war, ratify treaties, or appoint members of the judiciary and whether parliaments can summon, investigate, or compel testimony from executive officials. As there are a number of institutional arrangements structuring executive/legislative relations (Lijphart 1999), parliamentary power varies across different European political systems (Auel and Benz 2007).

The extent of a parliament's power has an effect on its constituents' views on the role of a parliamentary body. Stronger parliaments are more likely to exert power and have an active role in decision-making, ensuring greater visibility in the public sphere. Their constituents may thus come to expect a parliamentary body to effectively influence decision-making and check the power of the executive. As weaker parliaments may have a far less prominent role in national

politics, their constituents may not attribute a parliamentary body with the same importance in the political process. Europe's variation in parliamentary strength may thus lead to each EU members' voters having different expectations for the European Parliament. As voters accustomed to strong national parliaments have higher expectations for their representative institutions, negative perceptions of the EP may have a larger effect on turnout and vote switching in EP elections. In countries with weak national parliaments, the voters do not place as much emphasis on the strength of representative institutions and are thus less likely to be swayed by negative perceptions of the EP.

Previous research demonstrates that national-level institutions have an effect on the public's attitudes toward European integration. Many individuals evaluate the quality of political representation in their country based on the openness of national bureaucracies and judiciaries – the extent to which these institutions allow citizens to express their preferences and demands (Rohrschneider 2002). These procedural-based assessments are detrimental to public support for the entire political system. “The procedural aspect is particularly important given that individuals rarely obtain everything they value: what counts, to a considerable degree, is the belief that institutions provide a fair articulation of one's interests” (Rohrschneider 2005: 464). Better-performing institutions have the inverse effect on support for the EU: open and responsive political institutions at the national level only underscore perceived deficiencies in representational quality at the EU level. In these countries, the public is not only more likely to find fault with the EU institutions, but to develop EU positions based on these perceived deficiencies rather than the financial costs and benefits of European integration.

National-level actors influence EU-level behavior by structuring the public's expectations from their political institutions. Rohrschneider (2002) focuses on bureaucracies and judiciaries, but we expect that other national actors serve a similar function when individuals consider and appraise the different EU institutions. National parliaments offer a far more relevant benchmark for individuals evaluating the European Parliament. Moreover, parliamentary bodies are useful tools for assessing the representational quality of a political system. Parliamentarians are the voters' delegates within the political system (Strom 2000, Maurer 2007), articulating the views and preferences of different groups (Polsby 1975) and ensuring compromise between opposing interests (Gerring and Thacker 2008) in a democratic society. Parliaments offer an important point of access for the public to provide input and feedback to their decision-makers. Most individuals will thus look to their experiences with national parliaments when judging the quality of EP elections.

To summarize our argument thus far: the public behaves much differently in national and European-level elections. Voter turnout is substantially lower at the EU level, and many EP voters appear more concerned with sending messages of disapproval to national political parties rather than electing representatives at the European level. The second order literature often interprets this behavior as evidence of public apathy toward EU issues. We contend that the public, when considering whether and how to participate in EP elections, are motivated more by doubts about the European Parliament than a lack of interest in EU issues. Given the perceived weaknesses of the European Parliament, many individuals do not believe they can effectively address EU issues through EP elections.

### **Turnout in European Parliament Elections**

Most of the survey data in this study is taken from the 2009 European Election Study (EES), a part of the project on "Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union" (European Election Study 2010). EES analyses are supplemented with data from Eurobarometer 69.2 (Papacostas 2009) and the Parliamentary Powers Index (Fish and Kroenig 1999). We investigate two potential explanations for low voter turnout in EP elections:

*Issue-based Hypothesis:* The low salience of EU political issues prompts many individuals to abstain from EP elections

*Institution-induced Hypothesis:* Negative perceptions of the European Parliament prompt many individuals to abstain from EP elections

Conducted prior to the 2009 EP elections, Eurobarometer 69.2 asks those who report having abstained from the 2004 EP elections why they chose not to participate. Figure 1 presents the responses to this question. Around 43% reply that they are not interested in EU politics, and over 57% agree that the EP does not deal with problems that matter.

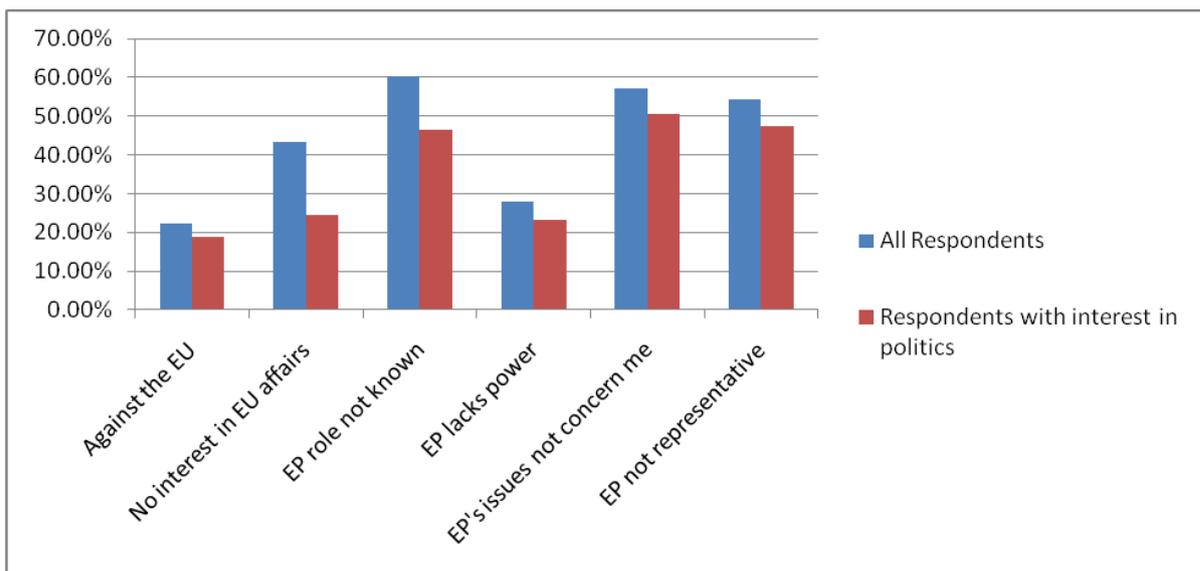


Figure 1: Considerations shaping likely vote in 2009 EP elections.

While only about a third of abstainers raise concerns about the EP's influence, nearly 55% respond that the Parliament does not represent their views. Over 60% of respondents reply that they do not have sufficient information about the Parliament's role. After removing abstainers who express no interest in politics in general, those who indicate that they are not interested in EU issues drops to less than 25% – this is by far the largest effect of political interest across all of the responses. There are not significant regional differences in the data, other than individuals from Eastern Europe are far less likely to abstain because of opposition to the European Union<sup>3</sup>. Altogether, these responses indicate that some individuals choose to abstain due to low EU issue salience, but that negative perceptions of the EP are more responsible for low voter turnout.

EB respondents were also asked how likely it is that they will vote in the 2009 elections. Table 1 presents the results of an ordinary least squares regression of trust in national and EU institutions and perceptions of the EP's importance within the European Union on the intention to vote in the 2009 EP elections<sup>4</sup>. Neither of the measures for satisfaction with national and EU-level affairs is significant – we expected one or both to matter if issue-based concerns influence turnout. Moreover, contrary to the second order argument that EP elections are largely defined by national political concerns, these results suggest that an individual's trust in their national government does not influence their decision to participate in EP elections. Instead,

<sup>3</sup> 15% identify this reason in the East compared with nearly 28% in the West.

<sup>4</sup> These measures are described more fully in Appendix A.

perceptions of the European Parliament are the best predictors of an individual's intention to participate in EP elections. As predicted by the institution-induced hypothesis, trust in the EP and the belief that the EP can influence EU decision-making increases the likelihood that someone will vote in EP elections. Additionally, our measure for trust in national parliaments achieves significance, suggesting that experiences with national parliaments have an effect on perceptions of EP elections.

*Table 1: Predicting likely vote in European Parliament elections.*

	Likelihood of voting
EU membership bad	-0.77 (0.03)**
Country moving in wrong direction	-0.08 (0.03)
EU moving in wrong direction	-0.08 (0.03)
Tend not to trust national parliament	-0.18 (0.03)**
Tend not to trust national government	0.03 (0.03)
Tend not to trust European Parliament	0.39 (0.03)**
European Parliament not important in EU decision-making	-0.48 (0.03)**
Education	0.001 (0.002)
Sex	-0.11 (0.04)
Age	0.02** (0.001)

Note: Entries are coefficients from an ordinary least squares analysis.

This model includes dummies for each of the EU's 27 members. These coefficients are not presented in order to conserve space.

\* and \*\* denotes significance at the .05 and .01 level. There are 24,510 observations tested in this model. Source: Eurobarometer 69.2.

Next, we turn to the European Election Study to further examine the factors shaping turnout in EP elections. The EES includes the question: "A lot of people abstained in the European Parliament elections of June 4, while others voted. Did you cast your vote?" We first note that there are significant discrepancies between likely, reported, and actual turnout in the 2009 EP elections. In 2008, over 65% of respondents in Eurobarometer 69.2 indicated there was a better than even chance that they would vote in the 2009 elections. Over a year later, the actual turnout, averaged across the EU-27, was 43%<sup>5</sup>. In the 2009 EES, over 70% of respondents replied that they had voted in the elections. While the Eurobarometer and EES may have unintentionally over-sampled likely and actual EP voters, it seems more likely that these surveys have the same problem with voter over-reporting as found in other election studies (Granberg and Holmberg 1991, Karp and Brockington 2005). Fortunately, over-reporting does not appear to bias survey results toward any demographic (Traugott and Katosh 1979, Katosh and Traugott 1981, Hill and Hurley 1984, Silver, Anderson and Abramson 1986).

Using the EES data, we estimate a maximum likelihood model to investigate the considerations leading individuals to abstain from EP elections. The results of this analysis, as

<sup>5</sup> As reported by the EP at

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout\\_en.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout_en.html)

depicted in Table 2, offer further support for the institution-induced hypothesis. The relationship between turnout and EU issue salience is in the direction predicted by the issue-based hypothesis – those who do not think that the EU deals with the most important problem facing their country are more likely to abstain – but is not significant. However, both measures of EP perceptions are statistically significant. Individuals who doubt the representativeness of the Parliament and the importance of EP elections are more likely to abstain from EP elections.<sup>6</sup>

*Table 2: Predicting abstentions in European Parliament elections.*

	Abstain (1) Vote (0)
EU Salience	-0.02 (0.04)
EP Representational Quality	0.08 (0.02)**
EP Elections Importance	0.49 (0.01)**
EU Knowledge	-0.20 (0.01)**
Education	-0.02 (0.003)**
Sex	-0.08 (0.03)*
Age	-0.03 (0.001)**
Socio-Economic Class	-0.12 (0.01)**

Note: Entries are coefficients from a logistic regression.

This model includes dummies for each of the EU's 27 members. These coefficients are not presented in order to conserve space.

\* and \*\* denotes significance at the .05 and .01 level. There are 25,900 observations tested in this model.

Source: The 2009 European Election Survey.

To better assess the substantive effects of issue salience and EP perceptions, we estimate the different predicted probabilities of abstaining from EP elections for those individuals who attribute low and high importance to EU issues and those with negative and positive perceptions of the Parliament. Table 3 presents the results. In line with the institution-induced hypothesis, perceptions of the EP have a greater effect on turnout than the salience of EU issues. Those who believe the EP represents the public interest are nearly 7% more likely to vote, whereas those who identify the EU as dealing with the most important issue in their country are less than 1% more likely to vote. Our measure for the perceived importance of EP elections has the largest effect – those individuals who believe that it matters who wins seats in the EP are nearly 40% more likely to vote.

<sup>6</sup> Abstainers tend to be younger, less-educated females, with less information about the EU, and from lower socio-economic cohorts.

Table 3: Predicted probabilities of abstaining from European Parliament elections.

	Probability of Abstaining
<b>Who deals with the most important issue today?</b>	
National/Regional Authorities	0.31
EU Authorities	0.301
<i>Difference</i>	<i>0.009</i>
<b>The Parliament represents citizens.</b>	
Strongly Disagree	0.345
Strongly Agree	0.276
<i>Difference</i>	<i>0.069</i>
<b>It matters which candidate wins the most seats in EP elections.</b>	
Strongly Disagree	0.543
Strongly Agree	0.145
<i>Difference</i>	<i>0.398</i>

Notes: Probabilities based on a middle-class, 50-year old female with some knowledge about the EU (able to answer 2 out of 4 true/false questions correctly) and around 14 years of education.

Source: The 2009 European Election Study

### Vote Switching in European Parliament Elections

The second order argument presumes that the public perceives EP elections as inconsequential. This perception removes any anxiety over wasting a vote and allows EP voters to either support smaller parties that are not as competitive in more important national elections or to send a message of disapproval to the government. While a number of second order studies demonstrate that performance evaluations of the government are related to vote switching in EP elections, there have been few efforts to verify *if* or explain *why* the public actually views EP elections as unimportant. In addition to confirming that dismissive attitudes toward EP elections do influence vote choices, we investigate two conditional hypotheses for vote switching:

*Issue-based Hypothesis:* EP voters are more likely to switch their vote from a government party to an opposition party in EP elections when EP elections are perceived as unimportant due to the low salience of EU issues

*Institution-induced Hypothesis:* EP voters are more likely to switch their vote from a government party to an opposition party in EP elections when EP elections are perceived as unimportant due to negative perceptions of the European Parliament

To measure vote switching across national and European elections, we use the standard four-part matrix (Carruba and Timpone 2005, Clark and Rohrschneider 2009) based on respondents' recalled votes in the last national and EP elections: (1) the voter supported a government party in both elections; (2) supported an opposition party in both elections; (3) moved from a government party in the national election to an opposition party in the EP election; or (4) defected from an opposition party in the national election to a government party in the EP election. As with past EP elections, there are very few defections – roughly 89% consistently

support the government or the opposition across elections. Amongst defectors, far more switch their vote from a government party to an opposition party – 11.5% compared with 3.38% who switch in favor of the government.

Table 4 summarizes the results of a multinomial logistic (MNL) regression on the probability of defecting from a government party in EP elections, as opposed to supporting the government in both national and EP elections. We do not present results for the other two categories in the four-part vote switching matrix, as the second order argument primarily focuses on defectors from the government and the number of voters defecting from an opposition party is a fraction of the total population. Our model of vote switching includes the measures of government performance used in most of the second order research, as well as demographic controls and indicators for perceptions of the importance of EP elections, the salience of EU issues, and perceptions of the EP's representativeness. Additionally, as we theorize that EU issue salience and the EP's representativeness may condition views on the importance of EP elections, our model includes terms for the interaction of the perceived importance of EP elections with both EU issue salience and EP representativeness.

The MNL results corroborate previous research on the second order effect: individuals who perceive themselves as diverging from the government on left/right issues or who disapprove of the government's performance are more likely to defect from a government party to the opposition in EP elections. In other words, national politics influences vote choices in EP elections. Consistent with more recent second order research, perceived differences with the government on the pace of European integration also increases the chances of defecting from the government in EP elections.

Seeking to explain why EP voters focus on national issues and actors at the EU level, we next examine how voter's perceptions of EP elections, EU political issues, and the European Parliament affect the likelihood of defecting from the government. The results in Table 4 suggest that doubts about the importance of EP elections are indeed associated with vote switching in EP elections, as is widely assumed in the second order literature. Additionally, in line with the institution-induced hypothesis, negative perceptions of the EP appear to induce vote switching – EP voters are more likely to defect from a government party if they harbor doubts about the Parliament. Moreover, the second interaction term is significant, suggesting that perceptions of the EP's representativeness condition the effect of views on the importance of EP elections. The MNL results do not offer as much support for the issue-based hypothesis. Neither the measure for EU issue salience nor the first interaction term (EU salience\*importance of EP elections) appear to be related to vote switching.

Table 4: Predicting defections from government parties in European Parliament elections.

	Pr(Vote Gov. in Nat. Election Opp. in EP Election)
Left-Right Distance	0.09 (0.02)**
EU Distance	-0.03 (0.02)*
Government Approval	1.13 (0.08)**
EP Elections Importance	0.22 (0.09)**
EU Salience	0.05 (0.17)
EP Representational Quality	0.24 (0.07)**
Interaction 1 (EP Importance*EU Salience)	-0.01 (0.08)
Interaction 2 (EP Importance*EP Represent.)	-0.06 (0.03)*
EU Knowledge	0.03 (0.03)
Education	0.01 (0.01)
Sex	-0.03 (0.07)
Age	-0.01 (0.002)**
Socio-Economic Class	-0.04 (0.04)

Notes: Entries are coefficients from a multi-nominal logistic regression.

This model tests the probability of voting for a government party in the last national election and an opposition party in the 2009 EP election as opposed to supporting a government party in both elections.

This model includes dummies for each of the EU's 27 members, but these coefficients are not presented above to conserve space.

\* and \*\* denotes significance at the .05 and .01 level. There are 9,466 observations tested in this model.

Source: The 2009 European Election Survey.

To better interpret these results, Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the substantive effects of the issue-based and institution-induced measures on the probability of government defections in EP elections. While neither measure exerts much influence over government defections, EP representativeness has a slightly larger effect than EU issue salience. Of particular note, EU issue salience has the opposite effect than predicted by the issue-based hypothesis – voters who attribute higher importance to EU issues are more likely to defect from a government party in EP elections.

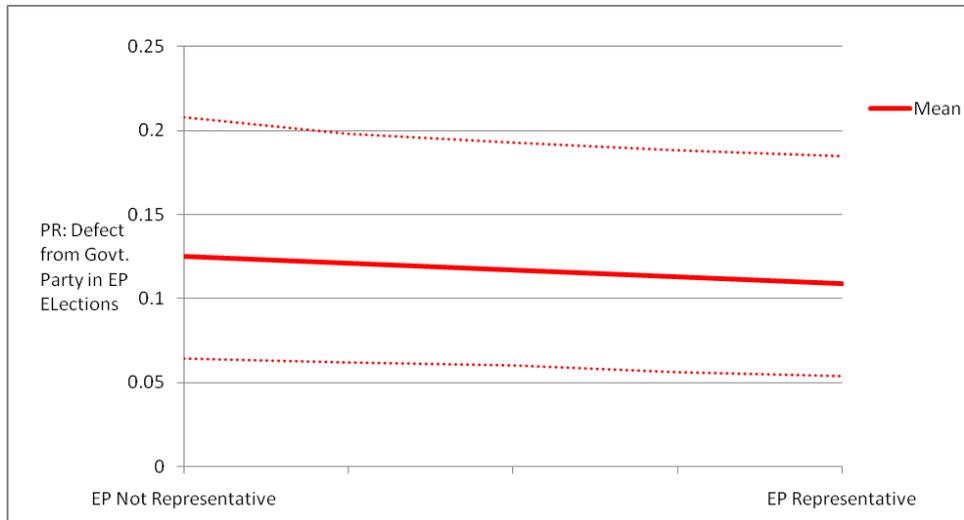


Figure 2: Probability of defecting with different perceptions of the European Parliament.

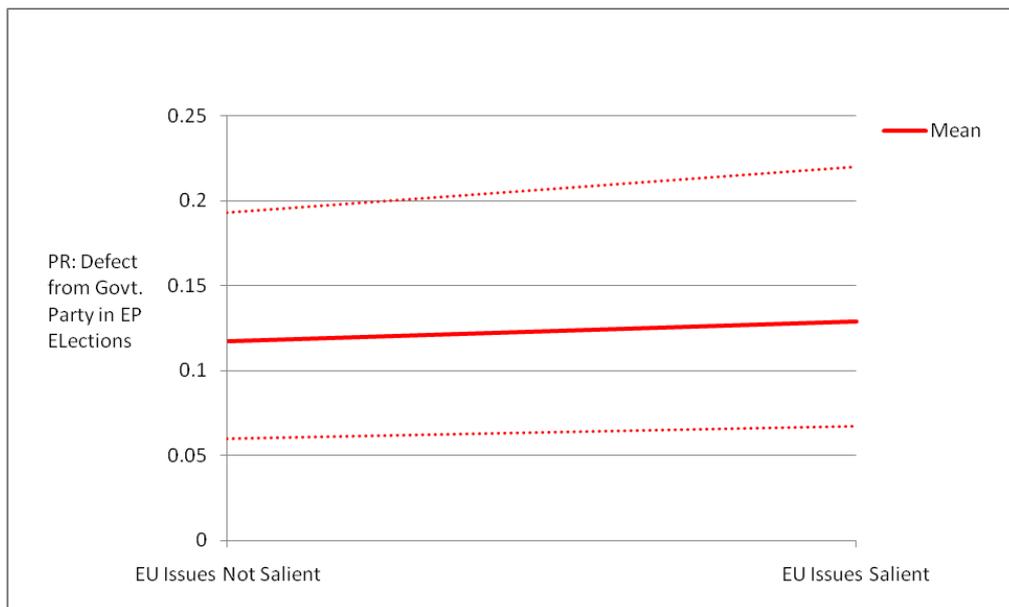


Figure 3: Probability of defecting when EU issues are salient.

Figures 4 and 5 depict the conditional effects of these two measures on the relationship between perceptions of EP elections and defections from the government. Assessments of the EP's representativeness clearly mediate the effect of perceptions of EP elections on vote switching.

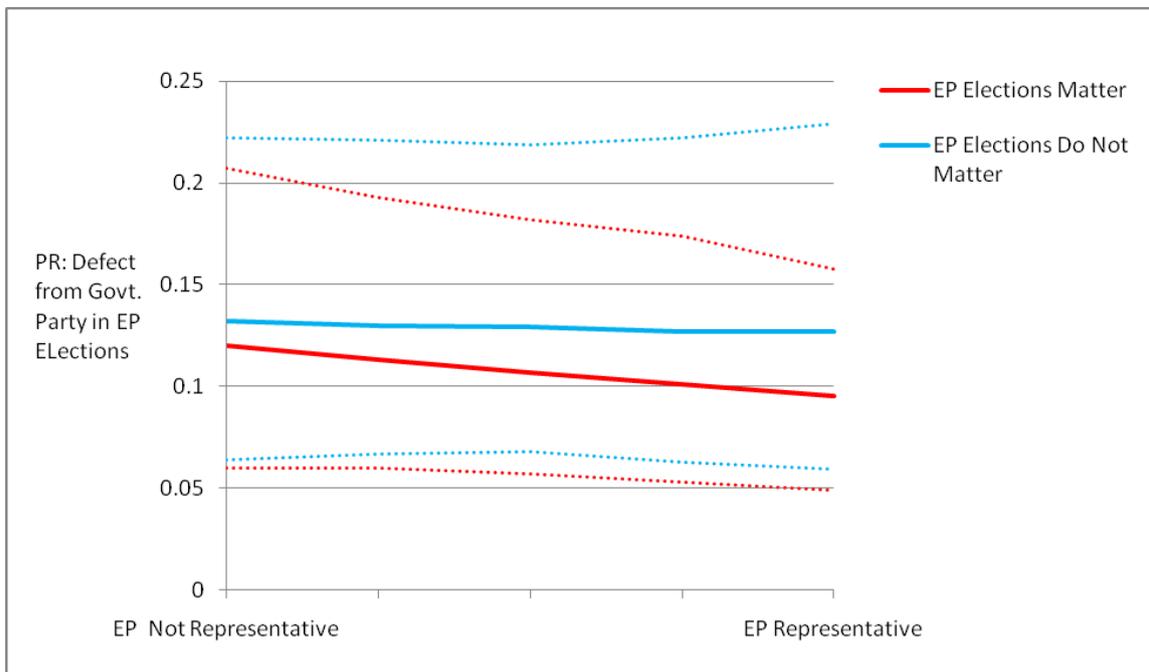


Figure 4: Conditional effects of EP representativeness on perceptions of EP elections.

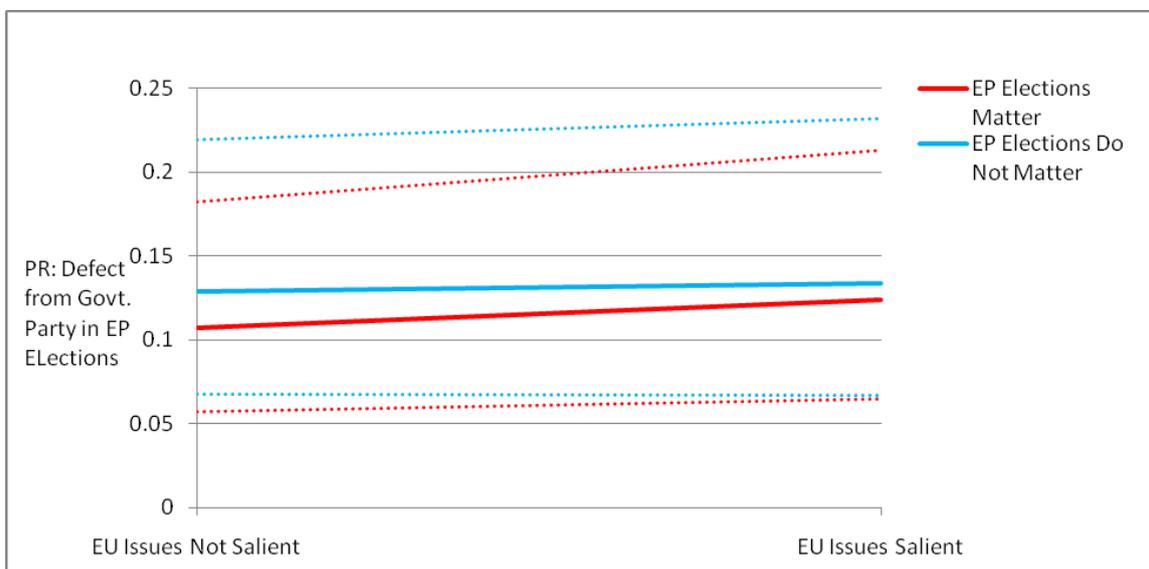


Figure 5: Conditional effects of EU issue salience on perceptions of EP elections.

The difference in the probability of defection (between those who strongly agree and strongly disagree that EP elections matter) increases along with faith in the EP's representational quality. EU issue salience not only has a weaker effect on perceptions of EP elections, but again appears to actually increase the odds of government defections. However, we are cautious in weighting

the results for EU issue salience, as a continuous measure of EU issue salience might reveal a greater effect.

Consistent with previous second order research, we find that the government's positions on left/right issues and European integration and evaluations of government performance lead to vote switching in EP elections. Additionally, we confirm that this voting behavior is related to the perception that EP elections do not matter, and that public doubts about the European Parliament underlie such perceptions. These results indicate that negative perceptions of the Parliament may lead voters to doubt the value of EP elections as instruments of accountability at the EU level and to thus use these elections to address national politics.

### **The Role of National Parliaments**

The public may look to their national parliament as a point of reference when evaluating the value of elections to the European Parliament. Theorizing that individuals accustomed to a powerful national parliament will expect the European Parliament to have a prominent role in EU decision-making, we use the Parliamentary Powers Index (PPI) to investigate the following hypothesis:

*National Filter Hypothesis:* Negative perceptions of the EP will have the strongest effect in countries with empowered parliamentary bodies.

The PPI scores every national parliament in the world on an index of 32 measures of parliamentary power, including 'influence over the executive', 'institutional autonomy', 'specified powers', and 'institutional capacity'. To estimate each parliament's score, the principle investigators take the confirmed number of powers out of the 32 possible in the index – a parliament receiving a score of .75 holds 24 of the 32 powers. Scores are based on the survey responses of country experts who participated in the Legislative Powers Survey and verified by checking national constitutions and secondary sources. The PPI includes all EU countries except Luxembourg and Malta. The mean score for these 25 countries is .73, with Cyprus (.41) and France (.56) receiving the two lowest scores and Germany (.84) and Italy (.84) receiving the two highest scores.

To assess the effect of national parliaments on EP voters, we expand the model of turnout from Table 2 to include PPI scores for 25 EU countries and interaction terms that signify the relationship between the PPI scores and EES respondents' perceptions of the Parliament.<sup>7</sup> Table 5 presents the results of a multi-level mixed-effects logistic regression on turnout in EP elections. The results reflect our earlier analysis of turnout – doubts about the Parliament and the importance of EP elections are associated with abstentions, but the salience of EU issues does not appear to influence whether individuals decide to vote in EP elections.

The coefficient for the PPI measure suggests that individuals from countries with weaker parliaments are more likely to abstain, but this measure does not achieve statistical significance. This is not a surprising result, as we do not theorize that national parliaments directly influence turnout so much as mediate the effects of EP perceptions. Indeed, the interaction term for the PPI and EP representational quality is significant at the .06 level, suggesting that negative perceptions of the Parliament are more likely to prompt abstentions in countries with stronger national parliaments. The perceived importance of EP elections does not appear to interact with the PPI scores, indicating that the public does not relate their experiences with national parliaments to EP elections as much as the EP itself.

<sup>7</sup> The PPI variable is mean-centered prior to generating the interaction terms and running the model.

Table 5: Influence of national parliaments on European Parliament election turnout.

	Abstain (1) Vote (0)
EU Salience	0.01 (0.04)
EP Representational Quality	0.09 (0.02)**
EP Elections Importance	0.49 (0.01)**
EU Knowledge	-0.21 (0.01)**
Education	-0.02 (0.003)**
Sex	-0.08 (0.03)*
Age	-0.03 (0.001)**
Socio-Economic Class	-0.12 (0.01)**
Influence of National Parliament (PPI)	-0.64 (1.75)
Interaction of PPI score with perceptions of EP elections importance	-0.07 (0.17)
Interaction of PPI score with perceptions of EP representational quality	0.34 (0.18)***

Note: Entries are coefficients from a multi-level mixed-effects logit analysis. This model is weighted for each of the EU's 27 members. \* and \*\* denotes significance at the .05 and .01 level. \*\*\* denotes significance at the .06 level. There are 23,504 tested in this model. Country weights were used in this analysis. Source: The 2009 European Election Survey.

Finally, we estimate the differences in the probability of abstaining between negative and positive perceptions of the EP's representational quality, in countries with low, average, and high PPI scores. At the lowest level (.41), moving from negative to positive perceptions of the EP actually increases the odds of abstention by 1.5%. Positive perceptions of the EP have the opposite effect in the middle-scoring EU countries – decreasing the odds of abstention by around 7%. Continuing this trend, individuals with positive EP perceptions are 10% less likely to abstain in the highest-scoring EU countries (.84). The influence of negative EP perceptions is clearly enhanced by strong national parliaments.

## Conclusions

Our findings suggest that perceptions of the European Parliament influence the public's voting behavior in EP elections. The analysis of data from Eurobarometer 69.2 indicates that trust in the European Parliament and perceptions of the EP's influence within the larger EU decision-making process are the strongest predictors that someone plans to participate in the EP elections. Data from the 2009 European Election Study further supports this finding: attitudes toward the European Parliament and EP elections are strongly correlated with reported

abstentions from the 2009 EP election. Furthermore, as anticipated, negative attitudes toward the EP have a stronger effect on turnout in countries with empowered national parliaments. While the effects of institution-based perceptions on vote switching are not as strong, there is still evidence that negative perceptions of the Parliament undermine the public's faith in EP elections and lead EP voters to base their decisions on national politics.

These results address an important division in the second order literature. The macro-level research indicates that national politics dominate EP elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980, Hix and Marsh 2007), while the micro-level evidence demonstrates that EP voters have an interest in EU politics (Hobolt, et al 2008, Clark and Rohrschneider 2009). Perceptions of the EP may well explain this discrepancy. Some EP voters may have an interest in EU affairs, but do not trust that the Parliament can or will address their concerns. These individuals (presumably) use EP elections as opportunities to signal preferences to national political parties, rather than select EU-level representatives. To the extent that such voters act on EU politics, it is to evaluate the performance of national parties on EU issues and not to hold accountable members of the European Parliament.

Additionally, our findings may apply to research on electoral behavior in other multi-level political systems. Local and regional elections often generate lower levels of turnout than national elections. Given that many individuals have a vested interest in local issues such as education and policing, it is clearly possible that differences in voting behavior are due more to perceptions of local and regional bodies than the salience of local and regional issues. Moreover, the power of national parliaments may have similar effects on the public's perceptions of local, regional, and European political bodies. If political and legislative power rests within a national parliament, then some voters may not attribute relevance to elections at any other level of governance.

Finally, this study has implications for discussions about democracy at the EU level. Critiques of EU democracy often focus on the accountability of EU institutions or the public's engagement with EU politics. To the extent that low turnout and national-centric voting is due to perceived weaknesses of the European Parliament, the EU should consider educating the public on the expanded powers of the Parliament or consider further institutional reforms to enhance the legitimacy of the Parliament. The public may simply require additional reasons to have faith in their elected representatives at the EU level.

## Appendix A: Construction of Measures

### 2009 European Election Study

#### **Dependent Variables:**

Participation in EP elections: Respondents were coded as reported voting in the last EP elections (0) and reported not voting in the last EP elections (1). \_

Government Support across National/EP elections: Respondents were coded as (1) voted for a party in a governing coalition in both the last EP election and the last national election, (2) voted for a party not in a governing coalition in both the last EP election and the last national election, (3) voted for a party in a governing coalition in the last national election and a party not in a governing coalition in the last EP election and (4) voted for a party not in a governing coalition in the last national election and a party in a governing coalition in the last EP election. \_

#### **Independent Variables:**

Left/Right Distance: EES respondents were asked to place themselves and each of the largest political parties in their country on a 0-10 scale of left/right ideology, with 0 as the most left and 10 as the most right. For each respondent, we subtracted the left/right score they assigned to the largest coalition partner in the government from their own left/right self-placement score and took the absolute value of the resulting number. The resulting measure ranges from (0) no ideological distance between the respondent and the government to (10) the widest ideological distance.

EU Distance: EES respondents were asked to place themselves and each of the largest political parties in their country on a 0-10 scale of support for European integration, with 0 denoting the view that “unification has already gone too far” and 10 denoting that “unification should be pushed further”. For each respondent, we subtracted the pro/anti-EU score they assigned to the largest coalition partner in the government from their own pro/anti-EU self-placement score and took the absolute value of the resulting number. The resulting measure ranges from (0) no ideological distance between the respondent and the government to (10) the widest ideological distance.

Government Approval: “Let us now come back to Britain. Do you (0) approve or (1) disapprove of the government’s record to date?”

EP Importance: “It is very important for you which particular candidates win seats and become MEPs in the European Parliament elections: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (4) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree”. We select the EES question about candidates rather than political parties, with the hope of controlling for respondents who might agree with this statement due to party loyalty.

EU Salience: Respondents were asked “what do you think is the most important problem facing <your country> today?” and then “as of today, is <the most important problem> mainly dealt with by the regional, national, or European level political authorities?” Respondents who indicated the European authorities were coded 1, and all others were coded 0. Nearly 25% replied that European authorities dealt with the most important problem. \_

EP Representational Quality: “The European Parliament takes into consideration the concerns of European citizens: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (4) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree”.

EU Knowledge: Each respondent was asked to answer four true/false questions about the history and institutions of the EU. The number of correct responses was tallied for each respondent producing a range from (0) no correct answers to (4) correctly answered all four questions.

Education: “How old were you when you stopped full-time education?” We substituted the respondent’s age for those who replied “still studying”.

Sex: (0) female, (1) male.

Age: “What year were you born?” Each respondent’s answer was subtracted from 2009 to estimate their actual age.

Socio-Economic Class: “If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to: (1) the working class, (2) the lower middle class, (3) the middle class, (4) the upper middle class, or (5) the upper class?” I grouped “other”, “don’t know” and refusals into an (6) other category.

Parliamentary Powers Index: The PPI scores each national parliament as “yes” or “no” on 32 different measures of the legislature’s influence over the executive, institutional autonomy, specified powers, and institutional capacity. To estimate each parliament’s score, the PPI’s principle investigators take the confirmed number of powers out of the 32 possible in the index

## **Eurobarometer 69.2**

### **Dependent Variable:**

Likely vote in EP elections: “Can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 10 how likely it is that you would vote in the next Europeans elections in June 2009?” The scale ranges from respondents who definitely do not plan to vote (1) to respondents who definitely plan to vote (10), with “don’t know” responses coded in the middle (5).

### **Independent Variables:**

EU Membership Bad: “Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union is...?” Responses were coded as a good thing (1), neither good nor bad (2), or a bad thing (3), with “don’t know” responses coded in the middle (2).

Country and EU Direction: “At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in...?” Responses were coded as the right direction (1), neither the right nor the wrong direction (2), or the wrong direction (3), with “don’t know” responses coded in the middle (2).

Trust in European Parliament and National Political Bodies: Respondents were asked “please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?” for their national government, their national parliament, and the European Parliament. Responses were coded as tend to trust (1), don’t know (2), or tend not to trust (3).

Importance of European Parliament: Respondents were asked if the European Parliament “plays an important role or not in the life of the European Union?” Responses were coded as important (1); don’t know (2), or not important (3).

Education: “How old were you when you stopped full-time education?” I substituted respondent’s age for those who replied “still studying”.

Age: “How old are you?”

Sex: (1) male, (2) female

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# Political Parties and 2009 European Parliament Election Campaign Content<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

What kinds of messages do political parties put out on the eve of European Parliament (EP) elections? Anecdotal evidence portrays EP election campaigns as either nationally-oriented (featuring domestic political actors and issues), European or Eurosceptic (critiquing the Members of the European Parliament and their records), or so lackluster as to have almost no content at all. To date there has been no attempt to systematically document campaign appeals across parties and countries to determine when and where these sorts of appeals are used. Nor have scholars attempted to predict when party campaign frames will be nationally or European oriented. Here we argue that parties competitive in first-order (national) elections face incentives to stress domestic political issues in their EP campaigns while political parties that flourish in second-order (European) elections possess motives for running more substantive, European-focused campaigns. We then examine the print advertising campaigns of 53 parties in 12 EU member states in the run up to the 2009 European Parliament elections and find evidence supportive of these expectations.

## Political Parties and 2009 European Parliament Election Campaign Content

European Parliament (EP) elections are frequently classified by students of voting behavior as second-order elections (e.g., Reif and Schmitt 1980, Marsh 1998, Ferra and Weishaupt 2004, Schmitt 2005, Brug and Eijk 2007). In contrast to first order elections, which determine who is in power and what policies are pursued, second-order elections are perceived by voters as being less important because there is less directly at stake. As a result, citizens often vote very differently in EP elections than in national ones because the former are not perceived as “counting” for much: voter turnout is lower in European elections than in national polls, political parties holding power in the national government tend to perform poorly while the opposition’s vote share increases, and large political parties lose vote share while smaller ones gain. These latter two effects are more pronounced in the European Union’s (EU) old member states than in the new member states (Koepeke and Ringe 2006, Carrubba and Timpone 2005).

In addition to these studies of voting behavior in EP elections, extensive systematic research has been conducted into the content of parties’ EP election manifestos (Gabel and Hix 2002) and on media coverage of the campaigns (e.g, Vreese et al 2006). Content analysis of party manifestos reveals that political parties have real differences of opinion over the policies under the European Parliament’s purview; in contrast, media studies indicate that national political issues dominate the news in the run up to EP contests.

While EP election voting behavior is relatively well understood, parties’ European platforms

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well documented, and media coverage of Euro-elections well analyzed, political scientists have not systematically recorded political party campaign appeals in European Parliament elections. What messages do parties give voters on the eve of European elections? How do they frame what is at stake in these contests? Although some authors have methodically focused on the intensity of efforts and the methods used in EP campaigns (e.g., the contributions to this volume; Bowler and Farrell 2011), to date there have been no systematic cross-national studies comparing the *substantive content* of political parties' EP campaigns.

Anecdotal accounts of campaigns abound, but they are conflicting and consistent both with the facts that political parties can take clear partisan stances on issues under the Parliament's control and that EP campaign coverage seems nonetheless to focus on national politics (e.g., Lodge 1986, 1990, 1996, 2001, 2005; Eijk and Franklin 1996; Perrineau, Grunberg, and Ysmal 2002, Maier and Tenscher 2006). Some authors observe that parties exploit EP election campaigns to actively build support for their national agendas (e.g., Hix and Marsh 2007, Lodge 2005), while other observers notice that parties use EP elections as an opportunity to launch Eurosceptic campaigns (e.g., Hoboldt, Spoon, and Tilley 2008; Vreese et al 2006), while still other researchers note that parties do little if anything to mobilize voters in EP elections (e.g., Weber 2007, Maier and Tenscher 2006).

The current lack of systematic knowledge about EP campaign content has spillover effects. Tellingly, one recent work which purported to be a "top down" account showing how political parties fail to mobilize their voters in EP elections did not have direct evidence of party activities, and instead was forced to rely on indirect media accounts of party actions (Weber 2007). Depending on a given scholar's preferred perspective, the "fact" that EP campaigns are nationally-oriented/ Eurosceptic/ or boring is in turn used to explain voting behavior and election outcomes in EP contests. Given that empirical evidence of each of the above three campaign strategies exists, however, it is clear that each of these approaches to campaigning for the EP is used by some parties in some instances. There is no single approach to framing EP elections.

The goal of this chapter is to provide a framework to reconcile these disparate observations about European Parliament election campaign content by delineating which specific types of political parties can be expected to put forth which types of campaign appeals under which particular circumstances. We argue that campaign content will vary with the type of party creating it; parties successful in first order elections are likely to stress national issues in EP contests whereas parties more successful in second-order elections are likely to focus on Europe and to do so in a substantive manner. Thus large or incumbent parties are likely to pursue nationally-oriented EP election campaigns or European-oriented campaigns without much policy substance. In contrast, small or opposition parties, especially in old member states, are more likely to create Europe-oriented campaigns richer in policy substance. Here we systematically examine 170 print advertisements created for the 2009 EP elections by over 50 political parties in member states containing 74% of the EU's population and find evidence consistent with our expectations.

We proceed as follows. First we highlight the contradictions in the literature on EP campaigns and then put forth a framework which can be used to reconcile these competing visions of European contests; second we discuss our data collection methods; third we present our empirical results; fourth, we discuss our contributions to the study of European elections.

## How Parties Frame European Parliament Elections

Observers of EP election campaigns to date have painted three contradictory portraits of parties' strategies in these contests. Below, we describe each viewpoint in turn and then provide a framework that can help reconcile these conflicting accounts.

First, many accounts of EP election campaigns find that they lack European content; attention is said to be paid to the domestic political arena of each member state rather than to the policy positions and records of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (e.g., Franklin, van der Eijk, and Marsh 1996: 367; Gabel and Anderson 2002: 911; the 2009 EPERN reports). After editing volumes describing all direct European elections, Juliet Lodge concluded "every EP election so far has largely been *hijacked by national parties peddling a national agenda* that deprives the electorate of the opportunity to consider EU issues" (2005: 4, emphasis added). Authors in this school present an institutional explanation for nationally-oriented content: EP election campaigns are organized not by the Brussels-based transnational party federations, but by individual national parties. The latter's primary mission is to compete for national government office and this goal is said to overshadow EP elections, turning them in to "second order" national contests (Hix and Marsh 2007: 495). Thus for national parties, it is thought to be more important to campaign on domestic issues than on European ones.<sup>4</sup>

A second group of observers of European Parliament election campaigns, in contrast, has found EP campaign appeals to be much more European in orientation than the above scholars would expect. Some have noted "high profile campaigning of Eurosceptic parties" (Hoboldt, Spoon, and Tilley, 2008, 97) in EP elections; indeed over half of the EU member states have party systems characterized by some form of contestation over Europe (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008: 350). Studies of media coverage in EP elections find that, while for the most part campaign coverage is neutral in tone, the media reports which do normatively evaluate the EU are very negative, possibly reflecting such campaign frames (Vreese et al 2006). Eurosceptic campaigns and their media echo have been argued to "activate" voters' perceptions that EP elections are indeed about Europe (Hoboldt, Spoon, and Tilley 2008: 96). These scholars therefore claim it is particularly important for parties to show that they have "gotten their act together" on European issues and demonstrate a coherent stance on European issues. Parties failing to communicate their European positions to voters are argued to suffer EP electoral defeats (Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004). Many researchers observe considerable overlap between the national and European political spaces, suggesting that parties should indeed be able to articulate clear positions on EU issues in campaign advertising as they do in their written manifestos (Gabel and Hix 2002; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002). Thus, this school of thought would imply that it is both rational and feasible for most national political parties to use their EP election campaign materials to establish their European credentials by showcasing both their MEP candidates and their positions on issues relevant to the European Parliament.

Yet a third view of EP election campaigns observes that political parties only devote limited resources to EP campaigns, failing to stress much of anything prior to the EP elections, especially if they are held at midterm in the national electoral cycle (e.g., Knudsen 2009; Krašovec and Lajh 2009). One scholar in this camp argues "whereas in the run-up to national elections parties mobilize their voters by means of information and persuasion, [there is a] mobilization deficit at the midterm" (Weber 2007: 510). Because European elections are seen as less relevant than national ones, and because parties have only limited resources, they will not expend much money, time, or energy on EP campaigns, reserving resources for more

<sup>4</sup> National political party leaders have also been hypothesized to stress national themes because their party is internally divided on Europe (Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996), because Europe is a valence issue making it difficult for parties to distinguish themselves from each other (Lange and Davidson-Schmich 1995), or because they are too Europhile for the general public's taste (Hoboldt, Spoon, and Tilley 2008).

important national contests (Negrine 2006: 38, 40; Maier and Tenscher 2006: 9).<sup>5</sup> Such authors expect that parties would not invest in media professionals to create (m)any new or unique posters for the EP campaign and/or they could decline to print up or distribute many such advertisements. While the latter observable implication is beyond the scope of this chapter<sup>6</sup>, the former could manifest itself in campaign advertising that can be used in either a national or a European election – for example hanging posters showing only the party’s logo – or a generic slogan equally applicable to the domestic and European arenas.

Clearly, then, there is no consensus in the literature as to what type of content can be expected in EP campaigns; moreover, authors in all three camps can cite empirical examples to support their claims. These divergent findings likely stem from the anecdotal nature of single-country case studies, as most empirical evidence about EP campaign content comes from edited volumes featuring different authors’ qualitative accounts of each country’s campaign (e.g., 2009 EPERN reports<sup>7</sup>; Lodge 1986, 1990, 1996, 2001, 2005; Eijk and Franklin 1996; Maier and Tenscher 2006). These authors have a tendency to draw conclusions about party campaigns based on electoral results (which occurred *after* not *during* the campaigns), media reports (which may or may not cover the appeals put forth by political parties), or on a particular (usually Eurosceptic) party’s advertising campaign which attracted a lot of attention in the run up to the election, rather than to systematically discuss the EP campaigns of all national parties. Problems of selection bias and measurement error thus plague this research design. For example, voters may vote against an unpopular national incumbent party and the media may discuss national political issues *because* parties campaign on these grounds *or* these results may occur because parties do not campaign much at all, so that European issues never filter into the national discourse. Only by systematically examining campaign framing by *all* parties prior to the election can conclusions about national party campaign appeals be drawn.

In contrast to the implications of the literature above, we do not expect that such analysis will uncover that all political parties take the same approach to European campaigns; instead we believe that different types of political parties across Europe have different incentives in terms of how to campaign for the Parliament and will thus pursue a variety of campaign strategies. Our approach assumes that national political parties are rational actors and desire to perform as well as they can in both national and European Parliament elections. However, we also recognize that parties have limited resources<sup>8</sup> and, as a result, argue that they will need to prioritize which electoral arena is more important and/or find ways in which campaign content can serve them in both realms. Because not all parties are created equal, they will make different decisions when faced with choices as to how to allocate resources to particular campaigns. In other words, we expect that whether EP campaign materials will be national, European, or neutral in content depends on the party making the appeal. Party campaign strategies should vary predictably depending on, among other factors, whether a party is located in a new or old member state, whether the party is a large or small one, whether it is a member of the domestic government or the opposition, when in the national electoral cycle a party finds itself, and what the party’s ideology is.<sup>9</sup> Here we elaborate on each of these points in turn.

<sup>5</sup> Additional scholars argue that because some parties are internally divided over Europe they prefer to remain silent (e.g., van der Eijk and Franklin 1997, Negrine 2006; Ferrara and Weishaupt 2004; but see Gabel and Anderson 2002, Hooghe and Marks 2002).

<sup>6</sup> See instead work on EP campaign activities by Vreese 2009, Giebler and Wüst, 2010; Bowler and Farrell 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Available at

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/europeanpartieselectionsreferendumsnetwork/europeparliamentalelections>

<sup>8</sup> By “resources” we mean assets such as finances, creativity, members’ willingness to volunteer, etc.

<sup>9</sup> This list may not be exclusive; other variables such as the internal cohesion of a party or the strategies of other parties in the party system may also influence campaign content. Our main point here, however, is that there is no single one-size-fits-all way of campaigning for the EP.

### ***Old vs. New Member States***

Second-order election effects, that is voters feeling free to vote for small, extreme, or opposition parties in an election that doesn't "count", have not been as consistently found in new member states as in older EU members (Carrubba and Timpone 2005, Koepke and Ringe 2006). Thus in long-time EU members, smaller, ideologically extreme, and/or opposition parties have a strong incentive to stress European issues in EP campaigns in order to remind voters that these are second-order and not national elections; in contrast, large, moderate and/or governing parties there would benefit by diverting voters' attention from the second-order nature of EP elections by stressing national themes where they enjoy an advantage. Because second-order election effects are not apparent in new member states, the differences among such parties' party campaign strategies are expected to be less pronounced. Smaller, ideologically extreme, and/or opposition parties in the new member states do not have as much reason to stress the European nature of EP contests and thus may choose to focus their scarce resources on the primary location of party competition – the domestic arena. Thus we would expect more nationally-oriented campaign content in new member states than in long-term EU members, and more thoroughly-developed European appeals in the older member states.

### ***Party Size***

Large political parties – those likely to lead a domestic government – are primarily in the business of winning national elections and possess strong incentives to use their limited resources either to remind voters of their domestic prowess by stressing national issues in EP contests or, if they include European content, not to heavily invest in creating elaborate campaigns, conserving resources for the next national election. Smaller parties are not consistently contenders for national office and thus may not always be as strongly focused on national issues. These differences across party size may be especially observable where large parties have suffered defeats in second-order elections. Voting research has determined that "size matters" in EP elections in old member states, with small parties performing better than larger one in these second-order contests (Ferra and Weishaupt 2004, Schmitt 2005, Hix and Marsh 2007). In this context, reminding voters that the EP election is a second-order one will likely worsen large parties' electoral results. Small parties, in contrast, can improve their chance by reminding voters that elections are about Europe. As a result, small parties may be better served than large ones by expending time and money developing European Parliament election campaigns rich in EP-related substance.

### ***Governing Status***

Domestic incumbents, whether they are large or small parties, have by definition been successful in the national arena and will rationally want to continue in office. To this end, it is unlikely that they would expend scarce resources developing elaborate European-oriented campaigns. Voting research has determined that opposition parties perform better than governing ones in second-order elections (Ferra and Weishaupt 2004, Schmitt 2005, Hix and Marsh 2007). Thus where ruling parties have experienced second-order election effects, reminding voters that the vote is about the European Parliament, its Members', and their records would only seem to further depress their electoral support. Moreover, governing parties enjoy high profile Ministers whose images and foreign-policy competency can cheaply be played up in a campaign. In contrast, opposition parties – especially those who are likely to enjoy a second-order election boost – have fared less well in the domestic arena and might benefit from turning voters' attention to the European realm. To the extent that the domestic government is unresponsive to their positions, such parties may choose to develop substantive European-oriented campaigns in the hope that they can find support to get their policy preferences implemented at the European level. Thus we would expect opposition parties to have more campaigns more focused on the EP and European issues than governing parties.

### ***Timing in the National Electoral Cycle***

When European elections are held at mid-term in the national electoral cycle, political parties may be willing to spend the time, money, and energy needed to develop campaigns that

substantively discuss European issues, as they have fewer competing demands for these resources. Alternatively, parties may fail to develop many campaign appeals at all at mid-term, relying on all-purpose materials usable in any election. Regardless of what they do mid-term, however, as the national election approaches it is likely that limited resources will be diverted to contesting the more important domestic election and EP election campaigns will become more nationally-focused, producing less European or neutral content.

### ***Party Ideology***

Political parties with very distinct ideological appeals – such as single-issue anti-EU parties, far-left, far-right, or Green parties – tend to be small and often in the opposition. As such, like other small or opposition parties, especially where second-order election effects are present, their electoral fortunes are enhanced by stressing European rather than domestic issues. Moreover, because of their distinct stances, the European-oriented campaigns they develop are likely to delve into policy substance which highlights the party's particular ideological approach. In addition, single issue anti-EU parties, given the nature of their ideology, should be especially prone to stressing Europe in their election campaigns.

Finally, to conserve resources, virtually all<sup>10</sup> parties have an incentive to create campaign content that can be used in both domestic and European contests. Such “*neutral*” campaign content may, for example, take the form of a poster featuring the group's logo and saying “Vote!”; such a poster could be hung in any election and reused time and again.<sup>11</sup> Thus we would expect to see all types of political parties making such campaign materials, but they may be particularly attractive for political parties with distinct ideologies as their anti-immigrant, anti-capitalist, pro-environmental stances are likely to dominate their campaign in election after election.

Before moving on to see if empirical evidence supports these hypotheses, a few caveats are in order. We recognize that the above-mentioned incentives are not the only considerations national party leaders have when developing election campaigns. Voters' issue concerns, their knowledge of and attitudes toward the EP, the party's internal cohesion, national traditions, and the actions of other parties all influence the campaign appeals put forth by political party leaders. Our goal is not to explain the exact content of party campaigns or to argue that party unity, national traditions, public opinion, party systems, and unique country-specific events do not matter. Instead, we seek to explain in the broadest terms how a party presents to voters what is at stake in an EP contest. National party leaders enjoy great leeway in selecting the images and phrases in their campaign materials. For example, a Green party under pressure to respond to a period of economic crisis in a Europhile country could, for example, frame the campaign as a fight for a Europe that encourages Green jobs, a struggle to unseat a domestic government that has failed to create new employment in the renewable energy sector, or as an opportunity to remind voters that “the future of work is Green”. It is this choice of frame that we seek to explain.

<sup>10</sup> Here single-issue anti-EU parties are the exception as most do not (seriously) contest national elections.

<sup>11</sup> Another observable implication of this argument would be national parties showing a propensity to use posters provided at no cost to them by a transnational party federation. Indeed we find this to be the case for members of the socialist and Green party families who were offered such materials in 2009. The socialists' “People First” cube (Figure 9) and the greens' “Green New Deal” themes were observable across the continent. For example, the cube is featured in Figure 7 from Slovakia and was found, among other places, on the Romanian PSD/PC and French PS's websites; it is also echoed in the German SPD's design in Figure 8.

## Research Design and Data Collection

While studies of media coverage and of parties' European manifestos provide invaluable information about European Parliament elections, manifestos and news articles may not reflect how parties attempt to frame the election to voters. Parties are very likely aware that most citizens do not read their manifestoes and do not view them as the primary means of communicating with voters. Journalists may focus on national issues because parties are stressing such issues in their EP campaigns or because parties are relatively inactive in campaigning for the EP, leaving reporters to write about the national events to fill a news vacuum. Moreover, while media studies rightly claim that newspapers and evening news broadcasts are an important source of information for citizens about EP elections, newspaper reading and nightly news viewing are declining across Europe (Lauf 2001; for a more nuanced account see Norris 2000). In addition, citizens must actively choose to opt into obtaining the information provided by these sources. Print and television news are only one source of information about parties' EP campaigns and they reach ever fewer citizens.

In contrast, political party posters, campaign information stands, and radio/television commercials are placed in European public spaces where it is harder for citizens – even politically uninterested ones – to opt out of exposure to them. Over 80% of European voters saw campaign advertising before the 2004 EP elections – compared to only 65% of Europeans who read about the contest in a newspaper (Tenscher 2006: 131). Moreover, the more exposure an individual has to party EP campaigns, the more likely that person is to turn out to vote in the elections (Steinbrecher and Huber, 2006: 24) and there is experimental evidence to suggest that campaign advertising influences voters' perceptions of MEP candidates (Raudsaar and Tigasson 2006). Thus political party campaign appeals are key sources of information for citizens as to what EP elections are all about. Indeed, the content of campaign advertising and its effects on voters is routinely studied in domestic electoral settings (e.g., Freedman, Franz and Goldstein 2004; Sides and Karch 2008) and we follow this approach here.

While radio and television ads are a very important platform from which political parties can disseminate campaign appeals, the rules governing European elections make it difficult to systematically compare television or radio campaigns cross-nationally. EP elections are regulated by national electoral laws and very different rules are in place regarding whether radio and television ads are permitted, whether parties may purchase such ads to be shown at any time or only during designated times, and whether (and how much) public funding is available for such advertising (Norris 2000, Farrell 2002). Political parties and/or their supporters are permitted to display posters and distribute fliers in all EU member states, however, and the 2009 European Election Candidate Study found the use of posters and brochures in all 27 countries.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in many of these states, hanging posters in public places is the dominant form of electioneering: almost 70% of Europeans received party fliers in the mail prior to the 2004 EP elections (Tenscher 2006: 31). These materials are also handed out at pre-election events, copied onto websites, and incorporated into television and radio commercials, making them highly representative of a party's appeals as a whole.

Thus, for the analysis below we examine printed campaign materials including posters and brochures. We obtained these in several ways. First, we examined each political party's website in the three months prior to the June 2009 European Elections. Most websites included a press release announcing the launch of the party's EP election campaign, often specifically detailing the posters that were unveiled at the launch and/or showing photos or videos of candidates standing near such posters so that their content could be discerned. Many websites also included downloadable print materials. A second source of information came from media accounts of political party poster campaigns prior to the election. Often the press covered the launch of a party's election campaign, ran articles comparing (and critiquing) party poster

<sup>12</sup> Personal correspondence with Heiko Giebler, 30 April 2010.

campaigns, or used photographs of party posters to illustrate articles about the EP elections. A third source of information came from personal contacts in the countries collecting hard copies of party campaign posters. Importantly, we did *not* rely on any retrospective accounts of the parties' campaigns written following the election; thus the data presented here reflects political parties' actual pre-election campaign strategies and avoids the tendency to characterize campaigns based on voting results.

While we would have ideally studied each political party that campaigned for the European Parliament in every member state in 2009, resource constraints prohibited this approach. Instead we selected fifty-four parties to obtain variance on our independent variables of interest (date of EU accession, party size, governing status, proximity to national election, and party ideology); all parties and their values on the independent variables are listed in the Appendix. Parties studied were from EU founding states, such as Italy and Germany, as well as in new members such as Latvia and Slovenia. In order to assure adequate variation in party size and ideology in our sample, we did not study every party in each country, however. Parties ranged in size from entities such as the British Labour and Conservative parties, both of which have enjoyed single party governments, to small ones such as the Austrian List Hans Peter Martin and German NPD that have never been elected to a national parliament. Parties in government at the time, such as the Irish Fianna Fail and the Romanian PSD + PC, were included in the study as were opposition members, such as the Spanish People's Party and the Czech ČSSD. Some parties, such as those in the UK and the Czech Republic were about to contest a national election; other parties such as those in Italy and Slovenia found themselves at mid-term in the national electoral cycle. Ideologically distinct parties including single-issue anti-EU parties such as the Danish People's Movement Against the EU, Green parties like the Czech Strana zelenych, far-left parties including the Italian Rifondazione Comunisti Italiani, and far-right parties such as the German DVU were studied alongside more mainstream center-left and center-right parties such as the Austrian SPÖ and the French UMP.

After selecting parties and collecting campaign materials, we coded each poster as either national, European, dual, or neutral in content, depending on both the visual image and the headline text. Images coded as "*national*" included pictures of politicians holding national level office and not running for the European Parliament (e.g., a Czech poster featuring Prime Minister Jiri Paroubek), whereas "*European*" images included MEP candidates or other symbols of the European Union such as the Euro, the EU flag, or a transnational party group logo (e.g., the Austrian SPÖ's poster featuring all its MEP candidates). Visuals where national and European images were equally weighted (e.g., the German SPD's poster featuring their national party leader / Chancellor candidate walking in park with their lead MEP candidate) were classified as "*dual*" images. Finally, "*neutral*" images included pictures of ordinary citizens rather than politicians, plants, animals, inanimate objects and national party logos (e.g., the Spanish PP's cartoon of a moped).

Headline text was coded according to the locus of action voters were urged to take; if the poster called for measures in the domestic arena (e.g., the Slovenian Social Democrats' slogan "Slovenia Can No Longer [endure the current national government]") it was coded as *national* in content, whereas large font mentioning activities in the European realm (e.g. the Danish People's Movement Against the EU's slogan "No to the EU's Development Policy") was coded as *European*. Statements articulating no concrete forum for action (e.g., the Austrian Communist Party's "People Instead of Profits") were coded as *neutral*. Smaller print was also examined, but when there was a conflict between the message in headline font and fine print, we used the headline classification because that was more likely to have caught a viewer's eye.

Generally a poster's text and images were equally national or European in tone; where there was a discrepancy between a national or European code for one element, and a neutral classification for the other element, we categorized the poster in the non-neutral group. If parties included national symbols on posters or brochures whose texts extensively critiqued the

EU, we coded the materials as European in tone because the national symbols were used not to make a statement about the domestic government but rather to critique EU policy. Conversely, some posters featured images of a domestic political actor and statements about his/her relationship with the EU; we coded such posters as national in tone because the European Union was being instrumentalized for domestic political purposes. See Figures 1 – 4 for examples of each poster type.



*Figure 1: “National” Campaign Appeal*  
Partito Democratico, Italy: “EU! The EU is dealing with those who become unemployed; Berlusconi isn’t.”



*Figure 2: “European” Campaign Appeal*  
Social Democratic Party, Austria: “June 7<sup>th</sup>: The A Team for Europe” (Depicts only EP candidates.)



*Figure 3: “Dual” Campaign Appeal*  
PSD/PC Romania: “Choose Wisely”  
(Depicts head of national party organization in center, flanked by EP candidtes.)



*Figure 4: Neutral Campaign Appeal*  
Greens, Spain: “Rebel in Green”

To assess the nature of European appeals, we took all “European” materials and further classified them as:

- **Substantive:** Takes a specific stance on a particular European issue (e.g., the Austrian FPÖ’s poster calling for an immediate end to Turkey’s accession talks with the EU)
- **Non-specific:** Contains Europe-related slogans that do not address a particular policy issue (e.g., the French UMP’s “If Europe wants, Europe can” (no details specified as to what exactly Europe could do if it wanted))
- **Personality-based:** Depicts MEP candidates (e.g., the Czech KDU-ČSL’s “Vote for the European Stars” campaign featuring portraits of its candidates for the European Parliament)
- **Get out the vote:** Features the date of the election or other procedural information about voting (e.g., a Spanish PSOE poster encouraging young voters to vote by mail in the EP election)

See Figures 5 – 8 for examples of each type of European appeal.



*Figure 5: “Substantive European” Appeal*

People’s Movement Against the EU, Denmark:

Poster critiques the Lisbon Treaty and questions whether the EU really is a peace project.

When analyzing data, rather than counting every individual poster or brochure a particular party developed, we grouped similar posters together and recorded them once. For example, if a party created posters for each of its MEP candidates, each using the same slogan and visual format, we coded that as one European, personality-based appeal rather than recording each poster separately. We did so because the message sent to the voters would be no different than that made by a party creating a single poster portraying all of its MEPs. Our goal was to avoid biasing the sample by over-reporting parties that created many variations of the same poster. Thus our unit of analysis is a campaign poster/brochure or series of similar posters/brochures; parties can and did utilize multiple posters. To increase the validity of our data, content was coded by both authors. We agreed on the classification of each poster 88.8% of the time. In cases where we disagreed on a categorization, we deliberated and came to a consensus on how an appeal should be coded.



*Figure 6: “Non-Specific” European Appeal*  
 People’s Party, Spain: “Europe goes with you”



*Figure 7: Personality-Based Appeal*  
 Social Democrats, Slovenia: “We put People First: A New Direction for Europe”  
 (Posters depict individual EP candidates and their names.)



Figure 8: “Get out the vote” European Appeal  
 Social Democrats, Germany: “Vote By Mail on June 7<sup>th</sup> for the European Parliament Election.”  
 (The picture is a visual pun; the German word for “election” and “whale” are homophones.)



Figure 9: Transnational Party Federation Campaign Material  
 Cut-out cube developed by the Party of European Socialists

## Results

The 2009 elections to elect the 736 Members of the European Parliament were held between June 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. It was the first election in which Romania and Bulgaria voted at the same time as the other 25 member states and the first held under the Treaty of Nice, which adjusted the number of mandates each member state received, ranging from 5 (Malta) to 99 (Germany). Turnout was typically low, averaging only 43%. Some form of proportional representation was used in every country. The election results favored the national parties who are members of the transnational European People's Party group in the EP (i.e., conservative and Christian Democratic parties); members of this bloc won 264 seats compared with only 161 for members of the other large transnational party federation, the Party of European Socialists. The Green bloc increased its seat total to 53, as did non-affiliated members of the EP (110 seats). Members of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (83 seats), the European United Left (33 seats) and the various Eurosceptic/nationalist party groups (32 seats) all lost mandates.

While the intensity and duration of EP election campaigns varied across the 27 member states, content was surprisingly consistent cross-nationally. In some countries such as the Czech Republic the EP contest monopolized the headlines for months; parties there held high profile events across the country beginning early in the year and developed elaborate campaign materials. In contrast, references to the EP campaign in the British media or on British parties' websites were virtually non-existent. Everywhere, however, the economic crisis dominated the campaign. Parties across the continent put forth proposals for fixing the economy, or at least implied they could do so better than their opponents; the specifics of their plans varied along ideological lines from reining in bankers, to creating Green jobs, to cutting red tape. Of interest here, however, was the fact that the same economic appeal could be framed quite differently. Some socialist parties framed the issue as one for the domestic government - for example the leftist Italian Partito Democratico criticized Berlusconi's handling of unemployment. Some socialists framed their campaign in European terms; the Romanian Social Democratic Party ran a campaign using the transnational Party of European Socialists' slogan "A New Direction for Europe: People First." Still other socialists took a neutral approach; the German Social Democrats created a poster suitable for both the June 2009 European and September 2009 national election showing a housekeeper making a bed with the slogan "Fair Wages for Good Work: So that she too can live from her job."

Table 1 summarizes the results of our analysis. Of the 107 distinct campaign posters analyzed, only 26% were overtly national or dual national/European. The majority of materials analyzed (55%) were European in content; a final 19% of posters and brochures were categorized as neutral. Thus contrary to the widespread perception that national parties actively exploit European elections as an opportunity to highlight domestic issues and personalities, only a minority of the campaign materials studied made explicitly national appeals. Instead, the most common type of European Parliamentary electoral appeal observed had some European content.

However, there was considerable variation among these European appeals, as depicted in Table 2. Only 34% of all European appeals focused on substantive policy questions; for example, the German Republikaner's campaign brochure was headlined "Get out of *This* EU" and listed the party's objections to the Lisbon Treaty, the Euro, the EU's accession negotiations with Turkey, and certain EU regulations. These substantive posters were a minority of those studied, however; instead, political parties most frequently created European-oriented posters featuring their MEP candidates (41% of all European appeals studied). These types of billboards were the single most common type of poster found, used in 8 of the 12 countries studied, created by political parties of all sizes, governing statuses, and ideological persuasions; starkly similar images of MEP candidates walking toward the camera appeared across the continent (see Figures 2 and 3). An additional 18% of European-focused posters included non-specific slogans; for example, in Germany the Christian Democratic Union ran a series of

posters showing ordinary citizens next to the slogan “WE in Europe.” A final 7% of the European appeals studied featured neutral or get-out-the-vote related information; for example, the Italian communists crafted a poster showing a woman’s head bumping against a soccer-ball-shaped party logo and the words “Head’s Up: Election Coming!” Thus, although over half of the EP election campaign materials studied focused on Europe, they did so without much substance, featuring instead pictures of candidates, slogans with little policy substance, and factual information about the day of the election.

*Table 1: Content of 2009 European Parliament Campaign Appeals*

	<b>National / Dual Appeal</b>	<b>European Appeal</b>	<b>Neutral Appeal</b>
<b>All Appeals Studied<sup>13</sup> (N=107)</b>	26%	55%	19%
<b>Old Member State Appeals (N =74)</b>	20%	56%	24%
<b>New Member State Appeals<sup>14</sup> (N = 33)</b>	39%	55%	6%
<b>Large Party Appeals (N=47)</b>	43%	42%	15%
<b>Small Party Appeals<sup>15</sup> (N=60)</b>	13%	65%	22%
<b>Governing Party Appeals (N=39)</b>	38%	49%	13%
<b>Opposition Party Appeals<sup>16</sup> (N=68)</b>	19%	59%	22%
<b>Mid-term Election Year Appeals (N = 80)</b>	22%	58%	20%
<b>National Election Year Appeals<sup>17</sup> (N = 27)</b>	37%	48%	15%
<b>Eurosceptic Party Appeals (N =6)</b>	--	100%	--
<b>Far Left Party Appeals (N= 10)</b>	20%	70%	10%
<b>Far Right Party Appeals (N=19)</b>	5%	58%	37%
<b>Green Party Appeals (N = 10)</b>	--	60%	40%
<b>Other Parties’ Appeals<sup>18</sup> (N=61)</b>	39%	48%	13%

In keeping with the framework presented earlier in the chapter, the nature of campaign content varied predictably with the type of party creating it. The following sections explore this systematic variation. As expected, there were statistically significant differences between the campaign content in the *old and new member states*; new member states had almost twice as many national appeals (39%) than the old member states (20%) (see Table 1). When Europe was discussed, the campaign content observed was most often substantive in nature in the old member states whereas the most common type of appeal in the new member states focused on personalities rather than issues (see Table 2).

*Party size* also exerted a significant impact on campaign content. As expected, the biggest parties holding a chance at serving in national governments were particularly prone to national appeals. Forty-three percent of large party appeals featured national or dual European/national content compared to only 13% for small parties (see Table 1). The differences in party size were starker in the old member states – where 40% of large party appeals fit these categories in contrast to only 7% of small parties’ campaign materials – than in new member states – where 47% of large party and 31% of small party posters made national or dual appeals.<sup>19</sup> As small

<sup>13</sup> The unit of analysis here (“appeal”) is a campaign poster or a series of campaign posters with similar content.

<sup>14</sup> Old vs. New Member States, Chi<sup>2</sup> pr = .026.

<sup>15</sup> Large vs. Small Parties, Chi<sup>2</sup> pr = .003.

<sup>16</sup> Governing vs. Opposition Parties, Chi<sup>2</sup> pr = .077.

<sup>17</sup> Mid-term vs. National Election Year, Chi<sup>2</sup> test not significant.

<sup>18</sup> Chi<sup>2</sup> test not reliable for party ideology; cells contain too few observations.

<sup>19</sup> Difference in old member states significant (Chi<sup>2</sup> pr = .002); Chi<sup>2</sup> not reliable for new member states due to cells containing too few observations.

Eastern European parties do not enjoy an advantage in EP elections, they seem more inclined than their Western European counterparts to frame the European contests as domestic ones.

Table 2: Types of European Appeals in the 2009 European Parliament Election Campaigns<sup>20</sup>

	Substantive	Personality	Non-Specific	GOTV/Neutral
<b>All European Appeals (N= 59)</b>	34%	41%	18%	7%
<b>Old Member State Appeals (N = 41)</b>	37%	34%	24%	5%
<b>New Member State Appeals (N = 18)</b>	28%	56%	5%	11%
<b>Large Party European Appeals (N = 20)</b>	10%	45%	35%	10%
<b>Small Party European Appeals (N = 39)</b>	46%	39%	10%	5%
<b>Governing Party European Appeals (N = 19)</b>	21%	42%	26%	11%
<b>Opposition Party European Appeals (N = 40)</b>	40%	40%	15%	5%
<b>Mid-Term Election Year European Appeals (N = 46)</b>	30%	41%	22%	7%
<b>National Election Year European Appeals (N = 13)</b>	46%	38%	8%	8%
<b>Euroceptic Party European Appeals (N = 6)</b>	83%	17%	--	--
<b>Far Left Party European Appeals (N = 7)</b>	43%	43%	--	14%
<b>Far Right Party European Appeals (N = 11)</b>	55%	27%	18%	--
<b>Green Party European Appeals (N = 6)</b>	34%	34%	16%	16%
<b>Other Parties' European Appeals (N = 29)</b>	17%	52%	24%	7%

When political parties did frame EP elections as a contest over Europe, however, the nature of their European appeals differed with party size; as expected, small parties were more prone to developing issue-based campaign posters than their larger counterparts were (see Table 2.) Almost half (46%) of the small party European appeals observed were substantive in nature compared to only 10% of the large parties' European appeals. Large parties created non-specific European posters at three times the rate of small parties (35% vs. 10%); a similar pattern was observed with neutral or get-out-the-vote type posters (10% of large parties' European appeals vs. 5% of small parties').

Whether a party was a member of the domestic *government or opposition* made a significant difference in the content of its 2009 EP election campaign posters. Parties serving in the national government were more prone to framing the EP election in national terms; across the EU, while 38% of incumbent party campaign messages featured domestic personalities or issues, only 19% of opposition electoral materials did so. (see Table 1). Many governing parties sought to capitalize on the visibility of their members of the national government. For example, the German CDU and the French UMP created posters featuring Merkel and Sarkozy, even though these individuals were not MEP candidates.

In the old member states, 40% of governing party appeals were national in tone, compared to 13% of opposition party campaign materials.<sup>21</sup> In the new member states, however, there were no significant differences between governing and opposition parties' use of national/dual appeals (37% vs. 43% respectively). In old member states 61% of opposition party appeals were European compared to only 40% of governing parties'.<sup>22</sup> The gap was much closer in the new member states, however, with 50% of opposition and 58% of governing party appeals being European in nature, reflecting East European opposition parties' tendency to frame EP contests as national ones. The lack of second-order election effects in Eastern Europe appears to discourage opposition parties from framing the EP elections as a European contest.

<sup>20</sup> The unit of analysis here ("appeal") is a campaign poster or a series of campaign posters with similar content. Chi<sup>2</sup> test not reliable due to cells containing too few observations.

<sup>21</sup> Chi<sup>2</sup> pr = .03.

<sup>22</sup> Chi<sup>2</sup> pr = .04.

Also as expected, opposition parties created substantive European appeals more often than members of national governments did (see Table 2.) Forty percent of opposition parties' European appeals were substantive compared to only 21% for governing parties. In our sample, the latter utilized neutral or non-specific appeals twice as frequently as opposition parties.

The *timing in the national electoral cycle* did not achieve statistical significance (see Table 1.) Nationally-oriented appeals were more frequent in both old and new EU member states with a domestic election approaching - but not significantly so. Across Europe, 37% of the observed election-eve appeals were nationally-oriented, compared to only 22% of the appeals developed midpoint in a national election cycle; 58% of mid-term election year posters were European compared to only 48% for national election years. As expected above, non-specific European appeals were observed more frequently in posters created at mid-term in the national electoral cycle (22%) than in national election year posters (8%). However, in contrast to expectations, substantive European appeals were more frequent in a national election year (46%) than in a mid-term election year (30%). This may be because parties devote altogether more resources toward developing campaigns in a national election year with the spillover effect that they can more substantively discuss European issues in such years.

*Party ideology* did perform as expected. Anti-EU, far-left, far-right, and Green parties rarely, if ever, produced nationally-focused materials (see Table 1). None of the single-issue Eurosceptic and Green parties studied used national or dual appeals in their 2009 EP campaigns. Far-left parties took swipes at the economic records of domestic political actors 20% of the time, and far-right parties capitalized on the visibility of national politicians presenting dual appeals in only 5% of the cases studied. In contrast, 39% of the mainstream parties' appeals focused on national issues or personalities. Instead, ideologically-distinct parties more commonly developed European and neutral campaign materials. Unsurprisingly, 100% of single-issue anti-EU party campaign posters featured European-oriented appeals; over half of the Green, far-left, and far-right campaign materials collected discussed Europe compared to less than half for other parties. Far-right and Green parties produced posters usable in either a domestic or European election in 37% and 40% of the materials studied, respectively, compared to only 13% of other parties' materials.

The European-focused posters and brochures developed by these ideologically-distinct parties were generally substantive in their approach (see Table 2). Eighty-three percent of single issue anti-EU parties' campaign materials focused on policy substance as did 55% of the far-right's, 43% of the far-left's, and 34% of Green party appeals; of the other parties' European appeals studied a mere 17% were substantive in nature. Eurosceptic parties very often used the EP election campaign as an opportunity to detail the specific aspects of the European Union they objected to; the Eurosceptic Danish People's Movement Against the EU ran a series of ads, each opposing a particular aspect of the EU including the Euro, the Lisbon Treaty, certain ECJ decisions, and EU welfare, environmental, foreign aid, and military policies. Far-right parties used the election to call for an EU hostile to immigration and cultural diversity; the German People's Union created a poster portraying Berlin's famous Winged Victory statue wearing a headscarf with red crescents on it and the slogan "Europe Defend Yourself on June 7<sup>th</sup>: Islamification No Thank You!" Far-left parties decried what they saw as an EU dominated by the interests of capital; the Austrian Freedom Party called for "Social Warmth rather than an EU for Big Business". Green parties demanded an ecologically-friendly Europe; the Scottish Greens called for a "Green New Deal" in which EU policies could promote job creation in the clean energy sector.

Our analysis also found evidence to support our expectation that rational parties with resource constraints have incentives to create materials featuring slogans equally applicable in the domestic and European arenas; these low-budget *neutral* appeals constituted 19% of all campaign materials studied (see Table 1). For example, the Spanish People's Party hung posters with their party logo and the word "Vote" above it. As expected, single-issue anti-EU

parties were the exception here and no evidence of their using this tactic was found in our sample. Also as expected, such appeals were particularly popular among far-right and Green parties (see Table 2). For example the far-right German NPD ran posters of Muslim women carrying tote bags under the headline “Have a Good Trip Home” and the French Europe-Ecologie exhorted “You can’t imagine the power of ecology!”<sup>23</sup> In contrast to expectations, far-left parties rarely created neutral appeals, preferring either to attack the domestic government’s record or call for a more left-wing EU.

### **Summary**

Systematic analysis of over fifty political parties’ 2009 European Parliament election appeals thus finds evidence consistent with the three prevailing accounts of EP campaign content: national, European, and neutral appeals were all utilized. The types of appeals posited varied significantly with political party type. National appeals were favored by large, governing parties in old member states and by many parties in the new member states; European appeals were more commonly put forth by small or opposition parties in the old member states; and neutral appeals found particular resonance with far-right and Green parties. Of the European appeals, substantive ones were created most frequently by single-issue Eurosceptic, small or opposition political parties.

### **Contributions**

This chapter has made two primary contributions to our understanding of EP election campaign content. First, in contrast to the prevailing qualitative, single-country studies of such campaigns written with an eye to election results, we have taken a more systematic multi-country approach, documenting the campaign materials developed by a wide range of political parties in advance of the 2009 EP election. This approach reveals that, contrary to many retrospective accounts of EP campaigns, most of the posters and brochures put out at election time are *not* about national issues and personalities, although as others have observed such campaign materials do exist. Instead, a majority of the printed matter put out by the parties under study did indeed have something to do with Europe, as expected by other observers of EP campaigns. In contrast to widespread characterizations of EP campaigns as Eurosceptic in tone, however, we found that most of the materials we classified as “European” simply depicted MEP candidates, provided information about the date of the election, or contained a non-specific Europe-related slogan. Finally, in keeping with still other qualitative accounts, almost 20% of the campaign material could be classified neither as European nor national in focus, making such materials usable in both arenas. Our study provides other scholars with a detailed and nuanced snapshot of 2009 EP election campaign activities. Our approach to documenting EP campaign content can be replicated in future EP elections, creating an even larger dataset with which to test our – and others’ – hypotheses about EP campaign content.

The second main contribution of this chapter has been to provide a theoretical framework with which to reconcile the many competing claims about EP election campaign content. We argue that, depending on their position in the first-order (national) arena, different political parties will have different incentives when preparing campaign appeals for European Parliament elections. Political parties which successfully contest national elections – that is, the largest two political parties in a given country and other members of national governments in the old member states – have the greatest incentive to frame EP contests as being about national issues and personalities, for those first order concerns are of most importance to them. Under pressure from smaller or opposition parties to show their European credentials, these parties do

<sup>23</sup> Clearly these slogans are not “neutral” in the policy sense – they obviously represent distinct ideological positions. For our purposes, however, they do not convey to the voters whether these policies should be passed at the European or national level. As a result, these posters could easily be reused in a national election.

create European-oriented campaign materials, but such print matter usually only includes pictures of MEP candidates or slogans devoid of policy substance, rather than a substantive discussion of the EP's record.

The incentives facing smaller political parties with distinctive ideologies (including anti-EU, far-left, far-right, and Green parties), and members of the domestic opposition in the old member states, are quite different. Because such parties tend to perform better in second-order than first-order contests, these parties possess a motive to frame EP elections as being about Europe (the second-order arena) rather than about domestic politics. As a result, these parties are more likely to create campaign materials that not only focus on Europe, but also do so in a substantive matter, discussing their stances on particular European policies. They are much less prone to crafting nationally-oriented content than are the parties discussed above. This means the information voters receive during election campaigns about the European Parliament and issues in its purview is quite slanted in its orientation. Green and far-right parties also developed neutral appeals stressing a Green or far-right agenda applicable in both European and national elections. In sum, the varying qualitative accounts of EP election content can be reconciled by examining the incentives various political parties have to frame EP elections as national, European, or generic contests.

## Appendix I: Cases

Party	Country	Date Joined EU <sup>24</sup>	Midterm Election? <sup>25</sup>	Party Size <sup>26</sup>	In Government? <sup>27</sup>	Single-Issue Eurosceptic Party <sup>28</sup>	Far Left Party <sup>29</sup>	Far Right Party <sup>30</sup>	Green Party <sup>31</sup>
<b>Buendins 90/Gruenen</b>	Germany	Founding member	No	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	Yes
<b>BZOe</b>	Austria	1995	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	Yes	No
<b>CDU</b>	Germany	Founding member	No	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>Conservatives</b>	UK	1973	No	Large	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>CSSD</b>	Czech	2004	No	Large	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>DeSUS</b>	Slovenia	2004	Yes	Small	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>DVU</b>	Germany	Founding member	No	Small	Opposition	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Europe-Ecologie</b>	France	Founding member	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	Yes
<b>FDP</b>	Germany	Founding member	No	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>Fianna Fail</b>	Ireland	1973	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>FPOe</b>	Austria	1995	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Front de Gauche</b>	France	Founding member	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	Yes	No	No

<sup>24</sup> In our analysis “old member states” are defined as those joining the EU in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; “new member states” joined in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>25</sup> Countries which in spring 2009 anticipated holding a national election before June 2010 were not considered to be at mid-term; all other cases were considered at mid-term.

<sup>26</sup> “Large” parties were the top two vote getters in the previous national election; all other parties were coded as “small”.

<sup>27</sup> Parties holding seats in the national cabinet were classified as “government” parties; all others were classified as “opposition” parties.

<sup>28</sup> Parties coded “yes” were parties whose *raison d’etre* is to oppose the EU, rather than political parties that take a wide range of stances including Eurosceptic positions; all others were coded “no.”

<sup>29</sup> Parties coded “yes” were members or aspiring members of the transnational European United Left parliamentary group in the EP; all others were coded “no.”

<sup>30</sup> Parties coded “yes” were members or aspiring members of the Non-Inscrits in the EP whose platforms went beyond opposition to the EU to include overt hostility to immigration and multiculturalism.

<sup>31</sup> Parties coded “yes” were members or aspiring members of the transnational European Greens parliamentary party group in the EP; all others were coded “no.”

**Appendix II: Cases, cont.**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Date Joined EU</b>	<b>Midterm Election?</b>	<b>Party Size</b>	<b>In Government?</b>	<b>Single-Issue Euro-sceptic Party</b>	<b>Far Left Party</b>	<b>Far Right Party</b>	<b>Green Party</b>
<b>Front National</b>	France	Founding member	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Il Popolo della Liberta</b>	Italy	Founding member	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>Izquierda-unida</b>	Spain	1986	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	Yes	No	No
<b>June Movement</b>	Denmark	1973	Yes	Small	Opposition	Yes	No	No	No
<b>KDU/CSL</b>	Czech	2004	No	Small	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>KPOe</b>	Austria	1995	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	Yes	No	No
<b>KSCM</b>	Czech	2004	No	Small	Opposition	No	Yes	No	No
<b>Labour</b>	UK	1973	No	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>L'AutoNomia</b>	Italy	Founding member	Yes	Small	Opposition	Yes	No	No	No
<b>LDS</b>	Slovenia	2004	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	UK	1973	No	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>List H.P. Martin</b>	Austria	1995	Yes	Small	Opposition	Yes	No	No	No
<b>LNNK</b>	Latvia	2004	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>MSR</b>	Spain	1986	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	Yes	No
<b>N.S.i.</b>	Slovenia	2004	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>NPD</b>	Germany	Founding member	No	Small	Opposition	No	No	Yes	No
<b>ODS</b>	Czech	2004	No	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>OeVP</b>	Austria	1995	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>Partito Democratico</b>	Italy	Founding member	Yes	Large	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>PD/PD-L</b>	Romania	2007	Yes	large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>People's Movement against the EU</b>	Denmark	1973	Yes	Small	Opposition	Yes	No	No	No

**Appendix III: Cases, cont.**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Date Joined EU</b>	<b>Midterm Election?</b>	<b>Party Size</b>	<b>In Government</b>	<b>Single Issue Eurosceptic Party</b>	<b>Far Left Party</b>	<b>Far Right Party</b>	<b>Green Party</b>
<b>PS</b>	France	Founding member	Yes	Large	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>PNL</b>	Romania	2007	Yes	Large	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>PP</b>	Spain	1986	Yes	Large	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>PSD + PC</b>	Romania	2007	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>PSOE</b>	Spain	1986	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>Republikaner</b>	Germany	Founding member	No	Small	Opposition	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Rifondazione Comunisti Italiani</b>	Italy	Founding member	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	Yes	No	No
<b>SD</b>	Slovenia	2004	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>SDS</b>	Slovenia	2004	Yes	Large	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>Sinistra e Liberta (Green list)</b>	Italy	Founding member	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	Yes
<b>Slovenian Greens</b>	Slovenia	2004	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	Yes
<b>SLS</b>	Slovenia	2004	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>SPD</b>	Germany	Founding member	No	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>SPOe</b>	Austria	1995	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>Strana zelenych</b>	Czech	2004	No	Small	Government	No	No	No	Yes
<b>Tautas Partija</b>	Latvia	2004	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>UDMR</b>	Romania	2007	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	No
<b>UKIP</b>	UK	1973	No	Small	Opposition	Yes	No	No	No
<b>UMP</b>	France	Founding member	Yes	Large	Government	No	No	No	No
<b>Verde (Spanish greens)</b>	Spain	1986	Yes	Small	Opposition	No	No	No	Yes

**Appendix IV: Cases, cont.**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Date Joined EU</b>	<b>Midterm Election?</b>	<b>Party Size</b>	<b>In Government</b>	<b>Single Issue Eurosceptic Party</b>	<b>Far Left Party</b>	<b>Far Right Party</b>	<b>Green Party</b>
<b>N = 53 parties</b>	N = 12 countries	Old Member States = 35 parties New Member States = 18 parties	Mid-term = 37 parties National Election = 16 parties	Large = 22 parties Small = 31 parties	Government = 18 parties Opposition = 35 parties	N = 5 parties	N = 5 parties	N = 7 parties	N = 6 parties

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# Punishing Incumbents by Voting Independent? Cleavages as Constraints on Vote-Switching in the 2009 European Elections in Estonia<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

While independent candidates rarely perform well in party-centered systems, a genuinely independent candidate attracted a quarter of the nationwide vote in the 2009 European Parliament elections in Estonia. This study uses data from the Estonian case to address the question of why voters vote for independents. It develops and tests two explanations: the first construes mass vote for an independent candidate as a manifestation of anti-party sentiment, while the second argues that voting independent constitutes a variation on the familiar theme of punishing the incumbents in second-order elections. The results lend strong support to the latter explanation, suggesting that voting independent constituted a low-cost strategy for punishing the incumbents in a context where strong socio-political cleavages inhibited vote-switching to the opposition.

## Introduction

The results of the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections in Estonia were truly out of the ordinary. To the surprise of observers, the six independent candidates included on the ballot took 30.4 percent of the nationwide vote. A vast majority of these votes went to Indrek Tarand, a former high-ranking civil servant who had run a campaign marked by strong anti-party rhetoric. Tarand won 25.8 percent of the vote, a mere 1046 votes less than the best-performing party. Having spent less than 2000 euros on his campaign (and having borrowed money from his mother to pay his registration deposit), Tarand secured one of Estonia's six seats in the European Parliament.

This result is unprecedented on many levels. To be elected to the European Parliament as an independent candidate is a rare accomplishment. Of the 736 members elected to the EP for the 2009-2014 term, only three were elected as independents (one from Romania, one from Ireland, and one from Estonia). Between 1999 and 2007, five individuals entered the EP as independent candidates (four from Ireland, one from Romania). While the success of independents in Ireland can be attributed to the country's candidate-centered electoral system,<sup>3</sup> the seat allocation procedure used in the 2009 EP elections in Estonia was closed-list proportional representation (PR) – the type of electoral system considered to be least conducive to the electoral strength of independents (Brancati 2008). While Romania also uses closed-list PR, the independents elected in 2007 and 2009 won less than 5 percent of the nationwide vote – an outcome much more consistent with the expected effects of the electoral system. Both also had

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<sup>3</sup> Ireland and Malta are the only countries in the EU that use the single transferable vote system.

close ties to certain political parties.<sup>4</sup> Tarand, in contrast, was a genuinely independent candidate, not backed by any political party, significant interest group or civil society organization.

Tarand's case is also unique in the context of Estonia's electoral history. Since 1992, independent candidates have won, on average, 1.3 percent of the vote in general elections. In the 2007 elections to the *Riigikogu*, independent candidates received only 0.1 percent of the vote. In the country's first-ever EP elections, held in May 2004, the combined vote share of four independent candidates was 5.7 percent. Thus, Tarand's triumph in the 2009 contest constitutes a rare example of strong independent performance in a party-centered system that cannot be explained away by reference to electoral system effects, the peculiarities of national political traditions, overt or covert backing by political parties or other influential organizations, or the candidate's own material resources.

This chapter examines voting behavior in the 2009 EP elections in Estonia in an attempt to understand the logic that led over a quarter of the voters to cast a ballot for an independent candidate. The starting point for our analysis is the recognition that EP elections constitute second-order national elections, where less is at stake for both parties and the voters, and which the voters use not to express preferences about European integration but to send signals to the national parties, and in particular, the political incumbents (e.g. Reif and Schmitt 1980, Marsh 1998, Koepke and Ringe 2006, Hix and Marsh 2007). Within this framework, we develop two explanations for the voting behavior observed in the Estonian case. The first explanation builds on the strand of research that links the electoral performance of independent candidates to the robustness of the voter-party linkage, and more specifically, to the prevalence of anti-party sentiment among the electorate. This explanation coincides with the dominant domestic interpretation of the results of the 2009 vote in Estonia, and is in line with the anti-party message that dominated Tarand's campaign. A rival explanation, which combines the predictions of the second-order national elections thesis with the influence of strong socio-political cleavages, construes the success of Tarand as a variation on the familiar theme of punishing the political incumbents. According to this explanation, Tarand constituted a convenient instrumental choice for habitual government party supporters who wished to punish the incumbents in a context where strong social cleavages and ideological differences inhibited vote-switching to the opposition. Both explanations yield a number of empirical predictions about patterns of vote-switching and voter characteristics that we test with individual-level data from a post-election survey conducted in the framework of the European Elections Study (EES 2009, van Egmond et al. 2009). The main empirical question addressed in this chapter is: what kind of voters voted for Indrek Tarand and how did they differ from party voters and non-voters? The results of the empirical analysis enable us to answer the question of whether the vote for Tarand should be interpreted as a vote against political parties or as a vote against political incumbents.

While the immediate objective of this study is to understand the logic of the vote in the intriguing Estonian case, the study also contributes to the study of voting behavior more generally. Although interest in independent candidates is on the rise (e.g. Brancati 2008), we still know relatively little about why people vote for independent candidates, and under what circumstances they might do so *en masse*. The Estonian case is particularly well suited for examining the question of how voters who vote for independent candidates differ from party-voters and non-voters: due to the extraordinarily large number of votes for an independent candidate, the analysis does not suffer from the problem of 'small n' that has plagued studies on small party and independent votes (van der Eijk *et al* 2006, 438). Second, an analysis of the Estonian case helps cast light on the question of why people vote differently in EP elections

<sup>4</sup> László Tőkés, elected to the EP as an independent candidate in 2007, was backed by Fidesz, the main opposition party in Hungary. Elena Bănescu, daughter of the incumbent president of Romania, had close ties with the Democratic Liberal Party, which she rejoined immediately after the election.

and first-order elections. While ‘voting differently’ has been generally understood as voting for a different party, the Estonian case suggests that the second-order setting has characteristics that may lead voters (and candidates) to circumvent parties altogether.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. The second section explains how voting in second-order elections (SOE) differs from voting in first-order elections, and shows how certain structural conditions associated with the SOE setting strengthen the position of independent candidates. The third section outlines two versions of protest-voting compatible with the relevant literature as well as the facts on the ground, and identifies a number of empirical propositions about voting behavior consistent with each account. The fourth section presents a brief overview of the 2009 EP election in Estonia, assessing the degree to which the electoral context and aggregate results lend plausibility to the competing explanations. The fifth section uses individual-level data to empirically test the propositions derived from the two rival explanations. The conclusion summarizes the main results and discusses the implications of our findings.

### **Why Voters Vote Differently in European Parliament Elections**

People vote differently in EP elections: compared to general elections, there is a lower turn out, and those who do vote are more inclined to support opposition parties than government parties (Flickinger & Studlar 2007, Mattila 2003). They are also more prone to vote for small parties - including protest parties and ideologically extreme parties - than for the mainstream parties they would support in a general election (Carruba & Timpone 2005). A powerful explanation for these trends is offered by the second-order national elections thesis, a dominant approach to EP elections that has generated a wealth of theoretical and empirical research (Reif and Schmitt 1980, Reif 1984, Marsh 1998, Koepke and Ringe 2006, Hix and Marsh 2007, Schmitt 2009). According to this model, EP elections are ‘national’ because voters choose among national parties who run campaigns focusing predominantly on national issues. They are ‘second-order’ because in contrast to first-order elections, they have almost no implications for the allocation and exercise of executive power. Because government formation is not an issue, less is at stake in EP elections for both parties and voters.

The prevalent understanding is that in EP elections, voters are much more likely to ‘vote with the heart’ or ‘with the boot’ than in first-order elections (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Because government formation is not at stake, voters are freed from the need to consider the strategic implications of their vote. The second-order setting thus encourages sincere voting – i.e., voting based on ideological proximity, group identities, or issue-positions. Voting with the boot, however, may involve ‘insincere’ or ‘instrumental’ voting (Marsh 1998). This mode refers to protest voting in which ‘voters cast their ballot for a party they would not vote for in a real election in order to send a message of distaste for the programs or candidates of the party they would normally vote for’ (Franklin 2005: 5). The second-order setting allows the voters to safely engage in such punitive vote-switching because it does not alter the status quo in terms of the exercise of executive power.

The second-order setting offers distinct advantages to small and peripheral political actors – including independent candidates. The propensity of voters to vote strategically by abandoning those with limited potential to participate in government formation constitutes a major obstacle for small parties and independent candidates in general elections. Limited or non-existent government potential, however, is not an impediment in second-order elections which ‘involve the selection of a representative rather than a government’ (Marsh 1998: 593). Independents are also potential beneficiaries of the anti-incumbent trend, which makes a large share of the voters reconsider the choice they made in general elections, and increases their susceptibility to the electoral appeal of alternative actors. Finally, the SOE context also reduces the tremendous financial and organizational disadvantages that independent candidates face when competing

with political parties for political office. Because less is at stake at EP elections, parties spend significantly less on EP election campaigns than they do in general elections. To the extent that party campaigns are low-cost and low-intensity, compared to the first-order arena, independents have a better chance of gaining visibility and getting their message across to the voters.

### **Two Versions of ‘Voting with the Boot’**

A mass vote for an independent candidate running on a protest platform seems to fit well within the broader *rubrique* of ‘voting with the boot’ in second-order elections. However, it is not clear who or what the Estonian voters protested against. The sections below outline two rival versions of protest-voting. The first, derived from the literature on independent candidate performance, links independent success to anti-party sentiment among the electorate. The second explanation argues that voting independent constitutes a peculiar punishment for the incumbents.

#### ***Anti-Party Sentiment as a Source of Support for Independents***

A dominant strand of research on independent candidates links the electoral strength of independents to the robustness of the voter-party linkage. The propositions associated with this approach are straightforward. On the individual level, voters who do not feel close to any party are considered to be more likely to vote for independents than voters with a stronger sense of party attachment (Rosenstone *et al* 1984, 176-177; Donovan *et al* 2000, 60). On the aggregate level, independents can be expected to perform comparatively well in contexts characterized by weak or undeveloped political parties, low levels of partisan identification or party attachment, and high levels of electoral volatility (Gerring 2005). Thus, independents have been shown to perform better in first democratic elections than in subsequent ones (Brancati 2008), and in new democracies compared to established ones (Birch 2003).

A stronger version of this logic links independent success to the prevalence of anti-party sentiment and anti-system attitudes among the electorate. Discontent with political parties has been recognized as one of the elements of the political malaise observed in advanced industrial democracies (Dalton 2004; Norris 1999), along with growing political cynicism, low levels of political trust, and declining levels of political participation. According to Poguntke (1996), anti-party sentiment can be specific, reflecting voter dislike of major party alternatives, or generalized, implying a rejection of party politics *per se*. Anti-partyism has been associated with the tendency to vote for independent candidates (Owen and Dennis, 1996) as well as minor parties, especially if these parties adopt anti-party rhetoric or mobilize popular disenchantment by offering ‘new ways’ of doing politics (Belanger 2004). Specific events that increase popular resentment towards party politicians (such as the MPs’ expenses scandal in the UK) may increase support for independents. Thus, it has been argued that independent candidates and anti-party parties perform important functions in a democratic political system. They serve as vehicles channeling political discontent in a ‘pacific and democratic way’ (Belanger 2004) and may even unlock voter apathy by providing disenchanted voters more choice and alternative means of representation. However, an anti-systemic protest agenda can also be associated with ideological extremism, as exemplified by radical right parties, which profit from popular dissatisfaction and anti-systemic attitudes by appealing especially to a less educated and lower income voter segment (Lubbers & Scheepers 2000). In short, the scholarly literature linking the electoral performance of independent candidates to anti-party sentiment resonates well with the prevalent domestic interpretation of the 2009 vote, according to which Tarand’s triumph signified widespread popular frustration with the Estonian political parties.

#### ***Voting Independent to Punish the Incumbents?***

The literature on European Parliament elections suggests a different interpretation of the protest-vote observed in the Estonian case. One of the central claims of the SOE model is that

voters use EP elections to punish political incumbents. The fact that government parties suffer losses in EP elections has been widely corroborated (e.g. Hobolt *et al* 2008; Kousser 2004). This happens because EP elections take place in the middle of the national election cycle: as governments tend to disappoint voters, support for incumbents is expected to decline as a function of time since the last general election, with the anti-incumbent trend being most pronounced if the EP elections are held in the middle of the national election cycle (Marsh 1998, Reif 1984). Due to the detachment of election results from government formation, voters can safely signal discontent with the incumbents without having to ‘live with the consequences.’

The question whether – and under what conditions - the wish to punish incumbents could lead voters to cast a ballot for an independent candidate leads us to consider the choices that habitual government party voters face in EP elections. Basically, this choice can be characterized in terms of the classic trilemma of loyalty, exit, or voice (Hirschman 1970). A disenchanted government party voter who wishes to send a signal of discontent to the incumbents thus faces a choice between abstention and vote-switching. The strategy they choose is likely to be strongly influenced by the supply side – i.e., the extent to which the electoral choice set includes parties or candidates perceived as suitable for the intended purposes. However, the fact that a voter wishes to punish the incumbents does not imply that the considerations related to identity and utility (Campbell *et al.* 1960, Downs 1957) that usually influence his or her vote choice are ‘turned off.’ Because the electoral choice set is limited (and is shaped by party competition on the first-order arena), instrumental vote-switching involves potentially significant costs, as voters may have to negotiate ideological distances and cross deeply-embedded social and political cleavages. If the costs associated with vote-switching are perceived to be high, disenchanted government voters are likely to abstain in EP elections. Conversely, if the choice set includes convenient, low-cost options that allow the voters to ‘vote with the boot’ without ‘betraying the heart’, many more voters are likely to choose the strategy of ‘voice’ as opposed to ‘exit’. In sum, this line of reasoning leads to the conjecture that in the Estonian EP elections, voting for an independent candidate constituted a low-cost strategy for punishing the political incumbents in a context where strong socio-political cleavages and significant ideological differences inhibited vote-switching to the opposition.

### ***Testable Propositions***

These two rival accounts yield a number of empirically testable propositions. The key to decoding the signal the voters were sending in the Estonian EP elections is finding out which voters abandoned their parties to vote for an independent candidate. The explanation derived from the SOE model yields the following empirical predictions:

*H1.* Voters who voted for the independent candidate in EP elections had, in the preceding general elections, voted for the winners (parties that subsequently formed the government).

*H2.* Vote-switching from government parties to an independent candidate was more prevalent than vote-switching from government to opposition parties.

*H3.* Voters who voted for an independent candidate in EP elections evaluated government performance more negatively than voters who voted for government parties.

*H4.* Voters who voted for an independent candidate were similar to government party voters and different from opposition party voters in terms of ideological positions and cleavage-constituting socio-demographic characteristics.

*H5.* Independent-voters, opposition party voters and government party voters did not differ from one another in terms of attitudes towards European integration or assessments of the country's EU membership.

The explanation that interprets the success of Tarand as a manifestation of anti-party sentiment, in contrast, yields the following hypotheses:

*H6.* Vote-switching to an independent candidate was equally prevalent among those voters who, in the preceding general elections, had voted for the winners and those who had voted for the losers.

*H7.* Compared to the parties appearing on the ballot, the independent candidate was highly successful in attracting the votes of habitual abstainers.

*H8.* Voters who voted for an independent candidate had a weaker sense of partisan attachment than party voters.

*H9.* Voters who voted for an independent candidate were less satisfied with the functioning of democracy than party voters.

*H10.* Voters who voted for an independent candidate were less educated and had lower socio-economic status than party voters, and were ideologically more extreme than party voters.

The main expectations derived from the two competing explanations are summarized in Table 1. Before testing these propositions with data from a post-election survey, we will offer a brief overview of the context, contestants, and results of the Estonian 2009 EP elections.

*Table 1: Summary of expectations associated with the two forms of protest-voting*

<i>Areas concerned</i>	<i>Anti-incumbent vote</i>	<i>Anti-party/anti-system vote</i>
Pattern of vote-switching	from government party to independent	from all major parties to independent
Mobilization of non-voters by independent	no	yes
Socio-demographic profile associated with voting independent	similar to government party voters, different from opposition voters	possibly less educated, lower-socio-economic status
Ideological profile associated with voting independent	similar to government party voters, different from opposition voters	possibly more extreme compared to party-voters
<i>Expected predictors of vote for independent</i>		
Dissatisfaction with government performance	yes	yes
Weaker partisan attachment	no	yes
Dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy	no	yes
Negative evaluation of country's EU membership	no	possibly yes

## 2009 European Elections in Estonia: Context and Results

Estonia's second elections to the EP were held on June 7, 2009, with advance voting taking place from June 1 to June 3. Estonia has 6 seats in the EP which are allocated in a single nationwide constituency. The electoral system was closed-list PR. Importantly, this was the first time Estonian voters were expected to vote for party lists. In all previous national, local and European elections, Estonian voters had been asked to cast votes for a specific candidate on the party list. In both 2004 and 2009, the electoral law allowed independent candidates to run on the same terms as political parties, treating them essentially as one-person party lists. There were no notable ballot access restrictions aside from a moderate monetary deposit (1390 euros).

Three observations about the context of the 2009 EP elections are in order. First, the elections were genuine mid-term elections, taking place two years and three months after the national parliament elections won by the pro-market Reform Party which had formed a coalition with the centre-right Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL) and the small Social Democratic Party (SDE). Second, the EP elections took place in the midst of a major economic crisis. Following a decade of high growth, the economy contracted by 15.8 percent in the first half of 2009, and unemployment reached 14 percent in the second quarter of 2009, up from 4.6 percent in June 2008. Aspiring for inclusion in the eurozone, the government had pushed through massive budget cuts to comply with the Maastricht criteria. Conflicts over the budget cuts culminated in the SDE leaving the three-member governing coalition in May 2009. Third, despite the economic crisis, public support for the EU remained very high, and the parties had few incentives to politicize Estonia's membership in the EU.

Altogether, 101 individuals were registered as candidates for the European Parliament. Eleven parties presented their electoral lists; six independent candidates also ran. The intensity of campaigns was low, and overall campaign spending constituted a little more than a fifth of the amount the parties had spent on national parliament election campaigns two years earlier. The campaign messages, to the extent that they had anything to do with the EU, were rather general. Although party manifestos touched on a range of EU-related issues (e.g. Estonia's prospective accession to the eurozone, energy security, EU policy towards Russia), almost no clearly identifiable focal points for political debate emerged. Promises focusing on purely domestic matters received more air time and media space than the parties' visions of European integration. Predictably, opposition parties used the elections as an opportunity to blame the government for the economic crisis and social problems, zooming in on the hardships brought by the budget cuts.

About a month before the election day, polls began to predict that Indrek Tarand would take an EP seat. Tarand is a former high-ranking civil servant, a talk-show host, and the Director of the Estonian War Museum who had never held elected political office. He ran on an anti-party platform, ridiculing the prevailing culture of party politics and criticizing the self-serving ways of Estonia's political elites. In particular, Tarand attacked the switchover from open to closed party lists that the major parties had engineered specifically for the 2009 EP elections, arguing that this change of electoral rules deprived voters of a real choice and made the selection of Estonia's MEPs a matter of party backroom politics. Although Tarand had very limited campaign resources, bold and occasionally scandalous confrontations with the major political parties helped him secure a strong media presence.

The seed sown by Tarand fell onto well-prepared soil. Popular frustration with the political parties has been a major theme in the Estonian political discourse for well over a decade, and the diagnosis of 'growing popular alienation from politics' has been widely shared by the media, politicians and opinion leaders, as well as social scientists (e.g. Arter 1996, Lagerspetz and Vogt 2004). Surveys have recorded very low levels of popular trust in political parties since the early 1990s (Ehin 2007); in June 2009, only 16 percent of the respondents in a Eurobarometer survey said they trusted the parties (TNS Opinion & Social 2009). In terms of electoral behavior, systemic dissatisfaction with the established parties has translated into high

levels of electoral volatility (the Pedersen volatility index for the 1990-2003 period was 17.7 percent (Wessels & Klingemann 2006)) and the remarkable success of new parties promising new politics (Sikk 2006). For instance, genuinely new parties gained 24.6 percent of the vote in the 2003 national election and 7.1 percent in 2007.

While Tarand sent few signals about his ideological leanings during the campaign, his record as a public figure offers ample information about his political convictions. In contrast to established Western democracies, political contestation in Estonia is not dominated by the left-right dimension. A second cleavage combining ethnicity, geopolitics and political memory plays an equally (if not more) important role in Estonian politics. In combination, the two cleavages produce an increasingly polarized pattern of political competition in which the governing Reform Party and IRL represent a centre-right ideological position, Estonian ethno-nationalism, a strong Western orientation and an unconditional condemnation of Soviet occupation. In contrast, the leading opposition force, the Centre Party, is distinguished by a greater emphasis on solidarity and equality, a softer position on Russia, a de-emphasis on historical conflicts and a highly successful strategy of appealing to the country's Russian-speaking population. Although Tarand has never been a member of any political party, his track record places him squarely in the first camp. He has had particularly strong ties to the conservative pro-market IRL and its chairman, Mart Laar. In the 1990s, Tarand worked for the Laar government, first as a special representative to the city of Narva, then as a political adviser to the Prime Minister. From 1994 to 2002, he served as Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – a position from which he was fired following an ugly, widely publicized personal conflict with Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland (who topped the Reform Party's electoral list in the 2009 EP elections). In 2005, Tarand became the Director of the Estonian War Museum - an institution with a strong nationalist-conservative imprint. In 2005, he caused a scandal by appearing in public in a T-shirt that called for 'burning the commies,' followed by a list of the names of active politicians who had been members of the Communist Party in the Soviet era. The scandal culminated in the resignation of the Minister of Defense. In 2007, Tarand joined Laar in contributing to state-building efforts in Georgia, advising President Saakashvili on administrative reform. After the outbreak of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, Tarand organized a peculiar volunteer mission to assist the government of Georgia, enlisting men with military training, despite the declared humanitarian objectives of the mission. In sum, Tarand's public record adds up to a political profile characterized by centre-right ideology, strong ethno-nationalist loyalties and over-the-top behavior that has, on several occasions, led him into conflict with the political establishment but has not generally been regarded as extremist.

Even though Estonia registered the greatest increase in voter turnout compared to the 2004 EP elections among all EU countries (from 26.8 percent in 2004 to 43.9 percent in 2009), turnout in the EP contest was much lower than in the previous national parliament elections (61.9 percent) and subsequent local elections (60.6 percent). The six mandates were allocated between four parties and one independent candidate (see Table 2). The main opposition party, the Centre Party, gained the largest share of the vote (26.1 percent) and secured two seats in the EP. Tarand came in second, having won only 1,046 votes less than the Centre Party. Indeed, Tarand gained the largest share of the vote in all 17 regions (15 counties and two major cities) except for Tallinn and Ida-Viru County which have a high percentage of Russian-speakers. The leading government force, the Reform Party, was the main loser, as its vote share dropped from 27.8 percent in the 2007 general elections to 15.3 percent in EP elections. The two smaller parties represented in the *Riigikogu*, the Greens and the People's Union, remained without a mandate, receiving 2.7 percent and 2.2 percent of the vote respectively. In sum, the above account provides considerable support for both the anti-party and anti-incumbent interpretation of the mass vote for an independent candidate in the 2009 EP elections in Estonia.

Table 2: Results of the 2009 European Parliament elections in Estonia

	EP party group affiliation (at time of election)	Number of votes	% of votes (change compared to 2007 general elections)	EP seats
Keskerakond (Centre Party)	ALDE	103,506	26.1 (0)	2
Indrek Tarand (independent candidate)	-	102,460	25.8 (NA)	1
Reformierakond (Reform Party)	ALDE	60,877	15.3 (-12.5)	1
Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit (ProPatria and Res Publica Union)	EPP	48,492	12.2 (-5.7)	1
Sotsiaaldemokraatlik erakond (Social Democratic Party)	PES	34,508	8.7 (-1.9)	1
Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised (Greens)	Greens-EFA	10,851	2.7 (-4.4)	0
Martin Helme (independent candidate)	-	9,832	2.5 (NA)	0
Eestimaa Rahvaliid (Peoples' Union)	UEN	8,860	2.2 (-4.9)	0
Dimitri Klenski (independent candidate)	-	7,137	1.8 (NA)	0

Note: The table lists parties and independent candidates that received over 1% of the vote. Source: Estonian National Electoral Committee, [www.vvk.ee](http://www.vvk.ee)

## Individual-Level Analysis

### *Data, Method and Variables*

To test the hypotheses derived from the anti-party and anti-incumbent versions of protest-voting, we use data from the voter survey of the European Elections Study (EES 2009; van Egmond et al. 2009). A total of 1007 interviews (707 face-to-face and 300 phone interviews) were carried out in Estonia in June 2009, a few weeks after the EP election. The nationally representative sample was weighted for non-response.

The empirical analysis consists of two parts. First, we examine patterns of vote-switching by cross-tabulating vote choice in the EP election against vote choice in the 2007 general elections. Second, to test the individual-level hypotheses derived from the anti-incumbent and anti-party explanations, we run multinomial logistic regression with a four-category measure of vote choice in the 2009 EP elections as the dependent variable. Thus, our dependent variable classifies respondents into four groups: those who voted for the Reform Party, IRL or SDE in the 2009 EP election are classified as *coalition voters*, those who voted for any other party are labeled *opposition voters*, those who cast a ballot for Tarand are grouped as *independent voters*, while those who did not vote in 2009 constitute *non-voters*.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of multinomial

<sup>5</sup>In the analysis that follows, we only include those independent voters who voted for Tarand, while excluding the voters who voted for one of the other five independent candidates on the ballot (who

logistic regression, we assign independent voters to the reference category against which coalition voters, opposition voters and non-voters are compared. Due to list-wise deletion of missing data, the number of cases included in the multivariate analysis was 658. Of these, 105 (16.0 percent) were coalition party voters, 215 (32.7 percent) opposition party voters, 128 (19.5 percent) independent voters, and 210 (31.9 percent) non-voters.

The choice of variables included in the model is determined by the two versions of protest-voting outlined above, while also being informed by previous studies on vote choice in EP elections (e.g. van der Eijk & Franklin 1996, Oppenhuis 1995, Schmitt *et al* 2007). Below, we offer a brief summary of the variables included in the model, while a detailed description of survey questions and coding choices is included in Appendix 1.

To measure satisfaction with government performance, we use a dichotomously coded variable expressing the respondent's approval of the government's record to date (23.8 percent approve). Our measure for party attachment distinguishes among those feeling close to any political party (41.8 percent of respondents included in the analysis) and all others. Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in the country is also a binary variable, coded 1 for those who report being very or fairly satisfied with the way democracy works in Estonia (48.8 percent of the respondents) and 0 for all others. To measure attitudes towards European integration, we employ two variables: a frequently used interval measure capturing attitudes towards further European integration (0 – gone too far; 10 – should be pushed further) and a binary evaluation of country's membership in the EU, coded 1 for those who regard EU membership as a good thing (69.1 percent of the respondents) and 0 for all others. We use two indicators to capture ideology: one is the traditional left-right self-placement, while the other captures the 'new values' dimension. The latter measure is an index of social liberalism combining attitudes towards same sex marriages, right of abortion for women, support of harsh punishment for criminals and teaching children obedience in school. Finally, we also include a binary variables measuring electoral participation in the 2007 general election (coded 1 for those who voted, and 0 for all others).

We employ three measures to capture the respondent's location in the cleavage structure of the Estonian society. These include a dichotomous measure of self-reported social class (coded 1 for upper and middle class, 54.6 percent of respondents) and a dummy variable for the rural-urban divide, coded 1 for respondents who reside in big cities or suburbs (47.7 percent of respondents), and 0 for all others. While religion is widely used in Western European studies on vote choice, it does not constitute an important cleavage in the non-religious Estonian society and is thus excluded. Instead, our third measure of cleavages is ethnicity. In Estonia, the status of Soviet-era settlers (who constitute about a third of the population) has been politically controversial, and their integration into the mainstream society only partially successful. There are significant and persistent differences between the titular nationality and the Russian-speakers in terms of political values and attitudes (Ehin 2007; Vihalemm & Kalmus 2009). Although there are no significant ethnic parties in Estonia, the Russian minority has become increasingly uniform in its support for one of the mainstream parties (the Centre Party). The ethnic divide is hence politicized and, to an extent, institutionalized.

We also include socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, education and family living standards as these have been demonstrated to influence electoral participation as well as vote choice (Blais *et al* 2009; Aarts & Wessels 2005; Blais *et al* 2004; Caballero 2005; Franklin 2003; Matsusaka & Palda 1999). The latter two also act as proxies for personal efficacy, as a higher socio-economic status together with education combine into higher cognitive ability to understand politics.

collectively received 4.3 percent of the vote). Because the independent candidates in question differed greatly in terms of ideology, personal profile, and campaign messages, we do not expect their voters to constitute a uniform group

## Results

### Patterns of Vote-Switching.

A cross-tabulation of vote in EP elections by vote in the 2007 general elections (Table 3) aggregated according to the grouping rule of our dependent variable, shows that significant

Table 3: Vote in 2009 European Parliament elections by vote in 2007 general elections N, (%)

<i>National election 2007</i>	<i>European Parliament election 2009</i>				
	Coalition	Opposition	Tarand	Didn't vote	Total
Coalition	150 (43.1) (77.3)	22(6.3) (9.7)	97(27.9) (52.4)	79(22.7) (24.2)	348 (100.0) (37.2)
Opposition	19(7.5) (9.8)	146(57.3) (64.3)	32(12.5) (17.3)	58(22.7) (17.7)	255 (100.0) (27.3)
Didn't vote	5(2.6) (2.6)	36(18.5) (15.9)	23(11.8) (12.4)	131(67.2) (40.1)	195(100.0) (20.9)
DK (don't know, refused, not eligible, blank vote, other)	20(14.8) (10.3)	23(17.0) (10.1)	33(24.3) (17.8)	59(43.4) (18.0)	136(100.0) (14.6)
Total	194(20.8) (100.0)	227(24.3) (100.0)	185(19.8) (100.0)	327(35.0) (100.0)	933 (100.0) (100.0)

vote-switching took place and offers substantial evidence that Tarand succeeded in attracting the votes of habitual government party voters. Over one half of the voters (52.4 percent) who voted for Tarand in 2009 had, in the 2007 general election, voted for the three parties that subsequently formed the government (Reform Party, IRL and SDE). In contrast, only 17.7 percent of the Tarand-voters had voted for any of the opposition parties in 2007. Although there is some evidence of the mobilization of non-voters, the opposition parties were, overall, more successful in attracting habitual abstainers or new voters than Tarand (see Table 3). Thus, these initial results offer relatively robust support to the expectations about patterns of vote-switching associated with the anti-incumbent explanation (H1, H2) while generally disconfirming the hypotheses derived from the anti-party interpretation (H6, H7).

Why did voters who were dissatisfied with the government not switch vote to one of the opposition parties, such as the Centre Party that ran a campaign accusing the government of incompetent and socially insensitive handling of the economic crisis? The mean ideological distances between self and party, reported in Table 4, suggest that Tarand-voters perceived opposition parties (with the exception of the small Green Party) to be ideologically much more distant from their own position than the coalition parties. In particular, the perceived ideological remoteness of the Centre Party from the self-reported position of coalition and Tarand-voters, suggests that for most habitual government party voters, switching their vote to the main opposition force to punish the incumbents would entail significant ideological costs. However, it should be noted that the groups were not uniform in their evaluations, as suggested by the large standard deviations.

Table 4: Mean ideological distances between voters and parties

Vote in 2009	Coalition parties			Opposition parties		
	Reform Party	IRL	SDE	Centre party	Greens	Peoples' Union
Coalition	-.42 (2.50)	-.46 (2.41)	2.35 (2.60)	4.17 (3.88)	1.74 (2.85)	2.81 (2.94)
Opposition	-2.75 (4.03)	-2.30 (3.75)	-.40 (3.24)	-.07 (2.91)	-.25 (3.02)	.18 (3.48)
Tarand	-.90 (3.74)	-.68 (3.03)	.52 (2.67)	2.75 (3.49)	.39 (2.72)	1.56 (3.10)
Non-voter	-.77 (3.80)	-.50 (3.41)	1.02 (3.12)	1.38 (3.59)	.34 (2.82)	1.18 (3.24)

Note: The figures are mean distances between the placement of self and party on the left-right scale ranging from 0 to 10, with standard deviations in parenthesis.

### Results of Multivariate Analysis

The results of multinomial logistic regression show that our model is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and overall, performs quite well. Nagelkerke  $R^2$  for the model is 0.435. The model classifies 50.5 percent of the cases correctly. This figure is substantially higher than the benchmark level of one-fourth improvement over by chance accuracy, which, given the distribution of cases on our dependent variable, is 27.2 percent.

The likelihood ratio tests show that the following independent variables have an overall relationship to the dependent variable at the 99 percent confidence level: self-placement on the left-right scale, education, electoral participation in 2007, ethnicity, the rural-urban divide, and evaluation of the country's EU membership. In addition, evaluation of government performance has a relationship to the dependent variable that is significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

Table 5 contrasts government party voters, opposition voters and non-voters with Tarand-voters (reference category). It reports the odds ratios ( $e^b$ ) for the independent variables included in our model. Because the interpretation of odds ratios is not intuitive, we also calculate and report (in the text below) the marginal effects for the key predictors of vote choice.

The results reported in the first column suggest that Tarand-voters differed from government party voters in six aspects. They were more educated, less satisfied with government performance and less likely to have voted in the 2007 general elections than government party voters (effects significant at the 99 percent confidence level). They were also more to the left on the left-right scale, less satisfied with the country's EU membership, and more likely to live outside of the major urban centers than government party voters (effects significant at the 95 percent confidence level). The other variables included in the model were not statistically significant predictors of the vote for Tarand, as opposed to a government party. The marginal effect for government performance evaluation (.102) suggests that a change in government performance evaluation (from satisfied to not satisfied) increases the probability of voting for Tarand, as opposed to a government party, by 10.2 percent, holding other variables constant at their mean values. Moving from the maximum value (10) to the minimum value (0) on the left-right scale is associated with a change of 21 percent in the same probability.

The results reported in the second column of Table 5 show that four variables have statistically significant effects in distinguishing Tarand-voters from opposition party voters. While higher levels of education and residence outside of the large cities is again associated

Table 5: Individual-level predictors of vote for independent candidate

Independent variables	Vote decision (reference category: Tarand voters)		
	Coalition party Voters	Opposition party voters	Non-voters
<b>Cleavages</b>			
Class: upper or middle	1.600	0.765	0.690
Ethnicity: Estonian	0.839	0.146***	0.335**
Rural-urban divide: urban	2.006*	2.276**	0.967
<b>Ideology</b>			
Left-right self-placement	1.169*	0.797**	0.971
Social liberalism	1.089	0.779	1.092
<b>European issues</b>			
EU unification	1.024	1.067	1.035
EU membership: good	2.703*	0.586	0.445**
<b>Political performance</b>			
Government record: good	2.501**	0.910	0.939
Satisfaction with democracy: satisfied	1.059	1.127	0.915
<b>Partisanship</b>			
Party attachment: close or sympathizer	1.668	1.515	1.137
<b>Voted in 2007 election</b>	3.738**	1.552	0.442**
<b>Controls</b>			
Age	0.999	1.001	0.983*
Education	0.877**	0.891**	0.850***
Living standard	1.050	0.997	1.068
Gender: male	1.050	1.263	1.158
<b>Nagelkerke Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.435		
<b>N</b>	658		
<b>Percent correctly predicted</b>	50.5		

Notes: The figures shown are odds ratios. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). Group sizes are the following: Tarand-voters: 128, coalition party voters: 105, opposition party voters: 215, non-voters: 210.

with a vote for Tarand (effects significant at the 99 percent confidence level), a major characteristic that distinguishes Tarand-voters from opposition-voters is ethnicity ( $e^b = .146$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Ethnic Estonians were much more likely to vote for Tarand, while Russian-speakers were significantly more likely to vote for opposition parties. Substantively, the effect of being an ethnic Estonian corresponds to a 28.1 percent increase in the predicted probability of voting for Tarand, as opposed to an opposition party, when other independent variables are held constant at their means. The effect of residing outside of the large cities corresponds to a 16.7 percent change in the same probability. The effect of left-right self-placement ( $e^b = .797$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) in the second column suggests that Tarand-voters placed themselves more to the right on the ideological scale, relative to opposition party voters. Moving from the minimum value (0) to the maximum value (10) on the left-right scale is associated with an increase of 52 percent in the predicted probability of voting for Tarand, as opposed to an opposition party.

Finally, the results reported in the third column of Table 5 suggest that Tarand-voters differ from non-voters in five respects. They were older and more educated than non-voters and were more likely to be ethnic Estonians. Tarand-voters were more likely to have participated in the 2007 general elections and were, overall, more satisfied with Estonia's membership in the EU than non-voters.

Although the multivariate results do not confirm all of the expectations associated with the proposition that the mass vote for Tarand was driven by the voter's desire to punish political incumbents, they do, on balance, lend substantially stronger support to the anti-incumbent explanation than to the anti-party explanation. Thus, our findings are in line with hypothesis 3: voters who voted for an independent candidate evaluated government performance more negatively than voters who voted for government parties. Although Tarand-voters were distinguished both from government voters and opposition voters in terms of ideology and cleavages, the comparison of substantive effects of left-right self-placement and of the rural-urban divide suggest that these differences were more pronounced in the latter case. In addition, ethnicity appeared as a major factor discriminating between Tarand-voters and opposition voters, while it did not contribute to explaining the vote for an independent candidate as opposed to a government party. These results offer some support to H4. The hypothesis (H5) that attitudes towards European integration or assessments of the country's EU membership are not correlated with vote choice in EP elections, however, has to be partially rejected. While general attitudes towards EU unification did not play any role in group separation, evaluations of Estonia's EU-membership did. Tarand-voters assessed Estonia's membership in the EU more negatively than government party voters but more positively than non-voters.

The main hypotheses associated with the anti-party explanation can be confidently rejected. The results of our analysis provide no support to the claim that independent voters had weaker partisan ties (H8) or were less satisfied with the functioning of democracy (H9). Hypothesis 10 which expected Tarand-voters to have the socio-demographic and ideological profile of an anti-system protest voter (less educated, with lower socio-economic status, and more extreme ideological views) found no support. Class belonging and living standards did not play any role in discriminating among the four groups of voters, and Tarand-voters were found to be more educated than either party-voters or non-voters.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter sets out to explain an anomaly: the spectacular electoral performance of an independent candidate in a party-centered system. The explanation developed in this chapter links the electoral triumph of an independent candidate to the structural conditions characteristic of the second-order setting which free the voters from the need to consider the strategic implications of their vote, while increasing the prevalence of sincere voting and protest voting. Against this backdrop, the chapter developed two explanations for the triumph of Tarand in the Estonian 2009 EP elections, suggesting that mass support of an independent candidate could be interpreted either as anti-party vote or as anti-incumbent vote. It developed a number of empirical propositions about voting behavior consistent with each account, and assessed the empirical validity of these, using data from a post-election survey.

Our empirical results suggest the following account of the observed mass vote for an independent candidate. Voters who voted for Indrek Tarand in the 2009 election were more educated than either party voters or non-voters, and were more likely to live in small towns and rural areas. They were ethnic Estonians most of whom broadly shared the centre-right ideological orientations of government party voters. A typical Tarand-voter had participated in the 2007 general elections, casting a vote for one of the three parties that subsequently formed the government. By mid-2009, this voter had grown dissatisfied with the performance of the national government – an evaluation to be expected amidst a severe economic recession. Mid-term elections with no consequences for the allocation of executive power constituted a convenient opportunity to signal dissatisfaction with the political incumbents. However, the party alternatives on the electoral list were a poor match to the electoral criteria employed by disenchanted government party loyalists wishing to cast an anti-incumbent protest-vote. Due to the growing polarization of the Estonian party system along ethnic and ideological lines, switching their vote to one of the main opposition parties constituted a high-cost (or an outright

unacceptable) option for most of the dissatisfied government party voters. In this context, an independent candidate, whose socio-demographic profile and ideological views were a close match to the preferences of habitual government party voters, constituted a low-cost alternative. This, combined with the fact that Tarand ran on a protest-agenda, made him a convenient instrumental choice for punishing the incumbents. In the absence of such a convenient option, many more disenchanted government voters would presumably have stayed at home. Thus, the higher-than-expected turnout in these elections can indeed be linked to Tarand's candidacy. However, according to our results, Tarand contributed to turnout not by mobilizing significant numbers of habitual non-voters, as the anti-party explanation suggested, but by enabling dissatisfied government party voters to choose the strategy of 'voice' rather than 'exit'.

The results of the individual-level analysis lend almost no support to the rival interpretation which links Tarand's triumph to the allegedly widespread anti-party sentiment in Estonian society. Tarand-voters did not differ from party-voters in terms of the strength of party attachment. They were no less likely to be satisfied with 'how democracy works' in Estonia than party voters. They certainly did not have the profile of a typical anti-system protest voter, nor did they represent an alienated or marginalized minority.

Overall, this study testifies to the ability of the SOE model to explain highly deviant electoral outcomes. Although the explanation of the strong electoral performance of an independent candidate advanced in this study is context-specific, our findings have broader implications. Contradicting a dominant strand of theorizing, they suggest that mass support for independents does not necessarily imply a weakness of the voter-party linkage and may, in fact, attest to the consolidation of party support along cleavage lines. They also suggest that studies seeking to explain voting behavior in EP elections may benefit from a closer analysis of cleavage structures and electoral choice sets. In particular, the question of how the structure of the choice set influences the choice between loyalty, abstention and vote-switching that disappointed government party voters face in EP elections merits careful consideration by future studies.

## Appendix 1: Variables included in logistic regression

<i>EES question wording</i>	<i>Coding</i>
<b><i>Cleavages</i></b>	
If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to?	1 – upper and middle class; 0 – all others
Do you consider yourself Estonian, or do you feel you belong to another group?	1 - Estonian; 0 – all others
Would you say you live in a...?	1 - large town or suburbs; 0 – all others
<b><i>Ideology</i></b>	
In political matters people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right’. What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means ‘left’ and 10 means ‘right’.	0 - left; 10 – right
For each of the following statements, please tell me to what degree you agree or disagree with each statement:	Four separate items measured on a 5-point scale combined into a social liberalism index
- Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law	
- Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion	
- People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days	
- Schools must teach children to obey authority	
<b><i>Issues</i></b>	
Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?	0 – gone too far; 10 – should be pushed further
Generally speaking, do you think that Estonia’s membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?	1 - good thing; 0 – all others
<b><i>Government performance</i></b>	
Do you approve or disapprove the government’s record to date?	1 - approve; 0 – all others
On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Estonia?	1 – very and fairly satisfied; 0 – all others
<b><i>Party attachment</i></b>	
Combination of the following items:	1 – very, fairly close or sympathizer; 0 – all others
-Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party?	
-Do you feel yourself to be very close to this party, fairly close, or merely a sympathizer?	
<b><i>Participation in the 2007 national elections</i></b>	
Which party did you vote for at the general election of 2007?	1-voted; 0-all others
<b><i>Controls</i></b>	
Age	In years
How old were you when you stopped full-time education?	In years
What is your family living standard?	1 - poor family; 7 - rich family
Gender	1-male; 0-female

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# Europe at Stake During the First European Parliament Elections Organized in an Enlarged Europe.<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Explanatory models on European Parliament (EP) electoral behavior in Western Europe focus on 'the second order election model', the major assertion of which is that EP elections are 'not real' European contests but mainly national contests. Yet, it has been established in the literature that 'the second order election model' does not yield accurate predictions for the post-communist context. This chapter builds on previous research on EP elections and EU referendums and posits that there is more room for Europe to matter in the context of the post-communist party system. In recent member states, the notion of Europe has a stronger impact on the decision to participate at EP elections than second order considerations. Several European dimensions are theorized and tested in the chapter as substantially impacting on voters' decisions. Specifically, these are: 'Europhile attitudes' towards the EU institutions and the EU as a political system; 'egocentric Europeanness', reflecting satisfaction with democracy in the EU; and especially 'national Europeanness', referring to voters' perceptions with regard to a country's benefits accruing from EU membership.

## Introduction

Yes, I am a regular voter, I came to vote at European Parliament (EP) elections because voting is my civic duty, but, at the same time, I believe in European institutions. I am positive that things will be better for us, now, that we are finally in Europe (...) and Romania will have a lot to gain from the European Union (EU) membership. Hence, I came today to make sure that the right people are going to Brussels to represent us.

This represents the dominant sentiment in Romania in 2009, during an exit poll I administered on election day with the goal of discerning voters' motivations for political participation at the first European Parliament (EP) elections.

Do these positive views on the EU and the utilitarian perspectives attached to the act of voting in EP elections have any effect on the decision to participate in the first place? Or is this Euro-optimism as dominant among the eligible electorate who decided to stay home on election day as it is among the active participants? And, if positive European attitudes do in fact matter during the first EP elections organized in newly democratized states, where inexperienced voters with EU policy-making processes believe that the new EU membership will alleviate some of the difficulties the states are experiencing, does this change over time? In other words, do EP elections transform, after five years of membership, from possible 'European affairs' into 'national affairs'?

The answers to these questions have important implications for understanding arguments concerning voter apathy and the dynamics of electoral behavior in states that have only recently

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Bryon Moraski, Amie Kreppel, Wouter van der Brug, and the PIREDEU Final User Conference participants for useful comments and suggestions. Fieldwork related to this chapter was conducted with generous funding from the Center for European Studies at the University of Florida (UF), the Department of Political Science (UF), and the Ernst Haas Fellowship from the European Union Studies Association (EUSA).

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become part of Europe. If Europe matters for political participation, this implies that there is a connection between citizens' attitudes towards Europe and EU governance that is overwhelmingly absent in the existing literature on previous EP electoral waves. Previous work argues that such attitudes do not exist or only make a difference in affecting voting behavior related to switching and defecting from governmental parties. Explanatory models on EP electoral behavior in Western Europe focus on the 'second order national election thesis', the core of which holds that EP elections are not real European contests but mainly second order national contests (Reif and Schmitt 1980). In this sense, voters have the opportunity to behave differently than in national contests, yielding overall lower turnout rates and systematically large governmental party losses complemented with small, new, radical party victories (Hix and Marsh 2007). Yet, behavior in post-communist states does not follow these nicely ordered patterns. EP turnout is much lower in new member states overall than in older members, large governmental parties' losses do not follow the cyclical argument, and voters do not cast protest votes against their incumbent governments (Schmitt 2005, Koepke and Ringe 2006). The lack of party institutionalization in the region, the high volatility of the post-communist democracies, and the weak party attachments when compared to Western Europe were considered to be the main culprits for why behavior that the second order theory expects failed to emerge in Eastern Europe as it did in Western Europe (Schmitt 2005).

In addition, previous research on European attitudes and support for EU integration underscores particular dynamics in new member states that only recently transitioned to democracy and market reforms (Cichowski 2000, Tucker et al. 2002). As such, for post-communist EU citizens, EU membership represents the fulfillment of a long-term, sinuous, historic goal of 'returning to Europe' that began at least as early as 1994 and complemented expectations for a better life. In this region, the EU is the guarantor of market reform commitments and of new supra-national forms of democratic accountabilities.

This chapter builds on the existing arguments that different party systems and East European attitudes towards the EU affect behavior at EP elections. I posit that because of the absence of long-term partisanship commitments or of other strong membership ties that might substitute the need for party identification, there is more room for attitudes towards Europe to matter and to affect behavior in the post-communist context. In a nutshell, given the weakness of the structural element of party institutionalization in the region (essential for keeping turnout high, see Franklin 2004), the high vote volatility, and the relevance of European attitudes for post-communist citizens, EP electoral participation depends more on European attitudes than on national ones. Specifically, I operationalize and test the argument that Europe matters using two pooled cross-sectional data sets from 7 EU member states for the 2004 and 2009 EP elections. The analyses, controlling for background variables and national, second order, dimensions, support the hypotheses.

## **Theoretical Approach for Explaining Political Participation**

### ***Second Order Approaches and their Alternatives***

The second order literature has paid surprisingly little attention to the arguments of why people participate in EP elections. For instance, country analyses that seek to disentangle interdependencies between national and European arenas affecting voting behavior have a rather minimal focus on low turnout, mostly because it is expected. Such analyses are concerned with campaigns, mainstream parties' positions with regard to European issues, parties' aggregate winnings and losses, and voter switching at the individual level (see for instance the country chapters in the edited volume by Eijk and Franklin 1996).

The cross-national studies concerned specifically with why people vote at EP elections use either aggregate level data for explaining decreasing overall trends in EP turnout from the first 1979 EP election to recent waves (Franklin 2001, 2007), or use individual level data for

understanding the 'hidden messages' of abstentions (Schmitt and van der Eijk 1996). The major conclusion of such studies, however, is that 'Europe hardly matters' (Schmitt and Mannheimer 1991, Franklin 2007). 'EC-related attitudes (...) play no significant role in the explanation of electoral participation in European elections' was the major finding of a comprehensive study that considered electoral participation data for all European Community member states in the 1989 and 1994 EP elections (Franklin, Van der Eijk, and Openhuius 1996: 322). In a more recent study on electoral participation at the 1999 EP elections, covering all EU member states of that time, the point that 'Europe hardly matters' is reinforced: abstention from EP elections does not carry an anti-EU sentiment. The decision to abstain is allegedly based on 'other grounds' than one's own evaluations of the EU (Schmitt and Van der Eijk 2007). Moreover, it is not only that 'Europe hardly matters' but also that national evaluations seem to have no impact on turnout since EP electoral participation can be explained with only two aggregate level variables: compulsory voting and the position of the EP election in the national electoral cycle (Franklin 2001, Wessels and Franklin 2010). As such, the major implication is that for both European politicians and citizens, EP elections are 'elections that serve no purpose' (Wessels and Franklin 2010). EP electoral participation becomes, in a sense, superfluous.

Since it seemed to be established that Europe does not matter for political participation, an alternative approach for considering whether Europe matters entailed the investigation of individual behavior with regards to their support of - or better yet, defection from - government parties (Marsh 2008, Carrubba and Timpone 2005). Yet, in an aggregate level study, using data from 6 elections, Hix and Marsh (2007) demonstrate that large parties lose votes regardless of their position on either left-right ideological or European dimensions. The results differ when examined at the individual level, however. Europe matters more in the referendum literature, though first order European attitudes still decisively trumped the effects of second order considerations (Glencross and Trechsel 2011).

Still, much of the research on micro-level dynamics of EP electoral behavior advances the argument that European attitudes and EU-based performance indicators affect EP voting behavior (Hobolt et al. 2008, Clark and Rohrschneider 2009, Hobolt and Witrock 2010, de Vries et al. 2010). Given the increased relevance of the European Parliament in the policy decision-making process and the overall prominence of EU institutions, voters evaluate the EU on 'its own terms' with respect to party choices at EP elections (Clark and Rohrschneider 2009). Moreover, voters who voted for government parties at previous national elections are more likely to turn out at European elections, the closer they are on European issues to the party they voted for (Hobolt et al. 2008). And yet, in an experimental setting that develops a spatial model of vote choice in European elections, voters base their party choices primarily on domestic preferences, with the qualification that EU related information makes EU preferences play a greater role in vote calculus (Hobolt and Wittrock 2010), for more sophisticated voters in particular (de Vries et al. 2010). Unfortunately, such analyses, only indirectly focused on EP electoral turnout. In addition, they are built upon the assumption that habitual voters' party preferences are stable from one legislative election to another, when, in fact, in the post-communist states this is more likely not to be the case, given the high volatility registered at both voter and party levels. Hence, considering preferences of more or less EU integration for both voters and parties and calculating distances on the EU dimension between a voter and his/hers assumed to be the same preferred party at the EP election becomes very problematic since we cannot automatically assume that a preferred party at the legislative election is still the preferred party at the EP election. Focusing on the post-communist states in the EU, then, permits the opportunity to build upon these previous studies.

### ***The Characteristics of Post-Communist Party Systems***

The environment of former communist states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 is substantially different from the one that developed over the last 40 years in Western Europe. Post-communist states are characterized by highly unstable electoral markets from both parties' and voters' perspectives. At the party level, these organizations frequently split, dissolve,

become completely extinct, do not stand for clear identifiable values or programs, and do not permit clear choices. As such, the mean party extinction in the region is 14.3 and it ranges from 0 (in a number of cases) to 58 (Poland in 2001) (Bernhard and Karakoc 2010). In addition to party extinction, about 5.6 new parties emerge on average in the region since regime change at each legislative election, with an average vote share of 19 percent (Tavits 2007). In Estonia and Latvia, for instance, new parties have formed the government or participated in governmental coalitions shortly after, while in Western Europe only one new party emerged on average for the period of 1945-1991, winning only 2 percent of the vote (Hug 2001).

No study has yet considered the effect of new party entry during EP elections, but one could assume that given the 'low stakes' of these elections and probably the low incentive for mainstream parties to invest resources in such second order contests, the costs of new party entry is lower for EP elections than national elections. This possibility might indicate that more new parties could use EP elections as a 'window of opportunity' for testing the electoral markets. Anecdotic evidence certainly points in this direction. At the 2009 EP election in Estonia, Indrek Tarand, a high-ranking civil servant, managed to run a successful anti-party campaign, securing an EP seat as an independent candidate (Ehin and Solvak 2010). Given the relative ease with which he succeeded, politicians seem to consider EP elections as 'testable electoral waters' for higher level, national politics.

On the voters' side, a high percentage of the electorate has not developed loyalty towards any of the existing parties, so that high proportions of .40 or .70 constantly acknowledge in surveys that they have no party attachment whatsoever. Around EP elections which take place within a national electoral cycle, only 10-20 percent of the voters feel close to the parties that are governing at the time. In some instances, coalitions formed after national elections have already broken up by the time the EP elections take place.<sup>3</sup> Yet, despite the parties' adaptability of changing governmental coalition structures without organizing new elections, the proportion of the electorate identifying with the coalitions' parties is rather minimal.

In this context of high partisan seat volatility and vote volatility, maybe the highest among democratizing regions if we exclude Russia and Ukraine (Bernhard and Karakoc 2010, Tavits 2005, Bielasiak 2002), it seems erroneous to assume stable preferences for voters. On the voters' side, preferences are far from settled. On the parties' side, the supply has varied significantly from one legislative election to another. Therefore, studies focused primarily on differences in party preferences from one type of election to another in the context of the post-communist EU region must consider weak party institutionalization and high vote volatility as potentially important intervening variables affecting EP voting behavior.

*Table 1: Party Attachment Distribution across East Central Europe*

	2004		2009	
	No party %	Governing coalition %	No party %	Governing coalition %
Czech Republic	32	16	<b>65</b>	30
Estonia	57	13	57	13
Hungary	<b>60</b>	16	35	13
Latvia	57	10	68	16
Poland	44	5	40	31
Slovenia	55	17	46	30
Slovakia	40	20	42	32

Source: 2004 EES; 2009 EES

<sup>3</sup> This is the case for Poland 2004, Latvia in 2009, and Czech Republic in 2009.

Essentially, the lack of strong linkages between voters and parties in post-communist Europe has two distinct effects on overall participation and party choices in national and European elections. First, as opposed to older European democracies, where parties play a distinct role in guiding their electorates on when and how to vote, in post-communist Europe, given the lack of such incentives, there appears to be room for other short-term incentives to affect electoral behavior. These short-term incentives have been identified in national elections as charismatic politics (which dominate the region), policies and candidates' images; in European elections one could add attitudes towards Europe. Second, given the short democratic experience with free and fair elections that post-communist countries have, these European citizens have not developed habits of 'entrenched voting' that may explain EP electoral participation in older democracies (Franklin 2004). From this perspective, then, one could expect European attitudes to play a larger part in determining turnout and party choices at EP elections in post-communist countries than in other EU member states. Or, as Wessels and Franklin (2010) argue 'the utility of voting should play a larger part in determining overall turnout in post-communist countries'. However, I understand the 'utility of voting' more broadly than Wessels and Franklin. For me, it captures voters' European affective and evaluative assessments of the EU rather than strict linkages between votes and policy outputs of the EU.

Finally, since previous research on electoral behavior underscores the role of information as essential for electoral participation and vote choices, I focus on the impact of EP campaigns in particular, because campaigns serve as major opportunities for informing and mobilizing citizens (see Craig 2006). Information communicated via campaigns matter to non-committed non-voters, especially in the sense that campaigns trump the lack of partisan allegiances and mobilize electorates to cast their ballot (Hillygus 2005). To the extent that the EU political system, its institutions and governance are mentioned in a campaign, the idea of Europe galvanizes voters for political participation (Hobolt 2008, Hobolt and Wittrock 2010, de Vries et al. 2010). This is more the case in the post-communist countries where voters are among the least partisan, the least knowledgeable about Europe, and yet, probably the most optimistic about 'returning to Europe'. But do campaigns activate this optimism, and is that what is reflected in voters' decisions to participate in the EP elections organized in the new member states?

This chapter addresses the question of whether European attitudes matter for political participation in new members states (i.e. states that joined the EU in 2004). In contrast to other studies that focused on turnout, this chapter is neither concerned with explaining decreasing turnout trends in EP elections, nor with explaining variations in turnout across countries. Building on work which suggests that Europe matters for political participation, mostly in an EU referendum context, the chapter's primary goal is to theorize and measure possible European dimensions impacting on voters' decisions during the most recent EP elections of 2004 and 2009. The European dimension is considered against the second order characteristics, understood as national/ domestic influences affecting political participation.

Thus, the theoretical model incorporates EU related dimensions of Europhile attitudes towards the EU institutions and EU democracy, in addition to 'national Europeanness' with regard to voters' perceptions of national benefits accruing from their country's membership to the EU. The second order model includes variables for four sub-dimensions: economic evaluations, attitudes towards the national democratic system, approval of government's record, and attachment to governmental parties.

In sum, the hypotheses to be tested in this study are formally stated as follows:

*H1a.* Attitudes towards Europe have a strong effect on turnout in post-communist states.

*H1b.* Positive attitudes toward Europe will increase political participation.

*H2.* There are no differences between the elections of 2004 and 2009 in the effects of attitudes towards Europe on turnout.

Since I do not exclude the second order effects and I only assume that they may be second in terms of relevance for political participation, the third hypothesis states that:

*H3.* National evaluations of economy and politics will add to the explanation of political participation, but their overall effect is less important than attitudes towards the EU.

*H4.* In post-communist societies, European campaigns have a strong effect on turnout.

## **Data and Methodological Approach**

The data sets used for the analyses come from the European Election Studies surveys carried out in the aftermath of the 2004<sup>4</sup> and 2009<sup>5</sup> elections for the European Parliament in seven post-communist countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia<sup>6</sup>. From the two pooled data sets, which contain responses to a core set of questions from representative samples of twenty-four (or twenty-seven in 2009) member states, two pooled data sets were constructed for the seven post-communist states, one for each EP electoral wave.<sup>7</sup> I selected only interviews of respondents eligible for voting in EP elections (see Appendix 1 for the questions selected).

The dependent variable for all analyses is a measure of voters' participation in EP elections, i.e. the binomial answers to the question 'did you cast your vote'. Voters who could not remember or did not answer the question were excluded from the analyses.

### ***Operationalising the 'Second Order' Aspects in Turnout***

The 'second order election' theory holds that voters base their voting behavior in second order elections on party preferences in the first order arena. In all countries concerned, the national arena is considered to be first order. Therefore, four sub-dimensions were created at the individual level, which capture the impact of national/domestic concerns on the decision to participate at EP elections. These sub-dimensions refer to subjective political and economic evaluations of national democracies, governments, national economies, and partisanship (see Appendix for survey questions).

- One sub-dimension related to the political system, which relates to the electorates' approval of democratic practices undergoing in the specific country: "how satisfied one is with how democracy works in [c]"; (1) 'very satisfied', (4) 'not at all'; 'don't know' answers were dropped from the analyses.

<sup>4</sup> The data are available from the homepage of the European Election Study ([www.europeanelectionstudies.net](http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net)) and from the Archive Department of GESIS (the former Central Archive for Empirical Social Research (ZA) at the University of Cologne – [www.gesis.org](http://www.gesis.org)), Germany.

<sup>5</sup> EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

<sup>6</sup> Lithuania is missing from the analysis mostly due to the limitations on the survey — only a short survey was administered and most of the questions selected for measuring first and second order dimensions were missing.

<sup>7</sup> Schmitt H., Loveless M., Adam S., Braun D. 2009. *European Election Study 2004. Design, Data Description and Documentation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition; van Egmond, M., Sapir, E. V., van der Brug, W., Hobolt, S. B., Franklin, M. N. 2010. *EES 2009 Voter Study Advance Release Notes*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.

- One decision-making sub-dimension which captures the support for government: "do you approve or disapprove the government's record to date"; coded as dummy variable (1) 'approve', (0) 'disprove'; 'don't know' answers were dropped from the analyses.
- One economic sub-dimension, which captures self-retrospective evaluations of the economy: "on the whole, what do you think about the economy"; (1) 'a lot better', (5) 'a lot worse'; 'don't know' answers were dropped from the analyses.
- Finally, a partisanship sub-dimension was created to capture attachment for government parties: "do you consider yourself close to any particular party? If so, which one?" Coded as dummy variable, (1) for parties that are members of the governmental coalition at the moment of EP elections; attachment to other parties was coded as (0). 'No party' answers were coded as (0), to avoid losing too many observations.

The correlations among these 4 sub-dimensions do not exceed .34 for both 2004 and 2009 pooled data sets. Moreover, partisanship and governmental evaluations are positively correlated in both pooled data sets, while these two sub-dimensions are moderately negatively correlated with economic and democratic evaluations. For individual countries, however, in Slovakia and Hungary only, economic evaluations are negatively moderately correlated (coefficient .46 and .48) with approval of government's record in 2004. Approval of government's record and attachment to governmental parties are positively moderately correlated in Poland, in 2009 (coefficient .41). These low to moderate correlations provide confidence that the second order dimension is well captured from different angles — attitudes towards the political system, the decision-making process, economic evaluations, and partisanship.

#### ***Operationalising the European, 'First Order', Dimension***

To measure the European attitudes, four sub-dimensions were included in the analyses that include both political and economic assessments of EU membership. These dimensions refer to individuals' normative assessments of the EU as a political system, captured by 'trust' in EU institutions and EU membership perceived as a 'good thing'. In addition, I add a sub-dimension that refers to individuals' perceived economic benefits accruing from EU membership. Based on previous research on economic voting and European integration, it has been shown that direct and indirect economic benefits associated with the EU affect support for EU integration. As such, individuals who benefit personally from EU membership support the integration project. Moreover, individuals living in countries that benefit more from EU membership display higher levels of support for their country's membership (Anderson and Reichert 1995). However, as all the countries considered in this analysis are new members, I did not consider it necessary to control for EU benefits at the country level. Finally, I add a sub-dimension that captures subjective perceptions of how EU democracy works, which might be problematic for citizens of new member states. Since these countries joined the EU in 2004, their citizens might not have had the time to form an opinion with respect to how the EU works for the 2004 EP election. In a nutshell, considering that 'returning to Europe' has been a recurrent theme in the foreign policy of the post-communist countries since the early 1990s, I expect European attitudes to have a strong effect on electoral participation, stronger than national evaluations. The four European sub-dimensions<sup>8</sup> are:

- National Europeanness, which represents a national, rationalized interest in the EU, captured by answers to the question: "decisions made by the EU will be in the interest of my country". The answers have an ordinal scale, with lower values indicating more support (1) 'a great deal of confidence' and higher values indicating less support (4) 'no confidence at all'. 'Refuse to answer' or 'don't know' were excluded from the analysis for each variable.

<sup>8</sup> I operationalize the four European sub-dimensions by closely following a similar conceptualization presented by Glencross and Trechsel (2011).

- 'Europhile' attitudes towards the EU institutions. This sub-dimension is provided by the answers to the "trust the institutions of the European Union" question. For the 2004 data set this dimension was created as a sum of answers to two questions — 'trust in European Parliament' and 'trust in European Commission'. The scale for the answers ranges from (1) 'no trust at all' to (10) 'complete trust'. I created a new variable of 'trust in EU institutions', as a sum of answers to two questions (with an alpha reliability coefficient of .91) and I rescaled it to become comparable with the 2009 survey question, from (1) to (5) 'complete trust'. In 2009, EU institutional trust was captured by the question: "indicate whether you agree or disagree with 'you trust the institutions of the EU'", with a range from (1) 'strongly agree' to (5) 'strongly disagree'. I reversed the coding for this item, to reflect the 2004 values: (1) 'strongly disagree' and (5) 'strongly agree'.
- Egocentric Europeanness — is captured by answers to the question "One's country's membership to the EU is a good thing", coded as a dummy variable (1) 'yes', and (0) 'bad' or 'neither'.
- Europhile attitudes towards the political system are measured using the question — "how satisfied is one with the way EU democracy works": (1) 'very satisfied', (4) 'not at all satisfied'; 'don't know' and 'refuse' are dropped from the analysis. However, this question in particular, proved to be very difficult for the new members, such that out of 7,700 participants almost one third (2,559) answered 'don't know' or 'refuse' in 2004 and only 1,100 answered the same in 2009. These respondents were excluded from the analyses.

This time, however, the first order sub-dimensions are moderately correlated in the pooled 2004 data set, such that the 'national Europeanness' is positively correlated both with 'egocentric Europeanness' and negatively correlated with Europhile attitudes towards the political system. Hence, evaluative perceptions of how the EU works and of possible economic gains are negatively correlated with more normative positions of trust in EU institutions and in EU membership. Coefficients in the pooled data set are .48 and .47, while for particular countries, Slovakia and the Czech Republic they go up to .64 and .61. In 2009, for the pooled data set, correlation coefficients do not go above .39, but are still high in the Czech Republic (.47).

### ***Operationalising the European Campaign***

Since I expect campaigns to matter, especially in the post-communist context where the public is essentially uninformed on the EU related issues, I capture the campaign environment with measures at the individual and country levels. At the individual level I created a scale for European campaign exposure, using survey questions related to television exposure, newspaper readings on the election, friends and family discussions on EP elections and campaigns, public meeting attendance related to campaigns, and website searches for campaign information (see Appendix for questions used). The final scale ranges from (3) 'more campaign' to (15) 'not at all', with an alpha reliability coefficient of .64 (for the 2004 data) and .74 (for 2009) indicating that the measures have internal consistency.

In addition to the measures created at the individual level, I add two contextual variables that vary across countries. Both are considered key in affecting electoral behavior at the EP elections: campaigning context and timing in the national electoral cycle.

### ***Country Level Predictors of Turnout***

Two country level predictors of turnout were defined: the visibility of the EU in national campaigns in the media and the timing of the election in the electoral cycle. The indicator of the European visibility in electoral campaigns was developed from the longitudinal cross-

national media study released in 2010<sup>9</sup>, a data set built on three cross-national media studies carried out in 1999, 2004 and 2009. Such studies conducted a systematic coding of national television and newspapers in every EU member state and included a measure of the EU visibility in the news. In the two data sets developed for this chapter, the EU visibility measure ranges from as low as 12 percent in Latvia up to 24 percent in Poland in 2004 and from 9 percent in Estonia to 21 percent in Poland in 2009.

The timing in the electoral cycle was measured as the distance in months from the previous national election. There is, however, not a lot of variation among the 7 countries. In 2004, most of the countries fall into the middle, with Slovenia having completed almost a full cycle; in 2009, Slovenia was in an early position with elections held within a year after the national election. All the rest of the sample spans were around 2-3 years (between 22-33 months). Considering the limited sample and the lack of variability I included only timing measured in months elapsed since the last national legislative election, omitting the squared component of the cyclical pattern, which was not found to work for the post-communist cases in 2004 (Schmitt, 2005) nor in 2009 (Schmitt, 2010).

### ***Control Variables***

Besides the preceding explanatory variables of interest, the following control variables were included in the analyses:

- Gender: coded as a dummy variable, (1) male and (0) female.
- Social class: coded as an ordinal measure, (1) working class and (5) upper level class. 'Refuse', 'other', and 'don't know' were dropped from the analyses.
- Age: a quantitative variable coded in 2004 as 'age' (2009 minus year of birth) and for the 2009 election as 'year of birth'.
- Interest in politics: measured as an ordinal variable with smaller values indicating 'very interested' (1) and larger values reflecting political apathy (4).
- Party attachment: "do you feel yourself close, fairly close, or merely a sympathizer to the party": (1) 'very close' and (3) 'merely a sympathizer'. To avoid dropping too many observations, I recoded 'don't know' and 'n/a' as 'no sympathizer' (4). As such, strength of party attachment becomes an ordinal variable, with a reversed coding: low scores meaning very strong attachments and high scores meaning no attachment.
- Education: measured in age when full education was stopped<sup>10</sup>.

All else being equal, I would anticipate that older men, middle-class partisan voters, who are interested in politics are more likely to participate at EP elections. This expectation conforms with the standard view in the voting behavior literature.

### ***Method***

As the dependent variable is dichotomous (vote participation in the EP elections), a series of logistic regressions have been estimated. For all analyses I use the pooled data sets rather than individual estimations for each country, mostly because I am interested in assessing an overall effect for the region of the national and European dimensions on individual behavior. Also, the

<sup>9</sup> Banducci, S., de Vreese, C., Semetko, H., Boomgarden, H., Luhiste, M., 2010. *EES Longitudinal Media Study Data Advance Release Documentation*, 15/10/2010. ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu))

<sup>10</sup> The case of 'still studying' registered in the original data sets proved to be very problematic, as one cannot automatically assume that 'still studying' means higher, post-graduate education (about 5% of respondents in both data sets). And yet, I arbitrarily recoded these respondents as 'most educated'.

variability at the individual level is better estimated using the pooled data set rather than data sets at each country level. Considering the nested structure of the data, individuals within countries, and the two level indicators used in the analyses, individual and country levels, I estimate a random intercept multi-level structural model with two distinct levels for covariates. Such a model accommodates for the dependence of observations within countries and makes adjustments to both within and between parameter estimates (Snijders and Bosker 1999).

$$\text{logit}(\text{Pr}(\text{Vote}_{ij}=1)) = \beta_{0j} + \beta_1\text{Gender}_{ij} + \beta_2\text{Class}_{ij} + \beta_3\text{Age}_{ij} + \beta_4\text{Political Interest}_{ij} + \beta_5\text{Party Attachment}_{ij} + \beta_6\text{Economic Evaluation}_{ij} + \beta_7\text{National Democracy}_{ij} + \beta_8\text{Government Parties}_{ij} + \beta_9\text{Governmental Approval}_{ij} + \beta_{10}\text{National Europeanness}_{ij} + \beta_{11}\text{Europhile attitudes EU Institutions}_{ij} + \beta_{12}\text{Egocentric Europeanness}_{ij} + \beta_{13}\text{Europhile attitudes EU Democracy}_{ij} + \beta_{14}\text{EU Campaign}_{ij},$$

where  $i$  indexes individuals and  $j$  indexes countries. At the country level, I model the individual-level constant  $\beta_{0j}$  as a function of European visibility in campaigns and timing:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\text{Months}_j + \gamma_{02}\text{EU Visibility}_j + u_{0j},$$

where  $u_{0j}$  are independent, identically distributed random errors.

By specifying level 2 random effect  $u_{0j}$ , I avoid imposing the assumption that the model accounts for all possible sources of contextual heterogeneity. For instance, given the small number of countries in the analyses, I prefer not to include additional country variables found significant in other analyses, such as financial benefits from the EU (Garry and Tilley 2010). However, the hierarchical model allows for such differences between countries not included in the model to be regarded as unexplained variability within the set of all countries (Snijders and Bosker 1999).

## Results

I estimate five models for each election year, 2004 (Table 2) and 2009 (Table 3). For each election time, I start with a first model only with control variables, to which I add, in a step-wise regression fashion, national, domestic determinants (Model 2), European attitudinal effects (Model 3), campaigns' heterogeneous effects captured at the individual level (Model 4) and finally, full model estimations that comprise all of the above and contextual sources of heterogeneity: timing and EU visibility in the media (Model 5).<sup>11</sup> The motivation behind these partial estimations is to capture the additional effect of each dimension, national but especially European, previously theorized as having a substantial impact on EP turnout. In particular, I am interested in two aspects: first, the effects of the European and national attitudes as a whole, captured by R squared calculations<sup>12</sup> when moving from one model to another; second, the behavior of national determinants when the European attitudinal effects are considered as well.

What happens then with the two main dimensions, national and European? How much do they add to the explanations of why people vote at EP elections? First, based on these ten estimations, we observe that control variables perform only partially as expected. As such, strong partisan older female voters, interested in politics, with higher social status, are more

<sup>11</sup> All coefficients presented in Table 2 and Table 3 have been obtained with centering data for continuous and ordinal variables. It has been argued that centering is important for numerical stability, i.e. models will converge faster (Doug Baer, Multi-Level Models, ICPSR 2010). However, estimations without centering produce very similar results (not shown here, but can be provided upon request).

<sup>12</sup> I calculated the R squared as the variance of the linear predictor divided by the sum of the variance of the linear predictor, plus the level-two intercept variance, plus the level-one residual variance (Snijders and Bosker 1999, pp. 224-225).

likely to participate in both the 2004 and 2009 EP elections. Education does not seem to have an effect, at least not in 2004, while in 2009 the variable has a minimal impact, but opposite in direction. This strange behavior might be explained in part by the coding procedure. To create a comparable variable across different educational systems, the survey question asked for 'years when full education stopped', with people 'still studying' coded as 'most educated'. A recoding of this variable or a different survey question is probably necessary to assess a more accurate impact of education on EP voting. We also notice that control variables explain a substantial percentage of the variance, .19 in both estimations.

Table 2: A Multilevel Model of Participation in the 2004 European Parliament Elections

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 5
	Particip.	Participation	Participation	Participation	Participation	Directional
	log odds	Effects				
	(s.e.)	(s.e.)	(s.e.)	(s.e.)	(s.e.)	
Interest in politics	-0.62(.03)***	-0.59(.03)***	-0.57(.05)***	-0.34(.06)***	-0.34(.06)***	+***
Gender	-0.24(.05)***	-0.23(.05)***	-0.20(.08)***	-0.20(.08)**	-0.20(.07)**	-**
Social class	0.20(.02)***	.017(.03)***	0.15(.04)***	0.09(.04)**	0.09(.04)**	+**
Age	0.02(.00)***	0.02(.00)***	0.02(.00)***	0.02(.00)***	0.02(.00)***	+***
Education	0.00 (.00)	0.00 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)	-0.00 (.00)	-
Party Attachment	-0.49(.03)***	-0.44(.04)***	-0.42(.05)***	-0.36(.05)***	-0.36(.05)***	+***
Economic evaluation		-0.13(.03)***	-0.06 (.04)	-0.04 (.04)	-0.04 (.04)	+
Satisfaction with democracy		-0.30(.04)***	-0.28(.06)***	-0.32(.07)***	-0.32(.07)***	+***
Governmental parties		0.02 (.09)	-0.07 (.12)	-0.08 (.13)	-0.08 (.13)	-
Government approval		0.05 (.07)	-0.08 (.09)	-0.06 (.10)	-0.06 (.10)	-
National Europeanness			-0.19(.06)***	-0.18(.07)**	-0.19(.06)**	+**
Europhile attitudes towards institutions			0.21(.00)***	0.19(.00)***	0.19(.00)***	+***
Egocentric Europeanness			0.51(.10)***	0.52(.10)***	0.52(.10)***	+***
Europhile attitudes towards the political system			0.25(.07)***	0.27(.07)***	0.27(.07)***	-***
EP campaign				-0.29(.03)***	-0.28(.03)***	+***
Timing					0.00 (.04)	+
EU visibility					-0.06 (.09)	-
<i>Random effects</i>						
Variance component	0.37***	0.36***	0.39***	0.34***	0.30***	
R squared	0.19	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.30	
No of groups	7	7	7	7	7	
No of individuals	7,049	5,812	3,217	3,164	3,164	

Source: 2004 EES. \*\*\*p<0.001; \*\*p<0.05; \*p<0.1

Table 3: A Multilevel Model of Participation in the 2009 European Parliament Elections

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 5
	log odds (s.e.)	Effects				
Interest in politics	-.72(.03)***	-.68(.04)***	-.66*** (.05)	-.39*** (.05)	-.39*** (.05)	+***
Gender	-.12(.05)**	-.13(.06)**	-.08 (.07)	-.06 (.07)	-.06 (.07)	-
Social class	.17(.03)***	.16(.03)***	.12(.04)***	.08(.03)**	.08(.03)**	+**
Age	-.00(.00)***	-.00(.00)**	-.00(.00)**	-.00(.00)**	-.00(.00)**	+**
Education	-.00(.00)**	-.00(.00)***	-.01(.00)**	-.01(.00)**	-.00(.00)**	_*
Party Attachment	-.54(.04)***	-.58 (.04)***	-.56(.05)***	-.49(.05)***	-.49(.05)***	+***
Economic evaluation		.03 (.03)	.08(.04)**	.09(.04)**	.09(.04)**	_*
Satisfaction with democracy		-.06 (.04)	.01 (.06)	.04 (.06)	-.03 (.06)	+
Close to governmental parties		-.14 (.09)	-.12 (.10)	-.09(.10)**	-.09 (.10)	-
Government approval		.29(.07)***	.17(.08)**	.18(.09)**	.16(.09)*	+
National Europeanness			-.22(.06)***	-.23(.06)***	-.24(.06)***	+***
Europhile attitudes towards institutions			.22(.04)***	.19(.04)***	.19(.04)***	+***
Egocentric Europeanness			.32(.08)***	.36(.09)***	.35(.09)***	+***
Europhile attitudes towards the political system			.09 (.06)	.09 (.06)	.08 (.06)	-
EP campaign				-.34(.02)***	-.34(.02)***	+***
Timing					-.02(.26)***	_*
EU visibility					.08(.02)***	+***
<i>Random effects</i>						
Variance component	.45***	.50***	.53***	.47***	.18***	
R squared	.19	.19	.21	.29	.33	
No of groups	7	7	7	7	7	
No of individuals	6,384	5,583	4,528	4,453	4,453	

Source: 2009 EES. \*\*\*p<0.001; \*\*p<0.05; \*p<0.1

When the second order national determinants (Model 2) are added to the equations, we notice only a minimal increase in the explained variance of EP voting, of .1 percent (2004) or less than .1 percent (2009). This minimal increase in R squared speaks to the minimal contribution of the second order thinking for turnout at EP elections in the post-communist region. In addition, we observe some variations from one EP election to another. In 2004, the most important national determinant is 'satisfaction with democracy', indicating that citizens satisfied with the way their national democracies work are more likely to vote. In 2009, on the background of the international economic crisis, the performance of national economies trigger EP participation the most. As such, people who consider the economy to be going badly are more likely to vote than people who think otherwise (Model 5 in 2009).

The predicted probabilities of EP voting (Table 4) allow us to estimate the size of the national effects. In 2004 there is a significant difference of 23 percent in the probability of voting for citizens who are most satisfied with how national democracies work versus citizens who are most dissatisfied with national democracies. The rest of the national dimensions do not attain statistical significance. Attachment to governmental parties and governmental approval decrease the probability of EP voting by only 2 percent, while negative assessments of national economies increase the probability of EP voting by 4 percent. In 2009, however, the most important national effect for EP electoral participation is the economy. The probability of EP voting is 6 percent higher for citizens who think the economy works badly when compared to the probability of voting for citizens who think the economy works well. Considering the overall international economic crisis that affected these new member states as well, it is not surprising that the economy is the most important national factor in 2009.

When European attitudes and European evaluations are added to the model, we notice a substantial increase in the R squared for 2004, up by .5. It increases by .2 in 2009 (Model 3). Most importantly, all four sub-dimensions matter for EP electoral participation and matter more than national considerations in particular (Model 5). Moreover, we distinguish two types of European related issues that significantly boost turnout. First, positive evaluations of the EU matter. As hypothesized, participation in EP elections in the post-communist region is economically driven; voters confident that EU membership represents national economic gains and the promise of a better life are more likely to participate than voters who think otherwise. Also, voters who are positive about EU institutions and trust them are more likely to vote than voters who think otherwise. However, surprisingly, negative assessments of the EU matter as well. Euro-skeptic voters with respect to the functioning of EU democracy are more likely to vote than voters who think otherwise. Overall, these first order considerations, of assessing the EU 'on its own terms' (Clark and Rohrschneider 2009) definitely trump the second order national evaluations, when deciding to participate in EP elections. As such, the main argument of the chapter is confirmed: the European dimension matters for EP electoral participation and it matters more than national considerations do to EP participation. To some extent however, the importance of negative European attitudes comes as a surprise. It might indicate that two types of voters participate in EP elections: euro-optimists who seek economic benefits from the EU and trust in EU institutions, and Euro-skeptics, who are not satisfied with how EU democracy works.

Table 4: Predicted Probabilities in % (2004 and 2009 EP Elections)

Variable	2004			2009		
	2 std below mean Dummy at value 0	2 std above mean Dummy at value 1	Absolute Change	2 std below mean Dummy at value 0	2 std above mean Dummy at value 1	Absolute Change
Economic evaluation Satisfaction with democracy	55	51	<b>4</b>	66	73	<b>6**</b>
Close to governmental parties	65	41	<b>23***</b>	69	71	<b>2</b>
Government approval	55	53	<b>2</b>	72	70	<b>4</b>
National Europeanness Europhile attitudes towards institutions	60	46	<b>14**</b>	77	62	<b>15***</b>
Egocentric Europeanness Europhile attitudes towards the political system	42	64	<b>12***</b>	61	77	<b>16***</b>
	40	53	<b>13***</b>	62	70	<b>8***</b>
EP campaign measured at the individual level	44	63	<b>19***</b>	67	72	<b>5</b>
	76	29	<b>47***</b>	90	38	<b>42***</b>

\*\*\* Indicates significant effects at .05 and .001 found in Model 5.

In a sense, this finding would corroborate previous aggregate level analyses which underscore the relative success of Euro-skeptic parties at EP elections when compared to such parties successes at national elections, a literature mostly developed for old member states. However, as I mentioned in the description of the data, this European governing item proved to be particularly problematic for EU citizens of post-communist countries. Asking them to assess how EU democracy works when they just joined the EU pushed one in three citizens to answer 'don't know' or 'refuse' in 2004, in contrast to one in seven for all other European evaluations. In 2009, however, after five years of membership, the proportion of responses to non-responses becomes similar to all other European items. It is in 2004 that negative evaluations matter, probably when only citizens with strong EU related opinions answered all EU related sub-dimensions. In 2009, however, when the EU democracy evaluation is not as problematic as in 2004, EU negative evaluations lose their significance as well. Hence, the relevance of EU negative attitudes might be interpreted as an artifact of a measurement problem rather than a clear indication of negative attitudes as highly significant.

The relative small increase in R squared in 2009 when compared to the larger European effects in 2004 can have two interpretations. First, the European effect has a decreasing impact on EP voting, despite the fact that it is still important when compared to the national one. A different structure of the data, that is in panel format, would be necessary to definitively adopt this interpretation. It is also possible that the result reflects the measurement issue just mentioned: the problem post-communist EU citizens with less developed opinions face when answering questions about EU governing structures. In other words, the difficulty that the EU post-communist citizens had in answering this question in 2004 might trigger the larger effect for the EU dimension in 2004, when compared to 2009.

A visual effect of the European dimension vs. the national assessment is provided in Figure 1 and Figure 2. In these plots, larger slopes mean larger effects. Attitudes towards the EU exert highly significant effects on turnout, and the effects of the European arena are stronger than domestic considerations, which display mostly flatter slopes. As such, four of the hypotheses to be tested in this chapter are confirmed: European attitudes matter (H1a), 'positive attitudes towards the EU' increase turnout (H1b), national evaluations matter as well but their overall effect is less important when assessed against the effects of European attitudes (H3). European attitudes matter more than the national arena in both the 2004 and 2009 EP elections (H2).

Finally, the last two models (Model 4 and Model 5) of campaign effects captured at both individual and contextual levels confirm the substantial effect of EP campaigns. As such, the more exposed to EP campaigns citizens are, to EU news in particular, the more likely they are to vote (H4). EU campaigns seem to be the most important mechanism in the region for increasing turnout; the explained variance increases by .5 in 2004 and by .8 in 2009, when EP campaign exposure at the individual level is added to the models. The substantial effect of EP campaigns' exposure is illustrated in Table 4. The difference in the probability of voting among citizens more exposed to EP campaigns versus less exposed electorates is about 40 percent, which is also the strongest impact of all determinants in the 2004 EP election and in the 2009 EP election. In addition, in 2009, the contextual EU visibility in the national media significantly increases turnout.

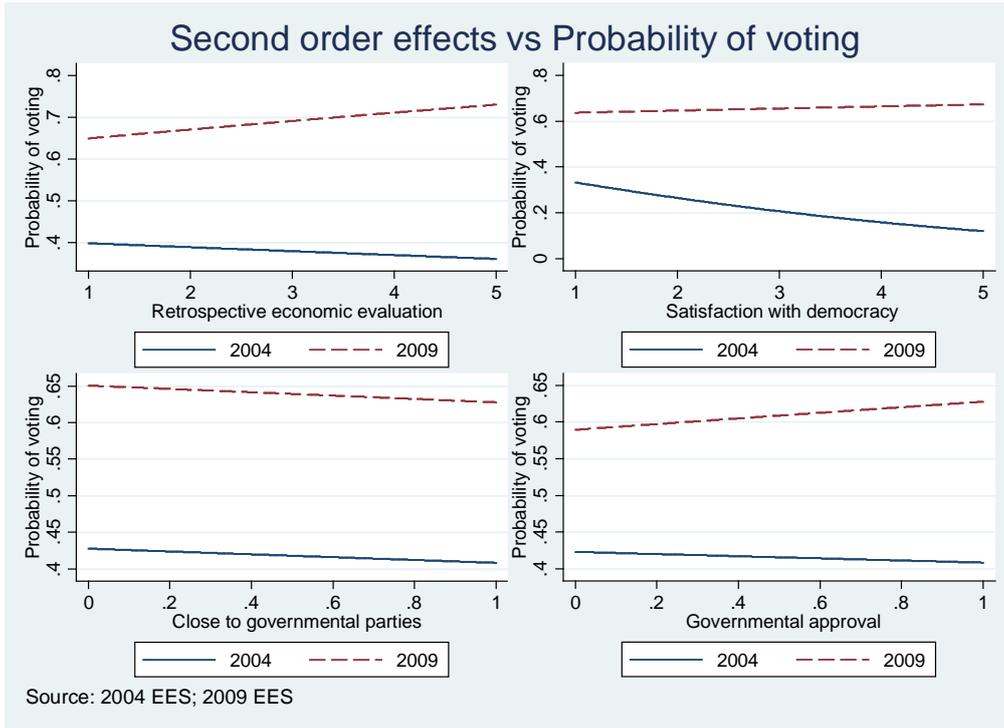


Figure 1: Second Order Effects and the Probability of Voting in European Parliament Elections

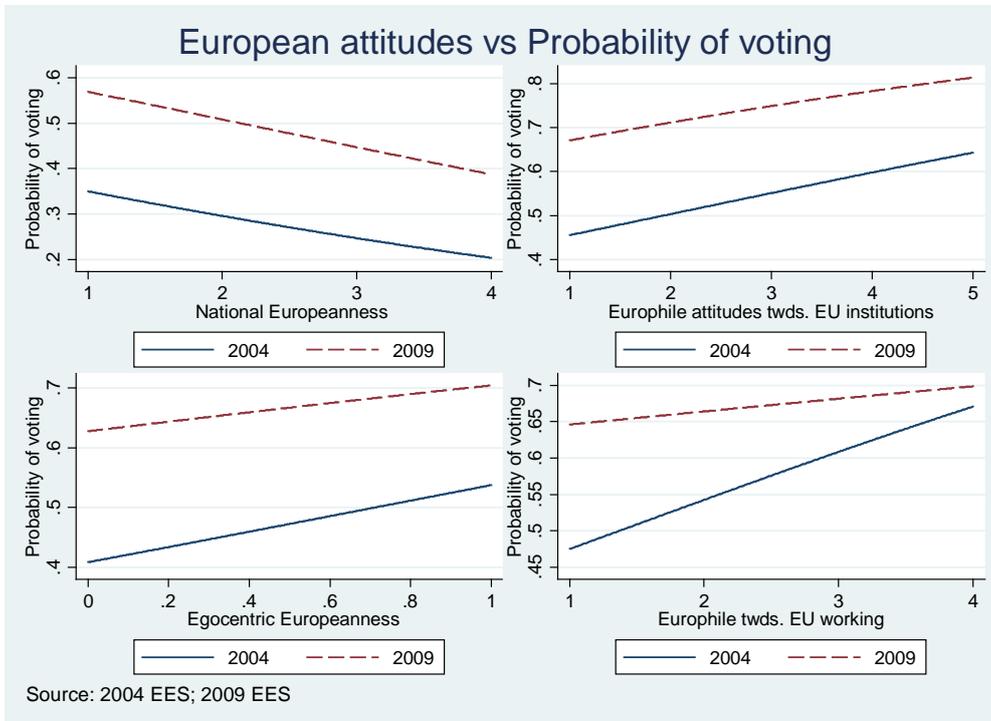


Figure 2: European Attitudes and the Probability of Voting in European Parliament elections

## Discussion

In 2004, eight post-communist countries participated at European Parliament elections for the first time. Yet, this 'return to Europe' translated into a low turnout. This is understandable and explainable however, if one considers the lower stakes of EP elections when compared to the first order national elections. Attaching the label 'second order', however, should not necessarily imply 'national, domestic affairs'. In the region, Europe matters, it matters as an incentive for people to participate and it matters more than domestic concerns. Why is this case? I posit, first, that it is because of the lack of strong party commitments in the region and second, because of different stakes that the EU represents in the post-communist region. Given the high party and vote volatility in post-communist EU member states, Europe - as an issue - finds room to impact electoral behavior in a region where the EU represents expectations of economic affluence and of democratic norm entrenchment.

In contrast to studies concerned with the relevance of the European arena for governmental parties' losses and different party choices, this study takes a step back and focuses on European attitudes and turnout. As such, this chapter shows that more positive evaluations of the EU institutions can boost turnout and definitely trump national determinants. However, this finding is not entirely surprising. As mixed evidence from recent research on revising 'the second order national election thesis' has pointed out, European attitudes matter for EP electoral behavior (Hobolt et al. 2008, Clark and Rohrschneider 2009, Hobolt and Witrock 2010, de Vries et al. 2010) and they matter differently in Eastern and Western European contexts (Garry and Tilley 2010, Tucker et al. 2002, Cichowski 2000).

In addition to the finding that Euro-optimists are the main voters in EP elections in the post-communist region, I underscore that EP voting is mostly economically driven: voters have a rationalized approach of the inter-dynamics they envision between their respective countries and the EU. In a nutshell, voters strongly believe that national economic benefits accrue from EU membership. Given the difficulties entailed by transitions to market economies, the sinuous enlargement process fueled sometimes with promises of material affluence via EU membership, and conditional on (mostly painful) social and economic reforms, the importance of EU economic calculations should not be a surprise. Voters attach a distinct meaning to their act of participating in elections that have been said to 'have no purpose' (Wessels & Franklin 2010) so that the EU policy making process is not evaluated in the strict sense of linkages between institutional attributes and policy outputs. The lack of these utilitarian approaches to the act of voting should not be viewed with suspicion, considering the relatively low levels of accurate understanding of how the EU operates. In the post-communist region, voting has a utility associated with it, but of a different kind to that found in Western Europe: the EU is the symbol of material affluence and, the association with the 'West' raises the hope that poorer member states will become more affluent (Cichowski 2000, Romanian interviews in 2009). In a sense, the relevance of economic utilitarian predictors for EP electoral participation corroborates previous studies on EU enlargements and support for EU integration of less affluent countries with short democratic experiences and almost no open trade with Europe, such as Spain, Portugal, and the Central and East European countries. In these states, public attitudes toward European integration were shaped by the prospects of higher living standards and of the EU as a mean of strengthening democracy and market related reforms (Cichowski 2000).

What will happen, however, if these high expectations of the EU are not fulfilled? Will the EU matter less? Will negative assessments of the EU matter more, as they seemed to in old Europe? After eight years of membership, the analyses above show that the European effect for the post-communist region is robust. Of course, this chapter looks at Eastern Europe as a whole and different analyses are necessary for disentangling the impact of European attitudes in particular countries.

Finally, as previous studies on EU electoral voting behavior demonstrate, the EU as an issue matters more in Western Europe and in national elections. Hence, the larger effects observed here for the post-communist region might be observed in old Europe as well, considering the increase of the importance of the EU in national and international politics. Another possibility for future research would be to systematically compare national and European elections, since attitudes towards Europe play a role in national (first order) elections. Future research might also compare systematically between Central and Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and Western European countries on the other.

## Appendix

Survey questions used in the analysis:

Sources:

- European Election Study 2004. 2nd edition. *Design, Data Description and Documentation*.  
Hermann S., Matthew L., Adam, S., Braun. D  
van Egmond, M., Sapir, E.V., van der Brug, W., Hobolt, S. B, Franklin, M.N. 2010. *EES  
2009 Voter Study Advance Release Notes*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam

### Socio-demographic controls

- ‘To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very (1), somewhat, a little, or not at all (4)?’  
‘Do you feel yourself to be very close to this party, fairly close, or merely a sympathizer?’ very close (1), fairly close (2), merely a sympathizer (3)  
‘How old were you when you stopped full time education?’ (xy in years, 97 for 'still studying)  
‘Gender’ male (1), female (2)  
‘What year were you born?’  
‘If you were to choose one of the five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to: the working class (1), the lower middle class, the middle class, the upper middle class, or the upper level class (5)?’  
‘Would you say you live in a rural area or village (1), in a small or middle-sized town (2), or in a large town (3)?’

### Second order indicators

- ‘What do you think of the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation is a lot better, a little better, stayed the same, a little worse, a lot worse? a lot better (1), a lot worse (5)’  
‘On the whole how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in[c]? very satisfied (1), fairly satisfied (2), not very satisfied (3), not at all satisfied (4)’  
‘Do you approve or disapprove of the government's record to date? approve (1), disapprove (2), neither (3)’ (Variable recoded as (1) approve(0) disapprove)  
‘Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?’

### European indicators

In 2004: ‘Please tell me on a score of 1-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 1 means that you do not trust at all, and 10 means you have complete trust. Trust in European Parliament? Trust in European Commission?’

In 2009: Q41: Do you strongly agree (1), agree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), disagree (4), strongly disagree (5)? You trust the institutions of the European Union.

‘Generally speaking, do you think that [country's] membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad? (good thing (1), bad thing (2), neither (3))’

‘All in all again, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union? very satisfied (1), fairly satisfied (2), not very satisfied (3), not at all satisfied (4)’

‘How much confidence do you have that decisions made by the European Union will be in the interest of [country]? (a great deal of confidence (1), a fair amount (2), not very much (3), no confidence at all (4).’

### European campaign exposure

- ‘How often did you watch a program about the election on television?’ often (1), never (3)  
‘How often did you read about the election in a newspaper?’  
‘How often did you talk to friends or family about the election?’  
‘How often did you attend a public meeting or rally about the election?’  
‘How often did you look into a website concerned with the election?’

European campaign at the country level

Source:

Banducci, S., de Vreese, C., Semetko, H.; Boomgarden, H., Luhiste, M., 2010. *European Election Study Longitudinal Media Study Data Advance Release Documentation*, 15.10. 2010. ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu))

‘Primary topic of the story’ - the % of EU related topics per country, which comprise stories related to EU elections, EU politics/EU institutions/competences of the EU institutions, and EU integration/EU enlargement were obtained by cross-tabulations.

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# Citizen Representation at the EU Level: Policy Congruence in the 2009 European Parliament Election<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Our analysis builds on the Selection Model of Representation and seeks to make a three-fold contribution to the scholarly debate on citizen representation via the European Parliament (EP) electoral channel. Firstly, we pay close attention to the *selection* and *sorting* mechanisms in place to advance the argument that, because the EP representation channel operates by national- and EU-level parties, congruence should be achieved (and assessed) at multiple levels. We contend that differences of congruence exist across levels and that this discrepancy manifests itself in different dimensions of political conflict. Furthermore, we hypothesize that variation on the basic elements of the model (selection and sorting mechanisms) as well as variation in citizens' knowledge about the EP election accounts for varied congruence differences across levels of representation. Secondly, operationalizing congruence as a "one-to-many" relationship, we utilize a novel measure (relative congruence) to investigate congruence at two levels (national and EU) and construct an indicator measuring difference between levels. Thirdly, we test our hypotheses against new data for 27 member states, collected by the EU Profiler and the 2009 European Election Study (PIREDEU). This data allows measuring policy congruence in both the classical left-right dimension and the EU dimension. We find varied degrees of congruence across levels, countries and EP party groups. We also find that congruence differences across levels of representation can be explained to some extent by phenomena nested in the individual, the national party, EP party group and country levels of analysis. Our results have implications for the study of political representation in the EP and the broader debate on the EU's democratic deficit.

## Introduction

Normatively, representatives should not be found at odds with the represented (Pitkin 1967). A research route towards assessing the quality of this relationship is the study of "policy congruence" (Wlezien and Soroka 2007). In the present chapter, we examine policy congruence in the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections and locate our inquiry in the broader debate about political representation in the EP. At the outset, neither this particular institution nor the EU system in general fit extant models of representation (see Marsh and Norris 1997). However, normative models provide valuable guidelines and criteria based on which the quality of political representation in the EP can be assessed (Thomassen 1994). For this purpose, previous studies of the EP have made use of the APSA (1950) manual (Responsible Party Model) (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999, 1997). Our analysis builds on this research but takes a different normative starting point.

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We focus on the Selection Model of Representation (Mansbridge 2009) and make a three-fold contribution to the scholarly debate. Firstly, we pay close attention to the *selection* and *sorting* mechanisms in place to argue that research should take seriously the particularities of the EP representational process. Precisely because the EP representation channel operates by national- and EU-level parties, congruence should be achieved (and assessed) at multiple levels. We suggest that differences of congruence exist across levels and that this discrepancy will manifest itself in different dimensions of political conflict. We discuss how variation in the basic elements of the model (selection and sorting mechanisms) as well as citizens' knowledge about the election could affect such differences. Secondly, operationalizing congruence as a "one-to-many" relationship, we utilize a novel measure (relative congruence) advanced by Golder and Stramski (2010) to investigate congruence at two levels (national and EU). Based on relative congruence estimates, we construct an indicator of the difference between these levels of representation. Thirdly, we test our hypotheses against new data for 27 member states, collected by the EU Profiler and the 2009 European Election Study (PIREDEU<sup>4</sup>). This data allows measuring policy congruence in both the classical left-right dimension and the EU dimension. Our data analysis reveals congruence differences across levels. The descriptive picture shows variation across countries, EP party groups and across dimensions of contestation. We then conduct regressions at different levels of analysis (i.e. individual, national party, EP party group and country), including variables that have been used generally in models of policy congruence. Our analysis throws new light on the quality of electoral democracy and representation in the EP, with implications for the broader debate on the EU's democratic deficit.

In what follows, we firstly flesh out our argument and hypotheses on congruence difference across levels and on variation of this difference across dimensions of conflict as well as voters, parties, and countries. Secondly, we deploy our methodological strategy. Thirdly, we report our results and in our fourth and concluding section we briefly discuss their relevance to (the study of) representation in the EP.

### **Theorizing Congruence in European Parliament Multilevel Representation**

In the Selection Model of Representation, alignment between representatives and represented is primarily determined by the *selecting* and *sorting* mechanisms that are in place for this purpose (Mansbridge 2009). Approaching the representational relationship from a principal-agent perspective, voters are the principals choosing candidates as their agents. Agents sort themselves in organizations (political parties) that are promoting specific policy proposals. It is important for the principals (voters) to know what these are and the organizational label (e.g. party name) provides relevant cues. However, from the voter's perspective, the achievement of such an alignment via the EP election is not business as usual. The difficulties they encounter are inherent in the architecture of the representation channel. Candidates for EP elections are recruited by national parties. The voice of the people thus gets articulated via party competition at the national level: each people within the EU selects a (fixed) number of representatives (according to member states' population size). Yet, the EP is organized along party (as opposed to national) lines. So the elected candidates (national party members) re-sort themselves in EU-level parties (EP party groups) to decide on legislation for the EU citizenry as a whole. Therefore, in the case of the EP, both national political parties competing in elections and EP party groups legislating are (constitutionally) entrusted with the task of embodying the "channelment"<sup>5</sup> between citizens and elites in the EU. In sum: every five years citizens of

<sup>4</sup> See official website: [http://www.piredeu.eu/public/Data\\_Release.asp](http://www.piredeu.eu/public/Data_Release.asp)

<sup>5</sup> Sartori (1976: xxi) views parties as "the central intermediate and intermediary structure enabling "channelment" "expression" and "communication" between society and government. Hence, an examination of ideological congruence between parties and their electors indirectly also contributes to

national constituencies go to the polls to *select* among candidates *sorted* in national parties that, after the election *re-sort* themselves into EP party groups. Therefore, as a *selection* mechanism, the EP election should produce congruence at two levels: (a) between voter X and national party x (voted for by voter X) and (b) between voter X and the EP party group  $\chi$  of which national party x becomes member. Under ideal circumstances, there should be no difference between the positions of EP party groups and that of their constituent members. However, this is (still) far from reality. In what follows, we elaborate on our expectations regarding congruence differences across levels of representation and variation in the manifestation of these differences across dimensions of contestation as well as voters, parties and countries.

## Research Hypotheses

Previous analyses of representation in the EP, which studied voters' congruence with either national parties or EP party groups, reveal variation across dimensions and issues of contestation, across countries and parties (e.g. Mattila and Raunio 2006; Kritzinger *et al.* 2010; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999). Moreover, research on EP party groups shows that they constitute a patchwork of - sometimes very - different fabrics (Mc Elroy and Benoit 2007). Synthesizing these findings, we suggest here that the alignment achieved between voter X and party x at the national level may "get lost in translation" when the national party x becomes a member of an EU-level party  $\chi$ . Our major hypothesis postulates that congruence differences are likely to exist across levels of representation (Hypothesis 1). Given that the main elements of the model adopted here, *selecting* and *sorting mechanisms*, concern differences across countries and parties, we expect variation in congruence differences both among EU member states (Hypothesis 1a) and EP party groups (Hypothesis 1b).

If congruence between represented and representatives differs across levels of representation, then it could be better or worse at the supranational level of representation when compared to the national level. When EP party groups are formed after the European election, there are two possibilities: if the EP party group position is closer to that of the voter (compared to the position of the national party this voter supported), then the voter will "gain" in congruence as we move up the levels of representation. Yet, if the resulting EP party group position is further away from that of the voter (compared to preferred national party), the voter will "lose" in terms of congruence across levels. In essence, the congruence difference between national and EP levels will be either advantageous, or disadvantageous to the voter. This means that some voters may be better represented than others at the stage when their preferred national party gets incorporated into an EP party group. If congruence can differ in either direction across levels of representation, a secondary research question concerns the factors accounting for either of these outcomes. In what follows, we examine the potential effect of country and party-level variables used in previous works (e.g. Mattila and Raunio 2006) and additionally explore whether EU-level as well as individual-level variables play a role in congruence differences observed across levels.

Firstly, a recurrent finding during thirty years of European electoral research is that EP elections are "second-order national elections" (Schmitt 2005; Reif and Schmitt 1980). They are haunted by the issues of another more prominent arena (e.g. the national election), they are notoriously low-turnout-events, in which large and incumbent parties lose and small and extreme parties win. Due to its second-order nature, the EP election is not necessarily fought over Europe or issues pertaining to EP competences (see also Mair 2007b; 2000; Lefkofridi and Kritzinger 2008). Research on political conflict, cleavages and national party competition *vis-à-*

our knowledge of how well parties perform with regard to these crucial functions attributed to them. The difference between the EU and national systems is that there are two structures to consider in the EP system.

vis European integration (e.g. Marks *et al.* 2006; Marks and Steenbergen 2004; 2002; Hooghe *et al.* 2002; Marks and Wilson 1999) suggests that national parties have incentives to underemphasize European issues and structure competition “along the more familiar and safer socio-economic cleavage” (Mattila and Raunio 2006: 428). So at the selection moment, more information is likely to be available to voters on left-right issues than on EU issues. Previous comparative analyses have shown that parties and voters achieve higher congruence in the classic left-right dimension of contestation than in the EU dimension, with national parties being more EU-supportive than voters (e.g. Mattila and Raunio 2006). Also, research on MEPs and EP party group behavior shows that “ideological variance from the EP party on left-right issues is a stronger predictor of MEP defection than ideological variance on European integration issues” (Hix 2002: 694). EP party group groups in the EP are, by and large, EU-supportive, as they share a long-term “preference of increasing the power of the EP and the legitimacy of the EU system as a whole” (Kreppel and Hix 2003: 93). So we expect congruence differences across levels to vary across dimensions of contestation (Hypothesis 2) and hypothesize that congruence differences will be less pronounced in the left-right dimension (Hypothesis 2a). In addition, assuming that at the national level incongruence is predominant in the EU dimension, then at the EP level congruence will be most likely to deteriorate so that voters “lose” as we move up the levels (Hypothesis 2b).

Secondly, we consider whether variation in congruence differences is due to varied timing of EP elections, timing of EU membership and institutions regulating selection, i.e. electoral rules. The timing of EP elections in relation to the national election matters: an EP election coinciding with a national election is more likely to be “second-order” than when the two elections are not held simultaneously (e.g. Oppenhuis *et al.* 1996). Concurrence of EP elections with important domestic electoral events suggests maximum prevalence of domestic lines of competition. This situation may exaggerate the divergence between congruence achieved at national and EP levels. We thus hypothesize that coincidence of domestic electoral events and EP election will bring about a greater difference between congruence achieved at national and EP levels (Hypothesis 3). Moreover, we hypothesize that voters in countries where the EP election is coinciding with national events will “lose” congruence as we move up the levels (Hypothesis 3a).

What is more, the length of EU membership could play a role (see Goetz 2006; Mattila and Raunio 2006). Newer member states are less familiar with the EU system in general and the EP in particular. We thus hypothesize that older member states will exhibit congruence differences than newer ones (Hypothesis 4). We formulate a more specific hypothesis about the direction of the difference across levels, namely that voters in newer member states will “lose” congruence as we move up the levels (Hypothesis 4a).

In addition, in various studies electoral systems have been theorized as important determinants of democratic representation. Although the literature on congruence has explored the impact of majoritarian versus proportional electoral institutions on policy congruence (e.g., Huber and Powell 1994; Powell 2000, 2006; McDonald *et al.* 2004; McDonald and Budge 2005; Blais and Bodet 2006) and has found no major differences, it remains unknown whether aspects other than proportionality are influential. In the case of EP elections, the typical dichotomy between majoritarian and proportional selection rules is absent: all countries use some form of proportional representation. However, the specific selection rules are not harmonized and variation among them matters in EP representation (Farrell and Scully 2007; Hix and Hagemann 2009). We know that differences between candidate-centric and party-centric selection mechanisms affect legislative behavior of representatives (e.g. Jun and Hix 2010). Also Farrell and Scully (2007) show that open, candidate-based systems are associated with greater concern about constituency representation among elected politicians. Even though EP party groups display high degrees of cohesion when legislating (e.g. Hix *et al.* 2007), national-level selection mechanisms have been found to affect MEP behavior. According to (Hix 2004) party-centered electoral systems (such as closed-list proportional representation systems) and centralized candidate-selection rules result in MEPs beholden to national parties

(that fight elections and choose candidates). Based on these insights, we are interested in the effects of varied selection rules on congruence produced across levels at the very moment of selection. Candidate-centered systems give voters the chance to choose among specific candidates. This generates the incentive for individual candidates to deviate from the national party line during campaigns so as to remain as close as possible to their supporters. Assuming that candidate-national party congruence in party-centered systems is higher than in candidate-centered systems, voters in the latter systems are more likely to experience congruence differences as we move up the levels of representation (Hypothesis 5). This is because when the various positions of EP party group members get aggregated to form a single EP party group position, voters of more “independent” MEPs will be in a disadvantageous position. It is easier for an internally cohesive party to pull the average EP party group position in its direction. Hence, voters in candidate-centered systems are more likely than those in party-centered systems to “lose” congruence as we move up the levels of representation (Hypothesis 5a).

Thirdly, we consider the potential effect of party-level variables, namely party ideology and party size of national parties as well as EP party groups. According to previous works (Dalton 1985; Mattila and Raunio 2006) ideological centrism/extremism matters for policy representation. Hence we hypothesize that supporters of national parties with clear ideological profiles on the left and right of the ideological spectrum experience the least congruence difference across levels (Hypothesis 6). Party size is another typical suspect in analyses of EP elections, party competition, party policy positions and, consequently, policy congruence. In fact, specific research investigating party-voter congruence on the EU dimension based on voters’ perceptions of party positions (Mattila and Raunio 2006: 443) finds party size to affect degree of congruence, with small parties scoring better on congruence than large parties (at the national level). The rationale is that small parties are likely to exhibit higher ideological homogeneity than bigger parties with larger electorates (*ibid.*). However, we do not know whether party size has similar effects when we take into account both national and European levels. We know that EP party groups’ positions do not always equate the average constituent members’ positions (McElroy and Benoit 2007). If so, then party size may matter and the positions of the entire EP party group will be closer to those of its largest constituent parties. It should be mentioned here that the size of a national party delegation within an EP party group depends upon the number of seats allocated to its country of origin. We therefore hypothesize that supporters of large national member parties of an EP party group, are least likely to experience congruence differences across levels (Hypothesis 7). We underline that our hypothesis refers to differences in congruence across levels; it follows that, in case large parties are incongruent with their voters at the national level, this incongruence should be preserved. We add a corollary hypothesis, namely that voters of large national member parties of EP party groups are least likely to “lose” congruence as we move up the levels (Hypothesis 7a).

Party size at the EP level can also be related to congruence differences across levels. Given important differences across EU member states in terms of preferences about the aims and outcomes of common policies (e.g. Hix and Goetz 2000), the more parties included in an EP party group, the larger the potential for intra-EP party group heterogeneity in terms of positions. Under conditions of group heterogeneity, chances are higher that there is greater deviation of national parties from the central tendency of their EP party group. Large EP party groups are composed of a higher number of constituent parties. We thus hypothesize that the higher the number of constituent member parties of an EP party group, the more likely it is for voters of these parties to experience congruence differences across levels (Hypothesis 8a). Furthermore, we hypothesize that voters represented by such EP party groups are more likely to “lose” congruence as we move up the levels of representation (Hypothesis 8b). The two largest EP party groups are the European People’s Party and the Socialists. So we should be able to see differences between voters of parties joining these two large EP party groups and voters of parties joining other Groups.

Finally, we know that voters' political knowledge matters for electoral processes (e.g. Bartels 1996; Bennett 1996; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996) and for achievement of alignment in the selection model (Mansbridge 2009). Assuming that knowledge is dependent upon degrees of citizens' interest and information availability, we expect that high political interest and political information for the EP election would matter for congruence differences. We thus hypothesize that voters whose knowledge about the EP election is poor will experience congruence difference across levels (Hypothesis 9). Moreover, voters that are highly informed about the upcoming EP election will consider sorting mechanisms at both levels of representation when making a choice. In other words, when selecting a national party informed voters will take into account information about the EP party group that the national party is likely to join. So we hypothesize that knowledgeable voters will "gain" congruence as we move up the levels (Hypothesis 9a).

Studying citizen's multilevel representation in the EP is obviously a complex phenomenon that requires the exploration of variation operating at different levels of analysis. In the next section, we elaborate on our methodological strategy for such an enterprise.

## Methodology

Having adopted a selection model of representation, we only focus on ideological congruence produced via direct EP elections<sup>6</sup>. A major contribution of the original Miller and Stokes' (1963) selection model and its refinements (e.g. Page *et al.* 1984; Kuklinski and Elling 1977) was the conceptualization of the representational relationship as "dyadic". Yet, due to the supranational nature of the EP institution and the second-order character of EP elections, congruence as a measure of representation is, evidently, not easy to operationalize: the dyads of interest differ between levels; they concern voters and national parties as well as voters and EP party groups, which are composed of national parties from different EU member states. To translate congruence into something both measurable and meaningful in the multinational EU setting, we use the differentiation of congruence measures put forward by Golder and Stramski (2010).

Golder and Stramski (2010) develop measures for three types of dyadic relationships: (a) "one-to-one" encapsulating the relationship between a single citizen and her representative, (b) "many-to-one" referring to the relationship between the group of citizens that have voted for one representative or party and (c) "many-to-many" depicting the relationship between all citizens and all representatives or parties in one assembly. First, the "one-to-one" concept does not allow us to investigate the national aspect of the elections. It should be noted here that in Pitkin's seminal linguistic analysis, a "political representative—at least the typical member of an elected legislature—has a constituency rather than a single principal" (Pitkin 1967: 214). Second, measuring congruence as a "many-to-many relationship" is more appropriate for an investigation of the alignment between constituency and legislature. Hence, for the purposes of our analysis of congruence difference across levels, we utilize the "many-to-one" relationship.

The "many-to-one" relationship is picturing congruence between one political party and the segment of the electorate that voted for it. This is a straight-forward relationship in a national context but more complex in the EP electoral setting. In order to operationalize congruence between voters and their representatives in the EP environment we need to go through the national party structures. In other words, the electoral system for the EP elections follows a national structure, where the national parties compete for the EP seats; it is only in the EP that

<sup>6</sup> Consistent with our theoretical framework, we focus here on the input of the EP representation channel. It should be noted, however, that congruence could also be evaluated as correspondence between citizen preferences and policy output.

the elected deputies join a EU-level party that is (in theory) unattached to national interests. Thus, even though the voters make a choice of a national party considering national issues they are finally represented by a EP party group on issues of EP jurisdiction. To capture this particularity in practice, we first measure congruence between voters and national parties and then move to combining national parties into their respective European parliament groups. This research design is based on the assumption that national parties are not ideologically identical with the Euro-party groups they join. Thus the clustering has to take place in a second stage.

An additional problem for dealing with representation in a supranational assembly is that ideological positions on the left-right axis do not always mean the same thing for the whole (European) electorate (see Mair 2007a). For instance, what a British voter understands as “extreme left” might be what a Swedish voter would place around the centre left. Thus, we need to ensure that the measures are standardized across Europe. Therefore, among different measures of the “many-to-one” relationship, we chose the “relative citizen congruence” as a standardized measure of distance between citizens and parties (Golder and Stramski 2010: 93):

$$RCC = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n |C_i - MC|}{\sum_{i=1}^n |C_i - P_j|}$$

where N is the number of citizens having supported party  $P_j$  and  $C_i$  is the ideal point of the  $i^{th}$  citizen. *Relative Citizen Congruence (RCC)* is the distance between the ideological position of party  $P_j$  and  $C_i$ , in relation to the dispersion of the preferences of all citizens having supported the same party (whereby MC is the ideological position of the median supporter of  $P_j$ ).

To measure policy congruence in the two main dimensions of contestation for the EP election we use the EES 2009 data to estimate the positions of voters and the EU Profiler data<sup>7</sup> to estimate the positions of national parties. The EU Profiler data provide a self-placement of the parties prior to the 2009 European election. Deriving party positions from a questionnaire on policy issues that parties themselves filled out is obviously a more accurate method to extract the position of political parties than relying on EES respondents’ perceived positions of parties. The data on the position of the voters are self-reported. The left-right dimension consists of a classic 0-10 scale (where 0 means “far left”). The EU dimension is a continuum ranging from the opinion that the European Unification has gone too far (0) to the opposite opinion that it should be pushed further (10). We recoded these data to an -2 to +2 scale to match the EU Profiler data that provide party positions on the corresponding issues. Perfect congruence between party and voters occurs when their positions are identical. The smaller the distance between voters’ and parties’ positions, the higher the congruence between them. Yet, what happens to policy congruence when we move up the representation ladder?

After measuring congruence on the national level, we proceed by combining the national parties into their respective Euro-party group based on the 2009 EP formation. Having used the self-reported EU profiler data for locating national parties along the two major dimensions of contestation, we need a similar source for the EP party group. Lacking the direct self-reported position, however, we need to rely on extrapolations that offer us an accurate measure of the EP party group positions. The findings by McElroy and Benoit (2010) show the position of the EP party group being very close to its median member party. They also find that national parties form EP party groups on the basis of policy congruence. Incongruence may be observed over

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Trechsel, "EU-Profiler: positioning of the parties in the European Elections", <http://hdl.handle.net/TEST/10008> UNF:5:8GmnaMhk3vC0e58H3PmWDg== European University Institute V1

time due to national party policy fluctuations, which eventually may lead parties to switch EP party groups. Yet, we focus on the moment of re-sorting, namely right after the election, when the EP group is just formed. By locating our analysis at this moment in time, we can safely assume that conditions of highest intra-EP party group congruence exist. For this reason, we use the median member party of an EP party group as an estimate for that party group's position and calculate the congruence between the party group and the voters of its national member parties utilizing the Golder and Stramski (2010) measure mentioned above.

To measure the difference of congruence (hereafter termed "Congruence Difference") produced at different levels, we subtract the congruence between voters and their national party from the congruence between voters and their EP party group. Negative values of Congruence Difference signify that the voter „loses“ as we move up the levels of representation, whereas positive values signify that the voter „gains“ as we move up the levels of representation. To illustrate, if:

$$\text{National level Congruence (C-NAT)} = \text{Voter Position (VP)} - \text{National Party position (NP)} = 0 \ \&$$

$$\text{EU level Congruence (C-EU)} = \text{Voter Position (VP)} - \text{EU Party Position (EUP)} = 1$$

then Congruence Difference (C-D) = (C-NAT) - (C-EU) = 0-1 = -1 (a)

Similarly, if:

$$(C-NAT) = \text{VP} - \text{NP} = 1 \ \text{and} \ (C-EU) = \text{VP} - \text{EUP} = 0, \ \text{then} \ (C-D) = 1 - 0 = +1 \ (b)$$

Finally, congruence at both levels could be identical, i.e. equally low or high. Therefore, if, for instance:

$$(C-NAT) = \text{VP} - \text{NP} = 1 \ \text{and} \ (C-EU) = \text{VP} - \text{EUP} = 1, \ \text{then} \ (C-D) = 1 - 1 = 0 \ (c)$$

In this last example, there is no difference between levels. This constitutes the Null Hypothesis in our inquiry, i.e. that there is no congruence difference across levels of representation. To the best of our knowledge, the variable "congruence difference" has never been used as a dependent variable before. As there is no established path to follow in constructing regression models and choosing control variables, we use our hypotheses and a lot of common sense.

We now turn to the operationalization of the country-level variables that we hypothesized as affecting congruence difference across levels. Firstly, like most comparative analyses, we use the 2004 enlargement wave as the cutting point to divide EU member states into "old" and "new". Secondly, we look at the timing of elections. Our case-study is the 2009 European Parliament election. In most countries, it took place on Sunday June 7, 2009. Because traditional polling days vary across countries (according to local custom), in some countries the election was held in the three preceding days<sup>8</sup>. Notably, in seven EU member-states, the EP election took place alongside other domestic electoral events: a general election in Luxembourg; local government elections in Latvia, parts of the United Kingdom and Germany, Italy, Malta, and Ireland (as well as two by-elections in Dublin South and Dublin Central); a regional election in Belgium; and a referendum on reforming the royal succession law in Denmark. Hence, our case-study allows us to study the effect of timing, by comparing countries where the EP election is a stand-alone event to those where they coincide with local, regional and, most importantly, national elections or referenda.

<sup>8</sup> Thursday June 4, 2009: United Kingdom (including Gibraltar), Netherlands (including Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles); Friday June 5, 2009: Ireland, Czech Republic (day 1); Saturday June 6, 2009: Cyprus, France (for part of Outre-mer), Italy (day 1), Latvia, Malta, Slovakia, Czech Republic (day 2); Sunday June 7, 2009: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy (day 2), Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden.

Thirdly, four different electoral systems operate in the EP election, as each country-constituency is allowed to choose a variant of proportional representation. These variations allow differences in how voters choose their candidate(s). Thus, we have: the preferential vote<sup>9</sup>, the closed list vote<sup>10</sup>, the mixed vote<sup>11</sup> and the single transferable vote<sup>12</sup>. In practice, the differences among these PR systems translate in variations of voters' range of choice. In many cases the voter has no control over the specific candidates that are elected.

With regard to our party level variables, we divide them into national party variables and EP party group variables. The former include party ideology and party size at the national level. We measure ideological extremism based on party positions on the left-right scale mentioned earlier: we characterize as "Left" parties scoring below 0 and "Right" the parties scoring above 0 in the -2 to +2 scale (where -2 is left and +2 is right). There is a significant number of parties that score 0, creating the centre ground of the left-right scale. Party size is measured as vote percentage won at the national level. The EP party group level variable of interest here is straightforward, i.e. the number of constituent member parties of an EP party group. We also construct a variable that includes the total number of seats gained by the EP Party group. To explore differences, we additionally construct a variable of national party membership in the Socialist or EPP party groups.

To assess the role of individuals' political knowledge in experiencing congruence differences across levels, we utilize the questionnaire items of the EES Voter Survey inquiring about frequency of: watching news in general, watching EP-election specific programs, reading EU-specific papers, talking about EP elections, attending EP-election related meetings, visiting a website on EP elections and visiting a vote-aid website for EP elections. Since we are studying policy congruence, we also test for individual left-right placement. We have not included this variable in our theoretical framework for reasons of endogeneity. However, we do include it in the data analysis to see how it performs, especially for the purpose of analyzing the EU dimension. We control for classic demographic variables used in electoral research, namely age, gender and religiosity. Last but not least, the case under study is the first pan-European election occurring during the financial crisis, which started in 2007. We thus include the voter's evaluation of the economy as a relevant valence item to see whether being disappointed with the economic situation of a member state has an effect on congruence differences between the two levels of citizen representation.

## Data Description and Analysis

The dependent variable in the present analysis is the difference of congruence achieved between voters and parties at the national and EP levels of representation; the range of this variable runs from -1 to +1. Due to reasons of space, we cannot report here the results for all parties in all EU 27 member states for two dimensions of contestation. We thus give an aggregate picture of our results. We look at each dimension of conflict separately, grouping the results for each dimension per country and per EP party group. Before organizing our results in such a way, we measured congruence at both levels as elaborated in the previous section. Observations at close to 0 would reflect no difference of congruence across levels. It should be borne in mind that negative values signify that voters "lose" as representation moves up a level whereas positive values signify that voters "gain" congruence when the parties they voted for joins an EP party group.

<sup>9</sup> Voters can modify the order of the candidates on the list according to their voting preference.

<sup>10</sup> Voters select a list that cannot be changed.

<sup>11</sup> Voters can choose different candidates from several lists.

<sup>12</sup> The voter indicates first choice, then second choice and so on. If the first candidate is not elected the vote is transferred to the second choice, etc.

With regard to the left-right dimension, a cursory look at our dependent variable shows that congruence at the national and EP level of representation is far from equal. Figure 1 displays the ranking of congruence differences among all EU member states, while Figure 2 shows the ranking of congruence differences among EP party groups. Both Figures exhibit large deviations from 0, thus lending support to the major proposition put forward here, namely that congruence differs across levels (Hypothesis 1). Importantly, variation in congruence differences is evident both

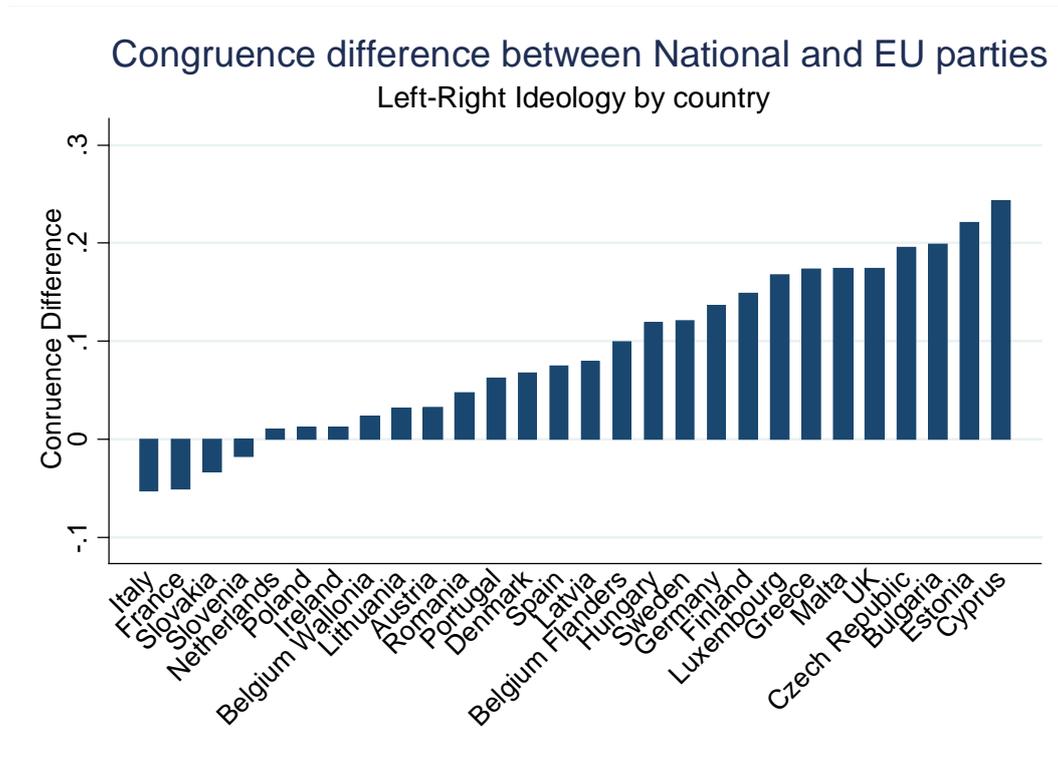


Figure 1: Congruence difference between national and EU parties. Left-right ideology by country.

across countries and across EP party groups (Hypotheses H1a and H1b). A closer look at Figure 1 shows that, voters in three countries (France, Italy and Slovakia) stand out as exhibiting greatest “loss” of congruence in the left-right dimension when their national parties join EP party groups. In most countries, however, voters “gain” congruence as we move up the levels of representation. This is an interesting finding and further investigation is needed to understand the mechanism behind it.

Figure 2 shows that supporters of national parties joining the Greens/European Free Alliance “lose” congruence more than supporters of parties joining other Groups. The biggest “loss” is for national voters of the Alliance of European National Movements, whose members are non-aligned and poorly integrated, contrary to other EP party groups. Notably, voters of parties joining the European People Party experience almost no difference across levels. For voters of the rest of EP party groups the picture is largely positive, with voters having supported national parties that joined the Alliance of Liberals & Democrats of Europe gaining most in terms of congruence with their representatives in the left-right dimension. The finding about the “Non-aligned” group is surprising, as those voters apparently “gain” congruence at the EP level despite the fact that they do not even constitute a proper EP party group.

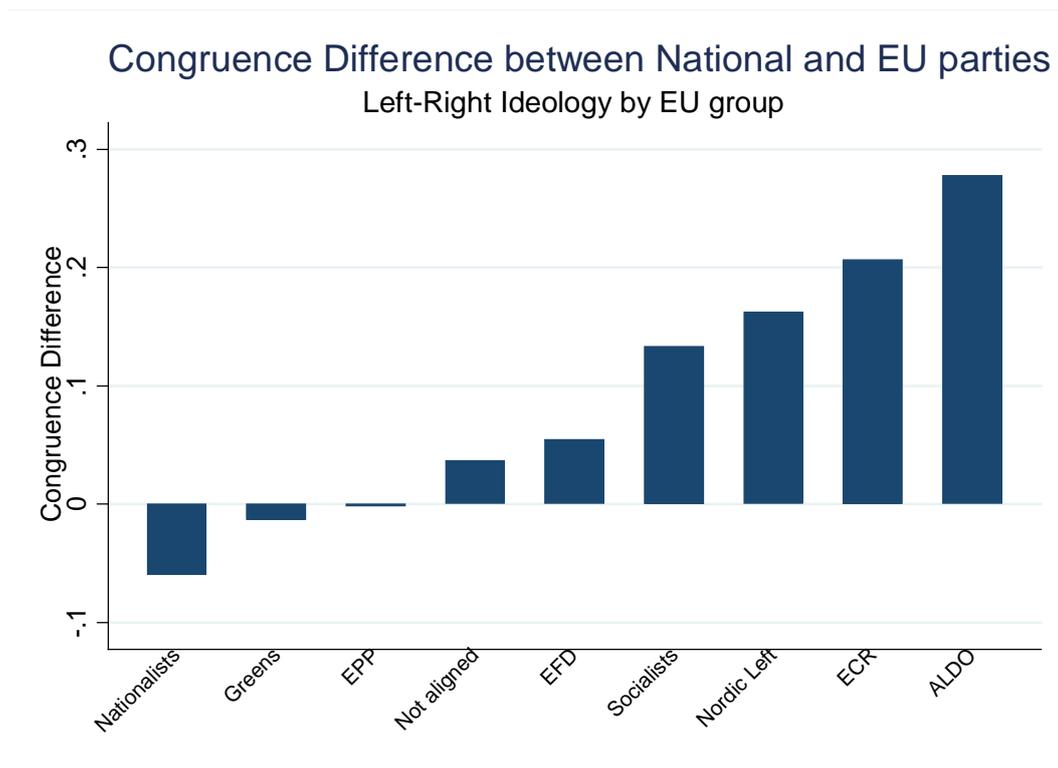


Figure 2: Congruence difference between national and EU parties.  
Left-right ideology by EU Party Group.

The next question to address is whether similar patterns of congruence differences exist among EU-level parties on the EU dimension. Figure 3 reports the results per country and Figure 4 the results per EP party group. Similarly to the left-right dimension, the analysis of the EU dimension reveals striking congruence differences as we move up the levels of representation, thus further supporting our major proposition (Hypothesis 1). When looking at country differences we see a completely different pattern on this dimension compared to the left-right one (Hypothesis 2). But when looking at EP party groups the patterns in the two dimensions of conflict are not that different. However, in the case of the EU dimension the EP party group that appears very “balanced” across levels is the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats. The voters of national parties joining this EP Party group experience only a slight difference across levels.

In Figure 3 we see that in half of EU member states voters “lose” congruence on the EU dimension when their chosen national parties join EP party groups, with four new member states championing in terms of congruence “loss” across levels. The picture for voters in the other half of the EU shows the opposite phenomenon, with voters from five of the six founding member states (France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and Germany) gaining congruence when representation moves from national to EP level.

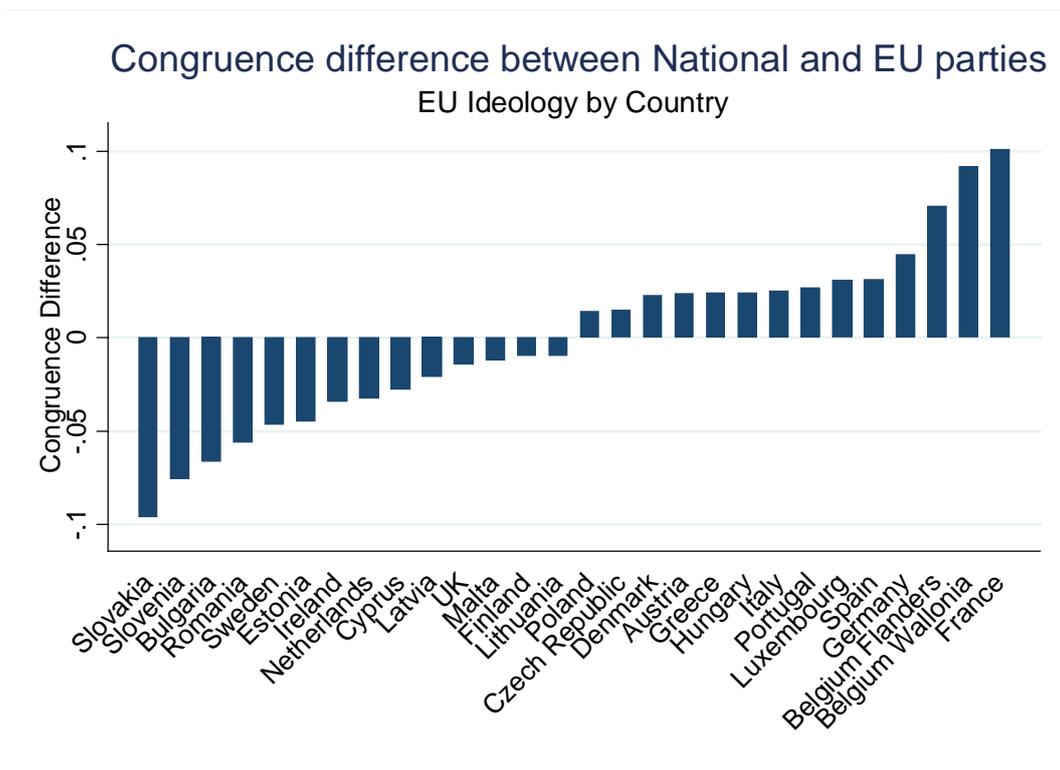


Figure 3: Congruence difference between national and EU parties

Figure 4 displays patterns of congruence differences among EP party groups in the same dimension. Here “losers” across levels constitute the supporters of national parties joining the European Conservatives, the Alliance of Liberals & Democrats for Europe and the European People’s Party. Voters supporting Euroskeptic national parties seem to score well in congruence with the EP party groups representing them. Supporters of the Group of the European United Left constitute the biggest “winners” of representation across levels, followed by the Alliance of European National Movements, the non-aligned and the Greens/European Free Alliance.

In sum: it is clear that there is a difference between national and EP party congruence that varies both among countries and among EP party groups. The data analyzed here thus lend support to the basis of our argument (Hypothesis 1, 1a, 1b). Our analysis shows variation across dimensions of conflict (Hypothesis 2). Also, our data provide some evidence regarding differences across levels as being less pronounced on the left-right than on the EU dimension (Hypothesis 2a). According to the four figures presented here the congruence differences on the EU dimension are much more prominent than those on the left-right dimension. Finally, with regard to our hypothesis about voters’ “loss” of congruence across levels in the EU dimension (Hypothesis 2b) the picture is ambiguous: in fact, there is evidence both for deterioration and improvement of congruence.

However, the EU dimension shows more EP party groups and more countries scoring below zero than in the left-right dimension. Having established the existence of congruence differences and their variation across dimensions, countries and EP party groups, in what follows we explore under which conditions an upward movement in the representative channel results in higher congruence between represented and their representatives.

From the description of our dependent variable it is clear that explanations of the variation in the congruence difference take into account two different levels of analysis, countries and EP party groups. As these two levels are not nested in one another, we undertake our exploratory

analysis on the two levels of analysis separately. As in our descriptive results, the dependent variable is the difference between national party and EU party congruence. At this stage of the analysis, we want to find out under what circumstances *going up a level* of representation results in higher congruence between represented and representatives. In other words, we inquire about when individual voters are better represented by their national party or by the EP party group. However, to test our hypotheses we need to establish under what conditions this congruence difference reaches its minimum. So we consider the *absolute* congruence difference between national and EP Party level, which can be utilized in a regression analysis. Consistent with our theoretical framework, we divide our results into four levels of analysis in order to pinpoint the most influential variables and to test our hypotheses: individual level, national party level, EP party group level and country level.

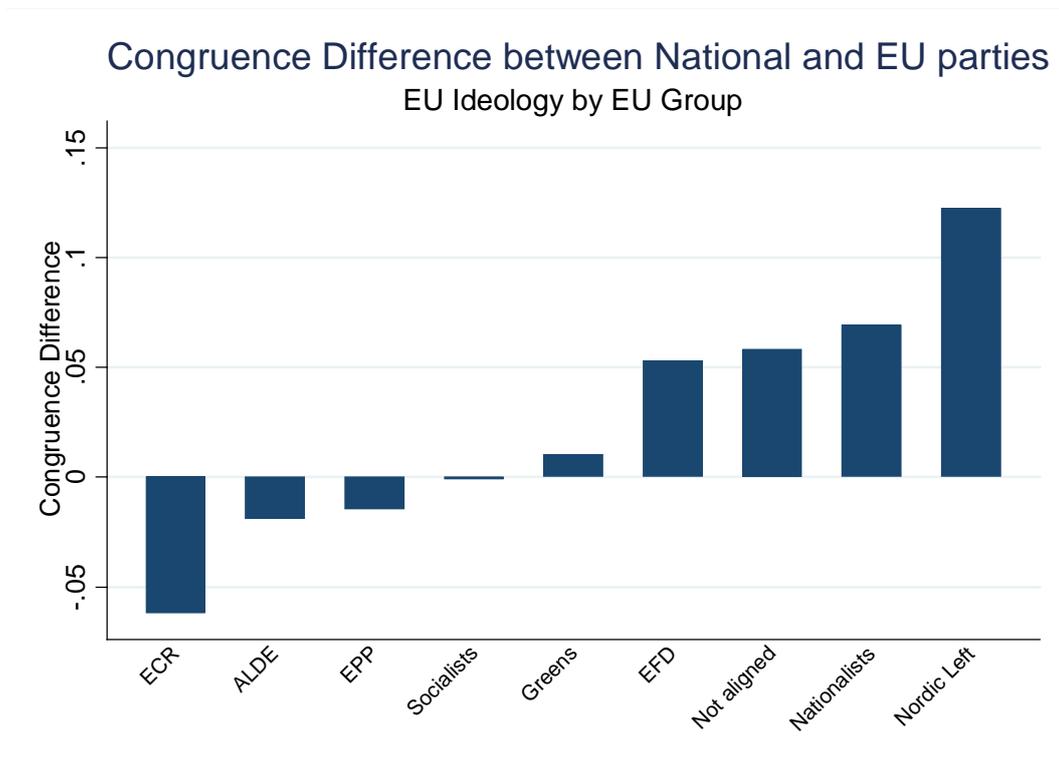


Figure 4: Congruence difference between national and EU parties

### ***The Individual Level***

The focus of our individual level analysis is political knowledge, measured as interest in and information about the EP elections. We hypothesized that poor knowledge would bring a larger difference between national and EU levels (Hypothesis 9a), while gaining more information would improve congruence as we move to the EP party group level of representation (Hypothesis 9b). Our results show a very low explanatory value. However the effects should not be disregarded. As we see in Table 1 we find some statistically significant effects, which, however have limited magnitude. This implies that conventional explanations of congruence, based on which we selected our independent variables, do not help us explain the new variable presented here, namely congruence difference between levels of representation. In what follows, we discuss these findings in detail.

Table 1. Explaining Congruence and Congruence Difference by Individual Level Variables

	Left-Right National-EU Congruence	Left-Right Absolute Difference	EU position National-EU Congruence	EU position Absolute Difference
Frequency of news watching	.002 (.001)	.002 (.002)	-.001 (.001)	-.002 (.001)
Watch program on EU elections	-.003 (.004)	-.006 (.005)	.007 (.003)	.000 (.003)
Read papers on EU elections	-.017* (.004)	-.000 (.005)	-.006 (.002)	-.003 (.003)
Talk about EU elections	-.005 (.004)	-.010 (.005)	.009* (.003)	-.005 (.003)
Attend a meeting on EU elections	-.000 (.005)	-.016 (.008)	.017* (.003)	.002 (.005)
Visit a website on EU elections	.007 (.005)	-.009 (.006)	-.004 (.003)	-.001 (.004)
Visited a vote aid website	-.007 (.009)	-.002 (.012)	-.025* (.006)	-.008 (.008)
Individual left-right position	.030* (.002)	-.023* (.009)	.006* (.001)	-.006* (.002)
Religiosity	.000 (.000)	-.000 (.001)	-.002* (.000)	-.002* (.000)
Economic valence	-.008* (.002)	-.004 (.003)	-.004 (.002)	.006* (.002)
Male	.006 (.005)	-.007 (.006)	-.008 (.004)	.005 (.004)
Age	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	-.000 (.000)	-.000 (.000)
Constant	.312* (.028)	.138* (-.037)	.185* (.02)	.029 (.026)
Adj R sq	.024	-.007	.008	.003
N	12230	12230	12230	12230

One asterisk (\*) means that the effect is significant in the  $p < 0.01$  level.

Firstly, in the left-right dimension of competition we find that, the more often an individual talks about the EP elections with her peers and attends meetings about them the smaller the congruence difference between national and EU level of representation. These forms of informing oneself about EP elections seem to be the most active ones, and thus dominate over the more passive forms of information gathering. The influence of left-right self-placement has to be viewed with a grain of salt, considering the potential endogeneity problems it might bring with it. If its significance persists in the EU dimension, our skepticism about its significance will be reduced. Keeping this in mind, it appears that right wing individuals experience a lower congruence difference between the two levels of representation. Left-right self-placement is also significant for the direction of congruence change. Right wing individuals gain in congruence as we move up a level from national to EP level. Similarly, individuals who read more about the EU elections gain in congruence in the EU level. Though such a finding could suggest that they are more aware of the actual position of the EP party groups and use this information when selecting a party, the magnitude of effect does not allow us to draw such a bold conclusion. Finally, we find that individuals who, despite the financial crisis, have a positive outlook on the national economy for the past five years, gain in congruence as we move up the levels.

Secondly, the EU dimension ranges from the opinion that the EU has gone too far to the opposite opinion that the EU has not gone far enough. On this dimension we find that the congruence difference between national and EP level of representation is minimized for more right wing individuals and individuals with higher levels of religiosity. Being positive about the economy also minimizes the congruence difference between levels. What we do not find is any

relevance of political knowledge. This only becomes relevant when we look at the direction of change across levels and have a clearly different effect than in the case of the left-right dimension. We find that the more the individual voter watches programs on the EP election, talks about it or attends a related meeting, the more congruent this individual is with her national party (rather than with the EP party group). Interestingly, reading about the EP election has the opposite effect. The more an individual voter reads news on the EP election, the more congruent she is with her respective EP party group (rather than with her national party). Similarly, we find that those who visited a vote aid website gain congruence as we move up the levels. This result is important, considering the increasing use of these websites. Individuals with higher religiosity and individuals with a pessimist view towards the economy appear more congruent with their national party on the EU dimension, i.e. losing congruence as we move up a level of representation.

Overall, we find some divergence with regard to what affects congruence differences in each dimension of conflict. We also find a distinction between active and passive ways of gathering information on the EU elections, with reading news being the only exception. Reading news seems to allow individuals formulate a better judgment than watching it. Finally, while in the analysis of the left-right dimension being more informed leads to gaining congruence as we move up a level, this is not the case for the EU dimension (once again, except for reading news).

#### ***The National Party Level***

Taking into account independent variables that concern national parties, we hypothesized that clarity of ideological profile of a national political party should lead to lower congruence differences across levels (Hypothesis 6). Also, that party size should influence policy congruence.

In particular, voters of large national parties were least expected to experience congruence differences across levels (Hypothesis 7) and to lose congruence as we move up a level (Hypothesis 7a). Considering the low number of cases, the results we get are insignificant. The only statistically significant finding concerns the EU dimension, where we find that voters of smaller national parties experience less congruence differences across representation levels, while voters of larger parties (i.e. with more seats) experience congruence loss as we move to the EP level of representation. Hence, we can say that our hypothesis about party size functions quite differently across dimensions of political conflict.

#### ***The European Parliament Party Group Level***

We hypothesized that voters of national parties, which join EP party groups encompassing a high number of parties should experience congruence differences across levels (Hypothesis 8a) and lose congruence as we move from the national to the EU level of representation (Hypothesis 8b). The results have minimal statistical significance, especially considering the low number of cases. In fact, for the left-right dimension we get no significant results. For the EU policy dimension, though it seems that voters of national parties, which join EP party groups with many members within their gulfs experience low congruence differences between the levels of representation, the magnitude of the effect is minimal. Although the number of constituent the members does not seem to matter, membership in the EPP or the Socialists, displays an effect with slightly higher magnitude.

*Table 2. Explaining Congruence and Congruence Difference by National Party Level Variables*

	Left-Right National-EU Congruence	Left-Right Absolute Difference	EU position National-EU Congruence	EU position Absolute Difference
Seats	.001 (.002)	.000 (.003)	-.006* (.002)	.000 (.002)
Left party	-.008 (.07)	.15 (.09)	.004 (.07)	-.08 (.08)
Right party	-.012 (.08)	.03 (.09)	.01 (.07)	-.128 (.081)
Constant	.259* (.07)	-.01 (.09)	.22 (.06)	.11 (.078)
Adj R sq	-.02	.006	.015	.01
N	142	142	142	142

*One asterisk (\*) means that the effect is significant in the  $p < 0.01$  level.*

*Table 3. Explaining Congruence and Congruence Difference by European Parliament Party Group Level Variables*

	Left-Right National-EU Congruence	Left-Right Absolute Difference	EU position National-EU Congruence	EU position Absolute Difference
EP seats	-.000 (.000)	-.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	-.000* (.000)
Number of parties within EP Party group	-.001 (.003)	.003 (.007)	-.006 (.004)	.003 (.002)
Joining the Socialists	-.32 (.42)	-.291 (.93)	-.55 (.59)	.83* (.274)
Joining the EPP	-.51 (.71)	-.63 (1.57)	.85 (1.01)	1.4* (.46)
Constant	.23 (.04)	.009 (.093)	.27 (.06)	.062 (.02)
Adj R sq	-.65	-.38	.02	.039
N	9	9	9	9

*One asterisk (\*) means that the effect is significant in the  $p < 0.01$  level.*

### ***The Country Level***

Finally, we look at the effect of country level variables. We hypothesized that the simultaneous occurrence of domestic and EP elections would increase congruence differences (Hypothesis 3) and lead to voters' loss of congruence when moving upwards in the representation channel (Hypothesis 3a). For new member states, we expected to find more congruence differences (Hypothesis 4) and loss of congruence across levels (Hypothesis 4a). Last but not least, we hypothesized candidate-centered systems as provoking more congruence differences (Hypothesis 5a), with voters losing as we move from national to EP level of representation (Hypothesis 5b). The effects we find are not significant, except for the EU dimension, where

we find that being a citizen of a new member state is associated with congruence difference between the two levels (in support of Hypothesis 4). Considering the low number of observations this is a very important finding.

*Table 4. Explaining Congruence and Congruence Difference by Country Level Variables*

	Left-Right National-EU Congruence	Left-Right Absolute Difference	EU position National-EU Congruence	EU position Absolute Difference
New member state	-.029 (.04)	-.030 (.04)	-.000 (.02)	.059* (.018)
Having choice over candidates	.030 (.08)	-.010 (.07)	.032 (.04)	-.057 (.032)
Parallel election simultaneously	.005 (.077)	.010 (.07)	-.060 (.048)	.044 (.030)
Constant	.269* (.02)	.105* (.026)	.150* (.017)	-.031* (.011)
Adj R sq	-.108	-.089	-.050	.290
N	27	27	27	27

*One asterisk (\*) means that the effect is significant in the  $p < 0.01$  level.*

## Conclusion

The fact that the EU is composed of representative democracies tells us little about whether the EU is indeed a democratic and representative system. Hence, the need to study it more closely. Not surprisingly, many journalistic commentaries but also many riddles for normative and positive political theory in the last decades have been evolving around the EU's legitimacy gap and its democratic and representation deficits. For the first time after almost half a century, the post-Lisbon institutional setting establishes the EP as a co-legislator in an important number of policy fields, while introducing citizen's policy initiative. We consider these to be important changes to the EU political system: they empower the European Parliament but at the same time, they make it possible for citizens to bypass parties and parliaments and organize an initiative requesting legislation. In a post-Lisbon world, then, those citizens who can manage to get an initiative registered and a transnational campaign started may circumvent the traditional channels of representation. This is the future.

Our analysis of political representation remained in the present-and was based on the belief that the extent to which citizens will get their act together in the immediate future (despite burdensome bureaucratic procedures) depends upon how (badly/well) they are currently served by extant institutions. The EP election is a case in point: infamously low levels of turnout document that most citizens in Europe refrain from seeking representation via this Europe-wide election. This motivated us to look more closely at the *selecting* and *sorting mechanisms* in place for producing an alignment between the represented and their representatives in the EP. We argued that for those citizens who give it a try, it is difficult to predict how their party choices at the national level translate into EU-level policy representation.

The argument advanced here is that the architecture of the EP representation's channel may produce different degrees of policy congruence across levels. Yet, congruence differences between national and EP levels are not always negative for citizen representation in the EP: it is possible for some voters to experience deterioration and for others to experience improvement of policy congruence across levels. To explore conditions under which improvement is possible, we examined a snapshot of EP representation. Using a series of hypotheses about factors operating at different levels of analysis, we inquired about congruence differences experienced by voters in the entire Union. As expected, we observed congruence differences, which varied across countries, EP party groups, and across dimensions of political conflict. These findings shed new light on the debate about the deficits of the EP (and the EU as a system more generally). Though congruence differences do exist, the good news is that they mostly mean improvement of congruence at the upper level of representation. Our results on the reasons behind this improvement are very tentative. Drawing on existing studies, we inquired about the effect of a series of variables on congruence differences and the direction of these differences (loss/gain). Given the extremely low R Squares concerning independent variables at all levels of analysis and the small magnitudes of their effects, the mechanisms behind the achievement of congruence through this two-level representation channel remain unknown. That said, we can state with certainty that, within the Union, there exists variation of policy congruence differences between national and EP levels. Hence, studies of the EP should attend to the conditions enhancing improvement/deterioration of policy congruence across levels of representation. Future research could investigate further into the relationship between these levels (e.g. nesting) and analyze the same data utilizing multilevel modeling and/or consider additional variables.

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# Meaningful Choices? Voter Perceptions of Party Positions in European Elections.<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

Voting decision processes are complex. Over the years it has been variously asserted that voters choose one party or candidate over another on the basis of their group orientations (see Lazarsfeld et al. 1948), their emotional attachments to parties (see Campbell et al. 1960), their retrospective evaluations of incumbents' performances (Fiorina 1981; Kramer 1971) or on the basis of party policies (Downs 1957).<sup>4</sup> According to the latter, and by now dominant, proximity model, voters favor candidates that are close to them in policy space (usually reduced to one dimension). This conception of voting behavior has been incredibly influential in political science but "scholars have been hard pressed to demonstrate empirically that the perceived distance in policy space between a voter and a competing candidate is a key predictor of which candidate a voter will support" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002: 20). The conditions for issue voting to take place are non-trivial, not only must voters have strong feelings about an issue, they must know their own position on the issue and they must also know the various competing parties' positions on the same matter. Furthermore, parties must actually offer distinct positions. Where parties convey inconsistent or ambiguous messages about their positions, it will be nearly impossible for voters to establish where parties are located in policy space (Bowler 1990; Andeweg 1995). In this chapter, we examine one small aspect of the issue-voting puzzle, whether or not voters in European elections can identify, with any degree of accuracy, the location of parties on the principal axes of competition. Furthermore, we explore which types of parties voters can locate most easily and speculate as to why this is easier for some parties as for others.

Collective agreement over the location of parties in policy space is generally viewed as a necessary (though far from sufficient) prerequisite for democratic representation (e.g. Dahlberg 2009; Wessels and Schmitt 2009; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2010).<sup>5</sup> If even modest levels of political accountability (e.g. as advocated by the responsible party model) are to be achieved, voters and elites should share relatively similar perceptions of party positions. Where voters cannot locate parties in policy space, meaningful mandates for parties to fulfill cannot be realized. And while there has been considerable research on projection effects in voter placement of parties (Merill et al. 2001), there has been surprisingly little research on the overall levels of agreement amongst voters or on the factors that facilitate such agreement (for exceptions see Van der Brug 1998; Van der Brug et al. 2008; Dahlberg 2009; Weber 2007; Wessels and Schmitt 2009; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2010). In this chapter, we are

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<sup>4</sup> Admittedly, this is an extremely parsimonious (even cartoonish) characterization of decades of voting behavior research and there are models not neatly encapsulated within these four overarching strands of research e.g. directional voting (MacDonald et al. 1991; Westholm 1997), strategic decision-making (Kedar 2005) and discounting models (Adams et al. 2005).

<sup>5</sup> And while perceptual agreement and perceptual accuracy are not the same, the former is needed if the latter is to be achieved.

interested in exploring the extent to which voters agreed on party positions at the time of the last European election. We find that there are systematic differences in perceptual agreement across the member states and parties themselves. We find that voters in 15 established European democracies can agree more readily on the placement of parties when compared with EU member states with a post-communist legacy and that extreme parties, in particular those on the left, are easier to locate than more moderate parties.

The remainder of the chapter proceeds as follows: first we outline our theoretical expectations regarding voters' ability to place parties in European Parliament elections. Second, we present the measure of perceptual agreement and discuss the descriptive results. Next, we examine if there are systematic factors that can account for the variation in parties' perceptual agreement scores. And finally we conclude with a brief discussion of potential problems and future avenues of research.

### **Theoretical Expectations**

Even the most minimal definition of effective democratic representation requires some degree of congruence between citizens' preferences and policy outputs (Dahl 1997). For this to be achieved, parties must offer a reasonably broad range of alternatives at election time (see Rohrschneider and Whitefield (forthcoming)). To quote Dalton, "the essence of the democratic market-place is that like-minded voters and parties will search out each other and ally forces" (1985: 279). The implicit assumption here, and in spatial theories of voting in general, is that voters can identify parties' positions, compare them to their own positions and then choose the party closest to their ideal point. By extension, it follows that where voters do not possess a common understanding of where parties are located in the political space, many will fail to choose a party that represents their views.<sup>6</sup> Under these circumstances voters' decisions cannot be considered as *meaningful choices*. There should be an overarching collective agreement amongst voters on the placement of a given party (e.g. van der Eijk 2001; Converse 1964; 1975). Even if everyone can place the Liberal party on the Left-Right spectrum but they disagree fundamentally over this positioning, the full Downsian conception of issue voting cannot be said to be operational. So, even if we accept that voters are issue motivated, if they choose parties on the basis of fundamental misperceptions of parties' positions in political space the end result will be 'ineffective representation'. The literature on this topic is surprisingly sparse, as political scientists generally assume that voters are capable of this level of cognition, even allowing for the well-documented projection and assimilation effects.

Our chapter scrutinizes the implicit assumption that voters can generally locate parties in policy space and examines in detail this small but crucial part of the democratic representation process. We ask whether or not voters can identify with any degree of accuracy the location of parties in European elections.<sup>7</sup> The reasons for low or high perceptual agreement amongst citizens are undoubtedly, at the risk of understatement, complex: voter, party and structural factors will interact to affect the level of agreement. For instance, the less informed, the less educated, the less connected a voter is to a party, the less he or she is likely to be able to identify its position. Intra-voter differences are beyond the scope of this chapter rather we simply explore (1) the differences between the member states in terms of the ability of voters to agree on party locations and (2) the differences amongst parties themselves.

#### ***Which Policies?***

The number of issues being addressed in any given political arena, even at a single point in time, is almost infinite and no voter, let alone any survey instrument, would be capable of assessing each party position on each issue. However, the complexity of the political space

<sup>6</sup> Note this is not to claim that such agreements are necessarily a precise reflection of a party's 'true' location.

<sup>7</sup> We do not explore in this chapter whether or not these perceptions are correct.

leads voters to take shortcuts and cues into account when *evaluating* parties (see Popkin 1991). The standard practice is to treat the policy space as unidimensional (typically left-right), which not only makes the placement of parties more tractable but some even argue analytically preferable (Hinich and Munger 1997). Furthermore, research has shown that these general ideological motivations are strong factors in predicting vote choice and better predictors than specific policy positions (e.g. van der Eijk et al. 1999).

We examine the placement of parties by survey respondents on two scales: the generic Left-Right (LR) one and the more specific European Integration (EI) dimension. While the Left-Right continuum is increasingly regarded as the main ideological dimension in the European political space (Tsebelis and Garrett 2000; Kreppel and Tsebelis 1999; McElroy and Benoit 2007; Hix et al. 2007),<sup>8</sup> some scholars have described the European policy space as consisting of two dimensions, a left-right dimension and an orthogonal dimension of EU integration versus national sovereignty (Hix and Lord 1997). Furthermore, considering the political space simply in terms of Left-Right can lead to distortions such as the classic problem of where to place a fiscally conservative but socially liberal party (see Kriesi et al. 2008; van der Brug and van Spanje 2009). Especially in the context of elections to the European Parliament the exclusive focus on the national-driven Left-Right ideological dimension may neglect an important dimension on which (at least some) parties compete. Party policy with regard to the very process of European integration itself may be one of the main factors on which issue motivated voters cast their vote. Certainly, the rise of Euro-skeptic parties such as the British *United Kingdom Independence Party* (the second largest vote getter in 2009) or the Austrian *Freedom Party*, suggest that this is a politicized dimension in some countries.

Finally, and on a slightly different note, drawing from discussions on European Parliament elections as second order in nature (e.g. Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh 1998) and of bigger questions about the democratic deficit, the descriptive question of whether or not citizens have any idea about the positions of parties on European Integration seems relevant. Schmitt (1995) demonstrated that voters do not have much idea as to where parties stand on European issues – even though they were generally prepared to express opinions on the matter. We therefore consider European voters' ability to identify party positions on the EU integration dimension as important of itself and it is worth examining whether the situation has changed in the past 15 years (since Schmitt's analysis). Has the rise of Euro-skeptic parties, European political groups and the decline of the permissive consensus led to increased voter knowledge about party positions on EU integration?<sup>9</sup>

### ***Degrees of Collective Agreement***

In an ideal world, parties would have high collective agreement scores on both the Left-Right and EU dimensions and we have no strong theoretical expectations as to which dimension will generate higher scores. Consider for instance the Left-Right scale: on the one hand, the reductionism of parties' positions to Left-Right is very common (e.g. in media coverage), so voters should be familiar with these cues. Previous research (Benoit and Laver 2006) has also found that this dimension represents well the national policy spaces. On the other, the meaning of Left-Right is contested and partially contradictory so we might expect some confusion on the part of voters. If we consider the placement of parties on the EU dimension, on the one hand it is far less publicized, even in European elections, but on the other hand the meaning of this dimension is less contested.

<sup>8</sup> There is some disagreement over the issue with others arguing that geo-political pressures define the principal axis of competition (Hoffman 1966; Moravcsik 1998).

<sup>9</sup> In individual countries of the EU there are, of course, other salient dimensions on which parties compete, for instance attitudes to immigration have been found to be highly salient in Austria. Nonetheless, research has shown that LR is a good proxy for the overall policy space in most member states (Benoit and Laver 2006) and the more specific attitude to European Integration is relevant in European elections. Not to mention none of these issues are included in the EES!

More generally, competition in European elections takes place on two different continuums that do not neatly coincide (Hooghe et al. 2004) and the political space is structured by different discourses. Following from this, we expect that voters' collective agreement will vary from country to country and from party to party. All in all, we expect that voters are more likely to collectively identify the European integration position of Euro-skeptic parties or parties that only compete in European elections, while for mainstream, established national parties voters should show more likely common agreements on the Left-Right continuum.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Collective Agreement and Party Characteristics***

While descriptive analyses of collective agreement scores will provide us with a first important overview of (1) voters' ability to identify the nature of the European political space, and (2) some partial insights into the quality of 'choice sets' (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2010), we are also interested in exploring analytically what influences the variation in agreements among political parties. Voters' likelihood of expressing agreement on party positions should be closely connected to the structure of the supply side, that is, the nature of party competition itself (see Wessels 2002; Wessels and Schmitt 2009). Where parties provide distinct cues, voters should be more likely to collectively agree on party positions. Where parties provide ambiguous signals, voters will have greater difficulty in positioning them. Wessels (2002) has shown that there is a connection between party level factors (for instance the effective numbers of parties) and voters' ability to connect party and policy. On the other hand, Wessels and Schmitt (2006) find that the party level characteristics do not impact voters' significantly on evaluations of party positions. In this area of research, where results are conflicting, we extend the analyses by the inclusion of a greater array of party level variables, such as the age of the party, party family, the party's extremism and whether or not a party is an incumbent to see if we can identify the factors that makes it easier for voters to place some parties in policy space compared with others.

We included information on *Party Age* as we anticipate that, all else equal, the older a party the more likely voters will be able to identify it with specific policies. Voters will be less likely to recognize new parties and place them in policy space. The information on party age was garnered from a contextual dataset provided by PIREDEU and reflects the age of a party in 2009 (EES 2009b; Czesnik et al. 2010).

*H1:* Older parties will have higher PA scores than younger parties, all else, equal.

The party's vote share in the most recent national election (prior to June 2009) is taken as an indicator of its *Size*. We anticipate that larger parties will be easier to place accurately, all else equal, as they will generally get the lion's share of media coverage. However, we allow for the possibility that such parties attempt to appeal to broader audiences and as such may send less clear messages to voters – classic Kirchheimerian 'catch-all' parties (1966).<sup>11</sup> The data was gathered from a variety of official national agencies and websites such as [www.electionresources.org](http://www.electionresources.org).<sup>12</sup>

*H2a:* Party size affects perceptual agreement scores positively.

<sup>10</sup> For a definition of mainstream and niche party see Ezrow (2010) who defines mainstream parties as Social Democratic, Christian Democratic, Conservative and Liberal, and niche parties as parties on the extreme left, the extreme right or distinctly noncentrist (e.g. Communists, Right-wing, Nationalist, Green, Ethno-regionalist).

<sup>11</sup> Of course the effect of party size may be non-linear, with midsize parties faring worst.

<sup>12</sup> Where parties ran as a coalition of parties for the European elections, their joint size is recorded. Where parties only ran in the European elections, we listed their size from the European election itself rather than recording a zero.

*H2b*: Party size affects perceptual agreement scores negatively.

The variable *Incumbency* captures whether or not the party was an incumbent at the time of the election. We anticipate that incumbent parties are more difficult to place, all else equal, due to their inability to provide distinct programmatic party positions in their government functions.<sup>13</sup>

*H3*: Incumbent parties, all else equal, will have lower PA scores.

We also include a variable to capture the effects of *Party Extremism* as we anticipate that more extreme parties are easier to place, than those with more moderate views. To capture extremism we make use of two different measures. The first measure captures the *Distance from the Mean* on the dimension in question. We use recent expert surveys to identify the ‘real’ positions of political parties on each of the two dimensions in our study.<sup>14</sup> In addition, to the absolute distance we also use a directional measure of distance from the mean, to capture the possibility that the distance effects are not equal for right and left wing parties. Second, we also use a measure of *Ideological Family* to capture extremism. While party family is a crude summary measure of a party’s general orientation, it does have the advantage, unlike the expert scores, of being applicable to more parties in our database. We lose over 20 percent of our cases with the expert survey based measure, as they have not been included in recent expert surveys.<sup>15</sup> The identification of parties with particular party families is notoriously difficult but we make use of the information from the contextual dataset of PIREDEU, which draws heavily on country experts to code parties as Communist, Green, Liberal, Social Democrat, Christian Democrat, Green or Radical Right. We also added an additional variable to this measure to capture Euro-skeptic parties. While this variable overlaps heavily with the Radical Right category it is not identical. Parties such as the British UKIP or the Austrian HPM, while Euro-skeptic, are not best described as radical right but do, nonetheless, offer a distinct European message.

*H4a*: Parties with extreme views on the left and right of the political spectrum should have higher PA scores, all else equal.

*H4b*: Euro-skeptic parties should have higher PA scores on the EU dimension.

In the next sections, first we describe the results on the collective agreement scores using the measure *perceptual agreement*, and second, we present our results on the impact of party characteristics on collective agreements.

## **Perceptual Agreements**

### ***Data and Measure***

In the following analyses we use the newly released data from the European Parliament Election Study of 2009 (EES 2009; van Egmond et al. 2010) to examine whether or not there is agreement, among the electorates of Europe, on the placement of parties in policy space. This election study was conducted in the immediate aftermath of the elections of June 2009 in each

<sup>13</sup> This applies particularly to parties in coalition governments. However, we cannot explore this distinction in this chapter.

<sup>14</sup> Specifically, we take the absolute distance of a given party from the weighted mean placement. We used the Chapel-Hill expert survey conducted in 2006 to create this variable. This particular dataset covers a larger selection of parties competing in the 2009 election than alternatives such as the Benoit and Laver (2006) survey.

<sup>15</sup> Almost 40 percent of the parties competing are not covered by Benoit and Laver.

of the 27 member states of the European Union.<sup>16</sup> In what follows, we draw on the two questions that ask respondents to place political parties on two dimensions: Left-Right and European Integration.

- 1) For LR positions the question was worded as follows:

In political matters people talk of “the left” and “the right”. About where would you place the following parties on this scale? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means “left” and 10 means “right”.

- 2) For European Integration the question reads as follows:

Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. About where would you place the following parties on this scale? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification ‘has already gone too far’ and 10 means it ‘should be pushed further’.

Using responses to these two questions we calculate perceptual agreement scores for each political party according to the measure devised by van der Eijk (2001). The advantage of this measure is that it takes into account the voters’ placement of parties on a given dimension in terms of both the skew of the voter dispersion and also the modality (unimodal, bimodal etc.) of the distribution.

Measuring party positions has become something of a cottage industry in political science in recent years, such is the demand for point estimates. There are many different ways of deriving ideal points: expert surveys, roll call vote analysis, text analysis or manifesto coding. But the use of the mean or median placement of voters of a party (or subset of voters such as self-identifying partisans) remains one of the most popular methods (see Macdonald et al. 1991). This is due, in part, to the ease of calculating these measures, their direct comparability with voters’ self-placement scores and also the availability of comparable cross national data. However, where the data is non-normally distributed, the use of such methods to produce party positions can be misleading and the choice of the mean or median can be critical. To illustrate this point, Figure 1 maps the density of respondent placement of the FPÖ (Austria) on the Left-Right scale from the EES09. The distribution is heavily left (negatively) skewed and the mean placement of the party is 7.6, whilst the median placement is 9 and the modal response is actually 10. On an 11-point scale these differences in measurement of the party’s position are substantial and the choice of one over another can have far reaching effects in statistical and substantive analyses.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, where data is not unimodal the use of means and medians can be deceptive. At the extreme, in a uniform distribution the median and mean are essentially meaningless, even though both measures are equivalent.<sup>18</sup> A uniform distribution of party placement is perhaps better interpreted as indicating that voters have no idea where a party belongs on a particular

<sup>16</sup> Circa 1.000 respondents were interviewed in each country. In the EU15 all surveys were conducted via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) whilst in seven of the newer member states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) the sample was split between Face to Face Interviewing (70%) and the CATI method (30%).

<sup>17</sup> Such skewness also affects measures such as standard deviation.

<sup>18</sup> Where A and B represent the minimum and maximum value of the scale  $\text{Mean/Median} = (A + B)/2$  in a uniform distribution. There is no mode in such cases.

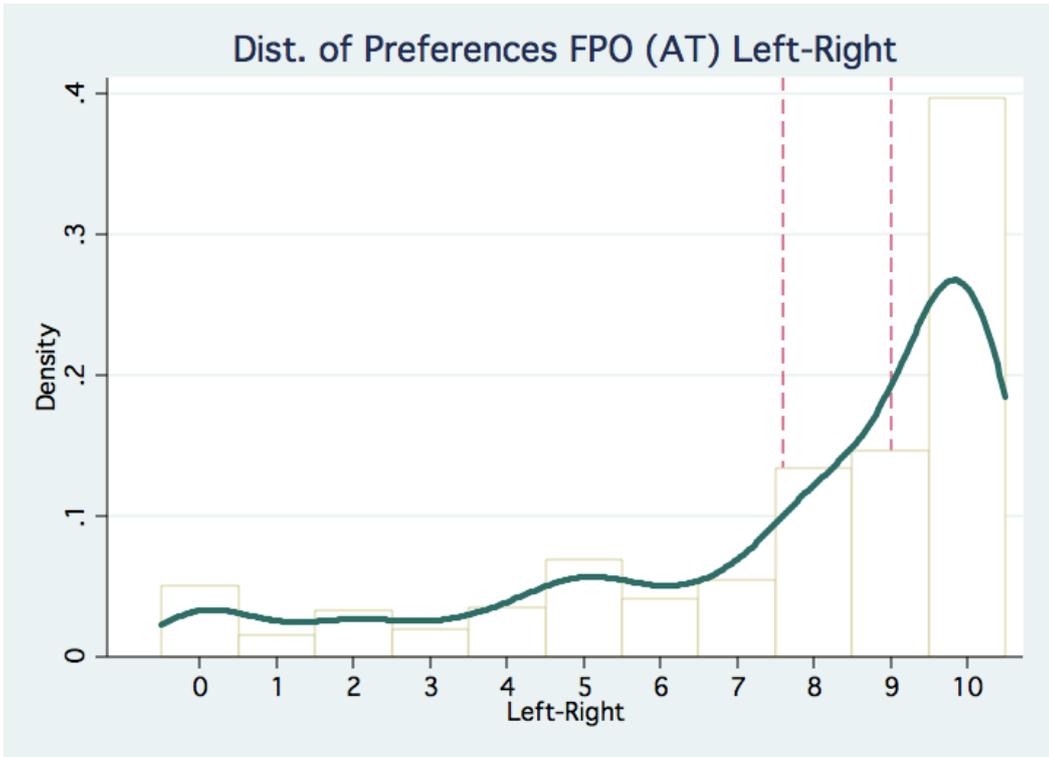


Figure 1: Distribution of Preferences FPÖ (AT) on L-R

dimension. For instance, Figure 2 maps the distribution of voter placement of the PNT-CD (Romania), and while there is a slight peak around 0, the distribution approximates a uniform distribution far better than a unimodal one.

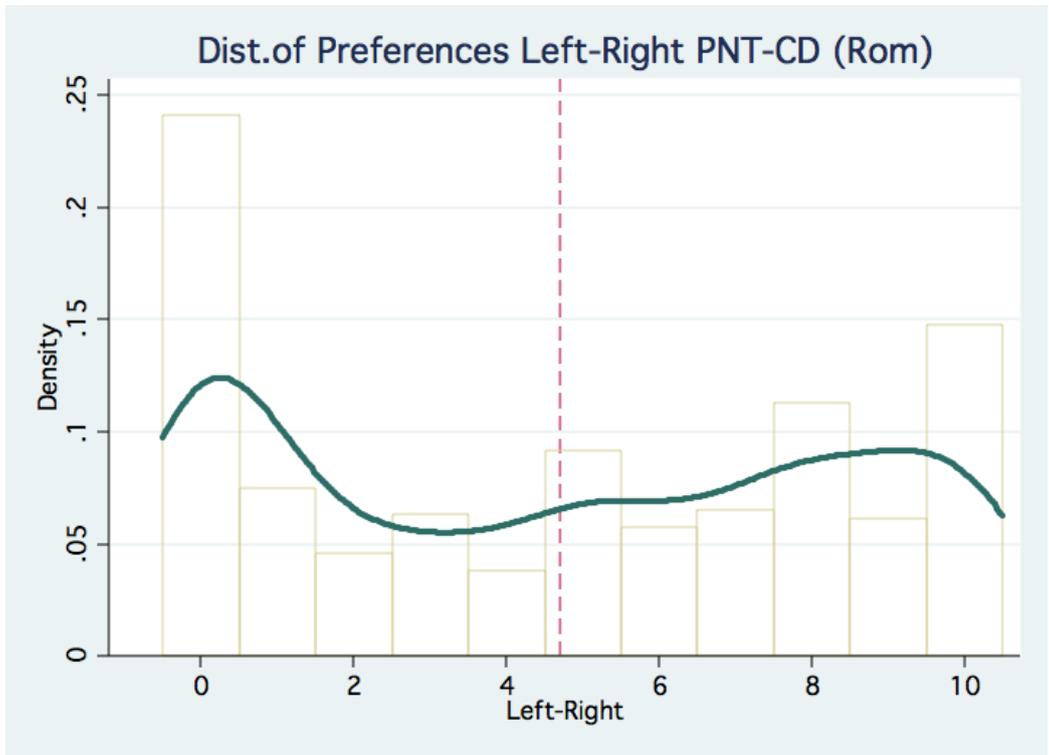


Figure 2: Distribution of Preferences PNT-CD (RO) on LR

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate other common types of distribution encountered in the EES09 data. The mapping of the *British National Party* (BNP) on the LR scale suggests a bimodal distribution with peaks at the extremes of zero and ten and the mapping of the PDS-CC in Portugal is perhaps best described as tri-modal. In general, aggregate statistics like *mean*, *median* and *standard deviations* from the mean are not detailed enough when data is non-symmetrically distributed.

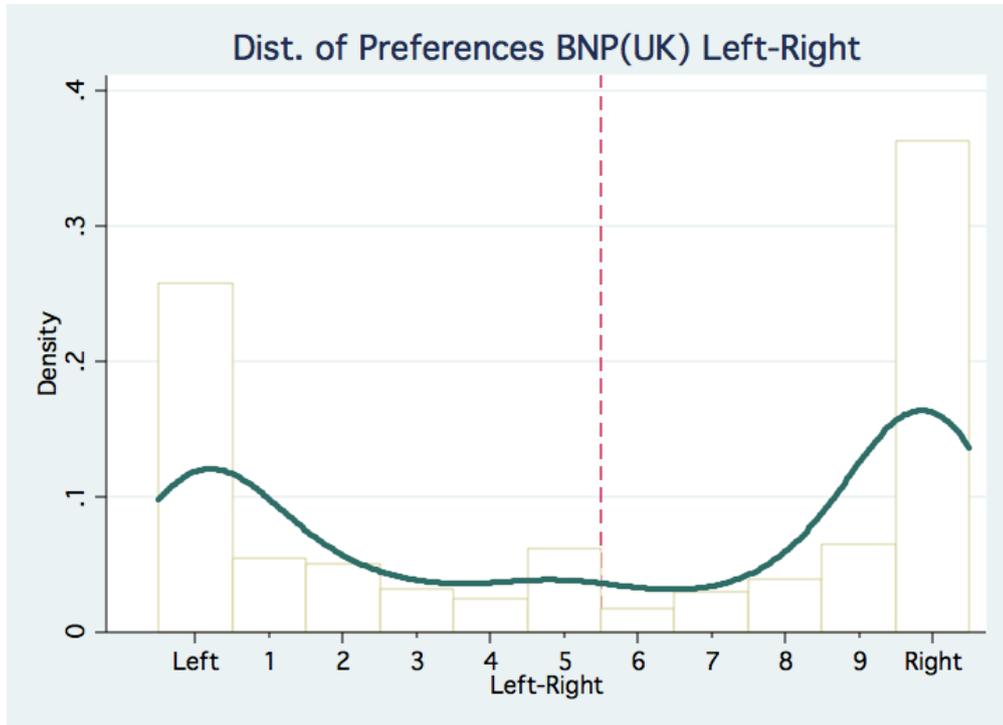


Figure 3: Distribution of Preferences BNP (UK) on L-R

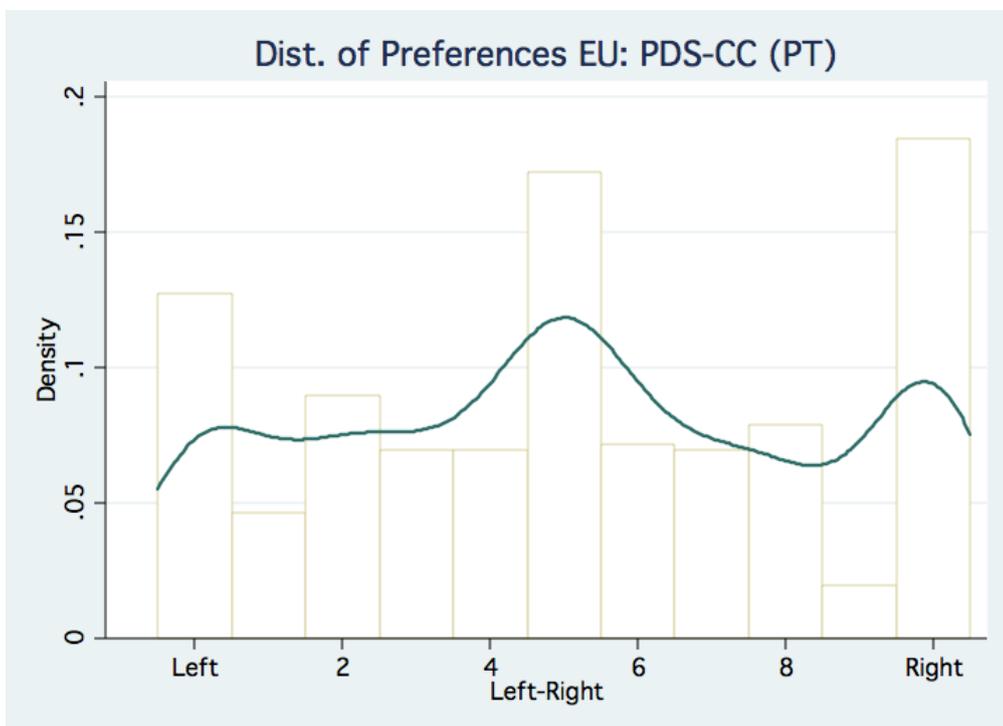


Figure 4: Distribution of Preferences PDS-CC (PT) on European Integration

The perceptual agreement (PA) measure used in this chapter overcomes several of these problems and ranges from a minimal value of -1 to a maximum value of +1. A score of -1 indicates that half the respondents place a party at one extreme of a scale (0 in this instance) while the other half place them at the opposite extreme (10 in our data). In the figures discussed above, the BNP is an example of this type of distribution. Clearly respondents are uncertain as to whether this is an extreme left or right-wing party. A score of 0 suggests a uniform distribution along the scale while a score approaching 1 indicates that all respondents are in agreement as to where to place the party. The PA score, thus, assesses the collective perceptions of voters, it evaluates to what degree they hold a common understanding of the party positions and overall policy space in a country (van der Eijk 2001).<sup>19</sup>

***A note on the issue of Don't Know responses***

Before we commence our analysis of PA scores in the next section, we have a caveat regarding the rather high incidence of 'Don't Know' (DK) responses in the EES09 on the two questions of interest. If we are truly interested in whether or not voters share a common perception of policy space, it is not merely an inconvenience if many respondents feel insufficiently informed to even attempt to place a party on either dimension. Figure 5 illustrates the alarmingly high occurrence of DK responses to both questions in some countries in the dataset.

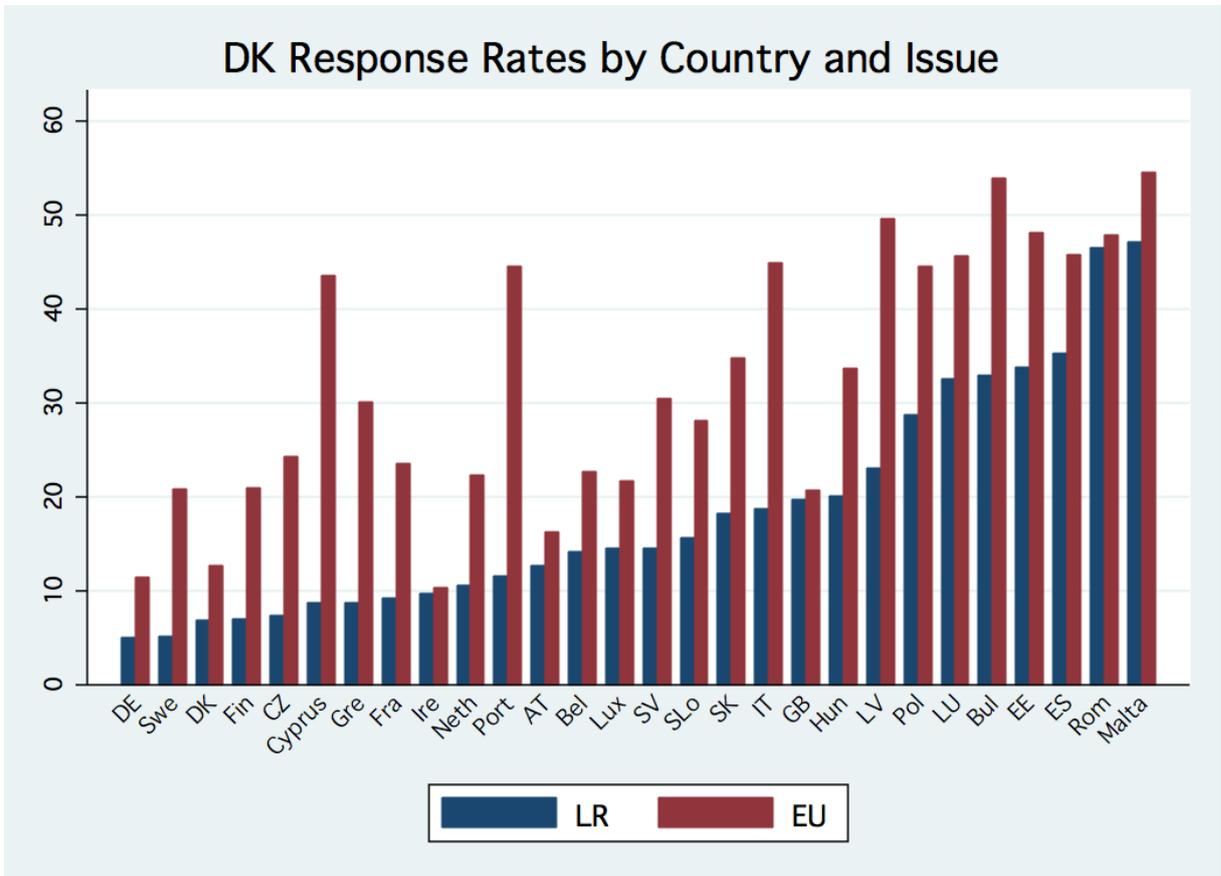


Figure 5: Mean Don't Know Responses by Country and Issue

We observe that in most Western European countries voters' attempt to place the parties' on the LR dimension, the mean DK response is less than 10 percent. Germany has the lowest rate of DK response for this dimension, the mean rate is less than 6 percent. However, in Central and Eastern Europe this is not the case. In countries such as Romania, upwards of 50 percent of

<sup>19</sup> The scores were calculated using an Excel based macro courtesy of Cees van der Eijk.

respondents fail to place the parties.<sup>20</sup> When examining European positions we see a more mixed picture across Europe: voters in general have greater difficulty expressing views on this dimension with very high DK rates witnessed even in founding member states such as Italy.

In general, these results reflect poorly on the capacity of voters to place parties and suggest that we should treat perceptual agreement scores with some caution. In some instances, the PA score we derive exclude a majority of the sample (when one includes refusal to answer the question). Unfortunately, while the PA measure has many attractive features it cannot be weighted to include DK responses. Given that it is a common finding in psychological research that individuals believe they know more than they actually do (e.g. Allwood and Montgomery 1987; Griffin and Tversky 1992; Nisbett and Ross 1980) these DK rates are particularly worrisome. Larger questions connected to issue voting cannot ignore this. If half of a country's population (as represented by survey respondents) feels incapable of even placing a party on a major axis of competition, the idea of proximity voting is severely tested.

### ***Descriptive Analyses: Results***

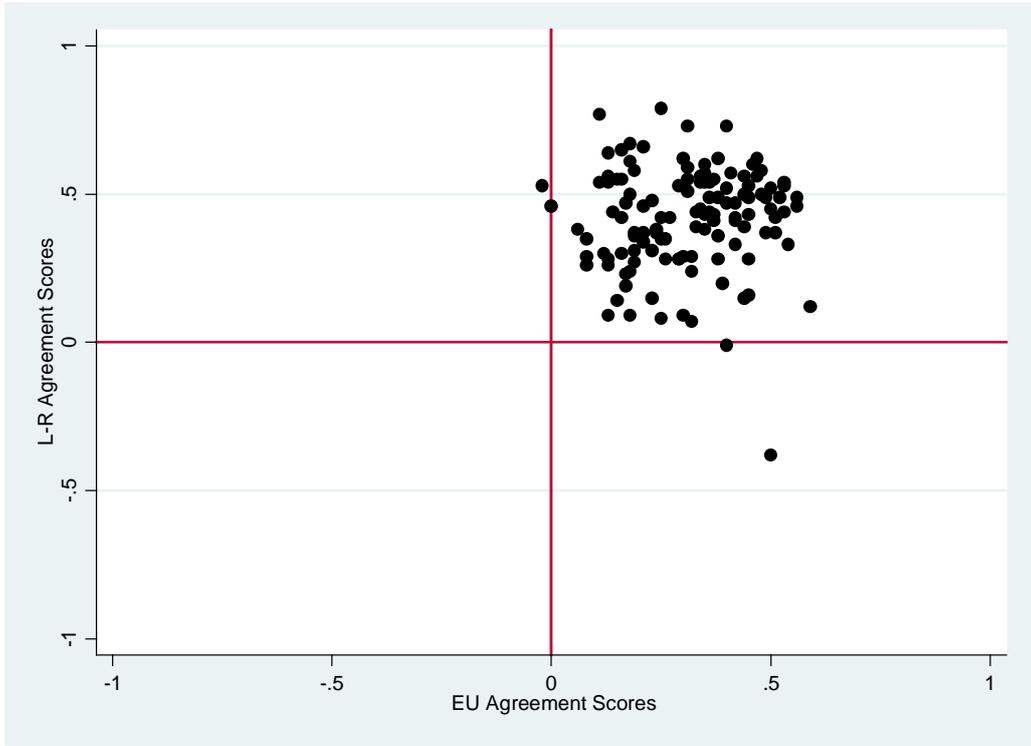
With this (rather considerable) caveat in mind, we proceed to examine the collective agreement scores at the timing of the 2009 European election by contrasting established democracies with former communist countries. In the former category, we assume party systems to be established and to be well known to their citizens. Meanwhile, this might not be the case in younger party systems such as in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. Graph 1 examines thus the PA scores for parties in the EU15, Graph 2 adds the new member states, and includes thus scores of the EU27. As we can see from the Graph 1, most parties in the EU15 have PA scores above zero on both dimensions, though very few approach the figure of complete agreement of 1. Recall that scores close to 0 suggest a uniform distribution of placement while figures approaching -1 suggest a bimodal distribution at the extremes of the scale. Interestingly, we can also observe that we do not observe major differences between the LR and the European Integration positioning. Eyeballing this graph suggests two preliminary findings: first voters do not hold strong collective agreements about parties' positions, but second, this is, perhaps surprisingly, the case for both for the LR and European integration dimensions.

Adding Central and Eastern European parties to the mix (Graph 2), we observe that the scatter plot is stretched towards lower (even negative) agreement scores both on the LR and the European continuum – indicating a more uniform distribution of party positions than in the EU15. Particularly, for the European continuum we observe very low and quite a few negative results. In the newer member states it appears, at least, that these two dimensions are not ones on which voters can easily agree about party positions confirming our initial assumption concerning the differences across EU member states. Combining these results with the high non-response rates in Central and Eastern Europe a troublesome picture concerning spatial voting models emerges.

Locating parties' positions may be connected with a high level of voter cognition and to examine this possibility we also conducted the analyses with the subset of the mostly highly educated respondents in the EU15.<sup>21</sup> The PA scores do improve rather significantly with this sample (see Graph 3). Where the scores in Graph 1 (only EU15) mostly accumulated in the square between 0.5 on the LR and 0.5 on the European integration continuum, now most parties are above the 0.5 line on LR positions. On the European integration continuum we continue to see poor perceptual agreement scores, there are still many parties below the 0.5 threshold.

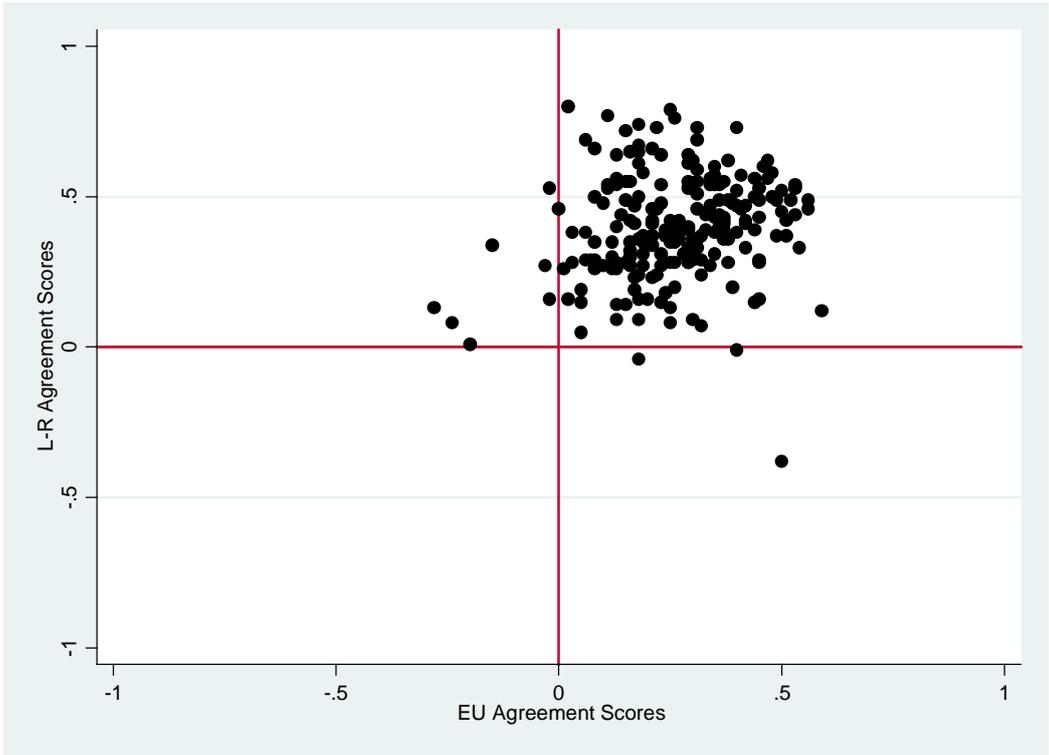
<sup>20</sup> And this holds across all parties in the system.

<sup>21</sup> We restricted this sample to all those respondents with a bachelor's university education or higher. The percentage of respondents falling into category was rather low in some countries, less than 8 percent, and nowhere reached above 20 percent of the total. This is a very select sub-sample.



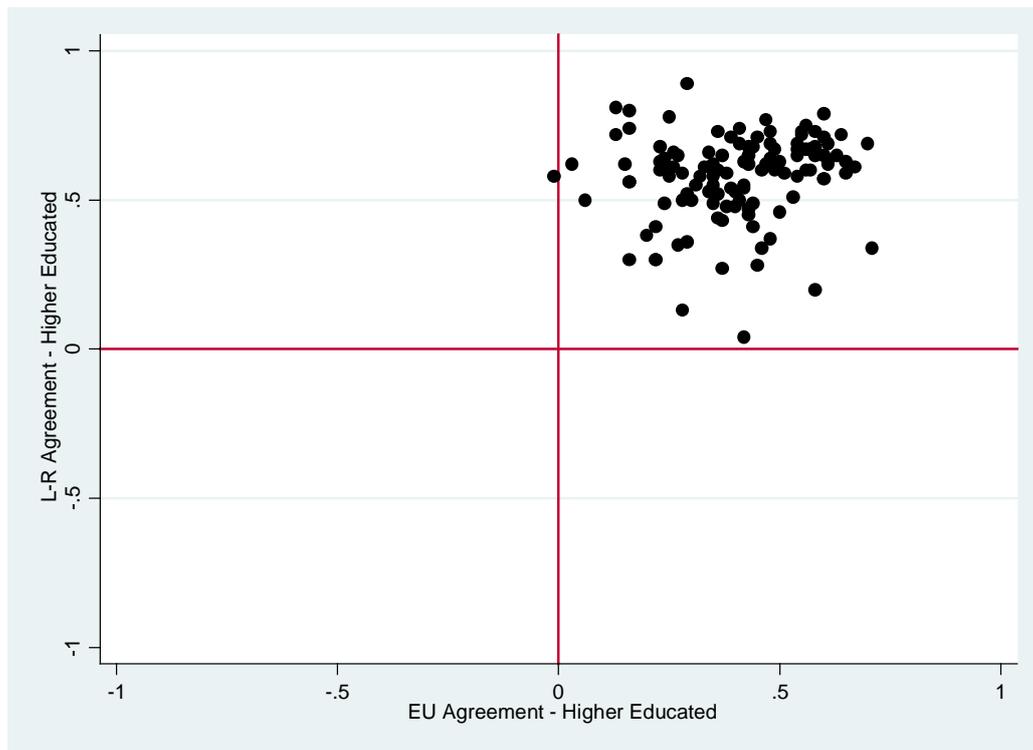
*Graph 1: Perceptual Agreement Scores on the L-R and European Integration Continuum (EU15)*

In general, voters (at least voters with higher education) agree to a large extent where to position political parties in the old EU member states on the LR dimensions. The often claimed



*Graph 2: Perceptual Agreement Scores on the L-R and European Integration Continuum (EU27)*

‘communication device’ of the LR dimensions seems to be reasonably effective for this set of voters.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, there are still significant variations both within and between countries.

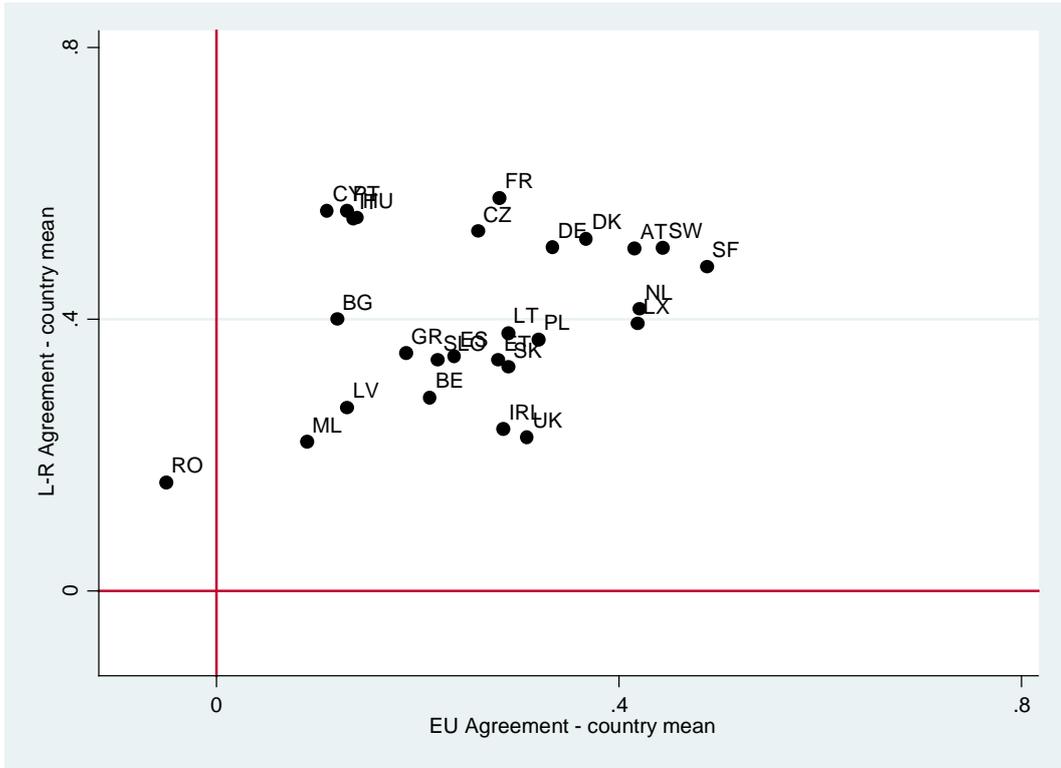


*Graph 3: Perceptual Agreement Scores on the LR and European Integration Continuum amongst higher educated respondents*

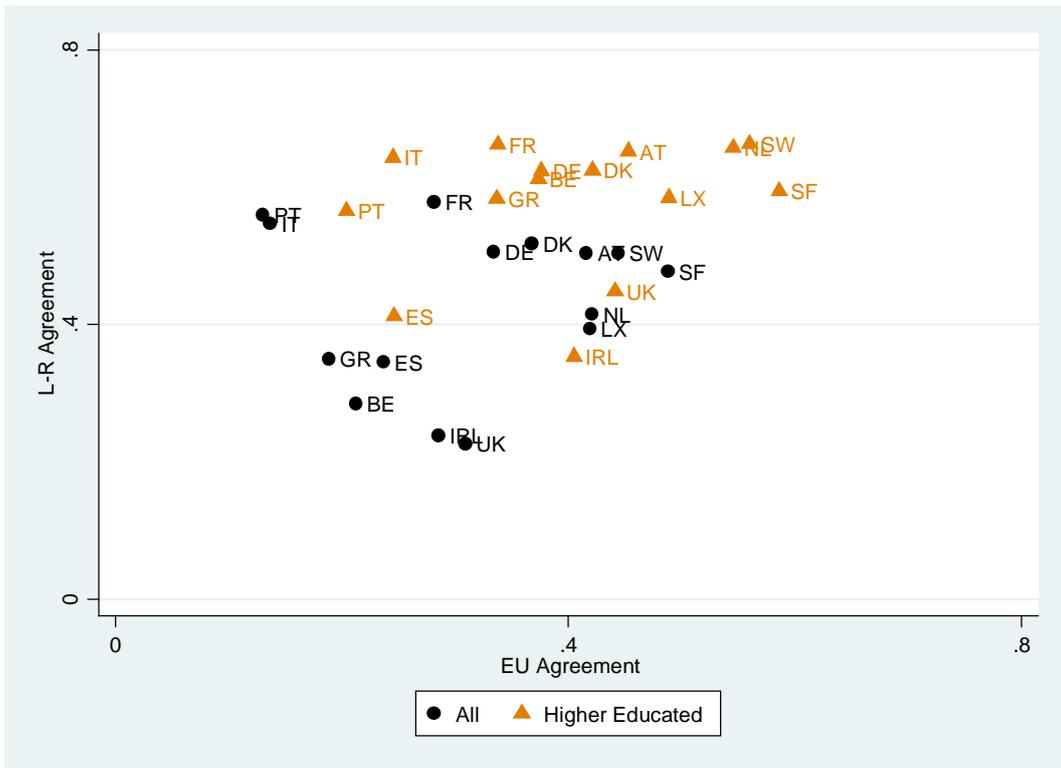
Calculating the mean of the perceptual agreement scores per country we obtain general party locations per country (see Graph 4). In the EU15, Greece, Spain, Belgium, Ireland and UK display low agreement scores on both continuums. Meanwhile, in countries such as Portugal, Italy and to a certain extent France, voters have a collective grip on parties’ positions on the LR continuum but not on the European Integration one. Voters in the other countries achieve medium collective identification on both continuums. In the newer member states meanwhile we observe Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Estonia and Slovenia located around 0.4 on both scales. While the Czech Republic and Cyprus do well on the LR continuum but less well on the European one. The remaining newer member states perform very poorly on both dimensions. In Romania even the mean of the PA scores on the European continuum is negative.

When we compare the means of all voters with the mean of voters with higher education we observe – as Graph 3 already indicated – that the agreement scores rise substantially (see Graph 5). In all countries the mean positions increase diagonally upwards into the right hand corner: agreement increases on both scales. The effect of education seems to be particularly notable in countries such as the UK, Belgium, Greece and the Netherlands where we find substantially higher agreement scores among those with a university degree. In countries such as Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands, higher educated voters display very high agreement scores on both continuums.

<sup>22</sup> These results echo the findings of Alvarez and Nagler (2004).

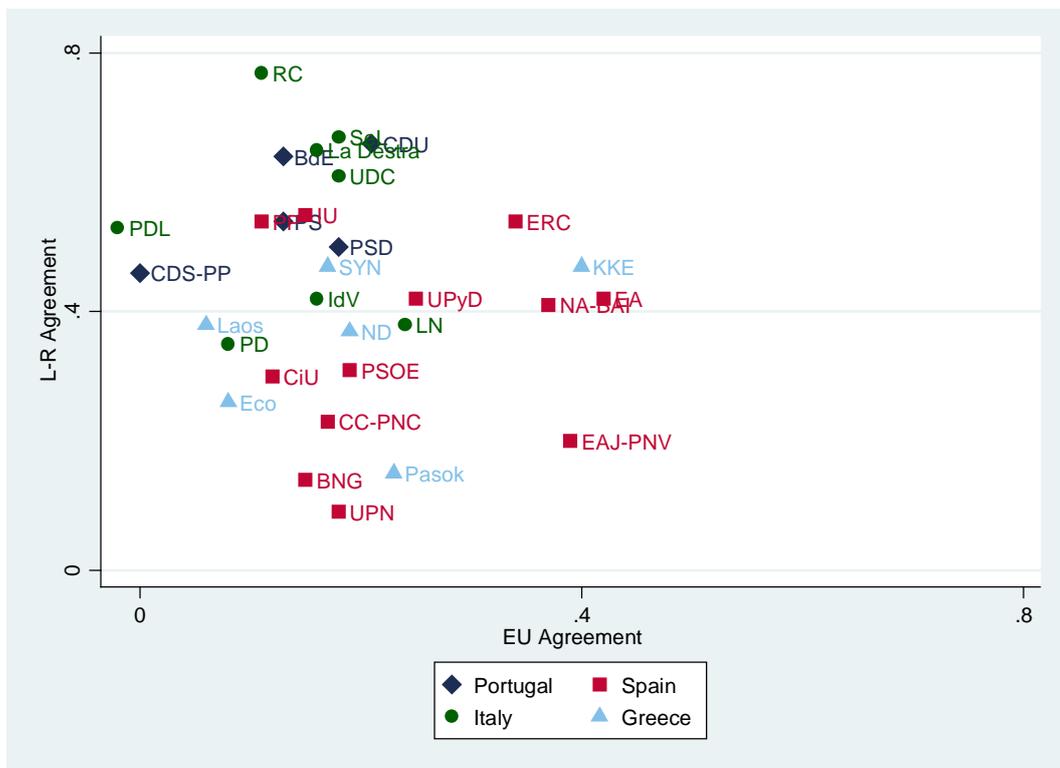


Graph 4: PA-Scores on the LR and European Integration Continuum (country means)



Graph 5: PA-Scores on the LR and European Integration Continuum (country means all voters versus higher educated voters)

For ease of presentation, Graphs 6 to 9 illustrate individual party differences in subsets of countries. For the first set of countries in Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece) we observe the main differences between Spanish and Greek parties on the one hand, and Italian and Portuguese parties on the other hand. While the voters can place the latter parties rather well on the LR continuum, this is not the case for the former ones. Most surprisingly are the cases of the Greek PASOK and the Spanish PSOE (both traditional social-democratic parties); voters do not share common perceptions of their place on what would be generally taken as their most salient axis of competition. Unsurprisingly, parties are far less likely to be collectively identified on the European integration dimension with Berlusconi's *Popolo della Libertà* (PDL) even achieving a negative value (likewise with the Portuguese Peoples' Party). Exceptions are the Greek Communist party as well as the Spanish regional parties, which appear to convey their EU position quite strongly.



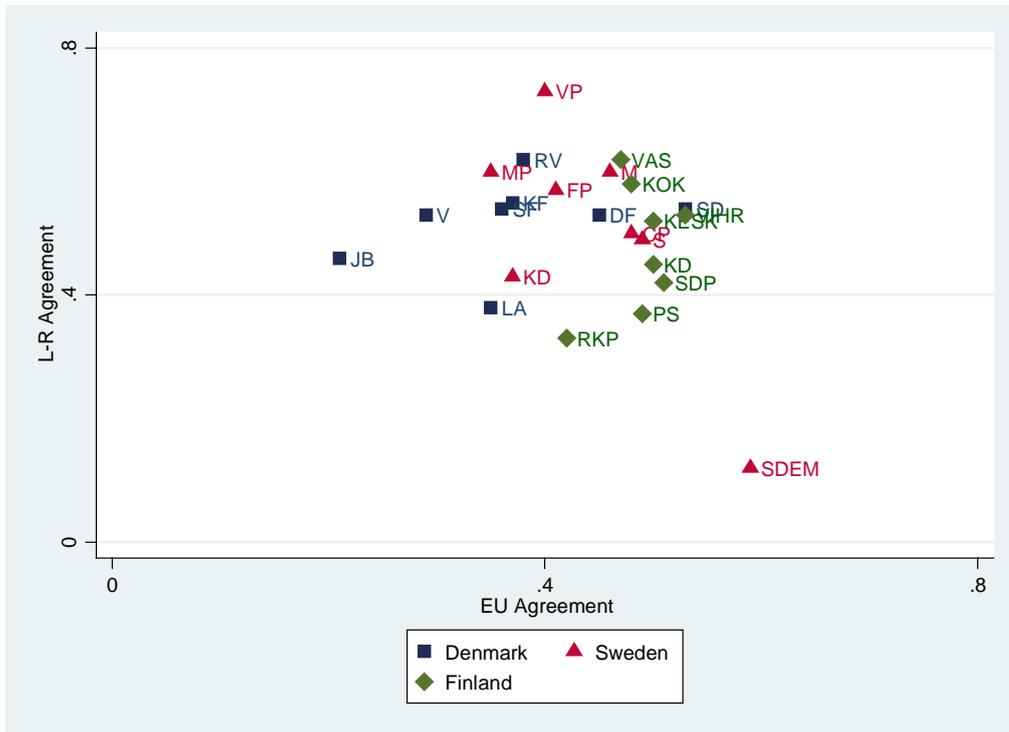
Graph 6: PA-Scores LR and European Integration Continuum: Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece

A rather different picture emerges in the Scandinavian countries where voters' agreements on both continuums are, in general, rather high. Exceptions are the Swedish *Sverigedemokraterna* (SDEM) – a highly Euro-skeptic party. Voters have problems placing this party, like many other anti-immigration parties, on the left/right dimension, but its position on European Integration is very clear. Oddly, the *JuniBevægelsen (JB)*, a Danish Euro-skeptic party which only competed at the supranational level displays more agreement on the LR dimension than on European integration.<sup>23</sup>

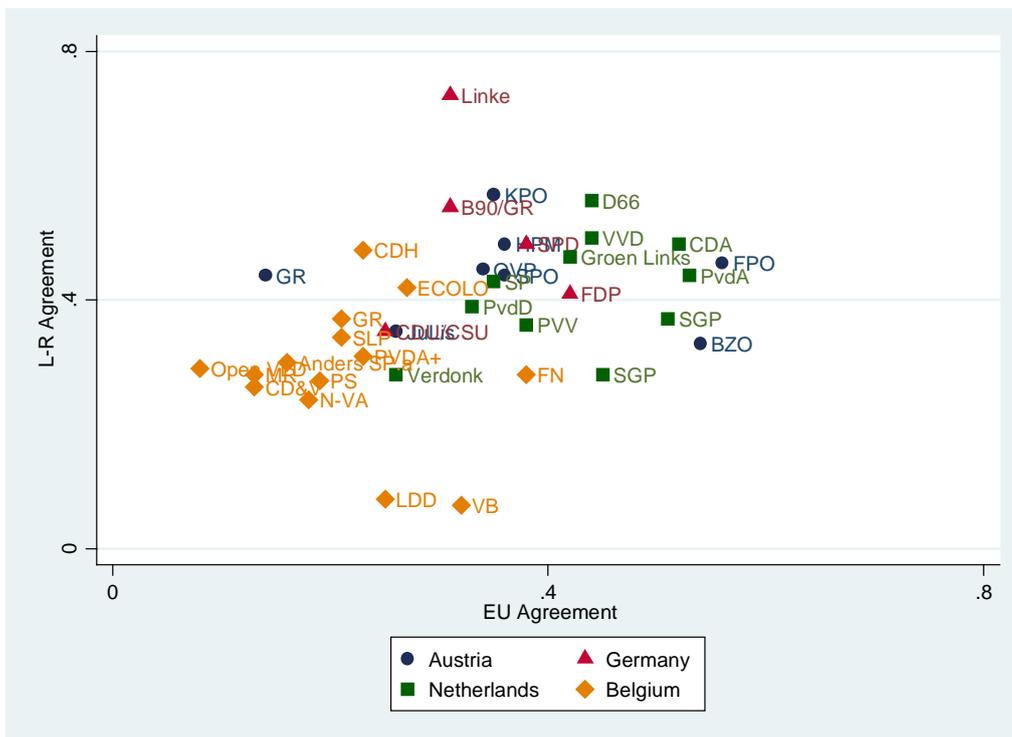
When examining the graph of the parties of 'continental Europe' (Graph 8), we find a positive linear distribution by country, with the Belgian parties faring worst in terms of PA scores on these two dimensions. The two continuums may simply not be relevant for Belgian voters. For the Netherlands we observe the opposite: positive agreement scores with parties collectively identified on both continuums. Particularly the main Dutch parties (PvdA, VVD, D66, CDA, Groen Links) do well. Meanwhile, in Germany the LR continuum is a useful device for collective identification, the European continuum to a lesser extent. Surprisingly, the

<sup>23</sup> The party disbanded after a disastrous Election performance in 2009.

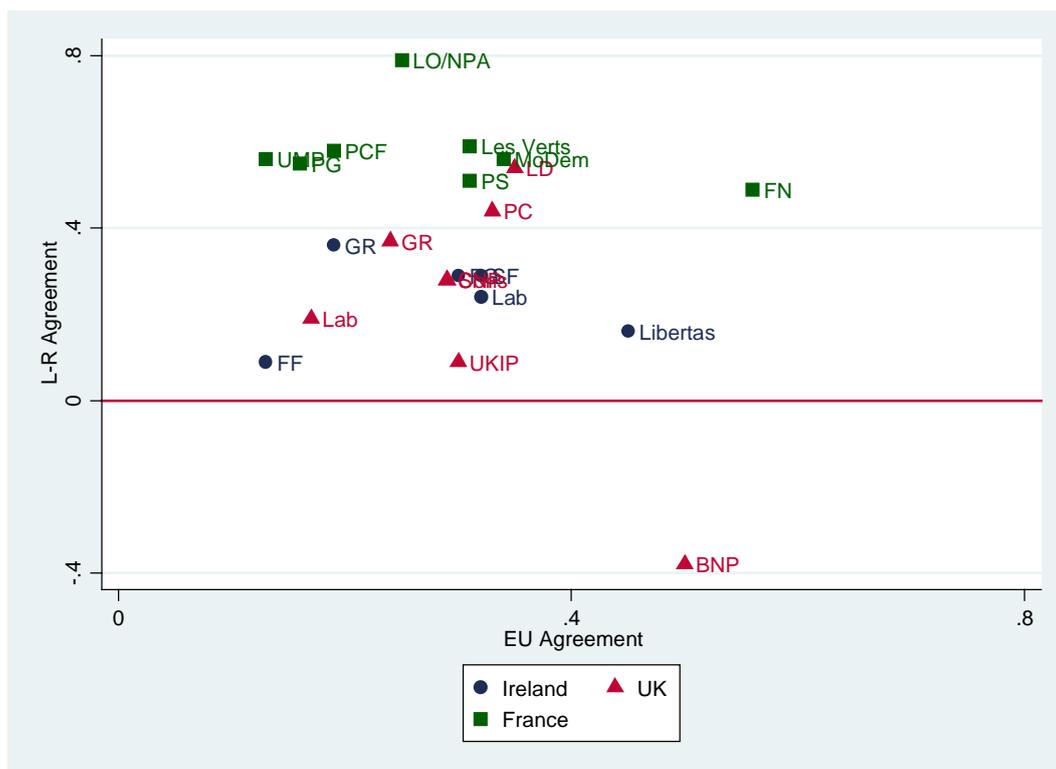
CDU/CSU is not particularly well identified on either of the two dimensions. In Austria we see a dispersed picture: while the two Euro-skeptic and right-wing parties FPÖ and BZÖ can be located easily on the European continuum (but oddly not Liste Hans Peter Martin, a party that only competes in the European elections), this is not the case for the Greens or the two mainstream parties SPÖ and ÖVP. The latter do however perform well on the LR continuum.



Graph 7: PA-Scores LR and European Integration Continuum: Denmark, Sweden, Finland



Finally, let us turn to the UK, Ireland and France (Graph 9). Most noteworthy is the result for the British BNP: voters agree very highly on their European position but there is great disagreement as to where to locate the party on the LR continuum. In general, British voters can hardly agree on any party position. Both the Labour Party and the Conservatives score low on the European continuum but also on the LR continuum. Unsurprisingly, the French parties feature high collective agreement scores on the LR continuum perhaps due to the strong historical division on this dimension. The *Front National* meanwhile achieves a very high agreement score on the European continuum as well. Ireland presents low agreement scores on both continuums. This is not surprising considering the fact that the political distinction between Left and Right is of lower importance and thus perceptions might be more easily distorted. Though for the European continuum results are surprising (exception Libertas): in the aftermath of several EU referendums a collective agreement on parties' positions might have been expected.



Graph 9: PA-Scores LR and European Integration Continuum: UK, Ireland, France

What conclusions can we draw from these preliminary analyses? First, the analysis suggests that data used to calculate any kind of voter-party distance needs to be evaluated carefully. High rates of non-response undermine the validity of using the data and raise questions about the extent of issue voting in some countries. Second, we can observe that voters' collective agreement over parties' positions varies significantly across countries and parties. While in most 'Continental' European and Scandinavian countries agreement scores on both continuums are rather high, this is simply not the case in the remaining countries (at least on these two dimensions). Furthermore, the evidence suggests that voters are better at agreeing on party's positions on the LR continuum. This is particularly the case for extreme left parties (the inheritors of Communism) such as the Italian RC, the Swedish VP, the French LO/NPA and the German Linke. On the other hand, right-wing parties are more likely to be placed in a common position on the European dimension: the Austrian FPÖ and BZÖ, the British BNP, the Swedish SDEM, Ireland's Libertas or the French FN. Surprisingly, however, we notice that the social democratic parties – and here particularly the Southern European ones, but also the British and

Irish Labour Parties do not have high collective agreement scores. Third, the very low perceptual agreement scores for some parties indicate that, at a minimum, Left-Right and European Integration do not appear to be the basis on which issue voting takes place. On the one hand, it may simply be the case that in some countries such as Belgium or Spain the decisive programmatic positions do not run along the LR and the EU continuums and we might find higher PA scores on alternative dimensions such as the regional or nationalist continuums (a question which can only be explored with national election data). On the other hand, certain parties may not convey clear issue positions to their voters and their voter base is not well captured by proximity voting models. A final conclusion focuses on the agreement scores of more educated voters, which in general tend to be much higher. This result suggests that where scholars are using voters' responses on placement scales to extricate measures of party positions they should probably restrict the analysis to subsets of voters.<sup>24</sup>

### Party Characteristics

In this final section of the chapter we explore, briefly, the differences in perceptual agreement scores across parties in the EU15.<sup>25</sup> To analyze the influence of party related factors on our dependent variables (the actual PA score), we created a dataset of a variety of party characteristics that might help explain why one party does better in terms of collective placement compared with another.

We also include several control variables in our analyses. As discussed above, the high rates of DK responses are not captured in the PA measure and for knowledge questions this seems particularly relevant, we therefore control for the number of missing (DK) responses per party, per dimension, calling the variable *Uncertainty*. The problem with DKs is that responses both "reflect two systematic factors: knowledge and propensity to guess" (Mondak 2001: 225). We expect that high rates of DK responses indicate an element of guessing on the part of those who do place the party.

Finally, it is well established that European elections are second order in nature and that campaign effects are generally much weaker than in national competitions. We thus control for the effect of national election campaigns on perceptual agreement scores (Weber 2007). Where campaigns are intense (as in national elections) voter information should increase and this should have a positive effect on voters' ability to identify party positions. Hence the nearer the European Election is to the national election, the higher the expected PA score (all else equal). This effect should be particularly evident for the LR continuum. We adopt Reif's measure (1984) which expresses on a scale of 0-1 the time-span between an EP election and the preceding national election, controlling for the length of the legislative session in the member state. We also include the square of this term to capture any non-linear impacts, such that when a European election is held in the middle of a national election cycle, the effects should be weakest.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Admittedly, the subset of party supporters is sometimes used to extricate party positions, however, with party identification rates declining, the numbers willing to so identify is getting lower and lower. In the EES09 many parties had fewer than five respondents (and in some cases not a single one) willing to admit that they were close to Party X.

<sup>25</sup> The choice of the EU15 is partly motivated by data availability issues but also these countries, typically, have more institutionalized party systems, longer EU membership and far lower DK responses on the party placement scales. In future work we will extend the analysis to newer member states.

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that this variable is not party specific but is rather country specific. Other potential structural variables that could be included in the model are the effective number of parties, overall polarization of the party system or the nature of the electoral system (see Wessels 2002). While we have gathered data on all these variables we omit them from the analysis as these all vary at the system level and we may be mistaking group level correlations for individual effects. Running a multi-level model may be one solution, however with a sample of only 15 countries (even 27) there are probably

## Results

We ran three separate OLS models on each of the two dependent variables (LR agreement score and European agreement score).<sup>27</sup> The first model considers mostly *traditional* party characteristics such as party age, party size, whether the party is in government or opposition and the extremism of the party as measured by the expert surveys. The second model replaces the expert survey extremism measure with the parties' ideological families, and the final model takes into consideration the timing of the European election relative to the national electoral cycle.

Table 1 presents the results of the 6 models. Overall there are few significant results; party characteristics (at least as measured here) do not greatly impact on agreement scores. The only consistently significant variable relates to the percentage of DK responses (Uncertainty), though this is hardly a surprising outcome: the greater the number of DK responses the lower the overall PA score. The first three columns of Table 1 report the results for the LR dimension. In model 1 the only significant variable of interest relates to directional distance from the party mean as measured by expert survey results. The further a party is to the left of the political spectrum the higher the agreement scores.<sup>28</sup> Absolute distance from the weighted mean position, is however not significant. Model 2 replaces the expert survey measure of extremism with the ideological family variables but none of the variables reach standard significance levels with the exception of yet again the variable that captures extreme left parties (Communist). All in all, the first two models indicate that voters collectively agree on the location of communist parties. Our third model introduces the electoral cycle variable and the results are consistent with the findings of Weber (2007): the closer the European election is to national elections the higher the agreement scores for a party.

Models 4-6 reproduce the same analysis for the European integration dimension. Here the results are slightly more interesting. In the first model for this dimension (model 4) we discover that some of the traditional party characteristics are now significant. As predicted, the older a party, the more likely are voters to agree on its location in political space. In addition, the size of a party is now significant, with smaller parties having higher PA scores. However, neither of the expert survey measures of extremism (absolute or directional) are significant. In model 5, which includes party family, the effects of party size and party age remain significant, and we find that membership in the Communist, Conservative and Green ideological families negatively impacts on PA scores for the European continuum. The electoral cycle does not however (Model 6) appear to have any significant influence, a result which is at odds with that of Weber who, somewhat surprisingly, found that agreement on this dimension was "highest at the midterm and lowest at election time in the member states" (2007: 523).

Overall, our findings stemming from this basic OLS-regression are not particularly noteworthy and we are not particularly confident of their robustness. We can interpret the results as indicating that party characteristics are of minor explanatory power in the collective identification of party positions, though of course the measures utilized may also be crude and inappropriate proxies for the underlying causal hypotheses we wish to test. Nonetheless, the results do suggest that on the Left-Right dimension, voters seem to agree on the placement of extreme left parties. Secondly, on the European continuum smaller, older parties feature higher collective agreement scores.

insufficient level 2 variables. Also the appropriateness of country as a level 2 variable is contested.

<sup>27</sup> The models are run using robust ordinary least squares regression (Huber-White transformation).

<sup>28</sup> Given the construction of this variable, positive scores on this dimension refer to parties to the left of the weighted mean, while negative ones measure parties to the right. The result holds if one also simply uses the actual placement of the party from the Left-Right Chapel Hill expert survey.

*Table 1: Effects of party characteristics on agreement scores (OLS-Regression)*

	LR (1)	LR (2)	LR (3)	EUPA (4)	EUPA (5)	EUPA (6)
Party Age	0.000321 (0.758)	0.000123 (0.910)	0.000494 (0.621)	0.00273 <sup>***</sup> (0.004)	0.00300 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	0.00278 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)
Party Size	-0.201 (0.171)	0.0206 (0.905)	-0.0823 (0.629)	-0.300 <sup>**</sup> (0.003)	-0.230 <sup>~</sup> (0.034)	-0.247 <sup>~</sup> (0.016)
Incumbent	-0.0185 (0.583)	-0.00483 (0.881)	-0.000250 (0.994)	-0.0115 (0.717)	-0.0100 (0.755)	-0.0105 (0.731)
Abs. Dist	-0.00639 (0.603)			0.000280 (0.976)		
Directional Dist.	-0.0161 <sup>**</sup> (0.007)			-0.00817 (0.146)		
Uncertainty	-0.607 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	-0.554 <sup>**</sup> (0.004)	-0.738 <sup>****</sup> (0.001)	-0.464 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	-0.526 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	-0.511 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)
Communist		0.159 <sup>**</sup> (0.002)	0.147 <sup>**</sup> (0.002)		-0.0991 <sup>**</sup> (0.001)	-0.108 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)
Euroskeptic		-0.111 (0.065)	-0.105 (0.062)		0.0419 (0.218)	0.0325 (0.330)
Radical Right		-0.0481 (0.663)	-0.0694 (0.518)		-0.0174 (0.755)	-0.00779 (0.897)
Liberal		0.0211 (0.675)	0.0177 (0.712)		-0.0581 (0.065)	-0.0627 <sup>~</sup> (0.044)
Conservative		-0.0480 (0.529)	-0.0350 (0.607)		-0.123 <sup>~</sup> (0.011)	-0.122 <sup>**</sup> (0.010)
Christian Dem.		-0.0140 (0.813)	-0.0224 (0.682)		-0.0983 (0.052)	-0.0993 (0.057)
Soc. Dem		-0.0595 (0.319)	-0.0610 (0.298)		-0.0504 (0.320)	-0.0517 (0.292)
Green		0.0139 (0.789)	0.0119 (0.809)		-0.134 <sup>**</sup> (0.006)	-0.142 <sup>**</sup> (0.003)
Cycle			-0.789 <sup>**</sup> (0.006)			0.0545 (0.792)
Cycle Squared			0.558 <sup>~</sup> (0.021)			0.0288 (0.866)
Constant	0.565 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	0.500 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	0.764 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	0.389 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	0.463 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)	0.427 <sup>****</sup> (0.000)
N	95	123	123	97	123	123
F	4.988	4.075	4.193	9.035	10.26	10.27

*p*-values in parentheses, \* *p* < 0.05, \*\* *p* < 0.01, \*\*\* *p* < 0.001

## **Conclusions**

Our initial analysis of voters' collective location of European parties suggest that political scientists may be unduly optimistic in assuming that voters possess high levels of cognition with regard to parties' positions at the time of European elections. Overall the results are pretty grim. This is particularly true for positions on the European Integration dimension. Not only are voters less likely to agree on party positions on this dimension, they are disinclined to even express an opinion about a party's placement in many instances. Citizens do not appear to have cognitive orientations towards this element of party competition. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to reach any firm conclusion as to why this is the case, but we speculate that parties may not compete on this issue dimension in European elections, that European elections are second order in nature and that citizens are simply not engaged with the European project.

The analyses presented in this chapter focus exclusively on characteristics of parties and party systems. In future work, we hope to explore the effect of individual voter characteristics on perceptions of party positions in European elections. Our aggregate analysis suggests that education has a powerful impact on respondents' collective agreement on party location. This finding may be particularly significant for those who wish to extrapolate party positions from these survey responses. There also appears to be grounds for concern about priming affects (Krosnick 1991) with these scales items, the distribution of voter responses are quite extreme with greater use of the ends of the scale than typically found in national election surveys. Furthermore, we identified some quite extraordinary and counterintuitive mode effects in Eastern Europe that need to be explored in greater detail.

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# ‘To them that hath...’. News Media and Knowledge Gaps<sup>1</sup>

Pippa Norris<sup>2</sup>

## Synopsis

Scholars continue to debate what citizens know about politics, whether ordinary people lack the capacity to make rational and informed choices in a democracy, and what voters learn from election campaigns. One common prism to understand these issues focuses upon the role of ‘*knowledge gaps*’, suggesting that any adult learning from the media will be strongly conditioned by prior levels of formal education. An alternative theory suggests that *lifetime learning* occurs, so that adult use of the news media has the capacity to shrink any information gaps arising from early schooling. Most studies have examined these issues among citizens living within one country, especially the U.S. Cross-national research is important, however, as the broader context of communication environments is also expected to shape political learning; with smaller knowledge gaps predicted in more cosmopolitan societies, where communications flow easily across and within national borders.

This study therefore compares European citizens to investigate whether the size and distribution of any knowledge gaps are affected by the interaction of individual-level education and media use, and also by societal level processes of cosmopolitan communications. The study utilizes the European Parliament Election Study 2009 survey, monitoring individual level news use and civic knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Societies are classified by the cosmopolitan characteristics of media landscapes in European countries, using the Norris and Inglehart (2004) Cosmopolitan Communications Index. The conclusion considers the implications of the results for understanding processes of political learning within European societies.

Persistent and substantial disparities in knowledge are important for understanding both the role of the mass media in social learning and also the role of citizens in a democracy. Enduring inequalities in citizens’ knowledge have been widely observed and these are central to many long-standing debates in the social sciences. This includes, for example, controversies concerning the rationality of economic decision-making in the market-place, the political capacity of citizens to cast informed ballots in a democracy, and the public’s awareness of information campaigns in studies of health care, communications, and marketing.

Knowledge gaps are of long-standing concern in the political and social sciences for several reasons. Some minimal level of knowledge is widely regarded as necessary for *informed choice*, whether decisions about casting a ballot, buying a car, or taking out a mortgage. Yet survey research repeatedly demonstrates that even in long-established democracies, such as the United States, many citizens usually know little about many basic facts in political life (Delli

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<sup>3</sup> Data is derived from the EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)). Marcel H. van Egmond, Eliyahu V. Sapir, Wouter van der Brug, Sara B. Hobolt, Mark N. Franklin (2010) EES 2009 Voter Study Advance Release Notes. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam

Carpini and Keeter 1996). Some scholars conclude that as a result, democracy does not work well (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964; Converse 1990). Others contend that citizens do not need extensive information to make reasoned decisions, especially if cognitive shortcuts can aid rational choices (Graber 2004). Encyclopaedic information may be redundant if citizens can get by with incomplete information (Lupia and McCubbins 1998).

This issue may also be considered important for *political behaviour*, if substantial knowledge gaps reinforce other inequalities in civic participation. Following events in the news can be regarded, in itself, as a desirable form of civic literacy in a democracy, as well as being closely associated with more active forms of political participation. A cross-national study by Milner showed that a population's degree of civic literacy is the single best predictor of its level of political participation (Milner 2002; Milner and Gronlund 2006). Awareness about politics and public affairs is associated with internal political efficacy or a sense of competence, one of the strongest predictors of political activism (Verba et al. 1995; Lassen 2005; Palfrey and Poole 1987). More knowledge about government programs has also been found to increase political trust (Cook et al. 2010).

The issue of knowledge gaps is not simply of academic interest; disparities between information rich and information poor citizens have also aroused considerable concern among public policymakers. For example, civics has long been integrated into the school curriculum on the grounds that young people need to learn about public affairs, their rights and duties as citizens, and the way that they can become engaged in society. Studies have monitored substantial cross-national variations in civic knowledge among young people.<sup>4</sup> More generally, lack of awareness about health campaigns, such as those concerning the risks of poor diet, smoking, or AIDS, have an especially severe impact on those groups most negatively affected by social changes, who also tend to be information poor (Hayward 1995). The contemporary policy debate has often framed the issue in terms of the access to newer information and communication technologies (ICTs), exemplified by the 'digital divide'. Hence the EU has prioritized expanding digital access as part of its strategy for economic growth and employment.<sup>5</sup> Yet in fact multiple disparities have long existed in civic awareness, as well as in access and use of traditional communication mediums, not simply access to digital ICTs.

## **Theoretical Framework**

What explains inequalities in civic information and political awareness? Socialization theories provide the mainstream approach to understanding social learning processes. The literature has repeatedly demonstrated that two of the strongest predictors of civic knowledge among the adult population are formal educational qualifications, derived from schooling during early childhood and adolescence, and also news media consumption during later life.

### ***Education and Cognitive Skills***

Socialization accounts have long emphasized the learning process derived from formal schooling occurring during earliest childhood through adolescence (Sears 1975; Gimpel et al. 2003; Grusec and Hastings eds. 2006). Formal education provides knowledge of civics, as well as broader insights into politics and society arising from the study of history, geography, social studies and related fields. Formal education is also predicted to deepen literacy, numeracy and the reservoir of cognitive, analytic and abstract reasoning skills; to provide prior contextual

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the IEA Civic Education Study, which surveyed nationally representative samples consisting of 90,000 14-year-old students in 28 countries, and 50,000 17- to 19-year-old students in 16 countries throughout 1999 and 2000. <http://www.terpconnect.umd.edu/~jtpurta/> A further IEA survey conducted in 2009 among 30 nations has recently been completed. For an overview of the sub-field, see Sherrod et al. 2010.

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/eeurope/i2010/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/index_en.htm)

knowledge which helps to make sense of additional new information; and to strengthen the existence of social networks which facilitate discussion and deliberative learning. Other important sources of early learning include the immediate family and peer-groups, as well as the local community, and religious institutions. Theories emphasize that socialization processes shape the ways in which children and adolescents acquire their enduring cultural attitudes, beliefs, and values and how they learn their role as citizens. Longitudinal panel surveys are the most effective research design to establish the formative experiences shaping childhood socialization processes; studies of the American public using this approach have established that distinctive generational differences can be attributed to certain experiences and events occurring during the formative life stages (Jennings 1996; Jennings et al. 2009).

### ***Lifetime Learning through the Mass Media***

In addition, adults are expected to learn during their lifetime from both direct experience and through information provided by processes of interpersonal, group, and mediated communications. The 'virtuous circle' thesis theorizes that habitual use of the news media, social learning, and civic engagement are complimentary and mutually-reinforcing interactive processes (Norris 2000; Norris 2001; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006; Stromback and Shehata 2010). This includes acquiring political information from the main channels of the traditional and newer media available within each country, as well as via cosmopolitan communications flowing from abroad. An extensive body of empirical work has examined the classic issue of whether individual consumption of news reinforces political knowledge and, if so, whether any such learning is conditioned by the *type of media source* (including learning from radio and television news and entertainment, as well as from tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, from internet websites and online social networks, and from interpersonal discussion) (Russell 1974; Stauffer et al. 1981; Robinson and Levy 1986; Mondak 1995; Martinelli and Chaffee 1995); the *amount, duration and prominence* of news coverage; the *type and complexity of topics* (such as awareness of local, domestic, or international issues); and the *measure of knowledge* (such as tests through closed or open-ended questions) employed in the research design (Chaffee and Schleuder 1986; Price and Zaller 1993).

### ***The Interaction of Education and the Media***

As well as the separate effects of both education and news media exposure on civic knowledge, the interaction of these factors is also expected to prove important. The theory of 'knowledge gaps' was first proposed by Phillip J. Tichenor and his colleagues in their 1970 article "*Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge*" (Tichenor et al. 1970). The original thesis argued that schooling during the formative years shapes subsequent processes of lifetime learning. In particular, the most educated and highest status sectors of the population are thought to have the greatest capacity to acquire further useful information about people, processes and institutions during their adult lifetimes, including learning from the mass media, thereby reinforcing pre-existing inequalities between the information rich and information poor (see Figure 1, Model A).

The *knowledge gap thesis* predicts that people with higher education (and thus higher SES) learn at a faster rate than those with lower education, a pattern attributed to differential communication skills, pre-existing knowledge, social networks, and access to the mass media. In particular, Tichenor et al theorized that any knowledge gaps were due to the skills and capacities developed by human capital. Those with higher levels of education are expected to prove more active when seeking further new information from the media (McLeod and Perse 1994). The well-educated are therefore predicted to gradually become more informed about politics, society, and public affairs as they learn from the news media during their adult years. Those lacking formal educational qualifications are also expected to learn from the media during their lifetimes, but at a far slower rate, gradually dropping even further behind. Thus the knowledge gap between the well-educated and less educated is expected to widen during adulthood.

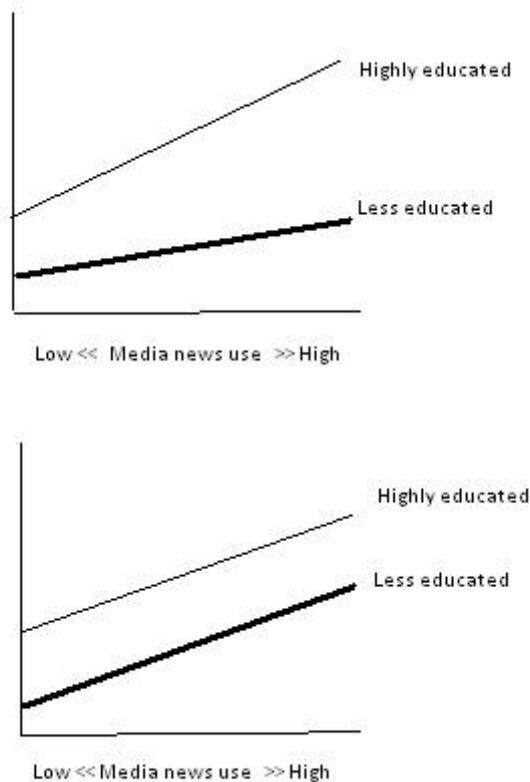


Figure 1: The 'knowledge gap' and 'lifetime learning' models

The typical links between formal education, news media consumption, and patterns of knowledge in the United States can be illustrated by the results of surveys conducted by the *Pew Research Center for The People and The Press*. Pew has regularly monitored levels of awareness about political figures and current events in the news in the United States over many decades. Their battery of almost two-dozen questions seeks to monitor whether people can identify the correct name of some leaders (such as the President of Russia or the US Vice-President), political issues featured in the news (such as which party currently controls the House of Representatives), and the position held by certain public figures (such as the Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives 2008-10, Nancy Pelosi). Based on a comparison of American levels of political knowledge from 1989 to 2007, the Pew study concluded that education is the single best predictor of knowledge: *"Holding all other factors equal, levels of knowledge rise with each additional year of formal schooling. At the extremes, these educational differences are dramatic.... More than six-in-ten college graduates (63%) fall into the high knowledge group, compared with 20% of those with a high school education or less – among the largest disparities observed in the survey"* (Pew Center 2007). Pew reports that Americans also learnt from the news – but the audiences for different media sources (such as cable or network television news) varied greatly in how much they know about what's going on. These patterns can be seen as a consequence both of *self-selection* (the kinds of people who rely on each type of medium) and *media effects* (how much people learn from specific sources).

An extensive literature has built upon the idea of the knowledge gap thesis originally proposed by Tichenor et al, generating more than a hundred studies in total (Gaziano 1997; Hwang and Jeong 2009). Research has expanded in scope and methodological sophistication

during the last forty years and several approaches have dominated the empirical literature. One uses panel survey data, with repeated surveys of the same subjects, to examine learning over time (Jennings 1996). This is an ideal research design but unfortunately the longitudinal data remains limited, with no available cross-national evidence. Experimental studies have also been used, examining the effects of learning from different news sources and stories (Sanders and Norris 2007). Another more common approach uses a cross-sectional sample of citizens to examine the learning effects of levels of issue coverage in the media, for example concerning awareness of economic and foreign policy issues. Hwang and Jeong's (2009) recent meta-analysis reviewed the accumulated body of scholarship and concluded that certain robust findings emerged from the knowledge gaps literature:

- (i) The size of any knowledge gaps were consistently related to *formal educational levels*, as the original thesis predicted.
- (ii) Knowledge gaps were often, but not always, moderated by *types and levels of media news coverage*, with the strength of any association conditioned by the type of media sources and issue topics, as well as by the type of knowledge measures and the study design.
- (iii) Nevertheless Hwang and Jeong emphasize that the substantive size of any knowledge gains over time, or as the result of the degree of issue coverage, were usually modest.
- (iv) Lastly, empirical studies do not always consistently support the knowledge gap thesis; some scholars have concluded that any knowledge gaps between the well and less educated remain constant.
- (v) Among high and low media users, suggesting that the latter are capable of lifetime learning at a rate which is comparable to the former.

In the light of these inconsistencies, the knowledge gap thesis has come under challenge from other theoretical approaches. In particular, the alternative *life-time learning perspective* developed by Mishler and Rose (2002) suggests that although those with formal schooling have a head-start at civics during their early adulthood, these differences do not persist over a lifetime, since people have the capacity to acquire new information from multiple sources, including from personal discussions, from social networks, and from the mass media. Mishler and Rose emphasize, in particular, that citizens living in countries which have experienced a major regime transition can be expected to have the capacity to learn new democratic processes and procedures. Thus attention to political news is expected to generate processes of adult learning, with a gradual closure of the 'head start' knowledge gap arising from formal schooling (see Figure 1, Model B).

### ***The Communications Environment***

The core propositions of the knowledge gap thesis therefore deserve reexamining against empirical evidence. What has received less attention in the research literature on knowledge gaps in the United States, however, is the context of the media system in each society and, in particular, the degree to which communications flow freely and easily within and across national borders. As Milner (2002) notes, with a few notable exceptions, most existing studies of political knowledge among representative samples of the adult population have been conducted within the United States. Any learning effects arising from news, however, can be

Table 1: Media landscapes, Europe

Nation	Historical democratization Index 1972_2008, 100 pts (FH)	Liberal Democracy scale 100 pts 2008 (Freedom House)	GDP per capita ppp 2006 (World bank 2007)	Human development index 2005 100-pt scale (UNDP 2007)	Cosmopolitanism index (Norris and Inglehart 2009)	Press Freedom 2005 reversed (RWB)	% of HH with TV, average 2000-04, (World Bank)	Cellular mobile telephone subscribers per 100, 2005 (ITU)	Daily newspaper: number of titles, 2004 (UNESCO 2008)	Daily newspaper circulation per 1000, 2004 (UNESCO)	State owned, television by share; Djankov (2008)
Austria	85	99	\$26,110	0.948	4.73	98	93	99	17	311	0.78
Belgium	84	99	\$24,541	0.946	5.04	96	97	90	29	165	0.41
Bulgaria	34	85	\$2,256	0.824	0.37	90	93	81	58	79	0.75
Cyprus	75	99	\$22,699	0.903	2.85	95	98	95	8		0.23
Czech Rep	43	99	\$7,040	0.891	2.65	99	97	115	81	183	0.34
Denmark	85	99	\$32,548	0.949	5.60	100	97	101	35	353	0.80
Estonia	40	99	\$6,945	0.860	2.01	99	92	107	13	191	0.29
Finland	78	99	\$27,081	0.952	4.91	100	93	100	53	431	0.48
France	80	99	\$23,899	0.952	4.17	94	95	79	101	163	0.43
Germany	80	99	\$24,592	0.935	4.29	96	95	96	347	267	0.61
Greece	70	92	\$13,339	0.926	2.19	96	98	90			0.08
Hungary	50	99	\$6,126	0.874	2.35	98	96	92	34	217	0.20
Ireland	84	99	\$31,410	0.959	4.78	100	96	101	7	182	0.68
Italy	80	92	\$19,709	0.941	2.85	91	96	123	96	137	0.61
Latvia	39	92	\$5,683	0.855	1.23	98	86	81	23	154	
Lithuania	41	99	\$5,247	0.862	1.27	96	97	128	14	108	0.23
Luxembourg	84	99	\$54,779	0.944	6.69		97	158	6	255	
Netherlands	85	99	\$25,333	0.953	4.89	100	98	97	37	307	0.57
Poland	49	99	\$5,521	0.870	2.05	88	92	76	42	114	0.57
Portugal	75	99	\$11,124	0.897	3.04	95	99	109	27		0.38
Romania	31	85	\$2,443	0.813	0.04	84	92	62	163	70	0.37
Slovak Rep	40	99	\$5,126	0.863	1.89	99	90	84	13	126	0.35
Slovenia	42	99	\$12,047	0.917	2.20		97	88	5		0.54
Spain	71	99	\$16,177	0.949	3.29	67	99	95	151	144	0.43
Sweden	85	99	\$31,197	0.956	5.57	98	94	93	93	481	0.51
UK	83	99	\$27,582	0.946	4.67	95	98	109	109	290	0.60
Total	64	94	\$18,060	0.904	3.07	92	96	94	83	238	0.48

Source: Pippa Norris. Cross-national Democracy Dataset June 2009, [www.pippanorris.com](http://www.pippanorris.com)

expected to be conditioned by the broader communications landscape, where the U.S. media are not necessarily typical of other post-industrial societies, such as those with a stronger national newspaper industry and a public service tradition of broadcasting. The cross-national studies which have been published suggest that the United States may be 'exceptional' in levels of political knowledge, exemplified by low awareness of foreign affairs. Hence Bennett et al. (1996) compared knowledge of international affairs across five post-industrial societies and found that Americans displayed far less awareness than other comparable societies. Another study comparing Switzerland and the United States also found that knowledge of international affairs (and knowledge gaps) varied by the amount of international news coverage (Iyengar et al. 2009). Within Europe, as well, habitual viewership of either public service or commercial television broadcasting has also been found to influence levels of political knowledge (Norris and Holtz-Bacha 2001).

We therefore need to monitor how far civic knowledge among citizens varies systematically across European nations and how far different individual-level educational qualifications and societal-level media landscapes may help to account for such variations (see for instance Curran et al. 2009; McCann and Chappell Lawson 2006; Holmberg 2009). The majority of studies of the knowledge gap have been conducted in the US, yet the media system in America and in European societies differ in some important regards; European television continues to have a far stronger public service tradition of broadcast journalism, alongside stricter regulation of campaign coverage, political expenditure, and political advertising (Kelly et al. 2004; Dragomir et al. eds. 2005; Bardoel and d'Haenens 2008). As Table 1 illustrates, media landscapes in Europe vary substantially on many dimensions, such as in historical and contemporary levels of democratization, per capita GDP and human development, as well as press freedom, access to media technologies, and the structure of broadcast television. European media systems also continue to differ significantly among member states, such as in Internet penetration rates, the degree of public service v. commercial broadcasters, and the structure of newspaper markets, providing a suitable context to test the potential impact of communication environments on knowledge gaps in post-industrial societies.<sup>6</sup> This includes important contrasts between long-standing West European democracies and EU member states which only experienced the transition to multiparty competitive elections and democratic states during the third wave era. These contextual features vary quite significantly across European countries and these factors are expected to influence knowledge gaps in the same way as they shape other aspects of political involvement and political equality (see for instance Gallego 2010; Baek 2009).

There have been a number of attempts to conceptualize contrasts in media systems, notably Mancini and Hallin developed an influential typology which has identified important contrasts across European countries, including in the development of a mass circulation press, the strength of the links between media and political parties, the development of professional journalism, and the extent of State intervention in the media system (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Unfortunately, their theoretical typology has proved difficult to operationalize and measure with any precision (Norris 2009).

To provide an alternative way to conceptualize the contrasts, this study focuses upon the idea of cosmopolitan communications. The concept of 'cosmopolitan communications' represents the degree of information flowing across and within national borders, including how far people interact today within a single global community, or whether these networks remain more localized and parochial.<sup>7</sup> Cosmopolitan communications are understood to reflect the degree of openness towards ideas and information derived from divergent cultures, deepening

<sup>6</sup> Macro-level data about the regulation, structure and audience for the mass media are gathered from many database sources, including UNESCO, Euro-Stats, and the European Audiovisual Observatory. See, for example, <http://www.obs.coe.int/db/index.html.en>.

<sup>7</sup> For the idea of cosmopolitanism, see Hannerz 1990; Tomlinson 1999; Vertoves and Cohen eds. 2002.

awareness of other places and peoples, including their languages, habits, and customs. It is measured in any society, as discussed later, in terms of the degree of press freedom within any state, economic development (as a proxy determining levels of access to the mass media in each country), and external barriers to information flows (arising from the process of globalization). The core theory posits that life-time learning about civic affairs can be expected to be particularly strong under certain conditions; notably in cosmopolitan societies where all social sectors have widespread access to diverse news media channels and outlets, in democratic states with an independent press where citizens have many opportunities (and few constraints) to learn about public affairs from news and current affairs, and in countries where political information flows easily across national borders, without censorship or restrictions. Cosmopolitan communications are expected to be particularly important for learning about the workings of the European Union, as well as for deepening understanding of democratic processes and awareness of civic concerns at home. The term ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘parochial’ is employed descriptively in this study, without implying any normative judgment about the preference for one or the other. The measure of cosmopolitan communications is described in more detail in the next section of the paper.

### ***Core Empirical Propositions***

To reexamine the knowledge gap thesis, the core propositions at the heart of this project therefore predict that:

- (1.1) *Formal education* will cause stronger levels of civic knowledge.
- (1.2) *Exposure to the news media* will cause stronger levels of civic knowledge; with the effects conditioned by the type of media.
- (1.3) A significant *interaction effect* will be evident in levels of civic knowledge, so that formal education in childhood and adolescence will reinforce the learning effects arising from exposure to the news media in adult life.
- (1.4) The strength of the interaction effect between education and media exposure will vary cross-nationally depending upon the degree of cosmopolitan communications within each society. In particular, we expect to establish that *civic knowledge gaps between the well and less educated will be larger in societies with more parochial communications systems.*

### ***Research Design***

Research testing these propositions requires classifying a diverse range of contemporary media landscapes in Europe as well as monitoring systematic cross-national survey data on media use and nationally-equivalent measures of civic knowledge.

### ***Cosmopolitan Communication Index***

This study draws upon a Cosmopolitanism index which is designed to measure the permeability of societies to inward information flows. The idea of cosmopolitan communications is operationalized here in terms of three closely-related dimensions. *External barriers* include the degree to which national borders are open or closed, whether imports of cultural goods and services are limited by tariffs, taxes, or domestic subsidies, and how far there are restrictions on the movement of people through international travel, tourism, and labor mobility. To compare how far countries are integrated into international networks, we draw upon the KOF Globalization Index. This provides comprehensive annual indicators of the degree of economic, social, and political globalization in 120 countries around the world since the early 1970s (Dreher et al. 2008). Limits on *media freedom* also restrict news and information within societies, including through the legal framework governing freedom of expression and

information (such as penalties for press offences); patterns of intimidation affecting journalists and the news media (such as imprisonment, deportation, or harassment of reporters); and the nature of state intervention in the media (such as state monopolies of broadcasting, political control over news, and the use of official censorship). The most isolationist regimes seek to control domestic public opinion through rigid censorship of any channels of external information, controlling state broadcasting and limiting access to foreign news. To measure the free flow of news and information internally within each society, we draw upon annual estimates of media freedom developed by Freedom House.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, *economic underdevelopment* is also an important barrier to information; less affluent nations commonly lack modern communication infrastructures, such as an efficient telecommunication sector and a well-developed multi-channel broadcasting service, and large sectors of the population in these countries often do not have the resources or skills to access media technologies. To compare national-levels of media access, we monitor differences in economic development, measured by per capita GDP in purchasing power parity. Economic development is closely correlated with patterns of media access.

In combination, these three factors are combined to develop the Cosmopolitanism index, described in Table 1, which is applied to compare and classify European societies. The results show considerable variance across EU member states, exemplified by the contrasts between a highly cosmopolitan society such as Luxembourg and a more parochial one, such as Bulgaria.

### ***Measuring Media Use***

The EES 2009 includes several items tapping frequency of campaign exposure to sources of election information (see Technical Appendix A). Respondents are asked how many days a week they generally followed the news (whether on TV, listening to the radio, or reading the press). They were also asked whether they often, sometimes, or never followed the news about the European election during the campaign (in the four weeks before polling day), whether on television, in a newspaper, or via a website, as well as whether they had talked with friends about the election, or attended a rally or public meeting about the election. The items on use of television news, newspapers and website election news were summed for analysis to construct a news media use scale.

Some qualifications about the news media exposure measures should be highlighted. The metrics are focused on habitual use ('how many days a week'), which is appropriate for watching evening news bulletins, but this is imprecise for monitoring the frequency of broadband online usage, which is often 24/7 for users. Some have also claimed that these sorts of traditional measures can be biased and include considerable over-reporting, particularly among people with

<sup>8</sup> For more methodological details and results, see Freedom House 2007. The IREX *Media Sustainability Index* provides another set of indicators (<http://www.irex.org/resources/index.asp>). The Media Sustainability Index benchmarks the conditions for independent media in a more limited range of countries across Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Unfortunately the IREX index does not contain sufficient number of cases worldwide to provide a further cross-check for this study.

Table 2: Campaign information sources, EES 2009

% 'sometimes' or 'often'...	Watch election on TV	Read elections news in newspaper	Go to election website	Discuss election	Attend election meeting or rally	Election news scale (TV, Newspapers, Website)
<b>Austria</b>	86	86	24	85	7	<b>59</b>
<b>Germany</b>	89	79	22	80	9	<b>57</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	78	89	34	86	8	<b>57</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	76	77	21	86	10	<b>56</b>
<b>Luxembourg</b>	81	76	26	76	10	<b>56</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	74	67	30	84	5	<b>53</b>
<b>The Netherlands</b>	74	76	31	71	4	<b>53</b>
<b>Latvia</b>	81	60	29	87	9	<b>53</b>
<b>Italy</b>	75	63	25	80	21	<b>53</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	70	59	31	70	20	<b>52</b>
<b>Finland</b>	66	78	31	81	8	<b>52</b>
<b>Hungary</b>	75	58	16	77	9	<b>51</b>
<b>Slovenia</b>	75	63	19	75	7	<b>50</b>
<b>Malta</b>	74	48	18	78	14	<b>50</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	61	64	25	70	4	<b>50</b>
<b>Greece</b>	69	45	22	84	13	<b>49</b>
<b>Estonia</b>	71	66	16	79	6	<b>49</b>
<b>Cyprus</b>	75	50	11	73	18	<b>49</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	66	64	19	65	14	<b>49</b>
<b>Slovakia</b>	72	58	14	66	10	<b>48</b>
<b>Poland</b>	72	47	14	65	5	<b>47</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	74	40	10	74	10	<b>46</b>
<b>France</b>	55	53	15	69	5	<b>46</b>
<b>Spain</b>	59	55	15	76	6	<b>46</b>
<b>Lithuania</b>	69	52	9	71	5	<b>45</b>
<b>Romania</b>	70	35	8	64	12	<b>45</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	67	41	11	65	4	<b>45</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>51</b>

Notes: Proportion reporting that they 'often' or 'sometimes' used any of these sources during the four weeks before the European elections. See Technical appendix.  
Source: EES 2009

higher levels of education and political interest (Prior 2009). Respondents may not be able to recall the frequency of time spent on these activities and reporting may over or under-estimate exposure due to social desirability biases (Coromina and Saris 2009). The measure of frequency of exposure does not monitor attention to news or politics. The survey asks about use of some specific news outlets within each country, such as some of the major newspapers and mainstream television channels, but given the fragmentation of news outlets and markets, it is not possible to generalize from these questions to assess broader patterns of news exposure. Plausibly, some may not access any of the selected media, and yet they may still access news elsewhere on a regular basis, for example for young people using online sources. Problems of measurement also arise from the multiple platforms which are accessed and used today, generating complex experiences, habits, and exposure for users. The EES questions are unable to distinguish between forms of online participation that are simply 'translated' from the offline environment, such as reading newspaper stories via the website, and those that are unique forms of two-way communications the internet, such as political discussion in social media such as Facebook (Gibson et al. 2005). Moreover while the EES can identify more passive forms of information gathering (i.e. reading websites or receiving email contacts from candidates or party organizations) it does not monitor the more active, user-driven communications (such as blogging, Tweeting, or forwarding viral videos and news clips to friends and family).

Given these important qualifications, the results in Table 2 show the contrasts among EU member states in use of campaign information sources. The variations confirm important differences within Europe, reflected in aggregate indices, such as the widespread readership of newspapers in Scandinavia compared with Mediterranean Europe (Norris 2000; Kelly et al. 2004). Hence in the EES, readership of election news during the 2009 campaign was relatively low in Portugal, Bulgaria and Romania, whereas by contrast more than twice as many citizens reported reading election news in Austria, Sweden and Germany. Television news use proves more uniform, although again there are variations among EU states, for example with relatively little use in France and Finland compared with Germany and Latvia. Finally, the use of election websites also vary a lot within the European Union, reflecting broader aspects of the digital divide, with minimal use (less than one in ten) in Lithuania and Romania contrasted with almost one third of all citizens using these online resources in Sweden and the Netherlands. Similar contrasts can be observed in interpersonal forms of campaign communications, such as attendance at meetings of rallies (which remain most popular in Belgium and Italy) and, to a lesser extent, discussion of the election with friends and family.

### ***Measuring Political Knowledge***

There remains considerable debate in the research literature about the most appropriate way of conceptualizing and measuring political 'knowledge'. Three main approaches can be identified.

#### *Civics test*

The most common approach has used simple true-false factual statements towards political knowledge, or the so-called "*civics test*" approach. As exemplified by Delli Carpini and Keeter (1993; 1996), this assumes that voters need to grasp the basic institutional arrangements in any regime (typified in American studies by being able to identify the name of the US Vice President or which party controls Congress), comprehensive and detailed information about the policy platforms of the main contenders for office; and familiarity with the fine-print of the government's record. Similar items have been used in the EuroBarometer and in national election studies.<sup>9</sup> One issue arising from this approach is that, even in long-established democracies and highly educated societies, the majority of citizens appear to fail these tests most of the time. Often the trivial is weighted equally with the important in knowledge scores, and no allowance is made for whether it makes any difference or whether there are any

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the analysis of knowledge and campaign learning in the 1997 British Election Study (Norris et al. 1999).

consequences if citizens get the answers right or wrong. In some cases, ‘civic’ questions can be useful for practical judgments. But not all. The acid test is knowledge for what? To give a simple example, knowing exactly how many members sit in the national parliament is irrelevant to electoral choices. But knowing the party or parties currently in government is essential to cast an informed ballot. Many civics items fall in between these categories, for example is it important to know the name of a minister with a specific portfolio to judge the quality of public services provided by that department?

#### *Relativist knowledge*

By contrast, the “*relativist*” approach acknowledges that people have a limited reservoir of political information, but suggests that this can be sufficient for citizens (Zaller 1993). Relativists argue that cognitive short cuts, such as ideology or ‘schema’, like a handy ready reckoner, reduce the time and effort required to make a reasoned choice about the performance of government with imperfect information. In this view, citizens are capable of making good low-information decisions because the costs of keeping fully informed are high, whereas the rewards for engaging in politics in contemporary democracies are low. Relativists lower the necessary information hurdles, producing a more realistic assessment so that most citizens get at least a passing grade. Yet one major difficulty with this approach is that the cognitive shortcuts that voters use to decide may be helpful in reducing the buzzing clutter of multiple messages, or they may be based on serious factual inaccuracies – or “false knowledge” – especially if the public is not paying close attention to complex political, economic, or social issues in European politics.

#### *Practical knowledge*

An alternative approach, associated with the work of Lupia and McCubbins, focuses on the importance of “*practical knowledge*” (Lupia 1994; Lupia and McCubbins 1998). In this view, people need useful knowledge – in domains that matter to them – to connect their preferences with their social, economic and political choices. This approach strikes a middle way on the assumption that citizens do not need to know everything about democratic governance, as if cramming for a school civics test. Nor do they need to rely upon ideological shortcuts, such as feelings of national pride or partisan loyalties, as such shortcuts may prove misleadingly dated or inaccurate. Instead the practical knowledge approach implies that for rational judgments, citizens need sufficient information in the social, economic and political spheres to connect their preferences rationally with their choices (Graber 1988; 1994).

The EES 2009 adopted the ‘civics’ approach and presented respondents with a series of seven true/false factual statements about national and European politics (see Technical Appendix A). The items varied in the difficulty of the questions asked, generating a balanced scale displaying a normal distribution. Several considerations should be noted about the survey design. The questionnaire used closed-ended formats where respondents have to choose whether each statement was either true or false (Mondak 2001). This format may overestimate levels of political knowledge, as it facilitates random guesses.

There are also some issues to consider about the treatment of the ‘Don’t Know’ (DK) answers. The most conventional way to construct civic knowledge indexes is through an additive measure of correct answers to factual knowledge questions, where 1 refers to a correct answer and 0 to an incorrect or DK response. However, evidence suggests that identically treating the options “incorrect” and “DK” can lead to ambiguous estimations of what people know about politics (Mondak and Creel 2001). While the option “DK” implies a lack of information from citizens about political issues, the option “incorrect” implies a certain degree of misinformation or at least partial information, and therefore the “incorrect” answer might potentially represent a higher state of knowledge than the ‘DK’ answer.

Lastly, beside format issues, the *topics* chosen for the different factual items are also important, as they affect the capacity of respondents to answer correctly the knowledge items in

surveys. The topic of the questions may refer to different dimensions of political knowledge, such as political leaders, political institutions, European or domestic politics, economic or foreign policy issues, and so on.

The seven civic knowledge questions included in the EES 2009 are listed in Table 3. The three items concerning national politics were amended as suitable for comparable equivalence in each country, such as the name of the minister for education. Each answer was recoded into a binary variable as either factually correct (coded 1), or else zero (coded 0) for the incorrect answer or else ‘don’t know’.

*Table 3: Civic knowledge scale*

	True or false statement	% Correct
Q96. The British Secretary of State for Children, schools and families is Ed Balls.	True	73.3
Q92. Switzerland is a member of the EU	False	64.2
Q94. Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.	False	64.0
Q95. Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union	True	57.3
Q98. There are 969 members of the British House of Commons	False	53.3
Q97. Individuals must be 25 or older to stand as candidates in British general elections.	False	41.0
Q93. The European Union has 25 member states	False	36.4
Mean score out of 7		3.9

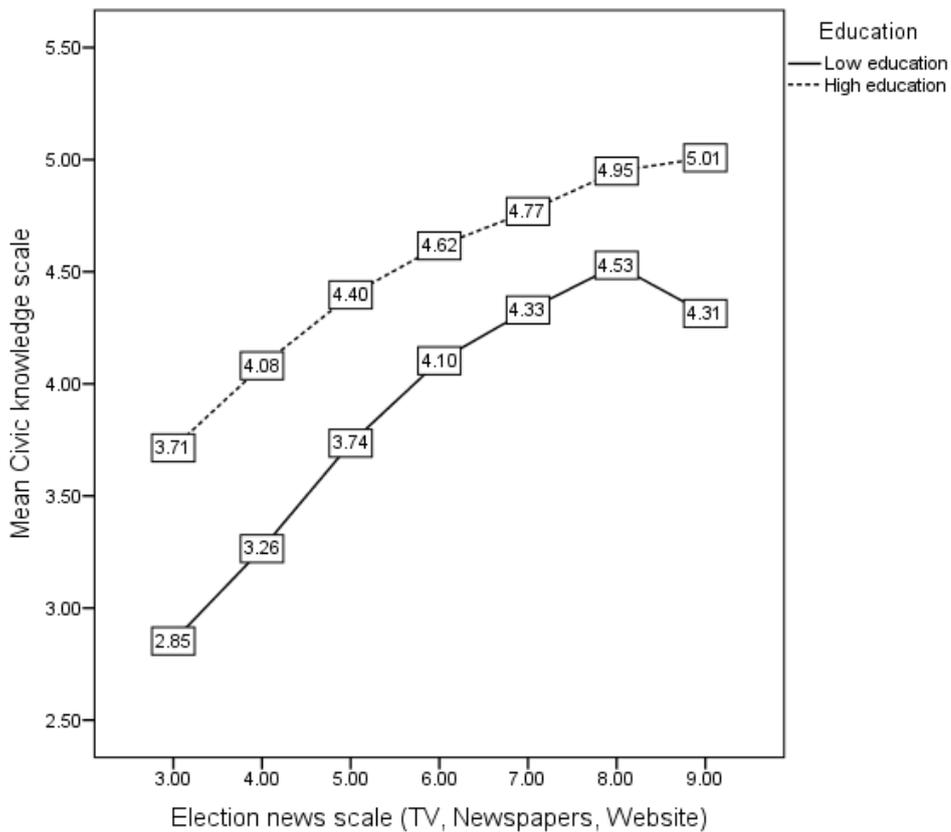
Note: The UK version of the questionnaire. Both incorrect and ‘don’t know’ answers were categorized as incorrect.

Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

As the distribution of correct answers shows, these items showed considerable discriminance by level of difficulty, with most inaccuracy concerning the number of EU member states and the highest proportion of correct answers identifying the national minister for education. The seven items were tested with principle component factor analysis and they formed a single dimension. Reliability statistics suggest that the items form a reasonably strong index (Cronbach Alpha = .67). The summary index showed a normal distribution, producing a mean score of 3.89 out of 7 points (Median 4.0, Variance 3.5, Std Dev. 1.87, Skew -0.281). None of the civics issues were given particular emphasis within the period of the EU election, so in this regard the civics items formed a weak test of campaign learning. Nevertheless it might be expected that the month-long campaign for the European parliament would encourage some background learning about European Union institutions, procedures, and membership among the most attentive news media users, amplifying and reinforcing general knowledge of matters such as the rotating EU presidency and the number of member states.

## Analysis and Results

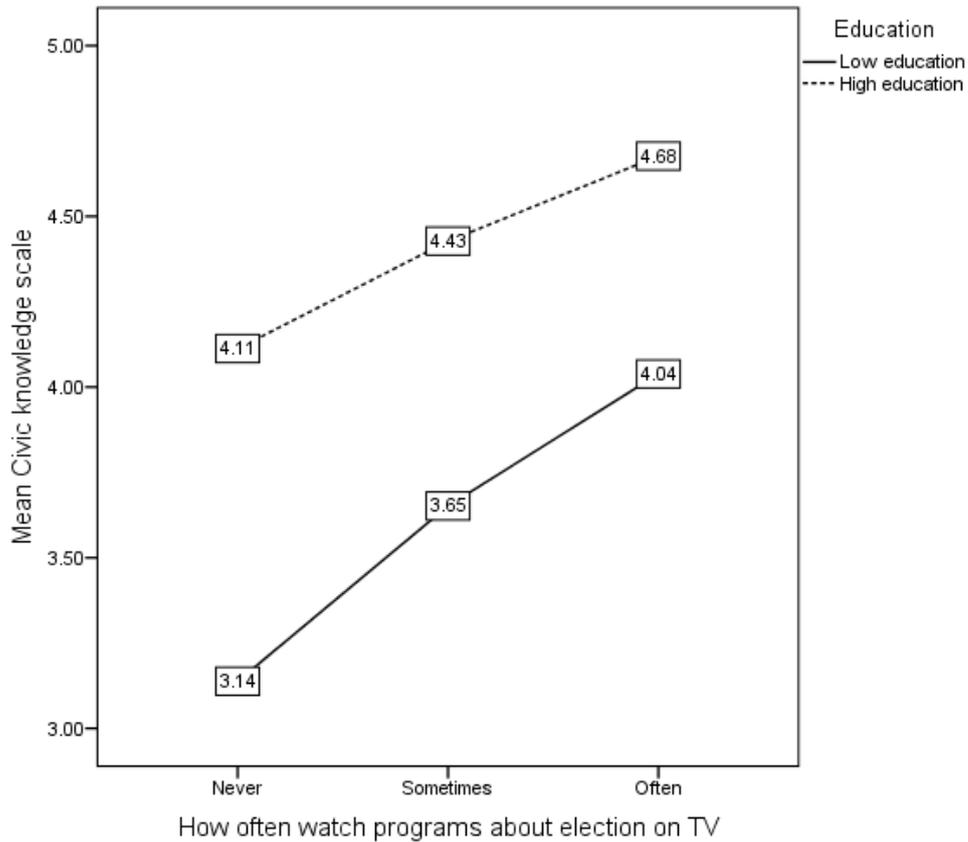
First we can examine the core propositions descriptively and then use the multilevel multivariate analysis models. The first proposition suggests that (1.1) *Formal education* will cause stronger levels of civic knowledge. The study monitoring individual-level educational attainment, based on a 14-point ISCED internationally-standardized scale concerning the highest level of education which the respondent had completed, ranging from 1 (no qualifications and left school prior to age 11) up to 14 (doctorate). This was collapsed into a seven point scale, to increase the reliability with smaller national samples. Finally the scale was also categorized around the mean into high or low levels of education, for descriptive statistics.



Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

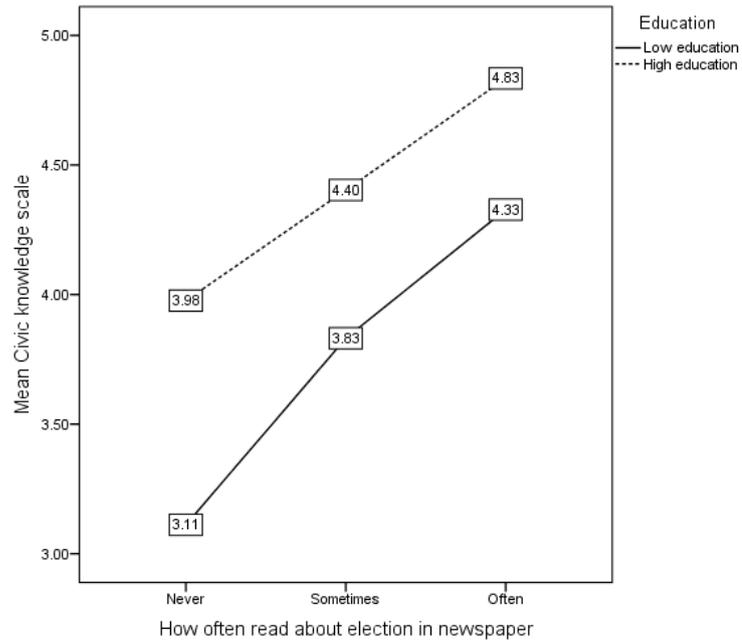
Figure 2: Knowledge gaps by education and election news media scale

The key issue for the classic knowledge gap thesis, however, is how far early schooling during childhood and adolescence conditions lifelong learning processes and thus information about contemporary affairs acquired through the news media. The third core proposition predicts that (1.3) a significant *interaction effect* will be evident in levels of civic knowledge, so that formal education in childhood and adolescence will reinforce the learning effects arising from exposure to the news media in adult life.



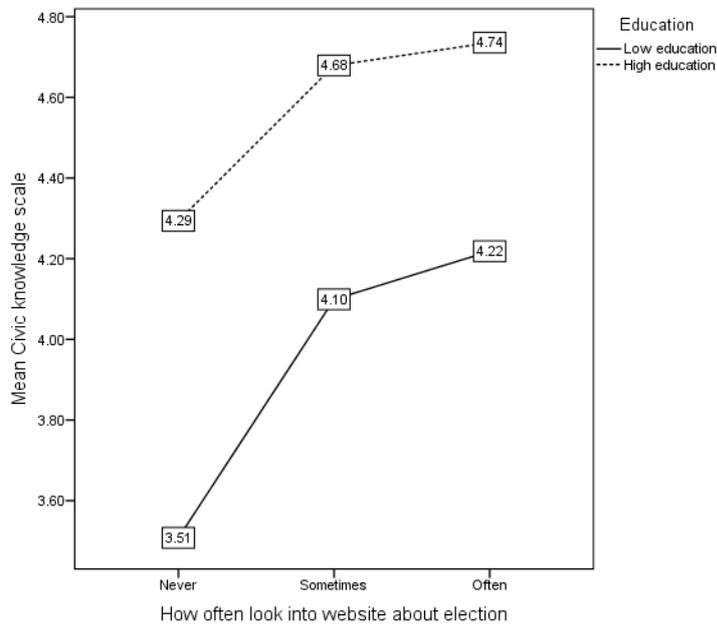
Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

*Figure 3: Knowledge gaps by education and televisions news use*



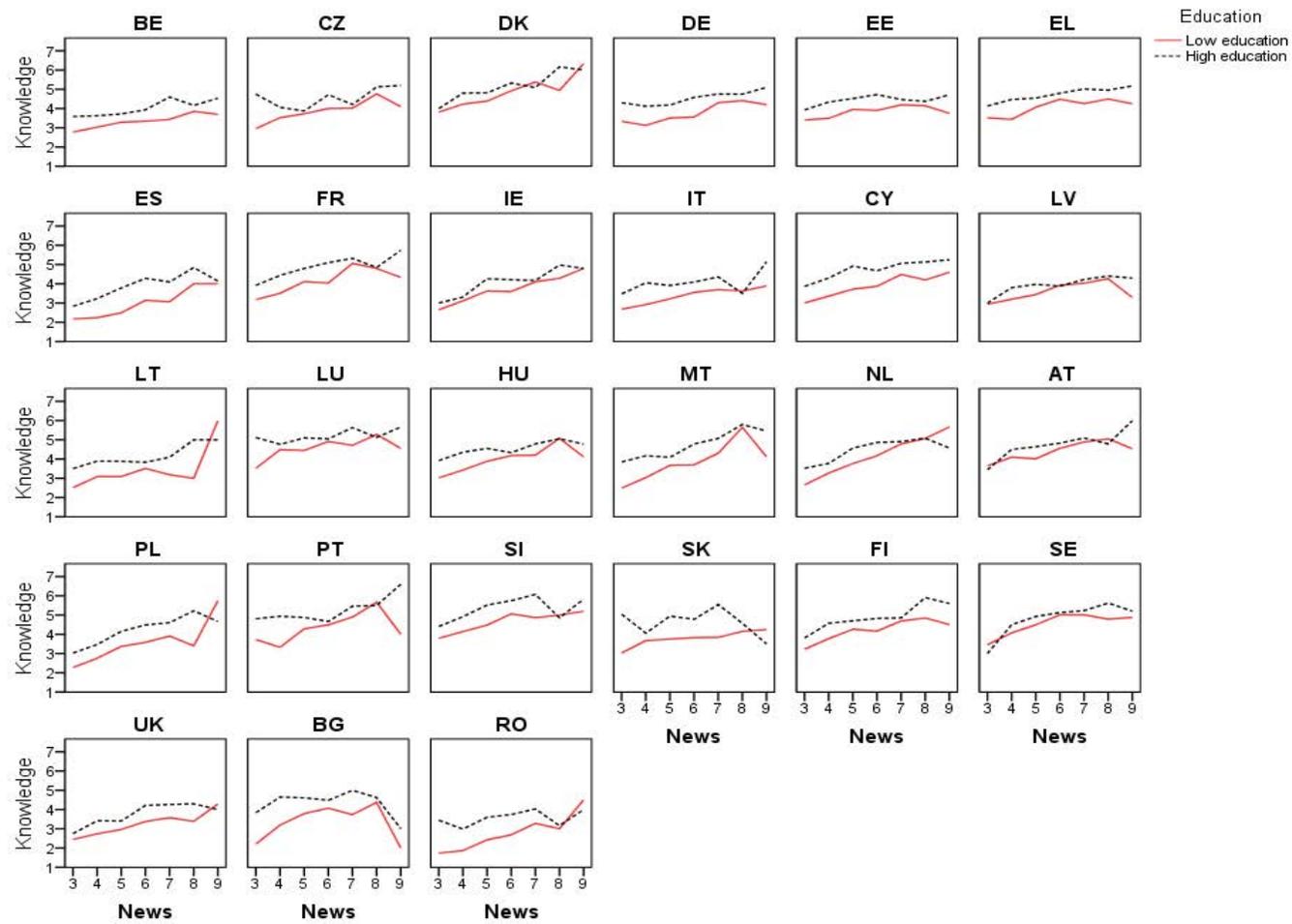
Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

Figure 4: Knowledge gaps by education and newspaper use



Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

Figure 5: Knowledge gaps by education and internet use



Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

Figure 6: Knowledge gaps by education and media use scale, by nation

Table 4 demonstrates the descriptive interaction effects between formal educational qualifications, use of the election news media scale, and levels of civic knowledge. Figure 2 illustrates the pattern visually. The use of elections news is clearly associated with greater civic knowledge. Most strikingly, however, instead of observing a widening knowledge gap between the well-educated and the less educated, the evidence demonstrates that use of the campaign news media gradually closes the knowledge gap. Hence there is a mean knowledge gap of .86 among the low and high educational groups who rarely use the news media during the election. By contrast, the size of this knowledge gap among the low and high educational groups shrinks by about half among those most attentive to the election news media. In other words, the news media in Europe appear to have a positive effect by *reducing* lack of knowledge from formal schooling, a pattern consistent with the lifetime learning model and one contrary to the effects predicted by the traditional knowledge gap literature.

One way to look at this pattern in more detail is to compare the size of knowledge gaps by use of different types of election news media; thus Figure 3 presents similar patterns for television news use while Figure 4 compares newspaper readership and Figure 5 looks at internet use. The results demonstrate that the knowledge gap between the less and well-educated shrinks consistently for each type of media, with particularly strong effects for television news. It may be that knowledge gaps which have been commonly observed in the context of the United States media environment are different to those found in Europe, given the stronger emphasis on European public service broadcasting. This explanation, which requires further evidence to confirm fully, is certainly consistent with Norris and Holtz-Bacha's earlier finding that people learn more from public service than commercial television in Europe (Norris and Holtz-Bacha 2001).

Table 4: Civic knowledge by education and media use

<b>Election news scale (TV, newspapers, websites)</b>	<b>Low education</b>	<b>High education</b>	<b>Gap</b>
1. Lowest use of election news	2.85	3.71	0.86
2.	3.26	4.08	0.82
3.	3.74	4.40	0.66
4. Moderate use of election news	4.10	4.62	0.51
5.	4.33	4.77	0.44
6	4.53	4.95	0.42
7. Highest use of election news	4.31	5.01	0.69
<i>Total</i>	<i>3.60</i>	<i>4.41</i>	<i>0.81</i>

Note: Mean scores on the 7-point Civic Education index by educational category and use of election news

Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

In addition, the core relationship between knowledge gaps and both education and media use can be broken down by country, as illustrated in Figure 6. This replicates Figure 2 but the results are subdivided by EU member state. The visual patterns show that the knowledge gap between the well-educated and the less educated is evident in all countries, although it is smallest overall in Ireland, Austria and Sweden, while proving more substantial in Romania, Slovakia and Portugal. The closure of the knowledge gap between those with low and high educational attainment due to media use, however, is clearest in Romania and Bulgaria.

Thus overall the descriptive results suggest that formal schooling leaves a strong imprint on adult knowledge about politics and civic affairs. Nevertheless far from the knowledge gap

between the well and the less educated expanding, use of the news media serves to close, although not eradicate, the differential.

#### *Multilevel models*

So far we have only observed the descriptive patterns, but these could be attributed to other individual and national level differences which are commonly associated with habitual use of the news media, such as those of sex, class and age. It is well-established that patterns of newspaper readership are usually greater among men rather than women, among the older populations and among middle-class sectors, although these relationships vary both over time and among societies, in part due to the nature of the media markets. Some similar social profiles are evident in distinguishing internet users, with a reversal of the age use, showing the familiar digital divides. Lastly television news viewership is usually less clearly defined by socioeconomic or demographic group, although it does tend to be higher among the older generation, who usually watch more television in general (See for example Norris 2000). Patterns of media use and civic knowledge are expected to vary substantially in the context of a wide range of European media environments at societal-level, based on their permeability to cosmopolitan communications. Given these considerations, multilevel regression is the most suitable technique for analysis.

Model A in Table 5 presents the results of the multilevel regression models testing the effects of education, media use, and the interaction of both these factors controlling for the standard demographic and socioeconomic variables at individual levels. The results confirm, as observed earlier, that both campaign news use and educational qualifications are associated with greater civic knowledge, even after employing the standard social controls. Since the coefficients are standardized (Z-scores), they can be compared against each other. The effects of education are particularly marked, outweighing all the other demographic, socioeconomic and attitudinal factors. Nevertheless far from exacerbating the difference, the combined interaction of media use *and* education reduces the knowledge gap. This suggests that, as observed descriptively, the knowledge gap between the well-educated and less educated is greatest amongst those who pay little attention to the news media. Amongst the group paying more attention, the knowledge gap due to education closes.

Model B in Table 5 then adds the effects of cosmopolitan communications at societal level, and the interaction of education, media use and cosmopolitan communications. The argument is that in information-rich societies, where there is widespread access to political news at home and abroad, these conditions are most likely to promote civic knowledge. The results of Model B show that the main effects remain largely constant, although the impact of both education and media use strengthen slightly. The interaction of education and media use continues to close knowledge inequalities. Moreover, knowledge is strengthened by living in a cosmopolitan society. And this type of society interacts with media use and education to reduce knowledge differentials. The results do not change the main coefficients but overall the higher degree of cosmopolitan communications in any society, the smaller the civic knowledge gaps.

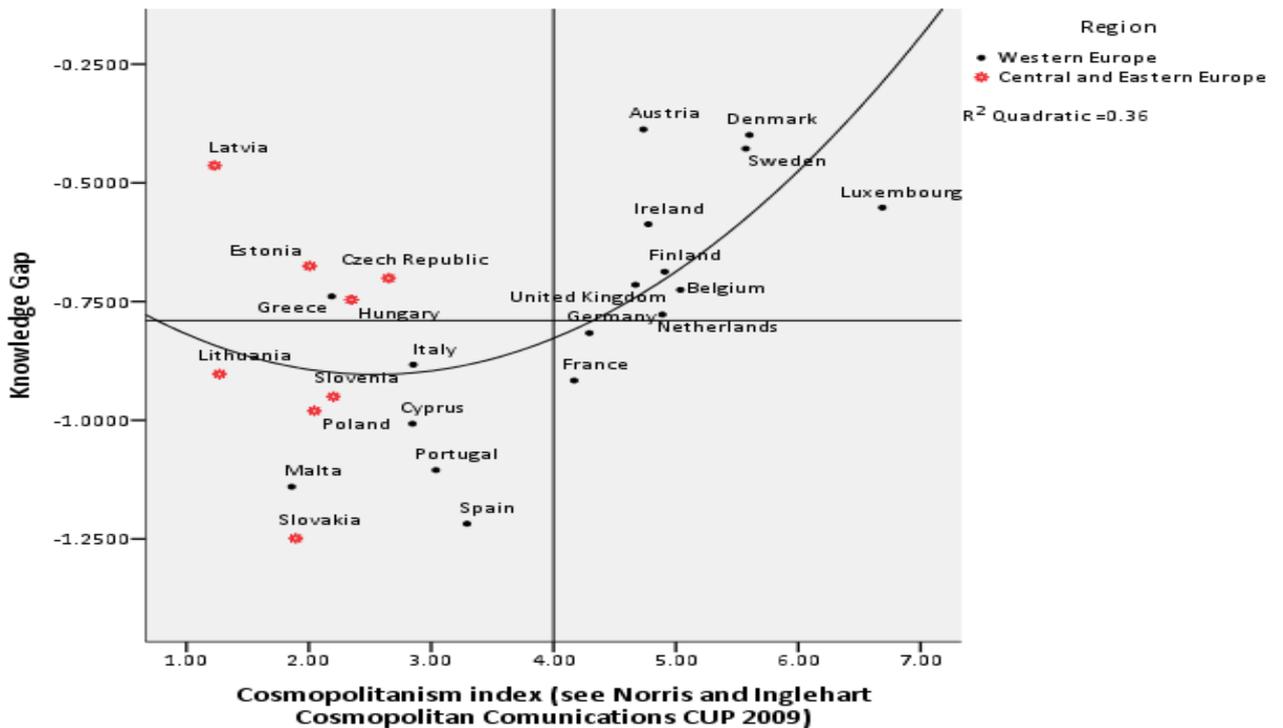
Table 5: Multilevel regression models of civic knowledge

	<i>Model A</i>	<i>Model B</i>
<b>INDIVIDUAL LEVEL</b>		
<b>Demographic characteristics</b>		
Age (years)	<b>.213***</b> (.013)	<b>.212***</b> (.013)
Gender (male=1)	<b>.332***</b> (.012)	<b>.332***</b> (.012)
<b>Socioeconomic resources</b>		
Occupational class 7-pt scale	<b>.264***</b> (.014)	<b>.260***</b> (.014)
Education 7-pt scale	<b>.410***</b> (.025)	<b>.468***</b> (.043)
<b>Attitudes</b>		
Political interest	<b>.329***</b> (.013)	<b>.327***</b> (.013)
<b>Media use</b>		
Frequency of election news use	<b>.154***</b> (.015)	<b>.203***</b> (.020)
<b>NATIONAL-LEVEL</b>		
Cosmopolitan Communications Index		<b>.229*</b> (.091)
<b>INTERACTION EFFECTS</b>		
Education*Election news use	<b>-.153***</b> (.029)	<b>-.124***</b> (.028)
Education*Media use*Cosmopolitanism Index		<b>-.169***</b> (.044)
Constant (intercept)	3.82	3.83
Schwartz BIC	69,805	69,976
N. respondents	18,448	18,432
<b>N. nations</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>

Note: All independent variables were standardized using mean centering (z-scores). Models present the results of the REML multilevel regression models including the beta coefficient, (the standard error below in parenthesis), and the significance. The civic knowledge scale is constructed from the items listed in Table 3. The campaign media use scale combined use of newspapers, TV news, and websites for election news. The Cosmopolitan Communications Index combines measure of media freedom, economic development, and globalization. P.\*=.05 \*\*=.01 \*\*\*=.001. See appendix A for details about the measurement, coding and construction of all variables. Significant coefficients are highlighted in bold.

Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

This pattern is illustrated in the scatterplot in Figure 7, where the knowledge gaps (i.e. the deficit of civic knowledge) between the well-educated and the less educated prove greatest in countries such as Slovakia, Malta and Poland, which are more parochial, while the gap closes in more cosmopolitan societies such as Denmark, Sweden and Luxembourg.



Source: EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release, 7/4/2010, ([www.piredeu.eu](http://www.piredeu.eu)).

Figure 7: Knowledge gaps and cosmopolitan communications

## Conclusions and Implications

Debate about what citizens learn about politics and public affairs has been a long-standing issue in the study of political science and voting behavior. Disputes continue about the extent of any campaign learning and the conditions which facilitate or hinder this process. Unfortunately many studies have been limited to only one country, with analysis at individual-level, so that any effects arising from the broader societal context of the communications environment cannot be examined. Yet the impact of the availability of information arising from multiple sources is a plausible condition for any inequalities between information rich and poor.

The findings presented here illustrate some of the factors driving knowledge gaps, including the role of education, exposure to the news media, and living in an information rich cosmopolitan society. All of these factors prove important but at the same time much further research is needed to build upon this foundation. In particular, the effect of this process is expected to be conditioned by several factors which have not yet been discussed. Hence the complexity and type of issues may well matter, in particular, knowledge gaps dividing the well-educated and less educated can be expected to be larger concerning more complex and abstract issues, such as international affairs rather than domestic issues of the economy or social policy. The knowledge test used here concerns fairly narrow issues of civic awareness, so we are unable to compare different dimensions of knowledge, and it thus remains unclear whether similar effects would be evident using a practical or relativist notion of what constitutes relevant knowledge. The type of public or private broadcasting system may also matter for

learning processes, along with the content and amount of coverage of campaign news and public affairs more generally. More fine-grained approaches which match habitual exposure to specific channels and programs with levels of knowledge would facilitate this further analysis. Therefore this study has added a cross-national comparison to the standard single-nation approach of understanding knowledge gaps but there are many other dimensions which require analysis for a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

## Technical appendix A

**Campaign news:** “How often did you do any of the following during the four weeks before the European election? How often did you:”

	Often	Sometimes	Never
<i>Q16. Watch a program about the election on television?</i>	1	2	3
<i>Q17. Read about the election in a newspaper?</i>	1	2	3
<i>Q18. Talk to friends or family about the election?</i>	1	2	3
<i>Q19. Attend a public meeting or rally about the election?</i>	1	2	3
<i>Q20. Look into a website concerned with the election?</i>	1	2	3

## Civic Knowledge index

Q92-Q98: Now some questions about the European Union and \_\_\_(your country). For these questions, I am going to read out some statements. For each one, could you please tell me whether you believe they are true or false? If you don't know, just say so and we will skip to the next one. (UK version of the questionnaire)

	True	False	REF	DK
Q92. Switzerland is a member of the EU	1	2*	7	8
Q93. The European Union has 25 member states	1	2*	7	8
Q94. Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.	1	2*	7	8
Q95. Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union	1*	2	7	8
Q96. The British Secretary of State for Children, schools and families is Ed Balls.	1*	2	7	8
Q97. Individuals must be 25 or older to stand as candidates in British general elections.	1	2*	7	8
Q98. There are 969 members of the British House of Commons	1	2*	7	8

Note (\*) statements were recoded as the correct answers.

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# Parties, Candidates and Voters in the 2009 Election to the European Parliament

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## Introduction

This chapter pursues three broad research questions. On the most general level, we are interested in the effectiveness of political parties in EU electoral politics. We focus on two aspects of this question that are empirically accessible. The first concerns the ability of political parties to effectively communicate their issue positions and policy concerns to the citizenry. Do citizens perceive the electoral messages of political parties in such a way that they can decode them in terms of generalised policy positions, or ideologies? Many theories of issue voting assume exactly this: that voter perceptions of party positions reflect to some degree the policies and issue stands of these parties. Already in 1957 Anthony Downs highlighted the information costs that are involved here, and referred to ideology as a cost saving device. In EU politics, those generalised issue or ideological positions are related to the left-right and the independence-integration dimension. We will analyse whether citizens are able to translate the electoral communications of parties in terms of those generalised issue positions. By doing so, we will also explore the substantive meaning, or policy content, of these two dimensions. What exactly is it that defines whether a party is perceived to lean more to the left or to the right, or whether it is perceived to be closer to the independence or to the integration pole of the ideological spectrum?

The second aspect of our general research question, which we will empirically assess, concerns the ability of political parties to govern the issue positions and policy preferences of their candidates. This is no less important than parties' ability to communicate their messages to the voters. Candidates are the spokespersons of political parties in the electoral campaign "on the ground". Parties therefore need to make sure that their local candidates are speaking in accord with the main party line. This chapter will establish how well they manage to do this.

It is the argument of this chapter that these kinds of questions can be answered by referring to the issue emphases and policy positions that parties advocate in their manifestos. We will show that citizens' perceptions of the location of political parties – on the left-right and the independence-integration dimension – are to a considerable degree associated with the content of these parties' election manifestos. Moreover, we will demonstrate that the positions of the candidates of political parties on these two dimensions can be understood as a reflection of the content of the election manifesto of their parties. Our general approach to address these questions will first identify the latent dimensions of parties' programmatic issue and policy statements; second, predict on this basis citizens' perceptions of political parties' left-right and independence-integration positions as secured in the cross-sectional surveys of the European Election Study 2009; and third, use these same latent dimensions in political parties' election manifestos to predict the self-locations of their candidates on the left-right and the independence-integration dimensions.

The structure of the chapter is straightforward. We first review the available scholarship in this area and formulate three broad hypotheses that guide our data analysis. We proceed by discussing our data base and the design and the methodology of our analysis. This will be followed by the presentation of our empirical findings. A conclusion reviews the main findings and specifies some directions for further research.

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## Previous Research and Hypotheses

The EU political space has been structured by two generalised policy dimensions. One is the well-known left–right dimension which expresses a host of salient issue conflicts in terms of one common denominator (e.g. Laponce 1981; van der Eijk and Schmitt 2010). The other dimension organises political preferences that range from national independence to European integration (e.g. Hix et al. 2007). These two dimensions used to be independent from one another so that a particular position on one dimension (say somewhere on the ‘left’) did not imply a particular position on the other (say near the ‘national independence’ pole; e.g. Schmitt and Thomassen 2009; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004).

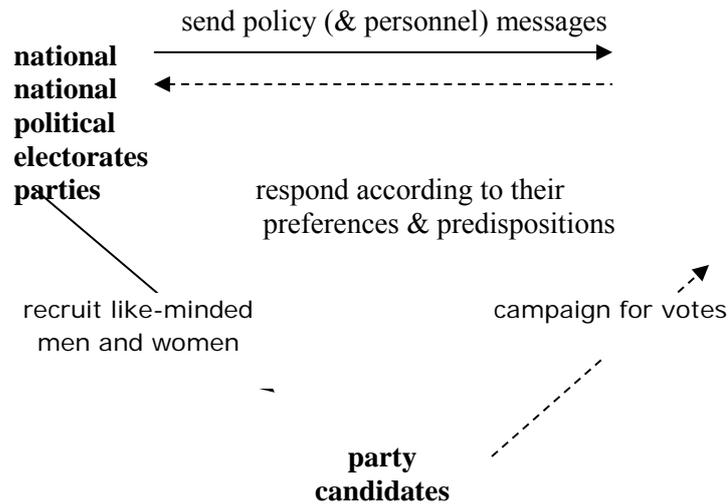
We argue that these two generalised policy dimensions serve as heuristics. Heuristics, under conditions of imperfect information, help citizens to take rational decisions (e.g. which party to vote for) that are still based on their own specific issue positions and policy preferences (Downs 1957; Sniderman, Brody & Tetlock 1991). This is why they are sometimes referred to as “super issues” which can serve as summary indicators of a broad range of diverse issue positions and policy concerns (Inglehart & Klingemann 1976).

We believe that citizen perceptions of the issue emphasis and policy positions of political parties have their basis in the actual behaviour of parties. Of course, parties behave in different arenas: EU politics, national politics, and even sub-national politics. However, these distinctions become somewhat blurred by the very fact that the European Union is operating as a multi-level system of governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001), and party behaviour in one arena has its repercussions in other arenas. Our focus here is on parties’ public political pronouncements and, more in particular, on the contents of their election manifestos. As we focus on the EU political arena, we will deal with the manifestos that parties issued on the occasion of the 2009 European Parliament election. This is not to say that these Euromanifestos are important as direct sources of information for the citizenry at large. We know well that citizens normally do not read election manifestos. Still, those manifestos are important indirectly as their main messages are spread via the media, the *commentariat* and the political behaviour of party elites which is itself – this is at least our assumption – to a large part informed by and based upon the political direction that has been commonly defined in the election manifesto of their party.

Graph 1 illustrates our research design; the solid arrows in it are investigated in this paper. We distinguish three groups of actors in the EU electoral process – parties, candidates and voters.<sup>4</sup> Parties send policy (and personnel) messages to the voters, and we are interested in knowing what these messages are about and whether they are well received by the voters. The reciprocal effect, namely that voters respond to these messages by abstaining from the election or by participating and choosing one of the competing parties, is a more traditional question of electoral research which will not, however, be addressed in the present chapter.

Not only do parties send policy messages to voters; they also recruit candidates who engage in the campaign in order to gain the support of as many voters as possible and ultimately, parliamentary representation. We expect these candidates to form groups of like-minded men and women, much as Flinn and Wirt observed many years ago when studying local party leaders in Ohio (Flinn and Wirt 1965). The reason for this assumed like-mindedness is in the interest of political parties: they cannot afford to recruit candidates with vastly differing issue orientations and policy preferences as this would threaten party unity and damage a party’s prospects for electoral success.

<sup>4</sup> We concentrate on the most obvious here, and even among those we ignore one very significant actor – the media. These limitations are imposed by the constraints of a conference paper.



Graph 1: Three Groups of Actors in the EU Electoral Process

Based upon this reasoning, we are interested here in the degree to which we can understand the issue positions and policy preferences of party candidates as a function of the content of their parties' election manifestos. In other words: can we think of these party candidates as the agents of their principal, that is: the party for which they are campaigning? And of course, there are again important further questions related to the attitudes and behaviours of party candidates which we cannot address in this paper, like their campaign effort and its relation to electoral success, to name but one.

Based upon the above, we test the following two hypotheses:

*H1:* Citizens' perceptions of political parties' left-right and independence-integration positions are informed by the content of the Euromanifestos of the parties.

*H2:* Candidates' issue orientations and policy positions are determined by the content of the Euromanifestos of their parties.

In addition, we expect that:

*H3:* These relationships are context-specific. More in particular, we expect contextual variations both in the strength of the overall determination of left-right and independence-integration perceptions of parties and in the relative importance of specific content dimensions in those predictions.

This latter argument is particularly important with regard to the seven post-communist countries in our sample. While research on the meaning of left and right in post-communist countries is limited, there are some indications that it has been different and, at least in some instances, reversed in comparison with connotations that are customary in the Western world. "During perestroika the terms 'left' and 'right' were inverted: the 'left' came to denote the free market democrats and liberals, and the 'right' the devotees of socialism and the communist system" (Sakwa 1996: 44; see also Colton 1998; Whitefield & Evans 1998; Markowski 1997; Park 1993).

Much the same argument about contextual variations holds for the dimension of national independence versus European integration. In Western Europe, EU orientations have

progressively become associated with a perceived need to protect, or demarcate, national economies and cultures from the effects of globalisation in general and of European integration in particular (Kriesi et al. 2008). In Eastern Europe, the situation seems to be different. After the (forced) integration of Eastern European countries into the USSR and the Warsaw Bloc came to an end, national independence is obviously a highly valued goal in post-communist politics which is not easily sacrificed on the altar of European integration (e.g. Jahn 2008). In addition, political expectations that Eastern Europeans associate with the European Union are of a particular kind, as the support for EU policy competences is often associated with the expectation that the EU might help to improve the quality of national political and economic processes (Schmitt 2007).

## **Data, Design and Methods**

The overwhelming majority of analyses based on manifesto content is interested in estimates of the left-right positions of political parties (see e.g. Budge et al. 2001; Laver 2001; Klingemann et al. 2007). This is not to say that these studies would agree on the best way to get there. Quite the contrary, the traditionalists – that is, the adherents of the expert coding school around Budge, Klingemann and others – are accused by a growing group of revisionists – around Laver, Benoit and others – that the MRG/CMP coding process lacks reliability and thus validity, and should therefore be replaced by computerized coding routines (e.g. Laver et al. 2003; Benoit et al. 2009). We do not entirely follow the line of reasoning of these critics, not least because computerized content analysis itself is not without problems. On the other hand, the CMP approach of estimating left-right positions of political parties has more problems – and arguably more important ones – than the questionable reliability of its content codes. Most importantly, it can hardly be justified that the left-right positions of political parties are determined with a time- and space-invariant instrument – the so-called RILE index – which specifies a priori how the content categories of the MRG/CMP coding scheme are indicative of left and right.

The situation is not principally different regarding the independence-integration dimension. This dimension is obviously best covered in the Euromanifesto project which, however, accurately copied the strategy of content analysis from the MRG/CMP and now MARPOR project. Here as well, additive indices have been used to measure parties' European integration policy which count the proportion of Euro-positive arguments in a Euromanifesto and subtract it from the proportion of Euro-negative arguments (e.g. Thomassen and Schmitt 2004; Wüst and Schmitt 2007; Schmitt and Thomassen 2009). While the independence-integration dimension is arguably less complex than the left-right dimension, this is still a somewhat "mechanical" approach with obvious limitations.

In the following, we will proceed differently and confront the left-right and independence-integration positions of political parties and their candidates with the issue emphasis and policy position of those parties as stated in their Euromanifestos. Parties' positions on these dimensions are estimated from voter surveys, by way of citizens' mean perception of those positions, while candidates' positions are self-reported in the data from the PIREDEU candidate survey. We do this for all parties that contested the European Parliament election of 2009 and for which (a) a party manifesto for the 2009 election could be identified and coded; (b) questions have been included in the post-electoral voter surveys asking for the position of the party on both dimensions; and (c) at least one candidate has been interviewed.

The *policy positions* of parties are assumed to be reflected in their election programs, and more particularly in the coded form of the latter. These election programs have been subjected to systematic content analyses in the tradition of the MRG/CMP project. Coding categories are used to characterise each sentence (or in the case of complex sentences, each argument, or

quasi-sentence). When aggregated into proportions these codes represent the emphasis that parties place on the issues associated with the respective codes.

We will attempt to explain citizens' perceptions of party positions and candidates self-locations from the issues and policies that the parties emphasize in their Euromanifestos. In principle we could do so by using the party and candidate positions as dependent variables, and all the MRG/CMP content categories as independent variables. This has a number of disadvantages, however. First, the large number of independent variables that this would entail risks problems of estimation and interpretation owing to unavoidable multicollinearity. This is aggravated by the already mentioned reliability problems of the MRG/CMP data, which partly originate in the substantive overlap between categories (Mikhaylov et al. 2008; Benoit et al. 2009; but see also Braun et al. 2009), and which would result in a considerable degree of capitalising on chance when using all categories as independent variables. Instead, we will rely on the latent structure underlying the manifest variables contained in the original coding categories, and use those latent dimensions in subsequent analysis as our predictors of perceived left-right and independence-integration positions of political parties and their candidates.<sup>5</sup>

The *latent structure* of coded party manifestos can be analysed in a number of ways, the choice of which depends on assumptions about the character of the manifest and the latent variables, and about their relationships. If we assume the latent variables to be continuous, some kind of latent trait model is required, whereas latent class analysis is the relevant approach if we assume the latent structure to be categorical (nominal) in character.<sup>6</sup> The manifest variables are in our analysis the substantive content categories of the manifesto coding scheme, which reflect for each party the proportion of arguments, relative to all coded arguments of a manifesto, that belong to them. These variables are of an interval-character (albeit bounded by lower and upper limits of 0 and 1). Latent and manifest variables can be assumed to be linear, monotonous, or non-monotonous. In the first two instances we can use factor-analytic or cumulative IRT-models to investigate the latent structure. In the third instance ideal-point or vector-preference models are the most appropriate choice.

We expect the latent variables to be dimensional in character, which would reflect that parties and manifestos can be distinguished in gradations of 'lower' versus 'higher' in substantive issue and policy terms. We also expect a monotonous (possibly close to linear) relationship to exist between the manifest and the latent variables, so that some form of factor analytic approach seems viable.

Factor analyses have been used in the past to investigate the structure of manifesto data (e.g. Budge et al. 1987; Strøm and Leipart 1989; Cole 2005; Petry and Pennings 2006; Schmitt & van der Eijk 2009; van der Eijk and Schmitt 2010; Wessels and Schmitt 2010). While not

<sup>5</sup> Note that we utilised a version of the 2009 Euromanifesto data which differs in two important respects from the original data as they are made available from the PIREDEU website. One of the differences is that we ignore the level of government codes that are assigned to each argument. The second difference is that we inspected the distribution of each individual coding category and suppressed all categories that are used in less than 90 percent of all documents. These "suppressed", or ignored, categories are typically those that have been newly included in 2009 as negative counterparts of originally positive categories (an example is the code "peace negative"). Negative counterparts were newly included in the 2009 coding routine in order to allow for a strictly hierarchical coding procedure (for details see Braun et al. 2009).

<sup>6</sup> In the case of latent traits, we arrive at a depiction of parties and their manifestos in terms of positions on one or several (latent) dimensions, each of which runs from 'low' to 'high'. In the case of latent classes, the analysis will lead to a characterisation of parties in terms of one or several nominal classifications, each of which distinguishes substantively different 'types' of manifestos (hence types of parties).

unequivocally supported (van der Brug 1997)<sup>7</sup>, this technique has been shown repeatedly to be able to extract latent dimensions which structure the content codes of election manifestos. In this paper, we use a principal components extraction of the four main factors. We decided to restrict the number of dimensions to four on substantive grounds (no overlap between the factors) and by ignoring the widely used Eigenvalue  $\geq 1$  criterion, as was recently suggested by Costello and Osborne (2005).

The *voter perceptions* of parties' left-right and independence-integration positions are based on voter survey respondents' answers to questions in which they were asked to locate the parties involved on an 11-point rating scale. We use the mean values of these responses, as available from the PIREDEU website, as a measure of party location.

In contrast to our strategy to identify voter perceptions of party positions, we rely on *self-placements* on identical left-right and independence-integration questions in the candidate survey to place these parties' candidates. We also analyse more specific issue orientations of candidates and assess how these are informed by their party's Euromanifesto. The respective issue questions are documented in Appendix 2.

The final aspect of the design of the analysis concerns the question *how to determine the effect* of latent dimensions on the left-right and independence-integration positions of political parties and their candidates. More in particular, we face the problem that issue saliencies and problem agendas differ widely between the EU member countries in the West and the East of the Union, and we must expect the latent dimensions of manifesto content to vary accordingly. There are basically two strategies for dealing with this. One is the extraction of four common factors for all – Eastern and Western – parties, and a regression analysis concentrating on East-West interactions of the main effects (i.e., the latent dimensions). The alternative strategy is to extract *separate* latent dimensions for Western and Eastern parties, and to run *separate* analyses for both classes of cases. We decided to choose the latter alternative for reasons of descriptive clarity even if the latent dimensions would not differ all that much.

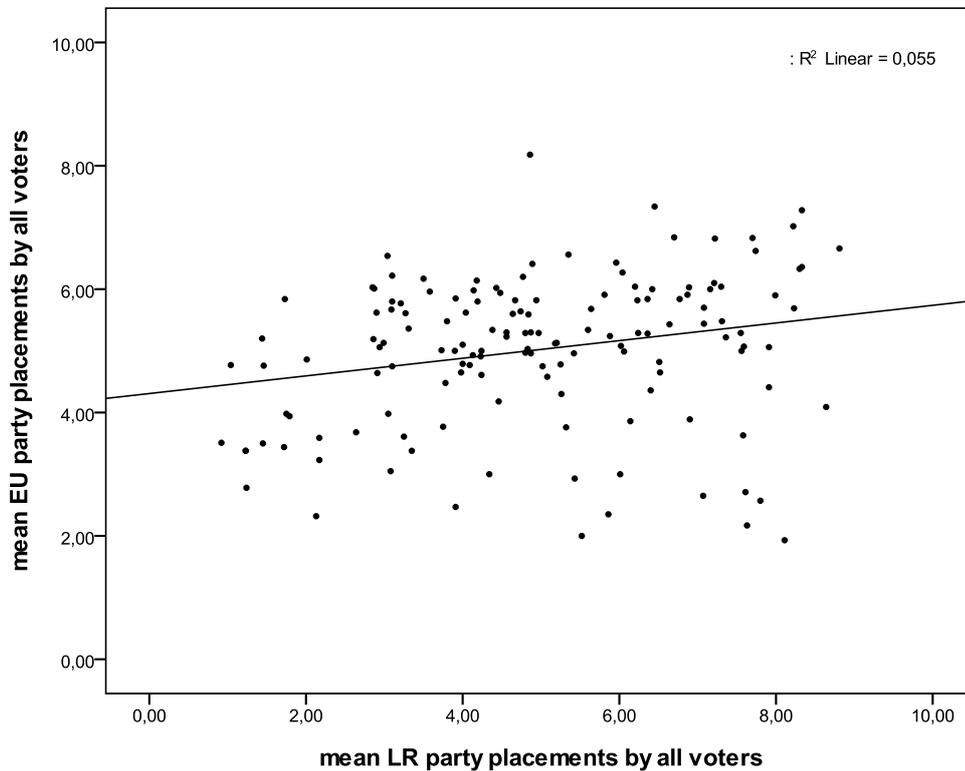
### **Excursus on the Dimensionality of the European Political Space**

Before we can do that, however, we need to take a brief look at the dimensionality of the European political space. The question we are pursuing here is whether positions on the left-right dimension and the independence-integration dimension are indeed independent from one another. Would this not be the case, i.e. were these two dimensions more or less strongly correlated, our findings regarding the determinants of position taking on both dimensions would also be correlated. This would not invalidate our strategy of analysis, but we should of course know about it and take it into account when interpreting our findings.

Existing research on this question points in the direction of independence. Hix *cum suis* (2007) identifies two orthogonal dimensions structuring the European political space. These two dimensions are characterised by left-right and independence-integration policies. Based on their analysis of roll-call votes in the European Parliament, they maintain that the left-right dimension is increasingly gaining weight and importance over the independence-integration dimension. Based on different empirical evidence – namely national voter perceptions of national party locations – this conclusion was supported by Schmitt and Thomassen (2009) for

<sup>7</sup> Van der Brug argues that MDS is a more appropriate manner to analyse the data. Although we do not disagree with his position in principle, we find that the larger number of variables contained in the coding scheme ameliorates the potential disadvantages of a factor analytic approach. Elsewhere we will elaborate in more detail under which circumstances different approaches lead to substantively different findings in the analysis design utilised here.

the 2004 election of the European Parliament.<sup>8</sup> When we replicate this analysis for the 2009 election, we find hardly any difference to the situation in 2004 (Graph 2). With an  $R^2$  of “only” five percent, the locations of political parties on these two dimensions are still largely independent from one another. This is somewhat counter-intuitive on the background of the recent Euro-sceptical upsurge of support for “populist new right” parties.



Source: *European Voter Study 2009 (PIREDEU)*.

*Graph 2. Left vs. Right and Integration vs. Demarcation:  
The Two Dimensions Are Still—Almost—Orthogonal*

### The Latent Structure of Party Manifestos

As discussed earlier, we use factor analysis to describe the content of parties’ manifestos in a limited number of dimensions of core importance. Obviously, a large amount of original detail is lost by doing so, and whether or not this matters can only be assessed when using the resulting dimensions as independent variables to explain how parties are perceived by citizens, and how these latent content dimensions constrain the policy orientations of party candidates.

In the analyses reported here we conducted separate latent structure analyses for the Euromanifestos of Western and Eastern European parties respectively.<sup>9</sup> Table 1 reports the

<sup>8</sup> See van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) for additional empirical evidence supporting the independence claim.

<sup>9</sup> We did so somewhat reluctantly, as from a generalist perspective we would prefer to use a single analysis for *all* manifestos. Such a pooled analysis would allow a unified regression analysis of all parties and all countries, in which interaction effects could be used to estimate differences in effects between countries or between kinds of parties. Actually, we did originally perform such an analysis, and it leads, by and large, to the same conclusions as we derive in this paper from separate analyses for the two groups of countries. Yet, we decided on separate analyses for two reasons. One relates to differences

results from these factor analyses. In both instances, we extract the same number of factors, which capture somewhat less of the overall variance in the original 101 variables in the Western Euromanifestos.

It is clear from the substantive meaning of the factors that the political agenda that parties address in their Euromanifestos is quite different in Western and Eastern Europe. The analysis of the 135 Western platforms reveals as a first and most important factor what we call “xenophobic Euro-Scepticism” – a syndrome of issue concerns that comes close to the cultural dimension of the new structural cleavage between winners and losers of globalisation that Kriesi *cum suis* identify in their 2008 book. The second factor combines two aspects – one pol-

*Table 1. Meaning Dimensions in the Electoral Communication of Political Parties Competing in the 2009 European Parliament Elections (results from a factor analysis of Euromanifesto content categories)*

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135 WESTERN EUROPEAN PARTIES (4 Factors, extracting 20,5 % of variance of the original categories)

Substantive interpretation of factors:

1. Xenophobic Euro-Scepticism
2. [against] Law and Order and Free Enterprise
3. Economic Europe
4. Protectionism and CAP

61 EASTERN EUROPEAN PARTIES (4 Factors, extracting 23,2 % of variance of the original categories)

Substantive interpretation of factors:

1. Post-communist Nostalgia
2. [Green] Alternative Libertarianism
3. Market Economy
4. Capitalist Independence

Note: see Appendix 1 for details.

itical and one economic – of conservative or right-wing orientations: the emphasis on law and order and the military on the one hand, and on *laissez-faire* economics on the other. The third factor represents a more traditional emphasis on European integration, combining the demand

in the structure of residuals from the analyses, which could, in principle be modelled with higher-order interactions, but at the cost of clarity of presentation. The second reason is more important, however. Interpreting the substantive meaning of the factors derived from a pooled analysis is less clear-cut than in the case of the separate analysis. Moreover, comparing the results from the separate analyses shows very clearly, and in a way that is not captured by the pooled analysis, the differences in the political agendas in both groups of countries.

for increasing EU competences with clear economic connotations – against labour and for the Single European Market. The final factor points in the direction of a protectionist European Union which holds up the principles of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Eastern European politics is confronted with different challenges which are to a large extent related to the political and economic transformations from communist states to liberal democracies and market economies. With this background, it does not really come as a surprise that our factor analysis of Eastern European Euromanifestos identifies as a first and most important factor the content of which we can describe as “*post-communist nostalgia*”. This dimension combines strong emphases against privatisation, for protectionism, and against decentralisation. There is an important negative reference to the military which might also be understood as reminiscent of the communist past. What follows is close to the first factor in the West: negative loadings for multiculturalism and immigration, negative references to Europe in general and positive loadings for law and order and the preservation of a national way of life. The second Eastern factor is about *alternative libertarianism* (which is lacking the “green” element that Marks et al. in 2006 described as the GAL end of the GAL-TAN dimension). Here, the emphasis is on gay and women’s rights, immigration and Turkey as an EU member, while Council competences, law and order, and the EU structural fund are looked at negatively. Third comes a *laissez-faire economy* factor with some Euro-sceptic implications (e.g. regarding the competences of the Commission). Fourth and finally, we extract a factor of “capitalist independence” which opposes the transfer of powers to the EU, protectionism, market regulation, and the welfare state, and favours the support of the elderly.

These are the four substantial factors that we extract each from the coding categories of West and East European parties’ EP election platforms (Euromanifestos) for the election of June 2009. We move on in order to establish whether those content dimensions are indeed helpful in our understanding of citizens’ perceptions of political parties’ placements on the left-right and the independence-integration dimension, and whether they constrain the positioning of their candidates on those dimensions (as well as on a variety of more detailed issue positions).

### **Manifesto Content and Public Perceptions of Party Positions**

As explained earlier, we are interested in the extent to which citizens are able to “translate” the content of the Euromanifestos of political parties into their perceptions of the left-right and independence-integration position of these parties, in other words: whether parties are indeed able to communicate *via* their manifestos policy concerns to the citizenry at large, as our first hypothesis proposes. In order to answer this question and to test this hypothesis, we use the factors reported in Table 1 as condensed summaries of those policy concerns. The perceived positions of political parties on the left-right and the independence-integration dimension are derived from the voter study of the 2009 European Election Study (PIREDEU), as discussed earlier. To assess the relationship between the two, we use OLS regressions. Table 2 reports the results of these regressions.

The first panel of that table reports the results for Western European parties. The findings indicate that manifesto content related to “xenophobic Euro-Scepticism” contributes strongly to the perceptions of parties on both the left-right and the independence-integration dimension: it pulls parties to the right-hand pole of the left-right dimension and, even somewhat more forcefully, to the independence pole of the independence-integration dimension. Manifesto content that contributes to the “law and order and free enterprise” factor pulls a party to the right, and somewhat less significantly, to the Euro-positive or integrationist side. Euromanifesto arguments constituting the “Europe of the Economy” factor pull political parties both to the right and to the integrationist side. Finally, manifesto content that contributes to the “Protectionism & CAP” factor does not significantly contribute to left-right perceptions of parties, while it pulls parties modestly to the independence side. All in all, manifesto content as

we identify it here accounts for 56 percent of the variance in citizens' left-right perceptions of parties, and for 57 percent of the variance in their perceptions of parties' independence-integration positions.

*Table 2. Euromanifesto Content Dimensions Predict Voter Perceptions of Party Locations in the Two-Dimensional Policy Space of the EU (figures are betas and R-squares)*

Western EU Member Countries (n=135 parties)		
	<i>Left -Right</i>	<i>Independence -Integration</i>
Xenophobic Euro-Scepticism	.45	-.55
Law & Order and Free Enterprise (negative)	-.44	-.28
Europe of the Economy (positive)	.48	.41
Protectionism and CAP (positive)	-.11 (ns)	-.24
R-square	.56	.57
Eastern EU Member Countries (n=61 parties)		
	<i>Left -Right</i>	<i>Independence -Integration</i>
Post-Communist Nostalgia	.22 (ns)	-.21 (ns)
[Green-] Alternative-Libertarian (GAL)	-.28	.40
Market Economy	.37	.09 (ns)
Capitalist Independence	.24	.15 (ns)
R-square	.28	.23

Sources: Voter Survey and Manifesto Study of the 2009 European Election Study (PIREDEU).

Things are very different when we move on to Eastern European parties in the second panel of Table 2. Predictive success is much less impressive here with 28 percent explained variance in left-right perceptions and 23 percent explained variance in independence-integration perceptions. Political parties in post-communist politics are less stable, therefore perhaps less effective regarding their electoral communication efforts, and evidently much less clearly defined as far as their policy profile is concerned (see van der Eijk & Schmitt 2010 and Schmitt & Scheuer 2011 for similar results). This difference supports our third hypothesis which postulates that context does indeed matter.

Left-right perceptions in the post-communist countries are most clearly shaped by manifesto content that contributes to the “market economy” factor (identifies rightist positions), “alternative libertarianism” (identifies leftist positions), and “capitalist independence” (identifies rightist positions). The most important manifesto content dimension for East European parties, “post-communist nostalgia”, contributes neither to left-right nor to independence-integration perceptions of party placements.

The only significant predictor for the positions of East European parties on the independence vs. integration dimension is manifesto content that contributes to the “alternative libertarianism” factor.<sup>10</sup>

### **Manifesto Content and the Policy Positions of Party Candidates**

Can the manifesto content of political parties indeed constrain the issue orientations and policy positions of their candidates, as our second hypothesis postulates? We test this by matching the four manifesto content factors of each of our parties to the survey responses of these parties’ candidates in order to use the former to predict the latter. Again, we use the OLS algorithm, with candidates’ issue orientations as dependent variables and their party’s Euromanifesto content dimensions as independent variables. Table 3 reports the findings of those regressions, again separately for Western and Eastern European parties’ candidates.

What we find is very striking. While predicting individual policy positions of party candidates rather than aggregate perceptions of party positions on our two generalised policy dimensions, we find almost identical results to those in Table 2. What differs is the predictive power of the four factors that summarise manifesto content. As one would have expected due to the change from the aggregate to the individual level of analysis, factors prove to be somewhat less powerful predictors of candidates’ policy positions in three out of four regressions (left-right for Western candidates, and independence-integration for both Western and Eastern candidates), but proportions of explained variance are still substantial. Interestingly enough, manifesto content as represented by our four factor solution predicts the left-right positions of Eastern local party candidates better ( $R^2=.36$ ) than it predicts public perceptions of these parties’ left-right placements ( $R^2=.28$ ). This seems to suggest that the characteristic lack of predictive success for Eastern European parties does not originate primarily in a weak definition of what left and right means to political elites in post-communist politics, but in the lack of public knowledge of parties’ policy positions. Candidates know the programs of their parties better than voters do which is probably why their content dimensions are more closely associated with the candidates’ left-right self-positioning.

<sup>10</sup> A word of caution is required, however, when comparing significance between the top and bottom panel of Table 2. The number of Eastern European party manifestos is quite small (61) compared to Western Europe (135). The strength of the effects of the post-communist nostalgia factor in Eastern Europe is of the same order of magnitude as those of protectionism and CAP in Western Europe. The fact that these effects are not significant in Eastern Europe while they are significant in Western Europe is entirely attributable to the much smaller number of cases.

*Table 3. Euromanifesto Content Dimensions Predict These Parties Candidates' Locations in the Two-Dimensional Policy Space of the EU (figures are betas and R-squares).*

Western EU Member Countries (n=824 candidates)		
	<i>Left -Right</i>	<i>Independence -Integration</i>
Xenophobic Euro-Scepticism	.46	-.51
[against] Law & Order and Free Enterprise	-.38	-.15
Europe of the Economy	.24	.30
Protectionism and CAP	-.21	.06 (ns)
R-square	.47	.46
Eastern EU Member Countries (n=179/178 candidates)		
	<i>Left -Right</i>	<i>Independence -Integration</i>
Post-Communist Nostalgia	.11 (ns)	-.30
[Green] Alternative Libertarianism (GAL)	-.15	.23
Market Economy	.43	.10 (ns)
Capitalist Independence	.36	-.04 (ns)
R-square	.36	.15

Sources: Candidates Survey and Manifesto Study of the 2009 European Election Study (PIREDEU).

We move on to our final analytical step and test whether the content of political parties' Euromanifestos does not only constrain generalised policy positions of candidates but also their more specific issue positions. Table 4 shows the result of these regressions. By and large, we still find substantial proportions of variance in West European candidate positions explained by their parties' manifesto content, with an average of 35 percent and a maximum of 45 percent (for the issue of state ownership of major public services). However, explained variance is very modest for East European candidates with an average of 13 percent and a maximum of 22 percent (again for state ownership of major public services).

*Table 4. Euromanifesto Content Dimensions of Political Parties Predict Issue Orientations of These Parties Candidates (figures are % explained variance)*

	Western Europe	Eastern Europe
immigrants must adapt	27,5	14,5
women decide on abortion	43,6	8,0
no politics intervention in economy	30,9	14,1
harsher sentences for crime	34,6	20,1
redistribution of wealth	21,8	3,9
authority taught in schools	22,5	7,8
EU referendums	28,6	10,7
women cut down for family	40,0	16,5
reduce immigration	23,4	14,8
private enterprises solve problems	32,5	8,7
prohibit same sex marriages	24,8	14,3
major public services in state ownership	44,6	21,6
mean proportion of explained variance	35,4	12,8

Sources: Candidates Survey and Manifesto Study of the 2009 European Election Study (PIREDEU). See Appendix 2 for exact question wordings.

## **Implications**

We can summarise the implications of our findings in a small number of propositions. First, how citizens perceive generalised policy positions of political parties is strongly related to the content of the party manifestos. That supports the assumption that parties' policy messages as stated in their Euromanifestos are well received. However, this relationship is much stronger in Western European countries than in Eastern European ones, but in all these countries public perceptions are significantly shaped by the policy and issue positions of parties. This is a prerequisite for the ability of elections to impact the course of government policy in the direction desired by voters, or, in other words, for the democratic meaningfulness of elections. As this relationship is observed between data from two entirely different sources (manifestos on the one hand, and voter and candidate surveys on the other), it cannot be dismissed as an endogeneity artefact. Of course, this relation does not arise from citizens reading manifestos and reflecting upon them. Rather, it attests to the capacity of the 'public sphere' with its myriad of explicit and informal communications to transmit the core of parties' positions about issues and policies.

A second implication of our analyses is that parties effectively constrain the policy and issue orientations of their candidates. Parties select their candidates at least to some degree on ideological and policy grounds so that they can indeed be regarded as groups of like-minded

people. While the overall level of determination is somewhat weaker here, this seems to be more than balanced by the fact that we analyse individual level data rather than public perceptions of party positions in the aggregate. This finding, it seems to us, is particularly important in view of the party decline literature which suggests that candidates are becoming more important than their political parties as electoral cue givers (Schmitt forthcoming; Zittel & Gschwend 2008).

A third implication of our findings is that positions on the left-right dimension and the independence-integration dimension, while being independent from one another, can be understood by the same set of manifesto content dimensions. Xenophobic euro-scepticism, for example, contributes to the left-right perception of parties (by pulling parties to the right) as it contributes to the independence-integration perception (by pulling parties towards independence). The orthogonality of these dimensions is not necessarily immutable, but rather a reflection of the fact that, for the time being, factors contributing to both dimensions are balancing. This may change over time, however. It would be a dramatic development if this state of affairs would seriously change, i.e., if the independence-integration dimension would become strongly associated with the left-right dimension. This would drastically reduce room for package dealing, compromising and coalition formation in EU politics, and would possibly put the continued functioning of the European Union into question.

**Appendix 1. Factor Structures of the Manifesto Content Categories (Western and Eastern European Parties Separately).**

*Table A1. Results of a factor analysis of the content categories of the 2009 Euromanifestos*

Western European parties only (n=135). Factor loadings  $\geq .45$  are documented.

	xenophobic Euroseptici sm	law & order and free enterprise[against]	economic Europe [for]	protecti onism and CAP [for]
Turkey EU member (-)	.68			
immigration (-)	.68			
Europe/EU in general (-)	.68			
transfer of powers (-)	.61			
nat way of life (+)	.59			
EU enlargement (-)	.56			
multi-culturalism (-)	.53			
EP competences (-)	.48			
labour groups (-)	.46			
exec & admin efficiency (-)	.46			
peace (+)	- .45			
law & order (+)		- .65		
military (-)		.56		
incentives (+)		- .50		
productivity (+)		- .48		
free enterprise (-)		.48		
Europe/EU in general (+)			.59	
competences EC (+)			.48	
labour groups (+)			- .47	
single market (+)			.46	
protectionism (-)				- .69
agric & farmers (-)				- .52
human rights (+)				- .45
variance of original indicators extracted (%)	6.76	4.85	4.62	4.29

Source: *Euromanifestos Data 2009 (PIREDEU)*. The original data set has been “cleaned” in such a way that content categories are analysed only if they are used in at least 10 percent of all documents that are included in the analysis. The content categories that fail meeting this criterion are mostly “artificial” negative counterparts that were included to allow a strictly hierarchical coding routine - an example would be the category “peace negative”. See Braun et al. (2009) for a documentation of the revised coding procedure for the 2009 study. Reported in the above table are the loadings of the orthogonally (=varimax) rotated component matrix. Oblique rotations were also run to ensure that the dimensions are actually orthogonal.

Table A2. Results of a factor analysis of the content categories of the 2009 Euromanifestos.

Eastern European parties only (n=61). Factor loadings  $\geq .45$  are documented.

	post-communist nostalgia	green-alternative- libertarian (GAL)	market economy	capitalist independ- ence
privatisation (-)	.90			
protectionism (+)	.89			
decentralisation (-)	.89			
military (-)	.87			
multiculturalism (-)	.86			
Europe/EU in general (-)	.77			
immigration (-)	.58			
law & order (+)	.53			
nat way of life (+)	.47			
homosexuals (+)		.84		
competences Council (-)		.66		
immigration (+)		.66		
law & order (-)		.65		
women (+)		.55		
corporatism (+)		.54		
Turkey EU member (+)		.53		
EU structural fund (-)		.50		
social justice (+)			-.73	
labour groups (+)			-.68	
free enterprise (-)			-.68	
competences EC (-)			-.52	
eco orthodoxy (-)			-.49	
transfer of powers (-)				.65
protectionism (-)				.58
market regulation (-)				.56
elderly (+)				.53
FSR (-)				.52
welfare state (-)				.51
Variance of original indicators extracted (%)	6.66	5.66	5.49	5.39

Source: *Euromanifestos Data 2009 (PIREDEU)*. The original data set has been “cleaned” in such a way that content categories are analysed only if they are used in at least 10 percent of all documents that are included in the analysis. The content categories that fail meeting this criterion are mostly “artificial” negative counterparts that were included to allow a strictly hierarchical coding routine - an example would be the category “peace negative”. See Braun et al. (2009) for a documentation of the revised coding procedure for the 2009 study. Reported in the above table are the loadings of the orthogonally (=varimax) rotated component matrix. Oblique rotations were also run to ensure that the dimensions are actually orthogonal.

## **Appendix 2. Issue List Included in the Candidates Survey.**

(Answering categories: strongly agree, agree, neither/nor, disagree, strongly disagree)

1. Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of[country]
2. Private enterprise is the best way to solve [country's] economic problems
3. Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law
4. Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership
5. Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion
6. Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy
7. People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days
8. Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people
9. Schools must teach children to obey authority
10. EU treaty changes should be decided by referendum
11. A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family
12. Immigration to [country] should be decreased significantly

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# The Nationalism-Postnationalism Axis and the Gradual Transformation of Ideological Space in Europe: Evidence from Party Discourse in Euromanifestos from Six European Countries.<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This chapter investigates the thesis about the growing politicization of issues pertaining to European integration and/or globalization and the ensuing polarization dynamic within European political systems between supporters and foes of the latter processes. Our main research hypothesis is that even though European integration and globalization constitute multifaceted and diffuse processes, preferences of political actors on issues related to the challenges and opportunities of globalization will tend to manifest clear tendencies of consistent directionality across distinct economic, cultural and political domains. We test this hypothesis by examining Euromanifestos data from six European countries (Germany, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece and Hungary) for a time frame of up to thirty years (for Germany and the United Kingdom), beginning with the first European elections in 1979. We apply multidimensional unfolding, which allows us to depict in a joint low-dimensional space the relative positions of both political parties and ideological categories. Our findings largely support the hypothesis that components of a nationalism-postnationalism divide tend to transform the content of the traditional cultural-political dimension.

## Conceptual Framework

The political science literature on the dimensionality of ideological space and political competition in contemporary democracies stretches back (at least) to the middle of the previous century with the median voter theorem (Black 1958) and its familiar assumption about the unidimensionality (e.g. left-right dimension) of ideological space. However, cursory as well as more systematic observations of party coalition strategies or parties' policy preferences (e.g. Budge et al. 1987) suggested that assumptions about the unidimensionality of ideological space did not conform well with the realities observed in most political systems. As a result, the assumption of multidimensionality of ideological space has become a staple for most subsequent analyses. Such approaches have been also undoubtedly buoyed by Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) influential work on cleavages which, as is well known, identified four main societal conflicts that dominated political life in Western Europe during the last few centuries and, in turn, gave rise to political parties with particularistic policy agendas. There was an acknowledgment, however, that all of these conflicts (capital-labor, land-industry, church-state, center-periphery) correspond to just two overarching dimensions, an *economic* one and a *cultural* one.

As the literature on cleavages investigates the links between demand-side and supply-side politics, it is no surprise that the identification of structural transformations in Western societies

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has prompted new analyses of the major divisions in contemporary political systems. Technological changes, the reorganization of economic production and the increased significance of the ever-expanding middle class have supposedly dulled the classic capital-labor conflict. In addition, economic growth, increased affluence levels and the rapid expansion of education have created a secularizing dynamic and a purported generational value shift (Inglehart 1977). Hypotheses that new cleavages are gradually replacing older ones, or that simply traditional cleavages are in decline (e.g. Franklin et al. 1992), abound in the relevant literature. The new divisions might reflect divergence of interests within the middle class (e.g. Kriesi 1998) or the emergence of new value conflicts and divergence of interests within the middle class. There has been an array of labels intended to capture these new cleavages: left libertarianism vs. right authoritarianism (Kitschelt 1994), new left vs. new right (Flanagan 1987; Flanagan and Lee 2003), materialist vs. postmaterialist (Inglehart 1977, 1990). These new conflicts are not supposed to have added any fundamentally new dimension of conflict into the political space but merely transformed the meaning of the two already existing ones (Kriesi et al. 2008b: 13). In other words, all cleavages, whether the old Rokkanean ones or the newer ones, essentially boil down to two dimensions of conflict: an economic conflict over distributional preferences, reflecting a divergence of objective material interests; and a cultural-political conflict informed by fundamental value divides (e.g. religiosity vs. secularism).

The latest structural transformations that are supposed to rearrange the configuration of national cleavage structures are associated with the process of globalization. The most important, perhaps, empirical investigation of this thesis has been carried out by Hanspeter Kriesi and other political scientists from the Universities of Zurich and Munich (Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008a; Bornschieer 2010). The assumption underlying this thesis is that as the impact of globalization in its various aspects (economic, cultural and political) can assume a diversity of forms for the different members of a national community, new disparities and new forms of conflict are created. Citizens will tend to perceive these differences in terms of 'winners' and 'losers' of globalization and that the aspirations or grievances of these competing groups will be articulated by political parties (Kriesi et al. 2008b: 3).

Following this line of reasoning, this chapter investigates the thesis about the growing politicization of issues pertaining to European integration and/or globalization and the ensuing polarization dynamic within European political systems between supporters and foes of the latter processes. Our main research hypothesis is that even though European integration and globalization constitute multifaceted and diffuse processes, preferences of political actors on issues related to the challenges and opportunities of globalization will tend to manifest clear tendencies of consistent directionality across distinct economic, cultural and political domains. In other words, we posit that there is a unidimensional underlying ideological axis which we call the nationalism-postnationalism axis that can be used to aggregate consonant predispositions in issues as seemingly disparate as the strengthening of EU institutions and perceived challenges to national sovereignty, attitudes towards immigrants and the perceived erosion of national identity, as well as market integration and trade liberalization. In addition, we expect that this dimension is aligned with the traditional cultural-political issue-dimension within the ideological space and that, as the effects of globalization are becoming increasingly felt by national populations around the world, they are gradually redefining the content of the cultural-political dimension. We hold the same expectation for the economic dimension of the nationalism-postnationalism axis and, for this reason, we have conceptualized and operationalized distinct categories for economic integration and economic liberalism, even though the two are often conceptually and operationally collapsed (as in the work by Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008a). We argue that the issue of economic integration is fundamentally a boundary issue, not unlike the cultural and political components of the globalization divide, and that orientations in favor or against stem from shared ideological predispositions on the broader question of community demarcation vs. integration.

We test this hypothesis by examining the programmatic commitments of political parties from six European countries (Germany, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece and Hungary) as expressed in their European election manifestos. We employ data from the Euromanifestos and PIREDEU project and the time frame of our study covers up to thirty years (for Germany and the United Kingdom), beginning with the first European elections in 1979. For our data analysis we apply a multidimensional unfolding technique, which allows us to depict in a joint low-dimensional space the relative positions of both political parties and ideological categories.

In the following section we present in detail our research strategy and design, which provides an overview of the Euromanifestos data and focuses the discussion on the operationalization of our main ideological categories and the selected method of analysis. Then we proceed with a discussion of the national context and country-specific hypotheses for each of the six countries of our sample, before moving on the presentation of our findings.

## **Research Strategy and Design**

Our study focuses on four main objectives. The first and overarching one is to examine the structure of the ideological space of different party systems and, subsequently, the position of our globalization-related issues within this space. Another main objective is to measure the salience of the debate around these issues for each political party and to identify possible trends of growing politicization surrounding globalization. Moreover, we attempt to locate the exact position of all relevant political parties within the national ideological space by examining that proximity between political parties and particular issues. Finally, we attempt to offer more nuanced readings of contextual factors for each national political system in an attempt to anticipate findings that contradict our main expectations about the unidimensionality and/or alignment of the nationalism-postnationalism axis.

### ***Selection of Data***

Our analysis focuses exclusively on the supply-side of party competition. Undoubtedly, the demand-side of electoral competition, consisting of the policy preferences of the electorate, is a crucial component of the complete equation that captures major changes in the ideological space. A cross-national analysis with a longitudinal perspective that covers both sides of the equation would obviously be a tall order given the space limitations of this chapter and, for this reason, we have decided to focus our analysis exclusively on parties' policy positions.

The first and most important step of our study design was to make an appropriate choice of data in order to estimate the policy positions of political actors, in accordance with our research questions and with the availability of data for the selected time frame. Over the past twenty-five years or so, different methodological attempts have been made to locate the positions of political actors in ideological/political spaces. Peter Mair has offered an overview of the main approaches on measuring political space, trying also to comment on their limitations and possibilities (2001: 10). Mair's review covers: a) the use of a priori judgements, the oldest approach to locating parties in a given policy space; b) secondary reading; c) perception of party positions expressed in mass surveys; d) elite studies; and, finally, the two most dominant approaches, e) the analysis of party programmes and manifestos and f) expert surveys (Mair 2001). At this point, we could also include a recent approach on the measuring of the supply-side of ideological space, the content analysis of articles in major daily newspapers based on human coding (Dolezal 2008a: 67-71), devised to examine a similar research question, namely the impact of the globalization-inspired 'new cultural' divide on the ideological/political space in Europe.

The empirical investigation of our study rests on an analysis of party manifestos from European Parliament elections (hereafter: EP elections) taken from six different countries.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that this constitutes an innovative aspect as our analysis is based on party programmes for second-order (EP) national elections, unlike previous studies that employ strictly "first-order" elections. We have used the database of the Euromanifesto project (EMP)<sup>5</sup> at the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) for the time period of 1979-2004; for the Euromanifestos of 2009, the available database of the Manifesto Study 2009 of the PIREDEU project was analyzed.<sup>6</sup>

The starting theoretical and analytical point for the content analysis of manifestos is that the (human) coding is based on the assumptions of the saliency theory of party competition (Robertson 1976, Budge et al. 1987; Klingemann et al. 1994). The theory posits that the relative policy position of parties can be determined by the emphasis they place on each issue, not necessarily on the articulation of an explicit position, which the theory assumes is more or less the same for all parties. Several critiques have been levelled against the MRG/CMP project over the years. Perhaps the most important are that manifestos have a soft-focus effect - meaning that parties avoid clear statements - and that voters tend to not read manifestos (Dolezal 2008a: 67). Nevertheless, there are many benefits from using manifesto data. Braun et al. (2010:5) emphasize inter alia that the party manifestos cover a wide range of themes, problems and political positions. Changes of issue emphases and policy positions of parties can be studied in a diachronic and cross-national perspective.

#### ***Selection of Countries, Parties and Time-frame of the Study***

One of our goals was to select a sample of countries that reflect the diversity of socio-economic and cultural contexts in Europe. For this reason we have decided to select EU-member states from Western, Southern and Eastern Europe: Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. This particular group of countries allows for variation in national levels of pro- and anti-European attitudes at the level of public opinion, level of economic development, as well as status of net beneficiary vs. net contributor within the European Union.

<sup>4</sup> In some countries parties do not distribute a proper Euromanifesto. In this case, the coders of each country were asked to find and code another 'official' election-related party document (e.g. press release), a manifesto of the party leader, an excerpt of the national manifesto - in case of concurrent national elections only, or (under justification) another document summarizing the statements of the party's policy positions. For more details, see: *The Euromanifestos Handbook 2009* (Euromanifestos Coding Scheme/ EMCS III), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> The roots of the *Euromanifesto Project* (EMP) go back to the flagship study of party manifestos for national elections, the cross-national "Manifesto Research Group" (MRG)/ Comparative Manifestos Project". The EMP started in 2000, when Prof. Hermann Schmitt (MZES) started to apply the MRG/CMP approach of analyzing party manifesto content to European Parliament elections. For more details go online at: <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/manifestos/>. See also Wüst and Volkens (2003) and Braun et al. (2006).

<sup>6</sup> This is one of the components of the Collaborative Project on 'Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union' /PIREDEU. For more details go online at: <http://www.piredeu.eu/> and Braun et al. (2010)

Table 1: EU and globalization-related scores (2007)

Countries	Net benefit per capita	Pro-European Attitudes	Globalization index
Germany	-1045	65%	84.16
Greece	2238	55%	75.83
Hungary	2384	37%	87.00
Italy	-778	39%	82.26
Netherlands	-1467	77%	91.90
UK	-937	39%	80.18

Sources:

(1) For the net benefit per capita, the data are taken from the “*Open Europe briefing note: European Communities (Finance) Bill, 2007*”, available at: <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/budget07.pdf>

(2) Pro-European Attitudes: the data present the positive evaluations of the EU- membership (“membership a good thing”). Eurobarometer 67, spring 2007

(3) KOF Index of Globalization -2007 (ETH Zurich). The globalization index measures the economic, social and political dimensions of globalization. For more details see <http://www.globalization-index.org/>

At this point, it should also be mentioned that for the final selection of these countries we had to take into account the issue of data availability. As one of our aims is to study the transformation of ideological space over time, the first EP election of 1979 is the starting point for our analysis, until the 2009 EP election. Nevertheless, it was necessary to adjust this time frame for some cases. Only in Germany and the UK is there a consistent time-series of selected and coded Euromanifestos for (at least) all major parties from 1979 to 2009, which allowed the study of the basic structure of ideological space of the party system at a given time and which constitutes our threshold criterion for the inclusion of an election in our study. Based on this criterion, the final time-frame for each of the other countries is as follows: the Netherlands and Italy (1994-2009); Greece (1999-2009) and Hungary (2004-2009).]

Another central question of our study design concerns the selection of the parties. On one hand, the Euromanifestos project research team defined as relevant parties in the EU those that have been represented in the European Parliament at least once (Braun et al. 2010: 4-5). On the other hand, the criteria that have been used in the MRG/CMP projects are based on the argument that, in general, the relevance of parties is given both by their representation in the national parliament and on the blackmail potential of a party in a given party system (Sartori 1976). For the purposes of our analysis, we decided to follow a middle-of-the-road approach. Our basic and most important criterion that we employ to designate a party as 'relevant' is representation in the European Parliament as a result of the specific election under consideration. Only for some elections, we have decided to follow a mixed criterion, which is to include in our analysis some parties that were not able to obtain a seat at EP, but their role in the immediately preceding national 'first-order' elections was decisive. For example, we have included the List Pim Fortuyn in Netherlands for the 2004 EP election, even though they failed to gain a seat in that electoral contest, but their performance in the 2002 parliamentary elections had been responsible for the description of that contest as the 'earthquake' election of the Dutch political system.

### ***Operationalization of Ideological Categories***

As is well known, the scores in the Euromanifestos dataset represent percentages of political arguments (quasi-sentences) related to particular issues within each manifesto. Because of differences in the length of the documents, the number of quasi-sentences in each category is standardized in order to make coded manifestos comparable. We have selected only a subgroup

of categories for our analysis<sup>7</sup>, which are then regrouped into nine distinct categories that denote more abstract ideological orientations: economic liberalism, welfare state economy, fiscal conservatism, cultural liberalism, sociopolitical authoritarianism, environmentalism, economic integration, Euroscepticism, and nativism. The particular issues and the broader ideological categories were selected in an attempt to satisfy two main criteria: a) ideological clarity, in terms of selecting categories of issues that correspond more clearly to the two main dimensions of political competition as identified in the beginning of the chapter (socio-economic and cultural-political), plus the nationalism-postnationalism divide that constitutes the focus of our study; b) conceptual congruence, in terms of striking the best possible balance between more abstract ideological categories (e.g. economic liberalism) and concrete policy issues (e.g. privatization). We achieved the latter by selecting issues with detailed definitions (in the Euromanifestos codebook) that were unambiguously associated with one of our nine categories. Some issues were excluded due to the fact that components of their definitions had no direct relevance with our strictly defined ideological category, even in cases where the title of the issue-category at first appeared relevant. We decided, at this stage, against pursuing a more inductive approach by applying data reduction techniques on the entire group of available issue-categories in the Euromanifesto dataset for the construction of our ideological categories. Such an approach would have probably allowed us to employ additional issues from the dataset in our analysis and to quantitatively identify underlying factors, surely at the cost of greater conceptual stretching and lower content validity for our composite categories (cf. Ray 2007: 12; Keman 2007: 78).

As mentioned above, following our first criterion we have created categories that correspond to the two classic dimensions related to economic and cultural-political issues, plus the 'globalization' dimension: a) economic liberalism, welfare state economy, and fiscal conservatism correspond to the economic dimension; b) cultural liberalism, sociopolitical authoritarianism, and environmentalism correspond to the (broadly defined) cultural-political dimension, which includes the 'new politics' dimension; and c) economic integration, Euroscepticism, nativism capture the economic, political and cultural dimension of our nationalism-postnationalism axis.

The nine ideological categories are defined in such a way that they indicate clear directionality. More specifically, we have distinguished between positive and negative references for all the selected issues. It should be noted that a major benefit of using the dataset of the Euromanifestos project, in comparison to the MRG/CMP, is that the direction of parties' statements is documented in most of its categories. Table 2 lists and describes in detail the nine ideological categories, including the particular issues that form the components of each category. The nine ideological categories are computed by summing up all the positive references and subtracting the negative ones. We have applied this formula to all the relevant parties of each country and for each EP election.

<sup>7</sup> The original Euromanifesto Coding Scheme (EMCS) includes a range of policy domains: external relations. freedom and democracy. political system. economy. welfare and quality of life. fabric of society and social groups. They are further divided into several content categories and sub-categories.

Table 2: Ideological categories and issues

Ideological categories/ Abbreviations	Issues used for calculation of ideological category scores (positive minus negative quasi-sentences)	
	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Environmentalism <i>environment</i>	Environmental protection; anti-growth politics; steady state economy; ecologism; ‘Green Politics’	Any opposite mentions of positive
Eurocepticism <i>euscept</i>	Hostile references to Europe or the EU; no “deepening of Europe” necessary; a more integrated Europe and the transfer of power to EU is rejected; hostile reference to the European Parliament and its MEPs, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice and other EU institutions; required unanimity in the European Council	Favourable references to Europe or the EU; “deepening of Europe” necessary; a more integrated Europe and the transfer of power to EU is supported; desirability of expanding the competences of EU institutions; positive reference to the European Parliament and its MEPs, the European Commission, the European Court of Justice and other EU institutions; required majority voting in the European Council (democratisation and more efficiency in decision making within EU)
Cultural Liberalism <i>cultlib</i>	Opposition to traditional moral values; support for divorce, abortion etc.; favorable mentions, support or assistance for homosexuals and women; any other mentions opposite of negative	Favorable references to traditional moral values; prohibition, censorship and suppression of immorality stability of family; religion; negative references to homosexuals and women.
Economic Integration <i>econintgr</i>	Favorable references to or support for the Single European Market and the European Monetary Union; favorable reference to labor migration and support for the concept of free trade; support or accept national contributions to finance the EU or its policies; maintain or extend EU funds for structurally underdeveloped areas	Negative references to or rejection of the Single European Market and the European Monetary Union; negative reference to labor migration and positive mentions to protect internal markets; national contributions to finance the EU or its policies are criticized or rejected; cutback or suspension of funds for structurally underdeveloped areas
Economic Liberalism <i>econlib</i>	Favourable references to free enterprise; need for wage and tax policies to induce enterprise, privatisation*; negative reference to: corporatism; direct government control of economy; social ownership*; publicly-owned industry*; socialist property*; nationalization, market regulation, Marxist analysis	Any opposite mentions of positive; positive references to: corporatism; direct government control of economy; social ownership*; publicly-owned industry*; socialist property*; nationalization, market regulation, Marxist analysis

\*: only for 2004 and 2009 Euromanifestos

Table 3: Ideological categories and issues (continued)

Ideological categories/ Abbreviations	Issues used for calculation of ideological category scores (positive minus negative quasi-sentences)	
	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
Fiscal conservatism  <i>fiscalcon</i>	Need for traditional economic orthodoxy; e.g. reduction of budget deficits, support for strong currency; positive references to the European Central Bank	Keynesian demand management: demand-oriented economic policy; devoted to the reduction of depression and/or to increase private demand etc; any negative references to economic orthodoxy and the European Central Bank
Nativism  <i>nativism</i>	Enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration; any appeals to patriotism and/or nationalism; need to reduce immigration; negative references to or no support for immigrants and foreigners	Cultural diversity; communalism; preservation of autonomy of religious, linguistic heritages, against patriotism and/or nationalism; need to retain or increase immigration; positive references to and support for immigrants and foreigners
Sociopolitical Authoritarianism  <i>authoritarian</i>	Enforcement of all laws; actions against crime; support and resources for police; fight against terrorism*; need to maintain or increase military expenditure; negative references to the importance of human and civil rights	Against the enforcement of all laws and the fight against terrorism; favorable reference to decreasing military expenditures; disarmament ; favorable reference to importance of human and civil rights; freedom of speech; supportive refugee policies
Welfare State Economy  <i>welfare</i>	Need to introduce, maintain or expand any social service or social security scheme; the concept of equality; fair treatment of all people and special protection for underprivileged; references to labor groups; specific measures for supporting the expansion of the welfare state (pensions, health care and nursing service, social housing, child care)	Limiting expenditure on social services or social security; negative mentions to equality and fair treatment, or proposal to cutback or suspend specific measures for supporting the expansion of the welfare state

\*: only for 2004 and 2009 Euromanifestos

### **Method of Analysis**

We selected multidimensional unfolding (MDU) as our main method of analysis due to the appropriateness of the method when trying to represent the relative positioning of ideological categories and parties in a low-dimensional space. The capacity to locate political parties and specific ideological categories within a common space allows us to compare parties and party systems both cross-nationally and over time. Perhaps most importantly, the visualization of the structure of the ideological space and the place of parties within it produces easily interpretable findings. MDU can be seen as a special case of multidimensional scaling (MDS), where the within-sets proximities are missing (Borg and Groenen 2005: 293) - in our case proximities between parties and between ideological categories respectively. Instead, our data represent only between-sets proximities, that is proximities between parties and ideological categories.

MDU is best applied when the data constitute preference scores (such as rank-orders of preference) of different individuals (or, in our case, political parties) for a set of choice objects (in our case, ideological categories) (Borg and Groenen 2005: 293). Therefore, based on the

scores that we obtained on each of our ideological categories for each party, we have ranked ideological-preferences for each of our parties in each separate election, in order to obtain the initial unweighted proximities between parties and ideological categories. In order to account not only for the similarities between pairs of objects (parties and ideological categories), but also for the salience of these relationships, we have used the measure of this salience (i.e. the frequency of the entire set of quasi-sentences used per ideological category by each political party) as a weight that adjusts the original proximity between party and ideological category. As a result, the distances on the joint space corresponding to salient relationships between parties and ideological categories will be more accurate than the less salient ones (cf. Dolezal 2008a: 72). In addition, we employ the same frequencies to examine in separate tables salience trends for the three ideological categories that are associated with our nationalism-postnationalism axis. Even though all our unfolding solutions are completed for a two-dimensional space following our main hypotheses, we do not simply assume that the optimal dimensionality of the ideological space will be the same for every single election. We run each unfolding model for different numbers of dimensions and use badness-of-fit values (Kruskal's Stress-1) to gauge the optimal dimensionality of the unfolding model.

### **Six European Party Systems in the Era of Globalization: National Contexts and Country-Specific Hypotheses**

In this section we offer a discussion of the historical background, national context and country-specific hypotheses for each of the six countries of our sample, before moving on the presentation of our findings.

#### ***Germany***

In the relevant literature, the German party system is typically described as being historically dominated by two cleavages: class and religion (Urwin 1974; Dolezal 2008b). Perhaps the only qualification that should be added is that the religious cleavage of Protestants vs. Catholics early on in the post-war period transformed into a religious-secular (or church-state in Rokkanean terms) cultural cleavage, with the CDU expanding its appeal to both religious Catholics and Protestants. Even though pre-1990 studies inevitably focus solely on West Germany, the structure of the German system did not really change after unification. The main legacy of unification has been the emergence of a national party of the post-communist left (PDS/Die Linke). However, the long lasting three-party format (SPD, CDU/CSU, FDP) had already come to an end with the advent of the Greens onto the political scene in the 1980s.

The fact that the two traditional cleavages have tended to not overlap but to be orthogonal, means that polarization has never been an enduring feature of German political life. So long as the party system retained its three-party configuration, it constituted a classic case of a centripetal two-and-a-half party system, with the smaller FDP serving as coalition partner for both the larger SPD and CDU/CSU. This triangular arrangement was possible due to the convergence between FDP and CDU/CSU on 'bourgeois values' and between SPD and FDP on 'socio-liberal values' (Pappi 1984). In terms of the ideological and political space, there was also the question of whether the emergence of the Green party was the harbinger of a fundamental shift in German politics, whereby a new value division would gradually replace older ones (Dalton 1984) or the new conflict would overlap and be absorbed by the traditional left-right cleavage (Pappi 1984).

Moving on to the nationalism-postnationalism divide (in this case labeled 'demarcation-integration' divide), most authors agree that the issues political integration at the European level did not prove to be a particularly polarizing issue for German political parties (Dolezal 2008b: 213). On the other hand, reactions against EU enlargement and the European Monetary Union are issues that have gained traction with the German electorate in recent years (Busch and Knelangen 2004). However, none of the small parties that endorse 'hard' Eurosceptic positions

(such as the Republikaner) have been well rewarded at the polls. Of the relevant parties, PDS/Die Linke is perhaps the most consistently critical party of the 'neoliberal' character of European economic integration, without, however, rejecting the project of European unification. In contrast, immigration has emerged as a hot-button issue, with CDU and (especially) CSU becoming more attuned with the growing anti-immigration and culturally protectionist sentiments across the country.

We expect the German system to be structured by two conflicts: the socio-economic one and a second one dominated by traditional cultural-political issues (sociopolitical authoritarianism and cultural liberalism). However, we expect the 'new politics' environment category to be increasingly signifying the cultural-political conflict after the growth of the Green party in the late 1980s. In relation to the nationalism-postnationalism axis, we hypothesize that cultural threats induced by globalization (reflected in our nativism category) will mainly contribute to the content of the vertical dimension, whereas Euroscepticism is not anticipated to be a polarizing category due to the overwhelmingly pro-European tendencies of the German party system as a whole.

### ***United Kingdom***

Open any textbook on British politics and in the opening paragraphs you will find, almost without exception, a similar introductory note. For the most part of the past century or so, British politics has been dominated by the class cleavage. With the extension of suffrage and the replacement of the Liberal party by the Labour party after the end of World War I as the main alternative to Conservative rule, the political system became, even more acutely, an institutional arena for the representation of socio-economic class interests. However, class is not the only durable feature of the British political system. The United Kingdom has always been a multi-ethnic state and, in more recent decades, with the advent of the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties has acquired a more fully developed form of the center-periphery cleavage. Hoping to facilitate the comparative aspect of our analysis, we have decided to focus only on the national relevant parties. Due to the fact that the unit of analysis in this study is 'second-order' elections, we have already included a greater number of parties (addition of Greens, UKIP and BNP) than what we would normally have, had we focused on national elections instead. The gradual tendency towards fragmentation and multipartyism for the once classical two-party system certainly appears more accelerated when focusing solely on EP elections.

Undoubtedly, the past three decades has been an era of great transformation for the British party system. There has been a proliferation of parties (including the resurgence of the Liberals) and a steady decline for the combined percentages of the Conservative and Labour parties. After a near two-decade hegemonic period for the Conservative party that was marked by intense ideological polarization, the (New) Labour party moderated its image fashioning third-way politics under Tony Blair, and managed to kick off its own successful run that terminated in 2009 for EP elections and in 2010 for national elections. Going back to the 1980s, the British ideological space appeared to be quite straightforward, largely thanks to Margaret Thatcher's electorally triumphant neoliberal project. The Conservatives under Thatcher had launched a true ideological revolution, combining an extreme - for the time - economically liberal agenda with socially conservative rhetoric (cf. Kelly 2003: 255-257; Hall 1988). This innovation had not only polarized, but also simplified the structure of ideological space in Britain, with the broader left-right dimension signifying the entire British political universe.

Even back then, however, one could detect the first few signs of a new set of issues that was gradually coming to the center of political discourse. As the process of European integration intensified in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, Europeanization-related issues started to compete with classic distributional issues in political interest terms. European integration awakened deeply-held prejudices toward continental powers and politics and, in addition, influx rates of immigration increased once again after a three-decade hiatus in the 1990s (Kriesi and Frey 2008b: 190), raising anxieties concerning the integrity of the British -social fabric and culture.

We expect that the British political system will be structured primarily by the socio-economic dimension, especially in the pre-1990s period. Following the findings of Kriesi and Frey (2008b) we expect that a second dimension will be dominated by classic cultural-political categories (i.e. cultural liberalism vs. authoritarianism), only to be gradually replaced in the 1990s by globalization-related issues, and especially the Euroscepticism category. The fact that we are working with Euromanifestos data (combined with the inclusion in our analysis of the Green party, UKIP and even BNP in 2009), lead us to expect a comparatively higher salience of the Euroscepticism and economic integration categories, as they are the two categories which include the EU-related issues.

### ***Netherlands***

In most studies of politics in the Netherlands some well-known distinct characteristics of Dutch society are highlighted. The most important of these is that “the Netherlands is a country of minorities” (Andeweg and Irwin 2005:19, Kriesi and Frey 2008a: 154). Up to the mid-1960s, the society was traditionally divided into four different subcultures that formed closed social groupings called “*zuilen*” (pillars). There were four main pillars, each corresponding to a major subculture in the country: the Catholics, the Calvinists, the Socialists, and the Liberals (with the latter belonging to the so-called ‘general’ pillar). This unique feature of organizational pillarization, the so-called ‘*verzuijing*’ (e.g. Andeweg and Irwin 2005:25) has been defined as “the degree of interlocking between cleavage-specific organizations active in the corporate channel and party organizations mobilizing for electoral action” (Rokkan 1990: 142). In purely political terms, a corollary feature is that Dutch space of political competition has been historically dominated by class and religious divides. The mutual isolation and divisions were held together by elite cooperation and a ‘spirit of accommodation’ among political elites, the so-called model of ‘consociational democracy’ (Lijphart 1968).

During the mid-1960s, Dutch society underwent a process of rapid depillarization. Even though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyze this process in detail, one could cite the impact of individualization and secularization that has been transforming politics in most advanced industrial democracies during the past few decades. The direct result of these twin processes is that voters’ party preferences and structural positions are becoming increasingly independent from one another (Franklin et al. 1992). As the dominant cleavages were losing much of their acuity, depillarization inevitably contributed to the re-formulation of the Dutch political arena. The party system gradually acquired features of a more conventional type of multipartyism. There was a proliferation of secular parties - Democrats 66 (D66), Socialist Party (SP), Green Left (GL) - that complemented the traditional Labour Party (PvdA) and the liberal People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). In contrast, there was a contraction of religious political forces. In 1980, the Catholic People’s Party (KVP), and the two main Calvinist parties, Christian Historicals and the Anti-Revolutionary Party merged into the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), in an attempt to address the challenge of an increasingly secularized polity. The national election of 2002 was another major turning point for Dutch politics. The unprecedented meteoric rise of populist politician Pim Fortuyn, and the electoral success of his party (LPF), coupled with his assassination only nine days before the polls, caused an earthquake in the Dutch party system (Kriesi and Frey 2008: 163). The sudden decline of LPF was balanced out by the rise of the Geert Wilders’ Party for Freedom (PVV) in 2005, signalling that the right-wing populist agenda of Euroscepticism and anti-immigrant positions is here to stay.

The question that has repeatedly been examined in the relevant literature is to what extent the religious and class cleavages that structured Dutch political space have been replaced by new cleavages in its contemporary phase. Numerous studies reveal a wealth of different and often contradicting findings, in some cases perhaps reflecting not just different -temporal focus but also the effects of different methodological strategies. For example, some studies identify only two-dimensions of conflict: the socio-economic left-right, and a libertarian-cosmopolitan-multicultural/authoritarian-nationalist-monocultural dimension that has succeeded the classic

religious-secular conflict (Kriesi and Frey 2008a: 172; Pellikaan et al. 2003). Pennings and Keman (2003) also put forth a two-dimensional model, where the left–right dimension is complemented by a second dimension, the progressive–conservative axis. Finally, a recent study focuses on the issues of immigration and post-materialism and even though they argue that both issues should not be underestimated, they conclude that they have not yet developed into cleavages and therefore it is not clear what type of cleavage, if any, has come to replace the old ones (Andeweg and Irwin 2005: 39-41).

Our first expectation is that there will be an equal amount of dispersion of parties along both the economic and cultural-political axes. Furthermore, we expect that the cultural-political axis will be determined by 'older' categories in the elections of the 1990s, whereas *nativism* should emerge as the most important structuring category in the 2004 and the 2009 EP elections, which followed the 2002 election, a significant election that is usually credited with the transformation of ideological space in the Netherlands.

### **Italy**

The fact that our analysis begins in 1994 means that we are dealing with a radically new party system. Even though the Italian party system is the newest of all six (even newer than in later democratizers Greece and Hungary), the new configuration quickly developed a bipolar structure which persists to this day.

As is well known, the party system that collapsed was dominated by the Christian Democratic Party (DC). The Christian Democrats represented moderate conservatism and became the hegemonic force in post-war Italian politics due to two interrelated factors. The first was Italy's electoral system of pure proportional representation that allowed even the smallest parties to be represented in parliament, resulting in the fragmentation of Italy's political forces into too many parties. Most governments were therefore made up of weak and unstable inter-party coalitions. The second related factor was that eligibility for inclusion in these government coalitions did not extend to the two extremes of the political competition space, the 'antisystem' communists (the second largest political force in Italy) and the 'neofascists' of the Italian Social Movement (MSI) to the right of DC. As a self-declared 'anti-communist and anti-fascist' force, as well as the largest party in any electoral contest until 1994, the DC was able to occupy the political center and dominate democratic politics by always serving as the major partner in successive coalition governments (Pappas 2001: 235).

After forty years in government, the DC became the main cog in a machinery of systemic corruption. Following the *Tangentopoli* affair<sup>8</sup>, the DC fragmented into three main parties: the Italian People's Party (PPI), which was under the leadership of Romano Prodi; the conservative Christian Democratic Center/United Christian Democrats (CCD/CDU); and the Christian Social Party (CS). The latter disappeared completely as it was quickly absorbed by the other parties. Subsequently, the PPI joined center-left coalitions, while the CCD/CDU sought collaborations with parties on the right. Finally, a smaller group within DC chose to move even farther to the right by forming a coalition with the MSI. The MSI seized the political opportunity of the dissolution of the DC and its own strong performance in the local elections of 1993 and rebaptized itself as the National Alliance (AN) under the leadership of the party's secretary, Gianfranco Fini (Tsatsanis 2006: 125). The dissolution of DC, the formation of Forza Italia (FI) by Silvio Berlusconi, and the 'refoundation' of the Communist Party as the (more legitimate) Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) formed the main components for the creation of two coalition camps, led by FI and PDS respectively, that put an end to the one-party dominant system of the post-war era and inaugurated an era of multi-party bipolar politics.

<sup>8</sup> *Tangentopoli* (Italian for bribeville) was the name generally used to refer to the corruption based political system that ruled Italy until the *mani pulite* (clean hands) investigation delivered it a deadly blow in 1992. leading to the demise of the DC and of the Socialist Party (PSI).

Even though the post-war Italian party system was marked by a dual cleavage structure where class and religion predominated (Bellucci and Heath 2007: 5), partisan dealignment and organizational fluidity do not allow us to posit more specific hypotheses about the structure and content of contemporary ideological space in Italian politics. We retain our more general hypotheses about the two-dimensional structure of the ideological space (even though the continuing fragmentation of the party system is likely to elevate badness-of-fit values) and increasing significance of the ideological categories belonging to the nationalism-postnationalism axis. Nevertheless, because of the existence of pre-electoral coalitions based on a bipolar left-right configuration, one should expect some degree of polarization along the economic axis. In addition, the presence of AN (before its dissolution into PdL) and, especially, of LN are expected to increase polarization along the cultural-political axis.

### *Greece*

Even though the party system of Greece is relatively new, created after the return to democracy in 1974, memories of the political divisions of the pre-authoritarian period continued to condition the understanding of Greek politics and to shape political identities long after regime transition. It has been argued that Greek political space has been characterized by a three-pronged (left-center-right) unidimensional structure and a single cleavage, with its exact point of division along the single axis shifting according to the historical juncture (Moschonas 1994). The post-German occupation civil war created a schism between communists vs. anticommunists that replaced the dominant interwar division of republicans vs. royalists (or Venizelists vs. Anti-Venizelists), thus shifting the line of separation towards the left end of the left-right axis. The protracted monopolization and abuse of political power by conservative political forces eventually shifted the line of separation back toward the right end of the political spectrum through the emergence of a right-antiright cleavage in the 1960s, with the antiright bloc encompassing both forces of the left and of the political center (Moschonas 1994: 167-170).

Despite the apparent straightforward intelligibility of the unidimensional left-right space, it should be noted that in the case of Greece the content of this dimension never quite corresponded to its classic definition and understanding. Even though political divisions in Greece forged resilient identities, they never amounted to full cleavages - in the strict sense - due to the exceptionally weak structural anchoring of both political identities and voting choices. The absence of a sizeable industrial working class due to late industrialization, coupled with the post-war regime of quasi-authoritarianism meant that the left-right axis was primarily understood in terms of a conflict over socio-political values and not as outright class conflict (Tsatsanis 2009: 39). Most of the parties that appeared after the end of the colonels' regime in 1974 were new but with clearly discernible ties to pre-authoritarian political life. After the first two elections of the post-authoritarian period in the 1970s, which were characterized by a relatively high degree of fluidity, the Greek party system was dominated once again by three blocs (left-center left-center right) (Lyrintzis 2005: 244) but started to develop even stronger majoritarian tendencies. The shift of the ideological equilibrium to the left of the spectrum, that lasted at least until the 1990s, can be attributed to a relative radicalization of the Greek electorate generated by the seven-year experience of right-wing authoritarianism. In the 1980s there was a swift move towards two-partyism, with the party of the center-left (PASOK) and the party of the center-right (New Democracy) regularly capturing over 80 percent of the vote in parliamentary elections. The third bloc, consisting of a united or (more commonly) fragmented communist left continued to struggle, with an electoral strength that hovered around 10 percent of the vote and seats in parliament, a tendency that persists to this day.

Our national specific hypotheses in the case of Greece relate first to the dimensionality of the Greek party system. Recasting the received wisdom of previous studies and following the findings of Tsatsanis (2009), we hypothesize that Greek political space is two-dimensional, not unidimensional, albeit with the cultural-political dimension being of much greater importance than the economic one. In other words, polarization along the cultural axis is expected to be

significantly more acute than polarization along the economic axis. The comparatively extreme leftward tendencies in economic issues for all political parties as well as voters have also been documented in previous studies (Tsatsanis 2006, 2009), and lead us to hypothesize close proximity between all parties and the issue of welfare, with the latter emerging more like a valence issue. Once again, our hypothesis about globalization-related issues does not deviate from our more general hypothesis; following the findings of Teperoglou et al. (2010), we expect them to be aligned with and to be gradually replacing more traditional cultural-political issues, especially after the emergence onto the Greek political scene of right-wing populist LAOS during the last decade.

### ***Hungary***

As in most post-communist democracies, the political landscape in Hungary was very fluid in the first years of the 1990s. The parties that dominated the first parliamentary elections of the post-communist era in 1990 were the conservative Democratic Forum (MDF) and the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), two parties that were quickly relegated to the status of junior coalition partners following subsequent elections. Since the late 1990s, there has been an apparent move towards the consolidation of a more classic two-and-a-half party system, with the center-left Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the center-right Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz) assuming their place as the two major parties in Hungarian politics.

However, tendencies of bipolarism were perhaps evident since the beginning of the post-transition years. Since the first elections, there has been a, more or less, steady alternation in government between right-wing and socialist-liberal coalitions (Fowler 2002: 800). This alignment of political forces in terms of left and right does not mean that political competition in Hungary reflects primarily a divide over economic policy or a deep-seated class conflict. A quick look at the composition of the opposed camps can be quite instructive about the nature of the dominant cleavage that structures political space in the country. The fact that the liberal SZDSZ is the default coalition partner of the socialists, not of Fidesz or any other right-wing party, is probably testament to the reality that the decisive element that has been conditioning coalition formation thus far is proximity of parties on cultural issues, not convergence of their economic agendas.

The economic liberalization policies carried through by the communist regime before its downfall blunted the issue of economic reform. The MSZP, as the communist successor party, could claim a credible commitment to economic reform, making it less attractive for other political parties to focus their appeal primarily on economic issues (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 234). In the search of more politically lucrative divisions, politicians in new parties chose to adopt culturally conservative, populist and often xenophobic positions, contrasting their agendas to the cosmopolitan and libertarian positions of other parties. Fidesz led this populist turn in the early to mid-1990s, which has been credited to a large extent for its later electoral success (Enyedi 2006: 179). The split in the MDF and the creation of the right-wing populist Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) in 1993, as well as the emergence and subsequent success of the ultra-nationalist Movement *for a Better Hungary* (JOBBIK) in 2003, conform to the broader hypothesis that polarization in Hungarian politics is gradually becoming more acute when it comes to identity and value issues.

Our hypotheses concerning the case of Hungary do not deviate from our more general hypotheses. We expect that globalization-related issues will tend to be aligned with the standard cultural dimension. Furthermore, following the findings of Kitschelt and his coauthors (1999), we expect that differentiation along the economic dimension will be comparatively low, whereas greater polarization will tend to be observed along the cultural-political dimension. This tendency is expected to be even stronger in the 2009 election due to the introduction of JOBBIK in European elections.

## Findings

In this section we discuss our findings for each country by observing the main configurations of political parties and ideological categories per election as they appear on our unfolding models. For presentation purposes, we have rotated the two-dimensional plots in a way that the economic axis is arranged horizontally, always running from left to right (welfare state economy to economic liberalism). Following the presentational strategy employed by Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008a), we have drawn an additional vertical axis on each plot based on our visual representation of the second dimension structuring the ideological space. The categories forming the cultural-political axis can change from one election to the next, and so does the degree of integration between the two axes. At this point, we should once again point out that the distances between parties and ideological categories represent relative distances. In other words, we can only say that a party adopts culturally liberal positions only if it is located very close to that category, not necessarily because it is located in the upper end of the configuration (cf. Dolezal 2008a: 73). Again, we begin our discussion with Germany and the United Kingdom, the only two countries for which our analysis begins with the first EP election of 1979.

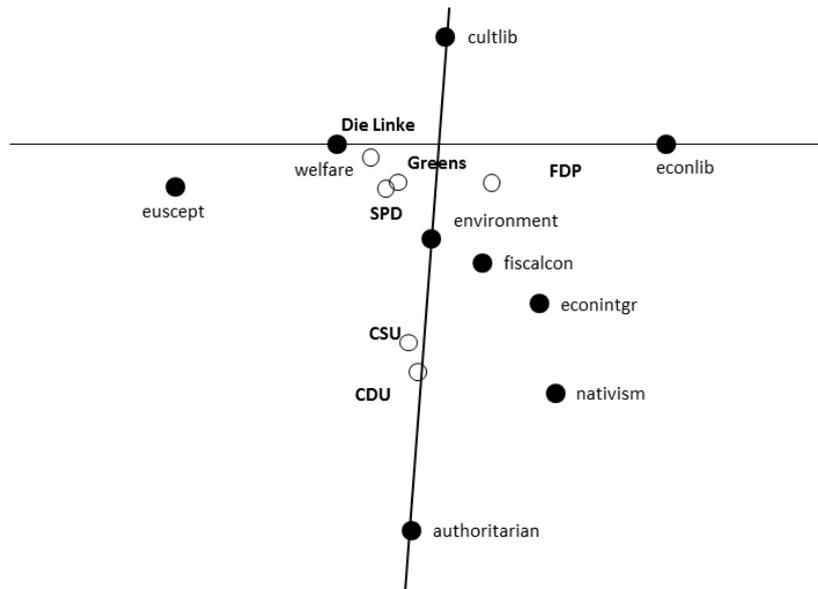
### *Germany (1979-2009)*

The dimensionality of the ideological space and political competition in Germany generally conforms to our nationally-specific hypotheses. The first important finding is that we observe a two-dimensional space of conflict. Raw stress values significantly drop from a single to a two-dimensional solution to below 0.2 in every single case, with the exception of 1984, where the stress value is low even in the one-dimensional solution. The economic dimension, which corresponds to the traditional class cleavage, clearly constitutes a structuring dimension in Germany. In fact, in the election of 1984, the economic dimension appears to be the only important one. Our exceptional case is in accordance with previous analyses (e.g. Klingemann 1999), which posit that the left-right divide is the only prominent one in the German political competition. However, it should be noted that in the EP elections of 2009, 1989, and 1979, there are clear leftward tendencies for most parties, with welfare state economy strongly appearing as a valence category.

The second dimension of political conflict is composed by the traditional cultural-political ideological categories of our study (sociopolitical authoritarianism vs. cultural liberalism) in several cases (see Figures 1a, 1c, 1e), a finding that is in line with our expectations concerning the importance of the religious-secular cleavage in Germany. However, the traditional cultural-political categories are far from being the only ones that structure the second dimension of German ideological space. Environmental protection and anti-growth politics emerged in the 1990s (following also the growth of the Green party) as an important structuring category of the second dimension, and by 2009 one could say that the environment has been transformed into a valence issue.

The EP election of 1989 (which is also the only year in which the Republikaner party is included in our analysis) also led to the emergence of nativism as a polarizing category. Taking into account the fact that this ideological category corresponds largely to the issue of immigration, we can deduce that nativism became in Germany an important dimension with the rise of refugees and asylum-seekers in the early 1990s. In relation to the nationalism-postnationalism axis, nativism is the only category that often contributes to the content of the cultural-political dimension (with the partial exception of economic integration in 1979 and 1999). As discussed in the country discussion above, none of the -German relevant parties of our study have endorsed 'hard' Eurosceptic positions (with the exception of the REP in 1989). The political aspects of integration have never been a polarizing issue for German parties; Euroscepticism in German party politics is mainly expressed by individual politicians and is not translated into party policies (Busch and Knelangen 2004: 89).

A final set of findings relates to the movements of parties across time. The SPD maintains economically leftist positions and often culturally libertarian positions but since the entry of PDS/Die Linke into the political system, it tends to move closer to the center of the economic axis. In regard to the position of the FDP, our findings are totally in line with the position that by the mid-1990s the party give up its libertarian position and presented itself as closer to economic liberalism (Dolezal 2008b: 231). Both parties of the Union have rather stable positions close to authoritarianism and nativism (although CSU is rather closer than CDU). However, the most impressive transformation is probably the shift toward economic liberalism and the abandonment of pro-welfare positions for CDU after the 1989 EP election; until then, the positions of the party on the economic axis had been close or even to the left of SPD.



Kruskal's Stress 1: 0.13

Figure 1a: Germany 2009

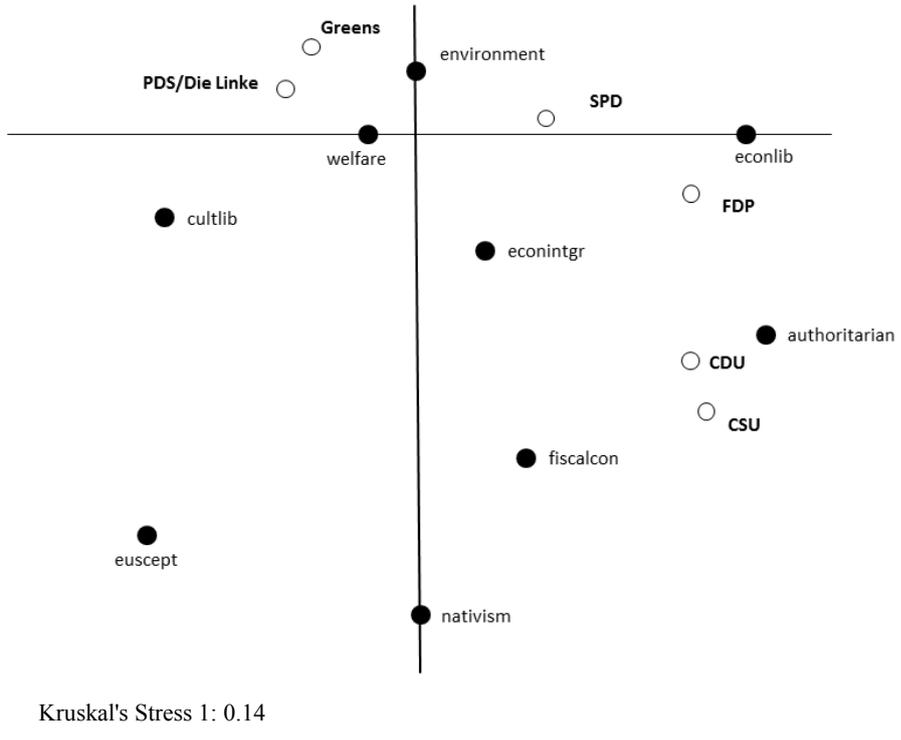


Figure 1b: Germany 2004

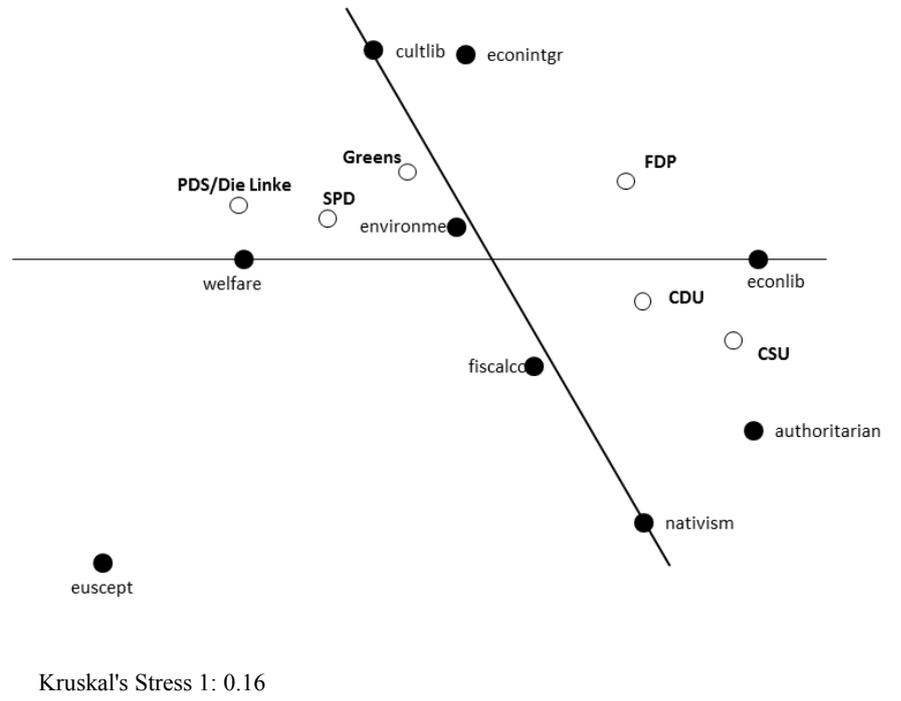
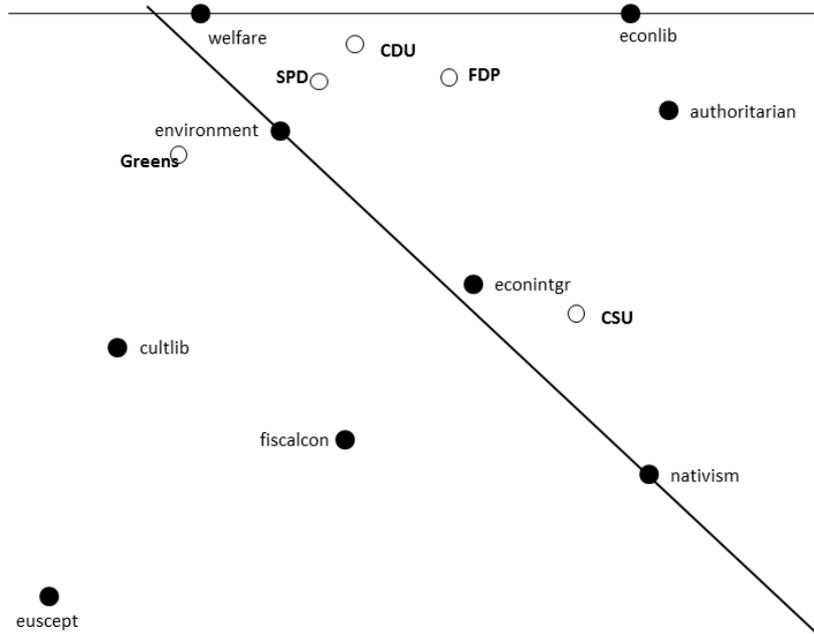
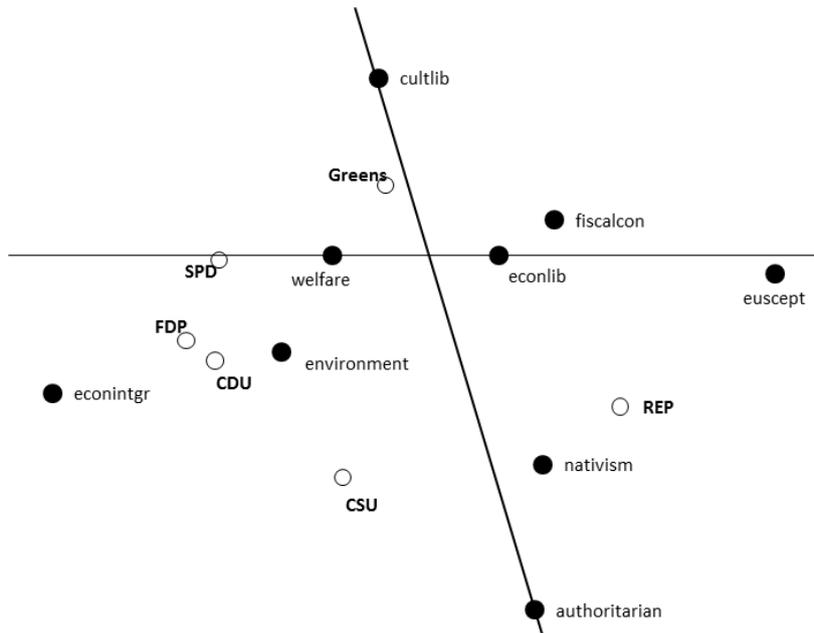


Figure 1c: Germany 1999



Kruskal's Stress 1: 0.15

Figure 1d: Germany 1994



Kruskal's Stress 1: 0.17

Figure 1e: Germany 1989

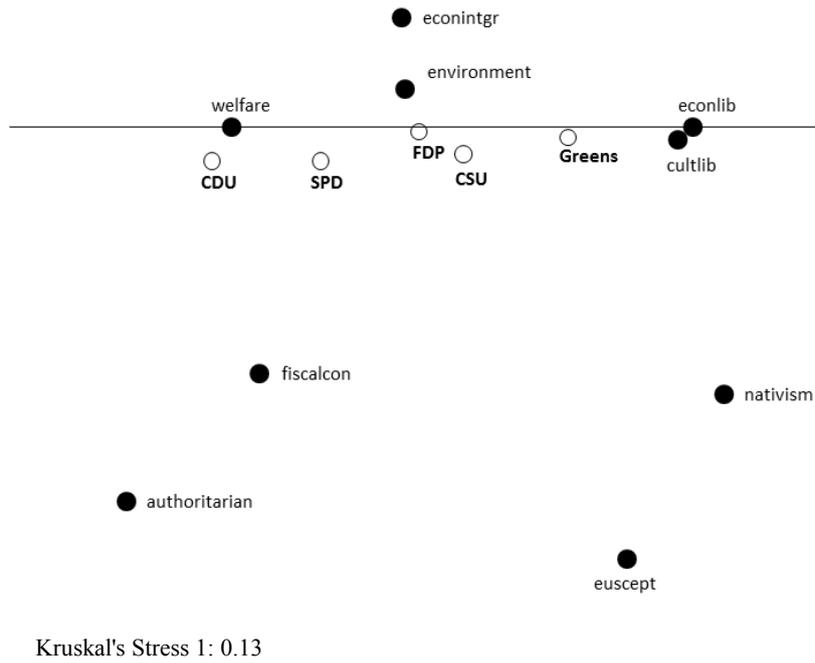


Figure 1f: Germany 1984

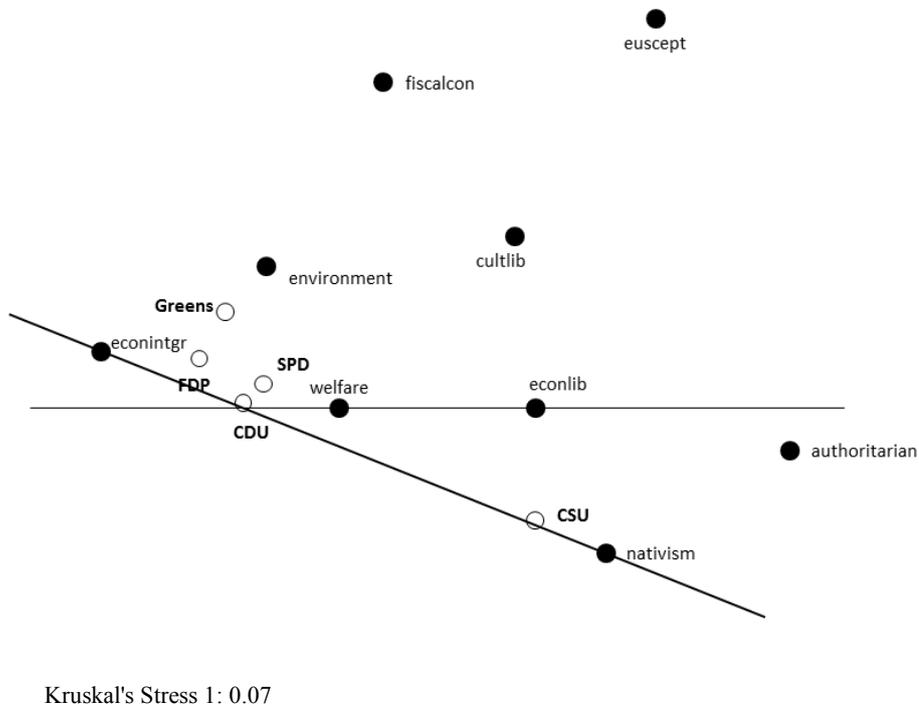


Figure 1g: Germany 1979

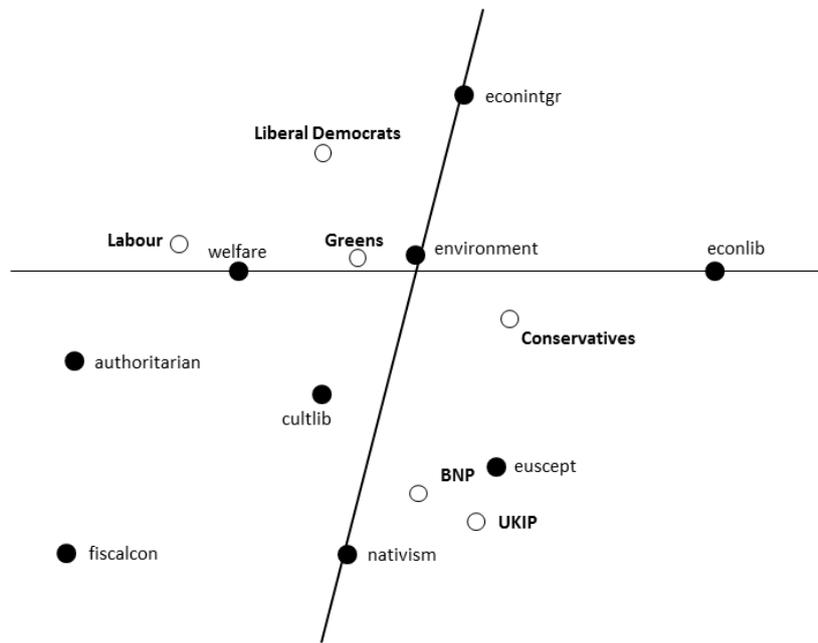
- ideological categories ● welfare=welfare state economy; econlib=economic liberalism; fiscalcon= fiscal conservatism; environment=environmentalism; cultlib=cultural liberalism; authoritarian=political authoritarianism; nativism= nativism; econintgr=economic integration; eusept=eurocepticism
- political parties ○ SPD=Social Democratic Party; FDP=Free Democrats; CDU=Christian Democratic Union; CSU=Christian Social Union; REP=Republicans; PDS=Party of Democratic Socialism

### ***United Kingdom (1979-2009)***

The EP election of 2009 reveals a party system clearly structured by two dimensions: the economic dimension, with Labour at the left end and the Conservatives and UKIP at the right end. The content of the second dimension conforms rather perfectly with our main hypothesis: it is dominated by the issues of economic integration (on the one end) and nativism and Euroscepticism (on the other). The inclusion of UKIP and BNP, which are comfortably located at the 'nationalism' end of the axis, certainly contributes to this alignment. The Liberal party emerges as the most 'postnational' party in this election, as in every single election since 1999. Overall, in relation to Germany, the content of the second dimension is much more determined by our globalization-related categories, and especially Euroscepticism and economic integration, but with nativism also strongly entering the picture, especially with the advent of the BNP in the last elections. This is no surprise given the well-known Eurosceptic tendencies of many political parties in Britain. The transformation of the content of the cultural-political dimension is accelerated in the 1990s, a fact also reflected in changes in the salience of the globalization debate in the post-Maastricht period (see Figure 7).

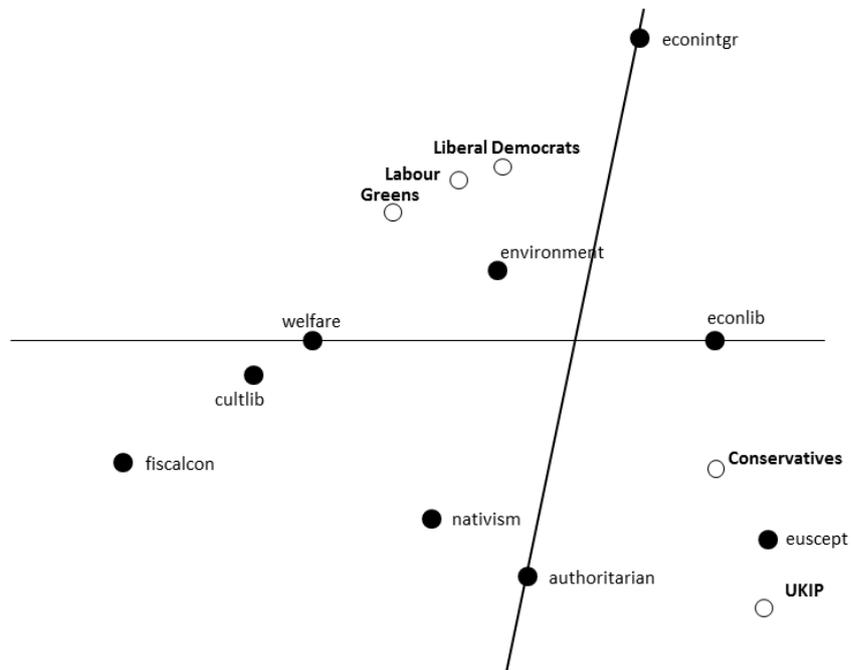
The results of our analysis are in line with the findings of Kriesi and Frey (2008b) in relation to the structuring of the second dimension by integration-demarcation issues. However, we have not discovered a 'slow transformation' of the cultural-political axis, with globalization-related categories replacing the more traditional cultural liberalism-authoritarianism axis (Kriesi and Frey 2008b: 204). Instead, we find that the party system in the elections of 1979 and 1984 can be best described as unidimensional, with the single economic axis accounting for almost all variance (the raw stress value for a one-dimensional solution for 1979 is 0.04 and for 1984 is 0.17).

The movement of parties conforms to the widespread views about the changes in the orientations of the Labour and Conservative parties, especially in regard to issues related to Europe (see Rosamond 2003). Like many leftist parties, the Labour party initially adopted Eurosceptic anti-integration positions, only to become a pro-integration political force along with the Liberal party. In contrast, the Conservatives, which traditionally contain both pro-European and Eurosceptic factions within their party, initially adopted more pro-European stances, only to shift to Euroscepticism in the late Thatcherite period (cf. Spiering 2004:131).



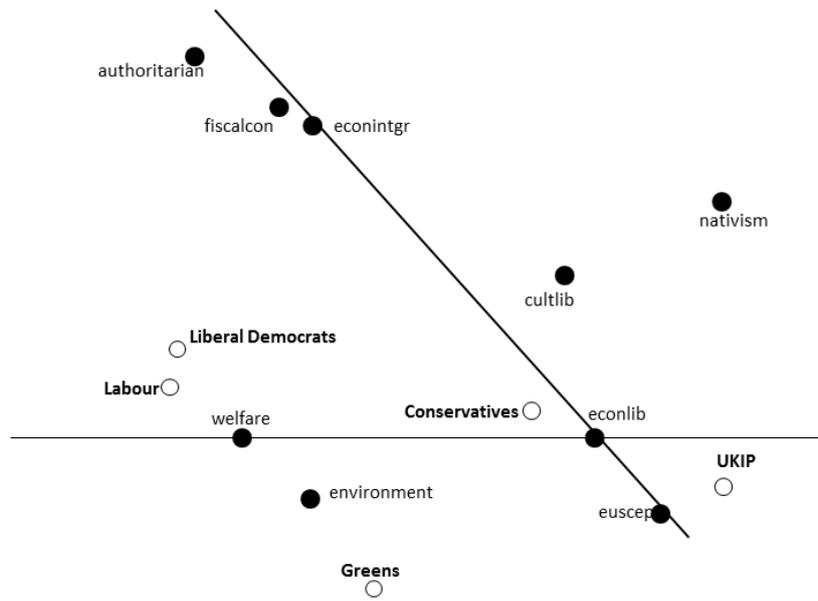
Kruskal's Stress 1: 0.20

Figure 2a: UK 2009



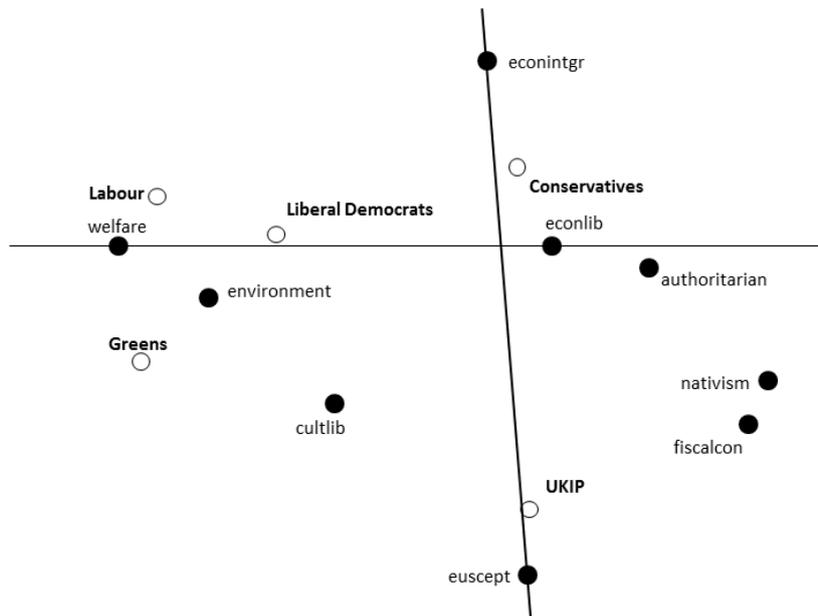
Kruskal's Stress 1: 0.30

Figure 2b: UK 2004



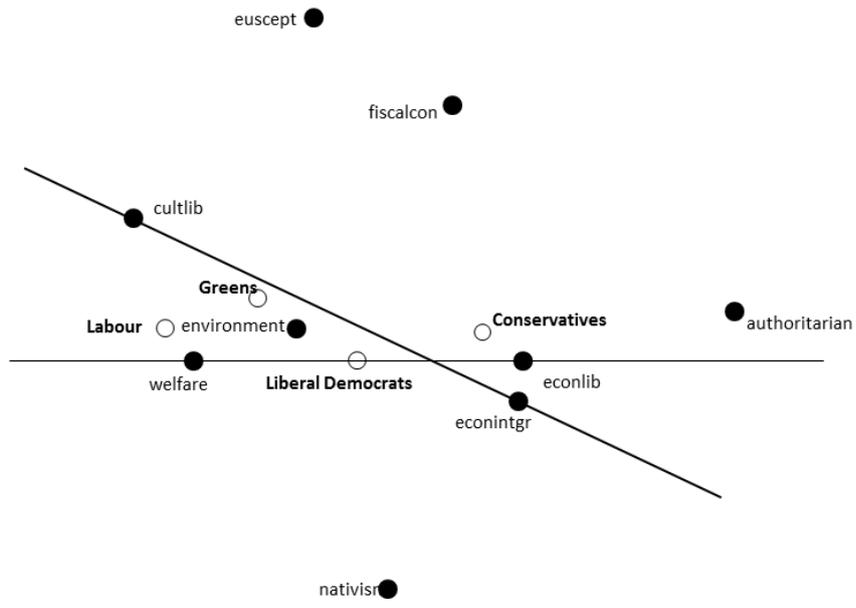
Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.22

Figure 2c: UK 1999



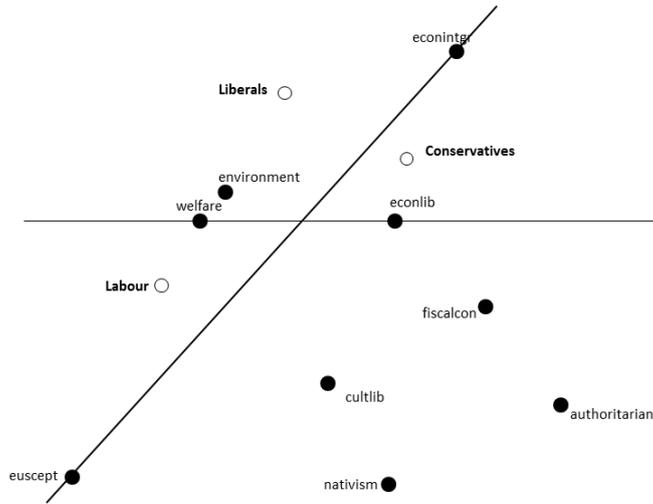
Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.18

Figure 2d: UK 1994



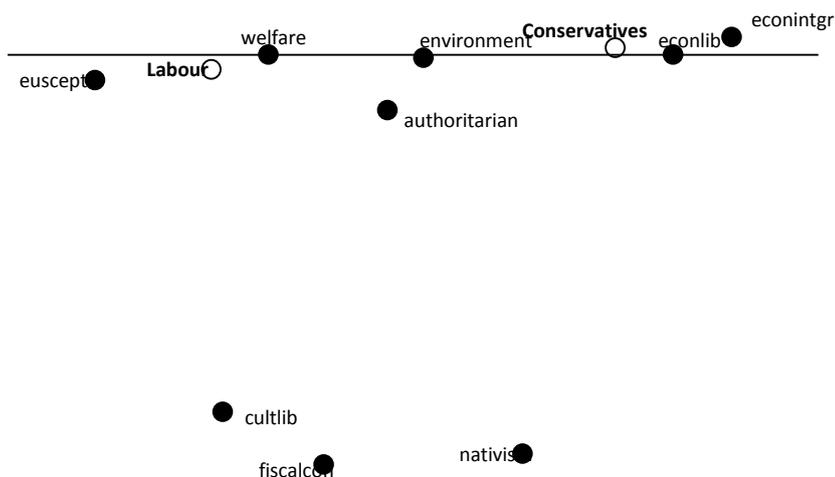
Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.13

Figure 2e: UK 1989



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.10

Figure 2f: UK 1984



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.01

Figure 2g: UK 1979

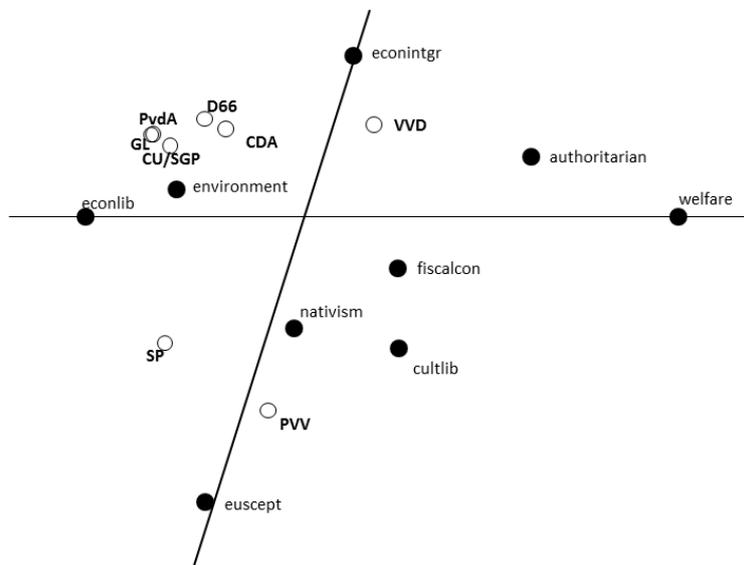
- |                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| ideological categories | ● | welfare=welfare state economy; econlib=economic liberalism; fiscalcon= fiscal conservatism; environment=environmentalism; cultlib=cultural liberalism; authoritarian=political authoritarianism; nativism= nativism; econintgr=economic integration; euscept=eurocepticism |
| political parties      | ○ | 1979 manifesto not available for Liberals; LDP=Liberal Democrats; UKIP=UK Independence Party; BNP=British National Party   |

### Netherlands (1994-2009)

The unfolding models for the four EP elections in the Netherlands reveal considerable confirmation of our main research hypotheses. In all the four EP elections, we observe a clear two-dimensional space of conflict. Raw stress values drop significantly when moving from a single to a two-dimensional solution to below 0.2 in all cases. The first striking result that emerges for the configuration of parties and issues in all elections, save the 1999 election, is that there seems to be very little differentiation in the positioning of parties along the economic dimension. Welfare state economy and environmentalism emerge as valence issues with the occasional exception of the VVD and CDA (as well as the two right-wing populist parties, LPF and PVV in 2004 and 2009 respectively), which are not as close to welfare state economy in most cases but never clearly adopt economically liberal positions either. The 1999 EP election is the only one where there appears to be greater dispersion of parties along the economic dimension, and the only time where a party (CDA) can be seen as adopting a liberal economic agenda. In addition, the consistent proximity between environmentalism and welfare state economy suggests, contrary to our expectations, that there is an overlap between the economic and the 'new politics' dimensions.

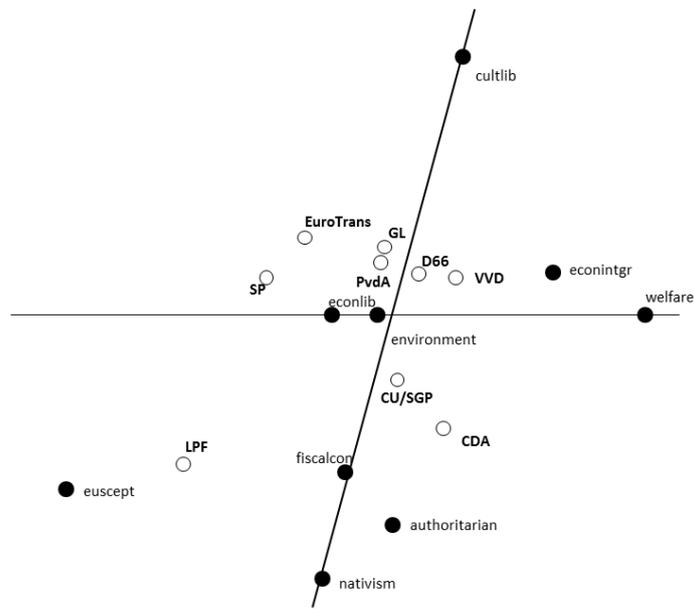
Going back to 1994, the configuration that emerges partially contradicts the findings of previous studies (Kriesi and Frey 2008a: 176; Van der Brug 1999: 161) concerning the ideological heterogeneity of the 'purple coalition' (PvdA, VVD, D66). The analysis of the Euromanifestos data (in contrast to the analysis of references in the press and voter perceptions in the other studies) depict the three parties located extremely close to each other in the specific election, combining pro-welfare, pro-environment, pro-integration and culturally liberal positions.

The second main trend is related to the content of the second dimension. As in the case of the United Kingdom, the categories of the nationalism-postnationalism axis appear to contribute greatly, if not determine, this vector of ideological space. The main difference with the UK is that identity and immigration issues (captured by our nativism category) appear to typically provide the 'lower' end of the second axis instead of Euroscepticism. The 'upper' end of the second vector corresponds, in most cases, to cultural liberalism and economic integration, reflecting the mixture of 'old' and 'new' issues of the cultural-political axis and confirming, once again, our hypothesis about the latent variable that structures orientation on the issue of economic integration. In the last EP elections of 2009, the second dimension is structured exclusively by all three of the 'globalization' categories. We cannot confirm the finding of a previous study (Kriesi and Frey 2008a: 172) that the globalization categories have transformed the meaning of the cultural-political dimension because our data stretch back only as far as 1994. However, if we assume that the ideological space had a two-dimensional structure even before the 1990s, such a transformation would seem to be a likely development. The picture that emerges concerning the location of parties on this vector is much easier to interpret than positions along the economic axis. There is an integrationist and culturally liberal bloc consisting of PvdA, D66, Green Left and, to a lesser extent, VVD, contrasted with the left Euroscepticism of the Socialist Party and the right Euroscepticism of List Pim Fortuyn (2004) and PVV (2009). The position of the Christian Democratic parties (CDA and CU/SGP) appears to vary according to the content of the cultural-political dimension. When the content of the dimension is structured by the ideological categories that contain issues related to economic and political integration (Euroscepticism and economic integration) as in 2009 and (partially) in 1999, the two parties generally tend to belong to the integrationist camp. Conversely, when the dimension is structured by identity and values issues (nativism, cultural liberalism, sociopolitical authoritarianism) as in 1994 and 2004, the two parties are positioned closer to the nationalist/authoritarian end of the spectrum.



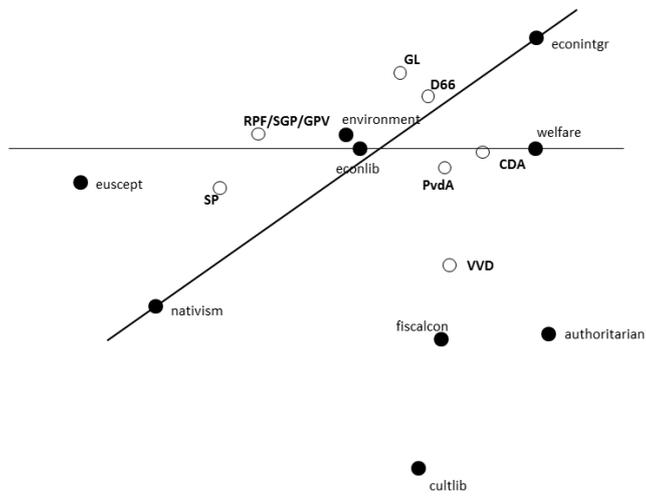
Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.16

Figure 3a: Netherlands 2009



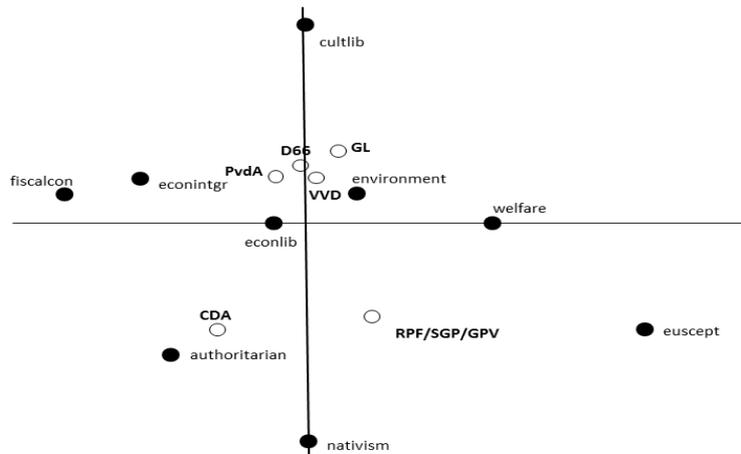
Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.15

*Figure 3b: Netherlands 2004*



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.18

*Figure 3c: Netherlands 1999*



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.13

Figure 3d: Netherlands 1994

- |                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| ideological categories | ● | welfare=welfare state economy; econlib=economic liberalism; fiscalcon= fiscal conservatism; environment=environmentalism; cultlib=cultural liberalism; authoritarian=political authoritarianism; nativism= nativism; econintgr=economic integration; euscept=euroscpticism   |
| political parties      | ○ | PvdA=Labour Party; CDA=Christian Democratic Appeal; D66=Democrats 66; SP=Socialist Party; CU=Christian Union; SGP=Reformed Political Party; VVD=People's Party for Freedom and Democracy; GL=Green Left; PVV=Party for Freedom; LPF=List Pim Fortuyn; RPF=Reformatory Political Federation; GPV= Reformed Political League; EuroTrans=Europe Transparent |

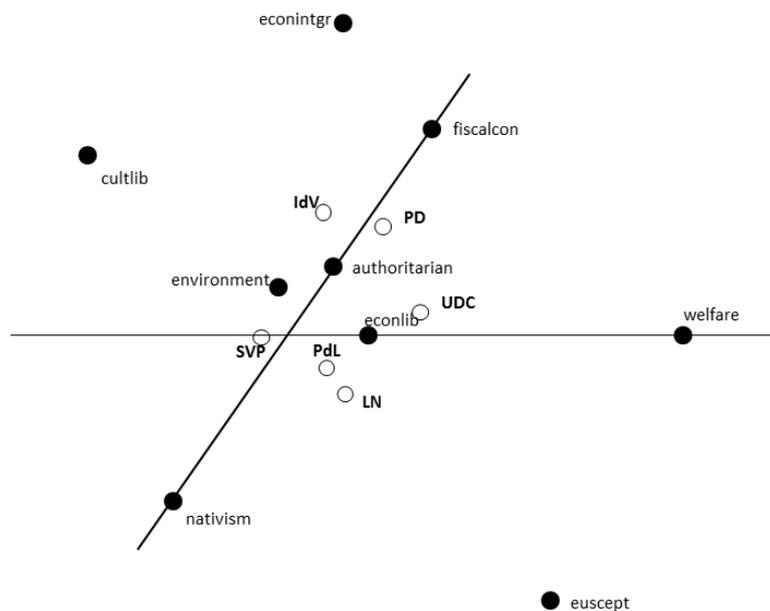
### Italy (1994-2009)

The first thing that should be noted about the unfolding models of the Italian elections is that they render acceptable fits for all two-dimensional solutions (raw stress values around or below 0.20), which means that the ideological space in Italy retained a basically dual structure. In 1994, in the EP election that was conducted only a few months after the first national election of the restructured party system, what emerges is a picture of relative moderation along all relevant vectors. In the economic dimension there is some differentiation, with Lega Nord (LN) adopting the most rightward position, whereas Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and the Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI) adopting economically leftist stances. The new Forza Italia (FI) and the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS) emerge as centrist parties that blend pro-welfare with economically liberal positions. Similarly, all parties adopt relatively pro-integration positions, with the exceptions of AN, which comes closer to the authoritarian and nativism categories and the only outlier, Rifondazione Comunista (RC), which positions itself as the only Euroscptic party.

High levels of organizational fluidity in the following elections make the task of trend detection extremely difficult. In the 1999 and 2004 elections we have the appearance of new parties the autonomous existence of which was short-lived; most of them were absorbed into new parties or coalitions in subsequent elections (e.g. Democrats, FLI/PRI, UD, EUR).

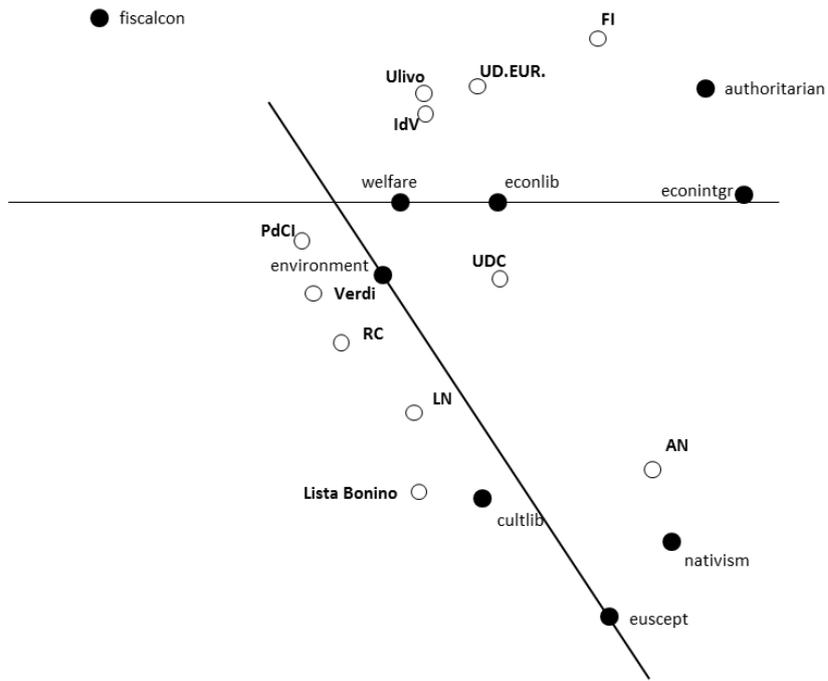
Following our criterion of inclusion which is securing representation in the European Parliament in the election under consideration, combined with the availability of stand-alone coded Euromanifestos, forced us to include a large number of parties in our analysis that often appear only once. Moderation in economic issues continues to be the rule in subsequent elections (see Figures 4a, 4b, 4c), however, some interesting observations can be singled out. FI makes a noteworthy shift towards economic liberalism in 1999 and 2004, but moves back into a more moderate position in the 2009 EP election after its merger with AN into the Popolo della Libertà (PdL). The PDS (in 2004 examined only as part of the Ulivo coalition due to the unavailability of separate manifestos, and in 2009 competing as Partito Democratico (PD), following its merger with La Margherita) oscillates between centrist and leftist economic positions, reflecting its many changes in leadership and programmatic identity.

In comparison with the previous countries, the configuration of the cultural-political axis is less straightforward and stable. Cultural liberalism and sociopolitical authoritarianism often contribute to the signification of this dimension, reflecting the classic cultural divide (religious-secular cleavage). The paradox is that sociopolitical authoritarianism is often aligned not only with nativism (which is expected) but also with economic integration. This creates a situation where the main party of the center-left appears to adopt simultaneously pro-integration and authoritarian positions (see PDS/PD in 1999 and 2009). This inverse alignment in the cultural-political axis can be also observed in Greece, the only other Southern European country under consideration in this study.



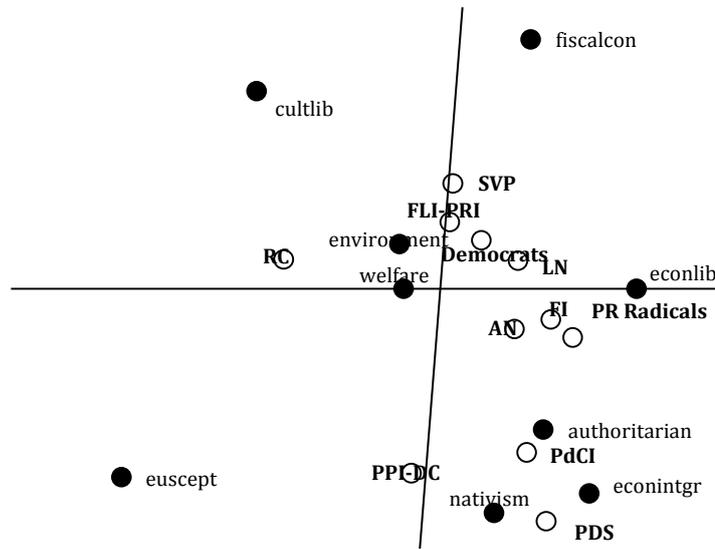
Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.13

Figure 4a: Italy 2009



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.21

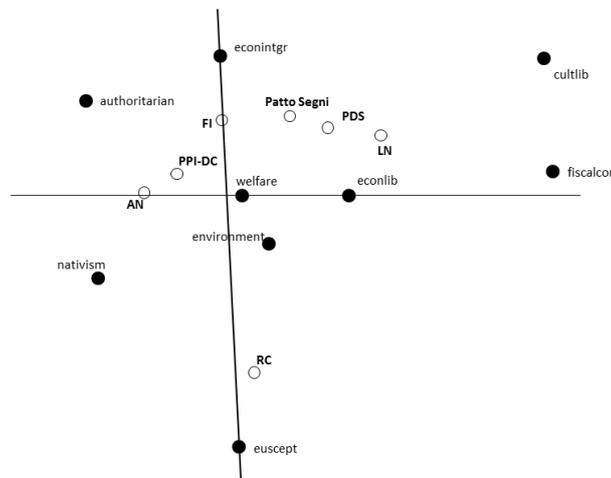
Figure 4b: Italy 2004



(positive minus negative quasi-sentences)

Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.21

Figure 4c: Italy 1999



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.20

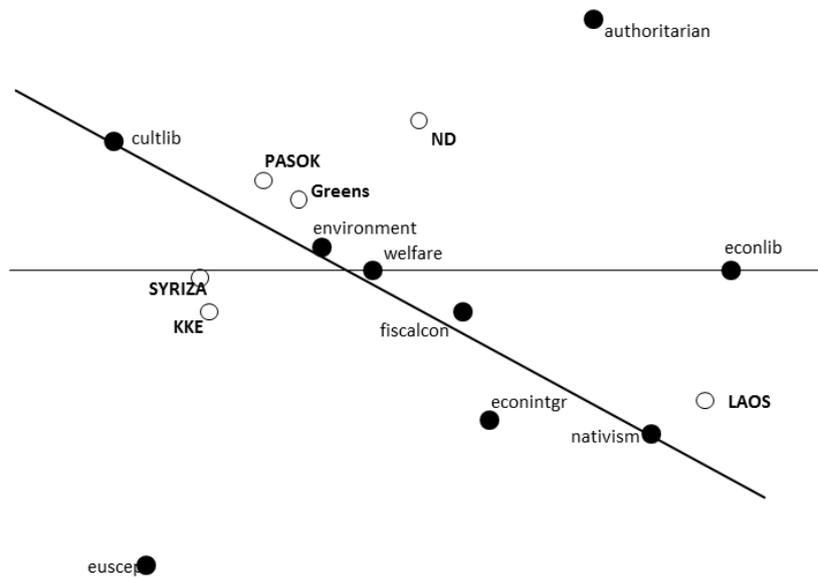
Figure 4d: Italy 1994

- |                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| ideological categories | ● | welfare=welfare state economy; econlib=economic liberalism; fiscalcon= fiscal conservatism; environment=environmentalism; cultlib=cultural liberalism; authoritarian=political authoritarianism; nativism= nativism; econintgr=economic integration; euscept=eurocepticism   |
| political parties      | ○ | PdL=The People for Freedom; PD=Democratic Party; IdV=Italy of Values; LN=Lega Nord; UDC=Union of Christian and Centre Democrats; SVP=South Tyrolean People's Party; FI=Forza Italia; UD, EUR=Union of Democrats for Europe; PPI=Popular Party; AN=National Alliance; RC=Communist Refoundation; PdCI=Party of Italian Communists; PRI=Italian Republican Party; FLI=Future and Freedom; PDS=Democratic Party of the Left |

**Greece (1999-2009)**

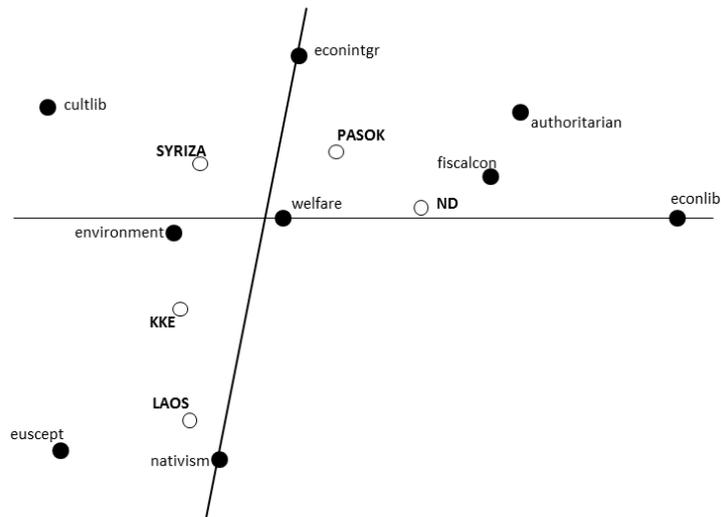
In the EP elections of 2004 and 2009 there is a peculiar alignment of authoritarianism and pro-integration positions, a fact that reflects the major conservative party's (New Democracy-ND) steady proximity to both ideological categories. In fact, New Democracy is the only party that is very close to the authoritarian category in every election, due to the fact that law and order, together with defense, are consistently high on the party's priority list. The main representative of Eurocepticism in Greece remains the Communist Party (KKE), the only unreformed communist party left in Europe which still embraces hardline antisystemic rhetoric and continues to embrace Stalinist symbolism. The proximity between nativism and Eurocepticism, and their contribution to the content of the cultural-political axis in 1999 and 2004 conforms to our main hypothesis about the directionality of the 'globalization' categories and, in the case of Greece, can be explained by two factors. The first is that KKE has moved towards culturally protectionist and anti-immigration positions since the early 1990s, reflecting a more general strategic choice to rely upon a more explicitly national-populist agenda. The second factor has been the advent of right-wing populist LAOS onto the political scene, which has increased the relevance of its flagship issues: immigration and protection of the national culture (the issues corresponding to our *nativism* category).

Our hypothesis concerning the leftward tendencies of the Greek party system on the economic dimension are partially confirmed. In most elections welfare state economy emerges as a valence issue for all parties, with the exception of ND in 1999, which espouses very liberal, economically, positions and LAOS in 2009, which becomes an outlier party in economic policy terms. Otherwise, the location of parties on the economic dimension are more or less as expected. Another important observation related to the alignment between our 'new politics' category (environmentalism) and welfare state economy, meaning that, as in the Netherlands, the 'new politics' and the economic dimension overlap simplifying the ideological space. Thus, as reflected in the low raw stress scores (0.15 for 1999 and 2004, 0.17 for 2009). Greece might have developed a more complicated structure than the unidimensional one that had been identified in past decades (see discussion above), but probably one does not need to go beyond two dimensions to capture the complexity of contemporary Greek politics.



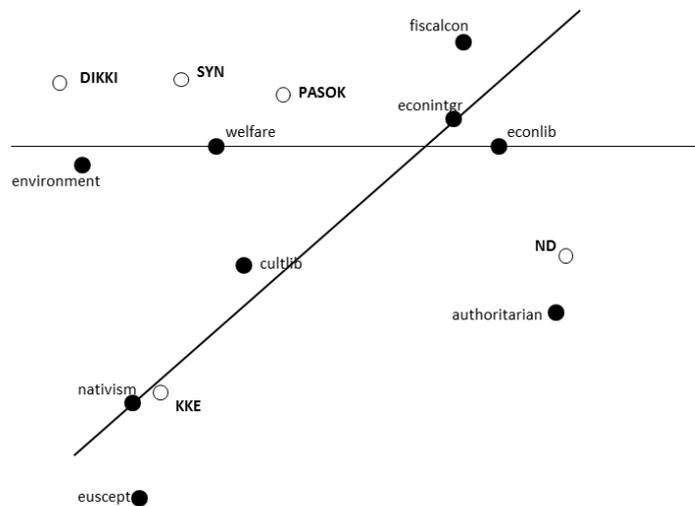
Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.17

Figure 5a: Greece 2009



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.15

Figure 5b: Greece 2004



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.15

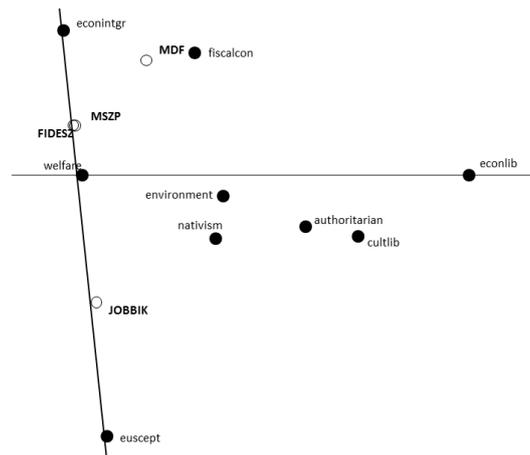
Figure 5c: Greece 1999

- |                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| ideological categories | ● | welfare=welfare state economy; econlib=economic liberalism;<br>fiscalcon= fiscal conservatism; environment=environmentalism;<br>cultlib=cultural liberalism; authoritarian=political authoritarianism;<br>nativism= nativism; econintgr=economic integration;<br>euscept=eurocepticism |
| political parties      | ○ | PASOK=Panhellenic Socialist Movement; ND=New Democracy;<br>SYRIZA=Radical Left Coalition; SYN=Left Coalition;<br>KKE=Communist Party; LAOS=Popular Orthodox Rally;<br>DIKKI=Democratic Social Movement   |

### **Hungary (2004-2009)**

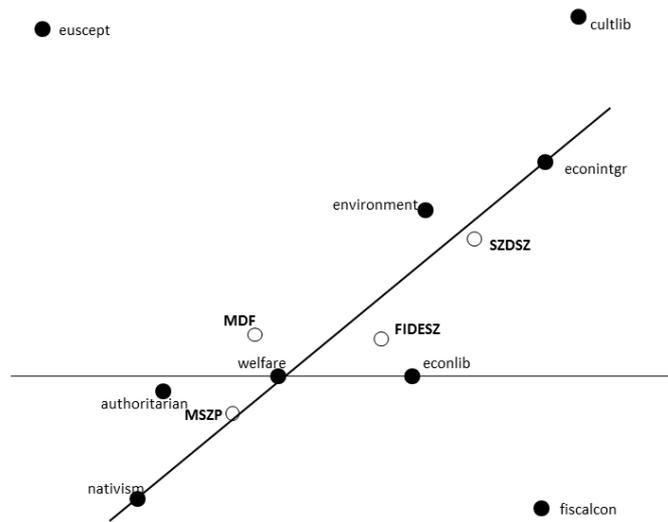
As a new member of the European Union, Hungary had the opportunity to participate only in two EP elections since its accession in 2004. Obviously, the study of only two elections in a time frame of five years does not allow us to identify any meaningful trends in a party system that is, any way you look at it, very new.

In both configurations, the raw stress scores are very low (0.04 for 2004 and 0.12 for 2009), allowing us to conclude that there is a clear two-dimensional conflict. From the representation of the Hungarian relevant parties and the ideological categories of our study into the common political space, we observe that our hypotheses concerning the case of Hungary do not deviate from our more general hypotheses. The first and most important conclusion is that the globalization-related issues tend to be uniformly aligned with the cultural-political dimension, with the exception of Euroscepticism in the 2004 EP election. Furthermore, our country-specific hypothesis concerning the different levels of dispersion along the two axes appear to be fully confirmed for both elections. In 2009, all four parties are concentrated on the left end of the economic axis, with all parties exhibiting similar rejection of economic liberalism. This picture is somewhat different from 2004, when there was a clearer differentiation between the parties, with the socialists (MZSP) and the conservative Democratic Forum (MDF) adopting more welfare-friendly positions and Fidesz and SZDSZ adopting more liberal economic agendas. For MDF and Fidesz at least the observation that positions on cultural issues are more important than convergence on economic agendas is confirmed; the unexpectedly nationalist/authoritarian position of the MZSP on the cultural-political axis does not allow the same observation to be confirmed by our data for socialist-liberal alliance of MZSP-SZDSZ. Finally our last country-specific hypothesis concerning the expected increase in polarization through the entry of JOBBIK in 2009 is partially confirmed: JOBBIK as expected occupies a position close to the Eurosceptic end of the axis but other than that we see a near complete coincidence of the positions of the two major parties MZSP and Fidesz.



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.12

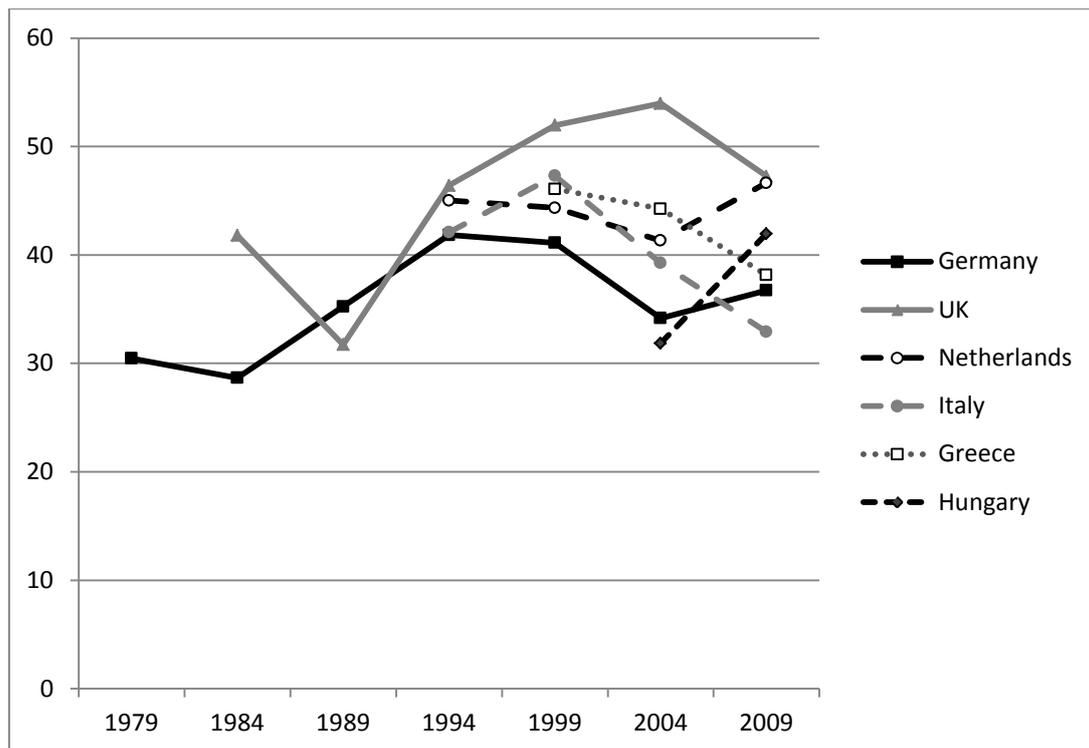
*Figure 6a: Hungary 2009*



Kruskal's Stress-1: 0.04

*Figure 6b: Hungary 2004*

- |                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| ideological categories | ● | welfare=welfare state economy; econlib=economic liberalism;<br>fiscalcon= fiscal conservatism; environment=environmentalism;<br>cultlib=cultural liberalism; authoritarian=political authoritarianism;<br>nativism= nativism; econintgr=economic integration;<br>euscept=eurocepticism |
| political parties      | ○ | MSZP=Socialist Party; FIDESZ=Alliance of Young Democrats;<br>MDF=Hungarian Democratic Forum; JOBBIK=Movement for a Better<br>Hungary; SZDSZ=Alliance of Free Democrats   |



*Figure 7: The Salience of the Globalization Debate in Six Countries  
(Salience of globalization-related issues: % of total)*

## Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we have tried to investigate the thesis that orientations of political actors on the economic, cultural and political aspects of globalization and Europeanization tend to be expressed in the form of ideological preferences along a common underlying dimension. We have named this dimension the 'nationalism-postnationalism axis', while others have developed akin conceptualizations which, in reality, constitute similar polarities under different headings: the globalization-antiglobalization, demarcation-integration, or cosmopolitanism-communitarianism divide. In addition, we have posited that this divide will tend to be embedded in the classic ideological space, structured by the two broadly conceived traditional conflicts: an economic conflict over distributional preferences, reflecting the historical class cleavage; and a cultural-political conflict informed by different value divides (religiosity vs. secularism, cultural liberalism vs. conservatism, political authoritarianism vs. libertarianism, etc.). We hypothesized that the nature of this globalization-inspired nationalism-postnationalism divide will lead to a specific route of embedment into national ideological spaces: the different components of the nationalism-postnationalism divide will tend to transform the content of the traditional cultural-political dimension.

Our six-country analysis produced some interesting results. To begin with, in all six countries our general expectation concerning the dual structure of ideological space was largely confirmed with a few minor exceptions. Furthermore, our transformation hypothesis was a much better fit for the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Hungary. In the other three countries, while there are some signs that the globalization debate informs to varying extents the structure of the ideological space in some elections, we cannot conclude with similar confidence that the nationalism-postnationalism divide is supplanting more traditional concerns related to the cultural-political dimension. However, we could say that the location within the ideological space of the three categories that we associate with the nationalism-postnationalism

divide (nativism, economic integration, Euroscepticism) exhibit tendencies towards unidimensionality in all six countries. Even the nominally economic category of the axis (i.e. economic integration) election after election cross-nationally was located in an orthogonal position to the classic distributional categories (i.e. welfare state economy vs. economic liberalism).

On the other hand, our measurement of the salience of the globalization debate in each country and per EP election, did not reveal any clear trends concerning the level of importance of the debate. Of course, our limited time frame was perhaps not suitable from the beginning for such comparisons. In Germany and the UK, for which our time frame spans three decades, we cannot discern any sustained trend. However, a modest trend does exist in both countries when comparing the average level of salience between the pre-Maastricht and post-Maastricht period. In our other countries the time frame was 15 years or less, which obviously do not allow us to talk about any long-term trends. For example, the observation that salience levels have been dropping from their late 1990s highs in the two South European countries of our analysis is noteworthy, but should not lead one to assume that the globalization debate is on the track of losing its polarizing edge. After all, the current national debt crisis that has impacted Southern Europe and the rest of the continent can serve as another reminder of how an increasing number of issues that enter the national political agenda are framed in terms of global politics.

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# Do European Attitudes Matter for Explaining Participation in European Parliament Elections?

Mariano Torcal<sup>1</sup>

European citizens tend to vote much less in the European elections than in national elections (Rose 2004; Flickinger and Studlar 2007). This anomaly is not explained by traditional models of electoral participation. It has to be related to the nature of these supra-elections. What explains the fact that the individual probability of voting in this kind of election is always lower than voting in national ones? It is evident from previous studies that voting in national elections is the best predictor of individual turnout in European elections (Franklin 2001). Thus, after discounting the traditional factors that explain general turnout in national elections in the European countries, there are two remaining reasons for citizens' decisions to go to the polls in the European elections: the individual marginal utility of voting for a pro-European party or an anti-European party and the benefit of expressing support as a European citizen for the European project.<sup>2</sup> How much do citizens take into consideration these two factors when they are about to decide whether or not to go to the polls in the European Parliament (EP) elections? So far, the responses in the literature have been very inconclusive, although the dominant view until recently was that European issues do not matter when it comes to this type of election, the results of which depend instead only on national issues. This argument has been supported mostly by the second-order election literature, which essentially has defended, among other things, the argument that these elections are mostly about issues that have to do with domestic politics, which is the main electoral arena, and therefore citizens decide whether or not to vote, and how to vote, depending upon national matters. Therefore, if citizens decide to stay home instead of casting their vote, it is assumed that this is a lack of interest or perceived consequences at either of the two electoral levels: national or European (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Eijk and Franklin 1996; Schmitt 2005; Schmitt and Eijk 2007; Hix and Marsh 2011; Hobolt *et al.*, 2008; Hobolt and Wittrock 2011). In other words, if we discount the effect of national electoral politics, nothing remains with which we can explain citizens' behaviour in European elections. So, what then explains cross-national and individual differences after taking into account the effect of national elections and national politics? The objective of the present chapter is to explain these differences using exclusively European factors.

Recently, there have been growing indications that European issues are becoming more important in these types of elections. For instance, the study by Blondel, Sinnott and Svensson (1997) suggests that abstention specific to European elections is strongly related to the electorate's assessment of the work of the European institutions, while a study by Carrubba and Timpone (2005) attributes explanatory value to preferences regarding EU policies in explaining vote-switching in European elections. Hix and Marsh (2007) also consider that the vote for Green and Eurosceptic parties is related to specific factors to do with European integration; and more recently they have argued that EU policy concerns are becoming more relevant to support pro-European parties (Hix and Marsh 2011). Similarly, Egmond (2007) holds that party positions for or against the EU have increasing influence in this type of election when it comes to choosing certain parties. Finally, Flickinger and Studlar (2007) shows the importance of European factors when it comes to explaining cross-national differences in turnout in the 2004 European elections. So, were European issues more present in the 2009 elections? If this is the

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<sup>2</sup> According to the rational-spatial literature on turnout, there could be two individual factors that help to explain the individual probability to vote: the individual marginal utility of supporting the party that might benefit our interest (i.e., the expected party differential), and the sense of citizenship duty (Downs 1957; Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Niemi 1976; Blais 2000).

case, how did the presence of Europe in these European elections increase the probability of voters going to the polls in May 2009?

Answering this last question is not easy. It is true that the prevalence of Europe may be changing as a result of the increasing visibility of the consequences of the process of European integration, such as the introduction of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the Euro. It may be also certain that there has been a process of increasing contestation of Europe in the national arena in many countries which has made this a central issue not only in European elections, but also in national elections (Franklin, Marsh and McLaren 1994; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Anderson and Reichert 1996; Anderson 1998; Gabel 1998a and 1998b; Hooghe and Marks, 2008; Schuck, Xezonakis, Elenbass, Banducci and Vreese 2011). Greater prominence of this conflict among the elites and during the election campaign could lead to “Europe” becoming more prominent in the public sphere and in the media (Vreese, Lauf and Peter 2007; Hix and Marsh 2011; Gibler and Wüst 2011). But precisely, because the politicization of Europe depends so much on national factors, we cannot expect the presence of Europe in the elections to be a uniform process across all European countries, as it is mostly assumed and tested (for exceptions see Peter 2007; Eijk and Franklin 2007; Flickinger and Studlar 2007). For example, it can be argued that the extent of the influence of support for the EU on voter turnout in this type of elections would depend on the presence of a national debate and conflict over the EU. Thus, a country whose public opinion was extremely divided over the issue of the European construction process could produce electoral benefits for Eurosceptics by making it easier to mobilise political opposition in these terms and resulting in higher levels of participation. On the other hand, the government of a country in which public opinion is very pro-Europe might adopt a pro-European stance that would benefit it, encountering hardly any resistance from its political opponents, making both sets of party positions indistinguishable from each other and thereby favouring a low voter turnout. Therefore, national matters might disrupt the presence of Europe in their respective national arenas, having a distinctive effect when it comes to explaining the individual decisions of going to the polls, but those are national matters about “Europe”, not exclusively national issues.

However, it is difficult to imagine how Europeans can think of “European issues” when they go to the polls on such occasions. This is first, because there is a lack of attention from political parties and the media to European matters during the campaigns for these elections (Vreese, Lauf and Peter 2007); second, because the knowledge citizens have about the EU is very scant (Janssen 1991); and finally, because these elections have their own specificity due to the presence of an underdeveloped polity (Citrin and Sides, 2004), and therefore they do not give rise (even indirectly) to the election of an executive or a European Parliament (EP) that controls this executive (Eijk and Franklin 1996). Nevertheless, there might be an alternative way to estimate the presence of “European issues” for these supra-national elections. We also know that when citizens have to vote on issues about which they lack information or do not already have a formed opinion, they tend to refer back to very basic attitudes that help them to do this and attain greater political awareness (Zaller, 1992: 20-23). Taking this fact into consideration, in this paper I will argue that when citizens want to form opinions and take decisions about whether or not to vote in the European elections, they resort to two basic attitudes of support for or rejection of the EU that serve as informational shortcuts: affective or diffuse support; and instrumental or specific support (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970; Wilgden and Feld 1976). But the influence of these attitudes, as I said above, is not going to be uniform across countries, but conditional on the level of the EU debate present in the respective national arenas. More concretely, it will be shown here that whereas the effect of the general affective or diffuse support to the EU is small and uniform across Europe, the effect of instrumental calculations becomes very relevant in countries where there is a more conspicuous presence of the inter-party debate on the EU at the national level. In such countries, these instrumental attitudes towards the EU have a greater effect when it comes to supporting a particular party (i.e., expected party differential about the EU is higher), substantially increasing the likelihood of

going to the polls. In national political contexts in which the EU has low inter-party differences, besides the weak and general effect of the affective or diffuse support, there is however, nothing favouring the effect of Europe when it comes to the electoral results, and thus, besides the weak and general effect of EU diffuse support, the participation might only depend on what is going on in the principal national arena (issues, incumbent effect, current electoral cycle and so on), reinforcing the second-order nature of the EP elections.

### **The “D and B” Terms of Electoral Turnout in the European Elections**

Ever since the classic study by Downs (1957) and all the subsequent literature it has produced, we have known that the two most important elements for explaining individual electoral turnout of citizens are the marginal benefit they expect to obtain by voting for one candidate over another (the  $B$  term in the equation is just the expected party differential that voters expect to obtain for choosing one party instead of another) and the cost of actually casting their vote (the  $C$  term).  $B$ . The problem is that the benefit  $B$  of voting for one candidate or party instead of another is conditioned by the low value of  $P$ , i.e., the probability that an individual vote will have a decisive influence on the final result (as there are millions of voters). Therefore, as  $P$  is so low, the product  $P*B$  is always tiny and so the value of  $C$ , i.e., the cost of voting will always be higher than the product  $P*B$ , which means that the most rational course of action is not to vote. Nevertheless, most citizens in all the democratic political systems do vote. This contradiction between the logical deduction and the empirical evidence is what is known as “the voting paradox”.

The best known way of attempting to solve this paradox is by including in the equation a  $D$  term representing the consuming satisfaction and/or the obligation of complying with the citizen's duty to vote (Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Niemi 1976). This duty may refer to the particular group to which the person belongs or to the whole community (Aldrich 1993), but ultimately the action of voting depends fundamentally on the individual value of  $D$ . The other alternative is considering other ways to estimate the value of  $B$ . This latest term might be more than just a pure individual utilitarian calculation, becoming an absolute instrumental motivation that can only be satisfied by the consumption value of expressing support for the most preferred option. This will also make  $B$  non-conditioned by the always low value of  $P$ . This way, we also shift the interest of explaining turnout from just cost and pure instrumental calculations to the resources and motivational cues that may not only lower transaction and information cost, but add an additional value to the simple act of voting, resolving the paradox that the rational choice model was not able to resolve by its own parameters.<sup>3</sup> I adopt this theoretical approach, including the  $D$  term in the equation and making  $B$  non-conditioned by the low value of  $P$ .

However, in the case of the European elections, the content and value of  $B$  and  $D$  are different after discounting the general effect of  $B$  and  $D$  for national elections. The “ $B$  European term” ( $B_{EU}$ ) will be the “consumption satisfaction of expressing support to a pro-European or anti-European party”; whereas, the “ $D$  European term” ( $D_{EU}$ ) shall only estimate the “consumption European duty benefit”; i.e., the satisfaction or duty to participate in this particular type of election ( $D_{EU}$ ). The values of  $B_{EU}$  and  $D_{EU}$  for European elections are not only different in nature but even more important, in so far as that is possible, than general  $B$  and  $D$  for national elections since the relative value of  $P_{EU}$  is more reduced from what  $P$  is in national

<sup>3</sup> These responses are not completely satisfactory for the rational-choice paradigm and in some ways make the argument tautological (Barry 1978; Green and Shapiro 1994), but they at least serve to pose an interesting question by raising the issue of the role that general individual attitudes could have in overcoming the assumption of the importance of certain instrumental individual calculations in explaining electoral behaviour. Additionally, they represent a convergence of the individual resource model, the psychological involvement model and the mobilization model with the rational-choice one to explain turnout. For this argument see (Blais 2000: 12-14).

elections. The value of  $P_{EU}$  is even smaller in this type of election, since, although the size of the electoral constituencies for the European elections is bigger (as, in most cases, the whole country is the electoral district), the total number of electors per district is much higher and, therefore, the value of the individual vote (i.e., the  $P_{EU}$  value) diminishes. Additionally, we are talking about elections in which each person is called upon to vote together with 500 million other Europeans.

If this is the case, the  $B_{EU}$  term might become even more important when it comes to explain participation in the EP elections, but only if there are distinctive positions of the parties when it comes to valuing the EU and its policies, something that is not uniform across all the EU countries. If this pro- and anti-European distinctiveness among parties is not present to the public eye (so the expected party differential for the EU is zero),  $B_{EU}$  will not have any effect on choosing party preferences and consequently on whether to decide to vote or not (Downs 1957, 44) in European elections. The “consumption benefit” from expressing party support will be gone or substituted by national instrumental calculations related with the principal national arena (this is the basic argument of the second-order literature). But, also when  $B_{EU}$ , the EU instrumental benefit consumption of expressing party preferences, is absent, the decision as to whether to cast a vote or not will depend much more, if not entirely, on the value of  $D_{EU}$  or the European citizen duty/satisfaction of going to vote. In this context also,  $B_{EU}$  will be “only” a function primarily of issues related to domestic politics (i.e.  $B$ ), with the main electoral area playing a major part and the status of these elections as second-order elections becoming enhanced. Therefore, the effect of  $B_{EU}$  and  $D_{EU}$  on going to the polls will depend on the visibility of party position differences on “Europe” in the national political arena and national public opinions. In a context in which Europe and the different party positions on Europe are strongly present in the political sphere, the value of  $B_{EU}$  will be clearer and, of course, it will have more variation. As I already said, in this context, this will mean that electoral turnout for the European elections will not depend so much, or uniquely, on  $D_{EU}$ , and, therefore, citizens will not only go to vote because they manifestly support or oppose the EU or the European integration process, but also, it will depend on the instrumental benefits that citizens expect to obtain from supporting clearly pro- or anti-European parties.

Finally, the effect of  $D_{EU}$  should be similar for all the countries regardless of the level of politicization of the EU in national politics, since this kind of diffuse support should be immune to daily politics forming the “safety net” of support (Easton 1965) and consequently, having the same effect on turnout across countries and their respective levels of EU trust and EU inter-party politicization.

### **Measurement of $B_{EU}$ and $D_{EU}$ and Operational Hypotheses**

As I said, turnout in European elections will depend on the “consumption European duty benefit” itself, that is,  $D_{EU}$  which must be very distinctive from the general  $D$  value, which applies to all elections and all citizens, and it should be measured by the general or diffuse support given to the EU integration process in general which is distinctive from the potential effect of the general consumption benefit of participating in elections in general. It should also be somehow independent for the level of instrumental or conditional support to the EU. The question I will use to measure this affective or diffuse support for the EU will be the following: “Generally speaking, do you think that membership of the European Union is a good thing, neither or bad thing?” This is a most frequent indicator used to measure diffuse support for the EU in the literature<sup>4</sup> and it has been tested to explain turnout in European elections in other preceding studies (for instance Flickinger and Studlar 2007).

<sup>4</sup> For a most recent discussion of this literature see Sander, Toka, Belluci and Torcal (2011).

Estimating the value of  $B_{EU}$  is not easy either. This is because, as has already been said (Eijk and Franklin 1996), these elections do not give rise (even indirectly) to the election of an executive or an EP that controls this executive, leaving the value of  $B_{EU}$  almost empty (since there is not a clear connection between party support and individual benefits coming from the adopted policies by those parties). Furthermore, there is a lack of attention from political parties and the media to Europe during the campaigns for these elections (Vreese, Lauf and Peter 2007), and, as perhaps as a consequence of the former, citizens' knowledge about the EU and its policies is very scant (Janssen 1991). Finally, citizens are, to a large extent, unaware of which tiers of government are responsible for different areas of public policies, adding more confusion to the conscious level of accountability that rational voting requires (Sander, Toka, Belluci and Torcal 2011).

Therefore, for these types of elections,  $B_{EU}$  can only be estimated by a general sociotropic measure of the consumption satisfaction of expressing instrumental party pro-European or anti-European preferences. This is because, as I said before, European voters are most likely to fall back on basic attitudes of instrumental support for the EU to give  $B_{EU}$  a value that it is independent from the  $B$  value of national elections. In particular, I propose to measure the value of  $B_{EU}$  with an attitude that measures the sociotropic instrumental support given to the EU (whether belonging to the EU is beneficial to the country: "How much confidence do you have that the decisions made by the EU will be in the interest of your country?"<sup>5</sup>). In this connection, EU instrumental support may become a basic factor in calculating the individual absolute value of  $B_{EU}$  and therefore in determining party preferences. This is a basic attitude in shaping most attitudes toward the evaluation of the EU, its institutions and its policies (Sanders *et al.* 2011), and, as it has been shown by preceding works, is based on cost-benefit analysis of either objective economic and social benefits (whether for individuals or groups) or of subjective perceptions of those benefits (Dalton and Eichenberg 1998; Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel 1998a and 1998b; Christin 2005). Yet others consider that this indicator of instrumental support is related to the economic and social winners and losers in each country as a result of given EU policies (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Anderson and Reichert 1996; Gabel 1998a and 1998b; Hooghe and Marks 2005). Additionally, some trends have been observed in the last years, detecting the rising importance of these subjective instrumental calculations, cued by national politics, when it comes to making an overall appraisal of EU integration, signaling the end of the so-called "permissive consensus" times of European integration to the new "constraining dissensus" times (Hooghe and Marks 2008).

Additionally, the current increasing "constraining dissensus" is also producing several consequences with regard to these two types of support: their relationship is getting weaker over time; both types of support tend to have different behavior over time and from country to country; and, finally, they tend to have different relationships with other indicators of European citizenship (Sander, Toka, Belluci and Torcal 2011; Torcal, Muñoz and Bonet 2011). In the current data set, the correlation between these indicators is 0.38, although it varies from country to country, from a low 0.12 in Belgium to a high 0.51 in the Czech Republic.

Therefore, we have two operational hypotheses:

- I) The effect of diffuse support on turnout should be uniform across countries regardless of the level of EU party conflict.
- II) A) In contexts in which there is little difference between the parties with regard to the EU and its policies, EU affective or diffuse support measured by general support to the EU, will be the only relevant factor in explaining individual turnout;

<sup>5</sup> For a similar approach to operationalize  $B$  to explain turnout probability in elections see Blais (2000).

B) but instrumental sociotropic support for the EU will hardly have any influence on the choice of which party to vote for and therefore it will not have any effect on explaining individual turnout.

III) A) In contexts in which there are bigger differences between the parties in regard to the EU and its policies, EU instrumental sociotropic support will have a bigger influence on explaining individual turnout as it will also be influential for the choice of which party to vote for;

B) and, thus, the effect of affective or diffuse to the EU will remain significant but it will be secondary in explaining individual turnout.

### A Preliminary Analysis of the Data

A preliminary analysis of the 2009 European Electoral Study (EES) data set allows us to confirm, in empirical terms, the aforementioned hypotheses. In order to do it, I have first created a party system distinctiveness index on the EU by country using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey Series<sup>6</sup>. This index of Party Score Distinctiveness has been calculated according to the following formula:

$$PSD = \sqrt{\left\{ \sum (\text{vote share party}_i) \cdot ([\text{EU position party}_i - \text{party system average EU position}] / 3)^2 \right\}}$$

This index produces a score that ranges from 0 to 1. The value 0 represents that all parties occupy the same position on the EU; and value 1 is when all parties occupy the most opposing positions on the EU.

Country indices are presented in Table 1. I display in Tables 2 and 3 the distributions of these two attitudes, affective and instrumental support to the EU, clustering all the EU countries in two different groups according to the overall average of this index (below and above average).<sup>7</sup> As we can see, the distribution of these two variables is the same in the two groups of countries and is therefore independent of the degree of national party system EU distinctiveness. We can also observe that diffuse support for the EU is always higher than the degree of instrumental support, regardless of the interparty positions discrepancies, confirming hypothesis I. Therefore, the degree of EU distinctiveness of the party positions does not affect the degree of diffuse or instrumental support for the EU. However, the same cannot be said for abstentions in the European elections and preferences for pro-European parties. Table 4 shows that turnout is ten percentage points higher in countries where there is a big contrast between the parties' election platforms. Furthermore, Table 5 shows that the level of support for anti-Europe parties is much higher where the differences between the party positions are much bigger, which confirms the importance of these distinctive elite positions in affecting the level of electoral conflict that may be present in national public opinion (Brug and Eijk 2007).

<sup>6</sup> This index of Party Score Distinctiveness has been calculated from overall EU opinion (Q1) from Chapel Hill Survey 2006 (see file 2006\_ChapelHillSurvey\_means.sav)

<sup>7</sup> The countries with higher distinctiveness are Poland, France, Greece, UK, Czech Republic, Italy, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium. Lower distinctiveness includes Bulgaria, Slovakia, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia, Estonia, Finland, Romania, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Latvia, and Lithuania.

*Table 1: Index of EU Party System Distinctiveness by Country, 2006.*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Index Score</b>
Poland	0.610697
France	0.561081
Greece	0.552425
Austria	0.542936
United Kingdom	0.531625
Czech Republic	0.528346
Italy	0.527127
Netherlands	0.497564
Denmark	0.497258
Sweden	0.455472
Belgium	0.428881
Bulgaria	0.386071
Slovakia	0.367032
Ireland	0.362102
Portugal	0.353811
Slovenia	0.332651
Estonia	0.317675
Finland	0.303116
Romania	0.280857
Germany	0.279925
Spain	0.256405
Hungary	0.255506
Latvia	0.204913
Lithuania	0.147775

*Table 2: EU Diffuse Support in Europe by Levels of EU Political Party Distinctiveness, 2009*

		Countries with LOW EU Party System Distinctiveness	Countries with HIGH EU Party System Distinctiveness
Generally speaking, do you think that membership of the European Union is a...?	Good thing	63.46	64.72
	Neither	27.64	23.34
	A bad thing	8.90	11.94

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

*Table 3: Instrumental Support in Europe by Levels of EU Political Party Distinctiveness, 2009*

		Countries with LOW EU Party System Distinctiveness	Countries with HIGH EU Party System Distinctiveness
How much confidence do you have that decisions made by the European Union will be in the interest of (country)?	A great deal	6.29	4.71
	A fair amount	38.36	40.73
	Not very much	44.73	42.87
	No confidence	10.63	11.69

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

*Table 4: Turnout in the European Elections by Levels of EU Political Party Distinctiveness, 2009*

	Countries with LOW EU Party System Distinctiveness	Countries with HIGH EU Party System Distinctiveness
Voted	65.33	73.44
Abstention	34.67	26.56

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

*Table 5: Pro-European Party vote in the European Elections by Levels of EU Political Party Distinctiveness, 2009*

	Countries with LOW EU Party System Distinctiveness	Countries with HIGH EU Party System Distinctiveness
Anti-Europe	3.58	28.13
Neutral	7.49	5.26
Pro-Europe	88.94	66.61

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

*Table 6: Relationship between Turnout in European Elections and Diffuse Support to the EU, 2009*

		Good thing	Neither	Bad thing
LOW EU Party System Distinctiveness	Voted	71.87	55.15	55.61
	Abstention	28.13	44.85	44.39
HIGH EU Party System Distinctiveness	Voted	79.25	62.17	66.90
	Abstention	20.75	37.83	33.10

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

However, the important aspect of the argument is to show the nature of the relation between these attitudes and electoral behaviour depending on whether or not the party positions in regard to Europe are clearly different. Table 6 shows the relation between individual abstention rates and diffuse or affective support for the EU according to the degree of differentiation of the party positions. As can be seen in Table 6, the support for the EU variable correlates somewhat with individual abstention, but this relationship is the same regardless of the level of EU differentiation between parties.

This pattern of relations changes substantially when voting for parties against or in favour of the EU is studied. As can be seen in Table 7, the relationship between instrumental support for the EU and preferences for pro- and anti-European parties is very high in countries where a high degree of differentiation between party positions exists, whereas this relation is almost non-existent where the degree of such differentiation is low.

*Table 7: Relationship between Pro-European Party Vote and Instrumental Support to the EU, 2009*

		A great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	No confidence
LOW EU Party System Distinctiveness	Anti-European vote	3.25	2.52	4.52	6.00
	Neutral vote	3.25	6.03	9.25	11.27
	Pro-European vote	93.49	91.45	86.23	82.73
HIGH EU Party System Distinctiveness	Anti-European vote	17.41	17.19	35.51	58.96
	Neutral vote	9.22	5.47	4.94	3.02
	Pro-European vote	73.38	77.33	59.55	38.01

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

This approach using comparative data confirms the initial theoretical hypotheses and shows the different roles attitudes of diffuse and instrumental support for the EU can play in different national contexts, where the presence of the EU debate is higher as a consequence of the

existence of distinctive party positions. Affective support may have an impact, although not very strong, on increasing turnout in all countries, but what may increase turnout substantially are the sociotropic instrumental calculations ( $B_{EU}$ ) when the different party positions are more conspicuous and visible to the average citizen, increasing the consuming satisfaction of supporting pro- or anti-European parties.

## Testing Further the Hypotheses

### 1. *The influence of EU affective or diffuse support*

To further confirm these findings, I have estimated two logistic regression models having individual turnout as the dependent variables but including EU affective or diffuse support as the independent variable, but for both groups of countries: those with low and high EU political party system distinctiveness. In the model, I have included turnout in national elections as a controlling variable, since I want to estimate the effects on these variables for the levels of turnout in European elections and not general turnout. The inclusion of the latter variable will take away the effects that are related with the general model of turnout in each country, and therefore will take into account the general effect of  $D$  and other variables affecting national turnout.<sup>8</sup> In other words, I want to estimate the weight of the  $D_{EU}$  sense of European duty only for the European elections, not for the whole  $D$  sense of duty. In order to maintain the parsimony of the model, I have not included in it the usual socio-demographic suspects in the literature in explaining individual turnout. These variables are also important predictors of participation in national elections and their effects are already included in the effect of the participation in national elections (although as I will discuss later, results do not vary with the inclusion of these variables). I have included, however, in the model the original left-right scale and also the quadratic transformation of the left-right scale given the curvilinear relationship detected between EU party competition and ideology (Aspinwall 2002; Ray 2003a and 2003b; Eijk and Franklin 2004; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2004). Finally, I have added an indicator of EU political knowledge to control the potential effect that this variable might have on the level of EU political awareness and its effects on electoral behavior (Vries, Brug, Egmond and Eijk 2011). To make the interpretation of the results easier, I have transformed all the independent variables to have the same range from 1 to -1.

The results confirm the theoretical expectations: the impact of affective or diffuse support to the EU is not high but it is significant, although it seems to be almost the same regardless of the levels of EU party system distinctiveness (the probabilities of voting are almost the same in both models). As expected, the best predictor of voting in the European elections is voting in national elections (Franklin, 2001). Additionally, ideological positions matter. Leftists citizens tend to vote more, although the hypothesis that individuals at extreme positions on the scale tend to vote more is also valid, as we can see with the quadratic term of the equation (marginal effects in both models are 0.15 and 0.16 respectively and they are statistically significant)<sup>9</sup>, confirming previous findings (Aspinwall 2002; Ray 2003a and 2003b).

<sup>8</sup> This model could contain some endogeneity for the inclusion of this variable, but the model was estimated with instrumental variables and the results were exactly the same. Additionally, I have estimated the same model without the inclusion of the variable and the parameters seems to be robust and significance test stable.

<sup>9</sup> I have computed these predictive probabilities of the marginal effects of the quadratic term by the following formula when the rest of the variables are at their means:

$$\frac{\partial y}{\partial x} = \beta_1 \text{Left / Right} + \beta_3 \text{Left / Right}^2$$

Table 8 contains the result of the estimation of the logistic model with robust standard.

*Table 8: Predictors of European Elections Turnout by levels of EU Political Party Distinctiveness, 2009*

		<i>B</i>	<i>prob. **</i>	
Low EU Party System Distinctiveness	Participation in National Elections	1.86* (0.069)	0.43	
	EU Diffuse support	0.36* (0.033)	0.15	
	Political knowledge	0.34* (0.036)	0.14	
	Left-Right self-placement	-0.55* (0.132)	-0.23	
	Left-Right self-placement squared	0.74* (0.122)		
	Intercept	-0.83 * (0.081)		
	Pseudo R square	0.09		
	N	10,856		
	High EU Party System Distinctiveness	Participation in National Elections	2.03* (0.086)	0.46
		EU Diffuse support	0.34* (0.034)	0.13
Political knowledge		0.43* (0.042)	0.18	
Left-Right self-placement		-0.94* (0.153)	-0.33	
Left-Right self-placement squared		0.92* (0.144)		
Intercept		-0.64* (0.099)		
Pseudo R square		0.09		
N		9,891		

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

\*Significant at  $p < 0.00$  \*\* First Probability differences when rest of variables at fixed at their means.

The effect of support for the EU is not high but it is significant, although it seems to be almost the same regardless of the levels of EU party system distinctiveness (the probabilities of voting are almost the same in both models). As expected, the best predictor of voting in the European elections is voting in national elections (Franklin, 2001). Additionally, ideological positions matter. Leftists citizens tend to vote more, although the hypothesis that individuals at extreme positions on the scale tend to vote more is also valid, as we can see with the quadratic term of the equation (marginal effects in both models are 0.15 and 0.16 respectively and they are statistically significant)<sup>10</sup>, confirming previous findings (Aspinwall 2002; Ray 2003a and

<sup>10</sup> I have computed these predictive probabilities of the marginal effects of the quadratic term by the following formula when the rest of the variables are at their means:

2003b; Eijk and Franklin 2004; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2004). These results also seem very robust if we include more variables in the model such as the demographic ones and other short-term variables such as the evaluation of the economic situation and more.<sup>11</sup>

To further test the hypothesis, I have estimated the same model, but added an interaction between EU affective support and the level of EU party system distinctiveness to assess the conditional effect of affective support in different national context. In order to better interpret the results of the interaction terms, I have transformed the EU affective support into a dummy variable.<sup>12</sup> The results of this model in Table 9 confirm the results obtained previously, but,

*Table 9: Logistic Predictors for Turnout in European Elections, 2009 (robust standard errors)*

Dependent variable: Participation in the 2009 European Elections.	
	Coeff.
Intercept	0.97* (0.092)
Participation in National Elections	1.95* (0.053)
EU Diffuse support	0.40 (0.112)
Political knowledge	0.40* (0.027)
Left-right self-placement	-0.71* (0.100)
Left-right self-placement squared	0.79* (0.093)
EU Party System Distinctiveness	0.16 (0.203)
EU Diffuse support * EU Party System Distinctiveness	0.35 (0.269)
Pseudo R squared	0.09
N	21,139

\*Significant at p<0.00

what it is more relevant is that it shows that the probability of voting when the level of distinctiveness is zero is very low, especially for the median levels of support (information not

$$\frac{\partial y}{\partial x} = \beta_1 \text{Left / Right} + \beta_3 \text{Left / Right}^2$$

<sup>11</sup> Results are not shown, but can be obtained from the author on request.

<sup>12</sup> I have transformed the categories “a bad thing” and “neither” into 0, and a “good thing” into 1.

displayed).<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the aggregate variable EU party system distinctiveness has no effect on turnout and the coefficient for the interactive term is non-significant. Finally, the mean of the conditional probability of voting when there is no support and inter-party distinctiveness increases only 0.096 when there is total support to the EU and it is not statistically significant.<sup>14</sup> The data is confirmed in Figure 1, which represents the average marginal effects of EU diffuse support for inter-party distinctiveness (and its confidence interval with a 95 percent of confidence). This figure shows that the marginal effects are small (see the slope), and not statistically significant since the slope does not go out of the range of the confidence intervals at any point.

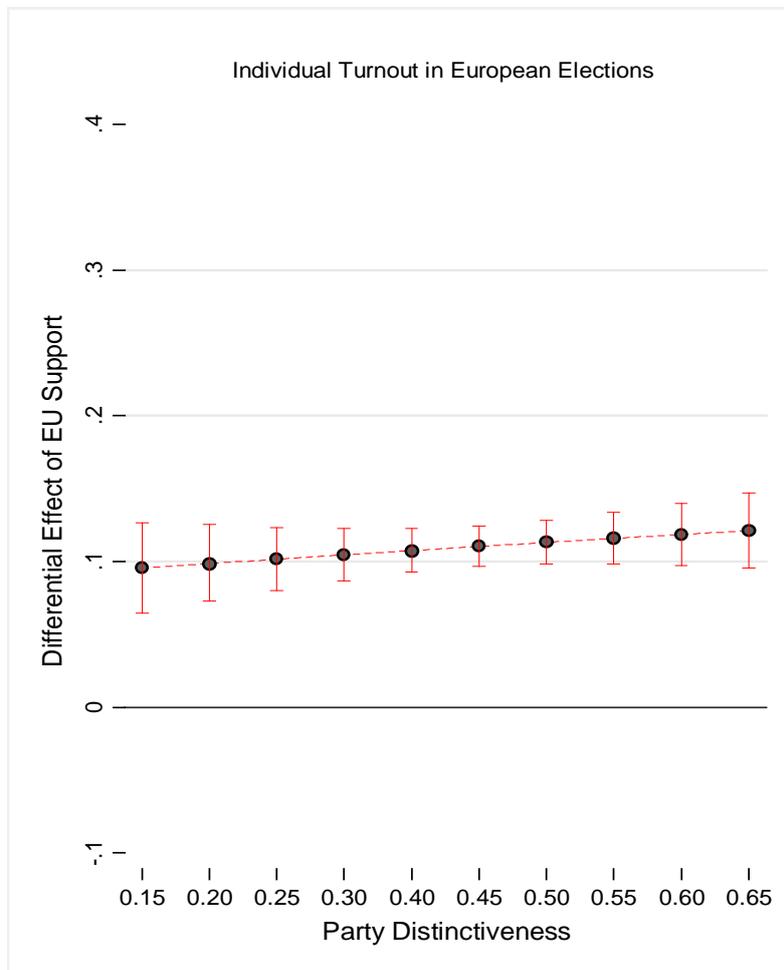


Figure 1: Differential Effect of EU Support on Individual Turnout as Party Distinctiveness Changes.

<sup>13</sup> The statistical interpretation of the coefficient of one of the terms of the interaction is the effect of the original term when the other term is zero (Brambor, Clark and Golder 2006, 65), which in this case have a substantive meaning, since 0 it means the absence of party system distinctiveness on the EU issue positions.

<sup>14</sup> I have computed these predictive probabilities of the marginal effects by the following formula when the rest of the variables are at their means:

The replication of this model in a Two Level Hierarchical Logistic Model confirms the above results and the coefficient of the cross-level interaction remains non-significant (results are not displayed due to limited space). This result is logical if we observe the graphical distribution of the random slope for EU diffuse support. The variance component of this slope is small with 0.163 and is not statistically significant, and additionally, as we can see in Figure 2, which contains the 24 national slopes of this coefficient, the cross-national variation of the slopes is small and does not respond to the level of EU party system distinctiveness.

These results confirm hypothesis I and some additional things. First, it shows that diffuse support of the  $D_{EU}$  term is important to predict participation in these elections, once participation by national factors is controlled. Secondly, this effect is uniform regardless of the level of the discussion and public distinctiveness of the EU conflict in each country. So, diffuse support to the EU does not only seem to be immune to the level of the EU conflict at the national level given the nature of this support, but its effects on turnout seem also to be uniform, regardless of the level of the “nationalization of the EU conflict”, showing the distinctive nature and consistent consequences of this type of support.

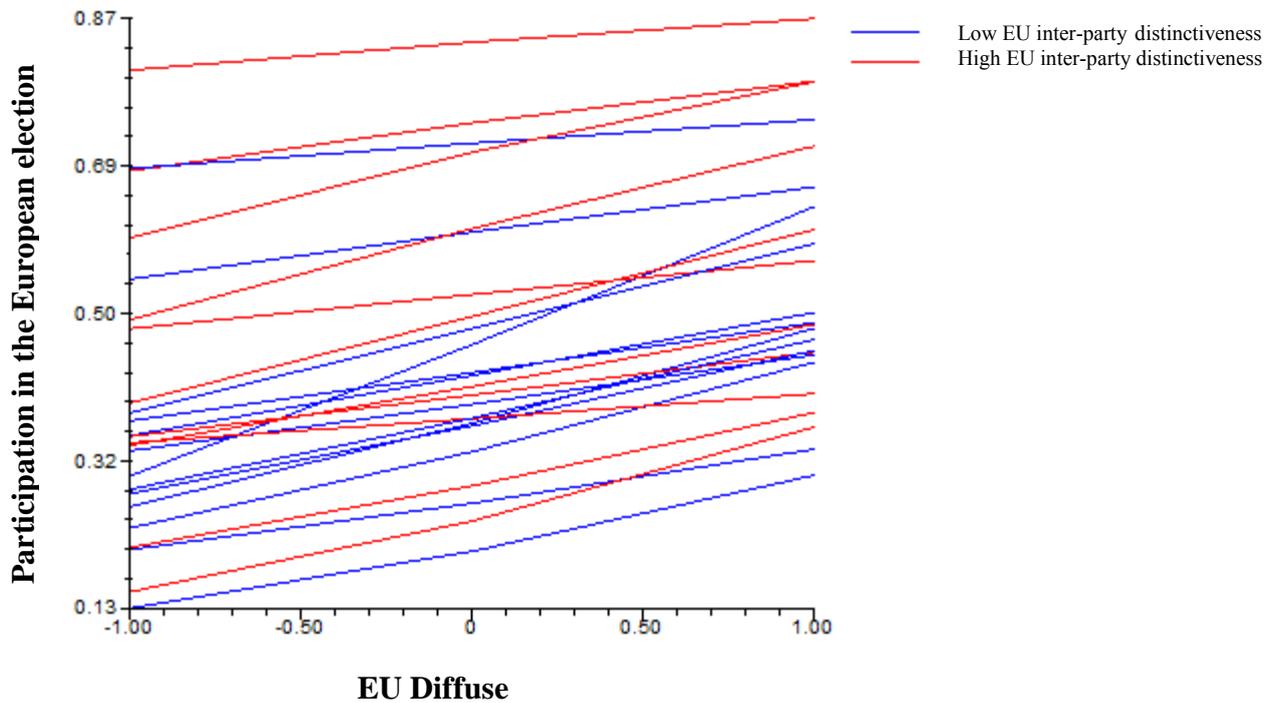


Figure 2: Country Slopes for EU Diffuse Support and Participation in the 2009 European Elections.

## 2. The influence of EU instrumental support

To estimate the effect of EU sociotropic instrumental support on turnout I will take two steps. Firstly, I will see the effect of this variable on party preferences, and secondly I will look at the effect of this same interaction between EU instrumental support and EU party system distinctiveness on individual EP turnout.

### a) First step: estimating the effect on party preferences

In order to estimate the effect of instrumental support on party preference, I have estimated a multinomial regression model for the three voting options (since this variable has three values: pro-, neutral and anti-Europe voting), but again for two different set of countries: low and high

EU party system distinctiveness countries. This dependent variable is constructed from declared individual vote in the last election and by clustering the different parties for which they vote into pro-, neutral or anti-European, according to their location on the 2006 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data set. The independent variables are the same from the preceding turnout model, but with participation in national elections removed, since we are now estimating party preferences and adding other additional variables that might influence individual voting preference for this type of elections: economic situation of the EU, and the sociodemographic variables such as age, education and religiosity.

*Table 10a: Predictors of Pro-EU Party Vote by Levels of EU Political Party System Distinctiveness, 2009.*

REFERENCE CATEGORY: Pro-European vote.		Coeff.	First Prob Diff
Low EU Party System Distinctiveness	Intercept	-2.79* (0.291)	
	Anti-Europe		
	EU Instrumental support	-0.65* (0.159)	-0.04***
	Political knowledge	-0.09 (0.129)	
	Economy	0.37** (0.190)	
	Left-Right self-placement	-0.43 (0.290)	
	Left-Right self-placement squared	-0.07 (0.407)	
	Religion	-0.05 (0.133)	
	Education years	1.49* (0.463)	
	Age	-0.19 (0.204)	
Neutral	Intercept	-3.70* (0.296)	
	EU Instrumental support	-0.63* (0.116)	-0.07***
	Political knowledge	0.08 (0.095)	
	Economy	0.04 (0.126)	
	Left-Right self-placement	0.30 (0.314)	
	Left-Right self-placement squared	-1.11* (0.334)	
	Religion	-0.12 (0.098)	
	Education years	-1.36* (0.490)	
	Age	-0.47 (0.148)	
	Pseudo R square	0.042	
	N	4975	

The results of the estimation can be observed in Tables 10a and 10b. In these tables we can confirm the effect of these attitudes of EU instrumental support upon voting preferences is much stronger in countries with high levels of EU party distinctiveness, as we can observe in the significance of the coefficients and the estimated probability presented in the same table.

Table 10b: Predictors of Pro-EU Party Vote by Levels of EU Political Party System Distinctiveness, 2009 (cont.).

REFERENCE CATEGORY: Pro-European vote.		Coeff.	First Prob Diff
High EU Party System Distinctiveness	Anti-Europe	Intercept	-1.08 (0.134)*
		EU Instrumental support	-1.31 (0.075)* -0.47***
		Political knowledge	-0.08 (0.063)
		Economy	0.18 (0.179)**
		Left-Right self-placement	-0.81 (0.198)*
		Left-Right self-placement squared	1.13 (0.189)*
		Religion	0.01 (0.057)
		Education years	-0.88 (0.224)*
		Age	-0.16 (0.095)
		Neutral	Intercept
		EU Instrumental support	-0.19 (0.151) -0.01***
		Political knowledge	-0.40 (0.121)*
		Economy	-0.60 (0.132)*
		Left-Right self-placement	0.37 (0.573)
		Left-Right self-placement squared	0.89 (0.453)**
		Religion	0.72 (0.123)*
		Education years	-1.94 (0.560)*
		Age	-0.85 (0.182)*
		Pseudo R square	0.09
		N	4689

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

\*Significant at  $p < 0.00$

\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$

\*\*\* First Probability differences when rest of variables at fixed at their means.

The probability of voting for an anti-European party instead of a pro-European party in the context of high EU party system distinctiveness decreased by an average of 0.47 when the citizen thinks that the membership of the country to the EU has been beneficial for his/her country. The model is especially relevant when we want to predict the probability of anti-European versus pro-European. Additionally, in general, the results show that the traditional variables that explain party preferences work much better in a context of party distinctiveness. The only exception is the ideological variable when it is not transformed in a quadratic form, showing once more, how the European conflict is a cross-cutting cleavage with the traditional left-right conflict in those countries where the conflict among parties emerges in significant and visible ways.

Table 11: Logistic Predictors for Pro-Europe vote in EP elections 2009

	Log Coeff
Intercept	4.38* (0.168)
EU Instrumental support	0.41** (0.222)
Political knowledge	0.134* (0.047)
Economy	-0.06 (0.056)
Left-right self-placement	0.55* (0.153)
Left-right self-placement squared	-0.69* (0.140)
Religion	0.037 (0.046)
Education	0.59 (0.199)
Age	0.29* (0.071)
EU System Party Distinctiveness	-7.97* (0.311)
EU Instrumental support* EU Party System Distinctiveness	1.20* (0.473)
Pseudo R Square	0.13
N	9,914

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

\*Significant at  $p < 0.00$  \*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$

To test the effect of the sociotropic instrumental variables in the context of party distinctiveness, I have grouped the dependent variables for the sake of simplicity into two categories, not voting (neutral and voting non-European parties) or voting for pro-Europe parties. The preceding results from the multinomial regression show the plausibility of this grouping. I have estimated a logistic regression with robust standard errors with the same model presented in Table 10, but have added the interactive term for EU instrumental support and the level of party system distinctiveness. Also, in order to make the interpretation of the interaction easier, I have transformed the EU instrumental support into a dummy variable.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> I have transformed the categories “no confidence” and “not very much” into 0, and the categories “a great deal” and “fair amount” into 1.

The results, displayed in Table 11, show first that EU party system distinctiveness has a clear negative impact on pro-EU support; i.e., the greater the level of EU distinctiveness, the greater the probability that people will vote for an anti-EU party. Additionally, the interactive term (instrumental support and EU party system distinctiveness) is statistically significant and goes in the expected direction (higher when the party system distinctiveness is greater). We can better observe the conditional effect of instrumental support on EP voting depending on the level of party system distinctiveness with the analysis of marginal effects of this variable displayed in Figure 3. Not only is the slope important but also significant (since the slope increment goes out of the bounds of the confidence interval) (see Brambor, Clark and Golder, 2006).

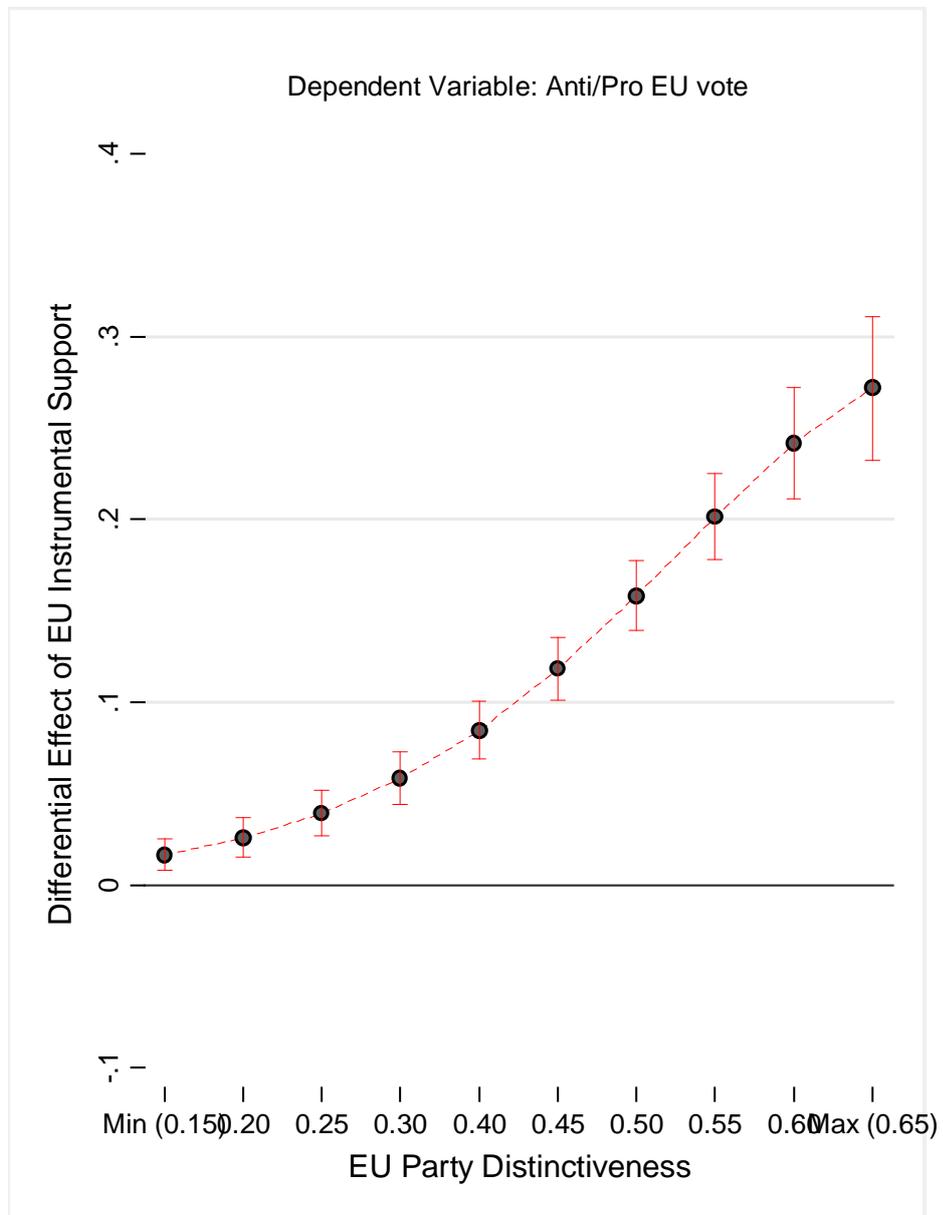


Figure 3: Differential Effect of EU Instrumental Support on ProEU vote as Party Distinctiveness Changes

These results confirm hypothesis II. The replication of this model in a Two Level Hierarchical Logistic Model (results are not displayed) does not add any additional information, and the coefficient of the cross-level interaction remains significant. Again, this result should be expected if we observe the graphical distribution of the random slope for EU instrumental support. The variance component of this slope is 0.719 and it is statistically significant, and as we can see in Figure 4, which contains the 24 national slopes of this coefficient, the cross-national variation of the slopes is important and it seems to depend on the level of EU party system distinctiveness: the impact of this support seems to be conditioned by the level of EU inter-party positions. Before I finish this part, I want to make clear that this preceding model does not propose any causality in the process, but just the interactive nature of the relationship between voting to specific pro- or anti-European parties and EU instrumental support in the context of EU inter-party differentiation.

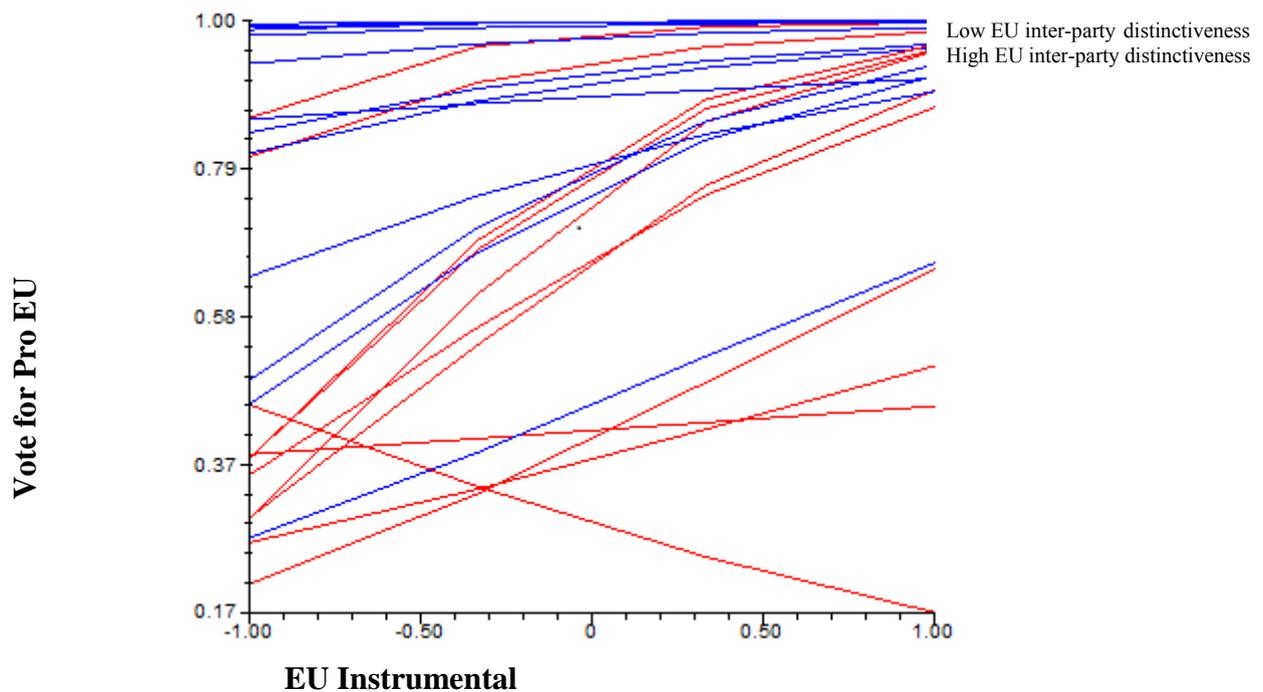


Figure 4: Country Slopes for EU Instrumental Support and Vote for Anti/Pro EU Parties in the 2009 European Elections

*b) Second step: estimating the effect on party preferences*

The final step to test hypotheses I to III is estimating the effect of individual turnout of EU diffuse support and EU instrumental support conditioned by the contextual (country level) of EU party system distinctiveness.<sup>16</sup> In this case I propose to estimate a multilevel model with two cross-level interactions to test if the level of EU party system distinctiveness could explain the random effect of the slopes of the two attitudes of EU support (EU instrumental and EU affective or diffuse support). The model I propose to estimate is the following:

<sup>16</sup> The right way to estimate this model is using the predicted value of the dependent variable of the preceding model that estimates the probability of voting a Pro- or Anti-EU party as the independent variable of individual turnout. The problem, then, will be that in this case all the individuals included in the estimation would have declared that they had participated in the election.

$$\text{Prob}(EPVOTE_{ij}=1|\beta_j) = \phi_{ij}$$

$$\log[\phi_{ij}/(1 - \phi_{ij})] = \eta_{ij}$$

$$\eta_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} * EU \text{ Party System } DISTINCTIVENESS_j + \beta_{1j} * (TURNOUT \text{ NAT. ELECTIONS}_{ij})$$

$$+ \beta_{2j} * (EU \text{ DIFUSSE SUP}_{ij}) + \beta_{3j} * (EU \text{ INSTRUMENTAL SUP}_{ij}) + \beta_{4j} * (EU \text{ KNOWLEDGE}_{ij}) +$$

$$\beta_{5j} * (LEFT\_RIGHT_{ij}) + \beta_{6j} * (LEFT \text{ RIGHT SQUARE}_{ij}) + \gamma_{21} * (EU \text{ Party System } DISTINCTIVENESS_j$$

$$* INSTRUMENTAL SUP_{ij}) + u_{0j}$$

Table 12: Logistic Multilevel Model for European Elections Turnout, 2009

<i>Fixed effects at individual level</i>	Log Coeff.
Participation in National Elections	1.72 (0.060)*
Political knowledge	0.43 (0.044)*
Left-right self-placement	-0.73 (0.145)*
Left-right self-placement squared	0.84 (0.156)*
<i>Random effects at individual level</i>	
EU Diffuse support ( $\gamma_{20}$ )	0.20 (0.039)*
EU Instrumental support ( $\gamma_{30}$ )	0.41 (0.044)*
Country-level intercept ( $\gamma_{00}$ )	1.27 (0.113) *
<i>Aggregate level variables</i>	
EU party System Distinctiveness ( $\gamma_{01}$ )	-0.54 (0.939)
<i>Cross level interactions</i>	
EU Diffuse Support * EU party System Distinctiveness ( $\gamma_{21}$ )	0.24 (0.335)
EU Instrumental Support * EU party System Distinctiveness ( $\gamma_{31}$ )	0.57 (0.325)**
<i>N</i>	20,615

Source: PIREDEU data set on the 2009 EP Elections.

\*Significant at  $p < 0.00$

\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 12 contains the results of the estimation of this multilevel model. The most important finding is that EU Party System Distinctiveness (the cross level interaction between EU instrumental support and EU party system distinctiveness) is significant and it goes in the right direction ( $\gamma_{31}=0.41$ ); in other words, EU system distinctiveness (a country level variable) is able to explain the country differences that exist in the relation between EU instrumental support and EP individual turnout. Therefore, the effect of  $B_{EU}$  on turnout is conditioned by the relative presence of the EU conflict in the political arena and its interaction with the selection of a pro or an anti-EU party. However, this is not the case for EU affective support, as we can see for the significance of the parameter ( $\gamma_{21}=0.24$ ). The lack of significance of this parameter means that the influence of the  $D_{EU}$  on EP turnout is constant regardless of the EU party system distinctiveness at the national level, which once more confirms hypothesis I.

## **Conclusion**

As we have seen, attitudes of EU support might have a clear effect on EP turnout, but depend on the level of EU inter-party conflict in the national arena. The effect of EU affective support in explaining individual turnout is small on average and uniform across countries regardless of the politicization of Europe in the national arenas, something that it is expected given the nature of this support. But in countries where the level of EU party distinctiveness is low, it is the only attitude contributing to increased individual turnout. So, in countries where this type of diffuse support is low and the level of EU party distinctiveness is also very low, participation in this type of elections should also be low. However, the picture is very different when it comes to the effect of EU sociotropic instrumental support. This kind of support was still relatively important on average for the European elections of 2009, but its effect was highly conditioned by the level of EU party system distinctiveness at the national level. The effect of this type of EU instrumental support on voting preferences is very weak in countries with low levels of distinctiveness, but it is much higher when parties hold very different positions on EU integration. Therefore, this is an important aspect in explaining individual turnout in the latter countries.

This is not a denial of the importance of national politics in European elections. On the contrary, EU national polarization or the Europeanization of national politics is a distinctive national political feature, and its impact is driving the electoral and political conflicts crafted by the main national political parties. What make the European elections second-order elections are the different positions of the national parties on EU issues. No EU inter-party conflict means that electoral participation depends only on the levels of EU support, and voting preferences are merely a reflection of what is going on in the main political arena. However, greater levels of EU inter-party conflict augments the individual consumption benefit of participating in the European elections, and, consequently, increasing the level of participation in these elections, although it might also signify an increased anti-EU vote.

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# The Electoral Trade-off: How Values and Ideology Affect Party Preference Formation in Europe<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Scholarly literature on post-communist countries of East Central Europe points to differences in how voting behaviour is structured in those countries in comparison with more established democracies of Western Europe. This chapter shows that, in addition, considerable variance exists in the impact of values on party preferences across East and West. However, those differences can be explained by a general pattern characterising voter behaviour. We theorize and empirically prove that the variance in the effects of values across countries is caused by the varying degree to which voters' attitudes are structured by left/right. In countries where it is less clear for voters what left/right stands for and where they can locate their attitudes in terms of left/right, the effect of values is stronger. In turn, in countries where voters know better how their attitudes relate to the major dimension of competition, the effect of values is weaker. Our findings explain why in post-communist democracies the effect of left/right on party preferences is weaker, while the effects of values are stronger than in Western European countries. This proposition is empirically substantiated in a two-step analysis using the European Election Study 2009.

## Introduction

Scholars of comparative electoral behaviour have been increasingly interested in cross-country differences in the extent of structural voting, ideological voting and issue voting. Several of these studies focus on the differences in the determinants of party support between established democracies in Western Europe and formerly communist countries in East Central Europe. Those studies, which treat established and consolidating democracies as rather homogenous blocks of countries, show that in the latter the effect of social class and left/right distance is weaker (De Graaf et al. 1994; Van der Brug et al. 2008), while the effects of religion and EU issue voting is stronger than in established democracies (De Vries and Tillman 2010). However, those studies do not account for variance within country groups. This approach downplays different paths of development that those countries have undergone (Kitschelt 1999) and disguises differences among them. This chapter takes a broader view on the variation between European countries by examining differences in the effects of values on party support and outlining factors which explain those cross-country differences.

The focus of this chapter lies on the demand-side factors that determine the extent to which values affect party preferences. We believe that the crucial variable responsible for the differences in the effects of values on party support across countries is the extent to which voters' value stances are structured by left/right. From the extant literature we can devise two opposing hypotheses on the impact of values on party preferences. The first line of reasoning is that if party political conflicts are not structured by left/right, it is difficult for voters to know where parties stand on these conflict dimensions (Van der Brug et al. 2008). When voters do

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not know where parties stand on specific value dimensions, they may have difficulty relating their own value stances to their position on left/right. Subsequently, it is unlikely that voters will take these values into consideration when forming their party preferences as they will not know how those values relate to the major dimension of political competition. The effect of values on party support is then expected to increase when issues and voters' attitudes towards those issues are more strongly associated with left/right. However, research on policy voting has also shown that there is a trade-off between the effect of left/right and the effect of issues on party support (Bellucci 1994; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). When voting is strongly structured by left/right distance, there is less room for issues to have an effect, and vice versa. The same reasoning could hold for values which are associated with those issues. This leads us to the prediction that there is more room for party support to be structured by values when voters' value stances are to a lesser extent structured by left/right.

This chapter tests those opposing predictions. Based on our aggregate analysis we empirically prove that in countries where voters' stances on values are to a considerable extent structured by left/right, voters use the left/right considerations to convey their preferences. Thus, the effect of values on party preferences is weaker in those countries. In turn, in countries where voters' positioning on values is to a weaker extent structured by left/right, voters take direct recourse to values. Here, the effect of values on party preferences is stronger. Not only do these findings contribute to our general understanding of the way voters arrive at their party choice, but also the results of our chapter help us understand the differences between party support in consolidating democracies in East Central Europe and established democracies of Western Europe. In Western democracies, voters know better what the left/right means in practical policy terms and how their attitudes relate to the major dimension of competition as more stable party systems have provided them with enough clarity on where they stand on the left/right dimension. Thus, voters are able to convey their attitudes at the ballot box through direct recourse to left/right. In less stable democracies of East Central Europe, in turn, it is less clear for voters what left/right stands for and where they can locate their attitudes in the more abstract terms which dominate political competition. As a result, the left/right cognitive shortcut proves to be less useful for voters in their decision about which party to choose and values play a more important role.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section we discuss the relevant literature and derive expectations on the cross-country differences in the impact of values on party preferences. We test those expectations in a two-step analysis based on a research design proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). For this purpose, we employ the European Election Study 2009. Subsequently, we present our findings and we conclude by discussing their implications for comparative research on party preferences in the European Union.

## **Theoretical Expectations**

### ***Values, Left/Right and Party Preferences***

Many previous studies have shown that across various European systems the behaviour of parties and voters alike has been structured largely by the left-right dimension, which until the 1990s remained the dominant ideological dimension (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Klingemann et al. 1994; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Hix 1999). Not all substantive differences between parties and among voters, however, are captured by their positions on the left/right dimension. In elections not all issues can play a role because it is unrealistic to assume that there will be a party with which one fully agrees on all possible substantive issues. In the words of Sartori (1976), "*when the citizen speaks, he may have many things to say, but when he is coerced into casting a (...) vote, he may well have to (...) vote for the party (...) perceived as closest on the left-right spectrum (...)*". Electoral research from the 1980s and 1990s confirms that voters reached their electoral decision by considering which party was the closest to them

on the left/right dimension (Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Oppenhuis 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Schmitt 2001; Van der Brug et al. 2008).

The left/right dimension constitutes an ‘ideological super-issue’ (Pierce 1999), which summarises diverse policy issues in the domestic arena (Marks and Steenbergen 2002). However, the meaning of the left/right dimension is not fixed, but may vary across countries and over time (Gabel and Huber 2000). Similarly, the degree to which issues are structured by the left/right dimension may vary. This applies both to issues structured by left/right at the level of political parties as well as at the level of voters. Given the heterogeneity of issues dominating political discussions in countries of the European Union, we may encounter differences across countries with respect to which issues have been assimilated by the left/right dimension. Furthermore, the degree to which those issues have been assimilated by left/right may vary across countries. Similarly, values associated with those issues may be to a varying extent structured by left/right. The above implies that the left/right as a cognitive shortcut may take a different meaning in various countries as it structures various issues, and related values, to a varying extent across countries.

Recent research points to a gradual decline of left/right in its capacity to structure behaviour of parties and voters in Western Europe. An important development is that the largest parties have converged on the left/right dimension (Pennings and Keman 2003; Green and Hobolt 2008). As the Third Wave social democrats have accepted the basic principles of free market capitalism, the larger political parties have become less distinct in left/right terms. If the differences between parties on the left/right dimension have become smaller, the left/right ideology proves to be a less useful cue for voters on which to base their electoral choices. As it has been referred to above, the meaning of left/right goes beyond the socio-economic policies. New issues, such as environmentalism and immigration have, to a large extent become integrated in the left/right dimension, at least at the party level. However, some of those issues are at the level of voters almost uncorrelated with the left/right. Recent research shows that voters’ attitudes towards immigration are very weakly structured by the major dimension of competition (Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009). Thus, if voters want to influence immigration policies by their vote, they cannot take recourse to their left/right position in their party choice. The combination of these two developments – parties converging on the left/right dimension and new issues not being structured by left/right — leads to the prediction that the left/right ideology will lose its capacity to structure voting behaviour. Subsequently, other considerations, such as voters’ value orientations towards political issues may play a more substantive role in structuring party preferences (Rose and McAllister 1986). Owing to the facts that new conflict dimensions may arise, which are not clearly structured by left/right and that choices of voters at the ballot box may be increasingly influenced by other considerations than left/right, it is pertinent to look at the effects of values on party preferences. As we may expect considerable variance with regard to which values are important for electorates in each of the European countries as well as how values relate to the main dimension of competition in those countries, we systematically compare the effects of values on party preferences across all countries of the European Union.

Values are cognitive structures of knowledge and beliefs guiding peoples’ attitudes towards political issues (Campbell et al. 1960; Johnston Conover and Feldman 1983; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990). They are regarded as the ultimate underpinnings of political behaviour as they condition the formation of attitudes and preferences on a range of issues (Feldman 2003). Values are considered stable long-term determinants of party preferences (Feldman 2003), in contradistinction to voters’ opinions and preferences on concrete issues which may be ambivalent and inconsistent (Converse 1964; Meffert et al. 2004, Steenbergen and Brewer 2004). Values are more encompassing than specific issues and are also more deep-rooted. They are expected to constrain attitudes towards more specific issues. In our analysis, we use the term ‘value schema’ rather than ‘value dimension’, both employed in political behaviour literature. The reason is that various items that measure respondents’ attitudes on issues in a

specific policy domain are too weakly related to speak of ‘dimensions’. The term ‘schema’ has been used in social psychology to describe cognitive structures which organise attitudes and political beliefs in a bipolar spatial metaphor (Johnston Conover and Feldman 1984; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990). In this chapter, we look at four value schemas – socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian, EU integration and immigration – which have dominated the literature on party choice and attitude formation.

The first value schema we employ here refers to socio-economic issues and encompasses the traditional division of attitudes towards the free market and the role of the state in the economy. On the one hand, we find approval of state involvement in the economy and a more just distribution of income and wealth in society, while on the other we find support for a free market economy and the economic freedom of individuals without state control (Downs 1957; Lipset et al. 1954). The second value schema, labelled libertarian-authoritarian, encompasses attitudes on the position of individuals in the society, namely greater societal and personal freedoms, including equality of women and rights for sexual minorities, greater citizen participation in democratic structures as well as lifestyle issues. This is contrasted here with attitudes including restriction of personal freedoms of minorities, respect for authority and discipline, emphasis on economic and physical security such as a tough stance on crime and support for a stronger army (Inglehart 1977; Flanagan 1987; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Dalton 1984; Flanagan 1987; Hooghe et al. 2002; Knutsen 2006). A further value schema used in this study refers to attitudes towards European integration and immigration (Hix 1999; Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008). Those attitudes seem to have restructured the traditional socio-cultural dimension in Western Europe and overshadowed the questions of lifestyle and public order in their importance for party preferences (Kriesi et al. 2008; Bornschieer 2010). Although Kriesi et al. (2008) assert that the socio-cultural schema has been restructured by attitudes towards immigration and EU integration, we consider attitudes towards both issues separately from the traditional socio-cultural value schema as they are clearly distinctive to the materialist vs. post-materialist considerations. Furthermore, we look at the impact of attitudes towards EU integration and immigration on party preferences separately, as there are reasons to expect that in consolidating democracies voter attitudes towards EU integration are independent from considerations regarding immigration.

### ***What Explains Country Differences?***

Which factors explain cross-country differences in the effects of values on party preferences? We argue that the crucial variable is the extent to which voters’ attitudes are structured by left/right. Where party systems have been less stable, voters will have more difficulty linking their attitudes and value stances to their positions on left/right. In other words, it will be less clear for them where their own attitudes can be located in terms of higher order concepts which dominate political competition and what the left/right effectively stands for in terms of practical policy. Thus, voters’ stances on value schemas will be weakly correlated with their positions in left/right terms. In turn, when party systems are more established, and positions of political parties on issues and left/right have been more stable, thus allowing voters to undergo a learning process with respect to party positioning, voters will be more capable of relating their stances on values to their position on left/right. They will know better what the left/right dimension signifies in terms of practical policy and where their attitudes can be placed on the more abstract continuum used in political competition. Thus, in more stable democratic systems voters’ value stances will be to a higher extent correlated with their position on left/right. It is the extent to which voters’ positions on values are structured by left/right which will be responsible for the differences in the effects of value schemas on party preferences.

As we know that voters evaluate political alternatives in higher order concepts such as left/right (Downs 1957; Conover and Feldman 1984; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Van der Brug 1997), we believe that this shortcut fulfils its function when voters know what left/right stands for and how to place their own attitudes in terms of left/right. We could expect, on the one hand, that in countries where voters are to a lesser extent capable of linking their attitudes

to left/right, the less clear it will be for voters what left/right stands for and where their own attitudes can be located in terms of this more abstract dimension which dominates political competition. We could expect here that in those countries we will observe a weaker effect of values on party preferences. In turn, in countries where voters are more capable of linking the attitudes they hold to their position on left/right, the more clarity they will have about what the left/right shortcut stands for and where exactly their attitudes fit in terms of an abstract dimension of competition. Those considerations lead us to the first of our two opposing expectations.

*Hypothesis 1:* There will be a positive relationship between the degree to which voters' stances on values are structured by left/right and the impact of values on party preferences.

On the other hand, we could expect that in countries where voters are more capable of linking their values to their position on left/right, voters will more often use the cognitive shortcut as they know better what this shortcut means in practical policy terms. Their attitudes and stances on values will be transmitted through the usage of left/right. In this case, a direct recourse to values will be unnecessary as voters can convey their attitudes through voting according to their left/right position. However, in countries where voters are less capable of linking their stances on values to left/right, the cognitive shortcut will prove less useful for voters as they will not be able to convey their attitudes effectively through the simple recourse to their left/right stance. Here, the direct considerations such as values will play a more important role for party support. This reasoning leads us to the following expectation.

*Hypothesis 2:* There will be a negative relationship between the degree to which voters' stances on values are structured by left/right and the impact of values on party preferences.

We also take into account other factors which may explain why the effects of values on party preferences are higher in some countries than in others. We treat them here as control variables to test our main hypotheses on the relationship between the degree to which attitudes are structured by left/right on the one hand and party preferences on the other. One of those factors is the agreement among voters with regard to where political parties in their country stand on left/right. This structural agreement denotes the degree to which voters share the same perceptions of where parties are located on the left/right scale in the political system (Van der Eijk 2001). We expect that the higher the agreement among voters on where parties stand on left/right, the more clarity voters have regarding where parties stand on left/right. Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996) have shown that the effect of left/right on party preferences is positively related to the degree to which voters agree upon where political parties stand on the left/right political spectrum. In line with previous argumentation, our expectations here can be twofold. On the one hand, we expect that the clearer it is for voters where political parties stand on left/right, the easier it will be for them to know where parties stand on issues and which values they associate with them. Therefore, we hypothesise as follows.

*Hypothesis 3:* There will be a positive relationship between the degree of structural agreement among voters and the impact of values on party preferences.

On the other hand, we could expect that if it is clear for voters in a party system where parties stand on left/right, voters will use the left/right considerations more extensively. As voters are able to convey their attitudes through recourse to left/right, the effect of values will be weaker. This reasoning leads us to the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 4:* There will be a negative relationship between the degree of structural agreement among voters and the impact of values on party preferences.

Furthermore, we account for two other factors that may affect the impact of values on party preferences. The first one is voter polarisation. We know from the existing literature that the more political parties are polarized on a dimension of competition, such as left/right, the stronger is the effect of voters' positions on this dimension, in this case their left/right positions, on party preferences (Van der Eijk et al. 2005; Ensley 2007; Lachat 2008). In a similar vein, we expect that the more voters are polarised in terms of their stances on value schemas, the stronger the effect of those values on party preferences will be (Knutson and Kumlin 2005). Last, but not least, the differences in the effects of value schemas across countries may be attributed to the extent to which voters of those countries consider particular issues as important or problematic for their country. In order to capture the differences in the significance of problems among European electorates, we account for voter perceptions regarding the most important problem facing the country. We expect that the more an issue is considered as the most important problem facing the country of respondents, the higher the effect of values associated with this issue on party preferences will be.

### ***The East-West Divide?***

Over the past two decades, much research has focused on the differences in patterns of party preferences between consolidating democracies in East Central Europe and more established democracies in Western Europe. Various studies have pointed to historical legacies of authoritarian rule under the communist regimes as an explanation for differences of how party support is structured across East and West. In consolidating democracies the party systems are less stable than in established democracies. In the former, political parties have repeatedly adapted their policies and ideological profiles in the face of changing opportunities for political mobilisation. The political systems have been more fluid, as parties have been appearing, changing their names, coalescing with other parties or vanishing from the political scene (Cirtautas 1994; Wesolowski 1996). Consequently, it has been more difficult for voters to establish how political parties differ in terms of policies they advocate as party stances have been blurred on some, mostly economic, issues (Markowski 1997). This lack of clarity has been partly caused by strategic considerations of left-wing parties that aimed to shake off their communist image by adopting extensive market policies, thus precluding the possibility of voters distinguishing political parties on the economic left/right dimension (Tavits and Letki 2009). In addition, the frequent changes in the supply of parties and the movement of elites between political parties in the early stages of party system development have led to confusion among voters with regard to which policies political parties advocate, contributing to increased voter volatility (Tavits 2008). The shifts in the policies formulated by political parties in new democracies have been partly induced by the requirements of accession to the European Union (Vachudova and Hooghe 2009). Those changes in identity and location of political parties have undermined the learning process that voters in new democracies have been undergoing. Unlike in Western democracies, where voters live in stable political systems with the same parties competing mostly from the same location on the left/right spectrum (Oppenhuis 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Van der Brug 1997), voters in post-communist democracies have experienced a fluid party system where the learning process with regard to where parties stand on left/right and what is their stance on issues has been much more difficult. Even if party systems have been slowly stabilising (Kitschelt et al. 1999), voters have been experiencing more stable positions of parties only in the last couple of years, which does not allow for a thorough learning process.

Twenty years after the fall of communism, voters from both established and consolidating democracies are guided by similar considerations while choosing a political party at the ballot box. Still, differences remain with regard to which determinants of party support play a more important role in structuring party preferences in the new and established democracies of the European Union. Research has shown so far that the consolidating democracies see somewhat stronger effects of religion, satisfaction with democracy and age, and somewhat weaker effects of social class, government approval and strategic considerations than more established democracies (Van der Brug et al. 2008). Considerations regarding EU integration play, a bigger

role among East Central European voters than among voters in Western Europe (De Vries and Tillman 2010). The major difference, however, in the determinants of party preferences is the significantly lower effect of left/right on party preferences in the consolidating democracies. It seems that in the new democracies voters use the left/right considerations in their decisions to support a political party to a lesser extent than their counterparts in the West. In turn, no systematic research has been conducted so far with regard to the effects of values across established and consolidating democracies. Owing to the different paths of development of Western European and East Central European countries, we expect to find differences in the effects of values on party support between both groups. We argue that whatever differences will be found between East and West will be explained by the contextual variables outlined in the previous section. Now, we turn to a brief methodological discussion, after which we proceed with the presentation of our results.

### **Operationalization, Data and Methods**

This chapter explores and explains differences in the effects of values and left/right across countries of the European Union. For this purpose, we employ a two-step analysis based on a research design proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). We use the European Election Study 2009 (EES 2009) which is a representative study of the electorates of all EU countries. Our analysis involves 28 political systems as Belgium is treated as two separate political systems (Flanders and Wallonia).<sup>4</sup> The total sample size amounts to 27,369 respondents, where the majority of country databases contain exactly 1,000 respondents.

The method proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996) allows us to systematically compare voter preferences for political parties across countries of the European Union. Methodologies such as multinomial or conditional logit, which are frequently employed to analyse party choice, do not lend themselves to answer the research questions of this study. In such approaches, the outcome variable (party choice) is a nominal variable, which differs from country to country as it consists of a country-specific set of choices. As long as we do not want to redefine the outcome variable to a dichotomy, we would have to carry out separate country studies without straightforward means of comparing the results across countries. In order to overcome this restraint, we create a stacked data matrix with propensities to vote for political parties as the outcome variable (Tillie 1995; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Van der Eijk 2002; Van der Eijk et al. 2006). The outcome variable is the observed strength of support that a respondent assigns to all political parties in her party system. In each country, voters are asked how likely it is (on an 11-point scale) that they will ever vote for a list of political parties in their country. Those propensities to vote for political parties can be regarded as preferences, because voters generally decide to vote for a party they most prefer. An advantage of this method is that vote propensities are comparable across countries as the electoral support of voters to political parties is measured on an identical scale. Even though the question on vote propensities is framed with reference to each particular party, the resulting party preference variable no longer refers to a specific party, but to parties in general. This enables us to consider the effects of explanatory variables on propensities to vote for all political parties across Europe.

In the first step of the analysis, we create a stacked data matrix for each of the political systems under study. The stacked data matrix is derived from a survey data matrix, in which the unit of analysis is transformed from the respondent to the respondent\*party combination. The respondent appears here as many times as there are parties for which vote propensities were measured. The level of analysis is effectively changed from the individual level to the

<sup>4</sup> Belgium is effectively a two-system country as it is not possible for voters in the Flemish region to cast a ballot for Wallonian parties and vice versa. For this reason, Flanders and Wallonia are treated separately.

individual\*party level. In the first step, we measure the effects of value schemas, controlled by a number of variables, on party preferences for each political system under study. The variables of interest are socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian value schemas as well as E U integration and immigration schemas. We control for left/right distance, age, gender, social class, education, religion, approval of the government, satisfaction with democracy, retrospective and prospective economic evaluation and party size. As the outcome variable reflects preferences of voters for all political parties, we need to transform the explanatory variables so that they reflect the relation between a respondent and a political party. This can be done by setting the explanatory variable in relation to the outcome variable through employing a distance measure or the y-hat procedure, both of which will be explained below.

In order to operationalize the value schemas, we employ a number of questions from the EES 2009. For the socio-economic schema, we use questions on whether private enterprise is the best way to solve a country's economic problems, whether major public services and industries should be in state ownership, whether politics should abstain from intervening in the economy as well as whether income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people. For the libertarian-authoritarian schema, questions are used on whether same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law, whether women should be free to decide on matters of abortion, whether women should be prepared to cut down on their paid work for the sake of their family, whether people who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days as well as whether schools must teach children to obey authority. Furthermore, we use questions on immigration – whether immigrants should be required to adapt to customs of the receiving country and whether immigration in the country of respondents should be decreased significantly. We also employ questions on EU integration, in particular whether EU membership of the country is regarded as a good or bad thing and which stance respondents have on EU unification and EU enlargement. Responses to each set of questions are on the same valence i.e. they have been re-coded on the same scale so that low scores indicate left-wing attitudes and high scores indicate right-wing attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

The value schemas represent very broad concepts which do not need a priori to reflect a single dimension, although recent literature on party choice postulates the presence of clear socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian (Kitschelt 1995) and integration-demarkation (Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008) dimensions in Western Europe. In order to analyse the dimensionality of the schemas and explore whether each set of items can be combined in a single scale both in each country under study, confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation and non-parametric Mokken scaling have been used.<sup>6</sup> All employed techniques show that those dimensions can be found in some countries of the EU, but not in others.<sup>7</sup> This does not allow us for the creation of separate scales which would be comparable for all countries. Therefore, we use the items relating to value schemas as separate items in a y-hat procedure. Here, we predict the outcome variable for each party separately on the basis of a simple regression analysis using the vote propensities for this party as the outcome variable and the items chosen to represent each value schema as predictors. These regressions per party yield one predicted score (y-hat) for each respondent for each value schema. After these y-hats are computed for each party separately,

<sup>5</sup> For the socio-economic schema, low scores reflect attitudes approving of state control of the economy, while high scores point to attitudes encompassing *laissez-faire* market economy and retrenchment of the state. For the libertarian-authoritarian schema, low scores indicate acceptance of same-sex marriages, women's right to decide on abortion and her occupation as well as less emphasis on law and order in the society, while high scores indicate the opposite. For EU integration and immigration, low scores indicate favourable attitudes to further EU integration and immigration, while high scores point to opposition to closer EU integration and little tolerance towards immigrants. Here, we employ the logic of Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008), who attribute left-wing attitudes to greater support towards EU integration and immigration and right-wing attitudes to opposition to both.

<sup>6</sup> Those techniques have been employed on each country separately to explore whether comparable value scales emerge.

<sup>7</sup> Due to space limitations the results of the confirmatory factor analysis and Mokken scaling are not included in this chapter. They are available upon request from the authors.

they are saved and used as an explanatory variable. They represent linear transformations of the original independent variables, which are centred on their means in order to remove country-specific differences from the analysis. Such transformed y-hats are added to the stacked data matrix as they are comparable across parties and countries.

Most of the control variables have been constructed using the y-hat procedure as well. The relevant literature on party choice teaches us that we should control for age, social class, education (Swyngedouw et al. 1998), gender (Gidengil et al. 2005), religion, approval of government and satisfaction with democracy (Van der Eijk et al. 1999), retrospective and prospective evaluation of the economic situation in the country of respondents (Lewis-Beck 1988) and party size (Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Furthermore, we control for left/right distance in the first stage of analysis. Those variables, except for the left/right distance, are created using the inductive procedure where either a numerical independent variable or a set of dummy variables are regressed on propensities to vote for political parties in the political system. Age is created by regressing age of voters on propensity to vote for political parties. Gender uses a dummy for male/female in the same procedure. Social class is created with a subjective measure of self-assessed belonging to a particular class location. Education is represented by respondents' self-placement according to various levels of education specific for each country. Religion is a composite variable of religious denomination, church attendance and level of religiosity. Approval of government uses a dummy representing the level of satisfaction with the incumbent government, while satisfaction with democracy is created with questions on satisfaction with democracy in the country of the respondent in particular and in the EU in general. The retrospective and prospective economic evaluation variables are constructed with questions on how voters assess the country's economy in the last year and how the country's economy will develop in the coming year respectively. For the left/right distance, we use the questions asking respondents to indicate how they would place themselves on an 11-point left/right scale as well as to indicate where they perceive the political parties on the same scale. This variable is transformed in the distance variable by subtracting the voter's own position from the position of each party on the left/right scale. The absolute value of this variable has been included in the stacked data matrix.<sup>8</sup> If voters prefer parties close to them in terms of left/right distance, then the resulting measure should exert a negative effect on vote propensities i.e. the smaller the distance between voter and party, the greater the preference for the party. In addition to the individual-level variables, we add party size as a party-level control variable. Measured in parliamentary seats, party size is meant to represent a strategic consideration which voters may take into account while casting a vote at the ballot box. When two or more parties are nearly equally attractive for some voters, then those voters tend to vote for the largest of these parties because it has the best chance of achieving its policy goals.

After having included the value schemas and control variables into the stacked data matrices of 28 political systems, we performed a linear regression, using the Huber-White-Sandwich estimate of variance to account for the dependency among observations pertaining to the same respondent (Rogers 1993; Williams 2002). From each stacked data matrix we stored the coefficients for the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian, EU integration and immigration value schemas in a separate database. The number of observations in this database equals the number of the analysed political systems, namely 28. This database will be used in the second step of the analysis, in which we aim to explain the differences in the effects of value schemas on party preferences across countries. Here, we again use linear regression with White's heteroscedastic consistent standard errors (Lewis and Linzer 2005). The explanatory variables that we include in the second step of the analysis are measures of correlation between voters' left-right self-placement and their position on the value schemas, left/right system agreement, voter polarisation on the value schemas as well as a variable that identifies the most important

<sup>8</sup> If the respondent did not answer the question on the position of any particular party, we replaced the missing value with the national sample mean of the perceived party position. In this way, we lost only respondents who failed to place themselves in the left/right terms.

problem facing the country. In order to operationalise the correlation variables, we take recourse to the question on voters' self-placement on the left/right scale and responses to questions which have been used to construct the value schemas, as explained above. The positioning of voters on a value schema has been created by adding up and averaging voters' responses on the schema of interest. The correlation variables thus yield a single correlation for each value schema in each party system. In order to operationalise the left/right system agreement we use a question where respondents were asked to place each political party on the left/right scale ranging from 0 to 10. This measure of perceptions of left/right positions of political parties has been weighted using the proportion of valid votes obtained in the national parliamentary elections preceding the elections to the European Parliament in 2009 (Van der Eijk 2001). The polarisation of voters on value schemas is measured by the standard deviation in the positions of voters on the value schemas in each party system under study. Furthermore, we analysed voter responses to the question regarding the most important problem facing their country. Countries where at least 5 per cent of voters see issues related to the value schemas under study as the most important problem were indicated with 1, while others with 0.

The choice of the two-step analysis has been dictated by two considerations. Firstly, we aim to capture and explain the differences in the effects of value schemas across all countries of the European Union. Dividing the countries under study into categories would not reflect the differences among them. Secondly, our variables of interest – value schemas – cannot be interacted with the explanatory variables in the stacked data matrix as they have been transformed in the course of the  $\hat{y}$  procedure. This restriction precludes us from including covariates in a stacked data matrix or using hierarchical modelling, where  $\hat{y}$  variables would be interacted. Now, we turn to the findings of the two-step model.

## Findings

Table 1 presents the results of the second step analysis, in which we explain the variation in the effects of the socio-economic schema (model 1), libertarian-authoritarian-schema (model 2), immigration (model 3) and EU integration (model 4) across the 28 political systems under study. The first part of each model shows the effects of left/right system agreement and correlations between voters' left/right self-placement and their stances on value schemas, voter polarization on relevant issues and a measure of the most important problem facing the country. The second part of each model shows bivariate regressions of the correlation variables on value schemas.

Table 1 shows that there is a negative relationship between the degree to which voters' stances on values are correlated with left/right and the impact of values on party preferences. This relationship holds for the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian and immigration value schemas, while it does not explain the variation in the effect of EU integration. The effects of the correlation variables between left/right self-placement and the libertarian-authoritarian schema as well as the correlation between left/right self-placement and immigration, controlled by structural agreement, voter polarization and the most important problem variable, are strong and highly significant (-.66 and -.85 respectively). The effect of the correlation between left/right self-placement and socio-economic schema fails to reach statistical significance once we add left/right system agreement to the model. However, its effect points in the negative direction (-.19) and shows high statistical significance in the bivariate regression (-.33). The bivariate regressions show strong significant effects of the correlation variables for the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian schemas and immigration (-.33, -.80 and -.72 respectively). Moreover, models 1, 2 and 3 show that our explanatory variables account for a considerable amount in the variation of the effects of value schemas ( $R^2$  of .57 for socio-economic, .56 for libertarian-authoritarian and .33 for immigration schema). The  $R^2$  in bivariate regressions shows that the correlation variables explain the lion's share of the variance we are interested in (.16, .46 and .27 respectively).

Table 1: Factors explaining variation in the effects of value schemas on party preferences.

<b>Model 1</b>		<b>Model 2</b>		<b>Model 3</b>		<b>Model 4</b>	
<b>Socio-economic schema</b>		<b>Libertarian-authoritarian schema</b>		<b>Immigration</b>		<b>EU Integration</b>	
LR system agreement	-.12 (.12)	LR system agreement	-.37** (.16)	LR system agreement	-.30 (.31)	LR system agreement	-.57** (.25)
Correlation LR self-placement & SocEcon	-.19 (.21)	Correlation LR self-placement & LibAuth	-.66*** (.21)	Correlation LR self-placement & Immig	-.85*** (.26)	Correlation LR self-placement & EUInt	.24 (.39)
Voter polarization on SocEcon (sd)	.01 (.28)	Voter polarization on LibAuth (sd)	-.12 (.25)	Voter polarization on Immig (sd)	-.01 (.17)	Voter polarization on EUInt (sd)	-.32 (.47)
Economy as the most important problem	.12*** (.03)	LibAuth issues as the most important problem	-.03 (.06)	Immig as the most important problem	.07* (.03)	EUInt as the most important problem	-
R <sup>2</sup> : .57		R <sup>2</sup> : .56		R <sup>2</sup> : .33		R <sup>2</sup> : .23	
<b>Bivariate Regressions</b>							
Correlation LR self-placement & SocEcon	-.33** (.14)	Correlation LR self-placement & LibAuth	-.80*** (.16)	Correlation LR self-placement & Immig	-.72*** (.24)	Correlation LR self-placement & EUInt	.1 (.33)
R <sup>2</sup> : .16		R <sup>2</sup> : .46		R <sup>2</sup> : .27		R <sup>2</sup> : .003	

Notes: \*\*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$  \*\* significant at  $p < 0.05$  \* significant at  $p < 0.1$  (one-tailed); cell entries represent regression coefficients obtained in a second step analysis in a linear regression using White's heteroscedastic consistent standard errors

Model 4 shows that the negative relationship between the correlation variable of voters' stances on EU integration and their left/right positioning and the impact of EU integration on party preferences does not hold, unlike for other value schemas. This may not be surprising as EU integration represents a relatively complex policy issue. As De Vries (2007, 2010) points out, EU integration as a complex issue which is relatively new to national politics, will impact party choice if political parties provide cues for voters on this issue. How the effect of EU integration on party choice varies across countries, can be mostly explained by the degree to which parties link their EU position to their positioning on the major dimension of competition i.e. left/right. Our analysis provides indirect support to those findings. As it is shown in Graph 3, the degree to which voters stances on EU integration are correlated with their positioning on left/right has been very low, with very little variance across countries. The correlations range here from .01 (France) to .22 (Sweden), with a high effect of EU integration on party preferences in Malta (.4). However, countries vary to a large extent with regard to how EU integration affects party preferences, as it is depicted by the spread of the effects on the y-axis. This variance cannot be explained by the demand-side variables which have been included in this study.<sup>9</sup> The results presented in model 4 show that those demand-side explanatory

<sup>9</sup> The variable EU integration as the most important problem has been omitted as in no EU country any problem related to EU integration has been mentioned at the level of 5 per cent of the responses. The reason might be that the European Election Study 2009 was conducted in the period of economic crisis in Europe, when socio-economic concerns overshadowed any other potential problems.

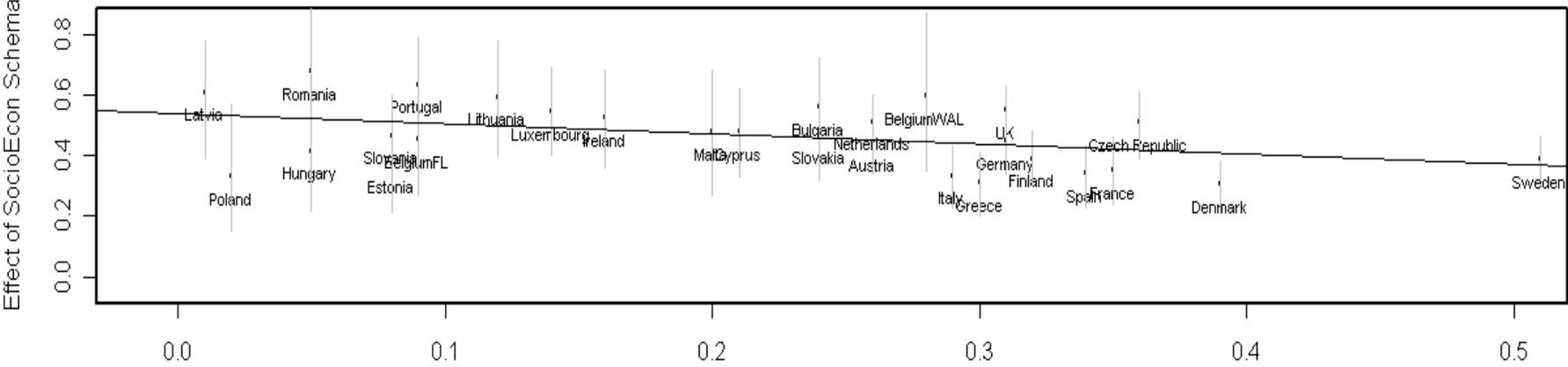
variables can to a very limited extent explain variation in the effects of EU integration on party preferences ( $R^2$  of .23). The correlation variable per se barely explains any variation, as  $R^2$  in the bivariate regression amounts to .003. This leads us to conclude that the variance in the effect of EU integration across countries cannot be explained by differences in the electorates per se, but might be induced by differences in the supply side among those countries. In order to explain this variation, we need to look at the supply side in every country, which remains an avenue for further research. Any attempt to do so here would go beyond the scope of this chapter.

Graphs 1-4 visualize the effects of the correlation variables on the corresponding impact of value schemas on party preferences in the 28 political systems under study. Graphs 1, 2 and 3 show that the higher the correlation between voters' stances on the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian and immigration schema is, the lower the effect of this value schema is on party preferences. In Graph 4 we see that the relationship between the correlation variable and the impact of EU integration on party preferences does not hold. Here, the variance in the effect of EU integration on party support cannot be explained by demand-side variables. Those results provide support for our *Hypothesis 2*, according to which we were supposed to observe a negative relationship between the degree to which voters' stances on values are structured by left/right and the impact of those values on party preferences across countries (however, this does not apply to EU integration).

Furthermore, Table 1 shows that structural agreement relates negatively to the effects of value schemas on party preferences, which supports our *Hypothesis 4*. It turns out that the more voters agree about where parties in their political system stand on left/right, the weaker will be the effect of values on party preferences. This effect is strong and significant for the libertarian-authoritarian schema and EU integration (-.37 and -.57 respectively), while it fails to reach statistical significance for the socio-economic and immigration value schemas (-.12 and -.30 respectively). Polarization of voters, in turn, does not have a consistent effect on the value schemas. Contrary to what has been expected, polarization has a negative effect on the impact of value schemas on party preferences, with the socio-economic value schema as an exception. However, those effects are not significant. Finally, if voters consider some issues as the most important problem facing their country, the effect of values related to those issues increases. This effect is significant for the socio-economic and immigration value schemas (.12 and .07 respectively), while it has a negative effect and fails to reach statistical significance for the libertarian-authoritarian schema (-.03).

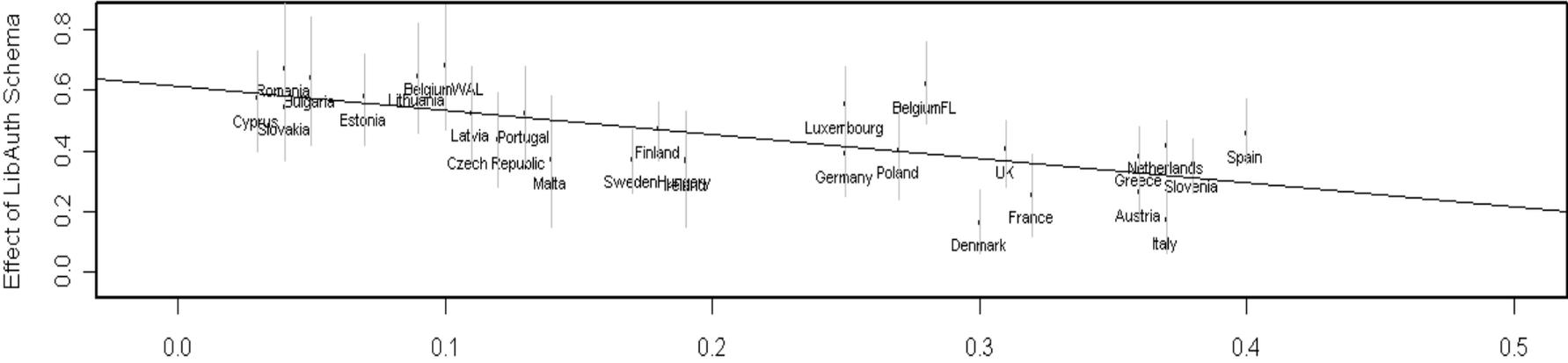
The general pattern of the negative relationship between the correlation variables and the effects of socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian and immigration value schemas on party preferences captures differences in those effects between established and consolidating democracies. In Graph 1 we see that most East Central European countries are characterized by a low degree to which voters' attitudes on socio-economic values are structured by left/right and a high impact of this value schema on party preferences. In turn, in most of the established democracies voters' stances on the socio-economic schema are to a higher extent structured by their position on left/right. Here, the effect of the socio-economic value schema on party preferences is weaker. The graph reveals that there are two groups of consolidating democracies – Poland, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia where the impact of the socio-economic value schema on party preferences is low and Romania, Latvia and Lithuania where socio-economic considerations exercise a stronger effect on party preferences. The former countries are those that have not been substantially affected by the economic crisis of 2009, while the latter group represents East Central European countries which suffered under the economic meltdown. In order to account for this difference and fully capture the effect of the correlation variable, we introduced as a control variable voters' perception about the most important problem facing their country. After controlling for this and a range of other variables, as depicted by Table 1, the analysis still reveals a negative effect of the correlation variable on the magnitude of the socio-economic schema on party preferences.

**Graph 1: Effect of Socio-Economic Value Schema on Party Preferences**



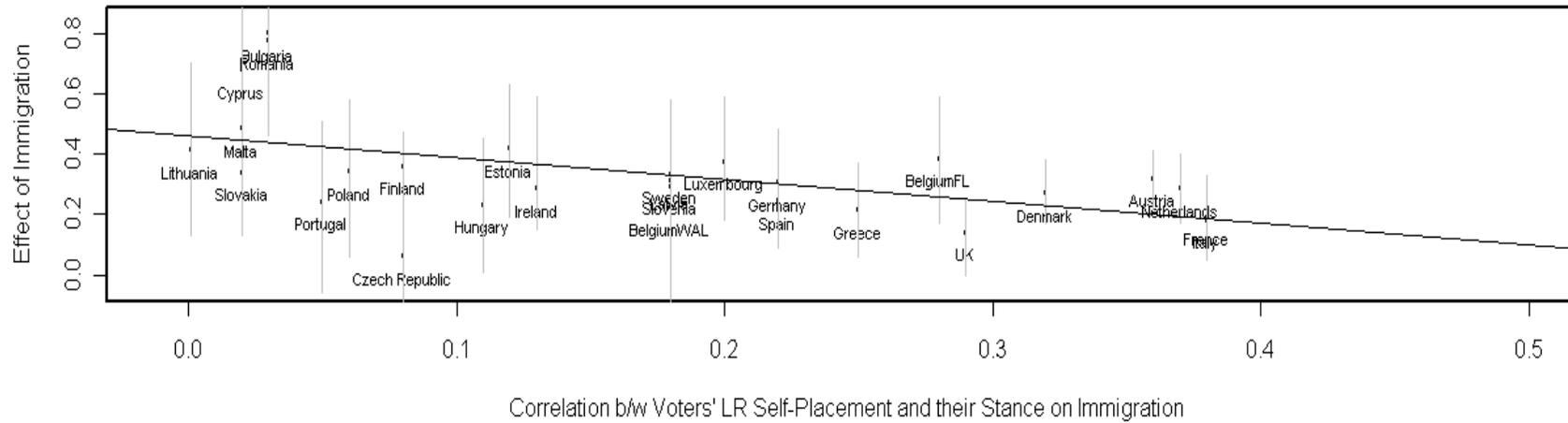
Correlation b/w Voters' LR Self-Placement and their Stance on Socio-Economic Value Schema

**Graph 2: Effect of Libertarian-Authoritarian Value Schema on Party Preferences**

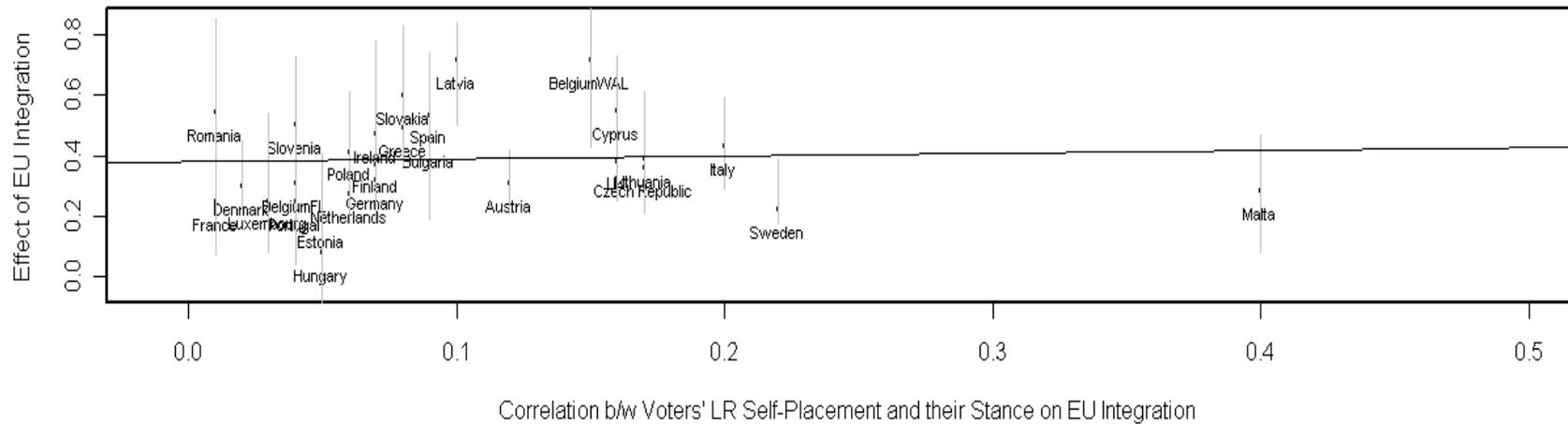


Correlation b/w Voters' LR Self-Placement and their Stance on Libertarian-Authoritarian Value Schema

**Graph 3: Effect of Immigration on Party Preferences**



**Graph 4: Effect of EU Integration on Party Preferences**



*Note:* Graphs 1-4 show the effects of correlation variables on the impact of value schemas on party preferences. The coefficients for value schemas for 28 political systems, which have been obtained in the 2nd stage analysis, are depicted with 95% confidence interval

In Graph 2 we see that in most consolidating democracies the correlation between voters' stances on the libertarian-authoritarian schema and left/right is low, while the effect of the value schema on party preferences is high. In most of the established democracies, in turn, the correlation is relatively high, while the effect of the libertarian-authoritarian schema remains moderate. The same pattern can be found in Graph 3, which shows the effects of the correlation variable of voters' left-right self-placement and immigration on the impact of the immigration schema on party preferences across countries. In most of the consolidating democracies, voters' stances on immigration are to a weak extent correlated to their left/right position, but the effects of immigration on party preferences are considerably high. In most established democracies, the correlation is higher and the effect of immigration is lower.

*Table 2: Effects of left/right and value schemas on party preferences across regions.*

	Established democracies Western Europe (model A)			Consolidating democracies East-Central Europe (model B)		
	B	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
Left/right distance	-.38	.005	-.29*	-.28	.008	-.23*
Socio-economic schema	.39	.013	.1*	.49	.026	.11*
Libertarian-authoritarian schema	.38	.015	.1*	.43	.026	.11*
Immigration	.24	.018	.051*	.32	.038	.053*
EU Integration	.37	.02	.07*	.44	.035	.08*
Age	.21	.035	.02*	.53	.047	.06*
Gender	.54	.060	.03*	.93	.11	.05*
Social Class	.40	.025	.06*	.33	.054	.05*
Education	.27	.033	.03*	.26	.052	.03*
Religion	.48	.018	.1*	.54	.024	.14*
Government Approval	.31	.015	.09*	.44	.025	.12*
Satisfaction with Democracy	.28	.022	.05*	.30	.037	.05*
Retrospective economic evaluation	.28	.027	.04*	.29	.048	.04*
Prospective economic evaluation	.18	.028	.03*	.24	.041	.04*
Party size	.009	.0001	.18*	.02	.0003	.15*
_cons						
R <sup>2</sup> -adjusted			.32			.29
Number of observations			73 969			30 959

*Notes:* \* significant at  $p < 0.01$  (one-tailed); cell entries present regression coefficients obtained in a robust regression on a stacked data matrix containing established democracies of Western Europe, including Cyprus and Malta (model A) and consolidating democracies of East-Central Europe (model B)

The results show that in most of the consolidating democracies of East Central Europe the effects of values on party preferences are stronger, while in most of the established democracies of Western Europe the effects of values are weaker. In order to visualise those differences between country groups, Table 2 presents the effects of left/right and value schemas, controlled by a range of explanatory variables, on vote propensities. Model A shows the effects in established democracies of Western Europe, including Cyprus and Malta, while model B shows the effects in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe. We explain 32 per cent of the variance among established democracies and 29 per cent among consolidating democracies. The comparison of standardized coefficients reveals that the effect of left/right distance is slightly weaker in East Central European countries than in Western European countries, which

confirms previous findings by Van der Brug et al. (2008). However, the effects of the value schemas seem to be slightly stronger in consolidating democracies.<sup>10</sup> The opposite pattern can be observed in Western Europe. Here, the effect of left/right on party preferences is stronger, while the effects of values are weaker.<sup>11</sup>

The results of our analysis show that there are considerable differences across EU countries in the effects of socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian and immigration value schemas on party preferences. Those differences can be explained by the degree to which voters' value stances are structured by their position on left/right. The analysis also shows that there are differences in the effects of values on party support across Western European and East Central European countries. In newer democracies the effects of values on party preferences are stronger than in established democracies, while the effect of left/right on party support is weaker. In the established democracies, in turn, the effects of values on party support are weaker, while the effect of left/right is stronger. However, significant heterogeneity within country groups remains, pointing to the fact that there is a general explanation for the variance in the effects of values across countries rather than only an East-West specific one. This general explanation related to how voters' value stances are structured by left/right captures the differences between consolidating and established democracies in the effects of values on party support.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

This study proposes and empirically substantiates an explanation for the differences in the effects of values on party preferences across countries of the European Union. In countries where voters can better link their attitudes to the abstract dimension of competition i.e. left/right, the impact of values on party preferences is smaller. Voters to a lesser extent refer to their value stances in their decisions at the ballot box as they can convey their preferences through direct recourse to left/right. In those countries voters know better what the left/right stands for and how their attitudes can be described in the abstract terms of left/right competition. In turn, in countries where voters can to a lesser extent relate their attitudes to their stance on left/right, the observed impact of values on party support is stronger. Here, voters take direct recourse to values in their decisions about which party to choose as the left/right does not fulfil its purpose as a cognitive shortcut. In those countries, voters have difficulty in establishing where their attitudes can be located in the left/right continuum as well as what the left/right means in terms of practical policy. Those findings provide us with an explanation for the differences in the effects of values on party preferences between consolidating democracies of East Central Europe and established democracies of Western Europe. The aggregate analysis shows that in consolidating democracies voters' stances on the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian and immigration value schema are to a weaker extent correlated with their position on left/right than in established democracies. The impact of values on party preferences is stronger in the newer democracies, while the effect of left/right is weaker. In the established democracies, in turn, the effect of left/right on party support is stronger, while the effects of values are weaker.

The contribution of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, the findings teach us about a general mechanism of how voters arrive at their electoral decision at the ballot box. The aggregate

<sup>10</sup> As the value schemas have been created using the y-hat procedure, they have similar distributional characteristics. Thus, we use standardized regression coefficients (beta) to meaningfully compare the effects of value schemas across the datasets.

<sup>11</sup> The comparison of betas allows for a substantive interpretation of differences across country groups. An insertion of a dummy for East Central European countries in a combined data matrix would not provide us with any meaningful comparison of both country groups. The reason is that our variables of interest - the value schemas - have been created through the y-hat procedure.

analysis shows that there are differences across countries with regard to how voters' attitudes are structured by left/right. Those structural differences, which may result from varying degrees of stability of party systems, provide us with an explanation of why we observe strong effects of values on party support in some countries and weaker effects in others. This chapter focuses on a wide spectrum of values, encompassing values concerning economic issues, personal freedoms, tolerance of minorities as well as questions related to lifestyle, immigration and integration in the European Union. The analyses show that these issues exert different effects on party preferences in the different member states. These country differences can be explained largely by the extent to which the issue is structured by left/right. This is true for all issues, except those related to EU integration. Voters' attitudes on EU integration are not structured by voters' positions on the left/right dimension. The differences in the effects of EU integration on party preferences across countries must be attributable to other factors, possibly induced by the supply side in the political systems. Secondly, this study contributes to our understanding of the differences in the patterns of party support across East Central European and Western European democracies. Our explanation for the variance in the effects of values across those country groups directly relates to the latest findings that point to the lower effect of left/right on party support in the new democracies (Van der Brug et al. 2008). It stresses the fact that the lower effect of left/right in newer democracies is associated with the higher effects of values on party support in those countries. However, our analysis goes beyond this regional comparison by showing that neither Western Europe nor Central Eastern Europe are monoliths; rather, there are considerable differences in the impact of values within both country groups.

Our findings have two important limitations that may constitute an avenue for further research. Firstly, our explanation of the differences in the effects of values on party preferences across countries reaches its limits at values related to EU integration. The characteristics of the electorates which we explored in this study do not account for the variance in the effects of EU integration on party preferences across countries and regions. This finding points to other possible explanations which focus on the supply-side factors that may influence party preferences. An interesting angle for pursuing further research into the differences in the effects of EU integration on party preferences across countries offers the issue linkage perspective (De Vries 2007, 2010), where EU issue voting is explained by the degree to which political parties relate EU issues to the major dimension of competition. As there is a considerable variation in the impact of values related to EU integration on party preferences across countries, it may prove worthwhile to explore how party system characteristics of the newer and established democracies condition the way in which EU integration affects party preferences. Secondly, our analysis takes an aggregate-level perspective by examining how voters' stances on values are structured by left/right in the electorate as a whole. In a further step, we could extend our findings into the differences in the effects of values and left/right on party support by looking at how individual-level characteristics such as political knowledge mediate those effects. Notwithstanding these avenues for further research, our findings offer a theoretical and empirical contribution to our understanding of the determinants guiding voters' decisions at the ballot box.

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# Attributions of Responsibility in the European Union: The Role of Motivation and the Information Environment<sup>1</sup>

Traci L. Wilson and Sara B. Hobolt<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Systems of multilevel governance can blur lines of responsibility and leave voters uncertain about which level of government is responsible for policy outcomes. Democratic accountability requires that citizens can assign responsibility for policy outcomes, yet multilevel structures of government only serve to complicate this task. This chapter examines the extent to which Europeans are able to navigate the complex and ever-changing divisions of responsibility between their national governments and the supranational European Union. Specifically, we compare citizen and expert responsibility attributions to evaluate if and how voters can correctly assign responsibility to the European Union. We argue that the key determinant of citizen competence is the extent to which they are motivated and able to seek information about EU policy-making. Using multilevel modeling to analyze survey and media data from 27 EU member states, we demonstrate that politically sophisticated voters and those that do not have strong EU attitudes are better able to allocate responsibility correctly. At the contextual level, highly politicized environments result in more correct allocations of responsibility, with a conditioning effect on individuals with strong EU attitudes.

## Introduction

In general, it is irrational to be politically well-informed because the low returns from data simply do not justify their cost in time and other scarce resources.  
Downs (1957: 259)

Anthony Downs proposed that it is rational for most citizens to remain ignorant about political affairs due to the low marginal benefits of acquiring relevant political information, and the lack of political knowledge among citizens is well-documented (see e.g. Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1991). Indeed, the level of citizen ignorance about politics has led some scholars to suggest that ‘the low level of political knowledge and the absence of ideological reasoning have lent credence to the charge that popular control of the government is illusory’ (Iyengar 1987: 816). Citizens living in systems of multi-level governance, such as the European Union (EU), face an even greater challenge when it comes to holding their representatives to account, since they have the additional task of differentiating between national and federal responsibility. Yet, if popular control is to be more than an illusion, then it is crucial that citizens have at least a basic understanding of the different levels of government responsibilities and are able to assess their performance. Unfortunately, it is not this straightforward in the EU given the overlapping and ever-changing structures of governance. This raises the question of

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whether European citizens are able to correctly differentiate responsibility between levels of national and supranational government. More fundamentally, it begs the question of why citizens would be motivated to seek out the relevant information that would enable them allocate responsibility correctly.

This chapter examines individual attributions of responsibility to the European Union. To be able to assess the extent to which citizens allocate responsibility ‘correctly’, we compare citizen evaluations to expert judgments. We propose a theoretical framework that highlights the key factors at both the individual level and contextual level that motivate individuals to seek information about policy-making in the EU and thus enable them to distinguish between the responsibilities of different levels of government. This chapter utilizes the ability-motivation-opportunity triad (Luskin 1990; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996) as a starting point to understanding when and how citizens correctly allocate responsibility. Specifically, we theorize that learning about governmental responsibility will depend on three key factors: at the individual level information processing will be influenced by ability and motivation, while opportunity is defined by the amount of information available in the context. In addition, we contribute to the existing literature with important distinctions at both the individual and contextual level. First, we demonstrate that motivation can serve to either improve or worsen correct responsibility judgments depending on the type of motivation. Second, different political contexts provide varying opportunities for learning, with more information available in some contexts compared to others. Third, we show that motivations do not affect all citizens equally; the political context has a conditioning effect on individual motivations. Finally, this study is distinctive in that it relies on three unique datasets: a survey of citizens in all 27 EU member states, a study of the media contexts, and a survey of experts in EU policy making. The opportunity to assess twenty-seven different national contexts provides a rich source of comparative data that has not been exploited in single-country studies of federal governments.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, we review the literature and present our theoretical model of attributions of responsibility in multilevel government systems, motivated information processing, and the role of political context. Next, we provide a descriptive summary of citizen and expert responsibility attributions to national governments and the European Union. A set of multilevel models test the hypotheses about the individual and country-level factors associated with correctly allocating responsibility to the European Union. Finally, we review the findings and provide suggestions for future research.

### **Attributing Responsibility in Multilevel Government Systems**

For a number of reasons, multiple levels of government make it more difficult for individuals to correctly assign responsibility. The institutional arrangement is complex and responsibilities overlap on different levels. Individuals may not have the cognitive resources or motivation to learn about the division of responsibilities, or perhaps the information is not available or not salient in the context. Since policy responsibility is often not clearly divided but rather shared between different levels, individuals may not know which government is more responsible for a particular outcome (Arceneaux 2006; Cutler 2004, 2008; Johns 2010; León 2010). In addition, politicians do not have incentives to make the system more clear. Complexity allows them to claim credit for successful policies and engage in blame shifting for undesirable outcomes.

Recent developments in the economic voting literature have demonstrated the importance of attribution of responsibility as a moderator of voting behavior. According to the classic reward-punishment model, individuals vote for the incumbent when the economy is good, and for the opponent when times are bad (Key 1966; Fiorina 1981). However, this model has been shown not to work in all contexts, so scholars have shifted their attention to issues of governmental responsibility for policy performance. An influential article by Powell and Whitten (1993)

demonstrated that elections in countries where responsibility is most easily focused on a single government party are more likely to follow the reward-punishment model. Other studies also using cross-national data have supported the more general claim that economic voting is less prevalent when governments are weak and divided (e.g. minority and coalition governments) and legislatures are strong (e.g. strong committees and bicameral opposition) (Anderson 2000; Hellwig and Samuels 2008; Nadeau et al. 2002; Whitten and Palmer 1999). Most of these aggregate-level studies have focused on ‘horizontal’ institutional structures, such as coalition and divided government, and they have not directly examined voters’ views of who is responsible.

Recently more attention has turned to the ‘vertical’ institutional structures of federal government, mainly in the context of the federal systems of Canada and the US (Anderson 2000; Arceneaux 2006; Gomez and Wilson 2003; Cutler 2004, 2008; Johns 2010). These studies suggest that multiple levels of government make it challenging for voters to assign responsibility for policy outcomes as they find it difficult to know which level of government is responsible. Collectively, this work has sought to understand if 1) citizens attribute different levels of responsibility to different levels of government; 2) these attributions are correct; and 3) voters cast their ballot based on these perceptions of responsibility and assignment of credit or blame. Yet, the studies provide mixed evidence about the extent to which citizens are able to make distinctions between the responsibilities of different levels of government. Some studies suggest that elected representatives are held accountable for performance at their level of governance (Atkeson and Partin 1995), whereas others suggest that citizens have difficulty distinguishing between different levels of government and do not differentiate responsibility (Cutler 2008) and that even when they are able to correctly distinguish it is unclear if this translates into greater accountability (Arceneaux 2006; Cutler 2004).

This work thus leaves open the question of the degree to which citizens are able to correctly assign responsibility to different levels of government in a multilevel system, and more importantly what makes them able to do so. But before examining the role of motivating factors, we first need to address the issue of what we mean by “responsibility” and “correct” responsibility assignments. In the context of multilevel government, “responsibility” has been considered in various ways: functional responsibility, causal responsibility, or credit/blame for outcomes (see Hart 1968 for a discussion on the types of responsibility). Functional responsibility refers to the role and tasks for which the government is responsible, in other words, the areas over which it has policy-making duties. For example, the European Union has functional responsibility for monetary policy in the Eurozone. Causal responsibility refers to the influence an actor had on bringing about a specific outcome; did the actor cause an event or outcome.

Perceptions of causal responsibility can lead to attributions of credit for positive outcomes and blame for negative results. In this chapter, we limit our analysis to the concept of role, or functional responsibility by analyzing if and how individuals understand the amount responsibility the EU has for various policy areas. We do not assess here individual perceptions of EU influence, success, or failure.

So how do we know when citizens are making “correct” attributions of responsibility, especially in light of the above discussion that multilevel government systems are complex and that frequently responsibilities overlap between different levels? One solution is to review literature on the policy-making process and determine the “correct” answer. However, a better method is to obtain an expert consensus through a survey of European Union scholars. If we assume that EU experts are the most knowledgeable group about the European Union’s role, then averaging across expert evaluations provides a baseline judgment of EU responsibility. By comparing individual evaluations of responsibility to expert judgments, we can determine how close citizens are to making a “correct” allocation of responsibility. We can then assess the individual-level and contextual-level factors that are associated with more correct responsibility

attributions. The next section presents our theoretical propositions about when and why individuals are capable of reaching attribution judgments of expert quality.

### **Ability and Motivation: Information Processing**

There is no doubt that it is difficult for individuals to attribute responsibility in federal or multilevel government systems. Even some experts in our study found it difficult to assign responsibility to the national and European levels of government across various policy areas. As discussed above, previous work has shown that sometimes citizens are able to differentiate governmental responsibility at various levels, and other times they are not able to. However, this prior work lacks a theory to explain when and why individuals are motivated and able to attribute responsibility in systems of multilevel governance. It is widely accepted that political knowledge is a function of ability, motivation, and opportunity (Luskin 1990; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Gordon and Segura 1997). Building upon this triad, we theorize that ability and motivation to seek information about the complex institutional structures of the European Union depends on an individual's cognitive ability and individual predispositions towards the EU. We argue that individuals with high levels of political sophistication have the cognitive ability to seek out and process complex information relating to European Union responsibility. In addition, extreme attitudes (both positive and negative) towards European integration may motivate individuals to gather information about the EU, but their strong predispositions result in biased information processing, making these individuals less likely to correctly allocate responsibility. Finally, the information context plays a critical role by providing individuals with the opportunity to acquire information. Without the availability of information, even highly able and motivated citizens may not have the opportunity to learn about the EU's responsibilities. Furthermore, the political context itself can serve as a motivating factor which influences information seeking and processing. We argue that cognitive ability facilitates, while individual predispositions motivate information processing about the EU's responsibilities. In turn, this increased processing of EU-related information will affect the level of knowledge about the European Union's policy responsibilities dependent upon individual predispositions and the information context.

Individuals vary considerably in their ability and motivation to understand political information. Some individuals have a higher cognitive ability, which manifests itself in higher levels of political sophistication. These citizens will have the cognitive capacity which facilitates the consumption and processing of complex information. Indeed, high knowledge citizens are better able to understand institutional complexity and divided lines of responsibility. Highly sophisticated voters are more capable of recognizing that responsibility is divided among multiple levels and of making diffuse responsibility attributions, whereas low sophisticates generally focus on one political actor (Cutler 2004; Gomez and Wilson 2003, 2008). High sophisticates are also more competent in processing political information and news stories, and in converting this information into stored knowledge (Zaller 1991). Moreover, an individual's level of general political knowledge is a reliable predictor of news story recall, implying that there is a general audience receptive to news stories (Price and Zaller 1993). Some individuals are generally interested in and more knowledgeable about a variety of political topics. In addition, highly informed citizens are more likely to perceive objective facts (Blais et al. 2010). As political sophisticates are better able to understand complex government structures, divided responsibility, and have the cognitive ability to process political news, we expect high political sophisticates to also be more knowledgeable about the European Union's responsibility. This brings us to our first hypothesis:

*H1: Political sophisticates will make more correct responsibility assignments.*

Even if we do expect individuals with higher levels of political sophistication to more correctly allocate responsibility, it is generally costly and thus irrational for most citizens to be

politically informed (Downs 1957). Indeed, we would not expect all individuals, even those of equal cognitive ability, to be equally knowledgeable about the European Union's responsibilities; there must be an additional motivating factor. While individual cognitive ability and political sophistication facilitate information processing, political predispositions may motivate information processing. Political predispositions are:

stable, individual-level traits that regulate the acceptance or non-acceptance of the political communications the person receives. Because the totality of the communications that one accepts determines one's opinions... predispositions are the critical intervening variable between the communications people encounter in the mass media, on the one side, and their statements of political preferences, on the other. (Zaller 1991: 22)

Attitudes towards the European Union represent a political predisposition that can motivate individuals to seek out information about the EU's responsibilities. However, being motivated to seek out information does not guarantee that the information will be processed in a neutral manner: judgments may be affect-driven and distorted by systematic biases (Redlawsk 2002). Individuals are prone to interpret political items through a partisan bias (Campbell et al. 1960; Bartels 2002), which is a type of in-group attribution bias. A "group-serving attribution bias" refers to the tendency of in-group members to attribute positive actions committed by their own group to positive in-group qualities and negative actions by the favored group to external causes (Hewstone 1989; Pettigrew 1979; Fiske and Taylor 2007). While citizens may have factual information, "partisan-motivated interpretations can intercede between even accurate factual beliefs and policy opinions" (Gaines et al. 2007: 972).

Strong support for or opposition to European integration, as a political predisposition, can be viewed as a type of partisanship or group membership. Research has shown that attitudes towards the EU are to a large extent shaped by identity concerns (McLaren 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2005, 2009). In other words, the 'nation' versus 'Europe' may be regarded as a salient in-group/out-group division in this context. Studies have shown that people who have more exclusive national identities are less likely to be in favor of EU integration (Carey 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2005; McLaren 2006). If the relative attachment to the European Union serves as a salient in-group, we would expect that feelings about the EU will affect responsibility judgments in a similar manner to partisanship. Predispositions can lead to biased information processing through group-serving biases, whereby individuals view their own group more favorably (Taylor and Fiske 1991), and through the use of heuristics. Partisanship is a much-used heuristic in political decision-making and information processing (Rahn 1993, Bartels 2000). An individual's partisan predispositions affect his perceptions of the economy (Evans and Anderson 2006, Evans and Pickup 2010, Gerber and Huber 2010) and attributions of responsibility (Tilley and Hobolt 2011, Rudolph 2003, 2006), with citizens tending to see their own group in a positive light and blame problems on the out-group. Furthermore, while individuals are able to make responsibility judgments in a "reasoned manner", they are more often prone to a partisan bias (Rudolph 2003: 210).

In summary, while we expect that individuals with strong EU attitudes will be motivated to acquire EU-related information, we also expect that they are more likely to select information that is in line with their partisan beliefs and to process new information in a way that conforms to their predispositions. Therefore, when questioned about the EU's responsibility, the answers given by Europhiles and Euroskeptics are more likely to be biased and consequently less accurate. Individuals without strong predispositions for or against the European Union, whom we refer to as "centrists", are more likely to process information in a non-biased way and thus better able to allocate responsibility.

*H2: Individuals with strong attitudes about European integration are less able to correctly assign responsibility compared to centrists.*

## **Opportunity: Contextual Information and the Politicization of European Integration**

Moving away from determinants at the individual level, we now turn to the role of the information context. Citizens do not acquire information in a vacuum; they are affected by the type of information available in the contextual environment and the saliency of a given issue. The political context can motivate, provide information, and help even low informed citizens to gain knowledge (Kuklinski et al. 2001). Previous studies have shown that the knowledge gap between low and high sophisticates can shrink when more information is provided in the political context (Nicholson 2003; Iyengar et al. 2010; Jerit and Barabas 2006). What type of political environment provides the opportunity to acquire information about complex structures of governance and motivates citizens to pay attention to this information?

We argue that the politicization of the European issue plays an important role in determining not only the availability of information but also the salience of the issue to individual citizens. Recent work on political behavior in Europe has argued that the issue of European integration is becoming increasingly politicized as we are witnessing public contention over European matters in referendums, party competition and media reporting (de Vreese 2003; Tillman 2004; de Vries 2007; Kriesi et al. 2008; Hobolt 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2009). EU politicization refers to the increasing contentiousness of decision making in the process of European integration (Schmitter 1969). Hooghe and Marks posit that this politicization has changed both the content and the process of decision making in the EU (2009, 8). Importantly, however, the level of politicization of European issues varies considerably across countries. We know from studies of vote choice in referendums and elections that arena-specific voting - so-called "EU issue voting" - is more pronounced when the European issue is politicized in the domestic sphere (Tillman 2004; de Vries 2007; Hobolt 2009). Equally, we would expect that the level of politicization of the European Union in a country affects the acquisition of information about the European Union's responsibilities by increasing the amount of information available about the EU and making it a salient issue to more citizens. In turn, the increased salience and available information provides an opportunity for all citizens to acquire information about EU responsibilities.

It is important to note that a lack of politicization in the field of EU studies has been associated with elite (and media) consensus in favor of European integration, and generally little public debate. Consequently, politicization mostly implies that actors more critical of the EU are given a voice, creating debate and increasing the amount of negativity surrounding European integration. For this study, we envision two key indicators of politicization: the negativity of media coverage of the European Union and perceived party polarization on the EU issue. Learning can occur in negative contexts through two mechanisms: by the increased availability and attention to information, and by increasing its salience. Negativity makes issues salient: studies have uncovered a negativity bias whereby negative information stands out above positive information (Rozin and Royzman 2001). One reason for this is that negative stories are more likely to capture an individual's attention through physiological arousal. Negative arousal in particular is associated with retaining more information (Reeves et al. 1991, Lang et al. 1996). As individuals pay the most attention to negative stories, we expect that the EU is most salient in countries with more negative coverage of EU news or where parties are perceived as polarized along the EU dimension. Individuals in negative media contexts have more opportunity to learn about the European Union either directly through the news stories since individuals pay more attention to and retain more negative news information, or by an increased motivation to acquire additional information about the EU resulting from the increased salience of European issues.

Negative coverage in the media is not the only way to make an issue relevant to citizens. We would expect the EU to be salient in contexts where parties are polarized on the European integration dimension. Issue salience to the public increases when political parties are polarized

on that domain (Milazzo et. al 2010). When political parties move towards the center on a particular issue, it makes the issue less salient to voters. Therefore in contexts where there is little party polarization on the issue of European integration, the EU will not be a salient matter and there will be less information available than in highly polarized contexts. In summary, previous work has shown that individuals in negative and/or politicized contexts have more opportunity to learn from the information-rich environment and are motivated to do so because of the perceived relevance of the topic. We theorize that in contexts where the European Union is highly politicized through the media or party polarization, there will be more information available to citizens and they will pay more attention due to the saliency of the topic.

*H3: The more negative the media tone is on stories about the European Union, the more correctly individuals will attribute responsibility.*

*H4: Individuals in contexts where parties are polarized along the European dimension will more correctly allocate responsibility.*

### **Conditioning Effect of the Politicized Context**

As just discussed, increased saliency in the political environment can motivate and provide an opportunity for individuals to pay more attention and acquire more information compared to individuals in low-saliency contexts. However, the cues provided by increased politicization do not motivate everyone similarly, but rather provide incentives for specific groups to acquire knowledge. The political context and group identification can separately increase the saliency of an issue, but they can also interact for greater saliency among certain groups in specific contexts (Hutchings 2001, 2003). In addition, in-group attitudes motivate individuals to dedicate more information processing and complex reasoning when information is, on the surface, negative towards the in-group (Schaller 1992). Along these lines, we expect that in contexts where the European dimension is highly politicized, this will motivate EU supporters to seek out additional information.

In the context of negative information about the EU, we theorize that information processing by EU supporters may be influenced by various motivations and consumption goals, including (dis)confirmation biases and accuracy goals. When an individual is confronted with information contrary to his beliefs, such as a Europhile in an environment highly politicized along the European dimension, he may be motivated to argue against or discount the information so that his beliefs are not disconfirmed. This disconfirmation bias is particularly strong for the politically sophisticated and those with strong prior attitudes (Taber and Lodge 2006; Taber et al. 2009). Similarly, a confirmation bias occurs when, given a choice, people will preferentially seek out information that is non-threatening to their beliefs or congruent with their pre-existing attitudes. Therefore we would expect EU supporters to not only discount information that is contrary to their beliefs, but also to be prone to a confirmation bias whereby they seek out additional information that supports their pro-EU attitudes. In contrast, we would not expect that negative environments motivate Euroskeptics to seek out additional information, as the context is already congruent with their predisposed beliefs.

Individuals who engage in an effortful search for information with the goal of forming accurate impressions are much more likely to report correct information or impressions than individuals who do not have an accuracy goal (Huang and Price 2001, Biesanz and Human 2010). When individuals undertake reasoning driven by accuracy goals, they spend more time and effort in evaluating the information and are much less reliant on several types of bias and heuristic shortcuts (cf. Kunda 1990). Therefore, we argue that in a highly politicized context, Europhiles will be motivated more by accuracy goals and therefore make more correct attributions of responsibility. More generally, individuals in political contexts that are contrary

to their partisan predispositions will be more motivated to acquire information and better able to make accurate judgments.

As discussed above, we envision two different politicized contexts that would potentially moderate EU attitudes: negative media tone and party polarization. This leads to our final hypothesis, which examines the interaction between context and political predispositions:

*H5a: EU supporters are better able to assign responsibility in contexts where the EU dimension is highly politicized compared with EU supporters in less politicized contexts.*

*H5b: Euroskeptics are better able to assign responsibility in contexts where the EU dimension is not highly politicized compared with Euroskeptics in more politicized contexts.*

### **Descriptive Summary of the Data**

To test our hypotheses of responsibility attributions, we rely on three separate datasets: the 2009 European Election Study Voter Survey (EES 2009; van Egmond et al. 2009) which included a module of responsibility questions (Hobolt et al. 2009), the EES Media Study (Schuck et al. 2010) and a survey of experts on EU policy making conducted by the authors. The voter survey was fielded during the four weeks immediately following the June 2009 European Parliament elections, with randomly-drawn samples of at least 1,000 respondents in each of the EU's 27 Member States. The Media Study includes content analysis of news stories from two broadsheets and one tabloid as well as the main evening news broadcasts from each EU country. In total, 52,009 television and newspaper stories were coded. Finally, to ascertain "correct" evaluations of European Union responsibility, we designed a survey of experts on European policy making. One hundred seventy-five potential expert respondents were sent a link to complete the survey online in February 2010 and the survey included the same responsibility questions as in the voter survey. We succeeded in obtaining at least two expert respondents per EU Member State and a total of 117 individuals responded (67 percent response rate). The goal was not to obtain a perfect distribution across countries, in particular since EU experts are not represented equally throughout the Member States, but rather to have enough variation to be able to average the responses to obtain an "expert evaluation" of European Union policy responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

The question modules on attributions of responsibility in both voter and expert surveys probed respondents for their responsibility judgments in five policy areas. The questions were worded as:

How responsible is the (country) government for economic conditions in (country)?  
Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility."

And what about the European Union, how responsible is the EU for economic conditions in (country)?

These questions are repeated, substituting the following policy areas:

- standard of health care
- levels of immigration
- setting interest rates

<sup>3</sup> For the question on interest rates, experts were separated into two groups – Eurozone and non-Eurozone – before taking the expert average.

- dealing with climate change

A possible critique is that these questions do not specify which institution within the European Union – European Parliament, Commission, Central Bank, etc. is responsible. However, most citizens tend not to distinguish between the myriad of European institutions (Karp et al. 2003) so it should not pose a problem when measuring citizen perceptions of EU responsibility.

Table 1 provides a summary of expert and citizen attributions of functional responsibility to their national governments and the European Union across five policy areas. Table 1 gives the mean and standard deviation for each group, and citizens are further divided into three groups based on their level of political sophistication, as well as Eurozone/non-Eurozone for the interest rate questions.<sup>4</sup> T-tests show the difference between experts and citizens are statistically significant at the 99% level. On average, citizens attribute higher levels of responsibility to both the European Union (EU) and their national governments (NG) than do experts in all areas except two: Eurozone citizens attribute less responsibility than the experts do to the EU for interest rates, and citizens attribute less responsibility than the experts do to the national government for health care. However, the difference in NG health care evaluations is small, and both citizens and experts give the overall highest score to the NG government for health care.

To be able to assess the extent to which citizens assign responsibility correctly, we compare the scores given by individuals in our voter survey with the scores of experts. Before proceeding to the multivariate analysis, let us first examine how political sophistication facilitates correct responsibility attributions. As shown in Table 1, when dividing the respondents by political sophistication, there is more variation between sophistication groups in some policy areas than others, and it is clear that low sophisticates had more difficulty allocating responsibility to the European Union than they did to their national governments. Looking first at attributions to the national government, there is little difference between sophistication groups in attributions of responsibility for the economy, immigration, and climate change, and many of these differences are not statistically significant. Interestingly, the largest discrepancies between high and low sophisticates, each more than 1 point difference, are in the cases where lines of responsibility between the EU and national government are most clear: interest rates and health care. Low sophisticates over-attribute responsibility to their national governments in these areas. This supports the theory that high political sophisticates are better able to understand division of responsibility in complex governance systems.

In addition, the standard deviations in each issue area are smallest for the experts and largest for the low sophisticates.<sup>5</sup> These standard deviations show that while there is some variation in expert opinion, there is much less disagreement among experts than there is among citizens. To verify that the citizen and expert mean scores are significantly different, Figure 1 shows the mean scores with 95% confidence intervals.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Political sophistication is a summated scale created from the political knowledge questions (q92-98). Alpha score of .67. While no measure is perfect, factual true/false questions are the best measure of political knowledge (Zaller 1992). For the descriptive tables, we divided political sophistication into 3 groups: bottom 25% for low sophisticates; middle 50% for medium sophisticates, and top 25% for high sophisticates.

<sup>5</sup> With the exception of interest rates, although this could be due to experts and high sophisticates thinking about the role of central banks that is external to the government responsibility.

<sup>6</sup> The confidence intervals were derived analytically from the data. In addition, we separately obtained the 95% confidence intervals by bootstrapping, which does not require any assumptions about the distributional properties of the data. With three different methods of confidence intervals: normal, percentile, and BCa, the results were nearly identical ( $\pm .01$ ) to the analytically derived confidence intervals.

Table 1: Comparing expert and citizen attributions of responsibility

Issue	Experts		All Citizens		High Sophisticates		Medium Sophisticates		Low Sophisticates	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
NG - Economy	5.88	(1.84)	7.19	(2.72)	7.09	(2.51)	7.23	(2.68)	7.19	(3.00)
EU - Economy	4.48	(1.86)	5.70	(2.70)	5.36	(2.54)	5.68	(2.68)	6.10	(2.84)
NG - Health Care	8.13	(1.77)	7.80	(2.70)	8.03	(2.40)	7.81	(2.68)	7.57	(2.98)
EU - Health Care	2.28	(1.96)	4.72	(3.00)	4.03	(2.82)	4.71	(2.97)	5.47	(3.09)
NG - Immigration	6.69	(2.09)	7.23	(2.81)	7.16	(2.64)	7.23	(2.79)	7.31	(3.01)
EU - Immigration	4.18	(2.28)	6.00	(3.03)	5.71	(2.93)	5.98	(3.03)	6.34	(3.10)
NG Interest Rates - Non Eurozone	4.53	(3.35)	6.80	(3.22)	6.26	(3.31)	6.82	(3.17)	7.19	(3.18)
EU Interest Rates - Non Eurozone	3.04	(3.32)	5.26	(3.26)	4.61	(3.15)	5.28	(3.22)	5.81	(3.33)
NG Interest Rates - Eurozone	2.38	(2.55)	5.96	(3.08)	5.19	(3.25)	6.05	(2.97)	6.70	(2.94)
EU Interest Rates - Eurozone	7.95	(2.10)	6.29	(2.88)	6.34	(3.00)	6.25	(2.83)	6.33	(2.86)
NG - Climate Change	5.83	(2.16)	6.25	(3.10)	6.32	(2.93)	6.27	(3.08)	6.12	(3.32)
EU - Climate Change	5.50	(2.12)	6.22	(3.03)	6.29	(2.86)	6.23	(3.01)	6.10	(3.24)
<i>n</i>	117		27069		6103		14416		6550	

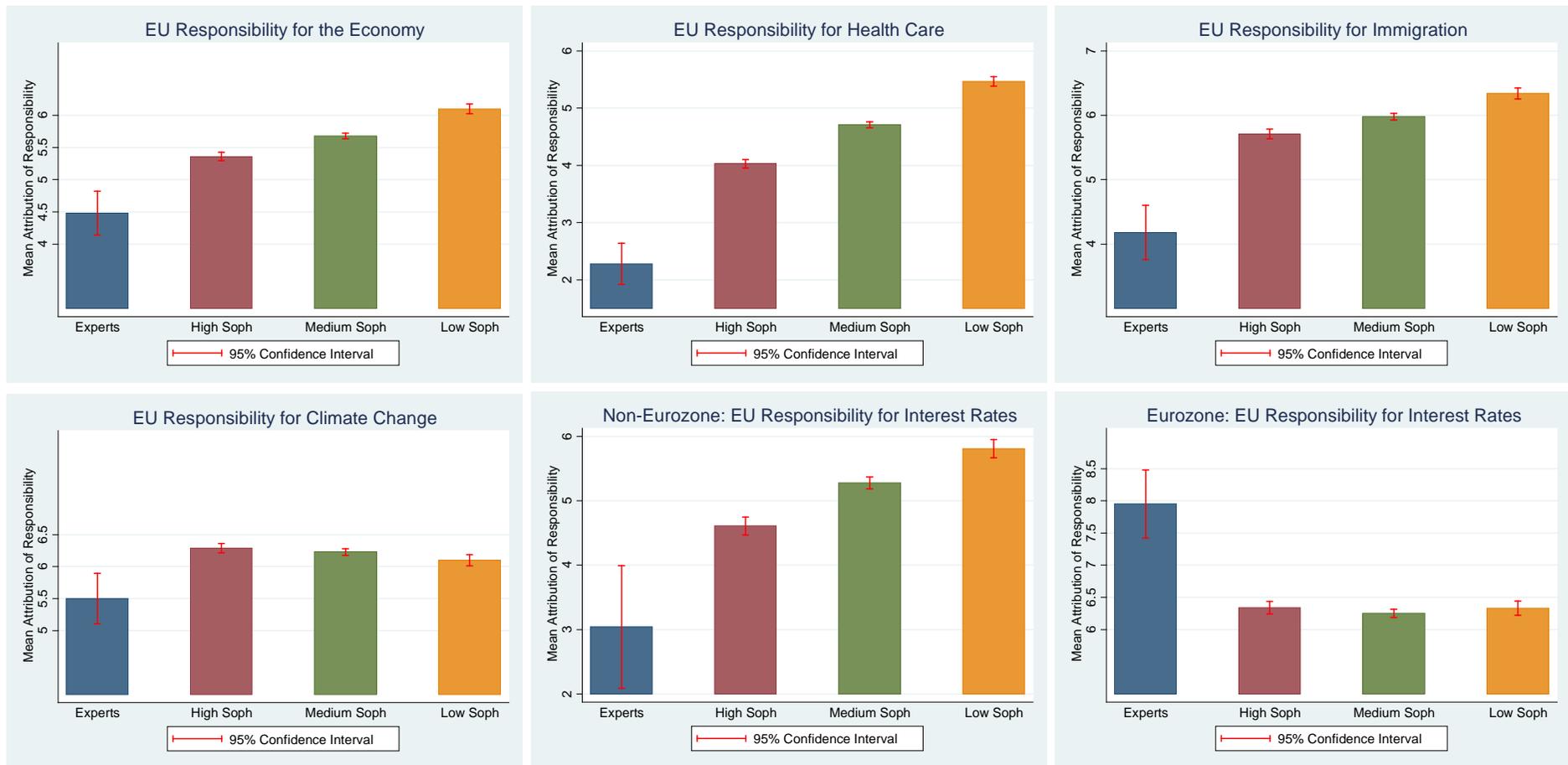


Figure 1: Mean expert and citizen attributions of responsibility to the European Union

Even though expert standard deviations are much smaller than the citizen standard deviations, the confidence intervals are much larger for the experts. These larger confidence intervals for the expert evaluations are primarily a function of a smaller sample size (~115 experts compared to 27,000 citizens). Importantly, in no issue area do the confidence intervals overlap between citizen and expert means. In some policy areas they do overlap between sophistication groupings, which suggests that political sophistication does not play an equally important role across policy areas. It is perhaps not surprising that citizens at all levels of sophistication attribute similar responsibility to the EU for climate change. Being a cross-national issue that is frequently discussed at the European level, it would seem that the EU should be responsible. However, the EU does not have much formal power in this area, so it is a difficult policy for citizens to distinguish. We also see no difference between sophistication groupings in the Eurozone for interest rates. Overall, from examining these graphs we can be confident that there is a difference in how experts and the average citizen perceive European Union responsibility, and that political sophistication brings individuals closer to expert evaluations.

When examining attributions of responsibility to the European Union, we see the number of low sophisticates responding to the question declines considerably. In the low sophisticates group, up to 10 percent fewer people responded to each responsibility question compared to the high sophisticates group. Low political sophisticates are much more likely to respond they “don’t know” rather than assign a responsibility score. This indicates the possibility of overestimating the low sophisticates’ accuracy; that if all low sophisticates had answered questions about EU responsibility, they may have been even farther from the expert evaluation. In addition, low sophisticates were much more likely to refuse to answer questions about EU responsibility but were willing to answer the national government questions in the same policy area. This indicates that low sophisticates feel more comfortable assigning responsibility to their national governments than to the European Union. This is another example of low sophisticates being less knowledgeable about the European Union, and is further evidence that political sophistication facilitates attributions of responsibility in multilevel government systems.

While the high sophisticates are nearly always closer to the expert mean score than the medium or low sophisticates, it is clear that citizens of all sophistication levels had a more difficult time assigning responsibility to the European Union than to their national governments. Differences across sophistication groups are much smaller when attributing responsibility to their national governments.

Overall, citizens are more familiar and comfortable with the role of their national governments and are better able to correctly assign responsibility at the national level. This raises the important question of why some people are better able to attribute responsibility to the EU than others. Therefore, the empirical analysis will focus only on assignment of responsibility to the EU and not to the national government. We turn now to the multivariate analysis of the individual-level and contextual-level factors to test our hypotheses about the role of ability, motivation, and politicization in correctly allocating responsibility to the European Union.

## **Methodology**

The goal of this empirical study is to compare citizen and expert attributions of responsibility to the EU to examine the individual-level characteristics and contextual factors that help citizens correctly allocate responsibility. The outcome variable is a measure of how close a citizen’s assignment of responsibility is to the expert evaluation. To create our outcome variable, *closeness to the expert evaluation*, we first calculated the mean expert attribution of

responsibility for each issue area.<sup>7</sup> Next, we subtracted an individual's attribution of responsibility from the expert mean and took the absolute value to find the distance from expert evaluation. Finally, we averaged across the five policy areas to create the outcome variable of closeness to expert evaluation.<sup>8</sup> Similar to how a multi-item scale can correct for measurement error, by using the average across all policy areas, we obtain a more accurate picture of individuals' general understanding of EU responsibility.

The individual-level models estimate the importance of cognitive ability and partisan motivations in making correct responsibility judgments. To test the hypotheses that cognitive ability facilitates correct responsibility attributions, *political knowledge* (described above) is included as an explanatory variable. We also theorized that predispositions towards the European Union would motivate individuals to preferentially seek information in line with their EU attitudes, resulting in biased information processing and less accurate allocations of responsibility among individuals with strong pro- or anti-EU sentiment. *EU attitudes* is a standardized scale, with positive values being most supportive of the European Union.<sup>9</sup> All individual level variables were grand-mean centered.

In the interactive models, the linear variable *EU attitudes* is divided into three categories: Euroskeptics (bottom 25%), Centrists (middle 50%) and EU Supporters (top 25%). The Euroskeptics and EU supporters are the individuals with the most consistent, strong attitudes. *Centrists* is a more diverse group, and could include people who are ambivalent about the EU, who either have no strong opinion or who have a combination of positive and negative views of European integration. For this research, the heterogeneity of the *Centrists* group is not a concern as the theoretical focus is on individuals who identify strong EU attitudes.

To test our hypotheses on the direct and conditioning effects of politicization, two contextual-level variables will be included in separate models. The first, *negative media tone*, is a measure of the tone of news stories about EU-related topics in television broadcasts and newspapers.<sup>10</sup> The variable has been reversed so that higher values correspond to a more negative tone on EU issues. While negative media tone is a content analysis of news stories from only the two weeks leading up to the EP elections, it should provide an accurate picture of the media context as these two weeks would be a salient time for European-related news stories across the 27 Member States. Second, *party polarization* is a measure of the political party system on the issue of European integration. It uses the voters' placement of the parties in the EES voter survey and is calculated as the standard deviation of the mean party positions in each political system.<sup>11</sup> Finally, to test the moderating effects politicization, we include interaction terms of EU attitudes and our two politicization measures.

<sup>7</sup> While there was less variation in the experts' attributions of responsibility than the citizens' attributions, the experts were not in complete agreement. To ensure the robustness of the findings, we also calculated the dependent variable using the lower and upper bounds of the expert confidence interval as the mean expert score. The substantive conclusions did not change in either case.

<sup>8</sup> We also ran models separately on each policy area with the same substantive conclusions. For space and presentation considerations, they are not presented here but are available from the authors upon request.

<sup>9</sup> EU attitudes is a standardized item scale created from four equally weighted questions: q79, q80, q83, and q81; alpha score of .71. Please see appendix for question wording. These items were chosen for the scale of EU attitudes as they were highly correlated with each other and meet the monotone homogeneity assumption in item-rest tests. In addition, we model it as a one-dimensional construct, as we found strong unidimensionality in the responses. Furthermore Euroskepticism is normally modeled unidimensionally in the literature (see e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2005).

<sup>10</sup> This is a measure from coding how news stories evaluated the European Union, European Parliament, and potential enlargement: negative, rather negative, balanced/mixed, rather positive, positive.

<sup>11</sup> Our findings are robust when we instead use the range of the parties' positions in each system with the EES data.

Multilevel models will be used to analyze both the individual-level and contextual-level variation in closeness to expert evaluations. A multilevel, or hierarchical, model allows for estimating the variance between individuals as well as the variance between countries to specifically correct for the clustered nature of the data. In addition, multilevel modeling is necessary for hierarchical data such as cross-national surveys to obtain correct standard errors (Snijders and Bosker 1999). A benefit of cross-national studies is that variation at the contextual, or country, level is analyzed to help explain why similar individuals in different countries may have different outcomes. At the individual level we have over 25,000 observations and therefore it poses no problem to include multiple individual-level predictor variables. However, at the country level we have just 28 observations which limits the degrees of freedom available and restricts the number of country-level independent variables that can be tested. We will therefore run separate models with different contextual effects to check the robustness of our politicization theory. A final model with both contextual variables will be assessed, bearing in mind the limitations due to the small number of second-level units.

## Results

To test our hypotheses, we estimate three sets of models. Each model includes the same individual-level variables but different country-level variables to test the robustness of politicization as a predictor of accurate responsibility judgments. The results are shown in Table 2. Recall that all variables were grand mean centered, so the intercept can be interpreted as the effect for the *average* respondent. The coefficients are then an indication of increasing or decreasing from the average.

At the individual level, we proposed that cognitive abilities would facilitate while EU attitudes would motivate information acquisition and processing. For the sake of parsimony and clarity of effects, our models presented include only two individual-level variables. However, a model with the full battery of controls is available in the appendix.<sup>12</sup> First, we theorized that citizens with high levels of political knowledge are generally more aware of and able to process political topics and would therefore make attributions closer to expert evaluations. We find this hypothesis is supported: political knowledge is strongly associated with correct responsibility attributions.<sup>13</sup> This finding is not surprising, but it could not be assumed. Citizens usually have limited knowledge about the European Union governance, so it is important to confirm that political sophistication facilitates correct attributions of responsibility.

For the second individual-level covariate, we examine how political predispositions motivate information processing. We theorized that while EU supporters and Euroskeptics may be motivated to learn about the European Union and are more receptive to information about it, they select and process the information in a biased way. Therefore, they will make responsibility judgments that are less accurate. On the other hand, individuals with ambivalent attitudes towards the EU are much less likely to suffer from a partisan bias and therefore are better able to acquire factual content about the European Union. This hypothesis was strongly supported: both Euroskeptics and EU supporters make less accurate responsibility judgments than do the “centrists”. This is demonstrated in Figure 2 below, which plots the fitted values of the dependent variable, holding all other covariates at their mean

<sup>12</sup> Note that the full model including educational attainment and other socioeconomic indicators as control variables does not change the strength or significance of our main findings presented here. While educational attainment is relevant to responsibility formations, we did not include education in the presented model for concerns about possible collinearity. The full model specification is available in Appendix 3.

<sup>13</sup> The knowledge items from the survey included questions about the EU and national governments. In models testing the EU and national items separately, both EU and national government knowledge had a strong and significant positive association with correct responsibility attributions.

Table 2: Multilevel model of closeness to expert evaluation

	<b>Model 1a</b>		<b>Model 1b</b>		<b>Model 2a</b>		<b>Model 2b</b>		<b>Model 3a</b>		<b>Model 3b</b>	
	<i>Coef.</i>	<i>SE</i>										
Intercept	-2.72	(0.05)**	-2.73	(0.05)**	-2.71	(0.05)**	-2.72	(0.05)**	-2.71	(0.05)**	-2.73	(0.05)**
Knowledge	0.09	(0.00)**	0.09	(0.00)**	0.09	(0.00)**	0.09	(0.00)**	0.09	(0.00)**	0.09	(0.00)**
EU Attitudes	0.06	(0.01)**			0.06	(0.01)**			0.06	(0.01)**		
EU Attitudes <sup>2</sup>	-0.20	(0.01)**			-0.20	(0.01)**			-0.20	(0.01)**		
Euroskeptics			-0.27	(0.01)**			-0.28	(0.02)**			-0.28	(0.02)**
EU Supporters (Base = Centrists)			-0.10	(0.01)**			-0.11	(0.02)**			-0.10	(0.02)**
Negative Media Tone	0.22	(0.08)*	0.20	(0.09)*					0.18	(0.08)*	0.18	(0.08)*
Media Tone*Skeptics			-0.04	(0.03)							-0.07	(0.03)*
Media Tone*Supporters			0.06	(0.03)*							0.06	(0.03)*
Party Polarization					0.33	(0.13)*	0.28	(0.12)*	0.28	(0.12)*	0.24	(0.12)-
Party Polar*Skeptics							0.11	(0.04)**			0.14	(0.05)*
Party Polar*Supporters							0.05	(0.05)			0.04	(0.05)
Number of individuals	2622		26228		2622		26228		26228		26228	
Number of contexts	28		28		28		28		28		28	
Between-Country Variance	0.07	(0.27)	0.07	(0.27)	0.07	(0.27)	0.07	(0.27)	0.06	(0.25)	0.06	(0.25)

-p<.1 \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01

Source: European Election Study 2009 and Expert Survey 2010

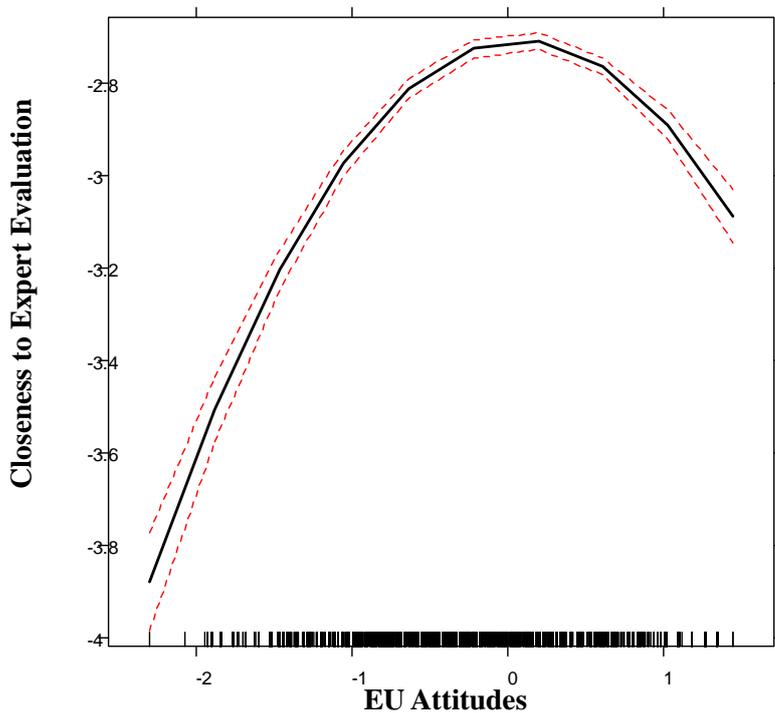


Figure 2: Fitted values of EU attitudes on responsibility allocations

At the country-level, we proposed that politicization creates an opportunity for citizens to learn from the information-rich environment, resulting in more correct assignments of responsibility across levels of government. In contexts where the EU is highly politicized, the European issue becomes more salient and more accessible for people to learn about it. We tested this theory with two different contextual-level variables: negative media tone and party polarization. First, we find support for the direct effects of negativity in the media, shown in Model 1a. The EU is more salient to individuals in countries where the news stories about the EU are primarily negative, and they are able to make more accurate responsibility judgments. To test the interactive effects, we categorize EU attitudes by dividing it into three discrete groups: Euroskeptics (bottom 25%), Centrists (middle 50%) and EU Supporters (top 25%). Negative media tone significantly moderates the effect of EU attitudes, as demonstrated in Model 1b. Figure 3 provides a graphical representation of this interaction effect.

The figures compare *Euroskeptics* (Figure 3a) and *EU Supporters* (Figure 3b) with the baseline *Centrist* category at different levels of *negative media tone*. Recall that higher values represent more negativity in the media. The lines show a sample of the 28 media contexts, including the most negative context (top line) and most positive context (bottom line). These graphs show that the media tone moderates the effect of EU attitudes in contexts that are contrary to an individual's partisan dispositions. This is most clear for EU supporters: in the most negative media environment, they make much more accurate attributions than do EU supporters in positive environments. This is evidenced by the nearly flat line in figure 3b: there is no discernible difference between the attributions of EU supporters and Centrists in the most negative media contexts. However, the bottom line is quite steep: Europhiles in positive environments do not face any cognitive dissonance: the positive context is in line with their partisan predispositions, and therefore they are not motivated to seek out unbiased information.

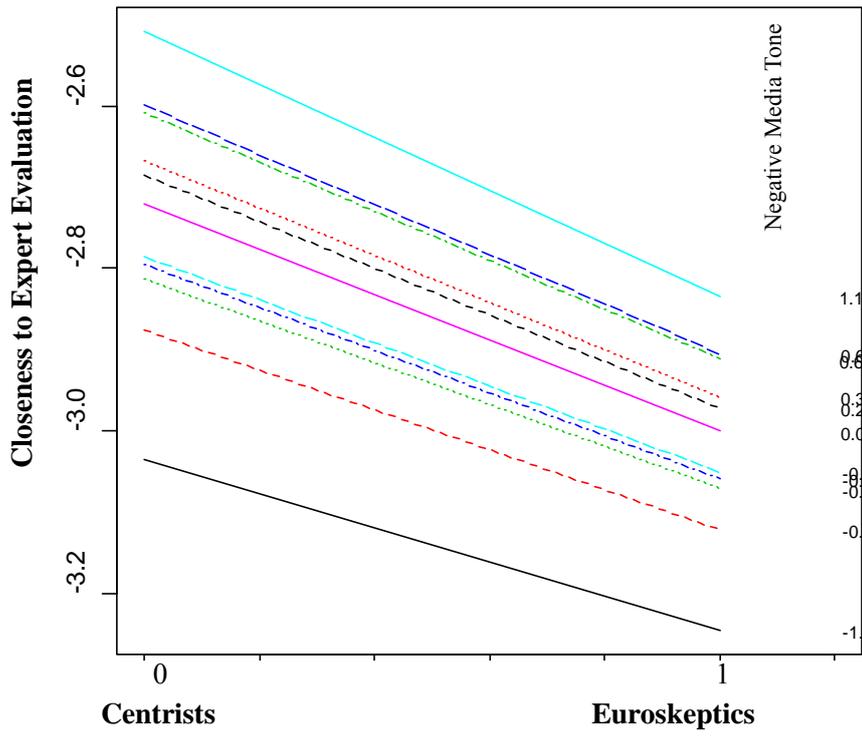


Figure 3a: Negative media tone moderates EU attitudes

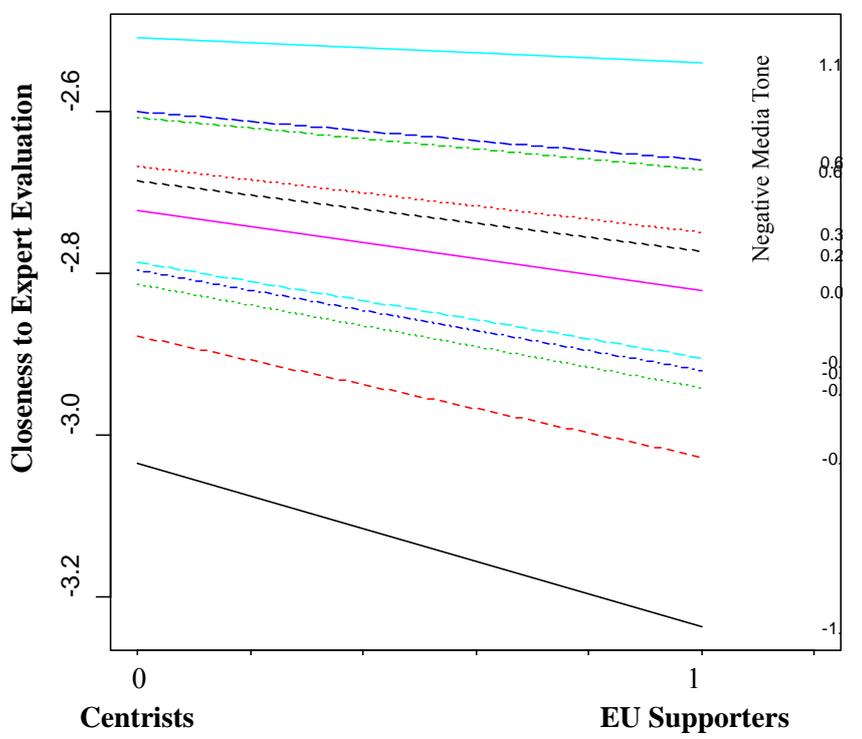


Figure 3b: Negative media tone moderates EU attitudes

For both graphs, the flatter the line, the less difference there is between those with strong attitudes and centrists. In other words, we see that individuals with strong EU attitudes are motivated by contexts that are contrary to their partisan predispositions. This supports our theoretical expectation that when confronted with an environment that is contrary to an individual's beliefs, individuals will be motivated by accuracy goals to seek out information which results in improved attributions of responsibility. In contexts that do not threaten their beliefs, partisan biases are more likely, resulting in less accurate attributions. Our second politicization variable was party polarization. As shown above in Table 2, Model 2a, there are strong direct effects of party polarization on accurate responsibility judgments. We find the same effects as those with negative media tone on EU issues: individuals living in countries where political parties are polarized on the European integration dimension make more accurate responsibility evaluations. While the interaction between party polarization and EU attitudes was highly significant, the magnitude is quite small. When graphed, the interaction is nearly indiscernible. Therefore, we focus on the importance of strong direct effects of party polarization in increasing correct allocations of responsibility. The politicization indicators, media tone and party polarization, both support the theory that increased politicization creates an environment where individuals have access to information and improves correct attributions of responsibility.

Finally, we test a model with both contextual-level politicization indicators to see if the effects of one are perhaps controlled for by the other (Model 3). When including both negative media tone and party polarization, the magnitude of both decreases slightly, but they retain their statistical and substantive significance. This suggests that while both predictors are measures of politicization and have similar effects on correct attributions of responsibility, they are tapping into slightly different processes. This is further supported by their low correlation (.16). The lack of association between politicization variables could help explain why there is a significant interactive effect with negative media tone and EU attitudes but not with party polarization, and lends further support to the claim that politicization, in various forms, increases the amount of information available in the context.

## **Conclusion**

Citizens generally are uninformed about political affairs and are lacking in political knowledge. It is especially difficult for them to understand allocations of responsibility in complex institutional structures. Indeed, some scholars have argued that it is irrational for voters to spend the necessary time and energy to become well-informed. Yet it is crucial for democratic accountability that citizens have at least a basic understanding of governmental responsibility. To that end, this chapter sought to discover whether European citizens can correctly allocate responsibility to the national government and European Union. In addition, if becoming informed is costly, what motivates citizens to seek out information?

We proposed a theory that builds upon the ability-motivation-opportunity structure and took into account individual and contextual factors. At the individual level, we posited that cognitive ability facilitates the acquisition and consumption of information. Moreover, while support or opposition to European integration may motivate individuals to acquire information, it also promotes biased information processing which leads to less accurate responsibility judgments. At the contextual level, we theorized that politicization on the European issue would provide an information-rich context where citizens can learn about the EU. The increased salience of the EU and opportunity to easily acquire information motivates individuals and improves their understanding of EU responsibility. Finally, we expected the political environment to moderate the effect of individual EU attitudes on the accuracy of attribution judgments: those with strong opinions about the EU would be more likely to engage in unbiased information processing when confronted with a politicized environment in opposition to their partisan beliefs.

The empirical study provided support for this theoretical model. First, high political sophisticates are more likely to correctly allocate responsibility than are low knowledge citizens. Second, individuals with strong EU attitudes engage in more biased information processing as they selectively acquire information to support their predispositions, compared to EU centrists. This results in Euroskeptics' and EU supporters' attributions of responsibility being farther away from the expert evaluations.

At the contextual level, politicization of the European issue motivates individuals to seek additional information. We demonstrated the robustness of this finding by showing that two different types of politicization resulted in more correct responsibility attributions: negative media tone on EU stories and party polarization on European integration. In contexts where the EU is politicized, it becomes a salient topic for citizens. There was a direct effect of negative media tone and party polarization on more accurate responsibility judgments. We also found a strong conditioning effect of politicization, with negative media tone moderating individual EU attitudes. When individuals are located in highly-politicized environments that are contrary to their beliefs, they are motivated to seek out more information and are able to make better responsibility attributions. Contrary to what might be expected, highly politicized contexts lead to improved understanding of European Union functions. One might imagine that a Europhile from a pro-Europe country would be the most knowledgeable about the EU, but it is actually the citizens living in politicized environments that are motivated to acquire additional information.

These findings have important implications for our understanding of what facilitates and motivates individuals to learn about complex political matters. While cognitive ability is important, it is only one factor that facilitates political learning; motivation and opportunity are also crucial. Individual interest or perceived group membership, as well as an information-rich context, make the issue salient and motivate individuals to seek out information. However partisan biases influence information processing, which prevents many individuals with strong attitudes from making complex allocations of responsibility that approach expert evaluations. Future studies could more closely explore the link between attitudes/biases and individual ability to understand complex political institutions, as well as the different moderating effects of various politicized contexts.

## **Appendix 1: Question Wording from EES Voter Survey**

### Political Knowledge

- Q92. Switzerland is a member of the EU
- Q93. The European Union has 25 member states
- Q94. Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.
- Q95. Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union
- Q96. The [Country] Minister of Education {or appropriate national title} is [Insert Name].
- Q97. Individuals must be 25 or older to stand as candidates in [Country] general elections.
- Q98. There are [actual number + 50%] members of the [Country] parliament.

### EU Attitudes

- Q79. Generally speaking, do you think that [Country's] membership of the European Union is a good thing, bad thing, or neither good nor bad?
- Q80. Some say European Unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?
- Q83. In general, do you think that enlargement of the European Union would be a good thing, bad thing, or neither good nor bad?
- Q91. How much confidence do you have that decisions made by the European Union will be in the interest of (country)? A great deal of confidence, a fair amount, not very much, or no confidence at all.

## Appendix 2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
<b>Individual-Level Variables</b>					
Closeness to Expert Evaluation	26236	-2.82	1.25	-7.95	-0.05
<u>Grand-Mean Centered (used in models)</u>					
Political Knowledge	27069	0.00	1.87	-3.90	3.10
EU Attitudes	27056	0.00	0.73	-2.30	1.44
<u>Original Scale</u>					
Political Knowledge	27069	3.90	1.87	0	7
EU Attitudes	27056	-0.01	0.73	-2.30	1.44
<b>Contextual-Level Variables</b>					
Negative Tone	28	0.16	0.59	-1.36	1.26
EU Party Polarization - Standard Deviation	28	1.12	0.40	0.42	1.97

### Appendix 3: Hierarchical Model

Table A3.1: Model with standard control variables

	Direct Effects Only			Interaction Effects		
	Coef.	SE		Coef.	SE	
Intercept	-2.72	(0.05)	**	-2.72	(0.05)	**
Knowledge	0.07	(0.00)	**	0.07	(0.00)	**
EU Attitudes	0.04	(0.01)	**			
EU Attitudes^2	-0.20	(0.01)	**			
Euroskeptics				-0.24	(0.02)	**
EU Supporters (Base = Centrists)				-0.11	(0.02)	**
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Education	0.06	(0.00)	**	0.06	(0.00)	**
Age	-0.002	(0.00)	**	-0.002	(0.00)	**
Female	-0.07	(0.02)	**	-0.07	(0.02)	**
<i>Social Class (Base = Routine non-manual)</i>						
Upper Service	0.07	(0.02)	**	0.07	(0.02)	**
Lower Service	0.05	(0.03)		0.05	(0.03)	
Petty Bourgeois	-0.00	(0.03)		-0.01	(0.03)	
Skilled	-0.10	(0.02)	**	-0.10	(0.02)	**
Non-Skilled	-0.11	(0.02)	**	-0.11	(0.02)	**
Still in Education	0.02	(0.03)		0.03	(0.04)	
Other	0.01	(0.02)		0.02	(0.03)	
Negative Media Tone	0.17	(0.08)	*	0.16	(0.09)	-
Media Tone*Skeptics				-0.06	(0.03)	-
Media Tone*Supporters				0.06	(0.03)	-
Party Polarization	0.27	(0.12)	*	0.23	(0.12)	-
Party Polar*Skeptics				0.14	(0.05)	*
Party Polar*Supporters				0.02	(0.05)	
Number of individuals	26228			26228		
Number of contexts	28			28		
Between-Country Variance	0.06	(0.24)		0.06	(0.24)	

-p<.1 \*p<.05 \*\*p<.01

Source: European Election Study 2009 and Expert Survey 2010

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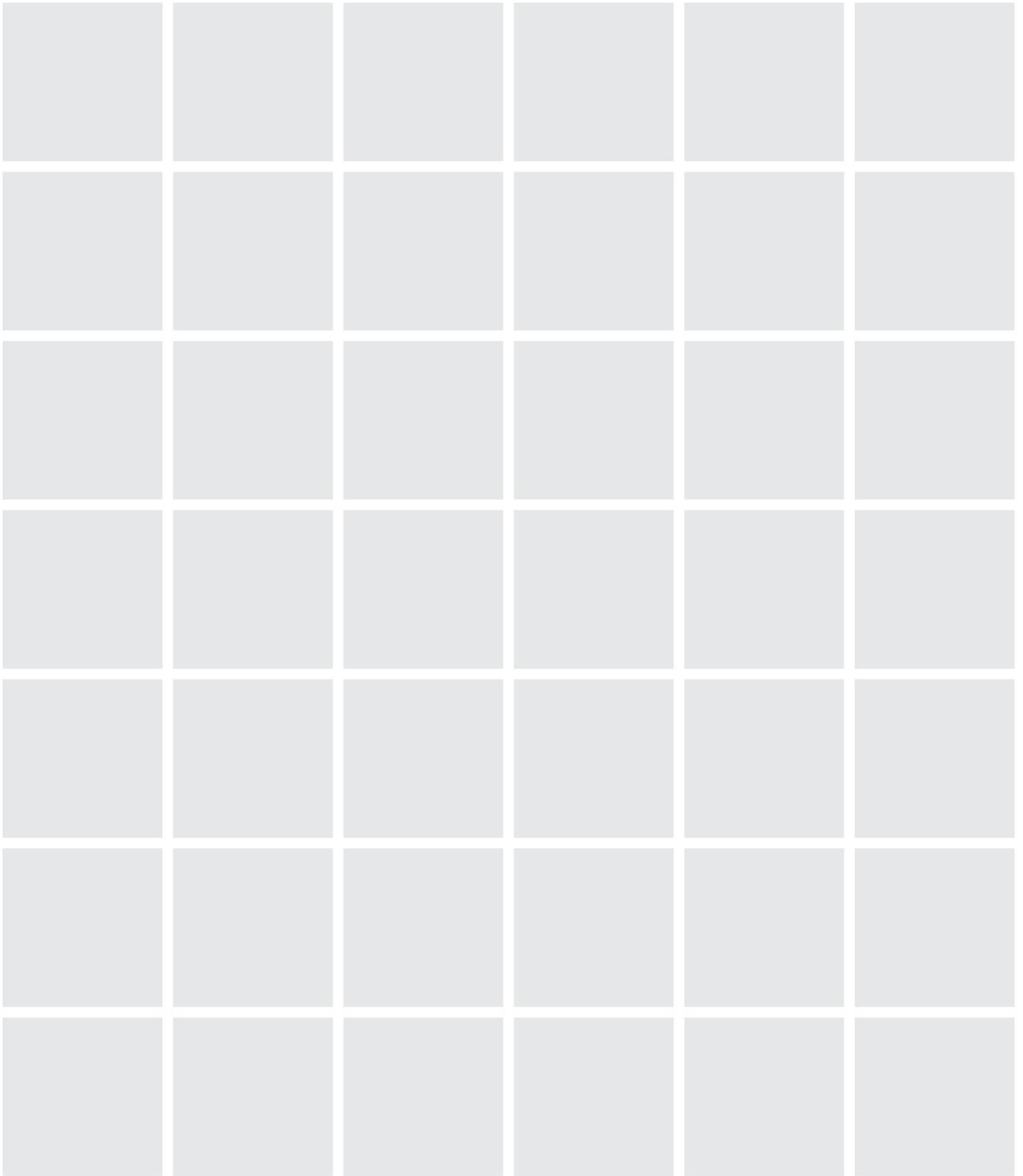
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