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Is left/right still the 'super glue'? The role of left/right ideology and issues in electoral politics in Western and East Central Europe

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Publication date
2012

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Walczak, A. (2012). *Is left/right still the 'super glue'? The role of left/right ideology and issues in electoral politics in Western and East Central Europe*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

Chapter 4

Representation in the European Parliament:

Factors Affecting Attitude Congruence of Voters and Candidates in the EP Elections

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Abstract

This chapter examines the extent to which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics affect attitude congruence of voters and candidates for elections to the European Parliament. It analyses attitudes towards basic policy packages in the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian issue domains as well as immigration and EU integration. The analysis is based on the 2009 European Election Study and European Election Candidate Survey covering 27 EU countries, 162 parties and over 11,500 respondents. It show that the European Parliament suffers from inequalities in representation for different groups of citizens, representing much better attitudes of educated, middle class and politically knowledgeable voters. Furthermore, it uncovers significant differences across political parties in how well they represent voters. It provides tentative evidence suggesting that voters are better represented in open and ordered ballot systems.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores factors determining how well voters are represented in the European Parliament (EP). In their quest to explore the quality of representation in democratic elections, many scholars have employed the Responsible Party Model (e.g. APSA, 1950; Katz, 1987; Thomassen, 1994), which sees political parties as major actors *by* and *through* which representation is realised (also: Sartori 1968: 471). Studies based on this model have established that preconditions for effective representation are largely fulfilled at the European level. Voters in European elections have a choice between a considerable number of parties which are ideologically as distinctive and cohesive as national parties (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999). Voters are able to recognise ideological differences among parties and consider them at the ballot box in European elections (Van der Brug and Van der Eijk, 1999). In addition, the party space in the EP reflects the national political space, with left/right as the major dimension of competition (e.g. Hix, 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen, 2000). When it comes to the left/right dimension, voters, at least those from Western Europe, are well represented in the European Parliament. However, little is known about the quality of representation in the EP beyond left/right, although there are some indications that representation on issues is much poorer than on left/right (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997, 1999; Thomassen, 1999). What has also remained unexplored so far is whether the quality of representation in the EP varies for different groups of citizens, parties and countries. These lacunae in our knowledge of representation at the European level lead us to inquire *which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics influence the quality of democratic representation of voters on political issues*.

This study is based on the delegate model of representation to analyse the quality of the link between voters and their representatives. In the delegate model, representatives are expected to act as the voice of those who are not present in the representative body (e.g. Pitkin, 1967: 133). This link between voters and representatives will be effective if political decision makers enter the policy process with the same issue preferences as those who voted for them (Dalton, 2002: 217). If attitudes of representatives resemble those of voters, their actions and decisions can be expected to be in line with the political preferences of the citizens they represent (e.g. Thomassen, 1994; Holmberg, 1999). In order to examine the mass-elite linkage this chapter focuses on the congruence of issue attitudes between voters and their representatives in the European Parliament. It focuses on attitude congruence on basic packages of policy opinion in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issue domains as well as on issues of immigration and EU integration. In doing so, it contributes to an extensive literature on substantive representation, which investigates whether issue positions of governments, political parties and their representatives reflect attitudes of voters (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994; McDonald and Budge, 2005). This literature takes a well-established place in research on representation, next to studies on symbolic and descriptive representation (see: Pitkin, 1967), which examine whether the presence of representatives with certain ascriptive characteristics, e.g. race or gender, affects attitudes of groups with the same characteristics and the extent to which these representatives represent such groups better than other representatives (e.g. Childs, 2008; Pantoja and Segura, 2003).

The major aim of this chapter is to assess which voters are best represented in the European Parliament and which party- and system-level characteristics account for the congruence in positions of voters and parties. So far, our knowledge about determinants of representation in the European elections is very limited. The few studies that focus on representation in these elections teach us that parties which

project clear cues represent their voters better than parties with less clear cues. We also know that representation is better in countries with proportional representation and in countries with a large number of parties (e.g. Dalton, 1985; Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997; Thomassen, 1999). However, little is known about the extent to which individual-level characteristics affect representation. Moreover, conclusions reached so far about representation in European elections are limited in scope. They focus on representation in terms of left/right or on issues related to the EU, whereas there are other domains that have not been studied.

This chapter sheds light on the determinants of the fit between positions of parties and their voters in the European Parliament by employing the European Election Study and the European Election Candidate Survey 2009. It proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the theoretical framework and expectations on individual-, party- and system-level factors affecting the quality of representation in European elections. The following sections describe the employed data and methodology, present our findings and, finally, outline our conclusions.

REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The linkage between the public and political decision makers is one of the most important topics in the study of democratic political systems (e.g. Miller et al., 1999; Powell 2000; Shapiro et al., 2010). Although there are various links in the *"political chain of democratic command and control"* (Keman, 1996), the congruence of issue attitudes of voters and their representatives has been a key topic in studies on representation. In this perspective it is assumed that policy outcomes are likely to reflect citizen preferences if representatives share opinions of their voters (e.g. Miller and Stokes, 1963). The concept of congruence between issue attitudes of representatives and citizens has been acknowledged as important for analysing the quality of representation (Powell, 2000; Diamond and Morlino, 2005). In European parliamentary systems political parties are central to the process of representation (e.g. Thomassen, 1994). Therefore, studies of representation in Europe have mostly focused on the voter-party dyad. We follow this approach and examine the congruence between attitudes of voters and representatives from the party they voted for in the last EP elections. Certainly, policy outcomes may be suboptimal from the perspective of voters even if representatives share issue attitudes with their electorate, because in the process of decision-making many factors play a role. This chapter will not consider the complex picture of what determines representative policy outcomes, but will simply focus on the congruence of issue attitudes of voters and their representatives as an indicator of representational quality.

We will consider congruence on basic packages of political attitudes, which have been of importance to political competition in all parliamentary systems in both Western and East Central Europe (e.g. Kriesi et al., 2008; Vachudova and Hooghe, 2009).[33] We distinguish between issues in the socio-economic domain, the libertarian-authoritarian domain as well as issues related to immigration and EU integration. The socio-economic domain relates to attitudes towards state ownership, the role of private enterprise and state intervention in the economy and redistribution of income and wealth, while the libertarian-authoritarian domain concerns attitudes towards societal and personal freedoms, such as equality of

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[33] In this chapter we do not study differences between issue publics i.e. differences in attention of citizens to various issues which arise from different interest structures. Instead, we focus on basic policy packages.

women or rights for sexual minorities, life-style and functioning of the society. In addition, we conduct separate analysis for attitudes towards immigration and European integration as these issues have gained importance in political discourse in recent years (Kriesi et al., 2008; Bornschier, 2010).

The congruence of attitudes between voters and representatives may vary across issue domains. Scholarly literature shows that attitudes of voters and political elites are structured by at least two dimensions (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1999: Kriesi et al., 2008). As there is no consensus on whether attitudes towards immigration and European integration are strongly related to these dimensions (Kriesi et al., 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009), we have decided to treat issues of immigration and EU integration separately from the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domains. As public opinion is structured by several dimensions, voters may not be equally well represented in all issue domains by the party of their choice. Our cross-country analysis focuses on factors which generally account for better representation in all issue domains and also includes variables (mostly at the level of parties) which may account for better representation in some issue domains, but not in others. In the following, we examine which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics affect the congruence of attitudes between voters and their party on socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian issues, immigration and EU integration.

Individual-level characteristics

There are reasons to expect that MEP candidates will better represent the more educated, middle and higher class strata of society. Candidates running for the EP elections are likely to be highly educated, potentially coming from middle or upper class themselves. These candidates are ready to live in a different country and interact on an international level and are less reliant on national identity in their perceptions of political problems (e.g. Hooghe and Marks, 2008). Studies show that after having been elected to the EP, the majority of candidates pursue European careers (Scarrow, 1997). This might be indicative of a certain self-selection of political candidates given their background and readiness to leave the national political sphere in favour of the European. There is also evidence that representatives at the local and national level are mostly middle class and well educated, which can result in better representation of these particular groups (Schattschneider, 1975; Barnes, 1977). Another reason why more educated and higher class voters may be better represented in European elections can be related to party strategy. As better educated and middle class voters are more likely to turn out in the EP elections (e.g. Franklin, 2007), parties and their candidates may strategically ignore less educated voters. In this case, opinion congruence between EP representatives and voters in each issue domain will be better for more educated and higher class voters. We hypothesise as follows.

Hypothesis 1 (Education): Education has a positive effect on attitude congruence between voters and their representatives.

Hypothesis 2 (Social class): For voters belonging to the middle and upper class attitude congruence between them and their representatives will be better than for voters from the working class.

How politically informed voters are may also play a role for opinion congruence. Democratic elections will function well as a process by which voters are represented, if voters are aware of political stances of candidates and parties (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Literature shows that there is considerable

variation across individuals in how informed they are about politics (e.g. Converse, 1964; Zaller, 1992; Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). Research has shown that the more informed voters are, the more certain they are about their attitudes towards political issues and the more likely they are to act upon their attitudes while at the ballot box (e.g. Palfrey and Poole, 1987; Basinger and Lavine, 2005; De Vries et al., 2011). Moreover, well-informed voters are better able to recognise which ideological profiles parties have and which positions they take on concrete issues (Van der Brug and Van der Eijk, 1999). As politically informed voters are well aware of where parties stand and are most likely to vote upon their attitudes, we can expect them to be most likely to cast an informed choice at the ballot box. This means that the party that they choose will reflect their preferences better than parties chosen by less informed voters.

When studying political involvement, scholars distinguish between political knowledge and political interest. As Luskin (1987) has shown, these two variables tap into the same latent trait, but measures of political knowledge are less affected by social desirability bias because they are not based on self-reported political interest or involvement. So, we will examine the effect of political knowledge on the quality of representation. We hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 3 (Political knowledge): Political knowledge has a positive effect on attitude congruence between voters and their representatives.

Next to political knowledge, exposure to mobilisation efforts in the run-up to the elections may play a role for attitude congruence. Mobilisation relates to persuasive actions of, among others, parties, political candidates and media actors, which stimulate individuals to turn out to vote. As a result of these efforts, voters are provided with information about party stances on issues and about characteristics of candidates that they may find appealing (e.g. Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). So, exposure to mobilisation efforts means exposure to politically relevant information. As a result of this exposure, voters acquire certain knowledge. We feel that it is important to distinguish between exposure to mobilisation efforts and political knowledge because the latter measures voters' general levels of political information, while the latter refers to how much information they are exposed to before the elections.

European elections are less important for voters than national elections as they do not result in government formation which would directly affect them (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Particularly in a second-order election, mobilisation efforts are crucial for providing information about parties and convincing voters to turn out to vote (Franklin and Wessels, 2010). The more voters are exposed to party messages ahead of EP elections, the more we can expect them to be able to assess which party bests suits their preferences, which may have consequences for representation. We hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 4 (Exposure to mobilisation efforts): More exposure to mobilisation efforts leads to more attitude congruence between voters and their representatives.

On the basis of theoretical considerations, we developed four hypotheses about individual level variables that might be related to attitude congruence between voters and their party. In addition to the four variables for which we have theoretical expectations, we also included the following individual level control variables for which we do not have such expectations: religion, gender, age and place of residence.

Party-level characteristics

Scholarly literature suggests that sound representation depends partially on the clarity of party positions (e.g. Dalton, 1985; Pierce, 1999). Political parties with a clear ideological profile are more likely to provide clear cues which inform voters on their policy positions. Literature so far has assumed that mass parties and non-centrist parties display such ideological clarity (e.g. Dalton, 1985). However, from the perspective of voters this may be far from true as they may know the ideological position of some mass or non-centrist parties, but not of others. A significant variation in ideological clarity of parties can be also expected across party systems. It is in general less clear for voters in consolidating democracies of East Central Europe what the ideological profiles of parties are as the party systems are relatively new and fluid (Van der Brug et al., 2008; Tavits, 2008). Given the variation within and across party systems, we conceptualise ideological clarity not with dichotomies but with the extent to which voters in a country agree about the position of political parties in left/right terms. If there is a high level of agreement in a party system where political parties are located on the major dimension of competition (left/right), it is easier for voters to consider which party is closest to their own preferences, so that they are more like to vote for a party that represents their preferences.

We expect variations across issues in how ideological clarity enhances representation. Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) show that left/right positions of voters are only weakly related to their opinions on immigration and EU integration. Clarity of ideological profiles of parties' left/right positions will then not help voters to assess where parties stand on these 'new' issues. Yet, it will offer information on issues that traditionally belong to this ideological dimension: issues in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domains. Our hypothesis is therefore:

Hypothesis 5 (Ideological clarity): More ideological clarity of a party in left/right terms leads to more attitude congruence between this party and its voters in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domain.

Irrespective of ideological clarity, some parties may represent their voters better on some issues than other parties. Not all parties in a party system have a clear position on all issues. While older mainstream parties have clear stances on traditional socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issues, new parties often have a clearer profile on issues which are weakly related to the traditional dimension of competition (Meguid, 2008). Among the new issue parties, radical right parties have a clear profile on issues such as immigration and EU integration (e.g. Kitschelt and McGann, 1997). In turn, green parties strongly stress environmental issues, although these issues remain closely related to economic stances. Moreover, green parties normally take a clear (left-wing) position on socio-economic issues (e.g., Hix, 1999; Burchell, 2002). Also radical left parties take clear stances on a set of issues in the socio-economic domain (Ezrow, 2010). It seems plausible that parties with a particular profile will represent their voters better in related issue domains – radical right parties will better represent their voters on the issue of immigration and EU integration, while radical left parties will better represent voters on socio-economic issues. Since green parties tend to position themselves clearly at the left side of the socio-economic dimension (e.g., Kriesi et al. 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009), we hypothesise that they will represent their voters well on these issues. We expect that:

Hypothesis 6a (Radical right parties): Voters of radical right parties will display high attitude congruence with their parties on the issues of immigration and EU integration.

Hypothesis 6b (Green and radical left parties): Voters of green and radical left parties will display high attitude congruence with their parties on socio-economic issues.

System-level characteristics

Scholarly research has shown that the type of electoral system affects the quality of representation (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994; Mattila and Raunio, 2006). In 2002, the EU passed legislation establishing Uniform Electoral Procedures for elections to the European Parliament. However, this legislation allows for substantial differences between member states, so that the electoral systems vary with regard to the type of ballot structure (open, ordered or closed) and the average district magnitude (Farrell and Scully, 2005, 2007, 2010). We can outline two scenarios with regard to how the type of electoral system affects the quality of representation.

In the first scenario we expect closer attitude congruence between voters and their EP representatives in an open ballot system, particularly if the ballot system has large districts. In an open system, candidates campaign more on the basis of their personal reputation than on the basis of the reputation of their party. Such personal vote-seeking increases with the size of the electoral district (Carey and Shugart, 1995). In electoral systems with larger districts, candidates have a higher incentive to cultivate personal vote as they need to differentiate themselves from other candidates (of their own party as well as of competing parties). This way of campaigning leads them to providing information to voters about their policy stands on issues, which, in turn, makes it easier for voters to choose a candidate who represents their views well. In contrast, in closed electoral systems candidates choose between party lists with little influence on who will be their EP representative.

The increased personal vote-seeking in an open ballot system means that the divergence of attitudes between a candidate and the party may have a positive effect on representation. If candidates stress their own issue positions ahead of the elections, they are more likely to attract voters who share their stances. If voters do not fully agree with some candidates of one party, but are attracted by one candidate of this party, the open electoral system allows them to choose this candidate directly, which may have positive effects on representation. This line of argument leads to the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 7a (Electoral system): In an open ballot system, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be better than in other ballot systems.

Hypothesis 8a (Open ballot system*District magnitude): In open ballot systems with larger districts, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be better than in such systems with smaller districts.

Hypothesis 9a (Open ballot system*Candidate's deviation from party position): In an open ballot system, a candidate's deviation from his/her party's position will positively affect attitude congruence.

In the second scenario we expect exactly the opposite as the party is the major actor in a political system. Political parties develop distinct policy programmes and compete by mobilising supporters on the appeal of these programmes. Only internally cohesive parties can send a clear message to the electorate before elections and implement their policy proposals after elections. Since the party as a whole is the major point of reference for both voters and candidates, we can expect that mass-elite congruence will be stronger if candidates campaign on the platform of their political party. Personal vote-seeking in an open ballot system involves taking positions or actions that may not correspond fully with the party platform. This may dilute the programmatic message of the party and introduce personal aspects related to the representative which may constitute a departure from the cohesive party line. Since incentives for personal vote seeking increase with the size of electoral districts, the party message becomes more diluted in larger districts. In turn, in a closed ballot system, representatives have the least incentive to pursue personal vote-seeking and care more about party reputation and party programme, because their electoral prospects depend on the votes cast for their party (Carey and Shugart, 1995). We would, thus, expect that in an open ballot system parties will be less able to send a clear, undiluted, signal to voters regarding their parties' stances on a range of issues and any deviation from the party opinion will affect representation negatively. We hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 7b (Electoral system): In an open ballot system, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be poorer than in other ballot systems.

*Hypothesis 8b (Open ballot system*District magnitude)*: In open ballot systems with larger districts, attitude congruence between voters and their representatives will be poorer than in such systems with smaller districts.

*Hypothesis 9b (Open ballot system*Candidate's deviation from party position)*: In an open ballot system, a candidate's deviation from his/her party's position will negatively affect attitude congruence.

At the system-level, we control for how many years a country has been a member of the EU as party positions on issues in the EP elections might be more clear in countries with longer membership.

DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs the 2009 European Election Study (EES 2009; Van Egmond et al., 2010) and the European Parliament Election Candidate Survey (EECS 2009; Giebler et al., 2010) as both surveys contain identical questions which tap respondents' attitudes on a broad range of basic policy issues. The voter study was fielded immediately following the EP elections of June 2009, with independently drawn samples of over 1000 respondents in each of EU's 27 member states. The candidate survey was carried out shortly before and after the EP elections and contains information on representatives from 160 parties, which is over 60% of the parties that were contacted in the course of the survey. In order to examine the attitude congruence of voters and their representatives, we combine data from the voter and candidate survey, which yields information on 28 political systems,[34] 162 parties and over 11,500 respondents in the

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[34] 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 as two separate systems.

European Union.[35] We create a multilevel data structure, where voters are nested in parties according to their party choice in the last EP elections, and parties are nested in 28 political systems.

Both surveys asked respondents to indicate on a scale from 1 to 5 (Likert-scale) how much they disagree/agree with a number of statements. These statements tap into attitudes on a number of socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian issues, as well as immigration and EU integration. Items in the socio-economic domain are: "Private enterprise is the best way to solve your country's economic problems" (we call this item *Enterprise*), "Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership" (*Ownership*), "Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy" (*Intervention*), "Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people" (*Redistribution*). Among issue items in the libertarian-authoritarian domain are: "Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law" (*Same-Sex Marriage*), "Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion" (*Abortion*), "People who break the law should be given much harsher sentences than they are these days" (*Law & Order*), "Schools must teach children to obey authority" (*Authority*), "EU treaty changes should be decided by referendum" (*Referendum*), "A woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family" (*Family*). Attitudes towards immigration are tapped by two questions: "Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of (country of respondent)" (*Adaptation of Immigrants*) and "Immigration to (country of respondent) should be decreased significantly" (*Decrease of Immigration*). Attitudes towards EU integration are measured with the question whether EU unification should be pushed further or whether it has already gone too far (*EU Integration*).

We measured the congruence between attitudes of voters and the party they voted for in three steps. We first determined the position of each party on each issue by computing the mean position of all MEP candidates from each of the parties. So, the position of party A on an issue is the mean of the positions of all candidates of party A. In the second step we computed for each respondent for each issue the distance between her own position and the position of the party. In the third step, we established congruence in each issue domain by computing for each respondent the average distance between her and the party she voted for across all issues belonging to this domain. In the final step, we took the negative value of this score, so that high values indicate that the voter is (on average) well represented in a particular domain and low values (i.e., large distances) that the respondent is not well represented.[36]

Our individual-level explanatory variables are *Education*, *Social class*, *Political knowledge* and *Exposure to mobilisation efforts*. For *Education* we employ the cross-country measure included in the EES 2009 which is based on ISCED coding. This measure provides information on the highest level of education completed by respondents and consists of six categories coded as follows: 0 stands for pre-

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[35] This study includes only parties for which we have observations both at the level of EP representatives and voters. As the candidate survey lacks observations for a substantive number of parties, the exclusion of voters of such parties from the analysis leads to a reduction in the number of observations at the individual level. Parties on which we have few observations from the Candidate Survey belong to the ethnic/linguistic and agrarian party families. In Western Europe we have information on issue attitudes of only 22 candidates from ethnic/linguistic parties and 39 from agrarian parties, while for other party families in this region we have information on 70 candidates per party family at the minimum. In East Central Europe, the ecologist, agrarian and ethnic/linguistic party families remain underrepresented with information on 10, 11 and 12 candidates respectively, while for each of the remaining party families we have information on 20 candidates at the minimum. Still, information on 28 systems, 162 parties and over 11,500 individuals provides sufficient observations to conduct multilevel analyses.
[36] As some positions of voters on substantive issues are missing, we have performed multiple imputation in STATA in order not to lose observations on voters.

primary education, 1 for primary education or first stage of basic education, 2 for lower secondary or second stage of basic education, 3 for upper secondary education, 4 for post-secondary non-tertiary education, 5 for first-stage or tertiary education and 6 for second-stage or tertiary education. Although the ISCED measure does not capture distinct values of vocational education (Schneider, 2010), it is the best measure in the EES 2009 comparing educational attainment across countries.

Social class is operationalized by occupational categories, which is in line with much recent work in this area. The EES contains a categorisation in 11 occupational groups, which match up very closely to categorisations employed in recent work on class voting (e.g., Müller 1999; Oesch, 2006; Kriesi et al. 2008; Evans and De Graaf, 2012). This is the categorisation used in this chapter.

Political knowledge is measured by the factual correctness of respondents' answers to seven statements about national and European politics contained in the EES 2009. We coded the correct answers for each question as 1, 0 otherwise. In order to assess whether these questions relate to a single latent dimension, the responses to these items were analysed on a pooled sample of all countries by means of an ordinal IRT model (Mokken, 1971). Constructing a scale on the basis of all countries allows us to adequately construct an index which measures the same concept across countries. We use an ordinal IRT model as it accounts for various levels of difficulty across items and thus constitutes a more valid dimensionality test than other data reduction methods (Van Schuur, 2003). We were able to construct a satisfactory political knowledge scale (with Loevinger H coefficient of .33) on the basis of 3 items: whether Switzerland is a member of the EU, whether the EU has 25 member states and whether every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament. The additive index for *Political knowledge* ranges from 0 to 3, where 0 indicates the lowest and 3 the highest level of political knowledge.

In order to construct *Exposure to mobilisation efforts* we perform Mokken scaling for all countries together on questions how often voters 1) watch a program about the election on television, 2) read about the election in a newspaper, 3) talk to friends or family about the election, 4) attend a public meeting or rally about the election and 5) look into a website concerned with the election. We have recoded each item so that 1 indicates 'never', 2 'sometimes' and 3 'always'. A common scale can be constructed for the first four items (with Loevinger H of .35). The index we constructed here is the average of responses on all items and ranges from 0 to 3.

At the party level we have four explanatory variables. *Ideological clarity* is a party characteristic which denotes the level of agreement among citizens about where a party stands in ideological (left/right) terms. To measure the perceptual agreement among voters, we use a question where respondents were asked to place each political party in their party system on the left/right scale ranging from 0 to 10. Following Van der Eijk (2001) we calculate here a coefficient of agreement which describes the distribution of citizen responses regarding each party. The value of this coefficient runs from -1 (maximum disagreement) to +1 (maximum agreement). *Radical right parties* and *green and radical left parties* are distinguished by means of dummy variables, constructed on the basis of the classification of the Comparative Manifesto Project (Klingemann et al., 2006; Volkens et al., 2010).

At the country-level, we create a variable denoting *Electoral system*, which is coded as 0 for closed, 1 for ordered and 2 for open ballot system. *District magnitude* is a continuous variable with the

number of districts used for EP elections. We adapted the classification of district magnitude and ballot systems from Farrell and Scully (2007). In order to test the hypothesis on the effect of district magnitude in open ballot systems, we created an interaction between *District magnitude* and a dummy for *Open ballot system*. *Candidate deviation from party position* has been operationalized as the standard deviation from the mean party position on an issue (domain), where the mean party position is given by the mean positioning of all candidates belonging to a party. Finally, *EU membership in years* stands for the number of years since a country joined the EU.

We employ multilevel analysis as our model has a hierarchical structure: individuals are nested in parties according to their choice in the last EP elections, and parties are nested in political systems. In order to facilitate interpretation of the model, we have centred explanatory variables which do not contain the baseline of 0 (Hox, 2010: 59-63).[37]

FINDINGS

Before we conduct causal analysis, Table 4.1 presents some descriptive statistics for four outcome variables – congruence in the socio-economic domain, libertarian-authoritarian domain, immigration and EU integration. The outcome variables are bound between (and include) -5 and 0, where the former stands for the maximum difference in the positions of voters and representatives on an issue (domain) and the latter indicates perfect congruence. Table 4.1 reveals that on average the differences in attitudes of voters and EP representatives are smallest for the socio-economic domain (mean of -1.14 and minimum of -3.33). In turn, we observe the highest average difference on EU integration (mean of -1.29).

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Outcome Variables

Outcome variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Socio-economic domain	-3.33	0	-1.14	.48
Libertarian-authoritarian domain	-3.50	0	-1.25	.47
Immigration	-4.50	0	-1.21	.73
EU integration	-4.38	0	-1.29	.98

Notes: The outcome variables are bounded between (and include) -5 and 0, where the former stands for the biggest difference in stances of parties (consisting of EP representatives) and their voters and the latter indicates perfect congruence.

Table 4.2 presents results from multilevel analyses for four outcome variables: congruence in the socio-economic domain (Model I), the libertarian-authoritarian domain (Model II), immigration (Model

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[37] The centred variables are: *Exposure to mobilisation efforts*, *Ideological clarity*, *District magnitude* and *EU membership in years*.

III) and EU integration (Model IV).[38] These model estimates were obtained from models which also included as control variables: place of residence, gender and religion.[39] Since we have no theoretical expectations about the effects of these individual level control variables, we decided not to present these effects in this chapter. The full results are available in Appendix VI. In each model in Table 4.2 we present two versions – Model A and Model B –, which include different interactions. We tested these interactions with system-level variables in separate models, because the limited number of observations at this level (N=28) does not give the tests enough power when testing them in one joint model.[40] In all models, positive coefficient of an explanatory variable indicates that this factor contributes positively to representation.

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[38] We checked for possible failures of normality of the residuals, linearity and homoscedasticity at all levels of the multilevel models and we found no departures from these assumptions.

[39] Models which included occupational categories and age did not converge. When age was included in a model with subjective social class, its effect was significant and negative. Its inclusion in those models did not substantially change any of the conclusions about the effects of the other variables, therefore we have no reasons to assume that the failure to control for age affects any of the conclusions.

[40] Models B contain slightly fewer observations than Models A as the former contain the standard deviation of party positions on an issue domain. As for 5 % of parties we have information on issue position of only 1 candidate, the standard deviation for these parties is missing. Inclusion of this information into Models B results in a lower number of units. If we exclude from our analysis parties for which we have information on only 1 candidate, our substantive results do not change.

Table 4.2 Multilevel Analysis of Attitude Congruence between Voters and Party Candidates in European Elections

	Model I (Socio-economic domain)		Model II (Libertarian-authoritarian domain)		Model III (Immigration)		Model IV (EU Integration)	
	Model I A	Model I B	Model II A	Model II B	Model III A	Model III B	Model IV A	Model IV B
Individual-level variables								
Education	.01 (.003)***	.02 (.004)***	.03 (.003)***	.02 (.003)***	.03 (.005)***	.03 (.005)***	.02 (.008)***	.02 (.008)***
Occupation (ref. never worked)								
Professional & technical	.02 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.03 (.02)	-.01 (.03)	-.002 (.03)	.02 (.05)	.03 (.05)
Higher administrative	.02 (.03)	.04 (.03)	.03 (.02)	.03 (.02)	-.07 (.04)*	-.06 (.04)	.01 (.06)	.01 (.01)
Clerical	.03 (.02)	.04 (.02)	.04 (.02)**	.03 (.02)	-.03 (.03)	-.02 (.03)	.002 (.05)	.01 (.05)
Sales	.01 (.02)	.01 (.03)	.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	-.07 (.04)*	-.08 (.04)**	-.04 (.05)	-.03 (.06)
Service	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)	-.06 (.03)*	-.06 (.03)*	.03 (.05)	.02 (.05)
Skilled worker	-.02 (.02)	-.01 (.03)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.13 (.03)***	-.12 (.04)***	-.05 (.05)	-.09 (.05)*
Semi-skilled worker	-.05 (.03)*	-.05 (.03)*	-.03 (.02)	-.04 (.02)	-.14 (.04)***	-.15 (.04)***	-.12 (.05)**	-.13 (.06)**
Unskilled worker	-.04 (.03)	-.04 (.03)	-.03 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.11 (.04)***	-.09 (.04)**	-.07 (.06)	-.10 (.06)*
Farm worker	-.04 (.03)	-.01 (.04)	-.01 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.08 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	.01 (.07)	-.003 (.07)
Farm proprietor/manager	-.04 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	.02 (.03)	.03 (.04)	-.01 (.05)	.01 (.06)	-.06 (.08)	-.09 (.08)
Still in education	.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.08 (.02)***	.08 (.03)***	.09 (.04)**	.08 (.04)*	.04 (.06)	.04 (.06)
Political knowledge	.02 (.004)***	.02 (.01)***	.02 (.004)***	.02 (.004)***	.03 (.01)***	.02 (.01)***	.0003 (.01)	.00 (.01)
Exposure to mobilization efforts (c)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.01)*	-.02 (.01)**	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Party-level variables								
Ideological clarity (c)	.22 (.1)**	.27 (.11)**	.32 (.10)***	.37 (.11)***	.11 (.20)	.10 (.21)	-.01 (.18)	.18 (.18)
Radical right parties	-.06 (.05)	-.02 (.06)	.06 (.06)	-.03 (.06)	.37 (.09)***	.48 (.10)***	.13 (.09)	.29 (.10)***
Green parties	.11 (.05)**	.08 (.06)	.05 (.07)	.08 (.05)	.02 (.10)	.03 (.10)	.11 (.10)	.08 (.09)
Radical left parties	-.13 (.05)**	-.2 (.06)***	-.23 (.07)***	-.27 (.05)***	-.05 (.10)	-.10 (.10)	.04 (.10)	-.02 (.09)

System-level variables

Electoral system (ref. closed ballot system)								
Ordered ballot syst.	.04 (.06)	.06 (.06)	.20 (.05)***	.22 (.05)***	-.08 (.20)	-.02 (.20)	.01 (.09)	.001 (.09)
Open ballot syst.	.01 (.06)	-.01 (.10)	.09 (.05)*	.11 (.09)	.13 (.20)	.02 (.20)	-.02 (.09)	-.06 (.13)
District magnitude (c)	.0008 (.001)	.001 (.001)	.003 (.001)***	.004 (.001)***	.001 (.005)	.001 (.003)	.0008 (.002)	.0002 (.001)
Open ballot syst.*District magnitude (c)	.001 (.002)		.002 (.002)		.0006 (.008)		.0007 (.004)	
Candidate's deviation from party position		-.06 (.1)		-.04 (.09)		-.07 (.12)		.13 (.07)**
Open ballot syst.*Candidate's deviation from party position		.08 (.15)		.06 (.14)		.25 (.22)		.10 (.10)
EU membership in years	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)	-.001 (.001)	-.001 (.0009)	.01 (.004)***	.01 (.004)***	-.0001 (.001)	-.0009 (.001)
_cons	-1.24 (.05)***	-1.24 (.07)***	-1.50 (.04)***	-1.46 (.06)***	-1.74 (.15)***	-1.67 (.17)***	-1.38 (.09)***	-1.48 (.10)***

Random effects

Intercept for political systems	.08 (.02)	.09 (.02)	.00005 (.0002)	.07 (.02)	.38 (.06)	.38 (.06)	.12 (.04)	.13 (.03)
Party intercept	.15 (.01)	.15 (.01)	.21 (.01)	.14 (.01)	.29 (.02)	.27 (.02)	.27 (.02)	.23 (.02)
Residual	.43 (.003)	.43 (.003)	.38 (.002)	.37 (.003)	.61 (.004)	.60 (.004)	.92 (.006)	.90 (.006)
Variance explained at:								
Individual-level	1.5%	4.2%	9.6%	9.6%	2.5%	7.4%	2%	5.8%
Party-level	17.8%	17.8%	11%	60%	3.2%	20.6%	1.3%	30%
System-level	45%	27%	90%	56%	49%	49.7%	32%	17.5%
No of political systems	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
No of parties	162	134	162	133	162	134	162	136
N	11161	9482	11161	9171	11161	9590	11161	9873

Note: *** significant at $p < .01$, ** significant at $p < .05$, * significant at $p < .1$; centred variables have been indicated with (c)

With regard to individual-level explanatory variables, we see that representation in the European Parliament improves with levels of education. In each issue domain under study – socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian, immigration and EU integration – we see a positive coefficient of education in each of the Models A and B.[41] This confirms *Hypothesis 1*. Table 4.2 reveals that social class matters very little for representation in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domain. Yet, on the issues of European integration and especially immigration, workers are less well represented than other groups, even when controlling for education. Since attitude congruence for middle class voters is higher in two domains than for the working class, *Hypothesis 2* is partially confirmed.

The level of political knowledge matters for attitude congruence as well. Table 4.2 displays a positive effect of knowledge on congruence in the socio-economic, libertarian-authoritarian domains and for the issue of immigration. This pattern cannot be confirmed for the issue of EU integration, however. With the exception of EU attitudes, our expectation with regard to the effect of political information on the quality of representation (*Hypothesis 3*) can be confirmed. Surprisingly, voters' exposure to mobilisation efforts does not play a role for attitude congruence. The only significant effects that appear here – those in the libertarian-authoritarian domain - are negative, while effects for other issue domains are positive and non-significant. Here, we have to reject *Hypothesis 4*.

Among party-level variables, ideological clarity plays a role for congruence of issue attitudes. A clearer ideological stance of a party in left/right terms, leads to more congruence with its voters in the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domains. This is precisely what we expected in our *Hypothesis 5*. Furthermore, radical right parties represent their voters better on immigration and EU integration than other parties, which confirms *Hypothesis 6a.* However, there is no evidence that green and radical left parties represent their voters better on socio-economic issues. The effect for radical left parties is in several cases negative. The significant effect for green parties in Model I A is not enough to draw any conclusions on this matter. *Hypothesis 6b* should thus be rejected.

With regard to system-level variables, there is some evidence for more congruence in open and ordered ballot systems than in closed ballot systems in the libertarian-authoritarian domain, where three of the four effects are positive and significant. In all other cases the effects are insignificant, and they are sometimes positive and in other case negative. These results thus provide only limited evidence for *Hypothesis 7a*.[42] As the effect of an open ballot system may be conditional on district magnitude, we have introduced an interaction between a dummy for open ballot system and measure of district magnitude (Model A presents this interaction for every issue domain). The obtained coefficients are positive, suggesting that the higher the district magnitude in an open ballot system, the higher the opinion congruence between voters and

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[41] As a robustness check we have estimated the same models with measures of education standardised per country, which did not lead to substantively different results.

[42] As an additional test, we included in our analysis an index of intra-party efficiency, which assumes a non-linear relationship between district magnitude and representatives' personal vote-seeking activities based on the degree of openness of the ballot system (Carey and Shugart, 1995; Shugart, 2001). The index, adopted from Farrell and Scully (2007: 130) assumes that representatives' personal reputation is worth more as district magnitude rises in open systems and less when magnitude rises in closed systems. Also here, we obtain a non-significant effect in all models.

EP candidates from the party of their choice. However, these effects do not reach conventional statistical significance. This points us to our *Hypothesis 8a*, but because of the low number of cases we have to be cautious in our conclusions. We remain similarly cautious on how candidates' deviations from their parties' positions affect representation in an open ballot system. In three domains the effects are negative and insignificant, but in the case of European integration the effects are positive and significant. Last, but not least, how many years countries have been members of the EU does not play a role for the quality of representation of their citizens in European elections.

The last note goes to the variance explained at each level of analysis, which we report in Table 4.2. As usual, our models are least able to explain individual-level variance, ranging from 1.5% to 9.6% depending on the issue domain. Party-level variance can be much better explained. The R^2's range from 1.3% to 60%, although for the issues of immigration and EU integration their explanatory power is very low. Variance at the system-level can be explained most accurately, with explained variance ranging from 17.5% to 90%. Although there are differences in variance explained across issue domains, there is a general pattern showing that the system-level factors explain most of the existing variance, while individual-level factors do not explain much. So, the extent to which individuals are represented does not depend very much upon their social class, education, or their political knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed which individual-, party- and system-level characteristics account for the quality of representation in European elections.

The first main finding of this study is that the level of educational attainment and political knowledge as well as belonging to middle class increase voters' congruence with attitudes of political elites. These results show that the European Parliament suffers from a similar bias towards more educated middle-class citizens as it is the case in national parliaments (e.g. Schattschneider, 1975; Barnes, 1977). The reasons behind these inequalities in representation can be multiple. Better representation of more educated middle class voters can be a natural consequence of the fact that EP candidates are likely to be highly educated and middle-upper class themselves. There may be also strategic reasons involved, because EP candidates may ignore less educated lower class voters as these voters are less likely to turn out in EP elections. Finally, cognitive skills of voters may play a role. More educated, knowledgeable middle-class voters may be more aware of candidate's attitudes, while less educated lower class voters may not realise which candidates can represent them well.

The inequalities in representation of different groups of voters speak to the discussions about the democratic character of the EU. With the recent extension of powers to the EP, which took place through the Treaty of Lisbon, an attempt has been made to alleviate the democratic deficit in the EU. The findings of this chapter highlight the fact that even if the problem of democratic deficit is addressed, the EP will suffer from inequalities in representation for different groups of citizens, just as it is the case at the national level.

Inequalities in representation imply that not all EU citizens are able to influence the direction of the policy agenda to the same extent, which is likely to have repercussions for the direction of policies formulated at the EU level. At the same time, we should also emphasise that variations at the individual level cannot be explained very well with these socio-structural variables.

The second main finding of this study is that important differences exist between the different domains in how well groups of voters are represented. In the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian domain, better educated and more knowledgeable voters are better represented, but when controlling for these variables, social class does not have an additional effect. Yet, in the issue areas of immigration and European integration, the working class is significantly less well represented than other groups. A possible reason could be that the working class tends to often vote for left-wing parties, which they agree with on socio-economic policies, but disagree with on the issues of migration and European integration. Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) pointed to the representation gap at the national level, which stems from the fact that the ideological profile of the 'authoritarian worker' (Lipset, 1960) is not represented in the national party space. Our findings are in line with their idea.

Thirdly, parties with clear ideological profiles present their voters best in the socio-economic and in the libertarian-authoritarian domain. Controlling for ideological clarity, radical left-wing parties present their voters less well in these domains. So, the traditional established parties with clear ideological profiles (mainly social democratic, Christian democratic, conservative and liberal parties) represent their voters best in these domains. However, radical right parties represent their voters on average much better in the field of immigration and European integration. This speaks to recent literature which has demonstrated that the issue of further European integration has increasingly become subject to political competition among political parties and increasingly affects voters' electoral choices (e.g. Tillman, 2004; De Vries, 2007). Our findings show that even if voters more frequently rely on their attitudes towards EU integration in casting a ballot, the extent to which they will be represented on this issue by the party of their choice will vary. So, even if considerations regarding EU integration have begun to guide voters in their party choice, putting an end to the period of 'permissive consensus' (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970), significant differences can be observed with regard to how voters are represented on this issue and, ultimately, in the extent to which their vote can influence the direction of integration.

The last finding of this study suggests that in open and ordered ballot systems there is more attitude congruence between voters and their party in the libertarian-authoritarian domain. Several scholars have hypothesised that representation would work best in open ballot systems, especially when there are large districts (e.g., Farrell and Scully, 2007). Hobolt and Høyland (2011) also expected the quality of candidates to be positively affected by these characteristics of electoral systems, but did not find significant effects. The results from our analyses are mixed, but provide some tentative evidence that attitude congruence increases with the district magnitude. In such systems, a candidate's deviation from his/her party's position positively affects representation, but only in the field of European integration, where the largest representation gap was noted (see also: Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). These findings extend existing knowledge about ballot systems, since their recent introduction for the EP elections (e.g. Wessels, 1999). Our findings offer some

tentative evidence for a better voter-candidate congruence of opinions in more open ballot systems. Dependent on their further investigation, these findings have potential policy implications for bringing voter preferences closer to representatives at the European level.