Better than it used to be?
New evidence on the congruence of voters and their national MPs regarding the issue of European integration

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Abstract

The paper analyses the issue congruence between citizens and their national MPs in 15 EU member countries. The two broad issue dimensions that structure the European political space are distinguished: left vs. right and European integration vs. national independence. Based on INTUNE survey data from 2007/2008, the paper investigates the congruence of voters and elites on those dimensions. It concludes that the gap between Euro-positive elites and Eurosceptical voters does no longer exist. Moreover, the antecedents of left-right and integration-independence attitudes are very similar both among citizens and political elites. There are two possible lessons to be drawn from this: one is methodological and suggests that earlier survey instruments were less than perfect. The other is substantial and argues that the politicisation of European integration in its post-functionalist era produces a fit between citizens and their representatives that is ‘better than it used to be’.

1. Introduction

One and a half century after the Communist Manifesto, another spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of the democratic deficit of the European Union. This spectre is appearing in many disguises. One of those – actually a quite influential one – refers to the limited powers of the European Parliament and the particular nature of European Parliament elections, and here in particular to the fact that the elections of its members fail to attract many voters, and that they are fought over national rather than European issues.

The European Parliament

The institutional development of the European Union is characterised by the ongoing strengthening of the role of the European Parliament within it (e.g. Maurer 2007). In the expanding domains that are subject to the co-decision procedure of EU legislation, policy decisions taken by majorities of the Members of Parliament can no longer be overruled by the Council. In addition, the Parliament has been able to significantly increase its impact on the composition of the Commission (both regarding the selection of its president and that of
individual Commissioners)\(^1\) and, after the 2009 election to the European Parliament, even could make some progress towards the power to initiate legislation.\(^2\)

This increase in the political weight of the European Parliament is all the more relevant as the policy reach of the EU layer of the European multi-level system of governance has been constantly growing over the past half century. When the EU began in 1952 – it was called the ‘European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)’ at the time – there was hardly any policy authority allocated at the Union level. Fifty years later, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Union is an important co-legislator, at a par with national legislatures. A series of expert judgements about the relative weight of “Europe” in the legislative process of 28 policy areas reveals that today, about half of all significant legislation in these areas originates in Brussels rather than in national capitals. In all of these cases, national legislatures merely ratify, or adopt, ready-made EU-wide directives so that their national administrative apparatus can implement them (Graph 1).

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\(^1\) Recall the struggles, following the 2004 election of the members of the European Parliament, between Parliament and Council over the investiture of the Barroso Commission (e.g. Schmitt 2005).

\(^2\) In its own words, the EP “… plays a genuine role in creating new laws, since it examines the Commission’s annual programme of work and says which laws it would like to see introduced.” (European Parliament 2010).
Another indicator of the same process is the evolution of the number of EU initiated legislative acts that pass national parliaments per legislative period. Although national implementation processes of EU law vary a bit from one member country to the next regarding their speed and effectiveness, the trend is the same everywhere and it is therefore sufficient for our purposes here to look into the parliamentary statistics of one. The German figures in this case indicate that the number of EU-initiated legislative acts has grown 2413 times between 1957 and 2002, and has reached the number of 3137 in the legislative period from 1998 to 2003 (the last period for which data are now available; Feldkamp & Ströbel 2005: 862-3). 3

The increasing competences of the parliament and the linearly growing policy scope of the Union cannot but make European elections more consequential, both regarding policy and personnel decisions of elected members of the European Parliament. And because this is so, the effectiveness of the “representational bond” (Miller & Stokes 1963) between voters and their elected representatives in the European Parliament assumes central importance for the quality of the democratic process in the European Union.

European Parliament elections

In addition to the argument of a powerless European Parliament, the second-order nature of European Parliament elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980) is often referred to in order to question the representativeness of the EU political process. There are basically two arguments. One refers to the fact that European Parliament elections, as other second-order national elections, fail to stimulate high levels of turnout; and the other one to the fact that in EP election campaigns “national” issues predominate. Both arguments as such are obviously right; the question is what they mean for the effectiveness of political representation in the European Parliament.

The first argument states that low turnout has a negative effect on the representativeness of the European Parliament because the interests of all the abstainers remain unrepresented. The proportion of voters among eligible citizens is indeed low and, however we count it, declining over time. However, European Election Study data have repeatedly revealed that EU sceptics are not overrepresented among the abstainers (Schmitt & Mannheimer 1991; Schmitt & van der Eijk 2007; van der Eijk & Schmitt 2009). This provides clear evidence that low turnout is not a sign of deficient legitimacy of European Union politics, and it suggests

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3 We note in passing that, on the aggregate level of analysis, this tremendous increase in the policy making authority of the European Union is found to have a minor negative effect on EU support in Germany, but a strong negative effect on the legitimacy of the national political process there (Scheuer and Schmitt 2009).
that Euro-skeptics are not under-represented among its members (see for a contrary view Blondel et al. 1998). A more direct test of the effect of low levels of turnout on the representativeness of the European Parliament, based on the 2009 European Election Study and using a counter-factual research design, supported those earlier findings. A simulation of the electoral effects of “higher” turnout – as high as at the last first-order election of each country – demonstrated that neither the national nor – by implication – the EU-wide distribution of seats would have changed. The one exception to the rule is Bulgaria where one party would have lost one seat while another one would have gained an additional one (see van der Eijk et al. 2010).

The second broad argument maintains that European Elections cannot produce a truly representative parliament because national rather than European issues tend to dominate EP election campaigns. This seems to imply that voter preferences on European issues remain irrelevant for vote choices, and are thus not adequately represented. This however is a somewhat naïve and simplified vision of reality. While it is true that the national level of the multi-level government structure of the EU remains in the focus of EP election campaigns – not least because the major campaigners are still key national political figures – it is also true that the respective campaign issues are not exclusively national. All the broad issues complexes of contemporary European politics are simultaneously addressed at the national and the EU level of government, and sometimes – as in the case of the German federation – even at sub-national levels in addition (e.g. Schmitt & Thomassen 1999; Schmitt 2008). This implies that the members of the European Parliament are occupied with more than just “EU constitutional issues”; in fact, those issues are just a small minority among all issues that are dealt with. “Normal policy issues” are dominating the agenda of the EP on which resolutions regarding, say, the Lisbon Treaty are exceptional highlights rather than day-to-day chores. This reflects itself in the fact that among the two broad policy dimensions that structure EP policy decisions – the left-right dimension and the integration-independence dimension – the former has by far the greater explanatory power (e.g. Hix et al. 2006).

Based on this, we cannot a priori know whether EU political representation is a success story or a failure. This then is the central research question of the present paper: how ‘tight’ is this representational bond? Our criterion for assessing the effectiveness of political representation will be policy congruence over the position issue of more or less European integration. There are plausible alternative choices of a criterion for the effectiveness of
representation, but this is the one that is arguably most relevant for assessing the quality of representative democracy in the EU.

We will proceed in the following manner. In the next section we will briefly review the state of the art. Then, a number of hypotheses are developed that draw upon the findings of previous scholarship and yet are hoped to help to advance our knowledge about EU political representation. The fourth section is about data and methods, and the fifth about the findings of the empirical analyses. In the final section of this paper we will discuss those results and put them in a broader perspective.

2. Previous research

Political representation has become a major topic in the study of EU politics, both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically it is argued that, as European integration has moved over the past years in its postfunctional phase, “(a) European integration has become politicized in elections and referendums; (b) as a result, the preferences of the general public and of national political parties have become decisive for jurisdictional outcomes; (c) identity is critical in shaping contestation on Europe” (Hooghe & Marks 2009: 1). This puts the electoral connection in EU politics on top of the research agenda, and the degree, the conditions and the mechanisms of elite-mass congruence at center stage.

Of course, political representation is not restricted to the electoral channel of interest intermediation. Public protest, the lobbying activities of organized interest groups, even the influence of national and sub-national governments on EU decision-making bodies – all of this can be and has been discussed with an eye on the effectiveness of political representation. However, much of the empirical work concentrates on the electoral channel of political representation because it appears to be both the most encompassing and therefore the most democratic (Schmitt 2005).

Empirical studies in that domain typically try to assess one of two things: (a) the effectiveness of electoral representation of EU political issues; and (b) the mechanisms that generate this relative congruence between representatives and represented. Going back to the classic definition of Miller and Stokes (1963), effectiveness is understood as the relative issue congruence that characterizes the dyadic correspondence between electors and elected. Regarding congruence, the most prominent alternatives in the literature are the individual and

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4 I am thinking here particularly of valence issues and related issue competence attributions and the representational bond that can be established on this basis (e.g. Schmitt 1998, 2001; Clarke et al. 2004; Green 2007; Green & Hobolt 2008).
the collective perspective. The individual representational bond is the one between constituency voters and their elected representative as conceptualized by Miller and Stokes (1963) in their landmark study of the US political process. Consecutive studies of European electoral systems found it more appropriate to build their analyses on the collective model of political representation which compares policy preferences of national party electorates with that of their parties (e.g. Holmberg 1974; Thomassen 1976; Barnes 1977; Dalton 1985; Schmitt 2001; but see Converse & Pierce 1986). This is mainly due to the different make-up of most European political systems which is characterized by proportional representation and coalition governments. Both of these institutional features favour party discipline in parliament and underscore the role and importance of political parties rather than that of individual representatives (e.g. Gallagher et al. 2005).

If one tries to strike a balance, one probably can say that the empirical study of EU electoral representation has produced the following insights. Issue congruence between parties and their voters varies with the type of issue under investigation. It is weakest with regard to specific policies of the European Union, like the abolishing of border controls or the introduction of a common currency; it is highest with regard to ideological orientations (Thomassen & Schmitt 1997; Schmitt & Thomassen 2000). Located somewhere in between is the voter-party agreement on the basic goal of European unification (Schmitt & Thomassen 2000). Whether this relative issue congruence is brought about by the responsiveness of party elites, or by the cue-taking and socialization of their voters could depend on circumstances: both processes seem to exist (Wessels 1995; Schmitt & Thomassen 2000; Carruba 2003; Ray 2003; Gabel and Scheve 2007; Steenbergen et al. 2007; for a dissenting view Hellström 2008).

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Our main research question here is about the position that political parties and their voters take towards more or less integration, and how the relative congruence that we are going to find compares to the ‘gold standard’ in the field – i.e. the congruence of parties and their voters on the left-right dimension. A second research question is about the foundations of this relative congruence. Are the same sources steering towards EU support or opposition on mass

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5 Parties in this perspective are collective actors the policy preference of which can be identified by surveys among their candidates or members of parliament, or by content analyses of their election manifesto, or by analyzing the roll call behaviour of their MPs.
and elite levels, or do we find significant differences? Regarding this second research question we will test five hypotheses that we derive from established scholarship.

**The electoral politics hypothesis**

There are a variety of factors impacting on voters’ choices, but one of them relates to the issues that political parties emphasize and the policies that they propagate. Strong issue effects on vote choices cannot but strengthen the representational bond between parties and their voters. The scholarly dispute on issue voting is old and controversial. Not only are there different philosophies about how issues might affect the vote (e.g. Downs 1957; Stokes 1966; Budge & Farlie 1983; Rabinowitz & Macdonald 1989). From the beginning, scholars also disagreed about the relative importance of issue orientations for electoral behaviour (Campbell et al. 1960; Key 1966). Whatever the details are here, issue voting is the reason why voters are expected to agree with the central political issues of their parties.

Turning to the other side, we know that political parties – under certain conditions – tend to be responsive regarding changing policy preferences of their voters. Otto Kirchheimer (1965) and many after him observed that big parties, in environments of de-alignment (Dalton et al. 1985, Franklin et al. 1992), tend to become vote-seeking catch-all parties, that is: to adjust their electoral appeals to changing policy preferences in their potential electorate (cf. for recent empirical support Adams et al. 2006). The same seems to apply to governmental parties: once elected, they tend to value office higher than policy (Wright 1971; Müller & Strom 1999). Again disregarding the details, and not expecting perfect determination, responsiveness leads us to expect political parties to position themselves about where they think their (potential) voters are.

All in all, we expect the issue positions of political parties and those of their voters to be strongly related. Upon this basis, parties and their voters should locate themselves rather close by one another.

**The economy hypothesis**

As European integration started as a primarily economic enterprise, it seems logical that citizens form their attitudes towards the EU as a function of (among others) economic growth, unemployment, inflation, and intra-European trade concentration. Eichenberg & Dalton (1993) were among the first to confirm significant positive correlation between these macro-economic factors and their perception with EU support for the period of 1973–88.4 A number of subsequent studies confirmed the results (e.g. Anderson & Kaltenhaler 1996; Bednar et al.
The argument implies that people praise Europe in times of economic growth and prosperity because they attribute those developments to European integration, while there is less reason to do so in times of economic hardship. Along these lines, one would have to expect that the implementation of the Single European Market and the European Monetary Union increases support for European integration. This, however, clashes with post-Maastricht views about the EU. Eichenberg and Dalton discover that in the post-Maastricht era the impact of macroeconomic factors on EU support decreases (Dalton & Eichenberg 2007). They explain this by the fact that EU citizens became increasingly aware of the implications of European Monetary Union on national social policy and the increasing intrusion of the EU into formerly domestic policy areas. The basic argument – if the national economy does well, support for Europe profits from it, and if it does badly, support for Europe suffers – still seems to hold but maybe has to be qualified in terms of the specific political context.

**The quality of government hypothesis**

There are two somewhat different views on how attitudes towards the national and the European level of government affect each other. Sanchez-Cuenza (2000) argues that low bad government at home causes high EU support: the less happy people are with national politics, the happier are they with Europe. Rohrschneider (2002), on the other hand, argues that the link is only indirect inasmuch as the quality of national institutions sets the criteria for evaluating EU democracy. But he also assumes that the happier people are with national politics, the unhappier are they with Europe – which is just another way of saying what Sanchez-Cuenza has said before. We therefore predict that the quality of national government and the self-placement on the integration-independence dimension is negatively correlated.

**The new membership hypothesis**

Our final hypothesis refers to the duration of EU membership of a country. Analyses of public support for European integration have found that “familiarity breeds content” (e.g. Newton & Bosch 1995): the longer a country belongs to the Union, the more its citizens tend to agree with it. This does not question the effectiveness of the representational bond in these new member countries (e.g. Rohrschneider & Whitefield 2007). Rather, we expect both voters and their representative in the new Eastern member countries to be somewhat more Euro-skeptical even if we control for the obvious confounding factors like the economy and the quality of government.
4. Data and how they are analysed

We analyse here some of the data that were collected in the framework of the INTUNE project. Funded under the 6th Framework Programme of the European Commission, INTUNE aimed at studying the changes in the scope, nature and characteristics of citizenship that result from the process of the deepening and widening of the European Union. INTUNE focused on how integration and disintegration processes, at both the national and European level, affect three major dimensions of citizenship: identity, representation and scope of good governance. On the data side, the project collected two waves of representative mass and elite surveys in 16 (mass) and 15 (elite) member countries of the EU. We are analysing wave one data for both levels. Mass surveys were collected in 2007 by the TNS group with a sample size of approx. 1000 citizens per country. Interviews among political elites were conducted by project members during 2007 and 2008, with a sample size of approx. 60 members of the national parliament per country; some 40 members of the economic elite were also interviewed in each country but those data are not analysed here.

We concentrate on two questions that were asked in identical form in both surveys: the integration vs. independence scale and the left-right scale. Our analysis proceeds in two steps. First, we will determine how well or how poorly the attitudes of voters and political elites about integration vs. independence are in line. The inspection of party dyads will be the main focus here, but we will also have a look at country dyads to determine the overall national fit between the public (including next to the voters of the main parties those of minor parties and the non-voters) and the political elites as it is represented in the national parliament.

In a second step, we will test our hypotheses and confront the mass- and elite-level results of individual level regressions of the integration- vs. independence-positions of our respondents on (a) their party affiliation as well as (b) indicators of the national economic performance, (b) the quality of national democracy and (c) the duration of membership of

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6 Both surveys could be conducted in the following 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and the UK. In the Czech Republic, the elite survey was done while the mass survey could not be realised.

7 See for more details http://www.intune.it/.

8 The question reads as follows: “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 10-point-scale. On this scale, 1 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?”

9 The question reads as follows: “In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means the left and 10 means the right?”

10 Gross National Income p.c., economic growth and unemployment; those data are taken from the OECD Economic Outlook.
Comparing the findings for our samples of citizens and MPs will allow us to judge whether integration vs. independence preferences are springing from the same sources at both levels – a finding which would clearly demonstrate that the degree of issue congruence that our data entail is based on structural rather than coincidental factors.

5. Findings

Any study of electoral representation presents at some point a measure of congruence, be it a correlation coefficient, a distance measure, or some other indicator of how close the fit is found to be between voters and parties, constituency members and their representatives, the citizenry as a whole and its assembly, and so on. We start here with a comparison of the integrations vs. independence positions of national electorates (including non-voters) and their elected national members of parliament (Graph 2a).

Graph 2a
Integration vs. Independence Positions of National Electorates and National Members of Parliament Compared

Source: INTUNE surveys (wave 1).

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11 The Worldbank indicators of the quality of democracy include: (a) voice and accountability; (b) political stability; (c) government effectiveness; (d) regulatory quality; (e) rule of law; and (f) control of corruption. Based on the 2006 values of these variables, a factor analysis was performed which yielded an overwhelming first factor. The scores of that factor are used here as a general indicator of the quality of democracy in a country.

12 For the sake of simplicity we only distinguish respondents from the new Eastern European members that entered in 2004 from those in the older member countries.

13 Data are weighted in order to adjust the sample findings to the actual proportions of parties’ vote (mass level) and seat shares (elite level).
Based on this graph, we can distinguish two camps: one in which political elites are more integrationist than their electorates (8 countries), and another one in which political elites are more independence oriented (7 countries). The latter phenomenon tends to involve somewhat larger distances – most pronounced in our sample of countries is Poland in that regard where the public is much more pro-European than its elected members of parliament. The correlation between mean mass and elite positions is at $r=0.43$. The question of course is whether this indicates a low or a high degree of mass-elite congruence. In order to be able to answer this question, we put this result in perspective. Past empirical representation studies have identified the left-right dimension as the one where mass-elite congruence is tightest (e.g. Essaiason & Holmberg 1996; Schmitt & Thomassen 1999). The relative congruence between citizens and their representatives on the left right dimension is therefore the standard of comparison that we will apply here (Graph 2b).

This graph identifies only one scenario instead of two: citizens are more to the right – sometimes much more to the right – than their elected representatives are. This is not a new phenomenon of course, and numerous empirical studies of political representation have discussed the likely reasons of it (e.g. Converse & Pierce 1986). But this is not our main business here and we will not further dwell on it. What is relevant in this context is rather that national
publics and their political elites are significantly more agreed on the integration vs. independence dimension than they are on the left-right dimension. This does not support the notion of a democratic deficit in electoral politics over EU issues.

However, our focus is here on voter-party dyads rather than on the more abstract and general country dyads in which the issue positions of national electorates and their political elites are juxtaposed. The two are not independent of course, as the former to a large extent is a product of the latter. But there is room for differences and deviations mostly because of the more or less extensive segment of abstainers in national electorates, and we therefore expect the issue positions of the voters of a party and those of this party’s parliamentary elite to be closer than those of the general electorate and the political elite. Graph 3a shows the issue congruence on the integration vs. independence dimension for voters and MPs of 44 European political parties. With an R square of .62, the evidence points again towards a well-functioning electoral connection. Within very euro-positive parties, we see that voters are somewhat less euphoric than their party elites are; and the same goes holds on the euro-sceptic side, where voters again are somewhat more centrist than their elites. But overall, European political parties and their voters are rather closely in touch regarding the issue of European integration, and they certainly do not live in different worlds.

Graph 3a
Integration vs. Independence Positions of Party Electorates and Party Elites Compared

Source: INTUNE surveys (wave 1).

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14 Data could be identified for about ten more party-voter dyads which will be added in the next version of the paper.
This shows itself also very clearly if we compare our integration vs. independence results with the chosen point of reference: the congruence of parties and their voters on the left-right dimension (Graph 3b). There is actually not much of a difference at the level of party dyads. While the congruence is even a bit tighter (R square =.75) than it is regarding integration vs. independence, we find again the voters at both ends of the scale to be somewhat more moderate than their elected representatives are. And as party electorates on average are leaning somewhat more towards the Euro-sceptic pole of the scale, they are also leaning somewhat more to the right (as we have seen already before).

We have clearly established so far that the electoral connection is very effective in structuring attitudes towards the two poles of the European attitudes scale: European integration vs. national independence. Given the steady increase of the policy reach of the Union vis-à-vis its member states and their sub-national authorities, and the expanding powers of the European Parliament, this underlines the importance of the transnational path of political linkage in the European Union – the one that involves as a central instrument the direct election of the members of the European Parliament.

But what other factors – in addition to the electoral connection – are shaping attitudes towards European integration vs. national independence? Is the economy important, the quality of national government, and the duration of membership as we predict in our
respective hypothesis? If those factors were found to be relevant at both ends of the electoral connection, for voters and elected representatives, this would provide additional assurance of the high degree of congruence between parties and voters regarding their attitudes on the issue of European integration vs. national independence. Because it would suggest that the high degree of congruence that we identified is not ‘just’ a consequence of the electoral process, but also a function of structural conditions under which both party voters and party elites are operating.

We will include in our regression one very important additional structural predictor of integration vs. independence orientations: the diversity of the choice options that are provided by a party system. There are two related reasons for this. One is that only if political parties stand for distinct issue emphases and policy positions do voters have a real choice, and the elected body can effectively represent the variety of preferences that exist in a constituency. The other is that the relative diversity of the policy menu offered by the party system is likely to contribute to issue congruence because (a) voters are orienting themselves in view of a greater variety of options and, as a consequence, (b) parties are seeking votes in a wider policy space. Table 1 provides some answers to our questions on the structural factors that might affect preferences on European integration vs. national independence for both our samples at the mass and the elite levels. And Table 2 offers again the comparison with the determinants of left-right orientations.

If we stay first with integration vs. independence orientations, we find that the structure of determination – this is a big word for small proportions of explained variance – is very much the same both at the level of citizens and voters, and the level of their elected representatives. It is the support for the same European parties that help structure those attitudes: the far right is most independent oriented, followed by the Euro-skeptics, while the Socialists and the Greens are at the most integration-oriented. European Peoples Party and the far left did not show significant effects on either side, and the liberals (ELDR/ALDE) were used as the reference category. In addition, both the fresh membership of ex-communist citizens and elites and the quality of government show the expected negative effects: Eastern origin and bad government has a significantly negative effect on support for further integration. From among the economy variables, it is only the unemployment rate that has a significant

15 As the party system differs somewhat from one country to the next, we have recoded national party choice (on the voters’ side) and party affiliation (on the MPs side) into European parties (Schmitt & Thomassen 2009) represented by EP groups. In the sixth directly elected European Parliament (2004-2009), those groups – from left to right – were the following: Europe of Nations, Democracy and Diversity, Far Right, European Peoples Party, Liberals, Socialists, Greens, and Far Left. In the dummy regressions that follow, we define the Liberals as the reference group.
Table 1
Regression of National Independence vs. European Integration Orientations on Party Support and Party and System Characteristics at the National Level (general public and political elite compared)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling Frame</th>
<th>Mass Publics</th>
<th>Political Elites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent: Nat Independence vs EU Integration</td>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>robust std. err.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictors:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far Right</td>
<td>-2.73</td>
<td>.332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem &amp; Div/EoN (1)</td>
<td>-1.15</td>
<td>.405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>+0.82</td>
<td>.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>+0.21</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Government</td>
<td>-0.81</td>
<td>.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Past</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
<td>.253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INTUNE (wave 1) surveys. Robust standard errors adjusted for 16 (mass publics) and 15 (political elites) clusters in countries; number of observations are 14700 (mass public) and 1106 (political elite); prob > F = 0.000 in both analyses; RSQUARE = .04 (mass public) and .15 (political elite). (1) Representatives of member parties of ‘Democracies and Diversities’ were not surveyed in the Elite Sample, while voters of member parties of the ‘Europe of Nations’ group were not found to differ significantly in the survey of mass publics.
Table 2
Linear Regression of Left-Right Orientations on Individual Party Choice/Affiliation and Party and System Characteristics at the National Level (Mass Public and Political Elite Compared)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling Frame</th>
<th>Mass Publics</th>
<th>Political Elites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent: Left vs. Right</td>
<td>coefficient</td>
<td>robust std. err.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EoN</td>
<td>+2.10</td>
<td>.288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem &amp; Div</td>
<td>+1.71</td>
<td>.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far Right</td>
<td>+1.31</td>
<td>.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Peoples Party</td>
<td>+1.52</td>
<td>.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>-1.15</td>
<td>.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
<td>.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far Left</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
<td>.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross National Income p.c.</td>
<td>+0.01</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP Growth</td>
<td>+0.12</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>+5.13</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INTUNE (wave 1) surveys. Robust standard errors adjusted for 16 (mass publics) and 15 (political elites) clusters in countries. Numbers of observations are 14669 (mass publics) and 1125 (political elite). Prob > F = 0.000 in both analyses. RSQUARE = .20 (mass publics) and .50 (political elite).
effect on European attitudes, and this only on the elite side: the higher the unemployment rate is in a country, the more do political elites support more integration. On the level of the mass publics, the state of the economy is found to be irrelevant in our sample of countries and at the point in time that we can study.

For the left-right dimension – the continuous point of reference in this paper – we find the party differential to be much stronger (all European-level parties are indeed lined-up in the order of their left-right orientation) on both the level of citizens and voters and the level of political elites. A fresh EU membership/communist past does not significantly affect left-right orientations on either side, nor does the quality of government. What does play a role though is the state of the economy, and here in particular economic growth: a growing economy gives citizens and their representatives a somewhat more right-wing/conservative outlook. (Only on the citizens’ side, but not among elites, the gross national income p.c. does the same.)

6. Conclusions

This paper has shown a congruence between voters and their national representatives regarding the issue of European integration that is reasonably high. A ‘sleeping giant’ who in all likelihood would demolish the received structures of European electoral politics when woken up (van der Eijk & Franklin 2007) was nowhere to be seen. All that was found is that voters are somewhat more conservative in European affairs, meaning that they locate themselves on average somewhat farther towards the independence pole of the scale. But this is nothing particular, we have seen the same – even more pronounced – regarding the average distance between citizens and political elites on the left-right dimension.

Is the representational bond regarding European integration issues indeed ‘better than it used to be’? There are two possible answers to this question, yes and no. If the answer is ‘yes’, that is: if it is indeed better than it was in the past, something related to it must have changed over time in order to improve it. A likely candidate here is the proposed politicisation of European integration in its post-functional era (see Hooghe & Marks 2009; also Kriesi 2007). Their basic argument is that the saliency of ‘Europe’ has increased as a result of the parallel processes of the deepening (policy scope) and the widening of the European Union (30 member countries soon). This could have improved the quality of political representation on two accounts. One is the responsiveness of political parties which is known to be a function of the salience of issues (and the competitiveness of elections) – which is to say that political parties are responsive if they have to (e.g. Schmitt 1987). The complimentary reason
why representativeness could have improved is the facilitating role of issue saliency for the relative weight of issues in the vote function (e.g. Budge & Farlie 1983).

The answer could also be ‘no’, suggesting that not much has changed over the past years regarding the quality of electoral representation of issues related to European integration and the EU. Earlier findings demonstrating contrary evidence (e.g. Thomassen & Schmitt 1987; Schmitt & Thomassen 1999) could have been based on a somewhat too narrow, or specific, conception of the issues and policies that the representational bond is based upon (Schmitt & Thomassen 2000).

However that may be, the basic message of this paper is not at all affected by it. Either way, we can assure the reader that nobody must be afraid of sleeping giants or spectres – in particular not of the spectre that has become known as ‘the Democratic Deficit of the European Union’.
7. References


