Dual Legitimation in the European Union: 
The Impact of European Integration Attitudes 
in National and European Elections

Catherine E. de Vries
Department of Political Science 
University of Amsterdam
Oudezijds Achterburgwal 237
1012 DL Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel. +31-20-5254702
Fax. +31-20-5252086
Email. c.e.devries@uva.nl

Agnieszka Walczak
Department of Political Science 
University of Amsterdam
Oudezijds Achterburgwal 237
1012 DL Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel. +31-20-5254427
Fax. +31-20-5252086
Email. a.walczak@uva.nl

Martin Rosema
Department of Political Science and Research Methods 
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217
7500 AE Enschede
The Netherlands
Tel. +31-53-4893270
Fax. +31-53-48932590
Email. m.rosema@utwente.nl

---

1 Catherine de Vries acknowledges the financial support of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO VENI Grant 451-08-001) and wants to express her gratitude to the Mannheim Centre for Social Science Research (MZES) for granting her a research stay during the Fall semester of 2010.
Abstract

Ever since the first popular election of the European Parliament (EP) in 1979, voters are presented with two channels to legitimate decision-making within the European Union (EU). In national elections voters authorize and hold accountable their national representatives, who represent their interests in the European Council. Through EP elections voters elect and hold accountable their European representatives. These two electoral channels constitute a system of dual legitimation of EU policy-making. This study examines the extent to which voters actually use both of these channels in order to express their attitudes regarding European integration and hold European or national political elites accountable. Utilizing European Election Survey data from 2009, we show that in a majority of EU member states the process of dual legitimation is indeed functioning in practice. Importantly, the empirical findings demonstrate that when voters translate their attitudes regarding European integration in vote choice, they do so in both channels. In some countries, however, like Bulgaria or France, issue voting based on EU preferences is absent from both channels. Only in two countries, the Czech Republic and Malta, we find that voters only express their EU attitudes in one of the electoral channels present. Overall, these results indicate that with a few exceptions the voters behave in accordance to the system of dual legitimation of EU policy-making in most EU member states. Hence, this study has important implications for our understanding of how issues regarding European integration affect electoral politics, as well as for the ongoing debate regarding legitimacy and accountability in EU politics.
Politicians and social scientists alike have struggled with the question of how to ensure that political decision-making in the European Union (EU) is democratic. What started off in the 1950s as a collaboration between six countries in one particular area of economic policy (coal and steel) has developed into an integration process that spans a large range of policy areas: from market integration and employment policy to foreign policy and immigration. The recent introduction of a single currency is perhaps the clearest example of this development. Although it remains to be seen whether in the years to come the EU will develop into a political union in which more substantial powers are transferred to the transnational level, the process so far has gone far enough to establish a widespread belief that decision-making at the European level requires direct legitimation from those who are governed.

The landmark event for the establishment of a democratic European polity was the introduction of popular elections for the European Parliament (EP) in 1979. However, the position of the EP in the European institutional troika with the Commission and Council has been rather weak. Despite the recent increase in power of the EP, mainly due to the extension of the co-decision procedure, many decisions at the European level are still made without its direct consent. Hence, providing ordinary citizens only with the opportunity to voice their opinions in EP elections does not suffice to ensure direct legitimation of EU policy-making. Currently, this lack of public input in EU decision-making is accounted for by the fact that politicians who decide at the EU level are authorized and held accountable at the national level. They are authorized by, and held accountable to, national parliaments, which in turn are directly elected.

Whether this indirect mechanism is adequate in order for the EU to qualify as a “democratic” polity has been topic of extensive debate (Føllesdal, 2006). The skeptical view is captured by the notion of the “democratic deficit”, two words that leave little doubt regarding the presumed quality of democracy in the EU (Kielmannsegg, 1996; Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999; Schmitt, 2002). Other scholars,
however, have taken an opposing view arguing that a discussion regarding the democratic deficit is redundant. These scholars, for example, show that the relatively new European polity shows similar or even identical levels of democracy to those of established liberal democratic states (Zweifel, 2000) or argue that democratic legitimation at the European level is not a necessary requirement (Majone, 1998) or that this legitimation process in fact functions properly (Moravcsik, 2002). A third group of authors argues that the EU may not suffer from all the democratic insufficiencies for which it has been accused, but it does bear one central democratic shortcoming: the absence of public contestation for political leadership and over public policy (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006: 556).

Indeed, one of the key arguments in the debate about the democratic deficit has been that in European elections voters do not base their choice on opinions about European affairs (see Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Instead, national concerns dominate those elections, which consequently merely mirror the popularity of national governments. Political parties contribute to this, as they focus their campaigns on issues salient in the national realm. Hence, EP elections constitute “second-order national elections” (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). In this article, we broaden the scope of this debate by arguing that in order to judge whether the EU lacks democratic quality, one has to do more than identify the impact of opinions about European integration in European elections.

A perspective often lacking in this debate concerns for whom people vote, and, most importantly, why they do so. The mere fact that people vote similarly in EP elections as in national elections is not problematic for European democracy as such, as long as considerations that are relevant at the European level also play a role in elections at the national level. Judging the democratic quality of the EU thus requires a simultaneous look at national and European parliamentary elections. Because decision making about European integration is primarily in the hands of the national ministers who decide in the Council of Ministers and the European Council, one could even argue that it makes sense for voters to voice their opinions about
European integration in national elections rather than in EP elections (see for example Gabel, 2000; Mair, 2005). After all, those ministers are authorized by and held accountable to their national parliaments, not the EP.

Utilizing European Election Study (EES) data from 2009, we show that when voters translate their attitudes regarding European integration in vote choice, they do so in both EP and national parliamentary (NP) elections. Providing evidence for what Beetham and Lord (1998) coined the process of dual legitimation, that is to say a system whereby voters hold political elites accountable for EU policy-making through both the supranational channel, i.e. EP elections, as well as the intergovernmental channel, i.e. NP elections. This being said, in some countries, like Belgium, Bulgaria or France, issue voting based on EU preferences is absent from both electoral channels. Only in two countries, the Czech Republic and Malta, we find that voters only express their EU attitudes in one of the two channels present. Overall, these results indicate that with a few exceptions the system of dual legitimation of EU policy-making functions in most EU member states. Hence, this study brings to bear important new empirical evidence for the ongoing debate about democratic deficiencies in EU politics. In doing so, it has implications for our understanding of how issues regarding European integration affect electoral politics, as well as for the ongoing debate regarding legitimacy and accountability in EU politics (see Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999, or more recently Hix, 2008).

In the following, we first discuss the role of NP as well as EP elections in legitimizing political decision making within the EU, its implications for the democratic deficit discussion and identify the ways in which voters should ideally make their choices at the polls – in order to guarantee a “truly democratic” European polity. We then analyze to what extent voters actually meet these expectations. In doing so, we compare the impact of attitudes towards European integration on vote choice in NP elections to their impact in EP elections. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for the functioning of democracy in the EU and the related debate on the democratic deficit.
The Concept of Dual Legitimation

European integration is not an isolated event. The process fits the worldwide development that is referred to by terms like “transnationalization” or “globalization”. These developments are considered a response to the fact that many of today’s problems cannot be adequately dealt with at the level of the nation state. The rise of transnational organizations such as NATO or WTO fits this shift to new modes of governance. What distinguishes the EU from almost all other transnational organizations is the way power and decision making are legitimized democratically. No other transnational organization has similar structures that allow for, albeit indirect, citizen involvement.

When the EU is judged in terms of its democratic quality, authors often use the legitimacy and accountability standards from the nation state context. Whether it is appropriate to judge the EU on the basis of criteria developed in relation to democracies at the national level is a matter of ongoing debate (see for example Majone, 1998; Coultrap, 1999; Katz, 2001). However, it is difficult to imagine studying the EU without any reference to how national democracies function. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the EU differs substantially from the nation states it builds on and comprises and thus to judge the EU in its own right.

Legitimation of political power takes place differently in polities of different scales. Dahl (1994) drew a parallel between the transformation from city states to nation states and the transformation from nation states to transnational systems. The former transformation was accompanied by a shift in the idea about the nature of democracy: whereas in the city state democracy was characterized by direct citizen involvement, the transformation to the nation state shifted the meaning of democracy by making the notion of representation central. Similarly, Dahl argued that the transformation to transnational political systems may also require re-thinking the concept of democracy. The replacement of direct citizen involvement by elected representatives may need an equivalent at the transnational level, as the system of representative democracy as we know it may no longer be suitable.
The most thorough answer to this problem in relation to the EU is that of dual legitimisation (Beetham and Lord, 1998). In this view, transnational political systems like the EU can only be democratic if citizens are provided with two channels to control political power: directly elected representatives at the European level and processes of authorization, representation, and accountability at the national level focused on the behavior of political leaders in transnational political structures. This view builds on the presumption that the EU can neither be adequately democratized through the intergovernmental approach nor through the supranational approach. The former implies that the EU is basically a collaboration of nation states, and hence democratic legitimation depends on ratification of treaties by national parliaments, domestic elections for the national parliament, national allocation of Commissioners and MEPs, and authorization and accountability processes between European Council and Council of Ministers and the national parliaments. The supranational approach implies that the EU becomes a full-blown democracy in its own right with an EU-wide election of the union’s political leadership and authorization and accountability processes between Commission and EP and between EP and European electorate. Because each approach is characterized by severe problems, the only solution seems to be to combine elements of both approaches and thus establish a process of dual legitimation (see Beetham and Lord, 1998).

**Dual Legitimation & The Democratic Deficit**

Beetham and Lord (1998) also emphasize that the presence of democratic procedures, which establish processes of authorization, representation, and accountability through both channels, is not sufficient. They argue that the EU also needs to deliver, so to speak. This distinction between democratic procedures, on the one hand, and adequate performance with respect to key policies, on the other hand, is central in many writings, including Scharpf’s (1999) distinction between input legitimacy and output legitimacy. In fact, deciding about the trade-off between citizen participation versus system effectiveness may well be the crucial dilemma for those deciding
about European integration (Dahl, 1994). The fact that this often does involve a trade-off is the precise reason why the legitimacy problems that the EU faces are considered unsolvable (Höreth, 1999).

Indeed, over the past years many authors have claimed that the EU suffers from a so-called *democratic deficit*. The more widespread the use of a particular concept becomes, the less clear its meaning. This statement certainly applies to the democratic deficit discussion. Because the concept has been so widely used, its exact meaning has blurred over the years. Being attentive to political, public, and academic discussions, some scholars have attempted to construct what they refer to as the “standard version” of the democratic deficit (Weiler, Haltern, and Mayer, 1995). More recently, Føllesdal and Hix (2006) have updated the “standard version” and identified five claims made by those who speak about a democratic deficit. These are some of the key problems that scholars have identified in the dual legitimation process of the EU.

The first claim refers to the fact that the European integration process has supposedly increased the power of the executive at the cost of national parliaments (Andersen and Burns, 1996; Raunio, 1999). Second, the EP, the only directly elected institution, has a relatively weak position in the European institutional configuration between Parliament, Commission and Council, because it is unable to perform a central function of a parliament, namely controlling the executive and holding it accountable (Kielmannsegg, 1996; Schmitt, 2002; Nugent, 2003). Third, even though the powers of the EP may have increased in recent years, European elections are primarily “second-order” in nature, meaning that national policy concerns dominate and no European-wide political parties compete (Reif and Schmitt, 1980, see also see Ferrera and Weishaupt, 2004; Hix and Marsh, 2007; Marsh, 1998; Schmitt, 2005; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996, for an alternative perspective see Hobolt, et al., 2009; De Vries, et al., 2011). Fourth, European institutions are seen as “too distant from ordinary European citizens” (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006: 536). That is to say, the characteristics of the European polity exacerbate the lack of direct input from
European citizens. Consider, for example, the lack of transparency of decision-making within the Council (Sbragia, 1992; Wallace and Smith, 1995; Nentwich, 1996; Magnette, 2003) or the weakness of a European public sphere (Meyer, 1999; Gerhards, 2000, 2001; Peter et al., 2003; Downey and Koenig, 2006). Finally, scholars argue that the policies adopted at the EU level are not supported by a majority of European citizens (see, for example, Scharpf, 1997, 1999). The predominantly neoliberal character of the single market and the monetarist framework of the European Monetary Union (EMU) seem to have produced a “policy drift” from voters’ preferences, who on average are more in favor of a stronger regulated and social Europe (Hix, 1999; Hooghe, 2003, see also Schäfer, 2006a, 2006b). The “no” vote in the French and Dutch referendums fits this last claim. If national elections are not fought on European affairs, there is no guarantee that decisions made by European policy makers reflect the majority opinion. If particular decisions, such as the approval of the Constitutional Treaty, are then subjected to a referendum, it should be no surprise that the outcome is not always positive (Hobolt, 2009).

Several scholars have questioned these claims (Majone, 1996; Moravcsik, 2002; Zweifel, 2002). Arguably, Majone (1998) went furthest, suggesting that decisions made within the EU do not need democratic legitimation. His starting point is the observation that the kind of policies adopted at the transnational level are rather “apolitical”, i.e. those in which citizens are hardly interested and which are often beyond direct governmental control at the national level (see also Moravcsik, 2002). In this view, democratic legitimation by citizen participation would only become normatively justified if value-laden decisions would be taken at the European level. But precisely because there is no support among the European electorates for the transfer of such powers to the EU, this transfer has not taken place. Consequently, Majone argues, there is no need to arrange citizen involvement, directly or indirectly, to legitimize policy making in the EU at the present time.

A second objection to the notion of the democratic deficit is put forward by scholars who do think that citizen participation is crucial and that checks and
balances are necessary but who argue that the current institutional structure at the European level provides sufficient opportunities and safeguards. The basic argument here is that the intergovernmental process by itself, but certainly in combination with a directly elected Parliament that has substantial rights when it comes to the selection of the European Commission, suffice for considering the EU democratic. Or put in the words of Moravcsik: “Constitutional checks and balances, indirect democratic control via national governments, and the increasing powers of the European Parliament are sufficient to ensure that EU policy-making is, in nearly all cases, clean, transparent, effective and politically responsive to the demands of European citizens” (2002: 605). In as far as there are deficiencies, he argues, these are not more severe than in any other national democratic system.

What becomes clear from this discussion of the process of dual legitimation in the EU and the presumed democratic deficit of EU politics is that the democratic quality of the EU polity is debatable. Nonetheless, many political scientists studying EU politics would agree that there should be some sort of mechanism to enable public input in policy-making at the EU level. This study examines the extent to which voters actually use the two channels of legitimation open to them, i.e. EP and national elections, to express their attitudes regarding European integration and hold political elites accountable for policies originating from the EU level.

The Ideal Role of Voters in the EU system of Dual Legitimation
In order to ensure public scrutiny over EU politics voters are thus provided with both a supranational and intergovernmental electoral channel. Thus far, scholars have primarily focused on EP elections to examine the degree to which voters express their preferences regarding European integration as elections to the EP constitute the most straightforward mechanism to ensure public appraisal of EU policy-making. Researchers found that these elections do not always serve their democratic objective as they are dominated by national concerns and thus have put forward a rather skeptical view of the input of voters in EU affairs (see especially van
der Eijk and Franklin, 1996, but also Ferrera and Weishaupt, 2004; Hix and Marsh, 2007; Marsh, 1998; Schmitt, 2005, for an alternative perspective see Hobolt, et al., 2009; De Vries, et al., 2011). Franklin, Van der Eijk and others argued that European politics is in a “crisis of legitimacy” (Franklin and Van der Eijk, 1996: 3). In their view, the origins of the democratic deficit at the EU level stem not so much from the weak institutional position of the EP, but rather from the inability of EP elections to perform its basic democratic function: the EP lacks a mandate to use its power. EP elections “are fought primarily on the basis of national political concerns, rather than on problems relevant to the European arena” (Franklin and Van der Eijk, 1996: 7).

However, neither the mere fact that people vote on similar grounds in EP elections as in national elections, nor the fact that votes in EP elections are based on attitudes dominant in national politics, needs to be problematic as such. For example, if considerations that are relevant at the European level also play a role in elections at the national level, voting similarly in EP elections as in national elections would not be problematic from a normative perspective. At present, some authors argue that it may even prove more effective for voters seeking a voice in the integration process to do so via national elections, as these elections provide them with the opportunity to authorize and hold accountable their national representatives, who in turn shape the course of integration in the Council of Ministers and the European Council (Gabel, 2000; Mair, 2005, 2007).

Indeed, a growing body of work explores the impact of European attitudes on voters’ choices in national elections, a process coined EU issue voting (De Vries, 2007). While EU issue voting clearly does not constitute the norm, there is now considerable evidence that it does play an important role in some countries, at certain times (see for example Evans, 1998, 2002; Tillman, 2004; De Vries, 2007, 2009; Schoen, 2008). For example, in his examination of Austria, Finland and Sweden Tillman (2004) finds evidence of EU issue voting at the time of accession, a period in which

---

2 Note that in this study, we use the term EU issue voting to signify the impact of EU preferences on vote choice both in NP as well as EP elections.
EU membership can be assumed to have been salient and at least somewhat divisive. Similarly, De Vries (2007) finds evidence of EU issue voting in Denmark and the United Kingdom, two countries characterized by high levels of party conflict and issue salience over Europe, yet fails to find such evidence in the Netherlands for example, where party conflict and issue salience regarding European integration are much more limited. Looking at the 2005 German elections, Schoen (2008) argues that attitudes towards Turkey’s potential accession to the EU played an important role, with voters being more likely to support parties that held positions closer to their own on the Turkish question.

Against this backdrop, it becomes evident that the crucial question is not whether opinions about European integration are voiced only in EP elections, but whether they are voiced in EP and/or national elections. In this study we argue that in order to judge the extent to which voters can express their positions towards Europe and hold European elites accountable, one needs to look at national and EP elections simultaneously. So, we assess the democratic quality of European decision-making by taking up the notion of dual legitimation as developed by Beetham and Lord (1998). In brief, decision-making in the EU can only be democratic if citizens are provided with two channels to control political power: (1) directly elected representatives at the European level, and (2) processes of authorization, representation, and accountability at the national level focused on the behavior of political leaders in transnational political structures. In the EU context, two such pathways exist through which citizens may seek to exert influence on EU policy-making and institutions or to control its outputs, namely EP and NP elections. The EU polity, thus, consists of two “channels of political influence, with two sets of delegates who may be mandated, and with two arenas in which politics might be played out” (Mair, 2007: 8). The interesting question then becomes, if voters actually use both of these channels in order to express their attitudes regarding European integration or hold European or national political elites accountable for policies originating from the EU level. To tackle this issue, this article compares the extent to
which voters utilize their EU preferences in national versus EP elections. Before we do so, let us first briefly discuss the operationalizations, methods and data used in the empirical analysis.

**Operationalization, Data and Methods**

In order to assess the democratic quality of the EU, we analyze the extent to which attitudes towards European integration influence vote choice in NP elections and EP elections. The 2009 European Election Study (EES) allows such a direct comparison. Although this survey is aimed at understanding vote choice in EP elections, respondents were also asked about their vote preferences in national elections (EES 2009; Van Egmond et al., 2010). The survey was conducted among representative samples of the electorates in all 27 EU member states, and focused on electoral behaviour and political attitudes.

If one is interested in deviations between vote choice in national elections and EP elections, one could compare the way that individuals have voted in both elections. However, such a comparison entails one crucial problem: usually both elections are held at different points in time and hence any incongruence between vote choices in the elections need not be a consequence of the difference in level (national vs. EU). Since the EES was conducted shortly after the 2009 EP elections, in several cases there exists quite a time-lag between the last NP election prior to 2009 and the time-point at which this survey was administered. We therefore analyze vote choice in national elections on the basis of another measure, namely a question that asks voters shortly after the EP elections how they would vote “if there was a general election tomorrow”.

We perform two analyses with two different dependent variables, one estimating a model explaining a respondents’ vote preference in NP elections “tomorrow” and analyzing their vote choice in the 2009 EP elections. We limit our analyses to parties that took part in both elections under investigation. This allows for a more fruitful comparison between vote preference in the parliamentary
elections and voters’ actual choices in the 2009 EP elections, as any incongruence observed is then not biased by differences in the supply of alternative parties. In doing so, we for example exclude EU single issue parties that only compete in the EP elections, such as Libertas in Ireland, the Netherlands or Malta for example. The parties included in the analysis are listed in appendix B of the supplemental appendix.

To analyze EU issue voting in NP and EP elections, we employ a conditional logit (CL) model. All variables were standardized around their respective means. Since our dependent variable is categorical in nature but has multiple values – i.e. vote choice for different parties – we need to address several methodological concerns (see Alvarez and Nagler, 1998; Agresti, 2002). First, since the probability of voting for a party can only vary between 0 and 1, ordinary least squares regression analysis is ruled out. The use of an ordered probit or logit model is also not appropriate, as it assumes the electoral space to be one-dimensional. Moreover, we use a CL rather than a multinomial logit (MNL) model. CL models are more appropriate when modeling electoral behavior in a spatial setting since they are based on positions of voters relative to parties rather than focusing solely on information about individual voters, as MNL does (Alvarez and Nagler, 1998: 56).3 In the analysis, we use a special case of the CL model (Alvarez and Nagler 1998): the McFadden’s choice model (1974). The McFadden’s choice model permits two types of independent variables: alternative specific and case-specific. Alternative-specific variables vary across both cases and alternatives, and case-specific variables vary only across cases. All estimations were conducted using the asclogit command in STATA version 10.

3 One potential problem with a conditional logit model is the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) assumption. IIA means that the ratio of the choice probabilities for two alternatives, A and B, is independent from all other alternatives in the choice set (see Agresti, 2002). We computed a Hausman test statistic for the respective elections, which demonstrated that the IIA assumption seems reasonable.
We included four types of predictors in our models. First, we included three variables to reflect the impact of cleavage structures. More specifically, we included a self-classification measure of social class, a measure of a respondent’s level of education and a measure of church attendance as a proxy for religiosity. These variables range from a minimum value indicating “lower class”, “no qualifications” and “go to church every Sunday” to a maximum value indicating “upper class”, “university education” and “never go to church” respectively. Second, we included a measure for perceived ideological agreement in terms of the left/right continuum. Here we simply computed the difference between the score individuals assigned to oneself from the scores they awarded each party. Third, we included a measure that indicates the voter’s evaluation of the economic performance of the national government. This links up with theories of retrospective and prospective economic voting, as well as with the hypothesis that EP elections are second-order national elections in which voters express their approval or disapproval of the national government record. We included respondents’ retrospective and prospective economic considerations (ranging from 1 a lot worse to 5 a lot better). Note that we have not included measures of partisanship because in many European countries it appears virtually impossible to disentangle party identification from vote choice, and hence the concept has no value as an explanatory variable (Thomassen, 1976; Thomassen and Rosema, 2009).

Fourth and finally, we included a measure of the extent of EU issue voting. To examine the extent of EU issue voting, we constructed an EU issue distance variable that indicates voters’ perceived (dis)agreement with political parties on the issue of European integration. The variable measures the absolute distance between respondents’ self- and party placements on an EU scale. Respondents were asked to place themselves as well as several political parties on a ten-point European integration scale, where 1 stands for the process “has already gone too far” and 10 stands for the process “should be pushed further”. If attitudes on European

---

4 In order to ensure proper estimation, the CL regression models also include party dummies.
integration have an independent effect on vote choice, the effect of EU issue distance should be negative and significant. In other words, an increase in disagreement between a respondent’s EU position and a party’s EU position should lead to a decrease in the likelihood of the respondent to vote for the party.

**Empirical Analysis: EU issue voting in EP and NP Elections**

Let us start by exploring EU issue voting in NP elections. After all, the debate on the democratic deficit partially builds on the presumption that European integration plays virtually no role in national politics. Former President of the European Commission Jacques Delors identified this as the major problem, arguing that “the problem with democracy in the European Union is not the insufficient incorporation of national governments into the Union’s political system, but the inadequate incorporation of the Union into the domestic politics of member societies” (cited in Beetham and Lord, 1998: 70).

EU issue voting takes place when voters to vote for the party that most accurately resembles their EU positions, i.e. the *smallest distance hypothesis* (Enelow and Hinich, 1984). The existence of EU issue voting is thus reflected in negative and statistically significant CL coefficients for EU issue distance. In other words, a larger distance between a respondent’s EU position and a party’s EU position should lead to a smaller likelihood of voting for that party. Figure 1 presents the CL coefficients of EU issue distance for each of the 28 systems. The dots in this figure represent the point estimates of the CL coefficients for EU issue distance. The horizontal lines depict the 95 % confidence intervals. The range of the parameter estimates is displayed on the x-axis, while the 28 systems are denoted on the y-axis. These results are based on a fully specified model including left/right distance, economic voting

---

5 As it is not possible for voters in the Flemish region to cast a ballot for Wallonian parties and vice versa, Belgium is effectively a two system country. For this reason Flanders and Wallonia are treated separately.
indicators and socio-economic controls. Full results are presented in appendix A of the supplemental appendix.\textsuperscript{6}

\textit{-- Figure 1 about here --}

The results presented in Figure 1 indicate to what extent EU issue voting takes place within the domestic electoral arena. With the exception of four systems, namely France, Latvia, Poland, and Wallonia, all coefficients are negative and in the expected direction. As the distance between a voter and a party on European integration increases, the likelihood of voting for that party in an NP election decreases. The counter-intuitive positive coefficients in the four systems mentioned earlier only reached statistically significance in the case of Latvia and Poland. Here an increase in EU issue distance leads to a greater likelihood of voting for a party. In Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Malta, Spain and the United Kingdom, we find negative coefficients, but these are not statistically significant. Overall, these findings show that EU issue voting affects vote choice in NP elections in 18 out of 28 systems under examination. In these systems EU issue voting exists independent from traditional sources, such as cleavage structure, left/right ideology or retrospective economic evaluations, influencing voters’ decisions at the national ballot box.

Within the system of dual legitimation in EU politics, voters have an additional electoral channel to express their EU attitudes and hold political elites accountable, namely EP elections. So, the question now is: do we find EU issue voting in EP elections as well? Figure 2 below provides the CL coefficients of EU

\textsuperscript{6} Note that the models are based on the assumption that effects of ideology and policy preferences are uniform across parties: for each party, we expect that as perceived differences with a political party in terms of ideology (left/right) or policy preferences (European integration) increase, the chance of voting for that party decreases. This is reflected by the fact that a single coefficient represents the effect of these factors for all parties. With respect to social class, religion, and government approval, in contrast, we expect different effects across parties. For example, we expect a working class self-image to have a positive effect on the chance of voting for some parties (e.g., Labor parties), but a negative or no effect with respect to other parties. The same applies to religiosity and incumbent approval. This is reflected by the fact that these factors are represented by a separate coefficient for each party.
issue distance including 95 % confidence intervals for each of the 28 systems for the EP vote choice models. Full results are again presented in appendix A of the supplemental appendix.

Interestingly, the results in Figure 2 almost mirror those of the NP elections presented in Figure 1. Again we find that in a large majority of systems EU issue distance has a negative and statistically significant effect on vote choice in EP elections. We find evidence of EU issue voting in 20 of the 28 systems. In these 20 countries we also found evidence of EU issue voting in NP elections. So, the empirical findings demonstrate that in most EU member states voters translate their attitudes regarding European integration in vote choice and do so in both channels. Hence, this provides evidence for the system of dual legitimation at work. In eight systems, namely Bulgaria, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom and Wallonia, we find no evidence of EU issue voting in either channel. Only in two countries, the Czech Republic and Malta, we find that voters only express their EU attitudes in one of the electoral channels present. Here we only find a statistically significant and negative effect of EU issue distance in national elections. Consequently, these results lend credence to the idea that the system of dual legitimation of EU policy-making functions in most EU member states.

Next to the fact that attitudes concerning European integration have an impact on vote choice, it is important to judge how strong their impact is. Particularly relevant here is the contribution of the EU issue voting in explaining voters' choices at the national and European ballot box. In order to get a real sense of contribution of the EU issue distance variable to the overall fit of a NP and EP choice model in each of the systems, we calculated likelihood ratio tests which compare the full model including all predictors to a nested model excluding the EU distance variable for both electoral contests. Table 1 below presents these results.
The two columns in Table 1 present the improvement of the fit of the model in terms of the likelihood when we add EU issue distance to an explanation of electoral choice in NP elections, while the third and fourth column provide the same information for EP vote. The results of the likelihood ratio tests indicate that EU issue distance improves the overall fit of a model of electoral choice in a majority of the systems. EU issue distance does not lead to a statistically significant improvement of an explanation of vote choice in NP elections in six systems versus eight systems for EP vote choice. The strength of EU issue voting varies substantially across systems. The improvement in terms of model fit when we add EU issue distance varies between 17.97 percent in Lithuania and .06 percent in Luxembourg in the case of NP vote choice and between 19.12 percent in Romania and .06 percent in Luxembourg for EP vote choice. The last column in Table 1 presents the differences between the improvements in terms of likelihood based on EU issue distance in EP versus NP elections. Negative values indicate that EU issue distance has a larger impact in NP elections, whereas positive values signify a greater effect in EP elections. These results show that in 10 out of 28 systems, namely Czech Republic, Flanders, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovenia, we find higher levels of EU issue voting in national elections compared to European elections. These findings corroborate the findings presented in a growing number of studies that demonstrate the emergence of European questions in domestic electoral politics (Evans, 1998, 2002; Tillman, 2004; De Vries 2007, 2009; Schoen, 2008; De Vries and Tillman, 2011). In addition, the finding that in a majority of systems EU issue voting is actually more pronounced in EP versus NP elections is in line with work by Hobolt, et al. (2009) and De Vries (2011) and her colleagues that shows that counter to the second-order model suggesting that EU preferences play no role in EP elections, voters’ do utilize their EU attitudes when deciding which party to vote for in European elections. Overall, these findings indicate that future research on voting
behaviour within the EU needs to consider the role of European issues in both NP as well as EP elections. The findings presented here point out that with a few exceptions the system of dual legitimation of EU policy-making functions in most EU member states. In other words, when voters express their preferences regarding European integration or hold political elites accountable for policies originating at the EU level, they do so in both the supranational and intergovernmental electoral channel.

**Concluding Remarks**

In the debate about the democratic deficit of the EP elections play a crucial role. Indeed, the choices that voters make have important implications for the functioning of democracy. Elections enable citizens to select politicians and parties that hold similar views and also to hold them accountable. If voters base their choice on their judgment of the performance in office of those who governed as well as on their judgment of politicians plans for the future, the functions of elections are well served. It has been argued that in the EU these mechanisms do not function properly (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006). One problem is that those who govern, in particular the European Commission, are neither authorized through popular contestation nor held accountable to the European electorate or its representatives in the EP. Voters thus have virtually no influence on who leads Europe from Brussels. Furthermore, in neither of the two electoral channels – EP elections and national elections – does public opinion about European integration appear to play an important role (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Arguably, the most crucial conclusion drawn in electoral research is that EP elections are basically fought, and therefore determined, on the basis of national politics rather than European politics. Hence, EP elections are referred to as second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

The key thought underlying much of the debate seems to be that in European elections voters ought to base their choice on considerations related to EU politics. Hence, the preoccupation in the literature is with EP elections. At least as important, however, is the impact of EU attitudes in national elections (De Vries, 2007). After all,
national ministers are key actors in EU decision-making through their roles in the European Council and Council of Ministers. One could even argue that it makes more sense for voters to voice their opinions about European integration in the context of national politics, since national ministers are more directly concerned with such policies than the European Parliament (cf. Mair, 2005). The key problem for democracy in the EU might well be, as former European Commission president Jacques Delors argued, the absence of the EU in domestic politics. Thus, in order to assess the democratic quality of the EU it is essential to simultaneously focus on EP elections and national elections and determine the impact of attitudes concerning European integration.

This study examined the extent of EU issue in NP and EP elections using data from 2009. The analysis shows that both electoral channels are used by European voters to express their opinions regarding the European project. If EU issue voting exists in a country in the first place, it is likely to impact both national as well as European elections. So, at first glance, these findings would qualify the conclusion by Moravcsik (2002) among others that the current dual legitimation structure within the EU ensures public legitimation and accountability of EU politics. This being said however, EU issue voting is not uniformly taking place across European and national elections within all member states. In two out of 28 systems, the Czech Republic and Malta, we find that voters only express their EU attitudes in one of the electoral channels present, namely the European channel. In Bulgaria, France or the United Kingdom for example, neither channel is used by voters to express their attitudes towards Europe. This may be due to a lack of concern for Europe among British, Bulgarian or French voters or a lack of conflict regarding the EU among British, Bulgarian or French political parties (see De Vries, 2007).

Overall for eight out of 28 systems, we find no evidence of EU issue voting in either electoral channel. Hence, one may be tempted to conclude that the democratic quality of the EU will suffer. This conclusion would only be warranted, however, if low salience of European affairs leads to incongruence between elite opinion and
mass opinion, as became manifest in the French and Dutch ‘No’ vote in referendums on the Constitutional Treaty. This may not necessarily be the case as it is possible that within these eight systems opinions about European integration are constrained by cleavage structures and ideological positions. If voters vote on the basis of these cleavage structures and ideological positions which in itself align with their EU preferences, voters’ choices at the polls may still link up with the ideals of representation fairly well. This may be an interesting angle to explore more in-depth in future work.
Supplemental Appendix

--- Appendix A about here ---

-- Appendix B about here --
References


Tables and Figures

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1:** Variation in EU issue voting in NP elections across the 28 systems

*Notes:* The dots represent the point estimates of the CL coefficients for the effect of EU issue distance. The horizontal lines depict the 95% confidence intervals. The range of the parameter estimates is displayed on the x-axis, while the 28 systems are denoted on the y-axis.
Figure 2: Variation in EU issue voting in EP elections across the 28 systems

Notes: The dots represent the point estimates of the CL coefficients for the effect of EU issue distance. The horizontal lines depict the 95% confidence intervals. The range of the parameter estimates is displayed on the x-axis, while the 28 systems are denoted on the y-axis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>NP Vote Improvement in likelihood</th>
<th>NP Vote In Percent</th>
<th>EP Vote Improvement in likelihood</th>
<th>EP Vote In Percent</th>
<th>Δ EP-NP Vote In Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>24.07**</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>27.39**</td>
<td>11.46</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-Flanders</td>
<td>8.68**</td>
<td>10.97</td>
<td>7.47**</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>-3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium-Wallonia</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>5.71*</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>8.80**</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>6.02*</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>15.78**</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>22.21**</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>5.70*</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>10.36**</td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>22.75**</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>31.01**</td>
<td>8.36</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>16.91**</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>12.71**</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>-.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>18.52**</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>33.92**</td>
<td>11.13</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>9.30**</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>4.94*</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>7.57**</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>8.65**</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>12.46**</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>4.50*</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>-3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>21.13**</td>
<td>11.85</td>
<td>6.12*</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>-8.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>21.39**</td>
<td>17.97</td>
<td>15.09**</td>
<td>16.48</td>
<td>-1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Column 1</td>
<td>Column 2</td>
<td>Column 3</td>
<td>Column 4</td>
<td>Column 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>6.00*</td>
<td>11.41</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>-3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>27.62**</td>
<td>6.05</td>
<td>25.87**</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>9.05**</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>6.38*</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>-2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>6.58*</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>6.12*</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>18.50**</td>
<td>13.73</td>
<td>17.80**</td>
<td>19.12</td>
<td>5.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>19.78**</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>10.73**</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>7.58*</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>11.97**</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>13.77**</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>39.41**</td>
<td>10.07</td>
<td>6.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Second and fourth column show results of likelihood ratio tests comparing a model explaining NP or NP vote choice excluding EU issue distance (i.e. the partial model) with a model that does include EU issue distance as a predictor (i.e. the full model). The third and fifth column present these improvements in terms of likelihood as percentages compared to the full model. The last column presents the differences between the improvements in terms of likelihood based on EU issue distance in EP versus NP elections. Negative values indicate that EU issue distance has a larger impact in NP elections, whereas positive values signify a greater effect in EP elections.

** significant at the p < .01 level; * significant at the p < .05 level (two-tailed).