

CHAPTER 4

Comparing the Views of Parties And Voters in the 1999 Election to the European Parliament

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The increasing transfer of policy-making powers from the member states to the European Union during the past decades has generated relatively little political controversy in most of the member states. The exceptions to this general pattern—particularly Denmark and Britain, to some extent also Sweden—indicate that this state of affairs cannot be regarded as a ‘natural’ development. Both situations raise important questions with respect to the role of the electoral process in European integration and its democratic character. Addressing these questions requires, at the very least, a focus on political parties, on voters and on the electoral connection between them. This chapter deals mainly with political parties, which are amongst the most important actors in the process of politicization of issues. Where do parties position themselves on the issue of European unification, and how are these positions perceived by voters? To what extent do parties in the various member states offer voters a choice between different views on the future of the EU? The question of political representation—how well voters’ attitudes towards European unification are represented by parties—will be discussed briefly in this chapter, and will be assessed in more detail in Chapter 10.

The analysis of parties’ positions in this chapter will be based on data from a systematic analysis of the contents of their manifestos for the European elections. The question how adequately voters’ perceive parties’ positions will be addressed by juxtaposing parties’ positions as derived from their manifestos with voters’ perceptions as derived from the voter survey of the European Election Study (see Appendix A).

We use party manifestos as a source of information to gauge parties’ positions on various issues. Manifestos are authoritative statements of party policy. In spite of the facts that they are usually drafted by small groups of specialists within a party, and that they are issued prior to an election so that they do not address issues that will become salient at later

¹ This chapter reports on the findings of the Euromanifestos project. This project was funded by a research grant of the German Science Foundation DFG (grant identifier: SCHM 835/4–1). For more information on the project and its objectives visit <http://www.euromanifestos.de>.

times, it has established that what parties advocate in parliament and what parties do when in government is indeed to a large extent in line the contents of their manifestos for national elections (Klingemann et al. 1994).

Thus, election manifestos constitute an important source of information on parties' input into the electoral connection, and it is therefore that they take a prominent place in any "extended design" of comparative electoral research (Thomassen 2000). Their relevance as sources of information on party positions is not diminished by the fact that they are usually hardly read by voters, although this observation prompts the question how manifesto content and voter perceptions of party positions are related.²

Empirical analyses of party manifestos must be based on a systematic coding of the contents of these documents. This can be done in different ways. Probably the most prominent strategy is to code the issues raised, or referred to, in the manifesto. Statistical analyses can then determine how often (in absolute and relative terms) certain issues are mentioned, and the analyst can use this as a proxy for the party-specific saliency of these issues. This is in a nutshell what the multilateral Manifesto Research Group (MRG) does. The beginning of this research group dates back to the mid-1970s (cf. Robertson 1976). By that time, a coding frame was conceived that later was further developed and utilized to generate empirical information on the content of election programs of parties in 25 countries from 1945 onwards (Budge et al. 2001). The MRG scheme focuses on the emphasis that parties put on various issues, as manifested by the number of arguments devoted to them (see also next section).³ All in all, MRG coding provides frequencies for arguments in 56 coding categories which are grouped into the following seven policy domains covering: external relations, freedom and democracy, the political system, the economy, welfare and quality of life, the fabric of society, and social groups.

In this chapter we report first findings of a research project which closely follows the footsteps of the MRG. In this project the experience and the particular approach of the MRG research group has been applied to a different political level: the manifestos that parties issue at the occasion of European Parliament elections. These Euromanifestos, as we call these

² Voters may perceive parties' positions through other sources than election manifestos, and on possibly "outdated" information. Therefore we expect the match between voter perceptions and partisan offer to be less than perfect.

³ The MRG coding scheme has been criticized for not consistently providing directional information: whether parties are favoring or opposing certain issue positions. However, this coding scheme does apply a distinction between pro- and anti-positions for 13 of the 43 issues covered, the remaining issues being of a valence-type that does not require this (Volkens 2002).

documents, are usually different from national election manifestos.⁴ Most parties in the member-countries have produced such Euromanifestos for each EP election in which they participated.⁵

While we aim at applying the well-established MRG coding scheme to the new subject area as closely as possible, this cannot be done without adaptation and change. The reason is that parties give considerably more attention in their Euromanifestos than in their national manifestos to ‘Europe’, the European Union (formerly the European Community) and its institutions and policies. This emphasis cannot be covered adequately by the MRG schemes as they are and requires a cautious adjustment of the original coding scheme.

Coding the Contents of the Euromanifesto of Political Parties

On the data side, the purpose of the Euromanifesto project has been to collect and code as many Euromanifestos as possible parties have issued on occasion of elections to the European Parliament, from 1979 on. Before getting into the details of coding, let us be clear about the units to be coded and analyzed. Coded are not entire manifestos, or sections or chapters in it. Following the MRG practice, we are interested in as much detail as possible. Therefore, we code and analyze individual “arguments” as they are stated in the Euromanifestos. An argument is defined as the verbal expression of a political idea or an issue. A sentence coincides with an argument most of the times, as it is the basic or natural unit of meaning. When a sentence comprises more than one argument, it is broken down in as many quasi-sentences as there are arguments, and these quasi-sentences are coded.⁶ In the end, our unit of analysis is an argument, which often—but not always—coincides with a natural sentence. These arguments are coded according to a modified and “mirrored” MRG coding frame. While the modification was necessary to add EU-specific issues (13 categories and various

⁴ We tend to find a common (national and EP) election manifesto only when EP elections are held concurrently with national first-order elections, as it is regularly the case in Luxembourg.

⁵ We note however that a growing number of national parties use as their Euromanifesto an adaptation from the manifesto of their European party organization, rather than drafting one from scratch themselves.

⁶ Note that the identification of multiple arguments in sentences is a difficult terrain even for expert coders, and one source of less than perfect inter-coder reliability.

sub-categories were added to the MRG scheme), the mirroring was done to identify which level of government is involved when referring to an issue.⁷

In the original MRG coding frame, only two codes are provided for the coding of EC/EU related arguments: EU positive [code 108] and EU negative [code 110]. While these codes might suffice to capture the EU-related arguments of national party manifestos, they are obviously not enough for an adequate coding of the contents of Euromanifestos. We have kept these two “original” codes that now denote general pro-/anti-EU arguments and arguments regarding a further deepening of the EU, respectively. In addition, however, we have split the domain “political system” [domain 3] into two sub-domains, “political system in general” [domain 3.1] and “political system of the European Union” [domain 3.2] in an effort to cover most of the more constitutional issues of the debate on the future of the EU. Party positions on the most important dimensions of institutional development of the EU political system, on enlargement, and on unspecified protest to the system as such, can now be coded in a number of specific categories (as described in Table 4.1). Wherever necessary, we have, in addition to the codes of the new domain, added EU-specific sub-codes to existing codes, an example being “lack of democracy in the EU”, which was added to “democracy in the EU. Note, however, that all codes of the new domain and all sub-codes can be regrouped into the two original codes “EU-positive” and EU-negative”, which allows the EMCS findings to be compared with the contents of national manifestos that have been coded according to the original MRG coding-scheme.

Not only have we added new code categories to the MRG coding scheme. Table 4.1 indicates another major difference: in our coding we distinguish the level of government to which each argument refers. Is a poor performance of the economy due to national or to European factors? Should immigration be regulated by EU or by national political authorities? In a multi-level polity like that of the European Union, issues and policies can originate and be dealt with at different levels, as these examples demonstrate. Any effort to grasp the role and importance that parties assign to the European Union in their Euromanifestos, must therefore identify the level of government of the argument involved.⁸ This level of government can be identified by two meaning elements and two decision rules (Wüst & Volkens 2003: 7f.).

⁷ Our notion of “governmental frame” here refers to the level of government that parties envisage when discussing an issue: do they mention it with reference to the national level of government, to the European level of government, or is no level of government specified?

⁸ Note that this coding strategy does not distinguish between empirical and normative references to levels of government, i.e. whether a policy or problem *is* or *should be* dealt with at a particular level of government.

The two meaning elements are:

- the governmental frame of an argument: codes (1) national government, (2) EC/EU government and (3) world government or unspecific; and
- the policy scope of an argument: codes (1) the nation or sub-national entities, (2) the EC/EU/Europe, and (3) the world or unspecific.

The two decision rules are:

- if only one meaning element is present, it defines the code;
- if both elements are present but do not suggest the same code, governmental frame beats policy scope.

Generally, almost all arguments can refer to all three levels of government. However, the categories of the new domain “political system of the EU” can only refer to the European level, as a discussion on institutional aspects of the EU is framed by definition in terms of European government. In addition, there are a few sub-codes that are also limited to either the national (e.g. financing the EU: negative) or the European level of government (EMU/European currency: positive/negative).

<TABLE 4.1 ABOUT HERE>

Order of Presentation

Based on the coding scheme described above, we first present results of a content analysis of the manifestos that political parties have issued ahead of the European Parliament election of 1999.⁹ We compare those findings with the results of the Voters Study of the European Election Study 1999. In doing so, we focus on issues. Issues are problems that parties and voters deal with in an election campaign.

Issues differ, among other things, with regard to saliency and framing. Saliency is measured, on the side of the parties, by the frequency with which an issue is mentioned in an election program. How often particular issues are stressed is taken as an indicator of the emphasis parties put on them, which in turn is indicative of the saliency they attribute to

⁹ These include a few parties that had previously been represented in the EP, like Germany’s Republikaner. The manifestos of the European party federations are also included in the analysis. Some data for Italy (four out of 22 Euromanifestos), Spain (two regional alliances) and for the Belgian CVP are missing.

particular issues.¹⁰ On the voters' side, the saliency of issues is measured by asking respondents from a representative sample what they see as the most important political problems (agenda question).

With regard to framing, one important dimension is the level of government parties refer to when discussing an issue, and where voters think problems ought to be solved. We will empirically determine in which governmental frame parties put the issues they are talking about in their manifestos, and the level of government that voters envisage for the problems that are salient to them.¹¹

We will also study the positions of political actors with regard to the European Union and European integration. On the parties' side, this will be done in two ways. First, for each party the shares of Euro-positive arguments (14 code categories) and Euro-negative arguments (15 code categories) are calculated and the balance between these two is determined.¹² Second, the expert coders' assessment of each party manifestos position on a 10-point pro/anti-EU scale will also be analyzed, which serves as a test of the validity of the previous measure. With regard to the voters we rely on the European Election Study where representative samples of voters were asked to position themselves and the nationally relevant parties on this same pro-anti-Europe dimension.¹³

Empirical Findings

In presenting our empirical findings, we will first look at the party side and hence the Euromanifestos, then add the pertinent information for the voters from the European Election Study 1999, and finally compare the two with one another.

¹⁰ Note that it is relative frequencies that are indicative of emphasis and saliency. Relative frequencies are calculated as the proportion of arguments referring to a particular issue or problem in all arguments.

¹¹ Note that on the voters' side, the European Elections Study survey includes questions on which governmental level the most important political problem *is* and *should be* dealt with.

¹² In each Euromanifesto, the *pro-EU share* is calculated as the sum of emphasis on the following categories: 108s, 2-203, 3021, 306s, 308s, 310s, 312s, 314s, 316s, 4041, 4084, 4086, 2-601, 1-602. *The anti-EU share* is the sum of the following: 110s, 2-204, 3011, 307s, 309s, 311s, 313s, 315s, 317s, 318s, 4011, 4085, 4087, 2-602, 1-601. (for detailed descriptions of each code, see Wüst & Volkens 2003: Appendix 1).

¹³ The respective survey question provides a scale from (1) 'European Unification has already gone too far' to (10) 'European Unification should be pushed further'.

Governmental Frame and Pro/Anti-EU Positioning of Political Parties

What governmental frame do political parties use in their Euromanifestos, national or European? Do they primarily stress the EU level of government and address European-wide political issues and problems? Or do they rather have the national polity in mind, perhaps even suggesting re-establishing its independence from and sovereignty vis-à-vis the ever-growing policy scope of the Union? Analyzing the first digit, i.e. the level code assigned to every argument that they coded, we find that political parties present their arguments predominantly in a European Union perspective in their 1999 Euromanifestos. With very few exceptions, a majority of arguments of the 1999 manifestos are put in an EU governmental frame. And these exceptions do not follow a clear pattern.¹⁴ When shifting our focus from parties to member states, there is some evidence that the parties from founding members discuss more arguments within a European frame than parties in countries that have joined later—like Ireland, Denmark, Portugal, Greece, and Austria (see Table 4.2). However, Finland, Sweden, and Spain do not fit in that pattern.¹⁵

<TABLE 4.2 ABOUT HERE >

Table 4.2 may be read as support for what Bosch & Newton (1996) referred to as “familiarity breeds content”, by which they meant that, the longer a country belongs to the Union, the more its parties support the Union’s basic rules and procedures. We do find support for this thesis, but also remarkable variation between party families in this respect. Taking the adherence to one of the political groups of the European Parliament as a sorting criterion, social-democratic (PES) and green parties (EFGP) put the largest share of arguments in an EU governmental frame (Table 4.3). This is particularly pronounced for all Social Democratic parties with the exception of Greek’s PASOK. Of all parties belonging to the green group, only Belgium’s Groen is framing its arguments overwhelmingly national. The parties in the other two big parliamentary groups, the Christian Democrats and Conservatives (EPP-ED) and the Liberals (ELDR), tend to frame their political arguments more frequently in a national perspective. Yet, there are as well notable exceptions. In the EPP-ED group, France’s UDF, the Belgian Social Christian Party (PSC), the Christian

¹⁴ The exceptions are PASOK and New Democracy (Greece), Groen and VLD (Belgium), Front National (F), the Christian Democratic CCD (Italy), Fine Gael (Ireland), the UK Independence Party, the Liberal Democrats (Great Britain), the Scottish National Party and DUP (Northern Ireland).

¹⁵ The party-specific data (framing, pro-anti-EU positions, coder evaluations) are available on the internet [<http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/manifestos/eestab.pdf>].

Democrats of Germany (CDU) and of the Netherlands (CDA) frame more arguments European. Among the Liberals, it is D66 of the Netherlands, and CiU of Spain that present almost all arguments in a European frame. There is one overtly EU-critical group in the fifth directly elected European Parliament, “Europe of Democracy and Diversity (EDD)” whose member parties to a larger extent view the world through a national lens than all other parliamentary groups. Compared to EDD, “Europe of Nations (UEN)”, a group of patriotic and partly nationalist parties, turns out to be more moderate in its views on Europe, as indicated by the balance of its pro- and anti-EU arguments. To some extent does the governmental frame that parties apply co-vary with their positions on a pro-anti-EU dimension. We will have a closer look at this association later in this chapter.

- Table 4.3 about here -

In the following, we first switch to the position-taking of parties on the pro-anti-EU scale. Before we go into that in some detail, we need to clarify the empirical basis upon which our pro-anti-EU differential rests. Let us first ask what proportion of all arguments parties devote to the EU and European integration? In the total of 118 Euromanifestos that we can analyze here, the combined share of pro- and anti-EU arguments drops below 10 % in only 13 cases, while it exceeds 25 % in 50 documents. We determine the position that a party takes towards the Union by subtracting the proportion of negative arguments from the proportion of positive arguments. A negative score identifies an overweight of negative arguments, while a positive sign identifies a positive overweight. The top ten parties promoting an explicitly anti-EU program are mostly polar parties on the right and left edge of the political spectrum.¹⁶ However, the British Conservatives are also among the parties with more anti-EU (23%) than pro-EU arguments (12%). This clearly confirms our confidence in the pro-anti-EU-scale based on the differential of positive and negative arguments. But there is a harder test than this. That our EU differential is a valid measure of political parties’ positioning towards Europe is comfortably indicated by a solid and positive correlation of $r=0.81$ with the expert coders’ placements of the Euromanifestos on a 10-point European unification scale.

Let us return to the relationship between governmental frame and the position-taking on European unification of political parties. We find a moderate positive correlation of $r=0.36$

¹⁶ These are Germany’s Republikaner (REP), the UK Independence Party (UKIP), Austria’s FPÖ, the Danish People’s Party (FP) as well as Folksbevægelsen (FB), the French Front National (FN) and Lutte Ouvrière (LO), DUP of Northern Ireland, and the Dutch as well as the Swedish extreme left/communists.

between the proportion of EU governmental frames and pro/anti-EU positions (Figure 4.1). Parties with a clear Euro-positive position tend to put more arguments in a European frame than others. The strongest correlation between these two variables ($r=0.77$) can be found among parties belonging to the EU-critical EDD group. Most prominent outliers at the bottom right of the graph are Germany's Republikaner, on the left the main Greek parties (PASOK and New Democracy) and Groen! of Belgium. While the Euromanifesto of the former is filled with negative arguments on the EU, the latter do not talk much about the EU, but if they do, they refer to it positively.

-<FIGURE 4.1 ABOUT HERE >

Issue Emphasis of Political Parties

Having analyzed the framing of issues and its relationship with the position-taking of parties on a pro-anti-EU dimension, we move on to the specific issues that parties emphasize in their Euromanifestos. What do parties talk about in their EP election programs? This question was central to a computerized content analyses of the programs of the European party federations (Schmitt&Binder 2004). The basic finding of this study was that parties are preoccupied with the polity of the European Union, thus leaving hardly any room for other topics. We find some traces of that as well in our present analysis of expert coders evaluation of national parties' Euromanifestos. In virtually all these documents, the "EU in general" and "EU institutions" play central roles (Table 4.4).

<TABLE 4.4 ABOUT HERE >

If it comes to differences between the parties, the political agendas of the Christian-conservative EPP-ED and of the socialist PES have much in common, even though some of the issues that they put forward reflect the traditional center-right and center-left profiles of these European party families—examples are "decentralization", "agriculture and farmers" and "law and order" (rank 10; 3,3%) for the EPP-ED and "internationalism", "non-economic demographic groups" (rank 7; 3,9%), "social justice" and "creating jobs" (rank 9; 3,1%) for the PES. The green party group, by contrast, puts the strongest emphasis on "environmental protection", followed by "democracy", the post-materialist issue of an "anti-growth economy" and "EU institutions". "Environment" and "democracy" as well as the "welfare state" (rank 7; 4,6%) are very important for the liberal parties as well, but the ELDR member parties give

also significant weight to “decentralization” and the various EU issues. The GUE/NGL parties on the extreme left discuss Marx within a European frame (top 5 issue), and pay more attention to “social justice” than the parties of the other parliamentary groups. For the Euro-skeptic parties of EDD, UEN and the non-attached the (loss of a) “national way of life” is a top 10 issue in their Euromanifestos. In addition, the various institutional aspects of the EU get more attention by the parties belonging to the UEN and the Non-Attached than from the parties belonging to the two largest groups.

All in all, it is not trivial to say that Euromanifestos contain a mix of issues. Party-specific issue profiles are clearly visible, most pronounced for the parties belonging to one of the smaller groups, and somewhat less distinct for member parties of the predominant EPP-ED and the PES.

Voters’ Governmental Frame

Let us now move on to the voters. The governmental frame here is the level of government – sub-national, national or European – that in their view is or should be in charge of particular issues.¹⁷ Findings of the 1994 European Election Study suggest that Europe is considered to be a powerful political actor by many, and that a good number EU citizens wants the European level of government to become even more powerful (Schmitt & Scheuer 1996; De Winter & Swyngedouw 1999). These earlier findings are nicely confirmed by the 1999 results. As Table 4.5 displays, 28 percent of EU citizens think that the problem that is most important to them *is* currently dealt with on the European level (national level: 54%), while 34 percent think their most important problem *should be* dealt with on the European level (national level: 44%). There is considerable cross-national variation both in the perception and in the preference for solving problems on the EU level. In countries in which the EU level of government is perceived to play less of a role, people would rather prefer more problems should be solved there (exception: Finland), while the opposite tendency is found in countries where the EU is perceived to be charge of many problems (exception: Austria).¹⁸

¹⁷ Note that in the 1999 Voter Study, the agenda-question first asked from respondents what in their view the most important problem was; secondly, which of the national parties would be best in dealing with it; thirdly, which level of government was actually in charge; and fourth and finally, which level of government should be in charge of it. We are analyzing here parts 1, 3 and 4 of this complex question.

¹⁸ A methodological problem could arise from the fact that the likelihood of different issues to be attributed to the European level of government varies. We know, however, from earlier work that national agendas are rather similar (Thomassen & Schmitt 2004) so that we can put those worries to rest.

On the parties side, we found a moderate and positive correlation between the relative frequency with which political parties put their arguments in a European governmental frame and their pro- or anti-EU position-taking. We can replicate this analysis for the voters by relating both their perception and preference of the governmental level in charge of the most important problem to their attitudes towards European integration. Perceptions of reality, while possibly colored by preferences and deeper rooted values, should not systematically covary with pro- or anti-EU positions. This is different with preferences about where a political problem *should* be dealt with. There we expect at least some co-variation between the proportion of problems discussed in a European governmental frame and the general attitude towards European unification. And this is indeed what we basically find. Figure 4.2 shows that the level of government perceived to be in charge is not related to one's attitude about European unification. Preferences are different. Preferences for the EU level of government are modestly, and positively, correlated to general appreciations of the process of European Unification. This suggests that preferences for a particular level of government are not only determined by the "nature" of the issue at hand. A general approval of the process of European unification seems to strengthen the "specific support" (Easton 1975) people have in the problem-solving capacity of the EU's political authorities and institutions.

<FIGURE 4.2 ABOUT HERE >

At this point, we can draw a few preliminary conclusions. First, voters seem to assign fewer issues and policies to the European Union than parties do. This at least is the impression one gets from a comparison of parties' governmental frame as applied in their Euromanifestos with their voters' preferences about where the most important political problem should be dealt with—at the sub-national, the national or the European level.¹⁹ Our second preliminary conclusion is that voters want to see more problems to be dealt with by the European Union than what they think is already the case. It is noteworthy that there is some association between voters' EU-competence perceptions and preferences: The more problems and

¹⁹ We realize that this is perhaps a bit a far-fetched conclusion, as the instruments from which those findings are drawn differ considerably between the parties' and the voters' level. However, valid conclusions do not need to be based on identical, but functionally equivalent instruments (van Deth 1998). Functional equivalence in this case would require at the very least that in their Euromanifestos parties do address all the issues that are salient to them rather than a just subset of issues that in their view belong in the realm of the European Union. Whether or not this form of equivalence exists can and will be tested elsewhere by comparing the content of Euromanifestos with that of national manifestos.

policies they perceive to be already in “European hands”, the less increase do they advocate (cf. the ‘thermostat’ hypothesis advocated by Franklin & Wlezien 1997).

Issue Agendas Compared

Looking at the issues that voters want to be solved on the European level, it becomes obvious that, in European Parliament elections, parties and voters have quite distinct agendas (for a detailed analysis, see Schmitt & Binder 2004). For the voters, unemployment (48% of respondents mention it as most important) is by far the most important European issue, followed by issues related to crime and law & order (5%) and health care (3%). Note that the distribution is heavily skewed, with unemployment being by far the single most important issue among voters. All other issues rank far behind.

No single EU issue ranks among the top ten issues of the voter agenda. Even all EU issues combined make up less than 5% of all issues mentioned. Yet, at least the key issues that parties emphasize in their Euromanifestos enjoy some prominence in the agendas of their voters. Examples are protection of the environment for Green party supporters and creating jobs for the voters of social-democratic parties. However, the voters’ agenda also contains a number of issues that are hardly emphasized in the Euromanifestos (see Table 4.3), like law and order (4%), migration (4%), or drugs (3%).

To sum up, there is not much congruence in the agendas of voters and parties in European Parliament elections. Parties in their manifestos seem to be preoccupied by the politics of the European Union, while voters when asked what the important problems are come up with much more mundane concerns—unemployment being the most prevalent among them. Having said this, we want to add a warning note based on methodological grounds. Perhaps voter and party agendas as measured in this study cannot really coincide, and we are thus looking for an impossible finding. There are limits to congruence that originate in the very nature of documents and data compared. Consider for a moment a party manifesto that spends about 50 or more percent of its arguments on unemployment: parties might issue such a manifesto as a special policy document, but hardly as a general election platform. Voters, on the other hand, when asked in a standardized interview what the most important problem is in their view, can only come up with one or a few issues. Upon this background, perhaps, the signs of similarity between voters’ concerns and parties’ agendas that we still found are less meager than it seems at first glance.

Pro-Anti-EU Positions Compared

We come back, last but not least, to the pro-anti-EU differentials of political parties as they can be derived from their Euromanifestos. There are two purposes for doing this. One is to compare these scores with the perception of voters about where the parties are. The other is to relate party and voter positions to each another. Voters' perceptions of party locations, and voters' self-location, are again drawn from the post-election survey of the 1999 European Election Study.

Previous studies have shown that parties' positions towards the EU and European integration play a negligible role both for voters' decisions to participate in elections (e.g. Schmitt & van der Eijk 2003, see also Chapter 8 of this volume) and for their party choice (e.g. Van der Eijk et al. 1999; Schmitt 2001; see also Chapter 9 of this volume). This can be the result of at least two different constellations, one being that voters do not know where the parties are and the other, that they do not care. It is obvious that either of the two possible backgrounds suggest different political consequences. If voters would not know where the parties are, a more effective campaign could help to solve the problem and parties would be well advised to invest into political communication. However, if voters do not care, the only remedy would be to raise the saliency of "Europe" and parties' strategies should concentrate on developing the institutional and procedural preconditions of more salient European politics.

How accurate is the voter perception of parties "true" position on the general pro-anti-EU dimension? Again, we have previous evidence to start out from. Van der Brug & Van der Eijk (1999) estimated party positions by the judgment of party candidates: they were taken to be the experts and their average party placements were considered to be as good an estimate of "true" party positions as one could get at the time in the absence of a more objective measure. They concluded that the voters have a rather vague perception of party positions on three EU policy dimensions—common currency ($r=.63$), borders ($r=.69$), and employment program ($r=.71$). This was considered a rather poor fit on the background of a much higher correlation between voters' and parties' left-right positions ($r=.89$).

What if we do not rely on the expertise of party candidates, but rather determine the parties' pro-anti-EU positions on the basis of arguments they make in their Euromanifestos? The fact that we then deal with a general dimension rather than with specific policies could lead us to expect a stronger correlation than the ones Van der Brug and Van der Eijk found for 1994. However, Euromanifestos are indeed hardly read by the public at large, which may lead to an expectation of even weaker correlations with voter perceptions. What we find is surprisingly similar to the earlier results, however. There is a substantial positive correlation

between parties' 'true' positions as reflected in their Euromanifestos, and voters' perceptions of these party positions, but this correlation is not too strong ($r=0.67$). Among the main outliers are the Greek ND and the Portuguese PSD as well as PSP: these parties are perceived to be more supportive of European unification than they actually are on the basis of their Euromanifestos. On the other hand, the Welsh Plaid Cymru, the Danish Progress Party (FP) and Junibevægelsen, are perceived to be more EU-sceptical than their Euromanifestos suggest (see Figure 4.3), which replicates the results of Van der Brug & Van der Eijk (1999) for these parties.

<FIGURE 4.3 ABOUT HERE >

Moving on from perceptual accuracy to the congruence of positions of voters and parties, we finally can address the question whether voters' EU orientations are in accord with their parties' positions on this same dimension. The electoral connection between citizens and EU politics can only add to the democratic nature of EU politics if voters chose parties on the basis of issue considerations, or at least, if their own preference and that of the party they support are consonant. In other words: representative democracy requires some basic issue congruence between voters and parties.

In the European Representation Study of 1994 we found a strong positive correlation between mean left-right self-placements of voters and their representatives ($r=0.86$). The correlation was considerably weaker with regard to the position on a common currency (to $r=0.52$), and it dropped even further on the question of open borders between EU member-countries (to $r=0.41$; cf. Thomassen & Schmitt 1999: 200f). These earlier findings gave rise to concerns about a possible loss of contact between voters and parties on EU matters. We must underline these concerns on the basis of our current results. If we correlate party positions towards European unification as measured by the EMCS with their voters' positions—which is only possible for 64 voter-party-dyads²⁰—we find a correlation of $r=0.46$. For a significant number of cases we have to conclude that voters and parties live in different European worlds. And the cases in which voters and parties deviate most, can be grouped as follows: parties of the predominantly left center like the Danish or Luxembourgian Liberals and some social-democratic parties which are more pro-EU than their voters and quite extreme parties like Austria's FPÖ or the Greek Communists which take far more critical positions on the EU than

²⁰ Parties which in the voter study of the European Election Study 1999 are represented with less than 26 respondents are declared missing.

their voters. Yet, beyond this general picture, we realize that the fit between parties and voters differs between countries, and it seems to be somewhat closer on the British Isles and in Denmark than elsewhere. This can be read as if congruence between voters and parties is the higher the more controversy and opposition exists in a national public over questions of European policy making. Plausible as that may be, the empirical basis of these observations is very thin and we will not dwell on this for the time being.

Conclusion

Our analysis of issues and the governmental frame in which they were put in the 1999 election to the European Parliament has shown that European Union politics play different roles for parties and for voters. While parties in their Euromanifestos discuss issues predominantly in an European Union frame, their voters are still more oriented toward the nation-state. Moreover, voters and parties seem to be concerned about different things. Voters care over all about unemployment first; parties in their Euromanifestos deal with the EU, its institutions and its future. While these differences may be partly due to the very nature of the different sources analyzed, they are telling nevertheless. It seems that parties and voters talk a great deal past one another, and that the political messages of the parties are only in part received at the voters' side.

Differences are less pronounced if it comes to general pro/anti-EU positions. Voters do not know well enough where the parties position themselves toward European unification. This confirms earlier findings. However, in contrast to earlier assessments, it seems to us that parties do not 'hide' Europe, do not avoid the politicization of the European issue, as the variation of party positions aptly demonstrates. There is no party conspiracy (Franklin et al. 1996: 370, 388) on the European issue. But nevertheless, the electoral connection was again found to be weak with regard to EU politics. The positions of voters and parties on questions of European Union politics are only weakly related to one another. Based on these findings, parties may be well advised to adjust their European electoral rhetoric to the language of ordinary citizens in order to be better understood. And voters may then want to have a closer look at what happens in Brussels and elsewhere in the EU political arena that is of utmost relevance to their daily lives.

Table 4.1: Categories of the “New” Domain 3.2 of the EMCS

Code	Content of the Argument
2-306	Competences of the European Parliament: Positive
2-307	Competences of the European Parliament: Negative
2-308	Competences of the European Commission: Positive
2-309	Competences of the European Commission: Negative
2-310	Competences of the European Council/Council of Ministers: Positive
2-311	Competences of the European Council/Council of Ministers: Negative
2-312	Competences of the European Court of Justice: Positive
2-313	Competences of the European Court of Justice: Negative
2-314	Competences of Other EC/EU Institutions: Positive
2-315	Competences of Other EC/EU Institutions: Negative
2-316	EC/EU Enlargement: Positive
2-317	EC/EU Enlargement: Negative
2-318	Complexity of the EC/EU Political System

Table 4.2: Governmental Frame and the shares of pro-EU and anti-EU Arguments in 1999 Euromanifestos and coder evaluation by Country

Country*	Governmental Frame of Arguments			Pro-EU (14 codes) and Anti-EU (15) Arguments			pro / anti EU (coder evaluations)
	National (%)	European (%)	not specified (%)	pro EU (sum %)	anti EU (sum %)	difference pro-anti EU	scale values (pro-anti, 1-10)
Austria	19,5	72,0	8,5	16,0	12,1	3,9	3,4
Belgium	13,8	76,5	9,7	19,8	5,9	14,0	3,2
Flanders	20,1	66,9	13,0	16,1	6,6	9,5	3,5
Wallonia	3,8	91,7	4,5	25,8	4,7	21,1	2,6
Denmark	12,7	71,0	16,3	21,3	11,5	9,8	5,0
Finland	7,7	81,0	11,3	17,1	2,6	14,5	4,5
France	12,9	80,6	6,5	15,6	10,9	4,7	4,4
Germany	6,7	91,8	1,5	18,3	7,2	11,1	3,5
Greece	72,5	24,1	3,5	7,8	3,8	4,0	3,3
Ireland	32,5	60,0	7,5	12,8	2,7	10,1	3,4
Italy	16,6	74,0	9,4	26,1	3,1	23,0	2,9
Luxembourg	11,7	79,7	8,6	23,1	6,5	16,6	2,5
Netherlands	1,8	89,2	9,1	19,8	4,7	15,1	4,2
Portugal	23,6	74,7	1,7	19,3	6,3	13,1	2,8
Spain	13,2	84,1	2,8	16,4	2,1	14,3	1,7
Sweden	7,2	80,9	12,0	13,5	6,2	7,3	4,5
United Kingdom	18,0	78,7	3,8	13,3	13,4	-0,0	6,2
Great Britain	17,5	78,7	3,8	13,4	13,3	0,1	6,2
Northern Ireland	32,7	65,5	1,8	10,6	14,4	-3,8	6,0
Summary (15 Countries)*	15,8	78,3	6,0	17,5	7,2	10,3	4,8
EC Founding Countries*	11,0	82,8	6,2	19,9	6,8	13,1	3,6

* weighted by seats in EP.

Table 4.3: Governmental Frame and the shares of pro-EU and anti-EU Arguments in 1999 Euromanifestos and coder evaluation by Parliamentary Groups

	Parliamentary Groups/Parties	Governmental Frame of Arguments			Pro-EU (14 codes) and Anti-EU (15) Arguments			pro / anti EU (coder evaluation)
		National (%)	European (%)	not specified (%)	pro EU (sum %)	anti EU (sum %)	difference pro-anti EU	scale values (pro-anti, 1-10)
EP groups*	All parties (118 manifestos)	15,8	78,3	6,0	17,5	7,2	10,3	3,8
Conservatives and Christian democrats	EPP-ED (25 manifestos)	18,9	76,6	4,6	17,6	8,3	9,3	4,0
Social democrats	PES (19 EM)	8,0	87,7	4,3	18,3	1,6	16,7	2,7
Greens	EFA (17 EM)	9,7	80,7	9,6	13,2	5,6	7,6	4,0
Liberals	ELDR (17 EM)	19,9	68,9	11,2	20,3	3,3	17,0	2,9
Socialists	GUE/NGL (15 EM)	15,3	75,8	8,9	9,6	10,5	-0,9	5,7
Nationalists	UEN (5 EM)	17,8	78,2	4,0	17,0	19,0	-2,1	5,5
Euro-skeptics	EDD (5 EM)	27,6	59,7	12,8	5,0	25,3	-20,3	9,1
none	Non-Attached (7 EM)	29,8	66,8	3,4	14,0	15,9	-2,0	5,1
Euro-Parties	EPP	0,0	92,7	7,3	14,6	0,0	14,6	4,0
	PES	0,0	98,4	1,6	14,5	2,0	12,5	4,0
	ELDR	0,0	96,1	3,9	17,5	5,3	12,1	3,0
	EFGP	0,0	87,7	12,3	5,6	0,4	6,0	4,0

* weighted by seats in EP.

Table 4.4: Arguments in 1999 Euromanifestos by Parliamentary Groups (share of grouped issues in %)

All Euromanifestos			EPP-ED		PES		Greens		ELDR		GUE/NGL		EDD		UEN		N.A.	
<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>%</i>
1	8,5	EU in general/ deepening of the EU	1	8,2	2	7,1	7	4,5	3	6,6	4	7,4	1	16,1	1	10,5	2	9,5
2	7,1	Political Authority	2	8,1	4	5,8	16	2,2	14	2,7	1	8,3	2	13,5	5	4,4	3	8,6
3	5,5	Environmental Protection	6	4,0	3	6,3	1	14,0	1	8,6	9	3,6	6	7,3	13	3,2	22	1,5
4	5,1	Democracy	9	3,7	6	4,6	2	8,2	2	8,5	2	7,7	5	8,7	8	3,5	13	2,3
5	4,8	EU Institutions	8	3,9	9	3,3	4	5,8	4	5,8	8	3,6	7	5,5	2	9,3	4	8,4
6	4,2	Decentralisation	3	5,4	19	1,9	5	5,7	5	4,9	11	2,9	3	10,1	6	4,4	6	4,6
7	4,0	Internationalism	12	3,0	5	5,0	6	5,0	6	4,7	6	5,2	12	2,3	3	7,3	15	2,1
8	3,8	Social Justice	21	2,3	1	7,1	11	3,3	17	2,0	3	7,6	32	0,2	27	1,4	27	0,9
9	3,4	Freedom and Human rights	5	4,2	11	3,1	8	4,4	9	4,1	15	2,3	15	1,1	20	2,0	23	1,4
10	3,1	Agriculture and Farmers	4	4,5	27	1,3	10	3,3	10	3,7	17	2,0	11	3,2	17	2,0	5	6,2
14	2,5	National and European Way of Life	13	2,9	28	1,3	26	1,1	32	0,7	31	0,8	4	8,7	9	3,5	1	9,5
28	1,2	Single Market	29	1,2	33	1,0	32	0,5	25	1,2	32	0,7	28	0,4	4	5,5	28	0,9
37	0,8	Anti-Growth Economy	46	0,0	34	0,9	3	6,0	38	0,2	27	1,1	33	0,2	38	0,8	40	0,1
40	0,4	Marxist Analyses	42	0,2	48	0,0	47	0,5	47	0,0	5	5,3	46	0,0	44	0,0	39	0,2

Note: The Top 10 issues based on all Euromanifestos plus the Top 5 issues for the parties of each parliamentary group are presented. Percentages refer to all Euromanifesto content.

Table 4.5: Most Important Problem (MIP) Being Solved on the European Union Level: Perception (in %), Preference (in %) and Differences By Country

Country	<i>Governmental level in charge of most important problem</i>			<i>Governmental level that should deal with most important problem</i>			<i>Difference (preference and perception)</i>
	Regional	national	European	regional	national	European	European
Luxemburg	7	47	47	11	50	39	-7
Greece	16	39	44	19	44	37	-8
Austria	18	39	42	20	37	44	1
Spain	25	42	33	43	27	30	-3
Denmark	16	51	33	10	59	31	-2
Belgium	15	53	33	12	58	30	-2
Germany	32	37	31	25	37	38	7
Ireland	17	54	29	31	46	23	-6
Netherlands	12	59	29	16	38	46	18
<i>EU-15</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>6</i>
Italy	15	61	23	18	47	36	12
UK	24	53	23	30	45	25	2
France	23	55	22	24	40	36	14
Finland	20	61	19	24	63	13	-5
Portugal	4	78	18	29	35	35	18
Sweden	32	51	17	29	51	20	3

Source: European Election Study 1999: Weighted data are reported; a combination of the political weight and the EU population weight has been applied.

Figure 4.1: Co-variation of the Share of Arguments put in an EU Governmental Frame and the Position Taking of Parties on a Pro-Anti-EU Scale

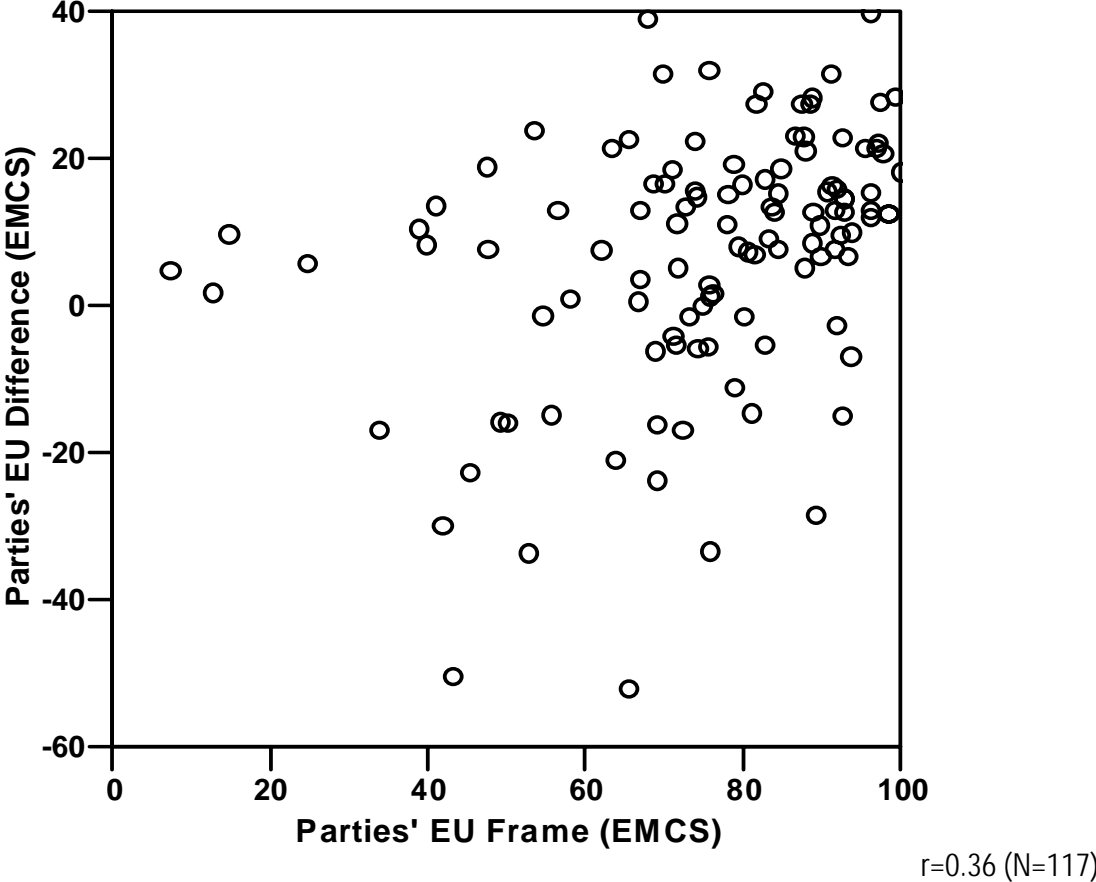


Figure 4.2: Preference for EU Government Being in Charge for Most Important Problem by Voters' Attitudes Toward European Unification (% share by scale values)

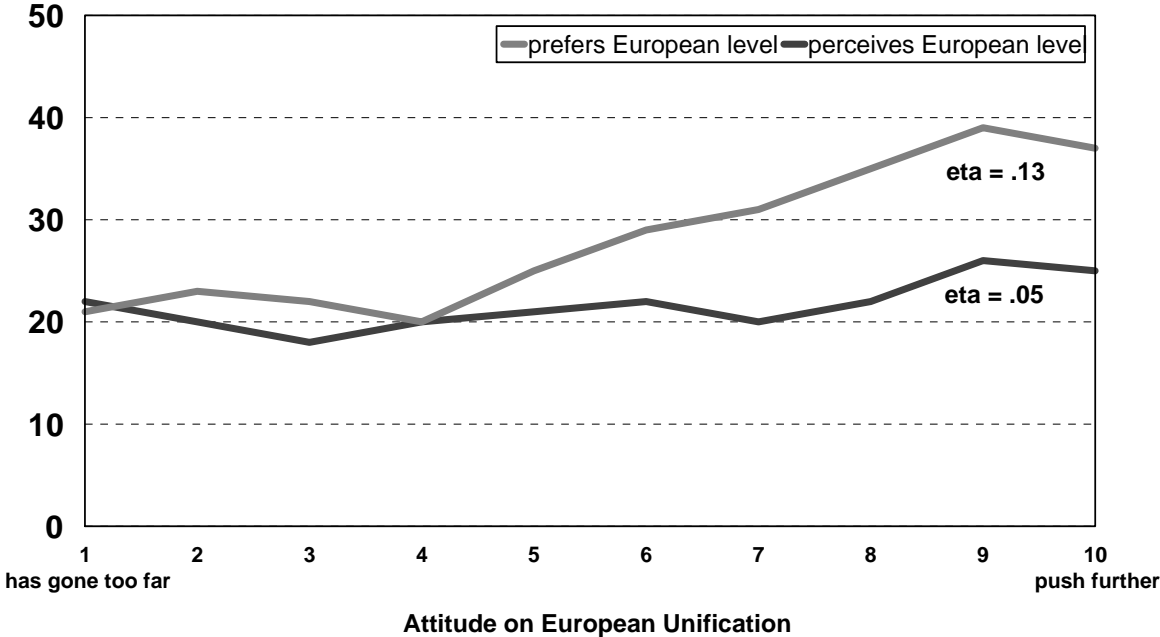


Figure 4.3: Difference Between Pro- and Anti-EU Arguments in Euromanifestos and Voters' Party Perceptions (interpolated medians) Toward European Integration

