

# B2.5 Representation in Europe: Policy Congruence between Citizens and Elites (REPCONG)



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## Research Questions

Within this collaborative research project, we have asked the following three main questions:

- What is the quality of policy congruence between citizens and political parties at the national level?
- How do political institutions (e.g. electoral rules, party organizations) shape policy congruence between voters and parties?
- What are the consequences of policy congruence on the perception of democratic representation?

## Data & Methods

- Comparative electoral surveys (CSES, ESS) combined with institutional variables (e.g. electoral rules)
- (Bayesian) multilevel regression techniques to capture hierarchical structure of data
- Individual measure of congruence:
 
$$C_{ij} = -\min |P_j - P_{ij}|$$
 ( $P_{ij}$  indiv. Citizen;  $P_j$  Party closest to  $P_{ij}$ )

## Collaborations

- University of Vienna, Department of Methods in the Social Sciences: Sylvia Kritzing, Zoe Lefkofridi and Juan Casado Asensio
- Trinity College Dublin, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy: Gail McElroy and Caroline McEvoy
- University of Lausanne, Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences FORS: Georg Lutz, Kathrin Kissau and Jan Rosset

## Selected Research Findings

- Political parties are important actors in the process of representation and fulfill their representational role to very different extents:
  - 12% of the total variance of (individual) congruence is at the party level (only 2% at country level).
- Individual congruence measures allow studying subgroup representation, for instance, how well the poor are represented by European parties:

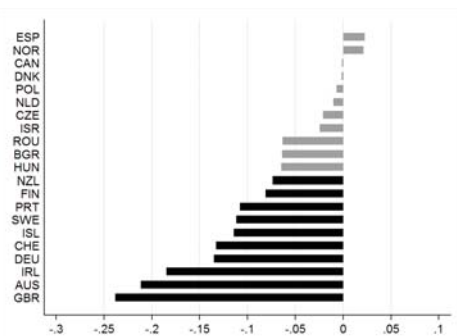


Fig.1 Underrepresentation of poor in the party system

→ Our findings demonstrate that representation in European democracies suffers from inequality (similar effects are known for the US).

- Political institutions matter for the policy representation by political parties and also for the extent of subgroup representation, e.g. underrepresentation of the poor:

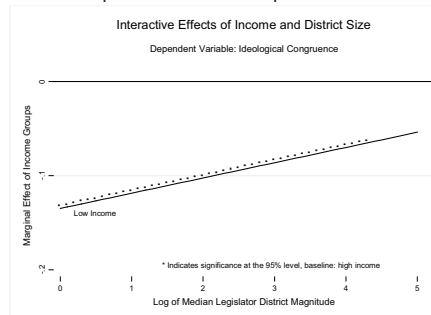


Fig.2 Interaction between low income and the electoral system

→ In systems with high district magnitude (148 seats in median legislator district) low income citizens are not significantly worse represented than the rest of the population, however in systems with small districts, we find a considerable lower policy congruence of this group compared to the rest of the population.

- Subjective perceptions of policy representation are systematically linked to the actual degree of policy congruence:
  - Citizens who are well represented in their preferences by political parties also perceive the degree of their representation to be higher.

## Selected Output

Online archive of electoral manifestos:

Journal Articles:

- Lefkofridi, Zoe, Giger, Nathalie and Kathrin Kissau (2012). "Inequality and Representation in Europe", *Journal of Representation*, 48:1 (Special Issue).
- Giger, Nathalie, Rosset, Jan, and Julian Bernauer (2012). "The poor Representation of the Poor in Comparative Perspective", *Journal of Representation*: 48:1, 47-61.
- Rosset, Jan, Giger, Nathalie and Julian Bernauer (2013). "More Money, Less Problems? Cross-Level Effects of Economic Deprivation on Political Representation", *West European Politics*, forthcoming.
- Lefkofridi, Zoe, Giger, Nathalie and Aina Gallego (2013). "Electoral Participation in Pursuit of Policy Representation: Ideological Congruence and Voter Turnout", *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, forthcoming.
- Bernauer, Julian, Nathalie Giger and Jan Rosset (2013). "Mind the Gap. Do Electoral Systems Foster a More Equal Representation of Women and Men, Poor and Rich?", *International Political Science Review*, forthcoming.