

# Introduction

Michael Marsh<sup>a</sup>, Slava Mikhaylov<sup>b</sup> and Hermann Schmitt<sup>c</sup>  
*University of Dublin, Trinity College (<sup>a,b</sup>) and MZES, Mannheim (<sup>c</sup>)*

The papers here were presented at an academic workshop held in Lisbon May 11-13, 2006 on the subject of the European Parliament elections of 2004. The workshop was convened by Michael Marsh (Trinity College Dublin) and Hermann Schmitt (MZES, University of Mannheim) and organised locally by Marina Costa Lobo, André Freire and Pedro Magalhães through the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon under the auspices of CONNEX, a Network of Excellence for research into EU governance funded under the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme.<sup>1</sup> The participants are all part of a group that carried out a study of the European Elections of 2004 by running surveys of electors in the member states, using a standard questionnaire.<sup>2</sup>

The 2004 project is the latest in a long line of European Election studies stretching back to 1979.<sup>3</sup> These have been focussed primarily on electoral participation and voting behaviour in European Parliament elections, in part as a means of studying elections in general, but more than that, they have also been concerned with the evolution of a political community and a public sphere in the EU, examining citizens' perceptions of and preferences about the EU political regime and their evaluations of EU political performance. In essence, the aim was to explore whether we are seeing a legitimate European system of political representation in the making, at least in the channel of

political representation that is provided by competitive elections. The project was started in 1979 by a trans-national group of electoral researchers and Europeanists some of which are still on board. Between 1979 and 2004, 6 election studies were prepared and 5 of them were realised. A new era began in 2004 when national study directors - rather than the international research group - funded and conducted the 2004 study in 24 of the 25 EU member-countries.

The Lisbon meeting was designed to facilitate the discussion of further advances in the exploration of the implications of EES 2004 for accountability and representation in the European Union. Contributions were invited on the general theme of accountability and representation and the 2004 elections, but in the expectation that most would make some use of the 2004 data. The papers consequently cover a wide range of topics within those themes, from basic issues of turnout and vote choice in 2004, through the relationship between attitudes to the EU and voting decisions and case studies of EU elections in particular countries to more general issues of EU democracy: community, citizenship and identity and the relationship between the electoral process and the behaviour of MEPs. There are significant and original re-examinations of some 'old chestnuts', such as the second order thesis in papers by Toka, Marsh and Linek and Lyons, and the 'democratic deficit' in that by Rohrschneider and Loveless, papers on enduring issues of citizenship and identity by Thomassen and by Scheuer and Schmitt, as well as papers on newer, but highly important, issues, such as that by van der Brug and Fennema on anti-immigration parties. While voter surveys form the core of the EES project, there are also companion projects on the media and on party manifestos, and these too are represented in the papers collected here.

All of these papers appear in much the same form as they were presented, barring some minor editorial amendments. A few contain an 'afterword', indicating ways in which the papers could be improved, following

discussions at the workshop. However, all represent work in progress and should be read as such. Many will appear elsewhere in future with more developed arguments and analyses. However, the authors have agreed to allow their work to be reproduced here as an aid to the growing research interest in the EU in general and in the electoral process within the European Union in particular, and to advertise more widely the data resource provided by the various European elections studies. These will shortly be available as a combined data file, incorporating the studies carried out between 1989 and 2004.

## **Campaigns, turnout and vote switching**

The first session of the workshop examined the campaigns, turnout and vote switching. De Vreese, Banducci, Semetko and Boomgaarden reported on the news coverage of the 2004 Election Campaign across all 25 countries, using data from a companion project on the media and the 2004 elections. Their paper provides a unique pan-European overview of the campaign coverage in each country, based on an analysis of three national newspapers and the most widely watched main evening private and public television news programs in each country in the final two weeks leading up to the elections. They find that average visibility of the elections on television news in the 'old' EU-15 increased in comparison with the previous EP election in 1999, while it decreased marginally in national newspapers. Even so, the elections tended to be more visible in the 'new' 10 member states than in the 'old' 15 EU member states. The news coverage tended to be domestically focused: the political personalities and institutional actors featured were generally domestic or national political actors and not EU actors, though there were more EU actors in the news in 2004 than in 1999. The tone of the news was predominantly neutral, but when it was evaluative, the news in the 'old' EU-15 was generally negative towards the EU, while in the 'new' countries a mixed pattern was found with the broadsheet press and television news being, on average, positive and tabloid papers, on average, negative. The

paper discusses these findings in the light of the literature on the EU's democratic deficit and concludes that campaign communication seems to contribute to the legitimization of European politics.

Franklin's paper looks at the dynamics of turnout, taking the 2004 elections as its focus. The elections of 2004 were extraordinary in bringing to the polls citizens of 25 countries, ten of them participating for the first time in EP elections. Turnout levels in established member states at these elections were very much as would have been expected from past patterns, but turnout in new member states was generally very low, though highly variable. This is surprising in the light of expectations that countries participating for the first time in EP elections would demonstrate higher turnout than at later elections. The variability in turnout across the new EU member states provides us with leverage that may help us understand dynamic features of turnout variations that are still puzzling to researchers. A variety of explanations for low turnout among new members have been proposed, from the fact that all of them had recently conducted referendums on EU membership that might have resulted in electoral fatigue to the fact that many of them are consolidating democracies with patterns of electoral behaviour that are not yet settled. This paper investigates these and other ideas, using the EP elections of 2004 as a resource that helps us to better understand the mainsprings of turnout variations and concludes that more research is needed, in particular into the unexpectedly low turnout figures in the new member countries.

The paper by Marsh reviews three theories of lower stimulus elections: surge and decline, referendum and second-order theory. It explores differences and similarities between them in order to assess what each can tell us about European Parliament elections in 2004. Most offer something of value, although some have a wider potential than others. Several clear patterns emerge in the results, many of them interpretable through existing theories. In addition, many similarities between the old and new member states are

found in respect to the dynamics of change, although volatility in the new states remains much higher than in the old states. Certain types of volatility, such as that within the respective sets of parties in government and in opposition, are not envisaged by theories of surge and decline or ‘referendums’, but might be in accordance with second-order theory of regarding the differential prospects of large and small parties. Weak party attachment seems to be a factor in all of this, but more work needs to be done to explore the precise patterns of within-camp changes.

Freire, Costa Lobo, and Magalhães explore the importance of left and right for vote choice in 2004. While the importance of the left-right divide is well established, the conditions under which the left-right cleavage is more or less important in explaining the vote are understudied. This paper seeks to determine the conditions under which the left-right divide is more or less important in explaining the vote, and whether these conditions are at work in both established and consolidating democracies. The paper examines whether the ideological location of citizens – in terms of left-right self-placement — has a different impact on the vote in different types of democratic regime (consolidating versus established democracies), defined in terms of their level of party system institutionalization and the patterns of partisan ideological competition; and whether the generic differences found between democracies in terms of their level of democratic “consolidation” or “establishment” are sustained if controls are introduced for three other factors hypothesized to make a difference in the extent to which left-right orientations have a greater influence on the vote. It concludes that there is a sizeable effect of left-right orientations on EP vote choices, particularly in party systems with low effective thresholds for new parties to enter; where the left-right and the pro-/anti-integration dimension of party competition are correlated; and where there is high perceptual agreement in the electorate on where the parties stand in terms of left and right.

Tóka's paper takes a critical look at the theory of second order elections. It argues that how the most influential theory of voting behaviour in European elections can be further clarified by taking the notion of information effects into account and offers competing information-based explanations for some previously observed empirical anomalies for the theory of second order elections. He proposes a modification in terms of the different degrees of information available in first and second order elections. He outlines a "less-information" and a "different-information" explanation. The paper offers some preliminary tests of the different explanations using data collected from EES 2004 elections. Tóka concludes that the results seem fully consistent with the different-campaign-information version of the informational account of second order election effects, but contradict both the less-campaign-information and the motivational explanation of greater support for small parties in European elections.

## **EU attitudes and the Vote**

The second section focussed more specifically on the relationship between attitudes to the EU and Voting Decisions. This has been a debated topic both in respect of vote choice and turnout itself with many advocates on each side of the debate. The issue is very significant because it goes to the heart of the interpretation of the significance of EU elections for the European project. The first paper in this section examines attitudes to the EU themselves, asking what determines EU support. Garry and Tilley explore attitudes to European integration using the most recent wave of the European Election Study. They test a range of both individual level and contextual level theories. In general, what emerges is the similarity between west and east. Egocentric utilitarianism, national identity and political interest are all better predictors in the western than in the eastern context, but in substantive terms the effects are not particularly large. It is also interesting to note that two control variables – age and sex –act quite differently in the two contexts. Being younger and being male are predictors of a positive disposition

towards integration in the west, but not in the east. Overall, while attitudes to integration are less structured (i.e. less predictable with the theories tested) in the east than in the west, citizens in both areas are roughly similar in terms of the reasons that they favour or oppose integration. However, key differences do emerge in terms of different aspects of economic utilitarianism: economic xenophobia drives attitudes in the west and prospective economic evaluations drive attitudes in the east.

Wessels examines the sources of turnout, arguing that turnout is in decline (c.f. the earlier paper by Franklin), contrary to what might be expected from the increasing relevance of the European Union as a more and more powerful political system and the increasing significance of the European Parliament within this system. Whereas the level of turnout compared across countries may not signify political satisfaction where it is high, or the opposite, where it is low, decline across time certainly does indicate that something is going on. Mark Franklin's work on turnout has demonstrated the strong impact of demographic change in the composition of the eligible population by lowered voting age. But, even so, the question remains, why has the European system been unable to attract (new) voters. The last enlargement of the European Union moved the borders of the community far beyond the former iron curtain to the East. Indeed, the 2004 elections can be called the founding elections of the new Europe, overcoming the obsolete East-West divide. It was the first time that the people in the East could express their belonging and indicate their preference for the political course of the Union and it was the chance for the people in the old member states to demonstrate the historical significance of the event by participating in it. However, turnout was on average extremely low in the new member states, and even in the old member states it was a little lower than 1999. Wessels tests a number of hypotheses that explain low turnout in terms of the absence of factors that will promote participation. He concludes that political actors, namely candidates, parties, and EU officials, have to put more effort into making it

clear to the voter that voting makes a difference and to informing and mobilizing them.

Markowski and Tucker in their paper ask three basic questions regarding political representation in Poland and the issue of EU membership. First, how important was this issue to both masses and elites? Second, did Polish political parties react in any way to mass political attitudes towards EU membership? Finally, did views on EU membership have an effect on how Polish citizens voted, how they viewed political parties, or their overall assessment of the quality of Polish democracy? They address these questions in an effort to expand our understanding of the relevance of EU membership to Poland's domestic politics beyond the question of why certain citizens support EU membership, and in an effort to expand the study of political representation outside the confines of stable established democracies. They answer these questions using the 1997 and 2001 Polish National Election Studies, which surveyed both masses and parliamentary elites. Overall, they conclude that the issue of EU membership did matter to Polish citizens, helping inform their political choices and attitudes, and that political parties were aware of this fact and reacted to it. Although they note that this bodes well for the development of political representation in Poland, they also point out that, ironically it may ultimately prove threatening to the quality of democratic development by providing mass support for radical and anti-systemic parties.

Mattila and Raunio observe that parties do not offer real choices to voters on European integration. Indeed, in most EU countries there has been broad consensus about integration between the main parties. Importantly, previous research shows that this elite convergence is not replicated among the voters. Using EES data from 1979 to 2004, their paper analyses the ideological range of parties on the EU dimension in the EU member states. The analysis is in two stages. First they describe longitudinally the development of inter-party competition on the EU dimension between since the first EP elections.

Second, moving to the empirical analysis, they then examine the impact of various factors – such as number of parties, the range on the left/right dimension and government composition – on the level of party competition over integration. The paper finds that the higher the polarization in support for membership, the bigger is the differences between two main competitors. The level of support for membership operates the opposite way: when EU membership is very popular, there is less need for the two main parties to compete with each other on the EU dimension. But overall, the hypothesized factors explained only a small portion of between-country differences.

Finally, in this section, van der Brug and Fennema examine the support base of radical right parties, which have typically manifested a strong anti-EU position. In the last two decades of the twentieth century many western democracies have seen the rise of parties that have been labelled extreme-right (Ignazi), New Radical Right (Kitschelt), Radical Right (Norris), right-wing populis or anti-immigration parties (Fennema). There are several competing theories of support for such parties. Socio-structural models inspired most research on radical right parties until the late 1990s. The crux of these explanations is the suggestion that support for radical right parties comes from citizens who feel threatened by rapid changes in post-industrial societies. More recent contributions have challenged this perspective. Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie showed with data from 1994 that radical right parties attract support which is more broadly based in sociological terms than is that of the more established parties. Moreover, they showed that support for radical right parties is motivated by the same kind of ideological and pragmatic considerations as support for established parties. However, a similar analysis for 1999 suggested a more complicated picture. The current paper replicates the earlier analyses with data from the EES 2004, which provides a wider range of cases. The analysis suggests that the difference in findings is largely due to political change: the ongoing loss of electoral credibility of some of these parties, the growth of a populist radical right in some of the countries, and the build-up of a strong party organisation by

those radical right parties whose support profile remained largely unchanged between the two surveys.

## **National case studies**

Three papers were national case studies. Linek and Lyons examined vote switching in the in the Czech Republic with a view to testing some of the implications of the second-order election thesis. The influential second-order election thesis explains the relatively lower turnout in European elections, losses in support by government parties, and increases in support for smaller, new and radical parties at the expense of established larger parties. It has received much validation within the literature, but much of that comes from aggregate data. This paper argues that second order theory is fundamentally an aggregate level explanation and runs the risk of the ecological fallacy. Using an ecological inference technique this paper examines vote switching in the Czech Republic between the 2002 Chamber elections and 2004 European elections. These results are compared with two individual level mass survey results. The results of these analyses confirm many of the predictions of second order theory but also generate further hypotheses for future research.

Gyrfasowa's paper is on the EP election in Slovakia, setting it in a wider EU context. It argues that the circumstances of the election allowed differential turnout to affect the outcome. Slovak citizens introduced themselves on the European scene with critically low turnout – only 17 per cent of eligible voters participated in the selection of 14 Slovak EP members. On the other hand, in spite of mid-term unpopularity, the pro-European coalition parties did well, rather than the parties that might have mobilized the voters by appealing to anti-EU sentiments. That means the trend in Slovakia did not follow a pattern observed in some other countries – a strengthening of the opposition and greater support for smaller euro-sceptical or anti-EU parties. Europhobes like communists or nationalists failed completely. The

traditionally best-mobilized constituencies of national populist parties were not apparently motivated by the idea of Europe. This issue has lower salience for them; they are ambivalent about it. The differential mobilization helps explain the success of coalition parties.

Finally, Teperoglou and Skrinis look at the 2004 European Election in Greece and ask if it fits the second order model. The paper is divided in two parts and tries to answer two questions. In the first part they examine the 2004 European Election in Greece with the help of the second-order election model, looking at participation, losses by large parties, including the government parties, and finally gains by smaller parties. The main conclusion is that the hypotheses of the second-order election model are corroborated. The question that runs through the second part of their paper is an attempt to extend this perspective one step further: Second-order election, for whom? In other words, did all voters treat the election as a second order contest? They attempt to answer these questions using data from the Eurobarometer Flash 162, exit polls and results of the EES 2004. Their tentative findings suggest that EP elections have less of a second-order nature for older citizens, for voters living in rural areas, and for the less well educated.

## **The issue of EU democracy**

The fourth section of the workshop examined the issue of EU democracy. First of all, De Winter, Swyngedouw and Goeminne explore attitudes towards the scope of EU government. The question about the decision-making level that is the most appropriate to deal with different policy areas is multifaceted and has been posed by political philosophers since centuries. The question of level of government is also one of the aspects of the political system that is supposed to affect strongly its legitimacy (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1999).

The paper argues that the legitimacy of a given level of government in democratic polities depends on the evaluation by the citizens of whether a certain division of power is right or not. The question of the appropriate level of governance has been dormant for a long time given the permissive pro-European consensus. The subsidiarity debate has turned it into one of the hot issues in the debate on the legitimacy of and democratic deficit within the EU. This paper first examines to what extent European citizens allocate decision-making responsibilities to the European Union, the national state, or the regional level. Second, the authors test a set of hypotheses concerning the socio-demographic, attitudinal and structural characteristics that affect differences in preferences for government levels. Finally, they suggest questions for future research.

Thomassen's paper on European Citizenship and Identity is part of a larger project on the legitimacy of the European Union. It is based on the European Election Study 2004. It argues that the bases of democratic legitimacy need to be deduced from normative democratic theory. From this perspective three dimensions of legitimacy are distinguished: Identity, Representation and Accountability and Performance, although the analysis in this paper is limited to the dimension of Identity. 'Who constitutes the people' is one of the most fundamental aspects of legitimacy. However, there are two contrasting views from the perspective of legitimacy on what 'the people' really means. In one view the establishment of a legitimate democracy requires the pre-existence of a collective identity. An alternative view is that citizenship is primarily a legal construct that – once established – can enhance the development of a sense of community. These alternative concepts of citizenship and identity were operationalised in the European Election Study. The paper presents a preliminary descriptive analysis of the development of both the sense of European citizenship and the sense of a collective European identity and discusses the possible consequences for the legitimacy of the European Union, arguing that the recent expansion of the

Union seems to have significantly reduced average levels of trust between peoples.

Štebe's paper looks at trust and legitimacy in the EU, focusing on the possibly contrasting perceptions of national and EU institutions. It sees citizenship as a set of roles and expectations on the individual level that are in a process of transformation. The modern view is that citizenship is a feature of a nation state. This raises the question whether the EU, as new institutional and political entity, can be the focus of the type of emotional attachment typical of national states, or whether any attachment of citizens to it is of a different nature. Moreover it is interesting to contrast old and new members of EU. The paper concludes that national and European citizenship are not independent but influence one another; that in the new member countries, European citizenship seems to be stronger than national citizenship; and that contextual factors – some deeply rooted in history – structure the correlation between the two.

Scheuer and Schmitt examine the dynamics of European identity. They suggest that EU democracy requires a European demos: in more modern language, a European political identity. In earlier work, using the EES 1994, they identified major indicators of European political identity: (1) personal identification of the citizens as Europeans, (2) a sense of we-feeling among the people in the EU beyond national borders, and (3) a clear notion about who is in and who is out. The European Election Study 2004 contains the data that can show the degree of change that has happened within the last decade. The questions guiding the analysis are whether citizens' identification with the EU has increased over time, whether the bonds among the European people have gained in strength, and whether the new member countries have been integrated into the European demos. The paper concludes that identification with Europe has increased, but not everywhere, and that Europeans have very distinct perspectives about the trustworthiness of fellow Europeans from different geographical areas of the Union.

Rohrschneider and Loveless take on the fundamental question of the EU's democratic deficit and ask whether this is different in the old and new member states. They explore citizens' perception of representation within the European Union and examine whether explanations developed for west European countries apply to the new member-states. Their argument is that previous models often view the representation deficit through the lens of national-level, predominantly economic, performance but that recent analyses suggest that West European citizens evaluate the EU on its own terms on the basis of a range of political criteria, such as its capacity to represent citizens. On the basis largely of data from the EES 2004, they examine to what extent this mechanism applies to the new member-states. Do East-Central Europeans perceive a democracy deficit? If so, what drives these perceptions? And what similarities and differences emerge across the East-West divide? Data from the European Elections Studies 2004 allow them to begin to tackle these questions. They find that that for the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe, dissatisfaction with representation in the EU is more strongly driven by economic concerns than is that of their Western counterparts, but also that *both* low and high institutional quality is a strong predictor of high levels of dissatisfaction with the representational quality of the EU. That does not diminish the role of economics entirely, but rather underscores the role of economics as it directly impacts individuals, particularly in countries in which socio-economic development places economic issues at the forefront of national interests.

Finally, Wüst and Faas shift the focus from citizens and voters on to MEPs. They make use of party manifestos from one of the projects complementing EES 2004 to see how far party manifestos link with the behaviour of MEPs in the European Parliament. Wüst and Faas suggest that an important element in the chain of political representation in Europe is the voting behaviour of elected members in the European Parliament. They argue that voters expect their representatives not only to act in their interest, but also to act in a

manner consistent with the programmatic profile the respective parties presented in the EP election campaigns. Combining the record on MEP's roll call voting behaviour with the content of election manifestos issued for the EP elections, they are able to analyze the congruence between the two. Euro manifestos show a significantly larger variance than national manifestos on EU-related content, which makes them specifically valuable for such analyses. They analyze this relationship between programs and roll call voting for core issue areas and for the time period ranging from 1979 to 2004.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.connex-network.org>

<sup>2</sup> Principal Investigators were Stefano Bartolini (Florence), Wouter van der Brug (Amsterdam), Cees van der Eijk (University of Nottingham), Mark Franklin (Trinity College Hartford, Con.), Dieter Fuchs (Stuttgart), Gábor Tóka (Central European University, Budapest), Michael Marsh (Trinity College Dublin), Hermann Schmitt (University of Mannheim) and Jacques Thomassen (University of Twente). National study directors were: Günther Ogris (Austria), Marc Swyngedouw and Lieven Dewinter (Belgium), James Tilley (Britain) and John Garry (Northern Ireland), Bambos Papageorgiou (Cyprus), Lukáš Linek (Czech Republic), Jorgen Goul Andersen (Denmark), Alan Sikk and Vello Pettai (Estonia), Mikko Maatila and Tapio Raunio (Finland), Pascal Perrineau and Bruno Cautres (France), Andreas Wüst (Germany), Ilias Nikolakopoulos and Eftichia Teperoglou (Greece), Gabor Tóka (Hungary), Michael Marsh (Ireland), Renato Mannheimer and Roberto Biorcio (Italy), Ilze Koroleva (Latvia), Algis Krupavicius (Lithuania), Patrick Dumont (Luxembourg), Cees van der Eijk (the Netherlands), Radoslaw Markowski (Poland), Pedro Magalães (Portugal), Olga Gyrfasova (Slovakia), Niko Tos (Slovenia), Juan Diez Nicolas (Spain), and Sören Holmberg (Sweden). The project was co-ordinated by Hermann Schmitt. Data integration was carried out by P. Matthew Loveless (Mannheim/Bloomington, Ind.)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net/>