

# Chapter 13

## Adjusting to the European Union: What are the effects of European integration on party and government policy positions?

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### **Abstract**

This study compares the EU-related position of political parties and governments. We analyze the party and government positions in seven European member states, i.e., Austria in the time period between 1979 and 2006, Belgium (1985-2003), France (1986-2002), Germany (1980-2005), Ireland (1982-2002), the Netherlands (1977-2006) and the United Kingdom (1979-2005). Thereby, we derive the data from the analysis of the content of election manifestos, coalition agreements and government declarations. We ask the following research questions: What is the European stance of national parties and governments? How have their positions changed over time? And how strongly do party and government positions correlate with popular Euroskepticism? For being able to respond to our research questions, we discuss hitherto studies that dealt with national parties and the EU. Second, we present our methodology and data. Third, we show our descriptive results, which we seek to explain in the fourth section. The fifth section draws the conclusion.

## **Introduction**

The current state of European integration can best be summarized as unidirectional. On the one side, the enlargement of the European Union (EU) has advanced notably. Besides the 27 member states, the European Commission is eagerly negotiating future enlargements, which will most probably concern the countries of south-eastern Europe, namely Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey. Through its enlargement policy, the EU inspired profound reforms in Central and Eastern Europe and extended prosperity, democracy, and the rule of law across Europe (see Grabbe 2003).

On the other side, the defeat of the EU Constitution represents another essential momentum in the history of European integration. The proposed constitution contained the key reform issues including the basic principles of the EU, the regulation of material policy competencies, and a reform of the institutional framework.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in a referendum held on 29 May 2005, French voters rejected the terms of the treaty with 55.6 percent voting against it. Dutch voters confirmed this result on 1 June 2005 with 61.8 percent of the turnout voting against the treaty. The fact that by that time fourteen other member states had already ratified the constitutional text (see Göler/Jopp 2006: 92), clarifies the divergent national positions related to the European constitution. Accordingly, it seems fair to say that “[t]here is currently a sense of indirection, of confusion, and of doubt as where the grand project that the Six [i.e., Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands] began with the Treaty of Paris in 1951 is going” (Sbragia 2006: 238).

This picture, however, becomes less ambiguous when we look more precisely at the underling decision-making processes. When speaking of the enlargement process, we have to keep in mind that this is an area in which the supranational institutions of the EU clearly dominate decision-making.

More precisely, it is the European Commission that assesses whether an applicant meets the conditions of membership. Only if the Commission delivers a positive opinion, and the Council unanimously agrees a negotiating mandate, the negotiations between the candidate and all the member states are opened formally. Hence, enlargement entails an inter-state bargaining between the candidate countries and the EU institutions. Although there is a difference among the attitude of various supranational concerning the question about either further or lesser integration (see Tsebelis/Garrett 2000), the EU-institutions are generally assumed to be more favorable to enlargement than the domestic governments as well as electorate.

Yet, also in the case of the European constitution, the Commission and the European Parliament played a significant role by providing information and preparing the agenda. However, the decision was made by the citizens, who in the French and Dutch cases at least voted against the European constitution. In fact, most voters did not explicitly against the constitution. As Schild (2005: 190) explains, 52 percent of the French 'no' was motivated by an overall dissatisfaction with the country's social and economic situation. Additional 24 percent used the referendum to express their disagreement with President Chirac and his government. By contrast, the Dutch 'no' was to a stronger degree motivated by the perception of high costs related to EU integration (see Aarts/van der Kolk 2006), however also here dissatisfaction with domestic politics represented an important factor. In fact, a study by Hug and Schulz (2005) reveals that the voters responded positively to the single dimensions of the constitution when asked separately from the referendum in an ex-post survey.

The occurrence of this kind of 'involuntary defections' (see Hug/Schulz 2005) in multi-level systems draws our attention to the public opinion toward European integration as well as the attitude of the relevant actors at the national level. Thereby, we concentrate on political parties since they link the public opinion with the behavior of governments. Political parties provide the

instrument for the electorate to express itself by accommodating diverse interest groups and offering voters different political options. Even with referendums, political parties play an important role by advocating one side in the referendum, which will affect the way citizens vote (Hix 2005: 176). From this point of view, the unsuccessful referendums in France and the Netherlands can at least partially be explained by a ‘gap’ between political parties and voters. In the French case, the centre-left parties – which were in favor of the EU constitution – were unable to mobilize their electorate (Schild 2005: 194). And in the Netherlands, there was an extremely weak correlation between the party choice in the 2003 elections and the voting behavior in the referendum on the European Constitution as voter were against it whereas their parties had supported it (Aarts/van der Kolk 2006: 245). In conclusion, political parties have the potential to move integration forward by convincing the public that a further European integration is acceptable and that the EU produces a number of benefits for the citizens.

Despite of their vital role for the functioning of representative systems, the relevance of political parties often became obscured in light of relative complexity of EU politics. But “to understand how EU politics work, then, we need to understand how parties compete and organize” (Hix 2005: 180). Thus, in a first step we must examine how political parties define their stance on European integration. However, EU politics is clearly dominated by the interaction between supranational institutions and domestic government. From this follows that we must understand how party positions are transposed into government positions, and how strongly they correlate.

So in light of all these considerations, this study compares the EU-related position of political parties and governments. To this end, we analyze the party and government positions in seven European member states, i.e., Austria in the time period between 1979 and 2006, Belgium (1985–2003), France (1986–2002), Germany (1980–2005), Ireland (1982–2002), the Netherlands (1977–2006) and the United Kingdom (1979–2005). Thereby,

we derive the data from the analysis of the content of election manifestos, coalition agreements and government declarations. So far, there have been only a few studies that relied on election manifestos (see Pennings 2006; Kritzinger et al. 2004). However, an approach that combines both party and government positions has not come up yet.

Accordingly, we ask the following research questions: What is the European stance of national parties and governments? How have their positions changed over time? And how strongly do party and government positions correlate with popular Euroskepticism? For being able to respond to our research questions, we structure the paper in the following manner. First, we discuss hitherto studies that dealt with national parties and the EU. Second, we present our methodology and data. Third, we show our descriptive results, which we seek to explain in the fourth section. The fifth section draws the conclusion.

### **Political party analysis in the context of EU-integration**

Generally, we can distinguish between two strands of research that focuses on political parties and the EU. The first strand examines the political parties at the European level, mainly in the European Parliament, and the evolution of the European party system, concentrating on party legitimacy, party organizational strength, and the systemic functionality of parties (see e.g. Pedersen 1996; Hix/Lord 1997; Hix 2002). The second type deals with the European policy orientation of individual national political parties, which corresponds to the perspective adapted in our study (see e.g. Gaffney 1996; Ray 1999; Marks et al. 2002). Often this perspective has been associated with the impact of Europeanization on the national political parties of the member states. While Europeanization originally refers to downloading' EU directives, regulations and institutional structures to the domestic level and the processes

of ‘uploading’ preferences to the EU level (see Knill 2001), there are some studies (e.g. Mair 2000; Ladrech 2001) that represent an insightful application of this concept to political parties.

In this context, Mair (2000) analyzes the direct impacts of European integration on the format (i.e., the emergence of new parties) and mechanics of national party systems (i.e., the way in which parties interact with each other in the national electoral arena). Mair’s main conclusion is that party systems turned out to be resistant to potential change resulting from Europeanization. He explains this finding by two factors. First, the absence of a genuine European party system might inhibit the restructuring of the domestic party competition. Second, the imperviousness of domestic party systems could stem from a misplaced division of competences associated with the national and European electoral arenas. When exploring the indirect effects of Europeanization, Mair further concludes that politicians and bureaucrats dominate decision-making at the European level, which reduces the active engagement of the electorate, and hence the lowers the importance of political parties.

A different approach is undertaken by Ladrech (2001), who presents a basic framework for assessing how political parties as organizations respond to the effects of European integration. Though also departing from the Mair’s (2000) analysis, he identifies five areas of investigation for testing the potential effects of Europeanization on political parties:

- (1) Programmatic change, which can be measured the programmatic content of the party manifestos across time,
- (2) Organizational change, which may lead to new internal party rule and statutes concerning delegation to the European Parliament,
- (3) Patterns of party competition, i.e. the extent to which a party has a pro- or anti-EU position,

- (4) Party-government relations, which is an important aspect since national governments are organized on partisan bases,
- (5) Relations beyond the national party system, i.e. the perspective of transnational cooperation with other parties from other member states.

Of these five areas, our paper touches only the programmatic change, the patterns of party competition as well as the party-government relations. As concerns the first two aspects, i.e. the programmatic change and party competition, there is a solid body of research, which helps us to formulate theoretical expectations. Concerning the party-government relations, we have to adopt a more explorative approach, which may be subject to further theoretical refinement.

In rather general terms, Ray (1999) presents data indicating that parties have, on average, become increasingly pro-European over the period 1984–1996. Both the salience of the issue of integration and the extent of intra-party disagreement increased. However, intra-party divisions appear to be less prevalent than commonly assumed. For explaining the position of national parties toward European integration, the research literature mainly suggests three variables. First, a relationship between the positioning of parties on the left-right spectrum is suggested (see Hooghe et al. 2002). Though theoretically intuitive, there has not been strong empirical support for this perspective. Therefore, Hooghe and Marks (2004: 1) claim there is no linear relationship between the level of support for European integration and the positioning on the conventional left-right dimension. It should be more reasonable to refer to the costs and benefits of a party's EU-related positioning. This entails that parties that are parties of government or potential government parties of government have high costs when expressing strong Euroskepticism since they participate in the European decision-making processes. By contrast, peripheral parties that base their appeal on their status

as outsiders are more likely to oppose further European integration since this outside government this stance does not imply high costs (see Taggart/Szczerbiak 2004: 5, and implicitly Mair 2000: 34).

Although the second variable is quite intuitive, it falls short of explaining the variation among the 'core' national parties. Hence, we need to consider another variable, which touches more directly the dynamics of competition within national party systems. In fact, party competition could enhance the incentive for the expression of divergent positions on EU-integration, which stems from the policy preferences of the voters. If parties primarily try to maximize their vote share (Downs 1957; Grofman 2004), then they should bear in mind the positions of their voters when writing their election manifestos. In consequence, we assume that party positions on the European Union correlate with the public opinion on European integration. Though it has often been argued that European integration is a 'second-order issue' (see Taggart/Szczerbiak 2004: 6), we reason that the increasing involvement of the EU with domestic politics enhances its relevance for domestic electoral decisions (see Aarts/van der Kolk 2006). In the case of the position of governments on European integration, in contrast to the last mentioned hypothesis our expectation is that governments should not primarily follow the voter's policy positions on that issue. This is because governments are expected to enforce long-term perspectives on policies such as European unification regardless of 'populist' viewpoints of the electorate (see Laver/Shepsle 1998; Warwick 2001). Hence, we can formulate the following hypotheses:

H1: *If a national party belongs to the 'core' of the political system, it will have a more positive attitude toward European integration.*

H2: *If a national party belongs to the 'periphery' of the political system, it will have a more negative attitude toward European integration.*

H3: *The higher the level of popular Euroskepticism, the more negative will be the (core) parties' attitude toward European integration.*

H4: *If there is a high level of popular Euroskepticism, then the government will not directly respond to it.*

## **Data and Method**

The dependent variables of our analysis are the positions of political parties and governments toward EU integration. Our explanatory variables are the positioning of the single parties within the domestic party system (i.e., core/periphery) and the public opinion on the EU. Except for the public attitude toward the EU – which we operationalize by using the cumulative *Eurobarometer* dataset (ZA-Nr. 3521) – we receive all variables by conducting a content analysis of documents. In contrast to data by the *Comparative Manifesto Project* (Budge et al 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006), our self-generated analysis provides data on both the party's *and* the government's European policy position over time. Further, the *Comparative Manifesto Project* does cover issue saliencies rather than positions of political actors on various policy dimensions (Laver 2001). An alternate source of data would have been expert surveys (e.g. Ray 1999; Laver/Hunt 1992; Huber/Inglehart 1995; Benoit/Laver 2006; Warwick, 2006). However, there are a number of problems related to expert surveys. One is that examining the position toward the EU there is little variance, which induce the respondents to overestimate differences between parties (Taggart/Sczerbiak 2004: 8). Most importantly in our case, however, there are no expert surveys measuring the programmatic position of both political parties and (coalition) governments over time.

For overcoming these problems, we use a fully computer-aided analysis of policy documents. For the party-positions, we refer to their election manifestos as the document containing their policy goals. To estimate the position of the coalition government, coalition agreements and – in case of

single party governments – government declarations are used (see e.g. Budge/Laver 1992, 1993; Warwick 2001). According to Timmermans (1998: 423; 2006: 265), coalition contracts not only have a symbolic and conflict prevention function, their task also is to build a framework for the political agenda for the years following the election. Therefore, coalition agreements as well as government declarations approximate the intended future policy of the respective government, taking into consideration and balancing the positions of party cores (Timmermans 1998: 419). Table 1 below shows the number of covered government formation processes as well as of the analyzed policy documents.

**Table 1: Number of analysed policy documents**

	<i>Election manifestos</i>	<i>Coalition agreements/ government declarations</i>
Austria (1979–2006)	39	8
Belgium (1985–2003)	63	6
France (1986–2002)	27	2
Germany (1980–2005)	40	9
Ireland (1982–2002)	34	6
Netherlands (1977–2006)	91	10
United Kingdom (1979–2005)	26	18
<i>N</i>	320	59

*Notes: In Belgium the coalition agreements are analysed in both Dutch and French. In the case of France, we only have coalition agreements for the coalition governments formed in 1986 and 1993.*

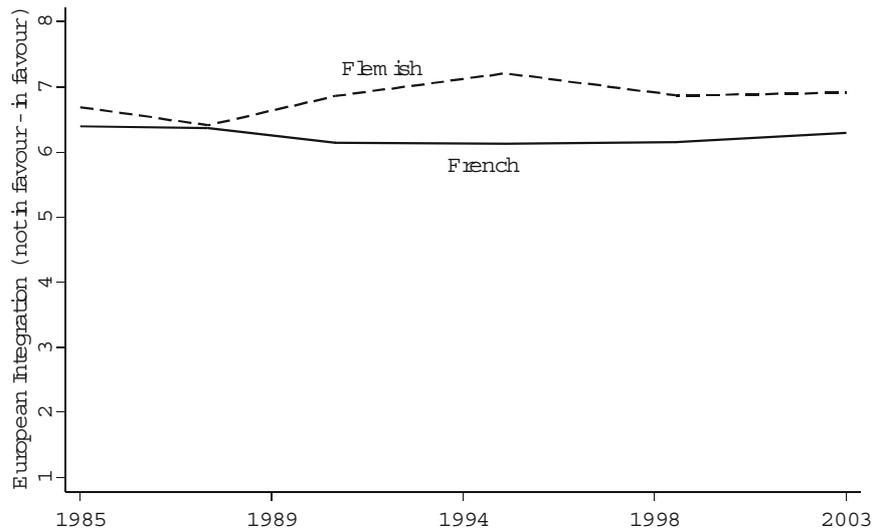
To estimate the programmatic positions of parties and governments, we use the language blind and non-manual *wordscore* method developed by Laver et al. (2003; see for applications Kritzinger et al. 2004; Gianetti/Laver 2005; Laver et al. 2006). The *wordscore* technique allows estimating positions of political parties on various policy issues. The basic idea of the *wordscore* procedure is to compare the frequency distribution of words in a text, whose programmatic position is known, to the word distribution of a text of the

same character whose position is unknown. Laver et al. (2003: 314-5) refer to these two sorts of documents as reference and virgin texts, respectively. In a nutshell, the position of a virgin text changes if the frequency of some signal words goes up or down. This implies that the required assumption by using *wordscore* is that political parties do not use words randomly. Moreover, when writing election manifestos parties include ideological signals by mentioning some sort of words more frequently and others less frequently or even never. It is important that reference and virgin texts have the same type and therefore the same text corpus (Laver et al. 2003: 326-7). As reference texts, we use the election manifestos that come close to the survey period of the expert survey conducted by Marks et al. (2006). These election manifestos were scored with data on the programmatic position of each party on European integration.<sup>2</sup> The policy dimension ranges between the value “1”, which indicates strong opposition towards integration, and the value “7”, which implies that the respective party is strongly in favor of further Integration. The results from that procedure are the programmatic positions on European integration of political parties on the one hand, and on the other hand the coalition agreements as well as government declarations for each election and government formation process covered in this study.

An example from Belgian politics shows the success and robustness of the results based on the *wordscore* technique. Because of its division in a French-speaking and a Flemish-speaking part, all documents from the government and thus the coalition agreements are bilingual. The goal is now to calculate the programmatic position of the Belgian coalition agreements for their French and Flemish version separately for each language. The reference texts are the Flemish and Walloon election manifestos from the elections held in 2003, scored with the Marks et al (2006) data. If *wordscore* works correctly, then there should be no large differences between the programmatic positions of the French and Flemish version of the coalition agreements. As figure 1 shows, this is indeed the case. The *wordscore*

technique delivers very similar values for the European policy position of the six Belgian coalition agreements on the basis of their French and Flemish version. The coalition agreements of all Belgian governments regardless of their partisan composition have clearly favourable viewpoints on steps of further European integration.

**Figure 1: Positions on European Integration of Belgian coalition agreements in their French and Flemish version, 1985-2003**



## Descriptive Results and Explanatory Factors

We apply a two-step procedure for answering our research questions. In a first stage, the programmatic change and the patterns of party competition are under consideration. That is, we present descriptive results of the development of the positions on European integration of political parties and their supporters in each of the seven countries here under consideration. Thereafter, we investigate whether the European policy position of each party is correlated with the viewpoint of their supporters. In the second part of the

empirical section, we take into account the policy position of the government as given in coalition agreements or government declarations (see Timmermans 1998, 2006; Müller/Strom 2000). Thereby, we explore whether the positions of the government parties diverge from the ones of the government and test what reasons influence the policy position of the government.

### *The positions of political parties on European Integration*

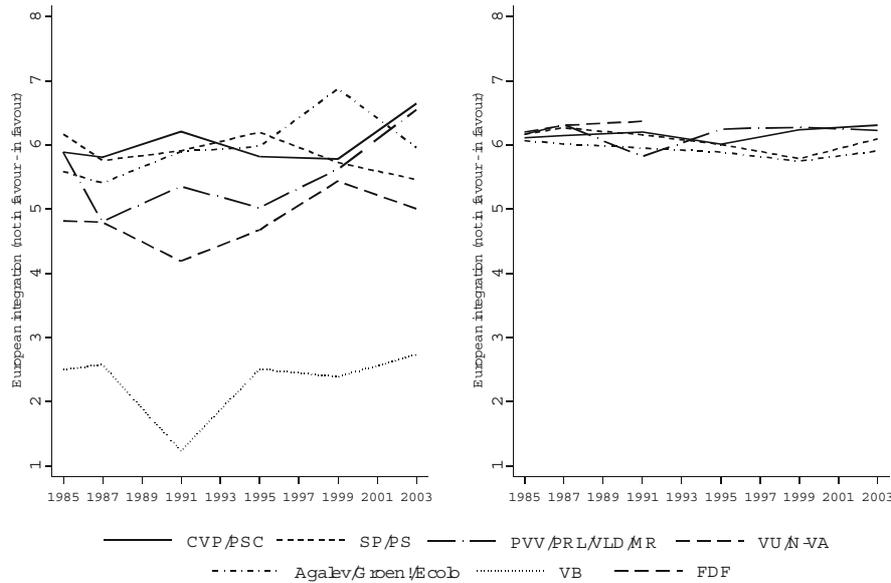
As already highlighted in the literature review, parties that are located at the center of the ideological left-right spectrum are generally assumed to support further European integration, whereas anti-system parties and/or ones that belong to the extreme left or right wing of the ideological spectrum are usually considered to stand against European integration at all (see e.g. Marks et al. 2002). This differentiation between core and peripheral parties represents the first dimension of our analysis.

We begin with Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands as the four countries included in this study that are founding members of the European Community. Thereafter, we turn to the United Kingdom and Ireland, which entered the European Community in 1973. Finally, we are going on to interpret the policy positions of parties from Austria as the only country in our sample that joined the EU in the 1990s.

To start with the programmatic development of Belgian parties on European policy, it becomes obvious that in the Walloon part of the country all, and in the Flemish region most of all parties have supported further European integration (see figure 2 below). While there is no much variance in the policy positions of the Walloon parties in the time period under consideration here, some differences between the parties in Flanders become obvious. In contrast to the Christian-Socials (CVP) and the Socialists (SP), the Flemish Liberals (PVV/VLD) are somewhat more skeptical on European integration until 1995. The same is true for the Flemish Peoples Union

(VU/N-VA) and the separatist Flemish Bloc (VB) in particular. The latter hints the hypothesis mentioned above on the Euroscepticism of extremist parties as the VB is widely considered as a right-wing populist party (see e.g. Erk 2005; for an overview on Belgian party competition see De Winter et al. 2000; Keman 2002; Deschouwer 2004).

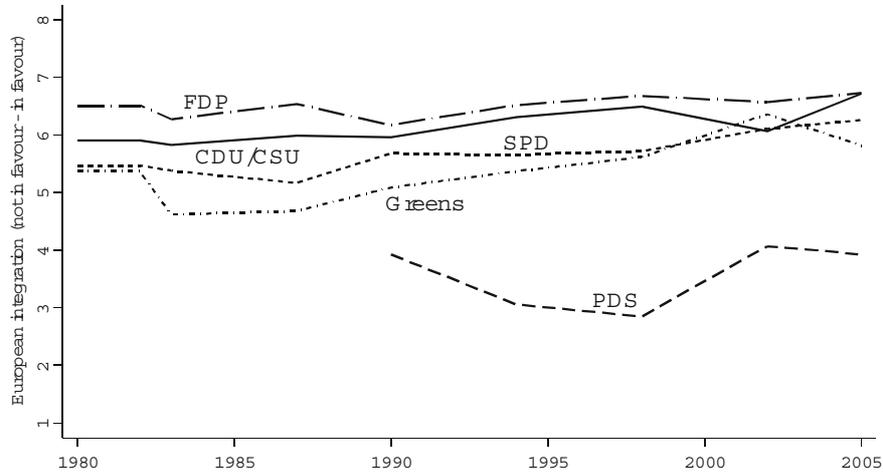
**Figure 2: European Policy Positions of Flemish parties (left panel) and Walloon parties (right panel), 1985–2003**



A similar picture arises when turning to the European policy position of German parties since 1980 (see figure 3; for a detailed analysis on the German party competition see Pappi 1984; Saalfeld 2000). In this case, the former Eastern German Communists (PDS) represent the only party that does not have a positive opinion on European integration. By contrast, the four major parties have very different positions than the PDS. While the liberal Free Democrats (FDP) as well as the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) are the German parliamentary parties that are strongly in favor of further European

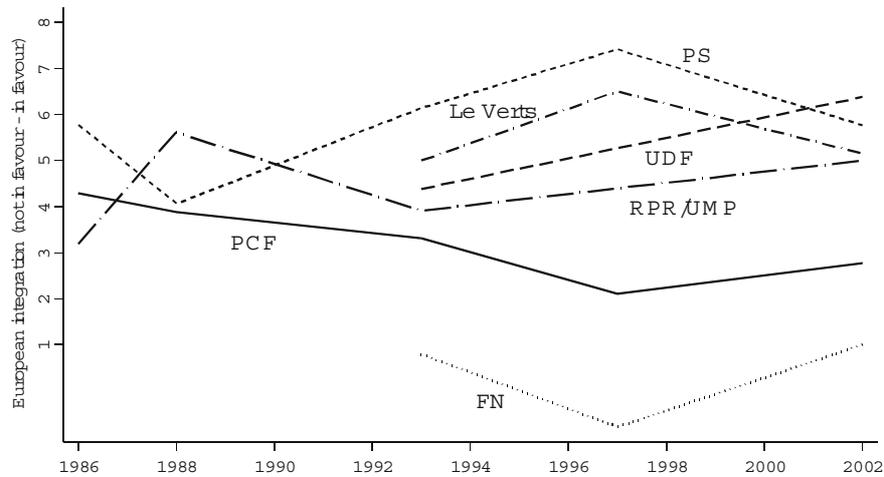
integration, Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens are somewhat more critical on that issue until the end of the 1990s.

**Figure 3: European Policy Positions of German parties, 1980-2005**

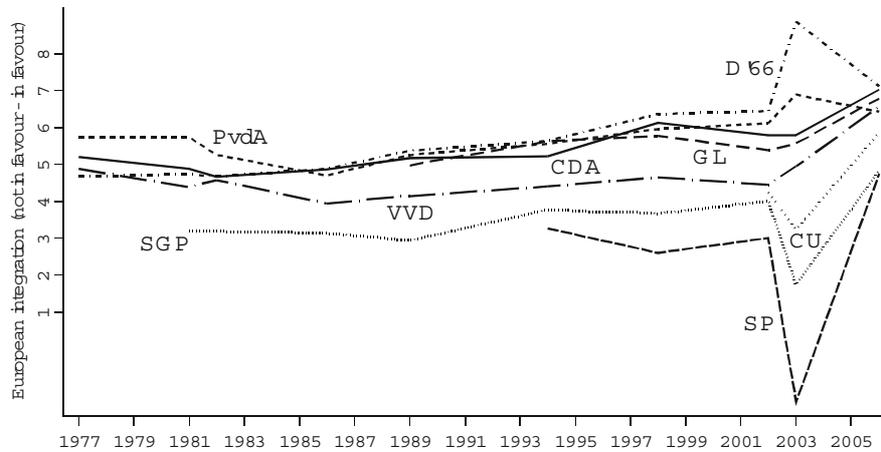


In France, the picture is somewhat different (see e.g. Thiebault 2000). First, the differences in the European policy position of the major parties are more pronounced than in the case of Germany. During the first half of the 1990s, for instance, the Socialists (PS) were the party that was the most 'Euro-friendly' one, whereas the conservative Gaullists (RPR/UMP) and the Communists (PCF) in particular were not that much in favor of further integration. These patterns changed in 2002, when the policy positions of Socialists, Gaullists, Liberals (UDF) and Greens (Le Verts) converged. Further, in contrast to Germany and Belgium, there exists a second party besides the Communist Party, which is continuously opposed to European integration. Like the Flemish Bloc in Belgium, the National Front (FN) is the corresponding French party at the extreme right. Consequently, their explicit anti-European position comes as n

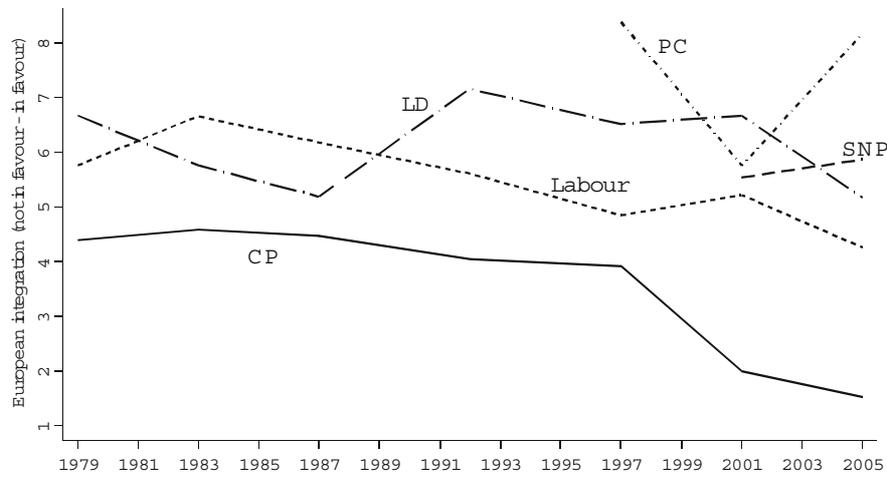
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**Figure 4: European Policy Positions of French parties, 1986-2002**

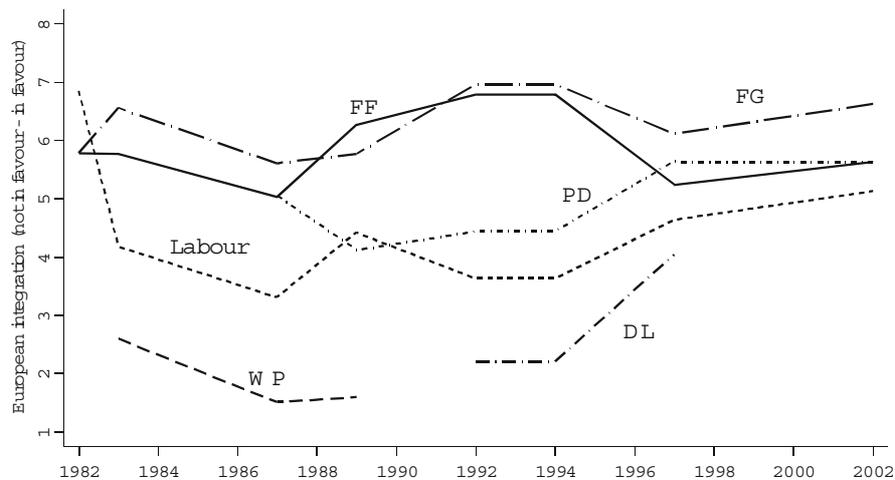
As figure 5 reveals, there are no considerable differences in the European policy position of Dutch major parties. Social Democrats (PvdA), Christian Democrats (CDA), the libertarian Democrats'66 (D'66), the Green Left (GL) and – though to a lesser degree – the liberal VVD have a positive attitude toward European integration. There are no major changes in the programmatic positions of those parties during time course (for further analysis of Dutch party competition see Koole 1999; Timmermans/Andeweg 2000; Andeweg/Irwin 2005: 45ff.; 110ff.). Three of the parties included in our analysis have not that much of a favorable position on further steps on European integration. These parties are the Socialist Party (SP) and two orthodox Calvinist parties SGP and CU. Except for the 2003 election, however, those three parties were not as hostile against Integration like the French FN or the Belgian VB.

**Figure 5: European Policy Positions of Dutch parties, 1977-2006**

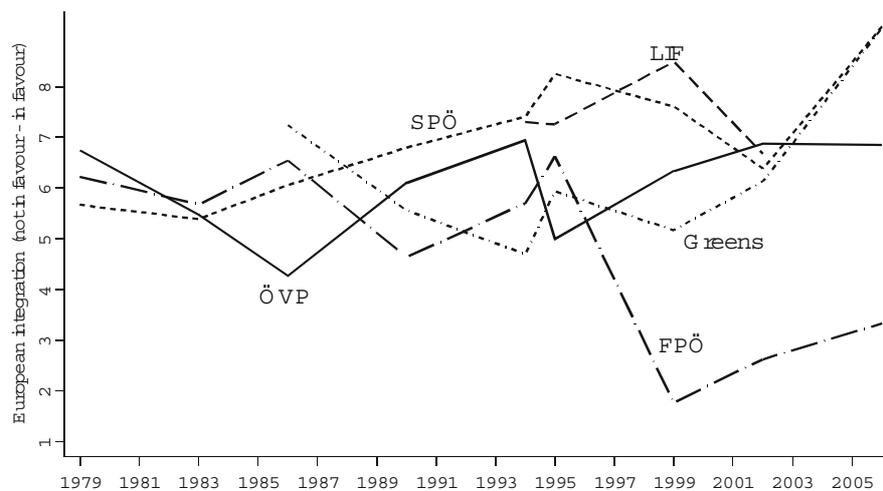
When turning to the United Kingdom and Ireland as the two countries that joined the European Community in 1973, two very different patterns emerge in the programmatic movement of the main political parties. While in the United Kingdom a clear tendency towards unfavorable positions on European integration since 1979 exists (see figure 6), in Ireland the four major parties Fianna Fáil (FF), Fine Gael (FG), Labour and the Progressive Democrats (PD) converged in their view of European Integration since the election in 1997 (see figure 7). In the United Kingdom, the Conservative Party (CP) is the political actor, which is not in favor of further integration. Surprisingly, until 2001 their policy positions on European integration were not that much negative as described in a number of studies (see e.g. Laver 1998; Clarke et al 2004). The Liberal Democrats (LD) and the British Labour Party are more favorable toward European integration, but with a decreasing tendency. The two main regional parties – the Scottish Nationalists (SNP) and the Party of Wales (PC) – together with the Liberal Democrats belong to the pro-European parties in the United Kingdom.

**Figure 6: European Policy Positions of British parties, 1979-2005**

In Ireland, it seems that both large parties FF and FG not only have similar positions in policy areas like economic or social affairs (see Mitchell 2000; Mair/Marsh 2004; Mair/Weeks 2005; Benoit/Laver 2006: 265). Both parties in fact had equally favorable viewpoints on European Integration between 1982 and 2002. In contrast to the United Kingdom, the Irish Labour Party is more critical on further Integration. The same holds true for the Progressive Democrats until the elections in 1997. The Worker's Party (WP) and the Democratic Left as two explicit left-wing parties also had more hostile policy positions on European integration.

**Figure 7: European Policy Positions of Irish parties, 1982-2002**

When finally turning to the positions of Austrian parties on European Integration from 1979 to 2006, their viewpoint on European policy show a considerable degree of divergence during the observed time period (see figure 8). This is mainly because of the change in the position of the Freedom Party (FPÖ), which turned into a right-wing populist party in 1986 when Jörg Haider took over the party leadership (Pelinka 1993; see also Luther 1999; Müller 2000; Pelinka 2002; Müller/Plasser/Ulram 2004). The Austrian Social Democrats moved steadily towards a more pro-European policy position. While the same is true in case of the Green Party since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Christian-social Peoples Party (ÖVP) is more skeptical of giving more authority towards the European Union. The Liberal Forum (LIF), created by former FPÖ members, who were unsatisfied with the ideological direction of the Freedom Party under the leadership of Jörg Haider, used to be the most pro-European party. Yet, it constantly failed at the electoral level since the general elections in 1999.

**Figure 8: European Policy Positions of Austrian parties, 1979-2006**

To sum up the findings from our descriptive analysis, there is, first, variance among the countries, and secondly, between national political parties. While the finding of Marks et al. (2002, 2006) on the negative viewpoint of extremist parties on European integration can be verified, there are also different directions of the programmatic movement of system immanent parties. Consider, for instance, the European policy positions of British and German parties. While in the latter all parties except for the left-wing PDS adopted more supportive programmatic positions on European Integration during the course of time, the reverse development took place in the United Kingdom (see also Mair 2000: 36). There, not only the Conservatives, but also Labour and the Liberal Democrats, which are seen as the most Euro-friendly British major political party, changed their programmatic position towards a more unfavorable position on European integration over time.

Moreover, in states like Belgium and the Netherlands likewise to Germany, the respective parties seemingly do not try to win programmatic profile against each other, whereas in Austria, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom the main parties have very different positions on European policy.

One reason may be that in those countries this policy area is of high saliency for the voters, compared to other policy dimensions. Our findings also reveal an increasingly pro-EU positioning of parties that used to have a more complex relationship with the EU, namely the Green parties (see also Bomberg 2002).

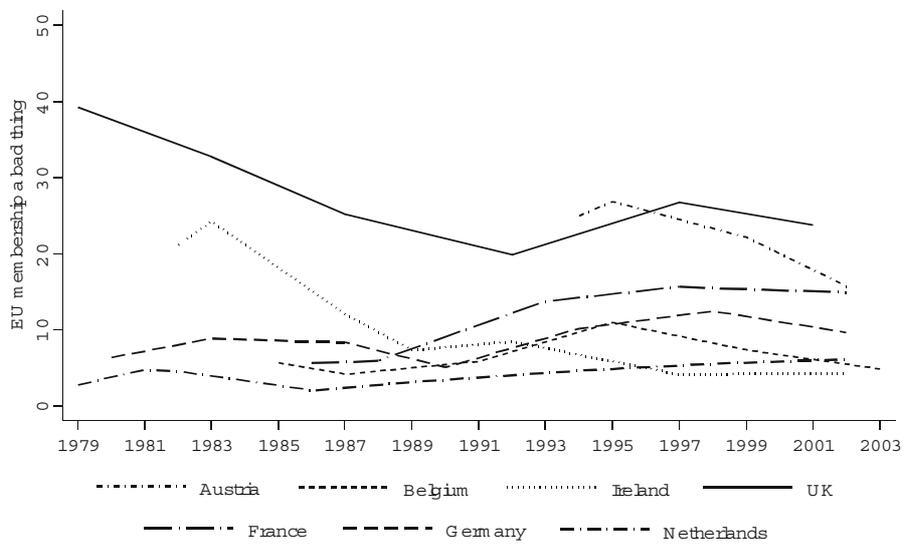
Therefore, in the following, we evaluate whether the European policy position of the political parties depends on the share of voters of each party that says that the membership of their country in the European Community/Union is undesirable. The last mentioned value serves as an indicator for the voter's programmatic position on European integration. We assume that such respondents are not in favor of further steps in European integration. The larger the share of party voter's with a negative opinion on European integration is, the smaller the support of the respective political party for further Integration should be. Before turning to the regression model, however, we shall present some descriptive results on the voter's viewpoint on European integration.

As already mentioned, we use data from the cumulative *Eurobarometer* trend file (ZA-Nr. 3521) that provides voter positions on European Integration from 1979 to 2002 in six of the countries covered in this study. In the case of Austria, which joined the European Union in 1995, data is available since 1994. This restricts our analysis to the elections held until the year 2002 and 2003.<sup>3</sup> Table 1 and figure 9 below show the share of voters with a dismissive opinion on European integration across all parties for the election years under consideration here. While the share of voters with a negative attitude toward the European Community in the United Kingdom, Austria and Ireland in particular decreased over time, it increased on a low level in the remaining states since the beginning of the 1990s.

**Table 1: Share of Respondents Membership in the European Community/Union a “bad thing” per country and election year (share of respondents in percent)**

Belgium	1985	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003		
	5,6	4,1	5,8	10,9	7,3	4,8		
France	1986	1988	1993	1997	2002			
	5,6	5,9	13,7	15,6	14,9			
Germany	1980	1983	1987	1990	1994	1998	2002	
	6,3	8,8	8,3	5	10,1	12,4	9,6	
Netherlands	1977	1981	1982	1986	1989	1994	1998	2002
	2,7	4,7	4,5	2	3,1	4,6	5,5	6,1
Ireland	1982, Feb.	1982, Nov.	1987	1989	1992	1997	2002	
	21,1	24,2	12	7,3	8,4	4,1	4,3	
United Kingdom	1979	1983	1987	1992	1997	2001		
	39,2	32,7	25,1	19,8	26,7	23,7		
Austria	1994	1995	1999	2002				
	24,9	26,8	22,1	15,7				

**Figure 9: Share of Respondents Membership in the European Community/Union a “bad thing” per country and election year (share of respondents in percent)**



To estimate now the effect of the European policy position of party supporters on the programmatic positioning of the respective party, we use a regression model based on ordinary least squares (for a similar approach, see Marks et al. 2002). The independent variable is the position of each party on European integration as given in the figures above. Our dependent variable is the share of the respective party supporters that look upon the European Union membership of their country as something bad. To control for the factor that some parties tend to be ‘Euroskeptic’ in general, we further include a dummy variable into the regression model that identifies those parties.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, similar to Marks et al. (2002) we add dummy variables for each country into the model to account for the ‘national surroundings’ in which each party is embedded. Table 2 below presents the results of this simple regression model. Under control of the ‘extremist’ character of some parties and the country dummies, the coefficient of the voter’s policy position has the expected negative direction: the larger the share of EU opponents within the voters of a specific political party, the more this party will adopt more skeptic policy positions on European integration. Such an effect is even stronger in the case of parties that are considered as being extreme left- and right-wing ones.

**Table 2: OLS Regression on the European policy position of parties**

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Coefficients</i>
European policy position of voters	-0.026 (0.009)**
Extremist party	-1.922 (0.244)**
Austria	1.319 (0.438)**
Belgium	-0.094 (0.246)
France	-1.16 (0.318)**
Ireland	-1.196 (.278)**

Netherlands	-0.515 (0.253)*
United Kingdom	0.187 (0.368)
Constant	5.561 (0.119)**
<hr/>	
N	241
Adj. R-squared	0.423

The baseline is the European policy position of a German political party. Standard errors in parentheses. \* significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%

### *The government's position on European integration and its determinants*

As concerns the government's position on the EU, we argued that governments for reasons of path dependency or long-standing policy goals – such as overcoming the thinking in national borders – adopt different positions in their program for government. For this reasons, we not only estimate the European policy position of political parties, but also the ones of each government as given in coalition agreements or government declarations. As various analyses on the congruence between the policy-area specific positions of parties before the election and the position of the government after the election have shown (see Budge/Laver 1992, 1993; Warwick 2001; Debus 2007: 177f., 2008), the policy position of a (coalition) not necessarily is Pareto-optimal and, thereby, does not reflect the ideological “center of gravity” (Gross/Sigelman 1984: 467; Cusack 1997: 381f.) of the government parties.

Figure 10 below presents the European policy positions as mentioned in the publications of the respective governments.<sup>5</sup> The positions of the respective governments vary between the countries and within time. The European policy position of the Belgian governments is not only very favorable to further Integration, but also represent the government with the most stable viewpoints on European policy among the states included in this study. This is despite the fact that a number of changes in the partisan composition of the Belgian government took place since 1985. The German

governments since 1980 were also supportive to further European integration. One exception was the position of the 'red-green' (i.e., the Social Democratic Party and the Greens) coalition governments in 1998 and 2002, which adopted somewhat less favorable programmatic positions on that issue. While the Dutch governments steadily moved towards more friendly positions on European integration, similar to Germany, the governments elected in 2002 and 2003 were somewhat more critical. The Irish governments like the Dutch ones were more indifferent on further integration during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. These patterns changed clearly in 2002, as Ireland became the country included in this study with the government that is the most favorable one on giving more authority to Brussels. Also the French government became increasingly Euro-friendly.

As expected, the British government is consistently skeptic on integration, regardless which party forms the government. Only the 2001 Blair government articulated more favorable positions on European integration, but in 2005 the re-elected Labour government moved back towards the traditional British position on European policy. When turning to Austria, since its accession to the EU the Austrian government, like the British one, was not that much in favor of giving further authority to Brussels. This was in particular the case after the Euro-skeptic FPÖ became a member of the government in 2000, which further resulted in sanctions of the European Union toward Austria (see Hummer/Pelinka 2002). The coalition between Social Democrats and the Peoples Party formed after the 2006 election turned towards a more EU friendly policy position, but the government of Austria together with the one of the United Kingdom still remains as the most Euro-skeptic one of the countries under consideration here.

So, which factors influence the EU-position of the coalition government? As we already argued above, the European policy position of the electorate should have no or an opposite impact on the policy goals of the

government. This stems from the fact that governments take long-term perspectives on issues like European unification into account, while to voters are assumed to be myopic. Therefore, we expect that the share among the electorate, which is not in favor of stronger integration, does not influence the policy position of the government into a Euro-skeptic direction. There are, of course, other factors that should influence the position of national governments on European integration. From an economic perspective, a government should be favorable vis-à-vis the EU – and therefore on further European integration – if it receives more resources from the EU than it transfers to Brussels (see e.g. Carruba 1997; Rodden 2002). The higher the net financial transfers to a EU member state, the more positive the government of the respective country should be on further integration. A third influential factor should be the time that a country is already a member of the EU. According to theories on path dependency (see Hall/Taylor 1996), once a policy is implemented in a specific direction, it is difficult to change the general direction of the respective policy. Therefore, we expect a positive impact of time on the government's positions on European integration: the longer the respective country is a member of the EU, the more favorable the governments of the respective should be on further integration.

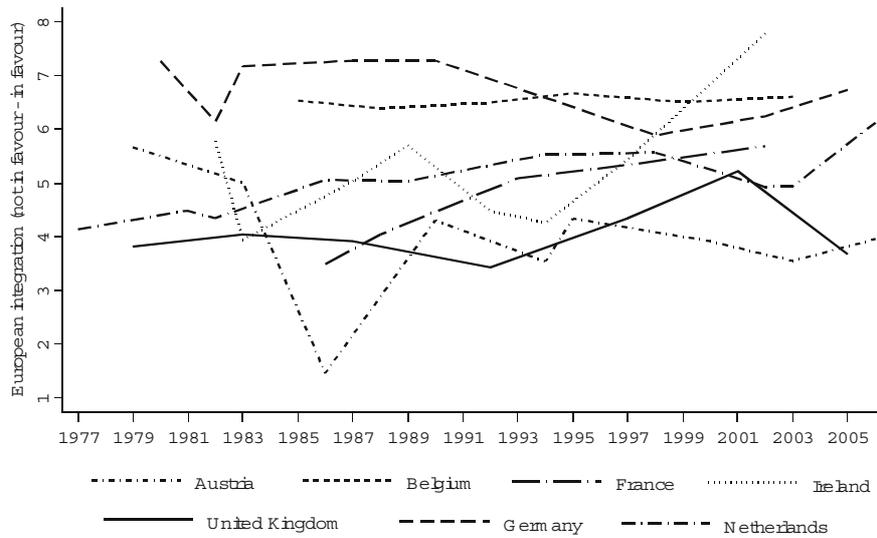
**Table 3: OLS Regression on the European policy position of governments**

<i>Independent Variables</i>	<i>Coefficients</i>
European policy position of voters	-0.019 (0.028)
EU membership (in years)	0.031 (0.017)*
Net financial transfer (per capita)	-1.846 (1.671)
Austria	-1.360 (0.820)
Belgium	-0.271 (0.400)
France	-1.937

	(0.449)***
Ireland	0.147 (1.051)
Netherlands	-1.738 (0.389)***
United Kingdom	-1.625 (0.685)**
Constant	5.690 (0.689)***
Observations	42
Adj. R-squared	0.639

The baseline is the European policy position of a German political party. Standard errors in parentheses. \* significant at 10%, \*\* significant at 5%, \*\*\* significant at 1%

Table 3 presents the result of the regression models on the European policy position of the 42 governments included in this study, once more under control of country dummies. As the results show, there is partial evidence for our reasoning. The coefficient of the variable that accounts for the years a country is already a member of the EC/EU has the predicted sign: the longer a country is a member of the European Community, the positive is the policy position of its government on further integration. As concerns the net financial transfers, the effect is statistically not significant. As predicted, the latter is also the case when turning to the share of voters that are not in favor of the European Union. This is in line with our expectation: the policy positions of (coalition) governments in contrast to the parties do not take the European policy preferences of the electorate into account when defining the future policy goals.

**Figure 10: Positions of governments on European integration**

In summary, we find empirical evidence that only the European policy position of political parties, but not the one of the government depends on the policy preferences inside the electorate. While factors with a temporal background have a statistically significant impact on the government's position on European integration, there is no evidence that the degree of financial benefits is of relevance for the European policy position of a government in the seven EU member states under consideration here.<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper, we analysed the positions of national political parties and governments toward further European integration by using *wordscore* as a technique for content analysis. Thereby, we illustrated that there is a remarkable variation among countries and between national political parties. According to our regression analysis, the European policy position of the political parties depends on the share of voters that are sceptical in terms of

EU membership and stronger integration. Hence, national parties respond in a rather direct manner to the public opinion. By contrast, the national governments, which are also composed by political parties, show another development. While the positions of the respective governments also vary between the countries and within time, we find evidence that there is a positive impact of time on the government's positions on European integration: the longer the respective country is a member of the EU, the more favorable the governments of the respective should be on further integration. Therefore, only the European policy positions of political parties, but not the government positions, are shaped by the policy preferences of the electorate.

With respect to the principal-agent theory, in which the electorate functions as the principal and the government as the agent, we can interpret this finding as some sort of defection as the government does not take up popular Euroskepticism. The political parties, however, as intermediary institutions can include public concerns related to the EU and voice them in their manifestos. However, once the parties participate in the government, their stance on the EU becomes 'mellowed'. As suggested by Mair (2000: 48), this gap between the public opinion and its limited reflection in the behavior of governing politicians may in fact foster negative outcomes for important referendums on the issue of European integration. While the insights of our study are surely instructive, it also suffers from a number of limitations. Most importantly, our analysis is restricted to a sub-group of EU member since the collection of necessary data is highly time-consuming. However, the consequential next step will be the more comprehensive coverage of member states. Further, there may be a problem of omitted variables in the analysis, which we tried to minimize by referring to the state of the art in theoretical work.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For further details on the policy-making process related to the European constitution see Hug and König (2006).

<sup>1</sup> The Marks et al (2006) data served as the basis for scoring the manifestos from the Austrian parties in 2002, the Belgian parties in 2003, the British parties in 2001, the French parties in 2002, the German parties in 2002, the Irish parties in 2002 and the Dutch parties in 2003.

<sup>1</sup> To loose not more observations than necessary, we assign the positions of Belgian voters in 2002 to positions of parties in the 2003 Belgian elections. Similar is done in the case of the Netherlands, where the positions of the voters from 1979 are assigned to the European policy position of parties in 1977.

<sup>1</sup> According to Marks et al. (2002: 587), these are parties that belong to extreme left-wing and extreme right-wing party families. Furthermore, radical Calvinist parties as well as some of the Green parties belong to this “Euroskeptic” category (see also Gallagher et al. 2006: 231ff.).

<sup>1</sup> In the case of France, we only have the coalition agreement between the Gaullists and the liberal UDF in 1986 and 1993. For the remaining cases, we refer to the non-weighted centre of gravity of the respective government parties.

<sup>1</sup> We further tested whether the European policy positions of the government parties as mentioned in their election manifestos have an impact on the position of the government as stated in the coalition agreement or government declaration, respectively. Because there is a high correlation between the positions of the government parties and the whole government (*Pearson's r* = .78), we excluded the position of the government parties from the regression model to be safe from multicollinearity.

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