

First Draft
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**Second-Order Elections to the European Parliament:
Is E-Voting the Solution?**

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1. European Parliament Elections as Second-order National Elections

Direct elections to the European Parliament were first held in 1979. Although they were contested, in most places, by the same parties that also compete in first-order national elections, they were different. Efforts to summarize these differences emphasised a few central points. First and most importantly, European Parliament elections lacked any of the usual dramatic consequences of the electoral process. No government was formed after election day. No head of government – be it a Prime Minister, a Chancellor, or whatever – was depending on the strength of political groups in the newly elected parliament.

More important than the European consequences of European Parliament elections were their national implications. Whether or not a national government could be said to be reaffirmed by the election result; whether or not the opposition could draw support from it in its strife for national political power; these were the questions that political actors were dealing with. Consequently, European Parliament elections have been described as second-order national elections (cf. Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1984, 1985a; Curtice, 1989). As such, they appeared to be similar to “mid-term elections” in the US; *Landtagswahlen* in Germany; by-elections in Britain; and so on.¹ Specific to this type of second-order national elections is that their immediate, arena-specific political significance is inferior compared to their indirect meaning to the main political arena, the national polity.

The political stature of the European Parliament has changed since this first direct election was held in 1979. While its budgetary powers have been substantial early on, its legislative powers have been growing significantly. Following the Single European Act of 1987, the European Parliament for the first time was formally involved in the legislative process of the European Community through the co-operation procedure between Council, Commission and Parliament. This involvement was further extended by the establishment of a co-decision procedure in the Treaty on the European Union (Maastricht Treaty) in 1993. From Maastricht on, at the very latest, the European Parliament is among the most powerful players in the institutional system of the European Union (Weßels and Schmitt, 2000).

From Maastricht on, the Parliament has also a say in the investiture of the European Commission. While the treaty does not authorize it to elect a President of the Commission and an accompanying set of Commissioners, it can now decline a Council proposal for a next Commission. This clause of the Maastricht Treaty is seen by some as a first step in the direction of a European Union government being dependant upon, and therefore responsible to, the European Parliament. However, it clearly cannot establish a link between the European Parliament election result and the formation of a European government.

As crucial as this would be in view of the constantly growing policy reach of the legislative *apparatus* of the Union (see e.g. König, 1997; Pinder, 1998), the increase in the powers of the European Parliament over the last two decades does not – probably not yet – translate into electoral politics. European Parliament election still are not about alternative leadership proposals and campaign platforms of competing trans-national electoral alliances of political parties. And that is why *there still is* (or, seems to be) *less at stake in European Parliament elections*, and why European Parliament elections are still best described as second-order national elections.

¹ Christopher Anderson and Daniel Ward (1997) when analysing German *Landtagswahlen* and British *by-elections* have used the term “barometer elections” to describe second-order national elections.

In view of the election result, the second-order character of European Parliament elections has three major consequences. First, turnout is expected to be lower than in first-order elections. Secondly, government parties – that is, parties participating in national government – are expected to lose support compared to their first-order standing, relatively speaking. And thirdly, small parties – and that involves many young and/or ideologically extreme parties – are expected to win in comparison to what they obtain in first-order elections, again in relative terms (see Reif and Schmitt 1980).

These propositions are based upon the assumption that the second-order character of European Parliament elections (“less at stake”) impinges on the behaviour of political actors involved. First of all, political parties will pay less attention. And indeed, they are found to “fight” their national campaigns half-heartedly (Reif 1985b).² Often, they do not even exhaust their campaign funds.³ In an age of personalisation of mass communication, professional communicators lack the “faces” that could signify the electoral alternatives. As a consequence, mass-media attention to this non-event is restricted, and their coverage is moderate at best (Blumler and Fox, 1982; Blumler, 1983).⁴ Voters are not enthused. Many do not care to participate (Schmitt and Mannheim, 1981; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Blondel, Sinnott and Svenson, 1998). Those who go and vote still seem to be impressed by first-order arena considerations rather than by European Union politics (Marsh 1998). Which is not to say that European Parliament elections would not be capable of representing voters’ preferences in parliament (Schmitt and Thomassen, 1999; 2000).

2. How Can E-voting Change the Picture?

If we concentrate on the behaviour of voters, the specificity of second-order elections national elections – European Parliament elections in our case – is that fewer turn out, and that those who do choose differently from among the parties on offer than voters would in first-order elections. This latter phenomenon most likely is caused by an unknown mix of two different processes, one being differential mobilisation (which refers us back to the turnout aspect), and the other being that voters apply different criteria for determining which party to endorse.⁵

How can e-voting interfere with these particularities of European Parliament elections? E-voting is understood here as the opportunity for voters to cast a ballot not in person in the voting booth, but electronically e.g. from home or wherever they might be on election day. We cannot see how e-voting could possibly affect the second-order election specific calculus of the vote. But it might reduce some of the “costs” of electoral participation and thereby raise the second-order

² There is actually very little positive knowledge about what European Parliament election campaigns are about. Little has been done after the 1979 “Campaign Study” in the framework of the first European Election Study. A content analysis of the Euromanifestos of political parties which is currently being undertaken will provide more information on this (see <http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/projekte/manifestos/>)

³ In a country like Germany, where the state is refunding campaign costs on a flat rate basis, a considerable part of the money granted to the parties is saved for more important political events to come.

⁴ This literature emerged from a study of the 1979 European Parliament elections. Twenty years later, the European Election Study 1999 was again a mass communication study. It involves an analysis of party manifestos (see footnote 2), a content analysis of mass media news broadcasts, and a representative mass survey conducted shortly after the election in each of the members countries (see van der Eijk et al., 2002). The forthcoming results of this study will put the 1979 findings in perspective.

⁵ Reif and Schmitt (1980) suggested that voter in European Parliament elections would find it easier to vote “with the heart”, while “voting with the head” would be the more frequent pattern in first-order elections. In another terminology, this same phenomenon is referred to as sincere vs. strategic (or tactical) voting (e.g. Alvarez and Nagler 2000).

election specific low level of turnout. The cost factor that might be reduced is the time and effort that it takes to go to the electoral office and cast a vote in person. However, there are other cost factors involved in electoral participation, most noteworthy among them being the time and effort that it takes to acquire subjectively sufficient information to cast a ballot. Those other costs seem to remain unaffected by e-voting. In addition, low levels of electoral participation in European Parliament elections might have reasons that are independent of participation costs. For example, abstentions could be motivated by Euro-hostile attitudes. These motivations would also remain unaffected by e-voting.

In order to come closer to an assessment of the likely impact of e-voting on the result of European Parliament elections, we will in this paper pursue two strategies. One is to determine the amount of Euro-hostile non-voting – because this portion of abstentions will not possibly be reduced by e-voting. The other is to explore what role the internet already now plays for the voters during the campaign preceding European Parliament elections.

3. How Important is Euro-hostile Non-voting in European Parliament Elections

By politicians and the media alike, participation rates in European Parliament elections are seen as a crucial indicator of political support for the European Union. When the first direct election was called in 1979, the European Parliament launched a broad non-partisan mobilisation campaign in all member-countries of the Union (Reif 1985b). Those efforts have been repeated in subsequent elections. In spite of this, turnout was widely considered disappointingly low in 1979, and has declined since. The trend generally points down. EU-wide participation dropped from some 60 percent in 1979 and 1984, to around 55 percent in 1989 and 1994, and down again to 50 percent in 1999 (Table 1).

— Table 1 about here —

This decline in turnout is probably less alarming than it might seem at first sight. At least to some degree, it is the consequence of successive enlargements of the Union with countries where factors promoting high turnout are absent or weak. As a case in point, the proportion of the EU citizenry “operating” under conditions of compulsory voting has declined.

In addition to compulsory voting, turnout is also affected by the timing of European Parliament elections relative to that of first-order national elections. Turnout is highest when European and national elections are held concurrently. It is lowest immediately after a first order national election, and increases slowly with the passing of the domestic electoral cycle. The effects of these factors are not immediately apparent, but they generate problems of comparability with respect to ‘raw’ turnout figures.

When composition effects (i.e., the decline of the proportion of citizens under compulsory voting) and timing effects (i.e., the unequal closeness to national first-order elections) are removed, participation in European Parliament elections is relatively stable (see e.g. Weßels and Schmitt 2000; Franklin 2001). But stable as “in reality” turnout may be, it is also particularly low. This brings us to our question of Euro-hostile abstentions in European Parliament elections. Past research is somewhat inconclusive with regard to Euro-hostile abstentions. Schmitt and Mannheim, in their 1991 analysis of the 1989 European Election Study data, find that participation in European Parliament elections is virtually unrelated to attitudes about European integration. In

1989 at least, electoral participation was mostly a matter of habitual voting – “people went to the polls because they are used to doing so on election day.” (1991: 50) Later analyses based on the same 1989 European Election Study included, in addition to individual level factors, systemic and contextual characteristics and their interaction with individual-level variables (see Franklin, van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1996). While this strategy of research meant quite a step forward (accompanied by a considerable raise of explained variance), attitudes about European integration and the European Community were again found to be virtually unrelated with electoral participation.

Blondel, Sinnott and Svensson in their 1994 participation study conclude, by contrast, “voluntary Euro-abstention to be significantly affected by attitudes to European integration, by attitudes to the European Parliament, and by attitudes to the parties and candidates in the election, and that it is not significantly affected by second-order considerations and calculations” (Sinnott 2000: 70 summarising Blondel et al. 1998: 222-236). While this obviously conforms much better with conventional wisdom of politicians and journalists,⁶ the validity of those claims has to be questioned.

Blondel et al. call *voluntary Euro-abstainers* those respondents who, in the course of the interview, gave one or more of the following reasons for their abstention: “Lack of interest, distrust of or dissatisfaction with politics and politicians, lack of knowledge and dissatisfaction with the European Parliament electoral process.” (1998: 50). Two objections can be made to such a self-reporting intentions methodology. First, survey respondents are themselves not the most reliable source of information about the causes of their behaviour.⁷ Second, the approach yields non-falsifiable and therefore non-scientific propositions as it is impossible to assess whether the same causes (i.e., Euro-hostile attitudes) exist among those who do not manifest the expected effect (i.e., who report to have turned out). Put somewhat differently, Blondel et al. may be seen to have ‘stacked the deck’ because they defined (i.e. selected) the category of respondents that was found to be “dissatisfied with the European Parliament electoral process” on the basis of this very characteristic.

Although we are sceptical about the validity of the conclusions of Blondel *cum suis*, we still cannot rule out that things might have changed since we first explored the issue for the 1989 election. Over the last decade, public appearance of the European Union has changed in many important ways. National sovereignty has been further transferred to Union institutions and authorities (e.g., in the currency domain). The political consequences of EU policy making are more widely felt (like during the BSE crisis and the Hoof and Mouth Disease-epidemic). Last but not least, the dynamics of EU membership is a source of concern for many citizens (like the Eastward enlargement as it was approved in the Nice Treaty). These and other developments may have changed the relation between mass political orientations towards the European Union and electoral behaviour in European Parliament elections. Euro-hostile abstentions in European Parliament elections might have become more numerous and hence, strategic non-voting in the EU more important than in the past. Whether this is the case is the question which we will try to answer in a diachronic analysis covering the three elections from 1989 on.

⁶ See e.g. J. Smith who notes that „Franklin, van der Eijk and Oppenhuis have challenged the sort of claims made in this section ...” and contends without further empirical evidence or argument that “... Despite their scepticism it seems that attitudes do have a part to play in explaining behaviour in EP elections.” (1999, p. 123, footnote 10)

⁷ Alvarez and Nagler (2000:61), reviewing the strategic voting literature, cast doubt on the validity of data gathered with the *self-reporting intentions methodology*: “Unfortunately, researchers using these survey questions do not appear to have seriously considered the quality of the survey responses obtained for questions asking for justifications of reported political behaviour.”

3.1. Data Base and Strategy of Analysis

Our data base is the European Elections Studies of the 1989, the 1994 and the 1999 elections. Three sets of independent variables have been included in every EES post-election survey since 1989 that can be employed here, two structural and one attitudinal. On the structural side, there are the social-structural position of respondents⁸ and their general political involvement⁹. These structural factors will be used to isolate the true effects of Euro-hostile attitudes on turnout. Two basic indicators of respondents support for Europe and the European Union¹⁰ will then be utilized to determine the evolution of Euro-hostile abstentions. If it comes to the dependent variable, respondents have been asked in each study whether they participated in the preceding election and which party they voted for. The format of these questions differs slightly from study to study; but that would probably be of greater concern if we were estimating levels of participation rather than identifying causes of abstention.

A strategy for determining the effects of EU attitudes on participation in three consecutive European Parliament elections must be both theoretically grounded and empirically parsimonious. With regard to theory, we refer to the conventional wisdom that non-voters are “peripheral” socially¹¹ and politically¹². Both these peripheral locations are of a structural – i.e., not election specific – nature. They are supposed to impact on turnout no matter what kind of election is analysed. The potential relevance of support for Europe and the European Union, by contrast, is of an attitudinal nature and is very election-specific. While both structural position and political attitudes may be interlinked, we decided – with an eye on parsimony – to control for structural factors first and then move on and assess the behavioural relevance of EU attitudes. This can be done by a procedure known as block-recursive regression. Stepwise regressions are performed with electoral participation as the dependent variable. Social-structural factors are entered first, and their explanatory power is determined. Indicators of political involvement are entered second, and the proportion of additional variance explained is determined. Attitudes about Europe and the European Union are entered third and again the proportion of additional variance explained is determined (together with the proportion of variance explained overall).

⁸ Sex, age, education, marital status, union membership and church attendance are used mainly as indicators of social integration and resource attribution.

⁹ Political involvement is measured somewhat differently than for the 1999 study – we include interest in politics (4 point scale from not at all to very) and party attachment (measured on a 4 point scale from not close to any party to very close to a particular party).

¹⁰ Support for Europe and the EU is measured by two indicators. One is asking for respondents support for European unification (in 1989 and 1994 on a four point scale from very much against to very much in favour; in 1999 on a ten point scale from has already gone to far to should be pushed further). The other is the familiar membership “trend” question from the Eurobarometers which establishes whether one’s countries membership of the EC/EU, according to the respondent, is a good thing, neither good nor bad, or a bad thing.

¹¹ Due to a lack of social integration; see e.g. Lipset 1959; Tigsten 1963; Lancelot 1968; and Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980.

¹² Due to a lack of political involvement; see e.g. Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell 1962.

3.2. Findings

We move on and consider the evolution of Euro-hostile abstentions over time. Did the phenomenon increase, or decrease, or was there not much of a change? Are there particular country patterns standing out? And what about the evolution of structural determinants of electoral participation? Some of these questions can be answered on the basis of information provided in Table 2.¹³ The first observation is that attitudes about Europe and the European Union do not play much of a role for the decision to go and vote, or to abstain, after structural determinants of electoral participation have been considered. This is so across the board; no countries are really standing out here as exceptions to the rule; and we find not much development over time either.

— Table 2 about here —

However, we see development the explanatory power of the structural determinants of turnout. Social-structural factors are losing some of their importance for electoral participation. This is most visible in France, but can be traced elsewhere too. It seems to suggest that more and more of those whose social profile traditionally promoted electoral participation abstain nevertheless. Even more pronounced is the downturn of political involvement as a facilitator of participation in European Parliament elections. People abstain no matter whether they are interested in politics or not, or whether they feel attached to a political party or not. Both trends accelerate between the 1994 and the 1999 election.

Could it be that controlling for the two structural dimensions conceals a stronger direct (“gross”) association between turnout and (lack of) support for Europe and the European Union? Table 3 compares gross and net effects of European attitudes on electoral participation. It appears that there are, indeed, examples where social integration and political involvement shield a strong “gross” effect of European attitudes on participation in European Parliament elections: Germany in 1994 and Sweden in 1999 belong in that class of cases. But on average, “gross” and “net” effects of political support for Europe and the European Union do not differ much – mainly because the “gross” effects are very modest themselves.

— Table 3 about here —

Do people stay home because they disagree with the European Union and European integration? The answer, in a nutshell, is no. Nowhere do Euro-hostile attitudes play a major role in the decision to participate in or abstain from European Parliament elections.

This in a way is good news. Growing levels of abstention in European Parliament elections are not the result of a growing alienation with the EU political system or hostility towards the politics of European integration. They rather seem to result from the fact that those who used to go and vote on election day – the socially integrated and politically involved – stay home in ever greater numbers when the members of the European Parliament are elected. The lack of excitement that comes with these elections, which itself is largely a function of the shortage of political consequences that can be associated with the election result, may be the main reason for

¹³ While we remain faithful to our preference for the OLS algorithm, control runs have been done with multiple logistic regression. We arrived at virtually the same results with Nagelkerke’s pseudo R^2 as compared to OLS.

this phenomenon. The second-order logic of European Parliament elections thus seems to accelerate the decline of participation.

4. The Current Importance of the Internet for European Parliament Elections

For the time being, there is not e-voting in European Parliament elections. The only role the internet therefore can play in these elections is to provide access to all sorts of information, most notably to the homepages of EU political institutions as well as to those of national and trans-national political parties. Do the citizens of the European Union use this new technology in the weeks preceding election day to inform themselves about the upcoming elections and the “supply” of voting options? In the questionnaires of the 1999 European Election Study’s post-election survey, the internet figured for the first time as a means of pre-electoral information alongside the more traditional ones like talking to friends, watching TV news, reading newspapers, and attending a public meeting. The proportions of eligible voters engaging in these information seeking techniques are displayed in Table 4.

— Table 4 about here —

In all EU member countries, speaking with friends, watching TV and reading papers are the major sources of information. On average about two thirds of national citizens are using them. Attending public meetings and exploring the world-wide web are much less popular. An average proportion of only five percent of national citizens claims to have accessed the web in search of pre-electoral information. Having said that, it is astounding that the traditional form of ‘high cost’ participation in election campaigns – attending public meetings – is almost at about the same level (average proportion of eight percent) than the most likely solitary (viz: bowling alone!) internet search. In some countries – like Denmark, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands – we even find somewhat more voters checking the web than participating in a public meeting. Social-structural contours in the likelihood of internet use are documented in Tables 5 and 6.

— Tables 5 and 6 about here —

Those contours are probably less pronounced than one would expect. The young are somewhat closer to the web than older citizens, about seven percent of the up to 35 years old are using the internet as a means of pre-electoral information as compared to four percent of those over 65 years of age. But this only holds for the average of the country scores, and there is by far no regular pattern that would present itself in each and every country under study.¹⁴ Education plays also a role, with an average of seven percent of the highly educated accessing the web for election material as compared to three percent of those with only basic education. But here again, this is all but drastic differences and in most of the countries no clear trend is emerging.

What does the use of the internet as a source of pre-electoral information, finally, mean for electoral participation? There is not one EU member-country in which voters who claim to have used the internet would not report in greater numbers to have voted than those who did not use the web (Table 7). Internet access goes hand in hand with elevated electoral participation. There are four coun-

¹⁴ One reason for this modest association might be that the young, while finding it easier to use the web, are at the same time more distant to politics than older citizens.

tries – Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands – where this association is even statistically significant, despite the small numbers of cases involved. The causal structure of this association, however, is all but obvious.

— Tables 7 about here —

5. On the Future Importance of the Internet for European Parliament Elections: Summary and Perspectives

We began by recapitulating the concept of second-order national elections that was elaborated in an effort to understand the results of the first direct election to the European Parliament in 1979. The European Union has changed significantly since, but elections to the European Parliament are still “second order” – because there is, or seems to be, less at stake. This has consequences for political actors involved, not least for the voters. In second-order elections, voters are expected to abstain in greater numbers, and they are expected to arrive at characteristically different vote choices because their choice criteria (“calculus of the vote”) are different.

E-voting, should it be introduced, would have hardly any bearing on the choice criteria of voters. But it might affect the likelihood of voters to participate in European Parliament elections. This would be the case if non-voting would largely be a function of the “costs” of physical participation. These costs could be reduced by allowing the voters to participate virtually. But there are additional “costs”, e.g. for information, which e-voting as such does not help to reduce. In addition, non-voting could be motivated by Euro-hostile attitudes the effect of which also would not be affected by e-voting.

In order to determine the likely impact of e-voting on European Parliament election results, we therefore first explored the degree of Euro-hostile non-voting in European Parliament elections over time. What we found is encouraging for the introduction of e-voting, and discouraging at the same time. It is encouraging because there is not much Euro-hostile non-voting, and there never was. This disqualifies a possible cause of Euro-abstentionism which would have been immune to the blessings of e-voting. It discourages e-voting because it appeared, in the course of the analysis, that non-voting is as frequent among the integrated as among the isolated; among the interested as among the uninvolved; which seems to suggest that it is simply the lack of excitement that stems from the fact that European Parliament elections still do not deliver any of the dramatic consequences of the electoral process that the citizenry is used to from first-order electoral politics. E-voting can not do much about that as it provides no cure against electoral boredom.

A second route of empirical analyses explored the current use of the internet as a source of pre-electoral information in European Parliament elections. It appeared, astonishingly enough, that the internet on average is almost as popular as public meetings – which once were one of the most typical forms of electoral campaigning of European political parties (at least of those of the mass-integration variety). Younger and better educated citizens were found to use the internet in somewhat greater numbers, but the contrasts while in the right direction appeared to be rather modest. Internet users finally were found to participate in greater numbers than those who do not use it – whatever the causal structure might be here.

In the title of this paper we asked: Is e-voting a solution? Probably not. Consequential elections, a close race, real electoral alternatives to choose from – these would probably be better measures to fight low turnout.

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Table 1
Participation in European Parliament Elections 1979-1999
(figures are percent)

	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999
Austria				68 ³	49
Belgium	92	92	91	91	90
Denmark	47	52	46	53	50
Finland				60	30
France	61	57	49	53	47
Germany	66	57	62	60	45
Greece	79¹	77	[80]	71	70
Ireland	[63]	48	[68]	44	[51]
Italy	86	84	82	75	71
Luxembourg	[89]	[87]	[87]	[89]	[86]
Netherlands	58	51	47	36	30
Portugal		72 ³	51	36	40
Spain		69 ²	55	59	[64]
Sweden				42 ³	38
UK	32	33	36	36	23
EU-9	62				
EU-10	64	59			
EU-12		61	56	57	
EU-15				57	50

Sources: <http://europa.eu.int>; Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2000; Grundberg, Perrineau and Ysmal 2000. Notes: (1) election of 1981 (2) election of 1987 (3) election of 1995. Bold figures signify elections under compulsory voting; figures in [] indicate that national elections were held concurrently with European Parliament elections.

Table 2
Participation in European Parliament Elections :
The Effects of Social Structure, Political Involvement, and Attitudes Towards Europe
(figures are R² and R² changes from block-recursive multiple OLS regressions)

election	89				94				99			
country	A	B	C	C-B	A	B	C	C-B	A	B	C	C-B
Austria									.09	.13	.14	.01
Belgium	.09	.12	.12	.00	.08	.14	.14	.00	.04	.06	.09	.03
Denmark	.09	.17	.18	.00	.08	.20	.20	.00	.05	.12	.13	.00
Finnland									.07	.19	.20	.01
France	.16	.21	.21	.00	.13	.24	.24	.01	.09	.12	.12	.00
Germany	.07	.15	.16	.01	.07	.18	.21	.03	.08	.12	.12	.00
Greece	.22	.24	.24	.00	.23	.32	.32	.01	.04	.06	.06	.00
Ireland	.18	.20	.20	.00	.11	.19	.19	.00	.13	.14	.14	.00
Italy	.08	.15	.15	.00	.17	.24	.25	.01	.02	.10	.10	.00
Luxemburg	.07	.08	.08	.00	.04	.11	.16	.04	.07	.13	.15	.01
Netherlands	.08	.15	.17	.02	.10	.15	.17	.02	.08	.16	.17	.01
Portugal	.07	.17	.18	.01	.09	.23	.23	.00	.04	.16	.16	.00
Spain	.09	.15	.16	.00	.11	.21	.22	.02	.08	.12	.13	.01
Sweden									.12	.20	.23	.03
UK	.12	.20	.21	.01	.08	.16	.17	.01	.12	.15	.16	.00
country average	.11	.17	.17	.00	.11	.20	.21	.01	.08	.13	.14	.01

Source: *European Election Studies* 1989, 1994 and 1999. Missing values have been deleted pairwise. In the above table heading, "A" symbolises the proportion of variance explained in turnout by social structural factors; the sex of respondents, their age, education, marital status, union membership and church attendance are used as predictors in this block. "B" stands for a model where in addition to social structural factors those of political involvement are entered; political involvement is measured as interest in politics and party attachment. "C" represents a model where in addition to social structural factors and factors measuring political involvement a third block of variables has been entered: attitudes towards European unification (for-against unification) and the European Union (is EU membership of one's country good or bad); note that in 1999, the unification question has been asked in a somewhat different form than in the earlier surveys.

Table 3
Attitudes Towards Europe and Participation in European Parliament Elections:
Direct Impact and Effect When Social Structure and Political Involvement Is Controlled For
(figures are proportions of explained variance from multiple OLS regressions)

Country	19 89		19 94		19 99	
	R ²	Δ R ²	R ²	Δ R ²	R ²	Δ R ²
Austria					.02	.01
Belgium	.00	.00	.01	.00	.03	.03
Denmark	.00	.00	.01	.00	.01	.00
Finland					.02	.01
France	.02	.00	.02	.01	.00	.00
Germany	.04	.01	.09	.03	.02	.00
Greece	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00
Ireland	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Italy	.01	.00	.01	.01	.00	.00
Luxemburg	.00	.00	.05	.04	.01	.01
Netherlands	.05	.02	.04	.02	.02	.01
Portugal	.01	.01	.00	.00	.00	.00
Spain	.01	.00	.03	.02	.02	.01
Sweden					.08	.03
United Kingdom	.03	.01	.03	.01	.01	.00
country average	.02	.00	.02	.01	.02	.01

Source: *European Election Studies* 1989, 1994 and 1999. Missing values have been deleted pairwise. In the above table heading, OLS R² symbolises the gross effect of attitudes towards European unification (for-against unification) and the European Union (is EU membership of one's country a good or bad thing) on electoral participation; note that in 1999, the unification question has been asked in a somewhat different form than in the earlier surveys. Δ R² symbolises the net effect of these same variables – after the effect of social structural factors (sex, age, education, marital status [not available in 1999], union membership and church attendance) and political involvement (interest in politics and party attachment) has been removed.

Table 4
Sources of Pre-Electoral Information: European Parliament Elections of 1999
(figures are percent)

country	talked to friends	watched TV news	read paper	attended a meeting	visited a website
Austria	73	87	76	4	3
Belgium	73	64	54	6	5
Denmark	71	57	60	4	6
Finland	57	53	67	6	6
France	60	53	57	6	1
Germany	74	85	73	5	6
Greece	72	71	45	11	5
Ireland	72	58	65	5	5
Italy ^a	70	60	54	24	13
Luxemburg	71	75	75	16	13
Netherlands	62	58	66	2	3
Portugal	67	91	52	3	0
Spain	53	49	43	12	2
Sweden	73	59	70	5	4
United Kingdom	47	48	54	3	5
EU average ^b	66	65	61	8	5
EU a. without Italy ^b	66	65	61	7	5

Source: *European Election Study 1999*. Figures are based on weighted data (political weight 1, var006). ^a Unlike the others, the Italian survey was realised in a tele-panel which might distort the level estimate of internet usage. ^b Arithmetic mean of country scores.

Table 5
Internet as a Source of Pre-Electoral Information, According to the Age of Voters
(figures are percent)

country	18-34	35-49	50-64	65 +	overall
Austria	4	3	4	3	3
Belgium	5	6	5	2	5
Denmark	7	7	5	4	6
Finland	15	2	8	5	6
France	2	1	2	1	1
Germany	8	4	6	7	6
Greece	4	8	3	5	5
Ireland	7	5	3	5	5
Italy ^a	16	10	14	12	13
Luxemburg	28	9	9	2	13
Netherlands	4	4	1	1	3
Portugal	0	1	1	0	0
Spain	1	2	4	2	2
Sweden	4	6	3	2	4
United Kingdom	5	6	4	4	5
EU average ^b	7	5	5	4	5
EU a. without Italy ^b	7	5	4	3	5

Source: *European Election Study 1999*. Figures are based on weighted data (political weight 1, var006). ^a Unlike the others, the Italian survey was realised in a tele-panel which might distort the level estimate of internet usage. ^b Arithmetic mean of country scores.

Table 6
Internet as a Source of Pre-Electoral Information, According to the Education of Voters
(figures are percent)

country	low	middle	high	overall
Austria	3	2	6	3
Belgium	2	5	7	5
Denmark	1	5	8	6
Finland	4	3	10	6
France	2	1	2	2
Germany	7	5	6	6
Greece	5	2	8	5
Ireland	6	6	4	5
Italy ^a	11	12	13	12
Luxemburg	2	14	21	13
Netherlands	2	2	4	3
Portugal	0	1	0	0
Spain	1	2	3	2
Sweden	0	3	6	4
United Kingdom	4	3	10	5
EU average ^b	3	4	7	5
EU a. without Italy ^b	2	4	7	5

Source: *European Election Study 1999*. Figures are based on weighted data (political weight 1, var006). ^a Unlike the others, the Italian survey was realised in a tele-panel which might distort the level estimate of internet usage. ^b Arithmetic mean of country scores.

Table 7
The Use of Internet as a Source of Pre-Electoral Information and Reported Electoral Participation
(figures are percent of those indicating to have participated)

country	internet not used (a)	internet used (b)	overall (c)	differ- ence (b-a)	corre- lation ^b
Austria	61	67	61	+ 06	-
Belgium	96	100	96	+ 04	-
Denmark	57	73	57	+ 16	.08
Finland	41	65	42	+ 24	.12
France	70	71	70	+ 01	-
Germany	59	63	60	+ 04	-
Greece	89	96	89	+ 07	-
Ireland	57	67	58	+ 10	-
Italy ^a	86	92	87	+ 06	-
Luxemburg	94	97	95	+ 03	-
Netherlands	33	57	33	+ 24	.09
Portugal	58	100	59	+ 42	-
Spain	84	90	84	+ 06	-
Sweden	46	78	48	+ 36	.11
United Kingdom	30	36	31	+ 06	-
EU average ^c	64	77	65	+ 13	
EU a. without Italy ^c	63	76	63	+ 13	

Source: *European Election Study 1999*. Figures are based on weighted data (political weight 1, var006). ^a Unlike the others, the Italian survey was realised in a tele-panel which might distort the level estimate of internet usage. ^b Pearson correlation; coefficients significant above p=.05 are shown. ^c Arithmetic mean of country scores.