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## **Chapter 4: Towards a European Electorate. One electorate or many?**

**Wouter van der Brug, Mark Franklin, Marina Popescu and Gábor Tóka**

### **Introduction**

The previous two chapters focused on the practice of political representation in the European Union from the perspective of the ‘supply side’ of the electoral market: parties and their political programs and how the media communicate what’s at stake at the elections. In this chapter we focus on the demand side: the electorates of the different European countries. Thomassen argued in the introductory chapter that the behaviour of voters should meet a number of requirements for them to be represented meaningfully. In the first place, voters should base their choice on policy considerations. It is very unlikely that political parties represent the opinions of their voters if these opinions do not guide electoral choice. Secondly, political representation is unlikely to materialize if voters have idiosyncratic sets of policy preferences that motivate their decisions. The responsible party model requires that a small number of ideological dimensions —preferably only one— structure(s) the behaviour of parties and voters (e.g., Thomassen, 1994).

Prior research has established that the left-right dimension structures the behaviour of voters and parties in most Western European countries (e.g, Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Klingemann et al. 1994; Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Hix 1999; Van der Eijk et al. 1999; Van der Brug et al. 2007). Left-right positions of parties and voters reflect their positions on the most salient issues in each of the countries, so that the left-right dimension functions as an important link in the chain of democratic representation. However, these results do not warrant the conclusion that opinions of voters will also be represented at the European level after the 2004 enlargement. In the first place, we cannot know *a priori* whether the left-right dimension structures the behaviour of voters and parties in the 10 new member states. Moreover, even if voters in the separate member states of the EU vote largely on the basis of the same ideological dimension —left-right— the substantive meaning of left-right may be very different in different countries. So, in order to assess whether the 25 separate national

electorates operate as a single European electorate in European elections, we will focus on these two aspects.

Our main focus will be on similarities and differences between voters in different countries in the determinants of party choice at the 2004 European Parliament elections. At those elections do we find cleavage voting more prevalent in some countries than in others? Are the effects of ideology and policy considerations different? However, in order to be able to conduct meaningful analyses of voting behaviour across old and new member states we first need to be sure that the variables we analyse have largely the same meanings in the two parts of Europe. In order to address this question we will first investigate similarities and differences among the opinions of voters of parties of the same family. Are there big differences between voters for Christian Democratic parties in different countries? What about voters for liberal or socialist parties? Since we wish to assess the consequences of the 2004 enlargement for democratic representation, we are primarily interested in the differences between the new accession countries and the 'old' member states. Theoretically, we have no reason to expect that length of membership of the EU would affect patterns of voting behaviour. However, as we will outline below, there are theoretical reasons to expect such differences to exist between established democracies and democracies with a recent history of communist rule, where party systems are being consolidated. Therefore, our main focus in this chapter is on the distinction between established and consolidating democracies.

### **Theoretical expectations**

What differences do we expect to find in voting behaviour between established and consolidating democracies? In the first place we may expect to find differences in political orientations and underlying social values between the two sets of countries. The consolidating democracies in Central Europe have lower levels of economic development than even the poorest of the fifteen pre-2004 member states. Nearly all went through a very deep and painful recession in the early 1990s, while the rest of Europe – with the initial exception of Finland, which, like Central Europe, was hard hit by the collapse of the Soviet economy – reached previously unprecedented levels of affluence. Moreover, the consolidating democracies share the legacy of a unique social, economic and political experiment with communism that lasted for more than four decades in all of these countries. Since most generations in these countries were politically socialized under communist rule, the citizens of

these countries can be expected to hold different social and political attitudes than the citizens of the other EU member states.

Regional differences in social and political opinions are not necessarily problematic from the point of view of political representation. Within each of the European member states there are regional differences in political opinions, which translate into support for different kinds of parties. In some parts of Britain the Conservatives will almost always get a majority of the votes, and in other parts Labour is more popular. As long as these differences in party support reflect differences in public opinions, there is no problem. So, differences in value orientations between different countries are not problematic, as long as these translate into aggregate level differences in support for party families in the European parliament. This, in turn, requires that votes for a socialist party in Poland or in Hungary are guided by the same considerations as votes for the socialists in France or Germany. Are there reasons to expect these considerations to be different?

The differences that are relevant to vote choice concern the sources from which voters get their cues. Prior research shows that voters in established democracies take their cues from reference groups, locate themselves and the policy alternatives in left-right terms, and take account of strategic considerations. How might these things be different in a consolidating democracy? Will all these forces have the same relative strength there as in established democracies?

Until the 1960s and in some countries also in the 1970s, voters in established democracies were guided by strong group loyalties, which boosted the effects of social structure and limited the effects of policy positions (and presumably also of strategic considerations). There is some controversy in the scholarly literature as to whether this also happened when democratic party systems developed in countries that had previously been ruled by communist parties. Some scholars have predicted that, as a result of the fact that communist parties attempted to eliminate or suppress religious and class differences, there will only be weak effects of religious and social cleavages on the vote in post-communist societies (Lindstrom 1991; White, Miller, Grodeland and Oates 2000; Muelemann 2004). On the other hand, others have argued that in countries where party systems are new and especially where they are in flux, voters are in desperate need of other cues, which may be 'cheaply' provided by social and ethno-religious distinctions. This would lead us to expect strong effect of these cleavages (Kitschelt 1992; Klingemann and Wattenberg 1992; Tóka 1992; Evans 1996a,b; Mateju and Rehakova 1996; Szelenyi, Fodor and Hanley 1997; Tomka and Zulehner 1999; Gijssberts and Nieuwbeerta 2000). So, we have no very clear expectations

for the importance of social structure relative to other effects, or relative to their importance in established democracies. However, we do have quite strong expectations for the relative importance of policy positions compared to those in established democracies.

This is because one of the most important things that might be different in a consolidating democracy, compared to established democracies, is the clarity of the party system. Established democracies have established party systems that remain much the same over a sequence of elections. Having the same parties competing for political power from the same locations in the left-right spectrum at election after election serves an educational function. Voters learn their way around their political system over the course of their first two or three elections by experiencing it at work. In a consolidating democracy the necessary consistency may not be present. Parties do not necessarily appear fully formed on the political scene with a reasonably stable size and left-right location. In a newly democratising country, parties are more likely to repeatedly adapt their policies and ideological profiles in the face of changing opportunities for political mobilization. Frequent changes in the identity and location of political parties will be confusing to voters and prevent the sort of learning that would occur in more established systems. If the system is in sufficient flux, voters may fail to learn where parties stand in left-right terms, and may even be unsure of such fundamental facts as which parties are large and which are small (cf. Rose 1995; Rose and Mishler 1998; Miller and Klobucar 2000). Without knowledge of which parties are serious contenders for power, voters will be unable to employ the strategies that in more established systems enable them to winnow down the contenders to those with a serious chance of becoming major parties of government.

We should stress that we do not expect all consolidating democracies to have the same characteristics any more than we expect this of all established democracies. Countries differ in the speed with which their party systems consolidate and in the extent that consolidated systems present voters with clear and simple choices. Enough time may have elapsed in several of the new EU member countries for the party systems to having become quite well consolidated (Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski and Tóka 1999).

So, there may in practice be as many differences among consolidating systems as there are between the two groups of countries. However, we would expect the effects of left-right location to be generally less in post-communist states, and effects of issues to be correspondingly greater, relative to each other. This follows findings in past research showing that in countries where ideology is less important, issues play a correspondingly greater role (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996).

Our study involves two sets of analyses. The first set focuses on the structure of value orientations in new and old member countries, and on differences between the opinions of voters regarding parties of the same party family. These analyses serve to validate the variables employed in this chapter and to provide the basis for a second set of analyses, which focus on the determinants of party choice. To what extent are voting decisions in the different member states of the EU motivated by the same considerations? The two sets of analyses require different data sources and different methodological approaches. Therefore, the rest of this chapter is divided in two separate sections, discussing the separate sets of analyses. Each of these sections will open with a discussion of the methodology used in that section.

### **Differences in value orientations**

When studying value orientations a central role is played by the concepts of left and right. The left-right dimension is considered to be a summary measure of ideological allegiances on the various dimensions of party competition in each country. However, because of historical differences between the countries, the terms left and right may have very different meanings in political discourse in the different countries. Therefore, we start with an analysis of what concrete policy preferences are related to left-right self-placement and support for different European party families in the eight East European new member states in comparison to the older democracies in the Union. Before we discuss our results, we will first discuss our methodology and the data employed in these analyses.

### **Methodology to compare the determinants of left-right positions**

In order to compare across countries the relationship between left-right self-placement and party choice on the one hand, and value orientations on the other, we employ data from the European Values Study 2000. In this survey respondents were asked to place themselves on a 10-point scale of which the extremes were labelled left (at “1”) and right (at “10”). This question was asked in all EU member states except Cyprus, which is therefore the only country missing in this part of the analyses. The total sample size in these countries is 31,316 respondents, ranging from 1000 in Great Britain, Hungary and Portugal to 2,409 in Spain. Throughout the analysis we weighted the cases with the original weighting variable provided with EVS data set but only after adjusting the latter to assure that each country has an equal

weighted sample size of 1305, so that the weighted number of cases corresponds to the unweighted number of cases in the data file.

The drawback of this data set is that it was collected in 1999 and 2000, when, especially in some of the new democracies, quite a few parties that are currently represented in the European Parliament were not even in existence, and other parties occupied their places in the party system. Moreover, electoral alignments and citizens' attitudes on various issues may have changed since then. However, in spite of this drawback, among all comparative surveys the European Values Study offers by far the best chance to accomplish our task here. The reason for this is the richness of this study – and the poverty of all readily available alternatives – in mapping citizens' attitudes and value orientations in a variety of policy relevant domains. Moreover, to the extent that changes will have taken place since 2000, these will likely have reduced the differences between old and new member countries, so the differences we find with these data represent if anything an over-estimate of differences that will have existed in 2004. In this survey, we identified as many as 31 attitude items relevant for our exercise. Since presenting the analyses for so many separate items would be unwieldy, the items that tapped similar attitude dimensions were aggregated, through summing up their standardized scores, into a single attitude scale. This way we constructed a total of 13 attitude variables, which cover most of the policy dimensions associated with left and right in common parlance. All these scales have a mean of zero and unit variance in the pooled and weighted 24-country data set (see Appendix for details of scale construction).

In order to assess whether left-right has a different meaning in the political discourse in different countries, we will estimate regressions with the 10-point left-right self-placement scale as the dependent variable. The independent variables in these analyses are the 13 attitude scales. If these attitude scales exert a different effect on left-right positions in different countries, this would indicate that left-right has a different substantive meaning.

### **Results: how different are the determinants of left-right positions?**

Table 1 presents three regression analyses with left-right positions as the dependent variable and the 13 attitude scales as independent variables. It presents these analyses first for the 16 established and for the 8 consolidating democracies separately, and then for all 24 countries together, but adding interactions between the dummy variable identifying consolidating democracies and the 13 attitude scales.

## TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Three findings emerge from Table 1. First, when looking at the analyses for all countries, we find a small but significant positive effect of the variable ‘consolidating democracies’. This shows that if we compare citizens with identical positions on the 13 attitude scales in the two groups of countries, citizens of consolidating democracies place themselves on average one-sixth of a point to the right from their otherwise like-minded counterparts in established democracies. This difference of 0.13 on a 10-point scale is of course rather minor. We attribute it to the enduring unpopularity of the left-wing dictatorships of the recent past in Eastern Europe.

Secondly, if we regress left-right self-placement on the 13 attitude variables separately for old and new democracies, it turns out that values offer a less potent explanation of the respondents’ left-right position in consolidating than in old democracies. This finding is most likely explained by the fact that the determinants of political attitudes show more idiosyncratic individual variation in new than in long-established democracies. Thirdly, at face value we see remarkable similarities of the effects of the 13 attitude scales on left-right positions in the two parts of Europe. These similarities overwhelmingly dominate the noteworthy but relatively minor differences. What emerges from the results is that left is associated with distrust of NATO and support for equality over both freedom and meritocratic allocation, social liberalism, women’s liberation in both old and new democracies. Likewise, right is associated with religiosity and support for economic individualism, and what we abbreviate as clericalism – i.e. a strong political role of churches – in both sets of countries. Equally remarkably, trust in the European Union is not significantly correlated with left-right position in either.

Despite the large similarities in the two sets of countries, there are also some differences. The statistical significance of these is tested with the interaction terms between each of the 13 attitude scales and the dummy variable identifying consolidating democracies on the other appearing in the last equation estimated for all 24 countries together. Statistically significant interaction terms suggest differences in what is associated with “left” and “right” in these two parts of Europe.

The most striking difference in the effects of the 13 attitude scales in the two groups of countries emerges with respect to postmaterialist values and support for stronger environment protection. These attitudes tend to be associated with the left in the established democracies but more often than not with the right in the consolidating democracies. Similarly, anti-



immigrant views tend to be associated with a right-wing self-placement in older democracies, albeit only weakly so, but remain uncorrelated with left and right in the East. The most plausible explanation of these findings probably includes the association of left with the authoritarian (communist) past, and the absence of both green parties and immigration as a major social and political issue in the new member states.

Some further differences between consolidating and established democracies concern the exact degree to which various attitude scales correlate with left-right self-placement. The somewhat weaker effect of clericalism in the established democracies probably just makes up for the stronger effects of religiosity in comparison with consolidated democracies. What may be substantively more interesting is that economic individualism is less strongly, and attitudes towards NATO more strongly associated with left and right in Eastern Europe than in the established democracies. We think that this finding can be related to post-communist transitions, which generated a great deal of policy consensus but little popular enthusiasm regarding the main direction of economic transformation in the region, and involved a major shift in the foreign policy orientation of these countries that was very popular with the bulk of the population but created some resentment among supporters of the ex-communist left.

### **Results: attitudinal differences among voters for the same party family**

Table 2 concludes the first part of our empirical analysis with a look at value differences between consolidated and consolidating democracies, and at how the supporters of socialist, conservative and liberal parties differ in their attitudes in established and in consolidating democracies. It must be stressed again that our data come from 1999/2000, and in the typical European country less than half of the national sample expressed a voting preference for a party that would gain seats in the European Parliament at the 2004 elections as a member of the European People's Party, the Party of European Socialist or the liberal (ELDR) faction. For the other party groups in the European Parliament we did not have a sufficiently large and cross-national pool of supporters in these data – for instance, the European of Nations group was overwhelmingly represented by Irish respondents. Therefore, we only present this part of the analysis for the supporters of the parties that were included in the EPP, PES or ELDR groups in the European Parliament following the 2004 election.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 displays the mean value of the same 13 attitude scales presented in Table 1 for the three party groups in both established and consolidating democracies. The last three columns flag the statistical significance of the differences between citizens in these two groups of countries within each of the three main party groupings.

The most striking feature of these comparisons is that the differences between the means of voters for the same party family tend to be small. The largest differences are about half a standard deviation (i.e. 0.5 on any one of our 13 standardized scales), but in most cases the differences are much smaller than that. Because of the large sample size, most differences are statistically significant between the two types of countries, and it is to those differences that we now turn.

The EPP supporters differ significantly between old and new democracies on 10 out of the 13 scales, and the same is the case with the ELDR supporters. The socialist party grouping is less divided in this comparison: their supporters in old and new democracies only differ in 6 out of the 13 dimensions. Remarkably, the only dimension where none of the three shows such division is the one that appeared to be unrelated to the left-right self-placements in the electorate, namely trust in the European Union. More generally, it seems that foreign policy, religion (i.e. the religiosity and clericalism scales), and women's liberation are least likely to create the potential for an East-West divide in the electorate of the three major party groupings. In contrast, economic individualism, family values, post-materialist and anti-immigration dimensions generate particularly large attitude differences between the electorate of the party groupings in new and old democracies. Preference for egalitarianism over merit-based allocation shows a unique pattern in that it does not create an East-West divide in the PES electorate at all, but creates a particularly large one among liberals.

The apparent reason for many of these divides within party groups is that East Europeans in general tend to differ greatly from the citizens of the established European democracies in a number of dimensions. As a comparison of the columns of Table 2 shows, they are more egalitarian, anti-immigrant and socially conservative than Westerners. Hence, even when the differences between party groupings follow the same pattern in new and old democracies, the East-West differences within the party groups are in a few cases even larger than the differences between them. Anti-immigration attitudes are probably the best example of this. In consolidating democracies, liberal supporters are the least likely to display such attitudes, but the ELDR-supporters in the East are nonetheless far more anti-immigrant than the most anti-immigrant of these groups (the EPP-supporters) in the established democracies.

The same or similar pattern is repeated for family values, social liberalism and economic individualism.

The probably most notable oddity is the different attitude profile of the liberal supporters in terms of environmentalism and egalitarianism in the two parts of Europe.<sup>1</sup> The PES and EPP supporters, however, show exactly the same kind of differences from each other in both old and new democracies on all dimensions except post-materialism. Hence, the pattern that seems most clearly to emerge from Table 2 is that the Eastern enlargement made all three party groupings internally more diverse. Yet, this happened in such a way that, at least with the exception of the post-materialist and possibly the environmentalist dimension, did not make the European party groups less meaningful agents of representation. After 2004 each of the main party groups will need to aggregate a broader range of opinions, but the supporters of an EPP-member organization differ from those of a socialist party much the same way in the new as in the established democracies, and with some caveats the same can be said about the liberals too.

On the basis of these findings we are ready to move on to the second part of this paper, which investigates the determinants of party choice in the European Parliament elections of 2004. The study we employ for this analysis contains many fewer variables than the ESS (which is why we could not use it for the exploratory study reported above) and, in particular, does not include measures of post-materialism or environmental concerns. So the variables that might have proved problematic in a cross-national study including new and old member countries are not included in the analyses that follow. We have seen that other measures do have much the same meanings across the new-old divide.

## **Determinants of party choice**

### **Methodology to compare determinants of party choice across countries**

How does one compare the determinants of party choice across different countries? The most fashionable plug-and-play methodologies for analysing party choice, such as multinomial

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<sup>1</sup> Note however that the liberal supporters in Table 2 are a peculiar mix in terms of their national origin, coming exclusively from the Nordic and Low Countries and the UK for the sample of established democracies, and exclusively from the Baltic States, Hungary and Slovenia among the new member states. This may have some impact on their attitude profile. For instance, their particularly irreligious outlook may have as much to do with the fact that most of these countries are particularly secularized as with the fact that these respondents support a liberal party in their home country.

logit, do not enable us to answer our research questions. In such approaches the dependent variable (party choice) is a nominal variable, which reflects a different choice set in each country. As long as we do not want to redefine this dependent variable to a dichotomy (such as a vote for the government versus a vote for the opposition), we would have to carry out 25 separate country studies, without straightforward means of systematically comparing the results between the countries.

Therefore, our enquiry proceeds along the same lines as in *Choosing Europe?* (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). In each country voters were asked, for each party in their political system,<sup>2</sup> how likely it was (on a scale of 1 to 10) that they would *ever* vote for it. These questions have been carefully designed to yield measures that can be interpreted as the propensity to vote for each of the parties (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; van der Eijk 2002; Van der Eijk et al. 2006). They can be regarded for ease of exposition as preferences, and we know that voters make their choice in each election for the party they most prefer.<sup>3</sup> The determinants of vote propensities are therefore the same as the determinants of party choice. Employing vote propensities as the dependent variable rather than party choice itself, has been shown to have many advantages (Van der Eijk 2002; Van der Eijk et al. 2006, van der Brug et al. 2007). In this chapter the most important function is to provide us with a dependent variable that is comparable across countries.

When the data matrix is stacked so that each voter appears as many times as there are parties for which preferences have been measured, the conventional research question “what attracts people to Party X?” can be reformulated as “what attracts people to a party?” We already know that voters virtually always vote for the party they express the strongest preference for. Thus, an answer to the question “what is it that attracts people to a party?” is also an answer to the question “what determines which parties are voted for?” This way of analysing the determinants of party choice has been validated elsewhere (Tillie 1995; Van der Eijk et al. 2006).

In order to compare determinants of party choice across different countries we employ data from the European Elections Study 2004. In this survey the question about “propensities to support parties” has been asked in 13 established democracies (Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and

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<sup>2</sup> In practice the parties asked about included only those with representation in the national parliament or those widely expected to obtain representation in the European Parliament.

<sup>3</sup> In practice this occurs about 93% of the time in established EU member states.

Spain), and in 7 consolidating democracies (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia). We employ the data from the respondents in each country who answered the question whether they voted in the last European election. The total sample size in these countries is 20,497 respondents, which is 1,025 per country on average, ranging from 430 in Greece to 1,606 in Estonia.

From these data we created a stacked data matrix in which the party\*respondent combination is the unit of analysis. This data set has 154,509 entries, but we weighted our stacked data to the original number of respondents (N=20,497). When computing the weight variable, we first employed a weight that makes each sample representative in terms of party choice in the European Elections conducted at the time of the interview. After that we constructed a second weight, which ensures that each of the 20 contexts exerts an equal weight on the results.

Rather than having a separate dependent variable for each party, we now have a dependent variable in the stacked matrix that refers to parties in general. The problem, of course, is how to define meaningful independent variables that explain the variance in this variable. Since the unit of analysis is the respondent x party combination, it is straightforward to include party characteristics in this data matrix. We included one variable at the party level, *party size*, which represents a strategic consideration that voters may take into account: we hypothesize that when two or more parties are about equally attractive for some voters, then those voters tend to vote for the largest of these parties because it has the best chance of achieving its policy goals.

Adding individual characteristics to these data is less straightforward, however. For left-right location and the position regarding European unification, the surveys did not only measure the self-declared positions of respondents, but also how they perceive the location of each party on the same scale. Therefore, we were able to transform these variables into the distance between each voter's own position and the position of each party. If voters preferred parties close to them in left-right terms or in terms of position regarding European unification, then the resulting measure should exert a negative effect on vote propensities: the smaller the distance between voter and party, the greater the preference for the party. For respondents who did not answer the question about the position of any particular party, we replaced their missing values with the national sample mean of the perceived position of the party in

question. If, however, no answer was provided about the voter's position, the distance measure records a missing value.<sup>4</sup>

When party-specific information is lacking, it is more problematic to construct a meaningful independent variable. As a case in point, social class may have a positive effect on the propensity to vote for party A (meaning that this party attracts its support disproportionately from the higher classes), and a negative effect on the propensity to vote for Party B. When inserting the variable social class in the stacked data matrix, these effects would cancel each other out, so that we would wrongly conclude that social class has no effect on the vote. The solution to this problem involves linear transformations of the original independent variables, party by party and country by country, into predicted scores (y-hats) of the dependent variable. The y-hats for each independent variable from the different sets of predicted scores can then be stacked and treated as a generic version of that independent variable. The procedure is explained elsewhere in detail (e.g., Van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Van der Brug et al., 2000; Van der Brug, 2002); and will not be repeated here.

The following independent variables were transformed in this manner: 'social class', 'religion', 'gender', 'importance of issues' (what is the most important problem facing the country), 'government approval', and 'satisfaction with the functioning of democracy'. As a result of these transformations, the effects of the y-hat variables will necessarily be positive. The large benefit is that they allow us to conduct comparative research without transforming the dependent variable. This benefit does, however, come at a certain price. Because the variables are transformed party-by-party and country-by-country, after the linear transformation cross-country differences will be incorporated in these newly created variables. Although country differences will still be visible in the standardized regression coefficients (betas), it is unlikely that one will find interaction effects between these transformed variables and country dummies. Therefore, we will not focus in this paper on differences between established and consolidating democracies in the effects of these variables. Instead, we focus on differences between countries in the effects of left-right distance, the issue of European unification, and of strategic considerations, which are captured by the variable party size.

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<sup>4</sup> In this way, about 80% of the respondents could be included in the analyses. If we had only included the respondents who answered the questions on party positions, we would have lost an additional 25% of the sample.

**Results: how different are the determinants of choice?**

Table 3 shows the effects of the various independent variables, created as explained above, on vote propensities. The table contains three panels, of which the first pertains to all countries and the other two distinguish between established and consolidating democracies. We explain 31 percent of the variance in party preferences for all countries taken together, using these independent variables (34 percent among established democracies and 24 among consolidating democracies). In single country studies the variance explained is normally higher than this, because such models normally include the position issues that are most relevant in each of the particular countries. In this joint data collection effort, only one position issue was included (position on European unification), but in most countries other position issues will be relevant as well. Left-right distance is probably closely correlated with the distance between parties and voters on issues everywhere, but past studies suggest that in most countries distance on a number of specific position issues would explain an additional 5 to 10% of the variance in party preferences after left-right distance is controlled for. Not having measured more position issues therefore lowers the explanatory power of the models.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

More important than the proportion of explained variance, however, are the striking similarities in the findings for established and consolidating democracies. Because of the way we constructed the  $\hat{y}$  variables (from social class through satisfaction with democracy), the unstandardized regression coefficients cannot be compared in a straightforward manner. The standardized coefficients, however, indicate that the strengths of the effects are very similar in the two sets of countries. The former communist states see somewhat stronger effects of religion, satisfaction with democracy and age, and somewhat weaker effects from social class and government approval than more established democracies do. But overall the effects seem very similar.

We now turn to the variables of primary interest: left-right distance, distance on the issue of European unification, and party size. Note that these variables were deductively derived and thus the unstandardized regression coefficients are directly comparable across countries. The results show that the effects of left-right distance are particularly reduced in former communist states. Strategic considerations also play a lesser role in the former communist states, as shown by the lesser effect of party size. The issue of European unification, on the other hand, seems to play a somewhat more important role for electoral

decisions in the new democracies. However, the differences are small in all three cases. Indeed, the strongest message to take from the comparison between established and consolidating democracies is how little difference we see. It is only the variance explained that is notably lower in consolidating democracies, suggesting the presence of rather more unmeasured and perhaps more idiosyncratic effects on vote choices in new than in established democracies. The fact that the effect of a dummy variable for "formerly communist countries" fails to prove significant in the analysis when all countries are pooled together shows that after controlling for the relevant determinants of party preferences, the overall level of party support is not different in the two sets of countries. This is unexpected, given the emphasis in the extant literature on the weakness of citizens' party attachments in the former communist countries (see Rose 1995; Rose and Mishler 1998), but has no bearing on the hypotheses examined here.

The analyses of Table 3 did not provide a test for whether differences in the effects of party size, left-right distance and distances on the issue of European unification in established as compared to consolidating democracies are statistically significant. We now turn to this topic (Table 4). Model A includes three interaction terms between whether the country in question is a former communist state on the one hand, and left-right distance, party size and distances on the issue of European unification on the other. Once again, it turns out that the effect of left-right distance on party choice is somewhat weaker (less negative) in former communist states than in the more established democracies. The differences are small however. The main effect (unstandardized) is -.394. In former communist states this effect is .056 weaker, i.e., it is -.338. Even though the differences are small, they are statistically significant at  $p < .01$ .

#### TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

An equally important finding is that the other two interaction effects are *not* statistically significant. In other words, the strategic consideration - that a larger party is more likely to have influence on government and hence should be a more attractive candidate for one's vote - applies equally in the two sets of countries. Moreover, the issue of European unification is *not* more important in elections in former communist countries (which are all new member states) than in the more established democracies. So, Model A strongly supports the impression gathered from Table 3, which is that the determinants of party choice in the two sets of counties are very similar.



So far we distinguished between two sets of countries only. This separation of countries into two different groups is based upon the central research question, but leaves open the possibility that various other types of differences exist between voting patterns across the different countries, and these differences are not well captured by the distinction between established and consolidating democracies. Yet, we have already said that we would expect differences between countries within both groups. After all, van der Eijk and Franklin (1996) did find differences between the then member states that could only be accounted for by interactions defined at the country level. We would expect that this still holds, and that we can find similar idiosyncratic differences among consolidating democracies. An extensive search for interactions between country dummy's and individual level variables demonstrated that the effect of left-right on party choice was significantly different from the general pattern in Model A in four countries: Denmark, Portugal, Cyprus and the Czech Republic. Moreover, the effect of party size turned out to be different in several countries.

The analyses in *Choosing Europe* (van der Eijk, Franklin et al. 1996) indicated that a systemic variable could explain differences in the effect of left-right distance on party choice. When positions in left-right terms are very clear, these left-right positions provide a good indication of parties' ideological complexions, and thus of their future actions. When, on the other hand, voters are not so much aware of the positions of parties on a left-right dimension, left-right positions help voters less in learning about the political program of the parties. Therefore, voters are most likely to rely upon left-right positions of parties when these positions are very clear, and less likely to do so when these positions are fuzzy. An indication of the extent to which voters are aware of party positions is the amount of agreement among them. The more they agree about where a party stands, the less ambiguous this position apparently is.

To test whether this is indeed the case, Model B introduces an interaction term between the amount of perceptual agreement (see Van der Eijk 2002) about the left-right positions of parties on the one hand, and left-right distances on the other hand. Model B shows that the effect of left-right distance depends indeed upon the degree of perceptual agreement. Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996) and Van der Eijk et al. (1999) report the same findings on two different sets of data, so this pattern turns out to be very robust. The question is whether the interaction between former communist states and left-right distance (see Model A) still remains significant after we control for the interaction between left-right system agreement and left-right distance. Model C shows that it does. So, even though the differences between established and consolidating democracies are small, the effects of left-right

distances are significantly weaker in the latter countries, even beyond what can be explained by differences in the extent of agreement on left-right party locations.

To what extent does Model C explain the different patterns of party choice in each of the 20 countries? Only two of the interactions between individual country dummies and left-right distance are significant in Model C, those for Cyprus (where the effect of left-right distance is significantly stronger than in the other countries) and Italy (where the effect is significantly weaker). Moreover, none of the interactions between countries and the issue of European unification turned out to be significant. Significant interactions were found with party size: the effect is different from the general effect in seven countries. There are evidently idiosyncratic factors at work in these countries to account for the fact that party size has unusually small or unusually large effects there. Unfortunately, we were unable to find specific variables that explicate these differences.

### **Conclusion: one electorate or many?**

This chapter set out to answer the question whether patterns of electoral behaviour in the European Union are likely to be different as a result of the 2004 enlargement. Eight of the ten countries that joined the EU in 2004 are former communist countries and we argued that there are some theoretical reasons to expect differences between established and consolidating democracies for this and other reasons. Therefore, this chapter focused on differences in patterns of voting behaviour in the new enlargement countries and in the established democracies of the EU. We looked for differences in the major determinants of party preferences, and in the socio-political attitudes associated with left-right ideology as well as electoral support for member organizations of the three main party groupings in the European Parliament. The underlying concern is whether the addition of new countries to the European Union, which brought a change of the composition of the European electorate, also brought a change in patterns of voting behaviour leading to major differences that might hamper effective political representation through the existing party groups.

Our analyses found that nearly the same factors, and above all the same left-right dimension structures the behaviour of voters and parties within the entire European electorate. Moreover, there is a shared basic meaning of left-right in terms of value and issue dimensions relative to egalitarianism, religion, social liberalism, foreign policy orientations and economic individualism. So, the main conclusion from this study is that patterns of voting behaviour are

not likely to change in the EU as a result of the inclusion of eight consolidating democracies after the 2004 enlargement.

This does not mean that there are no differences between established and consolidating democracies. It simply means that although there are differences both between and within the Eastern and Western electorates of the party groups, essentially the same factors determine voting behaviour in both parts of the EU. Moreover, the choice of one party group versus the other follows similar policy preferences in the Eastern member states and elsewhere in the Union.

Citizens in former communist countries in Central Europe appear to be more egalitarian and more socially conservative along a number of dimensions, but less supportive of economic individualism than citizens of Southern and West European democracies. This is consistent with findings in previous studies and may be explained partly by differences in level of socio-economic development (Renwick and Tóka 1998). In principle, these differences need not be more consequential for political representation in values than differences between, say, the North and the South of England. In practice, however, our findings suggest that the observed value differences between the old and new member states increase value heterogeneity in the electorates of the main party groupings in the European Parliament. Interestingly, however, they do not radically alter the meaning of the differences between vote for a conservative or a socialist or a liberal party.

The methods used in this study were perfectly able to detect genuine differences where they do exist between old and new democracies. East Europeans, probably because of the novelty and volatility of their party systems, are less likely than Western Europeans to agree on the left-right placement of the parties, and their voting behaviour, at the individual level, seems more idiosyncratic than that of their counterparts in the established democracies. We also found that post-materialist and environmentalist orientations are differently related to support for the main party groups in established and consolidating democracies, and that some other attitude dimensions are not equally strongly related to left-right self-placement in these two types of countries. But the balance of the evidence suggests that similarities are far more numerous and significant than dissimilarities. Thus, this chapter suggests that the inclusion of the post-communist countries into the European Union did not produce a fundamental change in the left-right structuring of mass voting behaviour and the European party system.

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## Appendix

All 13 attitude scales appearing in Tables 1 and 2 were created, in the 1999/2000 European Values Study data, by summing up the standardized scores of responses to the questions listed right after the name of the respective scale below. Where appropriate, response scales were reversed so that they match the direction suggested by the name given to the summary scale. For example, since on both input variables defining the Religiosity scale high values stood for the opposite of religiousness, it was actually their negative standardized values that were summed up to create the Religiosity scale. Missing values on the original variables were replaced with the weighted mean for individuals with the same voting preference and nationality. A few variables that were altogether missing for a particular party were substituted with a constant of zero for the given country. Each of the 13 scales was standardized to have a zero mean and unit variance in the pooled and weighted 24-country sample. Note that we grouped items into scales not on the basis of their scalability but in order to simplify the presentation of the results by aggregating item-by-item results where several items refer to the same policy domain. The extent to which the items collapsed into each scale this way actually form a distinct dimension of popular attitudes greatly varies across countries depending on the politicization of the given policy domains, and the inter-item correlations within scales are sometimes distorted by methodological artefacts – like ipsativity in the case of our postmaterialism scale and apparent response set effects triggered by the scale recording the responses to our questions about “equality over merit” and “social liberalism”. Thus, the Cronbach alpha values are very low or – as for “postmaterialism” and “equality over merit” – even negative for some of the scales in most or all of the countries in the analysis. The cross-country means of Cronbach alpha are .34 (with a standard deviation of .15), -.16 (s.d.=.22), .77 (s.d.=.05), .22 (s.d.=.13), -.74 (s.d.=.40), .74 (.06), .37 (.12), .27 (s.d.=.07), .61 (.07), .64 (s.d.=.05) for the multiple-item scales for Economic individualism, Equality over merit, Social liberalism, Women’s liberation, Post-materialist, Environment, Anti-immigrant, Family values, Religiosity, Clericalism, respectively.

### **Economic individualism:**

Two items were used for this scale from the same battery: “How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between. [...] The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for OR People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves. [...] Competition is good. It stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas OR Competition is harmful. It brings out the worst in people.”

### **Equality over freedom:**

A single item was used for this scale: “Which of these statements is the nearest to your opinion? (A) I find that both freedom and equality are important. But if I were to choose one or the other, I would consider personal freedom more important, that is, everyone can live in freedom and develop without hinderance. (B) Certainly both freedom and equality are important. But if I were to choose one or the other, I would consider equality more important, that is, that nobody is underprivileged and that social class differences are not so strong.”

**Equality over merit:**

Three items were used for this scale from the same battery: "In order to be considered "just", what should a society provide? Please tell me for each statement if it is important or unimportant to you. 1 means very important; 5 means not important at all." The three selected items were: "Eliminating big inequalities in income between citizens"; "Guaranteeing that basic needs are met for all, in terms of food, housing, cloths, education, health"; and "Recognizing people on their merits."

**Distrust NATO:**

The item on NATO was used for this scale from the following battery: "Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it 1=a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or 4=none at all?"

**Social liberalism:**

The "homosexuality", "abortion", "divorce" and "euthanasia - ending the life of the incurably sick" items were used for this scale from the same battery: "Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card." The original coding of the responses run from 1=never justifiable to 10=always justifiable.

**Women's liberation:**

Three items were used for this scale. The first read: "If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent, but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?" The second and third asked: "For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how much you agree with each. [...] A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work. [...] Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay."

**Post-materialist:**

The two input variables were based on responses (recoded as 2=" Giving people more say in important government decisions" or "Protecting freedom of speech"; and 1=" Maintaining order in the nation" or "Fighting rising prices") to the following question: "There is a lot of talk these days about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different people would give top priority. If you had to choose, which of the things on this card would you say is most important? [...] And which would be the next most important?"

**Environment:**

Two items were used for this scale from the same battery: "I am now going to read out some statements about the environment. For each one I read out, can you tell me whether you (1) agree strongly, (2) agree, (3) disagree or (4) disagree strongly?" The two items were "I would agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money were used to prevent environmental damage"; "I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution".

**Distrust EU:**

The item on the European Union was used for this scale from the following battery: "Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it 1=a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or 4=none at all?"



**Anti-immigrant:**

Three items were used for this scale. The first asked: “Which of these statements is the nearest to your opinion? (A) For the greater good of society it is better if immigrants maintain their distinct customs and traditions. (B) For the greater good of society it is better if immigrants do not maintain their distinct customs and traditions but take over the customs of the country.” The second response was considered less immigrant-friendly. The second item asked: “How about people from less developed countries coming here to work. Which one of the following do you think the government should do? (1) Let anyone come who wants to. (2) Let people come as long as there are jobs available. (3) Put strict limits on the number of foreigners who can come here. (4) Prohibit people coming here from other countries.” The third item asked: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to [NATIONALITY] people over immigrants.”

**Family values:**

Three dichotomous items were used for this scale. The first asked: “If someone says a child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily, would you tend to agree or disagree?” The second asked: “Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary?” The third asked: “Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? [...] Marriage is an out-dated institution.”

**Religiosity:**

Two items were used for this scale: “Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days? [CODING: (1) More than once a week, (2) once a week, (3) once a month, (4) only on special holidays, (5) once a year, (6) less often, (7) never practically never.] “Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are ... (READ OUT) (1) ... a religious person; (2) not a religious person; or (3) a convinced atheist?”

**Clericalism:**

Four items, with the responses originally coded on a scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, were used for this scale. The question asked: “How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?” The selected items were: “Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office”; “Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections”; “It would be better for [COUNTRY] if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office;” “Religious leaders should not influence government decisions”.

## TABLES

**Table 1: Regression models for the explanation of left-right self-placement with interaction terms**

	Established democracies only			Consolidating democracies only			All countries together		
	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
(Constant)	5.345	0.014		5.471	0.025		5.345	0.014	
Economic individualism	0.230	0.014	0.115**	0.129	0.023	0.062**	0.230	0.015	0.114**
Equality over freedom	-0.148	0.014	-0.076**	-0.141	0.022	-0.071**	-0.148	0.014	-0.075**
Equality over merit	-0.243	0.014	-0.127**	-0.213	0.024	-0.102**	-0.243	0.014	-0.124**
Distrust NATO	-0.199	0.015	-0.103**	-0.347	0.028	-0.172**	-0.199	0.016	-0.101**
Social liberalism	-0.071	0.016	-0.037**	-0.104	0.027	-0.047**	-0.071	0.017	-0.036**
Women liberation	-0.040	0.015	-0.021*	-0.082	0.024	-0.037**	-0.040	0.015	-0.020*
Postmaterialist	-0.056	0.014	-0.029**	0.109	0.024	0.051**	-0.056	0.015	-0.028**
Environment	-0.039	0.014	-0.020*	0.055	0.024	0.025*	-0.039	0.014	-0.019*
Distrust EU	-0.001	0.015	-0.001	0.001	0.029	0.000	-0.001	0.015	-0.001
Anti-immigrant	0.251	0.015	0.129**	0.020	0.025	0.009	0.251	0.015	0.127**
Family values	0.016	0.014	0.008	0.027	0.027	0.011	0.016	0.015	0.008
Religiosity	0.270	0.016	0.140**	0.090	0.024	0.044**	0.270	0.016	0.137**
Clericalism	0.178	0.015	0.093**	0.334	0.025	0.157**	0.178	0.015	0.090**
Consolidating democracies							0.126	0.028	0.029**
Economic individualism * Consolidating democracies							-0.100	0.027	-0.028**
Equality over freedom * Consolidating democracies							0.007	0.025	0.002
Equality over merit * Consolidating democracies							0.030	0.027	0.008
Distrust NATO * Consolidating democracies							-0.149	0.031	-0.042**
Social liberalism * Consolidating democracies							-0.033	0.031	-0.009
Women liberation * Consolidating democracies							-0.042	0.028	-0.011
Postmaterialist * Consolidating democracies							0.165	0.027	0.045**
Environment * Consolidating democracies							0.093	0.027	0.025**
Distrust EU * Consolidating democracies							0.002	0.031	0.000
Anti-immigrant * Consolidating democracies							-0.232	0.028	-0.061**
Family values * Consolidating democracies							0.011	0.030	0.003
Religiosity * Consolidating democracies							-0.180	0.028	-0.050**
Clericalism * Consolidating democracies							0.156	0.029	0.042**

R <sup>2</sup> -adjusted (N-weighted)	.156 (17689)	.112 (7842)	.143 (25531)
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\*: significant at  $p < .01$ ; \*\*: significant at  $p < .001$ .

**Table 2: Political attitudes in established and consolidating democracies among the supporters of the three main EP party groups**

	Mean value in established democracies among supporters of the ....			Mean value in consolidating democracies among supporters of the ....		
	<b>EPP</b>	<b>PES</b>	<b>ELDR</b>	<b>EPP</b>	<b>PES</b>	<b>ELDR</b>
Economic individualism	0.30	-0.01	0.25	0.04**	-0.14**	-0.06**
Equality over freedom	-0.13	0.07	-0.25	-0.08*	0.10	-0.06**
Equality over merit	-0.29	0.05	-0.49	-0.08**	0.00	0.06**
Distrust NATO	-0.32	0.01	-0.41	-0.37	-0.01	0.07**
Social liberalism	-0.23	0.13	0.52	-0.36**	-0.17**	-0.01**
Women liberation	-0.26	0.00	0.19	-0.16**	-0.01	0.22
Postmaterialist	0.04	0.08	0.18	-0.19**	-0.27**	-0.16**
Environment	0.03	-0.01	0.17	0.13**	0.01	-0.05**
Distrust EU	-0.28	0.00	0.03	-0.25	-0.04	0.10
Anti-immigrant	-0.02	-0.15	-0.03	0.38**	0.46**	0.05*
Family values	0.03	-0.15	-0.33	0.45**	0.37**	0.22**
Religiosity	0.40	-0.12	-0.24	0.27**	-0.16	-0.24
Clericalism	0.33	-0.15	-0.23	0.32	-0.28**	-0.03**
Weighted N (unweighted N in parentheses)	3760 (3944)	4236 (4235)	1631 (1420)	1806 (1714)	904 (883)	964 (780)

\*: the difference between the mean value of the supporters of member parties in the old and the new democracies is significant at  $p < .01$ ; \*\*: significant at  $p < .001$ .

Note: “EPP-ED (PES, ELDR) supporters” mean respondents who declared a voting preference (if there were an election next weekend) for a party that belongs to the EPP-ED (PES, ELDR).

**Table 3: Regression models for the explanation of party preference without interaction terms**

	All countries together			Established democracies only			Consolidating democracies only		
	<b>b</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Beta</b>
Social class	.550	.048	.077**	.573	.054	.083**	.492	.099	.064**
Religion	.652	.036	.118**	.600	.044	.107**	.762	.067	.142**
Gender	.712	.127	.037**	.698	.145	.037**	.741	.254	.036*
Education	.513	.056	.062*	.551	.065	.067**	.432	.110	.052**
Age	.341	.070	.033**	.294	.087	.027**	.452	.120	.048**
Importance of issues	.670	.052	.085**	.643	.059	.084**	.741	.106	.086**
Government approval	.634	.023	.192**	.628	.025	.204**	.649	.051	.162**
Satisfaction with democracy	.412	.042	.067**	.372	.049	.060**	.496	.078	.082**
Issue distance on European unification	-.081	.009	-.058**	-.073	.011	-.053**	-.098	.018	-.069**
Left-right distance	-.377	.009	-.292**	-.394	.011	-.304**	-.335	.017	-.262**
Consolidating democracies (dummy variable)	-.096	.042	-.015						
Party size	4.252	.126	.221**	4.325	.135	.246**	3.776	.304	.153**
R <sup>2</sup> -adjusted (N-weighted)	.306 (16,464)			.336 (11,421)			.241 (5,043)		

\*: significant at  $p < .01$ ; \*\*: significant at  $p < .001$ .

**Table 4: Regression models for the explanation of party preference with interactions (all countries)**

	Model A			Model B			Model C		
	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
Social class	.551	.048	.077**	.541	.048	.076**	.542	.048	.076**
Religion	.653	.036	.118**	.656	.036	.119**	.657	.036	.119**
Gender	.713	.127	.037**	.709	.126	.036**	.710	.126	.036**
Education	.512	.056	.062**	.511	.056	.062**	.510	.056	.062**
Age	.346	.070	.033**	.334	.069	.032**	.339	.069	.033**
Importance of issues	.669	.052	.084**	.666	.052	.084**	.665	.052	.084**
Government approval	.631	.023	.191**	.624	.023	.188**	.621	.023	.188**
Satisfaction with democracy	.414	.042	.067**	.400	.042	.065**	.401	.042	.065**
Issue distance on European unification	-.072	.011	-.052**	-.082	.009	-.059**	-.073	.011	-.052**
Left-right distance	-.394	.011	-.305**	-.378	.009	-.293**	-.395	.011	-.306**
Party size	4.385	.141	.228**	4.307	.126	.224**	4.451	.141	.231**
Consolidating democracies (dummy variable)	.014	.063	.002	-.088	.042	-.014	.030	.063	.005
Consolidating democracies * left-right distance	.056	.018	.024*				.054	.018	.023*
Consolidating democracies * issue distance	-.029	.020	-.011				-.028	.020	-.011
Consolidating democracies * party size	-.728	.312	-.024				-.779	.312	-.026
LR system agreement * LR distance				-.439	.069	-.042**	-.440	.069	-.042**
LR system agreement * issue distance				-.347	.410	-.006	-.347	.410	-.006
R <sup>2</sup> -adjusted (N-weighted)	.307 (16.464)			.308 (16.464)			.308 (16.464)		

\*: significant at  $p < .01$ ; \*\*: significant at  $p < .001$ .