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# Mapping the European Party Space

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Final version 2002-05-27

To be published in Roemelle, Andrea & Hermann Schmitt (forthcoming) "The Electoral Connection". London: Routledge.

## Introduction

Most scholars agree that citizens in general are not very knowledgeable about political matters (Converse 1975; Kinder & Sears 1985; Luskin 1987; Sniderman 1993; Zaller 1992). In most countries, only small proportions of voters can match basic prerequisites of popular models of political representation. In a previous chapter, Robert Johns' analyses raises serious doubts about voters' preference formation and knowledge about policy alternatives. Considering these shortcomings, it can be hard to understand why representative democracy function at all.

An argument why political representation works after all is that citizen and elites share the same belief systems. According to this perspective, *ideology* provide the fundamental means of communication and constitute a crucial linkage between citizens and elected representatives. It is the existence of a common political language, spoken and understood by elites and masses, that make modern democracies not break down.

A range of studies, this included, concentrate on citizens abilities to perceive political messages from elites, i.e. how well policy alternatives and issue positions are being communicated to citizens. An electorate with clear and common perceptions of the party space has repeatedly been identified as one important prerequisite for successful political representation (Converse 1975; van der Brug 1996; Schmitt & Thomassen 1999). To maintain meaningful mass-elite communication, citizens need to have clear,

common and correct perceptions of the main alternatives, the most important differences between them, and what the ideological conflicts in the party system are all about (Berelson 1952). To manage all of this in an efficient way, rational voters use heuristics such as *ideologies*, *cognitive schemas* or *belief systems* as cost-reducing devices or shortcuts (see for example Downs 1957; Zaller 1992).

In this chapter, we will investigate the current status of the most important ideological shortcut in western democracies – the left-right dimension – among the voters of the European Union. More precise, we will analyze voters perceptions of parties' left-right positions and assess to what extent EU citizens' political preferences are shaped by left-right ideology. Data come from the 1999 European Election Study.

## The Importance of Heuristics for Political Representation

History provide endless examples of mans extensive use of spatial metaphors for organising abstract social, political and religious beliefs and thought systems (Laponce 1981). Thus, it is not very surprising that a spatial metaphor has played an important part of Western political culture. Since its birth in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the bipolar left-right construction has shown remarkable resistance, reproducing itself in new polities and in new historical and social contexts. With this in mind, the hard-to-kill left-right distinction will most likely continue to play a dominant role in shaping a future European party system.

Although the substantive meaning and interpretation of the left-right distinction have not remained the same for two hundred years – albeit for the key element of 'equality' (Bobbio 1996) – the distinction has played an crucial role as an information cost reducing device for political actors. Leaders have made extensive use of the left-right grammar for sending political messages that otherwise probably would have been uncomprehensible for most voters. Left-Right have important orientational functions for individual citizens, and communication functions for political systems (Fuchs & Klingemann 1989; Inglehart & Klingemann 1976).

Of course, there is no telling what the spatial left-right distinction itself has meant for the formation and functioning of Western representative democracies. However, it is not very controversial to conclude that the pro-

cess of political representation is more efficient if citizens and elites have about the same perceptions of the ideological landscape. It is a prerequisite for both leadership and ‘followership’ that actors know the major landmarks of the political space.

The absorptive power of the Left-Right semantics is impressive. For instance, religious, liberal economic and materialist values all contribute to rightist identification among citizens, while secular, economic leftist and post-materialist values contribute to leftist identification (Knutson 1995; Knutson 1999). Actually, we know little about how and why the left-right metaphor manage to survive and reproduce itself by consuming elements of new values and policies. An educated guess might be that the left-right metaphor provide a more powerful base for communication than any other thinkable or feasible alternative. And it is hard to imagine what sort of events, value changes or social developments that would change this.

Analyses of European voters’ perceptions of their national party spaces are not a new exercise in comparative research, but it is nevertheless important for monitoring the evolution of an emerging European Party Space. The development of a well structured pan-European party system is one important prerequisite for functioning political representation in the European Union (Hix 1999). Being the common denominator for the national party systems in Europe, the left-right dimension is today the only viable candidate to structure a future EU party system (see Schmitt & Thomassen 1999,:258).

The role of belief systems in models of political representation has recently been highlighted by Jacques Thomassen (Thomassen 1999). According to Thomassen, unidimensional belief systems is a much desired characteristics of representative democracies: *“the effectiveness of the responsible party model depends on the extent to which the policy views of both the masses and elites are constrained by a one-dimensional conflict dimension, more specifically, a left-right dimension”* (1999:34). His simple but strong argument rests upon social choice theory as well as the classic Downsian spatial theory of elections. In short, simplicity of the political world is necessary not only for political comparativists, but also for effective political representation.

In this chapter, we will proceed the on-going evaluation of political representation in the EU member states by assessing the strength and importance of a unidimensional ideological structure, specifically the left-right dimension. Thus, in our ideal world of political representation, a) citizens have perfect agreement over parties’ left-right positions, and b) citizens’ party preferences is structured by a single left-right dimension. In the following two sections we will use these two criteria as a benchmarks for the European electorates. In a final analysis, we will test the hypothesis that the simpler the structure of the party system, the more effective political representation.

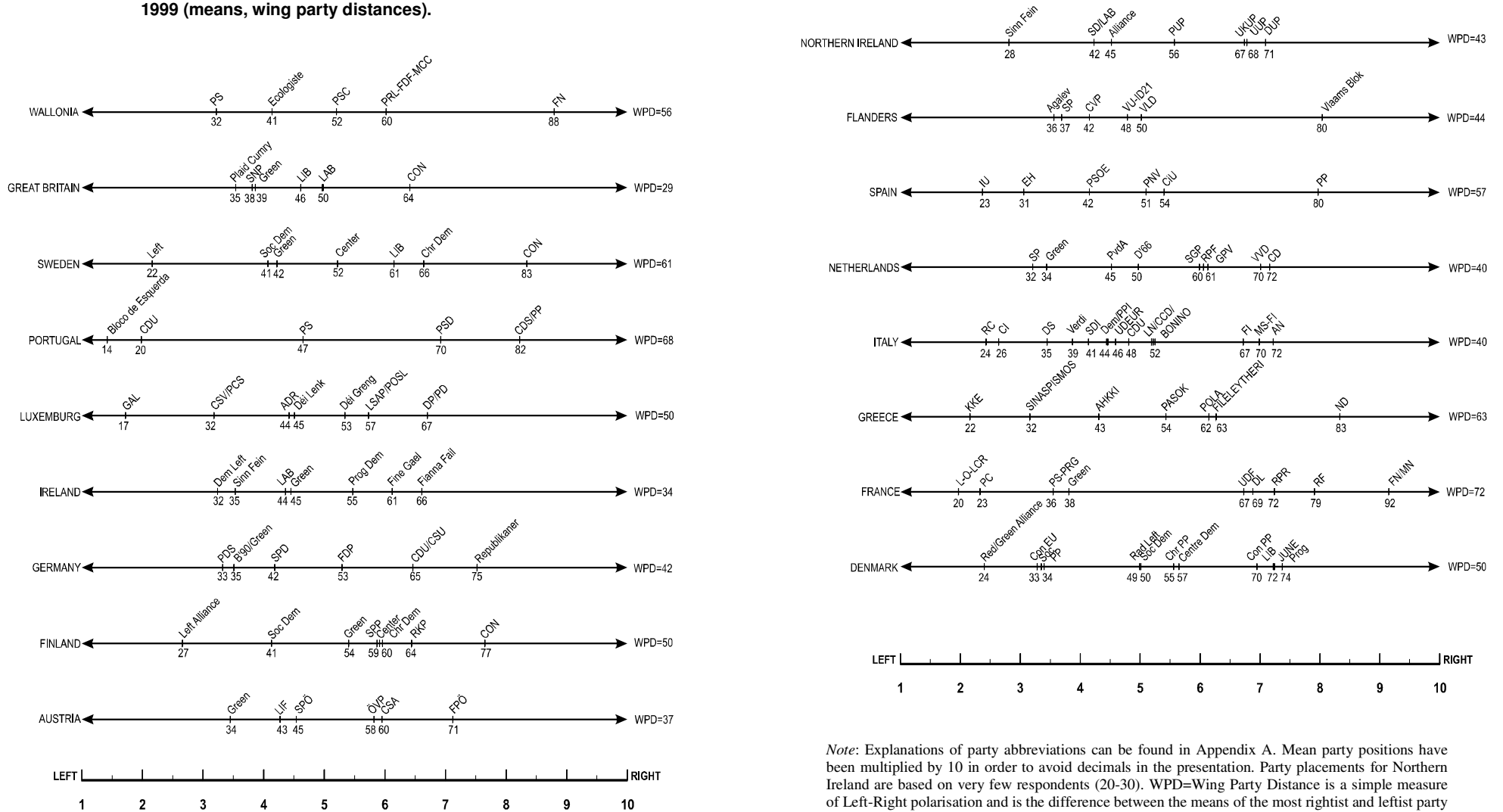
### **Left-Right Perceptual Agreement in the EU-countries**

Perceptual agreement is considered to be a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the electoral process to function as an effective channel of communication (van der Brug & van der Eijk 1999). The more agreement over parties’ positions along the left-right continuum, the stronger the impact of left-right ideology on voters party preferences (Oppenhuis 1995; van der Eijk, Franklin & Oppenhuis 1996). Strong agreement over party positions among voters is being interpreted as an indicator of parties’ successful presentation of policy alternatives.

We know from extensive previous research that a moderate-to-strong left-right dimension is present in all countries within the European Union, Ireland being the interesting exception where religion outscore left-right ideology (see fc Klingemann 1995). Recent studies have underscored the importance of left-right in European politics. Studies of perceptual *accuracy* – which require comparisons of elites and citizens positioning – have shown that European voters have fairly accurate perceptions of parties’ left-right positions. Moreover, they are *more* accurate about left-right positions than for any other comparable issue dimension, such as EU-related issues (van der Brug & van der Eijk 1999).

In the 1999 European Election Survey, the respondents were asked to place national parties along a left-right scale from 1 ‘left’ to 10 ‘right’. Since the Left-Right is a spatial metaphor, we choose to represent the results graphically. In figure 1, we depict the mean left-right positions of European parties as they were perceived in the eyes of the national electorates (for details, see Appendix A).

**Figure 1 European Voters' Perceptions of Parties' Left-Right Positions, 1999 (means, wing party distances).**

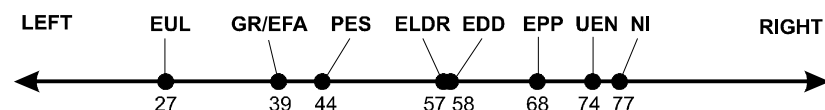


*Note:* Explanations of party abbreviations can be found in Appendix A. Mean party positions have been multiplied by 10 in order to avoid decimals in the presentation. Party placements for Northern Ireland are based on very few respondents (20-30). WPD=Wing Party Distance is a simple measure of Left-Right polarisation and is the difference between the means of the most rightist and leftist party (see Gilljam & Oscarsson 1996).

European parties are scattered across most of the Left-Right ideological territory, from the most leftist party, the Spanish Bloco de Esquerda (14), to the most rightist party, the French Front National/Mouvement National (92). According to the voters' perceptions, the French and Portuguese party systems are the most polarised in terms of Left-Right (WPD=72 and WPD=68), while the British party system is the most depolarised, i.e. has the smallest ideological distance between wing parties along the Left-Right dimension (WPD=29).

Of course, similar measures of perceived left-right positions of the party groups in the European parliament is simply not possible to apprehend, since most EU voters are not familiar with the bouquet of parties in the European parliament at this point. Nevertheless, we aggregated the perceptions of national party positions along the left-right scale to the European level in order to get some idea of what a European party system would look like in the eyes of European voters (see figure 2).

**Figure 2** European voters' left-right perceptions of parties belonging to different party groups in European Parliament 1999 (weighted means).



Note: Left-Right positions of party groups are weighted means of the perceived positions of national parties belonging to each group. The means have been weighted according to the number of seats in the National Parliament (see Appendix A for details). The following party group labels are used: EUL=European Unitary Left/Nordic Green Left (socialist and communist); GR/EFA=European Federation of Green Parties/European Free Alliance (ecologist and regionalist); PES=Party of European Socialists (social democratic and socialist); ELDR=European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (liberal and centrist); EDD=Europe of Democracies and Diversities (euro-sceptic, anti-communitarian); EPP=European People's Party/European Democrats (christian democratic and conservative); UEN=Union for a Europe of Nations (euro-sceptic); NI=Non-affiliated (extreme right).

Compared to recent studies of how the EU parliamentarians position themselves along the dimension, our aggregated left-right ordering of the party groups in the European parliament enjoy face validity (see van der Brug &

van der Eijk 1999:119). In fact, the party groups line up in a predictable left-right fashion: the European Left, Green, Socialist, Liberal, Centrist, Christian Democratic, Conservative, and Extreme Right. Thus, the grouping of national parties within the European Union makes a lot of sense in left-right terms.

Perceptual agreement among political actors is not only a desirable characteristic of modern mass democracies (Berelson, 1952), it is also a fundamental theoretical assumption in spatial theory of elections (see f c Downs 1957), and a major feature of the Responsible Party Model. The more accurate and common perceptions of the political world, the more efficient the communication of political preferences in society. In this context, *efficient* usually means high levels of ideological representation and well-functioning translation of preferences into parliamentary seats by means of the electoral system.

We know from a number of national studies that perceptual consensus is dependent on the saliency of issue dimensions (see Oscarsson 1998; van der Brug 1997). This means that the more intensively parties communicate their left-right positions to voters, the more common will voters' perceptions of the parties' left-right positions become. Aggregated measures of perceptual accuracy can be regarded as an indicator of how well the process of political representation works for left-right related issues in a system.

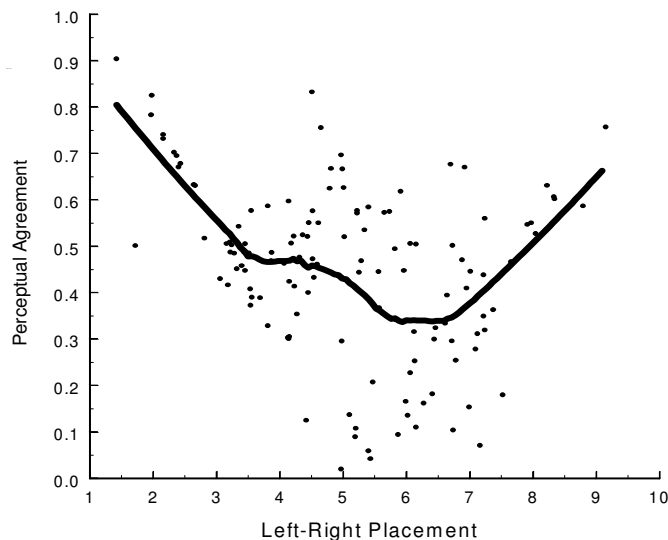
We use a measure of perceptual agreement (PA) that was originally developed by Cees van der Eijk (1998). The PA-measure has been employed a number of times in similar analyses (see van der Eijk & Franklin 1996:433-4, van der Brug & van der Eijk 1999:137-9). PA is calculated for each individual party (see appendix A) and can be aggregated into an overall measure of perceptual agreement in a political system. The measure of Perceptual Agreement is developed for ordered rating scales and reflects the deviation from a unimodal distribution and ranges from -1 (perfect bimodality) to +1 (perfect unimodality). Uniform distributions will get a PA-value of zero. The higher PA-value, the higher perceptual agreement (van der Eijk 1998).

Before we turn to country comparisons, let us first consider the nature of voters' party perceptions. There is variation in the European parties' abilities to successfully communicate their left-right positions to the voters (see Appendix A). Most of this variation is a function of parties left-right extremism. For instance, perceptual agreement tends to be higher for parties with extremist positions along the left-right dimension (see figure 2). This result is not very surprising in the light of popular models of voting behavior, such as saliency theory or the directional theory of issue voting (Budge & Farlie 1983) (Rabinowitz & Macdonald 1989). To begin with, it may be strategically rational for wing parties to stress the importance of dimensions where they hold advantageous positions, i.e. extreme positions from where they effectively can communicate to voters. Parties that occupy more centrist positions send more nuanced left-right messages to voters. Such messages have higher probability to be misunderstood, making voters' perceptions more variable and fuzzy.

Of course, far from all parties compete along the left-right continuum. Some parties — such as many of Europe's green parties — are communicating positions along other conflict dimensions, and do not send clear messages about their left-right positions. Such parties will therefore score low on left-right perceptual agreement.

The next step of the analysis is to compare perceptual agreement across nations. Some nations will come closer to the ideal of the Responsible Party Model than others. For this exercise, we need an aggregated measure of perceptual agreement of party positions. For all parties that gained representation in the European Parliament after the 1999 elections, we calculated a weighted average PA-measure where we factored in party size (i.e. the number of seats acquired in the European Parliament 1999).

**Figure 2** EU-citizens' Perceptions of Parties' Left Right Positions and the Degree of Perceptual Agreement.



**Table 1** Perceptual agreement of parties left-right positions in the EU member states, 1989, 1994 and 1999.

party system	perceptual agreement 1989 <sup>b)</sup>	perceptual agreement 1994 <sup>a)</sup>	perceptual agreement 1999 <sup>c)</sup>	change 1989-99
Britain	.55	.50	.27	-.28
Wallonia	.40	.53	.29	-.11
Northern Ireland	.36	.47	(.32)	-.04
Ireland	.48	.44	.35	-.13
Greece	.71	.65	.40	-.31
Germany	.56	—	.40	-.16
Flanders	.40	.32	.45	+.05
The Netherlands	.54	.47	.47	-.07
Finland	n a	n a	.47	
Spain	.48	.40	.48	+.00
Denmark	.63	.60	.50	-.13
Germany (W)	—	.53	—	
Luxemburg	.52	.51	.53	+.01
Sweden	n a	n a	.54	+.10
France	.65	—	.59	-.06
Germany (E)	—	.61	—	
Italy	.60	.62	—	
Portugal	.63	.54	.72	+.09
EU 15 Average	.54	.52	.41	-.13

<sup>a)</sup> the 1994 data come from (van der Brug & van der Eijk 1999:138). <sup>b)</sup> the 1989 data come from (van der Eijk 1998:84). <sup>c)</sup> My results for 1999 include only parties that gained representation in the European Parliament after the 1999 elections. Parties have been weighted according to the number of parliamentary seats. See appendix A for details.

According to our analysis, Portugal comes closest to the ideal of perceptual consensus over parties left-right positions among citizens in the 1999 European election (PA=.72), while Ireland, Britain and Wallonia scored very low on perceptual agreement (PA=.35, .27 and .29).

Thanks to previous research on perceptual agreement, we were also able to test a hypothesis of perceptual integration within the European Union. The hypothesis is that as the EU countries become more politically integrated, national party systems will become more alike and this will result in a growing consensus over parties Left-Right positions among European citizens. Admittedly, it is still very early in the integration process to test

a hypothesis of this kind. The across-time comparability in this analysis is unfortunately far from perfect, since the set of national parties, the parties' weights and the methods of data collection vary from election to election.

Our comparison with PA-measures calculated for the 1989 and 1994 European Parliament election show that in only 3 of the 16 comparable countries or region, there has been an increase in perceptual agreement during the last ten years. Most polities seem to have experienced a drop in perceptual consensus, most notable Greece, Wallonia and Britain. The hypothesis of citizens' increasing certainty of the left-right positioning of parties in Europe must be rejected. The results do not indicate any growing consensus over parties' left-right positions among EU electorates.

### Unfolding the European Party Spaces

All European party systems may not be properly described with a Downsian unidimensional left-right ideological division. How universally applicable is the left-right dimension in Europe? To find that out we need a more 'neutral' analytic strategy to map European voters perceptions of their national party spaces without a priori mentioning of the labels 'left' and 'right'. Following a long tradition in electoral research, we will now apply scaling analyses to recover the structure of political preferences among European electorates. The technique we have chosen for this purpose is unidimensional *unfolding analysis*. This is a more sophisticated way of finding out how EU citizens perceive their national party spaces.

The first and most important reason for making use of unfolding techniques is theoretical: The assumptions underlying the unfolding model are analogous to the assumptions underlying the well known Downsian spatial theory of elections. For instance, the unfolding model and the spatial theory both assume *perceptual agreement* – that all actors perceive the political world in much the same way. If this assumption does not hold, the unfolding model simply will not fit the data. Thus, applying the unfolding model means, in practice, testing the Downsian theory (see also Rabinowitz 1978; Rabinowitz, Macdonald & Listhaug 1991).

Second, unfolding techniques can produce spatial representations with *both* stimuli (e.g. parties) and subjects (e.g. individuals). Even scholars who are skeptical about the usefulness of scaling techniques for the purpose of theory testing agree that the construction of joint spaces for stimuli and subjects is a prerequisite for theory testing (see Budge & Farlie 1978; Knutsen 1989), especially since most theories of electoral competition focus on the interactions between voters and parties.

The third reason for using unfolding analysis is that we put ourselves in a position where we actually can make plausible interpretations of the party spaces that pops out of the analyses. Because the unfolding technique yields coordinates for *both* parties and individuals in the same space, we are able to make extensive use of external data to give more substantive and reliable interpretations of the spatial point configurations. We do this by bringing information on individuals' positions in the party space back into the original data set and using it in subsequent analyses. That way we can actually test to what extent the unfolded space is structured with labels such as 'left' and 'right'.

Fourth, the unfolding procedure is tailored to handle data on individuals' *evaluations* of political stimuli. Voters party evaluations are the only input into the scaling model. These types of data have been collected in the form of sympathy rating scales or feeling thermometers in a large number of surveys, and combined with the application of uni- and multidimensional unfolding techniques they make comparative research a potentially promising venture.

Unfortunately, the data set at hand does not include evaluative measures such as a dislike-like scale. Instead, we will use probability-to-vote measures as a substitute for party evaluations in the unfolding analyses. Respondents were asked the probability that he/she would vote for each party: "*How probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties?*". A ten point scale ranging from 1 'not at all probable' to 10 'very probable' was used. Probability-to-vote instruments such as this are growing popular among electoral researchers in Europe. One should bear in mind that this instrument measure not only the individual's assessment of the probability to vote for different parties (the evaluative component that we want to measure here), but also, and to an unknown degree, the probability to participate in the elec-

tion *at all* (which can vary a lot from system to system). One can also raise serious doubts whether terms like "probable" or "likely" can travel across the language barriers as easily as the more general terms of "like" and "dislike". The following analyses are carried out bearing these considerations in mind.

In this particular study, we will only apply the unidimensional version of unfolding analysis. Since we know that many European party spaces are better represented with more than one dimension, this restriction must be justified. The most important reason is that the unidimensional unfolding model closely resembles the classic Downsian spatial theory of elections. Since we build our argument upon the notion that simplicity of belief systems is necessary for successful political representation, the choice of a unidimensional model is natural. Secondly, while attractive, multidimensional unfolding algorithms is very data demanding. To obtain robust solutions one must have at least eight political stimuli for each polity. Since party systems often contain less parties than eight, one must perform multidimensional scaling analyses on both party and leader evaluations. Right now it is hard to gather comparable data for all EU member states. Thirdly, testing whether the preferential structure is unfoldable in one dimension is often a first natural step. True, misfits between data and model may volunteer a search for a second or even a third dimension in data. This search is often very fruitful, since even in many strongly unidimensional systems (such as Sweden), a second dimension will allow more nuanced conclusions of how voters perceive the political world (see Oscarsson 1998).

Testing how well a Downsian model fit a set of party preference orderings is in fact just a more indirect, but sophisticated way of assessing the degree of perceptual agreement among voters. Actors' common perceptions is a key assumptions in Downs theory. Thus, if an electorate do not base their party evaluations on a common perception of the party space, the unfolding model cannot be very successful. The less perceptual agreement, the weaker fit between data and model.

The unfolding model fit measure, the coefficient of scalability (H) tell us to what extent the voters' preference orderings have been produced by one common latent set of principles, i.e. an ideological dimension. The H-measure vary from -1 to +1 and show to what extent the responses to sti-

muli is in agreement with a perfect dichotomous unfolding model (see table 2). The unfolding procedure try all possible orderings of the parties and selects the unfolding model that fit best to data, i.e. the party ordering with the largest H-value.

**Table 2** Preferential Structure under a dichotomous unidimensional unfolding model with no scaling errors (0=party not picked, 1=party picked).

	party A	party B	party C	party D	party E	party F
respondent 1	0	1	1	0	0	0
respondent 2	1	1	1	0	0	0
respondent 3	0	0	0	1	1	0
respondent 4	0	0	1	1	0	0
respondent 5	1	1	1	0	0	0
respondent 6	0	0	0	0	1	1

Of course, the unfolding procedure itself cannot tell us much about the content of that ideological dimension, since it only produces an ordering of the parties along the dimension (a so called qualitative j-scale), i.e the ordering that fit best to the original probability-to-vote data.

However, we can use the unfolded j-scale to assign positions to respondents (van Schuur & Post 1990). Each individual will get a position along the same ordered dimension as the parties. For interpretative purposes, individual scores on the apprehended scale can be correlated with external data, such as respondents self placements along the left-right scale that we analysed earlier. The higher correlation between the i-scale and left-right self placements, the higher probability that left right ideology actually *was* the latent principle that produced the structure of political preferences in the first place.

The goal of the unfolding analyses is to find the best possible unidimensional unfolding scale (j-scale). For any given set of party preferences, there are often more than one plausible solution to the unidimensional unfolding problem. The guiding principle in this search was that each unfolding scale should include all main parties, if possible. The recovered uni-

dimensional scale should be common to as a large proportion of voters as possible. Plausible models where all the large parties are included have been selected over models with better fit but where one of the relevant national parties are left out.

What countries within the European Union corresponds most closely to the downsian idea of a one-dimensional political space where all parties' positions are perceived at the same way by all voters? According to the unfolding results, Portugal, Denmark, Italy and Sweden come closest to the ideal of a simple, unidimensional space that facilitates the process political representation (H=.89, .65, .63, and .60).

For most countries, there is possible to find unidimensional unfolding scales with reasonable good fit. But to what extent is the recovered unidimensional scale actually a left-right dimension? Of course, the first and most obvious answer can be obtained by comparing the unfolded ordering of the parties with the party orderings acquired in the earlier analysis of voters perceptions of left-right party positions (see figure 1). For some countries like Sweden, Portugal and Greece, the party ordering obtained from unfolding analysis reflects perfectly the ordering of the parties obtained from citizen's perceptions of party positions along the left-right scales. The unfolding of french citizens' evaluative judgments of parties show a unidimensional solution that only in part reflect a left-right party ordering, since right-wing nationalist parties are positioned in the center of the unidimensional unfolding model,

*Note to table3:* Only respondents that assigned voting probabilities (PTVs) to all parties are included in the unfolding analyses. Since a dichotomous unfolding model (MUDFOLD) was employed, cut-points for 'picked' party had to be selected. A party was considered 'picked' by a respondent if the party scored 6-10 on the ten-point PTV-scale. This range of evaluative response had to be adjusted to find better j-scales: <sup>a)</sup> range 7-10, <sup>b)</sup> range 5-10, <sup>c)</sup> range 4-10 <sup>d)</sup> range 2-10. There are a number of possible reasons why a stimuli (party) may not be unfoldable, such as if the stimuli is too popular or too impopular, if a stimuli is very close to another stimuli, or if a stimuli does not fit the scale (the responses to the stimuli was guided by a completely other principle, or ideology, than all other stimuli).

**Table 3 Results from unfolding analyses of European voters' party preferences.**

party system	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
	Total # of parties	# of respondents	qualitative j-scale obtained from unfolding analysis	# of parties in J-scale	model fit (H)	J-scale × L-R party placements (rho)	I-scale × L-R self placements (Pearsons r)
PORTUGAL	5	416 <sup>c)</sup>	BE-CDU-PS-PSD-CDS/PP	5	.89	1.00	.51
DENMARK #1	12	919 <sup>a)</sup>	JB-FMEU-Soc-SocDem-RL-CD-LIB-CON (PP, RG, ChrPP and Prog not unfoldable)	8	.65	.29	.53
ITALY	9	3043 <sup>c)</sup>	LN-FI-AN-BONINO-CCD-Dem-PPI-DS-RC	9	.63	.80	.55
SWEDEN	7	462	LP-SocD-Gr-C-LIB-ChrD-CON	7	.60	1.00	.71
GREECE	7	456 <sup>c)</sup>	KKE-SYN-AHKKI-PASOK-ND (POLA and LIB not included)	5	.51	1.00	.64
FRANCE	7	670 <sup>a)</sup>	V-PS/PRG-PC-FN/MN-RPF-RPR-UDF	7	.50	.50	.64
SPAIN	6	821	EH-PNV-CiU-IU-PSOE-PP	6	.50	.37	.46
FINLAND (no RKP)	7	353 <sup>a)</sup>	Left-SocDem-Green-CON-Center (Chr Dem and SPP not unfoldable)	5	.50	.90	.52
BRITAIN	7		LAB-LIB-Green-UKIP-Con (SNP and Plaid Cumry not unfoldable)	5	.50	.30	.35
NETHERLANDS	10	931 <sup>b)</sup>	SP-GL-PvdA-D'66-VVD-CDA-RPF (SGP, CD and GPV not unfoldable)	7	.47	.88	.55
IRELAND	7	427 <sup>d)</sup>	SF-DL-Green-LAB-FF-FG-ProgDem	7	.47	.79	.25
DENMARK #2	12	919 <sup>d)</sup>	RG-Soc-SocDem-RL-CD-ChrPP-LIB-CON-Prog (JB, PP and FMEU not included)	9	.47	.90	.54
AUSTRIA	6	443	LIF-Grüne-SPÖ-ÖVP-FPÖ (CSA not unfoldable)	5	.45	.90	.38
WALLONIA	5	198	PS-Ecolo-PRL/FDF/MCC-PSC-FN	5	.44	.90	.49
LUXEMBURG (no ADR)	6	232 <sup>b)</sup>	GAL-DL-DG-LSAP/POS-L-DP/PD-CSV/PCS	6	.43	.42	.33
GERMANY	6	967	PDS-B90/DG-SPD-FDP-CDU/CSU (Rep not unfoldable)	5	.40	1.00	.47
FLANDERS	6	264 <sup>a)</sup>	CVP-Agalev-VLD-VUID21-VB (SP not unfoldable)	5	.40	.60	.31

Note: The table show the final results of the unidimensional unfolding analysis of European voters' probability-to-vote assessments. The MUDFOLD program was used to perform the analyses. (a) the number of parties that were included in the survey, (b) the number of respondents that gave a probability-to-vote assessment for all parties. (c) the qualitative j-scale of unfoldable parties. (d) the number of parties in the final j-scale. (e) badness-of-fit measure for the unfolding scale (Loevingers H). (f) Spearman correlation between the ordering of the parties along the j-scale obtained from unfolding analyses and the left-right ordering of the parties (see Appendix for details). (g) the Pearson correlation between the individual scale scores (i-scales) obtained from unfolding analyses and the respondents left-right self-placements.

Another way to measure compability of the unfolded j-scales and the left-right positions of citizens is to calculate correlations between individuals scale scores (i-scales) and their own self-placements along the left-right scales. In the Swedish case, there is total agreement between the two party orderings (Spearman's rho=1.0), and the correlations between Swedish voters scale scores and self placements along the left-right dimension is impressively high (Pearson's r=.71). Thus, we are pretty confident that voters left-right ideologies is responsible of having structured Swedish voters party preferences and that the recovered unidimensional unfolding model actually is a left-right dimension. Compared to the other European party systems, the Swedish system seem to be among the most unidimensional and well structured in Europe. It corresponds well to Thomassens idea of a simple, unidimensional belief system that facilitate political representation.

In the Danish unfolding analysis (#1), it was difficult to find a solution that incorporated all twelve parties. The most successful unfolding model (H=.65) did not include some of the smallest parties. However, the ordering of the parties does not resemble a left-right ordering at all. Instead, the two most EU-critical parties (JB and FMEU) holds the extreme positions at one end of the scale and EU-positive parties hold the extreme position at the other end. This scale is actually more of a pro-con EU dimension than a left-right scale (Pearson's r=.53). Taking the two con EU-parties out of the analysis (Denmark #2), the model fit go down, but the left-right correlation remain on the same level. This suggests that no unidimensional model can tell the whole story about danish citizens party preferences. The same is true for other party systems as well.

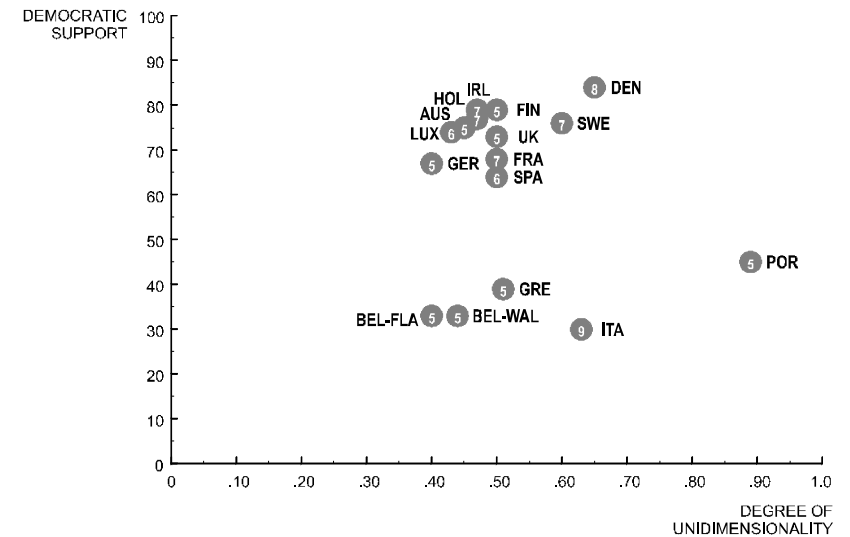
### Do simple party systems produce higher political legitimacy?

According to Jacques Thomassens hypothesis, simplicity produce legitimacy. The idea is that in polities with a strong unidimensional tendency and where the major parties have stable, easily recognizable ideological positions along a left-right continuum, the process of political representation will be more successful than in multidimensional polities where parties compete along a larger number of ideological dimensions. The obvious reason is simply that it will be easier for parties and voters to communicate political preferences.

We can operationalize simplicity as the degree of unidimensionality by using the fit measure from the preceding unfolding analyses. The higher H-value, the more the structure of citizens' political preferences are in harmony with the idea of a perfect unidimensional Downsian party system. The bold hypothesis is that the more unidimensional the party space, the more successful the elite-mass communication of political preferences. In systems that enjoy high levels of unidimensionality there is a higher probability for a well-functioning political representation, which in turn can reproduce political legitimacy in the system. But is this true?

To fulfil our goal, we will need some measure of political legitimacy for each EU country. In the contemporary literature, the most common measure of political legitimacy is simply the percentage of citizens supporting the democratic system (Norris 1999). Political legitimacy is then operationalized in terms of overall system support. Here, we will follow this line of research. In the 1999 European Election Study, and in the Eurobarometer 52 (1999), the respondents were asked "How satisfied are you with how democracy works in your country?".

**Figure 3** The Degree of Uni-Dimensionality of the Party System and General Satisfaction of Democracy in EU15, 1999.



Note: Measures of democratic support (Satisfaction with Democracy) are percentage of citizens responding "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied". The aggregate data on Democratic support for respective country is taken from the same dataset, EES99. The degree of unidimensionality is fit-measures taken from the uni-dimensional unfolding analyses of citizens preferences for national political parties (Probability to Vote-measure) (see table 3).

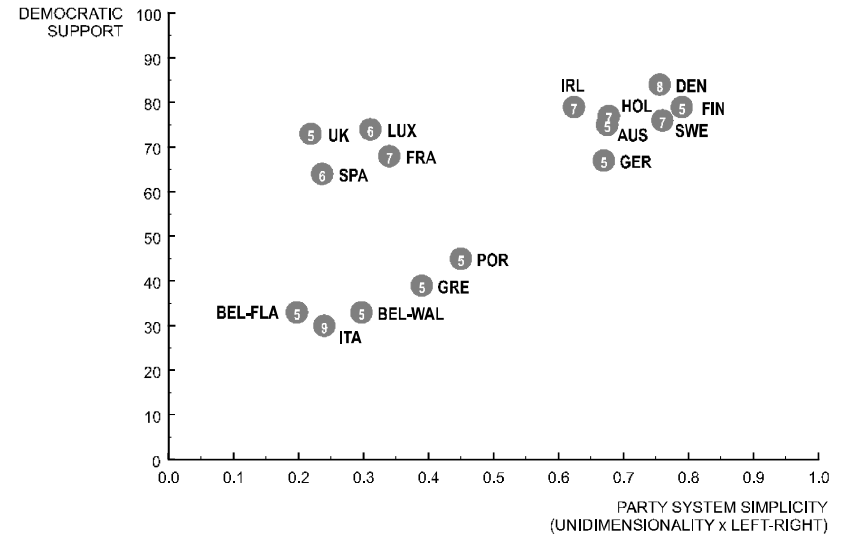
In figure 3, we plotted the EU-polities according to the degree of unidimensionality and general satisfaction of democracy. We expect this correlation to be positive, i.e. that simplicity and democratic support will go hand in hand. Since it is easier to get high H-values with a five-party than an eight-party model, it is necessary to take the number of parties into account when analyzing the correlation between the degree of unidimensionality and system support. The number of parties present in the unfolding model are also shown in figure 1.

Overall, we find only weak support for Thomassens boldly stated simplicity-hypothesis ( $r=+.36$ ). Some countries do score relatively high on both

degree of unidimensionality and satisfaction of democracy (Sweden and Denmark) and some countries score relatively low on the same dimensions (Belgium and Greece). The really deviant case is Portugal, which has a high degree of unidimensionality in the party system but do not enjoy very high levels of democratic support.

As mentioned earlier, Jacques Thomassens simplicity hypothesis is not only about unidimensionality, but also about the strength of the left-right dimension itself. The idea is that just unidimensionality will not do the job -- a simple and straightforward common political language is an important prerequisite for effective communication of preferences between citizens and leaders. Therefore, we needed to construct a measure of party system simplicity that also include the degree of "left-rightishness" of the party system. By combining the fit-measure of the unfolding analysis (H-values) with the correlation of parties' positions along the left-right scale and along the j-scale (obtained from unfolding analysis). The higher the correlation between the party orderings, the more important is the left-right dimension for structuring citizens party preferences. In figure 4, we see the results of the correlation analysis.

**Figure 4 Party System Simplicity and General Satisfaction of Democracy in EU15, 1999.**



Note: Measures of democratic support (Satisfaction with Democracy) are the percentage of citizens responding "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied". The aggregate data on Democratic support for respective country is taken from the same dataset, EES99. The measure of Party System Simplicity is the product of the degree of unidimensionality (column e) and the spearman correlation between the respondents perceived left-right ordering of national parties and the party ordering along the j-scale obtained from unfolding analyses (column f).

Factoring in an interpretative element (left-right) into the simplicity-measure produces a much clearer pattern that really strengthen the argument that party system simplicity may be a key explanation to why levels of democratic support and political legitimacy vary across countries within the EU ( $r=+.65$ ). Thus, the argument here is that unidimensionality itself may not be enough to produce high levels of general satisfaction with democracy. In party systems that enjoy high levels of unidimensionality *and* are strongly structured according to an ideological left-right dimension, political communication and representation works better and there are higher levels of democratic support. If this is true, future political representation within EU may work better if the EU party system is not only unidimensional, but also well structured along a traditional left-right dimension.

### A Pan-European Party System?

The on-going evaluations of how political representation works in the European Union are not very enthusiastic. In fact, the European parliamentary elections can meet very few demands of popular models of political representation, such as the responsible party model (Schmitt & Thomassen 1999). Many scholars agree that, aside from the implementation of a common electoral system, the development of a well structured pan-European party system is one important prerequisite for a better functioning political representation in the European Union.

The analyses in this chapter confirm that the Left-Right dimension still is the sole viable candidate of structuring a unitary pan-European party system, at least in a near future. In most European countries, the Left-Right dimension is the strongest structuring force on citizens' political preferences.

However, there are some empirical evidence that the prospects for a unidimensional pan-European party system structured according to a left-right conflict are not too bright. For instance, the degree of perceptual agreement of parties' left-right positions is still very low in some EU electorates. Furthermore, there are no evidence of any development towards increasing agreement over parties' left-right positions in EU.

The final question was whether a unidimensional party system at the EU level actually can produce a higher degrees of political legitimacy at the EU-level. In this chapter, we have tested a simplicity-hypothesis on the national level. The results show support for this hypothesis, i.e. within EU, support for the Democratic system is somewhat higher in party systems with a simple unidimensional left-right structure.

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Note to Appendix A: EPP=European People's Party/European Democrats; PES=Party of European Socialists; ELDR=European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party; GR/EFA=European Federation of Green Parties/European Free Alliance; EUL=European Unitary Left/Nordic Green Left; UEN=Union for a Europe of Nations; EDD=Europe of Democracies and Diversities; NI=Non-affiliated. Information about abbreviations, election results and number of parliamentary seats originate from the following website: <http://www.agora.stm.it/elections/europeanunion.htm>.

## Appendix A

Country	Party Label	Party Name	European party group affiliation	Seats in EUP	Electoral Support EPE'99	Mean LR position	Percept. Agreement
AUS	Grüne	Die Grünen — Die Grünen Alternative	GR/EFA	2	9.2	3.45	0.50530
	LIF	Liberales Forum	-	0	2.6	4.27	0.35390
	SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	PES	7	31.8	4.54	0.43332
	ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei	EPP	7	30.6	5.82	0.49490
	CSA	Christlich-Soziale Allianz	-	0	1.5	5.95	-0.03076
	FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	NI	5	23.5	7.12	0.31166
DK	RG	Enhedslisten – De Rød-Grønne	-	0	0.0	2.40	0.67082
	FMEU	Folkebevægelsen mod EU	EDD	1	7.3	3.28	0.48505
	Soc	Socialistisk Folkeparti	EUL	1	7.1	3.35	0.54297
	PP	Dansk Folkeparti	UEN	1	5.8	3.40	0.45830
	Rad-Left	Radikale Venstre	ELDR	3	9.1	4.99	0.66701
	SD	Socialdemokratiet	PES	3	16.5	5.01	0.62655
	Chr	Kristelig Folkeparti	-	0	2.0	5.56	0.44544
	CD	Centrum-Demokraterne	-	0	3.5	5.65	0.57305
	Con	Konservative Folkeparti	EPP	1	8.6	6.95	0.40992
	Lib	Venstre	ELDR	5	23.3	7.22	0.43853
	JB	Junibevegelsen	EDD	3	16.1	7.24	0.31964
	Prog	Fremskridtspartiet	-	0	0.0	7.37	0.36312
	FIN	Left	Vasemmistoliitto	EUL	1	9.1	2.66
Soc Dem		Socialdemokraterna	PES	3	17.8	4.13	0.30326
Green		Vihreät	GR/EFA	2	13.4	5.40	0.58478
SPP		PS Perussuomalaiset	ELDR	1	6.8	5.87	0.09418
Center		Keskusta	ELDR	4	21.3	5.91	0.61844
Chr Dem		Kristilliset	EPP	1	2.4	5.96	0.44807
RKP		RKP	-	0	0.0	6.44	0.30008
CON		Kokoomus	EPP	4	25.3	7.65	0.46657
FRA	L-O-LCR	Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire	EUL	5	5.2	1.97	0.78311
	PC	Parti Communiste Français Independants	EUL	2	6.8	2.33	0.70253
	PS-PRG	Parti Socialiste	PES	18	22.0	3.55	0.57701
	Verts	Les Verts	GR/EFA	9	9.7	3.81	0.58702
	UDF	Union pour la Démocratie Française	EPP	9	9.3	6.73	0.50188
	DL	Démocratie Libérale*	EPP	4	12.8	6.88	0.47095
	RPR	Rassemblement pour la République*	EPP	8	12.8	7.24	0.56023
	RPF	Rassemblement pour la France	UEN	13	13.0	7.91	0.54697
	FN/MN	Front National/Mouvement National	NI	5	9.0	9.15	0.75721
GER	PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus	EUL	6	5.8	3.32	0.45171
	B90/DG	Buendnis 90/Die Gruenen	GR/EFA	7	6.4	3.51	0.48537
	SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	PES	33	30.7	4.18	0.50678
	FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei	-	0	3.0	5.29	0.46876
	CDU/CSU	Christlich Demokratische Union	EPP	53	48.7	6.46	0.32443
	Rep	Die Republikaner	-	0	1.7	7.52	0.17989

Country	Party Label	Party Name	European Party Group Affiliation	Seats in EUP	Electoral Support EPE'99	Mean LR position	Percept. Agreement
GRE	KKE	Kommunistiko Komma Ellados	EUL	3	8.7	2.16	0.73194
	SYNASPISMOS	Sinaspismos tis Aristeras ke ti Proodu	EUL	2	5.2	3.16	0.50579
	AHKKI	Dimokratiki Kinsoniku Kinima	EUL	2	6.9	4.31	0.47621
	PASOK	Panellino Socialistiko Kinima	PES	9	32.9	5.43	0.04254
	POLA	Politiki Anixi	-	0	2.3	6.15	0.11037
	LIB	FILELEFTHERI	-	0	1.6	6.27	0.16220
	ND	Nea Dimokratia	EPP	9	36.0	8.33	0.60690
IRL		Democratic Left	-	0	.	3.24	0.50292
		Sinn Fein	-	0	.	3.53	0.40852
	LAB	Labour	PES	1	8.8	4.36	0.52469
	GP	Green Party	GR/EFA	2	6.7	4.45	0.40022
		Progressive Democrats	-	0	.	5.47	0.20734
	FG	Fine Gael	EPP	4	24.6	6.12	0.31592
FF	Fianna Fail	EUN	6	38.7	6.61	0.33389	
ITA	RC	Rifondazione Comunista	EUL	4	4.3	2.43	0.67864
		Comunisti Italiani	-	0	.	2.64	0.63279
	DS	Democratici di Sinistra	PES	15	17.4	3.45	0.44803
	Verdi	Federazione dei Verdi	GR/EFA	2	1.8	3.87	0.48682
	SDI	Socialisti Democratici Italiani	PES	2	2.1	4.14	0.59744
	Dem	I Democratici	ELDR	6	7.7	4.44	0.52165
	PPI	Partito Popolare Italiano	PPE	4	4.3	4.46	0.55097
	UDEUR	Unione Democratici Europei	PPE	1	1.6	4.59	0.46140
	CDU	Cristiani Democratici Uniti	PPE	2	2.1	4.81	0.66786
	LN	Lega Nord	ELDR (1)/NI	4	4.5	5.19	0.08959
	CCD	Centro Cristiano Democratico	PPE	2	2.6	5.22	0.57134
	BONINO	Lista Panella/Bonino	NI	7	8.5	5.25	0.44390
	FI	Forza Italia	PPE	22	25.2	6.72	0.29614
	MS-FI	Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore	NI	1	1.6	6.99	0.15373
	AN	Alleanza Nazionale	UEN	9	10.3	7.22	0.34981
LUX	CSV/PCS	Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei	EPP	2	31.9	3.18	0.41678
	DP/PD	Demokratesch Partei	ELDR	1	20.8	6.70	0.67699
	LSAP/POSL	Lëtzeburger Sozialistesesch Aarbechterpartei	PES	2	23.2	5.73	0.57511
	ADR		-	0	.	4.42	0.12496
	Déi Greng	Déi Gréng	-	1	10.7	5.34	0.53552
	Déi Lenk	Déi Lenk	-	0	.	4.51	0.83274
	GAL		GR/EFA	0	.	1.72	0.50157
NL	SP	Socialistische Partij	EUL	1	5.0	3.21	0.50879
	GL	Groen Links	GR/EFA	4	11.9	3.44	0.48718
	PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid	PES	6	20.1	4.52	0.47293
	D'66	Democraten 66	ELDR	2	5.8	4.97	0.69687
	SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	EDD	1	11.9	5.99	0.16569
	CDA	Christen Democratisch Appèl	EPP	9	26.9	6.06	0.50640
	RPF	Reformatorissh Politieke Federatie	EDD	1	8.7	6.06	0.22725
	GPV	Gereformeerd Politek Verbond	EDD	1	11.9	6.13	0.25280
	VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	ELDR	6	19.7	7.01	0.44593
	CD	CD	-	0	.	7.16	0.07120

Country	Party Label	Party Name	European Party Group Affiliation	Seats in EUP	Electoral Support EPE'99	Mean LR position	Percept. Agreement
POR	BE	Bloco de Esquerda	-	0	1.8	1.42	0.90401
	CDU	Coligacao Democrática Unitária	EUL	2	10.3	1.98	0.82569
	PS	Partido Socialista	PES	12	43.1	4.65	0.75569
	PSD	Partido Social Democrata	EPP	9	31.1	6.92	0.67063
	CDS/PP	CDS/Partido Popular	EUN	2	8.2	8.22	0.63138
ESP	IU	Izquierda Unida	EUL	4	5.8	2.37	0.69533
	EH	Euskal Herritarrok	NI	1	1.5	3.06	0.43051
	PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español	PES	24	35.2	4.15	0.42435
	PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco	GR/EFA	1	2.9	5.10	0.13711
	CiU	Convergencia i Unió	ELDR	2	4.4	5.40	0.05929
PP	Partido Popular	EPP	27	39.8	7.97	0.55057	
SWE	Left	Left Party	EUL	3	15.8	2.16	0.74071
	Soc Dem	Social Democratic Party	PES	6	26.1	4.07	0.46367
	Greens	Environmentalists	GR/EFA	2	9.4	4.22	0.52187
	Center	Center Party	ELDR	1	6.0	5.22	0.57706
	Liberals	Liberal Peoples Party	ELDR	3	13.8	6.15	0.50455
	ChrDem	Christian Democrats	EPP	2	7.7	6.64	0.39478
Con	Conservatives	EPP	5	20.6	8.34	0.60232	
BEL-FLA	Agalev	Agalev	GR/EFA	2	7.5	3.56	0.39053
	SP	Socialistische Partei	PES	2	8.8	3.69	0.38914
	CVP	Christelijke Volksparlei	EPP	3	13.5	4.15	0.30581
	VU-ID21	Volksunie-ID21	GR/EFA	2	7.6	4.79	0.62500
	VDL	Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	ELDR	3	13.6	5.02	0.52079
	VB	Vlaams Blok	NI	2	9.4	8.04	0.52761
BEL-WAL	PS	Parti Socialiste	PES	3	9.6	3.22	0.48767
	Ecolo	Ecolo	GR/EFA	3	8.4	4.14	0.30074
	PSC	Parti Social Chrétien	EPP	1	4.9	5.20	0.10778
	PRL/FDF/MCC	Parti Réformateur Libéral/Front Democratique des Francophones/Mouvement des Citoyens pour le Changement	ELDR/EPP	3	10.0	6.02	0.13596
FN	Front National	-	0	1.5	8.79	0.58691	
GB	PC	Plaid Cumry	GR/EFA	2	1.8	3.54	0.37336
	SNP	SNP	GR/EFA	2	2.7	3.81	0.32868
	Green	Green Party	GR/EFA	2	6.2	3.86	0.46891
	LIB	Liberal Democrats	ELDR	10	12.7	4.61	0.55047
	UKIP	UKIP	EDD	3	7.0	4.97	0.01985
	LAB	Labour	PES	29	28.0	4.98	0.29554
CON	Conservatives	EPP	36	35.8	6.41	0.18225	
N-IRL	Sinn Fein		-	.	.	2.81	0.51764
	SD/Lab	Social Democrats and Lab. Party	PES	1	1.0	4.23	0.41414
	Alliance		-	.	.	4.52	0.57667
	PUP	Progressive Unionist Party	-	.	.	5.57	0.36760
	UKUP	UK Unionist Party	-	.	.	6.74	0.10432
	UUP	Ulster Unionist Party	EPP	1	0.8	6.78	0.25474
	DUP	Democratic Unionist Party	NI	1	1.0	7.09	0.27843