

Europe at Stake during First European Parliament Elections Organized in an Enlarged Europe

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Abstract:

This paper's primary goal is to theorize and measure the potential dimensions impacting on voter's decisions during the 2004 EP elections organized in Europe. Explanatory models on EP electoral behavior in old member states Europe focus on 'the second order election model' whose major statement is that EP elections are 'not real' European contests but mainly national contests. However, with respect to the newly democratized member states, 'the SOE election model' does not yield accurate predictions. Moreover recent research on the last two waves of EP elections challenges the perspective that EP elections are strictly national affairs, even from the old Europe's perspective. This paper builds on previous research on EP elections and EU referendums and posits that there is more room for Europe to matter in the context of the post-communist party system. In such recent member states, the notion of 'Europe', understood as 'Europhile attitudes' towards the EU institutions and the EU as a political system, 'egocentric Europeanness'-- reflecting satisfaction with democracy in the EU, and especially 'national Europeanness' (reflecting voters' perceptions with regard to country's benefits accruing from EU membership) has a stronger impact on the decision to participate at EP elections than second order considerations.

Keywords: EP elections, post-communist context, Europe as first order effect

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Introduction

“Yes, I am a regular voter, I came to vote at European Parliament (EP) elections because voting is my civic duty, but, at the same time, I believe in European institutions. I am positive that things will be better for us, now, that we are finally in Europe (...) and Romania will have a lot to gain from the European Union (EU) membership. Hence, I came today to make sure that the right people are going to Brussels to represent us” --

--this was the dominant answer received in 2009, in Romania, when I was administering an exit poll on Election Day with the goal of discerning among voters' motivations for political participation at first EP elections.

Do these positive views on the EU and the utilitarian perspectives attached the act of voting in EP elections have any effect on the decision to participate in the first place? Or is this Euro-optimism as dominant among the eligible electorate who decided to stay home on Election Day as it is among the active participants? Moreover, are electorates' motivations in new member state, such as Romania, systematically different than electorates' motivations in the old member states? The literature on EP elections systematically agrees that 'EP elections are national affairs', where national issues determine voting participation and vote choices. From this theoretical perspective, arguments such as the ones above, that European attitudes might influence vote participation certainly has merit, as it might reveal interesting dynamics between an electorate already accustomed with the EP elections as 'lackluster affairs' vs. an inexperienced one.

The answers to these questions have important implications for understanding arguments of voter apathy and the dynamics of electoral behavior in EU states. If Europe matters for political participation, this implies that there is a connection between citizens' attitudes

towards Europe and EU governance that overwhelmingly has been said not to exist or made difference mostly in affecting voting behavior related to switching and defecting from governmental parties. Also, understanding regional dynamics is important in that if EP elections are more about Europe in the recently democratized states vs. the old Europe, then new theories of European electoral behavior should be developed to adjust for the differential impact.

Explanatory models on EP electoral behavior in Western Europe focus on the 'second order national election thesis' whose major statement is that EP elections are not real European contests but mainly second order national contests (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). In this sense, voters have the opportunity to behave differently than in national contests, yielding overall lower turnout rates and systematic large governmental parties' losses complemented with small, new, radical parties' winnings (Hix and Marsh, 2007). Yet, behavior in post-communist states does not follow the nicely ordered pattern underscored above. EP turnout is much lower in new member states overall than in older members, large governmental parties' losses do not follow the cyclical argument, and voters do not cast protest votes against their incumbent governments (Schmitt 2005, Koepke and Ringe 2006). The lack of party institutionalization in the region, the high volatility of the post-communist democracies, the weak party attachments when compared to Western Europe, were considered as main culprits for failing the second order theory to elicit similar behavior in Eastern Europe as it did in Western Europe (Schmitt, 2005).

This paper builds on the argument that the different party system in Eastern Europe matters and affects behavior at EP elections. I posit therefore that because of the absence of long-term partisanship commitments to parties, or of other strong membership ties that might substitute the need for party identification, there is more room for 'Europe', as a short term issue, elevated by the campaign context, to matter and affect behavior in the post-communist context. This study, therefore, operationalizes and tests the argument that 'Europe matters' using a pooled cross-sectional data from 22 EU member states during the 2004 EP elections. The quantitative analyses, controlling for background socio-

economic variables, in addition to national, second order indicators, support the hypotheses.

Theoretical approach for explaining political participation

Second order approaches and their alternative

The second order literature has surprisingly paid little attention to the arguments of why people do not participate at EP elections. For instance, country analyses that seek to disentangle interdependencies between national and European arenas affecting voting behavior have a rather minimal focus on low turnout, mostly because it is expected. Such analyses are mostly related to campaigns, mainstream parties' positions with regard to European issues, parties' aggregate winnings and losses, and voter switching at the individual level (see for instance the country chapters of the edited volume by Eijk and Franklin 1996).

The cross-national studies concerned specifically with why people vote at EP elections, use either aggregate level data for explaining decreasing overall trends in EP turnout from the first EP election of 1979 up to last waves (Franklin 2007) or use individual level data for understanding the 'hidden messages' of abstentions (Schmitt and van der Eijk 1996). The major conclusion of such studies, however, is that 'Europe hardly matters' (Schmitt and Mannheimer 1991, Franklin 2007). 'EC- related attitudes (...) play no significant role in the explanation of electoral participation in European elections' was the major finding of a comprehensive study that considered electoral participation data for all EU member states in 1989 and 1994 EP elections (Franklin, Van der Eijk, and Openhuis 1996). In a more recent study on electoral participation at the 1999 EP elections, covering all EU member states of that time, the point that 'Europe hardly matters' is reinforced--abstention from EP elections does not carry an anti-EU sentiment. Therefore, the decision to abstain, was said, is based on 'other grounds' than own evaluations of the EU (Schmitt and Van der Eijk 2007).

Since it was established that Europe does not matter for political participation, the alternative that 'Europe matters' was mostly introduced in relation to explaining individual level behavior and defection from government parties (Marsh 2008, Carrubba and Timpone 2005). At the aggregate level, for instance, Hix and Marsh (2007), using data from 6 elections, demonstrate that large parties lose votes regardless of their position on either left-right ideological or European dimensions. 'Europe matters' more however, in the referendum literature, where first order European attitudes decisively trumped in effects second order considerations (Glencross and Trechsel, 2007).

Yet, a recent study using data from the most recent EP elections of 1999 and 2004, and only indirectly concerned with turnout, posits that Europe matters at EP elections. More specifically, 'EU attitude differences' on the issue of European integration, between habitual voters who voted for governmental parties at previous national elections and the governmental preferred parties, has a negative effect on political participation. Moreover, it is argued, it's not only the distance between the two different ideal points on EU issues of parties and habitual voters that matters for abstention; a directional specification is added, such that voters who are less supportive than their party of European integration' are more likely to abstain at EP elections (Hobolt, Spoon and Tilley, 2008). Such an analysis, however, is build upon the assumption that habitual voters' preferences are stable from one legislative election to another, to the extent that, distances on the EU dimension, between a voter and his/hers assumed to be the same preferred party at the EP election, can be calculated.

Party systems characteristics

The environment of former communist states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 is, however, characterized by highly instable electoral markets from both parties' and voters' perspectives. At the party level, they frequently split, dissolve, or do not stand for clear identifiable values, and do not permit clear choices. About 5.6 new parties emerged on average in the region since regime change at each legislative election, with an average vote share of 19% (Tavits 2007). In Estonia or Latvia, for instance, new parties have formed the government or participated in governmental coalitions shortly after, while in

Western Europe only one new party emerged on average for the period of 1945-1991, winning only 2% of the vote (Hug 2001). There is no study yet on the new party entry at EP elections, but one could assume that given the 'low stakes of elections' and probably the low incentive for mainstream parties to invest resources in such second order contests, the costs of new party entry decreases compared to costs at national elections; this possibility might indicate that more new parties could use EP elections as 'window of opportunity' for testing the electoral markets. On the voters' side, a high percentage of the electorate has not developed loyalty towards any of the existing parties, such that high proportions of .40 or .70 constantly acknowledge in surveys that they have no party attachment what so ever. Around EP elections, which take place within a national electoral cycle, only 10-20 % of the voters are closed to the governmental parties that are governing at the time of EP election. It happens, however, that coalitions put together as the outcomes of the legislative elections to be not in place any more around the EP elections¹. Yet, despite the parties' adaptability of changing power relations without organizing new elections, the electorate's percentage identifying with the coalitions' parties is rather minimal.

In this context of high volatility, the highest among the democratizing regions, which stems from both sides of voters and parties, assuming stable preferences for voters from one election to another in order to measure voter switching or strategic behavior at EP elections based on the previous vote at the national election is simply too strong of a statement. In this context, however, where parties do not provide stable linkages between states and societies, there is more room for short term incentives to affect electoral behaviors, such as charismatic politics (which dominates the region), policies, candidate images at national elections and, why not, of Europe. To the extent that the EU political system, its institutions and governance, are mentioned in the campaign, Europe can galvanize voters for political participation. This is more the case since the post communist public is assumed to be one of the least knowledgeable about Europe, and yet, one of the most optimistic about 'returning to Europe'. Is this optimism, then, reflected in voters' decisions to participate at first EP elections organized in the new member states?

¹ This is the case for Poland 2004, Latvia and Czech Republic in 2009.

This paper addresses thus the question of whether European attitudes matter for political participation in recent members states, i.e. states that joined the EU in 2004. In opposition to other studies that focused on turnout, this paper is not concerned with explaining decreasing turnout trends from one EP wave to another or within countries variations. Building on work which suggests that 'Europe matters' for political participation mostly in a EU referendum context, the paper's primary goal is to theorize and measure possible European dimensions impacting on voters' decisions during the most recent EP elections of 2004 and 2009. The 'European dimension' is considered against the second order characteristics, understood as national/ domestic influences affecting political participation.

Thus, the theoretical model incorporates EU related dimensions of Europhile attitudes towards the EU institutions and the EU democracy, in addition to 'national Europeanness' with regard to voters' perceptions of national benefits accruing from their country's membership to the EU). The second order model includes variables for four sub-dimensions--economic evaluations, attitudes towards the national democratic system, approval of government's record, and attachment to governmental parties.

The hypotheses to be tested in this study are formally stated as follows:

H1. Political participation at EP elections in new member states is primarily determined by attitudes towards Europe, all other things being equal.

H1 a. Positive attitudes toward Europe will increase political participation.

H2. To the extent that 'Europe matters' as well in the old member states, the European effect in Western Europe should be less important when compared to the European effect in Eastern Europe.

Since I do not exclude the second order effects and I am only assuming that they may be second in terms of relevance for political participation, the third hypothesis states that:

H3. National evaluations of economy and politics will add to the explanation of political participation, but their overall effect is less important when compared to the European one.

H4. Finally, I argue that in this environment of party instability and lack of stable allegiances, campaigns make the most positive difference in increasing turnout.

Data and methodological approach

The data set used for the analyses comes from the European Election Studies surveys carried out in the aftermath of 2004 elections for the European Parliament in 20 EU MS². Since the surveys were administered by the same institution, I obtained a pooled data set with the same questions applied in all countries. I selected only interviews of respondents eligible for voting in EP elections.

The dependent variable for all analyses is a measure of voters' participation at EP elections, i.e. the binomial answers to the question 'did you cast your vote'. Voters that could not remember or did not answer the question were excluded from the analyses.

Operationalising the 'second order' dimension

The measure for the 'second order' is primarily concerned with capturing political participation at EP elections as a reflection of concerns stemming from domestic politics. Therefore, using various survey questions, four sub-dimensions were created at the individual level to capture the impact of national/domestic concerns on the decision to participate at EP elections:

- one sub-dimension related to the political system, which relates to the electorates' approval of democratic practices undergoing in the specific country: "how satisfied

² I intend to extend the analysis to the 2009 EP election as well. Therefore, states that miss particular questions in either 2004 or 2009 waves were excluded from the analysis--these countries are Belgium, Lithuania, Sweden, Malta and Luxembourg.

one is with how democracy works in [c]”; (1=very satisfied, 4= not at all; 'don't know' was coded as missing)

- one decision-making sub-dimension which captures the support for government: “do you approve or disapprove the government’s record to date”; coded as a dummy (approve=1, disprove =0). To avoid missing too much data, ‘don’t know’ (n= 928 for 2004) was recoded as ‘no’.
- one economic sub-dimension, which captures self retrospective evaluations of the economy: “on the whole, how satisfied are you with the economy”; (1= a lot better, 4= a lot worse; ‘don’t know’ was coded as missing).
- Finally, a partisanship sub-dimension was created to capture attachment for government parties: “Do you consider yourself close to any particular party? If so, which one?” Coded as a dummy, ‘1’= for parties that are members in the governmental coalition at the moment of EP elections; attachment to other parties or complete distance (‘no party’ answers) were coded as ‘0’.

The correlations among these 4 sub-dimensions do not exceed .34 for the 2004 pooled data set. Individual countries, however, in Slovakia and Hungary only, economic evaluations are moderately correlated (coefficient .45 and .48) with approval of government’s record in 2004. Approval of government’s record and attachment to governmental parties are moderately correlated in Italy in 2004 with economic evaluations (coefficient .58 and .48 respectively). These low to moderate correlations provide confidence that the second order dimension is well captured from different angles—attitudes towards the political system, the decision-making process, economic evaluations, and partisanship.

Operationalising the ‘first order’ dimension

To measure the European attitudes four sub-dimensions were created:

- National Europeanness sub-dimension which represents a national, rationalized interest in the EU, captured by answers to the question: “decisions made by the EU will be in the interest of my country”. The answers have an ordinal scale, with lower values indicating more support and higher values indicating less support; ‘refused’ or ‘don’t know’ answers were dropped from the analysis.
- ‘Europhile’ attitudes towards the EU institutions. This sub-dimension is provided by the answers to the “trust the institutions of the European Union” question. For the 2004 data set this dimension was created as a sum of answers to 2 questions—‘trust in European Parliament’, ‘trust in European Commission’. ‘Trust in Council of Ministers’ was not considered mainly because the question was not asked in Italy.. The scale for the answers ranges from ‘1’= no trust at all to ‘10’= complete trust. After adding the two answers, the new variable of trust in EU institutions ranges from 2 (no trust at all) to 20 (complete trust). The final scale ranged from ‘2’ (no trust at all) to ‘20’ (complete trust), with an alpha reliability coefficient of .91.
- Egocentric Europeanness—is captured by answers to the question “One’s country’s membership to the EU is a good thing”, coded as a dummy (1=yes, 0=bad or neither). ‘Refuse’ or ‘don’t know’ were dropped from the analysis
- ‘Europhile’ attitudes towards the political system—‘how satisfied is one with the way EU democracy works’; 1= very satisfied, 4= not at all satisfied; ‘don’t know’ and ‘refuse’ are dropped from the analysis. However, this question in particular, proved to be very difficult for the new members, such that out of 7000 participants almost one third said ‘don’t’ know or ‘refuse’ in 2004. These respondents were excluded from the analyses but the higher percentage of people not answering this question especially in 2004 might actually indicate that the question of evaluating how EU democracy works should not be considered as part of the EU attitudes, mostly because new members did not have the time, as EU members, to form an opinion

about the functioning of the EU. Therefore, in future drafts of this paper, I intend to remove this sub-dimension for the first order characteristics.

This time, however, the first order sub-dimensions are moderately correlated in the pooled 2004 data set, such that the 'national europeanness' is correlated both with 'egocentric europeanness' and with Europhile attitudes towards the political system. Coefficients in the pooled data set are .48 and .47, while for particular countries, Slovakia and Czech Republic they go up to .61. Despite the fact that high correlations impede discerning the independent effects of these particular sub-dimensions of European attitudes, I still prefer to measure 'Europe' from different angles rather than creating a single indicator. Establishing a strong significant impact, in the context of moderate to high correlations, testifies to the importance of European attitudes in impacting voting participation.

Operationalising the European campaign

At the individual level I created a scale for European campaign exposure, using survey questions related to television exposure, newspaper readings on the election, friends and family discussions on EP elections and campaign, public meeting attendance related to campaigns, and website searches for campaign information. The final scale ranges from 3 (more campaign) to 15 (not at all), with an alpha reliability coefficient of .64 and .74 indicating that the measure has internal consistency.

In addition to the measures created at the individual level, I add two contextual variables, considered key in explaining electoral behavior at the EP elections: campaigning context, measured as 'Europeanness in the news' and EU tone, and timing within the national electoral cycle.

Country indicators

- Campaign--At the country level, I used the measure for European news dominance in the news agenda developed from the cross-national media studies carried out in 2004 (Claes de Vreese, Susan A. Banducci, Holli A. Semetko and Hajo G.

Boomgaarden). Such studies conducted a systematic coding of national television and newspapers in every EU member state and included a measure of the EU visibility in the news, ranging from 11% to 35% for the countries in question.

- Campaign tone is also included in the analysis, mainly because it has been argued in the literature that EU negativity prompts anti-EU sentiments that affect electoral behavior (Hobolt, Spoon, and Tilley). The percent of negative evaluations of the EU in the media ranges from 1% to 7%, with the clarifications that the differences up to 100% are consist in general of neutral news rather than positive ones.
- Timing--In addition to campaigns, timing is probably the most important variable used in aggregate analyses when assessing second order dynamics at play. The theoretical expectation is that EP elections that take place closer to national elections will reflect more the national dynamics in terms of participation (i.e., will reflect higher participation rates) while EP elections at the midpoint of a national electoral cycle will have lower participation. Timing is measured as distance in years elapsed from the previous national election.

Background variables

A series of background variables were used to capture the regular voter. The socio-economic and demographic factors mostly used in political behavior analyses refer to:

- Gender: coded as a dummy, 1 (male) and 0 (female)
- Social class: coded as an ordinal measure, 1 (working class) and 5 (upper level class). Refusals of classifications, 'other', and 'don't know' were dropped from the analyses.
- Age: a continuous variable coding for the year of birth (hence I expect a negative coefficient)
- Interest in politics in general: measured as an ordinal variable with smaller values indicating 'very interested' and larger values reflecting political apathy
- Party attachment: 'do you feel yourself close, fairly close, or merely a sympathizer to the party'—Given the high percentages of people that do not feel attached to any political party, for instance 64% in Czech Republic, 68% Latvia,

57% in Estonia, I coded the answers as dummy, 1 is ‘yes’, and 0 as ‘no attachment’.

I anticipate that *ceteris paribus*, older men, middle-class voters, interested in politics, with party attachment will be more likely to participate at EP elections.

Method

As the dependent variable is dichotomous (vote participation in the EP elections) I opt for logistic regressions in all estimations. For all analyses I use 2 pooled data sets, one for each region of old and new member states, rather than individual estimations for each country, mostly because I am interested in assessing the overall regional effects of the two dimensions on individual behavior³. Also, the overall variances of the pooled data sets are larger than the individual variances of each country set. Considering the nested structure of the data, individuals within countries, and the two levels indicators used in the analyses, individual and country levels, I estimate a random intercept multi-level structural model with two distinct levels for covariates:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{EP Participation}_{ij} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Gender}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{ Class}_{ij} + \beta_3 \text{ Age}_{ij} + \beta_4 \text{ Political Interest}_{ij} + \beta_5 \\ & \text{ Party Attachment}_{ij} + \\ & \textit{Second order considerations} (\beta_6 \text{ Economic Evaluation}_{ij} + \beta_7 \text{ National} \\ & \text{ Democracy}_{ij} + \beta_8 \text{ Close to Ruling Parties}_{ij} + \beta_9 \text{ Governmental} \\ & \text{ Approval}_{ij}) + \\ & \textit{First order dimension} (\beta_{10} \text{ National Rationalized EU interest}_{ij} + \\ & \beta_{11} \text{ Europhile attitudes for the EU Democracy}_{ij} + \beta_{12} \text{ Europhile} \\ & \text{ Attitudes for the EU Institutions}_{ij} + \beta_{13} \text{ EU Campaign}_{ij}) \end{aligned}$$

At the country level, I model the individual-level constant β_0 as a function of European campaigns and timing:

³ Cyprus, despite its recent EU accession, is considered part of the old Europe, mostly because it lacks the party characteristics corresponding to the newly democratized states.

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \text{ Years} + \gamma_{02} \text{ EU Campaign} + \gamma_{03} \text{ EU tone} + u_{0j}$$

By specifying a Level 2 random effect u_{0j} I avoid imposing the assumption that the model accounts for all possible sources of contextual heterogeneity, mostly stemming from electoral rules and economic situations. Given the small number of groups in the analyses, I preferred not to include additional country variables found significant in other aggregate analyses.

Results

I estimate 5 models for each region. Table 1 shows the models for old Europe and table 2 shows models for new member states. I add components of the explanatory variables in a step-wise regression fashion, mainly because I assess to what extent first order effects, operationalized as I already mentioned with four sub-dimensions, add to the explained variance. Based on the literature already mentioned, European attitudes do not contribute, or have only a minimal effect, to the increase in Rsquare⁴. Hence, to the partial model with controls, I add second order effects (model 2), first order effects (model 3), EU campaign effects measured at the individual level (model 4) and finally country level effects, timing, EU negative tone and EU visibility in campaigns (model 5). Overall, the coefficients estimates are stable, when either adding more variables. There are, however, some exceptions to which I refer below. The background variables have the expected effects, such that older, wealthier female, educated, more interested in politic, attached to a party, are more likely to participate at EP elections⁵.

[Tables 1 & 1a about here]

The second order effects have positive effects on voting such that positive evaluations of the economy and the more satisfied with democracy people are the more likely they are

⁴ I computed R square as the square of the standard deviation of the fitted values divided by the standard deviation of the fitted values plus the random estimate and plus 3.29. (Snijders and Boskers, *Multilevel Analysis*)

⁵ The surprise here is however the gender impact--the expectation is that females are less likely to participate in politics than males. The first 2004 analyses however, show a different relation, highly significant though; One explanation for the finding could be the fact that I used the raw data with no demographic weights.

to vote⁶. Some of these effects are highly significant. What is interesting, however, is that by adding the four sub-dimensions of second order effects, the increase in the explained variance is minimal (from 14.9 -model 1 to 15.04 model 2). This fact is surprising as it runs counter the literature that old Europe's motivations at choices at EP elections are mainly national. Indeed, this study does not address the question of different party choices at EP elections vs. national ones. Still, it reveals that in terms of deciding to participate, the national evaluations of the political system and the economy have a rather minimal contribution. In the case of new member states, the directional impact of the socio-economic variables and the evaluations of national politics are similar to the old European ones. However, in this case, adding the second order indicators, leads to an increase in the explained variance from .19 to .21. Therefore, for evaluations at the national level, what seems to matter the most for both European regions is 'satisfaction with democracy in the country'.

[Tables 2 & 2a about here]

The first order variables --attitudes towards the EU are highly significant and have larger impacts (see models 3, 4, 5 in all tables): the more convinced people are that their country will gain from the EU, trust EU institutions and think that the EU membership is a good thing the more likely they are to vote. Problematic is the effect of 'how democracy works in the EU'--the less satisfied people are with how the EU democracy works, the more likely they are to vote, only in the case of new member states. Considering the previous positive Europe related having a positive effect on voting, this relationship seems surprising. It might be related to the decision of disregarding 30% of the observations--since the 'don't know' responses were 3 times higher for this variable than for the other European dimensions (around 900 'don't know' for each of the European dimensions, while this variable had 2,600 in 2004). More analysis is however necessary to disentangle this effect. The overall picture, however, is that the first order dimension is more stable: more Euro-optimists from all over Europe participate at EP elections, regardless of the evaluations referred to national politics. In both cases, adding the first order European

⁶ To ease a first interpretation of the logit coefficients, I present tables 1a and 2a respectively, indicating the direction of the impact and the significance level. Some of the signs might be running in the opposite direction with the ones in tables 1, 2, fact explained by the reversed coding of particular variables.

dimensions leads to a substantial increase in the explained variance from .15 to .18 (old Europe) and from .21 to .25 (new Europe).

Finally, EU campaign exposures at the individual have the expected, largest effects. EU campaigns seem to be the most important mechanisms for increasing turnout in elections that are not about electing a government, and therefore are less important. The explained variable increases by 3% when this one variable is added in old MS and by 5% in new MS. However, the campaign effects measured at the country level seem to not contribute with anything to the overall fit of the model. One limitation might be the fact that I used for this paper only the percent of negative EU news around the campaign, percent that in general is relatively small, from 1% to 7% for old MS and from .57 to 2.14 for new MS. The difference up to 100 is not necessarily a positive tone but rather mixed or neutral.

Given that the logistic coefficients are not directly interpretable in the model, and to have a sense of the actual impact of the variables on voting participation, I estimate predicated probabilities by holding all variables at the mean with the exception of predictors in whose effects I am interested to assess by moving two standard deviation below and above the mean on the continuous variables and from 0 to 1 on the dichotomous ones. in which effects I am interested to asses. Table 3 presents the absolute change in the impact of each sub-dimension developed in the paper. We can easily see now, that EU matters more for participation than second order evaluations in both old and new Europe, but the effects for new MS is stronger. Finally, the huge effect that the EU campaigns (measured only at the individual level) have when compared to all other indicators is now visible.

[Table 2 & Graphs about here]

Conclusion

In 2004, 8 post-communist countries participated for the first time at European Parliament elections organized in the EU. 'The return to Europe' marked the first participation with a low expected turnout, understandable and explainable, if one considers the lower stakes of EP elections when assessed against first order national elections. Attaching the label 'second order', however, should not necessarily imply 'national, domestic affairs'. In the region, for both old and new MS, Europe matters, as an

incentive for people to participate, and it matters more than domestic concerns. In addition, it matter more for new MS rather than for the old ones. Why is this case? First, I argue, because of the lack of strong party commitments in the new member states. Given the high instability of the electoral market, Europe, as an issue, finds room to impact electoral behavior.

Table 1: A Multilevel Model of Participation at the 2004 European Parliament Elections in Old MS

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)
<i>Individual level predictors</i>					
Interest in politics	-.61*** (0.03)	-.59*** (.03)	-.55*** (.03)	-.32*** (.05)	-.32*** (.05)
Gender	-.10*** (0.05)	-.11*** (.05)	-.14*** (.05)	-.15*** (.05)	-.15*** (.05)
Social class	.12*** (0.02)	.09*** (.03)	.06*** (.02)	.04* (.04)	.04* (.02)
Age	.02*** (0.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)
Rural	-.08*** (.02)	-.06** (.02)	-.06** (.03)	-.08*** (.03)	-.08*** (.03)
Education	.00** (0.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.01 (.00)
Party Attachment	-.33*** (.05)	-.34*** (.06)	-.30*** (.08)	-.27*** (.09)	-.27*** (.09)
• Second order effects					
Economic evaluation		-.04* (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)
Satisfaction with democracy		-.12*** (.03)	-.01 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.02 (.04)
Close to governmental parties		-.21*** (.06)	-.13** (.07)	-.09 (.07)	-.08 (.04)
Government approval		.05 (.05)	-.03 (.06)	-.01 (.06)	-.01 (.06)
• First order effects					
National europeanness			-.04 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Europhile attitudes towards institutions			.17*** (.02)	.15*** (.02)	.15*** (.02)
Egocentric europeanness			.17*** (.06)	.14*** (.06)	.14*** (.06)
Europhile attitudes towards the political system			-.09** (.04)	-.08** (.04)	-.08** (.04)
EP campaign				-.27*** (.01)	-.27*** (.01)
<i>Country level predictors</i>					
Timing					.00 (.01)
EU negative tone					.03 (.11)
EU visibility					.01 (.02)
Intercept	.98*** (.18)	1.01*** (.19)	-.94*** (.22)	1.03*** (.17)	-.96*** (.19)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Variance component	.65***	.37***	.40***	.34***	.15***
R squared	.15	.15	.18	.21	.22
No of groups	13	13	13	13	13
No of individuals	12, 944	11, 141	9,205	8,847	8,847

Source: 2004 European Electoral Study. ***p<0.001; **p<0.05 *p<0.1

Table 1a: A Multilevel Model of Participation at the 2004 European Parliament Elections in Old MS --Directional Impact and Statistical Significance

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)
<i>Individual level predictors</i>					
Interest in politics	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Gender	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***
Social class	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ *	+ **
Age	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Rural	+ ***	+ ***	+ **	+ ***	+ ***
Education	+ **	+	+	+	+
Party Attachment	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
• Second order effects					
Economic evaluation		+ *	+	+	+
Satisfaction with democracy		+ ***	+	+	+
Close to governmental parties		- ***	+ **	+	+
Government approval		-	+	+	+
• First order effects					
National europeanness			+	+	+
Europhile attitudes towards institutions			+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Egocentric europeanness			+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Europhile attitudes towards the political system			+ **	+ **	+ **
EP campaign				+ ***	+ ***
<i>Country level predictors</i>					
Timing					+
EU_negative tone					+
EU visibility					+
R squared	.15	.15	.18	.21	.22
No of groups	13	13	13	13	13
No of individuals	12,944	11,141	9,205	8,847	8,847

Source: 2004 European Electoral Study. ***p<0.001; **p<0.05 *p<0.1

Table 2: A Multilevel Model of Participation at the 2004 European Parliament Elections in New MS

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)
<i>Individual level predictors</i>					
Interest in politics	-.62*** (.03)	-.59*** (.04)	-.58*** (.05)	-.35*** (.06)	-.34*** (.06)
Gender	-.24 *** (.05)	-.23 *** (.23)	-.20*** (.08)	-.20 *** (.08)	-.20 *** (.05)
Social class	.19*** (.03)	.16 *** (.03)	.14 *** (.04)	.09 ** (.04)	.09 ** (.04)
Age	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.02 *** (.00)	.02*** (.00)
Rural	.06 * (.03)	.05 (.03)	.00 (.05)	-.01 (.05)	-.01 (.05)
Education	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-. 00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Party Attachment	-.48*** (.03)	-. 44 *** (.03)	-.41*** (.05)	-.35 *** (.05)	-.36*** (.05)
• Second order effects					
Economic evaluation		-.13 *** (.03)	-.05 (.04)	-.04 (.04)	-.04 (.04)
Satisfaction with democracy		-.30 *** (.04)	-.28 *** (.06)	-.32 *** (.06)	-.32 *** (.06)
Close to governmental parties		.02 (.09)	-.07 (.54)	-.08 (.10)	-.08 (.12)
Government approval		.04 (.07)	-.06 (.10)	-.06 (.10)	-.06 (.10)
• First order effects					
National europeanness			-.19 *** (.07)	-.18 *** (.07)	-.18 *** (.06)
Europhile attitudes towards institutions			.20 *** (.04)	.19 *** (.04)	.18 *** (.04)
Egocentric europeanness			.51*** (.09)	.51 *** (.10)	.51*** (.10)
Europhile attitudes towards the political system			.24 *** (.07)	.26 *** (.06)	.26 *** (.06)
EP campaign				-.28 *** (.02)	-.28 *** (.02)
<i>Country level predictors</i>					
Timing					-.00 (.04)
EU_tone					.00 (.22)
EU visibility					-.06 (.10)
Intercept	.06 (.14)	.15 (.14)	.01 (.17)	-.00 (.20)	-.21 (.40)
<i>Random effects</i>					
Variance component	.37***	.35***	.38***	.34***	.30***
R squared	.19	.21	.25	.30	.30
No of groups	7	7	7	7	7
No of individuals	7,042	5,808	3,215	3,162	3,162

Source: 2004 European Elections Studies ***p<0.001;
**p<0.05; *p<0.1

Table 2a: A Multilevel Model of Participation at the 2004 European Parliament Elections in New MS -- Directional Impact and Statistical Significance

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)	Participation log odds (s.e.)
<i>Individual level predictors</i>					
Interest in politics	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Gender	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***	- ***
Social class	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ *	+ **
Age	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Rural	+ *	+	+	-	-
Education	+	+	-	-	-
Party Attachment	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
• Second order effects					
Economic evaluation		+ ***	+	+	+
Satisfaction with democracy		+ ***	+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Close to governmental parties		+	-	-	-
Government approval		+	-	-	-
• First order effects					
National europeanness			+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Europhile attitudes towards institutions			+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Egocentric europeanness			+ ***	+ ***	+ ***
Europhile attitudes towards the political system			- ***	- ***	- ***
EP campaign				+ ***	+ ***
<i>Country level predictors</i>					
Timing					+
EU_negative tone					+
EU visibility					-
R squared	.19	.21	.25	.30	.30
No of groups	7	7	7	7	7
No of individuals	7,042	5,808	3,215	3,162	3,162

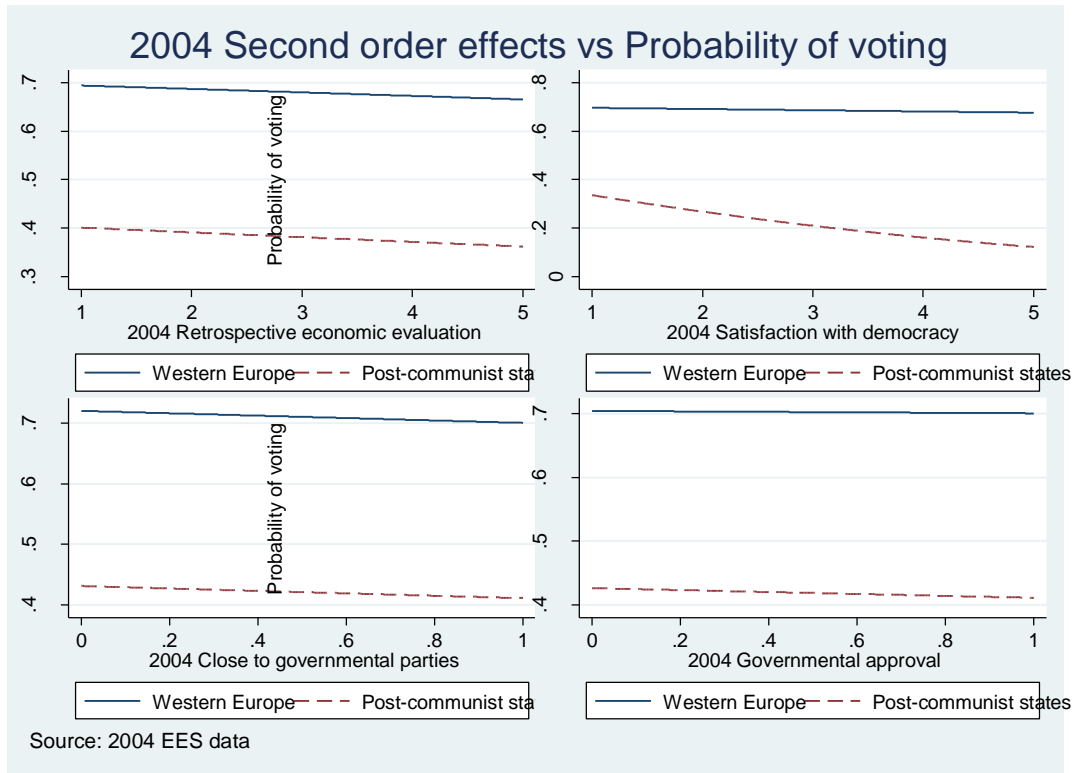
Source: 2004 European Electoral Study. ***p<0.001; **p<0.05 *p<0.1

Table 3: Predicted Probabilities in % (2004 Old and New MS)

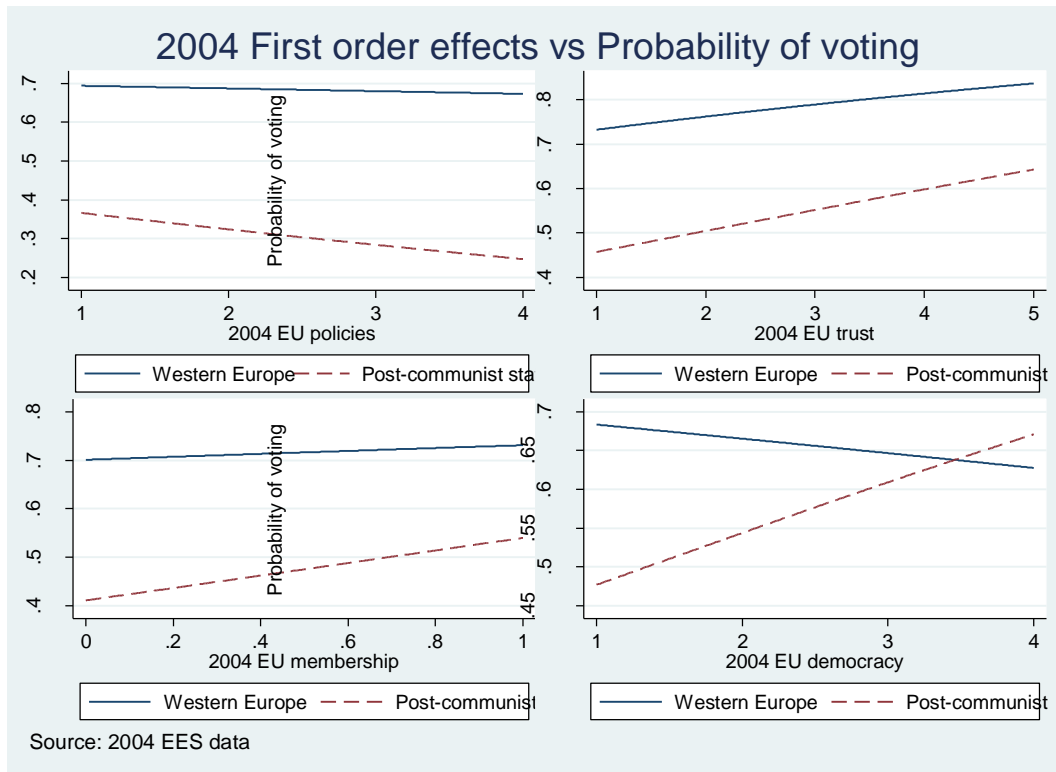
Variable	2004 Old MS			2004 New MS		
	2 std below mean Dummy at value 0	2 std above mean Dummy at value 1	Absolute Change	2 std below mean Dummy at value 0	2 std above mean Dummy at value 1	Absolute Change
Economic evaluation	74	71	3	56	51	5
Satisfaction with democracy	73	72	1	65	42	23 ***
Close to governmental parties	74	73	1	56	53	3
Government approval	73	73	0	55	53	2
National europeanness	74	72	2	60	46	14***
Europhile attitudes towards institutions	65	79	14 ***	42	64	22 ***
Egocentric europeanness	73	70	3 ***	54	41	13 ***
Europhile attitudes towards the political system	75	70	5 ***	44	63	19 ***
EP campaign measured at the individual level	80	34	46***	76	29	47 ***

*** Indicates significant effects at .001 found in Model 5 analyses.

Graph 1 Second order effects on the probability of voting



Graph 2 First order effects on the probability of voting



Appendix:

Survey questions used in the analysis:

Source: European Election Study 2004. 2nd edition. *Design, Data Description and Documentation*. Hermann Schmitt, Matthew Loveless, Sascha Adam, Daniela Braun.

Socio-demographic controls

V154: To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all? (1 -very, 4 - not at all)

V212: Do you feel yourself to be very close to this party, fairly close, or merely a sympathizer? (1-very close, 2-fairly close, 3-merely a sympathizer)

V216. How old were you when you stopped full time education? (xy in years, 97 for 'still studying)

V217. Gender (1-male; 2- female)

V218. What year were you born?

V224. If you were to chose one of the five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to: the working class, the lower middle class, the middle class, the upper middle class, or the upper level class (1-working class, 5-upper class)?

V225: Would you say you live in a rural area or village, in a small or middle size town, or in a large town? (1-rural area or village; 2-small or middle size town; 3-large town;)

Second order indicators

V149 What do you think of the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation is a lot better, a little better, stayed the same, a little worse, a lot worse? (1-a lot better, 5- a lot worse)

V208 On the whole how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in[c]? 1- very satisfied, 2- fairly satisfied, 3-not very satisfied, 4-not at all satisfied, 5 - neither (only in Es)

V209. DO you approve or disapprove of the government's record to date? (1 approve, 2-disapprove, 3-neither (only in Es)

V211. Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?

First order indicators

V 129. Please tell me on a score of 1-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 1 means that you do not trust at all, and 10 means you have complete trust. Trust in European Parliament? Trust in European Commission?

V155. Generally speaking, do you think that [country's] membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad? (1-good thing, 2- bad thing, 3- neither)

V209. All in all again, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union? (1-very satisfied, 2-fairly satisfied, 3- not very satisfied, 4- not at all satisfied)

V213. How much confidence do you have that decisions made by the European Union will be in the interest of [country]? (1-a great deal of confidence, 2-a fair amount, 3- not very much, 4- no confidence at all).

European campaign exposure

V105 How often did you watch a program about the election on television? (1-often, 3-never)

How often did you read about the election in a newspaper?

How often did you talk to friends or family about the election?

How often did you attend a public meeting or rally about the election?

How often did you look into a website concerned with the election?

European campaign at the country level

Source: Banducci, Susan, de Vreese, Claes, Semetko, Holli; Boomgarden, Hajo, Luhiste, Maarja, 2010. *European Election Study Longitudinal Media Study Data Advance Release Documentation*, 15.10. 2010. (www.piredeu.eu)

Primary topic of the story-- the % of EU related topics per country, which comprise story related to EU elections, EU politics/EU institutions/competences of the EU institutions, and EU integration/EU enlargement were obtained by cross-tabulations.

Story evaluating the EU: EU tone: 0-neutral, 1-positive, 2-rather positive, 3-ambivalent, 4-rather negative, 5-negative.

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