Policy representation

JACQUES THOMASSEN¹ & HERMANN SCHMITT²

¹*Faculty of Public Administration and Public Policy, University of Twente, The Netherlands;*

²*Zentrum für Europäische Umfrageanalysen und Studien, University of Mannheim, Germany*

Abstract. This paper examines the extent to which conditions for the ‘representative party government’ model of representation exist in the EU. It suggests that, although application of the model is obviously limited, there is some support for its relevance. Using surveys of voters and candidates for the European Parliament the paper shows that some policy positions of representatives are constrained more by their party group than their nationality, and to some degree there is obvious congruence between the opinions of candidates and their voters. This is particularly so with respect to left-right orientation; far less with respect to European Monetary Union where elites appear much more enthusiastic than their electorates.

Introduction

If the European Community was a state and it applied to join the EU, it might be turned down on the grounds that it was not a democracy (Dinan 1994: 288). Few would disagree with this observation by David Martin, a vice president of the European Parliament. But not everybody would sympathise with its overtones of regret. Margaret Thatcher, the former British prime-minister, was scathing about the idea of a European Parliament. In her memoirs she refers to the proposal to give the European Parliament power of co-decision as ‘something which would have effectively paralysed the Community by subjecting heads of government to perpetual interference by this inchoate, inexperienced and frequently irresponsible body’ (Thatcher 1993: 552). And the right of member states to control their own border, she referred to as ‘an essential matter of national sovereignty, for which a government must answer to its own Parliament and people’. She was ‘prepared to go along with some modest increase in the powers of the European Assembly, which would shortly and somewhat inaccurately be described as a Parliament: but the Council of Ministers, representing governments answerable to national Parliaments, must always have the final say’ (Thatcher 1993: 554). Obviously, what is an ideal for the one is a spectre for the other. People’s judgements on the European Union depend as much on their normative views as on their assessment of the present state of the Union.

Therefore, the so-called democratic deficit is a meaningless phrase as long as one does not specify what one's normative views on the European Union are. Only then is it possible to assess to what extent there is a democratic deficit, that is, a discrepancy between the present situation and the ideal situation.

Most normative opinions on European unification can be arranged on a continuum ranging between two extreme views, or ideal types, the *federal* and the *intergovernmental* model. According to the federal view, the Union should develop into a true 'European polity', in which a supranational government is directly responsible to the people of Europe and not national governments.¹ In the intergovernmental view, European unification should go no further than co-operation between sovereign states. David Martin's remark on the poor level of democracy within the European Union reflects the first view, whereas Margaret Thatcher's concern was that the Union might move too far from the intergovernmental model.

These models entail different channels of political representation. In the federal model the European Parliament should gradually acquire the same competence and power vis-à-vis European government as parliaments in the member states have vis-à-vis their national governments. Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by a European electorate. In this view European political parties should compete for the votes of this electorate on European issues. The system of political representation can schematically be represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. System of political representation: the federal model.

In the intergovernmental view, democratic control of European decision-making is primarily the responsibility of the national parliaments of the member states, to which the individual governments are responsible for the positions they take in the European Council and the Council of Ministers. Therefore, political representation at the European level is *indirect* via the national channels of political representation, according to Figure 2.

The current institutional structure of the European Union is a mixture of both models. On the one hand the Union is still a form of co-operation between sovereign states, where important decisions cannot be taken without the consent of the national governments, which in turn are subject to the political control of their domestic parliaments. At the same time there is certainly a cautious development in the direction of a federal Europe. Despite all complaints about the lack of a system of responsible government at the European level, and in particular about the limited legislative powers of the European Parliament and the low effectiveness of its budgetary and supervisory powers, it is hard to see how the whole idea of a directly elected European parliament could be justified, other than from the perspective of the federal model.

With respect to political decision-making in the European Union, as discussed in the concluding paper by Norris, two formal channels of political representation can be distinguished, one via the European Parliament and one via the national parliaments. The design of our overall study will enable us to study the effectiveness of both channels. However, in the context of this

Figure 2. System of political representation: the confederal model.

special issue that is based on the orientations of voters and candidates for the European Parliament, we will limit our analyses to the first channel, the route via the European Parliament.

Political representation in Europe

According to the populist view, a system of representation is democratic when 'political leaders act in accordance with the wants, needs and demands of the public in making government policy' (Luttbeg 1974: 32). Therefore, the key question is to what extent political leaders act in accordance with the will of the people. Earlier (Schmitt & Thomassen 1994) we argued that the effectiveness of the federal model can be assessed following the logic of the political parties model of political representation. According to this, the effectiveness of a system of political representation depends on the interaction between political parties and individual voters. Following this model, an effective system of political representation can only exist under the following conditions:

1. Voters have a choice of parties in competitive elections, i.e., they can choose between at least two parties with different programmes.
2. The internal cohesion, or party discipline, of political parties is sufficient to enable them to implement their policy programme.
3. Voters have policy preferences.
4. Voters are aware of the differences between the programmes of different political parties.
5. Electors vote according to their policy preferences, i.e., they choose the party that best represents their policy preferences (American Political Science Association 1950; Kirkpatrick 1971; Schattschneider 1942; Thomassen 1994).

Application of this form of representation to the European Union implies a translation of these requirements to the European level. However, the first two conditions require that coherent European parties compete for the votes of a European electorate on major policy issues. The remaining conditions require that voters in Europe have an opinion on these issues, know where European parties stand on these issues, and behave accordingly.

To what extent are these conditions met today in the European Union? There is ample evidence that elections to the European parliament are fought on 'national' rather than 'European' issues, by national rather than European parties, and that the electorate is voting according to their views on 'national' rather than 'European' political issues, and that consequently elections are no more than second order elections (Reif & Schmitt 1980). But does this

necessarily mean that European Parliamentary elections cannot provide an effective mechanism of political representation, i.e. link the policy views of European voters to European public policy, or at least to the decision making in the European Parliament? We think there are several considerations for not jumping too quickly to this conclusion.

The key question is what it means to claim that elections for the European Parliament are fought on 'European' rather than national issues. It is a common misunderstanding that the federal model of political representation would imply that European elections should be fought on issues referring to the development of the Union itself, like for instance the introduction of a common European currency. One might argue exactly the opposite: if the European Union as such is a main issue at the European elections, it is a clear sign that the European Union is far removed from something like a supra-national political entity. These kinds of issues refer to the legitimacy of a European political system rather than to the policy issues one would expect to be salient in a stable legitimate political system. Within well established democracies the political debate does not usually refer to the state itself, unless the existence or the definition of the nation-state as such is at stake, like in the case of the unification of Germany, the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, or the federalisation of Belgium (see Schmitt 1989). The more the European Union develops, the more we would expect political debate to be dominated by 'normal' policy issues, like the problems of unemployment, or of organised crime, rather than by more constitutional issues.

From this a second conclusion can be deduced. Parties in different countries, usually campaign as national parties to a domestic constituency. Yet they might still represent a European electorate on the assumption that the parties belonging to the same political group adopt similar stands on important political issues. This is the assumption upon which the major European political groups are based. These umbrella organisations are founded primarily on common ideological roots. The three major political groups, the Party of European Socialists (PES), the European People's Party (EPP) and the Liberal and Democratic Reformist group (LDR) together occupy 398 of the 567 seats of the European Parliament. Socialists, Liberals and Christian-Democrats from different countries share a common ideological heritage that might well lead to coherent political groups on related issues, even though European political parties in a true sense do not exist. A clear indication of the importance of party groups in the European parliament is the voting pattern at roll calls, which proves that the voting pattern in the European Parliament can to a great extent be explained by the left-right dimension, and that party discipline within the three major groups, certainly within the EPP and the

PES, is very strong (Quanjel & Wolters 1992). If distinct and coherent European political groups exist we might conclude that voters do have a choice of party programmes, and the cohesion of European party groups is sufficient to enable them to implement their programmes, thereby meeting the first two conditions of this model.

Similarly, if citizens vote according to the same ideological cleavage lines within the context of their national party system, we might expect their political attitudes to be more constrained by their European political group affiliation than by nation, at least on issues that are related to these ideological cleavages. If this is the case, this would fulfil the fifth requirement of the political parties model.

The first aim of this paper is to find out whether such an embryonic European party system exists. More specifically we will try to answer the following question: *To what extent are the policy positions of candidates and voters constrained by the membership of, or affiliation with, European political groups rather than by nationality?* Our second question concerns the key issue in political representation research, the congruence of mass and elite opinion: *To what extent do candidates and voters of European party groups share similar attitudes on policy issues?*

Data

The data base of this paper consists of the two surveys used throughout this issue: a representative survey of the electorate carried out in every member-state of the European Union immediately after the election and a survey of the candidates standing for office in the 1994 European Parliament election (for details, see the Appendix to this issue). Care has been taken that the questionnaires of both studies contain identical instruments in a number of areas. This allows us to compare the issue orientations of voters and candidates for the European Parliament.

Special attention has been given to the problem of an appropriate weighting of our survey data files. For the Voters Study a socio-demographic weighting routine which, in addition to improving representation on the national level, adjusts survey sample sizes to the population strength of the different member-countries was sufficient. The situation was somewhat more difficult and complicated with regard to the Candidates Survey. Here, party and nation were used as the two target criteria, resulting in a weighted data-file which (1) eliminates all candidates of parties not represented in the European Parliament from our data files, and (2) adjusts the strength of party specific candidates to that of this party's delegation in the European Parliament (see appendix for details).

To analyse issue orientations both voters and candidates were asked to place themselves on three bi-polar policy dimensions, as well as on the left-right scale. Voters were also asked to place their parties. The three policy dimensions were phrased in a way which clarified their relationship with current EU policy programmes: Jacques Delor's White Book with regard to unemployment, the Schengen Agreement about open borders, and the Maastricht Treaty provisions in view of the currency question. The wording of these issue questions ran as follows:

Currency: *Some people think it would be best for <our country> to keep its own currency and make it more independent from the other European currencies. Others think the best thing would be to create a common European currency. What do you think? Should <our country> keep its <local currency> and make it more independent from the other European currencies or should we aim at one common European currency?*

Unemployment: *Another important problem for the European Union (European Community) is unemployment. The President of the European Commission has proposed to raise funds for a massive employment programme in order to fight unemployment. Others argue that the completion of the Single European Market alone will promote economic growth and will be the best remedy for the current problems of unemployment. What is your opinion? Should the European Union (European Community) launch a massive employment programme, or should it rather concentrate on the completion of the single market?*

Borders: *Still another issue with the European Union (European Community) has to do with national borders. What do you think? Should the European Union (European Community) continue to remove national borders and let people move freely between the countries, or should we re-introduce tighter border-controls in order to be better able to effectively fight crime in <our country>? (INTERVIEWER: SHOW CARD)*

The **left-right** scale was also included, using the standard EuroBarometer instrument: *In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale?*

Uncovering the roots of a European party system

We have argued that we can expect that the policy positions of candidates and voters will be constrained by the membership of, or affiliation with,

European political groups rather than by nationality on issues related to the basic ideological cleavages on which these European political groups are based. How do the three policy issues and the left-right dimension relate to these basic cleavages? There is a growing consensus that the political conflict structure and the ideological differences between political parties in Western societies can to a great extent be expressed in the left-right dimension. In its original meaning the left-right dimension reflects mainly the class cleavage. However, the left-right dimension seems to have developed into the dominant conflict dimension, either because other conflict dimensions have lost their importance, or because the left-right dimension has gradually absorbed other conflict dimensions (Sani & Sartori 1983; Fuchs & Klingemann 1990).

Therefore, we can expect that European political groups are both distinct and internally coherent on this dimension. To the extent that specific issues are related to this all-embracing dimension, one would expect more or less the same findings. However, it would not be very realistic to expect that the positions taken by individual citizens and politicians on each and every issue would to the same extent be constrained by the left-right dimension. Different levels of constraint can be expected for different issues. Of the three position issues in our study the issue of unemployment refers to key elements in the classic meaning of the left-right dimension: the responsibility of the state for the welfare of the citizens and state control versus free market. Concern for law and order is traditionally a 'right' rather than a 'left' topic. Also, the concern for national identity can more easily be associated with the right than the left, although singing the International has gone out of fashion among most parties on the left. Relating the issue of a common currency to the left-right dimension is more difficult. It is not obvious beforehand what a left or right position on this issue would be. Therefore, the level of constraint for this issue will probably be lower than for the other two issues, which in turn can be expected to have a lower level of constraint than the left-right dimension. Different levels of constraint can also be expected between voters and candidates. Candidates in general are politically more sophisticated than voters and therefore more able to link specific policy issues to abstract ideological concepts (Converse 1964; Converse & Pierce 1986; Granberg & Holmberg 1996; Thomassen 1976). They are also more subject to the disciplining effects of the debates on the party's policy programme.

To find out how far policy positions are constrained by European political group and nationality we used analysis of variance and multiple classification analysis. Policy positions would be totally constrained by European party groups, if all candidates of each party group took exactly the same position on a particular issue. In that case all variance could be attributed to the difference between party groups and the statistical measure *eta* would be

equal to 1.00. At the other extreme, when party groups would have no effect at all, this measure would be equal to 0.00. The results of the analyses are reported in Table 1.

Left-right

As expected, the positions of European political groups on the left-right dimension are more constrained than on more specific issues. Both among candidates and voters the impact of European party affiliation on left-right self-placement is strong (Etas of 0.82 and 0.65 respectively), which clearly beats the impact of nationality (Etas of 0.27 and 0.12). Political groups position themselves where one should expect them. Communists, Socialists, Greens (and anti-Europeans) place themselves on the left side of the political spectrum while the extreme-right, Christian-Democrats and Liberals are more to the right. There is a clear distinction between the three major political groups. Between them they cover a length of 3.8 on a 10-point scale. 'Left-right' is obviously a political currency that easily travels across borders.

Nevertheless, nation is also significantly related to left-right positions, both among candidates and voters, but more so among the former. These national differences probably reflect different political histories and frames of reference. Italy, for example, is somewhat more to the left than the Netherlands or Germany. This may be because Italy has traditionally had a strong communist party on the left, whereas Dutch and German politics have had more moderate parties of the social-democratic family.

Policy issues: Candidates

Turning to the policy issues of unemployment, immigration and a common currency the results are more or less as expected. Candidates of the left – including socialist, communist and green respondents – are clearly in favour of a borderless Europe, while their counterparts from the extreme right (and from the mostly Scandinavian anti-European lists) are clearly against, leaving Christian Democrats and Liberals somewhere in the middle of the road. A similar picture can be observed concerning unemployment, i.e., the policy continuum between the European Union launching a massive employment programme or its continuation of market-liberalisation efforts in the framework of the Single European Market (SEM). On this issue the Christian Democratic candidates, together with the liberal and the regionalist ones, are strongly in favour of a market solution while the socialist, the communist and the green candidates prefer state-interventionist measures. On the question

Table 1. Left-right and issue self-placement by EP group and nation: Voters and candidates compared

	Voters				Candidates					
	N ^a	Left-right	Unemployment	Borders	Currency	N ^a	Left-right	Unemployment	Borders	Currency
Grand mean		5.3	4.2	5.5	5.2		4.1	4.2	2.8	7.8
EP group										
PES socialist	2447	-1.3 ^b	-0.4	-0.3	0.0	277	-1.6	-1.8	-0.9	0.8
EPP christ-demo	2097	1.2	0.3	0.2	-0.8	203	2.2	2.6	0.2	-0.4
LDR liberal	582	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.3	53	1.0	1.5	-0.4	1.3
EUL communist	244	-2.9	-0.8	-0.9	0.3	20	-3.1	-2.9	-1.0	-0.8
FE berlusconi	352	1.7	0.8	-0.1	2.3	44	-0.1	1.3	2.3	-1.3
EDA gaulist	258	2.0	0.0	1.4	1.1					
Greens	238	-1.5	-0.2	-1.5	0.5	33	-1.4	-2.1	-1.5	-0.4
ERA regionalist	53	-0.6	-0.8	-0.1	1.6	28	-1.6	-1.8	-1.1	1.8
EDN anti Europe	14	2.0	0.6	2.6	-1.0	7	-0.5	2.5	6.0	-6.1
IND extreme right	150	2.8	1.0	0.4	1.3	36	3.1	-3.4	4.9	-3.4
Eta		0.65*	0.14*	0.15*	0.23*		0.82	0.57*	0.55*	0.46*
Member country										
Belgium	193	0.1	-0.3	0.1	1.2	36	0.8	-0.3	-0.1	1.3
Denmark	128	1.3	1.1	1.3	-1.3	23	-0.3	2.1	0.6	-1.7
Germany	1673	-0.5	0.2	-0.5	-1.0	154	0.4	0.8	1.2	0.2
Italy	1018	-0.6	0.7	-0.6	2.1	138	-0.6	0.2	0.6	-0.1
Spain	660	-1.2	-0.9	-1.2	0.6	97	0.3	-0.5	-1.0	0.7
France	879	0.4	-0.4	0.4	1.0	61	-0.3	-2.4	0.8	-0.4
Luxembourg	10	-0.4	-0.7	-0.4	1.9	9	-0.3	-1.0	0.4	1.8
Netherlands	397	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.7	49	0.8	1.0	0.2	0.3
United Kingdom	1385	0.9	-0.3	0.9	-1.2	133	-0.3	-0.2	-1.1	-0.8
Eta		0.12*	0.18*	0.22*	0.36*		0.27*	0.26*	0.27*	0.23*
Explained (R ²)		0.44*	0.05*	0.07*	0.14*		0.66*	0.36*	0.36*	0.29*

^aThe number of cases differs from issue to issue. N refers to the lowest N on any of the issues.

^b Entries are deviations from the mean.

* Significance: * $p < 0.001$.

Source: European Elections Study 1994 – Voters Study and Candidates Study.

Table 2. The impact of nation within EP groups (entries are eta squares)

	Left-right	Currency	Employment	Borders
PES candidates	0.12	0.10	0.04	0.11
EPP candidates	0.44	0.35	0.24	0.24
LDR candidates	0.26	0.04	0.17	0.07
Greens candidates	0.18	0.27	0.14	0.44

of a common European currency we find the regionalist, liberal and socialist candidates favour a common currency, while anti-Europeans, extreme-right, and Berlusconi's *Forza Europa* candidates are against it.

The opinions of the candidates are constrained by party group to about the same extent on these issues (Etas of 0.57, 0.55 and 0.46). Yet this should not obscure the distribution of support. In the case of unemployment policy there are clear differences between the three major party groups, the PES and the EPP being 4.4 points apart, reflecting the party differences on the left-right dimension. On the issues of border control and a common currency the differences between these three party groups are much less (1.1 and 1.7 respectively). Certainly on the currency issue this is what we expected. As mentioned above, it is hard to see what a typical left or right position on the currency issue would be. For that reason it is surprising to see that even on this issue, which is not just an economic matter but has many symbolic overtones of national pride and identity, European party group is more important than nation. Therefore, taking the evidence on the scales together, we might conclude that at least on the elite side we can see the roots of a formative European party system.

Nevertheless, even on the left-right dimension, nation also has a significant effect. It is important to know what this means for an emerging European party system. If national differences reflect the existence of national factions within each political group, this would strongly undermine the conclusion that a European party system is clearly evident among candidates.

To explore how far national factions exist within each of the European party groups, we have used analysis of variance *within* each of the party groups, with nation as the independent variable. The analysis is limited to the major party groups, because one quickly runs out of cases for minor groups. The results of this analysis (in Table 2) reveal a clear difference in homogeneity. The socialists have the least to fear from national differences, the EPP most. Even on the left-right dimension there are apparently large differences due to nationality. A more detailed analysis of national delegations within party groups (data not shown) suggests that the differences within the EPP are mainly due to the deviant position of the British Conservatives who put

themselves far to the right of their colleagues on the left-right dimension, as well as on the policy issues. On the issue of a common currency the gap seems to be wider than the Channel: there is a difference of four points on a ten-point scale between the average position of the British Conservatives and the closest other national delegation. Among the Greens homogeneity also seems to be far from perfect on these issues, but the small number of cases within national delegations makes it hard to draw valid conclusions here. The same applies to the LDR. These results suggest that we should formulate our preliminary conclusion even more cautiously; for the time being the roots of a European party system are emerging but are not yet strongly developed.

Policy issues: Voters

As expected, voters' opinions on these issues are less constrained by party group affiliation than are candidates (Etas of 0.14, 0.15 and 0.23, respectively). The essential question from the perspective of our study is how far this difference between voters and candidates is due to the European context. We think it is not. Comparable analyses in different Western democracies yield similar results, revealing that even at the national level voters' opinions on many issues are not strongly constrained by party affiliation (Thomassen 1996). Therefore, if we accept the results of this study as an indication of a failing system of political representation, the situation at the European level is not much worse than at the national level.

There are two other pieces of evidence in Table 1 that support the argument that the roots of a European party system exist more in the heads of political elites than in the hearts and minds of the voters. First, nation rather than party is the more important determinant of policy positions for voters, at least on those issues with an overtone of national identity and sovereignty. Secondly, one should not overlook perhaps the most revealing evidence to be found in Table 1: on the two most 'European' issues the modest gap between candidates or voters of different party groups are by far overshadowed by the substantial differences between the *total* European electorate and the *total* group of candidates. On the currency issue this difference is 2.6 points and on the borders issue 2.7 points. It is to these differences between candidates and voters that we now turn.

Policy congruence between candidates and voters

We have seen that nationality rather than party often determines the policy views of elites, and even more so of voters. It remains to be seen what

Figure 3. Average left-right placement of voters and candidates, by party and party group. $R^2 = 0.6810$; $p = 0.0000$.

implications this has for the actual congruence between the positions of parties and their voters, one of the key questions in political representation research. Here we compare the policy congruence of parties and voters on the issue areas already discussed. Figures 3 to 6 plot the average scores of voters and candidates of each European party group and their constituent national parties on the scales.

Perfect congruence between candidates and voters would locate all parties on the diagonal. Such perfect agreement is unlikely in the real world. What is interesting here is the manner in which the pattern departs from the ideal. As might be expected, the congruence between voters and candidates is highest on the left-right dimension. The most striking aspect of Figure 3 is that almost all parties are located below the diagonal, demonstrating that the candidates tend to locate themselves to the left of their voters, on average

Figure 4. Average position of voters and candidates on *employment* issue, by party and party group. $R^2 = 0.3720$; $p = 0.0000$.

by more than one position on a ten-point scale. This is consistent with the findings in some earlier studies (see, for instance, Converse & Pierce 1986; Esaiasson & Holmberg 1996; Schmitt 1984; Thomassen 1976). The dominant interpretation of these systematic differences in the literature is that they reflect a difference in political culture, rather than different policy views. Accordingly, we prefer to look at the relative positions on the scale. From that perspective one can only conclude that there is a very high level of congruence between candidates and voters. The extension of parties over the scale (cf. Schmitt & Thomassen 1994) on the voters side is not much less than on the candidates side, and the party groups are in the same order, i.e. relatively at the same place. Therefore, our data underline the argument that the left-right dimension can be seen as a generalised political disposition facilitating

Figure 5. Average position of voters and candidates on border issue, by party and party group. $R^2 = 0.4140$; $p = 0.0000$.

efficient communication and orientation in the political sphere (cf. Fuchs & Klingemann 1990: 233–234).

This conclusion, however, cannot be extended to the three specific issues where congruence between candidates and voters is rather poor, although each issue tells a different story. What strikes the eye in the case of employment policy (Figure 4) is the low extension of parties on the voters side. Voters' attitudes on this issue are hardly constrained by party affiliation and are grouped together on the left (state interventionist) side of the scale. As a consequence, the level of congruence for those parties whose representatives take positions far to the right of the scale, supporting market forces, is fairly low.

On the issues of a common European currency and border control, there is still a relationship between the average position of candidates and voters,

Figure 6. Average position of voters and candidate on *currency* issue, by party and party group. $R^2 = 0.3171$; $p = 0.0000$.

but this is overshadowed by the large gap between voters and candidates in general. Whereas most candidates are clearly on the "European" side of both issues, voters have more differentiated views, to say the least. What the results suggest is a large discrepancy between candidates and voters in their willingness to transfer power from the national to the European level.

Conclusions

In this paper we have distinguished two routes of political representation in the European Union, the intergovernmental one via the national parliaments and governments, the federal one via the European parliament. Our objective was to assess the effectiveness of this last route. To test the effectiveness of

the *process* of political representation, we used the political parties model of representation as a yardstick; for the assessment of the *outcome* of this process we measured the congruence between policy positions of candidates and voters. According to the political parties model, a system of political representation can only be effective when both parties and voters meet certain requirements. Parties are supposed to compete with each other on different policy programmes. Individual representatives are supposed to keep to this programme. And voters are supposed to compare what different parties have on offer, and to support the party with the most attractive programme.

Formally, the model falls at the first hurdle: European party groups, as such, do not compete for the votes of a European electorate, and voters cannot possibly choose between what is not even offered to them. Yet, as we have argued throughout this paper, this does not necessarily mean that there is no effective system of political representation within the Union. If candidates and voters within national parties agree on important policy issues, aggregation of these policy preferences within umbrella European parties would have the same substantive result as if European political parties had addressed a European electorate more directly.

As an indicator of the existence of such an embryonic European party system we used the extent to which the political attitudes of both candidates and voters are constrained by the European party group which their national political party is associated with. Our findings are not unequivocal. On the left-right dimension the positions of both candidates and voters are clearly constrained by the European group to which their parties belong, demonstrating the common ideological roots on which the major political parties in different European countries are based. The existence of this common basis might lead to the conclusion that the development of a European party system is possible. However, such a conclusion is hardly supported by the findings with respect to the three specific policy issues. On all three issues candidate's positions are more constrained by European party group than by nation. Among voters the situation is different. The constraining effect of party group is much weaker and is less than that of nation. The dramatic failure of *any* process of political representation on these issues cannot be demonstrated better than by comparing the attitudes of the electorate and their candidates on border control and a common currency. Doing so, one can hardly avoid the conclusion that voters and their potential representatives are living in different European worlds.

Still, these findings do not necessarily contradict our conclusion that at least the roots of a European party system can be distinguished. The major European political groups composing this system are based, not on different views on the European Union, but on the common ideological roots shared

by related parties all over Europe. Whether such a party system will reach maturity depends on the extent to which the political agenda of the Union in the long run will be dominated by normal policy conflict, rather than by constitutional issues.

At least two of our issues, border control and a common currency, have constitutional implications since they influence the division of power between the Union and member states. On such issues nations are the most important players. European decisions within this policy domain depend not only on the extent to which different national governments can come to terms with each other. The degrees of freedom of each government in this process are defined by the national rather than the European political process. Therefore, the extent to which the decision making process on these matters is responsive to voters' sentiments depends on the effectiveness of the intergovernmental route of political representation that we have distinguished above: via national political parties, parliaments, and governments. The discrepancies between voters and candidates on an issue like European Monetary Union suggests that governments might be caught in the middle, between a pro-European political elite and a more conservative electorate. Only the future will show how they will come to terms with this dilemma: whether by convincing voters to change their minds, or by slowing down the process of further European integration.

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Notes

1. The use of the term 'federal' in the context of the European Union is somewhat confusing. It refers to a supranational Europe in contrast to a intergovernmental Europe, which refers to a Union of autonomous states. "Federal" in this context could still refer to the whole continuum from a unitary to a federal state in the usual meaning of these terms.
2. This is the dominant, but most certainly not the only possible view on political presentation. Luttbeg's description reflects a populist view on representative democracy that is quite common in the modern literature on political representation. In the liberal view on democracy the will of the people is much less dominant (Thomassen 1994: 238).

Appendix: Key to the Figures 3–6

Abbr.	Country	Party	Abbr.	Country	Party
Aga	Bf	Agalev	FN	F	Front National
CVP	Bf	CVP	PS	F	PS
SP	Bf	SP	RPR	F	RPR/UDF
VB	Bf	Vlaams Blok	Verts	F	Les Verts
VLD	Bf	VLD	Cons	GB	Conservatives
VU	Bf	Volksunie	Lab	GB	Labour
Eco	Bw	Ecolo	LD	GB	Liberal Dem.
PRL	Bw	PRL-EDF	AN	I	Alleanza Nazionale
PSC	Bw	PSC	FI	I	Forza Italia
CDU	D	CDU	LN	I	Lega Nord
CSU	D	CSU	PDS-i	I	PDS
FDP	D	FDP	PPI	I	PPI
Grue	D	B'90/Gruene	RC	I	Rifond. Com.
PDS-d	D	PDS	ADR	LUX	ADR
REP	D	REP	DP	LUX	DP
SPD	D	SPD	GG	LUX	GLEI-GAP
FKP	DK	Fremskridtsp.	LSAP	LUX	LSAP
KFP	DK	Kons. Folkep.	CDA	NL	CDA
KrFP	DK	Kristeligt Fp.	D66	NL	D'66
RV	DK	Rad. Venstre	GL	NL	Groen Links
SD	DK	Socialdem.	Kr	NL	Christian Coalition
SFP	DK	Soc. Folkep.	PvdA	NL	PvdA
V	DK	Venstre (Liberals)	VVD	NL	VVD
Ciu	E	Convergencia i Unio	PP	E	Partido Popular
IU	E	Izquierda Unida	PSOE	E	PSOE

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Address for correspondence: Prof. Jacques Thomassen, Faculty of Public Administration and Public Policy, University of Twente, P.O. Box 217, 7500 AE Enschede, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 53 489 3225; Fax: +31 53 4892255; E-mail: j.j.a.thomassen@bsk.utwente.nl