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# European integration, economic globalization and voting behaviour : how Do Voters Respond to (Economic) Authority Transfers?

Cal Le Gall

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## THÈSE

Pour obtenir le grade de

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HEINISCH**

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Economique et Comportement Electoral.  
Comment les électeurs répondent-ils aux  
transferts d'autorité (économique) ?**

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**European Integration, Economic  
Globalization and Voting Behaviour. How Do  
Voters Respond to (Economic) Authority  
Transfers?**

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# Abstract

Since the eighties, processes of European integration and economic globalization have expanded significantly in European democracies. This has resulted in two outcomes: first, national executives' economic margins of manoeuvre have largely decreased because of intensified pressures coming from international markets, while the European Union has gained several policy competences at the expense of national governments. In this PhD dissertation, I examine how these processes affect voting behaviour and accountability mechanisms in European democracies. To examine accountability mechanisms and voting behaviour in national and European elections, I rely on multiple data sources: *European Election Study* (2004, 2009 and 2014), the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics*, *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* and the *Standard Eurobarometer* (from 2001 to 2011). Through the use of these datasets, I am able to test multiple hypotheses linking processes of integration with voting behaviour in a first large comparative perspective using (mainly) individual perceptions which is lacking in the literature.

In the first part, I analyze whether perceptions of the loss of national governments' economic competences affect different features of the vote, i.e. performance voting, issue voting, electoral turnout and mainstream parties' fortunes. Drawing on the work of [Hellwig \(2014\)](#), I first make the case that the loss of economic competences of national governments is likely to change the structure of individual demands for government actions in the voting booth. Specifically, I test the *constraint hypothesis* and the *balancing demands hypothesis*. The former contends that economic considerations will matter less in the voting calculus as perceptions of economic constraints increase, while the *balancing demands hypothesis* predicts that non-economic issues will become more important as perceptions of economic constraints increase. The *constraint hypothesis* is confirmed in models of performance voting (chapter 1 and 4), while I find support for the *balancing demands hypothesis* in models of performance voting (chapter 1) and issue voting (chapter 2).

Furthermore, I contend that, by reducing the meaningfulness of general elections as means to affect economic outcomes, integration within world markets arguably increases sincere voting. As a result, it should increase the likelihood to vote for challenger parties which generally do not perform well in elections when there is more-at-stake. Empirical results invalidate the claim that the effect is linear however: respondents who believe their national government to have little economic responsibility tend to vote more for mainstream government parties than for challenger parties. Having said that, findings also indicate that respondents who attribute less responsibility to the national government are keener to favour challenger parties over mainstream opposition parties. This suggests that economic integration can affect the fortunes of mainstream parties, but different kinds of mainstream parties are not affected in a similar fashion by the loss of national governments' economic

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competences.

In addition, I also argue that the perceptions of the loss of national governments' economic competences should negatively affect the individual likelihood to cast a ballot in domestic elections following [Steiner \(2010, 2016\)](#). Indeed, by 1) decreasing polarization in the party system [Steiner and Martin \(2012\)](#), and by 2) decreasing the relevance of elections as mechanisms that influence policy decisions [Steiner \(2016\)](#), economic integration arguably provides incentives not to participate in general elections. Results indicate that citizens who believe that their national government has little economic margins of manoeuvre tend to abstain slightly more (chapter 3 and 4), but findings also demonstrate that those who believe that the European Union is responsible for the economy are not more or less prone to participate in domestic elections.

In fact, empirical results displayed in the second part suggest that the increase of power of the European Union does not have a major impact on voting behaviour, at the exception of economic voting in domestic elections (chapter 4). Indeed, citizens who believe that the European Union is responsible over the national political situation do not tend to choose parties more on their stances on the issue of European integration in domestic elections (chapter 5) and are not more prone to hold incumbent European representatives accountable for the political situation (chapter 6), even after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty. In contrast, individuals who believe the European Union to be responsible over the economy tend to hold incumbents less accountable on their economic records in domestic elections after the sovereign debt crisis, but not before (chapter 4). By focusing on the variation of the popularity of European Union, chapter 7 finally indicates that citizens appear to hold the European accountable for policies in which it has actual responsibilities, ultimately suggesting that citizens are capable of holding the European Union responsible for policy decisions.

At first glance, results displayed in this PhD dissertation do not seem like great news for tenants of normative democratic theory. If electoral participation, accountability and political offer are considered as good indicators about the health of a democratic polity, then the fact that the development of the processes of European integration and economic globalization reduce the latter should not be taken as good news. However, the picture brought about in this PhD dissertation also provides positive signs concerning democracy in times of increasing constraints. Indeed, voters appear to respond to constraints, not only by hollowing out economic issues, but also by emphasizing new issues when voting. As ([Hellwig, 2014](#), p. 5) puts it: "publics use information about integration in world markets to recalibrate their preferences, shifting demands away from economic issues and toward other domains." In fact, I show that voters are no fools: they simply adjust to the new configuration and assess the actions of their representatives on issues where they still have powers.

# Zusammenfassung

Seit den 1980er Jahren haben die Prozesse der europäischen Integration sowie der wirtschaftlichen Globalisierung in den europäischen Demokratien stark zugenommen. Dies führte zu zwei zentralen Veränderungen: Zum einen haben die nationalen Regierungen aufgrund des wachsenden Einflusses der internationalen Märkte an wirtschaftlichem Handlungsspielraum verloren, zum anderen konnte die Europäische Union auf Kosten ersterer ihre Kompetenzen in zahlenreichen Politikbereichen erweitern. Die vorliegende Doktorarbeit untersucht, wie sich diese beiden Prozesse - die Europäische Integration sowie die wirtschaftliche Globalisierung - auf das Wahlverhalten der europäischen Bürgerinnen und Bürger sowie auf die von ihnen vorgenommene Zuschreibung politischer Verantwortlichkeit auswirken. Um das individuelle Wahlverhalten sowie die Muster, nach welchen Regierungen für politische Entwicklungen verantwortlich gemacht werden, zu untersuchen, greife ich auf zahlreiche Datensätze zurück: Die European Election Studies (2004, 2009, und 2014), die Candidate Countries Eurobarometer Untersuchung von 2014 sowie die Umfragen des Standard Eurobarometer aus den Jahren 2001 bis 2011. Durch die Verwendung dieser Datensätze gelingt es mir, erstmals in vergleichender Perspektive die Auswirkung der Integrationsprozesse auf das Wahlverhalten europäischer Bürgerinnen und Bürger zu untersuchen und durch diese Konzentration auf individuelle Verhaltensmuster eine bestehende Lücke in der Literatur zu schliessen.

In einem ersten Teil untersuche ich, inwieweit sich die Wahrnehmung verringerter nationaler Kompetenzen in Wirtschaftsfragen auf unterschiedliche Aspekte des Wahlverhaltens auswirkt. Folgende Gesichtspunkte stehen dabei im Vordergrund: die allgemeine Wahlbeteiligung, das Abschneiden der etablierten Parteien, die individuelle Wahlentscheidung entsprechend der Leistungsbilanz der amtierenden Regierung (performance voting) sowie der individuellen Präferenz für bestimmte Themengebiete und Sachfragen (issue voting). Basierend auf den Arbeiten von [Hellwig \(2014\)](#) argumentiere ich zunächst, dass der Verlust wirtschaftlicher Kompetenzen, den nationale Regierungen gegenwärtig erfahren, das Potenzial hat, die individuellen Ansprüche an das Regierungshandeln und damit das individuelle Wahlverhalten zu verändern. Im Einzelnen teste ich zwei Hypothesen: die Hypothese der externen Zwänge (constraint hypothesis) sowie die Hypothese der Erwartungsadaptation (balancing demands hypothesis). Erstere geht davon aus, dass wirtschaftliche Erwägungen das Wahlverhalten weniger stark beeinflussen, wenn die Wahrnehmung externer wirtschaftlicher Zwänge zunimmt. Letztere hingegen nimmt an, dass mit verstärkter Perzeption wirtschaftlicher Zwänge nicht-wirtschaftliche Themen bei der individuellen Wahlentscheidung an Bedeutung gewinnen. Während die Hypothese der externen Zwänge in jenen Modellen nachgewiesen werden konnte, die das Wahlverhalten in Abhängigkeit von der Leistungsbilanz der amtierenden Regierung untersuchen (performance voting, Kapitel 1 und 4), konnte die Hypothese der Erwartungsadaptation sowohl in letzteren

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Modellen (performance voting, Kapitel 1) als auch in Modellen, die Themenpräferenz und Wahlentscheidung in Zusammenhang bringen (issue voting, Kapitel 2), überprüft werden.

Des Weiteren argumentiere ich, dass die Integration der Weltmärkte durch die mit ihr einhergehende verringerte Bedeutung, die allgemeine Wahlen für die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung haben, zu einer Zunahme des sogenannten nicht-strategischen Wahlverhaltens führt. Dadurch sollte auch die Wahrscheinlichkeit zunehmen, dass sich die Wählerinnen und Wähler für kleinere, alternative Parteien (challenger parties) entscheiden, die bei allgemeinen Wahlen, die für die kommenden politischen Entwicklungen richtungsweisend sind, traditionell eher schlecht abschneiden. Allerdings entkräften die empirischen Untersuchungen die Annahme, dass dieser Effekt linear ist: Befragte, die überzeugt sind, dass ihre nationale Regierung für die wirtschaftliche Lage nur minder verantwortlich ist, neigen stärker dazu, etablierte Regierungsparteien als alternative Parteien zu wählen. Allerdings zeigen die Ergebnisse in gleicher Weise, dass Befragte, die ihrer Regierung weniger Verantwortung zuschreiben, dazu tendieren, eher alternative anstatt von etablierten Oppositionsparteien zu unterstützen. Dies lässt darauf schliessen, dass das Zusammenwachsen der Märkte das Schicksal der etablierten Parteien beeinflussen kann, auch wenn die unterschiedlichen Volksparteien nicht in gleicher Weise vom Verlust nationaler Wirtschaftskompetenzen betroffen sind.

Zusätzlich argumentiere ich in Übereinstimmung mit [Steiner \(2010, 2016\)](#), dass die Wahrnehmung verringerter nationaler Kompetenzen in Wirtschaftsfragen die Wahrscheinlichkeit, an nationalen Wahlen teilzunehmen, negativ beeinflusst. In der Tat, indem sie die Polarisierung der Parteienlandschaft ([Steiner and Martin, 2012](#)) sowie die Bedeutung von Wahlen für konkrete politische Entscheidungen ([Steiner, 2016](#)) verringert, schafft die wirtschaftliche Integration möglicherweise Anreize, nicht mehr an allgemeinen Wahlen teilzunehmen. Die Ergebnisse der vorliegenden Untersuchungen deuten darauf hin, dass Bürgerinnen und Bürger, die davon ausgehen, dass die wirtschaftlichen Handlungsspielräume ihrer Regierungen stark begrenzt sind, dazu neigen, sich bei allgemeinen Wahlen zu enthalten. Allerdings zeigen die Ergebnisse ebenfalls, dass diejenigen, die der Europäischen Union die Verantwortung für die wirtschaftliche Situation zuschreiben, nicht weniger oder stärker geneigt sind, an nationalen Wahlen teilzunehmen.

Tatsächlich weisen die Ergebnisse, die im zweiten Teil der Arbeit besprochen werden, darauf hin, dass der Machtzuwachs der Europäischen Union keinen entscheidenden Einfluss auf das individuelle Wahlverhalten hat, wobei wirtschaftsspezifische Wahlentscheidungen (economic voting) bei heimischen Wahlen hier jedoch eine Ausnahme bilden (Kapitel 4). So neigen jene Bürgerinnen und Bürger, die die Europäische Union für die nationale politische Situation verantwortlich machen, nicht verstärkt dazu, ihre Wahlentscheidung von der jeweiligen Europapolitik der entsprechenden Parteien abhängig zu machen (Kapitel 5). Auch tendieren sie nicht in grösserem Masse dazu, die jeweiligen europäischen Amtsinhaber für die politische Situation zur Rechenschaft zur ziehen - eine Feststellung, die auch nach der Ratifizierung des Vertrags von Lissabon ihre Gültigkeit behält. Allerdings kann seit der Finanzkrise (jedoch nicht davor) beobachtet werden, dass jene Personen, die der Europäischen Union die Verantwortung für die wirtschaftliche Situation zuschreiben, ihre amtierende Regierung während nationaler Wahlen weniger nach deren ökonomischer Leistung bewerten. In Kapitel 7, welches sich auf die variierende Popularität der Europäischen Union

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konzentriert, kann schliesslich gezeigt werden, dass die Bürgerinnen und Bürger die Europäische Union in jenen Bereichen zur Rechenschaft ziehen, in der sie auch tatsächlich Verantwortlichkeiten besitzt - ein Ergebnis, das darauf hinweist, dass die europäischen Bürgerinnen und Bürger in der Lage sind, bestimmte politische Entscheidungen der EU zuzuordnen.

Auf den ersten Blick scheinen die in dieser Dissertation erzielten Ergebnisse die Vertreter normativer Demokratietheorien kaum überraschen zu können. Betrachtet man die Wahlbeteiligung, die Verantwortungszuschreibung sowie das politische Angebot als geeignete Indikatoren für das Wohl und Funktionieren eines politischen Gemeinwesens, sollte die Tatsache, dass letztere vom doppelten Prozess der Europäischen Integration und der wirtschaftlichen Globalisierung negativ beeinflusst werden, mit Sorge betrachtet werden. Allerdings hält das Bild, das sich durch die in dieser Doktorarbeit erzielten Ergebnisse abzeichnet, auch positive Erkenntnisse für die Zukunft der Demokratie in Zeiten zunehmender internationaler Zwänge bereit. So scheint die Wählerschaft in der Tat auf diese Zwänge zu reagieren, und dies nicht nur, indem sie wirtschaftliche Erwägungen ausklammert, sondern auch, indem sie bei ihrer Wahlentscheidung neue Themen- und Sachfragen in den Vordergrund rückt. In den Worten von Hellwig (2014, S. 5): Die Öffentlichkeit verwendet die Information bezüglich der Integration der Weltmärkte, um ihre Präferenzen neu zu justieren und ihr Augenmerk in Folge weg von wirtschaftlichen Fragen und hin zu anderen Themenfeldern zu verlagern.

Zusammenfassend kann also gesagt werden, dass die vorliegende Dissertation aufzeigt, dass sich Wähler in der Tat nicht so leicht täuschen lassen: Sie passen ihre Erwartungen schlicht den neuen politischen Gegebenheiten an und beurteilen das Handeln und die Leistung ihrer Vertreter in jenen Bereichen, in denen letztere auch weiterhin Handlungskompetenzen besitzen.



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# Introduction

## 0.1 Introduction

The processes of economic globalization and European integration have expanded substantially in the last three decades (Börzel, 2005; Dreher et al., 2008). Since the Single European Act signed in 1986, the European community has gained several policy competencies, most notably in the economic area. Nowadays, the European Union controls and limits national budgets and deficits; conducts international trade deals on behalf of the member states; has exclusive competencies to legislate on Customs union, competition rules and Common Fisheries Policy; while the European Central Bank plays a major role in the monitoring of inflation. In the meantime, levels of trade; foreign direct and portfolio investments; and income payments to foreign nationals as shares of the national growth domestic products have risen by, approximatively, 20% in the EU-15 states<sup>1</sup>. According to many empirical studies, this greater integration within world markets has resulted in the reduction of 1) the provision of welfare services; 2) levels of taxation of mobile capital; and 3) the degree of regulation of social and environmental policies in affluent democracies (Cai and Treisman, 2005; Plümper et al., 2009). To sum up, national governments' policy room to manoeuvres have shrunk considerably in the last three decades with the development of European integration and economic globalization.

In turn, globalization and European studies have started investigating the consequences of these structural changes on domestic policymaking. For instance, the convergence-divergence debate provides an extremely rich literature on the effects of economic globalization on the provision of welfare and fiscal policies by national governments. Many scholars defend the idea that economic globalization has forced national policymakers to produce similar policy outcomes at the domestic level, leading to a convergence between policy solutions across countries. The rationale behind this convergence argument is that the integration of national economies within a global marketplace leads governments to favour market-friendly environments because of a higher dependency toward foreign direct investments, while increased capital mobility gives governments incentives to respond to financial market cues. Meanwhile, other scholars highlighted inconsistencies between the convergence theory and empirical findings. Some authors notably found no clear relationship between economic integration and reductions in capital tax rates or with changes in the level of taxation in advanced democracies (Garrett and Mitchell, 2001). Ultimately, they argued that globalization could actually increase the weight of the welfare state in response to

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<sup>1</sup>The EU-15 includes members of the European Union in 1995, that is Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United-Kingdom

citizens' concerns regarding the risks yielded by the opening of domestic economies. In the meantime, European studies also paid great attention to the impact of European integration on domestic policies of member states, notably through the concept of europeanization (Börzel and Risse, 2003, for example), but also through the perspective of policy convergence (Knill, 2005). Indeed, many scholars examined whether European integration influenced policymaking in the member states of the European Union in different policy realms (Paetzold and Van Vliet, 2014) and through different means of governance (Cowles et al., 2001). Empirical studies have shown a pattern of differential adaptation between member states in response to the new requirements of the European Union (Börzel, 2005) and the theoretical discussion even developed to the research of explanatory factors - should they be sociological or rational - which bring about these different paths of policy adaptation cross-nationally (Börzel, 2005). In the last years, there has thus been intense and rich debates in both European and globalization studies regarding the effects of processes of integration on domestic policymaking.

That being said, much less is known about the effect of (economic) authority transfers from national governments to European institutions and global markets on domestic electoral politics. A decade ago, Kayser (2007) expressed his concern regarding the little attention devoted to the study of the impact of economic globalization on electoral politics in general, and on party behaviour in particular. Drawing on his own research, Kayser (2006) first argued that governments use international economic cycles to maximize their chances to be re-elected through the manipulation of election timings. In more recent years, some studies have asserted that the loss of economic room-to-manoevre ultimately leads to more convergence across political parties' platforms (Adams et al., 2009; Haupt, 2010; Ward et al., 2011; Steiner and Martin, 2012), while Ward et al. (2015) argued that political parties are more likely to emphasize non-economic issues as economic integration deepens. The observation that electoral politics were left out of the scientific agenda holds true in European studies, probably at the exception of the rich literature on Euroscepticism in party politics (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). In fact, the literature studying the impact of European integration on party behaviour at the domestic level gained visibility in the early 2000's with the seminal work of Mair (2000). In this article, the author made the argument that the process of European integration directly affects domestic party competition by hollowing out some issues in party platforms. Specifically, Mair (2000) made the case that the delegation of power to the European Union eventually leads to a depoliticization of issues which are dealt at the European level. According to the author, political parties have little incentives to publicize issues on which they do not have the upper hand in the national arena. This argument was further supplemented by Hix (2003) who claimed that the disappearance of policy issues within domestic party competition should only entail economic policies because the European Union is mainly responsible for the provision of economic and monetary policies. Finally, two recent articles (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013) have argued that party platforms should converge only in the policy areas where the European Union has competencies, eventually leading parties to compete less on these matters at the domestic level.

In contrast, this dissertation aims to contribute to the literature linking processes of (economic) integration and electoral politics by focusing on the impact on *voting behaviour*. More specifically, the question guiding this dissertation is *whether and how*

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*voters respond to (economic) authority transfers from national governments to other instances when they make electoral choices.*

So far, the literature on the impact of international economic integration on voting behaviour at the domestic level is circumscribed to three features of voting, i.e. economic voting, issue voting and electoral participation. The seminal work on this matter was produced by Hellwig (2001). In this article, the author argues that economic voting<sup>2</sup> should decrease as economic globalization deepens. The rationale behind is the following: in more economically integrated countries, national governments have supposedly less leeway to influence the domestic economic situation. Therefore, voters should adapt to this transfer of economic authority by paying less attention to incumbents' economic records. Several empirical studies supported this constraint hypothesis, mainly with data measuring economic globalization on the aggregate level such as levels of trade as a share of the national growth domestic product (Fernández-Albertos, 2006; Hellwig and Samuels, 2007; Hellwig, 2014): voters seem to judge national incumbents less on their economic records as international economic integration deepens. Building on these results, Hellwig (2008, 2014) further developed the agenda by looking at the impact of international economic integration on issue voting<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, Hellwig (2008, 2014) asserts that voters respond to the lowering of national governments' room to manoeuvre in the economy, not only by giving less importance to incumbents' economic records, but by increasing the weight of non-economic issues in their calculus of voting. His argument simply contends that "voters balance reduced demands for government action in the economy by increasing demands for attention in other, noneconomic areas" (Hellwig, 2014, p.46). So far, only one study validated this hypothesis of *balancing demands* on the individual level in the 2001 general election in Great-Britain and in the 1997 French election (Hellwig, 2008). Finally, Steiner (2010, 2016) made the original argument that economic integration ends up reducing the individual propensity to participate in general elections. More precisely, the author contends that rational voters are less prone to vote in general elections in more economically integrated countries because of a 1) low polarization on economic issues (Steiner and Martin, 2012) and because 2) meaningful differences in economic policy outcomes cannot be achieved by any alternative governments (Steiner, 2016). His results are supported on the aggregate level (Steiner, 2010) and on the individual level (Steiner, 2016), although less systematically because of a lack of available data. To summarize, there is now increasing evidence that international economic integration affects three key aspects of voting in national elections, i.e. economic voting, issue-voting and electoral participation. But, empirical results are mainly circumscribed to aggregate level studies, while studies on the individual level are still scarce (Hellwig, 2008; Steiner, 2016, for exceptions). This is problematic insofar as aggregate level studies face the problem of specification uncertainty (Plümper et al., 2005; Steiner, 2016). Indeed, aggregate level studies might omit important explanatory variables of voting behaviour, while statistical models are harder getting right with such data.

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<sup>2</sup>Economic voting describes the mechanism through which voters sanction (respectively, reward) the incumbent government for bad (respectively, good) economic performances. It is widely considered as one of the important aspects of voting behaviour, most notably in normative models of accountability (Przeworski et al., 1999)

<sup>3</sup>Issue voting relates voters' policy preferences to the policy proposals of political parties. In this framework, voters are supposed to vote for parties which are closer to their own policy concerns. This is also considered as one of the important features of choice in democratic elections (Carmines and Stimson, 1980; Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989).

Building on [Steiner \(2016\)](#) proposition to supplement the existing evidence with an investigation into the mechanisms on the individual level, i.e. individual perceptions, the first three chapters specifically ask *whether individual perceptions of economic constraints affect performance voting (chapter 1); issue voting (chapter 2); electoral participation (chapter 3); and vote for mainstream parties (Chapter 3) in general elections*. Thus, the first scientific purpose of this dissertation aims to falsify prior theories linking (economic) transfers of authority and voting behaviour in national elections using cross-national data. To do so, I take advantage of the *European Election Study* datasets. Through the use of these databases, I am able to perform micro-level analyses of voting behaviour in a first large cross-national perspective, which is lacking in the literature. In fact, most of the available studies rely on particular case studies (e.g. 1997 French elections and 2001 British elections) or use aggregate level data to analyse the relationship between transfers of (economic) authority and the vote. Not only do I test these previous theories, but I also complement them by looking at omitted features of the vote, namely performance voting in non-economic records (chapter 1) and political parties' fortunes (chapter 3). First, I extend the hypothesis of *balancing demands* to performance voting. Here, the logic is simple: if non-economic issues gain importance in the individual calculus of voting ([Hellwig, 2008](#)), then voters should reward and punish more incumbents on non-economic records as they perceive their national governments to be constrained by economic integration. Strikingly, this implication has never been tested both on both the aggregate and individual level. Second, I make the argument that mainstream (government and opposition) parties should suffer more from economic integration than challenger parties ([De Vries and Hobolt, 2012](#), for a definition). The rationale is the following: if economic integration reduces the importance of general elections as mechanisms of selection of future economic decisions ([Steiner, 2016](#)), then voters should act less strategically (respectively, more sincerely) in general elections as in the case of second-order elections ([Reif and Schmitt, 1980](#)). Yet, strategic voting generally favours mainstream parties, while it disadvantages challenger parties which generally have less chances to gather large shares of the vote. Interestingly, this implication has never been tested yet.

In contrast, the study of the impact of the transfer of (economic) authority from national governments to European institutions on voting behaviour is largely scattered, while its specific impact on national elections is restricted to a couple of studies on 1) economic voting and 2) issue-voting ([De Vries, 2007](#); [De Vries and Tillman, 2011](#); [Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012](#)). As mentioned, several studies have convincingly argued that European integration increasingly constrains national governments' room to manoeuvre, most notably in the economic area, and ultimately affect party strategies via party platforms ([Hix, 2003](#); [Dorussen and Nanou, 2006](#); [Nanou and Dorussen, 2013](#)). Starting from this premise, [Lobo and Lewis-Beck \(2012\)](#) contend that European integration should also affect voting behaviour by decreasing economic voting. Specifically, they assert that voters who perceive the European Union to have responsibility over the economic situation should be less prone to reward or punish incumbents on the basis of their economic records. Empirically, they find confirmation of this hint in four southern European countries, namely Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain in 2009. Interestingly, this is, as far as I know, the only study which has tested this implication. I intend to rectify this gap in chapter 4. Specifically, I ask *whether citizens who believe the European Union to be responsible for the*

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*domestic economic situation are less prone to reward and punish incumbent governments in general elections.* I do so in a first longitudinal cross-national setting through the exploitation of data from the *2009 and 2014 European Election Study* databases. In addition, I extend the argument to electoral participation as in the case of international economic integration (Steiner, 2016). If one views European integration as a process limiting national governments' policy room-to-manoeuve in the economy (Hix, 2003) and party polarization on economic issues (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013), it should also affect individual propensities to participate in general elections. Chapter 4 provides the first empirical analysis which tests this hypothesis on the individual level.

So far, I only conceptualized European integration as an external governmental process *constraining* national governments' policy room-to-manoeuve to apprehend its effect on domestic electoral politics. However, most studies linking European integration with electoral behaviour rather consider the latter as a political issue not unlike Foreign affairs or security (De Vries, 2007; De Vries et al., 2011). In this framework, the process of European integration is essentially considered as a governmental policy on which political parties and voters position themselves. This strand of literature which mainly views European integration as an issue gained visibility at the aftermath of the referendums in France and Denmark in 1992 which supposedly led to an increased politicization of the European issue in national arenas (Van Ingelgom, 2014). In turn, many studies foresaw that an increased politicization of the process of European integration - via an increased salience and polarization (De Wilde and Zürn, 2012) - would make voters pay more attention to the issue of European integration in general elections. The most fully articulated theory in this matter was provided by De Vries (2007): the author even made several contributions explaining under which political conditions the issue of European integration should be more prominent in the individual calculus of voting (De Vries, 2007; De Vries et al., 2011, for example). Empirical studies largely confirmed her argument: there is evidence of issue voting on European integration in almost all the member states of the European Union (De Vries and Tillman, 2011). Chapter 5 further contributes to this debate by asking *whether the increasing authority of the European Union enhances issue voting on European integration in general elections.* To do so, I use data from *the 2004 and 2009 European Election Study* and craft an original empirical test to analyse whether the perceived responsibility of the European Union results in more issue voting on the European integration process.

Lastly, the final two chapters step away from the study of the impact of processes of integration on domestic electoral politics to examine two other consequences of the recent transfers of authority from national governments to the European Union. First, I contribute to the wide literature on voting behaviour in European parliamentary elections by looking at the impact of the increasing authority of the European parliament on performance voting. Most studies on the matter consider European parliamentary elections as second-order contests where voters do not bother to vote or simply "waste" their votes by voting for challenger parties (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). In turn, voters do not generally use European contests to judge European incumbents on the basis of their past records, but rather to express their discontents about their national executives (Marsh, 1998; Hix and Marsh, 2007). According to Reif and Schmitt (1980), the main reason explaining this behaviour is that there is less-at-stake in European parliamentary elections than in general elections. To



put it differently, voters do not blame or reward European incumbents in these elections because of the low responsibility of the European Union in the policymaking process. Yet, as European integration deepens, there should be more evidence of performance voting in European parliamentary elections. Using data from the *2009 and 2014 European Election Study* modules, chapter 6 examines *whether the increasing authority of the European Union affects performance voting in European parliamentary elections, and whether it is conditional upon individual responsibility attributions to the European Union*. In this framework, the 2014 European parliamentary election provides an particularly good case study to test this hypothesis. Indeed, it is the first European parliamentary election where the choice of European executive is directly linked to electoral results.

Following this discussion on accountability mechanisms in European electoral contests, chapter 7 concludes this dissertation by providing a quasi-natural experiment which aims at investigating whether *the European Union is deemed accountable for macroeconomic policies when it becomes institutionally in charge*. So far, European studies have shown that there is still no credible mechanism through which citizens can hold the European Union accountable for its past policy records, notably because there exists no alternation of power at the executive level (Follesdal and Hix, 2006) and because the European Union is always in a situation of incumbency. Yet, does this mean that the European Union cannot be rewarded nor punished on the basis of its past policy records? Chapter 7 analyses the evolution of popularity functions of the European Union<sup>4</sup> in the new member states<sup>5</sup> before and after accession. I do so because it allows differentiating between a situation of incumbency and a situation of non-incumbency of the European Union, which is essential in models of accountability. Indeed, punishment and rewards for past policy records is most obvious when the government can be deemed institutionally responsible for policy actions.

Studying whether and how external processes of integration affect domestic electoral politics in general, and voting behaviour in particular is not without normative interest. Indeed, domestic governance is now more and more affected by external actors, whether horizontally, e.g. global markets and/or interest groups, or vertically, e.g. supranational and/or sub-national governments (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). In turn, the traditional concept of democracy centred around the nation-state is challenged, as are established electoral mechanisms (Rodrik, 2011). In this dissertation, I simply make the argument that one needs to know first how voters react to this transfer of powers from the nation states to external actors such as the European Union or global markets before thinking of revising current systems of public decision-making. Indeed, empirical observations informed by theoretical accounts are not derisory, it is the basis on which policymakers need to justify their policy decisions, or in this case, institutional reforms. Through these empirical analyses, I simply want to see how, we, voters, adapt to these structural changes that occurred most forcefully in the last three decades by looking at some specific aspects of the vote. Note that I do not

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<sup>4</sup>Popularity function is a function explaining the change in government's popularity by the changes in economic conditions (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994)

<sup>5</sup>New member states are the countries which entered the European Union in 2004, i.e. Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, and in 2007, i.e. Bulgaria and Romania

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aim to cover all the implications of the impact of economic integration on the vote in this dissertation. Notably, I do not open the discussion on the possible implications of economic globalization on domestic politics within the framework of the historical cleavage theory (Martin, 2007; Kriesi et al., 2012). But, empirical discussions presented in this dissertation are certainly complementary to this approach since the integration-demarcation literature predicts a restructuring of the domestic party competition because of the mobilization of winners and losers on the basis of new non-economic issues. Yet, they do not capture the potential massive changes induced by a new critical juncture, which could potentially change the structure of party systems very profoundly. To clearly distinguish these effects, one would however need more time since historical cleavages are arguable slow to directly impact domestic politics

Next section reviews the literature which has investigated the impact of international economic integration on domestic electoral politics, including both party and voter behaviour. The third section does the same, but focuses on European integration. The fourth part discusses the impact of transfers of power from national governments to the European Union on accountability mechanisms in general and European parliamentary elections in particular. Finally, the last section presents in extensive details the research designs of each chapter.

## 0.2 Economic Globalization and Domestic Electoral Politics

The integration of national economies into the international market economy has expanded considerably since the mid-eighties (Dreher et al., 2008). According to the KOF Index, levels of trade; foreign direct and portfolio investments; and income payments to foreign nationals as shares of the national growth domestic products increased by 21,8% in the EU-15 from 1985 to 2013, while it grew by 42,34% in the newer member states<sup>6</sup>.

This was translated in a significant increase of the 1) volumes of trade; 2) the level of direct foreign investments; and 3) the mobility of the capital. As mentioned in the introduction, many authors have asserted that this movement toward economic integration has reduced national governments' abilities to influence the state of the domestic economy. Indeed, it is argued that increased capital mobility, combined with a harsher competition for direct foreign investments provide national governments with incentives to improve their domestic competitiveness. Yet, the focus on competitiveness may entail 1) reductions in levels of corporate and income taxations, and 2) less regulatory policies in order 1) to facilitate the setting up of international firms within the national borders, and 2) to secure that the capital will not be allocated elsewhere. Although not unequivocally, empirical studies have supported this idea that national governments are constrained in their economic policy choices by economic integration. For instance, Bretschger and Hettich (2002) demonstrate that globalisation has a negative and significant impact on corporate taxes, while Plümer et al. (2009) shows that international tax competition decreases national governments' likelihood to tax mobile capital. Moreover, it is argued that

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<sup>6</sup>Note that the KOF index only provides measures of economic globalization in the newer member states since the beginning of the nineties



economic integration, not only constrains policy choices, but also decreases the efficiency of macroeconomic tools traditionally used by national governments to boost their domestic economy on the short-run (Kayser, 2007). On the contrary, it is argued that governments can only use supply-side measures such as research and development and education to influence economic performance on the long-term.

Starting from the assumption that international economic integration reduces national governments' abilities to influence economic policies; some studies have started looking at the potential consequences of economic constraints on both voter and party behaviour (Hellwig, 2008, 2014; Haupt, 2010; Steiner, 2010; Steiner and Martin, 2012; Steiner, 2016; Ward et al., 2015). Next subsection will review the specific impact of this phenomenon on party convergence and party strategies, while the following will review the consequences on voters.

### 0.2.1 The Effect of International Economic Integration on Domestic Party Competition

As already mentioned, the convergence argument foresees that economic policy choices should converge across welfare states due to the increasing pressures put upon governments by international economic integration. An implication of this argument is that economic policy differences between the left and the right will also diminish (Berger, 2000; Haupt, 2010; Steiner and Martin, 2012), mostly because of an ideological and programmatic shift of social democratic parties (Scharpf, 2002, for example). Indeed, social democratic parties arguably face more problems than their counterparts on the right side of the spectrum as international economic integration deepens: since traditional economic objectives of social democratic parties entail a decrease of the effects of business cycles and a more important redistribution of wealth, it might become difficult to compete on the basis of such policy proposals in highly integrated economies if they want to remain credible in the long run. An alternative line of argument also predicts party convergence on the economic dimension. Here, the rationale is slightly different: in response to risks stemming from an increased international economic competition and a more volatile market, national governments in established welfare states – should they be from the right or the left – might launch a set of economic policies aiming at protecting particular sectors or specific segments of the population. Hence, both left-wing and right-wing national governments might increase labour taxes and social expenditures in order to preserve welfare states (Bretschger and Hettich, 2002). In this scenario, party convergence can also be brought about by right wing parties.

Empirical studies scrutinizing the effect of economic integration on party convergence are still relatively scarce (Adams et al., 2009; Haupt, 2010; Ward et al., 2011; Steiner and Martin, 2012) but they point to similar results: there seems to be a convergence on the economic dimension across political parties as economic integration deepens. Yet, the direction of the effect is still debated, especially with regards to the impact of economic integration on social democratic parties (Haupt, 2010, for example).

In the largest comparative study gathering 24 developed democracies, Steiner and Martin (2012) convincingly show that economic integration – measured via the KOF index

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of globalisation which captures both national restrictions and international flows (Dreher et al., 2008) has a systematic negative effect on the dispersion of parties' economic policy positions. Using data from the Comparative Manifestos Project, they indeed demonstrate that "party platforms become more alike with regard to economic policies, thus reducing variance at the party system level" as economic globalization increases (Steiner and Martin, 2012, p.260) This result was already confirmed by Haupt (2010) who also utilized data from the Comparative Manifesto Project to investigate the effect of economic integration on changes of parties' economic propositions, but in a smaller set of European countries, i.e. 17 cases. Yet, the author shows that only changes in volume of exports, imports and gross private capital flows (as percentage of Growth Domestic Products) between the current and the previous election affect parties' policy shifts, but not changes in foreign direct investment. Most importantly, this article contradicts the argument that economic integration inevitably leads to convergence toward the right. Indeed, the empirical analysis shows that parties on the left react to changes in exports with rightward shifts, while they respond to changes in imports and capital mobility with leftward shifts. Meanwhile, right-wing parties follow the opposite pattern. In fact, the study demonstrates that "left-wing parties and right-wing parties react similarly to economic changes" within the domestic setting (Haupt, 2010, p.16), eventually suggesting that economic integration does not necessarily impeach left-wing parties to propose leftist solutions, nor it uniquely benefits parties located on the right side of the political spectrum.

In another study, Ward et al. (2011) highlight the important role played by the median voter in the process of party convergence. According to the authors, the original location of the median voter is essential to understand why party platforms converge: if the median voter is on the right to begin with, economic integration will not lead to more convergence, while if she is on the left, left-wing parties will move rightward. The reason to explain such empirical findings is that left parties do not need to move to the right when they already had incentives to do so from the start.

(Adams et al., 2009) look at the effects of economic integration on party convergence by disentangling between short-term and long-term indicators of economic integration. In this framework, the convergence theory is only validated when economic integration is measured by changes in trade and foreign direct investment (i.e. longer term economic integration). Indeed, both left and non-left parties' platforms move to the right of economic dimension, while they tend to diverge from right-wing parties when measuring economic integration by exposure to short term capital flows. Empirical findings on the economic convergence of party platforms thus remain inconclusive as to which political side is clearly responsible for the shift. But, there is general agreement of a convergence between parties at the party system.

Economic integration does not only lead to convergence on the economic dimension, but also arguably affects why parties emphasize certain issues in electoral campaigns. Indeed, it is argued that economic integration alters the range of economic options political parties can credibly offer in the first place. In turn, Ward et al. (2015) make the assumption that strategic parties which seek to remain credible should be less prone to 1) emphasize economic issues and 2) more likely to foster non-economic issues in their manifestos in response to increasing economic integration. Using a large party manifesto database

gathering 49 countries between 1961 and 2010, they find compelling evidence supporting the two hypotheses: a higher level of economic integration reduces the salience of economic issues in the party system, while all political parties (including incumbent and mainstream parties) tend to emphasize more strongly non-economic issues in more economically integrated areas. This result is confirmed by [Hellwig \(2014\)](#) who also demonstrates that political parties tend to be more responsive toward citizens' preferences in non-economic policies as economic integration deepens through the analysis of party and voter positions shifts in 18 democracies.

To sum up, the literature on economic integration and party behaviour shows that economic integration decreases (conversely, increases) the salience of economic issues (conversely non-economic issues) in party manifestos, while it leads to party convergence on the economic dimension.

### 0.2.2 The Effect of International Economic Integration on Voting Behaviour in National Elections

The study of the impact of international economic integration on voters is also rather new and is slightly richer. So far, it has been argued that international economic integration affects electoral turnout ([Steiner, 2010](#); [Steiner and Martin, 2012](#); [Steiner, 2016](#)); economic-voting ([Hellwig, 2001](#); [Hellwig and Samuels, 2007](#); [Hellwig, 2008, 2014](#)); and issue voting ([Hellwig, 2008, 2014](#)).

Based on the rational choice model of electoral turnout, [Steiner \(2010, 2016\)](#) makes the assumption that international economic integration should decrease the expected utility derived from the act of voting. Specifically, the author contends that voters should be less inclined to vote in countries which are more economically integrated because of a 1) lower party differentiation on economic issues ([Steiner and Martin, 2012](#)), but also because 2) meaningful differences in economic policy outcomes cannot be achieved by any alternative governments in highly integrated settings ([Steiner, 2016](#)).

The first noticeable empirical study which investigates the relationship between economic globalization and electoral turnout is [Steiner \(2010\)](#). The hypothesis that integration into world markets decreases electoral participation is tested on the aggregate level and the dataset covers more than four decades across 23 countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Results strongly support the idea that electoral turnout is hindered by the level of economic integration. Indeed, all the indicators measuring economic integration<sup>7</sup> display the same result whatever the measure of electoral turnout should it be measured as the ratio of votes cast to the number of officially registered eligible voters or as the voting age population: higher international economic integration reduces electoral turnout. [Steiner and Martin \(2012\)](#) further support this hypothesis in a study building on the idea that higher economic integration leads to party platform convergence on the economic dimension, which ultimately results in lower turnouts. Within this study, the authors directly link the restriction of economic policy choices stemming from the development of economic

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<sup>7</sup>[Steiner \(2016\)](#) uses multiple measures of economic integration to test his hypothesis: the sum of exports and imports as a share of the growth domestic product, the sum of all in and outflows of gross capital markets and a subindex of the KOF database which measures trade, foreign direct investment, portfolio investment and income payments to foreign nationals as a share of growth domestic product.

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integration to the decrease of electoral turnout. Using multiple estimation procedures and different measures of electoral turnouts in 340 elections, they show the existence of a negative association between the convergence of party positions on economic issues and electoral turnout. On the aggregate level, there is thus some evidence showing that economic integration decreases electoral turnout, notably via her impact on party polarization. On the individual level, [Steiner \(2016\)](#) recently examined whether individual perceptions of national governments' constraints on the economy directly affect the individual inclination to go cast a ballot. This study focuses on the single case of the 2001 British general elections which provides a good case study. Indeed, the 2001 electoral campaign was particularly centred on the issue of economic globalization as an exogenous factor that restricts the actions of national governments. In his analysis, the author demonstrates that those who believe their national governments to be constrained by economic globalization are less likely to report to have voted in the previous elections, thus confirming his previous results on the aggregate level. Furthermore, a related implication linking perceptions of economic constraints and perceptions of the meaningfulness of elections is tested in this article: respondents who perceive their governments to be constrained by economic integration are more prone to think that elections bear low importance. This finding is important since it eventually confirms the assumptions of the rational choice model of electoral participation.

Other studies have made the case that economic globalization also affects the economic vote, i.e. the extent to which national incumbents are judged on their economic records ([Hellwig, 2001](#); [Hellwig and Samuels, 2007](#); [Hellwig, 2014](#); [Fernández-Albertos, 2006](#); [Kayser, 2007](#)). Specifically, these studies argue that economic voting is moderated by the level of economic openness of a country: the more (conversely, the less) a national economy is economically integrated, the less (conversely, the more) voters will be inclined to reward or punish incumbent governments on the basis of their past economic performances. Many explanations are proposed to account for such a relationship in the literature. Building on the rational choice model of electoral choice, a first rationale argues that informed voters will adapt to the loss of economic competencies of national governments by mechanically reducing the weight of economic issues in their calculus of voting ([Hellwig, 2001](#); [Hellwig and Samuels, 2007](#); [Hellwig, 2014](#)). Here, the premise is that voters connect the increasing exposure to the world markets with decrease of policy room to manoeuvre on the economy. They can certainly connect the former with a reduction of national governments' margins of manoeuvre in other issue areas such as security and health care, but according to [Hellwig \(2013\)](#), it is less straightforward in non-economic areas. In turn, it makes no sense for voters to sanction or reward national governments in an area where they enjoy less power. A second alternative line of argument (but, possibly complementary) contends that economic integration can blur attribution of responsibility for policy outcomes and eventually weaken the economic vote ([Fernández-Albertos, 2006](#)). Indeed, when multiple economic and political actors influence policy outcomes, it is argued that it becomes more costly for citizens to gather accurate information and correctly pinpoint responsibility. Yet, being able to assign responsibility for policy decisions is a prerequisite for voters to punish or reward their national governments [Rudolph \(2003a\)](#). Empirical studies have supported this claim: the level of clarity of responsibility of a political system conditions the extent to which voters punish or reward incumbents ([Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993](#)). Starting from these premises, an extensive number of studies have tested this hypothesis.

The seminal study showing that economic globalization decreases economic voting is [Hellwig \(2001\)](#). In this study, the author investigates whether the weight of international trade within a country's growth domestic product moderates the extent to which the perceptions of the domestic economic performance affect incumbents' fortunes in nine industrialized countries. His conclusion supports the idea that the level of openness negatively affects the individual ability to hold incumbents to account for their past economic performance. More precisely, voters in countries where the proportion of exports plus imports of goods and services is an important component of growth domestic product are less likely to punish or reward their national governments based on their perception of the evolution of the national economy. This first result is further corroborated by [Hellwig and Samuels \(2007\)](#) in a larger comparative analysis gathering 75 countries over 27 years. They find compelling evidence that exposure to the world economy weakens the link between economic performance and incumbents' fortunes at the occasion of general elections. Contrary to [Hellwig \(2001\)](#), they also include the exposure towards transnational flows within their statistical models. In their analysis, they further confirm the hypothesis: voters in economies where the gross domestic product depends more on transnational flows and international trade are consistently less inclined to punish or reward the incumbents on the basis of their perceptions of the economic situation. In another study gathering 15 countries, [Fernández-Albertos \(2006\)](#) shows concurring evidence supporting the hypothesis using similar methods and measures, but also proposes another implication: left-wing incumbent governments should be less punished on the basis of past economic performance than right-wing ones in highly integrated economies because they are supposedly held less responsible for managing the domestic economy. Indeed, economic integration decreases the efficiency of social democratic interventionist policies, eventually decreasing their responsibility. However, empirical results do not unequivocally confirm this hypothesis because of problems of collinearity. On the individual level, there is one study investigating the impact of perceptions of economic integration on economic voting. In this study, [Hellwig \(2008\)](#) shows that voters who perceive their national governments to be constrained on the economy are less inclined to punish or reward their incumbents for economic performance, thus confirming studies using aggregate measures of economic integration but only in the framework of the 2001 British and 1997 French general elections.

In the latter study, [Hellwig \(2008\)](#) also makes the original proposition, later labelled the hypothesis of *balancing demands* [Hellwig \(2014\)](#), that voters should care more about non-economic issues when voting in more economically integrated areas. As noted above, one of the consequences of economic integration on voting behaviour is that voters simply avoid participating in elections because the expected utility of their votes is weakened by economic integration ([Steiner, 2010, 2016](#)). Yet, if instrumental citizens still decide to go to the voting booth, they should prefer issues on which alternative governments can bring meaningful results at the end of their mandate. In other words, rational voters should "choose candidates on the basis of some expectation that their choice will affect the future actions of government" ([Stein, 1990](#)). Hence, if voters decide to participate in general elections, they should react to the loss of economic policy competencies of national governments, not only by voting less on economic issues, but by voting more on non-economic issues. Note that the increasing weight of non-economic issues in the calculus of voting could also be explained by the increased salience of non-economic issues in the party system and in party appeals according to a top-down approach ([Hellwig, 2014](#), for



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an exception)<sup>8</sup>). As mentioned, political parties, even incumbents, increasingly emphasize non-economic issues as economic integration deepens, which eventually enhances the salience of such issues at the party system level (Ward et al., 2015). In turn, it is possible that the increasing salience of non-economic issues among parties and within the party system increases the weight of non-economic issues at the level of citizens. Overall, there is thus room to assume that increasing integration of national economies with the international market will enhance the weight of non-economic issues in individual calculus of voting.

Until now, the *balancing demand hypothesis* is only confirmed in a study on issue voting in Britain and France (Hellwig, 2008) and in a cross-national study on preferences for government actions (Hellwig, 2013). In the former, the author examines the conditioning effect of economic integration on issue voting, i.e. whether voters choose parties on the basis of their positioning on a policy dimension, in non-economic policy areas. Specifically, the author finds that voters who believe their national governments to be constrained in their economic choices by economic globalization tend to be closer to the parties on the libertarian-authoritarian axis than voters who think their governments are not constrained by economic integration. In the latter, Hellwig (2013) shows that individual preferences for government activity are conditioned by levels of economic integration: citizens' preferences for government provision of non-economic policies such as healthcare, the environment and pensions increase as economic integration deepens. Conversely, demands for more involvement in the economy decreases as economic integration deepens.

Overall, empirical evidence highlights that international economic integration negatively alters the individual probability to vote and the willingness to judge incumbent governments on their past economic records. Meanwhile, voters seem to react to increasing economic integration by evaluating political parties more in non-economic areas, i.e. where the national government still has room to manoeuvre.

### 0.3 European Integration and Domestic Electoral Politics

Modern governance is now increasingly characterized by cooperation between different levels of governments including local, sub-national, regional, national and supranational layers. This phenomenon is most commonly known as a multi-level system of governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). In this institutional framework, states also clearly lose part of their control over a number of policies. This is particularly true in the context of the European community: since the Single European Act, the European community gained several policy competencies, most notably in the economic area. Nowadays, the European Union, via the European Commission, controls and limits national budgets and deficits, which eventually affects national governments' capacity to redistribute. The Commission is also entitled to conduct international trade deals on behalf of the member states. In addition, the European Central Bank plays a major role in the monitoring of inflation via tools such as quantitative easing or interest rates. Also, the European Union has exclusive competencies to legislate on Customs union and competition rules within the internal

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<sup>8</sup>Hellwig (2014) makes the case that parties are more likely to be responsive to non-economic preferences from voters than they are to be responsive to economic preferences as economic integration deepens

market. In fact, national governments belonging to the Eurozone cannot unilaterally choose levels of interest rates or depreciate their currency, while national governments belonging to the European Union do not have the opportunity to bail out companies due to competition rules and are constrained when choosing their levels of debts and deficits since the Maastricht treaty. The constraining effect exerted by European economic integration on national governments in terms of (economic) policy choices is arguably comparable to the one exerted by international economic integration, even more so given the binding effects of European laws in this domain. In fact, the process of European integration is commonly referred to as an "intense case of globalization" (Scharpf, 2002; Ward et al., 2015)

Surprisingly, research on this matter is limited to a couple of studies on party behaviour, nay non-existent for electoral behaviour (Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012, for an exception). The next subsections investigate into more details the existing literature on the impact of European (economic) integration on 1) party competition and party platforms; and on 2) voting behaviour.

### 0.3.1 The Effect of European Integration on Domestic Party Competition

The idea that the process of European integration affects domestic party competition and party platforms dates from the seminal work of Mair (2000). Specifically, Mair (2000) makes the case that the delegation of policies from the domestic level to the European Union eventually leads to a depoliticization of these policy issues. Indeed, the author asserts that available democratic tools in the European system of governance are not sufficient to ensure that preferences of voters toward policy issues will be reflected in policy outcomes at the supranational level. In turn, it is argued that European citizens will eventually become indifferent toward those policy issues since their votes will not influence those policies. Following, political parties will arguably have no incentives to compete on such issues at the domestic level. Ultimately, Mair (2000) predicts that these issues will simply disappear from national party platforms and domestic party competition. This argument is further supplemented by Hix (2003) who claims that the disappearance of policy issues within domestic party competition should only entail economic policies because European institutions mainly have competencies over the economy. As mentioned, the European Union via the European commission has the duty to conduct international trade negotiations; has the ability to manage regulatory policies in the framework of the Single Market; while it also has control over macro-economic policies via the Economic and Monetary Union. In turn, Hix (2003) predicts that policy platforms on the economy should mechanically converge because of European economic integration, but not in the case of social policies. Building on these studies, Dorussen and Nanou (2006) and Nanou and Dorussen (2013) provided the most fully articulated theoretical account to apprehend the effects of European integration on party policy positions in general elections. Specifically, they suggest that party platforms will converge in the policy areas where the European Union has competencies because of credibility issues. Indeed, the possibility to implement proposed policies is of paramount importance for political parties when deciding to emphasize those issues. If the European legislation restricts policy room-to-manoeuvre, it should thus be reflected in party manifestos and in party competition. Yet, the authors argue that the increasing authority of the European Union in

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the management of policies should not affect all parties equally. Indeed, it should primarily affect those parties that are concerned with reputation costs, i.e. mainstream and big parties.

Only few empirical studies have scrutinized how the constraints stemming from the European integration process affect party competition and party platforms. But, there is general consensus that the increasing authority of the European Union in different policy domains has decreased the distance between parties' positions (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013), most notably in the economic realm (Hix, 2003). Utilizing data from the party manifesto project in 170 elections in the fifteen member states of the European Union from 1960 and 1998, Hix (2003) investigates whether membership within 1) the European Union; 2) the single market; and 3) the Economic and Monetary Union has an effect on party convergence between the main parties on the 1) economic left-right axis; 2) a regulatory axis; 3) a macro-economic dimension; and 4) social left-right dimension. Overall, results confirm the hypothesis that there is increasing convergence of economic policy proposals between the main parties after membership. Conversely, there is some evidence showing that there has been an indirect effect of European integration on the divergence on the social left-right dimension: after membership, parties tend to be further apart on issues related to the social dimension. Furthermore, findings suggest that convergence on economic platforms is not linear over time. Instead, the length of membership within the European Union, measured as a trend, appears to create divergence on economic platforms rather than convergence. However, these results need to be taken with caution since the number of cases is rather low, while variables of European integration are simply captured by dummy variables which do not provide efficient and precise measures of the phenomenon.

Empirically, the studies of Dorussen and Nanou (2006) and Nanou and Dorussen (2013) certainly provide the most robust analyses of the effects of European integration on party platforms' convergence. In both studies, they rely on the Comparative Manifesto Project to measure programmatic convergence between parties in multiple policy issues. Specifically, the authors have system-policy units of analysis in every election from 1951 to 2001 (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006) and from 1968 to 2005 (Nanou and Dorussen, 2013). Overall the datasets gather 18 countries, some pertaining to the European Union, some pertaining to the European Free Trade Area (Iceland, Switzerland and Norway). To measure the effect of European integration on policy decisions, the authors do not only use dummy variables indicating membership in the European Union, but also utilize expert evaluations based on the previous work from Hooghe and Marks (2001). This qualitative index provides a proxy measure of the evolution of the competencies of the European Union in different policy areas. Through the use of these indicators, they convincingly show that political parties tend to adopt positions closer to those of their rivals as European integration deepens. Indeed, the constraints stemming from the process of integration diminishes the divergence of party platforms in member states, but there is no discernible impact in non-Member States no matter the model specifications (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013). Contrary to Hix (2003), they also find that the length of involvement within the European Union tends to increase convergence of policy platforms between political parties (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006). Most interestingly, they do not find a differentiated impact between party types - should they be mainstream vs. non-mainstream parties; left vs. right wing parties; and even pro- vs. anti-EU parties. This means that all kinds of parties respond to European economic integration in a similar fashion by deemphasizing issues on which



national governments have no more control on. Yet, empirical analyses also demonstrate that the coefficients associated with international economic integration are better predictors of convergence of party platforms, thus mitigating the role played by European integration in comparison with economic openness in the world market.

In a slightly different manner, [Ward et al. \(2015\)](#) make the assumption that European economic integration alters party competition by affecting issue salience. Based on the argument that European integration is an intense case of economic globalization, that is a process which mainly restricts national governments' leeway in the economy; they argue that this process should increase political parties' incentives to publicize non-economic issues such as nationalism, foreign policy, minority groups in society, education and European integration. Thus, there should not only be convergence between parties on the economic dimension, but the structure of the debates should also differ in terms of issue salience as European economic integration deepens. Utilizing data from the *Party Manifesto Project* and data from an index of the evolution of the policy competencies of the European Union ([Börzel, 2005](#)), they further confirm that European integration has a negative effect on party polarization on economic issues as [Hix \(2003\)](#) already showed. Most interestingly, the politicization of non-economic issues increases at the party system level as the authority of the European Union increases. Again, the authors show that the effect is stable across party types: the likelihood to emphasize non-economic issues is not dependent upon the size or the age of a party. Strikingly, this result remains stable even when comparing niche with mainstream parties. To further strengthen the causal effect, [Ward et al. \(2015\)](#) also examine whether joining the European Union has had an effect on the increase of non-economic issues in party manifestos. To do so, they take advantage of the 2004 wave of enlargement and use it as a treatment. As expected, they find that joining the European Union leads to a clear increase of the space devoted to non-economic considerations in party manifestos, ultimately providing further evidence regarding the causal mechanism.

Similarly to economic globalization, European integration also seems to provide political parties with incentives to adopt a position closer to their opponents, notwithstanding their type, while they also seem more prone to emphasize non-economic issues when competing. This is not particularly surprising if one considers European integration as an intense case of globalization. Yet, the small number of studies impeaches one to put a definite pin on these results.

### **0.3.2 The Effect of European Integration on Voting Behaviour in National Elections**

The literature focusing on the impact of European integration on electoral behaviour in national elections is also quite recent and remains relatively scarce. Two conceptualizations of European integration can be distinguished in current studies: the first one, popularized by [De Vries \(2007\)](#), mainly views European integration as an issue among others. More precisely, it is defined as a positional issue on which citizens have differential preferences (in contrast with valence issues). Therefore, it can be compared to issues such as environment, healthcare, taxes, and foreign affairs. Traditionally, the issue of European integration is perceived as orthogonal to the the left/right economic dimension and is viewed as more closely linked to libertarian/authoritarian considerations, especially in the EU-15 ([Hooghe](#)

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et al., 2002). In turn, Hellwig (2008) suggested that the issue of European integration could be ranked as a non-economic policy. The second conceptualization of European integration, implicitly developed by Lobo and Lewis-Beck (2012), considers European integration as a political process which constrains the margins of manoeuvre of national governments in the economy. Here, it can be compared to the process of international economic integration. In turn, these two distinct conceptualizations of European integration have led to different questionings.

Specifically, authors who view European integration as an issue have examined whether the issue of European integration affects the choice of political parties in general elections (Gabel, 2000; Evans, 2002; De Vries, 2007; De Vries and Tillman, 2011; De Vries et al., 2011). These studies investigating "EU issue voting" gained visibility after the French and Danish referendums when many authors started arguing that citizens were becoming more divided on the issue of European integration (Van Ingelgom, 2014, for a more nuanced picture). As a result, Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) asserted that the issue of European integration was "ripe for politicization" and that it was only "a matter of time before political entrepreneurs in some countries seize the opportunity, presented to their parties by these quite polarized opinions, to differentiate themselves from other parties in EU terms" (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004, p.47). De Vries (2007) further specified the conditions under which issue voting on European integration can appear. Apart from partisan conflict, the author especially insists on two other factors: issue salience and orthogonality. To put it differently, voters must believe the issue to be important to take this issue into account when voting, while it should also be related to the major dimension of political conflict. In turn, many empirical studies investigated whether the issue of European integration actually influences the decision to vote for a party in general elections (De Vries, 2007; De Vries et al., 2011). Empirical studies have confirmed the hint: there is evidence of issue voting on European integration in all the member states of the European Union De Vries et al. (2011), especially in Denmark, Germany, Netherlands and the United-Kingdom (De Vries, 2007). Yet, it remains one issue among others and its weight in the voting calculus is still limited in comparison with other issues (De Vries, 2007). Recently, some authors made the assumption that the politicization - a mix of individual salience and partisan conflict - over the issue of European integration is also likely to increase as policy competencies of the European Union expand (De Wilde and Zürn, 2012, for a thorough review). Yet, no study has yet tested this hypothesis both on the aggregate and individual level.

Strikingly, almost no study on electoral behaviour has considered European integration, not as an issue, but as a process constraining the margins of manoeuvre of national governments in the policy-making process. This is surprising insofar as many studies agree upon the fact that European integration restricts policy choices (Hix, 2003; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013), while different authors show that many features of electoral behaviour are conditional upon the perceived or real policy responsibility of the government (Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993; Rudolph, 2003a; Hellwig, 2014; Steiner, 2016). Following this logic, Lobo and Lewis-Beck (2012) made the assumption that European economic integration should affect the extent to which incumbents are judged on their economic records. As in the case of economic globalization, they foresaw that economic considerations should decrease in the calculus of voting as European economic integration deepens. More specifically, they predicted that individuals who believe the European Union to be responsible for the national economy

should be less prone to punish (conversely, reward) current incumbents for a bad (conversely good) domestic economic situation. Using individual level data from the *2009 European Election Study*, they tested this hypothesis in four southern countries: Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Their analysis demonstrates, for the first time, that individuals who perceive the European Union to have responsibility over the national economic situation are more likely to reward their incumbents when they perceive the economic situation to have improved in their country. This study has the merit to confirm that perceived European economic integration conditions the individual probability to judge incumbents on the basis of their economic records. Yet, this study is circumscribed to four cases in one point in time and it only provides information regarding the effect of perceptions of European integration on the vote. Hence, there is still the need for further corroboration.

To sum up, the study of the effects of European integration on electoral behaviour in domestic elections is still limited, but it confirms, at least, one result found in the literature linking economic globalization to voting behaviour: as economic integration deepens, voters are more reluctant to judge their incumbents on their economic records. In the meantime, studies focusing on European integration as a political issue suggest that, the issue of European integration might increase as European integration deepens, but there is no clear results in this matter.

### 0.3.3 European Empowerment and Accountability

Besides, the recent transfers of power from the national governments to the European Union have also affected accountability mechanisms. Specifically, the increasing responsibility of the European Union in terms of policy competences is likely to increase the individual likelihood to hold the European Union accountable for policy decisions (chapter 7), most notably in the European parliamentary elections (chapter 6). This hypothesis builds on works which have long argued that accountability derives from responsibility attribution ([Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993](#); [Rudolph, 2003b](#))

As of today, European studies have analysed accountability mainly from a normative standpoint ([Scharpf, 2003](#); [Bovens, 2007](#); [Papadopoulos, 2010](#), for examples), notably from the well-known perspective of democratic deficit ([Moravcsik, 2002](#); [Follesdal and Hix, 2006](#)). In this literature, the European Union is portrayed whether as a non-democratic apparatus which does not allow for political contestation and does not permit citizens to hold the European executive accountable for its past policy actions ([Follesdal and Hix, 2006](#)), whether as a polity with no less or more democratic legitimacy than other forms of political systems ([Moravcsik, 2002](#)). In fact, [Moravcsik \(2002\)](#) contends that there are two channels through which incumbents in the European Union can be held accountable for their past actions: direct accountability through European parliamentary elections and indirect accountability via national elections. Historically, European studies have mainly focused on European parliamentary elections and, to a lesser extent, on national elections to study accountability of the European Union.

Studies on European parliamentary elections have generally shown that these electoral contests feature only few elements of electoral accountability: incumbent members of the European parliament are generally not rewarded or punished for their past performance

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on the economy (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). Only Tilley et al. (2008) and Bartkowska and Tiemann (2015) find some evidence of economic voting in these electoral contests. The former finds strong economic-voting in European parliamentary elections, but only in countries with single party governments, while the latter find that "across the board those voters who think their respective national economy is going to do well over the next 12 months are more likely to stick with one of the parties in government, while those who think the national economic development gives cause for concern are more likely to try out one of the parties in the opposition" (Bartkowska and Tiemann, 2015, p.14). Most importantly, Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) demonstrate that the European parliament is not an arena where voters punish or reward incumbent members of the European parliament based on their past economic records, although they demonstrate that citizens broadly perceive the European Union to have responsibility over the state of the domestic economy. This low accountability is generally explained by the important weight of national considerations in individual vote choices in European elections (Marsh, 1998; Hix and Marsh, 2007) and by the low institutional clarity of the European Union (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). Indeed, the style of politics within the European Union is generally based on large coalitions with compromises between mainstream party families. In addition, empirical studies show that it is harder for voters to assign responsibilities between different governments in multilevel governments (Anderson, 2006). Yet, the distribution of policy competences (i.e. exclusive, shared and supporting competences) in the European union is particularly cumbersome and might eventually impede potential accountability. Ultimately, this low clarity can end up making it harder to reward or punish a specific political actor (especially, the incumbent) for past policy performance. However, the Lisbon treaty might have been a game-changer in this perspective. Indeed, the institutional reform made the European parliament an equal partner with the Council in most exclusive policy areas via the implementation of the ordinary legislative procedure (Hix and Høyland, 2013). Now, the European Commission needs the agreement of the European parliament for its proposals to be secured, while the amendments of the Council of the European Union cannot pass without the approval of the European Parliament. In addition, the European parliament has gained an important power of veto over the choice of the European union executive, i.e. commissioners and the president of the Commission (Hobolt, 2014). For a couple of years now, the European parliament controls the nomination of the College of commissioners. Most importantly, the choice of the president of the Commission is now directly to the results in the European parliamentary elections. These new policy competences and institutional powers within the European union decision-making process have strengthened the European parliament and have partly responded to critics stemming from the democratic deficit literature (Follesdal and Hix, 2006). The combination between increased clarity and increased policy competences makes it plausible to witness more accountability in European contests, especially in the 2014 European parliamentary elections. This is the purpose of chapter 6.

Second, most of the works which study attitudes towards the European Union do not analyse European Union's support in terms of accountability, but rather in terms of the perceived costs and benefits of the integration process (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). Drawing on the concept of specific support which claims that citizens assess authorities "according to the extent to which [individuals'] demands are perceived to have been met" (Easton, 1975), support for the European Union is most of the time apprehended as support for a governmental policy-process (the integration process) rather than as support for a

decision-maker (the European Union). Yet, studies on accountability rely on the assumption that citizens are able to assign responsibilities to specific governments for policy outcomes. Indeed, in performance voting models, the central unit of analysis is generally the incumbent government because it provides a way to indirectly measure responsibility (Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993). Furthermore, these models are generally based on longitudinal studies to control for political alternations since political alternatives are also pre-requisites in models of accountability. Anderson (2000) notably argues that the explanatory power of economic-voting models depend on the viable alternatives against incumbents. In accountability models, incumbents are judged on their economic records at the end of their mandate. To be thrown out of office, Anderson (2000) contends that there should be 1) a policy performance considered unsatisfactory by voters; and 2) credible political actors capable of replacing incumbents. Within this framework, the reward-punishment mechanism is only efficient when the competition within the party system is structured in a way that the opposition offers some guarantees as possible incumbents. By viable alternatives, Anderson (2000) basically thinks of an opposition party capable of having the majority of the votes. Yet, viable alternatives are not usual in the European system of governance, notably because of the consensus-based structure of European Union politics (Hix et al., 2007) and the mode of selection of members of the European parliament (Marsh, 1998; Hix and Marsh, 2007). Yet, chapter 7 proposes an original quasi-natural experiment to resolve this issue.

## 0.4 Presentation of the Chapters

The main objective of his dissertation is to analyse how voters react to the transfers of competences resulting from the recent development of processes of integration when they vote. But, the transfer of policy competences can be apprehended in two ways: it is whether a mechanism that deprives political actors (e.g. national governments) from the control of policy competences or it can be analysed as a mechanism that enhances one political actor (e.g. global markets and the European Union) over another (e.g. national government). In the case of economic globalization, there is only one straightforward implication: as international economic integration deepens, national governments lose policy room to manoeuvre, mostly in the economic area. Indeed, there exists no institutional mechanism through which citizens can blame or punish global markets. Starting from this premise, the first part specifically examines the impact of the reduction of national governments' leeway in the economy resulting from increased international economic globalization. As already mentioned, I focus on four aspects of voting behaviour: performance voting, with an emphasis on economic voting (chapter 1); issue voting, with an emphasis on issue voting on the issue of European integration (chapter 2); electoral participation (chapter 3); and support for mainstream parties (chapter 3). In the case of European integration, it is rather the supranational government which gains policy competences. Therefore, the second part of the dissertation investigates how voters react to the transfers of policy competences of the European Union in general elections (chapters 4 and 5) and how it affects accountability mechanisms more generally (chapters 6 and 7).

Specifically, the first chapter contributes to the literature on the impact of economic integration on voting behaviour by looking more extensively at its effects on performance voting. This study aims to test the idea which asserts that perceptions of economic constraints reduces the weight of incumbents' economic records in the individual calculus



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of voting in a first large cross-national comparative setting (Hellwig, 2008, 2014). Most importantly, this chapter examines the *balancing demand hypothesis*, made by Hellwig (2013) which contends that economic integration should enhance non-economic issues in the calculus of voting. Precisely, I assume that voters who believe their national government to be constrained in their ability to influence the domestic economy should be more likely to punish or reward incumbents on the basis of non-economic records. Remarkably, this study constitutes the first attempt to apply this hypothesis to performance voting. To do so, I use the 2009 *European Election Study* dataset because it asks respondents about 1) their vote intentions in national parliamentary elections; 2) their perceptions of the situation of the domestic economy, the environment and the health care system. Thus, I am able to examine performance voting in standards of health care and environment. Most importantly, the dataset also includes a question regarding perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility. The 2014 *European Election Study* survey also adds questions on responsibility attributions and retrospective sociotropic assessments of the economy, but does not propose questions on non-economic issues. Through the use of these datasets, it is thus possible to analyse whether beliefs that governments are constrained in the economy condition the extent to which voters punish or reward national incumbents on their records. To do so, I run probit and logit regressions with vote for incumbents as dependent variables. Then, I interact indicators of perceptions of policy performances with perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility. Empirical results show that voters who believe their national governments to be constrained tend to punish and reward less incumbents for the state of the economy (Hellwig, 2008), but in a larger comparative perspective than previous studies. Yet, the effect of perceptions of constraints on the economy is less clear cut when looking at performance voting in non-economic areas. Indeed, results demonstrate that voters who think that their national governments are barely responsible for the economy tend to punish and reward more the latter for their record on health care, but no significant results are found regarding environment.

In chapter 2, I further assess the validity of the *balancing demand hypothesis* by focusing on a specific non-economic issue: European integration. Drawing on Hellwig (2008) which argues that "European integration has become closely linked to libertarian/authoritarian considerations in recent years, particularly in older member states" (Hellwig, 2008, 1138), I consider the issue of European integration to be a good case study to test the *balancing demand hypothesis*. In turn, I make the assumption that issue voting on European integration should increase as economic integration deepens. Specifically, I expect voters who deem their national governments to be constrained in their policy room-to-manoeuvre to be more prone to vote on non-economic issues such as European integration. To explore the variation of issue voting on European integration at the individual level, I use a two-step hierarchical model. In the first stage of the modelling, I determine the extent to which congruence on European integration, i.e. the relationship between self-placement on the issue of European integration with the placement of political parties on the same scale, affects the propensity to vote for a party. I then estimate an ordered-logistic regression to assess the extent of issue voting on European integration. I do so because the dependent variable is ordinal (a 1-10 scale). In the second stage, I want to determine whether issue voting on European integration is conditional upon different explanatory variables. Thus, I first compute residuals of the regressions which include congruence on the issue of European integration and I use the stored estimates as dependent variables. In this case, residuals provide a

proxy-measure of issue voting on European integration. Then, I run OLS regressions with all the important explanatory variables and compare their impact on the main independent variable, i.e. EU congruence. The estimations are carried out thanks to the use of the *2009 European Election Study* because it provides all the individual-level variables to assess issue voting on European integration: attribution of responsibility, identity-related factors, political sophistication and other socio-economic variables. The results show that attribution of responsibility to the national government is systematically the best predictor when compared with every other individual variable: both in terms of significance and coefficient. There is thus some evidence corroborating the idea that economic integration influence issue voting in a specific non-economic issue: European integration.

Chapter 3 aims to supplement the literature in two ways. First, I make the argument that economic integration should negatively (conversely, positively) affect the fortunes of mainstream parties (conversely, challenger parties). The rationale is the following: if economic integration changes the character of elections by making them less meaningful, then voters should act less strategically (conversely, more sincerely) as they do in second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Yet, sincere voting generally disadvantages mainstream parties, while it favours challenger parties which generally have less chances to gather large shares of the vote. This chapter constitutes the first empirical attempt to do test this idea on the individual level. Second, the only study which investigates the effect of perceptions of economic constraints on electoral turnout relies on the 2001 British case study. Although the 2001 general election in Britain arguably constitutes a most likely case, variation is needed to prove that the relationship between the individual likelihood to cast a ballot and perceptions of economic constraints is consistently negative across countries. Therefore, I test this implication in a larger comparative setting to further falsify the work of Steiner (2016). To do so, I take advantage of the *2009 and the 2014 European Election Study* datasets because they provide questions regarding vote intentions in national parliamentary elections and perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility in the fifteen European established democracies, i.e. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United-Kingdom. Using data across 15 countries, I am able to test whether perceptions of economic constraints affect both voter turnout and vote for mainstream parties on the individual level in a comparative setting. To further corroborate these hypotheses, I also propose tests on the aggregate level to see whether the relationship holds true. However weak, empirical results confirm recent findings linking voter turnout and economic integration: when voters believe their national governments to have low responsibility for the management of the domestic economy, they are less likely to report to have voted (Steiner, 2016). Most importantly, I show that voters who think that their national governments are not responsible for the state of the national economy are more likely to report to have voted for challenger parties than for opposition mainstream parties. Results however do not hold when comparing incumbents' with challengers' fortunes, probably due to a flaw in the question wording of the main independent variable: respondents who believe their national governments to be responsible for the situation of the domestic economy are less likely to report to have voted for incumbents than for challengers. Having said that, results on the aggregate level provide evidence that economic globalization reduces the vote share of mainstream parties and decreases voter turnout.

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In chapter 4, I investigate the particular impact of European integration on voting behaviour. Specifically, I ask whether perceptions of the authority of the European Union has an effect on individual electoral turnout and on economic voting. In this framework, I make the hypothesis that citizens who believe the European union to be highly responsible for the domestic economic situation will be less prone to punish or reward their incumbents on their economic records and will be less prone to report to have voted. On the one hand, previous studies investigating the link between European integration and economic voting only yield results on the aggregate level ([Anderson, 2006](#)), or on a small number of cases ([Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012](#)). On the other hand, the argument that perceived European Union's responsibility affects electoral participation has never been tested although it might be one of the missing explanations to explain the continuing rise of abstention in general elections in the member states of the European Union. So far, results on the individual level are consequently lacking, especially in a cross country comparison over time. To further comprehend the link between European integration and voting behaviour in national elections, I benefit from the *European Election Study* surveys from 2009 and 2014. These two cross-country surveys offer the possibility to test these hypotheses on the individual level in all the 28 member states of the European Union. Indeed, they provide all the relevant items to analyse the conditioning impact of responsibility attribution to the European Union on voting behaviour since they include questions on vote intentions; perceptions of the economic situation of the country; assessments of the responsibility of the European Union on the economic situation of the country; and many other political and socio-demographic control variables which can affect incumbents' fortunes and the likelihood to vote. Thanks to these data, I am thus able to produce several model specifications to test the two hypotheses on the individual level. Empirical findings do not consistently validate the two hypotheses. First, the hypothesis asserting that citizens who perceive the European Union to be highly responsible for the national economy will be less prone to hold their incumbents accountable for their past economic records is only validated in 2014, but not in 2009. Most importantly, the second hypothesis linking abstention and perceptions of responsibility of the European union on the economy is rejected: citizens who think the European union to be highly responsible for the economic outcomes do not tend to report to vote less contrary to expectations. Instead, findings suggest that the impact of perceptions of national governments' economic room to manoeuvre is a better explanatory variable to apprehend abstention as Steiner already suggested ([Steiner, 2016](#)).

In contrast, chapter 5 examines the impact of the increasing responsibility of the European Union on the phenomenon of issue voting on European integration,. Specifically, I ask whether the increasing responsibility of the European Union over domestic policy decisions increases the importance of the issue of European integration in individual voting calculus in national parliamentary elections. The rationale is the following: as the European union gains policy competences, politicization over the issue of European integration supposedly increases ([De Wilde and Zürn, 2012](#)). Consequently, citizens should choose political parties more and more on the basis of their positioning on the European integration process in national parliamentary elections as this issue becomes more salient to them ([De Vries, 2007](#)). If this assumption is right, issue voting on European integration should increase over time, while it should be especially important among voters who believe the European Union to have responsibility over policy decisions. Several empirical studies already confirm that the issue of European integration influences national vote choices in the European member states



(De Vries and Tillman, 2011), but no study looks at the conditioning effect of perceptions of responsibility of the European Union. To tackle this question, I take advantage of the 2004 and 2009 *European Election Study* datasets which include questions allowing to directly measure the impact of the issue of European integration on vote choice, most notably items on self-placement on the issue of European integration and corresponding questions on the perceptions of the positioning of political parties on the issue. Findings show that the issue of European integration does affect party choice in national electoral contests, but not increasingly so over time. Besides, attribution of responsibility to the European Union for the domestic situation has not the expected effect. Instead, I show that individuals who think the European Union to have low responsibility over the domestic political situation are more likely to choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. Thus, the hypothesis that the extension of the policy competences of the European Union has a positive impact on issue voting on European integration is clearly rejected.

In contrast with other chapters, chapter 6 focuses on European electoral contests. Specifically, it examines the impact of increasing authority of the European Union on performance voting in the European parliamentary elections. In this framework, I make the simple prediction that voters should increasingly judge incumbent members of the European parliament on past policy performance as European integration deepens. This should be especially the case after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty which increased the powers of the European parliament, notably regarding the choice of the main political actor in charge of the executive power in the European Union, i.e. the president of the Commission. To assess performance voting in the European parliamentary elections, I take advantage of three recent datasets: *European Election Study* and *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* which date from 2009 and 2014. They all include vote behaviours at the occasion of European parliamentary elections and national parliamentary elections; evaluations of policy performance and responsibility attributions on the economy. The 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* surveys make it possible to perform a broad cross-country comparison because they gather all the member states of the European Union, but the 2014 *European Election Study* does not feature information about four policy areas of interest (immigration, health care standards, interest rates and environment) while the 2009 *European Election Study* does. On the other hand, the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* provides information on unemployment, debts and deficits, taxation, immigration and environment, but is restricted to 7 European Union countries (France, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy). These datasets also include traditional socio-demographic and political information. The empirical strategy proposes series of probit estimations which aim to see whether the perceptions of policy evolution affect the fortunes of the incumbents in the European parliamentary elections and national parliamentary elections. Furthermore, I add interaction terms which capture perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union and national governments to assess whether it has an impact on performance voting on the individual level. The findings first show a clear prevalence of performance voting in national parliamentary elections, supporting the model of second order elections. Performance voting for incumbent European parties is systematically less important than performance voting for incumbent national parties. This finding is further supported by the systematic null effect of the interaction term of responsibility attribution for European Union, and by the fact that economic voting even shrinks over time in European parliamentary elections. By

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and large, this chapter strengthens the idea of a weak connection between the electorate and European incumbents in European parliamentary elections ([Hix and Høyland, 2013](#); [Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a](#)).

Finally, the last chapter provides a quasi-natural experiment to examine whether the European Union is held accountable on the basis of macroeconomic performance. The rationale behind is that the increasing responsibility of the European Union should be reflected in individual attitudes, before being reflected in the voting booth. Yet, no study has ever investigated whether the European Union is punished or rewarded on the basis of macroeconomic performance because it is difficult to compare situations in which the European Union is an incumbent with those in which it is not. Contrary to mechanisms of accountability in national arenas, there is indeed no natural incumbency situation to analyse such phenomenon. The 2004 and 2007 waves of accession however offer unique case studies to assess European Union's incumbency. Until 2004, the European Union had no formal and direct policy influence. After 2004 and 2007, the European Union was included among the rulers and gained formal competences over domestic policy decisions. Hence, this situation provides a useful counterfactual which allows to analyse accountability of the European Union via popularity functions. Formally, I expect individual support for the European Union to depend on the macroeconomic situation only when it becomes in charge. On the contrary, citizens should not punish nor reward the European Union before accession, since it was not responsible for the domestic economic situation at this time. To assess the evolution of popularity functions of the European Union, I take advantage of *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* and *Standard Eurobarometer* individual-level data surveys which were respectively conducted before and after the 2004 accession wave in those countries which joined the European Union at this occasion. These surveys are the only available data sources which allow for systematic comparisons of individual judgements toward the European Union over time. To assess the effect of European Union's incumbency on the probability to support the European Union, I carry out logit and OLS regressions and include interaction term between accession and macroeconomic variables, along traditional socio-demographic which explain European union support. Empirical results confirm that individual support for the European union is affected by macroeconomic performances only when the European union is formally entitled to influence macroeconomic outcomes. Conversely, European Union's support is not affected by economic variation when the European union is not legally in charge. Finally, results indicate that citizens seem to evaluate the European union according to its functional responsibilities: when in charge, the European Union is deemed accountable only in areas where it has leeway: inflation. The effect of unemployment and growth is null in the aftermath of accession, however.



## Part I

The impact of the loss of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre on voting behaviour



# Chapter 1

## Consequences on performance voting

### 1.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction, national economies have become more and more integrated within international markets over the years. Following, many studies have argued that this integration within global markets has diminished national governments' abilities to control economic outcomes as they wish. Indeed, a greater integration within world markets arguably reduces 1) the provision of welfare services; 2) levels of taxation of mobile capital; and 3) the degree of regulation of social and environmental policies in affluent democracies (Bretschger and Hettich, 2002; Cai and Treisman, 2005; Plümper et al., 2009). Besides, it also alters the efficiency of governments traditional levers of macroeconomic policies (Katzenstein, 1985; Kayser, 2007). In a more straightforward fashion, the process of European integration has also significantly reduced national governments' policy room to manoeuvre (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013), most notably in the economic area (Hix, 2003). Indeed, national executives have delegated important economic and monetary competences to the European Union, most notably after the Maastricht treaty. All in all, current evidence depicts a situation where the capacity of the states to control economic outcomes is hindered by economic globalization and European integration.

Building on these results, a couple of studies have looked more closely at the repercussions of these exogenous processes on voting behaviour. A first line of studies promoted by Steiner (2010, 2016) argues that economic integration eventually reduces electoral participation by diminishing the importance of elections as mechanisms which influence economic outcomes (Steiner, 2016) and by decreasing party polarization (Steiner and Martin, 2012). In contrast, a second line of studies, most notably developed by Hellwig (2013, 2014), makes the claim that economic constraints put upon national governments changes the structure of citizens' demands regarding governmental policy actions and affect voting behaviour accordingly. Specifically, voters are expected to adapt to the loss of national governments' margins of manoeuvre by 1) decreasing the weight of economic considerations in their calculus of voting (*constraint hypothesis*) and 2) by favouring non-economic issues, on which national governments still have control (*balancing demands hypothesis*). According to Hellwig (2013), voters are expected to react in such a way because it is simpler to make the connection between exposure to the world markets and reductions of policy room to manoeuvre on the economy, than connect the former with a reduction of the leeway of national governments in other issue areas such as health care and the environment. These hypotheses remain

plausible if one prefers a top-down approach of electoral behaviour. This alternative, but probably complementary, argument asserts that voters simply follow political parties' cues when voting. Yet, as [Ward et al. \(2015\)](#) show, economic globalization has a direct effect on issue emphases in party manifestos. More precisely, strategic parties which wish to remain credible increase (conversely, decrease) the weight of non-economic issues (conversely, non-economic issues) in their party manifestos as economic integration deepens.

Empirical results largely confirm the *constraint hypothesis* on the aggregate level: economic integration diminishes the importance of economic records in the individual calculus of voting ([Hellwig, 2001](#); [Fernández-Albertos, 2006](#); [Hellwig and Samuels, 2007](#)). On the individual level, [Hellwig \(2008\)](#) also corroborates the validity of this hypothesis on economic voting and issue voting in a study focusing on the 1997 French and the 2001 British general elections: citizens who think that their national governments are constrained in their capacity to influence the domestic economy 1) choose parties less on their economic positioning; and 2) are less prone to reward or punish incumbents on their economic records. Similarly, [Lobo and Lewis-Beck \(2012\)](#) show that citizens who believe that the European Union is highly responsible for the national economic situation tend to hold their national government less accountable for their economic records (but only in four southern countries in 2009).

Meanwhile, the *balancing demands hypothesis* has been validated less systematically. For instance, there exists no study which intends to falsify its validity on the aggregate level, while performance voting on non-economic records is omitted in the literature. So far, evidence simply suggests that citizens' demands regarding policy actions in non-economic domains increase as perceptions of economic constraints increase ([Hellwig, 2013](#)), while those who believe that their national government is constrained tend to choose parties more on their positioning on a non-economic political dimension ([Hellwig, 2008](#)).

This chapter contributes to the literature on the impact of economic integration on voting behaviour by looking more extensively at the effect of perceptions of economic constraints on performance voting. More precisely, this study first aims to corroborate the *constraint hypothesis* using individual level data in a larger cross-national setting than existing studies ([Hellwig, 2008](#)). Most importantly, this study constitutes the first attempt to examine whether the *balancing demands hypothesis* is validated in models of performance voting in non-economic records. Indeed, there is room to believe that voters who believe that their national government is constrained on the economy will pay more attention to non-economic records when judging incumbents, as if they were compensating for the loss of economic margins of manoeuvre.

Contrary to past studies which relied mostly on a small sample of countries, this study utilizes two large cross-sectional datasets (*the 2009 and 2014 European Election Study*) which permit to control for specific country effects, thus allowing to have more robust empirical results to validate the two hypotheses. Indeed, these datasets add questions about respondents' vote intentions in national parliamentary elections and their assessments of the situation of the economy. Most importantly, these datasets provide questions regarding perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility which allows assessing the impact of perceptions of economic constraints on economic voting. The 2009 European

Election Study survey also adds questions on the perceptions of the evolution of the national situation in climate change and the health care system. Through the use of these datasets, it is thus possible to analyse whether beliefs that governments are constrained in the economy moderate the extent to which voters punish or reward national incumbents on their economic and non-economic records.

Empirical findings displayed in this first chapter establish that perceptions of national governments' responsibility over the economy condition performance voting. First, it corroborates studies which demonstrate that those who believe that their national governments are constrained on the economy tend to punish and reward less their incumbents for the state of the economy (Hellwig, 2008), but in a larger comparative perspective than previous studies. Nevertheless, the effect of perceptions of room to manoeuvre constraints on the economy is less clear cut when looking at performance voting in non-economic areas. Indeed, results do not display similar results depending on the issue under investigation: this chapter demonstrates that voters who think their national governments to be barely responsible for the domestic economy tend to punish and reward more the latter for their records on health care. But, no significant effects are found when looking at the evolution of climate change.

This chapter is organized as follows. The first section presents the literature on the effects of economic integration on voting behaviour before introducing the *constraint and the balancing demands hypotheses* in more details. Next, I present my empirical strategy before presenting the empirical results in the fourth part. Finally, the conclusive part discusses the main results of this study.

## 1.2 Economic integration and mass politics

As noted in the introduction, current empirical evidence suggests that economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments reduce as economic globalization deepens (Kayser, 2007; Hellwig, 2014, for recent reviews). The rationale behind is that the opening of national economies arguably forces national governments to focus on the competitiveness of their national economies. To preserve their domestic competitiveness in a global market competition, national governments have to establish a market-friendly environment which is usually characterized by lower corporate taxation or/and by less regulatory standards. They do so to attract (respectively, to secure) foreign capital and foreign companies (respectively, domestic capital and companies) within their national borders. In turn, the focus on competitiveness limits, for example, their abilities to redistribute because of lower tax revenues and their willingness to set up regulatory standards as they wish. Also, economic globalization decreases the efficiency of traditional instruments used by national governments to boost their domestic economy on the short-run. Indeed, the more an economy is dependent toward international trade and transnational flows, the less it will be able to control prices in its domestic economy (Katzenstein, 1985). All in all, world markets reduce the range of credible responses national governments can offer in the economy.

This conclusion holds true when looking at the process of European integration. Indeed, many empirical works suggest that European integration has similar consequences on national governments' room-to-manoevure (Hix, 2003, for example). In this case, the



argument is more straightforward: since the Single European Act, the European Union has acquired many economic competences. For instance, the European institutions have full control over the regulation of customs unions, international trade deals and competition rules. Meanwhile, the European Union has the power to sanction member states which do not fulfil certain criteria regarding the level of deficit and debt relative to gross domestic product, while the European Central Bank has the upper hand on monetary policies. Starting from the assumption that economic globalization and European integration limit the range of credible responses national governments can provide in the economic area, many studies have started looking at the implications on voter and party behaviour (Hellwig, 2014; Ward et al., 2015; Steiner, 2016, for recent contributions).

Studies focusing on party behaviour have made the simple assumption that limitations of credible economic options resulting from increased economic integration should be reflected in electoral campaigns in general, and in party manifestos in particular. In fact, two lines of studies argue that political parties which seek to get into national office increasingly hollow out economic issues in their appeals because of credibility issues. The common argument within these studies is that political parties simply do not wish to promise something they will not be able to implement during their mandate by fear of being held accountable in the voting booth. In turn, authors have argued that economic integration eventually alters issue emphasis (Ward et al., 2015) and party polarization on the economic dimension (Haupt, 2010; Ward et al., 2011; Steiner and Martin, 2012). Specifically, Ward et al. (2015) make the assumption that strategic parties which seek to remain credible should be less prone to 1) emphasize economic issues in party manifestos and 2) more likely to foster non-economic issues in response to growing economic integration. Using a large party manifesto database gathering 49 countries between 1961 and 2010, they find clear evidence supporting the two hypotheses: a higher degree of economic integration affects negatively political parties' emphasis of economic issues in party manifestos, while political parties tend to emphasize more strongly non-economic issues in more economically integrated areas. In a similar vein, a couple of studies find that economic integration leads to party convergence on the economic dimension: parties become more market friendly as international economic integration intensifies (Haupt, 2010; Ward et al., 2011; Steiner and Martin, 2012). Meanwhile, European also studies convey similar results (Hix, 2003; Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013). Political parties' manifestos in European member states become more alike as European institutions gain policy competences, especially in the economic area. In addition, Ward et al. (2015) found that political parties in newer member states emphasize less (respectively, more) economic issues (respectively, non-economic issues) after accession, suggesting a clear causal link between European integration and the structure of party issue emphasis.

The finding that economic integration enhances party convergence on economic issues has led some authors to question the impact of the latter on electoral participation (Steiner, 2010; Steiner and Martin, 2012). Indeed, empirical studies suggest that party convergence on issues generally reduces the individual probability to participate in elections (Wessels and Schmitt, 2008; Steiner and Martin, 2012): voters are arguably less likely to cast a ballot when none of the parties in the political system matches their preference. Starting from this premise, Steiner (2010, 2016) argues that electoral turnout should decrease as economic integration deepens. Specifically, rational voters should be less inclined to vote in

countries which are more economically integrated because of a 1) lower party differentiation on economic issues, but also because 2) meaningful differences in economic policy outcomes cannot be achieved by any alternative governments. Indeed, if voters believe that their electoral choices will not influence economic outcomes because of economic integration, they should be less interested to participate.

The first noticeable empirical study which investigates the relationship between economic globalization and electoral turnout is [Steiner \(2010\)](#). In this article, the author uses aggregate level data which covers more than 4 decades and gathers 23 countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Empirical findings strongly confirm Steiner's hint: the ratio of votes cast to the number of officially registered eligible voters or as the voting age population is significantly correlated with levels of international economic integration. On the micro level, the author also finds evidence of a negative link between economic constraints and individual participation in the 2001 British general election. Indeed, British voters who think their national government to have low margins of manoeuvre in the economy tend to be less prone to go cast a ballot in these elections and more likely to think that elections do not matter ([Steiner, 2016](#)). These first studies were further confirmed by [Marshall and Fisher \(2015\)](#). Starting from similar premises, they slightly disentangle the argument of [Steiner \(2010\)](#). In fact, they make the hypothesis that foreign ownership affects electoral turnout, but not international trade. It should be the case because international trade is less mobile and sensitive to government actions than foreign ownership. Using a similar database on electoral turnouts, but more fine-grained measures of foreign ownership, i.e. foreign direct investment flows/stock and portfolio equity stock, they find that the most flexible flows affect electoral turnouts in a significant fashion, whereas variation of international trade has no clear effect. Thus, there exists evidence suggesting that economic globalization affects electoral turnout on the aggregate level. But, there is also some evidence that economic integration also changes the structure of individual demands regarding governmental policy actions.

### 1.2.1 Economic integration and performance voting

Economic integration thus affects party behaviour and electoral participation but also affects other key features of the vote. Indeed, studies have argued that economic globalization and European integration also affect the economic vote, i.e. the extent to which national incumbents are judged on their economic records ([Hellwig, 2001, 2014](#); [Fernández-Albertos, 2006](#); [Hellwig and Samuels, 2007](#); [Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012](#)). These studies make the hypothesis, generally labelled *constraint hypothesis*, that economic voting is moderated by the level of economic openness of a country: the more (conversely, the less) a national economy is economically integrated, the less (conversely, the more) voters will be inclined to reward or punish incumbent governments on the basis of their past economic performances. Many explanations are proposed to account for such a relationship in the literature.

According to [Hellwig \(2013\)](#), voters are expected to take economic considerations less into account when judging incumbents because it is simpler to make the connection between exposure to the world markets and reductions of policy room to manoeuvre on the economy, than connect the former with a reduction of the leeway of national governments in other issue areas such as health care and the environment.

Building on the rational choice model of electoral choice, a second rationale argues that informed voters will adapt to the loss of economic competences of national governments by mechanically reducing the weight of economic issues in their calculus of voting. Here, the premise is that voters do perceive the loss of national governments' influence on the domestic economic situation under economic globalization and multilevel governance. In turn, it makes no sense for rational voters to sanction or reward national governments in an area where they enjoy less power. In the economic voting literature, several studies support the claim that voters react to the actual economic responsibilities of governments when judging economic records. Most notably, [Stein \(1990\)](#) finds that American voters behave differently in gubernatorial and senatorial elections. Indeed, they punish (conversely, reward) their senators for a bad situation of the national economy (conversely, a good situation), while governors are not punished for the state of the national economy (except when they are incumbents at the federal level). Besides, other studies suggest that individuals are able to clearly distinguish between policy responsibilities at different levels of government ([Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a](#)). For instance, citizens in the European Union, on average, attribute more responsibility to their national governments for the management of health care standards than they attribute responsibility to the European Union, exactly as experts do.

Another top-down approach simply starts from the assumption that voters react to political parties' cues and/or to the salience of a given issue in the party system when deciding to take this issue into account in their voting calculus. Simply put, when a specific record of an incumbent is not on the agenda of a campaign, because parties strategically avoid this issue, the latter has fewer chances to affect individual voting decisions. Yet, economic integration has a clear negative impact on the emphasis of economic issues by political parties ([Ward et al., 2015](#)). Interestingly, this result holds true when disentangling between party types, should they be mainstream parties, niche parties and even incumbents. In turn, as economic integration deepens, the salience of the economy reduces at the level of the party system. Ultimately, this low salience of economic issues in the party system and among incumbent parties should reduce the weight of economic records in voting decisions.

A final alternative (but complementary) line of argument contends that economic integration, most specifically within the framework of multi-level governance, can blur attribution of responsibility for policy outcomes and eventually weaken the economic vote. Indeed, when multiple economic and political actors influence policy outcomes, it is argued that it becomes more costly for citizens to gather accurate information and correctly pinpoint responsibility. Yet, being able to hold incumbents accountable for policy decisions is a prerequisite for voters to punish or reward their national governments ([Rudolph, 2003a](#)). Empirical studies have supported this claim: the level of clarity of responsibility of a political system conditions the extent to which voters punish or reward incumbents ([Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993](#)), while [Anderson \(2006\)](#) demonstrates that economic voting decreases as decentralization deepens in 16 countries. Besides, it is more difficult for citizens to attribute responsibility when policy competences are not clearly divided in multilevel governance settings. [León \(2011\)](#) notably shows that, in regions where dispersion of power on fiscal competences is intertwined, citizens face problems to correctly assign responsibility. On the contrary, in regions with low or high levels of decentralization, i.e. where the region has low or high autonomy over revenues and expenditures, citizens have fewer problems to attribute

responsibility. All in all, there are many causal mechanisms which predict that economic integration should decrease the inclination of voters to punish or reward incumbents on their economic record.

Empirically, the seminal study showing that economic globalization decreases economic voting is [Hellwig \(2001\)](#). In this study, the author investigates whether the importance of international trade within a country's gross domestic product moderates the extent to which the perceptions of national governments' economic performance affect incumbents' fortunes. His conclusion supports the idea that the level of openness affects negatively the individual ability to hold incumbents accountable for the economic situation. More precisely, voters in countries where trade is an important component of gross domestic product are less likely to punish or reward their national governments based on their perception of the retrospective performance of the national economy. This first result is further corroborated by [Hellwig and Samuels \(2007\)](#) in a larger comparative analysis gathering 75 countries over 27 years. They find compelling evidence that exposure to the world economy weakens the link between economic performance and incumbents' fortunes at the occasion of domestic elections, i.e. legislative and presidential elections. Contrary to [Hellwig \(2001\)](#), they do not only focus on the role of international trade within a country's gross domestic product, but also include the exposure towards transnational flows. In their analysis, they show that voters in economies where the gross domestic product depends more on transnational flows are consistently less inclined to punish or reward the incumbents for economic outcomes. In another study gathering 15 countries, [Anderson \(2006\)](#) also supports the hypothesis using similar methods and measures, but also proposes another implication: left-wing incumbent governments should be less punished on the basis of past economic performance than right-wing ones in highly integrated economies because they are supposedly held less responsible for managing the domestic economy. Indeed, economic integration decreases the efficiency of social democratic interventionist policies, eventually decreasing their responsibility. However, empirical results do not unequivocally confirm this hypothesis because of problems of collinearity. On the aggregate level, there is evidence that economic records play a bigger role for voters who are within a closed economy than those who are in an opened one.

Although rather compelling, these studies do not permit to conclude that the loss of economic policy competences of national governments directly leads voters to reward or punish their governments less on their economic record. Indeed, they only test the relationship of two outcomes of what is a long causal mechanism. To further corroborate these hypotheses, these findings need to be supplemented by studies using individual level data. So far, only few studies have investigated the impact of perceptions of economic integration on voting behaviour. First, in a study focusing on the 2001 British and 1997 French general elections, [Hellwig \(2008\)](#) shows that citizens who perceive their national governments to be constrained on the economy are less inclined to punish or reward their incumbents for economic performance. Similarly, [Lobo and Lewis-Beck \(2012\)](#) find that individual perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union for the situation of the domestic economy negatively affects the extent to which voters punish or reward incumbents in Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain in 2009. Empirical studies thus show that there is a direct effect of perceptions of economic constraints on the economic vote, but available evidence is circumscribed to a limited set of cases. In this study, I thus aim to further corroborate past studies on the individual level on a larger scale. This results in the following

hypothesis:

Constraint hypothesis (H1): The more a citizen believes the national government to have influence on the domestic economy, the more prone she or he will be to reward or punish the incumbent government on its economic record

Conversely, the balancing demands hypothesis asserts that economic integration increases individual demands for governmental policy actions in the non-economic area (Hellwig, 2013, 2014), eventually fostering non-economic issues in the calculus of voting (Hellwig, 2008). As mentioned, Hellwig (2013) makes the argument that signals coming from the exposure to the world markets (assumed cause) are easy to link to the limitation of policy room to manoeuvre in the economy (effect) for voters. In contrast, it is less easy for voters to achieve cognitive congruence between economic integration and other issues. As Hellwig (2013) puts it: "achieving distal consistency between the external force of globalization and the capacity for government action on matters like health care, the environment, pensions, and the like is difficult" (Hellwig, 2013, p.5). In turn, voters are assumed to demand less in terms of economic responses, while they should compensate "for reduced demands for government action in the economy by increasing demands for attention in other, non-economic areas" (Hellwig, 2013, p.5). As a result, if voters participate in elections, they should react to the loss of economic policy competences of national governments, not only by voting less on economic issues, but by voting more on non-economic issues.

Again, this theoretical model is not the only one which can explain the potential impact of economic integration on the importance of non-economic issues for voters. Similar to the previous top-down mechanism, the increasing weight of non-economic issues in the voting calculus can be driven by party appeals and by the salience of non-economic issues in the party system. As mentioned, political parties, even incumbents, increasingly emphasize non-economic issues as economic integration deepens, which eventually fosters the salience of these issues at the party system level (Ward et al., 2015). In turn, it is possible that the increasing salience of non-economic issues among parties and within party systems in more economically integrated areas will increase the weight of non-economic issues at the level of citizens. Hence, citizens' perceptions of economic integration - should they be driven by the exposure to the real world, party cues or issue salience - should increase the importance of non-economic records in the calculus of voting.

Until now, the *balancing demands hypothesis* is only confirmed in a study on Britain and France (Hellwig, 2008). In this study, the author examines the effect of individual perceptions of national governments' economic constraints on preferences on non-economic issues, i.e. a libertarian-authoritarian index and positioning on European integration. In both cases, the author finds that voters who believe their national governments to be constrained in their economic choices by economic globalization tend to be closer to the parties on the libertarian-authoritarian axis than voters who think the opposite (Hellwig, 2008). A higher perception of economic integration consequently increases the weight of non-economic issues in the calculus of voting. Besides, Hellwig (2013) also demonstrates that individual preferences for government actions are moderated by the extent of economic integration: citizens' preferences for government provision of non-economic policies - such as healthcare, the environment and pensions - increase as economic integration deepens. Conversely, demands for more involvement in the economy decrease as economic integration

deepens. This result is confirmed in more than 20 advanced democracies in a large longitudinal study.

Nevertheless, nothing is known about the effect of economic constraints on performance voting in non-economic records. I thus extend this *balancing demands hypothesis* to performance voting because it arguably conveys similar consequences. Simply put, I expect voters who perceive their government to have little influence on the situation of the national economy to be more likely to punish or reward incumbents on non-economic issues. Formally, this results in the following hypothesis:

Balancing demands hypothesis (H2): The more a citizen believes the national government to have influence on the domestic economy, the less prone she or he will be to reward or punish the incumbent government on its record in non-economic policies

Next section first presents the dataset utilized in the empirical analysis, while the empirical strategy is presented afterwards.

### 1.3 Data and empirical strategy

To analyse performance voting on economic and non-economic records in general elections, I take advantage of two individual-level datasets: *European Election Study 2009 and 2014*. These surveys are cross-national datasets which allow for systematic comparison of voting behaviour between all the member states of the European Union. The two datasets include vote intentions in the next general elections; evaluations of policy performance in both economic and non-economic areas. Most importantly, these are the only surveys which include questions measuring perceptions of national governments' responsibility for the state of the national economy. The *2009 European Election Study* gathers around 1,000 respondents in each country (28.000 in total), while the *2014 European Election Study* also includes Croatia and gathers almost 30.000 respondents. Unfortunately, the two surveys do not systematically provide similar information on perceptions of the national situation in different policy areas. The *2009 European Election Study* and the *2014 European Election Study* provide common information regarding perceptions of the performance of the domestic economy, but the *2009 European Election Study* also includes perceptions of the evolution of the domestic situation on health care standards and climate change. These datasets also include traditional socio-demographic information and other relevant questions regarding political attitudes such as partisan identification and political interest.

The goal of this chapter is to assess whether performance voting in national elections is moderated by perceptions of economic constraints. The model of performance voting starts from a simple assumption: it contends that the minimal requirement for a democracy to be efficient is that voters' electoral choices are based on the past record of the politician. In a perfect accountable system, voters systematically renew the mandate of the incumbent if it succeeds to provide voters with good records, while it will be punished, if performances are bad, by choosing the opposition party or by abstaining. The economy is usually the main issue in models of performance voting, but it can be extended to all issues. Specialists of economic voting motivate this choice by arguing that economy is the policy area where judgements over governments' performance is the easiest to make, given citizens' low abilities



and low motivation to process complex information and their lack of coherence (Zaller, 1992). Besides, the economy is generally the most salient issue in the political agenda of both political parties and the media (Anderson, 1995), while it ensures the quality of the comparison across countries since it is generally a bad thing when unemployment goes up for instance. Consequently, the dependent variable utilized in this study is the vote intention for incumbents. There are generally two measures of vote intentions in the literature, i.e. retrospective and prospective. Due to the fact that the surveys gather 27 and 28 countries at two points in time, i.e. 2009 and 2014, I decide to use a prospective measure of vote intention which is worded as follows: "And if there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?" Indeed, last elections were not held at the same time in all the countries present in the dataset. Therefore, using the retrospective measure of voting might increase the common risk of overreporting the vote for the winning candidate (which is not equally distributed between countries), eventually making the comparison harsher. In this case, the dependent variable is simply a dichotomous variable where 1 gathers all the respondents who report that they would vote for the incumbents if a general election were held tomorrow and where 0 gathers vote intentions for all the other parties.

To investigate performance voting, I use independent variables measuring perceptions of the evolution of the domestic situation in the economy and in non-economic areas: standards of health care and the environment. Note that the *2009 European Election Study* also includes questions on the situation of interest rates and immigration. However, I decided not to include them in the empirical analysis because the wording of the questions did not exactly measure perceptions of the evolution of the situation in those areas. Most importantly, the inclusion of such items in the regressions reduces significantly the number of respondents. In the literature on economic voting, studies usually rely on retrospective and sociotropic perceptions of policy performance (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013). The pocketbook vs. sociotropic debate dates from the beginning of the economic voting literature (Kramer, 1983) and raises the problem of the micro-foundations of economic voting. The question has been whether people think about their own financial situation when voting rather than about the situation of the country. Most studies on this matter found the former to be more accurate when explaining individual behaviour at the voting booth (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981; Fiorina, 1981; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, 2013). In addition, the retrospective approach makes sense when focusing on performance voting since it is at the core of the theoretical assumption of the model, even though Downs (1957) argues that voters can also be forward-looking. Fiorina (1981) first demonstrated that the electorate use elections as referenda on the incumbents' performances. This has been largely tested and is now the most used measure within performance voting models. Thus, I use sociotropic retrospective variables as the main independent variables to see whether incumbents are rewarded or punished on the basis of past performances. More precisely, the questions are worded as follows: "What do you think about the economy/standards of health care/environment? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic/standards of health care/climate change situation in Britain is 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse." The questions are recoded on a 1 to 5 scale where 5 means that the situation has improved a lot in the last 12 months and where 1 means that the respondent thinks the situation on a given issue has worsened a lot in 12 months to ease readability.

The difficulty that arises is the delimitation between economic and non-economic issues.

Indeed, it is not easy to clearly differentiate between what can be conceptualized as an economic issue and what can be conceptualized as a non-economic issue: there are only few issues that can be defined as purely non-economic, in the sense that they are budget neutral. In other words, almost all policies must be funded to achieve their purpose. In this chapter, I simply follow the argument of [Hellwig \(2013\)](#) which posits "that the public associates certain issues as more or less related to economic policy, broadly conceived. Others issues are more weakly associated with economics frames" ([Hellwig, 2013](#), p.5). In this framework, climate change and standards of health care arguably constitute two good case studies to test the *balancing demands hypothesis*. Besides, the *Comparative Agendas Project* clearly differentiates between economic issues and the issues of environment and health care. So, even though both issues might be related to economic choices, they can arguably be considered as non-economic issues.

These datasets are the only two available large-n cross-sectional surveys in which respondents were asked to assess the degree to which they believe that their national governments are responsible for the management of the economy. More precisely, the question is worded as follows: "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain?" The question does not ask specifically about the extent to which respondents believe that national governments are constrained by external processes such as economic globalization or European integration, nor does it exactly refer to the influence national governments have on the economy as the British Election Panel Study 1997-2001. Thus, one problem arises with this question: contrary to the British Election Panel Study 1997-2001 which asks respondents about national governments in general, the question of the *European Election Study* does not add the plural to the national government. Consequently, the question might be understood by respondents as the particular responsibility of the current government, rather than responsibilities of national governments in general. Nevertheless, it is arguably a good question to measure perceptions of national governments' abilities to control the economy at the domestic level, notably because it incorporates the country name in the question and because the concept of responsibility is close to the concept of influence. Most importantly, it is the only large-n survey which incorporates such a question and which allows testing the hypotheses systematically at two points in time.

The empirical strategy proceeds in two steps. First, I need to see whether retrospective perceptions of the situation in the economy, standards of health care and climate change affect the fortunes of the incumbents in the next general elections. Hence, I run probit models (and logit models) including incumbent vote choices in the next general elections and my main explanatory variables: retrospective sociotropic assessments of policy performance. I also include socio-demographic and variables measuring political attitudes, such as political interest, or partisanship, which traditionally explain support for incumbents to control for the effect of alternative individual-level explanations. The data is non-random because voters are nested in countries. To control for this non-random effect, I include country fixed effects in the regressions. Second, I include interactions terms to see whether perceptions of national governments responsibility over the domestic economy conditions economic voting and performance voting in non-economic areas in general elections. I follow [Hobolt and Tilley \(2014a\)](#) operationalization and dichotomize between low and high responsibility where the former starts at 0 and ends at 6, while the latter comprises 7 to 10 on the 0-10



Table 1.1: Performance voting in the next general elections, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Vote for Incumbents			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Economic conditions	0.12002***			0.09145***
Health care conditions		0.16688***		0.15053***
Climate conditions			0.0497***	0.02424*
Party identification	2.09281***	2.09292***	2.10694***	2.07338***
Male	-0.01128	-0.03026	-0.01292	-0.03617
Left-Right	0.00898**	0.00639	0.00927**	0.00796*
Religiosity	0.01311	0.01163	0.01435*	0.01039
Union	-0.06013**	-0.06380**	-0.07772***	-0.06727**
Class	-0.04792***	-0.04567***	-0.05020***	-0.04499***
Age	-0.04276***	-0.04450***	-0.04813***	-0.04463***
Education	-0.01554	-0.01777	-0.02049	-0.01524
Constant	-1.27950***	-1.52047***	-1.17467***	-1.72224***
N	22,065	21,410	21,119	20,341
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0,42	0,43	0,42	0,43

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

scale in *European Election Study 2009 and 2014*<sup>1</sup>. In turn, 0 means low responsibility and 1 means high responsibility. Again, I run probit regressions because the dependent variable is dichotomous.

## 1.4 Empirical results

Table 1.1 presents the results of probit regressions for performance voting on the economy, standards of health care and climate change. The models are built in a stepwise fashion to control for the robustness of the association among model specifications. According to the performance voting model of behaviour, I expect individual assessments of the situation in the different policy areas to have a positive effect on vote intentions for the political parties in office.

Model 1, including only the perceptions of the domestic economic situation with control variables and socio-demographic controls, confirms previous findings of the literature of economic voting ([Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013](#)). Indeed, voters who think that the national economic situation has improved in the last twelve months tend to be more prone to report that they will vote for a political party which was in the governmental coalition with the effect being strongly statistically significant. Model 2 includes only the perceptions of the domestic situation in standards of health care with control variables and socio-demographic

<sup>1</sup>Note that I decided to use an asymmetrical dichotomous variable (0-6/7-10) because the mean distribution of the population is 6 (46%), while the rest of the respondents position themselves after 7-10 (54%).

controls. The model also corroborates the fact that incumbents are rewarded when their record is considered good. by voters Indeed, the more voters believe that the situation in standards of health care has improved in the last 12 months, the more prone they are to declare that they will vote for incumbents. Model 3 also confirms the results found when looking at performance voting in the previous policy areas. Indeed, believing that the situation of the climate change has improved increases the probability to vote for incumbent political parties. However, note that the effect of a positive evaluation of the climate change situation on vote for incumbents is substantially less strong than the effects of the two other variables on vote for incumbents. More precisely, the effect of the perception of the situation in standards of health care on vote intentions for incumbents is four times stronger than the effect of climate change situation, while it is three times stronger for the economy compared to the perceptions of the climate change situation. In fact, the issue that has the stronger effect on vote intentions for incumbents is the situation of the standards of health care. Model 4, which includes all the retrospective sociotropic evaluations of policy situation, confirms this result: voters tend to reward incumbents more on their records on standards of health care than on their records on the economy. Indeed, the effects of the former on vote intentions for incumbents are 0.6 points higher. Also note that the level of the p-value of the climate change situation decreases significantly when economic and health care conditions are added in the model. How can one account for such findings?

Figure 1.1 provides some hints to solve this puzzle. More precisely, it presents the extent to which citizens believe their national governments to be responsible for the management of the economy, health care standards and climate change. The question is measured on a 0-10 scale where 0 means that citizens think their national government to have no responsibility and where 10 means that citizens think that their national government has total responsibility over the given issue. The figure shows the mean distribution for each position in all the member states of the European Union. The figure clearly demonstrates that citizens in the European Union perceive that their national governments are, respectively, more in charge for standards of health care than for the economy and for climate change. Indeed, citizens who place themselves below the median point are, respectively, 39.36% when looking at climate change, 27,21% for the economy and 19,59% for standards of health care. These descriptive results seem to show that responsibility attribution is a mediating factor for performance voting. Indeed, there is a descriptive relationship between the level of responsibility attribution in a given issue and the extent to which voters punish and reward incumbents on this issue. Therefore, it is possible that perceptions of responsibility play a role in models of performance voting as already documented in the economic voting literature ([Rudolph, 2003a](#), for example). Hence, results suggest that national governments are evaluated fairly: voters punish or reward their incumbents less in areas where they believe national governments to have less control over policy outcomes. Yet, this not evidence that perceptions of constraints on the economy decrease economic voting directly since it is based only on descriptive statistics rather than robust statistical analysis.

If the *constraint hypothesis* is correct, voters who believe that their national governments are constrained in their leeway to influence the state of the domestic economy should be less prone to reward incumbents in the next general elections. To test this relationship, I include a dichotomous interaction term measuring responsibility attribution in regressions that

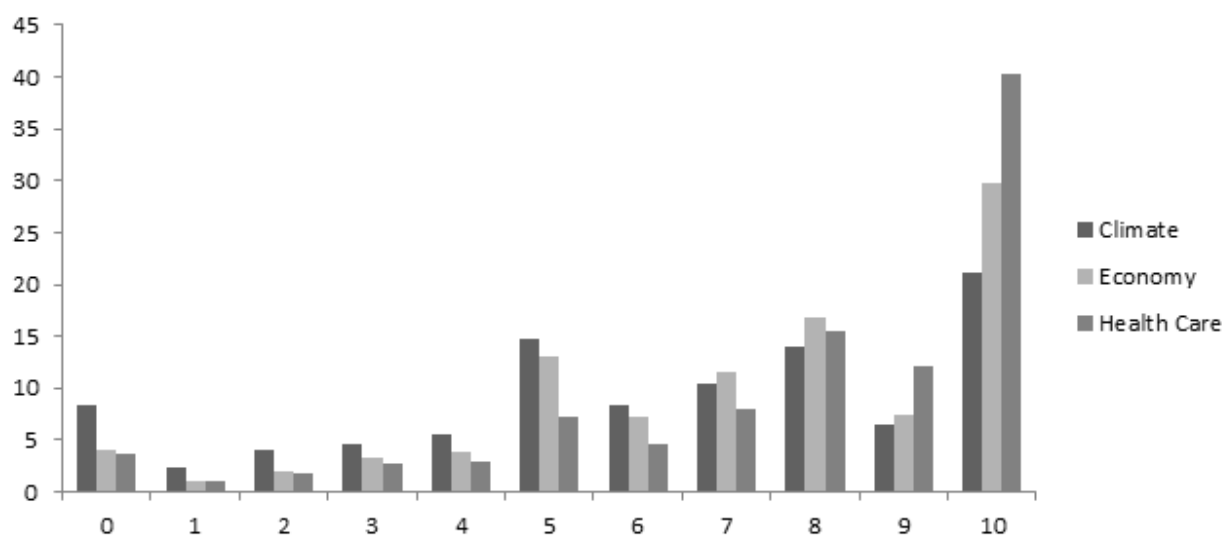


Figure 1.1: Distribution of individual perceptions of the responsibilities of national Governments regarding the economy, health care standards and climate change in the 27 EU member States in 2009.

Note: this figure displays added means in the EU 27

Source: European Election Study 2009

assess the importance of economic conditions on the vote for incumbents. Table 1.2 presents the results of models linking perceptions of the government's influence on the economy and vote intentions for political parties in office. The dataset is appended to include both 2009 and 2014 since data are available in both waves.

The model 5 in table 1.2 includes perceptions of the evolution of the situation of the domestic economy, a dummy variable measuring perceptions of high responsibility of national governments over the economy and an interaction term between these two variables, while no control variables are added in the model. The results confirm *constraint hypothesis* since the interaction term on responsibility attribution is positive and significant. Therefore, it confirms that voters who believe their national governments to have strong margins of manoeuvre to influence the domestic economy tend to be more prone to vote for political parties which are in office. Model 6 adds all political and socio-demographic control variables and further corroborates the *constraint hypothesis*. Indeed, when strong predictors of vote for incumbents are added - most notably, identification with the incumbent party - results are still statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\* and in the expected direction. Besides, note that the coefficient associated with perceptions of the evolution of the domestic economic situation decreases by more than 0,8 points, while the effect of the interaction term only decreases by 0,07 points after the addition of control variables. Thus, the moderating effect of perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility on economic voting remains stable whatever the model specification.

The second objective of this study is to test the *balancing demands hypothesis* which contends that voters who believe their governments to have low influence on the national economic situation will be more likely to vote on the basis of non-economic records. To test

Table 1.2: Economic voting in the next general elections including interaction terms with responsibility attributions, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Vote for Incumbents	
	Model 5	Model 6
Economic Responsibility	-0.28442***	-0.21338***
Economic Conditons	0.20413***	0.11755***
Economic Responsibility*Economic Conditions	0.06995***	0.06258***
Party identification		2.15135***
Male		-0.04917***
Left-Right		0.02043***
Religiosity		0.00501
Union		-0.03993**
Class		-0.04455***
Age		-0.02037**
Education		0.00114
Wave	-0.28776***	-0.35273***
Constant	-0.65111***	-1.14299***
N	53,876	43,313
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0,06	0,42

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

this hypothesis, I apply the same methodological strategy that I used in models 5 and 6: I add interaction terms between perceptions of national governments' responsibility over the domestic economy and perceptions of the evolution of the situation in non-economic records, i.e. standards of health care and climate change. I do so to see whether perceived economic constraints influence the probability to reward or punish incumbents on the basis of non-economic records. Table 1.3 presents the results from regressions models for performance voting on standards of health care and climate change with the interaction term.

Model 7 includes the perceptions of the domestic situation in standards of health care in the last twelve months, a dummy variable measuring perceptions of high responsibility of national governments over the economy, an interaction term between these two variables and socio-demographic and political variables. The results of the regression confirm the *balancing demands hypothesis*: voters who perceive their national governments to be merely responsible for the management of the domestic economy tend to vote more for incumbents when they perceive that the situation of health care standards has improved. Indeed, the interaction between these two variables decreases the likelihood to vote for incumbents with the effect of the interaction being statistically significant at 0.01,\*\*\* and slightly negative. To put it simply, those who think that national governments are not constrained on the economy are less likely to vote on health care standards than those who believe that their

Table 1.3: Performance voting in health care and climate change in the next general elections including interaction terms with responsibility attributions, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Vote for Incumbents		
	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Economic Responsibility	0.05665	-0.07956	0.13305
Health Care Conditions	0.19968***		0.20224***
HC Conditions*Economic Responsibility	-0.06600***		-0.06802***
Climate Conditions		0.05076***	0.04297**
Climate Conditions*Economic Responsibility	-	-0.01986	-0.02563
Party Identification	2.08824***	2.0999***	2.08084***
Male	-0.03548	-0.01630	-0.03974*
Left-Right	0.00710	0.01024**	0.00830*
Religiosity	0.01277	0.01414*	0.01120
Union	-0.05869**	-0.07403***	-0.06845**
Class	-0.04502***	-0.04846***	-0.04526***
Age	-0.04708***	-0.04996***	-0.04853***
Education	-0.01918	-0.02502	-0.02177
Constant	-1.55328***	-1.14134***	-1.69138***
N	21,044	20,798	20,137
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0,42	0,33	0,43

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

national government is constrained. There is thus evidence that perceptions of economic integration increase the weight of non-economic records in the individual voting calculus.

Model 8 does not include standards of health care, but perceptions of the evolution of climate change, a dummy variable measuring perceptions of high responsibility of national governments over the economy with control variables. Contrary to expectations, the effect of the interaction term is not significant although voters still reward incumbent political parties when they think that the situation of climate change has improved in their countries. Hence, H2 is not confirmed in the case of this environmental issue even though the sign of the interaction term is still in the expected direction, i.e. negative.

These findings are further confirmed when the interaction terms are put together in model 9. Indeed, voters still reward their incumbents when they believe that the policy situation has improved, while the interaction term between perceptions of economic responsibility and the situation of climate change still does not reach levels of significance. Thus, voters who believe that their national government is constrained in the economy are more likely to reward their incumbents on health care standards, but do not act similarly when assessing records in the situation of climate change. Note that in the three models,

all the political variables and the socio-demographic controls are in the expected direction, thus providing robustness to the models.

To sum up, the *balancing demands hypothesis* is thus only partly confirmed: voters who believe that national governments are economically constrained do not systematically compensate by judging incumbents on non-economic records. Again, figure 1 can help understand the differential impact of perceptions of economic constraints on performance voting in these two non-economic issues. According to the figure 1, citizens deem their national government very responsible for the state of health care standards, but tend to believe that the responsibility of national governments in climate change is much less important. As noted above, this is rather coherent with the actual competences of national governments since health care is still very much in the hands of the national executives, while climate change is much more a global issue. Therefore, this suggests that the *balancing demands hypothesis* first proposed by (Hellwig, 2013) seems to work only in areas where national governments have clear abilities to influence policy outcomes.

## 1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to supplement the literature on the impact of economic integration on voting behaviour on the individual level in general elections (Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012; Hellwig, 2014; Steiner, 2016). More precisely, I investigate the link between perceptions of the reduction of national governments' abilities to influence economic outcomes and performance voting in both economic and non-economic areas. According to the *constraint hypothesis* first proposed by (Hellwig, 2001), economic records should be considered less important by citizens who think their government to be constrained by European integration and economic globalization when they decide to reward or punish incumbents at the voting booth. Meanwhile, a compensation effect should spur non-economic records in the reward-punishment model. Indeed, if instrumental voters decide to participate in elections in an economically integrated system, they should be more likely to punish or reward incumbents on non-economic records since national governments cannot be held accountable on the economy as they used to.

Empirical results first confirm that incumbents' fortunes depend on the perceptions of past records as performance models of voting behaviour postulate (Przeworski et al., 1999). Yet, performance voting is different according to the issue under study. At first glance, the assessment of the domestic situation in health care seems more linked with vote intentions for incumbents than the situation of the national economy and the situation of domestic climate change. This suggests that performance voting is potentially linked to the real or perceived capacity of national governments to influence policy outcomes (Stein, 1990).

Most importantly, this study confirms previous results linking economic integration with the decrease of economic voting on the individual level. Whatever the causal mechanism - should it be lack of clarity of responsibility, instrumental adaptation to the loss of influence on the economy or top-down approach of individual behaviour - voters who believe their governments to be highly responsible on the economy tend to reward or punish incumbents more on their records of the economy. These findings on the individual level thus strengthen past results on the aggregate level linking economic integration to the

decrease of the economic vote in general elections.

Empirical results are however more cumbersome when looking at the *balancing demands hypothesis*. Indeed, it only partially confirms the assumption that voters who think their national governments to have less leeway on the economic outcomes will systematically favour other non-economic issues when voting. By looking specifically at performance voting in standards of health care and climate change, I show that citizens who believe their national governments to be constrained on the economy will only be keener to reward or punish incumbents on the basis of their records of health care, but not on climate change. Thus, the *balancing demands hypothesis* does not apply to every non-economic issue. On the contrary, results might suggest that perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility only spurs non-economic performance voting in areas where national governments still have real or perceived responsibility. This is as if citizens were fair voters because they seem to punish or reward their governments on the basis of their actual competencies. Most importantly, results show that economic integration does not necessarily hollow out elections as mechanisms of accountability as it can be implied in past studies on economic voting (Anderson, 2006, for example). Indeed, voters seem to adapt to the loss of policy competences of their national governments by judging representatives on other issues where they still have the upper hand.

Yet, I do not claim that this study perfectly confirms both hypotheses notably because of the problem of the quality of the measurement of the main independent variable. Indeed, the wording of the question and its distribution may pose several problems to ensure that it grasps the actual individual assessments of the capacity of national governments, in general, to influence economic outcomes. Indeed, there might be the risk that respondents think that the question only entails the current national government and not national governments in general. In addition, the distribution of the variable shows that respondents tend to think that their national government is still very much in charge of the economy, which is contradictory with the expectation that people see their executives to be increasingly constrained on the economy. However, this is, as far as I know, the only study on the individual level which proposes a large cross-country comparison. Thus, to further confirm these results, one would need data that systematically ask respondents about their views on the impact of economic integration on national governments' room to manoeuvre.

## Summary

Many empirical studies suggest that national governments are increasingly constrained in their abilities to influence economic outcomes because of integration within world markets and European polity. As a result, some observers have argued that these signals from integration processes have affected electoral behaviour. The *constraint hypothesis* forecasts that "citizens interpret signals from world markets as a constraint on the range of credible policy responses, and, thus, they demand less in terms of a policy demands" (Hellwig, 2013, p. 46), most notably in the economy. In turn, citizens are supposed to pay less attention to economic considerations when voting as economic integration deepens. This hypothesis is largely confirmed on the aggregate level since many studies show that economic voting is less important in more open economies. Empirical studies also confirm the *constraint hypothesis* on the individual level, but to a lesser extent: citizens who believe their national

governments to be constrained on the economy are less prone to judge incumbents on the basis of their records on the economy in the 1997 French legislative elections and in the 2001 British elections (Hellwig, 2008). In the literature, it is also argued that economic integration should trigger a mechanism of issue compensation among voters. Specifically, the *balancing demand hypothesis* predicts that "voters balance reduced demands for government action in the economy by increasing demands for attention in other, noneconomic areas" (Hellwig, 2013, p. 46). So far, only two studies corroborate these findings on the individual level in the French and the British cases (Hellwig, 2008, 2014), while there exists no evidence on the aggregate level. This first chapter further investigates both hypotheses on the individual level by focusing on performance voting<sup>2</sup> in economic and non-economic governmental records. To study the impact of perceptions of economic constraints on performance voting, I use the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* because they include vote intentions in general elections, retrospective evaluations of both policy performance and responsibility attributions in 3 policy areas (economy, standards of health care and climate change) in all the member states of the European Union. This study is the first large cross-sectional attempt to test these hypotheses on the micro-level. Empirical results confirm past results which show that citizens who believe their national governments to be constrained on the economy tend to punish and reward less their incumbents for the state of the economy. The effect of perceptions of constraints is however less clear cut on performance voting in non-economic records. Indeed, results show that citizens who think their national governments to be barely responsible for the economy do not unequivocally punish and reward incumbents on all non-economic records. In fact, they only punish or reward incumbents on their record on health care, but no significant effects are found regarding climate change.

## Appendix

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Vote for Incumbent Party:</b> 0=Non-Incumbent / 1=Incumbent "And if there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?"
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Economic Conditions:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better "What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in Britain is 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse." <b>Health Care Conditions:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better "And over the last 12 months, has the standard of health care in Britain got 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse." <b>Climate Change Conditions:</b> 0= a lot more of a problem / 4= a lot less of a problem "Finally, over the last 12 months, has climate change in Britain become 1- a lot more of a problem / 5- a lot less of a problem."
<b>Interaction Variable</b>	<b>Economic Responsibility:</b> 0= low responsibility (0-6) / 1= high responsibility (7-10) "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain?"

<sup>2</sup>Performance voting indicates the extent to which citizens punish or reward incumbent governments on the basis of their past policy records.



## 1.5. CONCLUSION

	Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".
<b>Control Variables</b>	<p><b>Party Identification:</b> 0= other / 1= close to Incumbent party Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?</p> <p><b>Male:</b> 0= female / 1= male</p> <p><b>Left-Right:</b> 0= left / 10= right In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "left" and 10 means "right". Which number best describes your position?</p> <p><b>Religiosity:</b> 0= never / 4= several times a week How often do you attend religious services: several times a week, once a week, a few times a year, once a year or less, or never? 1 several times a week; 2 once a week; 3 a few times a year; 4 once a year or less; 5 never.</p> <p><b>Union:</b> 0= Not member (4) / 1= Member (1-3) Are you yourself a member of a trade union or is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union? 1 yes, I am / 2 yes, someone else is 3 yes I am and someone else in the household is /4 no</p> <p><b>Class:</b> 0= working class / 4= upper class "if you were asked to choose one of these 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 class?</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 0= 18-24 / 3= 55+ What year were you born?</p> <p><b>Education:</b> 0= 1-15 / 2= 20+ How old were you when you stopped full-time education?</p>

# Chapter 2

## The case of the issue of European integration

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 has shown that processes that constrain national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre have changed the way individuals hold their incumbent government accountable for policy records (or to say it otherwise: *performance voting*). Specifically, I demonstrated that individuals who perceive their national government to have lost leeway on the economy tend to judge incumbents less in their economic records when voting in domestic elections as the *constraint hypothesis* predicts. In addition, those individuals are more inclined to hold incumbents accountable for non-economic issues, i.e. health care standards, as the *balancing demands hypothesis* predicts. If the latter hypothesis is correct, then it should also affect issue voting, i.e. the extent to which voters choose their parties on the basis of their positioning on issues.

The rationale to explain such behaviour is similar as in the first chapter: as economic globalization and European integration deepen, the margins of manoeuvre of national governments decrease, especially in the economy. In turn, the structure of citizens' demands regarding governmental policy actions changes, ultimately affecting voting behaviour in domestic elections. Specifically, the *balancing demands hypothesis* predicts that the loss of national governments' economic competences will increase the likelihood to choose parties on the basis of non-economic considerations. Voters are assumed to act accordingly because it is easier to associate exposure to the international market integration and European integration with reductions of policy room to manoeuvre in the economy, than it is to associate the former with a reduction in other issue areas such as preferences toward health care, authority, the environment, minority rights, foreign affairs and/or cultural diversity. Another line of argument, compatible with the latter, contends that individuals simply follow political parties' cues when voting (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2001). Yet, past studies show that all kinds of political parties tend to put more emphasis on non-economic issues as economic integration deepens. Hence, there is room to think that issue voting on non-economic matters should be more prominent in more economically integrated countries and/or among voters who believe their national government to be constrained in the economic area.

Until now, evidence that processes of economic integration affect issue voting is scarce, nay non-existent. There exists only few studies which examine the *balancing demands hypothesis* on the individual level (Hellwig, 2008, 2014). In the latest study, Hellwig (2014) finds that citizens' demands for government provision of non-economic policies such as healthcare and the environment (conversely, economic policies) increase (conversely, decrease) as economic integration deepens. In the most detailed study focusing on the 1997 French and 2001 British general elections, Hellwig (2008) demonstrates that voters who believe their national government to be constrained in the economy are more prone to choose parties in domestic elections based on their positioning on the the libertarian-authoritarian dimension than others. Besides, the author finds that those voters also tend to be more inclined to judge political parties on the basis of their positioning on the issue of European integration.

Drawing on the *balancing demands hypothesis*, this chapter aims to further examine the impact of processes of economic integration on issue voting by focusing on the issue of European integration in a cross-country perspective which is lacking in the literature until now. Specifically, I ask *whether individuals who believe that their national government have limited economic margins of manoeuvre are more inclined to choose parties on the basis of their positioning on the issue of European integration*. This issue can be considered as a non-economic issue first because it is largely orthogonal to economics-oriented left/right issues and closely linked to libertarian/authoritarian considerations (Hooghe et al., 2002). Furthermore, political parties which emphasize the most this issue in the party competition are, most of the time, niche parties (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008; Lynch and Whitaker, 2013). Yet, niche parties are generally defined as "parties with a distinctive focus on a limited set of non-economic issues which lie beyond the traditional class cleavage and are largely ignored by mainstream parties" or as "non-centrist or ideologically extreme parties [which] focus on non-economic issues" (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008; Lynch and Whitaker, 2013, p. 286). Thus, it is plausible that the issue of European integration fits in the non-economic dimension proposed by Hellwig (2008).

To explore the variation of issue voting on European integration on the individual level, I use a two-step hierarchical model. In the first stage of the modelling, I determine the extent to which congruence on the issue of European integration, i.e. the relationship between self-placement on the European integration scale with the placement of political parties on the same scale, affects the propensity to vote for a party. To do so, I estimate an ordered-logistic regression to assess the extent to which this congruence affects the probability to vote for a given party. In the second stage, I want to determine whether issue voting on European integration is conditional upon different explanatory variables, most notably the individual belief that national governments are responsible for the state of the national economy. To do so, a stacked data matrix is created. Then, I compute residuals of the regressions which include congruence on the issue of European integration and I use the stored estimates as dependent variables. Stated differently, residuals provide a proxy-measure of non-issue voting on European integration. Then, I estimate the effect of different independent variables on the residuals. The estimations are carried out thanks to the use of the *2009 European Election Study* which is a cross-national survey gathering the 27 member states of the European Union, with a representative sample of around 1,000 individuals in each country. This is an excellent dataset since it provides all the individual-level variables which predict issue voting on European integration, i.e. perceptions

of the responsibility of national governments, identity-related factors, political sophistication and other socio-demographic controls.

Empirical results first show that issue voting on European integration is indeed dependent upon individual perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility. Stated differently, the more citizens attribute responsibility to the national government, the less they are likely to vote for a political party on the basis of its positioning on the issue of European integration. Furthermore, results confirm that political sophistication influences issue voting: the more the voter knows about an issue, the more he or she will choose a party that displays policy proposals that are close to his or her preferences. Finally, I also demonstrate that general attitudes toward European integration affect issue voting on European integration. Specifically, I show that individuals who are less enthusiasts regarding the process of European integration are surprisingly more likely to will choose a party which proposes policies on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I first propose a discussion of the effects of processes of economic integration on issue voting, while focusing on the issue of European integration. In the next section, I present the literature on the determinants of issue voting on European integration. In a fourth section, I discuss my modelling strategy and the two last sections present and discuss the empirical results.

## 2.2 The balancing demands hypothesis and the issue of European integration

As mentioned in the introduction, processes of economic integration, i.e. economic globalization and European integration, have increasingly limited the economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments in the past decades. For example, the integration of national economies within world markets put pressure on national governments to increase their domestic competitiveness. As a result, national executives had to favour market-friendly environments to attract mobile capital and foreign companies, resulting in lower levels of income corporate taxation and fewer regulations (Cai and Treisman, 2005; Plümper et al., 2009). Meanwhile, the European Union acquired many exclusive competences in the economic realm at the expense of national governments: now, it enjoys exclusive powers over commercial policy, monetary policies, external trade, customs and competition rules while it has the mandate to control levels of domestic debts and deficits. Accordingly, it has been argued that this loss of economic margins of manoeuvre has ultimately affected party and voter behaviour.

On the one hand, studies on party behaviour show that, as economic integration intensifies, party platforms converge on the economic dimension (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Haupt, 2010; Steiner and Martin, 2012; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013), while political parties across the board put more emphasis on non-economic issues to the detriment of economic considerations (Ward et al., 2015). The theoretical assumption to explain such outcomes is that strategic political parties want to remain credible in front of voters when proposing policy platforms. On the other hand, studies on voting behaviour largely demonstrate that economic voting decreases in more economically integrated settings (Hellwig, 2001, 2008,

2014; Fernández-Albertos, 2006). In addition, chapter 1 contends that citizens also respond to processes of economic integration by holding incumbent governments more accountable on their records in the non-economic dimension. Two rationales are at play to account for such outcomes. A first top-down approach of voting behaviour assumes that individuals simply follow political parties' indications when casting a ballot (Lau and Redlawsk, 1997). By decreasing (conversely, increasing) salience of the economic dimension (conversely, non-economic dimension) in their party programmes, political parties provide heuristics which allow uninformed voters to recognize that governments are constrained on economic matters. Meanwhile, they send a signal that they remain able to influence policy outcomes in the non-economic dimension. This argument is at the core of Hellwig (2014) *constraint hypothesis*. Without mentioning explicitly the role played by political parties, the author claims that signals coming from the exposure to the world markets (assumed cause) are easy to link to the limitation of policy room to manoeuvre in the economy (effect) for voters. In contrast, it is less easy for voters to achieve cognitive congruence between economic integration and other issues. As Hellwig (2013) puts it: "achieving distal consistency between the external force of globalization and the capacity for government action on matters like health care, the environment, pensions, and the like is difficult" (Hellwig, 2013, p.5). In turn, voters are assumed to demand less in terms of economic responses, while they should compensate "for reduced demands for government action in the economy by increasing demands for attention in other, non-economic areas" (Hellwig, 2013, p.5). The latter phenomenon is labelled *balancing demands hypothesis*. Empirically, there is evidence that individual preferences toward governments' actions have changed in response to the loss of economic competences resulting from economic globalization. Indeed, Hellwig (2013) shows that the level of economic openness negatively (conversely, positively) influences mass preferences' demands to act upon economic areas (conversely, non-economic areas) in a large cross-national study gathering Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

As a result, it can be argued that this change in the structure of demands regarding policy actions will not only be reflected in the way voters hold incumbents accountable for their past records, but will also be reflected in how they choose parties on the basis of their policy proposals. This phenomenon is commonly known as issue voting. Specifically, issue voting is the type of electoral behaviour that relates voters' policy preferences to the policy proposals of political parties. In this framework, voters are assumed to choose parties which are closer to their own policy preferences. This feature of electoral behaviour is one of the important features of voting choice in democratic elections and is at the center of the Downsian's spatial model of voting (Downs, 1957; Carmines and Stimson, 1980; Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989, for an extensive review). Until now, only one study has examined the consequences of this loss of economic competences on issue voting (Hellwig, 2008). This study takes advantage of two available surveys which ask respondents about the extent to which they think their national government to be constrained by globalization in the economic realm to test the *constraint hypothesis* and the *balancing demands hypothesis*<sup>1</sup>. In this study, the author shows that issue voting is dependent upon individual perceptions

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<sup>1</sup>The first survey was coordinated by the CEVIPOF and gathers information regarding individual voting behaviour in the 1997 French legislative elections. Second, the 1997-2001 British Election Panel Study gathers information on voting behaviour in the 2001 British general elections.

of national government's capacity to influence the economy in both elections. Specifically, it is demonstrated that French and British voters who believe their national government to have leeway on the economy (conversely, no leeway) are more prone to choose parties which display economic positions (conversely, non-economic positions) that are closer to their preferences. For instance, it is found that the proximity on social policy exerts a greater cumulative effect than do party positions on the economy in the case of British voters who think the government to have "hardly any" influence on the national economy. Meanwhile in France, voters who believe their national government to be constrained are more likely to vote for parties (especially, parties from the Center-Left and the *Front National*) if they are close to the party's positioning on the authoritarian-libertarian dimension than those who do not. Besides, the electoral effects of positions on European integration are far more important for the case of high room-to-manoeuvre constraints than for the case where globalization has no effect on national policy efficacy. Thus, economic integration, not only affects performance voting, but also influences issue voting. Yet, evidence is circumscribed to two countries, while it remains limited to two non-economic dimensions which are measured through surveys of party experts: the authoritarian-libertarian axis and the issue of European integration. In turn, there remains a "black box" because data do not grasp individual perceptions of party positioning, while the generalization is still restricted given that the analysis only entails two countries.

If "economic and non-economic [issues] are used as shorthand for policies pertaining to government action in material-based compensation programs and policies and in other areas, respectively" (Hellwig, 2013, p. 5), then the authoritarian-libertarian axis can be easily considered as a non-economic issue. In the case of European integration, conceptualizing this issue as non-economic is less straightforward. Indeed, as I argue in this thesis, the process of European integration is seemingly a process of delegation of power in the economy, which often referred to as an "intense case of globalization" (Scharpf, 2002; Ward et al., 2015). Yet, I make the case that European integration, as an issue, not as a process, is more likely to fit within the non-economic dimension. First, empirical studies show that the issue European integration is orthogonal to economics-oriented left/right issues (Hooghe et al., 2002). In contrast, it is increasingly linked to libertarian/authoritarian considerations. For instance, Hooghe et al. (2002) find that political parties' support for European integration is more often associated with support for particular aspects of European integration, including environmental policy, asylum policy and non-nationalist stances. Furthermore, political parties which are more likely to put emphasis on the issue of European integration in the party competition are niche parties (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008; Lynch and Whitaker, 2013). Yet, niche parties are generally defined as "parties with a distinctive focus on a limited set of non-economic issues which lie beyond the traditional class cleavage and are largely ignored by mainstream parties" or as "non-centrist or ideologically extreme parties [which] focus on non-economic issues" (Lynch and Whitaker, 2013, p. 286). Therefore, it is plausible that the dimension of European integration can be considered as a non-economic dimension by individuals. Starting from this premise, I thus argue that processes of economic integration should strengthen issue voting on the European integration. This results in the following hypothesis:

Balancing demands hypothesis (H1): The more a citizen believes the national government to have influence on the domestic economy, the less likely she or he will choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European



integration that are close to his or her preferences.

Next section presents into more details the alternative explanations of issue voting on European integration.

## 2.3 Determinants of issue voting on European integration

Since the mid-nineties and the referenda held in Denmark and France, European integration has become a more controversial issue with the notable rise of political formations resisting the process of integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008; Kriesi et al., 2012). According to the *post-functional theory* (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), this change has been made possible because "the elite has had to make room for a more Eurosceptical public" (Hooghe and Marks, 2009, p.9). The main assumption behind is that public opinion has become more polarized and more critical towards European integration because of increased visibility of the process of European integration in domestic politics (De Wilde and Zürn, 2012). The literature focusing on citizens' attitudes towards European integration agrees upon the observation that support for the process of integration has been shrinking in the last two decades, even though Van Ingelgom (2014) convincingly shows that a large part of citizens remains indifferent towards this issue. Yet, the mean and net support decreased since the mid-nineties and the Maastricht treaty (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). In turn, Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) made the case that European issues appear to be "ripe for politicization" and that it is only "a matter of time before political entrepreneurs in some countries seize the opportunity, presented to their parties by these quite polarized opinions, to differentiate themselves from other parties in EU terms" (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004, p. 47). In fact, the authors argued that it was mainly because of a lack of willingness to promote and to offer a variety of choice on European issues from the side of political elites that a "sleeping giant" of public opinion has not yet altered or transformed the structure of domestic political dimension.

Following, a large number of studies examined the impact of the issue of European integration on the vote in national and European electoral competitions. Indeed, several researchers have shown that the issue of European integration does influence national vote choices in countries such as Austria, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom and Denmark (Gabel, 2000; Evans, 2002; De Vries, 2007; Hobolt et al., 2009). In addition, De Vries and Tillman (2011) have shown that issue voting on the European integration, i.e. the extent to which voters take political parties' stances on European integration when voting, was consistent in both west European and eastern and central European countries. Besides, De Vries et al. (2011) demonstrate that voters also choose parties that most accurately resemble their positions on the issue of European integration in European parliamentary elections. Having said that, there is also ample evidence that issue voting on European integration is still very weak in comparison with other determinants of the vote such as left/right orientations and domestic political issues.

All in all, the issue of European integration, although weak, has an impact on party choices at the national level, notably in the aftermath of referendums (Petithomme, 2011); in contexts of accession (De Vries and Tillman, 2011); or when eurosceptic entrepreneurs



voice their concerns about European integration in the public media (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). In fact, issue voting on European integration varies given contextual factors, i.e. the extent of media attention and the level of polarization among political parties (De Vries, 2007; Hobolt et al., 2009; De Vries et al., 2011). Indeed, the extent of media attention regarding an issue is decisive to predict issue voting: citizens tend to rely on the the information provided by the media when deciding for which party to vote for (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2008) because it is difficult for most of them to make the difference between parties' stances on issues without mediators. Empirically, past studies confirm that media salience influences European attitudes (Peter et al., 2003) and enhances issue voting on European integration (De Vries et al., 2011). Second, party conflict or polarization regarding an issue has also been depicted as an important variable to explain the extent of issue voting (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004; De Vries, 2007). The assumption behind is that the more political parties will be divided, the clearer the stances they will take in the party system. In turn, voters will be able to distinguish between political offers because of the increasing clarity of parties' positions. Furthermore, party conflict also influences the extent of issue voting because a larger political offer enables voters to voice their own political preferences more easily (Carmines and Stimson, 1986).

To sum up, past literature has intensively investigated contextual determinants of issue voting on European integration. But, there exists only few studies which examine the variation of issue voting on European integration on the individual level (De Vries et al., 2011, for an exception). This is a problem insofar as "it is unlikely that Europe matters equally for all voters and within all contexts" (De Vries et al., 2011, p. 18). On the individual level, studies have mainly emphasized on the impact of political sophistication (De Vries et al., 2011). Indeed, the level of political sophistication has long been a good predictor of issue voting and directional voting (Macdonald et al., 1995). More specifically, Macdonald et al. (1995) show that sophisticated voters can more readily incorporate issue information in their decision making. Thus, voters who have a better knowledge regarding the process of European integration should be more likely to retrieve issue information on European integration when voting. Empirically, there is evidence that the level of political sophistication matters to understand variation of issue voting on European integration among individuals (De Vries et al., 2011), but only in the context of European parliamentary elections. This results in the following hypothesis:

Political sophistication hypothesis (H2): The more a citizen knows about European integration, the more likely she or he will choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to his or her preferences.

The next section presents the data utilized to test these hypotheses and presents the empirical strategy which intends to respond to this challenge.

## 2.4 Data and empirical strategy

The individual-level data are derived from the 2009 *European Election Study*. This is a cross-national survey which gathers information on electoral behaviour and political attitudes from citizens of the 27 member states of the European Union, with a representative sample of around 1,000 respondents in each country. This survey notably provides individuals'

propensity to vote for a given party (or electoral utilities), voters' self-placement on European integration (on a 1-10 scale) and perceptions of political parties' positioning (on the same 1-10 scale). Besides, it adds an original question regarding attribution of economic responsibility which is worded as follows: "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain?". In addition, the 2009 *European Election Study* also provides questions which allow to measure political sophistication, identity-related matters, attitudes toward the process of European integration, trust in the European Union, government approval, subjective assessments of the economic situation of the country and other socio-demographic controls such as age, age when leaving school and gender.

To explore the variation of issue voting on European integration on the individual level and how it is conditional upon perceptions of economic margins of manoeuvre, I use a two-step hierarchical procedure. In the first stage of the modelling, I determine the extent to which congruence on European integration, i.e. the relationship between self-placement on the European integration scale with the placement of political parties on the same scale, affects the propensity to vote for a party (which is the dependent variable in this first step). Indeed, issue voting is the distance between voters' positioning and parties' positioning on a given issue. Accordingly, the closer a voter  $v$  will be to the party  $p$  on the issue of European integration, the more likely she or he will be to vote for party  $p$ . Thus, I expect congruence on European integration to be a decisive factor predicting the propensity to declare to vote for parties. The advantages of electoral utilities over reported vote choice questions are numerous (Van der Eijk et al., 2006, for an extensive review). First, unlike discrete-choice models, voters of small parties are not excluded from the statistical estimation. Yet, the elimination of respondents who favour small parties can considerably alter coefficients of determination and the ordering of independent variables within estimations. Therefore. To sum up, less information is lost with empirical observed electoral utilities. Thus, I estimate an ordered-logistic regression (and Ordinary Least Squares) using electoral utilities as the dependent variable. I do so because the variable is ordinal and categorical (1-10 scale).

To estimate electoral utilities, a stacked data matrix derived from the original matrix needs to be created. This is due to the fact that the survey produces a number of variables for each individual: one for each party mentioned in the survey. Then, the unit of analysis becomes respondents $\times$ party scores on the transformed stacked data. So, the dependent variable is the observed electoral utility for voters and it displays relationships between respondents and political parties rather than respondents' characteristics. It eventually allows to take into account both voters' and political parties' characteristics in a dynamic fashion. In the regression, the two main explanatory variables are congruence on European integration and Left-right congruence. Congruence on European integration is constructed as the relationship between self-placement on the European integration scale with the placement of political parties on the same scale, where 0 indicates unification "has already gone too far" and 10 means it "should be pushed further". Left-right congruence is constructed in the exact same fashion where left indicates 0 and 10 means right. In contrast with other studies which analyse issue voting (Hellwig, 2008, for example), the 2009 *European Election Study* thus allow to directly test issue voting on the individual level. Indeed, studies on issue voting generally rely on expert surveys or party manifestos to infer the positioning of a party. Yet, this technique does not permit to know whether subjective

assessments of party positioning do have an impact on vote choice. Note that variables are recoded in positive terms and 9 thus indicates perfect match between party positioning and voter positioning on European integration and left-right dimension.

A couple of other control variables are added in the regression to determine whether issue voting on European integration is independent of alternative explanations of voting. First, I add indicators of political performance, i.e. perception of democratic functioning and retrospective perceptions of economic performances. These variables are added in the estimations because they are traditional explanatory variables of voting. Specifically, individuals are expected to declare to vote more when they consider the political situation to improve (Dalton, 2013). Having said that, Blais (2006) suggests that the economic conjuncture has generally a null effect on the vote. In addition, I add indicators of interest in politics and social class identification which are generally positively correlated with the act of voting (Norris, 1999). Finally, I also add socio-demographic controls such as age, age when leaving school and gender. I have no particular expectations regarding these variables. Note that I also add fixed effects in the ordered logistic regression to control for variation between countries because of the non-randomness nature of the data. Besides, I cluster the analysis on the number of respondents because of the nature of the data (stacked matrix). At this stage, I expect congruence on European integration to be significant and to display a positive sign. Indeed, the independent variables measuring congruence are recoded to indicate proximity between party and voter positioning. In addition, I expect the effect of congruence on European integration to be lower than the effect of left-right congruence because of the importance of the latter on voting choice (De Vries and Tillman, 2011).

In the second stage, I want to determine whether issue voting on European integration is conditional upon different explanatory variables on the individual level. More precisely, I want to know whether perceptions of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre affect issue voting on European integration as H1 predicts. To do so, I first compute residuals of the regressions which include congruence on European integration and I use the stored estimates as dependent variables. Residuals are the positive sum of the distance between the outliers. Ultimately, it gives a proxy measure which indicates the extent to which the model of issue voting on European integration does not perform. More precisely, I store five regressions' residuals in total: the first regression only estimates the impact of congruence on European integration on electoral utilities; the second estimates the impact of congruence on European integration on electoral utilities while taking into account country fixed-effects; the third estimates the impact of congruence on European integration and socio-demographic variables on electoral utilities; the fourth estimates the impact of congruence on European integration, Left-Right congruence and control variables on electoral utilities; the final regression estimates the impact of congruence on the issue of European integration, Left-Right congruence and control variables on electoral utilities while taking into account country fixed-effects. Then, the residuals are all computed so that their sign becomes positive.

Next, I estimate Ordinary Least Squares regressions on these five dependent variables including the main independent variables of interest, i.e. perceptions national governments' economic responsibility and EU political sophistication. I do so because the dependent variables are residuals which cannot be estimated via other estimations. To test H1, I need a measure of perceptions of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre.

To do so, I use a question on attribution of responsibility which is available in the 2009 *European Election Study*. In this survey, there is indeed a question asking respondents regarding the extent to which they consider their national government to be responsible for the situation of the national economy, where 1 indicates "no responsibility" and 10 indicates "full responsibility." According to the expectations displayed in section 2.2, I also add variables which can affect the variation of issue voting on European integration on the individual level. The literature emphasizes mainly on political sophistication (De Vries et al., 2011). To test H2, I use the same scale of political knowledge regarding the European Union used by De Vries et al. (2011). The scale is an addition of good answers on four different questions: whether Switzerland is a member of the European Union; the number of member states in the European Union; whether all countries elect the same number of members to the European parliament; and finally the number of parliamentary seats in the national parliament. Following (De Vries et al., 2011), I change the variable into a binary one where 0 equals/or is lower than 3 and 1 indicates 4: politically sophisticated are the individuals who have perfect scores. In addition, many studies have fostered the role of identity-related matters to apprehend attitudes toward European integration (Carey, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2005). For instance, Hooghe and Marks (2005) demonstrate that general attitudes toward the European Union are largely driven by identity concerns. Indeed, individuals who display more exclusive national identities are less prone to support European integration, while those who feel more European are generally keener to favour European integration. Starting from this simple premise, Hobolt and Tilley (2014b) have argued that there exists an in-group/out-group division regarding European integration, which is "rooted in people's conception of their own (national) identity" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b, p. 7). According to the authors, it is thus paramount to take identity concerns into account to understand how citizens build their judgements on the European Union: how they attribute responsibility and supposedly how it affects voting behaviour. Nevertheless, identity concerns have not been taken into account when investigating issue voting on European integration yet. Thus, I add a couple of variables which aim to measure identity-related matters and attitudes toward European integration. In fact, I assume that exclusive identity should affect issue voting on European integration. Specifically, I expect those who feel more European to choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to his or her own preferences. To construct this variable, I take advantage of the question regarding respondents' feeling of identity which is divided in four categories: only [nationality], [nationality] and European, European and [nationality], only European. I then change the variable into a binary one where 0 indicates the two first dimensions while 1 indicates the two last dimensions. Three other political variables measuring general attitudes toward European integration are added in the Ordinary Least Squares regressions to control for their impact<sup>2</sup>. Finally, I also add socio-demographic controls such as age, age when leaving school and gender, while I also add a measure of social class identification which permits to control for the effect of social cleavages.

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<sup>2</sup> The question regarding general attitude toward European integration is worded as follows: "Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?" A second question regarding the benefits of the European Union on the domestic setting is worded in those terms: "How much confidence do you have that decisions made by the European Union will be in the interest of (country)?" Finally, a last question grasps the general confidence regarding the institutions of the European Union and is worded as follows: "Do you trust the institutions of the European Union?"

Table 2.1: Effects of European congruence on electoral utilities, with country fixed effects and clusters on individuals (Ordered logistic regression and Ordinary Least Squares)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
EU Issue Proximity	0.11622***	0.15752***
LeftRight Proximity	0.38447***	0.57409***
Retrospective economic evaluations	0.01610	0.02079
Supporter	0.01439	-0.00618
Government approval	0.04080*	0.06420*
Perceptions of the functioning of the democracy	0.01870	0.04378*
Interest in politics	0.0244*	0.04910**
Union	0.01633	0.02172
Religious attendance	-0.00326	-0.00487
Class identification	0.02089**	0.03589**
Male	-0.09280***	-0.21963***
Education	-0.03024***	-0.06035***
Age	-0.04769***	-0.06432***
Constant		5.3908***
N	63010	63010
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> and R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	0.24

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

The next section is dedicated to the presentation of the empirical results.

## 2.5 Empirical results

The data structure is stacked, so instead of having around 27,000 cases, the dataset gathers 406,035 observations. Consequently, the matrix also creates a high number of missing values: the structure of the data deeply alters the quality of the Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup>. Table 2.1. presents the results of estimations of the ordered logistic regression (model 1) and Ordinary Least Squares (model 2).

The models 1 and 2 aim to assess the impact of congruence on the issue of European integration on the propensity to vote for a party. As expected, table 2.1. indicates that the Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> is indeed very low in the ordered logistic regression, i.e. around 0.08 (respectively, 0.24 in Ordinary Least Squares estimations). Having said that, the expectation that congruence on European integration affects the party choice is confirmed since coefficients associated with party/voter proximity on the issue of European integration reaches statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*. As expected, the sign is positive: the less the distance between parties' stances and voter's preferences on the issue of European integration, the more individuals are likely to declare to vote for a party. This finding is strengthened by the fact that the traditional variables explaining voting behaviour are in line with expectations,

even though few indicators reach the threshold of statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.10$ \*,. Indeed, individuals who approve the action of the government; who are more interested in politics and who position themselves on the higher ladder of the social scale have a higher probability to vote for parties. Note however that models 1 and 2 show that older individuals do not declare to vote more contrary to expectations in the literature on electoral participation (Dalton, 2013). Having said that, the coefficient associated with proximity on the issue of European integration is clearly less important than the coefficient associated with proximity on the left-right dimension, indicating the predominance of this dimension in the vote (De Vries and Tillman, 2011). These first results thus show that proximity on the issue of European integration does play a role in the choice of parties.

In the second stage, I want to discriminate between individual level variables which explain issue voting on European integration. Based on the state of the literature, I have two main expectations. As mentioned in section 2.2., the *balancing demands hypothesis* (H1) predicts that individuals who perceive economic constraints (conversely, economic responsibility) should be more likely (conversely, less likely) to choose parties that display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. At this stage, the dependent variable is a proxy measure indicating non-issue voting on European integration. Indeed, the dependent variable is the positive sum of the distance between the outliers, i .e. the residuals. In other words, the more the distance between the outliers, the more it predicts that issue voting on European integration does not perform. In turn, I expect the coefficients associated with perceptions of national governments' responsibility on the national economy to be statistically significant and positive at this stage : this means that those who believe their national government to be responsible over the economy should be more prone to not choose political parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. In contrast, H2 forecasts that individuals who are more aware of the functioning of the European Union should be more prone to choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to his or her preferences. In turn, I expect the coefficients associated with perceptions of political sophistication to be statistically significant and negative since residuals give a proxy measure of non-issue voting on European integration. Stated differently, citizens who are more sophisticated about EU matters should be less prone to choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. Table 2.2. presents the different model specifications using five stored residuals as dependent variables. Model 3 only includes congruence on European integration and electoral utilities; model 4 includes congruence on European integration, country fixed-effects and electoral utilities; model 5 includes congruence on European integration, socio-demographic variables, country fixed-effects and electoral utilities; model 6 includes congruence on European integration, socio-demographic variables, political variables country fixed-effects and electoral utilities; finally, model 7 uses residuals of the full OLS regression as the dependent variable.

Given the fact that the dependent variables are residuals, the  $R^2$  of the different estimations are extremely low. Therefore, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variables that is predictable from the independent variables is far from perfect in all the models. Yet, these different model specifications have the advantage to provide the first empirical results that allow to discriminate between different individual level variables



Table 2.2: Residuals measuring non-issue voting on European integration, with clusters on individuals (Ordinary Least Squares)

Independent Variables	Residuals measuring non-issue voting on European integration				
	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Economic responsibility Govt	0.03519***	0.03515***	0.03511***	0.03412***	0.04074***
EU sophistication	-0.05283***	-0.05316***	-0.05342***	-0.06559***	-0.09111***
EU Identity	0.00144	0.00115	0.00091	0.07552***	0.01701
EU attitudes	0.03200***	0.03188***	0.03178***	0.02609***	0.02449***
EU interests	0.04769**	0.04811**	0.04844**	-0.02048	-0.02888
EU trust	0.04525***	0.04543***	0.04557***	-0.00475	-0.00993
Class identification	0.05108***	0.05109***	0.05110***	-0.01092	0.00045
Male	-0.10593***	-0.10663***	-0.03427	-0.00710	-0.04049
Education	-0.00125	-0.00120	0.02176*	0.01201	0.01220
Age	-0.12020***	-0.12077***	-0.00207	0.01090	0.02893
Constant	-1.4147***	-0.44327***	-0.68203***	-0.27475	-0.11452
N	71161	71161	71161	71161	71161
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.005	0.003	0.002	0.002

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

which arguably predict issue voting on European integration in domestic elections, rather than solely contextual variables. The main finding, coherent with past findings in the literature on issue voting, confirm that political sophistication is a strong predictor of issue voting. Indeed, in all the models specifications, sophistication regarding European Union's functioning displays statistically significant results at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*. In addition, the sign is negative as expected: the variance in the dependent variable (non-issue voting on European integration) is thus negatively correlated with sophistication on European matters. Formally, this result means that individuals who have more knowledge regarding the functioning of the European Union are more likely to choose a party which displays policy positions on European integration which are close to their preferences. This is not surprising to find such a result since it has already been found in the case of European parliamentary elections (De Vries et al., 2011). Surprisingly, the level of education does not play a significant role in the variation of issue voting on European integration since it never reaches statistical significance, although tests show a positive correlation between the two variables (Spearman's  $\rho = 0.1139$ ).

The second most noticeable result in the different model specifications is that general attitudes toward the process of European integration are better predictors of issue voting on European integration than variables such as confidence toward the European institutions and exclusive European identity. Specifically, models 3 to 7 demonstrate that those who are less inclined to support the process of European integration are more likely to choose a party on the basis of its positioning on the issue of European integration. This finding can be explained by mentioning the literature on Euroscepticism at the party level (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). Indeed, this literature shows that challenger parties tend to be more Eurosceptic, while mainstream government/opposition parties are more prone to be in



favour of the process of European integration. Yet, for many reasons - such as internal dissent - the latter tend to compete less on European issues than the former. Indeed, Eurosceptic parties usually have incentives to play the European card to restructure the party competition. Therefore, they are the main political actors that draw attention to the issue of European integration. Given that the variation in issue voting on European integration is largely a function of the degree to which the issue is salient to political parties and the level of extremism in terms of positioning on this issue (De Vries, 2010), it is not surprising to find that individuals who oppose the process of European integration are more prone to choose parties on the basis of their positioning on this issue of European integration. More interestingly, the variation of issue voting on European integration is not dependent upon feelings of European identity since coefficients associated with this variable only reach statistical threefold in model 6. Contrary to expectations, identity concerns thus do not affect issue voting on European integration directly.

Finally, the main hypothesis, i.e. *the balancing demands hypothesis*, of this chapter is validated by all the model specifications. In accordance with (Hellwig, 2013), I show that issue voting on European integration is dependent upon individual perceptions of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre. Indeed, models 3 to 7 display a statistically significant relationship at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\* between the two variables. Besides, the sign is positive as expected. Thus, residuals which provide a proxy measure of non-issue voting on European integration are positively affected by perceptions of the responsibility of the national government in the economy. Formally, this means that individuals who believe their national government to have low capacities to influence the economy display a higher probability than others to choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. In turn, if one agrees upon the premise that the issue of European integration belongs to the non-economic dimension, it gives further credit to the *balancing demands hypothesis* on the individual level since it also affects issue voting, and not only individual demands for political action (Hellwig, 2013) and performance voting (chapter 1).

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter aims to contribute to the literature which examines the impact of the loss of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre - resulting from process of economic integration - on issue voting in national elections. So far, there is large evidence that economic integration affects performance voting (most notably, economic voting), but much less is known about the extent to which it affects issue voting. Indeed, only one study directly tackles this question. In a study focusing on the 2001 British general elections and the 1997 French legislative elections, Hellwig (2008) shows that citizens tend to choose more parties on the basis of their positioning on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension (conversely, economic dimension) when they believe their national government to have few margins of manoeuvre (conversely, large leeway) in the economy. These hypotheses are respectively labelled *balancing demands hypothesis* and *constraint hypothesis*

In this chapter, I further test the *balancing demands* assumption by taking the issue of European integration as an issue pertaining to the non-economic dimension. I do so because many studies have shown that European integration, as an issue, is largely orthogonal

to economics-oriented left/right issues and closely linked to libertarian/authoritarian considerations (Hooghe et al., 2002). To test this hypothesis, I take advantage of the 2009 *European Election Study* which provides a good opportunity to assess whether individual perceptions of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre affect issue voting on European integration on the individual level. Indeed, this is the only available survey which provides questions regarding the individual perceptions of national governments' responsibility over the national economy and questions regarding perceptions of political parties' positioning on the issue of European integration. In contrast to most studies on issue voting which rely on expert surveys and party manifestos to infer party positioning, this survey thus allows to test directly the extent to which individual beliefs (most notably, perceptions of room to manoeuvre constraints) affect issue voting on European integration.

Results show that perceptions of economic margins of manoeuvre are paramount to explain issue voting on European integration. Indeed, voters who believe their national governments to have responsibility over the national economy are more likely to choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. This finding is coherent with previous studies which demonstrate that the opening of world markets has changed the structure of policy demands on the individual level. Specifically, it gives further support to the *balancing demands hypothesis* which predicts that economic integration should ultimately strengthen the importance of the non-economic dimension in the individual voting calculus at the occasion of domestic general elections.

Furthermore, results confirm that political sophistication influences issue voting: the more the voter knows about an issue, the more she or he can mobilize her opinions on this issue when voting. In the case of the issue of European integration, there is already evidence that EU political sophistication improves issue voting on European integration in European parliamentary elections. In this chapter, I show that EU political sophistication also enhances issue voting on European integration in national contests. On a more original note, I demonstrate that those who are against the process of European integration tend to be more prone to choose party which have policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their positioning. This finding is coherent with (De Vries, 2010). Indeed, the author demonstrates that issue voting on European integration is functional upon the extent to which the issue is salient to political parties. Yet, political parties that play the European card are usually Eurosceptic fringe parties (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008)

Having said that, empirical results provided in this second chapter must be mitigated for two main reasons. First, the dependent variables used in the second step of the empirical strategy are weak proxy measures of issue voting on European integration. As  $R^2$  show, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variables that is predictable from the independent variables are very low. Indeed, my models, instead of explaining the variance of issue voting on European integration, predict the extent to which the proximity between voters and parties on the issue of European integration does not explain the propensity to vote for parties. Also, it is not that clear that the issue of European integration pertains to the non-economic dimension since I argue, all along this thesis, that the European Union is primarily a process of economic integration. Nevertheless, I believe that the European integration, as a process, can be distinguished from European integration as an issue. Yet,

there is no definite study which allows to know whether individuals do make this difference.

## Summary

This chapter further examines the impact of economic integration on voting behaviour in domestic elections by looking at issue voting. Drawing on the *balancing demands hypothesis*, I investigate whether individuals who believe that their national governments have limited economic margins of manoeuvre are more likely to choose parties on the basis of their positioning on a non-economic dimension: the issue of European integration. If the implication of this hypothesis is right, then individuals who perceive that their national governments enjoy low economic leeway over the national economy should be more likely to choose parties which display policy platforms on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences on this issue. To assess whether issue voting on European integration is conditional upon perceptions of national governments' economic constraints, I take advantage of the *2009 European Election Study* which provides original questions regarding attribution of responsibility and individual perceptions of party positioning on the issue of European integration. Results show that perceptions of national governments' economic constraints, general attitudes toward the process of European integration and political sophistication on European matters are the most important predictors of issue voting on European integration on the individual level.

## Appendix

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<p><b>PTV:</b> 0= not at all probable / 10= very probable</p> <p>We have a number of parties in Britain each of which would like to get your vote. How probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties? Please specify your views on a scale where 0 means "not at all probable" and 10 means "very probable".</p>
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<p><b>EU congruence:</b> 0= low congruence / 10= high congruence</p> <p>Positive difference between self- and party- placement Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position? How about the (Party X)? Which number from 0 to 10, where 0 means "already gone too far" and 10 means "should be pushed further" best describes (party X)?</p> <p><b>LR congruence:</b> 0= low congruence / 10= high congruence</p> <p>Positive difference between self- and party- placement "In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means</p>

	<p>”left” and 10 means ”right” .          Which number best describes your position?”          ”How about the (Party X)? Which number from 0 to 10, where 0 means left and 10 means right best describes (party X)?  <b>Economic responsibility Govt:</b> 0= no responsibility / 10= full responsibility          ”First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain?          Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means ”no responsibility” and 10 means ”full responsibility” .  <b>EU sophistication:</b> 0= low sophistication (0-3) / 1= high sophistication (4)          Correct answers to different questions regarding the EU:          1. Switzerland is a member of the EU          2. The European Union has 25 member states          3. Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.          4. Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union</p>
<b>Control Variables</b>	<p><b>Retrospective economic evaluations:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better          ”What do you think about the economy?          Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in Britain is 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse.”  <b>Supporter:</b> 0= no / 1= yes          Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than others?  <b>Government approval:</b> 0= no / 1= yes          Let us now come back to Britain. Do you approve or disapprove of the government’s record to date?  <b>Perceptions of the functioning of the Democracy:</b>          0= not at all satisfied / 3= very satisfied          On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Britain? Are you  <b>Interest in Politics:</b> 0= not at all / 3= very          To what extent would you say you are interested in politics?          Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?  <b>EU Identity:</b> 0= British only / 3= European only          Do you see yourself as          1 British only          2 British and European          3 European and British          4 European only  <b>EU attitudes:</b> 0= already too far / 10= pushed further          Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?</p>

## 2.6. CONCLUSION

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Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?

**EU trust:** 0= strongly disagree / 3= strongly agree

For each of the following propositions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

You trust the institutions of the European Union

**Male:** 0= female / 1= male

**Left-Right:** 0= left / 10= right

In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right".

What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "left" and 10 means "right".

Which number best describes your position?

**Religious attendance:** 0= never / 4= several times a week

How often do you attend religious services:

several times a week, once a week, a few times a year,

once a year or less, or never? 1 several times a week;

2 once a week; 3 a few times a year; 4 once a year or less; 5 never.

**Union:** 0= Not member (4) / 1= Member (1-3)

Are you yourself a member of a trade union or is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union?

1 yes, I am / 2 yes, someone else is

3 yes I am and someone else in the household is /4 no

**Class:** 0= working class / 4= upper class

"if you were asked to choose one of these 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 class?"

**Age:** 0= 18-24 / 3= 55+

What year were you born?

**Education:** 0= 1-15 / 2= 20+

How old were you when you stopped full-time education?

# Chapter 3

## Consequences on voter turnout and vote for mainstream parties

### 3.1 Introduction

In the past few decades, there has been a noticeable decline of 1) electoral turnout ([Franklin, 2004](#)) and 2) mainstream parties' success ([Martin, 2013](#)) within national elections in the European established democracies. The Austrian case is particularly illustrative: 92,2% of the Austrian electoral body participated in the 1979 general elections, while the figure drops to 74,91% in the 2013 general elections. Meanwhile, the share of the votes received by the two mainstream parties, i.e. the SPÖ and the ÖVP, reduced by more than 42 points. A similar trend has been found in almost all the EU-15 with some minor differences across countries: since 1976, electoral turnout fell by approximately 12 points, and mainstream parties' vote share dropped by 11 points. Strikingly, this reduction coincides with the development of processes of economic integration. However, this relationship might only reveal a spurious correlation. Therefore, the question remains as to whether economic integration actually affects electoral turnout and vote for mainstream parties.

[Steiner \(2010, 2016\)](#) is the first author to have investigated the consequences of economic integration on electoral turnout. Specifically, he makes the argument that the intensification of economic integration eventually reduces the probability to cast a ballot in national elections. Indeed, empirical studies show that 1) economic integration decreases the (economic) offers available in domestic party systems in national elections ([Haupt, 2010](#); [Steiner and Martin, 2012](#)) and 2) decreases the individual belief that general elections are important mechanisms to determine policy choices ([Steiner, 2016](#)). In turn, the author predicts that the combination of these two factors is likely to decrease the expected benefits of the act of voting. Empirical studies convincingly support the claim on the macro level: (economic) offers in party systems ([Steiner and Martin, 2012](#)) and levels of electoral turnout ([Steiner, 2010](#)) decrease as economic integration deepens. Besides, [Marshall and Fisher \(2015\)](#) further confirm that electoral turnout is dependent on the degree of openness of a country. On the individual level, [Steiner \(2016\)](#) also demonstrates that British citizens who believe that their national government have less influence on the economy because of globalization tend to 1) vote less in the 2001 British general elections, and 2) are less prone to consider general elections as being able to produce significant policy differences. That being said, nothing is known about the impact of economic integration on the success of

mainstream (and challenger) parties.

This chapter aims to contribute to the literature in two ways. First, I make the argument that economic integration should negatively (conversely, positively) affect the fortunes of mainstream parties (conversely, challenger parties). The rationale is the following: if economic integration changes the character of elections by making them less meaningful in the eyes of voters, then voters should act more sincerely (conversely, less strategically) in domestic elections as they already do in second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Yet, sincere voting generally does not favour mainstream parties, while it advantages challenger parties. Indeed, the latter have less chances to gather large shares of the vote as elections become more important. Interestingly, this implication has never been tested. This chapter constitutes the first empirical attempt to do so on the individual level. Second, the only study which investigates the effect of perceptions of economic constraints on electoral turnout is based on the 2001 British case study. Although the 2001 general election in Britain arguably constitutes a most likely case, variation is needed to prove that the relationship between the individual likelihood to cast a ballot and perceptions of economic constraints is consistently negative across countries. Therefore, I intend to test this implication in a larger comparative setting to further falsify the past results of (Steiner, 2016).

To do so, I take advantage of the 2009 and the 2014 *European Election Study* datasets because they provide questions regarding vote intentions in national parliamentary elections and perceptions of national governments' responsibility over the situation of the domestic economy in the fifteen European established democracies, i.e. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United-Kingdom. In turn, I am able to examine whether perceptions of economic constraints affect voter turnout and vote for mainstream parties on the individual level in a comparative setting.

However weak, empirical results confirm recent findings linking voter turnout and economic integration on the individual level: when voters believe their national governments to have low responsibility for the management of the domestic economy, they are less likely to report to have voted (Steiner, 2016). Most importantly, I show that voters who think that their national governments are not responsible for the state of the national economy are more likely to report to have voted for challenger parties than for opposition mainstream parties. Results however do not hold when comparing the success of incumbents with challengers, probably due to a flaw in the question wording of the main independent variable: respondents who believe their national governments to have little economic responsibility are more likely to report to have voted for incumbents than for challengers.

The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section introduces the theoretical argument regarding the effect of economic integration on electoral turnout in the context of previous research. The second section proposes a new theoretical argument linking economic integration and vote for mainstream parties before presenting the results in the empirical part. Finally, the conclusive part discusses the main results of this third chapter.



## 3.2 Economic integration and the utility of the vote

As previously mentioned in extensive details in the introduction and in chapters 1 and 2, the current work linking economic integration to voting behaviour predominantly focuses on two key features of the vote: issue voting and economic voting. The basic argument in this literature states that, by limiting national governments' influence on the economic outcomes at the domestic level, processes of integration change the structure of citizens' demands regarding governmental policy actions. As a result, it affects the behaviour of citizens in the voting booth. Specifically, the *constraint hypothesis* assumes that citizens will choose less political parties on the basis of their economic positioning/records as integration deepens, whereas the *balancing demands hypothesis* asserts the opposite: non-economic considerations should be more important in individual calculus of voting in more economically integrated areas. According to Hellwig (2013), voters are expected to react in such a way because it is simpler to make the connection between exposure to the world markets and reductions of policy room to manoeuvre on the economy, than connect the former with a reduction of the leeway of national governments in other issue areas such as health care and the environment. These hypotheses remain plausible if one prefers a top-down approach of electoral behaviour. This alternative, but probably complementary, argument asserts that voters simply follow political parties' cues when voting. Yet, as Ward et al. (2015) show, economic globalization has a direct effect on issue emphases in party manifestos. More precisely, strategic parties which wish to remain credible increase (conversely, decrease) the weight of non-economic issues (conversely, non-economic issues) in their party manifestos as economic integration deepens. These two arguments can also be applied to the process of European integration. Indeed, it is easier to connect the effects of European integration to the economy than on other issue areas (at the exception of the conservation of marine resources), while European integration also diminishes (conversely, increases) political parties' emphases on the economy (conversely, on non-economic issues) (Ward et al., 2015)

As of now, empirical results confirm both hypotheses. Aggregate level studies demonstrate that voters hold incumbents less accountable on the basis of their economic records in more integrated economies (Hellwig, 2001, 2014; Fernández-Albertos, 2006), while citizens who believe their governments to be constrained on the economy tend to vote less on economic issues and are more prone to judge political parties on other non-economic issues (Hellwig, 2008). The current state of the art thus suggests that voters react to the loss of national governments' economic competences by simply making adjustments in their issue ordering in the voting booth. However, the deprivation of national governments' margins of manoeuvre on the economy can ultimately alter the utility of the vote in itself. This implication is obvious in the rational choice model of the vote (Downs, 1957; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968) which is illustrated in the following equation:

$$U_i = P_i B_i - C_i + D_i > 0 \quad (3.1)$$

where:

$U_i$  = individual utility from voting

$P_i$  = the probability to influence the outcome of the election

$B_i$  = perceived benefits of the vote

$C_i$  = costs of voting

$D_i$  = sense of civic duty

To put it simply, this model considers the act of voting as a trade-off between perceived benefits ( $P + B$ ) and potential costs ( $C$ ) derived from participation. In turn, the model predicts that a citizen will cast a ballot only if he or she thinks that the expected benefits exceed the potential costs derived from the act of voting<sup>1</sup>. Empirically, the trade-off is strongly moderated by the sense of civic duty ( $D$ ) which is generally considered as one of the strongest predictors (Blais, 2006). In this framework, processes of integration arguably reduce the perceived benefits of the vote ( $B$ ), and affect the individual utility of the vote ( $U_i$ ) as a result. The rationale is simple: if exogenous processes wane the set of feasible policies of national governments in domains which matter to citizens i.e. the economy, expected benefits derived from the act of voting should decline, and elections should become less meaningful. In turn, when there is less at stake in elections, individuals supposedly 1) participate less and 2) vote more sincerely (conversely, less sincerely). The next subsections investigate in more details these implications.

### 3.2.1 Economic integration and electoral turnout

Electoral turnout steadily dropped in advanced democracies since the eighties (Franklin, 2004). Figure 3.1. presents some empirical evidence confirming this trend in the EU-15. More precisely, the figure shows the evolution of the electoral turnout in the national parliamentary elections in the EU-15 since 1976. The figure distinguishes between four periods of times to ease readability and to control for varying national electoral cycles. Overall, previous findings regarding the evolution of electoral participation in advanced European democracies are confirmed in the sample: electoral turnout, defined as the percentage of eligible voters who cast a ballot in an election, dropped from 83% during the 1976-1985 period to 73% during the 2005-2016 period in the EU-15. Two cases are particularly interesting to highlight: the German and the Austrian cases. In both countries, electoral turnout was very high by the end of the seventies, i.e. around 90%. But, electoral participation steadily declined in both countries to reach 74,9% in the 2013 Austrian general elections, and 71,5% in the 2013 German general elections. The scope of this change is puzzling because, during the same period of time, the level of education rose significantly in European established democracies. In fact, classic individual determinants of electoral participation, such as socio economic status, diploma and social inclusion do not seem to account for such tremendous changes Franklin (2004).

In the same period, the integration of national economies into international markets grew substantially in the EU-15. Figure 3.2. utilizes data from the KOF index (Dreher et al., 2008) to illustrate more precisely the extent of the change. Specifically, the figure shows the evolution of national actual flows - combining the sum of exports and imports of goods and services, foreign direct investment, portfolio investment and income payments to foreign national as shares of the gross domestic product - in the EU-15 since 1976.

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<sup>1</sup>Note that this model has received considerable criticism over the years (Aldrich, 1993). The harshest criticisms are directed to the importance of  $P$  in the equation. Downs (1957) already discussed this in his famous "paradox of voting" which asserts that the probability to influence the outcome of the election is almost null.

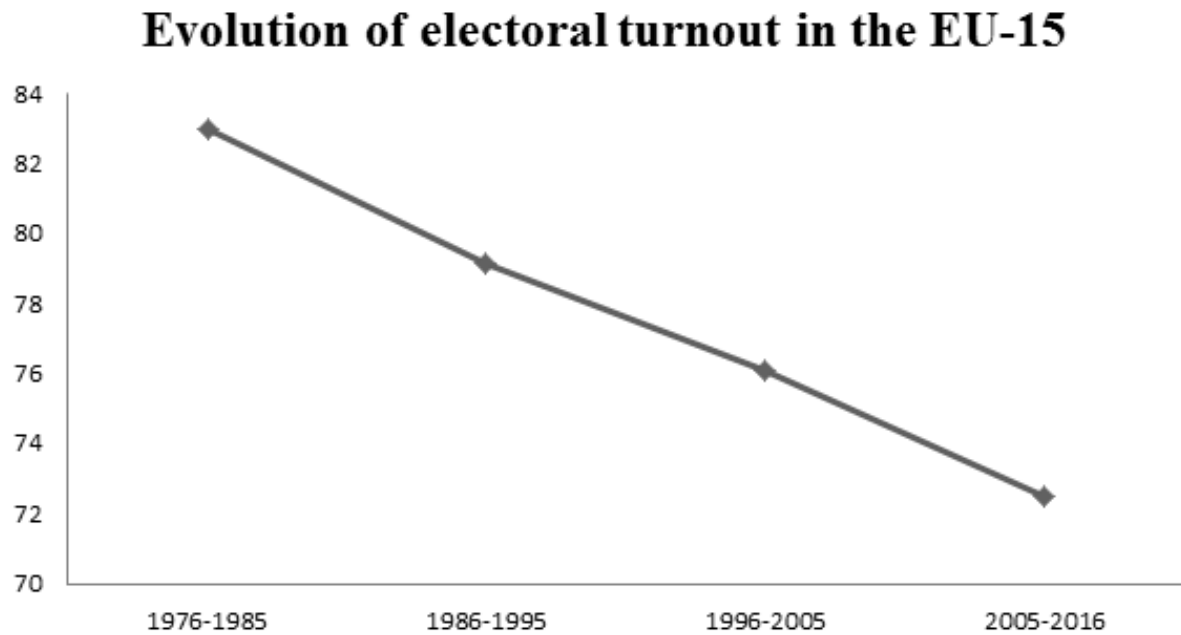


Figure 3.1: Evolution of the electoral turnout in the EU-15 since 1976

Note: this figure displays the evolution of electoral turnout on average in the EU-15 divided in four periods.

Source: <http://elections-en-europe.net/>

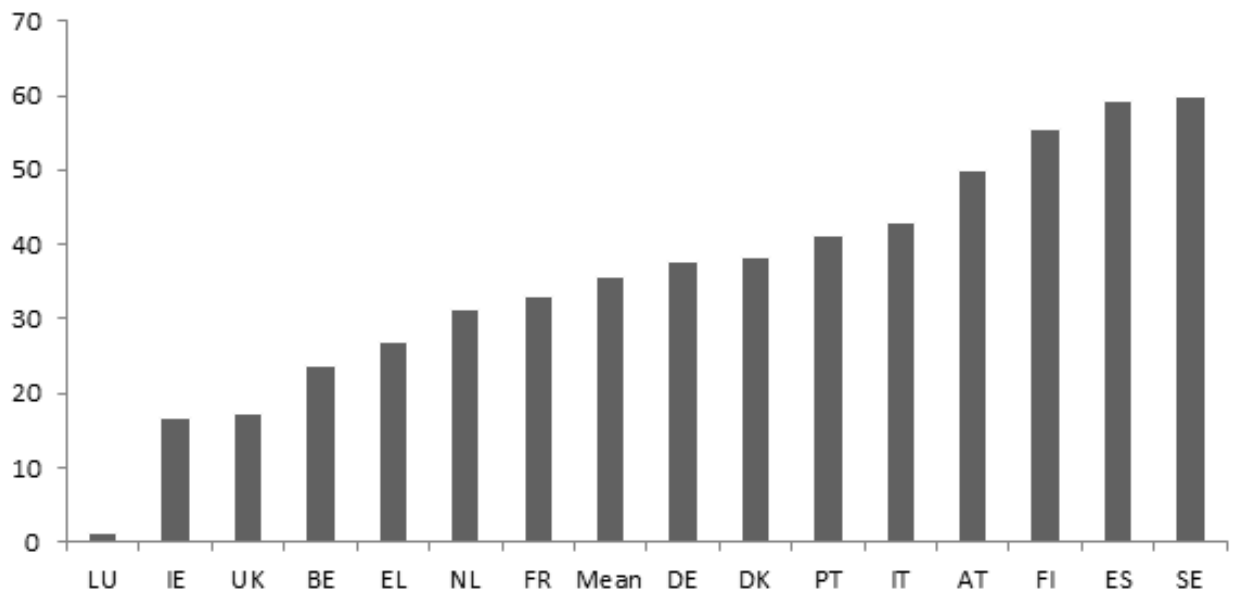


Figure 3.2: Evolution of the economic globalization in the EU-15 since 1976

Note: this figure displays the evolution of electoral turnout on average in the EU-15.

Source: Dreher et al. (2008)

At the noticeable exception of Luxembourg, where economic globalization did not

expand markedly, all the other European countries increasingly opened their domestic markets to foreign investors and international companies in the last three decades. Indeed, the KOF index indicates a mean increase of 35 points in the EU-15 since 1976. This increase is particularly visible in Austria and, to a lesser extent, in Germany. Indeed, the figure 3.2. shows that the actual flows in Austria grew by almost 50 points in 37 years. In the sample, Austria even ranks fourth. In Germany, the growth of actual flows in the gross domestic product also experienced a boom: it rose by more than 37 points in this period of time. In view of these data, this is thus plausible to assume that the two phenomena are linked.

Recently, a couple of studies started investigating whether a deeper economic integration actually leads to lower turnouts (Steiner, 2010, 2016; Marshall and Fisher, 2015). This argument that electoral turnout should decrease as economic integration deepens was first proposed by Steiner (2010). His model starts from the assumption that economic globalization hinders national governments' abilities to influence economic policy outcomes. Contrary to Hellwig (2001) however, he argues that economic constraints resulting from economic globalization does not solely affect individual demands for policy actions, but also affect the the individual inclination to cast a ballot. In fact, he proposes two channels through which higher economic integration could affect electoral participation: by 1) decreasing polarization in the party system Steiner and Martin (2012), and by 2) decreasing the relevance of elections as mechanisms that influence policy decisions Steiner (2016).

The first channel through which higher economic integration can decrease electoral participation on the individual level is through its effect on available policy offer in the party system. Indeed, there is large empirical evidence suggesting that the dispersion of the parties in the ideological space (generally, within the left-right continuum) has a positive effect on the electoral turnout (Banducci et al., 1999; Wessels and Schmitt, 2008; Brockington, 2009; Steiner and Martin, 2012). Indeed, a richer choice environment in the party system mechanically increases the voter's likelihood to find a party which will match its ideal preferences. All things held equal, it thus arguably increases the voting utility on the individual level, which mechanically enhances aggregate electoral turnout. The introduction of proportional representation in New Zealand in 1996 is particularly illustrative in this framework. Indeed, Banducci et al. (1999) show that the institutional change from a first-past-the-post electoral system to a mixed-member proportional electoral system had a positive effect on individual attitudes toward the relevance of voting, which resulted in an increase of electoral turnout via the extended participation of the extreme left. Supplementary evidence supporting the effect of polarization on electoral turnout is brought by Brockington (2009) on the individual level and by Wessels and Schmitt (2008) on the aggregate level. In the former, the author utilizes data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* project to show that proximity between voters' policy preferences and party positioning enhances the individual likelihood to vote, while the latter demonstrates that the more dispersed political parties are on the left-right continuum, the greater the participation on the aggregate level. Current studies thus seem to indicate a positive relationship between polarization of the party system and electoral participation.

As noted in the introduction, many authors have successfully shown that the dispersion of political parties' (economic) positions decreases because of economic globalization (Haupt,

2010; Steiner and Martin, 2012) and European integration (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013). To explain this behaviour at the level of parties, authors rely, once again, on the *constraint hypothesis* and invoke problems of reputational costs on the long term. More precisely, it is argued that competitive pressures resulting from the opening of the domestic economies make it more difficult for national governments to set up certain regulatory policies or increase certain taxes (e.g., companies and capital taxation). As a result, political parties that seek to remain credible in the eyes of voters will whether deemphasize these issues (Ward et al., 2015), or will soften their stances on these issues (Haupt, 2010). Steiner and Martin (2012) argue that it should be particularly the case of social-democratic parties which have long defended less market-friendly options. As a result, polarization at the level of the party system should drop as (European) economic integration deepens. Using data from the *Comparative Manifesto Project*, many studies confirm this assumption empirically (Adams et al., 2009; Ward et al., 2011; Steiner and Martin, 2012): overall, political parties become more alike in more economically integrated settings. In fact, it seems that it affects every party, not only leftist parties. Starting from this premise, Steiner and Martin (2012) argue that economic integration should ultimately affect electoral turnout by decreasing the policy options at the disposition of voters in national elections. To validate this hypothesis, they craft a macro-analysis aiming to examine 1) whether economic integration affects the dispersion of economic policy positions in a party system in a given election; 2) whether the latter affects electoral turnout; and 3) whether economic integration influences electoral turnout in 24 members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development over the period 1950-2005. Empirically, the three steps are validated by the data, thus providing compelling evidence that economic integration reduces electoral turnouts, through parties' positions on the aggregate level.

This is not the only channel through which economic integration presumably affects the individual propensity to vote in general elections. As mentioned, it is plausible to assume that increased economic constraints resulting from economic globalization and European integration simply decrease the expected benefits ( $B$ ) derived from the act of voting, which can end up lowering the individual voter utility ( $U$ ). To put it bluntly, the probability to participate in a general election is affected by the expectation that the individual ballot will affect future policy decisions made by the elected government ( $B$ ). Yet, processes of economic integration arguably limit the influence of national governments in the management of the domestic economy by reducing the set of economic choices (e.g. corporate income taxation). Therefore, all things held equal, the individual voter utility is likely to decrease in more economically integrated countries because individual perceived benefits derived from the act of voting are lower in these settings, while costs remain constant. Evidence of such phenomenon is obvious in second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Indeed, second-order contests are characterized by the fact that elected governments - should they be European or local - usually have less influence on policy decisions than their national counterparts. According to Reif and Schmitt (1980), there is simply less-at-stake in these elections. As a result, perceived benefits derived from the act of voting are particularly low in these elections. Empirically, this results in lower electoral turnouts in European and local elections than in general elections.

Steiner (2010) first tested this hypothesis utilizing aggregate level data. Specifically, his sample gathers elections in 23 countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development over the 1965-2006 period. To measure economic integration, the author utilizes the traditional sum of exports and imports as share of the gross domestic product; the sum of all in- and outflows of gross private capital; and the KOF index. The latter is divided into two sub-indexes which measure both actual flows and restrictions. The flow sub-index is the sum of total trade, foreign direct investment, portfolio investment and income payments to foreign national as share of the gross domestic product, while the restriction sub-index gathers data on hidden import barriers, mean tariff rates, taxes on international trade and capital account restrictions. All the model specifications corroborate the hypothesis that economic globalization decrease electoral turnouts: whatever the indicator used to measure economic integration, they all have a negative effect on electoral turnout, should it be measured as the ratio of votes cast to the number of officially registered eligible voters or as the voting age population. Most importantly, empirical results show that the change in predicted values for electoral turnout from the first election to the last election under study are relatively similar to actual changes. In addition, the overall predicted decline is largely implied by the values of actual flows and restrictions. This first study was further confirmed by [Marshall and Fisher \(2015\)](#). Starting from similar premises, they slightly disentangle [Steiner \(2010\)](#)'s argument. In fact, they hypothesize that foreign ownership, rather than international trade should affect electoral turnout simply because the latter are less mobile and sensitive to government actions than the former. Using a similar database on electoral turnouts, but more fine-grained measures of foreign ownership, i.e. foreign direct investment flows/stock and portfolio equity stock, they find that the most flexible flows affect electoral turnouts in a significant fashion, whereas variation of international trade has no clear effect. Thus, there exists evidence suggesting that economic globalization affects electoral turnout on the aggregate level.

Although rather compelling, these studies do not allow to conclude that the loss of national governments' economic competences resulting from processes of economic integration directly affects the individual propensity to cast a ballot because the causal chain between economic integration and electoral turnout is arguably a long one. Ultimately, this can even enhance problems of specification uncertainty ([Plümper et al., 2005](#)). To establish that economic integration hinders the individual voting utility ( $U$ ), through its impact on perceived benefits ( $B$ ), analyses on the individual level are thus needed. Yet, there is a considerable lack of individual level data to test this implication. Indeed, only two opinion polls ask citizens whether they believe economic globalization limits the economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments<sup>2</sup>. In turn, only one recent study examines whether individual perceptions of economic constraints directly affect the individual inclination to go cast a ballot [Steiner \(2016\)](#). This study focuses on the 2001 British general election which provides a good case study since the electoral campaign was particularly centred on the issue of economic globalization as an exogenous factor constraining the British government's actions. In this study, the author demonstrates that those who believe that the British government still has margins of manoeuvre in the economy are more likely to report to have voted in the last elections. Indeed, both logistic and ordered regressions show a linear pattern on the estimated dependent variables even after the inclusion of control variables. In addition, a related implication of the rational choice model of voting is tested in this article. Specifically, [Steiner \(2016\)](#) is able to test the idea that perceptions of economic

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<sup>2</sup>The 1997 French National Election Study and the 1997-2001 British Election Panel Study are the only two available opinion polls which add such a question in their questionnaires.



constraints also affect the perceptions of expected benefits derived from voting since the questionnaire adds a question regarding the meaningfulness of the election. Empirically, he finds that those who believe the British government to be constrained are less likely to consider general elections as meaningful mechanisms to induce political change. It thus seems that perceptions of economic constraints reduce the utility of the vote ( $U$ ), through the reduction of perceptions of benefits of an election ( $B$ ). Having said that, these findings only apply to a one-case study, which ultimately limits the generalization of the results. As a result, a large-n study is required to further validate the hypothesis

Building on the theoretical framework proposed by [Steiner \(2016\)](#), this chapter tests this hypothesis on a larger scale. Specifically, I aim to investigate whether perceptions of national governments' room to manoeuvre on the economy affect the propensity to report to have voted in the EU-15. This results in the following hypothesis:

H1: The more a citizen believes the national government to have influence on the domestic economy, the more prone she or he will be to participate in national elections.

As noted, evidence suggests that perceptions of economic constraints affect 1) economic voting; 2) issue voting; and 3) electoral participation. Another implication has not been investigated so far: the impact of economic integration on the fortunes of mainstream parties via its impact on sincere voting. Next section proposes a model which contends that economic constraints can also affect the individual likelihood to cast a ballot for mainstream parties.

### 3.2.2 Economic integration and vote for mainstream parties

Congruent with the fall of electoral turnout, the vote share of mainstream parties also steadily declined during the last four decades. [Figure 3.3.](#) presents empirical evidence of this trend. More precisely, it shows the evolution of mainstream parties' vote shares in the national parliamentary elections of the EU-15 since 1976: mainstream parties are defined as parties which have managed to reach premiership since 1976 ([De Vries and Hobolt, 2012](#)). Note that new parties such as SYRIZA are excluded from the analysis because they have reached incumbency after 2014. In total, 36 political parties reached premiership during this period of time. Again, [the figure 3.3.](#) distinguishes between four periods of times and mainstream parties' vote shares are computed into country means.

As [figure 3.3.](#) shows, the fall of mainstream parties' support in the EU-15 is similar in its scope in comparison with the decline of electoral turnout. Indeed, mainstream parties' total vote share dropped from 70% during the 1976-1985 period to 59% during the 2005-2016 period. Note however that the decline has been more pronounced during the last period (2006-2016). Indeed, until 2006 the vote share of mainstream parties remained at around 68%-66%. Again, the German and the Austrian cases are particularly interesting cases to illustrate this trend: the loss of the combined vote shares of the two German mainstream parties, i.e. SDP and CDU-CSU, from 1976 to 2016 approximates 24 points. Meanwhile, the two Austrian mainstream parties, i.e. SPÖ and ÖVP, lost 35 points altogether.

At first glance, this trend seems congruent with the expansion of the powers of world markets and the European Union. But, no study has yet investigated whether and how



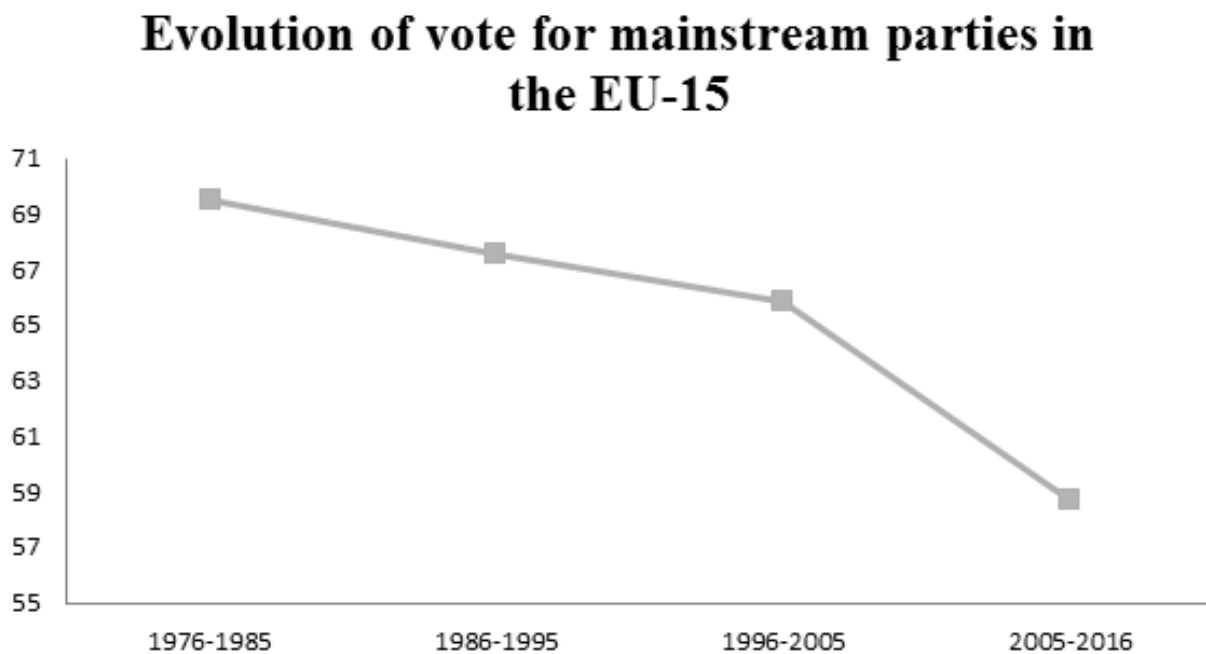


Figure 3.3: Evolution of the vote shares of mainstream parties in the EU-15 since 1976

Note: this figure displays the evolution of vote shares of mainstream parties on average in the EU-15 divided in four periods.

Source: <http://elections-en-europe.net/>

these trends can be connected. In this section, I propose a theoretical argument that link these two macro phenomena via an investigation at the micro-level. According to Coleman's bathtub (Coleman, 1990), any aggregate association is convincing only if there are theoretical reasons to link macro phenomena to behaviours on the individual level. In this framework, I thus assume that the effect of globalization and European integration on vote for mainstream parties is clear in the model of second order elections proposed by Reif and Schmitt (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif et al., 1997), and further developed by Marsh (Marsh, 1998) in the framework of European parliamentary elections.

The model of second-order elections has been first proposed by Reif and Schmitt (1980) as a way to understand the results of the 1979 European parliamentary elections which were characterized by three features: 1) low electoral turnouts; 2) a bad performance of incumbent parties; and 3) a good (respectively, bad) performance of challenger parties (respectively, mainstream parties). To explain these outcomes, this model of voting behaviour mainly emphasizes on the impact European parliamentary elections have on 1) the selection of the European executive body, i.e. the European Commission; and on 2) the daily life of European citizens<sup>3</sup>. In fact, Reif and Schmitt (1980) made the point that the results of European parliamentary elections had almost no impact on both. At that time, European parliamentary elections were indeed not decisive to determine the composition of the European executive body because the Commission was not appointed by the European parliament. In addition, policy competences of the European parliament in particular, and

<sup>3</sup>Also note that Reif and Schmitt (1980) fostered the strong role played by national electoral cycles to explain such phenomena, but it is not relevant in my model

the European community in general were extremely limited. In turn, there was almost nothing at stake in these electoral contests. On the individual level, this was translated in 1) low incentives to participate in electoral contests; 2) high incentives to voice discontent toward incumbents; 3) high incentives to vote sincerely, i.e. to vote for its favourite option. Empirically, all the studies focusing on European parliamentary elections have confirmed these claims in the EU-15 (Hix and Marsh, 2007, 2011), but this finding is less robust in the recent member states (Schmitt, 2005; Koepke and Ringe, 2006). Indeed, electoral participation is always significantly lower in European contests than in national contests. Besides, incumbent parties are generally sanctioned by voters in these elections. Finally, small parties systematically perform better in European contests than in national ones at the noticeable exception of small parties in new member states in 2004 (Schmitt, 2005). This trend holds true when looking at local and regional elections (Heath et al., 1999; Hough and Jeffery, 2006), but see Schakel and Jeffery, 2013), but see Schakel and Jeffery (2013)

The third result is particularly relevant in the framework of this subsection. Indeed, the model of second-order elections asserts that the vote for mainstream parties (conversely, for challenger parties) is conditional upon the importance of a given election. More precisely, mainstream parties face more difficulties in elections where there is less-at-stake, i.e. second-order elections such as European parliamentary elections, than in first-order electoral contests where results have a strong impact on 1) the selection of the government; and on 2) future policy outcomes. In this framework, voters are expected to cast more sincere votes (respectively, more insincere votes) as the consequences of the elections become less important (respectively, more important). This is well put by Marsh (1998) in those terms: "the fact that European parliamentary elections, unlike national ones, involve the selection of a representative rather than a government frees voters from the need to consider such secondary implications of their votes. Voters who opt for a party in a national election because it can contribute to the formation of a government, but who prefer another party (whether on grounds of ideology, group identity or personality), may be said to cast an insincere vote. Such voters may cast a sincere vote for the party they like best in a European Parliament election. To the extent that larger parties might be expected to reap the benefits of such insincere voting in national elections, such parties would be expected to lose support in European elections with the benefits going to small, relatively insignificant parties. Reif and Schmitt describe this process of change as voters choosing to vote with their hearts rather than their heads, or 'expressive' voting." (Marsh, 1998, 593). To sum up, this model of voting behaviour suggests that the perceived or real importance of an electoral contest matters to understand how individuals decide to cast a ballot.

Starting from the premise that the relevance of an election matters to understand how voters allocate their ballots, I make the argument that economic integration has the potential to decrease the vote share for big parties that regularly alternate between government and opposition, i.e. mainstream parties. Mechanically, I assume that it should increase the potential of small parties that never held office, i.e. challenger parties. Indeed, many empirical studies show that processes of integration reduce the margins of manoeuvre of representatives in the economic realm. For instance, implementing regulatory policies and increasing corporate income taxation becomes more costly for national governments as economic integration deepens. As a result, the influence of an individual ballot cast in general elections on future economic outcomes arguably diminishes. Evidence of such a phenomenon

is brought by Steiner (2016). In this article, the author shows that individuals who perceive their national governments to be constrained in their economic margins of manoeuvre are more prone to think that general elections do not provide efficient tools to produce policy change. Therefore, it is plausible that the increasing economic constraints resulting from processes of economic integration will end up decreasing the relevance of general elections on the individual level and will ultimately alter the likelihood to vote sincerely, eventually favouring challenger parties. So far, no study has tested this implication, neither on the aggregate level, nor on the individual level. I intend to provide a first empirical falsification of this hypothesis on the individual level. This results in the following hypothesis:

H2: The more a citizen believes the national government to have influence on the domestic economy, the more prone she or he will be to vote for a mainstream party.

In the following section, I first present the individual level dataset used in the empirical analysis. For the first time, the relationships between electoral turnout, vote for mainstream parties and economic constraints resulting from economic integration are tested in a large-n study on the individual level, thus providing generalizable results. Next, I present in more details the empirical strategy used to falsify the hypotheses.

### 3.3 Data and empirical strategy

To analyse electoral participation and vote for mainstream parties in general elections, I utilize two cross-national individual-level datasets: *European Election Study* 2009 and 2014. These datasets are of particular interest for students of voting behaviour because they include questions on vote intentions in the last general elections and in the future general elections; traditional socio-demographic information; and questions on political attitudes such as partisan identification, political interest and attitudes toward the process of European integration in the EU-15, i.e. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United-Kingdom. Both surveys gather around 1,000 respondents per country. Overall, 17,015 individuals and 17,775 were respectively interviewed in the 2009 and the 2014 European Election Study samples. Most importantly, these datasets are the only two available cross-national surveys in which respondents were asked to assess the degree to which they think their national governments are responsible for the situation of the national economy. More precisely, the question is worded as follows: "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain? Unfortunately, the question does not ask specifically about the extent to which economic globalization affects national governments' margins of manoeuvre on the economy unlike the 1997 *CEVIPOF* and the *British Election Panel Study* 1997-2001. In addition, contrary to the latter, the question within the modules of the *European Election Study* does not add the plural in the wording. Consequently, the question might be understood by respondents as the particular responsibility of the current government, rather than the responsibility of national governments in general. As I will argue later, this can alter the empirical analysis, notably when analysing the impact of perceptions of economic constraints on vote for mainstream government parties. Nevertheless, the questionnaire is of interest since the notion of responsibility is arguably close to the notion of influence. More decisively,

it remains the only survey which allows to measure perceptions of national governments' abilities to influence the domestic economy in a cross-national perspective.

The first objective of this chapter is to assess whether the inclination to cast a ballot in national elections is conditional upon individual perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility. Traditionally, two indicators of electoral turnout are used as dependent variables in the literature, i.e. retrospective and prospective vote declarations. In the dataset, the only measure of voter turnout available is the retrospective indicator. Yet, the retrospective measure of the vote might create problems of comparability between countries. Indeed, the European Election Study is a survey which is mostly focused on European parliamentary elections. Therefore, individuals responded to these surveys during the year of the European parliamentary election, i.e. 2009 and 2014. However, last general elections did not occur at the same time in all the countries within the sample. As a result, it can bias the quality of the responses. Indeed, it is arguably easier for a Belgian citizen in 2014 to precisely remember his or her choice in general elections (that occurred in 2014), than it is for a French citizen where the last general election took place in 2012. The retrospective measure of the vote is worded as follows: "Which party did you vote for at the General Election of year?" Formally, the dependent variable is dichotomous where 1 gathers all the respondents who report to have voted in the last general election and 0 gathers respondents who declare not to have voted in the last general election.

The modules of the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* also provide different items which allow to control for alternative explanations of electoral turnout on the individual level. Indeed, several political variables such as the level of interest in politics, the perceptions of the record of the government and the closeness to a party are said to positively affect electoral turnout (Dalton, 2013, for an extensive review). In addition, it has been suggested that the economic crisis is at the core of the decline of electoral turnout (Radcliff, 1992). Yet, the opposite argument has also been emphasized: citizens might be more prone to go cast a ballot in order to redress the economic situation. All in all, Blais (2006) suggests that the economic conjuncture has, most probably, a null effect. Notwithstanding, I also decide to include a measure of subjective perception of the situation of the economy in the models to control for its effect. Finally, I include other traditional control variables such as education, age, gender, religious attendance, unionisation and perceptions of social class. To put it simply, I expect individuals who are more included in the society to be more prone to cast a ballot in general elections. Unfortunately, the surveys do not provide an important component of electoral turnout: the sense of duty ( $D$ ). This is problematic insofar as many rational choice scholars have argued that this is the variable that explains the most evidently the individual inclination to participate in an election Aldrich (1993)

Using these individual level data, I run multiple probit regressions because the main dependent variable is dichotomous<sup>4</sup>. Also note that the structure of the data is non-random because voters are nested in countries. To control for this non-random effect, I include country fixed effects in the regressions. Finally, I also propose several model specifications that differentiate between time periods. More precisely, I run regressions first using the 2009 sample; then in the 2014 sample; and I finally append both databases altogether.

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<sup>4</sup>Please note that I also ran logistic regressions using the same models: no significant difference has to be noted, at the exception of the importance of the coefficients.

The second objective of this chapter is to assess whether the probability to vote for a mainstream party is moderated by the perceptions of national governments' economic constraints. In this analysis, mainstream parties are defined as parties which have managed to reach premiership since 1976, while challenger parties are defined as parties that have not held political office. More precisely, there exists two types of mainstream parties: mainstream opposition parties and mainstream government parties. Both types of parties regularly alternate between government and opposition and they usually receive the larger share of the popular vote. The main difference is that the mainstream opposition is not in position of office at the moment of the survey. I make this distinction between mainstream government parties, mainstream opposition parties and challenger parties because there exists potential problems of wordings' misunderstandings. Indeed, the question regarding responsibility is ambivalent: it asks respondents to indicate how much they think their national government is responsible for the state of the economy. Yet, this question can measure the responsibility of the national government currently in place or it can be understood as the responsibility of national governments in general. To override this problem, I also make differentiate between the government in place (the mainstream government party), a representative of the mainstream in general (the opposition mainstream party), and all the parties have not previously held political office (challenger parties). Overall, 36 political parties are listed as parties that reached premiership since 1976.

This time, I use prospective measure of the vote as the main dependent variable. Thus, the dependent variable is categorical. Specifically, the item 2 gathers citizens who declare that they would vote for mainstream government parties; the item 1 gathers those who declare that they would vote for mainstream opposition parties; and the item 0 gathers those who declare that they would vote for the challenger parties. In the empirical analysis, the independent variable of interest is the perception of national governments' responsibility over the national economy. Specifically, I expect citizens who attribute more responsibility to their national government for the economic situation to be less likely to vote for challenger parties than for mainstream parties. Several other political and socio-demographic variables are included in the models to control for alternative explanations of the vote for mainstream parties. Most notably, I include a subjective assessment of the situation of the economy because it affects significantly the fortunes of mainstream parties ([Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013](#)) and mainstream opposition parties on the long run [Perrella \(2005\)](#). Formally, the "economic hardship" argument predicts that a bad appreciation of the situation of the national economy will negatively affect the probability to vote for a mainstream party. In addition, I include a couple socio-demographic controls and political variables such as partisanship and attitudes toward the process of European integration in the models. Indeed, the latter is a good (conversely, a bad) predictor of support for mainstream parties (conversely, challenger parties). To assess whether perceptions of economic constraints differently affect mainstream and challenger parties, I first run ordered logistic regressions and, second, multinomial logistic regressions because the main dependent variable is categorical rather than continuous. Again, I include country fixed effects in the regressions to ensure that country effects are taken into account.

Table 3.1: Determinants of retrospective voter turnout in 2009 and 2014, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Voter turnout			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Economic Responsibility	-0.00086	-0.00008	-0.01987***	-0.02283***
Economic conditions		-0.01468		0.06061***
Government Record		0.12287***		0.03167
Supporter		0.58372***		0.70189***
Male	-0.01498	-0.04666	0.06226**	0.04176
Religiosity	0.06815***	0.05754***	0.04777***	0.03736***
Class	-0.03137*	-0.01864	0.29301***	0.27358***
Union	0.20934***	0.21064***	0.35198***	0.33624***
Age	0.34927***	0.33307***	0.37820***	0.35785***
Education	0.12869***	0.13582***	0.14986***	0.12632***
Constant	0.50384***	0.22056	-1.17674***	-1.4860***
N	12744	11361	14568	12151
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.09	0.13	0.15	0.19

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

## 3.4 Empirical results

The presentation of the empirical results is divided into three subsections. The first one presents the results of the estimations regarding the relationship between perceptions of economic constraints and voter turnout, while the second indicates the results of the estimations on the vote for mainstream parties on the individual level. Finally, I propose a final robustness check utilizing crude aggregate level models to see whether results found on the individual level are confirmed.

### 3.4.1 Voter turnout

Table 3.1 presents the results of the probit regressions regarding the analysis of the determinants of voter turnout in the 2009 and 2014 samples. The models are built in a stepwise fashion to control for the robustness of the association among model specifications. According to H1, I expect voter turnout to be positively correlated with perceptions of government responsibility over the state of the economy.

Model 1, including only the perceptions of economic responsibility of national governments with socio-demographic controls, largely invalidates the hypothesis that voter turnout is driven by perceptions of economic constraints in the 2009 sample. Indeed, the coefficient associated with perceptions of economic responsibility does not reach thresholds of statistical significance. When looking more closely, the direction of the relationship is even negative, while the effect is almost null. This suggests that the variation of the indicator of interest does not affect in any way the likelihood to report to have voted. Besides, the traditional



socio-demographic controls explaining voter turnout are in line with past results in the literature. First, older individuals tend to be more prone to report to have voted. Second, individuals with a higher level of education are more likely to declare to have cast a ballot in the last elections. Finally, indicators measuring social inclusion - such as attendance to religious service and union membership - are in the expected direction with the effect being statistically significant: individuals who are more socially included have a higher likelihood to participate in elections. These results are confirmed after the inclusion of political variables. Indeed, model 2 further disqualifies H1 in the 2009 sample: the coefficient associated with the variable of interest remains under  $p \leq 0.01$ , even if the Pseudo  $R^2$  increases from 0.09 to 0.13. Thus, the inclusion of political variables, such as being a supporter of a political party and approving the record of the government, does not change the results found in the first model. However, contrary to expectations, those who believe that the economic situation of the country has improved in the last twelve months are not more prone to report to have voted. As [Blais \(2006\)](#) already noted, this result might be due to the fact that the theoretical foundation of the hardship argument has two opposite claims regarding electoral turnout: it can either foster or deprive voter turnout.

Turning to the 2014 sample, the initial results are considerably mitigated by the empirical analyses. Indeed, model 3, including only perceptions of responsibility of national governments over the state of the national economy with socio-demographic controls, confirms the first hypothesis proposed in this chapter. Indeed, those who believe their national government to have more responsibility over the economy are more prone to declare to have cast a ballot in the framework of the previous general elections with the effect being statistically significant. Nevertheless, the effect of the variable is limited if compared with other socio-demographic controls: standardized coefficients of the latter are, by far, higher than the one associated with perceptions of the economic responsibility. Having said that, model 3 seems to support the hypothesis since there is no unusual result regarding the direction of the relationship between individual level variables used in the model and voter turnout. More importantly, the inclusion of political variables does not affect the relationship between voter turnout and perceptions of economic responsibility. In fact, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variables increases from 0,15 to 0,19. So, results remain robust even after the inclusion of alternative variables explaining electoral turnout on the individual level. Interestingly, model 4 shows that the relationship between individual perceptions of the economic situation and voter turnout becomes statistically significant contrary to regressions in the 2009 sample. Meanwhile, the reverse is found for individuals who approve the actions of the government: they are no more prone to declare to have participated in the last elections. This raises the question as to whether the results found in models 3 and 4 are independent or are driven by the economic crisis that challenged national economies in the EU-15.

Indeed, there are reasons to believe that the economic conjuncture might have played a role in results displayed in models 3 and 4, especially regarding the importance of economic considerations for citizens. Figure 3.4. shows that individual perceptions of the government responsibility over the situation of the domestic economy considerably increased from 2009 to 2014, at the noticeable exceptions of Denmark and Luxembourg. Overall, the mean evolution in the EU-15 raised by 0,6 points in this time period. As a result, it might have greatly altered the validity of the empirical analyses. In order to disentangle the effect of the



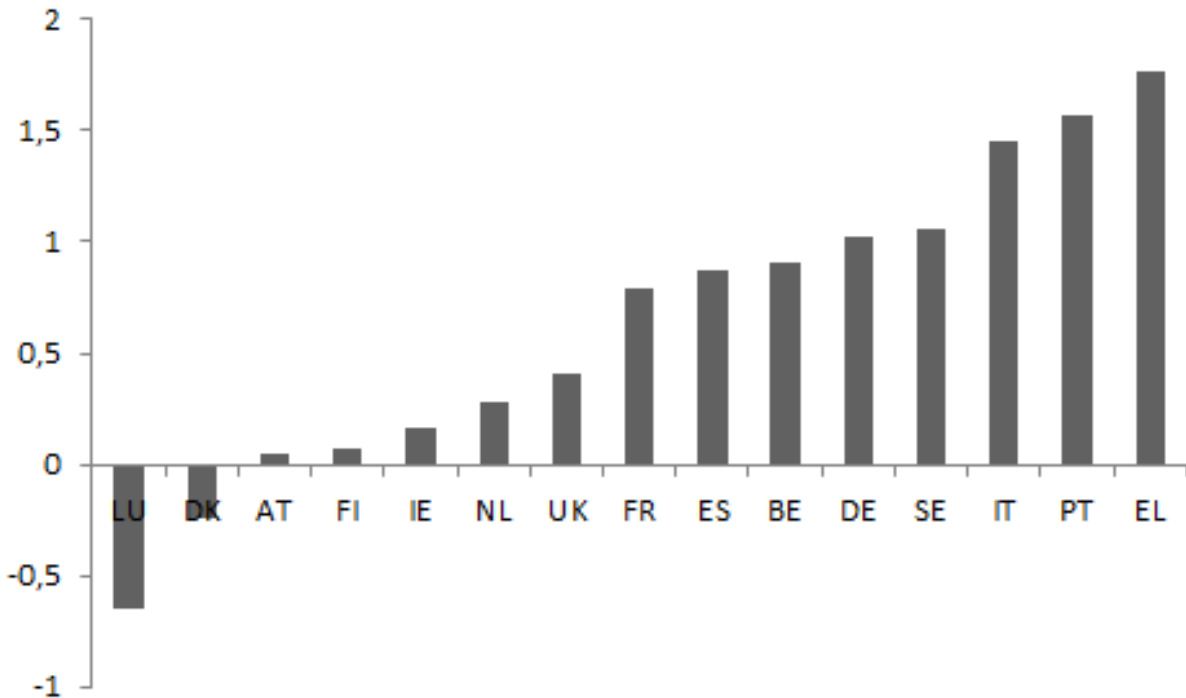


Figure 3.4: Evolution of the individual perceptions of the government responsibility over the situation of the domestic economy in the EU-15 from 2009 to 2014

Note: this figure displays the individual perceptions of the government responsibility over the situation of the domestic economy in the EU-15 from 2009 to 2014. The initial scale ranges from 0 to 10

Source: 2009 and 2014 European Election Study

crisis, I decide to append the two datasets altogether and run similar regressions to ensure that results remain stable in a larger perspective, while taking into account the time effect via a dummy variable labelled wave where 0 gathers all the respondents in 2009, while 1 gathers all the respondents in 2014.

Table 3.2 presents the results of the estimations using the appended dataset. Model 5 includes the perceptions of responsibility of national governments over the economy, socio-demographic controls and the dummy variable indicating the time period. At first glance, results in the model 5 confirm results obtained in model 3 and 4 in a larger setting. Indeed, the association between perceptions of government economic responsibility and voter turnout remains positive and statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ . Again, the socio-demographic controls are in the expected direction and display higher coefficients than the main variable of interest. Note however that the gender divide displays, for the first time, statistically significant result but only at  $p \leq 0.10$ . In this framework, men are more likely to report to have voted in the previous general elections than women. This result is odd given the relative inadequacy of the gender divide in the explanation of electoral participation in advanced societies (Timpone, 1998). Those findings on the appended dataset partly rule out the effect of the economic crisis. Indeed, if it was only an effect of the crisis, then the coefficient associated with perceptions of economic responsibility should be under  $p \leq 0.10$ , or at least reduce. Model 6, including all the political variables, further

Table 3.2: Determinants of retrospective voter turnout in an appended dataset, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Voter turnout	
	Model 5	Model 6
Economic Responsibility	0.01145***	0.01394***
Economic Conditions		0.03687***
Government Record		0.08495***
Supporter		0.65419***
Male	0.03448*	0.01005
Religiosity	0.05269***	0.04234***
Class	0.08735***	0.08237***
Union	0.28291***	0.27252***
Age	0.38011***	0.35788***
Education	0.19950***	0.18109***
Wave	-0.45697***	-0.51630***
Constant	-0.44153***	-0.65334***
N	27312	23512
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.16	0.20

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

confirm H1 since only the gender divide displays non significant relationship with voter turnout. However, two points have to be highlighted: first and foremost, all previously non-significant variables now reach the statistical threshold  $\leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*. To some extent, it is worrisome because there might be a dataset size effect playing behind. More importantly, the coefficient associated with perceptions of economic responsibility still is, by far, the lower.

All in all, a couple of primary conclusions can be drawn from these estimations. First, they provide confirmation that education, age, social inclusion and social class are decisive predictors of voter turnout, while they also confirm the inadequacy of the gender divide in the explanation of electoral participation on the individual level. Besides, political-related variables such as closeness to a party and approval of the government are still important explanatory variables to apprehend voter turnout. Formally, I show that the closer you are to a party and the more satisfied you are with governments' action, the more likely you are to participate in general elections. Thus, it seems that the perceptions of economic constraints do have an impact on the inclination to cast a ballot, even though the explanatory power of this variable is not as important as other traditional factors.

### 3.4.2 Vote for mainstream parties

To investigate whether individual perceptions of governments' economic responsibility affect the probability to vote for a mainstream party in the next elections, I proceed in two

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Table 3.3: Determinants of prospective vote for mainstream government parties, with fixed effects on countries (ordered logistic regressions)

Independent Variables	Vote for mainstream government parties		
	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Economic Responsibility	-0.08060***	-0.04749***	-0.06670***
Economic conditions	0.21731***	0.30599***	0.19372***
Partisanship (Incumbent)	2.5815***	3.5920***	3.0168***
European integration	0.00460	0.01289	0.01446**
Male	-0.02884	-0.14219***	-0.07397**
Religiosity	0.07687***	-0.01687	0.01891**
Class	-0.09108***	0.21146***	0.11492***
Union	-0.08418*	-.16143***	-0.14477***
Age	-0.03804	0.07329**	0.03003
Education	-0.12790***	-0.07454*	-0.02927
N	9180	9216	18396
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.23	0.33	0.26

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

steps. First, I run ordered logistic regressions in three different samples, i.e. 2009, 2014 and the appended dataset. In this framework, I expect individuals who believe their national governments to be responsible over the national economy to be more likely to vote for mainstream parties than, respectively, mainstream opposition parties and challenger parties with the effect being proportional between categories. In a second step, I run multinomial logistic regressions with the challenger as a base outcome in order to analyse the relationship between the likelihood to vote for mainstream government parties (conversely, mainstream opposition parties) and the vote for challenger parties. This choice is first informed by past empirical evidence but is also motivated by the quality of the question wording. Indeed, the model of second-order elections shows that incumbent parties are the political parties that suffer the largest losses during the European parliamentary elections. Therefore, there is the likelihood that the effect is non-linear and/or non-proportional. More importantly, the wording question of the main independent variable is problematic insofar as it does not add the plural, not unlike the 1997 *CEVIPOF* dataset, to the concept of government. Therefore, it is useful to test empirically whether there is a difference of relationship between types of mainstream parties and challenger parties. In turn, I expect individuals who believe their national governments to be responsible over the national economy to be more likely to vote for mainstream parties (conversely, mainstream opposition parties) than for challenger parties.

Table 3.3. presents the results of the ordered logistic regressions in the three samples<sup>5</sup>. First, note that there are no major differences in the results displayed in the three models,

<sup>5</sup>Model 7 proposes the results of the estimations in the 2009 sample; Model 8 indicates the results of the estimations in the 2014 sample; and model 9 combines the two datasets in a unified one

at the noticeable exception of the effect of social class' individual positioning on the probability to vote for mainstream parties. Indeed, individuals who place themselves at the end of the social class scale are less likely to vote for mainstream parties in 2009 (model 7), while the opposite is found in 2014 (model 8). Yet, the result in model 7 is puzzling because it is largely contrary to expectations. Indeed, individuals who position themselves on the top of the social hierarchy are more prone to favour mainstream parties because challenger parties' programmatic platforms advocate fiercer changes and defy the status quo accordingly (Arzheimer, 2009). Model 9, which combines both datasets, however, confirm past evidence: social class is an adequate predictor of vote for mainstream parties. All in all, empirical results are consistent with findings in the literature. To put it bluntly, those who favour political change, i.e. trade unionists and non-practising, are less prone to cast a ballot for mainstream parties than for challenger parties (Norris, 1999). Note that the effects are systematically statistically significant in the appended dataset, but not in models 7 and 8. The effect of supporting the process of European integration on the probability to vote for mainstream parties is less clear-cut than expected. Indeed, the association between support for European integration and vote for mainstream parties only reaches the threshold of  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\* in model 9. This is surprising insofar as support for European integration is generally linked with support for mainstream parties because the latter are the main parties advocating greater integration in the domestic political system (Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008); Hobolt and Tilley (2014a)). This puzzling result might be explained by the fact that many challenger parties in the database (e.g. the liberal democratic party in the United Kingdom) also support the process of European integration in their party platforms. The only unexpected result in model 9 is the non-significant effect of education on the vote for mainstream parties which is usually negative (Norris, 1999). Not surprisingly, being a partisan is the most important predictor of vote for mainstream parties, while the perceptions of the situation of the economy is also a strong predictor of the vote for mainstream (government) parties as expected. Having said that, the hypothesis that perceptions of economic responsibility of the national government affects positively the vote for mainstream parties is not confirmed, nay disproved. Indeed, respondents who believe their national governments to be responsible for the economy are systematically less likely to vote for mainstream parties. At this point, H2 must therefore be rejected. The question remains as to why models display such results. To resolve this interrogation, I propose to disentangle between the probability to vote for two types of mainstream parties: mainstream government parties and mainstream opposition parties. I do so mainly on empirical ground: indeed, the wording of the question on economic responsibility may be understood as the particular responsibility of the current incumbent rather than as the responsibility of governments in general. Yet, my theoretical argument advocates for the latter rather than the former. To do so, I propose multinomial logistic regressions which allow to assess the impact of perceptions of national governments' economic responsibility on the probability to vote for 1) mainstream opposition parties and 2) mainstream government parties, relatively to the vote for challenger parties in an unified model.

Table 3.4. presents the results of the multinomial logistic regressions analysing the probability to cast a ballot for 1) mainstream opposition parties and 2) mainstream government parties compared with the probability to vote for challenger parties in the three samples. In a first step, I present the results of the estimations which analyse the probability to vote for mainstream government parties relatively to challenger parties. To

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Table 3.4: Determinants of prospective vote for mainstream government parties and mainstream opposition parties with vote for challenger parties as a base outcome, with fixed effects on countries (multinomial logistic regressions)

Independent Variables	Voter for mainstream opposition parties		
	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Economic Responsibility	0.04341***	0.01082	0.02544***
Economic conditions	-0.14602***	0.03119	-0.10380***
Partisanship	3.7237***	4.6164***	4.1419***
European integration	0.02137*	0.01950	0.02403***
Male	-0.07068	-0.020002***	-0.11662**
Religiosity	0.03770	0.046233**	0.03004**
Class	0.01691	-0.14540*	0.16756***
Union	-0.03586	0.25400***	0.08096
Age	-0.06842*	0.10468***	-0.00277
Education	-0.16047***	-0.20093***	-0.14335***
Constant	-1.1191***	-2.8414***	-2.1175***
	Vote for mainstream government parties		
Economic Responsibility	-0.09864***	-0.05565***	-0.08182***
Economic conditions	0.260522***	0.40932***	0.24807***
Partisanship	3.7829***	4.6762***	4.2148***
European integration	0.01500	0.00812	0.02111**
Male	-0.05431	-0.26723***	-0.13536***
Religiosity	0.13145***	-0.00743	0.04430***
Class	-0.15870***	0.32655***	0.17165***
Union	-0.13099*	-0.12957***	-0.17244***
Age	-0.06400*	0.10618**	0.03930
Education	-0.20714***	-0.18154***	-0.06970*
Constant	-0.72827**	-3.2848***	-2.4275***
N	9180	9216	18396
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.31	0.41	0.33

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

ease readability, I specifically focus on the results displayed in the appended dataset (model 12). Results of the multinomial logistic regressions are very similar to the results obtained through the ordered logistic regressions. For instance, individuals 1) who think that the domestic economic situation has improved; 2) who are affiliated with the mainstream government parties; 3) who position themselves at the bottom of the social class scale; 4) who regularly attend religious services; 5) who are registered as women; and 6) who are not members of trade unions are more likely to report that they will vote for mainstream government parties with the statistical threshold reaching  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*. Again, the only results that do not concur with the literature is the low or null effect of age and education on vote for mainstream government parties. All in all, the model 12 confirms the previous

findings in the literature, and are coherent with findings in models 7, 8 and 9, ultimately enhancing the credibility of results obtained in the models. Yet again, H2 is not confirmed by the data. Indeed, voters who believe their national government to be responsible for the state of the economy are systematically less inclined to vote for incumbent parties in general elections with the effect being statistically significant. Contrary to the prediction, perceiving that the national government has no responsibility over the economy does not enhance the probability to vote for challenger parties. At this point, H2 must be rejected.

Having said that, results displayed in model 12 shows a reverse correlation when focusing on the probability to vote for mainstream opposition parties relatively to the probability to vote for challenger parties. Indeed, individuals who deem the national government to be responsible for the economy tend to be more prone to vote for opposition mainstream parties rather than for small parties. Stated differently, results show that perceptions of low responsibility of the national government over the economy increases the likelihood to cast a ballot for challenger parties. Given the stability of the other socio-demographic controls and political variables which usually predict the success of mainstream parties, H2 can be saved to some extent. Furthermore, the association between perceptions of the evolution of the economic situation and vote for mainstream opposition parties relatively to the probability to cast a ballot for challenger parties displays a negative sign with the effect being statistically significant. So, it means that individuals who think that the economic situation has improved in the last 12 months tend to favour challenger parties at the expense of mainstream opposition parties. A better economic situation thus seems to make voters reward incumbents and/or vote more sincerely. This is surprising since the literature on the hardship argument, notably developed by (Perrella, 2005), has shown that mainstream opposition parties also benefit from high rates of growth and employment in the long run. Finally, note that results do not hold for 2014. Indeed, I find no statistically significant relationships between the perceptions of the economic situation; perceptions of economic responsibility of the national government and vote for mainstream opposition parties, ultimately mitigating these results.

### 3.5 Robustness check on the aggregate level

To further validate the hypotheses discussed in this chapter, I propose raw estimations using data on the aggregate level. To do so, I estimate a simple OLS regression using aggregate scores of mainstream parties and electoral turnout in all the elections (n=157) since 1976 as dependent variables. The main independent variable measuring economic integration is labelled trade openness. To craft this variable, I rely on data coming from the *World Bank*. Specifically, I use the traditional indicator of level of exports divided by imports in proportion of the gross domestic product. In this simple aggregate model, I also include the growth of the gross domestic product because the economic hardship literature argues that economic crises tend to affect negatively support for mainstream parties and electoral turnout. More precisely, I use the log gross domestic product's growth to capture the effect of the economic crisis and not the absolute differences between countries. Finally, I include country fixed effects to control for non-random national effects. To put it simply, I expect levels of electoral turnout and vote shares for mainstream parties to decrease as levels of trade openness increase.

Table 3.5: Effects of trade openness on the aggregate level of electoral turnout and vote share of the mainstream parties with country fixed effects (OLS regression)

Independent Variables	Vote share	Turnout
Trade Openness	-0.161***	-0.0718***
Log GDP Growth	5.517	3.286*
Constant	82.672***	89.225***
N	157	157
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.50	0.72

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: World Bank and <http://elections-en-europe.net/>

Table 3.5. first suggests that the economic hardship argument only slightly predicts the level of electoral participation. Indeed, the OLS regression shows that a bad economic situation tends to decrease electoral turnout but the effect is statistically significant at only  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*. In fact, results on the aggregate level are more in line with the *constraint hypothesis* since a higher level of trade openness decreases electoral participation with the effect being statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*. Turning to the second hypothesis, the OLS regression shows that the ratio between exports and imports in proportion of the gross domestic product also affects mainstream parties' vote shares, while a better economic situation does not significantly impact mainstream parties' fortunes. Although promising, these results are only preliminary given the low number of observations ( $n=157$ ) and the few variables included in the model. It only provides small confirmation of previous findings regarding electoral turnout and suggests that it is plausible that mainstream parties' vote shares are correlated with the level of integration of national economies within the world markets.

### 3.6 Conclusive discussion

The primary objective of this chapter has been to complement the current literature which makes the claim that economic integration affects voting behaviour. Contrary to the first two chapters, I do not look at the specific effects of economic integration on the structure of citizens' demands in the voting booth. Rather, I investigate whether economic integration has an impact on two other features of the vote: voter turnout and vote for mainstream parties (conversely, vote for challenger parties). Specifically, I rely on past studies that have argued, and successfully shown, that economic integration decreases electoral turnout on the aggregate level (Steiner, 2010; Marshall and Fisher, 2015) and on the individual level Steiner (2016). In comparison with past studies, I test this relationship on the individual level using a large cross-national dataset gathering 15 European advanced democracies. Second, I also develop an original argument, based on the model of second order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif et al., 1997), in which I predict that economic integration should decrease the likelihood to vote for mainstream parties. Specifically, I argue that sincere voting should be more prominent among those who perceive their national government to



be constrained in their economic leeway, resulting in lower inclination to choose mainstream parties over challenger parties.

Empirical results presented in this chapter first slightly corroborate past studies that have demonstrated that the inclination to vote in general elections is conditional upon perceptions of national government's margins of manoeuvre in the economy [Steiner \(2016\)](#). Indeed, the data shows that individuals who believe their national government to have responsibility over the domestic economy are more prone to participate in general elections. However, this conclusion is mitigated by two important factors. On the one hand, results displayed in the 2009 sample do not confirm the hypothesis since the association between the two variables does not reach statistical significant threshold at  $p \leq 0.10$ \*,. On the other hand, traditional explanatory variables - such as social inclusion - are systematically better predictors than the variable of interest. Even though there is evidence of a relationship between economic integration and voter turnout, its scope is thus still limited in comparison with other factors.

Most originally, this study makes the case that economic integration is likely to affect the likelihood to cast a ballot for mainstream parties (conversely, challenger parties) in general elections. Based on the model of second order elections which argues that the stake of an election determines the way voters allocate their ballots for different parties, I argue that, by diminishing the meaningfulness of general elections, economic integration is likely to increase sincere voting in the latter. As a result, it should increase the likelihood to favour challenger parties which generally do not perform when there is more-at-stake. To test this hypothesis, I examine whether individual beliefs regarding the economic responsibility of the national government affect the probability to vote for different kinds of parties, i.e. challenger parties, mainstream opposition parties and mainstream government parties. Empirical results largely invalidate the claim that the effect is linear: respondents who believe the national government to be responsible for the economy tend to vote more for mainstream government parties than for mainstream parties. Yet, multinomial logistic regressions also demonstrate that respondents who attribute less responsibility to the national government are keener to favour challenger parties over mainstream opposition parties. This suggests that economic integration supposedly affect the fortunes of mainstream parties, but not in a similar fashion.

Yet, results displayed in this chapter need to be taken with caution notably because of the problem of the quality of the measurement of the main independent variable. Indeed, the wording of the question and its distribution may pose several problems to ensure that it grasps the actual individual assessments of the ability of national governments, in general, to influence economic outcomes. Indeed, there might be the risk that respondents think that the question only entails the current national government and not national governments in general. In addition, the distribution of the variable shows that respondents tend to think that their national government is still very much in charge of the economy, which is contradictory with the expectation that people see their executives to be increasingly constrained on the economy. However, this is, as far as I know, the only study on the individual level which proposes a large cross-country comparison. In addition, I do not test in this chapter the link between economic integration and sincere voting which is at the core of my theoretical argument. Therefore, to further confirm my assumption, additional analyses should be performed with adequate measures of sincere voting, or by using data on

the aggregate level.

## Summary

Economic integration has increased the pressure exerted on national governments' margins of manoeuvre in a number of policies over the years, most notably in the economic area. The impact of these processes on voting behaviour is now more and more documented on the aggregate level: as economic integration deepens, both electoral turnout and economic voting diminish. Yet, few studies have investigated the link between economic integration and voting behaviour on the individual level. The few available findings corroborate these hypotheses however. On the one hand, British citizens who perceive that their national government is constrained by economic integration are less likely to cast a ballot in the 2001 British general election. On the other hand, British and French citizens who believe that their government have little margins of manoeuvre on the economy because of economic integration tend to punish or reward less their incumbent on the basis of past economic records in the 2001 British general election and in the 1997 french election. This third chapter aims to further understand the moderating effect of perceptions of national government's room-to-manoeuve on voting behaviour by looking more extensively at 1) the individual likelihood to cast a ballot in general elections, and 2) the vote for mainstream parties. Interestingly, the consequences of economic integration on the vote for mainstream parties have never been investigated. Yet, there is evidence that economic integration decreases the meaningfulness of elections on the individual level. Consequently voters should act more sincerely in the voting booth as economic integration deepens. Specifically, voters should vote more sincerely and move away from mainstream parties to favour challenger parties. In the meantime, the effect of individual perceptions on electoral turnout has been investigated only in the framework of the 2001 British general election. Through the use of cross-sectional datasets which provide information on the individual level, I show that citizens who believe that their national governments have responsibility on the management of the national economic situation are, all else held equal, more likely to report to have voted and are more prone to support challenger parties than mainstream opposition parties. The hypothesis however does not hold when looking at mainstream government parties, while the relationship between voter turnout and perceptions of the economic competences is rather weak.

## Appendix

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<p><b>Voter turnout:</b> 0= did not vote / 1= voted Which party did you vote for at the General Election of [year]?</p> <p><b>Vote for mainstream parties:</b> 0= challenger parties / 1= mainstream opposition parties / 2= mainstream parties And if there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?</p>
<b>Independent Variable</b>	<p><b>Economic responsibility Govt:</b> 0= no responsibility / 10= full responsibility "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is</p>

	<p>the British government for economic conditions in Britain? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".</p>
<b>Control Variables</b>	<p><b>Economic conditions:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better "What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in Britain is 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse." <b>Supporter:</b> 0= no / 1= yes Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than others? <b>Government approval:</b> 0= no / 1= yes Let us now come back to Britain. Do you approve or disapprove of the government's record to date? <b>EU attitudes:</b> 0= already too far / 10= pushed further Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position? <b>Male:</b> 0= female / 1= male <b>Religious attendance:</b> 0= never / 4= several times a week How often do you attend religious services: several times a week, once a week, a few times a year, once a year or less, or never? 1 several times a week; 2 once a week; 3 a few times a year; 4 once a year or less; 5 never. <b>Union:</b> 0= Not member (4) / 1= Member (1-3) Are you yourself a member of a trade union or is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union? 1 yes, I am / 2 yes, someone else is 3 yes I am and someone else in the household is /4 no <b>Class:</b> 0= working class / 4= upper class "if you were asked to choose one of these 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 class? <b>Age:</b> 0= 18-24 / 3= 55+ What year were you born? <b>Education:</b> 0= 1-15 / 2= 20+ How old were you when you stopped full-time education?</p>

## Part II

# The impact of the empowerment of the European Union on voting behaviour



# Chapter 4

## Consequences on economic voting and voter turnout

### 4.1 Introduction

The process of European integration is first and foremost a process of delegation of sovereignty from national executives to a supranational executive body. Reasons explaining such delegation of sovereignty are multiple and range from a strengthening of political efficacy to a will of containing risks of armed conflicts to name a few. Among the numerous policy competences members of the European community have decided to transfer to the supranational level over time, the most prominent and more long-lasting policy area is arguably the economy. Indeed, European institutions have gained more and more policy competences in the economic realm over the years: institutions of the European Union have exclusive competences over commercial policy (Common Commercial Policy), external trade, customs and competition rules, while the European central bank controls monetary policies in Eurozone countries. In these economic policy domains, the European Union is thus the main governmental body that is able to yield legally binding acts, while member states need the approval of the European Union to legislate in such sectors. Besides, levels of national debts and deficits are also monitored by European institutions since the treaty of the European Union which came into force in 1993. The European Union thus has great deal of responsibility in national economic outcomes.

In contrast with the first three chapters, I investigate the specific impact of European (economic) integration on voting behaviour in national elections. Specifically, I focus on its impact on electoral participation and economic voting. Regarding the latter, I make the argument that European integration decreases the extent to which voters punish or reward incumbents on their past economic records. Three different, but yet complementary, causal pathways can explain such a mechanism. First, [Anderson \(2006\)](#) claims that European integration, not unlike multilevel governance, affects the clarity of responsibility of domestic policy-making processes: it is difficult for voters to clearly pinpoint responsibility for policy records in such a political system, eventually making it more demanding for voters to judge incumbents on their past records on the economy. So far, this hypothesis has only been validated using aggregate data, but studies on responsibility attributions corroborate the potential existence of such a causal mechanism on the individual level ([León, 2011](#)). Another theoretical argument linking economic globalization and economic voting can be applied to

the case of European integration (Hellwig, 2014). The *constraint hypothesis* simply suggests that globalization diminishes economic voting because of voters' mechanical adaptation to the decreasing abilities of the national government to influence economic outcomes. The rationale is similar in the case of European integration and can be depicted as follows: if the European Union gains clear competences in the economy, it will mechanically reduce national governments' room to manoeuvre in the economic realm. Ultimately, it should affect negatively national governments' influence on economic outcomes. Hence, if voters believe the European Union to be increasingly responsible for the national economy, they should pay less attention to economic matters when voting in general elections. This hypothesis received empirical confirmation on the individual level in four southern European countries in 2009 (Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012), but no large cross-country comparison over time has yet been produced. Finally, studies focusing on the impact of European integration on party behaviour have shown that economic constraints resulting from the process of integration have had a direct impact on issue emphases in party platforms (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013; Ward et al., 2015). Specifically, strategic parties have decreased the importance of economic issues (conversely, non-economic issues) in their programmes as European integration deepened (Ward et al., 2015). In a top-down conception of voting behaviour, i.e. citizens respond to party cues when deciding to vote, it is thus plausible to assume that voters change their demands regarding governmental economic actions as European integration deepens, eventually resulting in lower levels of economic voting.

Second, the empowerment of the European Union arguably decreases electoral turnout. Again, the literature linking economic globalization and voting behaviour can be useful to apprehend the impact of European integration on electoral turnout. Steiner (2010) argues that economic globalization decreases the abilities of national governments to influence economic decisions and ultimately affects the meaningfulness of general elections as mechanisms to yield economic outcomes. In this framework, perceived benefits derived from the act of voting in general elections become less important. Accordingly, it should decrease the incentives for voters to participate in these elections. Following, I argue that this mechanism can be applied to European integration: if individuals perceive that the European Union increasingly constrains national governments' abilities to influence domestic economic situation, then they should be less inclined to participate in general elections because they might think that their ballots will not affect future economic decisions.

In this chapter, I investigate these arguments on the individual level. More precisely, I ask whether citizen's individual beliefs regarding the European Union's responsibility on the economy has an effect on voter turnout and on economic voting. Formally, I expect citizens who believe the European Union to be highly responsible for the domestic economic situation to be 1) less prone to punish or reward incumbents on their economic records; and 2) less prone to report to have voted in general elections. On the one hand, there exists only few studies investigating the impact of European integration on economic voting. There is only one study on the aggregate level (Anderson, 2006), and one study on the individual level which focuses on a small number of cases (Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012). Thus, current findings on this matter are limited in scope. On the other hand, the argument that European integration affects voter turnout has never been tested although it might be one of the missing explanations to explain the continuing rise of abstention in general elections in the member states of the European Union. So far, results on the individual level



are consequently lacking, especially in a cross country comparison over time. Finally, also note that I do not wish to discriminate between different causal paths highlighted above.

To further comprehend the link between European integration and voting behaviour in national elections, I take advantage from the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* surveys. These two cross-country surveys offer the possibility to test these hypotheses on the individual level in all the 28 member states of the European Union. Indeed, they provide all the relevant items to analyse the possible moderating impact of responsibility attribution to the European Union on voting behaviour: they include questions on vote intentions in the last general elections; perceptions of the economic situation of the country; assessments of the responsibility of the European Union on the economic situation of the country; and many other political and socio-demographic control variables which can affect incumbents' fortunes and voter turnout. Through the use of these data, I am thus able to produce several model specifications to test the two hypotheses on the individual level.

Empirical findings do not consistently validate the two hypotheses. First, the hypothesis asserting that citizens who perceive the European Union to be highly responsible for the national economy will be less prone to hold their incumbents accountable for their past economic records is only validated in 2014, but not in 2009. Most importantly, the second hypothesis linking voter turnout and perceptions of responsibility of the European Union on the economy is rejected: citizens who think the European Union to be highly responsible for the domestic economy are not more likely to report to have voted contrary to expectations. Instead, findings suggest that the impact of perceptions of national government's economic room to manoeuvre is a better explanatory variable to apprehend voter turnout in line with [Steiner \(2016\)](#).

The next section aims to present the current studies investigating the impact of European integration on economic voting and electoral turnout. Building on these works, I present more precisely my expectation regarding voter turnout and economic voting in the third section. The fourth section is dedicated to the presentations of the data used to test my hypotheses. In this section, I also indicate the empirical strategy, while the fifth section displays the main empirical results. Finally, I discuss the results of this chapter in a conclusive part.

## 4.2 A general model of the impact of European integration on voting behaviour

This section is dedicated to the presentation of the different causal mechanisms which can explain how European integration affects voting behaviour, most notably electoral turnout and economic voting. So far, only few studies have investigated the impact of European integration on voting behaviour ([Anderson, 2006](#); [Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012](#), for exception). In fact, there is no coherent theoretical background which is able to generate clear hypotheses on the subject. Yet, two literatures provide expectations regarding the potential impact of European integration on electoral turnout and economic voting. First, I present past studies which argue that multilevel systems of governance are likely to decrease the extent of economic voting and the level of electoral turnout. Second, I utilize elements

found in the literature linking economic globalization and voting behaviour. Indeed, the latter arguably provides an excellent theoretical benchmark to apprehend the link between European integration and voting behaviour given the similar consequences those processes have on national governments' room to manoeuvre.

### 4.2.1 Multilevel governance and voting behaviour

First, the literature investigating the impact of multilevel governance provides interesting hindsight to look at the impact of European integration on voting behaviour in domestic elections. Advocates of federalism generally argue that processes of devolution, decentralization and supranational integration theoretically enhance democratic accountability by giving voters more opportunities to express their disagreements over governmental actions because of the multiplication of electoral venues (Downs, 1999). In turn, it is assumed that popular control over policy decisions increases in such political systems. However, many empirical studies have put into question this normative stance. Indeed, studies claim that multilevel governance also has two consequences at the level of voters: it diminishes the abilities to correctly identify responsibility competences on the individual level and it increases the voter fatigue.

First, the ability to correctly identify who is responsible for policy decisions is paramount in models of accountability because "responsibility judgements are the principal mechanism through which citizens hold representatives accountable for their conduct" (Rudolph, 2003a, p. 99). The argument that blurred responsibility can affect the capacity to punish or reward incumbents on their past records was first exposed in the seminal study of Powell Jr and Whitten (1993) and was later supplemented by Anderson (2000). These works simply assert that individual responsibility attributions are conditioned by the institutional design and the political context in which citizens are embedded. Starting from the observation that political systems are heterogeneous across countries - some concentrate policy competences in the hands of few actors, while others diffuse policy competences between different political actors - they argue that the variation in the concentration of power (which derives from electoral systems, legislative structures or specific inter-party arrangements) affects citizens' abilities to clearly identify responsibility for policy outcomes. According to the authors, the ability to identify which actor is responsible for which policy decision is hindered on the individual level when multiple actors are included in the process of decision-making. At the very least, information is harder to get in such a system. Therefore, they make the simple hypothesis that the easier it is for citizens to pinpoint responsibility, the easier it will be to blame or reward incumbents. Both studies confirm the importance of political and institutional contexts to predict the extent of economic voting. Indeed, they show that voters are more likely to punish and reward their national government for the situation of unemployment, inflation and gross domestic product growth if they belong to a political system where policy competences are heavily concentrated in the hands of the national government (e.g. in the UK) than voters who belong to a political system where policy competences are more diffused between political actors (e.g. the Netherlands).

Following this argument, many studies have argued that federalism and decentralization are also likely to blur responsibility attributions on the individual level. The rationale is similar as the argument of Powell Jr and Whitten (1993) it is more costly for citizens in

federal systems such as the European Union to know which actor is responsible for policy decisions because the diffusion of policy competences across levels of governments increases information costs. Empirical studies which investigate the impact of multilevel systems of governance on responsibility attributions tend to corroborate the assumption that it is harder for citizens to pinpoint responsibility in systems where policy competences are shared. Most notably, [León \(2011\)](#) shows that responsibility attributions are blurred in multilevel systems of governance only when there is no prevalence of one level of government towards another: the relationship between policy competences and responsibility attributions is thus u-shaped. Formally, it means that responsibility attributions should be harder to make where policy competences are shared rather than clearly assigned to different actors. To study this phenomenon, [León \(2011\)](#) focuses on the distribution of fiscal competences between autonomous communities in Spain. Her empirical findings confirm the u-shaped model: in regions where dispersion of power on fiscal competences is intertwined, it is harder for respondents to correctly identify responsibility. On the contrary, citizens can clearly attribute responsibility where the autonomous community has low or high leeway to determine revenues and expenditures.

Ultimately, if multilevel systems of governance, such as the European Union, alter perceptions of responsibility, it is argued that it should affect the extent to which voters hold their national governments accountable for policy-making. Empirically, studies have supported this claim. [Cutler \(2004\)](#) notably shows that voters in Ontario and Saskatchewan have difficulties to reward or punish governments when they think multiple actors are engaged in the management of an issue. Indeed, [Cutler \(2004\)](#) finds that voters who believe that both provincial and federal governments are responsible for the management of health care do not punish or reward any incumbent official on the basis of their record on health care. On the contrary, voters who believe the provincial government to be solely responsible for the situation of health care are more prone to punish (respectively, reward) provincial incumbents for a bad (respectively, a good) situation in health care. This result first suggests that responsibility attributions matter in the vote choice as already suggested by [Rudolph \(2003b,a\)](#). Most importantly, empirical findings demonstrate that perceptions of shared responsibility might blur the capacity to hold incumbents accountable for policy outcomes on the individual level. Besides, another empirical work corroborates these findings in a cross-national study which focuses on 16 advanced industrial democracies including many members of the European Union ([Anderson, 2006](#)) Empirical results indicate that incumbents are less rewarded or punished on their economic records in political systems where policy competences are diffused between different actors than in heavily centralized systems. Within this scenario, the process of European integration might possibly alter economic voting by adding a layer of governance.

Another line of argument asserts that multilevel systems of governance might decrease electoral turnout. Indeed, processes of federalism and decentralization mechanically multiply the number of electoral contests by adding layers of governments. Yet, levels of electoral turnout are generally negatively affected by the number of electoral consultations. In this framework, the distance between elections is considered to be a determinant factor ([Rallings et al., 2003](#)). The logic is the following: since the act of voting implies costs for the voter, the simple fact of adding consultations might increase individual costs derived from the act of voting which mechanically decreases the individual likelihood to participate

in elections. Besides, it is also argued that "increased frequency of opportunities to vote may give them the impression that their opinion is trivialized by politics" (Schlicht et al., 2010). More decisively, the costs of campaigning for political parties increase with the multiplication of electoral contests, hence limiting information on which voters can rely on when deciding to participate in an election. All in all, voters' inclination to participate in elections is thus likely to decrease in multilevel governance systems such as the European Union because costs derived from the act of voting increase in such systems. In fact, empirical findings show that this increase of costs derived from the act of voting mainly affect less salient elections. Indeed, Schlicht et al. (2010) demonstrate that the greater use of direct democratic procedures usually alter the participation in general elections in the Swiss case, notably because the latter are less important in their direct effects than the former. Yet, it could be also argued that voter fatigue and voter apathy increases, as a whole, with the multiplication of electoral consultations. In turn, European integration understood as a federal process might decrease electoral turnout.

### 4.2.2 Economic integration and voting behaviour

A second line of argument, derived from the literature on economic globalization, can be utilized to analyse the impact of European integration on voter turnout and economic voting. Specifically, several authors have argued that economic constraints resulting from economic integration decrease 1) electoral turnout (see chapter 3) and 2) economic voting (see chapter 1). Regarding the former, there are two channels through which economic globalization supposedly reduce electoral participation. First, it decreases the political offer available to citizens at the party system level (Steiner and Martin, 2012). Second, it reduces the perceived benefits derived from the act of voting (Steiner, 2010). Regarding the latter, it has been argued that voters simply respond to signals from the world markets by judging political parties less on economic considerations (Hellwig, 2014).

On the one hand, the literature investigating the impact of economic integration on party behaviour has convincingly shown that political parties' economic platforms converge as economic globalization flourishes (Adams et al., 2009; Haupt, 2010; Steiner and Martin, 2012). To explain such behaviour, authors simply assert that mainstream government parties "might realise that some policies are increasingly unsustainable or at least increasingly costly as a result of rising integration" (Steiner and Martin, 2012, p. 244), while third parties might simply want to avoid promising something they cannot possibly implement for reputation reasons in the long-run. Regardless of the initial determinants of such a convergence<sup>1</sup>, empirical findings strongly support the claim that economic integration decreases the offer available to voters at the level of the party system. Yet, a diverse political offer is generally a good predictor of electoral turnout. Indeed, the diversity of offers enhances the voter's likelihood that a political party will match his or her preference on the economy. Evidence of such positive relationship between party polarization and electoral turnout is brought by (Brockington, 2009) on the individual level and by (Wessels and Schmitt, 2008) on the aggregate level. In addition, (Banducci et al., 1999) demonstrated that the 1996 institutional

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<sup>1</sup>For instance, Steiner and Martin (2012) argue that this convergence toward more market friendly and regulatory policies at the party system level is mainly driven by social-democratic parties' policy shifts, while other authors emphasize the conditional role played by the initial position of the median voter within the party system (Ward et al., 2011).

reform in New-Zealand - from a first-past-the-post electoral system to a mixed-member proportional electoral system - increased the relevance of voting for New-Zealanders, which resulted in an increase of electoral turnout. Starting from these premises, [Steiner and Martin \(2012\)](#) made the argument that economic integration ultimately reduces electoral participation. Empirically, they found a positive correlation between the level of integration within world markets, the lack of diversity of policy offers at the level of the party system and abstention. Also, a second line of argument asserts that economic integration decreases voter turnout by simply lowering the perceived benefits derived from the act of voting. Here, the rationale is straightforward: if national elected officials have less leeway to influence economic outcomes in more economically integrated settings, then citizens should have less incentives to participate in general elections because their ballots have less weight in the future policy decisions taken in their country. This has been confirmed on the aggregate level and on the individual level ([Steiner, 2010, 2016](#)).

On the other hand, a second line of studies states that, by limiting national governments' abilities to influence the state of the national economy, economic globalization changes the structure of citizens' demands regarding policy actions. Specifically, the *constraint hypothesis* asserts that voters respond to economic globalization by decreasing the weight of economic issues within their voting calculus in general elections. On the individual level, empirical studies confirm that voters who think their national governments to be constrained on the economy tend to hold incumbents less accountable on the basis of their economic records, while they are also less likely to choose parties on their economic positioning ([Hellwig, 2008](#)). In addition, a large bulk of studies shows that economic voting decreases in countries where the economy depends more on transnational flows on the aggregate level ([Hellwig, 2001; Hellwig and Samuels, 2007](#)). This hypothesis remains plausible if one prefers a top-down approach of electoral behaviour. This alternative approach contends that citizens simply follow political parties' indications when voting. Yet, as ([Ward et al., 2015](#)) demonstrate, economic globalization has a direct effect on issue emphases in party manifestos. More precisely, strategic parties decrease the weight of economic issues in their party manifestos as economic integration deepens because of credibility issues. Therefore, there is evidence that international economic integration has a negative impact on economic voting and voter turnout.

In this chapter, I extend this rationale to the process of European integration. Indeed, this political process has arguably similar consequences on national governments' margins of manoeuvre in the economy: some authors even labelled the process of European integration an "intense case of globalization" ([Scharpf, 2002](#)). Indeed, economic competences of the European community have increased significantly since the Single European Act. Nowadays, the European Union, via the European Commission, controls and limits national budgets and deficits. Furthermore, the European Union has exclusive mandate in the management of customs and competition in the framework of the European market, while it shares competences in the field of consumer protection. In addition, the European Union, via the European commission, has the duty to conduct international trade negotiations. Most importantly, the European central bank is now a major actor in the process of economic decision-making because it has a strict mandate to monitor the level inflation via tools such as Quantitative easing or Interest rates.



Starting from these empirical observations, many studies have made the argument that European integration would end up affecting party behaviour in a same fashion as economic globalization. The rationale behind is entirely equivalent to the one fostered in studies mentioned above: if the European legislation restricts national governments' (economic) policy room-to-manoeuvre, these constraints should be translated in party stances because of credibility issues. Ultimately, it should affect the political offer in the party system. Empirical analyses confirm that European integration increases party convergence (Dorussen and Nanou, 2006; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013), most notably in the economic area (Hix, 2003); while economic issues become less salient in party platforms as European integration deepens (Ward et al., 2015). Utilizing data from the *Comparative Manifesto Project* and a qualitative index measuring European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2001), Nanou and Dorussen (2013) and Dorussen and Nanou (2006) notably indicate that political parties adopt stances closer to those of their rivals (in areas where the European Union has competences) in member states, but not in non-Member States. In addition, they also find that the length of membership decreases polarization between political parties. Finally, they do not find a differentiated impact between party types, should they be mainstream vs. non-mainstream parties; left vs. right wing parties; and even pro- vs. anti-EU parties. In fact, all parties respond to constraints from European integration in a similar fashion. (Hix, 2003) also provided support for such a claim but only in the economic area. Using similar data on party platforms, he investigates whether membership within 1) the European Union; 2) the single market; and 3) the Economic and Monetary Union affects party convergence between parties on the 1) economic left-right axis; 2) a regulatory axis; 3) a macro-economic dimension; and 4) social left-right dimension. Empirical findings corroborate the idea that membership within European Union decreases the diversity of economic offers within the party system. Finally, Ward et al. (2015) make the original claim that European integration decreases political parties' incentives to emphasize economic issues. Also utilizing data from the *Comparative Manifesto Project* combined with Börzel's indicator of the authority of the European Union (Börzel, 2005), they further confirm that European integration has a negative effect on party polarization on economic issues, while they show that the effect is stable across party types: all parties pay less attention to economic issues as European integration flourishes. Finally, they even find a direct effect between accession and the reduction of economic issues within party manifestos: there is a clear reduction of the space devoted to economic issues in party manifestos after membership in countries that entered the European Union in 2004. To sum up, there is empirical evidence that European integration decreases the diversity of the economic offer available to voters, while political parties also tend to deemphasize economic issues when European institutions gain economic competences. Drawing on the literature investigating the impact of economic globalization on the vote, there is thus room to believe that European (economic) integration should have similar impact on voter turnout and economic voting in general elections.

Figure 4.1 summarizes the expectations of each strand of literature and presents the potential causal pathways which can explain how European integration acts upon economic voting. The upper side of the figure exposes the causal mechanism linking multilevel governance and economic voting. This literature contends that European integration adds political actors in the decision-making process. Accordingly, this addition of actors is likely to blur clarity of responsibility on the individual level by increasing information costs for

voters. Eventually, it limits the ability to pinpoint responsibilities for policy decisions. As a consequence, I expect higher complexity to negatively affect the extent to which citizens are able to punish or reward incumbents on their economic records. The literature on economic globalization and the vote fosters two other causal pathways. The first starts from the postulate that the European Union has gained subsequent economic competences over the years and now influences the state of the national economy, not unlike economic globalization. If this growing influence of the European Union on the economy translates into individual attitudes, it is assumed that voters will have less incentives to vote for parties on the basis of these issues.<sup>2</sup> If one were to favour a top-down approach of voting behaviour, the fact that political parties tend to deemphasize economic issues as European integration deepens also provides another channel through which European integration can decrease economic voting. This is depicted in the lower side as well.

The figure 4.2. presents the causal pathways which might explain how European integration affect electoral turnout. The upper side of the figure postulates that multilevel systems of governance, not only add political actors within the process of decision-making, but also increases the number of elections. Yet, the multiplication of elections bolsters voter fatigue and is thus likely to decrease the individual propensity to participate in elections. Eventually, it is assumed that this would end up decreasing levels of electoral turnout on the aggregate level. On the lower side, I rely on past studies linking economic globalization to electoral participation. The first causal pathway starts from the assumption that European integration diminishes the political offer available to voters at the level of the party system. In turn, it decreases the individual inclination to go cast a ballot in general elections. The second causal pathway asserts that, as European integration deepens, perceived benefits derived from the act of voting shrink accordingly.

### 4.3 Hypotheses on the individual level

Drawing on the models proposed in the previous section, I develop the hypotheses to be tested into more details in this section. My primary objective in this chapter is to investigate whether European integration has an impact on the individual inclination to participate in general elections. Second, I aim to see whether European integration affects the individual likelihood to punish or reward their incumbents on their economic records. More precisely, I test the predictions laid out in the down side of figures 4.1 and 4.2. Specifically, I examine whether individual beliefs concerning the responsibility of the European Union over the national economy, i.e. the element labelled EU economic responsibility, affect economic voting and voter turnout. I do so because no empirical work has tested these links

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<sup>2</sup>Empirical evidence suggests that individuals are actually no fools when assigning responsibility, even though they are also subjected to partisan biases (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b). Clark and Rohrschneider (2009) show that individuals assign representational responsibilities separately to the national and European level of governance, while Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) demonstrate that citizens differentiate accurately between policy competences of the European Union and national governments in areas where the power is clearly distributed; they do not equally assign responsibility given the institutional framework they belong to; and they modulate their responsibility judgements when external events affect distributions of power. These results are clearer among the most sophisticated citizens, while they are also conditioned by individual partisanship bias, i.e. attitudes towards European integration. Thus, "it might be argued that the EU as a political context also provides people with distinct institutional cues about who is responsible, given the relatively clear demarcations between national and EU institutions" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a, p. 31).



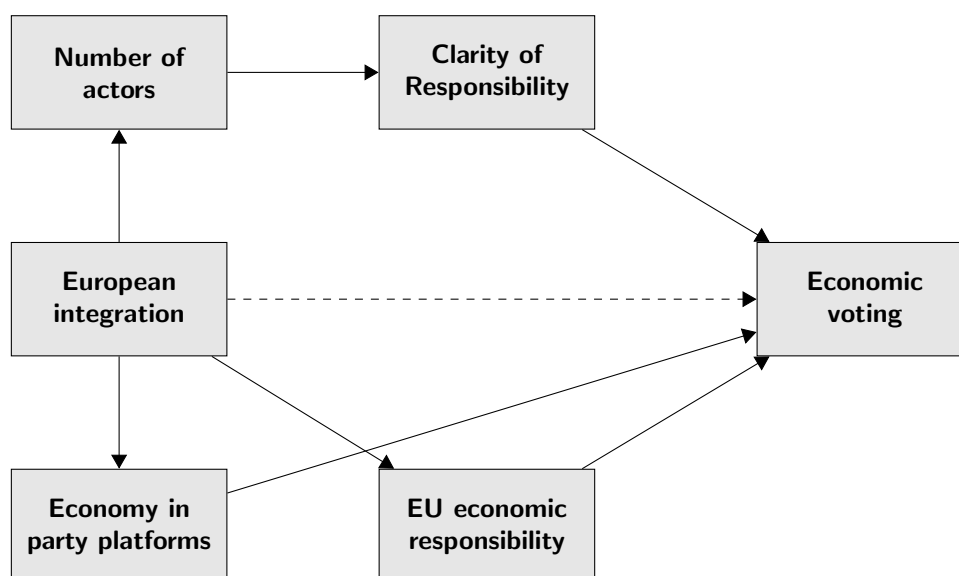


Figure 4.1: Causal pathways from European integration to economic voting

systematically in a cross-country comparison. Yet, this is a crucial missing link within the theory: if individual beliefs concerning the responsibility of the European Union for the domestic economy do not affect voting behaviour in general elections, then results on the aggregate level should be revised, nay rejected.

One of the most common models to analyse electoral participation on the individual level is the rational choice model of electoral turnout (Downs, 1957; Riker and Ordeshook, 1968). This model assumes that rational voters behave instrumentally: they are thus concerned about the expected benefits a particular election can provide in terms of policy outcomes. In a nutshell, the typical rational voter participates in an election if she or he believes her ballot will have an effect on the future policy outcomes. The effect of perceptions of meaningfulness of an election on electoral turnout is particularly salient in the case of second-order elections: the individual likelihood to participate in second-order elections is considerably lower than in first order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). This is due to the fact that local and supranational governments do not have similar policy competences, and thus do not influence policy outcomes similarly. Hence, objective or perceived competences of governments determine whether voters decide to go to the voting booth. Following this assumption, Steiner (2016) makes the claim that perceived constraints from economic globalization can affect the perception of benefits derived from the act of voting in general elections. Simply put, he makes the hypothesis that voters who believe their national governments to be constrained in their abilities to influence economic outcomes because of economic integration should be less likely to vote in general elections.

This hypothesis was first confirmed on the aggregate level (Steiner, 2010; Marshall and Fisher, 2015). In a study covering 23 economically advanced democracies, Steiner (2010) finds that levels of electoral turnout and different measures of domestic integration into the international market are negatively correlated: where economic integration affects more strongly the domestic economy, levels of electoral turnout tend to be lower. To do so, he uses two traditional measures of economic globalization, i.e. the sum of exports and

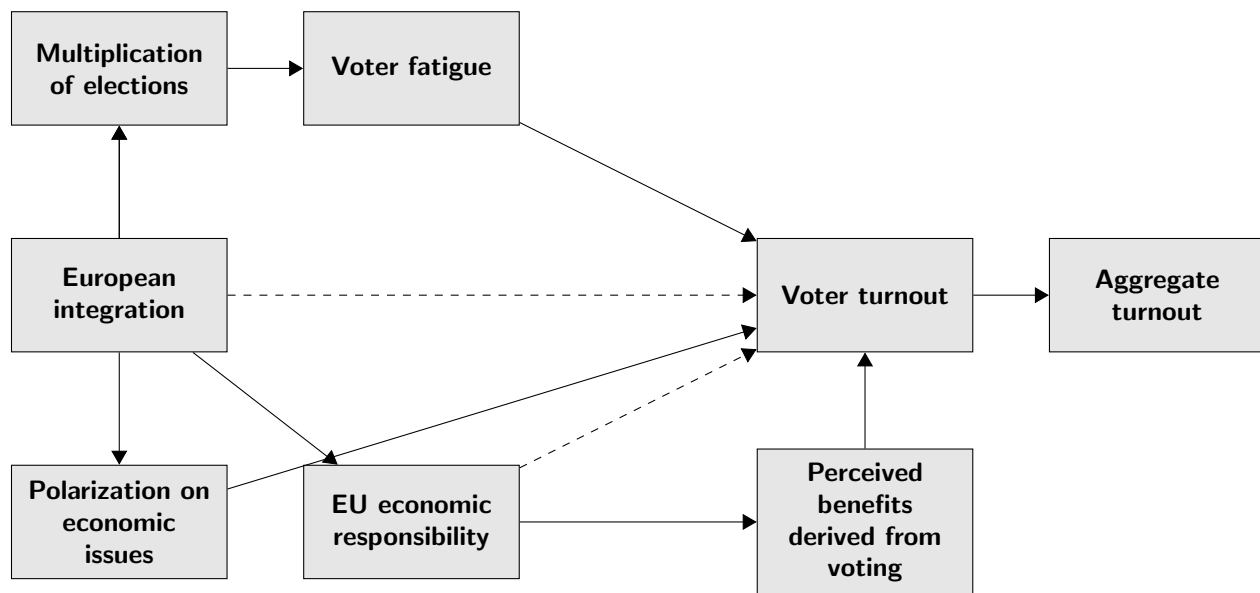


Figure 4.2: Causal pathways from European integration to electoral turnout

imports as share of the gross domestic product and the sum of all in- and outflows of gross private capital. In addition, he also relies on the more encompassing KOF index which measures both international flows and restrictions imposed on countries. Another study on the aggregate level developed by [Marshall and Fisher \(2015\)](#) has supported this finding. In this article, the authors show that foreign ownership, rather than international trade affects levels of electoral turnout. Indeed, the latter are less mobile and less sensitive to government actions than the former. Utilizing more precise indicators of foreign ownership, i.e. foreign direct investment flows/stock and portfolio equity stock, they find that the most flexible flows affect electoral turnouts in a significant fashion, whereas variation of international trade has no clear effect. Most importantly, [Steiner \(2016\)](#) demonstrates that economic globalization also affects the individual inclination to cast a ballot. Using data from the *British Election Panel Study* 1997-2001, the author shows that citizens who think their national government to be constrained by economic integration are less prone to report to have voted. Furthermore, these perceptions of constraints from economic globalization also affect how citizens believe general elections to be a relevant tool to affect policy outcomes. More precisely, citizens who think their national governments to have less room to manoeuvre on the economy are more likely to consider general elections as efficient mechanisms to produce policy changes. Empirical evidence thus suggests that economic integration has negative impact on voter turnout.

Here, I extend this rationale to the process of European integration. Indeed, there are many reasons to believe that the European Union constrains economic choices of national governments, not unlike economic globalization. For instance, the European Union puts pressure on national governments not to exceed levels of debts and deficits; under European competition laws, it makes sure that national governments do not favour national companies by offering undue comparative advantages; the European central bank also controls the monetary policy in the Eurozone. Consequently, the European Union is partly responsible for the economic situation of the member states and increasingly so since the creation of the Euro. I thus make the hypothesis that beliefs concerning the responsibility

of the European Union over the domestic economy should have similar effects on the vote as beliefs concerning the constraints emanating from economic globalization. In turn, I thus make the following hypothesis:

H1: The more a citizen believes the European Union to have responsibility over the domestic economy, the less prone she or he will be to participate in national elections..

In a unidimensional issue space, voters are thus expected to react to national governments' loss of room to manoeuvre on the economy by abstaining more. Yet, the act of voting is not unidimensional, but multidimensional. There are many issues on which a voter can choose a candidate or judge an incumbent. The literature linking retrospective economic voting and economic globalization thus fosters a slightly different mechanism than the literature on electoral turnout, even though they are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, authors who investigate the link between economic globalization and economic voting make the simple claim that voters respond to the signals emanating from the process of economic integration by changing the structure of their demands regarding policy actions. Most notably, the *constraint hypothesis* argues that voters should decrease the weight of the economy in their individual voting calculus as economic integration deepens. Stated differently, if governments are perceived to be deprived from their abilities to influence economic outcomes by external processes, it makes less sense for a voter to choose a candidate on the basis of his or her proximity on the economy with this candidate. Alternatively, it is argued that voters should be less prone to judge incumbents on economic records if incumbents can not influence economic outcomes, all things being held constant. In contrast, the *balancing demand hypothesis* predicts another behaviour: if economic globalization diminishes the weight of the economy in the voting calculus, then voters should compensate by voting more on the basis of other non-economic issues.

Previous results on the aggregate level strongly confirm that the level of economic integration reduces the extent to which voters judge their incumbents on their past economic record. These studies demonstrate that economic voting is conditional upon the degree of economic openness of a country: the more (conversely, the less) a domestic economy is economically integrated, the less (conversely, the more) voters will be likely to reward or punish incumbents on their past economic performances. The seminal study investigating this link is [Hellwig \(2001\)](#). In this study covering 9 industrialized countries, [Hellwig \(2001\)](#) demonstrates that voters who belong to countries where international trade affects the more the variation of the gross domestic product are less prone to punish or reward their incumbents on the perceived situation of the domestic economy. [Hellwig and Samuels \(2007\)](#) confirm this result in a larger comparative analysis covering 75 countries over almost three decades. In this large-n study, they corroborate this finding by investigating, not only the impact of the international trade on the variation of the gross domestic product, but also the impact of exposure of a country towards transnational flows on economic voting. The two measures of economic integration systematically predict a lower inclination to punish or reward incumbents on their economic records. On the aggregate level, there is evidence that economic globalization moderates the extent to which punish or reward incumbents on economic records. On the individual level, only one study focusing on the 2001 British and 1997 French general elections, corroborates these results ([Hellwig, 2008](#)). This study shows that voters who believe their national

governments to be constrained on the economy are less inclined to punish or reward their incumbents for economic performance in both French and British general elections. In addition, [Hellwig \(2008\)](#) demonstrates that there is a mechanism of balancing demands at play: non-economic issues become more important for voters who think their national governments to be constrained on their margins of manoeuvre on the economy. There is thus some evidence that economic globalization also alters economic voting on the individual level.

I extend this argument to the process of European integration building on the *constraint hypothesis*. Since the European Union is now responsible for the economic situation of European countries, it should be reflected in the way European citizens punish or reward their incumbents in general elections. If the European Union has an impact on economic voting, it should especially be the case among those who believe that European Union is highly responsible for the situation of the domestic economic situation. [Lobo and Lewis-Beck \(2012\)](#) find compelling evidence confirming this hypothesis, but only in the four southern countries of the European Union (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain). Indeed, an heightened perception of European Union's economic responsibility decreases the magnitude of the national economic vote in the four southern countries. In turn, I thus make the following hypothesis:

H2: The more a citizen believes the European Union to have responsibility over the domestic economy, the less prone she or he will be to punish or reward domestic incumbents on their economic records

## 4.4 Data and Empirical strategy

This section first presents the individual level dataset utilized in the empirical analysis. The effects of the impact of perceptions of responsibility of the European Union on the domestic economic situation on voting behaviour are tested in a large-n study, thus providing first generalizable results. The empirical strategy is presented in a second subsection.

### 4.4.1 Data

To investigate whether perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union on the economy affect the inclination to participate and moderates 1) the ability to hold incumbents accountable for the economy and 2) voter turnout, I take advantage of the *European Election Study* datasets from 2009 and 2014. These surveys are cross-country datasets which provide data on the individual level. They permit a broad comparison among individuals in the member states of the European Union which is lacking in the literature. The *European Election Study* dataset includes vote intentions in the last general elections and perceptions of the evolution of the domestic economy in the last 12 months. Most importantly, these datasets are the only two available large-n cross-country surveys in which respondents were asked to assess individually their perceptions of responsibility of the European Union for the management of the national economy. Overall, the 2009 *European Election Study* gathers around 1,000 respondents in each country (28.000 in total), while the 2014 *European Election Study* gathers 30.000 respondents after Croatia entered the European Union. Hence, they provide robust comparable data in order to test the hypotheses on a large scale. These datasets also include traditional socio-demographic individual questions and control variables

such as partisanship, left-right positioning and political interest which can affect incumbents' fortunes and voter turnout.

### 4.4.2 Empirical Strategy

The empirical strategy proceeds in two steps. First, I investigate the impact of perceptions of economic responsibility of the European Union on the inclination to vote. Second, I examine how beliefs concerning the responsibility of the European Union over the domestic economy condition the extent to which incumbents are rewarded or punished on the basis of their economic records. In a first step, I thus need to craft a dependent variable measuring the inclination to cast a ballot in general elections. The dependent variable utilized to measure turnout is usually retrospective because voters are assumed to know better which party they have chosen in comparison with what they are likely choose. Note that the problem of over-reporting is strong in the case of retrospective voting, notably because of social desirability biases. The survey data used in this study are centred around the 2009 and 2014 European parliamentary elections. Yet, general elections were not held at the time when the survey data was launched in all countries, which can eventually hinder comparability. Indeed, as time passes by, it can be harder for citizens to recall precisely their votes. Unfortunately, there exists no good measures of prospective turnout in both datasets because respondents are not questioned on their probability to abstain. Therefore, I only test the first hypothesis using retrospective measures of the vote.

To test H1, I need a question measuring how citizens perceive the European Union to be responsible for the national economic situation. The 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* provides a unique opportunity to do so. Indeed, there is such a question in both surveys which is worded as follows: "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the European Union for economic conditions in Britain? The distribution of answers are shown in figure 4.3. and 4.4.

The first noticeable fact to observe from figure 4.3 is the overall distribution of citizens who deem the European Union responsible for the economy: the proportion of citizens who locate themselves above the position 5 is systematically higher in 2014 than in 2009. This first descriptive result tends to corroborate the idea that the European Union increasingly influences the situation of the national economy, at least in this short period of time. Figure 4.4 further illustrates this finding by differentiating between countries: in every country (excluding Slovenia), the mean increases in 2014 compared to 2009. Even though these are only two points in times, figures seem to indicate that respondents believe the European Union to have gained responsibilities in the management of the economy from 2009 to 2014.

To test the first hypothesis, I propose a series of probit regressions differentiating between the three samples, i.e. 2009, 2014 and the appended dataset<sup>3</sup>. To control for the effect of alternative explanations, I also include in the models a set of attitudinal and demographic variables which are susceptible to explain the individual inclination to vote in general elections. I first add a measure of perceptions of national governments' constraints on the economy which is worded in the same fashion as the question on perceived responsibility

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<sup>3</sup>Please note that results are replicated with logistic estimations. Results are similar in levels of significance, but coefficients associated with independent variables are more important in logistic regressions.

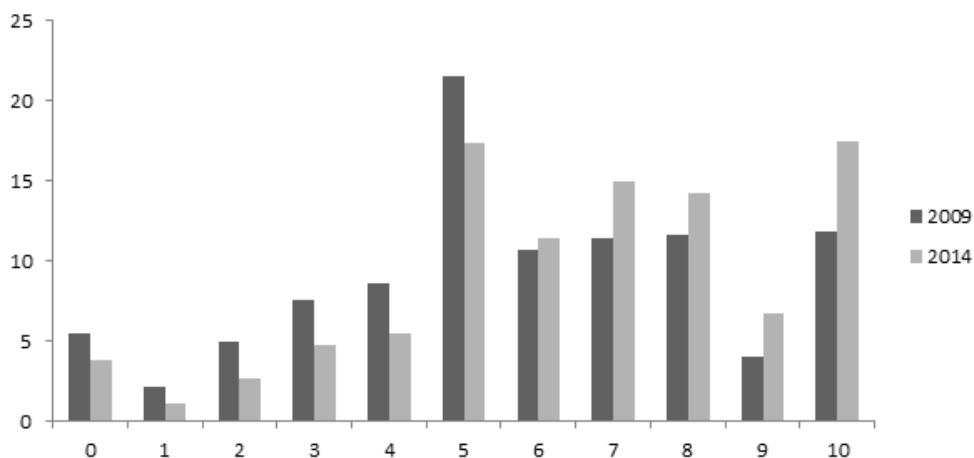


Figure 4.3: Individual perceptions of the economic responsibilities of the EU in the EU member States in 2009 and 2014

Note: this figure displays means of the EU responsibility attributions on a 0-10 scale in all EU members including Croatia which enters in 2014

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

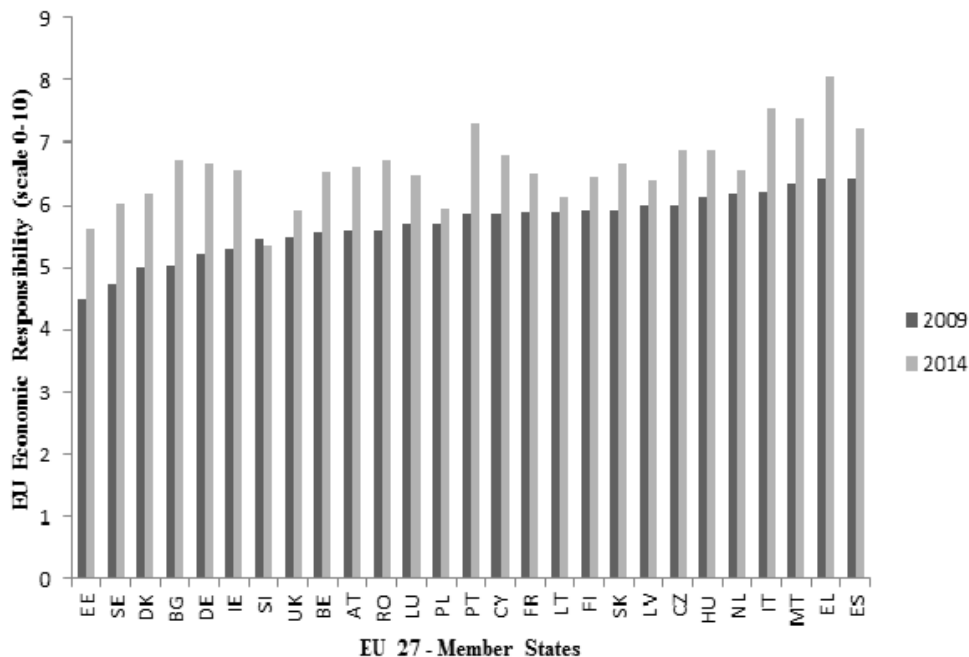


Figure 4.4: Individual perceptions of the economic responsibilities of the EU in the EU member States in 2009 and 2014

Note: this figure displays country means of the EU responsibility attributions on a 0-10 scale in all EU members excluding Croatia which enters in 2014

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

of the European Union. Indeed, [Steiner \(2016\)](#) makes the case that citizens who believe national governments to have less leeway on the economy should be less likely to report



to have voted in general elections. Next, I also include indicators of political interest, government records and closeness to a party which have long been associated with higher inclination to vote. Besides, I also add individual perceptions of the evolution of the domestic economic situation. The effect of economic conditions on turnout is however not straightforward as discussed in the last chapter. Finally, I also include demographic indicators such as age, gender and highest educational degree. All variables are coded in such a fashion that higher values should be associated with a higher inclination to vote. Note that the data is non-random because voters are nested in countries. To control for this non-random effect, I include country fixed effects and clusters on countries in the regressions.

Second, I intend to test whether perceptions of responsibility of the European Union moderate economic voting as H2 predicts. Models of accountability, by definition, assume that voters judge incumbents on their policy performance. Thus, the dependent variable needs to measure the individual likelihood to vote for a party which is in position of incumbency. For the sake of comparability, I choose as a dependent variable the question which is worded as follows: "If there were a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?" I do so because the question on the assessment of the economic situation asks respondents about the evolution of the economy in the last 12 months while general elections did not take place in all countries when the survey was carried out, i.e. in 2014. Voters who choose incumbent parties are coded 1, while voters who choose other parties are coded 0.

Studies examining the extent to which voters punish or reward incumbents on their economic records rely on retrospective and/or prospective and sociotropic and/or egotropic indicators of economic performance. The debate discussing whether citizens judge economic performance from their personal situation or from the national situation was first raised by [Kinder and Kiewiet \(1981\)](#). The egotropic approach makes the case that voters pursue their own interests and thus judge the government on the basis of the evolution of their pocketbook, while the sociotropic approach assumes that voters judge governments on the basis of their actual entitlement, i.e. managing the economy of the country. While being both theoretically plausible, the sociotropic approach has received more empirical confirmation than the pocketbook approach on the overall ([Fiorina, 1981](#); [Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013](#)). The second debate in the economic voting literature raises the question as to how voters choose candidates. Two options are proposed in the literature: voters can judge past actions of governments ([Przeworski et al., 1999](#)) or they can judge the propositions of candidates ([Downs, 1957](#)). Inevitably, units of analysis in the first approach are mostly incumbents because voters have less abilities to judge parties in the opposition on their records. The economic voting model is thus retrospective in its essence because it relies on the theoretical assumption that voters judge past actions of incumbents when they are in the voting booth. notably demonstrated that the electorate acts accordingly: voters use elections as referenda on incumbents' records on the economy. This has been largely tested empirically and is now one of the most common models used to study voting behaviour. In this study, I use sociotropic retrospective variables as the main independent variables to see whether incumbents are rewarded or punished on the basis of past performances. The question is worded as follows: "What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in Britain is." The position 0 gathers respondents who think that the situation has gotten a lot worse, while the position four gathers respondents who believe the economic situation to have gotten much better.



To investigate the moderating effect of perceived economic responsibility of the European Union on economic voting, I use the same question utilized to in past chapters. In this case, I use it as an interaction term. I follow [Hobolt and Tilley \(2014a\)](#) and create a binary variable measuring low and high responsibility where the former starts at 0 and ends at 6, while the latter starts at 7 and ends at 10 on the 0-10 scale. In turn, low responsibility equals 0, and high responsibility equals 1. Next, I perform several probit regressions (because the outcome variable is binary) to assess the effect of perceptions of economic situation on incumbents' fortunes and add an interaction term to see whether this relationship is conditioned by individual perceptions of responsibility attributions. Besides, I also include socio-demographic and political variables explaining incumbents' fortunes such as partisanship to control for alternative explanations. Finally, I perform different model specifications in different datasets, i.e. 2009, 2014 and altogether. Note that the data is non-random because voters are nested in countries. To control for this non-random effect, I include country fixed effects in the regressions.

## 4.5 Empirical results

In this section, I present empirical results on the impact of perceptions of economic responsibility of the European Union on electoral turnout, and then I present in more details empirical results on the moderating effect of responsibility attributions on economic voting.

### 4.5.1 Electoral turnout

Table 4.1 presents the results from models predicting voter turnout in the last general elections. I decided to distinguish between the three samples, while adding all the variables of interest in each estimation. According to H1, I expect individual perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union to have a negative effect on voter turnout.

To put it bluntly, the hypothesis that European integration affects voter turnout is largely invalidated by the empirical estimations. Indeed, the coefficient associated with perceptions of economic responsibility only reaches the threshold of significance at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\* in model 1 (the 2009 sample), while results displayed in model 2 (the 2014 sample) and model 3 (the appended dataset) show a null effect. Notwithstanding the statistical significance, the sign is in the expected direction only in model 1, while model 2 and 3 predict that those who believe the European Union to be responsible over the economy will be more prone to participate in general elections. Therefore only model 1 provides some evidence supporting the claim that perceptions of European Union's responsibility affects the inclination to cast a ballot. Having said that, results displayed in model 1 are not exactly in line with previous findings in the literature. Indeed, three results are contrary to expectations. First, individuals who position themselves on the top of the social hierarchy are less likely to report to have voted in the last general elections. This is surprising insofar as social inclusion is generally a good predictor of voter turnout ([Norris, 1999](#)). Besides, the effect of perceptions of the evolution of the economic situation on voter turnout is null, while those who believe their national government to have responsibility are not more likely to report to have voted, with the effect being statistically non-significant. Regarding the former, this can be explained by the fact that the literature is still uncertain concerning

## 4.5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Independent Variables	Turnout in the last elections		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Economic responsibility of the European Union	-0.01058*	0.00764	0.00033
Economic responsibility of the national government	-0.00058	0.02296***	0.01456***
Economic situation of the country	0.00548	0.06353***	0.04465***
Government records	0.19766***	0.13051***	0.18729***
Interest in politics	0.29165***	0.33915***	0.33205***
Supporter	0.56280***	0.65445***	0.60155***
Male	-0.11840***	-0.04987**	-0.07874***
Religiosity	0.06501***	0.03614***	0.04385***
Union	0.21981***	0.28824***	0.24958***
Class	-0.02601*	0.19564***	0.03222***
Age	0.27076***	0.31237***	0.29460***
Education	0.06440***	0.0555***	0.10334***
Wave			-0.51059***
Constant	0.01632	-1.7723***	-0.51059***
N	17057	19118	36175
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.21	0.24	0.24

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Table 4.1: Probit regressions including political and control variables with fixed effects on countries

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014.

the role played by economic situation on electoral participation. Some argue that a bad economic situation can boost electoral participation, while others argue that it decreases turnout (Blais, 2006, for a review). Turning to the role played by economic constraints, the literature predicts that voters who believe their national government to have limited leeway on the economy are more likely to abstain (see chapter 3). However, the coefficient associated with perceptions of national government's responsibility over the economy does not reach statistical significance in model 1. Furthermore, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variables is the weakest in model 1. These few results thus limit the scope of the empirical validity of model 1.

In contrast with model 1, models 2 and 3 provide empirical results that are largely in line with the past results in the literature on individual determinants of voter turnout. For instance, both models largely confirm the idea that social inclusion is a good predictor of voter turnout. Indeed, variables measuring attendance to religious services, trade union membership and self-positioning in the social class ladder are systematically associated positively with voter turnout in the last general elections with the effect being highly significant. To put it formally, individuals who regularly attend religious services, who are members of trade unions and who position themselves on the top of the social class' scale are more likely to cast a ballot in general elections. Besides, results show that the

older and the more educated individuals are, the more prone they are to declare to have participated in the last elections which is in line with the literature (Norris, 1999). These results are further reinforced by the effect of political variables on voter turnout. Indeed, the coefficients associated with interests in politics and closeness to party are systematically positive and statistically significant. In fact, the effect of these variables display the strongest associations of all variables. Finally, models 2 and 3 also indicate that the perceptions of the economic situation and the record of the government are important predictors of the vote: individuals who are satisfied with the record of the government and those who think that the economic situation has improved in the last 12 months are more likely to report to have voted with the effect being statistically significant. These findings suggest that the inclination to vote is largely dependent upon the positive perception of the domestic political context. Finally, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variables attains Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> 0,24 in both models, thus suggesting a higher level of fitness than model 1. All in all, the hypothesis that European integration hinders voter turnout must be rejected on the individual level because empirical estimations do not provide robust evidence to support this hint.

To further corroborate these results, I perform supplementary empirical estimations only in Eurozone member states and in the EU-15 member states. Indeed, Hix (2003) suggests that the impact of European integration on party behaviour should be even clearer in countries which are the most affected by European economic policies, i.e. Eurozone, and which have been impacted by European decisions during the longest period of time, i.e. EU-15. Nevertheless, as table 4.2. shows, results of the estimations in these set of countries are identical to the ones displayed in models 2 and 3. Ultimately, this suggests that, even where European Union has the most responsibility over the economy, perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union over the economy still do not matter to apprehend voter turnout.

### 4.5.2 Economic voting

Table 4.3 proposes the results from models which investigate whether perceptions of responsibility of the European Union over the domestic economy influence the propensity to reward or punish incumbents on basis of the past economic performances in 2009. The models are built in a stepwise fashion to control for the robustness of the association among model specifications. According to H2, I expect individuals who believe the European Union to be responsible for the economy to be less prone to punish or reward national incumbents on the basis of their perceptions of the evolution of the domestic economic situation. Model 6 includes perceptions of the economic situation in the last 12 months; a dummy variable measuring perceptions of responsibility of the European Union for the domestic economy; an interaction term between these two variables; political variables such as partisanship and self-positioning on the left-right scale; and socio-demographic controls. The model first demonstrates that the measure which predicts the better the inclination to vote for an incumbent party is partisanship: respondents who feel close to an incumbent party have the highest likelihood to vote for an incumbent political party (Bartels, 2000). Most importantly, model 6 confirms that people who think that the domestic economic situation has improved in the last 12 months are more likely to vote for a government party as expected. Nevertheless, H2 is not verified in 2009: respondents who believe the European

Independent Variables	Turnout in the last elections	
	Model 4	Model 5
Economic responsibility of the European Union	-0.00294	.00186
Economic responsibility of the national government	0.02023***	0.01300**
Economic situation of the country	0.04858***	0.02550*
Government records	0.15473***	0.08307***
Interest in politics	0.30869***	0.30255***
Supporter	0.56600***	0.53982***
Male	-0.06356***	-0.07078***
Religiosity	0.03450***	0.03895***
Union	0.21914***	0.24669***
Class	0.07997***	0.07427***
Age	0.29628***	0.32194***
Education	0.10739***	0.09859***
Wave	-0.47107***	-0.48334***
Constant	-0.90422***	-0.83266***
N	21903	22840
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.22	0.22

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Table 4.2: Probit regressions including political and control variables with fixed effects on countries in Eurozone member states and in EU-15  
 Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014.

Union to have high responsibility on the management of the economic situation are not less likely to choose an incumbent party if they think the economic situation has gotten better. Model 8, including perceptions of the national governments' economic responsibility and an interaction term between perceptions of economic situation and the latter, confirms these results. In this model, H2 is rejected since economic voting is not moderated by perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union in the economy. Thus, the analysis of [Lobo and Lewis-Beck \(2012\)](#) on southern European countries is not corroborated on a broader scale in the same period of time. Furthermore, contrary to empirical results in the literature on globalization and economic voting, perceptions of national governments' room to manoeuvre constraints on the economy do not seem to decrease the likelihood to reward or punish incumbents on the basis of their economic records. Table 4.4 shows the results from models testing H2 in 2014. Models are built in the same fashion as in table 4.3. Once again, partisanship and perceptions of the economic situation are the most important predictors of vote choice for incumbent parties with the effect being strongly statistically significant in both cases. Also note that Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> attain 0.48 in these models. Contrary to model 6, model 9 demonstrates that respondents who believe the European Union to be responsible for the domestic economic situation are less likely to reward incumbents when they perceive the economic situation to have improved. Yet, the effect only reaches statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*\*. In comparison, model 11 which investigates the moderating

Independent Variables	Vote for incumbents in 2009		
	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Economic responsibility of the European Union	-0.039		-0.001
Economic responsibility of the national government		-0.146**	-0.149**
Economic situation of the country	0.122***	0.115***	0.115***
Economic situation*Responsibility of the EU	0.005		0.005
Economic situation*Responsibility of the national government		0.012	0.009
Partisanship	1.998***	1.993***	1.994***
Male	-0.034	-0.031	-0.038
Left-Right	0.012	0.013	0.013
Religiosity	0.011	0.008	0.010
Union	-0.053	-0.058*	-0.049
Class	-0.061***	-0.059***	-0.059***
Age	-0.056***	-0.057***	-0.057***
Education	-0.008	-0.006	-0.008
Constant	-0.867	-0.804	-0.806
N	21046	21685	20952
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.37	0.37	0.37

Table 4.3: Probit regressions and control variables with fixed effects and clusters on countries  
Source: European Election Study 2009.

effect of perceptions of national government's responsibility on economic voting provides stronger p-values: respondents who believe national governments to have high responsibility on the management of the economy tend to vote more for incumbents when they perceive the economic situation to have evolved positively, thus confirming the *constraint hypothesis*. Model 11 further corroborates H2: the interaction between perceptions of responsibility of the European Union on the domestic economic situation is statistically significant and displays a negative sign as expected. Hence, those who think the European Union to be responsible on the economy are less prone to vote for incumbent parties in general elections in 2014. Model 11 also confirms the relevance of Hellwig's arguments. Indeed, the empirical estimation shows that perceptions of economic constraints conditions the extent of economic voting: more precisely, those who think their national government to be barely responsible for the economic situation are less likely to judge incumbents on the basis of their perceptions of the evolution of the economy. Finally, table 4.5 displays empirical results in the appended dataset gathering respondents from 2009 and 2014. All the models reject H2 since the effect of economic responsibility of the European Union on economic voting disappears when the two datasets are combined. Indeed, model 12 shows that, alone, there is no statistically significant effect of the interaction term on vote for government parties. In addition, results stay constant in model 13 after the inclusion of the interaction term between responsibility of the national governments and perceptions of the economic situation. It thus suggests that the effect of European integration on vote for incumbents is circumscribed to the year 2014. Having said that, models 13 and 14 show that economic constraints is an important variable to take into account when investigating economic voting. Indeed, people who perceive their national government to have high responsibility on the economy are generally more likely to

Independent Variables	Vote for incumbents in 2014		
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11
Economic responsibility of the European Union	0.172**		0.256***
Economic responsibility of the national government		-0.178*	-0.258**
Economic situation of the country	0.203***	0.140***	0.161***
Economic situation*Responsibility of the EU	-0.052*		-0.081***
Economic situation*Responsibility of the national government		0.062**	0.088***
Partisanship	2.321***	2.319***	2.324***
Male	-0.073***	-0.075**	-0.074**
Left-Right	0.022	0.024	0.023
Religiosity	0.001	0.001	0.001
Union	-0.006	-0.007	-0.005
Class	0.055*	0.056**	0.055*
Age	0.024	0.025	0.024
Education	-0.032*	-0.035*	-0.034*
Constant	-2.076***	-1.891***	-1.939***
N	21902	22387	21838
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.48	0.48	0.48

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Table 4.4: Probit regressions and control variables with fixed effects and clusters on countries  
 Source: European Election Study 2014.

vote for incumbent parties, when they think that the economic situation has improved in line with chapter 1.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to investigate the specific consequences of European integration, understood as a process constraining national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre, on voting behaviour. More precisely, this chapter investigates the relationships between European integration and two features of voting behaviour in domestic elections: voter turnout and economic voting. Based on the *constraint hypothesis* developed in the globalization literature, I expect citizens who believe that the European Union influences the domestic situation to be 1) less likely to participate in general elections; and 2) less likely to punish or reward incumbent governments on their economic records.

Empirical results clearly reject the hypothesis that the European integration decreases the individual inclination to vote in general elections as economic globalization does. Even though the repercussions of European integration and international market integration on national governments' economic room-to-manoevre are arguably the same, consequences on the individual inclination to vote in general elections are not equivalent. Indeed, respondents who perceive the European Union to be responsible for the economic domestic

Independent Variables	Vote for incumbents		
	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14
Economic responsibility of the European Union	-0.009		0.059
Economic responsibility of the national government		-0.209***	-0.231***
Economic situation of the country	0.154***	0.118***	0.122***
Economic situation*Responsibility of the EU	0.001		-0.019
Economic situation*Responsibility of the national government		0.060***	0.067***
Partisanship	2.156***	2.154***	2.156***
Male	-0.051**	-0.051**	-0.053**
Left-Right	0.017	0.018	0.018
Religiosity	0.005	0.004	0.005
Union	-0.038	-0.041*	-0.035
Class	-0.047**	-0.045**	-0.045**
Age	-0.017	-0.018	-0.018
Education	0.001	0.001	-0.001
Wave	-0.369***	-0.355***	-0.363***
Constant	-1.240***	-1.133***	-1.137***
N	42948	44072	42790
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.42	0.42	0.22

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*  
 Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Table 4.5: Probit regressions and control variables with fixed effects and clusters on countries  
 Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014.

situation are not more likely to abstain in last general elections in all the model specifications.

Yet, empirical results displayed in this chapter show that perceptions of responsibility of the European Union over the domestic economy do alter economic voting to some extent, i.e. in 2014. While I find no moderating effect of responsibility attributions in 2009, I find compelling evidence that responsibility attributions to the European Union matter to apprehend economic voting in 2014. Indeed, respondents who believe the European Union to have responsibility over the state of the national economy are less likely to reward incumbent parties on their economic records with the effect being statistically significant. Hence, the hypothesis that European integration moderates economic voting on the individual level is confirmed, but only in 2014. That is, in a very specific period following the crisis of the sovereign debt. Indeed, the effect disappears when the two datasets are appended together. In fact, findings demonstrate more convincingly that room-to-manoeuvre constraints on the economy have more importance when investigating the extent of individual economic voting. In line with [Hellwig \(2008\)](#), I show that respondents who perceive their national government to be constrained on the economy are less prone to reward incumbents on their economic records.

All in all, results suggest that the increasing influence of the European Union on the



domestic economy is only slightly connected to voting behaviour in general elections contrary to what can be expected. On the individual level, believing that the European Union is responsible for the economy does not affect voter turnout, while it affects economic voting only in 2014, that is after the crisis of the sovereign debts which struck European countries in a particularly extreme fashion. Thus, empirical results might be interpreted in two ways. First, these findings can be affected by the short-term contextual effect of the economic crisis that has linked the European Union with national economic performances for the first time in such a profound manner. In this scenario, the spotlights that were put upon the European Union during the crisis might have amplified and exacerbated individual perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union. Consequently, it is hard to conclude that citizens are genuinely influenced by the European integration in general elections. To ensure that the effect is not contextual upon the crisis of sovereign debts, longitudinal studies in comparative contexts are needed to supplement these findings. However, a second line of argument can be fostered: empirical results show a starting trend which is likely to influence general elections in more profound ways in the future.

More convincingly, the chapter shows that perceptions of the loss of national governments' room-to-manoeuvre abilities to influence the domestic economy have a strong effect on voter turnout and economic voting as chapter 1 already showed. These findings are not contradictory with the hypothesis that European Union affects voting behaviour, but is more encompassing in its consequences. In this scenario, not only does the European Union affect voting behaviour but multiple external processes, such as economic globalization, are likely to change individual behaviours in general elections. More broadly, empirical results confirm the relevance of the inclusion of perceptions of responsibility of governments in models of accountability. Indeed, as [Rudolph \(2003a\)](#) already argued, voters need to pinpoint responsibility before being able to hold governments accountable for past policy performance. Results suggest that responsibility attributions are indeed moderating the extent to which voters punish and reward incumbent parties on the basis of their past records.

## Abstract

Over the years, the European Union has gained many policy competences, most notably in the economic area. The European Union now has exclusive competences over customs Union, competition, monetary policy and external trade, while it has the ability to constrain budget deficits and public debts of the members of the European Union. Therefore, the European Union has directly reduced national governments' abilities to choose economic policies as they wish. Consequently, if citizens perceive that the European Union is increasingly responsible for policy outcomes as the introductory chapter suggests, they should take this fact into account in their voting calculus in general elections. Specifically, I expect the process of integration to play a similar role as economic globalization: by reducing economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments, European integration should 1) decrease voters' inclination to participate in general elections - through its impact on party polarization and perceived benefits derived from the act of voting - and should decrease the importance of economic evaluations in the voting calculus. Specifically, the empowerment of European Union in the economic area is likely to decrease the extent to which voters punish or reward incumbents on their economic records in general elections. This hypothesis has been

empirically validated in a study focusing on four southern European countries (Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012), but no systematic comparative work has analysed the generalization of this hypothesis over time and across countries. Besides, the hypothesis linking abstention and the European integration has never been tested yet. These two hypotheses are tested on the individual level thanks to the *European Election Study* modules from 2009 and 2014 which include vote intentions at the occasion of general elections, evaluations of past records and perceptions of governments' responsibilities on the economy in all the member states of the European Union. Findings do not consistently validate the two hypotheses, but citizens who perceive the European Union to be responsible over the domestic economy hold their incumbents less accountable for their past economic records in 2014. Meanwhile, citizens who think the European Union to be highly responsible for the economic outcomes do not report to participate less in general elections contrary to expectations.

## Appendix

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<p><b>Voter turnout:</b> 0= did not vote / 1= voted          Which party did you vote for at the General Election of [year]?</p> <p><b>Vote for Incumbent Party:</b> 0=Non-Incumbent / 1=Incumbent          "And if there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?"</p>
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<p><b>Economic responsibility Govt:</b> 0= no responsibility / 10= full responsibility          "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".</p> <p><b>Economic responsibility EU:</b> 0= no responsibility / 10= full responsibility          "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the European Union for economic conditions in Britain? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".</p>
<b>Interaction Variable</b>	<p><b>Economic Responsibility Govt:</b>0= low responsibility (0-6) / 1= high responsibility (7-10)          "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".</p> <p><b>Economic Responsibility EU:</b>0= low responsibility (0-6) / 1= high responsibility (7-10)          "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the European Union for economic conditions in Britain? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".</p>

<b>Control Variables</b>	<p><b>Economic conditions:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better      "What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in Britain is 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse."</p> <p><b>Party Identification:</b> 0= other / 1= close to Incumbent party      Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?</p> <p><b>Supporter:</b> 0= no / 1= yes      Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than others?</p> <p><b>Interest in Politics:</b> 0= not at all / 3= very      To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?</p> <p><b>Government approval:</b> 0= no / 1= yes      Let us now come back to Britain. Do you approve or disapprove of the government's record to date?</p> <p><b>Male:</b> 0= female / 1= male</p> <p><b>Religious attendance:</b> 0= never / 4= several times a week      How often do you attend religious services: several times a week, once a week, a few times a year, once a year or less, or never? 1 several times a week; 2 once a week; 3 a few times a year; 4 once a year or less; 5 never.</p> <p><b>Union:</b> 0= Not member (4) / 1= Member (1-3)      Are you yourself a member of a trade union or is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union?      1 yes, I am / 2 yes, someone else is      3 yes I am and someone else in the household is /4 no</p> <p><b>Class:</b> 0= working class / 4= upper class      "if you were asked to choose one of these 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 class?"</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 0= 18-24 / 3= 55+      What year were you born?</p> <p><b>Education:</b> 0= 1-15 / 2= 20+      How old were you when you stopped full-time education?</p>
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# Chapter 5

## The impact on issue voting on European integration

### 5.1 Introduction

The first four chapters make the claim that processes of economic integration change the structure of individual demands toward policy actions by decreasing national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre. Ultimately, the intensification of these processes arguably affect voting behaviour. In contrast, this chapter (and chapters 6 and 7) investigates the impact of the increasing policy competences of the European Union, not by considering the European Union only as a process limiting the (economic) margins of manoeuvre of national governments, but by viewing the European Union as a genuine federal system. In the literature on voting behaviour in federal systems, it is first assumed that individuals respond to the extension of federal governments' policy competences by increasingly evaluating federal representatives on the basis of their decisions and actions.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, representatives involved at the European level should be increasingly held accountable for their actions as European integration deepens, especially in areas where it gains power. Chapter 6 will analyse the effect of the increasing power of European integration on the main direct channel of accountability, i.e. the European parliamentary elections, while chapter 7 examines the extent to which the European Union is held accountable when it becomes institutionally responsible following [François et al. \(2012\)](#).

In this fifth chapter, I examine the effect of the extension of the authority of the European Union on the way individuals evaluate political parties on the issue of European integration in domestic elections. Formally, I assume that the increasing responsibility of the European union in terms of policy competences should increase the individual propensity to vote for political parties on the basis of their positioning on the issue of European integration. Indeed, many studies argue that the increasing authority of the European Union over policy decisions enhances polarization over the process of European integration within the party system ([Down and Wilson, 2008](#); [De Wilde and Zürn, 2012](#)). A greater polarization over an issue provides political parties with incentives to emphasize this very

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<sup>1</sup>As I will discuss in the next chapters, this premise is however put into question because the dispersion of power between governments can blur responsibility and weaken the link between individuals and their representatives or because some elections can be considered as referenda on the actions of other governments ([Atkeson and Partin, 1995](#), for example)

same issue to gain ballots via a process of differentiation. Ultimately, it can end up increasing the salience of this issue among citizens. Yet, issue salience is a prerequisite for an issue to be taken into account in the individual voting calculus (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008). As the European Union sees its policy competences grow, voters should thus be more inclined to choose political parties on the basis of their positioning on the issue of European integration. Strictly speaking, this chapter is thus a follow-up to chapter 2 which also investigates the determinants of issue voting on the issue of European integration on the individual level.

Past studies already show that the issue of European integration affects voting behaviour in European electoral contests (De Vries et al., 2011); in general elections in Austria, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom and Denmark (Gabel, 2000; Tillman, 2004; De Vries, 2007) and in eastern and central European countries (De Vries and Tillman, 2011). Many variables have been put forward in the literature to explain the variation of issue voting on European integration, most notably on the contextual level. Indeed, studies show that issue voting on European integration is not homogeneous across parties and party systems. It is conditional upon media attention and political conflict about the issue (De Vries et al., 2011); the level of internal party dissent (Netjes and Binnema, 2007); the degree to which parties emphasize European integration in their electoral appeals (De Vries, 2010); and the political entrepreneurship of challenger parties (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012). In addition, past studies suggest that challenger parties particularly gain from increasing the salience of the issue of European integration. Indeed, mainstream government parties are bound by their function not to take stances opposing, and thus fostering, the issue of European integration, because they would be in a difficult position when negotiating in European governmental bodies. Consequently, playing the European card is generally not a good option for mainstream government parties.

On the individual level, only one explanatory factor has been highlighted so far: political sophistication (De Vries et al., 2011). The authors show that individuals who have a better understanding of the functioning of the European Union are more prone to choose political parties on the basis of their positioning on European integration, all things being held equal. In chapter 2, I have also shown that voters who perceive their national government to face economic constraints are more likely to choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences following the *balancing demands hypothesis*. This should be the case if the issue of European integration is considered as a non-economic issue. Finally, I also found a negative relationship between attitudes toward the process of European integration and issue voting on European integration: Eurosceptic voters are more prone to choose political parties which have policy platforms on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences.

This chapter contributes to the literature on issue voting on European integration by investigating the notion of responsibility as a possible conditioning factor. Indeed, European integration is not only an issue on which citizens display (or not) attitudes (Van Ingelgom, 2014), but the European Union is also a government which affects policy outcomes at the domestic level. Thus, I make the argument that the increasing (objective and/or perceived) responsibility of the European Union on domestic affairs is likely to strengthen issue voting on European integration because it arguably enhances salience of the issue of European integration on the contextual level and on the individual level. Consequently, I expect issue

voting on European integration to grow over time, and especially among voters who believe the European Union to have responsibility over policy decisions. Interestingly, this study constitutes the first attempt to explore the implication of the increasing authority of the European Union on issue voting on European integration. Besides, salience on the individual level is rarely emphasized as a variable on the individual level because of the lack of data<sup>2</sup>.

To apprehend the extent and scope of issue voting on European integration and whether it is conditional upon the increasing authority of the European Union, I take advantage of the 2004 and 2009 *European Election Study* surveys<sup>3</sup>. These surveys have several advantages over national election surveys because they provide comparable data in all European countries, thus allowing for a comparison across countries. Most importantly, they include voters' self- and party placements on the European integration scale which allow to estimate issue voting on European integration on the individual level. Yet, as mentioned in chapter 2, studies investigating issue voting generally rely on indirect sources to measure party stances: expert surveys and party manifestos (Hellwig, 2008, for example). In contrast, measuring proximity with direct individual level data enables to examine more directly how issue proximity affects voting behaviour.

In a first step, I perform a longitudinal meta-analysis at the party level. More precisely, I estimate whether the issue of European integration increasingly explains the choice to vote for political parties over time, while disentangling between parties and time period. Specifically, I carry out multiple ordered logistic regressions, one for each political party. Second, I use a two-step hierarchical model to explore the conditional impact of perceptions of responsibility of the European Union on the extent to which the issue of European integration affect party choice. In the first stage of the procedure, I determine the extent to which congruence on the European integration, i.e. the relationship between self-placement on the European integration's scale with the placement of political parties on the same scale, affects the propensity to vote for parties in general. I then estimate an ordered-logistic regression to assess the extent of issue voting on European integration. In the second stage, I want to determine whether issue voting on European integration is conditional upon perceptions of responsibility of the European Union. To do so, I compute residuals of the regressions which include congruence on the European integration between individuals and political parties and I use the stored estimates as dependent variables: residuals provide a proxy-measure of (non-) issue voting on European integration. The estimations are carried out thanks to the use of the 2009 *European Election Study*.

Findings show that the issue of European integration affects voting behaviour in both surveys but not increasingly so over time. Indeed, the meta-analysis of party choice shows a decrease of the importance of the issue of European integration on party choices between 2004 and 2009. Besides, attribution of responsibility to the European Union affects the variation of issue voting on European integration but not in the expected direction. All in all, there is thus scarce evidence that the increasing authority of the European Union fosters issue voting on European integration.

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<sup>2</sup>Most notably because many voters are indifferent rather than positive or negative toward the issue of European integration (Van Ingelgom, 2014)

<sup>3</sup>Note that the 2014 *European Election Study* is not included in the analysis because some questions are missing within this survey. For more information, see Schmitt et al. (2015)



The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I present the current state of the literature on the determinants of issue voting on European integration and I present my theoretical argument linking the increasing responsibility of the European Union and issue voting on European integration. In a third section, I discuss the modelling strategy, while the two last sections present the empirical results and discuss findings.

## 5.2 Determinants of issue voting on European integration

As chapter 2 already mentioned, issue voting on European integration is now attested at the national level in many European countries. Empirical studies notably show that issue voting on European integration increases 1) after referendums on European integration (Petithomme, 2011); 2) in contexts of accession (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004), or when (Euroseptic) entrepreneurs voice their concerns about European integration (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012). In a nutshell, issue voting on European integration is conditional upon the salience of the issue in the political system (via media attention and political parties' attention). In addition, past results on the matter show that it is also dependent upon the level of polarization among political parties (De Vries, 2007; De Vries et al., 2011), while the issue ownership theory of voting contends that voters first need to identify the political party that they deem the most competent and credible proponent of a given issue before voting for that issue owner (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996; Bélanger and Meguid, 2008). In this framework, political parties which are traditional issue owners of European integration (e.g. Euroseptic parties) are more likely to be affected by issue voting on European integration.

First, empirical studies show that the salience of an issue at the national level is decisive to predict issue voting in general (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008, for example), and issue voting on European integration in particular (De Vries, 2007). Starting from the premise that voters are limited information processors and are largely ignorant about most political issues, the literature on "cognitive heuristics" argues that voters generally use information shortcuts to make a decision in the voting booth (Downs, 1957; Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2001). This is especially the case on the most complex issues such as the issue of European integration. Indeed, it can be difficult for voters to understand complex issues without mediators. These mediators are generally the national media and political parties. Empirically, past studies confirm that media salience does influence European attitudes (Peter et al., 2003) and enhances issue voting on European integration in European parliamentary elections (De Vries et al., 2011). Besides, De Vries (2010) shows that the degree to which political parties emphasize the issue of European integration in their electoral appeals also conditions the extent of issue voting on European integration in domestic elections. All in all, the more salient the issue of European integration is, the more likely voters will choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their own preferences. Second, party conflict or polarization on an issue has also been depicted as an important variable to explain the extent of issue voting. The assumption behind is that the more political parties are divided, the more parties take clear (and strong) stances on an issue within the party system. As a result, voters will have



more opportunities to distinguish between political offers because of increasing clarity of party positions. Finally, it is argued that issue owners, i.e. parties and candidates which have a (long-standing) reputation of competence in a given issue, tend to receive more votes on issues that they own. According to the theory of issue ownership, individuals make their voting decision by assessing the competence and credibility that political parties have in managing particular issues: voters are able to identify parties which are, in their view, the most competent on a given issue. In turn, they choose to vote for the party that owns this specific issue. Overall, there is evidence that issue ownership is a decisive feature of the vote in the United States (Petrocik et al., 2003; Blomqvist and Green-Pedersen, 2004); in Canada (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008); and in European countries (Budge and Farlie, 1983). Yet, it is also demonstrated that it is conditional upon issue salience (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008): issue ownership is determinant only if the issue is perceived as salient in the first place. In the case of the issue of European integration, issue owners are traditionally Eurosceptic niche parties such as UKIP (Lynch and Whitaker, 2013). Empirically, Eurosceptic political entrepreneurs, i.e. challenger parties, usually benefit from the issue of European integration in domestic contests (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012).

The literature on issue voting on European integration thus mainly fosters contextual level variables or party characteristics. In contrast, there exists only few studies which investigate the variation of issue voting on European integration on the individual level (De Vries et al., 2011, for an exception). Yet, "it is unlikely that Europe matters equally for all voters and within all contexts" (De Vries et al., 2011, p. 18). So far, studies on the individual level have highlighted the effect of political sophistication on issue voting on European integration in European parliamentary elections (De Vries et al., 2011). The assumption behind is that political sophistication is a crucial variable for citizens to intelligibly express their attitudes and opinions, notably on complex issues. This ability to have a clear view of his or her own attitudes affects electoral behaviour because these opinions will act upon voting choice only if they are easily retrievable. Given the complex features of the issue of European integration and the unclear division of power between supranational institutions and national governments, it is difficult for citizens to know political parties' stances on the issue of European integration. In turn, it is supposedly hard for most of them to take these stances into account when voting. Thus, voters who know the functioning of the European Union are more likely to choose a party on its positioning on the issue of European integration. Empirically, there is now evidence that the level of political sophistication matters to understand variation of issue voting on European integration among individuals but only in the context of European elections (De Vries et al., 2011).

In chapter 2, I made the argument that perceptions of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre also condition issue voting on European integration. In this chapter, I conceptualized the issue of European integration as a non-economic issue. If the issue can be thought in such a way, then the *balancing demands hypothesis* predicts that those who believe their national government to be constrained on the economy will be more likely to choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. The empirical analysis showed that, along attitudes toward the process of European integration and political sophistication, perceptions of economic responsibilities of national governments do condition issue voting on European integration.

In this chapter, I examine the effect of the extension of the authority of the European Union on issue voting on European integration in domestic elections. Specifically, I assume that the increasing responsibility of the European Union in terms of policy competences should increase the individual probability to choose political parties on their positioning on the issue of European integration. I do so because many studies argue that the increasing authority of the European Union over policy decisions enhances polarization over the process of European integration within the party system (Down and Wilson, 2008; De Wilde and Zürn, 2012). A higher polarization over an issue gives political parties incentives to put more emphasis on this specific issue to gain ballots via a process of differentiation. Ultimately, it supposedly increases the salience of this issue among citizens. Yet, issue salience is a prerequisite for an issue to be taken into account in the individual voting calculus (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008). As European Union gains more policy competences, voters should thus be more prone to choose political parties on their positioning on the issue of European integration.

Yet, attributing responsibility to the right level of governance in a multi-level system of governance where competences are shared is not an easy task. Empirical evidence suggests that both federalism and decentralization processes hamper citizens' capacity to differentiate between policy competences (Cutler, 2004; León, 2011). The fragmentation of competences diffuses the power and makes it more costly for citizens to gather information to hold the accurate level of governance accountable for policy outcomes. Furthermore, it provides political parties with incentives to engage in blame-shifting and credit taking which eventually lower individual perceptions of responsibility (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). Finally, the mere fact that these systems provide citizens with multiple elections might increase the voter fatigue (Downs, 1999). All in all, it is assumed that multilevel systems can undermine responsibility linkages for policy choices. Past studies on electoral accountability support these findings since it is commonly assumed that low clarity political systems alter voters' capacities to punish and sanction their governments on the basis of their economic record (Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993).

Notwithstanding, other studies which focused on the American federal system have found opposite empirical evidence. First, there is evidence showing that state governors are rewarded for their economic performance at the state level (Ebeid and Rodden, 2006) suggesting that politicians at the intermediate level can also be held accountable for policy outcomes. In addition, Arceneaux (2006) shows that American citizens make accurate distinctions between policy competences at different levels of government (local, state and federal). These studies corroborate findings about attribution of responsibility within the European context. Indeed, European citizens seem to be able to "get it right" when attributing responsibilities to the European Union even though policy competences are more intertwined than in the American context. Comparing experts' with citizens' attribution of responsibilities to the European Union in different policy areas (health care, economy, environment, interest rates and immigration), Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) find that the average individual does not significantly deviate from experts when attributing responsibility. Moreover, they find that European citizens outside the Eurozone attribute less responsibility to the European Union for the economic situation in comparison with citizens inside a country belonging to the European Monetary Union. This suggests that the

institutional structure in which citizens belong is taken into account on the individual level. Finally, European citizens are able to assign representational responsibilities separately to the national and European level of governance (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2009). Some evidence thus supports the idea that citizens assign responsibility to the European Union appropriately, at least to some extent. In turn, I expect issue voting on European integration to be affected by responsibility attributions. After all, if a voter considers the European level to have some impact on the decision-making process, his voting decision, even at the national level, will be conditional on the extent to which he attributes responsibility to the European Union, especially if increased responsibility strengthens the salience of the issue. This results in the following hypotheses:

Responsibility hypothesis (H1a): Issue voting on European integration should increase, across the board, as the European Union gains policy competences

Responsibility hypothesis (H1b): The more a citizen believes the European Union to have influence on the domestic situation, the more likely she or he will choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to his or her preferences.

### 5.3 Empirical strategy

The individual-level data are derived from the 2004 and 2009 *European Election Study*. These surveys are cross-national datasets which provide information on voting behaviour and political attitudes in the 27 member states of the European Union with a representative sample of around 1,000 respondents in each country. Most importantly, these surveys provide individuals' probability to vote for a party (on a 1-10 scale), voters' self-placement on European integration (on a 1-10 scale) and perceptions of political parties' positioning on European integration (on the same 1-10 scale). As a result, it is possible to have a measure of issue proximity on European integration on the individual level.

Besides, the 2009 *European Election Study* adds an original question regarding attribution of responsibilities to the European Union on different issues (economy, interest rates, immigration, climate change, health care standards) which is worded as follows: "First, thinking about the [issue], how responsible is the European Union for [issue] conditions in [country]?". In addition, this survey provides questions which allow to measure political sophistication, identity-related matters, attitudes toward the process of European integration, trust in the European Union, government approval, subjective assessments of the economic situation of the country and other socio-demographic controls such as age, age when leaving school and gender.

First, I want to assess whether issue voting on European integration increases over time. To do so, I proceed to a meta-analysis where I estimate the effect of congruence between individuals' preferences toward European integration and their perceptions of the positioning of political parties on this continuum on the probability to vote for an individual political party (electoral utility on a 1-10 scale) between 2004 and 2009. Unfortunately, the 2014 *European Election Study* does not provide information on individual perceptions of parties' positioning on European integration due to technical problems (Schmitt et al.,

2015, for more information). The sample includes 20 countries per wave and investigates 219 political parties because some parties are non-existent in one of the two surveys. All in all, 42613 respondents are included in the analysis. As mentioned, the dependant variable measures the individual probability to vote for a given party if there were domestic elections tomorrow. The main independent variable is the proximity between the respondent and each party on the issue of European integration. To do so, I subtract respondent's self-placement on European integration and respondent's perception of the positioning of each party on this issue. This is recoded to display a positive sign measuring proximity between individuals and parties on the issue of European integration. In these 219 regressions, I also add an indicator of proximity on the traditional economics-oriented left/right dimension which is constructed in the exact same fashion as proximity on European integration. Finally, a couple of alternative explanatory variables of voting behaviour are added in the regression. First, I add three items to control the effect of traditional cleavages, i.e. religious attendance, self-perception of social status and area of living. I add these measures of historical cleavages because they have long been used as the main theoretical framework to approach party choice in western democracies (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). Finally, I also add socio-demographic controls such as age, age when leaving school and gender. I have no particular expectations regarding these variables. Note that I also add fixed effects in the ordered logit regression to control for variation between countries because of the non-randomness nature of the data. At this stage, I expect congruence toward European integration to be significant and to display a positive sign. Indeed, the independent variables indicate the proximity between party and voter positioning. In addition, I expect the effect of congruence on European integration to be less important than the effect left-right congruence because of the weight of this political dimension on party choice (De Vries and Tillman, 2011).

To analyse whether issue voting on European integration is conditional upon perceptions of responsibility of the European Union, I use a similar two-step hierarchical procedure as in chapter 2. In the first stage of the procedure, I evaluate the degree to which congruence on European integration, i.e. the relationship between self-placement on the European integration scale with the placement of political parties on the same scale, affects the probability to vote for parties (which is the dependent variable in this first step). Indeed, issue voting is the effect of proximity between voters' positioning and parties' positioning on a given issue on vote choice. Accordingly, the closer a voter  $v$  will be to the party  $p$  on the issue of European integration, the more likely she or he will be to vote for party  $p$ . Thus, I expect congruence on European integration to be a decisive factor predicting the propensity to declare to vote for parties. The advantages of electoral utilities over reported vote choice questions are numerous (Van der Eijk et al., 2006, for a review). In a nutshell, less information is lost with empirical observed electoral utilities. In turn, I estimate an ordered-logistic regression (and Ordinary Least Squares) using electoral utilities as the dependent variable. I do so because the variable is ordinal and categorical (1-10 scale).

To estimate electoral utilities, I use a stacked data matrix. I do so because the survey produces a number of variables for each individual: one for each party mentioned in the survey. Then, the unit of analysis becomes respondents $\times$ party scores on the transformed stacked data. So, the dependent variable is the observed electoral utility for voters and it displays relationships between respondents and political parties rather than respondents' characteristics. It eventually allows to take into account both voters' and political parties'

characteristics in a dynamic fashion. In the regression, the two main explanatory variables are congruence on European integration and Left-right congruence. Congruence on European integration is constructed as the relationship between self-placement on the European integration scale with the placement of political parties on the same scale, where 0 indicates unification "has already gone too far" and 10 means it "should be pushed further". Left-right congruence is constructed in the exact same fashion where 0 indicates extreme left and 10 means extreme right. In comparison with other studies which analyse issue voting, data from the 2009 *European Election Study* thus allow to directly test issue voting on the individual level. Indeed, studies on issue voting generally rely on expert surveys or party manifestos to infer the positioning of a party. Yet, this technique does not permit to know whether subjective assessments of party positioning do have an impact on vote choice. Note that variables are recoded in positive terms and 9 thus indicates perfect match between party positioning and voter positioning on European integration and left-right dimension.

A couple of other control variables are added in the regressions to control for the effect of other alternative explanations of the vote. First, I add indicators of political performance, i.e. perception of democratic functioning and retrospective perceptions of economic performances. These variables are added in the estimations because individuals are assumed to vote more when they consider that the political situation has improved (Dalton, 2013). In addition, I add indicators of interest in politics and subjective social class identification which are generally positively correlated with the act of voting (Norris, 1999). Finally, I also add socio-demographic controls such as age, age when leaving school and gender. I have no particular expectations regarding these variables. Note that I also add fixed effects in the ordered logistic regression to control for variation between countries because of the non-randomness structure of the data. Besides, I cluster the analysis on the number of respondents because of the nature of the data (stacked matrix). At this stage, I expect congruence on European integration to be significant and to display a positive sign. Indeed, the independent variables measuring congruence are recoded to indicate proximity between party and voter positioning. Finally, I expect the effect of congruence on European integration to be lower than the effect of left-right congruence because of the importance of the latter on voting choice (de Vries and Tillman, 2011).

The second stage allows to determine whether issue voting on European integration is conditional upon different explanatory variables on the individual level. More precisely, I want to know whether perceptions of responsibility of the European Union affect issue voting on European integration as H1b predicts. To do so, I first compute residuals of the regressions which include congruence on European integration and I use the stored estimates as dependent variables. Residuals are the positive sum of the distance between the outliers. Ultimately, it gives a proxy measure which indicates the extent to which the model of issue voting on European integration does not perform. More precisely, I store five regressions' residuals in total: the first regression only estimates the impact of congruence on European integration on electoral utilities; the second estimates the impact of congruence on European integration on electoral utilities while taking into account country fixed-effects; the third estimates the impact of congruence on European integration and socio-demographic variables on electoral utilities; the fourth estimates the impact of congruence on European integration, Left-Right congruence and control variables on electoral utilities; the final regression estimates the impact of congruence on the issue of European integration,



Left-Right congruence and control variables on electoral utilities while taking into account country fixed-effects. Then, the residuals are all computed so that their sign becomes positive.

Next, I estimate Ordinary Least Squares regressions on these five dependent variables including the main independent variable of interest, i.e. attribution of responsibility to the European Union. I do so because the dependent variables are residuals which cannot be estimated via other estimations. To test H1b, I need a measure of perceptions of attribution of responsibility to the European Union. To do so, I use a question on attribution of responsibility which is available in the 2009 *European Election Study*. In this survey, there exists a question which asks individuals about the extent to which they consider the European Union to be responsible for the situation on five issues, i.e. the economy, interest rates, the environment, immigration and health care standards where 1 indicates "no responsibility" and 10 indicates "full responsibility." Thus, I create a variable on a 1-50 scale indicating the extent to which individuals consider the European Union to be responsible over the situation of their country. At this stage, I expect the relationship between residuals (measuring non-issue voting on European integration) and this index of perceived responsibility of the European Union to display negative and statistically significant coefficients. Besides, I also add variables which can affect the variation of issue voting on European integration on the individual level: political sophistication, attitudes toward the European Union, EU identification and perceptions of national governments' economic constraints. Political sophistication is an addition of good answers on four different questions: whether Switzerland is a member of the European Union; the number of member states in the European Union; whether all countries elect the same number of members to the European parliament; and finally the number of parliamentary seats in the national parliament. Following [De Vries et al. \(2011\)](#), I change the variable into a binary one where 0 equals/or is lower than 3 and 1 indicates 4. In addition, I also include a couple of variables which aim to measure identity-related matters and attitudes toward European integration. EU identity is measured through the question regarding respondents' feeling of identity which is divided in four categories: only [nationality], [nationality] and European, European and [nationality], only European. I then change the variable into a binary one where 0 indicates the two first dimensions while 1 indicates the two last dimensions. Three other political variables measuring general attitudes toward European integration are added in the Ordinary Least Squares regressions to control for their impact. I also add a measure of perceptions of economic responsibility of the national governments. Finally, I also add socio-demographic controls such as age, age when leaving school and gender, while I also add a measure of social class identification which permits to control for the effect of social cleavages.

In the next section, I present the results of the different estimations.

## 5.4 Empirical results

Table 5.1. presents the results of the meta-analysis which predicts the probability to vote for an individual party. Specifically, the first and the second rows of the table summarize the percentage of significant results and the average coefficient of 1) proximity on the left-right dimension; 2) the proximity on the issue of European integration; 3) religious attendance 4) self placement on the social hierarchy; 5) the rural vs. urban cleavage on the likelihood to vote for a party. The third and fourth rows display the difference of significant results and

Table 5.1: Probability to vote for an individual party, with fixed effects on countries and standardized coefficients

	LR Proximity	EU Proximity	Religion	Social Class	Rural vs. Urban
% of significant results	99	42	33	31	14
Average impact	0.53	0.08	0.20	0.13	0.07
Difference in significant results (2009 vs. 2004)	2	-12	-6	-3	-10
Difference in the average impact (2009 vs. 2004)	0.01	-0.10	-0.05	-0.01	-0.05
40% and more (average impact)	0.66	0.07	0.27	0.09	0.13
30% and more (average impact)	0.70	0.07	0.20	0.19	0.03
20% and more (average impact)	0.62	0.06	0.20	0.21	0.11
10% and more (average impact)	0.51	0.12	0.37	0.12	0.06
Less than 10% (average impact)	0.46	0.07	0.20	0.12	0.05

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2004 and 2009

the difference in the average impact of each variable between 2009 and 2004 (where 2004 is the reference), while the last rows present the average impacts of each variable on different party types.

First, table 5.1. confirms the relevance of the economics left/right dimension as a predictor of vote choice. Indeed, coefficients associated with the proximity on this dimension are almost always reach the threshold of significance. There are only two exceptions: the effect on the vote for KPÖ (communist party of Austria) and the SNS (Slovak National Party) in 2004. Turning to other predictors, they reach statistical significance in less than 50% of the cases. In addition, the average magnitude of the coefficients is considerably higher for proximity on the left/right dimension than every other variable. This result is thus in line with previous results which shows a prevalence of the economic left-right divide in party competition and in voting behaviour (Green-Pedersen, 2007; De Vries and Tillman, 2011). In contrast, the proximity on the issue of European integration is the second variable that predicts the propensity to vote for a party in terms of statistical significance. Having said that, the average magnitude is not the most important when compared with other variables. For instance, attendance to religious services is less significant, but its impact is stronger than proximity on the issue of European integration, especially in the Netherlands and for Christian democratic parties, notably in Finland and in Czech Republic. Furthermore, the variable measuring self placement on the social class reaches statistical significance relevance for social democratic parties in countries such as Austria, Sweden and Denmark. Finally, the indicator of rural-urban is the predictor that explains the least the likelihood to vote for a party, at the exception of decentralized countries, such as Germany and Austria, and, more surprisingly, in Estonia. Overall, the proximity on the left/right is the most important predictor in all national contexts.

According to H1a, there should be a difference in the variation of the effect of proximity on the issue of European integration on party choice between 2004 and 2009. Specifically, I make the claim that issue voting on European integration should increase, across the board, over time. Contrary to expectations, results show a decrease of the impact of European congruence on party choice in 2009 both in terms of significance and magnitude. Indeed, the percentage of statistically significant results shrinks by 12 cases, while the average impact



Table 5.2: Effects of European congruence on electoral utilities, with country fixed effects and clusters on individuals (Ordered logistic regression and Ordinary Least Squares)

Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2
EU Issue Proximity	0.11622***	0.15752***
LeftRight Proximity	0.38447***	0.57409***
Retrospective economic evaluations	0.01610	0.02079
Supporter	0.01439	-0.00618
Government approval	0.04080*	0.06420*
Perceptions of the functioning of the democracy	0.01870	0.04378*
Interest in politics	0.0244*	0.04910**
Union	0.01633	0.02172
Religious attendance	-0.00326	-0.00487
Class identification	0.02089**	0.03589**
Male	-0.09280***	-0.21963***
Education	-0.03024***	-0.06035***
Age	-0.04769***	-0.06432***
Constant		5.3908***
N	63010	63010
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup> and R <sup>2</sup>	0.08	0.24

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

also decreases by 0.10. In contrast, proximity on the left/right dimension increases over time. Thus, results further corroborate the idea that the economics left/right dimension is the main determinant of party choice, while the increasing authority of the European Union does not amplify issue voting on European integration.

Finally, the empirical analysis also allows to see whether issue voting on European integration differs given political parties' sizes. Indeed, the literature on issue voting on European integration argues that mainstream government parties are less likely to play the European card in comparison with challenger parties which have more incentives to put more emphasis on this issue to reap electoral gains ([Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008](#); [De Vries, 2010](#); [De Vries and Hobolt, 2012](#)). In turn, existing empirical evidence shows that issue voting on European integration is more prevalent in the case of challenger parties. Accordingly, political parties which receive a weakest share of the votes in the last elections should be more affected by issue voting on European integration. This hypothesis is partly confirmed in the analysis since parties which received less than 10% of the vote are equally affected by the issue of European integration than parties who received more than 20% of the vote share. Having said that, political parties that received between 10% and 20% of the vote share are the parties which are the most affected by the issue of European integration in line with past studies. In contrast, the effect of proximity on the left/right dimension on the probability to vote for a party increases with party size.

Table 5.2. presents the same results as table 2.1. using the stacked data matrix. Models 1 and 2 evaluate the impact of congruence on European integration on the propensity to vote for parties. Given the structure of the data (which gathers 406,035 observations), the Pseudo- $R^2$  is very low in the ordered logistic regression around 0.08. Results of the estimations show that congruence on European integration affects party choices because coefficients associated with party/voter proximity on the issue of European integration reaches statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*. As expected, the sign is positive: the less the distance between parties' stances and voter's preferences on the issue of European integration, the more individuals are likely to declare to vote for parties. Besides, traditional variables explaining the vote are in line with expectations, even though few indicators reach the threshold of statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*. Indeed, individuals who approve the action of the government; who are more interested in politics and who self identify as being in the higher ladder of the social scale have a higher probability to vote for parties. Having said that, the coefficient associated with proximity on the issue of European integration is clearly less important than the coefficient associated with proximity on the left-right dimension, indicating the predominance of this dimension in the vote. These first results thus show that proximity on the issue of European integration plays a role in the choice of parties, but less than proximity on the economics left/right dimension in line with table 5.1.

In the second stage, the objective is to differentiate between the effect of individual level variables on issue voting on European integration. H1b predicts that the coefficients associated with perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union on the domestic situation will be statistically significant and negative. The sign should be negative because the dependent variable, i.e. residuals, is the distance between the outliers. Stated differently, the more the distance between the outliers, the more it predicts that issue voting on European integration does not perform. Thus, residuals should be negatively affected by the extent to which individuals attribute responsibility to the European Union. Indeed, H1b predicts that individuals who think the European Union to be responsible for the domestic situation should be more prone to choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. Table 5.3. presents the different model specifications using the five stored residuals as dependent variables. Model 3 only includes congruence on European integration and electoral utilities; model 4 includes congruence on European integration, country fixed-effects and electoral utilities; model 5 includes congruence on European integration, socio-demographic variables, country fixed-effects and electoral utilities; model 6 includes congruence on European integration, socio-demographic variables, political variables country fixed-effects and electoral utilities; finally, model 7 uses residuals of the full OLS regression as the dependent variable.

Once again, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variables that is predictable from the independent variables is very low ( $R^2=0.01$ ). Having said that, empirical results presented in these estimations permit to differentiate between the direction of effect of individual level variables on issue voting on European integration in domestic elections. As in chapter 2, all the different estimations confirm that political sophistication is an important predictor of issue voting. Indeed, models 3 to 7 demonstrate that there is a negative and statistically significant relationship (at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*) between the level of sophistication on European matters and (non-) issue voting on European integration. As expected, individuals who have more knowledge regarding the functioning of the European

## 5.4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Table 5.3: Residuals measuring non-issue voting on European integration, with clusters on individuals (Ordinary Least Squares)

Independent Variables	Residuals measuring non-issue voting on European integration				
	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
EU Responsibility	0.01391***	0.01390***	0.01390***	0.01486***	0.01522***
Economic responsibility Govt	0.01567**	0.01564**	0.01561**	0.01600*	0.02363***
EU sophistication	-0.05030***	-0.05064***	-0.05091***	-0.06112***	-0.08678***
EU Identity	0.00714	0.00687	0.00666	0.10091***	0.03031
EU attitudes	0.03376***	0.03363***	0.03353***	0.02716***	0.02506***
EU interests	0.02782	0.02814	0.02839	-0.03751	-0.04551
EU trust	0.05327***	0.05345***	0.05359***	0.00964	0.00534
Class identification	0.05190***	0.05189***	0.05189***	-0.01332	-0.00489
Male	-0.11033***	-0.11097***	0.02999	-0.01413	0.02754
Education	0.00294	0.00303	0.02603**	0.01248	0.01752
Age	-0.09504***	-0.09563***	0.02305	0.02942	0.04575**
Constant	-1.8049	-0.8335***	-1.0723***	-0.77393***	-0.59153**
N	63215	63215	63215	63215	63215
R <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

Union are more prone to choose parties which display policy platforms on European integration which are close to their preferences. This finding is coherent with chapter 2, while it confirms past studies on European parliamentary elections (De Vries et al., 2011).

In addition, the estimations displayed in table 5.3. also confirm the *the balancing demands hypothesis*. Indeed, estimations show that issue voting on European integration is dependent upon individual perceptions of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre. Specifically, individuals who perceive their national government to be constrained on the economic margins of manoeuvre are more prone to choose parties which display policy platforms which are close to their individual preferences. Yet, contrary to results in chapter 2, models 3 to 7 only display weaker statistical threshold at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*\*. Also, note that general attitudes toward the process of European integration are still important predictors of issue voting on European integration. In fact, all the different models indicate that individuals who are less inclined to support the process of European integration are more likely to choose a party on the basis of its location on the issue of European integration. This is in line with past results which demonstrate that Eurosceptic challenger parties are usually the parties that are the most likely to put emphasis on this issue in the political system (De Vries, 2010; De Vries and Hobolt, 2012).

However, the main assumption of this chapter is largely refuted. Indeed, models show that voters who think that the European Union is highly responsible for the policy situation in their countries tend to be less prone to choose political parties which display policy proposals on the issue of European integration that resemble their own preferences contrary to expectation of H1b. Stated differently, attributing responsibility to the European Union negatively affects issue voting on European integration in domestic elections. One

possible explanation for such an outcome could be that voters' responsibility judgements are the function of their past political beliefs, such as partisanship (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b). Drawing on the partisanship literature, Hobolt and Tilley (2014b) show that "EU enthusiasts are more likely to attribute responsibility to the EU when conditions are improving, whereas Eurosceptics tend to deny the EU any responsibility for positive outcomes" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b, p. 16). Following, those who tend to attribute less responsibility to the European Union can be considered as the most Eurosceptic. Indeed, a spearman correlation between general attitudes toward the European Union and attribution of responsibility to the European Union reveals a positive relationship between the two variables (spearman=0.0257). Yet, it has been demonstrated that Eurosceptic parties are the parties which put the more emphasis on the issue of European integration in their party platforms, thus giving more opportunities to their voters to choose them on this specific issue.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter has been to evaluate the effect of the increasing competences of the European Union on issue voting on European integration. Specifically, I make the argument that the extension of the authority of the European Union should eventually increase the extent to which individuals choose parties on the basis of their policy platforms on the issue of European integration. Indeed, past studies have shown that the expansion of the authority of the European Union intensifies politicization of the issue of European integration, i.e. a combination of fiercer polarization between parties on the issue of European integration and a higher salience of the issue within the political system (De Wilde and Zürn, 2012). Yet, a greater politicization of an issue generally ends up increasing the salience of the issue on the individual level, ultimately favouring issue voting on this particular issue (see for example: Bélanger and Meguid, 2008; de Vries et al., 2011)

However, the different estimations displayed in this chapter clearly rule out this hypothesis. Indeed, results first show that issue voting on European integration does not increase over time. Instead, the effect of proximity on the issue of European integration on the probability to choose a party decreases between 2004 and 2009. Besides, individuals who believe the European Union to have responsibility over the domestic political situation are not more likely to choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences contrary to expectations. In fact, estimations show a reverse relationship: those who perceive the European Union to have low responsibility are more prone to choose parties which display policy platforms that resemble their preferences over the issue of European integration.

To explain this counter-intuitive result, I rely on the explanation provided by Hobolt and Tilley (2014b,a). The authors argue that individuals who support European integration tend to attribute more responsibility to the European Union for policy outcomes, especially when they perceive that conditions are improving. Under this understanding, individual attitudes toward the process of European integration function as a perceptual screen. Ultimately, this perceptual screen affect individual responsibility attributions. As a consequence, individuals who display Eurosceptic attitudes tend to attribute less responsibility to the European Union. Yet, the estimations also show that those who are

against the process of European integration tend to be more prone to choose party which have policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. This finding is coherent with [De Vries \(2010\)](#). Indeed, the author demonstrates that issue voting on European integration is a function of the extent to which the issue is salient to political parties. Yet, political parties that play the European card are usually Eurosceptic fringe parties ([Lynch and Whitaker, 2013](#)). Therefore, individuals who oppose the process of European integration are mechanically more likely to choose parties on the basis of their positioning on the issue of European integration because of increased salience.

Finally, I also show that perceptions of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre are also important predictors of issue voting on European integration. Indeed, voters who believe their national governments to be constrained over the national economy are more prone to choose a party which displays policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. This finding is coherent with previous studies which demonstrate that economic integration changes the structure of policy demands on the individual level. Specifically, it corroborates the *balancing demands hypothesis* which argues that economic integration fosters the importance of the non-economic dimension in the individual voting calculus in national elections.

Nevertheless, empirical results provided in this second chapter must be taken with caution because the dependent variables used in the second step of the empirical strategy are weak proxy measures of issue voting on European integration. Thus, the proportion of the variance in the dependent variables that is predictable from the independent variables is particularly low. Besides, the longitudinal analysis only compares two points in time, thus reducing the generalization of the results. Having said that, this chapter proposes an original way to discriminate between the effect of different individual level variables on issue voting on European integration.

## Summary

Chapter 5 examines the impact of the increasing responsibility of the European Union on the phenomenon of issue voting on European integration. In fact, I ask whether the increasing responsibility of the European Union over domestic policy decisions increases the importance of the issue of European integration in individual voting calculus in national parliamentary elections. The rationale is the following: as the European Union gains policy competences, politicization over the issue of European integration supposedly increases [De Wilde and Zürn \(2012\)](#). Consequently, citizens should choose political parties more and more on the basis of their positioning on the European integration process in national parliamentary elections as this issue becomes more salient to them. If this assumption is right, issue voting on European integration should increase over time, while it should be especially important among voters who believe the European Union to have responsibility over policy decisions. Several empirical studies already confirm that the issue of European integration influences national vote choices in the European member states, but no study looks at the conditioning effect of perceptions of responsibility of the European Union. To tackle this question, I take advantage of the 2004 and 2009 *European Election Study* datasets which include questions allowing to directly measure the impact of the issue of European integration on vote choice, most notably items on self-placement on the issue of European integration and corresponding

questions on the perceptions of the positioning of political parties on the issue. Findings show that the issue of European integration affects party choice in national electoral contests, but not increasingly so over time. Besides, attribution of responsibility to the European Union for the domestic situation has not the expected effect. Instead, I show that individuals who think the European Union to have low responsibility over the domestic political situation are more likely to choose parties which display policy stances on the issue of European integration that are close to their preferences. Thus, the hypothesis that the extension of the policy competences of the European Union has a positive impact on issue voting on European integration is clearly rejected.

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<p><b>PTV:</b> 0= not at all probable / 10= very probable                  We have a number of parties in Britain each of which would like to get your vote. How probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties? Please specify your views on a scale where 0 means "not at all probable" and 10 means "very probable".</p>
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<p><b>EU congruence:</b> 0= low congruence / 10= high congruence                  Positive difference between self- and party- placement                  Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?                  How about the (Party X)? Which number from 0 to 10, where 0 means "already gone too far" and 10 means "should be pushed further" best describes (party X)?</p> <p><b>LR congruence:</b> 0= low congruence / 10= high congruence                  Positive difference between self- and party- placement                  "In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "left" and 10 means "right".                  Which number best describes your position?"                  "How about the (Party X)? Which number from 0 to 10, where 0 means left and 10 means right best describes (party X)?</p> <p><b>Economic responsibility EU:</b> 0= no responsibility / 10= full responsibility                  "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the European Union for economic conditions in Britain? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".</p> <p><b>Economic responsibility Govt:</b> 0= no responsibility / 10= full responsibility                  "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain? Please indicate your views using any number</p>

	<p>on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility".</p> <p><b>EU sophistication:</b> 0= low sophistication (0-3) / 1= high sophistication (4)</p> <p>Correct answers to different questions regarding the EU:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Switzerland is a member of the EU</li> <li>2. The European Union has 25 member states</li> <li>3. Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.</li> <li>4. Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union</li> </ol>
<b>Control Variables</b>	<p><b>Retrospective economic evaluations:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better</p> <p>"What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in Britain is 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse."</p> <p><b>Supporter:</b> 0= no / 1= yes</p> <p>Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than others?</p> <p><b>Government approval:</b> 0= no / 1= yes</p> <p>Let us now come back to Britain. Do you approve or disapprove of the government's record to date?</p> <p><b>Perceptions of the functioning of the Democracy:</b> 0= not at all satisfied / 3= very satisfied</p> <p>On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Britain? Are you</p> <p><b>Interest in Politics:</b> 0= not at all / 3= very</p> <p>To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?</p> <p><b>EU Identity:</b> 0= British only / 3= European only</p> <p>Do you see yourself as</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 British only</li> <li>2 British and European</li> <li>3 European and British</li> <li>4 European only</li> </ol> <p><b>EU attitudes:</b> 0= already too far / 10= pushed further</p> <p>Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?</p> <p><b>EU trust:</b> 0= strongly disagree / 3= strongly agree</p> <p>For each of the following propositions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.</p> <p>You trust the institutions of the European Union</p> <p><b>Male:</b> 0= female / 1= male</p>



**Left-Right:** 0= left / 10= right

In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right".

What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "left" and 10 means "right".

Which number best describes your position?

**Religious attendance:** 0= never / 4= several times a week

How often do you attend religious services:

several times a week, once a week, a few times a year,

once a year or less, or never? 1 several times a week;

2 once a week; 3 a few times a year; 4 once a year or less; 5 never.

**Union:** 0= Not member (4) / 1= Member (1-3)

Are you yourself a member of a trade union or

is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union?

1 yes, I am / 2 yes, someone else is

3 yes I am and someone else in the household is /4 no

**Class:** 0= working class / 4= upper class

"if you were asked to choose one of these 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 class?

**Age:** 0= 18-24 / 3= 55+

What year were you born?

**Education:** 0= 1-15 / 2= 20+

How old were you when you stopped full-time education?



# Chapter 6

## Consequences on performance voting in European parliamentary elections

### 6.1 Introduction

For a long time, the European parliament had little responsibility in the European Union's process of policy-making. At the beginning of European integration, it was merely a body of consultation composed of part-time delegates coming from national parliaments. In the seventies, direct elections were put in place to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the institution. Afterwards, the European parliament increased its influence in the budgetary area by gaining the right to voice an opinion on bills. However, the European parliament was still an unequal partner: the cooperation and the co-decision procedures put in place respectively by the Single European Act and by the Maastricht treaty still did not favour the European parliament over other institutions of the European Union. Indeed, most studies assert that, under cooperation procedure and co-decision procedure, the European parliament had few abilities to influence legislative outcomes. Rather, the Council of ministers had the biggest influence under these procedures ([Crombez, 1996](#); [Tsebelis and Garrett, 1997](#)). Yet, the Lisbon treaty recently made the European parliament an equal partner with the Council of the European Union in most of the policy areas via the institutionalization of the ordinary legislative procedure ([Hix and Høyland, 2013](#)). Now, no law can pass if the European parliament does not agree with the European Commission's proposals and if it does not agree with the amendments made by the Council of the European Union. In addition, the European parliament gained an important power of veto over the choice of the European Union executive, i.e. commissioners and the president of the European Commission ([Hobolt, 2014](#)). For a couple of years now, the European parliament controls the nomination of the College of commissioners: the Commission as a collective body needs to be approved, but not chosen, by a majority of members of the European parliament to be able to govern. Hence, since 2004 and the dismissal of the Italian candidate Rocco Buttiglione, the European parliament has enjoyed an informal veto-power over the nomination of the European Commission. Besides, the choice of the president of the European Commission is now linked to the results in the European parliamentary elections. These institutional changes have undoubtedly strengthened the European parliament and have partly responded to critics regarding the democratic deficit of the European Union ([Follesdal and Hix, 2006](#)).

To sum up, the European parliament is now explicitly responsible for policy decisions and is able to control the actions of the European Union executive. In fact, the European parliament increasingly resembles the House of representatives in the American federal system. Following, I ask whether these new institutional powers - combined with the expansion of policy competences of the European Union depicted in the last chapters - affect how citizens behave in the European parliamentary elections. Specifically, I ask whether these two factors have affected performance voting in European parliamentary elections.

So far, European studies have described European parliamentary contests as second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif et al., 1997). Indeed, the members of the European parliament are generally elected on the basis of considerations which are driven by national domestic factors rather than by considerations about Europe: national governments' performances, domestic economic situations and national hot topics are major determinants of voting behaviour in European contests (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Reif et al., 1997; Marsh, 1998; Hix and Marsh, 2007). In this framework, European electoral contests generally function as referenda over national governments' achievements as in the case of senatorial elections in the United States of America (Atkeson and Partin, 1995). As a result, the reward-punishment model does not perform well in European parliamentary elections in the most recent studies, even when people deem the European Union responsible for policy performances (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). The traditional account proposed in the literature to explain such low accountability focuses on the consequences these elections have on 1) the choice of the European executive; and on 2) policy outcomes at the domestic level. To put it simply, it is argued that ballots cast in European elections do not greatly affect the composition of the European executive and European citizens' daily lives, eventually decreasing the individual inclination to hold members of the European parliament accountable for policy decisions. Indeed, the connection between the choice of the executive, especially the president of the European commission, and individual electoral choices has long been very thin. For instance, the selection of a *Spitzenkandidat* by the main European political party groups only appeared after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty. In addition, European Union's policy competences have been historically limited in comparison with those of the nation states, at the noticeable exception of commercial policy, external trade, customs, competition rules and the protection of marine biological resources. Another explanation in the literature focuses on the lack of clarity of responsibility. Indeed, the decision-making process in the European Union is generally based on broad consensus (Hix et al., 2007). Thus, it is difficult to clearly know who is to blame for policy outcomes because of the "lack of clear government-opposition politics and the complex policy-making procedures in the European Union" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a, p. 131).

Yet, as mentioned, policy competences of the European Union have increased significantly over the years, especially in the economic area (Cini, 2016). In the meantime, the links between the results of European elections and the choice of the European executive, i.e. the president of the European Commission and European commissioners, have also been strengthened, most notably since the Lisbon treaty. Besides, recent studies show that citizens clearly perceive the policy competences that belong to the European Union. Indeed, Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) indicate that citizens correctly distinguish between policy competences of the European Union and national governments. They do so especially in realms where competences are clearly distributed. In addition, citizens do

not equally assign responsibility given the institutional framework they belong to. For instance, citizens belonging to the Eurozone are more likely to attribute responsibility to the European Union for the economic situation than citizens who are in countries that are not part of the Eurozone. Finally, European citizens adapt to external events which affect distributions of power when they attribute responsibility. These results are clearer among the most sophisticated citizens, while they are also conditioned by individual partisanship bias, i.e. attitudes towards European integration. All in all, "it might be argued that the EU as a political context also provides people with distinct institutional cues about who is responsible, given the relatively clear demarcations between national and EU institutions" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b, p.31). In turn, there is room to believe that recent institutional changes has provided new incentives for voters to punish or reward the members of the European parliament on the basis of their policy performances.

So far, only Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) have studied performance voting in European parliamentary elections, but they only differentiated between two issues (health care standards and the economy) in a single election: the 2009 European parliamentary election. In this chapter, I aim to investigate the effect of the empowerment of the European Union on performance voting in European parliamentary elections by comparing across issues and by adding another point of comparison in time, i.e. the 2014 European parliamentary election. Drawing on the *functional responsibility hypothesis* which contends that citizens judge incumbents' performances on the basis of their actual competences (Stein, 1990), I make the claim that performance voting should be 1) more prominent in areas where the European Union has the the clearest competences and 2) increase after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty.

Studying accountability in European parliamentary elections responds to two important debates in European studies. First, it tackles the question of the characterization of the European Union system of governance and its comparability. If the *functional responsibility hypothesis* is correct the European Union could qualify as a traditional federal system of governance, not unlike the American federal system. Second, it also provides hints to comprehend the democratic deficit debate (Follesdal and Hix, 2006). Two of the main arguments supporting this thesis assert that low accountability in the European parliamentary elections stems from the weakness of the European parliament and the lack of direct connection between the European Union executive and voters. Also, low accountability is arguably linked to the low policy competences of the European Union. This chapter aims to provide evidence to discriminate between these arguments by analysing the relative impact of these explanatory variables in two different European parliamentary elections.

To assess accountability mechanisms in the European parliamentary elections, I take advantage of three recent datasets: *European Election Study* and *Comparative Electoral Dynamics*<sup>1</sup> which date from 2009 and 2014. They all include vote behaviours at the occasion of European parliamentary elections and national parliamentary elections; evaluations of policy performance and responsibility attributions on the economy. Besides, the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* surveys allow testing these hypotheses in a broad cross-country comparison because they gather all the member states of the European Union. Note that

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<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank Nicolas Sauger for having allowing me to use this database

the 2014 *European Election Study* does not feature information about four policy areas of interest (immigration, health care standards, interest rates and environment) while the 2009 *European Election Study* does. Finally, the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* provides information on unemployment, debts and deficits, taxation, immigration and environment, but is restricted to 7 European Union countries (France, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy). These datasets also include traditional socio-demographic and political information.

The empirical strategy proposes series of probit estimations which aim to examine whether perceived performances affect the fortunes of the incumbents in the European parliamentary elections and national parliamentary elections. Furthermore, I add interaction terms which capture responsibility attribution to the European Union to assess whether it has an impact on performance voting on the individual level. The findings first show a clear prevalence of performance voting in national parliamentary elections, supporting the second order model. Performance voting for incumbent European parties is systematically less important than retrospective voting for incumbent national parties. This finding is further supported by the systematic null effect of the interaction term of European Union responsibility attribution, and by the fact that retrospective voting in the economy even shrinks over time in European parliamentary elections. By and large, this chapter strengthens the idea of a weak connection between the electorate and incumbent members of the European parliament in European contests ([Hix and Høyland, 2013](#); [Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a](#))

This chapter proceeds as follows: I first discuss performance voting in the European parliamentary elections and emphasize on the most popular model explaining voting behaviour in these electoral contests: the model of second order elections. Next, I present the *functional responsibility hypothesis* and adapt it to the European Union. Section 3 details the data utilized in this chapter and develops the empirical strategy which aims to assess performance voting. Next, I interpret in more details the empirical results. Finally, section 5 concludes and proposes some suggestions for further research.

## 6.2 Electoral accountability in European parliamentary elections

The normative model of democratic accountability contends that voters should control their representatives on the basis of their past performances for a democracy to function well ([Przeworski et al., 1999](#)). This normative model stems from the principal-agent model of democratic representation whereby the principal (voter) delegates the power of decision-making to an agent (representative) for a given period of time (mandate). It assumes that strategic representatives want to hold onto their office positions. In this setting, elections provide representatives with incentives to act as performance maximizers: they should take into account the policy preferences of voters and adjust their records to these demands so to be voted back in office. If they manage to do so, the reward-punishment thesis predicts that voters will reward their representatives by allocating them their vote. In a perfect accountable system, voters will systematically renew representatives' mandate if they succeed to provide the electorate with good policy performances, while they will

be punished, if policy performances are bad, by choosing an opposition party or by abstaining.

Empirical studies on electoral accountability focus mainly on the economy: students of economic-voting consider the economy to be the policy area where judgements over incumbents' records is the easiest to make, given the low sophistication and the low motivation to process complex information (Converse, 1964) as well as the lack of coherence of voters (Zaller, 1992). Besides, the economy is generally the most salient issue in the political agenda of both political parties and media (Anderson, 1995) and is the area which is the most easily comparable in cross-country studies. In turn, democratic accountability has traditionally corresponded to the reward-punishment model on the economy whether sociotropic (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981; Anderson, 2000) or egotropic (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994). As Anderson (2007) puts it: "democratic elections are expected to ensure accountability via economic voting because they are held intermittently but regularly, and because they allow citizens to express broad and blunt approval or disapproval of the government's record in an area of policy they can relate to and understand" (Anderson, 2007, p. 277). Many studies in economic voting confirmed the empirical relevance of the theory in the United States and in the United-Kingdom (Key, 1966; Fiorina, 1981). Since then, the model has been largely tested in different types of elections (Nadeau and Lewis-Beck, 2001; Brown, 2010); in different regions (Rattinger, 1991); and in many countries with differing electoral systems (Norpoth et al., 1991; Lewis-Beck, 1997; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, 2007, 2013). Overall, there is thus evidence of a positive relationship between economic performance, i.e. unemployment, growth and inflation rates, and the support for the government in polls and in the voting booth. These economic effects explain approximately one third of the variation in the vote for the incumbent government (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994). Other non-economic issues also play a role in electoral results, but they display less systematic importance in the voting calculus.

In accountability models, the central unit of analysis is generally the incumbent government because it provides a way to indirectly measure responsibility. These models start from the assumption that, for voters to hold their representatives accountable for policy outcomes, a necessary condition is that they deem them responsible for policy outcomes. The incumbent government is generally assumed to be able to put its policy program in place, and is therefore presumably responsible for policy outcomes. But, this is not the case in every political system because government clarity of responsibility varies between countries. Indeed, Powell Jr and Whitten (1993) argue that both partisan and governmental features determine the extent to which voters can identify if governments are responsible for a policy outcome. The rationale behind is the following: the more cohesive a government is, the easier it is for citizens to assign responsibilities. Consequently, the easier it will be to hold a given government accountable for its past policy performance.

For instance, suppose a political regime called R1 where there is only one legislative assembly and where legislative committees do not include losers of the elections. Party p1 wins the election with the absolute majority in the legislative assembly. Then, party p1 can rule on its own without forming any coalition, nor depend on the help of opposition to pass laws in the economic realm. Suppose that party p1 is highly cohesive and has no party dissent. Theoretically, party p1 can pass any laws it wishes. Now suppose a political regime R2 where there are two chambers with identical legislative powers. In this political



Regime R', committees are extremely inclusive towards the electoral losers because they are integrated through a proportional mechanism. Party p2 wins the elections with no clear majority and has to rule with parties p3 and p4. To pass laws, p2 even has to rely on the support of party p5. Now assume that party p2 suffers from strong internal dissent. Hence, to pass laws, party p2 has to rely on a high number of institutional and partisan actors to pass economic laws. In the political regime R1, the responsibility of passing laws almost uniquely falls to party p1, while in the political regime R2, it falls to multiple actors such as parties p2, p3, p4 and p5; to the two legislative assemblies and to the legislative committees. Imagine that economic performances are exactly similar in both political regimes. Following [Powell Jr and Whitten \(1993\)](#), party p1 influences more policy outcomes than party p2, because it has the upper hand on the policy-making process. If so, it is easier for voters to judge party p1 on its records than party p2. These findings linking government responsibility to accountability have notably been confirmed in Italy ([Bellucci, 1991](#)) and in twelve member states of the European Union ([Anderson, 2000](#)).

In nowadays political systems, multi-level government settings also increasingly condition electoral accountability by distributing responsibilities between governments ([Anderson, 2006](#)). In these settings, citizens face a daunting task to correctly assign responsibility. The reasons advanced to explain why multi-level systems of governance decrease clarity of responsibility are numerous. First, it is more costly for citizens in federal systems to gather information as to whom is in charge of different policy realms ([Cutler, 2004, 2008](#)). Simply put, the dispersion of political authority across levels of governments increases information costs by adding layers in the decision-making process. In turn, it makes it more difficult for voters to accurately know who is responsible for policy outcomes, notably when competences are intertwined between levels of governance. In a study of decentralization and clarity of responsibility in Spain, [León \(2011\)](#) clearly shows that the relationship between these two phenomena can be represented in a u-shape fashion. In regions where dispersion of power on fiscal competences is intertwined, it is difficult for citizens to correctly assign responsibility. On the contrary, in regions with low or high levels of decentralization, i.e. where the region has low or high autonomy over revenues and expenditures, citizens can clearly attribute responsibility. Furthermore, electoral accountability can also be affected negatively by the mere fact of increasing the number of elections, as in the Swiss case ([Downs, 1999](#)). This is a phenomenon known as voter fatigue ([Schlicht et al., 2010](#)). Then, multi-level systems of governance can increase governments' incentives to engage in processes of blame shifting and credit taking ([Downs, 1999](#)). Thus, multi-level systems of governance further complicate voters' tasks: before rewarding or punishing any government, they first need to know whether the government is formally responsible for policy outcomes.

An illustration can clarify the hypothesis: take political regimes R and R' and suppose that they yield identical economic performance, i.e. a low level of inflation and a low level of unemployment. R is a centralized system where party p' is the incumbent government and has total power regarding the management of both inflation and unemployment. R' is a decentralized system where p'' is the incumbent government and has power over policies in relation with unemployment but cannot influence inflation rates, since the political authority controls this policy area. At the end of the mandate, voters have to choose whether they want to reelect p' and p''. All things being held equal, the probability that voters in R will reelect p' is higher than is the probability that voters in R' will reelect p'', since p'' is the

sole responsible for the worsening of inflation rates.

The model of democratic accountability has been empirically supported in national parliamentary elections but has received very few support in the case of European parliamentary elections so far. Indeed, only [Tilley et al. \(2008\)](#) and [Bartkowska and Tiemann \(2015\)](#) found small evidence of economic voting in European parliamentary elections. On the one hand, [Tilley et al. \(2008\)](#) find that voters judge incumbents on the basis of economic performances in countries with single party governments. On the other hand, [Bartkowska and Tiemann \(2015\)](#) find that "across the board those voters who think their respective national economy is going to do well over the next 12 months are more likely to stick with one of the parties in government, while those who think the national economic development gives cause for concern are more likely to try out one of the parties in the opposition" ([Bartkowska and Tiemann, 2015](#), p. 14).

In fact, European parliamentary elections are generally considered as typical second-order elections not unlike mid-term elections in the United States of America. In a nutshell, European parliamentary elections usually display a low level of participation, good prospects for small and new political parties, a high percentage of invalid ballots and, finally, small signs of accountability. Apart from the of clarity of responsibility argument, the most common explanation provided in the literature to comprehend such outcomes is that there is less-at-stake in European parliamentary elections than in general elections. Indeed, for a long time, the European parliament did not have any real power in the decision-making process of the European community. In the first European parliamentary elections, the European community was largely controlled by the European Court of Justice and by member states. Furthermore, the European community did not have extended policy competences: it merely tackled the coordination of national currencies and had minor power in realms such as atomic energy and market competition. As a result, political parties did not invest time and resources in European electoral campaigns ([MENKE and GORDON, 1980](#)) and national issues were prominent in these electoral contests ([Reif and Schmitt, 1980](#)). In fact, these elections long served as a way to express judgements about national political concerns. This is particularly well illustrated by the impact of electoral cycles on fortunes of governing parties: if the European parliamentary elections are held at mid-term, governing parties have a clear comparative disadvantage relatively to other parties ([Magni-Berton, 2008](#)). The rationale is the following: incumbent governments' popularity is higher in the beginning and at the end of their mandates, respectively because of a honeymoon effect and because governments are generally more distributive at the end of the mandate. Thus, mid-term elections usually demobilize governments' sympathizers and strengthen the opposition as is expected by the *referendum hypothesis* ([Atkeson and Partin, 1995](#))) which argues that citizens do not use the mid-term electoral contests to judge representatives on the basis of past performances. All in all, citizens do not seem to judge judge members of the European parliament on the basis of their past actions. Empirically, the model of second-order elections has been largely validated over the years ([Marsh, 1998](#); [Hix and Marsh, 2007, 2011](#)) at the noticeable exception of the 2004 European parliamentary election in the new member states ([Schmitt, 2005](#)).

More recently, [Hobolt and Tilley \(2014a\)](#) analysed whether this lack of accountability applied to different policy areas in the 2009 European parliamentary elections. In this study,

the authors clearly show that incumbent members of the European parliament, i.e. members of the European people's party, are still not rewarded or punished based on perceptions of policy performance, should it be on the economy or health care. Besides, they demonstrate that even when citizens deem the European Union responsible for policy performance, they are not more likely to hold incumbent members of the European parliament accountable for past policy performances. The main reason brought by the authors to explain this discrepancy is the low clarity of responsibility of the European system of governance. Indeed, they make the claim that the the European political system still impedes citizens' abilities to identify who is in really in charge. First, politics in the European parliament are characterized by broad-based consensus (Hix et al., 2007). Second, the Commission includes multiple partisan affiliations. Finally, the President of the Commission is not directly chosen on the basis of the political representation of the European parliament. Hence, it is "difficult to identify the specific political party responsible for the outcomes" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a, p. 131). Even though the European parliamentary elections is, in principle, the main mechanism of accountability in the European Union, there is still no robust empirical proof that citizens use their ballots in such a way in European contests.

### 6.3 Clarity of responsibility and functional competencies

As mentioned, the economy is usually the main issue students of accountability focus on because it is commonly considered as the most important issue for voters. Yet, accountability models assert that voters assess their representatives on the basis of their performances on different issues such as security, foreign affairs, environment or health care. In multilevel systems of governance, policy competences are distributed among different levels of governance: mayors, parliamentarians, prime ministers, presidents and federal representatives are not equally responsible for different policy outcomes. For instance, in the American federal system, the federal government, i.e. Congress and President, enjoys exclusive competences over national defence, foreign affairs, coinage of money, immigration or regulation of interstate commerce, while States and cities can act in the realms of education or crime. In the economic area, subnational governments are largely constrained by the federal decisions and enjoy little leeway of manoeuvre, notably because of their inability to control the mobility of labour and capital Hendrick and Garand (1991). Following, it has been argued that this distribution of competences moderate voting behaviour. This is the starting point of the *functional responsibility hypothesis*. This argument contends that governments' differing functional responsibilities inherited by history and written in constitutions determine how voters decide to reward or punish incumbents. In this model, voters' evaluation of governments is conditional upon the policy responsibilities assigned to the governments. As Stein puts it: "voters choose candidates on the basis of some expectation that their choice will affect the future actions of government" (Stein, 1990, p. 30).

Empirical studies on this matter generally rely on elections' results on the subnational and federal levels (mostly in the United States of America) to assess the extent to which policy performances match governments' functional responsibilities (Stein, 1990; Atkeson and Partin, 1995; Arceneaux, 2006). First, Stein (1990) shows that "the content of relevant voter evaluations is constrained by the content of functional responsibilities constitutionally and

historically assigned to each level of government” (Stein, 1990, p. 30). Indeed, voters in the 1982 Senatorial elections evaluated all republican candidates, should they be incumbent or challengers, on the basis of the situation of the economy on the federal level. Meanwhile, in the gubernatorial elections, voters did not take into account the situation of the economy on the federal level to choose to reelect the incumbent, except it was a member of the president’s party. Moreover, the author demonstrates that the situation of the economy in the State had an important effect on the choice of a governor only when an attribution of gubernatorial responsibility was made. To sum up, Stein (1990) shows that voters choose senators on the basis of the national economic performance, while governors are not punished for the state of the national economy (except when they are incumbent Republicans). This suggests that individuals are aware of the functional responsibilities that differentiate governments and act accordingly when casting a ballot. These findings are corroborated more fiercely by Atkeson and Partin (1995). In their study, they find that voters hold governors accountable for the economic situation of the State, while they do not hold Senators accountable on the situation of the State economy. Rather, they suggest that the former are blamed or rewarded on the basis of the situation of the economy on the federal level. Hence, this implies that voting behaviour in state elections are linked to issues allocated to governors such as the condition of the state economy, education and crime, but not to the national economy. In turn, the *national referendum hypothesis* predicts well voting behaviour in senatorial elections, but not in gubernatorial elections.

The *functional responsibility hypothesis* has also found some support in contexts outside the United States of America. In a recent article, Johns (2011) investigates the Ontarian election of 2003 and the Scottish election of 2007 to see if attributions of responsibility are in accordance with actual responsibilities and whether they affect decisions in the voting booth. The Scottish and Canadian case-studies are chosen because these subnational entities have considerable powers in the management of education, health care and public transport, while the Britain and the Canadian governments still have the upper hand over the management of the national economy. In fact, Scotland and Ontario are archetypal cases which provide distinct variation on issues, allowing one to compare how issue attribution is distributed among individuals and how this distribution affects voting behaviour. The results provided by Johns (2011) are less clear-cut than previous studies, but they tend to support the fact that voters accurately assign issues to different levels of government on the aggregate level: the Canadian and the British governments are considered responsible for dealing with the economic situation; responsibility for health care is attributed to the subnational governments; both Scottish and Ontarian citizens consider the subnational government responsible for public transport, while Scots do so in a smaller extent (probably due to the newness of the constitutional arrangement). Once again, citizens seem to get it right when pinpointing policy competences in federal states. Nevertheless, Johns (2011) remains sceptical about the actual impact of these responsibility attributions on voting behaviour for two reasons. First, he is not able to find structural explanatory variables susceptible to predict attribution of responsibility in both federal systems, which can eventually mean that attributions of responsibility are nonattitudes, i.e. ”delivered off the top of respondents’ heads and not tightly linked to their broader political thinking and predispositions” (Johns, 2011, p. 67). Second, his data also shows weak evidence that ”issues weighed heavier in the decision-making of those who laid responsibility for them at the door of the bodies being elected” (Johns, 2011, p. 71). Thus, as Johns suggests, there is still

much to know about the dynamics of responsibility attributions and, most importantly, how they translate into voting behaviour at different elections in multilevel systems of governance.

More recently, [Arceneaux \(2006\)](#) showed that issue accessibility mediates the extent to which voters are able to link responsibility attributions to their voting decision: the individual perception of functional responsibility between levels of government affects voting behaviour only when voters consider an issue to be important. More importantly, [Arceneaux \(2006\)](#) unravels that, within the subsets of individuals who have high issue accessibility, perceived functional responsibility attributions only affects voting behaviour when "they match the actual assignment of functional responsibilities" ([Arceneaux, 2006](#), 747). Indeed, unemployment affects voting behaviour on the federal level and on the state level, while education and traffic congestion has an effect on voting behaviour only in mayoral elections. The author contends that the cause of this match might derive from knowledge and campaign effects. First, individuals with high knowledge on an issue might simply want to credit or blame the appropriate office for what it has done because they care about the issue. But, it might also be due to the fact that electoral campaigns render issues more accessible ([Zaller, 1992](#)) and that the set of issues discussed in a campaign corresponds to the issues which are functionally attributed to each level of government. Finally, it might be that individuals use heuristics and rules of thumbs to form correct judgements as to the distribution of power within federal states, as they do when voting for their own interest ([Lau and Redlawsk, 1997, 2001](#)).

The European Union now has exclusive competences over commercial policy, monetary policy within the Eurozone, external trade, customs Union, establishment of competition rules and the conservation of marine biological resources. In these policy areas, only the European Union can legislate and adopt legally binding acts, while member states need the agreement of the European Union to do so. Yet, the European Union only has few or no competences in areas such as health care, industrial policies, tourism, culture, education, civil protection, labour market or tax. In this framework, the European institutions only serve as coordination arenas where member states' representatives meet and adopt non-binding legislative measures. In fact, the open method of coordination is often the legislative framework the European Union uses to support the action of the member states. Finally, there are other areas where the European Union and member states share competences: social policies, energy, consumers' protection, agriculture, transports and environment. Here, the principle of subsidiarity prevails. The latter states that "the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the member states, either at the central level or at the regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level"<sup>2</sup>. Drawing on the *functional responsibility hypothesis*, I thus expect members of the European parliament to be more rewarded or punished in policy areas where it has exclusive competences, than in policy areas where it shares competences. Accordingly, there should be no signs of performance voting in policy areas where the European Union has no competence.

H1: Performance voting should be more prominent in areas where the European parliament has clear functional responsibilities.

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<sup>2</sup>Article 5 Treaty of the European Union



As mentioned above, the democratic deficit argument, well summarized by (Follesdal and Hix, 2006), also raises doubts about the capacity of European parliamentary elections to be a channel of accountability. Advocates of this thesis build their rationale on similar arguments as the less-at-stake explanation: European parliamentary elections are dominated by national-related considerations and there are no institutional incentives for voters to participate in European parliamentary elections because of the weakness of the European parliament in the European institutional design. Concerning the latter, the Lisbon treaty ratified in the end of 2009 might be a game-changer. Indeed, the European parliament is now a co-equal legislator along the Council. In the legislative arena, the ordinary legislative procedure significantly bolstered the European parliament as a policy-maker. Nowadays, no law can pass without the approval of the European parliament, even at the latest round of the procedure, i.e. the second readings' round. Now, the European parliament is the ultimate instance which can decide whether a law will pass and is thus formally responsible for policy decisions at the European level. This is the first time that the European parliament enjoys such veto-powers in the European institutional framework. In turn, voters should increasingly hold their members of the parliament accountable for past policy performance. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that they should act accordingly because prior studies suggest that voters are able to get it right when assigning responsibility at different levels of governance, even though it is a difficult task in multilevel settings (Anderson, 2006; León, 2011). Indeed, citizens attribute representational responsibilities separately to the European Union and national governments since "representational perceptions at each level predict satisfaction with democracies at each level. And representational perceptions at the national (EU) level do not influence evaluations of democracies at the EU (national) level" (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2009, p. 153). In addition, European citizens do not differ significantly with experts when they attribute responsibility to the European Union on different policy areas (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). More importantly, the authors show that citizens' perceptions are affected by the institutions they are embedded in: the institutional and economic context in which citizens live shapes the way they attribute responsibility. For example, citizens outside the Eurozone attribute less responsibility to the European Union for the economic situation, in comparison with citizens who belong to a country inside the European Monetary Union.

Even if there is more-at-stake in European parliamentary elections after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty and if citizens are aware of this fact, performance voting could remain low if government clarity of responsibility is still hindered. However, the Lisbon treaty also had an impact on this matter. Indeed, the European Union now directly decides how the European executive is appointed. The Lisbon treaty made official the unwritten rule which gave the European parliament the right to choose Commissioners via the institutionalization of the vote of confidence. More importantly, the choice of the president of the Commission is now determined by European parliamentary elections results: the European political party which gets the more share of the vote can appoint its candidate. Prior to 2014, the Council was the only instance responsible for the nomination of the President of the Commission and debates concerning its choice were only of intergovernmental nature while there was no direct link between the European parliament's majority and the policies made by the Commission. Although the Lisbon treaty still gives the Council the first and last word on the nomination of the President, the "democratic legitimacy conveyed by the vote of Europe's citizens creates significant pressure on national governments to nominate the elected candidate to

accept informally, if not formally, the Parliament’s right to appoint the EU’s executive” (Hobolt, 2014, p. 1533). This measure thus enhances clarity of responsibility and brings the European parliamentary elections closer to traditional general parliamentary elections where “voters cast for a ballot for a party (or candidate) in the knowledge that this is also a vote for a specific prime ministerial candidate and government” (Hobolt, 2014, p. 1529). Thus, there is now a clearer translation from vote choice to the composition of the Commission. Combined with heightened European parliament’s responsibility, I then expect performance voting in European parliamentary elections to increase after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty.

H2: Performance voting in European parliamentary elections is likely to increase after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty.

Next part presents the data and the methods used in this study to investigate whether people reward and punish incumbent members of the European parliament on the basis of their past actions.

## 6.4 Data and Empirical Strategy

To investigate performance voting in the European parliamentary elections over time, I take advantage of three individual-level datasets: the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* and the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics*. The former are cross-country surveys which permit a broad comparison of voting behaviour in the member states of the European Union, while the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* is restricted to 7 member states (France, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy). They all include vote intentions at the occasion of the last European parliamentary elections; evaluations of policy performance in different areas and items measuring responsibility attributions to the European Union. The 2009 *European Election Study* gathers around 1,000 respondents in each country (28.000 in total), while the *European Election Study* 2014 also includes Croatia and gathers 30.000 units. The 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* is less extended: around 22.000 citizens participated in the survey, with around 4.000 respondents by country. The three surveys do not systematically provide similar information on assessments of issue performance and government responsibility however. The 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* gather information concerning perceptions of the economy, while the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* is more specific: it includes questions on unemployment, debts and deficits, and taxation. The 2009 *European Election Study* and the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* allow for comparison on immigration and environmental issues, while the 2009 *European Election Study* include questions on health care standards and interest rates. These datasets also include traditional socio-demographic information. In addition, they allow to take into account variables measuring political values.

In this chapter, the first objective is to assess the extent to which citizens punish or reward the members of the European parliament on the basis of their past policy records. This is not an easy task because European politics are generally characterized by broad-based consensus and because the link between the European parliament’s composition and the executive has been traditionally weak (Hix et al., 2007). In turn, it is hard to find which actor is the incumbent. During the two last legislative terms of office (2004-2009 and 2009-2014), the centre-right *European peoples’ party* (EPP) had the majority in the European



parliament and in the European Commission, while the president of the Commission was also a member of the *EPP*. In addition, the presidents of the Council of the European Union were also members of the *EPP*: the Czech foreign affair minister from the *civic democratic party (ODS)*, Alexandr Vondra held the presidency at the beginning of 2009, while he was replaced by an independent politician, Stefan Füle after a domestic political crisis. They were then followed by Swedish members of the moderate party, Carl Bildt and Cecilia Malmström, who were eventually replaced by a permanent president after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty, i.e. Herman Van Rompuy from the Belgian *CDV*. In fact, most presidents of the European Council since 2004 were members of the European peoples' party. Besides, the president of the European parliament in 2009, i.e. Jerzy Buzek, was also a member of the *EPP*, but he was replaced in 2012 by a member of the European socialists: Martin Shultz. All in all, it does not seem unrealistic to think that the main political party responsible for passing laws from 2004 to 2014 in the European Union is the *EPP* (even though European politics are more based on compromise than in other polities). As a result, the dependent variable aims to measure the vote for the *EPP*. Specifically, it gathers individuals who report to have voted for members of the European peoples' party. Note that I also compare performance voting in the European parliament with performance voting in national elections to further corroborate the second order model. In turn, I also use a corresponding dependent variable for vote choice for incumbents in national elections. In this case, I choose a prospective vote intention to ensure comparability between countries because last elections were not held at the same time in each country.

To investigate performance voting, models of accountability usually rely on retrospective and sociotropic perceptions of policy performance as in previous chapters. First, the pocketbook vs. sociotropic debate tackles the problem of the micro-foundations of economic voting. The question has been whether people think about their own financial situation or about the situation of the political entity they belong to when evaluating parties. Even though the pocketbook explanation has received some support, most empirical studies on this matter have found more evidence supporting the sociotropic argument (Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013). In fact, individuals seem to judge incumbents on what they achieved at the national level. Since the goal of this chapter is to assess whether members of the members of the European parliament are rewarded or punished on the basis of their performances, the more sociotropic the measure is, the better. Yet, the *European Election Study* and the *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* surveys do not provide items asking about policy performances at the European level, but only at the country level. Nonetheless, the national sociotropic measure of performance is arguably a good proxy for assessing accountability in the European parliamentary elections because the decisions taken at the European level arguably affect the national situation. In addition, the retrospective approach makes sense when focusing on accountability mechanisms since it is at the core of the theoretical assumptions. Thus, I use sociotropic retrospective indicators of policy performances as the main independent variables. In comparison with most studies on accountability, I do not focus only on the economic realm. Indeed, in multi-level systems of governance, accountability supposedly depends on the policies attributed to each government. Therefore, I use different kinds of issues: health care standards, interest rates, immigration, climate change, unemployment, taxation and debts and deficits. These are interesting items because some are mainly dealt at the national level (health care, taxation and unemployment), while others are dealt exclusively at the European level (interest rates). I also include a battery

of socio-demographic controls and political variables which traditionally explain vote for incumbents: gender, age, social class, religious attendance, membership within trade union, left-right positioning, partisanship and attitudes towards the process of European integration.

As noted above, models of accountability start from the assumption that governments' functional responsibilities determine how voters punish or reward governments in the ballot box. Attribution of responsibility thus has a conditional effect on accountability mechanisms: governments should be punished or rewarded only in policy areas where it has responsibilities. In turn, I expect voters to reward or punish European and national incumbents differently. Specifically, members of the European parliament (conversely, members of the national parliament) should not be rewarded or punished in areas where they have no power. To test this hypothesis, I first run probit models including vote intentions for incumbents in national and European elections with my main explanatory variables of interests, i.e. perceptions of policy performances in different policy realms. I also include socio-demographic and political variables explaining voting behaviour while the non-randomness nature of the data, i.e. voters nested in countries, is controlled by using country fixed effects. Note that I also ran the same regressions using logistic regressions. As mentioned, the European Union does not have similar policy competences in the economic area: they notably have more leeway to influence debts and deficits, than unemployment. Then, I expect the former to influence more incumbent members of the European parliament than the latter.

To test the effect of responsibility attributions on accountability on the individual level, I take advantage of the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* and the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics*, because they offer questions assessing responsibility attributions to the European Union and to the national governments. On the one hand, the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* provide questions which are worded as follows: "Now I would like to ask you some questions about how much responsibility the [respondent's country] and the European Union have for some of the things going on in [country]. Of course, you may think that neither is responsible. First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the [respondent's country] government for economic conditions in [country]?" Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility". Then the respondent is asked "And what about the European Union, how responsible is the EU for economic conditions in [respondent's country]? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "no responsibility" and 10 means "full responsibility". On the other hand, the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* provides a question which is worded as follows: "As of today, do you think that the same following issues are mainly dealt with by national or European authorities? Using this scale, what number best describes your opinion where 0 means "the [country] government has full responsibility" and 10 means "The EU authorities have full responsibility". Then, I include interactions terms to see whether attributions of responsibility reinforces performance voting in European parliamentary elections. I follow [Hobolt and Tilley \(2014a\)](#) and dichotomize between low and high responsibility where the former starts at 0 and ends at 6, while the latter comprises 7 to 10 on the 0-10 scale in the 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study*, while I take the two-extreme points as standpoints in the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics*, i.e. 1-2 and 9-10.

## 6.5 Empirical Analysis

Before analysing estimations' results, I first take a look at the descriptive statistics about responsibility attributions to see whether the data are in line with the assumptions put forward in this chapter. This will be the purpose of the first subsection. Next, I propose the results of the estimations regarding performance voting across issues, while the last subsection proposes estimations over time to see whether the ratification of the Lisbon treaty has had an effect on performance voting.

### 6.5.1 Descriptive Statistics

In this subsection, I examine the assumption that European citizens generally get it right when assigning policy responsibilities to different levels of governments. Formally, they should deem the European Union less responsible than national governments in areas where it enjoys few policy competences (e.g. health care). Conversely, they should deem the European Union more responsible than national governments in areas where it enjoys more policy competences (e.g. monetary policy), with the effect being moderated by the institutional framework.

To see whether this assumption is true, the 2009 *European Election Study* provides information regarding the perceptions of the responsibility of the European Union on interest rates and health care standards. The latter is an exclusive competence of national governments. Indeed, health care is dealt with by national organizations such as the National Health Service in the United-Kingdom. In this policy realm, the European Union has prerogatives only in the framework of the freedom of circulation: the 1998 Kohll and Decker judgements state that reimbursements from national agencies should also cover treatments prescribed in another member state. Thus, I expect European citizens to deem the European Union less responsible for health care provisions than national governments. In contrast, the European Union, via the European central bank, has the upper hand on the management of the monetary policy. In fact, the European central bank is completely independent from national governments in carrying out its mandate. As a result, I expect European citizens who live in Eurozone members to deem the European Union more responsible than national governments in the management of interest rates.

Figure 6.1. largely supports these assumptions. First, European citizens attribute less responsibilities to the European Union, in comparison with national governments, in the health care realm: national governments are considered as the political actors responsible in this policy realm with an overall mean of approximatively 8 out of 10 in both Eurozone and non-Eurozone members. Meanwhile, individuals generally deem the European Union less responsible in this policy realm with a mean around 5. Note that individuals within countries belonging to the Eurozone tend to consider the European Union a bit more responsible than individuals who are citizens of a non-Eurozone member. In contrast, citizens consider national governments to be less responsible for the management of interest rates than for the management of health care. More importantly, figure 6.1. shows that citizens who are member of the Eurozone deem the European Union more responsible than national governments for the setting up of interest rates. This suggests that citizens are relatively well-aware of the distribution of responsibilities between the European Union and

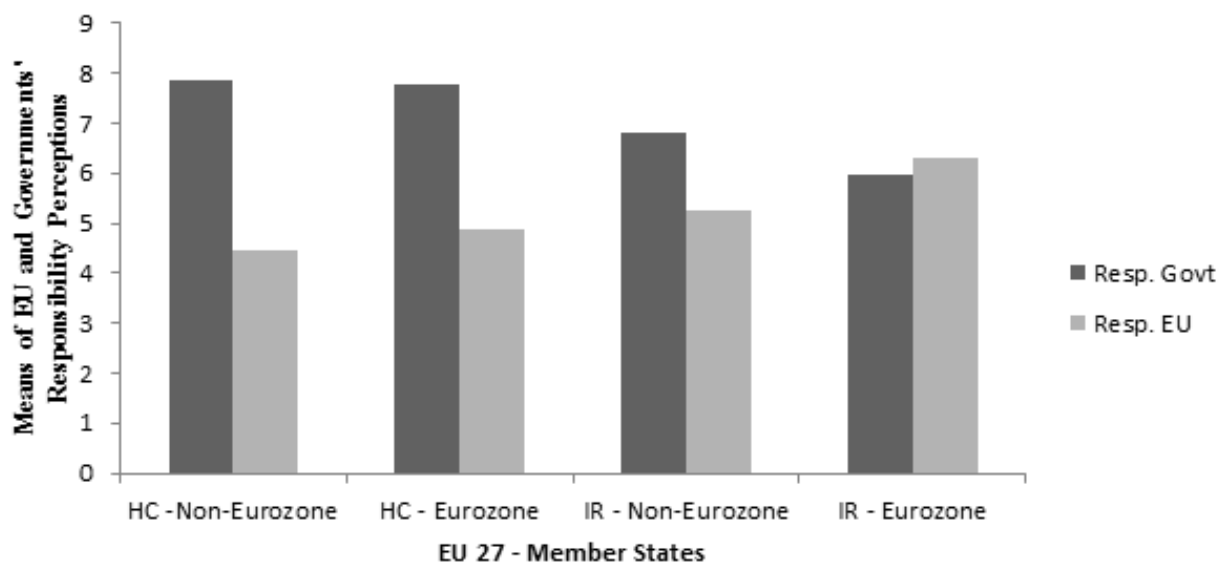


Figure 6.1: Perceptions of responsibility of the EU and national governments over health care and interest rates in the 27 EU member States in 2009 and 2014

national governments.

The second main assumption of this chapter is that European citizens increasingly hold the European Union responsible for policy outcomes. Due to the lack of the available data, it is only possible to examine the evolution of perceptions of responsibilities in the economy. Figure 6.2 presents the evolution of these perceptions in the 2009-2014 time-period.

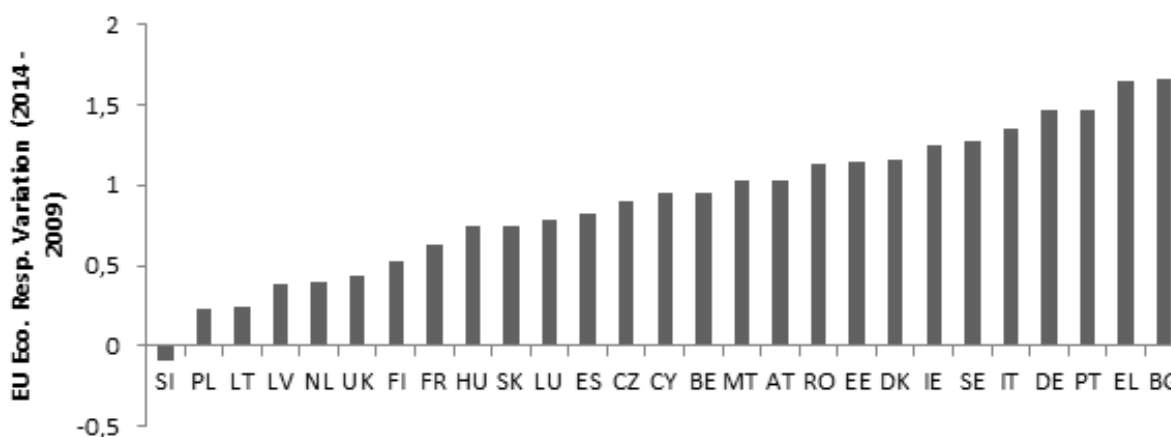


Figure 6.2: The evolution of individual perceptions of the economic responsibilities of the EU in the 27 EU member States between 2009 and 2014

From the look of this figure, it can be concluded that the European Union is increasingly considered responsible for the situation of the economy in most of the member states. However, the results do not provide information about the responsibility of the European parliament and are potentially affected by the economic crisis that occurred during this time-period.

Table 6.1: Performance voting in the 2009 European parliamentary elections and in the next general elections (2009), with fixed effects on countries (probit regresions)

Independent Variables	Vote for EU/national incumbents	
	Model 1	Model 2
Economy	0.02968*	0.08905***
Health Care	0.04062**	0.15049 ***
Interest Rates	-0.01829	-0.00465
Immigration	-0.03014**	-0.02447*
Climate	0.01517	0.01733
Partisanship	1.71695***	2.07226***
EU integration	0.01692***	0.02345***
Male	0.02389	-0.03074
Left Right	0.08979***	0.00870*
Religiosity	0.08841***	0.01469*
Union	-0.03022	-0.07962***
Class	-0.05101***	-0.04226***
Age	0.05582***	0.05165***
Education	0.05765**	-0.01429
Constant	-2.52268***	-1.62401***
N	15,827	16,256
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.39	0,43

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

## 6.5.2 Empirical results

Turning to the statistical analyses, I first run probit models in order to differentiate between performance voting in European parliamentary elections and performance voting in national parliamentary elections via the study of the 2009 *European Election Study*. In this framework, I expect voters to punish or reward national and European incumbent parties differently. Specifically, the *functional responsibility hypothesis* predicts that performance voting should be conditional upon the policy competencies of different levels of governments. Model 1 presents the results of the estimation which predicts the individual propensity to have cast a ballot for a member of the EPP in the 2009 European parliamentary elections, while model 2 shows the results of the probit regression which estimates the individual inclination to vote for the national incumbent party if there were a general election tomorrow.

Table 6.1. first shows that the variables predicting the vote for European and national incumbent parties are relatively similar. First, partisanship is, by far, the strongest indicator predicting the individual inclination to cast a ballot for incumbents: the closer an individual is to an incumbent party, the more likely he or she will be to declare to vote for the latter. Also, attitudes toward the process of European integration explain similarly incumbents' support in both elections: the more one thinks that the process of European integration

should deepen, the more likely he or she will be to support an incumbent. Here, the reason can be found in the fact that mainstream government parties are usually more eager to support European integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). In addition, results show that individuals who position themselves on the top of the social hierarchy are more likely to favour incumbent parties in both elections as expected (Arzheimer, 2009). Indeed, the coefficients associated with self-positioning on the social scale are systematically negative, with the effect being statically significant. Finally, age is also a good predictor of vote for incumbent parties. As expected, the older you get, the more prone you are to favour incumbents.

Turning to performance voting, results also display similar results across elections. On the one hand, individuals who perceive that the situation has improved in the economic domain in the area of health care are generally more prone to support an incumbent party in European and national parliamentary elections. On the other hand, individuals who think that the flow of immigration has increased in the last twelve months are less prone to vote for incumbent parties in both elections. Also note that coefficients associated with the evolution of climate change and interest rates do not play a significant role to explain incumbents' support. Even though the results show a similar pattern, the data indicates that citizens tend to punish or reward incumbents more in national parliamentary elections at the noticeable exception of immigration: the p-values associated with perceptions of the evolution of health care standards and the economic situation reach  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\* in national parliamentary elections, but do not in European parliamentary elections. In contrast, the p-value associated with perceptions of the evolution of immigration is smaller in national parliamentary elections (at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*) than in European parliamentary elections (at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*). These results suggest that voters pay more attention to economic and health care issues when judging incumbent political parties in national parliamentary elections than in European parliamentary elections. At first glance, H1 is neither confirmed, nor invalidated by the data. Indeed, the fact that voters judge more national incumbent parties on the economy and health care standards than European incumbent political parties is coherent with the distribution of powers between the European Union and national governments. However, the issue of immigration, although it is mainly a national competence<sup>3</sup>, better explains the inclination to vote for an incumbent political party in the European parliamentary elections, than in national parliamentary elections. This result thus contradicts the idea that accountability mechanisms depend on the formal responsibilities of governments. Besides, incumbent members of the European parliament are barely punished or rewarded on the basis of the economy, while they are held judged on the basis of the evolution of health care standards. This is at odds with the actual competences of the European Union. To further test H1, I include an interaction term between perceptions of the situation in a given policy with the individual assessment of the responsibility of the European Union in this policy in model 1. As mentioned, the 2009 *European Election Study* provides information on responsibility attributions to the European Union but not to the European parliament. So, I rely on this imperfect measure to see whether attributing responsibility to the European Union in a given policy increases the likelihood to punish or reward incumbent members of the European parliament on this particular issue. Results are

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<sup>3</sup>Some progress has been made towards a more integrated area of freedom, security and justice in the European community since the 1985 Schengen agreement but the it remains largely an intergovernmental area in essence (Cini, 2016)

not shown, because there are systematically under the threshold of statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*. Thus, these results are more in line with the model of second order elections: even when individuals think the European Union is responsible for policy outcomes, they still do not hold incumbent members of the European parliament accountable on the basis of their policy records.

Moreover, model 1 shows that perceptions of the evolution of interest rates does not affect vote for incumbents in European parliamentary elections, even though the European central bank has exclusive competence over monetary policy. One explanation for such a result is simply that the European central bank is independent from European institutions in carrying out its mandate and tasks. Table 6.2. further tests H1 by distinguishing vote decisions in European parliamentary elections and national parliamentary elections in Eurozone and non-Eurozone member states. I do so because member states are not equally affected by decisions taken at the European level: the 17 Eurozone member states are obviously more dependent on the decisions taken by the European central bank than non-Eurozone members are, since they retain the power to control interest rates more substantively. In turn, these different institutional settings might affect how voters punish or reward incumbent members of the European parliament. Specifically, I expect citizens in Eurozone member states to take monetary policies into account when voting in European parliamentary elections, while citizens in non-Eurozone member states should not care about interest rates when voting for an incumbent at this level of governance. Conversely, I expect the opposite to happen in national parliamentary elections. Model 3 and 4 presents the results of the estimations which predict the likelihood to have cast a ballot for a member of the *EPP* in the 2009 European parliamentary elections in the countries which belong to the Eurozone (model 3) and in countries outside Eurozone (model 4). In contrast, model 5 and 6 show the results of the probit regressions which estimate the inclination to vote for the national incumbent party if there were a general election tomorrow in the Eurozone (model 5) and outside the Eurozone (model 6).

Results suggest a different pattern of performance voting in European parliamentary between Eurozone and non-Eurozone member states, while it is more stable in national parliamentary elections across countries. Indeed, voters reward and punish incumbent governments similarly in both settings: health care and economic performances are systematically the more important explanatory variables along traditional political variables such as partisanship. Two findings need to be highlighted however. First, models 5 and 6 indicate that economic voting is lower in Eurozone member states than in non-Eurozone member states in national parliamentary elections. This is in line with the *constraint hypothesis* which indicates that performance voting on the economy is conditioned by the perception of national governments' room to manoeuvre in the economy. In political systems where national governments do not have the upper hand on the economy, citizens tend to vote less on the basis of economic considerations. Second, results indicate that performance voting on the issue of immigration does not function similarly in Eurozone and non-Eurozone member states. It has no impact on vote for incumbent political parties in non-Eurozone members, while the reverse is found in the Eurozone: individuals who believe the immigration flows to have increased are more inclined to punish incumbent political parties in Eurozone countries than in non-Eurozone members, with the effect being statistically significant at  $\leq 0.05$ ,\*\*. Again, this result is coherent with the *balancing*



Table 6.2: Performance voting in the 2009 European parliamentary elections and in the next general elections (2009) between Eurozone and non-Eurozone members, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Vote for EU/national incumbents			
	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Economy	0.03124*	0.02644	0.08449***	0.09829***
Health Care	0.05301***	0.02388	0.16491***	0.12302***
Interest Rates	-0.02745*	-0.00110	-0.01399	0.01667
Immigration	-0.02220	-0.05135*	-0.03753**	0.00234
Climate	0.01159	0.01955	-0.01207	0.02903
Partisanship	1.73452***	1.67184***	2.04186***	2.11836***
EU integration	0.00511	0.04725***	0.01500***	0.04180***
Male	0.01259	0.04831	-0.04300	-0.01337
Left Right	0.09934***	0.07206***	0.00116	0.02130**
Religiosity	0.08710***	0.08889***	0.01647	0.01408
Union	-0.05698	0.04502	-0.06706*	-0.12909**
Class	-0.05272***	-0.04716*	-0.03861**	-0.04905*
Age	0.04174**	0.07899***	-0.05406***	-0.04390*
Education	0.06731**	0.02634	-0.03247	0.03009
Constant	-2.51243***	-3.0869***	-1.5772***	-2.38622***
N	10286	5541	10286	5541
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0,39	0,38	0,42	0,46

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

*demands hypothesis* which states that non-economic issues become more important in individual calculus of voting as economic constraints increase. In fact, this hypothesis is further reinforced by the fact that perceptions of health care better predict the individual inclination to declare to vote for an incumbent party in the next elections in Eurozone members than in non Eurozone members.

More importantly, results highlight that voters do not punish and reward incumbent members of the European parliament similarly if they belong to a country within the Eurozone or outside the Eurozone. Indeed, performance voting is almost null in non-Eurozone member states: citizens do not reward or punish members of the *EPP* based on their perceptions of the evolution of the policy situation. They only punish the latter if they think that immigration flows have increased in the last twelve months, but the p-value only reaches statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*. On the contrary, performance voting in Eurozone member states is much higher. Again, health care standards and economic conditions are the most important variables along partisanship. Strikingly, the evolution of interest rates influences voters' decisions in the European parliament as the functional hypothesis predicts: the more one thinks interest rates to have increased, the more he or she will punish members of the *EPP*. The effect is however weak because it only reaches

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Table 6.3: Performance voting including only interest rates voting in the 2009 European parliamentary elections between Eurozone and non-Eurozone members, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Vote for EU incumbents		
	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Interest Rates	-0.02110*	-0.0308**	-0.00323
Partisanship	1.7075***	1.7244***	1.6672***
EU integration	0.01966***	0.00858	0.04536***
Male	0.03867	0.02935	0.05646
Left Right	0.09068***	0.09902***	0.07676***
Religiosity	0.09114***	0.09203***	0.08770***
Union	-0.01953	-0.03574	0.02629
Class	-0.06166***	-0.06369***	-0.05916**
Age	0.06410***	0.04379**	0.09755***
Education	0.05011**	0.05699**	0.02739
Constant	-2.3795***	-2.2950***	-3.1190***
N	18352	11544	6808
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0,39	0,39	0,38

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

statistical significance at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*. Another robustness check is provided in table 6.3. focusing only on the impact of interest rates on vote for incumbents in the European parliamentary elections. In model 7, Interest rates' evolution is not a strong explanatory variable. The p-value and coefficient are low compared to other alternative variables. Nevertheless, the p-value and the coefficient strongly increase when I focus only on Eurozone members, while it becomes non-significant in non-Eurozone members. All in all, these first results thus corroborate the model of second order elections: even in areas where the European has important functional responsibility, voters still do not hold members of the European parliament accountable for policy performances. But, results also provide some insights regarding the functional responsibility hypothesis and the low-at-stake explanation: incumbent members of the European parliament can be held accountable, but only if they are functionally and institutionally responsible.

The 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* also provides information regarding performance voting in the European parliamentary elections: seven countries are included in the analysis, and all of them are Eurozone members. So, the variance across countries and across institutional settings is not as important as in the the 2009 *European Election Study*. But, the 2014 *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* allows for a more refined comparison between economic issues, since it provides assessments on the evolution of unemployment, taxation and debts and deficits. Besides, it also adds items on immigration and climate change. This differentiation between economic issues is relevant because economic policy competences

Table 6.4: Performance voting in the 2009 European parliamentary elections, with fixed effects on countries (probit regressions)

Independent Variables	Vote for EU incumbents
	Model 10
Unemployment	0.02589**
Taxation	-0.02636*
Debts and Deficits	0.03146**
Immigration	-0.02839***
Climate Change	0.00144
Partisanship	1.62118***
EU integration	0.03125***
Male	0.03827
Left Right	0.12160***
Religiosity	0.07218***
Age	0.12013***
Education	0.04484***
Income	0.02346***
Constant	-3.55945***
N	10982
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.38

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009

are not equally distributed among national governments and the European Union. More precisely, the European Union has almost no power to collect taxes and national governments have consequently large leeway on this matter. Furthermore, unemployment is mainly dealt at the national level via national agencies. Therefore, national governments are largely responsible for performances in unemployment and taxation. In contrast, the stability and growth pact which entered into force in 1999 gives competences to the European commission and the Council of ministers to monitor national governments' levels of debts and deficits to maintain the stability of the European monetary Union. Through the excessive deficit procedure, the European executive can initiate actions which would force national governments to comply with the 3% and 60% limits on government deficits and debts. In line with the *functional responsibility hypothesis*, I expect individuals to be more prone to vote for members of the European parliament on the basis of their perceptions of the evolution of debts and deficits than unemployment and taxation. To test this hypothesis, I run similar probit regressions, including perceptions of the evolution in these policy domains, and I also include political variables and socio-demographic controls predicting the vote for incumbents.

Table 6.4. tends to support the *functional responsibility hypothesis* when differentiating between economic issues. Model 10 indicates that individuals who perceive that the domestic situation of unemployment and debts and deficits have improved in the last 12 months are

more likely to reward incumbent members of the European parliament, with the effect being statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*. Conversely, individuals who believe that the tax burden has increased are less inclined to vote for the *EPP* with the effect being statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*. Looking more closely at the results, the issue of debts and deficits is the variable that predicts the better the inclination to have voted for a member of the *EPP* in the 2014 European parliamentary elections according to the data. Besides, the issue of taxation is the issue that predicts the least the inclination to vote for an incumbent member of the European parliament. These results are corroborated by the fact that traditional explanations of the vote for incumbents are in the expected direction. Indeed, individuals who favour the process of European integration; who regularly attend religious services; who declare to be close to *EPP*; who are older and richer are more eager to declare to have voted for the incumbent in the European parliamentary elections. At first glance, findings are thus in line with H1. Yet, the issue of immigration, which is still largely in the hands of national governments, also greatly explains the individual likelihood to cast a ballot for European incumbents. Therefore, it is rather difficult to conclude that there is a real sign of accountability based on the European Union's formal competences in European parliamentary elections.

Finally, the second objective of this chapter is to see whether citizens are more prone to hold incumbent members of the European parliament accountable for past policy performances after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty. This increased accountability would be due to an enhanced clarity of responsibility. To do so, I need similar measures of performance voting over time in the same countries. The 2009 and 2014 *European Election Study* only provide comparable measures in the economy, but not in other policy realms. This does not seem unrealistic to focus on the economy, since this is traditionally the most salient and accessible issue in electoral campaigns, while it is the issue that matters the most in individual voting calculus (see chapters 1 and 4). More importantly, it is arguably the policy where the European Union has more room to manoeuvre, even though national governments remain important actors in this domain.

Table 6.5. largely invalidates the second hypothesis: economic voting decreases significantly between 2009 and 2014. Indeed, individuals who think that the situation of the domestic economy has improved in the last 12 months are not more prone to vote for members of the *EPP* in 2014. Even individuals who perceive the European Union to be highly responsible over the national situation are not more likely to reward incumbent members of the European parliament on the basis of their perceptions of the evolution of the economy. In fact, traditional political determinants such as self positioning on the left-right dimension, social class or partisanship predict better the individual inclination to declare to have voted for the *EPP*. Thus, there appears to be no effect of the ratification of the treaty of Lisbon on accountability in European parliamentary elections even though this was one of the goals promoted by tenants of the treaty reform. These preliminary results thus suggest that European parliamentary elections remain second order contests.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter has been to investigate accountability mechanisms in the European parliamentary elections. Drawing on the *functional responsibility hypothesis*,

Table 6.5: Economic voting in the 2009 and the 2014 European parliamentary elections, with fixed effects on countries (probit regresions)

Independent Variables	Vote for EU incumbents	
	Model 11	Model 12
Economy	0.04265***	0.01460
Partisanship	1.71067***	1.89078***
EU integration	0.02091***	0.00390
Left Right	0.09098***	0.13807***
Religiosity	0.08748***	0.04557***
Union	-0.01016	0.01817
Class	-0.06351***	0.19515***
Male	0.03896	-0.00010
Age	0.07694***	0.12423***
Education	0.04414**	0.04411**
Constant	-2.5097***	-2.8531***
N	20962	19757
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.39	0,41

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Source: European Election Study 2009 and 2014

I argue that voters should be more prone to hold incumbent members of the European parliament accountable for past policy performance in the areas where they have formal competences. Moreover, I assume that institutional changes which occurred after the ratification of the Lisbon treaty are likely to boost accountability. Indeed, at this occasion, the European parliament gained legislative power in the European institutional design, while the government clarity has been enhanced significantly with the introduction of the *spitzenkandidat* procedure. If these hypotheses are validated, it would suggest that European Union increasingly resembles traditional federal states where each level of government is judged on the basis of its past performance. This line of argument would eventually contradict the model of second order elections which argues that European consultations are electoral contests based on national concerns.

Results, however, do not support the hypotheses put forward. Instead, the data tends to give credit to the model of second order elections. Indeed, voters systematically care less about past performance when voting in European parliamentary elections, than in national elections. This first finding, coherent with the model of second order elections, is challenged when controlling for the impact of institutional designs: individuals are more likely to reward and punish members of the *EPP* if they are within a Eurozone member state than if they are not. Indeed, performance voting is almost null in non-Eurozone countries, while coefficients are systematically higher in Eurozone countries. In addition, the only exclusive policy of the European Union in the survey, i.e. interest rates, is more important in both p-values and coefficients than immigration, which is an important determinant in the whole model.

These results imply that institutional differences matter, to some extent, to understand accountability mechanisms. It is also interesting to note that performance voting in the economy is closely related to policy competences of the European Union: in 2014, citizens hold *EPP* representatives more accountable for debts and deficits' situation than for the evolution of tax burden.

Having said that, when interacting perceptions of issue evolution with responsibility attribution to the European Union, accountability does not improve. This finding is further complemented by the evolution of accountability over time. Despite the fact that there have been some institutional reforms aiming to strengthen electoral connection between voters and members of the European parliament, economic accountability does not seem to have improved in the European parliament. According to the results presented in this chapter, the model of second order elections thus receives more support. It is as if European electoral contests are still based on factors mostly driven by national factors than European ones.

Furthermore, this study responds to some claims arising from the democratic deficit literature. One important claim has long enhanced the weakness of the European parliament in the European institutional system to explain low accountability. Over the years, the European parliament has significantly gained power in the European institutions. Specifically, the last Lisbon treaty has introduced the ordinary legislative procedure procedure which made the European parliament a genuine co-legislator of the Council of the ministers. More importantly, it has strengthened the link between the executive and the European parliament by clearly associating European parliament's results with the nomination of president of the European commission. Yet, it seems that accountability has not been reinforced through those institutional innovations since there has been almost no signs of economic voting in the last 2014 European parliamentary. Even though results in this chapter are still preliminary, it suggests that institutional reforms did not have a strong impact on European parliament legitimacy.

## Summary

Empirical evidence suggests that the connection between individual assessments of policy performance and the vote for incumbent members of the European parliament does not systematically work along in the voting booth. Four arguments generally explain this low accountability. First, the European parliament is too weak for voters to bother voting in these electoral contests. Similarly, it is argued that there is generally less at stake in European contests than in national contests, because the European Union, as a whole, has fewer policy competences than national governments. Third, the actual responsibility of the European executive on policy decisions has been traditionally hard to identify given the broad-based consensus style of politics in the European parliament, eventually making it harsher for voters to identify who is to be blamed for policy records. In turn, members of the European parliament have been chosen on the basis of national concerns rather than European matters such as policy performances of the European Union. However, the European Union's policy competences have increased significantly over the years, while the European parliament has been empowered in the European decision-making process since it is now the main legislative actor with the Council of ministers. Besides, the Lisbon Treaty has further strengthened the role of the European members of the parliament by

increasing their abilities to control the designation of the European executive. Indeed, European parliament's results are now linked with the choice of the president of the European Commission. Thus, I expect performance voting to increase because of these changes. In this chapter, I first assess the extent of performance voting on different issues and how responsibility attributions condition accountability mechanisms. Second, I evaluate how performance voting has evolved since the ratification of the Lisbon treaty. By analysing performance voting across issues over time, I am able to discriminate between the above-mentioned alternative explanations of low accountability. To analyse performance voting in the European parliamentary elections, I use the *European Electoral Study* and the *Comparative Electoral Dynamics* survey which date from 2009 and 2014. They include vote behaviours at the occasion of European parliamentary elections and evaluations of policy performance and responsibility attributions in 8 policy areas (economy, standards of health care, interest rates, immigration, climate change, debts and deficits, tax and unemployment). The findings first show a clear prevalence of performance voting in national parliamentary elections in comparison with European parliamentary elections, supporting the second order model hypothesis: European incumbents are systematically less judged on policy performances than their national counterparts. This finding is further supported by the systematic null effect of responsibility attributions in European parliamentary elections, and by the fact that retrospective voting in European parliamentary elections even shrinks over time.

## Appendix

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<p><b>Vote for Incumbent Party:</b> 0=Non-Incumbent / 1=Incumbent          "And if there was a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for?"</p> <p><b>Vote for Incumbent EU Party:</b> 0=Non-EPP member / 1= Member of EPP          "If you had voted in the European Parliament elections, which party would you have voted for?"</p>
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<p><b>Economy:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better          "What do you think about the economy?          Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in Britain is 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse."</p> <p><b>Health Care:</b> 0=a lot worse / 4= a lot better          "And over the last 12 months, has the standard of health care in Britain got 1- a lot better / 5- a lot worse."</p> <p><b>Climate Change:</b> 0= a lot more of a problem / 4= a lot less of a problem          "Finally, over the last 12 months, has climate change in Britain become 1- a lot more of a problem / 5- a lot less of a problem."</p> <p><b>Immigration:</b> 0= decreased a lot 4= increased a lot          And over the last 12 months, has immigration in Britain increased a lot, increased a little, stayed the same, decreased a little or decreased a lot?</p> <p><b>Interest Rates:</b> 0= decreased a lot 4= increased a lot</p>



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	<p>And over the last 12 months, have interest rates in Britain increased a lot, increased a little, stayed the same, decreased a little or decreased a lot?</p>
<p><b>Control Variables</b></p>	<p><b>Partisanship:</b> 0= other / 1= close to Incumbent party Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?</p> <p><b>EPP Partisanship:</b> 0= other / 1= close to EPP member Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?</p> <p><b>EU integration:</b> 0= already too far / 10= pushed further Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification 'has already gone too far' and 10 means it 'should be pushed further'. What number on this scale best describes your position?</p> <p><b>Male:</b> 0= female / 1= male</p> <p><b>Left-Right:</b> 0= left / 10= right In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please indicate your views using any number on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "left" and 10 means "right". Which number best describes your position?</p> <p><b>Religiosity:</b> 0= never / 4= several times a week How often do you attend religious services: several times a week, once a week, a few times a year, once a year or less, or never? 1 several times a week; 2 once a week; 3 a few times a year; 4 once a year or less; 5 never.</p> <p><b>Union:</b> 0= Not member (4) / 1= Member (1-3) Are you yourself a member of a trade union or is anyone else in your household a member of a trade union? 1 yes, I am / 2 yes, someone else is 3 yes I am and someone else in the household is /4 no</p> <p><b>Class:</b> 0= working class / 4= upper class "if you were asked to choose one of these 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 class?"</p> <p><b>Age:</b> 0= 18-24 / 3= 55+ What year were you born?</p> <p><b>Education:</b> 0= 1-15 / 2= 20+ How old were you when you stopped full-time education?</p>



# Chapter 7

## Consequences on EU's popularity functions

### 7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 shows that the main channel of representation through which citizens can directly punish or reward European representatives, i.e. European parliamentary elections, does not feature elements of accountability. Indeed, performance voting in European parliamentary elections is almost non-existent. In fact, these elections are typical second order contests where representatives are elected on considerations which are driven by national domestic factors rather than on their policy records. The idea that the European democratic system suffers from accountability deficits is not new in European studies. Several studies have already made the case that there exists no effective electoral channel for citizens to hold European executives accountable for past policy decisions ([Follesdal and Hix, 2006](#)). But, does this mean that the European Union, as a whole, is not punished or rewarded on the basis of its policy performances by citizens? Increased responsibility should indeed lead to higher accountability.

This last chapter takes a fresh look at the literature and makes the case that it is possible to analyse accountability of the European Union, but not through elections. Drawing on the study of popularity functions ([Nannestad and Paldam, 1994](#); [Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013](#)), i.e. a function explaining the change in government's popularity by the changes in economic conditions, I contend that European Union's accountability can be gauged by taking the latter as landmarks: if there are no clear channels of accountability, but that individuals perceive the European Union to be responsible for economic outcomes, there should be, at least, some effect on the variation of European Union's popularity. The rationale behind is that increasing responsibility of the European Union should be reflected in attitudes toward the polity itself before being reflected in the voting booth.

Popularity functions arguably provide good proxies to examine European Union's accountability because existing studies of public opinion and European integration suggest that inflation or unemployment are good predictors of citizens' attitudes toward European integration ([Anderson \(1998\)](#); [Eichenberg and Dalton \(2007\)](#)). But, this is not a proof that the European Union is held accountable on its economic records. For instance, a better economic situation can also make people more optimistic. Accordingly, this optimism has

the potential to increase support for different political institutions across the board. In fact, the model of accountability relies on the prerequisite of assumed responsibility which is generally measured via incumbency: the central unit of analysis is thus the national incumbent government because it provides a way to assess responsibility. In this framework, citizens are supposed to deem the incumbent government responsible for the macroeconomic situation. Then, they punish it (conversely, reward it) if the economic situation goes awry (conversely, improves). Nevertheless, it is difficult to compare situations in which the European Union is an incumbent with those in which it is not because it is hard to know who is in charge at the European level. For instance, the European commission has long been nominated through intergovernmental broad-based consensus, while decisions taken in the European council and in the European commission are usually done behind closed doors (Papadopoulos, 2010). In fact, there is no clear situation of incumbency to assess accountability in the case of the European Union.

Having said that, the enlargement of the European Union offers a unique opportunity to examine the effect of European Union's incumbency on the variation of popularity functions. Until 2004 (and 2007), the European Union had no direct influence on the economic situation of Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. After 2004 (and 2007), the European Union was included among the rulers and gained explicit influence over domestic economic conditions. Hence, this evolution provides a useful mean to assess European Union's responsibility. Specifically, it gives the opportunity to distinguish between a situation of non-incumbency (before accession) and a situation of incumbency (after accession). Following, it is possible to see whether individuals actually hold the European Union accountable for the economic situation by comparing the evolution of popularity functions before and after accession. Specifically, I expect individual support for the European Union to depend on the macroeconomic situation only after accession. On the contrary, European Union's popularity should not be dependent on the variation of macroeconomic conditions before accession. Indeed, the European Union was not formally responsible at this moment.

In systems of multilevel governance, policy competences are not equally distributed between governments as already mentioned in previous chapters. In fact, the European Union and national governments do not have the same capacities to influence different macroeconomic outcomes. Indeed, the European Union only has exclusive competences over commercial policy, monetary policy within the Eurozone area, external trade, customs union and the establishment of competition rules. Conversely, the European Union has almost no competences in areas such as industrial policies, labour market or taxation. According to the *functional responsibility hypothesis* presented in chapter 6, the European Union should only be judged in macroeconomic areas where it has formal responsibilities. Thus, I expect European Union's popularity to be dependent on the evolution of inflation rather than on the state of unemployment when it becomes the ruler.

To measure popularity functions and to control for European Union's incumbency, I take advantage of *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* and *Standard Eurobarometer* individual-level data surveys which were respectively conducted before and after the 2004 wave of accession in Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania. These surveys are the only available data sources

which allow for systematic comparisons of individual judgements toward the European Union in a longitudinal perspective. The *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* started in 2001 and provides three points in time before accession, while the *Standard Eurobarometers* integrated all the candidate countries once they became members. To measure the evolution of macroeconomic conditions, I rely on three aggregate indicators: the annual gross domestic product, the average annual rate of unemployment and the annual inflation rate. The choice of these variables first follows standards in popularity functions' studies (Nannestad and Paldam, 1994; Paldam, 2008). More importantly, these specific economic areas provide most different cases to assess the impact of functional responsibilities on accountability mechanisms. The monetary policy is the most supranational competence of the European Union, while unemployment is mainly dealt through the open method of coordination. To assess the effect of European Union's incumbency on the probability to support the European Union, I carry out logit and OLS regressions and include interaction term between accession and macroeconomic variables, along traditional socio-demographic which predict the support for European Union.

Empirical results confirm that individual support for the European Union is affected by macroeconomic performances only when the European Union is formally responsible for macroeconomic outcomes. Conversely, European Union's popularity is not affected by economic indicators when the European Union is not legally in charge. These findings first suggest that citizens respond to the institutional design when punishing or rewarding different levels of government. Furthermore, this analysis supports the idea that European institutions can be held accountable on the basis of their policy records, even though there is no clear channel of accountability. Indeed, results indicate that citizens evaluate the European Union according to its functional responsibilities: when in charge, the European Union is deemed accountable only in areas where it has leeway: inflation. In contrast, the effect of the unemployment and gross domestic product are null before and after accession. These results add to the debate relative to the low accountability of the European Union (Papadopoulos, 2010). Recently, Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) have made the case that the European Union as a political system provides "responsibility without accountability" because of low government and institutional clarity of responsibility. Without ruling out this proposition, this chapter simply argues that the reason is probably due to the lack of responsibilities of the European Union. Since European Union's exclusive competences are limited, low accountability might simply be due to this limitation.

The next section is dedicated to a brief review of the literature on accountability mechanisms in the European system of governance. The third section of this chapter presents the theoretical framework which is based on models of popularity functions. The dataset and the empirical strategy which are utilized in this study are displayed in the fourth part and the empirical results are presented in the fifth section. Finally, the results are discussed more broadly in the concluding section.

## 7.2 Accountability in the European system of governance

Until now, European Union studies have mostly analysed accountability in the European Union from a normative and theoretical standpoint (Scharpf, 2003; Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Bovens, 2007; Papadopoulos, 2010). In this literature, the European system of governance is viewed as a polity featuring low democratic characteristics (Mair, 2000; Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Papadopoulos, 2010) or as a legitimate political system which provides two channels through which European Union officials can be held accountable for their past actions: direct accountability via European parliamentary elections and indirect accountability via national elections.

Studies on European parliamentary elections have mostly demonstrated that individual do not use these electoral contests to judge European representatives on their performances: incumbent members of the European parliament are generally not rewarded or punished for their past economic performance in the European parliament (see chapter 6). Having said that, Tilley et al. (2008) finds evidence of economic voting in European parliamentary elections, but only in countries with single party governments, while Bartkowska and Tiemann (2015) demonstrate that "across the board those voters who think their respective national economy is going to do well over the next 12 months are more likely to stick with one of the parties in government, while those who think the national economic development gives cause for concern are more likely to try out one of the parties in the opposition" (Bartkowska and Tiemann, 2015, p. 14). To explain such results, most studies on European parliamentary elections contend that this is due the heavy weight of national issues in individual vote choices. Other studies highlight low government and institutional clarity of responsibility (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a). Indeed, the style of politics in the European parliament, i.e. based on large coalitions and compromises, along with the weak link between the European executive and the European parliament hinders citizens' abilities to hold their members of the European parliament accountable for their past actions in the economic area. In addition, it is argued that multilevel systems of governance traditionally make it harder for citizens to distinguish responsibilities between governments. Indeed, the structure of distribution of policy competences (between exclusive, shared and supporting competences) in the European Union arguably blurs governments' responsibility and limits accountability. All in all, signs of electoral accountability mechanisms in the European parliament are still limited, nay non-existent.

In addition, the alternative mechanism of accountability in the European Union, i.e. national parliamentary elections, does not serve as a proper channel where citizens actually punish or reward their national executives for their past performance in the European Union council either. The principal-agent model assumes that national governments, as the representatives of voters via parliamentarians, should act on the behalf of citizens in both the Council of ministers and the European Council. Indeed, national representatives have incentives to be responsive to their electorates if they wish to be re-elected. Empirically, Hagemann et al. (2017) find that governments are responsive to public opinion in the Council of Ministers, but only to signal cues regarding opposition toward European integration, if the European topic is salient at the national level. In the meantime, De Vries (2007) extensively shows that voters take political parties' stances on European integration into

account when voting. As chapter 5 demonstrates, previous empirical findings show that vote choices in national general elections are not decisively determined by European issues. Many reasons explain why voters do not punish or reward their governments for their past performance in the European Union council. First, decisions taken in the Council are, for the most part, already decided at the level of Committee of Permanent Representatives. Yet, the Committee of Permanent Representatives is an institution where decisions are mostly taken behind closed doors to secure a large consensus in the Council (Papadopoulos, 2010). Hence, it is hard for citizens to clearly assign responsibilities for policy decisions taken in this crucial policy-making arena. In addition, the remaining controversial policies which are still to be discussed in the Council are now mostly taken at the qualified majority voting procedure. As Hobolt and Tilley (2014a) put it "European Union decisions do not reflect the positions of every single national government on all matters meaning that national electorates cannot necessarily punish a national government for a decision taken collectively by the Council" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a, p. 146). Eventually, it can lead to situations such as the Eurozone crisis where "decisions have been taken by the European Council and dictated to individual member states, leading to a loss of political autonomy for smaller and poorer member states" (Hobolt and Tilley, 2014a, p. 146).

Finally, most of the works which study attitudes toward the European Union in the light of the economic situation do not analyse European Union's support in terms of accountability, but rather in terms of the perceived costs and benefits of the integration process (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). Instead, support for the European Union is generally apprehended as support for a governmental policy-process (the integration process) rather than as support for a decision-maker (the European Union). Yet, studies on accountability rely on the assumption that citizens are able to assign responsibilities to specific governments for policy outcomes. Indeed, in economic voting models, the central unit of analysis is generally the incumbent government because it provides a way to indirectly measure responsibility (Powell Jr and Whitten, 1993). Furthermore, these models are generally based on longitudinal studies to control for political alternations since political alternatives are also prerequisites in models of accountability. Anderson (2000) notably argues that the explanatory power of economic voting models depend on the viable alternatives against incumbents. In accountability models, incumbents are judged on their economic records at the end of their mandate. To be thrown out of office, Anderson (2000) contends that there should be 1) a macroeconomic performance perceived badly by voters and 2) credible political actors capable of replacing incumbents. Within this framework, the reward-punishment mechanism is only efficient when the competition within the party system is structured in a way where the opposition is perceived as offering some guarantees to be possible incumbents. By viable alternatives, Anderson (2000) basically means an opposition party capable of having the majority of the votes.

An example can clarify Anderson's hypothesis: take political regimes R and R' and suppose that they display identical economic performance. R is a two-party system where party p1 receives 55% of the vote share, while party p2 receives 45% of the ballots. R' is a multi-party system with 7 parties where party p1' receives 51% of the votes, while other parties p2', p3', p4', p5', p6' and p7' receive respectively 10%, 8% (for p3', p4', p5' and p6') and 7% of the ballots. According to the viable alternatives hypothesis, rational voters will be less attracted to dissent from incumbents in R' because they cannot be sure that their



vote will matter to throw the incumbent out of office. On the contrary, the incentives to dissent from party p1 to party p2 in R is stronger because it can lead to change in power. In this model, the number of parties competing in elections thus mediates individual clarity of responsibility: the more parties compete within a party system, the less likely citizens will throw out the current incumbent. In a nutshell, punishing or rewarding the incumbent is difficult in the European Union system of governance, since identifying an actor as the sole incumbent is uneasy, while the alternative party is yet to be found.

One of the common explanations for the lack of accountability of the European Union in both electoral contests is low clarity of responsibility of the European Union. Indeed, accountability mechanisms presuppose correct responsibility attributions: to be able to punish or reward their representatives, voters first need to know who is responsible for policy outcomes. Yet, multilevel systems of governance blur attribution of responsibilities at the level of citizens (León, 2011) notably because the dispersion of political authority across levels of governments increases information costs by adding layers in the decision-making process. In turn, multilevel systems of governance usually blur electoral accountability and economic voting. Empirically, Cutler (2004) notably shows that voters have difficulties to reward or punish governments when they deem multiple actors responsible for the management of a given issue. In his study based on the 2001 provincial and federal elections in Alberta and in British-Columbia, the author indicates that voters who think that both provincial and federal governments are responsible for the management of health care do not punish or reward any government whereas voters who pin the blame on the provincial government hold the provincial layer of governance accountable for the management of health care. This result first suggests that responsibility attributions matter in the vote choice, but when many governments are held responsible, it might blur incumbents' accountability. More convincingly, a second study on the 2004 provincial and federal elections in Ontario and Saskatchewan yields similar results (Cutler, 2008). Cutler (2008) shows that Ontarian and Saskatchewanian citizens deem both governments more responsible than experts. Besides, responsibility judgements seem muddled in federal systems of governance, notably among the less educated and the less informed. This is problematic insofar as voters are more likely to disregard issues in their voting calculus if they are uncertain about who is responsible for this issue. Eventually, Cutler (2008) concludes by raising doubts regarding the possibility for accountability to be enforced in federal systems due to the lack of individuals' capabilities to deem the correct level of governance for policy outcomes. He even goes as far as saying that the governments' "closer to the people" argument of federalist proponents is rendered dubious by these findings. Another empirical work confirming the impact of multilevel systems of governance on electoral accountability is Anderson (2006) cross-national study on 16 advanced industrial democracies. In his comparative study, he focuses on the effects of multilevel systems of governance on economic voting in national parliamentary elections. To measure the degree to which a political system spreads political authority at different levels, Anderson (2006) develops 7 indicators: the existence of a federal constitution; the presence of elections to regional levels of government; the extent of territorial autonomy; and he creates four types of fiscal decentralization measures. Anderson's results show that economic effects are indeed decreased by multilevel systems of governance. Specifically, Anderson (2006) shows that in political systems where sub-national units have more power regarding tax generation, economic effects on the vote at the national level decreases.

In the European Union case, clarity of responsibility is arguably weakened by the complexity of the policy-making process (Cini, 2016), the lack of transparency (Papadopoulos, 2010) and the consensus-based structure of European Union politics (Hix et al., 2007). In turn, it is hard to hold European representatives accountable for past policy decisions. Even if there is low clarity of responsibility in the European Union system of governance, I argue that there is an alternative way to assess economic accountability in the European Union via the study of popularity functions, i.e. a function explaining the change in the popularity for the governments by the changes in economic conditions, in countries which entered in 2004 and 2007.

### 7.3 Natural experiment: the effect of EU enlargement

Economic explanations of the vote (V) and government popularity (P) have received an important amount of attention since the eighties. These studies simply predict that the success of the incumbent and the popularity of the government are a function of macroeconomic performances such as unemployment, inflation and income growth (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013, for an extensive review). Studies on Vote functions thus presuppose the existence of elections, since they postulate that the share of votes of the incumbent will be conditioned by past economic records. On the other hand, popularity functions only rely on the existence of a government, since they analyse the variation of the popularity of a government given the economic situation. Both models are straightforward and are generally estimated on national time-series. Seminal works in economic voting confirmed the empirical relevance of the theory in different settings (Norpoth et al., 1991; Lewis-Beck, 1997; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000, 2007, 2013). These results have however been put into question, because of significant cross-country differences. Lewis-Beck (1988) first found that effects of economic performance on governments' support on the individual level vary significantly between Great-Britain, Germany, Spain, France and Italy. In Great-Britain, economic effects display strong explanatory power, while the relationship is very weak in the Italian case. Paldam (1991) confirms these findings in a large comparative study across 197 government elections in 17 countries covering four decades. In this large comparative study, Paldam (1991) finds little evidence for the existence of Vote and popularity functions in other countries than the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States of America. At some points in time and in some countries, the economy does not seem to explain party and government support. However, Bellucci and LEWIS-BECK (2011) still confirm that the effect of the economy on the support for incumbents is stable over time and across countries.

In the case of the European Union, vote functions are almost non-existent because channels of accountability perform badly on the overall, for different theoretical reasons as Chapters 5 and 6 showed. Meanwhile, a number of studies demonstrate that support for the European Union is affected by the variation of macroeconomic conditions such as unemployment, inflation and growth. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that support for the European Union is systematically higher when national economic performance is favourable (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). On the individual level, there exists a strong correlation between individual benefits of membership and support for the European Union (Anderson, 1998; Gabel, 2000). Because the European Union is an international organization which promotes policies enhancing the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital and

which foster market liberalization, it offers better opportunities to citizens who have greater investment capacity or professional skills; who are more mobile; and who live in areas around borders (Gabel, 1998). This finding that economic winners tend to be more inclined to support the European Union has also found strong empirical support in central European states (Herzog and Tucker, 2010). Economic conditions are thus strong determinants of the support for European Union. In other words, European Union popularity varies according to the state of the economy.

But, this is no proof that the European Union is punished or rewarded for its past economic performance. Indeed, a better economic situation can also make people globally more optimistic. In turn, it can lead them to increase their support for a various number of issues. Besides, citizens can perceive the process of European integration as a policy decision stemming from governments rather than as a proper decision-maker. Indeed, mainstream parties which participate in national governments tend to support European integration more than others (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008). Moreover, according to liberal intergovernmentalists (Moravcsik, 2002), the European Union is an international organization rather than a real government. Yet, if the European Union is not perceived as a proper government, then the variation of European Union's popularity functions does not suggest a process of reward-punishment. It merely suggests a stance on a policy. To prove that there is a pattern of reward and punishment via the study of European Union's popularity, there is a need to investigate the latter in a situation in which the European Union is the incumbent and in a situation where it is not. If the European Union is perceived by citizens as a policy, European Union's support should stay the same when the European Union is in position of incumbency and when it is not. On the contrary, if the European Union is perceived as accountable for the economic situation, European Union popularity function should vary only when the European Union is institutionally responsible.

The accession of ten countries in 2004 and two countries in 2007 provide unique opportunities to observe attitudes toward the European Union in periods of non-incumbency and incumbency. In fact, the enlargement provides some sort of quasi-natural experiment, in which it is possible to compare the effect of the macroeconomic situation on support for the European Union in times of incumbency and non-incumbency (Ward et al., 2015, for a similar experiment). Strictly speaking, a natural experiment must also include a control group. So far, the literature provides evidence that support for the European Union is sensitive to the state of the economy before and after 2004 in old member countries (Garry and Tilley, 2009; Scheuer and Schmitt, 2009). These previous studies can therefore be considered as the control group. Also, it can be argued that the European Union had an impact on candidate countries' economies prior to European Union accession. Within the context of the Euro convergence program and the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, the European Union set up severe criteria to achieve membership which have arguably affected domestic economic performances. Yet, candidate countries remained theoretically able to refuse accession by referendums. This possibility of opt-out means that the responsibility of the European Union was limited to the decisions of voters. Hence, its responsibility was arguably limited and it is hard to consider the European as the main actor responsible for economic decisions at this time. In turn, I expect macroeconomic conditions to affect European Union's popularity only when the European Union is in charge, but not when it is indirectly pressuring candidate countries to apply legislation. This results in the following

hypothesis:

H1: Macroeconomic conditions should not affect European Union's popularity before accession, while they should affect European Union's popularity after accession.

In multilevel systems of governance, policy competences are shared between governments. For instance, in the American federal system, the president enjoys exclusive competences over national defence and foreign affairs and he can unilaterally sign treaties with foreign nations. In contrast, the Congress has the ability to collect tax or to regulate interstate commerce, while States and cities can act in the realms of education or crime. However, States have some margins of manoeuvre when engaging in "taxing, spending, and general marketing strategies to attract and retain productive capital and labour" (Stein, 1990, p. 33). Thus they can attract businesses through tax incentives, inexpensive land, and cheaper living conditions for their employees. These limited policy competences can eventually affect State economies, by either worsening the economic situation or diminishing the impact of a larger crisis for example. Drawing on the assumption that voters "choose candidates on the basis of some expectation that their choice will affect the future actions of government" (Stein, 1990, p. 30), the *functional responsibility hypothesis* contends that governments' differing functional responsibilities affect governments' fortunes. In this model, the evaluation of governments is conditional upon the policy responsibilities assigned to the governments. To put it bluntly, it seems illogical for voters to evaluate the actions of Governors based on the national performances on foreign affairs, while blaming the president for tax decisions would make no sense, since he has no power in this policy domain. Empirically, (Stein, 1990, p. 33) confirms that voters do not act similarly in elections at different levels: indeed, American citizens choose senators on the basis of the national economic performance, while governors are not punished for the state of the national economy (except when they are incumbent Republicans). These findings are corroborated by Atkeson and Partin (1995). The authors find that voters deem governors accountable for perceived state economic conditions, while they do not hold Senators accountable for the situation of the economy in the State. Rather, they suggest that the former are blamed or rewarded for the state of the national economy. These results imply that voting behaviour in state elections should be linked to issues belonging to governors such as the condition of the state economy, education and crime, but not to the national economy. Vote functions are thus conditioned by the structural distribution of policy competences among governments in federal systems. Logically, popularity functions should also be affected in the same fashion: governments' popularity should be influenced by economic conditions, only in areas where these governments have functional responsibilities. Thus, I expect macroeconomic conditions to affect European Union's popularity, only if the European Union has functional power over this macroeconomic area.

H2: Macroeconomic conditions should affect European Union's popularity in areas where the European Union has abilities to influence policy outcomes.

Nevertheless, multilevel systems of governance also produce confusion by altering the ability to distinguish clearly governments' responsibilities. Indeed, a number of studies shows that clarity of responsibility is blurred in multilevel systems of governance such as Spain (León, 2011), Canada (Cutler, 2004, 2008) or the United States of America (Brown, 2010). In these systems, citizens face a daunting task when assigning correctly policy responsibility

at each level of government. More precisely, multilevel governance makes it harsher for citizens to establish a causal link between political outcomes and politicians' actions due to the multiplication of arenas of power. In the European system of governance, the allocation of competences between the European Union and the member states is divided in three types of competences: exclusive, shared and supporting competences. The area of exclusive competence is the domain where the European Union may legislate and adopt legally binding acts. The domain of shared competences corresponds to the area where member states lose some leeway when the European Union decides to regulate. Finally, supporting competences are policies where the European Union has the ability to carry out actions to support, coordinate, or supplement the actions of the member state, without thereby superseding their competence in these areas. In the economic area, monetary policy is an exclusive competence of the European Union via the European central bank: it is the sole actor able to influence the money supply, create credit conditions, and set up interest rates. Thus, inflation is mainly dealt by the European Union. Conversely, responsibility for employment and social policies remains primarily on the hands of national governments. In these policy domains, the European Union can only coordinate and monitor national policies. At the very least, the European Commission is institutionally bound to reduce labour market disparities in the European common market, but its powers are scarce in this domain. Growth, however, results from a more complex process where both national governments and the European Union have policy margins of manoeuvre. Indeed, the European Union has some leeway to act upon growth, most notably via the stability and growth pact, and with the use of cohesion and regional funds, even though its budget remains low. In the meantime, national governments have to follow European guidelines regarding debts and deficits, but have the upper hand on important factors of growth such as industrial and redistributive policies. Thus, I expect European Union's popularity to be affected only in areas where it has clear responsibility attributions, i.e. inflation.

H3: Macroeconomic conditions should affect European Union's popularity, only in areas where the European Union has clear responsibility attributions.

Next part presents more precisely the empirical strategy and the data that permits to investigate the variation of European Union Popularity functions before and after European Union membership in different macroeconomic areas.

## 7.4 Data and empirical strategy

In order to test these hypotheses, I take advantage of the *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* and *Standard Eurobarometer* individual-level data surveys which were conducted from 2001 to 2011. The empirical analysis gathers a total of twelve countries, ten points in time and two accession waves. The next section first discusses the selection of country cases and presents the data in more details. Next, the empirical model is presented in a second section.

### 7.4.1 Case studies and data

This study focuses on countries which accessed the European Union in 2004 and 2007 because it allows to make a comparison between periods of incumbency and periods of non-incumbency of the European Union. Ultimately, it permits to see whether individuals

hold the European Union accountable for economic outcomes via the analysis of popularity functions. The first wave of enlargement concerns ten countries, i.e. Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The 2004 accession wave is the largest enlargement in the European Union, after the *Eurobarometer* surveys were put in place (1978). In contrast, the 2007 wave of accession only concerns two countries, i.e. Bulgaria and Romania. It is thus more limited in its scope. These waves of accession offer unique possibilities to have individual-level data on attitudes toward the European Union prior to accession. Indeed, both the Mediterranean enlargements and the 1995 enlargement do not offer data on evaluations of the European Union before accession. Benefiting from such data therefore limits the discrepancies between each country's progress toward accession. In addition, investigating several periods limits the incidence of specific national debates or domestic events which can promptly modify support for the European Union (Brinegar and Jolly, 2005). In the sample, most of the countries are part of eastern and central Europe, while two very small Mediterranean countries are also included. In this framework, eastern and central European countries are interesting case studies to analyse economic accountability since economic factors are traditional explanatory variables predicting attitudes towards the European Union and voting behaviour (Tucker et al., 2002). Indeed, eastern and central European citizens are responsive to macroeconomic performance when they cast their ballots in national elections. A phenomenon of hyper accountability has even been unveiled by Roberts (2008). Thus, these case studies offer extreme cases to apprehend the question of economic accountability.

### 7.4.2 Dependent variable

The main difficulty is to find continuous and corresponding questions to measure European Union's popularity before and after accession. Indeed, the *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* and *Standard Eurobarometer* offer few matching data over time and across countries. Nevertheless, a traditional question on support for European Union is consistently present in all Eurobarometer surveys. This question focuses on an individual evaluation of the benefits of the membership within the European Union and is worded as follows: "Generally speaking, do you think that our country's membership of the European Union is/ would be...? Answer: a good thing; a bad thing; neither good nor bad". Through this question, a binary variable is created based on the distinction between respondents which answered that the European Union is a "good thing" and others which responded that it is "a bad thing". The variable is rearranged to control for the variation of the median position which is the neutral item "neither good nor bad". Note that the missing data are excluded from the analysis. As a result, the dependent variable is a direct measurement of support for the European Union during the two periods: it gives an opportunity to indirectly test European Union's accountability via Popularity functions over time and across countries.

At first glance, figure 7.1. shows that support for the European Union decreases over time, even though the process is not linear. The moment of accession had a negative influence on European Union's support as it moves from 58.5% in 2003 to 46% in 2005 on average. Furthermore, figure 7.2. shows that this trend can also be depicted at the national level. The support for the European Union shrinks in almost every country from 2001 to 2011, with the notable exceptions of Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. In these countries, the support for European Union increases slightly or is stable over time.



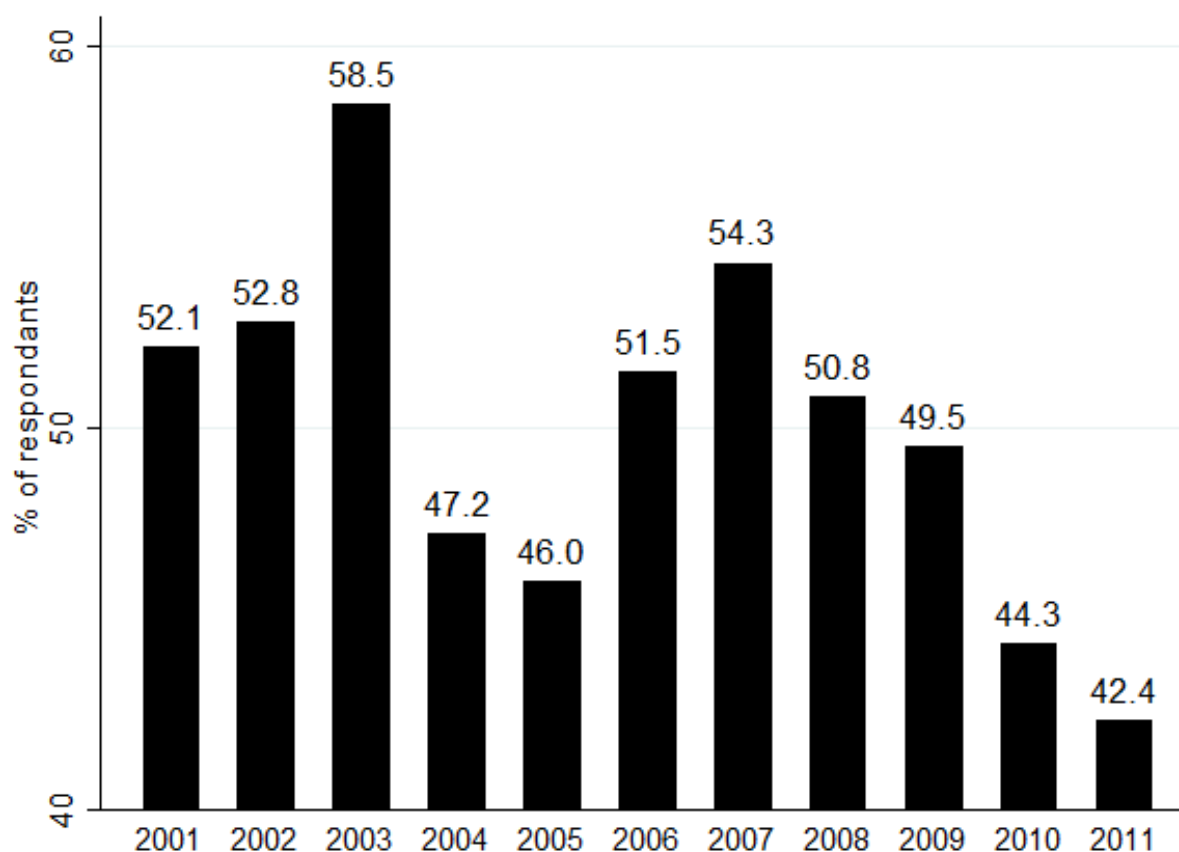


Figure 7.1: Average support for the European Union in countries which joined in 2004 and 2007

Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer and Standard Eurobarometer from 2001 to 2011

### 7.4.3 Independent variables

Following the literature on vote-popularity functions (Paldam, 2008), three macroeconomic variables are selected: annual gross domestic product growth, the average annual rate of unemployment and the annual inflation rate. These data come from *Eurostat*. They are chosen for theoretical purposes. Indeed, according to the hypotheses, the three different macroeconomic indicators should not affect European Union's popularity similarly. Indeed, hypotheses 2 and 3 assume that European Union's popularity should not be a function of economic indicators on which the European Union has no power on, or where the distribution between governments is not clear.

The three macroeconomic variables have a divergent pattern of evolution over time and across countries according to figures 7.3., 7.4. and 7.5. The gross domestic product growth decreases over time. Note that all countries experienced a critical drop during the period of the crisis around 2008 and 2009. In contrast, the level of unemployment is heterogeneous across countries and over time: there is no clear pattern across countries. Finally, the inflation rate is the more stable across countries over time. Except from Romania, which experienced a 20% decrease since 2001, inflation rates generally shrunk or remained stable over time across countries. Contrary to the evolution of the gross domestic



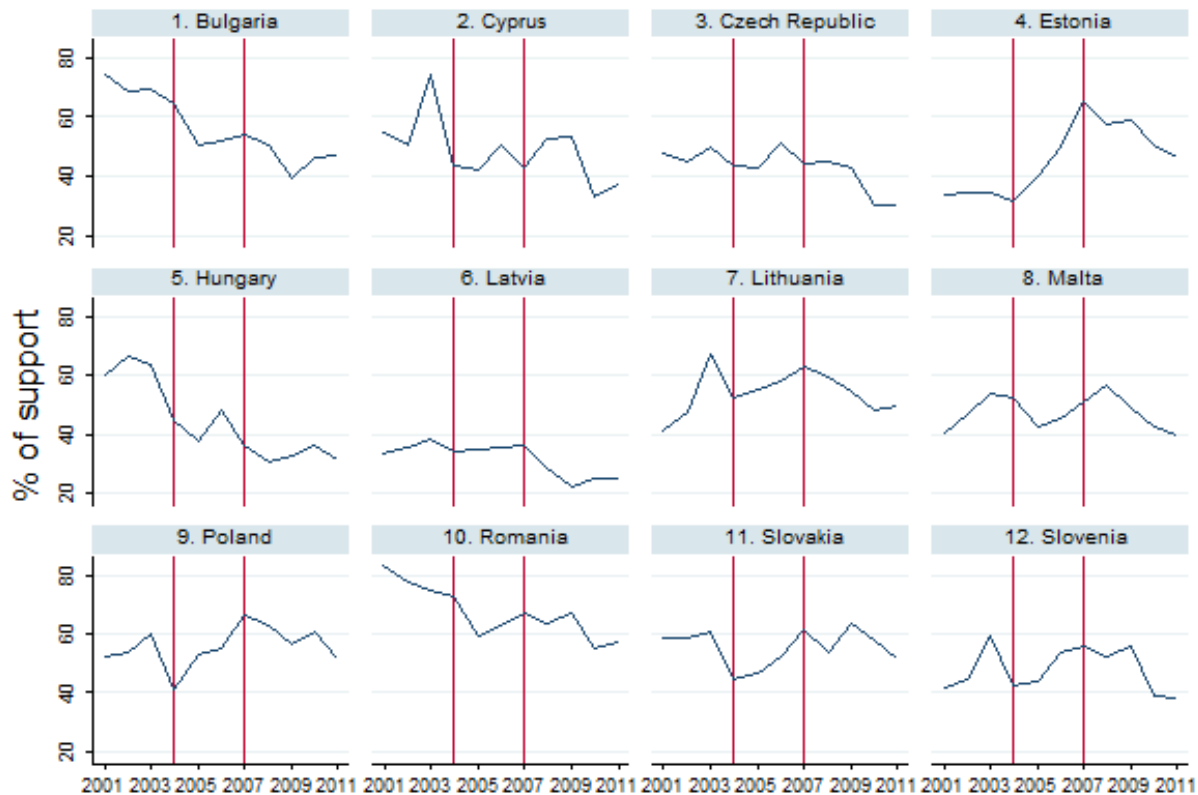


Figure 7.2: Support for the European Union country by country

Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer and Standard Eurobarometer from 2001 to 2011

product growth, no specific change appeared.

A classic set of individual socio-demographic control variables are also included in the empirical analysis: gender, age, education, marital situation, household size, the size of the agglomeration where respondents live, professional situation and estate ownership. These variables indirectly take into account what citizens gain from being within European Union. Here, the assumption is that the impact of joining the common market on individuals' economic welfare is linked to their personal levels of income, to their professional activity and to their level of education (Gabel, 1998, 2000). Indeed, Gabel (2000) demonstrates that high skilled workers with a higher level of education who live in areas that benefit directly from European Union's membership tend to value more their countries' membership than the rest of the population. Besides, general satisfaction with his or her own personal situation is included. The idea is to control the influence of individual subjective well-being on support for European Union. Two political variables on political interest and discussion are also added. These two variables are proxy measures which aim to evaluate respondents' degree of politicization. However, it is important to note that *Eurobarometer* surveys do not provide questions measuring identity values in a constant fashion. Undoubtedly, this shortcoming has an impact on the quality of the estimation because identity factors are good predictors of support for the European Union (Hooghe and Marks, 2005). Nevertheless, economic factors are considered more decisive in the context of eastern and central European countries. Indeed, the economic transition toward free-market and capitalism has long been

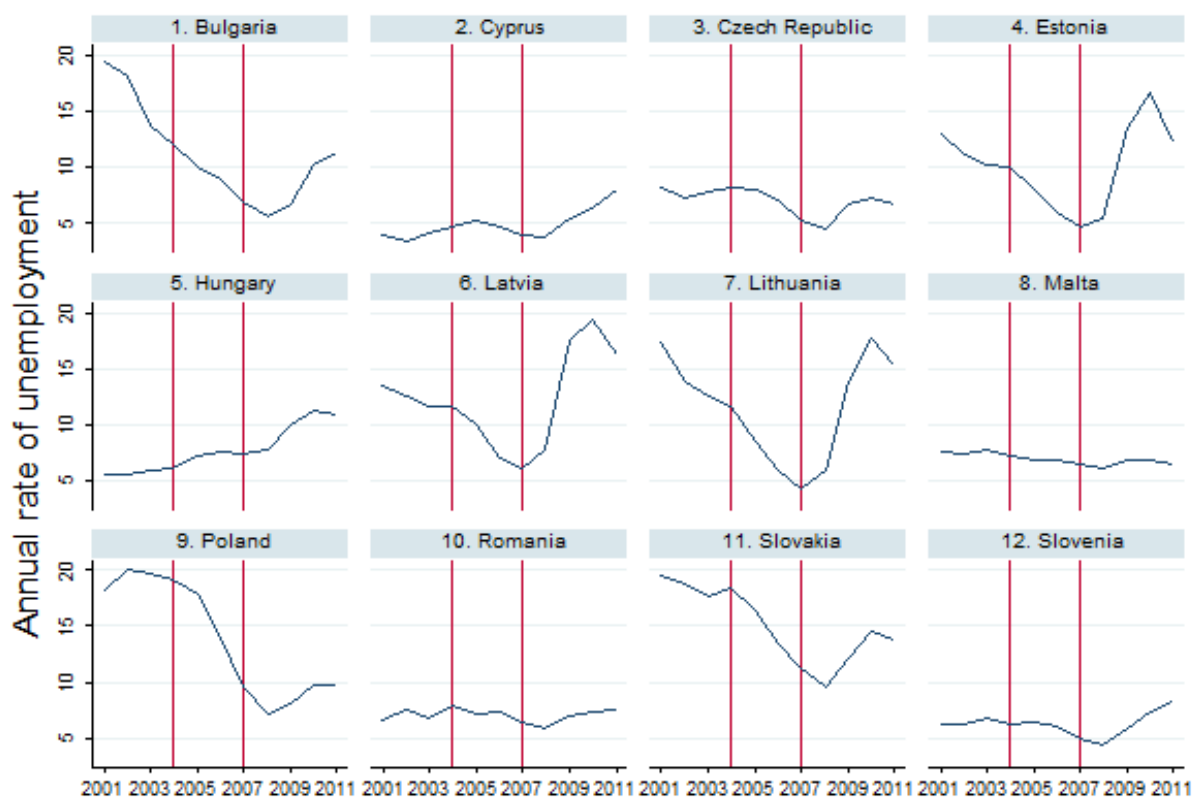


Figure 7.3: The evolution of unemployment rate in the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007

Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer and Standard Eurobarometer from 2001 to 2011

linked to the European Union (Tucker et al., 2002; Herzog and Tucker, 2010). Thus, I make the assumption that identity factors did not play a major role in these countries from 2001 to 2011.

#### 7.4.4 Empirical strategy

To estimate European Union's popularity, I first perform different logistic regressions, since the dependent variable is binary. The underlying assumption is that errors are logistically-distributed. The main statistical concern of the estimation is the addition of aggregate variables. Since conditions are not identical for all the respondents living in the same country in a given year, it could have an impact on the errors because residuals are potentially correlated with unobserved features of the country. Two strategies are used to avoid this concern. First, a dummy variable by country is introduced to control for characteristics associated to the national level, similarly as fixed effects. In addition, dummy variables are also added for each year within the estimation. Besides, I add clusters on countries to correct the variance of errors.

The main goal of this chapter is not to discriminate between the determinants of European Union's support in general, but to assess whether the European Union can be deemed accountable for the economic situation by looking at the variation of popularity functions between periods of incumbency and non-incumbency. According to the H1, I expect

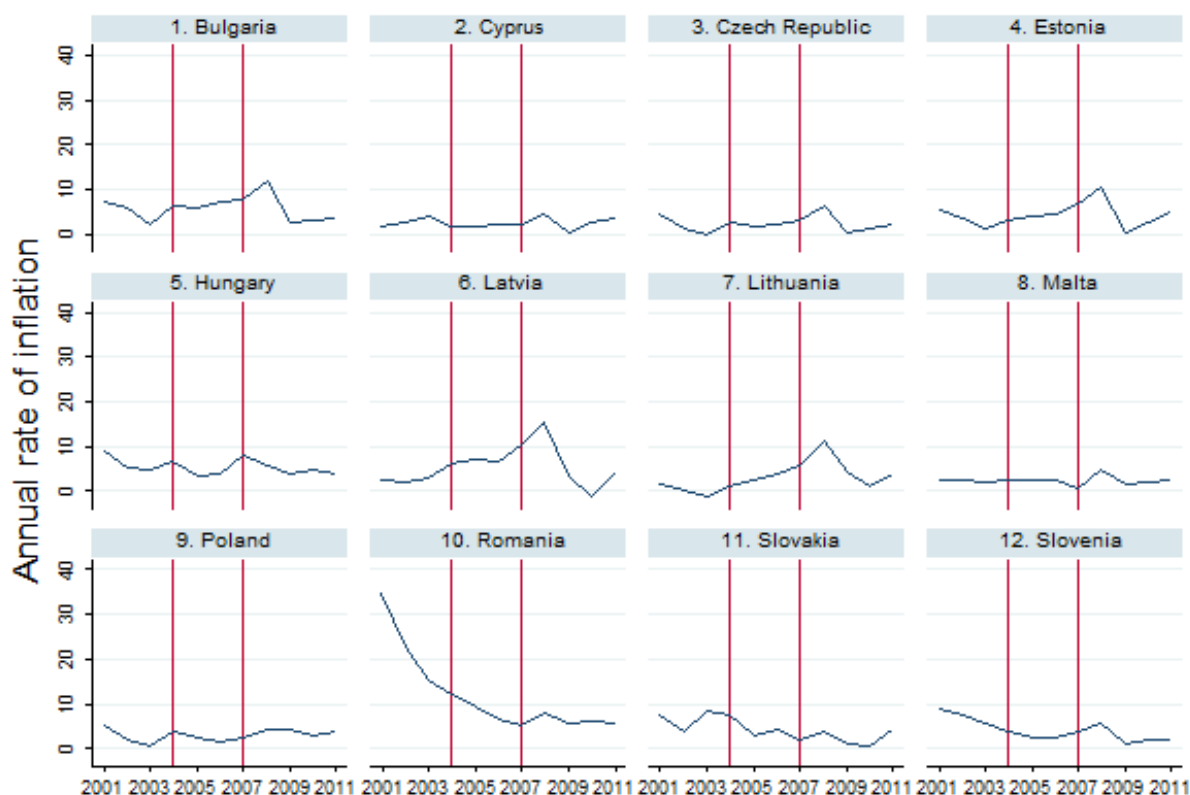


Figure 7.4: The evolution of inflation rate in the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007

Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer and Standard Eurobarometer from 2001 to 2011

coefficients associated with the macroeconomic variables to be different before and after accession in the European Union: macroeconomic situation should affect European Union's popularity only when the European Union is formally able to influence macroeconomic outcomes. If H1 is true, a worsening (respectively, an improvement) of the macroeconomic situation should thus decrease (respectively, increase) the popularity of the European Union only if it is in a situation of incumbency. Hence, the estimation is carried out with an interactive term on the moment of accession to discriminate between the effect of European Union's incumbency and European Union's non-incumbency. However, logistic regressions coefficients cannot be multiplied with interactive dummies. To capture the effect of the period of accession on popularity functions, an ordinary least square regression is thus performed with an interactive term on the moment of integration. The models are built in a stepwise fashion to control for the robustness of the association among model specifications.

## 7.5 Empirical results

The results of the estimations are presented in table 7.1. and 7.2. Table 7.1. proposes model specifications for logistic regressions, while table 7.2. displays results of estimations for OLS regressions. Models 1 and 5 include all the independent variables with an interaction term on accession and socio-demographic controls. On the other hand, models 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 only include socio-demographic controls and one macroeconomic variable with an interaction

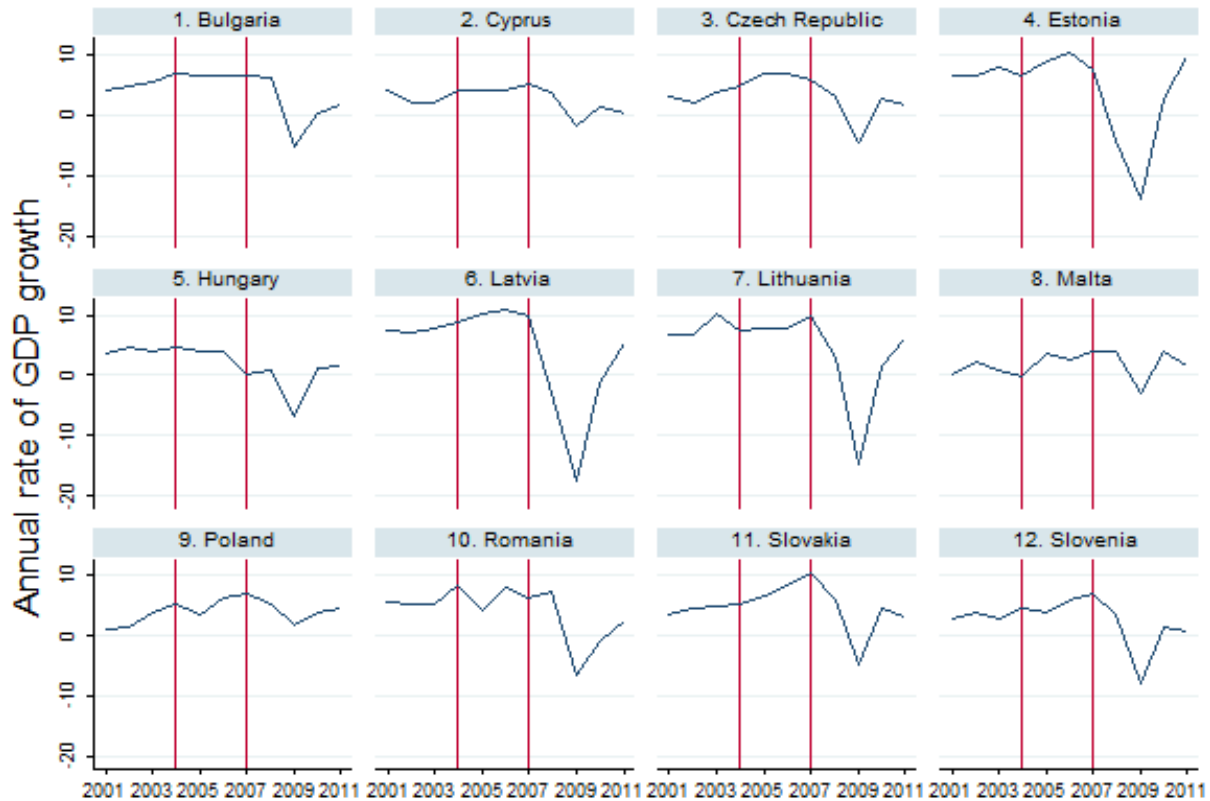


Figure 7.5: The evolution of Gross domestic product in the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007

Source: Candidate Countries Eurobarometer and Standard Eurobarometer from 2001 to 2011

term on accession. The number of observations is substantial ( $n=111368$ ) because all the datasets from 2001 to 2011, including all the twelve countries under study, are appended together. Appending these different cross-sectional surveys together makes the longitudinal comparison across countries more robust because it increases the number of cases and limits the effect of conjunctures. Overall, the quality of the estimations is satisfactory given the high number of observations: the McFadden pseudo  $R^2$  is around 0.09 for logistic regressions and the adjusted  $R^2$  is around 0.1 for OLS regressions. Before looking more into details at the effect of interaction terms on macroeconomic variables, I first present the effects of individual variables on the European Union's popularity.

The literature on individual determinants of support for the European Union is now relatively well documented. As mentioned, identity attitudes such as inclusiveness are important predictors for support of the European Union. Yet, the *Candidate Countries Eurobarometer* does not provide items capturing identity indicators. This limits the generalization of the results because the latter have been deemed increasingly important in the evaluation of European Union. Other variables such as economic benefits arising from European integration are also strongly correlated with support for the European Union, notably in the case of central eastern European countries. Indeed, citizens who benefit from common market, such as high skilled workers and educated citizens, tend to display more favourable attitudes toward the process of integration than the rest of the population

(Gabel, 2000). Both OLS and logistic results confirm this hypothesis. First, the level of education strengthens the probability to think that the European Union is a good thing, while citizens who live in urban areas also tend to favour more the process of integration. Furthermore, the probability to support European Union increases with the level of interest in politics (Boomgaarden et al., 2011). Also note that satisfaction with life increases the likelihood to believe the European Union is a good thing. Finally, men tend to be more supportive than women as Nelsen and Guth (2000) already suggested. These results confirm that the data utilized in this chapter seem to provide consistent and robust results on the individual level.

The first aim of this chapter is to assess whether citizens punish or reward the European Union for macroeconomic outcomes differently before and after accession. H1 states that the popularity of the European Union should not be affected by the variation of macroeconomic variables before accession, while the reverse is expected after accession. Consequently, I expect p-values to be statistically significant only when interacted with accession in the European Union accession but not independently in both OLS and logit estimations. Specifically, I expect coefficients associated with gross domestic product growth to be positive after interaction, while I expect the contrary for unemployment and inflation. Indeed, inflation and unemployment are generally perceived as negative economic outcomes, while gross domestic product growth is, most of the time, supposed to be positive for the economy.

The empirical analysis shows that H1 is only partly supported by OLS and logistic regressions. Indeed, models 1 and 5, which include macroeconomic variables and interaction terms all together, show no systematic differences on the p-values between macroeconomic variables and interaction terms. Indeed, gross domestic product growth and unemployment never reach a level of significance neither independently nor interacted with accession. Also, p-values are under the statistically significant threshold of  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\* in both cases for inflation. These findings are further confirmed by looking at other models which include each macroeconomic variable and interaction terms alone. For instance, take models 2 and 6 which estimate the impact of unemployment on support for European Union. Contrary to expectations, the interaction term is not more significant than unemployment. In fact, both logistic and OLS regressions show that a high level of unemployment decreases the likelihood to believe that the European Union is a good thing for the country (although not extremely significantly), while the interaction effect of accession does not reach any threshold of significance. Therefore, if one looks solely at the p-values, the first hypothesis is rejected since no effect of European Union's incumbency is distinguishable in both logistic and OLS regressions.

Despite these first empirical results, H1 is not totally rejected when looking more into details at the effect of inflation on support for the European Union. Indeed, model 5 shows that citizens' support for the European Union increases with the level of domestic inflation on the overall: this finding is puzzling because (national) governments are generally punished for increasing levels of inflation (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2013). In this case, the link between individual support for European Union and a bad domestic situation in inflation might be endogenous. Indeed, the central and eastern European countries' demand to enter European Union has long been linked to the resolution of their problems of

hyper-inflation that arose in the transition period. However, once countries enter European Union, inflation has the reverse effect on citizens' evaluation of the European Union: an increase in the level of inflation decreases support for the European Union. Indeed, the coefficient associated with the level of domestic inflation becomes negative when interacted with the dummy variable capturing accession in the European Union, while the coefficient is positive independently. The coefficient of the interaction term (-0.051) is even higher in magnitude than the effect of inflation alone (0.033) in model 5. Model 1 confirms this result, but not in its magnitude since the interaction (-0.0010) term is lower than the coefficient of the variable itself (0.0061). These findings suggest that citizens punish (or reward less) the European Union for a bad domestic situation in inflation when European Union is in a position of incumbency, while they tend to reward the European Union on the overall when there is a bad domestic situation in inflation. It is as if the European Union becomes accountable for the state of the national inflation only after accession. Without confirming unambiguously H1, this result thus gives some credit to the reward-punishment mechanism, most notably in the sole area where it has clear competences, i.e. inflation. Nevertheless, when having a closer look at the inflation alone, results are not completely confirmed because the p-value of the interaction term does not reach the level of significance. Note however that the estimate still stays negative in models 3 and 7.

Besides, H2 is also partially confirmed by the estimations. The hypothesis posits that individual support for European Union should be affected by the domestic macroeconomic situation only in areas where the European Union has formal abilities to influence outcomes. Thus, domestic levels of unemployment, inflation and gross domestic product growth should explain differently the popularity of the European Union, most notably when the European Union is in charge: I thus expect p-values related to inflation to be stronger than those related to gross domestic product growth and unemployment respectively. Indeed, the European Union has more policy capacities to influence inflation rates than gross domestic product growth. In addition, the European Union has more margins of manoeuvre to influence growth (via its capacity to constrain budget deficits and public debts) than levels of unemployment. As models 1 and 5 show, inflation is indeed the only macroeconomic factor which affects individual support for the European Union after accession. Moreover, unemployment and gross domestic product growth never reach the threshold of significance when interacted with accession in the European Union even in models 2, 4, 6 and 8, i.e. when taken alone. In fact, the level of gross domestic product does not predict better support for the European Union than changes in unemployment annual rates. Indeed, models 2 and 6 show that a negative domestic situation in unemployment leads citizens to think that the European Union is not a good thing on the overall with the effect being statistically significant  $p \leq 0.10$ \*, while no significant result is found when looking at models 4 and 8, i.e. when taken gross domestic product alone. Thus, H2 is not totally corroborated by the data. In fact, models' estimations are better in line with H3 which posits that reward-punishment mechanisms are driven by the extent to which responsibility for policy outcomes can be clearly identified by citizens. Indeed, expectations are all met: inflation is the only macroeconomic variable which has an impact on individual support for the European Union in models 1, 3, 5 and 7. Perhaps most interestingly the level of national gross domestic product growth never has an impact on support for the European Union, even when countries enter the European Union. All in all, the distribution of competences seems to have an impact citizens' attitudes toward the European Union government, but

clarity seems to be the best way to predict individual attitudes toward European Union.

## 7.6 Conclusion

This chapter sheds light on European Union's accountability by looking into details at the effect of macroeconomic areas, i.e. inflation, gross domestic product and unemployment on European Union's popularity. Specifically, I focus on countries which entered the European Union in 2004 and 2007. I do so because this institutional change provides a unique opportunity to compare situations of incumbency and non-incumbency which are usually lacking to study mechanisms of accountability in the case of the European Union (Hix et al., 2007). Indeed, the main arenas of accountability in the European Union, i.e. national general elections and European parliamentary, do not provide possibilities to delineate clearly between incumbents and opposition which is a prerequisite to assess whether citizens (especially voters) punish or reward any government on their policy records.

The main finding of this chapter is that citizens punish the European Union for bad domestic situation in inflation, only when countries enter the European Union, but not prior to accession. Prior to accession, citizens in candidate countries tend to support the European Union for high national inflation as if the European Union were a viable governmental alternative, rather than an incumbent. According to traditional vote popularity models, this suggests some form of accountability: punishment for bad inflation only comes with incumbency. Yet, if this hypothesis were to be unequivocally true, citizens would reward the European Union when the domestic situation of employment and gross domestic product are doing well in periods of incumbency as well. Conversely, when the European Union is the alternative, support for the European Union should increase when levels of employment and gross domestic product go awry at the domestic level. Nevertheless, empirical results suggest that citizens do not think in such fashion.

To further comprehend this mechanism of European Union's accountability, this final chapter also tests hypotheses distinguishing between policy issues. Past studies argue that citizens evaluate a government on the basis of its ability to influence policy outcomes. Indeed, it seems logical for citizens to punish or reward the European Union only if it has formal abilities to influence policy outcomes. In this scenario, individual support for the European Union should thus be higher in areas where it has the upper hand, and lower where it has no power. In this scenario, support for the European Union should be, at least slightly, correlated with a good situation in the gross domestic product because the European Union has some leeway to bolster or slow down this macroeconomic indicator. But no results should be found regarding unemployment since it has scarce power in this area. Yet, citizens never punish, nor reward the European Union for the evolution of growth. As mentioned above, citizens only reward or punish the European Union on the basis of the domestic situation of inflation. In fact, the *clarity of responsibility hypothesis* which asserts that the more clearly competences can be linked to a level of government, the more likely citizens will be able to punish or reward their governments, seems to better predict European Union's popularity. Indeed, support for the European Union is only affected by the variation of inflation, i.e. where the European Union has clearest responsibility attributions.

Results have implications regarding the discussion related to the democratic deficit



debate. Even though there are no real channels of accountability in the European Union, I show that there are possibilities that the European Union can be held accountable. Indeed, when there is institutional responsibility, European Union's popularity is affected by the level of domestic inflation, that is the only macroeconomic domain where the European Union has genuine and clear margins of manoeuvre. Therefore, the extension of power of the European Union along with a clearer distribution of power between governments are likely to reinforce accountability.

### Summary

Until now, there is almost no evidence that voters use domestic elections and European parliamentary elections to hold representatives at the European level accountable for their policy decisions. In this chapter, I analyse European Union's popularity functions to investigate accountability mechanisms in the European system of governance. Indeed, empirical findings show that indicators of macroeconomic performance such as inflation, gross domestic product or unemployment are important predictors of attitudes toward the process of European integration . Thus, popularity function seems to be operating in the case of the European Union because support depends on the state of the economy. To prove that the European Union is punished or rewarded for its economic performance, there is a need to show that European Union's popularity varies given the state of the economy only when the European Union is institutionally responsible, and that this relationship is insignificant when it is not. Moreover, it should be the case only in areas where the European Union has abilities to influence policy outcomes and where competences are clearly distributed. Based on *Eurobarometer* surveys which were carried out from 2001 to 2011, I analyse economic popularity function of the European Union in the ten countries which joined European institutions in 2004, and the two countries which joined in 2007. The objective is to see whether European Union's popularity is affected by macroeconomic variables differently before and after accession. Results show that European Union is held accountable for the situation of inflation, but not for the situation of unemployment and growth.

Independent Variables	Logistic Regressions			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
After Integration	-0.085	-0.29	-0.17	-0.43**
Unemployment rate	-0.026	-0.032*		
Unemployment rate*after integration	-0.022	-0.0071		
Inflation rate	0.033***		0.038***	
Inflation rate*after integration	-0.051***		-0.019	
GDP rate	-0.036			-0.025
GDP rate*after integration	0.038			0.036
<b>General Satisfaction with life</b>				
Very satisfied	-0.31***	-0.31***	-0.31***	-0.31***
Relatively satisfied	-0.99***	-0.99***	-0.99***	-0.99***
Not really satisfied	-1.37***	-1.37***	-1.38***	-1.38***
Not at all satisfied	-1.23***	-1.25***	-1.20***	-1.21***
<b>Frequency of political discussion</b>				
Frequently	-0.18***	-0.18***	-0.17***	-0.18***
Occasionally	-0.52***	-0.52***	-0.51***	-0.51***
Never	-0.78***	-0.81***	-0.77***	-0.79***
<b>Age when leaving school</b>				
Under 15 years	ref	ref	ref	ref
Between 16 and 19 years	0.27***	0.26***	0.27***	0.27***
Over 20 years	0.58***	0.57***	0.57***	0.57***
Still studying	0.46***	0.45***	0.46***	0.46***
Does not know	0.099	0.11*	0.12*	0.14**
<b>Age</b>				
15 - 24 years	ref	ref	ref	ref
25-39 years	-0.13***	-0.13***	-0.13***	-0.13***
40 - 54 years	-0.20***	-0.20***	-0.20***	-0.20***
More than 55 years	-0.17***	-0.18***	-0.17***	-0.17***
<b>Living area</b>				
Rural	ref	ref	ref	ref
Small town	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***
Urban	0.25***	0.24***	0.25***	0.25***
Missing	-0.027	-0.051	-0.027	-0.040
Marital Status (in a relationship)	0.022	0.021	0.033	0.033
Sex	-0.021***	-0.020***	-0.020***	-0.020***
Constant	1.95***	2.01***	1.38***	1.73***
N	111368	111368	111368	111368
Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Table 7.1: Logistic estimations of support for the European Union including interaction terms and control variables

Note: The standard-errors are corrected by the cluster method. Dummy variables for household size, professional status and country are not reported.

Independent Variables	OLS Regressions			
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
After Integration	-0.030	-0.067	-0.43*	-0.97**
Unemployment rate	-0.0061	-0.0072*		
Unemployment rate*after integration	-0.045	-0.0013		
Inflation rate	0.0061***		0.0070***	
Inflation rate*after integration	-0.010***		-0.0029	
GDP rate	-0.0088			-0.0060
GDP rate*after integration	0.0091			0.0083
<b>General Satisfaction with life</b>				
Very satisfied	-0.70***	-0.71***	-0.70***	-0.70***
Relatively satisfied	-0.22***	-0.22***	-0.22***	-0.22***
Not really satisfied	-0.30***	-0.30***	-0.31***	-0.31***
Not at all satisfied	-0.28***	-0.28***	-0.27***	-0.27***
<b>Frequency of political discussion</b>				
Frequently	-0.039***	-0.040***	-0.038***	-0.039***
Occasionally	-0.12***	-0.12***	-0.11***	-0.11***
Never	-0.17***	-0.18***	-0.17***	-0.17***
<b>Age when leaving school</b>				
Under 15 years	ref	ref	ref	ref
Between 16 and 19 years	0.060***	0.059***	0.061***	0.060***
Over 20 years	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***	0.13***
Still studying	0.11***	0.10***	0.11***	0.10***
Does not know	0.023*	0.026**	0.027**	0.032**
<b>Age</b>				
15 - 24 years	ref	ref	ref	ref
25-39 years	-0.027***	-0.028***	-0.028***	-0.028***
40 - 54 years	-0.044***	-0.045***	-0.044***	-0.044***
More than 55 years	-0.039***	-0.041***	-0.038***	-0.053***
<b>Living area</b>				
Rural	ref	ref	ref	ref
Small town	0.029***	0.030***	0.029***	0.029***
Urban	0.055***	0.054***	0.055***	0.055***
Missing	-0.0063	-0.012	-0.0061	-0.0095
Marital Status (in a relationship)	0.0042	0.0045	0.0064	0.0068
Sex	-0.045***	-0.045***	-0.045***	-0.045***
Constant	1.95***	2.01***	1.38***	1.73***
N	111368	111368	111368	111368
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.10$ ,\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.05$ ,\*\*

Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$ ,\*\*\*

Table 7.2: OLS estimations of support for the European Union including interaction terms and control variables

Note: The standard-errors are corrected by the cluster method. Dummy variables for household size, professional status and country are not reported.

# Chapter 8

## Voting behaviour in times of increasing constraints

In the recent decades, many European democracies have experienced major electoral changes. For instance the two main government parties that have been in power for 40 years in Greece, i.e. the *Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)* and the *New Democracy (ND)* were thrown out of office at the advantage of a new challenger party, i.e. *Syriza*, in the aftermath of the crisis of the European sovereign debt crisis. The vote share of the *Panhellenic Socialist Movement* even shrank from 40% in 2012 to 4% in 2015. In the Netherlands, the total vote share of the three mainstream government parties, i.e. the *People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)*, the *Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)* and the *Labour Party (PvdA)*, decreased from 81,1% in the 1977 general elections to 39,4% in the 2017 general elections. In Ireland, the long time dominance of the *Fine Gael* and the *Fianna Fáil* was largely contested by the *Sinn Féin* in the 2016 general elections, in spite of the growth of the gross domestic product of 7,8% in 2015.

In addition, levels of electoral participation diminished by almost 20% in 40 years in Austria and in Germany. In fact, almost all European countries experienced a steep reduction of electoral turnouts, at the exception of Luxembourg and Belgium where compulsory voting is in place, and in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

In France, a candidate from a 1 year old party, i.e. Emmanuel Macron for *En Marche (EM)*, won the 2017 presidential elections. In Italy, a party created in 2009, i.e. the *Five Star Movement*, won 25.1% of the share of the vote in the 2013 general elections on a policy platform largely dominated by issues such as immigration, corruption, the European Union and direct democracy. In Czechia, the *Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011)* founded in 2011 gained 18.65% of the share of the vote and 47 seats in the Czech chamber of deputies at the occasion of the 2013 general elections. During the electoral campaign, the *Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO 2011)* campaigned mainly on an anti-establishment platform that explicitly called to throw politicians out. In the United-Kingdom, the *UK Independence Party (UKIP)*, a niche party created to promote exit from the European Union, saw its electoral audience grow by almost 4200% in less than 20 years (from 0,3% in the 1997 general elections to 12,6% in the 2015 general elections).

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Furthermore, in the 2015 Polish parliamentary elections, the incumbent *Civic Platform* (*PO*) lost its first place to Law and Justice (PiS) even though the situation of the national economy was relatively good, especially in comparison with other European countries. According to *Eurostat*, the growth of the gross domestic product was around 3,65% in Poland, while the mean growth of the gross domestic product in the European Union only reached 1,9% at this time. The Polish case is not the only one where the incumbent party lost premiership despite good economic performances. For example, the candidate of the Spanish *People's Party* (*PP*), i.e. José María Aznar, and the candidate of the French *Socialist party* (*PS*), i.e. Lionel Jospin, lost the general elections (respectively in 2004 and 2002) in spite of a positive growth of the gross domestic products (respectively, +3,7% and +2,71% on average during the time of incumbency). Note that these two elections shared one common feature: both electoral campaigns were dominated by a non-economic issue (respectively, terrorism and insecurity).

Overall, the political landscape in European democracies has changed tremendously in the recent decades. Among other things, mainstream government parties considerably lost voters (especially, social-democratic parties); new challenger parties, with platforms dominated by non-economic issues, gained electoral audience; electoral turnouts decreased in most of European countries; and a positive national economic situation did not prevent incumbent parties from losing.

There exists many theoretical frameworks to apprehend this restructuring of the electoral competition in European democracies since the seventies. One of the most prominent theory that tried to explain these changes is Inglehart's *new politics* (Inglehart, 1990) which was later refined by Kriesi et al. (2012). The former theory contends that the traditional socio-economic cleavage has been challenged by a new post-materialist cleavage where issues of importance for new voters were sexual freedom, authority or diversity. This change has been made possible because of the development of the welfare state which, according to Inglehart (1990), reached a stage where equality was at its quasi-optimum in the seventies. Accordingly, the issue of redistribution of wealth was no longer the core issue which influenced vote choice. On a slightly different note, the literature on historical cleavages Martin (2007); Kriesi et al. (2012) argues that globalization constitutes a new critical juncture which creates new groups of winners and losers. In turn, these groups oppose on a different set of economic, cultural and political issues. Ultimately, it leads to the formation of new political parties which take into account these new demands in their policy platforms. Under this understanding, "globalization [is] a summary term to characterize the new set of political issues facing democracies in Western Europe at the end of the twentieth century" (Hellwig, 2014, p. 8)

In this dissertation, I concur with Kriesi et al. (2012) in arguing that economic globalization is a decisive factor to explain changes in electoral behaviour in the past decades, but I do not specifically view this phenomenon as a critical juncture as tenants of historical cleavage do. In contrast, I simply consider economic globalization - and European integration - as exogenous processes that clearly reduce the leeway of national governments in the management of the economy at the domestic level. Indeed, there exists little doubt that processes of economic globalization and European integration affect the economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments, (Mair, 2000; Hix, 2003; Cai and Treisman, 2005;

Plümper et al., 2009; Nanou and Dorussen, 2013). All these authors agree on the fact that the integration of national economies into world markets has led to a harsher competition between governments to attract capital and companies in their national boundaries, eventually reducing their capacities to tax mobile capital and choose regulatory policies as they wish. In addition, the process of European integration - which is often referred to as an intense case of globalization - also limits the economic leeway of national governments. It does so by means such as the stability and growth pact which allows the European Union (specifically, the European commission) to control domestic budgets and deficits; or through intergovernmental treaties which give the European Union exclusive competence over customs, commercial policy, external trade and competition rules. Following, individual member states are not able to control some key areas of economic sovereignty because of European integration. This is even clearer in the monetary realm. Indeed, members of the Eurozone are no longer able to decide unilaterally to depreciate their currency or set up interest rates as they wish.

Starting from the observation that the development of processes of economic integration are congruent with the restructuring of the political landscape in European democracies, I thus make the case that the resulting loss of economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments might be one of the keys to approach the electoral changes that occurred in the past decades.

Drawing on the *constraint hypothesis*, I first show, in chapters 1 and 4, that those who perceive 1) their national government to have little responsibility over the situation of the national economy; and 2) those who perceive the European Union to have responsibility over the domestic economic situation, judge incumbent national parties less on their economic performances. These two chapters supplement previous empirical studies which show that economic voting is less important in contexts of high economic globalization by providing cross-national evidence linking individual beliefs concerning the responsibility of national governments (and the European Union) to economic voting. Indeed, there exists only two studies which directly tackle the link between subjective perceptions of the loss of economic margins of manoeuvre (and, the economic responsibility of the European Union) and economic voting (Hellwig, 2008; Lobo and Lewis-Beck, 2012). This lack of evidence on the individual level can be problematic because studies using aggregate indicators "only test for the association of the two ends of what is arguably a long causal chain", while "they are specifically open to the problem of specification uncertainty" (Steiner, 2016, p. 119).

In addition, chapters 1 and 2 give credit to the idea that the loss of economic competences of national governments, not only decreases the weight of the economy in the individual voting calculus, but also increases the importance of non-economic issues as the *balancing demands hypothesis* predicts. Specifically, I have demonstrated that individuals who think that their national government has little responsibility over the situation of the national economy are more likely to 1) judge incumbent parties on their performances on non-economic issues (specifically, standards of health care) and are more prone to 2) choose a party which displays policy stances on non-economic issues (specifically, the issue of European integration) that are close to their preferences. This is the first time, to my knowledge, that the *balancing demands hypothesis* is applied to performance voting in non-economic issues. Yet, there is room to believe that, if processes of economic integration change the

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structure of citizens' demands regarding governmental policy actions (by notably increasing the demands for policy actions in the non-economic realm), then it should also affect mechanisms of accountability in domestic elections. In addition, the effect of economic globalization on issue voting on European integration has only been tested in the framework of the 1997 French general elections, eventually limiting the generalization of this result. To sum up, chapters 1, 2 and 4 show that the perceived loss of national governments' economic room to manoeuvre affects the way voters mobilize issues when voting in domestic elections in line with the *constraint hypothesis* and the *balancing demands hypothesis*

In the first part of the thesis, I do not only investigate the impact of processes of economic integration on issue voting and performance voting, but I also investigate whether the loss of economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments influences 1) the individual probability to cast a ballot (chapters 3 and 4) and 2) the vote for different party types (chapter 3). In chapter 3, I test the argument of [Steiner \(2010\)](#), which contends that the loss of national governments' economic competences, resulting from the opening of national economies to world markets, ultimately reduces the expected benefits of the act of voting. I do so in a first cross-national and longitudinal perspective using individual-level data. In this third chapter, I find that individuals who believe their national government to be constrained in managing the situation of the domestic economy are more likely to report to have abstained in the last general elections. However, chapter 4 does not corroborate this finding when focusing on the impact of perceptions of responsibility of the European Union over the domestic economic situation on electoral participation in national elections. In fact, the analysis shows that those who think that the European Union is responsible over the national economic situation are not less likely to declare to have participated in general elections. Finally, I also develop an original argument linking the fortunes of mainstream parties and challenger parties with the loss of economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments. Building on studies on voting behaviour in intermediary elections, I make the argument that the decrease of the influence of national governments over the situation of the domestic economy should give voters incentives to vote more sincerely in general elections because these elections can be perceived as less important, ultimately favouring the fortunes of challenger parties. In my empirical analysis, I demonstrate that individuals who believe their national government to have little responsibility over the domestic economy are more prone to vote for challenger parties than for mainstream opposition parties. Thus, the first part of the dissertation supports the idea that perceptions of the loss of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre affect voting behaviour in domestic elections.

In the first chapters of the dissertation, I thus specifically investigated the impact of the loss of the economic competences of the national governments, resulting from the expansion of processes of economic integration, on voting behaviour in domestic elections. In the following chapters, I analysed more precisely the impact of the extension of the competences of the European Union on voting behaviour in domestic and European elections, and on mechanisms of accountability in particular. The second part is thus more clearly linked to interrogations that can be found in European studies. Drawing on the literature of voting behaviour in federal states, I first test the simple implication that individuals should hold the European Union more accountable as it gains policy competences (chapters 6 and 7). In chapter 6, I examine the effect of the perceived responsibility of the European Union on performance voting in the main channel of accountability in the



European system of governance: the European parliamentary elections. In line with most studies, results show that there is still limited evidence that individuals punish or reward European representatives on the basis of their past performances (even in areas where it has clearly gained policy competences). In fact, even those who think the European Union to be highly responsible over policy outcomes at the national level do not hold members of the European parliament accountable for the policy situation in their country. Having said that, chapter 7 slightly contradicts the idea that the European Union and its representatives cannot be held accountable for the policy situation as it gains responsibility. Indeed, I show, in the final chapter, that the state of the economy affects individual support for the European Union when the latter becomes institutionally in charge. More precisely, a bad situation of inflation reduces the individual support for the European Union after integration within the European Union but not before. In contrast, chapter 5 examines the effect of the augmentation of the responsibility of the European Union on voting behaviour in domestic elections by focusing on issue voting on European integration. In this chapter, I make the claim the increasing responsibility of the European union in terms of policy competences should increase the individual propensity to vote for political parties on the basis of their positioning on the issue of European integration. Indeed, many studies argue that the increasing authority of the European Union enhances the salience of this issue among citizens via an increased politicization. Results however do not support the hypothesis. On the contrary, the analysis shows that issue voting on European integration is negatively correlated with responsibility attributions to the European Union. All in all, there is thus no clear evidence that the extension of the competences of the European Union has had a strong effect on voting behaviour, at the noticeable exception of a reduction of economic voting in domestic elections in 2014 (chapter 4).

## **A discussion of the main theoretical and empirical limitations**

As mentioned, this dissertation contributes, both theoretically and empirically, to the literature linking processes of economic integration and voting behaviour, but also to the literature on voting behaviour in federal systems. To put it bluntly, this dissertation is cumulative by essence since it primarily aims to falsify recent theories of voting behaviour which analyse the effect of the loss of national governments' economic margins of manoeuvre and the increasing responsibility of the European Union on individual voting behaviour. Indeed, there is still few empirical validation of the main hypotheses of the research agenda first developed by Hellwig (2001), notably because of the lack of available data. In fact, most of the available studies rely on particular case studies or use aggregate level data to analyse the relationship between processes of (economic) integration and the vote. In this dissertation, I take advantage of the *European Election Study* dataset to perform a micro-level analysis of voting behaviour in a first large cross-national perspective, which is lacking in the literature. Besides, I also contribute to the literature by providing some new theoretical perspectives: I notably develop the research agenda to other features of the vote such as sincere voting, and its corollary, the vote for different kind of parties. Nevertheless, as already mentioned in the different chapters, there remains some theoretical and empirical limitations that alter the generalization of the results, but offer perspectives for new research. In the following subsections, I present these limitations in more details before proposing what can be done to

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improve our current understanding of the impact of processes of integration on the vote.

## Theoretical and empirical limitations

The first study that investigates the relationship between processes of economic integration and voting behaviour dates from 2001. In this study, [Hellwig \(2001\)](#) explicitly relies on the premise that processes of economic integration (especially, economic globalization) constrains the economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments. This premise has been accepted by most students of voting behaviour and economic globalization: it is the theoretical basis on which I rely in the first part of the dissertation. Unlike [Hellwig \(2014\)](#), I decided to extend this argument to the case of European integration. Indeed, the process of integration can be conceptualized as a process which reduces the economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments since many authors have deemed it as an intense case of globalization. Besides, the exclusive competences of the European Union mainly pertain to the economic domain (e.g. customs, commercial policy, external trade and competition rules). This first assumption can be debated nonetheless. Indeed, the process of European integration is more than a mere process of economic integration: it is a process of delegation of power in multiple policy areas such as marine conservation (exclusive competence), agriculture and fisheries, environment and energy (shared competences). In fact, the case of the European Union illustrates one of the remaining black box in the literature. Indeed, most studies in the literature assume that individuals connect the expansion of processes of integration with the loss of economic margins of manoeuvre of national governments. Nevertheless, there exists few empirical studies which confirm that individuals actually make this connection. In fact, studies on individual attribution of responsibility to national governments (and European Union) are more nuanced and show that attribution of responsibility is a function of actual responsibilities but is also affected by partisan biases ([Hobolt and Tilley, 2014b](#), for example). In turn, the micro-level analyses performed in this dissertation might be subject to such biases since my main independent variables are individual perceptions of (economic) responsibility of national governments (and the European Union). This is particularly obvious in chapter 5 where I find a strong correlation between attitudes toward the process of European integration and attributions of responsibility of the European Union.

Besides, the wording of the main independent variable might also be subject to other problems. More precisely, the question is worded as follows: "First, thinking about the economy, how responsible is the British government for economic conditions in Britain?" The question does not ask specifically about the extent to which respondents think that national governments are constrained by processes of economic integration and only uses the singular. Consequently, the question might be understood by respondents as the particular responsibility of the current government, rather than responsibilities of national governments in general. Besides, it does not permit to identify whether perceptions of the impact of processes of integration affect responsibilities of the national government in the first place, and voting behaviour eventually. All in all, this can affect the results of the estimations, notably when differentiating between party types (chapter 3).

The second difficulty that arises in this dissertation is the delimitation between economic and non-economic issues, especially in the framework of chapters 1 and 2. Indeed, it is not easy to clearly differentiate between what can be conceptualized as an economic issue

and what can be conceptualized as a non-economic issue. Indeed, there are only few issues that can be defined as purely non-economic, in the sense that they are budget neutral. Stated differently, almost all policies must be funded to achieve their purpose. In this dissertation, I simply follow the argument of Hellwig (2013) which posits "that the public associates certain issues as more or less related to economic policy, broadly conceived. Others issues are more weakly associated with economics frames" (Hellwig, 2013, p.5). Yet, there is room to believe that such conceptualization is too abrupt since it conceives the issue dimension on a binary perspective. Rather, one can conceive issues on a continuum.

Besides, the *European Election Study* provides information on attributions of responsibility only in 2009 and in 2014, thus limiting the generalization of the results. This is even more problematic insofar as the European sovereign debt crisis that has been taking place in the European Union since the end of 2009 might affect substantially the way individuals perceive their national government and the European Union to be responsible over the situation of the domestic economy. In addition, the 2014 *European Election Study* does not allow to measure issue voting on European integration because it does not include individual perceptions of parties' positioning on European integration due to technical problems (Schmitt et al., 2015, for more information). Finally, the *European Election Study* is a survey that is crafted to study European parliamentary elections. Therefore, the surveys are carried out at the occasion of European parliamentary elections. Yet, I mainly focus on domestic general elections in this dissertation (at the exception of chapter 6). Accordingly, the dependent variables of interest used in this dissertation do not grasp precisely voting behaviour in domestic general elections, eventually increasing the risk of declarative biases already present in traditional surveys. All in all, there remains some theoretical and empirical problems that alter the validity of the results in this dissertation. Having said that, this dissertation provides new paths for further research. This is discussed in the next subsection.

## Roads to follow

The remaining gaps in the literature on voting behaviour in times of economic constraints first derive from the fact that there exists few datasets which allow testing those hypotheses on the individual level. Apart from the *European Elections Study* datasets, there are only two nationally-based surveys which ask individuals whether they consider their national governments to be constrained by processes of economic integration in their abilities to influence the domestic economy: the *1997 Cevipof* provides information on voting behaviour at the occasion of the 1997 domestic elections, while the *British Election Panel Study 1997-2001* provides information on voting behaviour in the 2001 British general elections. This dissertation clearly suggests that there is a need to further include such questions in election surveys, especially in a cross-national perspective. Indeed, studies using aggregate data do not permit to definitely confirm the different hypotheses laid out in the research agenda since they are subject to problem of specification uncertainty.

On a related note, there still exists few aggregate data measuring the actual influence of European Union on the domestic economy and on other policy domains. In fact, there exists only three datasets: the European Index of Regional Institutional Integration (Dorrucci et al., 2015), the qualitative index of (Hooghe and Marks, 2001) and Börzel's Index

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on the degree of authority of the European Union (Börzel, 2005). The first dataset measures the integration of territories into the European economic system, while Börzel's Index on the degree of authority of the European Union deriving from the institutional treaties quantifies the degree of authority over 18 different policy areas in four main categories: external relations, justice and home affairs, sociocultural affairs, and economic affairs. The former has never yet been used as an independent variable and the latter needs to be updated since the Lisbon treaty has changed the distribution of powers between the European Union and national governments. In fact, such data could allow to respond to two different unanswered questions. First, do individuals perceive the European Union to be a process of economic integration as suggested in this dissertation. Second, does higher objective European (economic) integration affects responsibility attribution and voting behaviour?

This dissertation also calls for the inclusion of measures of perceptions of policy performances and issue salience in other domains than the economy in a more systematic fashion. Indeed, following the *balancing demands hypothesis*, I demonstrated in chapters 1 and 2 that individuals who perceive their national government to be constrained in the economy are more prone to judge 1) incumbent parties on their performances on standards of health care (chapter 1); and 2) political parties on the issue of European integration (chapter 2). To do so, I took advantage of the 2009 *European Election Study* which provides information on subjective perceptions of national governments' performances on health care standards and climate change and items on perceptions of self- and party-placement on the issue of European integration. As already mentioned, there is still doubts concerning the conceptualization of non-economic issues, especially regarding the issue of European integration (see chapters 2 and 5). In turn, the inclusion of more non-economic issues in election surveys might improve our knowledge regarding the impact of processes of economic integration on individual demands for government policy actions and their effects on voting behaviour. Surprisingly, there is also few available databases which provide information on individual issues preferences over time. Indeed, even *Standard Eurobarometer* do not systematically ask this question.

Finally, if one agrees with the fact that economic globalization and European integration decrease the meaningfulness of general elections (Steiner, 2016), there is also room to believe that it could end up influencing other features of the vote as suggested in chapter 3. In this dissertation, I made the proposition that it could notably alter the fortunes of mainstream parties via its impact on sincere voting, and probably strategic voting. Accordingly, there is thus the need to further test this idea using both data on the individual and on the aggregate level. Specifically, it could be interesting to look at the direct impact of processes of European integration on sincere voting.

Taking a step-side from the impact of processes of economic integration on voting behaviour, empirical studies on party convergence indicate that economic integration most notably, economic globalization increases the convergence of party platforms on the economy. Yet, studies differ on their results when they measure international economic integration via different indicators. For instance, the effect of an increase of foreign direct investments on party convergence is whether null (Haupt, 2010), or positive (Adams et al., 2009) depending on the empirical analyses. The picture becomes even blurrier when disentangling the effect of different indicators of economic integration on the behaviour of left and right parties.

Indeed, Adams et al. (2009) also show that increasing level of exports makes left-wing parties move toward the right part of the spectrum on the economic dimension, while increasing levels of imports push them toward the left. Hence, there seems to be a need to further specify theoretically why different indicators of international economic integration affect differently party platforms. However, few studies provide a coherent theoretical approach to make sense of such empirical differences (Adams et al., 2009, for an exception). Furthermore, there is still some mystery surrounding the impact of economic integration at the party level. Indeed, almost all the studies mentioned in this review make the assumption that there should be a differentiated effect between kinds of parties, e.g. mainstream vs. niche parties; pro-EU vs anti-EU parties. Contrary to expectations, there is robust evidence that all political parties react similarly to increased constraints from European integration and economic globalization, although they have different strategies - should they be vote-seeking, office-seeking, or policy-seeking - they increase (conversely, decrease) the weight of non-economic issues (conversely, economic issues) in their party manifestos and they become closer to their opponents on the economic dimension. Until now, no coherent explanation has been provided to explain such phenomenon. To respond to these questions, one possibility would be to measure issue salience and party positioning through other channels than party manifestos. One possibility would be to investigate the way members of the parliament emphasize and position themselves on economic and non-economic issues as (European) economic integration deepens, possibly via the use of the *Comparative Agendas Project* which provides information on the matter.

Finally, note that this dissertation did not fully summarize all the consequences of economic integration have on domestic politics. Notably, I did not open the discussion on the possible implications of economic globalization on domestic politics within the framework of the historical cleavage theory. In fact, the interrogations and the empirical tests within this dissertation are certainly complementary to this approach since the integration-demarcation literature predicts a restructuring of the domestic party competition because of the mobilization of winners and losers on the basis of new non-economic issues. Yet, they do not capture the potential massive changes induced by a new critical juncture, which could potentially change the structure of party systems very profoundly. To clearly distinguish these effects, one would however need more time since historical cleavages are arguable slow to directly impact domestic politics.

## **Is this good news for democracy?**

Studies linking processes of economic integration and voting behaviour have demonstrated that electoral turnout clearly diminishes as economic integration deepens, while economic voting appears to be weaker in highly economically integrated countries. In this dissertation, I support these findings using only individual level data: chapter 3 suggests that individuals who think that their national government has little responsibility in the management of the domestic economy are less likely to cast a ballot in general elections, while chapters 1 and 4 indicate that voters who perceive more fiercely economic constraints resulting from economic globalization and European integration tend to hold their national executive less accountable for their past performance in the economy. At first glance, these results do not seem like great news for champions of normative democratic theory. If electoral participation and accountability mechanisms are considered as good indicators about the



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health of a democratic polity, then the fact that exogenous processes, such as European integration and economic globalization, reduce the latter should not be taken as positive signs.

Besides, I also showed that alternative channels of accountability, most notably European parliamentary elections, are still not used by citizens to counterbalance the effect of the loss of national governments' policy competences. Indeed, chapter 6 corroborates past studies which have already indicated that European members of the parliament are not punished or rewarded on their past policy performance. Finally, chapter 5 suggests that individuals still do not choose parties (especially, mainstream parties) on their positioning on the issue of European integration, eventually suggesting that domestic elections do not serve as a way to hold national executive accountable for the decisions taken at the European level.

These results can be worrisome because the issue of economy appears to be hollowed out from party competition as processes of economic integration intensify. This is particularly obvious in the case of economic globalization since there exists no channels that allows citizens to hold global markets accountable for their influence on the situation of the domestic economy. But, the expansion of the authority of the European Union has also not been translated in higher scrutiny in European parliamentary elections. This result clearly suggests that, this is not by merely multiplying electoral arenas that accountability will be enhanced contrary to the positions of advocates of Federalism (Downs, 1999, for example). The former usually argue that processes of devolution, decentralization and supranational integration enhance democratic accountability: voters have more opportunities to express their disagreements over governmental actions in federal states because of the multiplication of electoral venues. In turn, popular control over policy-making arguably increases. However, the analyses displayed in this dissertation show that this is not an automatic process.

In this framework, chapter 7 provides some clues to explain how the distribution of powers can actually enhance the scope of democratic politics in general, and accountability in particular. In this chapter, I concur with Stein (1990) and Rudolph (2003a) who argues that functional responsibility is a necessary prerequisite for citizens to hold representatives accountable for policy decisions. In addition, I also make the claim that competences assigned to the new level of governance must be clearly identifiable. Following, the picture brought about in this dissertation thus also provides positive signs concerning democracy in times of increasing constraints. Indeed, voters and parties appear to respond to the constraints stemming from economic integration, not only by hollowing out economic issues, but also by emphasizing new issues when voting. As (Hellwig, 2014, p. 5) puts it: "publics use information about integration in world markets to recalibrate their preferences, shifting demands away from economic issues and toward other domains." Accordingly, voters are no fools: they simply adjust to the new configuration - resulting from processes of economic integration - and assess the actions of their representatives on issues where they still have powers.

Finally, this dissertation also gives some information concerning the debate about the characterization of the European Union. This debate has been subject to a long discussion since the contribution of Haas (1958). Since its creation, it is labelled a *sui generis* political and economic association. This label fosters the idea that the project of European integration is completely unique compared to other polities such as the American federal

state; organizations of free trade and customs unions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; or international organizations such as the World Trade Organization. The European Union is not a state *per se* either, even though some researchers label the European Union as a proto-state "in order to indicate that the EU does exhibit at least some state-like characteristics" (Richardson, 2015, p. 7). Indeed, Richardson (2015) argues that the European Union meets some conditions of a modern state, or a policy-making state, without the monopoly of legitimate use of violence since it has acquired "the power to decide on public policies that were hitherto the province of member states" (Richardson, 2015, p. 10) via states' voluntary delegation of sovereignty and the supremacy of European law over national law. This definition of the European Union as a policy-making state is very similar to the definition of Majone (1996). The author claims that the European Union is a regulatory state and is a form of supranational state because a huge amount of national regulations originates from and is produced at the European level. Nevertheless, if one takes the definition of the state as an institution having the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, or more simply coercion, it might be difficult to characterize the European Union as a state *stricto sensu*. In fact, the European Union displays mixed institutional arrangements where state's sovereignty is voluntarily reduced by the states themselves. The uniqueness of the EU is well put by Richardson (2015): "Its multinational and neo-federal nature, the extreme openness of decision-making to lobbyists, and the considerable weight of national politico-administrative elites within the process, create an unpredictable and multilevel policymaking environment. Even the relationships among key institutions such as the Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Court of Justice has been in a considerable state of flux for many decades, with each treaty reform producing a new 'institutional settlement'." (Richardson, 2015, p. 10). Institutionally, the European Union appears to be an atypical form of supranational regime and the process of European integration is qualitatively different from other regional forms of association in many respects.

It then raises the question of comparability with other processes of regional integration in general and with polities in particular since this is the scope of this dissertation. The question whether the European Union can be comparable, or whether it represents an n of 1, has arisen more fiercely in the nineties as the European policy competences became more and more important and salient following the Single European Act (1986) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992). A Seattle ESCA meeting in 1997 put the question more clearly on the agenda. At this occasion, several renowned European Union's scholars, such as James A. Caporaso, Andrew Moravcsik, Gary Marks and Mark A. Pollack, asked whether the European Community is an instance of a more general class of phenomena and whether a sufficient amount of observations can be found to falsify theories and thus allow comparisons with other forms of associations, political regimes or Free trade associations. All four scholars agree on the premise that no epistemological reasons overturn the possibility to compare the European Union with other international regimes or polities based on its uniqueness. According to them, the European Union's uniqueness only means that the European Union differs in its properties. In turn, there are several ways to conceptualize the EU meaningfully as part of a larger universe of cases. In this dissertation, I argued that the European Union can be defined as a process of economic integration (chapters 1 to 4) or as a federal state (chapters 6 and 7). If the European Union can be defined through the way voters use it, then, it resembles more a process of economic integration - or an intense



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case of globalization - rather than a real federal state.

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