The voting behaviour of national delegations in EU institutions

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Abstract

When national delegations make voting decisions on the European stage, how do they act? How does the domestic political context affect such voting behaviour? This thesis, composed of three papers, analyses the voting behaviour of national representatives in two primary decision-making bodies of the European Union – *the Council of the European Union (the Council)* and *the European Parliament*. My first paper examines who the 'public' is that government parties respond to when voting in the Council – the *general electorate* or their *party supporters*. By differentiating types of public opinion and evaluating two conflicting models – the general electorate model and the partisan constituency model, I demonstrate that governments respond to partisan supporters' preferences on the pro-/anti-EU dimension rather than to the general electorate mood. Based on this, my second paper looks at how domestic party competition dynamics and electoral factors play a role in the party-partisan linkages in the Council. Specifically, I look at the conditions under which voter Euroscepticism is translated into party Euroscepticism when parties vote in the Council. The findings suggest that negative EU issue salience to a party strongly predicts party responsiveness to its Eurosceptic supporters, while proximity to national elections also has a limited moderating effect. Last, my third paper examines the mechanisms that explain the voting behaviour of MEPs in the European Parliament when the ideological position of the national party differs from that of the EP party group. I find that party-level issue salience and proximity to European Parliament elections condition the effect of ideological distance on MEPs' voting defection from the EP group. This thesis sheds light on the interconnectedness of domestic politics and EU-level decision-making. It also contributes to the fields of political representation, mass-elite linkages, the politicisation of Europe, legislative behaviour, and public opinion and party politics in the European context.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In democracies, political parties play a crucial role in connecting voters and legislators by channelling voters' preferences and delivering them into public policy through coherent policy programmes. European-level politics is not an exception to this. Not only in the domestic arena but also in supranational institutions such as the European Union (the EU), national parties are key actors that link voters' interests to decision-makers/legislators and try to influence EU-level decision-making processes via their national delegations. The Council of the EU (also known as the Council) is comprised of government ministers from each member country of the EU, who are delegated by the national parties they belong to. In the European Parliament, another main legislative body of the EU, national parties serve as national 'principals' that "delegate certain tasks" to their employed 'agents', Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (Mühlböck, 2012: 609; see also Hix, 2002; Thiem, 2007).

The overarching theme of this thesis is how national delegations act when making vote decisions in EU institutions and what drives them to behave in such ways. The main goal of this thesis is to examine whether supranational decision-making is interconnected to national politics. The multi-level system of the EU makes it an interesting case to test whether national representatives are still subject to the domestic party-political environment even at the European level or whether different mechanisms are at play in the supranational decision-making dynamics. In examining the interplay between national and European politics, this thesis, comprised of three papers (Chapters 2 through 4), focuses on two primary decision-making bodies of the EU – the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament. Chapters 2 and 3 look at national party ministers' voting behaviour in the Council with a specific focus on party-voter linkages, whereas Chapter 4 examines MEPs' voting behaviour

in the European Parliament, focusing on MEPs' voting (dis)loyalty to their European Parliament (EP) party group.

Before introducing the main arguments and findings of each chapter of this thesis, I provide a brief explanation of how both EU institutions work and existing literature related to it. First, the Council is an intergovernmental institution in which government ministers from each member state of the EU "meet to discuss, amend and adopt laws, and coordinate policies" in various policy areas (European Union, n.d.[1]). As ministers are party politicians who represent national government parties, they try to safeguard and defend national interests (Johansson and Raunio, 2019). The qualified majority voting rule (QMV) is most commonly used in the Council, and ministers can exhibit their opposition after the Council president "announces whether a piece of legislation got the necessary support" (Mühlböck, 2012: 626). However, studies suggest that opposition votes are rare given the highly consensual nature of the Council decision-making process (e.g., Hagemann et al., 2017; Hosli et al., 2011; Novak, 2013).

Due to its consensual nature, decision-making in the Council has long been regarded as insulated from domestic pressures and public opinion. However, a growing number of studies point out that as EU issues and policies have become increasingly politicised and contested in the domestic arena, governments do care about public opinion towards European integration even when making decisions in the Council (Hagemann et al, 2017; Wratil, 2018; Hobolt and Wratil, 2020). These studies have found that government parties, through ministers' voting in the Council, respond to the concerns of the domestic public on the pro-/anti-EU dimension. While these studies offer important insights into understanding the opinion-policy nexus at the supranational level, there is a gap in the literature. To my knowledge, existing literature on

[1] Available at: https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/council-european-union_en

government responsiveness in the EU looks at public opinion as an aggregated whole and does not distinguish who the 'public' is that governments mainly care about in the European arena. As political parties have various goals and objectives, I argue that distinguishing different types of public opinion – the general electorate and party supporters – provides a more nuanced answer to the dynamics of political representation and mass-elite linkages. Chapter 2 addresses this very point and tests what kind of the 'public' government parties respond to. Furthermore, building on Chapter 2, Chapter 3 examines domestic party-competition dynamics that condition party-voter linkages in the Council. I will discuss the main arguments and findings of these chapters in more detail later in this section.

Second, together with the Council, the European Parliament is another main legislative body of the EU. The European Parliament has become the only directly-elected legislative body of the EU since 1979, as part of the EU's institutional reforms to address the so-called 'democratic deficit' problem (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006). 'Democratic deficit' refers to a situation in which there is a "perceived lack of accessibility" or "representation of the ordinary citizen" in EU institutions and their decision-making process (European Union, n.d.[2]). In an attempt to tackle such concerns, the power of the European Parliament has been particularly enhanced through the reform in 2009, which made the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP; formerly known as co-decision) the "general rule for passing legislation at the EU level, covering the vast majority of [policy] areas" and making joint co-legislation between the Council and the European Parliament important (European Parliament, n.d.[3]). In the European Parliament, MEPs play a crucial role as a "vertical link" that connects national and European arenas, aggregating voters' preferences and delivering them into public policies (Koop et al.,

[2] Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/democratic-deficit.html

[3] Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/olp/en/ordinary-legislative-procedure/overview

2018: 581). As there are multiple actors involved in EU law-making – individual MEPs, national parties that select MEPs, and transnational party groups – in the EP, understanding legislative behaviour in the European Parliament is crucial in understanding the interplay between national and supranational politics, as well as the bicameral interplay between the Council and the Parliament.

In the European Parliament, there are three different types of voting. First, MEPs vote by a show of hands, which is the quickest way in a plenary session. Second, electronic voting counts the number of 'Yes', 'No', and 'Abstention' votes and only the overall result is published. The last type of voting is roll-call votes, in which the voting decision of each representative is recorded in the minute. Although there are some concerns about potential selection bias regarding roll-call votes (e.g., Carrubba et al., 2006; Hix et al., 2018; Yordanova and Mühlböck, 2015; Trumm, 2015), they are widely used by scholars for examining legislative and political behaviour of MEPs (e.g., Mühlböck, 2012, 2017; Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Willumsen, 2022). As roll-call votes contain crucial information about each MEP's vote decisions on EU legislative proposals, they serve as a useful tool for understanding MEPs' voting behaviour. Moreover, since roll-call votes are the "types of votes that can change public policy", they can also provide useful information about MEPs' policy preferences (Willumsen, 2022: 5). Following the established literature on MEPs' legislative behaviour, I focus on roll-call votes in my analysis in Chapter 4.

I now present an overview of each chapter's main arguments, theoretical expectations, and empirical findings as follows. First, Chapter 2 investigates to whom national governments respond in the Council by distinguishing different types of public opinion. According to the *general electorate model* in the context of political representation, parties are vote-maximising actors and thus are more incentivised to respond to the central voter position to maximise vote share (see Ezrow et al., 2011). On the other hand, however, the *partisan constituency model*

provides a compelling alternative framework for government responsiveness. The model posits that parties pursue policy-seeking and office-seeking as essential objectives. Parties may have incentives to cater to their supporters, instead of the mean voter, to clearly signal policy alignment with them and keep them in the fold. Combining five waves of European Election Studies (EES Voter Study 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019) and ministers' Council voting records on EU legislative proposals, I test which type of public matters for government parties when voting in the Council. The results show that party supporters' opinion towards European integration matters, thereby confirming party-supporter linkages. When domestic party supporters hold more Eurosceptic attitudes, government parties are more likely to cast opposition votes in the Council. On the contrary, there is little evidence of party responsiveness to the general electorate. Chapter 2 also discusses the limitation of findings that these party-supporter linkages only hold for the United Kingdom and do not extend to the rest of Europe.

Chapter 3 delves further into the question of under what conditions the party-supporter linkages get stronger. I focus specifically on the mechanisms that explain government parties' responsiveness to the Eurosceptic disposition of their party supporters. Existing studies on party-voter linkages in the domestic arena suggest that government parties are generally less responsive to voters' Euroscepticism (e.g., Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004; Mattila and Raunio, 2006, 2012; Spanihelova and Zicha, 2012). Moreover, as pointed out above, opposition votes occur very rarely in the decision-making process in the Council (only accounting for approximately 2% of the entire votes) due to the highly consensual nature of Council politics and some reputational costs associated with expressing an opposition (see Hagemann et al., 2017: 855). Against this backdrop, this chapter particularly asks what incentivises government parties to respond to their Eurosceptic supporters by casting opposition votes despite the rarity of such events and the costs related to them.

In answering the question, I argue that domestic party competition dynamics play a crucial

role in party responsiveness, even in the European arena. Specifically, I look at the moderating effects of party-level negative issue salience and proximity to national elections on party-partisan linkages. As policy-seeking and office-seeking actors, it is in the interests of political parties to signal stable, consistent policy positions to their supporters in a way that closely aligns with them in order to maintain the loyalty of the supporters and avoid electoral punishment (e.g., Strom, 1990; Giger and Lefkofridi, 2014). Therefore, if parties are vocal about their Euroscepticism in election programmes/manifestos, they are more likely to signal consistency and responsiveness to the supporters by voting against EU legislative proposals in the Council. Even if they cannot change the actual policy or legislative outcome, parties can still effectively use the European arena to signal responsiveness. Moreover, as domestic voters can hold parties accountable for their unresponsiveness in elections, I also expect that the effect of party responsiveness will be stronger when the next national parliamentary elections approach. The results demonstrate that government parties are indeed more likely to cater to the Eurosceptic attitudes of their supporters when EU issues are negatively salient to them in the election manifestos. Electoral proximity also moderates the opinion-policy nexus between parties and party supporters, but only to a limited extent.

Last, Chapter 4 moves onto MEPs' voting behaviour in the European Parliament and asks under what conditions the greater policy distance between MEPs' two principals – national parties and European Parliament party groups – leads to individual MEPs' voting defection from their European groups. Transnational party groups have shown noticeably high levels of voting cohesion over time, implying that MEPs mostly vote with their European groups and defect from them very rarely. This also implies that even when national parties and the European party groups disagree on a given EU proposal/issue, the policy distance alone cannot always predict MEPs' voting defection from the European groups. Although national parties are MEPs' primary principals that directly affect their re-election and entry into the Parliament

through candidate selection, national parties do not always have incentives and capacity to influence their MEPs as they generally priories domestic issues over European issues (Mühlböck, 2012). Moreover, defecting from European party groups is costly to MEPs and national parties (Klüver and Spoon, 2015). Therefore, parties will try to influence EU decision-making through MEPs' voting in cases of policy conflicts/clashes only when specific conditions are met – i.e., when doing so highly serves their interests.

In Chapter 4, I examine the conditioning effects of two factors on the relationship between ideological distance and MEPs' defection: how salient the given issue is to national parties and how close the next European elections are. For example, not all policy issues discussed in the European arena are equally important to national parties, and the ideological distance between national parties and transnational groups alone does not fully explain why MEPs' voting defection rate varies across different policy areas (Klüver and Spoon, 2015). Due to the costs associated with defecting from EP groups, national parties are more likely to discipline their MEPs to toe the party line as their position diverges from that of the transnational group if the issue is more salient and thus considered more important to the party. Furthermore, as EU issues have become increasingly politicised and contested, proximity to European Parliament elections affects the electoral calculations and incentives of the actors involved. I expect that national parties have incentives to enhance their control over MEPs in the run-up to European elections when their policy position is distanced from the EP group's position. Analysing final roll-call votes in the 7th–9th European Parliament (from September 2009 to June 2022) across six different policy areas, I find empirical evidence that both party-level issue salience and proximity to EP elections condition the effect of ideological distance on MEPs' disloyalty to the EP group. The results demonstrate that the effect of policy disagreement between national parties and their EP groups on MEPs' defection becomes stronger when national parties prioritise the issue at hand and when European elections are proximate.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the field in several ways. First, by applying and expanding the two conflicting models of political representation that have been mainly discussed in the domestic arena to the supranational level, this thesis broadens our perspectives of the opinion-policy nexus and party-based political representation. This thesis finds strong evidence that the partisan constituency model explains government ministers' voting behaviour in the Council. In other words, government parties are more likely to cater to the preferences and concerns of their supporters instead of the mean voter's preferences. These findings are particularly novel and illuminating, given that mainstream parties, which serve as government parties across Europe most of the time, have been considered to be generally more responsive to the central voter position than niche parties to maximise their vote share in elections (e.g., Ezrow et al., 2010). Therefore, the thesis brings a fresh perspective to the discussion of mass-elite linkages in the European arena.

Next, this thesis contributes to understanding party competition dynamics and the interplay between national and European politics. It provides evidence that national delegations to these EU institutions – government ministers in the Council and MEPs in the European Parliament alike – are party politicians and thus subject to domestic contexts and electoral calculations. Since both ministers and MEPs belong to their national parties in the first place, domestic party competition dynamics that shape and affect national parties' incentives and strategies influence these representatives' voting behaviour, even at the supranational level. Therefore, the thesis sheds light on the interconnectedness between domestic contexts and EU-level decision-making.

Relatedly, this thesis draws our attention to the conditioning effects of issue salience and electoral proximity on voting mechanisms both in the Council and the European Parliament. Chapters 3 and 4, despite their different focuses on different EU institutions, share important similarities in that both chapters seek to answer why 'rare' events occur in these institutions

and what incentivises actors to make such rare decisions against all odds. Government ministers' opposition in the Council is a rare event, as is MEPs' voting defection from their European party groups. The European arena is relatively of less importance to domestic parties than the domestic arena and as there are reputational costs related to voting against the majority opinion of the group (e.g., Hagemann et al., 2017; Mühlböck, 2012; Klüver and Spoon, 2015), national parties may try to signal responsiveness to their supporters through ministers' voting in the Council or enhance control over MEPs to keep them in line in the European Parliament only when there are enough incentives to do so. Chapters 3 and 4 find that party-level issue salience and electoral proximity play a role in moderating these dynamics. Therefore, the empirical findings of this thesis point out the importance of understanding the actors' various interests and incentives in explaining their voting behaviour.

The following chapters proceed as follows. Chapter 2 investigates what kind of voters – the entire electorate or party supporters – government parties respond to in the Council. Expanding the findings from Chapter 2, Chapter 3 examines how party-level issue salience and electoral proximity condition party-supporter linkages in the Council. Chapter 4 moves onto MEPs' voting behaviour in the European Parliament and examines conditions under which MEPs are more prone to defect from their EP party group in cases of policy conflicts between the national party and the EP group. Finally, in Chapter 5, the thesis concludes with a summary of these three papers, their contributions, and some further suggestions for avenues for future research.

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Chapter 2. For Whom the Vote Tolls: The Effect of Different Types of Public Opinion on Government Voting in the Council of the European Union

Abstract

When national governments vote on EU legislative proposals in the Council of the European Union, do they respond to the preferences of the general electorate or those of partisan supporters? Previous literature suggests that national governments respond to public opinion to some extent in supranational entities such as the EU, although the empirical results are mixed. However, I argue that more attention needs to be paid to who the *public* is that government parties respond to in the EU to see the full picture of mass-elite linkages. On the one hand, the *general electorate model* suggests that the central voter position is the primary concern of political parties as vote-seeking actors. On the other hand, according to the *partisan constituency model*, parties are office-seeking and policy-seeking actors and thus respond to their party supporters to maintain their loyalty. To address this, I conduct a mixed-effects logistic regression analysis covering 27 EU member states for five-year rounds between 1999 and 2019, drawing on various data sources including VoteWatch Europe and European Election Studies (EES Voter Study). The results suggest that government parties respond to the preferences of party supporters over EU issues rather than to the general electorate mood or to the preferences of voters who support other parties when voting in the Council. When party supporters' attitudes toward European integration are more Eurosceptic, parties are likely to cast more opposition votes in the Council. This research broadens our understanding of political representation and mass-elite linkages in supranational decision-making.

2.1 Introduction

The topic of public opinion and government responsiveness is at the core of democratic representation and accountability (Dahl, 1967, 1971). In democracies, parties shift their policy positions in response to mass preferences, in the hope of electoral gain or for fear of electoral removal sanction in the next election (e.g., Aspinwall, 2002, 2007; Page and Shapiro, 1983, 1992). A vast array of literature has focused on the domestic responsiveness of national parties/governments to the domestic public, particularly in the context of the United States (e.g., Page and Shapiro, 1983, 1992; Wlezien, 1995; Monroe, 1998; Coleman, 1999; Jones et al., 2009). Several comparative studies in the European context have also investigated factors that affect the link between mass preferences and domestic policy responsiveness in European democracies (e.g., Wlezien and Soroka, 2012; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005).

With regard to whether the opinion-policy nexus can be applied to the supranational level, such as the European Union (EU), a growing body of literature suggests that national governments respond to public opinion even in supranational entities such as the European Union. However, the empirical results are mixed and inconsistent depending on which aspect of the opinion-policy nexus they focus on. On the one hand, the European Union is expected to be less responsive due to its 'democratic deficit' problem, which refers to the lack of institutional mechanisms that connect European citizens to EU policy-makers (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006). On the other hand, recent studies have provided empirical evidence that the EU is responsive to the public mood to some extent (e.g., Bølstad, 2015; Hagemann et al., 2017; Hobolt and Wratil, 2020; Wratil, 2018). Although the EU is not entirely of democratic nature due to its multi-level system, public opinion has increasingly been playing a crucial role in facilitating or constraining the scope and pace of European integration since the post-Maastricht era (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). The fact that the Council of the European Union (hereafter referred to as the Council), which comprises national government ministers, is the

primary decision-making body of the EU, further enhances the importance of public opinion on governmental policy intentions even at the supranational level (Hagemann et al., 2017).

Previous research on government responsiveness in the EU has made important contributions to understanding the mass-elite linkages beyond the domestic level. However, there is an important gap in the literature. Existing literature has only focused on the link between government parties and the opinion of the general electorate rather than looking at the responsiveness of these parties to their supporters. To the best of my knowledge, previous literature on government responsiveness in the EU has treated public opinion as an aggregated whole and has not made any distinction between the preferences of the general electorate and those of party supporters. I argue that more attention needs to be paid to who the 'public' is that national governments respond to in the EU to see the detailed picture of mass-elite linkages.

On the one hand, the *general electorate model* suggests that the central voter position is a primary concern of national governments. As office-seeking actors, parties have incentives to respond to the central voter position, even at the European level, to signal that their voices are heard in order to maximise electoral fortune in the next election. On the other hand, the *partisan constituency model* serves as a compelling alternative explanation. As parties are not only office-seeking actors but also policy-seeking actors that are keen on aligning their stances with the positions of party supporters, government parties are incentivised to respond to their supporters to maintain partisan loyalty (for the two different models of representation in the domestic context, see Ezrow et al., 2011). By examining these two models, I argue that domestic public opinion does affect government decision-making in the European arena, but that types of public opinion matter. Specifically, I address the following research question in this chapter:

To whom do national governments respond in the Council of the European Union: the general electorate or their own party supporters?

In this chapter, I investigate the opinion-policy nexus in the Council by distinguishing types of public opinion on the pro-/anti-EU dimension. To address this, I conduct a mixed-effects logistic regression analysis covering 27 member states of the EU across five-year rounds between 1999 and 2019, combining various data sources, such as VoteWatch Europe, the European Election Studies (EES Voter Study), and the Manifesto Project Database. The binary dependent variable (DV) is governments' vote decisions on EU legislative proposals in the Council. The main explanatory variables (IVs) are voter preferences on the pro-/anti-EU dimension, drawn from five rounds of the European Election Studies (EES) database. The originality of this research lies in the distinction of different types of public opinion: the general electorate, government party supporters, and voters who support parties other than the government party. Making this distinction allows me to provide a more nuanced answer to the impacts of different types of public opinion on government decision-making in the Council. Thus, this research offers unique insights into the nature of political representation in the EU.

The empirical findings suggest that party supporters' opinion towards European integration matters when it comes to government responsiveness in the Council, not the preferences of the general electorate (nor those of supporters of other parties). That is, if party supporters' attitudes toward European integration are more Eurosceptic, government parties are more likely to cast opposition votes in the Council. By distinguishing types of public opinion, this study fills the gap in the existing literature on voter-party linkages, both theoretically and empirically, and brings a fresh perspective to the opinion-policy nexus

discussion. The empirical findings of this study also add to the literature on political representation and responsiveness in supranational decision-making beyond the national arena.

2.2. Voter-Party Linkages in the European Union

Government responsiveness to public opinion is a complex issue which requires a sophisticated classification of the "possible targets" and the extent of the relationship (Eulau and Karps, 1977: 241). A wide range of previous literature has examined the opinion-policy nexus with varying empirical focus. According to their level and scope of analysis, existing literature can be classified into different categories: macro- or micro-level studies, and static (i.e., cross-sectional) or dynamic (cross-temporal) studies. While micro-level studies focus their attention on the linkages between individual legislators and their constituencies (e.g., Miller and Stokes, 1963), macro-level studies examine aggregate levels such as national governments or international polities (e.g., Page and Shapiro, 1983; Wlezien, 1995; Peters and Ensink, 2015). Meanwhile, although some studies adopt static design to check synchronic issue responsiveness, a dynamic design has more widely been used in the literature to examine the link between public preferences and government responsiveness over time (Hobolt and Klemmensen: 2005: 381).

Generally, the field is rife with studies about government responsiveness in the domestic context. Consensus is that public opinion is indeed translated into policy agendas, governmental promises, or legislative acts (e.g., Page and Shapiro, 1983, 1992; Wlezien, 1996; Burstein, 2003). Various studies have examined the domestic context of European countries. For example, Hobolt and Klemmensen (2005) suggest that the public's policy concerns are translated into governmental agenda in Britain and Denmark and that the effect gets stronger in the proportional electoral system. Peters and Ensink (2015) also examine structural and

systemic factors that affect the preference gap, arguing that European governments are more responsive to the rich than the poor.

Policy responsiveness is not only limited to governmental parties, but political parties in general adjust their policy positions, issue priorities, and issue emphasis in accordance with public preferences. Furthermore, even supranational contexts can also influence party responsiveness to domestic public opinion. Somer-Topcu and Zar (2014) demonstrate that domestic political parties shift their policy strategies in response to previous European Parliament elections, as European Parliament elections provide information for parties about domestic public preferences. However, the empirical findings from Spoon and Klüver (2014) suggest that national parties in Europe are more responsive to the public in domestic elections than in the European Parliament elections due to the so-called "second-order" nature of European elections (see also Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

Supranational/international polities, such as the European Union, are generally believed to be insulated from public opinion. Nevertheless, a growing body of literature has focused on different aspects of EU policy-making to measure the EU's responsiveness – including the EU's legislative outputs (Toshkov, 2011; Bølstad, 2015), policy agenda congruence in the European Council (Alexandrova et al., 2016), governmental voting in the Council of Ministers (Hagemann et al., 2017; Hagemann et al., 2019), or public deliberations in the Council (Hobolt and Wratil, 2020), yet the empirical results are mixed. For example, Mattila (2009) argues that while governments' ideological positions on both the left-right and pro-/anti-EU dimensions influence the position they take in the Council, public policy preferences are not directly translated to governmental voting. A systematic analysis of the total volume of the EU's legislature by Toshkov (2011) also suggests that there was a causality between public opinion and the sheer volume of EU legislative acts until the 1990s but that the link has been missing ever since. These studies provide a useful systemic analysis of EU responsiveness by focusing

on the total volume of EU legislation, but they do not cover detailed, policy-specific linkages. Nor do these systemic analyses provide information about why individual governments have different voting behaviour on the European stage.

Contrary to the findings above, Hagemann et al. (2017) find that governments do have incentives to be responsive to public opinion when voting in the Council. By investigating the micro-level voting behaviour of governments, they offer compelling explanations about governments' signalling to domestic voters in the supranational institutions. However, Hagemann et al. (2017) suggest that the responsive dynamics does not apply to all policy areas of the EU. Specifically, when it comes to so-called 'well-established' policy areas that are believed to have already been well integrated into the EU's competencies, the authors indicate that other unexplained mechanisms might be at play. Another study conducted by Hobolt and Wratil (2020) shows that during the stage of public deliberations, domestic public opinion influences governmental decisions in the Council and that government responsiveness is stronger when the policy issue is more politicised at the domestic level. Governing parties in the Council can adopt different 'modes of responsiveness' when negotiating legislative policies in the Council, depending on issue dimensions (Wratil, 2018). That is, government responsiveness to domestic public opinion on left-right issues is more systematic, whereas government responsiveness to opinion on the pro-/anti-EU dimension is more sporadic (Wratil, 2018). These studies demonstrate that public opinion does play a role in national governments' decision-making in the Council.

However, none of these previous studies on the mass-elite linkages in the EU have differentiated different types of the 'public'. They have focused on gauging public opinion operationalised by the average position of the general electorate, but none of these studies addresses whether government parties respond to the general electorate or specifically to their *supporters* in the supranational arena. Governments in the Council are political parties, after

all, and the various objectives and functions of parties – e.g., whether they are vote-seeking, office-seeking, or policy-seeking – could lead to different dynamics of political representation. Therefore, distinguishing different types of public – preferences of the general electorate and those of party supporters over EU issues– would be useful in better capturing the comprehensive picture of the opinion-policy nexus.

2.3. Differentiating Public Opinion and Government Responsiveness in the Council Voting

The EU has long been said to suffer the 'democratic deficit' problem (Føllesdal and Hix, 2006). The EU's democratic deficit refers to the situation where European citizens have less control over the EU policies that affect their lives but are usually driven by pro-EU elites. As Føllesdal and Hix (2006) point out, there seems to be a lack of accountability of the EU elites, the absence of a European *demos*, and an opaque and remote decision-making process, which makes it hard for public opinion to be directly translated into European decision-making (see also Soroka and Wlezien, 2010). It is also hard for citizens to assign responsibility for EU policies. In addition, even though the European Parliament has been empowered, it is still perceived as relatively weak and of less importance than national parliaments, as European elections are often viewed as second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Hix and Marsh, 2007). As voters tend to have less interest and knowledge in EU issues than national issues, turnout in EP elections is relatively lower than in national elections.

However, since the post-Maastricht era, public opinion has increasingly played an important role in legitimising the EU's democratic performance. Hooghe and Marks (2009) describe that there has been a significant shift from the 'permissive consensus' of the early days of European integration to the 'constraining dissensus', which means that the era of elite-driven

European integration has ended and that public opinion has become crucial in determining or restricting the direction and pace of integration.

Then, why would governments respond to public opinion at the European level? According to a dynamic representation approach (Arnold and Franklin, 2012; Stimson et al., 1995), national governments decide their policy positions based on rational anticipation that their voting behaviour will be rewarded in the upcoming domestic elections. Political parties/governments are rational vote-seeking and office-seeking actors who seek to maximise their chances of being re-elected. The electoral uncertainty and the possibility of removal sanctions thus make the government more willing to respond to the public mood to increase their chance of remaining in office or winning an election (Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008: 314). At the European level, whether in legislative voting in the Council of Ministers or the agenda-setting processes in the European Council, national governments can also signal voters that they are being responsive to them in the hope that their actions will be rewarded in the upcoming national elections (Alexandrova et al., 2016: 606; Hagemann et al., 2017: 852). This refers to what Hagemann et al. (2017: 852) term “signal responsiveness”. It is also close to “rhetorical responsiveness” rather than “effective responsiveness” in that governmental vote choices in the Council may not consequently lead to actual changes in the EU’s legislative outputs (see Alexandrova et al., 2016: 606; Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008: 310).

Given the highly consensual nature of the decision-making process in the Council, government opposition constitutes only a small proportion of total votes. Even when a handful of government ministers occasionally cast opposition votes on specific proposals, practically all EU legislative proposals are passed by the majority. In addition, casting an opposition vote may negatively affect the negotiation power of the national government in the EU (Hagemann et al., 2017). However, it is this very fact that makes opposition votes more significant and credible, as ministers still cast costly opposition votes against furthering European integration

to signal responsiveness to their domestic public while knowing that their vote choices are not likely to affect the actual outcome in the Council (Mattila, 2009; Hagemann et al., 2017). Therefore, governments' opposition votes on EU legislative proposals can effectively signal to their domestic voters that national interests are protected and voters' concerns are heard.

In theorising party-voter linkages, the three different objectives of political parties – i.e., vote-seeking, office-seeking, and policy-seeking – offer a useful theoretical framework for understanding parties' motivations and behaviour (see Strom, 1990). These objectives can be distinguished by what parties seek to maximise: vote-seeking parties seek to maximise votes, office-seeking parties aim to maximise "control over political office", and policy-seeking parties focus on maximising their "effect on public policy" (Strom, 1990: 566-567).

The *general electorate model* in the context of party competition suggests that parties primarily represent the central tendency of the electorate in the political arena (Ezrow et al., 2011). Parties, as vote-maximising actors, have electoral incentives to adopt a "centre-oriented" strategy to respond to the central voter since catering to the overall mean voter position can effectively help them maximise votes in domestic elections (Ezrow et al., 2011: 278; see also Stimson et al., 1995; Adams et al., 2004; Marks et al., 2002). Although this model has been applied mainly to domestic contexts, the dynamic representation approach allows me to theorise that even at the supranational level, parties are incentivised to respond to the general electorate preferences based on the rational anticipation of votes in future elections. Following this logic, I hypothesise that when the general electorate mood is more Eurosceptic, governments are more likely to cast opposition votes in the Council to signal their responsiveness to maximise votes from the electorate.

Contrary to the general electorate model, the *partisan constituency model* (Ezrow et al., 2011; Adams, 2012; Ibenskas and Polk, 2022) offers strong alternative lines of reasoning to the

party-mass linkages. Parties are not only office-seeking actors but also policy-seeking actors (Strom, 1990). As policy-seeking actors, parties are keen on maintaining the loyalty of their supporters. Hence, according to the partisan constituency model, parties tend to be responsive to the preferences of their partisan supporters. This tendency is observed particularly among niche parties, as opposed to mainstream parties, which are usually located on the edges of the political spectrum (Meguid, 2005, 2008). Nevertheless, in general, parties that have clear and distinctive policy stances, instead of simply positioning towards the central voter position, can be attractive to voters who have "diffuse preferences" for different issues and who would favour those parties that offer clear policy alternatives to them if the parties' policy positions are consistent enough with those of the voters (Hellström, 2008: 194). In other words, parties have incentives to be more responsive to their supporters in the Council, instead of the general electorate, to show that they offer clear policy stances that represent supporters' views. Furthermore, as parties' resources are limited, they may be keen on strategically prioritising the preferences and concerns of their supporters, rather than those of the broader public that includes voters supporting other parties.

Admittedly, however, discerning a party's true intentions is challenging, as we can only infer its true motivations from observable behaviours, such as voting records, speeches, or campaign rhetoric. Moreover, the aforementioned three objectives of party behaviour are simplified models, whereas, in reality, these objectives are not entirely clear-cut. It would be unrealistic to assume that only one objective matters to political parties; rather, these goals are not mutually exclusive. Parties can be simultaneously motivated by various objectives and pursue "a particular mix of objectives" (Strom, 1990: 573). The interplay of different party objectives poses a challenge of fully disentangling its motivations based on observable data, which is referred to as observational equivalence. For instance, a party's pursuit of a specific policy may serve as a variant of vote-seeking behaviour if such policy-seeking behaviour aims

at securing electoral support from their base. In other words, emphasising or implementing a policy to maintain the loyalty of core supporters can also function as a vote-seeking strategy. In such cases, distinct underlying motivations may yield similar observable outcomes, making it difficult to determine which objective is actually driving them.

As Strom (1990: 573) noted, votes do not hold intrinsic value but simply serve as a means to achieve office benefits or policy influence (see also Ezrow et al., 2011: 278). Since votes can be used as a tool for both electoral gains and policy objectives, this instrumental role of votes further complicates clear distinctions between party objectives. Despite the complexity, a key distinction between vote-seeking and policy-/office-seeking parties lies in their central objectives rather than in their shared instrumental use of votes. While both strategies may involve appealing to voters, their primary goals diverge. Vote-seeking parties prioritise maximising future electoral gains by appealing to the median voter, whereas policy-/office-seeking parties primarily focus on policy influence through governmental office by aligning with the ideological preferences of their core supporters. By weighing the trade-offs of each objective and considering the institutional and organisational constraints, parties put relative weight on specific goals over others.

While distinguishing parties' different objectives is challenging due to their practical intertwinement, we can at least try to identify the relative weight parties assign to each objective through their observable behaviour. If vote-seeking and policy-seeking objectives were truly observationally equivalent, we would expect government parties in the Council to respond to an undifferentiated public opinion. However, if only one type of public opinion – whether that of the central voter or party supporters – systematically influences governing parties' voting behaviour in the Council, this suggests that vote-seeking and policy-seeking objectives do not always produce similar/identical observable outcomes, thereby mitigating concerns about observational equivalence to some extent. For example, if government parties in the Council

systematically respond to the EU preferences of the general electorate rather than those of their core base, this would serve as evidence that parties weigh vote-seeking more than other objectives. Conversely, if their vote decisions in the Council systematically align with party supporters' EU preferences rather than those of the central voter, this suggests that parties are driven more by a policy-seeking objective. Importantly, in the latter case, this does not imply that parties purely seek policy influence while disregarding vote-seeking. Instead, what empirical results can show is the relative weight and the central priority that parties place on these objectives.

Based on these theoretical expectations, I propose the following set of hypotheses:

> ***Hypothesis 1 (General Electorate Model)****: Government parties are more likely to respond to the preferences of the general electorate over European integration when voting in the Council of the European Union. That is, government parties are more likely to cast opposition votes in the Council when the general electorate holds negative views towards European integration.*

> ***Hypothesis 2 (Partisan Constituency Model)****: Government parties are more likely to respond to the preferences of their party supporters over European integration when voting in the Council of the European Union. That is, government parties are more likely to cast opposition votes in the Council when their partisan supporters hold negative views towards European integration.*

2.4. Research Design

To test hypotheses on the effects of different types of public opinion on government parties' vote decisions in the Council[4], this study covers 27 member countries of the EU. As the period under study is before the United Kingdom officially left the EU, the UK is included in all 5-year rounds; however, Malta is excluded due to data unavailability for the period of this study. The years covered in this study are 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019; these years were selected to match the European Election Studies (EES) Voter Study rounds. The Appendix provides detailed information about data operationalisation and coding schemes.

2.4.1. Dependent Variable

The binary dependent variable (DV) is government parties' vote decisions on each EU legislative proposal in the Council; 'No' and 'Abstention' votes are coded as 1, and 'Yes' votes are coded as 0. This is due to the fact that the signalling effect of an 'Abstention' vote is virtually equivalent to that of opposition, particularly under the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP) (Hagemann, 2008; Hagemann et al., 2017: 856-857; see also Mühlböck, 2012: 626). Compared to the European Parliament, in which simple majority is the most common voting rule for adopting a legislative proposal (unless on amendments at second reading), most vote decisions on legislative acts are taken by the qualified majority voting rule (QMV) in the Council (European Union, n.d.)[5]. Given the highly consensual, Europhile nature of Council decision-making, abstention is considered to have practically the same effect as voting 'No' in terms of opposing Europhile plurality (for the context of the European Parliament, see also Börzel et al., 2023). Government parties may sometimes strategically cast abstentions instead of outright

[4] A government party is defined as the Prime Minister (PM)'s party in the main analysis. However, I run additional robustness checks with an alternative operationalisation of a 'government party' that includes all parties that are members of the cabinet (see Table A9 in Appendix A); the results are consistent nevertheless.

[5] Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/simple-majority.html

'No' votes to signal their dissent while trying to reduce reputational costs associated with voting 'No' in the negotiation stage (Hagemann et al., 2017).

I built upon Hagemann et al. (2017)'s Council Vote dataset for the years 1999, 2004, and 2009; however, as this dataset only covers years up until 2011, I manually updated each national government's vote decisions in the Council for the recent years by cross-validating information from the following sources: the VoteWatch Europe website, the EUR-Lex website, and the European Parliament's Legislative Observatory website. All the government votes cast in the Council in the years under investigation have been collected.

Regarding policy areas into which each EU legislative act is categorised, the extant literature points out that not all legislative proposals adopted at the European level are about pushing the boundaries of European integration. Studies broadly agree that several policy areas – e.g., '*Agriculture and Fisheries', 'Economic and Financial Affairs',* and '*Internal Market and Consumer Affairs'* – are the ones in which the EU is believed to have already well-established competencies (Hagemann et al., 2017; Börzel, 2005). These studies argue that EU proposals that fall into these policy areas are believed to deal with rather technical terms instead of discussing further European integration. Particularly, using the Wordscores text scaling approach, Hagemann et al. (2017) found that the '*Agriculture and Fisheries'* area is the most well-established and integrated policy area within the EU.

However, contrary to Hagemann et al. (2017)'s approach to excluding the aforementioned three policy areas from their analysis of party-voter linkages, I decided to include all policy areas for my main analysis for the following reasons. As can be seen from Table 2.1 below, the estimation sample of this study shows that these three 'well-established' policy areas within the EU account for almost half of the opposition votes out of the total opposition votes cast in the Council in the period under study (184/376=48.9%). Especially, the '*Agriculture and*

Fisheries' area alone accounts for almost a third of all opposition votes (116/376=30.9%). As can be seen from Table 2.1, '*Agriculture and Fisheries'* is the most contested one among all areas in which national governments cast the most opposition votes in the Council of the European Union. On the contrary, national governments cast no opposition votes in the '*Foreign and Security Policy'* area in the period under study. These descriptive statistics indicate that, against the expectations from the previous studies, these so-called well-established areas are still highly contested and politicised. Therefore, excluding these contested areas would limit my analysis to less salient and less politicised, hence rather technical, EU proposals. Out of these considerations, I estimate the models on all policy areas; nevertheless, the main analysis is further supplemented by the additional analysis on policy areas excluding '*Agriculture and Fisheries'* (Table 2.5 in the following *Results and Discussion* section) for comparison. Moreover, for further robustness checks, I also ran models excluding all these three 'borderline' areas (see Table A11 in Appendix A); whether these areas are included in the models or not, the key findings of this study remain consistent.

Table 2.1: Opposition votes per policy area (estimation sample)

Policy area	Opposition votes	%	Total votes
1 Agriculture and fisheries	116	30.9	3,958
2 Budget	19	5.1	606
3 Civil liberties, justice and home affairs	58	15.4	1,979
4 Constitutional affairs and administration	3	0.8	227
5 Development and international trade	4	1.0	581
6 Economic and financial affairs	31	8.2	2,968
7 Employment, education, culture and social affairs	27	7.2	1,083
8 Environment and energy	48	12.8	1,904
9 Foreign and security policy	0	0	74
10 Internal market and consumer affairs	37	9.8	2,601
11 Transport and telecommunications	33	8.8	1,843
Total number of opposition votes	376	100	17,824

2.4.2. Explanatory Variables

The main independent variables (IVs) of this study are voter preferences on the pro-/anti-EU issue dimension, drawn from five rounds of the European Election Studies (EES Voter Study) database (1999-2019). In the analysis, I distinguish different types of public opinion – the preferences of the general electorate, of government party supporters, and of supporters of other parties – over EU issues to examine whose opinion matters when it comes to government voting behaviour in the Council. First, the measure of the EU position of the general electorate is the average of all valid responses by country on the pro-/anti-EU issue dimension. On the other hand, the measure of party supporters' EU position is operationalised as the average of all valid responses of the survey participants over European integration issues who reported that they had voted for the prime ministerial party in the previous parliamentary election. Last, the opinion of non-supporters is measured by taking the average of all valid responses of participants by country who reported that they had voted for a political party other than PM's

party on the pro-/anti-EU dimension.

I use the following question measuring respondents' level of support for European integration in the EES dataset. The same question/wording was used across all EES rounds: *"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?"* I rescaled the variables where necessary so that all the public opinion variables across different years range on a 0-10 scale. Detailed accounts of how the main independent variables are measured are presented in the Appendix (Section A2).

2.4.3. Control Variables

I control for several macroeconomic, vote-related, and party-related factors in this study.

To account for the macroeconomic conditions of a member state, I include *unemployment* and *inflation* rates as control variables. When the domestic economic conditions worsen, economic hardship can fuel support for populist and extremist parties that challenge the status quo, potentially influencing national governments' stances toward the EU. In response to domestic economic stress and the electoral threat posed by populist movements, governments may become more reluctant to push for further European integration (e.g., Bailer et al., 2015: 449). As such, theoretical expectations suggest that higher levels of unemployment and inflation are likely to increase governing parties' opposition to EU legislation.

Next, I control for several vote-related dummy variables: whether the member state held a rotating Council presidency at the time of voting, whether the vote was conducted under the co-decision rule (Ordinary Legislative Procedure; OLP), and whether the vote occurred after the EU's enlargement to Eastern and Central Europe in May 2004.

First, *Council presidency* is coded as 1 if the country held the Council presidency at the time of voting and 0 otherwise. The rotating presidency of the Council, held by each member state for six months, plays a crucial role in facilitating the EU's legislative process. As Council presidents have an interest in preserving negotiated outcomes, they may influence the voting behaviour of ministers from their home country. Consequently, holding a rotating Council presidency is expected to decrease the likelihood of a member state opposing legislative proposals during its presidency period (e.g., Hagemann et al., 2017).

Second, *co-decision* is coded as 1 if the vote was taken under the co-decision rule (OLP) and 0 otherwise. The division of decision-making powers between the Council and the European Parliament, which requires joint adoption of legislation by both institutions, introduces additional institutional constraints on EU law-making. Since the European Parliament can act as "another veto player", potentially impeding the passage of legislative proposals (Hagemann et al. 2017; 861), I expect that government parties will be more likely to oppose EU legislation under the co-decision voting rule.

Third, *post-enlargement* is coded as 1 if the vote occurred after the 2004 enlargement and 0 otherwise. Consistent with theoretical expectations about 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), which suggests greater opposition to European integration in recent years compared to the early years of integration, the likelihood of government opposition to European integration is expected to increase after the Eastern and Central enlargement in May 2004.

Finally, I account for party-related factors that may influence government voting behaviour in the Council, including government parties' left-right and pro-/anti-EU ideological positions, as well as the electoral strength of Eurosceptic challenger parties in the domestic arena.

Regarding *government parties' left-right ideological positions*, although there may be policy-specific variations in support for EU legislative proposals, economically right-wing parties are generally expected to be more supportive of EU legislation (Wratil, 2018; Hagemann et al., 2017). This expectation stems from the historical role of economically right-wing parties as the driving forces of European integration, given that the integration process initially focused on economic integration to promote open markets and economic competitiveness. Accordingly, the EU's market integration agenda closely aligns with the ideological commitments of economically right-wing parties. In addition, with respect to parties' *pro-/anti-EU positions*, government parties that hold more anti-EU stances are expected to cast a greater number of opposition votes in the Council to express their reservations about, or opposition to, EU legislation.

To measure governing parties' ideological stances on both the left-right and pro-/anti-EU dimensions, I use the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al., 2021). Using the Manifesto Project Database, formerly known as the Comparative Manifesto Project, has an advantage in that it reflects the shifts in emphasis on issues in a party's electoral manifesto/programme if a new national parliamentary election was held in the same year that matches the period of this study. For government parties' left-right positions, I use the "RILE" scale from the Manifesto Project Database for prime ministerial parties. "RILE" is a composite variable that combines quasi-sentences related to various issue positions to measure the traditional left/right ideological dimension (see Appendix A for the constitutive variables). It is based on party manifestos issued for national parliamentary elections most prior to the Council voting date. The "RILE" scale is operationalised as the relative proportional difference between 'rightist' and 'leftist' quasi-sentences, using a proportional scaling approach.

Similarly, the EU position of a prime ministerial party is also measured using the Manifesto Project Database, applying the same proportional scaling approach used for left-

right positioning. Specifically, it is calculated as the difference between the percentages of positive and negative quasi-sentences about the EU in the party manifesto, as drawn from the Manifesto Project Database[6].

Last, I control for the size of *Eurosceptic challenger parties* in the domestic electoral context, measured as the percentage of votes received by these parties in the national parliamentary election most recent to the Council vote date. Existing literature suggests that the rise of Eurosceptic challenger parties influences both voters' issue positions and mainstream parties' policy stances on EU issues in domestic party competition (see Hernández and Kriesi, 2016; Meijers, 2017; Persson et al., 2023; Persson et al, 2019). As governments facing domestic pressure from electorally successful Eurosceptic challenger parties may adopt tougher positions on EU issues, I expect that government parties will cast more opposition votes in the Council when these parties gain greater vote shares within the domestic party system. To measure vote shares for these parties, I use data from the ParlGov database (Döring et al. 2022). For cases where data are missing in the ParlGov dataset, I supplement it with information from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset (Jolly et al., 2022). Detailed information on the definition of a Eurosceptic challenger party, as well as a list of such parties by country for the years under investigation, is provided in Table A5 in Appendix A.

2.5. Results and Discussion

The goal of this analysis is to explore the relationship between different types of public opinion

[6] To maintain the consistency of measurement throughout the entire thesis, I employ a proportional scaling approach – the original scale used in the Manifesto Project Database – when measuring party positions on both left-/right and EU dimensions (for a detailed discussion of the rationale behind choosing the proportional scale instead of the logit scale, see footnote 21 on p.132, Chapter 4.)

and government voting behaviour in the Council of the EU. To examine this, I run mixed-effects logistic regression models with random effects for Council legislative acts and fixed effects for countries[7]. Country fixed effects are included to take into account the hierarchical nature of the dataset: vote decisions by national delegations – government ministers – from the same country might share the same contextual characteristics and thus are not entirely independent. In addition, including random effects is based on the assumption in the extant literature that EU legislative acts in the sample are randomly drawn from an "imagined population of Council acts" (Hagemann et al., 2017: 859).

Table 2.2: Descriptive statistics (estimation sample)

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Opposition vote (DV)	0.02	0.14	0	1
General electorate EU position	5.15	0.89	3.09	7.41
Party supporters' EU position	5.29	0.99	1.85	7.85
Non-supporters' EU position	5.11	0.91	3.31	7.55
PM's party position: left-right	-1.52	14.99	-52.50	48.66
PM's party position: pro-/anti-EU	2.02	2.26	-4.48	11.89
Co-decision	0.61	0.49	0	1
Post-enlargement	0.78	0.41	0	1
Council presidency	0.05	0.21	0	1
Unemployment	8.63	4.16	2	26.5
Inflation	1.29	1.56	-4.48	7.55
Eurosceptic challenger parties (vote share)	5.97	6.97	0	28.9
Observations	17,824			

To begin with, I present some descriptive statistics and figures. Table 2.2 above provides

[7] Results of robustness checks with different model specifications (e.g., with fixed effects on both countries and policy areas and with year-specific fixed effects) are reported in Tables A8 and A12 in Appendix A.

summary statistics for all variables in the estimation sample[8], and Table 2.3 below displays the number of opposition votes by year. According to Table 2.3, the total number of opposition votes cast by 27 member states for five years under my investigation was 376 votes, accounting for approximately 2% of the entire votes (17,824 votes) cast in the Council in these five years. Table 2.3 also shows the overall increase in the share of opposition votes over time, except for the year 2009 which saw a slight decrease in the percentage of opposition votes out of all total votes from 2004 by roughly 0.3 percentage points. In 2019, opposition votes cast by national governments accounted for approximately 3% of the entire votes, whereas the share of opposition votes was only about 1.6% in 1999. The overall increase in the percentage of opposition votes over time reflects the theoretical expectations that there has been a shift from the 'permissive consensus' to the 'constraining dissensus' over time (Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

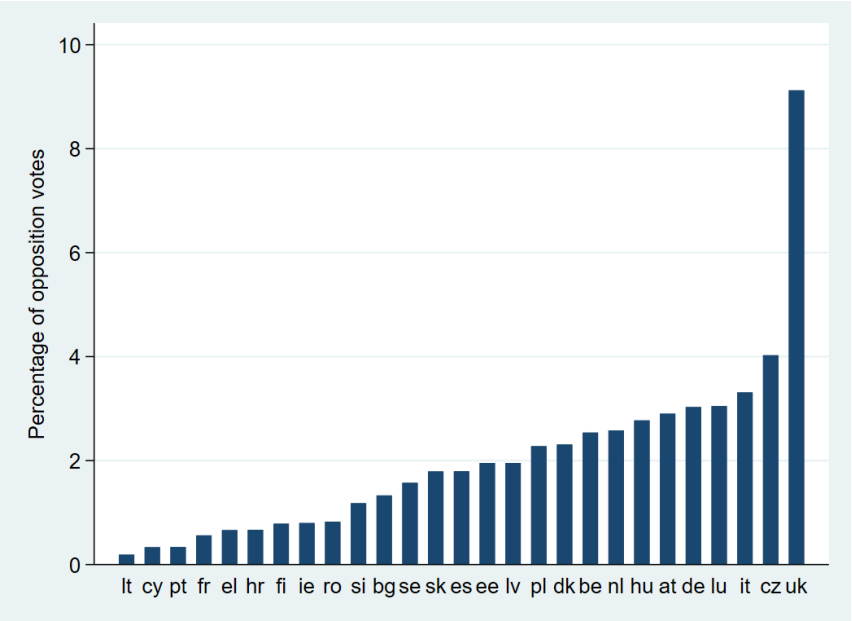
Table 2.3: Number of opposition votes by year

Year	Number of opposition votes	%	Total number of votes
1999	38	10.1	2,268
2004	60	16	3,330
2009	80	21.3	5,306
2014	96	25.5	3,887
2019	102	27.1	3,033
Total	376	100	17,824

Last, Figure 2.1 illustrates the percentage of opposition votes cast by each country in the estimation sample that includes all policy areas. According to the figure, the UK cast the most opposition votes among all the member states of the EU during the period under study, while Lithuania cast the least opposition votes.

[8] Each statistic is rounded to two decimal places. Detailed variable definitions and sources are presented in Table A1 in the Appendix.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of opposition votes per country (including all policy areas)



Now, the main logistic regression results that include all policy areas (N = 17,824) are presented in Table 2.4. Model 1 examines the effect of the general electorate's EU preferences (variable *general electorate EU position*) on the likelihood of the government party casting an opposition vote in the Council, while Model 2 estimates the effect of the party supporters' attitudes toward European integration (variable *party supporter EU position*) on the likelihood of government's opposition vote. Model 3 is a combined model that includes both the EU positions of government party supporters and non-supporters. Due to the multicollinearity issue, the general electorate's opinion and government party supporters' opinion could not be included in the same model, as party supporters are a subset of the general electorate. Therefore, in Model 3, I instead include mutually exclusive public opinion variables, which makes the model free from the multicollinearity issue[9].

[9] The variance inflation factor (VIF) detects whether there is multicollinearity between the explanatory variables in a regression model. A general rule of thumb is that VIFs above 5 indicate that multicollinearity should be further investigated, and VIFs above 10 show that there are serious issues of multicollinearity in the model. When including both the general electorate's opinion and party supporters' opinion in the model, the VIF score for the variable *general electorate EU position* is 6.00 and the VIF for *party supporter EU position* 6.27, while all the

Furthermore, the interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) in Table 2.4 justifies multi-level modelling in my analysis. The ICC measures the proportion of total variance in government opposition votes that is attributable to differences between second-level clusters rather than first-level individual vote decisions. The ICC values in Table 2.4 indicate that 44-45% of the variation in governmental voting in the Council is explained by differences at the second level, i.e., legislative acts. Therefore, applying multi-level models enables me to appropriately capture the nested structure of the data and provides more reliable insights into party-supporter responsiveness dynamics.

other explanatory variables show VIF scores less than 2. After replacing *general electorate EU position* with *non-supporter EU position* (as represented in Model 3), however, the VIF scores for all variables do not exceed 4. The *Non-supporter EU position* variable has a VIF value of 3.6, and the VIF value for *party supporter EU position* also drops to 3.76. A full report of the VIF scores for all variables is presented in Appendix A (Table A7).

Table 2.4: Mixed effects logistic regressions on opposition votes in the Council (Including all policy areas)

DV: Opposition vote	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
General electorate EU position	0.084		
	(0.156)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.234**	-0.346***
		(0.096)	(0.101)
Non- supporter EU position			0.550***
			(0.147)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.001	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
PM's party: EU position	-0.242***	-0.209***	-0.161***
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.042)
Co-decision	0.213	0.150	0.207
	(0.209)	(0.208)	(0.210)
Post-enlargement	-0.312	-0.417*	-0.350
	(0.247)	(0.247)	(0.249)
Council presidency	-0.550	-0.441	-0.606
	(0.409)	(0.405)	(0.408)
Unemployment	0.033	0.027	0.051*
	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Inflation	-0.021	-0.008	-0.008
	(0.064)	(0.066)	(0.065)
EU Challenger Party	0.033**	0.031**	0.045***
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Constant	-5.000***	-3.264***	-6.153***
	(1.027)	(0.661)	(1.010)
Observations	17,824	17,824	17,824
N of act	884	884	884
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	3152.773	3147.128	3135.132
BIC	3440.94	3435.295	3431.088
ICC	.44 (.04)	.44 (.04)	.45 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

According to Model 1, the general electorate's mood towards European integration turns out insignificant. As the variable has no statistical significance in this model, interpreting the direction and the size of coefficient would be meaningless and unreliable. Hence, there is not

enough evidence in favour of my Hypothesis 1 (*the general electorate model*). On the contrary, the results in Model 2 show that party supporters' EU preferences have a statistically significant effect on the government party's opposition votes in the Council; the direction of the coefficient (log odds) of the variable is also consistent and in line with my Hypothesis 2. Due to how the binary dependent variable was coded (opposition votes coded as 1), the negative direction of the coefficient of the *party supporter EU position* variable is interpreted as follows: the likelihood of an opposition vote increases as party supporters hold more Eurosceptic attitudes towards European integration. To put it differently, the probability of a government party casting an opposition vote in the Council decreases as their party supporters hold more Europhile views. Hence, Hypothesis 2 (the *partisan constituency model*) is confirmed. The AIC/BIC statistics also imply that Model 2 shows a better model fit than Model 1.

The different mechanisms of party-voter linkages are even more pronounced in Model 3, in which the distinction between party supporters and non-supporters is introduced. Model 3 provides a more nuanced answer to why the general electorate's opinion turns out insignificant in Model 1. The insignificant coefficient of the *general electorate EU position* in Model 1 seems to be driven by the fact that the two public opinion variables, *party supporter EU position* and *non-supporter EU position*, cancel out each other's effect, as the opposite directions of these coefficients show in Model 3. While the effect of party supporters' opinion remains consistent with the expected direction, the responsiveness dynamics between government parties and non-supporters (i.e., supporters of other parties) appear to be broken. In fact, according to Model 3, government parties even vote against the preferences of voters who are leaning toward other parties: the significant positive coefficient of the *non-supporter EU position* variable clearly indicates that government parties are more likely to oppose EU legislative proposals when the voters supporting other parties (e.g., supporters of opposition parties) show more pro-EU attitudes and less likely to oppose EU proposals when supporters

of other parties are more Eurosceptic, all else being equal. This result suggests that parties are incentivised to prioritise and cater to their supporters, rather than the general electorate or those supporting other parties, to clearly signal that they care about and represent the view of their supporters, while distancing themselves from the position of non-supporters. These empirical findings strongly support the expectation of this study that differentiating public opinion would provide a more nuanced explanation about the relationship between public opinion and government voting behaviour.

Previous work on voter-party linkages in the Council indicates that government responsiveness to public opinion no longer holds true in established policy areas. Specifically, when running a regression only on most integrated policy areas – i.e., '*Agriculture and Fisheries', 'Economic and Financial Affairs',* and *'Internal Market and Consumer Affairs'*, Hagemann et al. (2017) find that there is a significant positive coefficient on public opinion (the general electorate's EU position), which indicates that the responsiveness mechanism is nor working anymore when it comes to the well-established policy areas (see Hagemann et al. (2017)'s robustness model "A12" in their web appendix). My empirical findings touch upon this issue and provide some explanation about it. Although Hagemann et al. (2017) attribute the broken responsiveness dynamics to the inclusion of policy areas that are regarded as the well-established areas of the EU, the results in my Model 3 indicate that the responsiveness mechanism is actually not broken even when these most integrated areas are included, but that different types of public opinion need to be taken into account to see the complete picture of the dynamics. Because it turns out that government parties respond to their party supporters while not catering to non-supporters, relationships between public opinion and government responsiveness have been clouded in aggregate analysis in the previous work. By accounting for different types of public opinion, I instead find that the responsiveness mechanism works even when all these policy areas are included, yet it only works between government parties

and their supporters.

Nevertheless, for comparison, I also present models that exclude '*Agriculture and Fisheries*', the so-called most well-established policy area in the existing literature, in Table 2.5. Due to the exclusion of this policy area in which the largest share of EU legislative votes is cast (see Table 2.1), the number of total observations is reduced to $N = 13{,}577$. Across Models 4 – 6 in Table 2.5, the effects of the main independent variables remain largely unchanged. When the '*Agriculture and Fisheries*' area is excluded from the analysis, party supporters' EU preferences still show a significant effect on government vote decisions in the Council, and the magnitude of the effect gets even slightly bigger in both Model 5 and Model 6, compared to Model 2 and Model 3, respectively. The effect of non-supporters' attitudes towards the EU in Model 6 also shows consistency with that in Model 3; the effect is statistically significant, yet the positive coefficient suggests that government parties do not respond to voters who support other parties. The effects of party supporters and non-supporters cancel out each other again, which results in the effect of the general electorate having no statistical significance in Model 4. Therefore, whether the '*Agriculture and Fisheries'* area is included in the model or not, the main effects of different types of public opinion remain consistent: the opinion-policy nexus only works between government parties and their supporters, not the public as a whole or supporters of other parties, in the context of Council politics.

Table 2.5: Mixed effects logistic regressions of opposition votes
(Excluding *'Agriculture & Fisheries'* policy area)

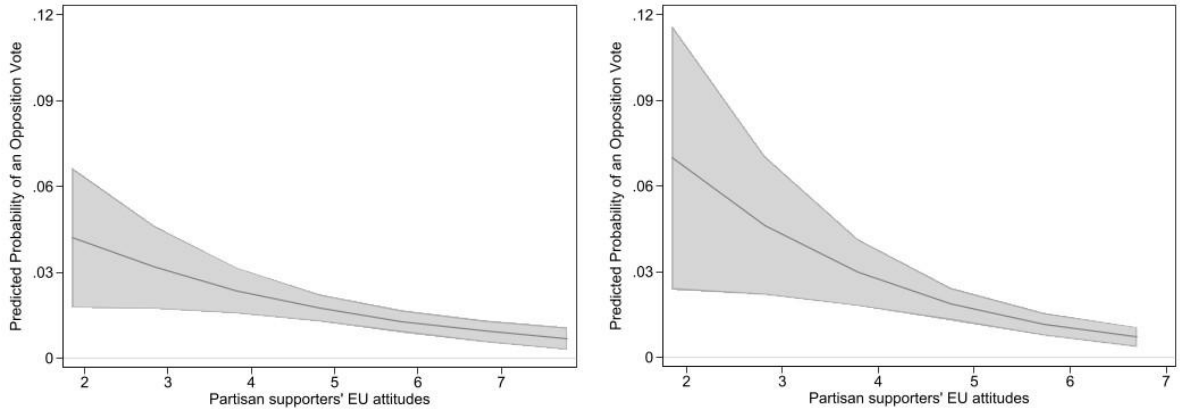
DV: Opposition vote	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**
General electorate EU position	-0.316		
	(0.203)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.494***	-0.546***
		(0.125)	(0.129)
Non-supporter EU position			0.327*
			(0.178)
Constant	-3.367**	-2.625***	-4.436***
	(1.397)	(0.935)	(1.360)
Observations	13,577	13,577	13,577
N of act	670	670	670
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	2152.492	2138.851	2137.483
BIC	2423.073	2409.431	2415.58
ICC	.43 (.04)	.44 (.04)	.44 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses,
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: Only the coefficients of the main independent variables are presented in this table. See Table A6 in Appendix A for a full model, including control variables.

To get a better sense of the magnitude of the effect of party supporters' EU preferences, Figure 2.2 presents the predicted probability of a government's opposition vote in the Council as a function of party supporters' attitudes toward European integration; the panel on the left is based on the estimates of Model 3 that includes all policy areas, while the panel on the right is simulated based on Model 6 excluding '*Agriculture and Fisheries*'. To calculate the predicted probability, I set the other control variables as follows: dummy variables are set at their median values (i.e., under the co-decision procedure, post-Enlargement era (post-2004), and the country holding no Council presidency), while all the other variables are set at their mean values.

Figure 2.2: Predicted probability of opposition votes in the Council as a function of party supporters' attitudes toward European integration, with 95% CIs
(Based on Model 3 and Model 6, respectively)



Note: The left panel shows the predicted probability of a government party casting an opposition vote in the Council at different values of party supporters' EU position when all policy areas are included, based on the estimates of Model 3. The right panel represents the predicted probability of an opposition vote in the Council when the '*Agriculture and Fisheries'* area is excluded, based on the estimates of Model 6. The shadowed area around the solid black line in each graph represents the 95% confidence interval.

As can be seen in Figure 2.2 overall, the predicted probability of a government party casting an opposition vote in the Council increases as their party supporters are more Eurosceptic (more to the left on the x-axis). When all areas are included in the model (graph on the left), the predicted likelihood of an opposition vote is about 0.67% when party supporters hold Europhile views (7.85), which means that governments rarely vote against EU legislative proposals when their supporters are favourable towards the EU. In contrast, when party supporters show hard-Eurosceptic attitudes (1.85), the predicted probability of an opposition vote is about 4.22%. In the meantime, party supporters' EU opinion has a slightly bigger effect on the predicted probability of the government party casting an opposition vote in the Council when *'Agriculture and Fisheries'* is excluded in the model (graph on the right). The predicted likelihood of an opposition vote is 7.0% when party supporters are hard-Eurosceptic (1.85), compared to 0.43% when party supporters show soft-Europhile attitudes (7.64). Furthermore, the predicted probability increases by approximately 2.26 percentage points, from 1.49% to 3.75%, when party supporters' EU attitudes move by two standard deviations to a more

Eurosceptic side from their mean value (5.29).

The effect of party supporters' EU preferences on government vote decisions in the Council may seem small, but given that opposition votes cast by national governments in the Council comprise only a small fraction of the entire votes (only 2% in the estimation sample), the effect is actually not small. As government voting in the Council takes place at the end of the negotiation stage (Wratil, 2018; Lo, 2013), practically all the legislative proposals in the Council are adopted by the majority regardless of some governments' opposition votes (Hagemann et al, 2017). Against this backdrop, my findings suggest that government parties, despite the structural nature of the Council decision-making system, use the European arena to signal that they represent their party supporters' opinions. Therefore, this study provides evidence that party supporters' EU preferences, as opposed to the general electorate's preferences, play a role in government vote decisions in the Council.

The interpretation of the effects of control variables is as follows. Two control variables significantly affect government vote decisions in the Council across all models: government parties' pro-/anti-EU position and the existence of an EU challenger party. First, the negative direction of the government party's EU position means that a more Eurosceptic government is likely to cast more opposition votes in the Council and vice versa, which is not very surprising and has already been shown widely in the extant literature. On the other hand, the results show that governments' left-right positions do not explain governmental voting behaviour in the Council. In terms of Eurosceptic challenger parties, the significant positive effects across all models indicate that governing parties are more likely to cast opposition votes in the Council when the electoral power of Eurosceptic challenger parties is stronger in the domestic domain. Last, it is also worth noting that the co-decision procedure (Ordinary Legislative Procedure) only affects governments' vote decisions in the Council across Models 4 – 6 when *'Agriculture and Fisheries'* is excluded (see Table A6 for the coefficients of this variable). Given that the

introduction of the co-decision procedure between two primary decision-making bodies of the EU – the Council and the European Parliament – empowers the European Parliament, the OLP procedure might create additional obstacles for an EU proposal to be passed.

To assess the robustness of the main findings, I ran several robustness checks (see Tables A8 through A15 for the full results). These include adding another fixed-effects (i.e., policy area and year) alongside country fixed-effects in the model, gradually excluding the 'borderline' policy areas, using an alternative operationalisation of government parties, controlling for Brexit, and excluding the UK from the analysis. While all the other robustness results are largely consistent with the main findings, excluding the UK from the analysis significantly changes the party-voter responsiveness dynamics and thus requires further explanation.

I re-estimated the models in Tables 2.4 and 2.5, excluding the United Kingdom (UK) from the analysis respectively. This decision was based on the observation that the UK exhibited an extraordinarily high rate of governmental opposition votes (9.12%) compared to other member states, as shown in Figure 2.1. The results of these robustness checks are reported in Table A14 (models including all policy areas) and Table A15 (models excluding '*Agriculture and Fisheries*') in Appendix A.

Excluding the UK from the sample results in a loss of statistical significance for the responsiveness dynamics between party supporters' EU position and government votes. Specifically, the effects of both *party supporter EU position* and *non-supporter EU position* on governmental votes become statistically insignificant when the UK is excluded from the analysis (see Models 2–3 in Table A14 and Models 5–6 in Table A15). Moreover, removing the UK from the analysis even reverses the direction of coefficients for both variables (Model 3 in Table A14 and Model 6 in Table A15) compared to the original findings, although interpreting the direction is unreliable due to their statistical significance. This pattern applies to both cases

when all policy areas are included and when '*Agriculture and Fisheries*' is excluded. The results suggest that the UK acts as an important outlier, uniquely driving the observed relationship in the full sample between party supporters' EU position and government voting behaviour in the Council, regardless of whether the '*Agriculture and Fisheries*' policy area is included or not. In other words, the party-supporter linkages only hold for the UK and not for the other member states of the EU, which remains as the main limitation.

However, the results from robustness checks still provide important context to the main findings of Chapter 2. Overall, these unexpected findings suggest that the UK stands out in Europe for governing parties' responsiveness to their supporters' EU preferences, implying that some country-specific factors might be at play. One possible explanation is that major EU-related events, such as national referendums on EU membership or the ratification of EU treaties (Wratil, 2018: 59) might partly account for the UK-specific party-voter linkages. In his study of governments' negotiation positions in the Council of the EU, Wratil (2018) finds that governments respond to public opinion on EU integration only sporadically ("sporadic mode"), particularly when EU matters become highly salient among the public due to major EU-related events. Undoubtedly, Brexit represents a highly transformative EU-related event for the UK which dominated domestic political debates (e.g., the 2016 EU referendum, the protracted Brexit negotiations, and the country's official withdrawal from the EU in 2020). Throughout this period, governments led by the Conservative Party increasingly aligned their EU stance with party supporters' preferences, particularly as the party base became more Eurosceptic.

Furthermore, the UK's strong partisan divides over EU issues alongside the unique Eurosceptic trajectory of the British Conservative Party might explain why party-supporter linkages in the Council appear far more pronounced in the UK than in other EU member states. Altiparmakis and Kyriazi (2024) offer important insights into the distinctiveness of party-voter linkages in the UK on EU issues. While their primary focus is on mainstream right parties

across Europe, their findings support the notion of British exceptionalism in terms of its mainstream Euroscepticism. In what they term “Tory exceptionalism,” the authors demonstrate that the British Conservative Party has followed a uniquely Eurosceptic trajectory over a long period, unlike their counterparts across Europe. They attribute this distinctive pattern mainly to the “ascent of more Eurosceptic influences within the party” (Altiparmakis and Kyriazi, 2024: 1074), suggesting that British Euroscepticism is rooted in the internal organisational developments within the Conservative Party.

A closer examination of UK voting patterns in the Council in my dataset further supports these points. The rates of opposition votes out of total votes cast in the Council were remarkably high under Conservative governments in the 2010s (17.1% in 2014 and 30.1% in 2019), which closely align with the Eurosceptic tendency of Conservative supporters. In comparison, Labour governments in the earlier period cast opposition votes in the Council at relatively lower rates (ranging from 1.2% in 1999 to 4.4% in 2009), reflecting the relatively moderate EU position of their supporters. Importantly, the spikes in opposition votes cast by the Conservative governments in 2014 and 2019 coincide with the period during which the Brexit debates dominated UK politics. This suggests that the major political event such as Brexit made EU issues highly salient to both voters and parties in the UK and might have enhanced party responsiveness to supporters’ Euroscepticism.

To sum up, while the main findings provide evidence of party-supporter linkages in the Council, the robustness results in Tables A14 and A15 reveal a major limitation: government responsiveness to party supporters' EU preferences in the Council is largely a British phenomenon rather than a broader European one. This limitation suggests the importance of taking into account country-specific factors that potentially affect the UK’s unique responsiveness dynamics.

2.6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to unravel the relationship between different types of public opinion and government vote decisions on the European stage and to examine what kind of voter plays a role in government voting in the Council. Combining data from various sources such as the European Election Studies, the Manifesto Project Database, the ParlGov, the Comparative Political Dataset, and VoteWatch Europe, this study finds little evidence of party responsiveness to preferences of the general electorate when they vote at the EU level, which is contrary to previous literature and consensus on the effect of the central voter position on government responsiveness. However, this study goes further and unravels the full picture of the relationship: my empirical findings suggest that the insignificance of the effect of the general electorate is driven by the effects of government party supporters and non-supporters cancelling out each other. While responsiveness dynamics does not work for public opinion as an aggregate whole, I instead find evidence that government parties respond to their partisan supporters' opinion toward European integration. When the domestic party supporters show more Eurosceptic attitudes, government parties are more likely to oppose EU legislative acts in the Council.

These empirical findings have important implications for the mass-elite linkages. The findings suggest that in EU-level politics, government parties are mainly incentivised to listen to the preferences of their party supporters rather than to the central voter position or the preferences of voters who support other parties. As previous literature has primarily focused on the public as a general electorate, the distinction of different types of public opinion I introduced in this study brings novel insights into the party-citizen linkages in the EU. This study also contributes to the fields of politicisation of Europe, political representation, and party

politics in the context of Europe.

Although this study provides important insight into party responsiveness, some related puzzles are to be examined, which I leave for future research. First, the limitation of this study is that the UK is an important outlier driving the relationship between party-supporter linkages during the period under investigation. As noted in the robustness checks excluding the UK from the analysis, the main findings of this study are only limited to the UK and do not extend to other EU member states. While the results from the robustness checks do not negate the broader theoretical implications for party-supporter linkages, future research could further investigate why the UK diverges so markedly from other member states and how country-specific dynamics condition the relationship between public opinion and government behaviour.

Second, another avenue for future research would be to classify Council legislative proposals into two issue dimensions – left-right issue dimension and pro-/anti-EU dimension – and examine whether my findings on the party-supporter linkages can also be applied to the left-right issue dimension. Admittedly, the Council not only deals with legislative acts that push for further European integration but also with left-right policy issues. In addition, some legislative proposals include both left-right and pro-/anti-EU elements (Wratil, 2018). It is unclear whether government parties also respond to their party supporters on the left-right issue dimension in the Council or whether different dynamics apply to the left-right dimension. Therefore, a more sophisticated classification of legislative proposals, based on content analysis of the legislative summaries, would be needed to identify which legislative acts fall into which issue dimension and to have a comprehensive picture of the mass-party nexus. Furthermore, how domestic party competition dynamics – e.g., EU issue salience and the timing of national elections – might affect the party-supporter linkages in the European context would be interesting to investigate.

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Chapter 3. The Impact of Domestic Party Competition on Party-Voter Linkages in the Council

Abstract

Under what conditions does partisan Euroscepticism translate into party Euroscepticism when parties make decisions at the European level? How does domestic party competition affect such partisan links in the EU? This study examines the mechanisms of party responsiveness to the preferences of domestic party supporters on the pro-/anti-EU dimension by focusing on government parties and their vote decisions on EU legislative proposals in the Council. In this chapter, I argue that the domestic party competition dynamics – i.e., the negative EU issue salience to a party and proximity to national elections – moderate party-supporter linkages in the Council. Results of the multi-level logistic regression analysis, covering 27 EU member states across five-year rounds between 1999 and 2019, show that party responsiveness to their Eurosceptic domestic supporters is higher when the EU issues are negatively salient to the party and when the next national election approaches. However, I also find that the effect of electoral proximity on party responsiveness is limited. By examining party responsiveness to its Eurosceptic supporters in Council politics, this study suggests that the domestic electoral/party-level context not only matters at the domestic level but also at the EU level, thereby shedding light on the interplay between domestic politics and EU-level decision-making. This study also contributes to the fields of Euroscepticism, political representation, public opinion, and party politics in the European context.

3.1. Introduction

Do parties respond to the Eurosceptic disposition of their domestic supporters when voting in the Council? What mechanisms explain when party supporters' Eurosceptic attitudes are translated into the party's Eurosceptic voting behaviour at the European level? With regard to party-partisan linkages on EU issues, recent studies on party responsiveness suggest that political parties respond to the preferences of their core constituents not only on the left-right dimension but also on the EU dimension. However, the degree of party responsiveness is conditioned by several other factors, such as party characteristics, party-system factors or electoral contextual factors (e.g., Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2008; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Spoon and Williams, 2017; Mattila and Raunio, 2006; Toshkov et al., 2020). While previous research has made important contributions to understanding mass-elite linkages, relatively less attention has been on how the linkage between party behaviour and the preferences of their supporters works at the supranational EU level, particularly when parties in government vote in the Council of the European Union (the Council). In addition, it is less clear whether and how the domestic context conditions the opinion-policy nexus at the EU level. In light of their relevance at the national level, I argue that the domestic electoral context also matters at the European level when it comes to party responsiveness to their supporters on EU issues. Since European politics is, after all, party politics, parties' decision-making in the European arena is bound to domestic opportunity structures and constraints.

In the Council, an intergovernmental institution where national ministers negotiate, discuss, and adopt EU legislative proposals, governments sometimes try to safeguard their national interests by voting against EU legislative proposals. Ministers are party politicians representing national government parties and thus bound to domestic contexts and electoral calculations. Empirically, however, opposition votes are relatively rare in the Council; they account for only about 2% of the entire votes in the Council. Regardless of opposition votes,

practically all legislative proposals are adopted in the Council due to the highly consensual nature of the Council's decision-making process (Heisenberg, 2005; Hagemann et al., 2017; Hosli et al., 2011). Furthermore, existing literature on party-voter linkages at the domestic level points out that on EU issues, political parties are generally more supportive of European integration than their voters, hence not very responsive to voter Euroscepticism (e.g., Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004; Mattila and Raunio, 2006, 2012; Spanihelova and Zicha, 2012; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2016). Notably, being in government even decreases the level of responsiveness to their voters on EU issues since voters and opposition parties tend to be more Eurosceptic than parties in government (Mattila and Raunio, 2006; Hobolt et al., 2008). The rarity of opposition votes in the Council is also in line with these theoretical expectations that mainstream parties, especially government parties, tend to be more pro-EU than their voters. Then, given that government parties only rarely cast opposition votes in the Council and are generally less responsive to voter Euroscepticism, why and under what conditions do government parties react to the Eurosceptic attitudes of their supporters by voting 'no' in the Council? To address this research question, I propose that domestic party competition plays a vital role in party responsiveness to their Eurosceptic supporters, even at the European level. In this chapter, I focus specifically on two factors – the level of negative emphasis that a party attaches to EU issues and proximity to the next national elections – in explaining responsive mechanisms in the Council. I hypothesise that parties are more likely to respond to their supporters' Eurosceptic disposition when they attach higher negative salience to EU issues in their election manifestos and when the next national election gets closer.

For example, when the next national elections approach, parties may face electoral sanctions by their supporters when they fail to respond to their preferences on EU issues. The case of Germany in the run-up to the 2017 federal election exemplifies that a government party may have to pay electoral costs when they do not listen to the concerns of their

supporters on EU-related issues. Despite concerns about the unprecedented refugee influx and its aftermath raised by her supporters and coalition partners, the then Chancellor Angela Merkel reiterated in public debates her firm stance in opening Germany's borders to allow more refugees and migrants and maintained her pro-EU stances. As a result, in the 2017 federal election, Merkel's CDU party and its grand coalition partner, SPD, had to pay harsh electoral costs, with their vote shares down by 8.6% and 5.2%, respectively. The dramatic decrease in their vote share implies that their dissatisfied supporters switched their loyalty to other parties. Contrary to the electoral loss of the governing coalition parties, the extremist EU-challenger party, AfD (Alternative for Germany), which took anti-immigration and hard-Eurosceptic stances, enjoyed an electoral success, whose vote share went up by 7.9% (Clarke, 2017). In this German case, refugee issues acted as a 'wedge issue' that cross-cut the dominant dimension of political competition (Dostal, 2017; see also Carmines and Stimson, 1986; Van de Wardt et al., 2014; Haas et al., 2023). This example suggests that parties may want to cater to supporters' preferences on EU issues in the run-up to national elections to avoid electoral sanctions/punishment by their supporters.

To test my hypotheses, I conducted a multi-level logistic analysis including 27 EU member states (only excluding Malta due to data unavailability for key explanatory variables) for five-year rounds between 1999 and 2019. This study finds that domestic party competition and electoral proximity moderate party-supporter linkages in the Council. Specifically, the results show that parties are more likely to respond to the Eurosceptic attitudes of their supporters when the EU issues are more negatively salient in their election programmes and when the next national elections are approaching. However, this study also finds that the effect of electoral proximity on party responsiveness is limited.

By investigating how party supporters' Euroscepticism translates into party Euroscepticism when parties vote in the Council, this study provides important insights into

understanding party-based political representation and the scope and limits of the politicisation of Europe. Another main contribution of this study is that it accounts for the moderating effect of domestic context on the party-supporter nexus at the EU level, which has not received wide scholarly attention so far. Not only does this study add to the burgeoning research that suggests party responsiveness even at supranational polities such as the EU, it goes further by examining how domestic contexts affect supranational politics. Hence, this study sheds light on the interplay between national and European politics. Last, it also contributes to the field of government (incumbency) behaviour.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, in the next section, I develop theoretical expectations about the conditions that influence party-supporter linkages on EU issues by reviewing and engaging with existing literature. Next, I discuss my research design and present the results of my data analysis. Finally, in Conclusion, I discuss the implications of my findings, as well as the limitations and avenues for future research. Robustness results are also presented in the appendix.

3.2. Party Responsiveness to Eurosceptic Voters: A General Overview

Contrary to the previous belief that supranational entities, such as the EU, are insulated from domestic audiences, a growing number of studies have provided empirical evidence that national governments do respond to the preferences of domestic voters in the EU-level decision-making process (Wratil, 2018; Hagemann et al., 2017; Schneider, 2019, 2020; Franchino et al., 2022). The interconnectedness of domestic politics and Council politics also suggests a systematic relationship in party-voter linkages in the EU (Wratil, 2018; Franchino et al., 2022; Hagemann et al., 2017).

The unified theory of party competition put forward by Adams et al. (2005) suggests that

political parties have incentives to align their positions with those of their party supporters closely. Recent studies have also suggested empirical evidence about the link between parties and their party supporters. They have confirmed that parties closely respond to their party supporters by either eliminating the existing incongruence between them and their voters (Golder and Ferland, 2018; Ibenskas and Polk, 2022) or following shifts in supporters' positions (Adams, 2012; Adams et al., 2006; Ezrow et al., 2011). This strand of research has highlighted the importance of taking into account the substantial changes since the end of the last century (Ibenskas and Polk, 2022), such as the changing dynamics of domestic party competition, the decline of class voting, the rise of niche parties entering into the political arena, and the decline of voter turnout. Especially in the post-Maastricht era since the 1990s, parties have become more responsive to the policy preferences of their partisan constituents (e.g., see Steenbergen and Scott, 2004).

On the other hand, however, party responsiveness to voters' attitudes toward European integration has provided mixed empirical evidence. Another strand of research shows a lack of evidence of party responsiveness to public opinion on the EU issue dimension (e.g., Mattila and Raunio, 2006, 2012; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2016). While political parties are closer to their voters on the traditional left/right dimension, they are less close to them on the European dimension (Mattila and Raunio, 2006). Furthermore, parties are generally more supportive of European integration than their voters (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004; Hobolt et al., 2008; Mattila and Raunio, 2006, 2012; Spanihelova and Zicha, 2012; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2016). When there is a shift in voter Euroscepticism, parties tend to be cautious about responding to growing Euroscepticism in their policy positions and even 'de-emphasize' EU issues (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004; Malet and Tiebaut, 2024). Government status also affects degrees of party responsiveness to voters. As voters and opposition parties tend to show more Eurosceptic attitudes than parties in government, government parties are less responsive

to their Eurosceptic voters than opposition parties are on EU issues (Mattila and Raunio, 2006; Hobolt et al., 2008; Klüver and Spoon, 2016). Since government parties face more constraints than opposition parties in their decision-making and behaviour, it is rather difficult for them to swiftly adjust their policy positions as a response to changing public opinion on European integration.

Research on party responsiveness has shown empirical evidence that party-supporter linkages on European integration issues are conditioned by domestic electoral context and party characteristics (Williams and Spoon, 2015; Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Spoon and Williams, 2017; Wagner and Meyer 2014). Although political parties do respond to voters' preferences regarding EU issues, the effect varies depending on factors such as the salience of EU issues in the domestic arena, party characteristics, intraparty division, or electoral timing. For example, party size matters in that smaller parties are more aligned with their own voters on European integration issues (Mattila and Raunio, 2006). However, a more recent work by Williams and Spoon (2015) found that the larger the size of a party is, the more likely it is to respond to public Euroscepticism by shifting its policy positions. Last, Spoon and Williams (2017) found that voter Euroscepticism is translated into party Euroscepticism, mainly when the party is internally divided over EU issues. Although these studies have important implications for understanding party responsiveness to voters and the moderating effects on such dynamics, they have mainly examined party responsiveness in the domestic arena. As it is less clear how domestic party competition dynamics affect party responsiveness beyond the national level, this study bridges the gap between the literature on party responsiveness and government/party behaviour in the EU.

3.3. Linking Party Euroscepticism to Voter Euroscepticism: The Effect of Negative EU Issue Salience on Party-Supporter Linkages in the Council

Under what conditions do parties respond to the Eurosceptic preferences of their supporters in the Council? The underlying theoretical expectation is that party responsiveness to their voters is contingent on domestic party competition (Spoon and Klüver 2014; Wlezien and Soroka, 2012, 2015).

Based on rational choice theories, scholars have developed three models of competitive party behaviour, identifying three different types of parties by their objectives: vote-seeking, office-seeking, and policy-seeking parties (Strom, 1990). While vote-seeking parties seek to maximise their vote share in elections to control government, office-seeking and policy-seeking objectives often accompany and supplement each other, in that parties that are policy-oriented seek to pursue their policy goals through government portfolios (Strom, 1990). This study posits that parties in government are policy-seeking and office-seeking actors who seek to influence public policy outcomes through the government office. Most of the time, governments of European countries are comprised of mainstream parties who compete with other parties in multi-party systems.

As policy- and office-seeking actors, government parties are incentivised to maintain a stable, consistent ideological position to satisfy and appeal to voters (Downs, 1957). As voters prefer parties that offer "reliable and responsible" policy positions, they vote for parties that maintain consistent policy stances and deliver their election promises to policies and actual behaviour in office (Strom, 1990: 573). While government parties have incentives to maintain consistent policy stances, they also face constraints for being in government office regarding their flexibility in policy shifts. Klüver and Spoon (2016) suggest that government status makes parties more constrained and less flexible in their behaviour than opposition parties, as they

face higher levels of public scrutiny, monitoring, and media attention (see also Bawn and Somer-Topcu, 2012: 433). That is why government parties are generally less responsive to their supporters' concerns and issue priorities (Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Mattila and Raunio, 2006).

Considering these incentives and constraints, I expect government parties to be less responsive to their Eurosceptic supporters on EU issues if they express pro-EU stances in their election promises. If they are already disposed to pro-EU positions, they will not be able and willing to switch their policies to respond to Eurosceptic supporters. On the other hand, however, parties that are vocal about their Euroscepticism in their election manifesto and promises will be more likely to incorporate Eurosceptic rhetoric or policies into their behaviour while in office to appeal to their Eurosceptic supporters. In election manifestos, parties officially outline policies that they emphasise and will "enact once elected to legislative or executive office" (Lowe et al., 2011: 124). If a party expresses and emphasises its Eurosceptic tendencies in its election promises, catering to its Eurosceptic supporters is in line with its own policy-seeking and office-seeking objectives since the party can signal the consistency between its election promises and actual behaviour in the office to their supporters. I argue that the same logic can be applied to the European level since parties can use the European arena to signal their party supporters that they listen to them and care about their preferences on EU matters. Even when voting cannot change the overall outcome, it is in the interests of parties to signal their position to external actors (e.g., Yordanova and Mühlböck, 2015). In particular, voting in the Council can be strategically considered by a government party as a relatively easy and less risky way to send a signal to their Eurosceptic domestic supporters about their responsiveness and position-taking through voting. The very fact that virtually all EU legislative proposals in the Council are adopted despite some governments' opposition (e.g., Hagemann et al., 2017) may incentivise government parties to use opposition votes as a signalling tool to their domestic audience without taking responsibility for the policy outcome in the domestic domain.

According to Costello et al. (2021), the level of party responsiveness to their voters tends to be higher on an issue that the party emphasises on in its election campaign, which points to the effect of party-level issue salience on party-voter proximity. If a particular issue is more salient to a political party in its election programme, that means the party attaches high levels of importance/value to that issue. Parties cannot, and may not, seek a close alignment with their supporters on all issues. However, if a party places importance on specific issues, they are more likely to be willing to respond in a way that closely aligns them with their supporters on that issue since the congruence of policy objectives with their supporters is their main goal (Ibenskas and Polk, 2022: 225). Giger and Lefkofridi (2014: 289) also point out that parties and their supporters "should be in agreement regarding policy issues". Therefore, parties will be more likely to keep their Eurosceptic supporters in the fold by responding to their preferences on European integration when EU issues are more negatively salient to the party. In addition, as the EU and domestic affairs are increasingly interlinked with each other, parties can use both national and European stages to signal responsiveness to their supporters (De Vries, 2007, 2010). The EU issue voting also plays an important role in increasing the impact of attitudes toward European integration on voting behaviour (De Vries, 2007; Hagemann et al., 2017).

Contrary to previous literature that mainly combines both positive and negative emphasis of a party on EU issues to measure *EU issue salience* (e.g., Hagemann et al., 2017; Malet and Thiebaut, 2024), it should be noted that this study is particularly interested in the effect of the *negative* EU issue salience of a party on its responsiveness to Eurosceptic supporters in the Council. The reason why I look at the one-sided – i.e., only negative – EU issue salience, instead of both positive and negative mentions of the EU as a proxy for EU issue salience, is as follows: As the main focus of this study is on how voter-level Euroscepticism is represented in party-level Euroscepticism in the Council, measuring EU issue salience of a party by

combining both positive and negative mentions of the EU by the party in its election manifesto would be misleading. In this case, an increase in EU issue salience can have two different meanings: the EU issue became more salient either because a party emphasised it more positively or because a party increased Eurosceptic, negative mentions in its election programme. Therefore, if there is an increase in the likelihood of a party casting an opposition vote when there is also an increase in party-level EU issue salience using the traditional measurement, the results could be driven by both directions. For this reason, I argue that the direction needs to be clearly set and measured.

Based on these theoretical expectations and considerations, I hypothesise that the level of party responsiveness to their Eurosceptic supporters in the Council depends on the degree of negative salience of EU issues to the party:

> ***Hypothesis 1 (Negative EU Salience Hypothesis)****: Government parties are more likely to respond to the Eurosceptic attitudes of their supporters by casting opposition votes in the Council when they put more negative emphasis on EU issues in their election programmes.*

3.4. The Effect of Electoral Proximity on Party-Supporter Linkages in the Council

Next, I move on to the effect of electoral proximity on party responsiveness to their supporters in the Council. Political parties compete against one another for electoral support in elections. As office-seeking actors, it is in the interests of government parties to keep the loyalty of their supporters and minimise their vote-switching/defection to stay in office. Since governments

fear the possibility of removal sanctions by their voters, they are expected to be more willing to respond to their voter preferences to boost credibility and increase their chance of remaining in office. Regarding electoral cycles, particularly, previous research agrees that parties are generally more responsive to domestic voters as proximity to the next national elections increases (Spoon and Klüver, 2014; Franchino et al., 2022; Hagemann et al., 2019; Wratil, 2018). The effect of electoral proximity on party responsiveness to the priorities of their voters is especially stronger in the run-up to national elections than in the European Parliament elections due to the second-order nature of EP elections (Spoon and Klüver, 2014).

The rational anticipation framework (e.g., Stimson et al., 1995) suggests that rational anticipation and electoral calculations incentivise political parties to care about the mood and preferences of their voters. As domestic voters hold parties accountable if the behaviour and policies of the party do not consistently match their preferences, parties try to minimise electoral sanctions in national elections by signalling their responsiveness when national elections are approaching. Just as parties care about their electoral fate and make strategic calculations domestically, decision-making in Council politics is also driven by national governments' rational anticipation of their electoral fate in future elections. Since the Council is an intergovernmental arena in which national interests are defended and safeguarded by governmental voting decisions, it is the "most visible venue in the EU decision-making process" among all the EU institutions (Meijers et al., 2019: 1729). As government parties' exceptional behaviour in the Council, such as voting against EU legislative proposals, is more likely to be salient in the domestic domain than decision-making in other institutions of the EU, parties can effectively use the European stage to signal policy responsiveness to their domestic audiences when the following national election approaches, out of electoral calculations. Furthermore, due to the increased salience and politicisation of EU issues in domestic politics, parties fear that voters may hold them accountable for their behaviour in

the EU in the next national election if their policy stances in the EU are not in line with voter preferences (Franchino et al., 2022). Domestic monitoring and scrutiny usually increase as elections approach, and governments can use not only domestic but also supranational arenas to signal their responsiveness to avoid domestic electoral punishment and maintain the loyalty of their supporters.

Particularly when it comes to Euroscepticism, different government accountability mechanisms work between different types of voters. Distinguishing Europhile and Eurosceptic voters, Schneider (2019) argues that how Eurosceptic voters hold parties and politicians accountable depends on the parties' attitudes toward the EU. She finds out that, compared to pro-EU voters who tend to evaluate government conduct based on its specific EU policies, Eurosceptic voters tend to hold consistently negative attitudes toward the EU as a polity, as well as toward further European integration, and thus are more likely to use their Euroscepticism when holding the government accountable for its behaviour in the EU (Schneider, 2019: 222). In contrast, EU issues are less salient to pro-EU voters, and thus, they are less likely to switch their partisan loyalty on the basis of EU issues (see Spoon and Williams, 2017: 744). As the EU issues are more salient to Eurosceptic supporters than to Europhile supporters, incumbent parties can also rationally expect that their Eurosceptic supporters would increase their support for the party when the party also pursues Eurosceptic positions in the EU and sanction/punish the party when the party takes a more pro-EU stance in the EU. Therefore, parties will be inclined to signal responsiveness to their Eurosceptic voters by casting opposition votes in the Council to keep them in the fold as national elections approach while simultaneously knowing that their vote decisions would not practically affect whether a legislative proposal is adopted. While voting decisions in the Council gain salience in the domestic public domain, parties can rely on the anticipation that, regardless of their opposition votes, practically all EU legislative proposals will be adopted in the Council (as also pointed

out in the previous section). This way, parties can strategically achieve their goals: signalling responsiveness to Eurosceptic voters and increasing their chance of staying in office without having to risk blame for actual policy outcomes due to their opposition votes in the Council.

Based on these theoretical expectations, I derive the second hypothesis as follows:

> ***Hypothesis 2 (Electoral Proximity Hypothesis):*** *The closer the next national election is, the more likely government parties are to respond to the Eurosceptic attitudes of their supporters by casting opposition votes in the Council.*

In the next section, I discuss the research design I will use to test these theoretical expectations.

3.5. Research Design

This research examines how party-level EU issue salience (with a particular focus on negative issue salience) and electoral proximity condition the relationship between party supporters' preferences on European integration and government parties' voting behaviour in the Council of the EU. To test the hypotheses, I run mixed-effects logistic regression models with country fixed effects and random effects for EU legislative acts, covering 27 member countries of the EU[10] and five-year rounds between 1999 and 2019. This yields 17,824 vote decisions on 884 EU legislative acts in total. As the dependent variable, government parties' opposition votes, is a dichotomous variable, I estimate a multi-level logistic regression model with fixed effects for

[10] The United Kingdom is included in my analysis as the period of my analysis only covers years before the official date (1st February 2020) when the UK left the European Union.

countries and random effects for legislative acts. This model specification is out of consideration that due to the hierarchical, clustered nature of the data, observations in the same cluster may be correlated and not completely independent from each other.[11]

3.5.1. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable (DV) is a dichotomous variable that measures government parties' vote decisions on EU legislative acts put forward in the Council: 'No' and 'Abstention' votes together are coded as 'Opposition' votes that take the value of 1, and 'Yes' as 0. Following existing literature on voting in the Council (e.g., Hagemann, 2008; Hagemann et al., 2017), abstention votes are coded as 'opposition' since both 'No' and 'Opposition' votes are used in the Council to express dissent for a legislative proposal. I drew on Hagemann et al. (2017)'s Council vote dataset for the years 1999 through 2011 and combined it with the VoteWatch Europe database (Hix et al., 2022) for the recent years; although the original VoteWatch Europe website (https://www.votewatch.eu/) has been closed since 2022, the dataset can be instead accessed via the European University Institute. All the government votes cast in the Council in the years under investigation have been collected.

Regarding the classification of legislative acts into policy areas, I follow Hagemann et al (2017)'s coding scheme, which yields 11 policy areas in total. For vote decisions in the recent years (2014 and 2019) that are not covered in Hagemann et al (2017)'s dataset, I categorise legislative acts in the VoteWatch Europe dataset following the same configuration criteria.[12] I

[11] For a robustness check, I further include fixed effects for policy areas to take into account the potential clustering effect of different policy areas; however, the main findings remain consistent (see Model B1 in Table B2 in Appendix B)

[12] In terms of legislative acts that fall under the "general affairs" category as appears in the VoteWatch dataset, they have been classified according to the manual configuration of policy areas based on EP policy types (the

include all these 11 policy areas in my analysis.

In this study, I operationalise a government party as a prime ministerial party when examining party responsiveness in the Council of the EU. A prime ministerial (PM) party most often constitutes the plurality of parliamentary seats among all the cabinet parties and usually plays an influential role in deciding on EU policy (Franchino et al., 2022: 47).[13] In the meantime, caretaker governments are omitted from the analysis as there is a lack of theoretical expectations that caretaker governments are particularly responsive to voters (Franchino et al., 2022: 49). Either outgoing incumbent parties or non-partisan, independent members usually take a caretaker position until coalition negotiations for the upcoming government are completed; hence, there is little electoral incentives for caretaker governments to be responsive to their supporters.

3.5.2. Explanatory Variables

The main independent variable (IV) of this study is party supporters' preferences on European integration, drawn from European Election Studies (ESS) (five-year rounds in total, including 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019). I used the identical survey question that was asked across all EES rounds to measure respondents' attitudes toward European integration: *"Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?"* (on a 0-10 scale, with 0 meaning unification "has already gone too far" and 10 means it "should be pushed further") Using this question, I measured party supporters' EU

VoteWatch dataset has a separate variable called "ManualEPConfiguration").

[13] Although government parties are operationalised as prime ministerial parties in the main analysis of this study, I use a different operationalisation of government parties – i.e., including all cabinet members – for robustness checks (see Table B2 in Appendix) and the main findings remain unchanged.

position by the average of all valid responses of the survey respondents who reported that they had voted for the prime ministerial party in the last national parliamentary election.

The *party supporter EU opinion* variable was then rescaled in a way that higher values (values closer to 10) indicate more anti-EU stances among party supporters, while lower values (values closer to 0) indicate more pro-EU stances. This rescaling was done specifically for the interaction term between party supporters' EU position and the party's negative mentions about the EU. The purpose was to ensure that an increase in either variable constituting the interaction term would consistently increase the probability of an opposition vote, allowing the interacted variables to pull in the same direction.

To test the moderating effects of both party-level negative EU issue salience and electoral proximity, I include interaction terms between the party supporters' EU attitudes and these variables. First, for Hypothesis 1, the negative EU issue salience of a party is defined as the negative emphasis a party puts on the issues of European integration in its election manifesto. It is measured by the percentage of *negative* quasi-sentences a party makes about the EU in its election manifesto for the national parliamentary election most prior to the Council vote date ("per110"), drawn from the Manifesto Project Database (Lehmann et al., 2022). As addressed in the previous section 3.3, I measure only the negative salience of the EU, rather than combining both positive and negative mentions of the EU, to better capture the direction of its effect on party responsiveness to their Eurosceptic supporters.

Next, electoral timing (Hypothesis 2) is measured by the number of days (in 100 days) to the next scheduled national parliamentary election at the time of governmental voting in the Council: [(*next national election date*) – (*Council voting date*)] (Wratil, 2018; Hagemann et al., 2019; Franchino et al., 2022). I draw on the Parlgov database (Döring et al., 2023) for information about election dates.

3.5.3. Control Variables

Following existing literature (e.g., Hagemann and Høyland, 2008; Hagemann et al., 2017, 2019; Wratil, 2018; Hobolt and Wratil, 2020), I control for several factors identified as influencing government parties' voting behaviour in the Council. These factors include a member state's economic conditions (i.e., unemployment and inflation rates), vote-related variables (i.e., post-enlargement voting, holding the presidency of the Council at the time of voting, and voting under the co-decision rule), the electoral strength of Eurosceptic challenger parties in the domestic arena, and the ideological positions of governing parties. The inclusion of these control variables is consistent with Chapter 2.

First, *unemployment* and *inflation* are included as proxies for a country's macroeconomic conditions. Both variables are measured using data from the Comparative Political Dataset (Armingeon et al., 2021). During periods of economic hardship, reflected by higher unemployment and inflation rates, governments will be more likely to oppose EU legislation (e.g., Bailer et al., 2015).

The following variables capture vote-related characteristics, all of which are dummy variables (Hagemann et al., 2017). First, *post-enlargement* is coded as 1 if the vote occurred after the EU's 2004 enlargement to Eastern and Central Europe and 0 if it took place before the enlargement. I expect that government parties are more likely to oppose EU legislation after the 2004 enlargement. Second, *co-decision* is coded as 1 for voting under the co-decision rule (OLP) and 0 for other voting rules. The co-decision procedure should increase government opposition in the Council, as it may create institutional obstacles for the passage of EU legislative proposals. Third, *Council presidency* is coded as 1 if the country held the presidency of the Council at the time of voting and 0 otherwise. Holding the Council presidency should decrease the likelihood of government opposition.

Furthermore, I control for the effect of Eurosceptic challenger parties' electoral strength on government parties' voting behaviour. Meijers (2017), for example, argues that mainstream parties are more responsive to the electoral rise of Eurosceptic challenger parties than to public Euroscepticism. Since the electoral success of these challenger parties in the domestic arena may pressure governments to adopt a tougher stance on EU issues, I expect a larger vote share for Eurosceptic challenger parties to increase government parties' opposition to EU legislation. I operationalise *the size of Eurosceptic challenger parties* as their vote share in the national parliamentary election most recent to the Council vote date, using data from the ParlGov (Döring et al., 2023) and Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al., 2022) datasets.

Finally, for the ideological positions of governing parties, I control for party positions on both the traditional left-right and pro-/anti-EU dimensions. In line with Hagemann et al. (2017), I expect that economically right-wing parties will be less likely to cast opposition votes in the Council. More pro-EU parties will also be less likely to exhibit opposition in support of furthering European integration. Consistent with the methodological approach used in Chapter 2, I apply the proportional scaling approach originally used in the Manifesto Project Database (Lehmann et al., 2022) to measure government parties' left-right and pro-/anti-EU positions. A government party's *left-right position* is defined as the relative proportional difference between 'rightist' and 'leftist' quasi-sentences in the prime ministerial party's election manifesto issued at the last election prior to the Council voting date, drawn from the Manifesto Project Database ("RILE"). A government party's *pro-/anti-EU position* is operationalised as the proportional difference between the positive and negative quasi-sentences about the EU/European integration in the party manifesto ("per108" - "per110"), also drawn from the Manifesto Project Database. Detailed information about variable definitions and data sources is presented in Table B1 in Appendix B.

3.6. Results and Discussion

Table 3.1: Descriptive statistics (estimation sample)

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Opposition vote (DV)	0.02	0.14	0	1
Party supporter EU opinion	4.71	0.99	2.15	8.15
PM's party position: left-right	-1.52	14.99	-52.50	48.66
PM's party position: pro-/anti-EU	2.02	2.26	-4.48	11.89
EU negative mentions	0.27	0.64	0	4.48
Days until next national election (in 100 days)	7.20	4.24	0.02	17.2
Co-decision	0.61	0.49	0	1
Post-enlargement	0.78	0.41	0	1
Council presidency	0.05	0.21	0	1
Unemployment	8.63	4.16	2	26.5
Inflation	1.29	1.56	-4.48	7.55
Eurosceptic challenger parties (vote share)	5.97	6.97	0	28.9
Observations	17,824			

I now turn to the empirical test of my hypotheses that government parties are more likely to respond to their Eurosceptic supporters when the party-level negative EU issue salience is high and when the next national election approaches.

Table 3.1 reports the descriptive statistics for the estimation sample, and Table 3.2 presents the results of the multi-level logistic regression analysis. To start with, Model 1 in Table 3.2 serves as a baseline model without any interaction terms, examining the effect of *party supporters' EU opinion* on the likelihood of government opposition votes in the Council. The results show that party supporters' EU preferences have a statistically significant effect on government parties' voting behaviour. Since the *party supporter EU opinion* variable was rescaled so that higher values indicate greater Euroscepticism among supporters, the positive coefficient is interpreted as follows: the likelihood of a government party casting an opposition vote increases as its domestic supporters express more Eurosceptic attitudes towards European integration. This result provides evidence that parties respond to voter Euroscepticism even at

the European level. In the meantime, the ICC (interclass correlation coefficient) value in Model 1 indicate that 44% of variation in governments' vote behaviour in the Council is attributable to differences among legislative acts.

Table 3.2: Main Results

DV: Opposition vote	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Party supporter EU opinion	0.234**	-0.349***	0.620***	-0.079
	(0.096)	(0.124)	(0.134)	(0.178)
EU negative mentions		-2.602***		-2.139***
		(0.492)		(0.528)
Party supporter EU opinion		0.556***		0.475***
× EU negative mentions		(0.088)		(0.095)
Days until next election			0.378***	0.192**
			(0.087)	(0.093)
Party supporter EU opinion			-0.074***	-0.039**
× Days until next election			(0.017)	(0.018)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.002	-0.011**	-0.001	-0.011**
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
PM's party: EU position	-0.209***	-0.212***	-0.209***	-0.202***
	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.042)
Co-decision	0.150	0.089	0.159	0.099
	(0.208)	(0.211)	(0.208)	(0.211)
Post-enlargement	-0.417*	-0.603**	-0.461*	-0.633**
	(0.247)	(0.257)	(0.250)	(0.259)
Council presidency	-0.441	-0.591	-0.495	-0.575
	(0.405)	(0.401)	(0.401)	(0.400)
Unemployment	0.027	0.040	0.033	0.042
	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.029)
Inflation	-0.008	-0.084	-0.050	-0.095
	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.068)
EU Challenger Party	0.031**	0.046***	0.029**	0.045***
	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Constant	-5.655***	-3.280***	-7.615***	-4.573***
	(0.656)	(0.738)	(0.810)	(0.964)
Observations	17,824	17,824	17,824	17,824
Number of act	884	884	884	884
Country FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	3147.128	3096.131	3131.592	3095.65
BIC	3435.295	3399.875	3435.336	3414.97
ICC	.44 (.04)	.45 (.04)	.44 (.04)	.45 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

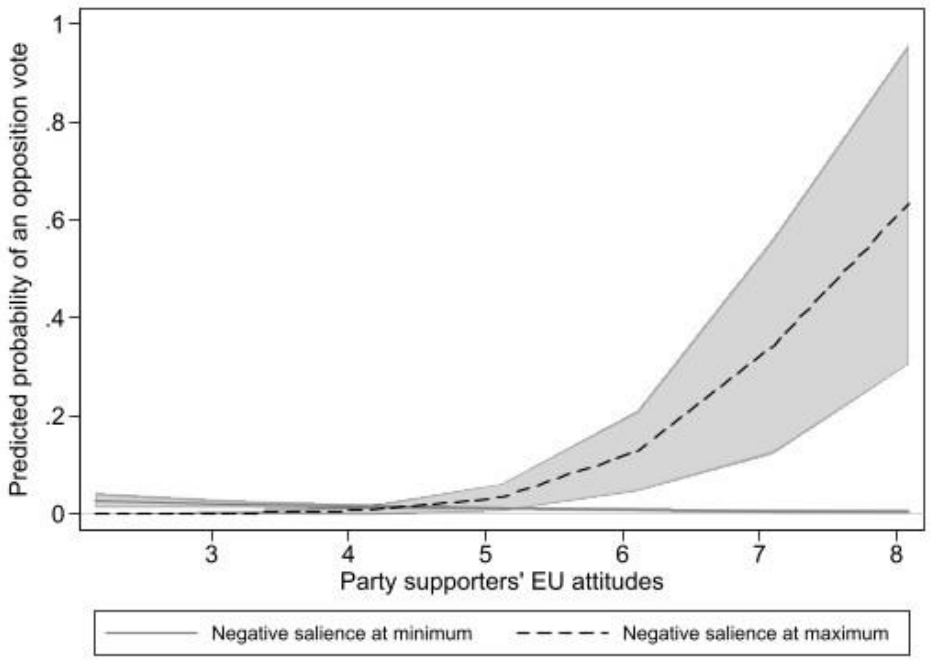
However, the basic model alone does not show the full picture of party-supporter linkages in the EU. Models 2 through 4 include interaction terms as hypothesised in the previous section.

First, Model 2 adds to Model 1 an interaction term between partisan Euroscepticism and party-level negative EU salience (Hypothesis 1). Next, Model 3 investigates an interaction effect between partisan Euroscepticism and proximity to national elections (Hypothesis 2). Last, Model 4 presents a combined model, including both interaction terms in the same model.

Across all three model specifications with interaction terms (Models 2–4), both interaction effects are statistically significant[14]. Models 2 and 4 show that the effect of party supporters' Eurosceptic attitudes on the probability of government opposition votes in the Council gets stronger when the negative EU issue salience is higher in the party manifesto. In Models 3 and 4, the interaction effect between party supporters' Euroscepticism and electoral proximity is also significant. Moreover, the AIC and BIC values indicate that the inclusion of interaction term(s) increases the fit of the model, compared to the basic model (Model 1).

[14] In Model 4, the fact that the constitutive term, the *party supporter EU opinion* variable, is not significant merely means that this variable does not have an effect when, for example, *days until election* is equal to 0. The significance of both interaction terms in Model 4 shows that party supporters' EU attitudes have an effect depending on other values of both the negative salience of EU issues and electoral proximity.

Figure 3.1: The effect of negative EU issue salience on party-supporter linkages (Based on Model 4), with 95% CIs



Note: This figure illustrates the predicted probability of a government party's opposition vote in the Council at different levels of party supporters' EU position and the party's negative EU issue salience (minimum and maximum salience presented). It is estimated based on Model 4.

In order to see the full picture of the magnitude and significance of these interaction terms, I simulated predicted probabilities and present the results. First, Figure 3.1 illustrates the predicted probabilities of a government's opposition votes at different levels of party supporters' EU attitudes when the party's negative EU issue salience is set at its minimum and maximum values, based on Model 4. I set the control variables as follows: dummy variables at their median values (i.e., under the co-decision procedure, post-enlargement era (post-2004), and the country holding no Council presidency), and all the other continuous variables at their mean values. The shadowed areas in Figure 3.1 indicate the 95% confidence intervals. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, the predicted likelihood of a government party responding to its Eurosceptic supporters by casting an opposition vote in the Council increases when the party puts a higher level of negative emphasis on EU issues in its election promises. If a party places higher

importance on EU issues in a negative sense, it is more likely to signal responsiveness to its Eurosceptic supporters to show that its actual behaviour in office is in line with its election promises. According to Figure 3.1, at the maximum level of PM party's negative EU salience (the dotted line), the predicted probability increases by roughly 22.1% percentage points, from 1.8% to 23.9%, when party supporters' EU attitudes move by two standard deviations to the right from their mean value (4.71). Furthermore, if party supporters show the most Eurosceptic attitudes (8.15) when party-level negative EU salience is at its maximum, the predicted probability of the government party casting an opposition vote is approximately 63.3%, which is significantly large. On the other hand, when negative EU issue salience is at its minimum value, the line is rather flat, indicating that the responsiveness mechanism is broken; government parties do not respond to supporters' Euroscepticism when they did not put any negative emphasis on EU issues in their election manifestos. If an EU issue is not (negatively) salient to a party, the party does not regard it as important and thus does not pay much attention to catering to its Eurosceptic supporters at the European level. As the findings are in line with my theoretical expectations, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

However, one result is inconsistent with the theoretical expectations. Specifically, in Model 2 (Table 3.2), the coefficient of the *party supporter EU opinion* variable is negative and statistically significant. This indicates that when a party does not mention the EU negatively at all in its election manifesto (i.e., *EU negative mentions* equals 0), it is less likely to oppose EU legislation when its supporters become more anti-EU. This finding contradicts the theoretical expectation and appears counterintuitive.

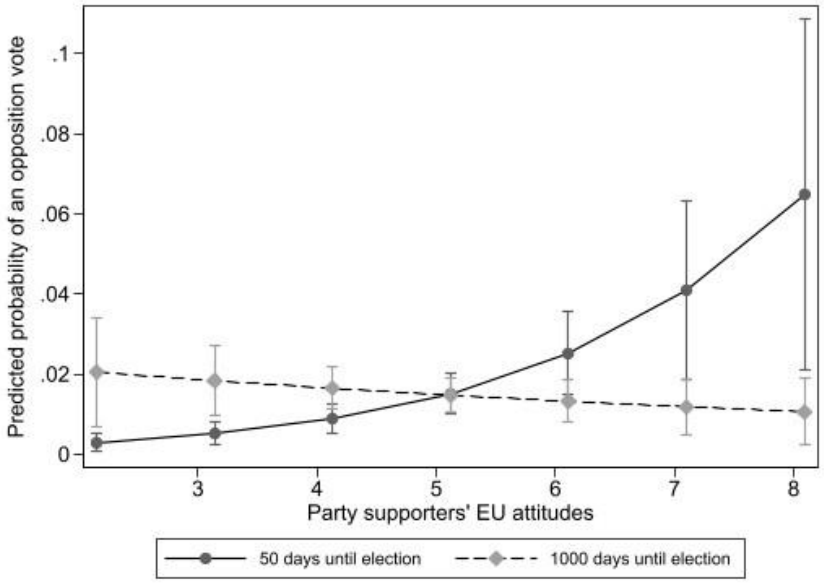
One possible explanation for this unexpected result lies in the potential observational equivalence issue associated with the measure of negative EU salience. A zero value for negative EU salience does not necessarily mean that a party is genuinely 'pro-EU'. When the *EU negative mentions* variable equals zero (i.e., a party having not put any negative emphasis

on EU issues), it could reflect one of two scenarios: either the party is pro-EU, or the EU is simply unimportant and less prioritised by the party. If the latter is the case, the significant negative coefficient of the *party supporter EU opinion* variable in Model 2 reflects a broken responsiveness mechanism due to the lack of importance assigned to EU issues. When a party does not prioritise EU issues, it is unlikely to link its voting behaviour to voters' EU preferences, which could possibly lead to the unexpected negative relationship observed in Model 2. In this context, admittedly, the key limitation of using party manifesto data to measure issue salience is the difficulty in discerning a party's true intent when it does not mention an issue at all in its election manifesto. Regardless of the underlying reason, the result in Model 2 indicates that in the absence of negative EU issue salience, the hypothesised relationship does not hold and that other factors might be influencing the relationship between public opinion and parties' voting behaviour in the Council.

Next, Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 illustrate the interaction effect between electoral proximity and party supporters' EU attitudes. Figure 3.2 displays the predicted probabilities of a government's opposition votes at different levels of party supporters' EU attitudes when days until the next national election are set at 50 days and 1,000 days, respectively (based on Model 3), whereas Figure 3.3 shows the predicted probabilities based on Model 4. All the other variables are set at their mean values (for continuous variables) or their median values (for dummy variables). According to Figure 3.2, the effect of supporters' Euroscepticism on party responsiveness is stronger when the next national election is approaching nearer. For example, two standard deviations from the mean value of party supporters' EU attitudes (4.71) to the more Eurosceptic side increases the likelihood of a government party casting an opposition vote in the Council by 2.2 percentage points, from 1.2% to 3.4%, when the next national election is only 50 days away. On the other hand, when the next national election is farther away, party-supporter linkages are lost, and parties do not respond to their Eurosceptic

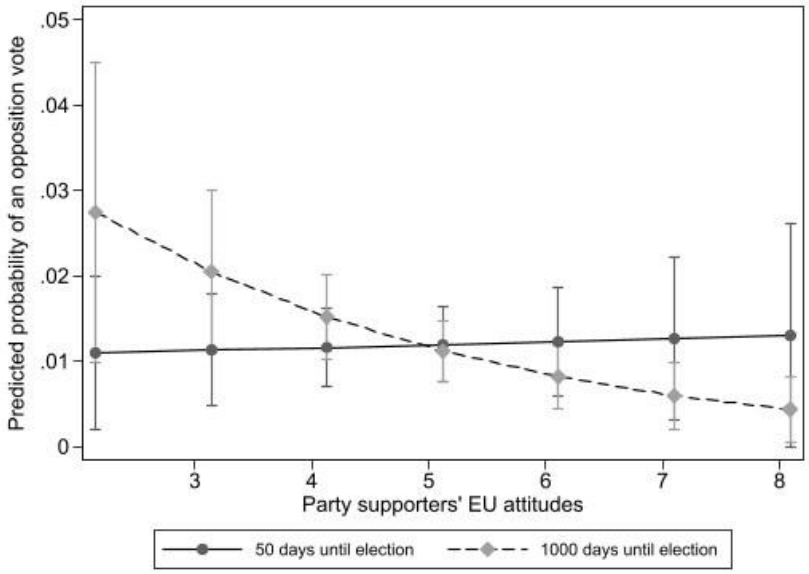
supporters. These findings are in line with the theoretical expectations that parties tend to be more responsive to their voters when elections get closer but not very responsive at other times. However, when estimating the predicted probabilities based on Model 4 (Figure 3.3), the line is rather flat at the higher level of proximity to the next elections (50 days before an election), which means that being close to election does not substantially affect party-supporter connection in the EU. In addition, the downward dotted line in Figure 3.3 indicates that the responsiveness mechanism is broken when national elections are farther away. Therefore, although Hypothesis 2 is confirmed, electoral proximity has only a limited effect on party responsiveness to Eurosceptic supporters, depending on models.

Figure 3.2: The effect of electoral proximity on party-supporter linkages (Based on Model 3), with 95% CIs



Note: This figure illustrates the predicted probability of a government party's opposition vote in the Council at different levels of party supporters' EU position and the number of days left until the next national elections. It is estimated based on **Model 3**.

Figure 3.3: The effect of electoral proximity on party-supporter linkages (Based on Model 4), with 95% CIs



Note: This figure illustrates the predicted probability of a government party's opposition vote in the Council at different levels of party supporters' EU position and the number of days left until the next national elections, based on **Model 4**.

The interpretation of control variables is as follows. Across all four models, government parties' pro-/anti- EU positions (which is different from negative EU issue salience), post-Enlargement, and the existence of EU challenger parties consistently turn out significant. The more anti-EU governments are in their policy positions, the more likely they are to cast opposition votes when party supporters' opinion is held constant. On the contrary, government parties' left-right ideological positions become statistically significant only in Models 2 and 4 when an interaction effect between supporters' EU preferences and EU negative mentions is included. The sign of the coefficients indicates that economically right-wing governments are less likely to oppose EU legislation during the period under this study.

The existence of EU challenger parties in the domestic domain also influences governments' voting decisions in the Council: the probability of a government party's opposition vote increases as hard-Eurosceptic challenger parties gain more vote shares in the most recent national elections prior to the council voting dates. These results not only correspond to both the theoretical expectations and empirical findings from previous literature that Eurosceptic challenger parties affect mainstream parties' behaviour on EU issues (e.g., Vrânceanu, 2019; Meijers, 2017), but they also extend these expectations to the European level.

However, the coefficient of the *post-enlargement* variable contradicts the theoretical expectations. Contrary to the theoretical expectation of a shift from 'permissive consensus' to 'constraining dissensus' (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), the negative coefficient indicates that government parties are less likely to vote against EU legislative proposals in the Council after the EU's major enlargement to Eastern and Central Europe in 2004. While this result is unexpected, one possible explanation is that government parties might have been more supportive of legislative proposals to ensure the successful integration of the new members and to reinforce solidarity within the enlarged Union, given that the 2004 enlargement was a historic and transformative moment for the EU.

3.7. Conclusion

Combining the EES voter surveys and party ministers' Council voting datasets, this study examined the mechanisms that explain government parties' responsiveness to the Eurosceptic disposition of their supporters in the Council. Not only did I find that government parties respond to their Eurosceptic supporters by voting against EU legislative acts in the Council, but I also demonstrated that party-supporter linkages at the European level are conditioned by domestic party competition. Specifically, I discovered that the party-supporter connection is strongly influenced by how negatively salient EU issues are for the party. Parties are more likely to respond to supporters' Euroscepticism when the level of negative EU issue salience is higher in their election programmes. In other words, when the Eurosceptic emphasis of a party in their election campaigns meets the Eurosceptic mood of their supporters, parties are more likely to deliver their supporters' opinions to the EU-level decision-making. Proximity to national elections also moderate party-partisan linkages, but its effect is limited in magnitude, depending on the models.

While relatively less attention has been paid to how domestic party competition affects EU-level decision-making and party responsiveness, the empirical findings of this research contribute to our understanding of elite-citizen linkages in a multi-level polity such as the EU, as well as the effect of politicisation of Europe. Given that opposition votes are rare due to the costs associated with governments' negotiation power (Hagemann et al., 2017), the findings suggest that EU decision-making is still, and after all, party politics and that national politics matters in the European arena. As government ministers in the Council are party politicians, they are bound to domestic party competition dynamics and are not disconnected from the preferences of their domestic supporters. Hence, this study expands the literature on party-supporter linkages to the supranational level and sheds light on the interplay between national and European politics.

Based on this study's main findings, future research could examine whether government parties' strategic decisions to tailor their responses to partisan Euroscepticism in the Council lead to their domestic electoral success afterwards. Furthermore, although this study found compelling empirical evidence that party-level EU issue salience, particularly negative EU salience, significantly moderates how voter Euroscepticism is translated into party Euroscepticism in the European arena, its limitation is that it did not take into account the voter-level salience of EU issues. Admittedly, party responsiveness would also be influenced by how salient a particular issue is to voters and in the public domain. If an issue is salient to voters, it means that they are more aware of and know about it. This might be important as voters tend to have less knowledge of European integration than of the left/right issues due to the second-order nature (e.g., Hobolt, 2007). Therefore, future research could incorporate voter-level EU salience and voter awareness of EU issues into investigating how party-level EU salience is affected by voter-level EU salience and how parties react to it in their supranational decision-making.

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Chapter 4. National or European, that is the Question: Explaining MEPs' Voting Defection from European Party Groups in the European Parliament

Abstract

What mechanisms explain the voting defection of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from their European party groups? Previous literature shows that when the ideological position of an MEP's national party differs from that of the European party group, the national party is the primary principal that influences MEPs' voting behaviour in the European Parliament. However, the empirical evidence is somewhat sporadic, and there has been an increasingly high voting cohesion among MEPs within EP groups over time. Against this backdrop, I investigate under what conditions the greater ideological distance between national parties and EP groups leads to MEPs' voting defection from their EP groups. Taking an issue-specific approach, I argue that the effect of ideological distance depends on the level of issue salience to national parties and proximity to European elections. Conducting a multi-level logistic regression analysis on the individual MEPs' voting decisions in the 7th–9th European Parliament (from 2009 to 2022) across six different policy areas, I demonstrate that greater ideological distance increases the probability of an individual MEP voting against the majority of the EP group on issues that the national party prioritises in its election manifesto. The effect of ideological distance on MEPs' voting defection also gets stronger when the next EP elections approach. This research has important implications for our understanding of legislative behaviour, party competition, and the politicisation of Europe.

4.1. Introduction

When national parties and the European Parliament party groups (EPGs[15]) are at odds with each other in terms of policy positions, how do Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) vote? What explains MEPs' voting disloyalty to their European party group? According to a principal-agent framework, MEPs are 'agents' who act on behalf of their 'principals' on the European stage (Hix, 2002; Thiem, 2007). The European Parliament is an interesting case in which there is 'one agent' for 'two principals': an agent (MEP) serves two principals, the national party and the European party group, which reflects the complex multi-level system of the EU (Hix, 2001, 2002, 2008; Coman, 2009; Mühlböck, 2012; Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Willumsen, 2022).

National parties join EP groups on the basis of ideological policy congruence; that is, national parties choose to be affiliated with EP groups that share similar policy preferences (McElroy and Benoit, 2010). When national parties are ideologically in line with their European party groups, individual MEPs will have no difficulty choosing their position when voting in the EP. However, when national parties' preferences and the EP groups' preferences conflict on a given legislative proposal, MEPs have to choose between the opposing policy positions as both national and European groups may pressure MEPs to comply with each of them.

Several studies have explored various factors that affect MEPs' voting behaviour in the European Parliament (EP). In the existing literature, however, it is disputed which principal – national parties or EP groups – is more important to MEPs. On the one hand, some scholars argue that national parties are the primary principal that affects MEPs' voting behaviour in

[15] In the thesis, I will use the term 'EP groups' and 'EPGs' interchangeably to refer to European Parliament party groups.

cases of conflict, as they have solid power to nominate and select MEP candidates for the EP in the first place. The greater ideological distance between a national party and its EP group (e.g., Hix 2002; Hix et al., 2007), as well as the ideological distance between an individual MEP and the EP group (Willumsen, 2022), influences MEPs' voting propensity to defect from the transnational party group. On the other hand, however, another array of studies points to the opposite direction: although national parties still serve as a primary principal that influences MEP's voting decisions when their national and transnational party groups take opposing policy positions, the evidence is rather sporadic, and there has been an increasingly high voting cohesion among MEPs within EP groups over time (e.g., Hix, 2001; Coman, 2009; Mühlböck, 2012, 2017). According to these studies, MEPs tend to show more voting unity with their transnational party groups since EP groups exert control over policy agenda and their MEPs in the Chamber.

However, the very fact that MEPs' voting defection from their European group is such a rare event raises interesting research questions to investigate: *Despite high levels of EP party group cohesion, what makes MEPs defect from their EP group when the ideological position of their national party differs from the position of the EP group? Under what conditions does the greater ideological distance between the national party and the EP group lead to MEPs' disloyalty to the EP group?*

While building on the established literature on the effect of ideological distance on MEPs' behaviour (e.g., Hix, 2002; Hix et al., 2007), I go further by arguing that ideological distance itself does not show the full story and testing whether its effect is conditioned by other factors. For example, ideological distance alone does not fully capture the variation in MEPs' voting defection across policy areas (Klüver and Spoon, 2015). Figure 4.1 illustrates individual MEPs' defection rates from the majority of the EP group on all final votes by policy area in the period between September 2009 and June 2022. Overall, Figure 1 clearly shows that MEPs' voting

defection rates do vary across different policy areas, as pointed out in the previous literature (e.g., Faas 2003; Klüver and Spoon, 2015), and indicates that something else might be at play in the relationship between policy distance and MEPs' voting behaviour. According to the figure, of all 16 policy areas of roll-call votes, MEPs defected from their EP group the least in the '*Economic and financial affairs*' area (2.88%). What is striking is that although '*Economic and financial affairs*' showed far greater ideological distance on average between each EP group and the national parties that belong to the group than the '*Agriculture*' or '*Justice and home affairs*' areas (approximately 11.89 times more distanced than the '*Agriculture*' area and 10.34 times than the '*Justice and home affairs*' area, which is considerably large), its defection rate was the lowest. Following Klüver and Spoon (2015), I argue that issue salience to national parties plays a role in the dynamics. When looking at issue salience in the aforementioned areas, the '*Agriculture*' area was 2.19 times more salient to national parties than '*Economic and financial affairs*' on average, and the '*Justice and home affairs*' area was 2.69 times more salient to national parties than '*Economic and financial affairs*' on average.

Figure 4.1: MEPs' defection from EP group on final votes by policy area (Sep 2009 – Jun 2022)

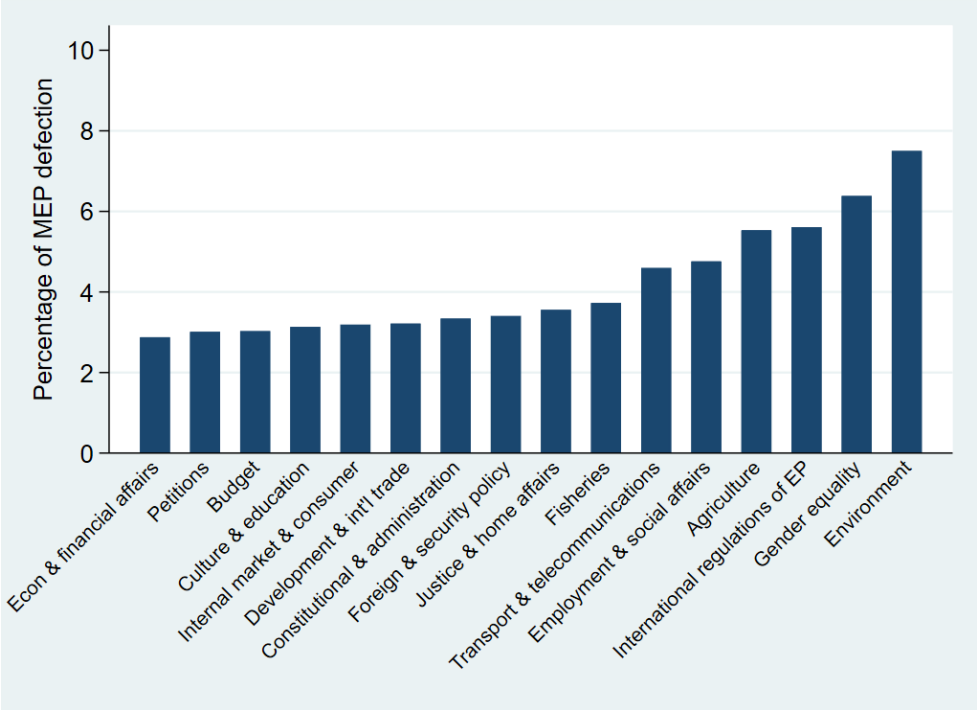


Figure 4.1 also presents that the '*Environment*' area had the highest rate of MEPs' voting defection overall (7.50%). '*Environment*' is also the policy area where both ideological distance and issue salience were the highest in the estimation sample of this study. In other words, in the period under study, environmental issues were the ones on which MEPs' two principals disagreed the most and also what national parties cared about the most overall by emphasising in their election manifestos. Farmers' protests and voters' backlash across Europe against the EU's series of Green Deal policies to tackle climate change in the earlier months of 2024, which lasted several weeks and even significantly affected the electoral outcome of the 2024 European Parliament elections later, also exemplify how salient and politicised the EU's environmental issues have become in the domestic domain (see Tasch, 2024[16]; Ford and Goury-

[16] Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4nneg6252eo

Laffont, 2024[17]).Environmental issues were highly contentious in both national and European arenas, the phenomenon which was even referred to as European "Greenlash" (Tasch, 2024). Furthermore, the increasing salience and relevance of EP elections in the domestic arena due to the politicisation of Europe further suggests that electoral proximity may affect actors' incentives and interests when voting in the European Parliament.

Taking ideological distance as a proxy for policy contestation between a national party and its EP party group, this study investigates the conditions under which the greater policy distance between a national party and its EP group leads to MEPs' voting defection from their EP group. I focus, more specifically, on the conditioning (moderating) effect of issue salience and electoral proximity on the relationship between policy distance and MEPs' disloyalty to European party groups. To test the conditioning effects of *party-level issue salience* and *electoral proximity*, I conduct a multi-level logistic regression analysis on individual MEPs' voting decisions (*final roll-call votes*) in the 7th–9th European Parliament (from September 2009 to June 2022) over six policy areas in total, combining various data sources, such as the VoteWatch Europe dataset (Hix et al., 2022), the Euromanifesto Project dataset (Carteny et al., 2023), ParlGov (Döring et al., 2023), and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset (Jolly et al., 2022).

The results show that the ideological distance between a national party and the EP group itself has a systematic effect on the likelihood of individual MEPs' voting defection from the EP group. However, this is not the entire story: the findings confirm the hypotheses that this effect would be further conditioned by issue salience and electoral proximity. First, I find that the effect of ideological distance tends to be stronger in issue areas that are more salient to the

[17] Available at: https://www.politico.eu/article/france-farmers-eu-elections-far-right-victory-agriculture-ministry/

national party in its election programme. MEPs are more likely to vote against the majority of the EP group when the ideological distance between the two principals increases *and* when the issue is more important to the national party. However, when issue salience is low, greater ideological distance does not increase MEP defection rates. Second, I also find that the effect of ideological distance on MEPs' voting disloyalty to the EP group gets stronger when the next European elections are nearer. In the run-up to EP elections, MEPs are more likely to be disloyal to the EP group when the distance between the two principals increases. However, this mechanism is broken when EP elections are farther away: greater policy distance does not increase the likelihood of defection during non-election times.

This research has important implications for understanding MEPs' voting behaviour in the EP. First, by testing the conditions under which greater policy distance between the two principals is translated into MEPs' voting (dis)loyalty, I add to the literature on the principal(s)-agent dynamics in the context of the European Parliament. In addition, by including more recent years, policy areas/domains, and party groups in the analysis, this research adds to the findings of the previous literature and further offers a nuanced explanation of the mechanisms that drive MEPs' voting behaviour. Last, as this chapter finds that national contexts affect the incentives and interests of the actors involved in the legislative process, it contributes to the fields of legislative behaviour, party politics, the interplay between national and European politics, and the politicisation of Europe.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section, I review the literature on MEPs' voting behaviour in the EP. Then, I present theoretical explanations and expectations about the factors that influence MEPs' voting (dis)loyalty to the EP group when ideological conflicts arise between the two principals – the national party and the EP group. I mainly focus on the moderating effect of party-level issue salience and proximity to European elections. Next, I present a research design and discuss the results of the analysis. Finally, I conclude and discuss

the implications of the findings, as well as limitations and avenues for future research, in the last section.

4.2. National vs. European: An Overview of MEPs' Voting Behaviour in the European Parliament

What explains MEPs' voting behaviour in the European Parliament? Extant literature suggests that the traditional left-right cleavage has been the main axis of contestation in the EP since 1979, alongside the pro-/anti-EU dimension as the second main cleavage (Hix, 2001; Noury and Roland, 2002; Hix et al., 2006; Raunio, 1999; McElroy and Benoit, 2007; Vestergaard, 2021; for a critical assessment of such dimensions after the Eurozone crisis and migration crisis, see Otjes and Van der Veer (2016) or Hix et al. (2019)). Hence, both the left-right ideology and the pro-/anti-EU attitudes of an MEP have been identified as the main factors determining voting behaviour (Hix, 2001; Hix et al., 2006). Regional differences between Central and Eastern European countries and West European countries also account for variations in MEPs' voting patterns in the EP. While there has been a general tendency of MEPs to move to the right after the 2004 Enlargement overall, MEPs from Central and Eastern European countries that later joined the EU after the Enlargement tend to be ideologically further to the right and less enthusiastic about empowering the EP than those from Western Europe (Scully et al., 2012: 671-672).

When MEPs face a conflicting choice between their national party and EP group, theoretical expectations about legislative behaviour suggest two lines of argument. First, MEPs will likely side with their national principal when conflicts between their national party and the European party group arise. As national parties select candidates for delegations to the European Parliament, they influence the voting behaviour of their MEPs in the EP. EPGs may

also lack the full capacity to control individual MEPs in their group. For example, empirical findings from Hix (2002) and Hix et al. (2007) support that MEPs tend to vote in line with the ideological preferences of their national party. On the other hand, another line of research suggests that MEPs are more compliant with their European principal than with national party leadership. For example, Coman (2009) finds that MEPs tend to be loyal to the larger European group as the ideological distance between the national party and the EP group increases. Mühlböck (2012, 2017) also suggests that, due to EP groups' influence over MEPs once they enter the Chamber through committee allocation or the appointment of important positions, MEPs are generally more inclined to vote with their EP groups most of the time.

Empirically, there has been a surprisingly high voting cohesion within European party groups over time (e.g., Hix, 2001; Hix et al., 2005, 2007; Bressanelli, 2014; Coman, 2009; Bowler and McElroy, 2015; Mühlböck, 2012, 2017). The level of European group cohesion is far higher than that among national delegations who are affiliated with the same national party in their own country, and especially, larger EP groups display higher levels of party group cohesion than relatively small-sized EP groups (e.g., Kreppel, 2002; Hix et al., 2003; Hix et al., 2007; Faas, 2003). As voting cohesion and cooperation among EP group members are crucial in achieving the group's common policy goals, MEPs in the same EPGs tend to vote collectively on legislative proposals. Notably, under the co-decision procedure where the power of the EP has been reinforced, EP party group cohesion and coalition stability on the traditional left-right dimension tend to be high (Noury and Roland, 2002). EPGs mainly employ power over committee assignments to ensure MEPs' loyalty and internal party cohesion. For example, McElroy (2008) finds that EPGs punish MEPs whose votes show continuous disloyalty through committee assignments.

Studies have found that EP group cohesion is higher in final votes (final resolutions), as opposed to amendments (Faas, 2003; Yordanova and Mühlböck 2015). EP group cohesion is

especially higher when roll-call votes are mandatory than when requested (Yordanova and Mühlböck, 2015). Investigating vote decisions before and after the 2009 rule change that required all final votes to be taken by roll-call, Yordanova and Mühlböck (2015) point out that EP party cohesion is much higher on final votes (required votes) than on amendment votes (requested votes); the authors attribute the difference to the fact that requests for roll call votes are more frequently made on contentious votes. Moreover, when it comes to government parties, previous literature suggests that MEPs from government parties in their own country are much less likely to defect from their EP party groups than MEPs from opposition parties are (Koop et al., 2018; Mühlböck, 2012, 2017; Klüver and Spoon, 2015). As MEPs from government parties are more subject to pressure from their EP group leaders to "toe the line agreed in the Council", they are more likely to be loyal to their European groups (Koop et al., 2018: 572). Looking at MEPs' voting behaviour who are affiliated with government parties between 1999 and 2009, Mühlböck (2012) also demonstrates that MEPs toe the transnational line 87.65% of the time when their EP group and the national party ministers in the Council disagree, which empirically shows that MEPs from government parties defect from their EP groups only on rare occasions.

Nevertheless, some scholars have examined conditions under which MEPs defect from their EP party groups (e.g., Hix, 2002, 2004; Faas, 2002; Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Lindstädt et al., 2012; Willumsen, 2022; Koop et al., 2018). Several factors, such as MEPs' individual preferences (e.g., Willumsen, 2022), the ideological difference between national parties and EP groups (e.g., Hix et al., 2007; Coman, 2009; Klüver and Spoon, 2015), national parties' control mechanisms (Mühlböck, 2012, 2017), and electoral institutions including district magnitude and party lists (e.g., Faas, 2002, 2003; Hix, 2004; Coman, 2009; Koop et al., 2018), have been identified to affect the likelihood of defection. Furthermore, looking at the 6th EP term, Lindstädt et al. (2012) find that new members from accession countries that newly joined the

EU tend to defect more frequently than those from former states (EU-15). They also show that incumbent MEPs are more likely to defect from their EP groups than newly elected members. These results suggest that as new accession countries are less established and not used to internal rules and disciplines in the EP, it might take some time until MEPs from these countries coherently follow the transnational group line. On the other hand, however, the empirical findings by Coman (2009) suggest the opposite: new MEPs from CEE countries tend to comply more with their European party group than those from West European countries in contested votes.

4.3. An Issue-Specific Approach: How Issue Salience Moderates the Effect of Ideological Distance on MEPs' Voting Defection

Building on the established literature on the effect of ideological distance on MEPs' behaviour as a starting point (e.g., Hix, 2002; Hix et al., 2007), this study goes further by examining whether the effect of policy divergence is conditioned by other factors. First, following Klüver and Spoon (2015), I take an issue-specific approach and discuss how party-level issue salience conditions the effect of ideological distance on MEPs' (dis)loyalty to EP groups. Given high internal cohesion within EP groups over time, the distance in ideological preferences between national parties and EP groups alone does not provide a full picture of MEPs' voting behaviour and, particularly, does not explain variation in defection rates across policy areas.

Not all votes cast in the European arena – in the Council and the European Parliament – are of equal importance to national parties. Looking at the bicameral law-making between the Council and the EP, Willumsen (2018) suggests that national parties tend to influence their MEPs only when important national interests are at stake and sufficiently large. Börzel et al. (2023: 1103) also point out that coalition-building in the EP works on an "ad hoc, issue-by-

issue basis". While the main focus of their work is different from mine (i.e., they focus on how much Eurosceptic MEPs dissent from the Europhile plurality), the authors find that the impact of Eurosceptic contestation in the EP varies across policy areas, hence highlighting the importance of taking into account different policy areas.

While MEPs defect from their EP group in some instances when the national party's position diverges from that of the EP group, their voting defection rates show considerable variation across different policy areas. Focusing on the earlier EP terms between 1979 and 1999, Klüver and Spoon (2015) provide an empirical example of the variation in defection rates across policy areas due to different levels of issue salience. They point out that during the 1st EP term, 22% of German MEPs who belonged to the SPD party defected from their EP group (PES) on environmental issues, while only 2.6% of MEPs from the CDU party defected from their EP group (EPP) on agriculture issues, although these national parties showed a similar level of ideological distances in these two areas. The authors argue that this variation in defection rates is attributed to the different levels of salience each national party placed on specific issues; as the SPD put a higher importance on environmental issues than the CDU did on agriculture issues, the defection rates of MEPs from the SPD were much higher on the environment issues than those from the CDU on the agriculture issues (Klüver and Spoon, 2015: 554). Their main analysis confirms that the effect of policy distance is conditioned by issue salience since national parties care about policy issues that are important to them when disciplining MEPs.

While the work of Klüver and Spoon (2015) provides valuable insights into the importance of an issue-specific approach in understanding MEPs' legislative behaviour, their analyses are limited to four major EP groups in four selective policy areas – Agriculture, Environment, Social/Employment, and External Trade/Aid – and only cover years up until 1999. Since then, the EU has seen major external events – e.g., the 2004 Enlargement, the Euro

Crisis, the Refugee Crisis, and Brexit – and has also undergone structural reforms since the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, extensive and updated research looking at recent years, as well as more policy areas/domains and EP groups, would enable us to see a nuanced picture of the interaction between issue salience and ideological distance in affecting MEPs' voting behaviour in the EP.

Regarding how issue salience affects MEPs' voting patterns in the EP, several studies have examined different types of issue salience; some looked at media attention as a proxy for the politicisation/salience of an issue in the domestic domain (e.g., Mühlböck, 2012, 2017; Koop et al., 2018), while others investigated party-level issue salience across different policy areas (e.g., Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Costello and Thomson, 2016). Although these studies differ in terms of their research designs and exact measurements of voting unity or voting defection of MEPs, the empirical findings of these studies consistently confirm the effect of issue salience on the likelihood of an MEP either voting in line with their national parties or defecting from the EP groups.

Drawing on the frameworks of issue saliency theory and signalling theory, I propose that the level of issue salience to a national party moderates the effect of policy distance between the national party and the EP group on the likelihood of MEPs' voting defection. First, issue saliency theory and issue ownership theory (e.g., Budge and Farlie, 1983; Budge, 2015; Petrocik, 1996; Carmines and Stimson, 1989) provide a useful theoretical tool for explaining why national parties' incentives to tighten control over their MEPs would depend on the level of the importance of an issue to them. These theories posit that political parties prioritise and strategically highlight the importance of specific issues over others. The level of salience a political party attaches to a certain issue indicates "the value it places on realizing the decision outcome it favours" (Costello and Thomson, 2016: 775). If an issue is more salient to a political party, that means the party attaches higher levels of importance/value to that issue. Realistically,

as parties cannot care about every issue, they selectively emphasise specific issues that they deem important. As there are limits on both budgets for policy implementation and the number of words that a party can express in its election manifesto, if a party devotes a larger proportion of mentions in a particular policy domain, it means that the party prioritises the issue at hand and places importance on it to signal voters that it cares about the issue (Veen, 2011). Therefore, it is expected that national parties will be inclined to put more effort into controlling and monitoring their delegates to the EP on issue areas more important to them to ensure that their agents vote the national party line and to avoid disutility it may receive due to the deviation/defection of their MEPs from the party line.

On top of that, I expect that the effect of party-level issue salience on MEPs' voting defection from their EP group will be more pronounced when the national party's policy positions are farther apart from those of the European group, which implies that the MEP is faced with a vote choice between the national party and the EPG in cases of 'clashes' or 'conflicts' of policy preferences. Signalling theory (e.g., Mühlböck, 2012; Thiem, 2006; Yordanova and Mühlböck, 2015) lends a further explanatory tool for explaining when parties would be incentivised to signal their policy positions to external actors by disciplining MEPs' behaviour. According to the signalling theory, as voting signals certain position-taking to external actors, parties can strategically signal a clear and cohesive position to the third party through voting. If a national party strongly opposes a certain EU proposal based on its ideological preferences, the party leadership may want to instruct party delegations to the EP to signal that position through voting (Mühlböck, 2012). If MEPs' vote decisions are different from the national party line, it will "undermine the party's credibility" (Mühlböck, 2012: 610). Even if such voting behaviour cannot change the vote outcome, parties can still strategically signal their position to external audiences, such as domestic voters or interest groups (Yordanova and Mühlböck, 2015; Mühlböck, 2012; Thiem, 2006). Although Thiem (2006) and

Yordanova and Mühlböck (2015) use the signalling theory in the context of EP groups requesting roll-call votes on specific issues to signal their policy positions to the third party, I argue that the same logic of position signalling can also be applied to explaining the incentives of national parties in disciplining their MEPs to signal clear party positions and credibility through voting defection.

However, due to the costs associated with defecting from EP groups, signalling through disciplining MEPs would make sense only when the policy position of a national party sufficiently diverges from that of the EP group on a given issue *and* when the party places higher importance on that issue (see Yordanova and Mühlböck (2015: 381) for the context of the motives for roll-call requests). Given high EP group cohesion, voting against EP groups causes reputational costs to both individual MEPs and national parties. These costs include sanctions by the EPG, weakened position in their EPG, and penalties in terms of future career, EPG leadership, or coalition-building. Due to these various reputational costs associated with voting defection, national parties will be inclined to tighten control over their MEPs to vote in line with the national party line only when the ideological distance is sufficiently large and when the policy issues are the ones they prioritise (Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Willumsen, 2018). Otherwise, there is not much point in national parties instructing their MEPs to vote against the EP group.

Following these theoretical expectations, I propose that the salience of an issue to a national party moderates the effect of policy distance on the likelihood of MEPs' voting defection. More specifically, I expect that MEPs are more likely to show disloyalty to the EP group when their national party and EP group take more conflicting policy positions in a given issue area *and* when the national party places higher importance on that issue. Therefore, I present the first hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 1*. The more emphasis a national party places on a policy issue, the stronger the effect of the ideological distance between the national party and EP group on the likelihood of an MEP's defection from the EP group on that policy domain.*

4.4. How Electoral Proximity Moderates the Effect of Ideological Distance on MEPs' Voting Defection

Next, I move on to the effect of electoral proximity on MEPs' voting (dis)loyalty to EP party groups. In democracies, political parties compete for electoral success. Electoral timing influences political behaviour by shaping incentives and constraints for both politicians and parties. In the context of the EU, several studies have examined the effect of proximity to elections on MEPs' voting patterns. For example, Lindstädt et al. (2011) suggest that the power and level of EP group cohesion varies over time, which is the weakest when EP elections are proximate and national parties' monitoring increases. Empirical findings by Koop et al. (2018) also demonstrate that the collective disloyalty of MEPs from the same national party to their EP group increases when both national and European elections approach and that proximity to EP elections has a stronger effect than proximity to national elections.

While Koop et al. (2018)'s study provides important empirical insights into the effect of electoral proximity on MEPs' voting behaviour, measuring MEPs' defection as the collective disloyalty of national party delegations has a downside: as at least three MEPs from the same national party is required in measuring a 'majority', many observations would have to be dropped, which disproportionately affects smaller countries that have fewer number of delegations to the EP (for the same methodological concern, see also Willumsen, 2022: 5). Furthermore, I propose that a more nuanced explanation can be sought by examining the

interaction effect between ideological distance and electoral proximity. If policy differences between a national party and its EP group are not large enough, it is theoretically less convincing to expect that MEPs' collective disloyalty to their EP group would systematically increase when elections approach, especially given the high level of EP group cohesion over time. I argue that the policy distance between a national party and its EP group should be taken into account as a proxy for contestation when looking at the effect of electoral proximity.

I argue that the effect of ideological distance between a national party and the EP group on MEPs' defection is conditioned by proximity to EP elections and that the effect of distance on MEPs' voting defection will be stronger when EP elections are proximate. The conditioning effect of electoral proximity can be explained through the lens of interests (and constraints) of three different actors involved: *MEPs*, *national parties*, and *EP party groups*.

First, *MEPs* have higher incentives to defect from EP groups and side with the national party in cases of conflict when EP elections approach, as their chance of getting re-elected solely depends on candidate selection exerted by their national parties. Hix et al. (1999) point out that three main goals explain legislators' behaviour: re-election, policy influence, and office benefits. However important policy-seeking and office-seeking incentives are, re-election serves as the primary goal that an MEP pursues since the benefits of policy influence and office can only be obtained after entering the EP through re-election (Faas, 2003: 843; Meserve et al., 2017: 518; Klüver and Spoon, 2015: 555). In other words, if MEPs are not re-elected to the EP, they cannot pursue other goals in the EP. Even though transnational groups have several means of control over their MEPs, it is national parties that select candidates for the EP and thus directly determine the future careers of MEPs through re-election.

Examining the 2nd – 6th European Parliament, Meserve et al. (2017) point out the importance of the electoral context in explaining MEPs' legislative behaviour. They find that

EP party cohesion tends to be loosened and that MEPs side with the national party rather than the European group during periods of "electoral uncertainty" (Meserve et al., 2017: 525). During volatile times when their future careers are not fully guaranteed, MEPs care more about "their reputation with national party leaderships than their group leaderships" out of electoral calculations (Meserve et al., 2017: 517). Since MEPs "use their national party label, not a European one" (Faas, 2003: 844) when vote-seeking in EP elections, the electoral success of their national party would be in the interest of MEPs. For these reasons, MEPs have strong incentives to willingly defect from the EP group and instead comply with the national party line when their national and European principals disagree on specific issues, especially in the run-up to EP elections. Moreover, as EP election results directly affect MEPs' chances of re-election, they may be "more invested in campaigning and signalling" in the run-up to these elections (Koop et al., 2018: 581). National parties may reward the loyalty and compliance of MEPs in the future while punishing disloyal MEPs who failed to show consistency with the party line, which in turn increases both incentives and additional pressure on MEPs to toe the national line (Thiem, 2007; Mühlböck, 2012, 2017; Koop et al., 2018).

Second, not only does proximity to EP elections increase individual MEPs' willingness to toe the national party line, it also incentivises *national parties* to tighten their control over their MEPs through various control mechanisms driven by electoral calculations. The domestic political context heavily influences voting decisions in European elections. EP elections are organised and conducted at the national level, and national parties compete against one another to maximise their electoral fortune. Since European elections gain far less attention and turnout rates than national parliamentary elections due to their 'second-order' nature (e.g., Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Hix and Marsh, 2007, 2011; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Hobolt and Spoon, 2012; Vestergaard, 2021), more focus is put on national parties and national issues than on "what the EP or its constituent party groups do" in EP elections (Faas, 2003: 844). Voters cast

their votes not purely based on the evaluation of the 'second-order' arena per se (for example, their evaluation of how well MEPs and EPGs performed in the EP or issues and events occurring in the European arena) but more based on national issues and various factors related to the 'first-order' domestic arena (Hix and Marsh, 2007; Faas, 2003). Hobolt and Spoon (2012) further suggest that both sincere voting and protest voting matter in EP elections, whose effects are conditional on the degree of politicisation of the EU issue. To minimise electoral loss and garner votes, it is in the interests of national parties to try to appease their dissatisfied domestic voters and to appeal to them by showing strong party leadership and policy consistencies between the party whip and the MEPs. Hence, national parties are incentivised to reinforce their control/monitoring over their MEPs in the run-up to EP elections, especially when their party positions are distanced from those of EP groups.

Furthermore, as EU issues have become increasingly contested and politicised, the electoral outcomes of EP elections, in turn, also affect national parties' fate in the domestic arena. For example, after a crushing defeat to Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) in the 2024 EP elections, Emmanuel Macron, president of France, dissolved the parliament and called for a snap election, which was described as a huge gamble that led to greater electoral volatility and uncertainty in France (Henley et al., 2024[18]). This example demonstrates how EP elections, despite being labelled as 'second-order' elections, increasingly gain attention in the domestic arena and influence not only the composition of the European Parliament but also the domestic party competition and electoral environment. Therefore, national parties would be incentivised to promote their electoral fortune and public standing in EP elections by signalling external actors that their delegations to the EP vote the party line and increasing their control over MEPs'

[18] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/09/eu-elections-far-right-gains-germany-austria-netherlands-exit-polls

legislative behaviour.

The pre-election period is especially when parties may face increasing public scrutiny, media attention, and criticism from competitors (Koop et al., 2018: 567). Under these circumstances, parties are incentivised to signal domestic voters that their MEPs are in congruence with the party position under the party leadership. As national delegations to the EP, MEPs play an essential role in translating the preferences of domestic voters into delivering EU public policy (Koop et al., 2018). If MEPs do not vote in line with the national party when the party position is distant from that of the EP group, it may seem to the domestic audience that the party is incoherent, incompetent, and internally divided, which may affect its electoral fortune. To prevent this, national parties would be keen on showing strong party leadership and policy consistencies between the party whip and their MEPs by putting more pressure on their MEPs to vote in line with the party's position against the EP group in cases of policy conflicts during election periods. Therefore, the effect of ideological distance between national parties and EP groups is expected to be stronger when EP elections are proximate.

Last, I look at *EP party groups* with regard to incentives and constraints. Compared to national parties, European parties sanction their MEPs to a much lesser extent. EP party groups do influence MEPs' careers within the EP, as they are responsible for the allocation of committees and legislative resources, the international organisation of the EP, or rapporteur appointment (e.g., Faas, 2003; McElroy, 2008; Corbett et al., 2007; Kreppel, 2002; Whitaker, 2001). However, EP group leadership's influence through committee assignments depends on "the personality of the chairperson" and the "numerical strength", which can be vulnerable when committee chairs are "weak" or "incompetent" (Whitaker, 2001: 82-83), while national parties exert control over their MEPs to ensure representativeness on committees with legislative power (Whitaker, 2005). Mühlböck (2012: 611) also points out that compared to national parties, which have a much higher degree of control mechanisms to enforce

compliance to their MEPs, EP groups generally lack mechanisms to reward or punish their MEPs through re-election or offices prior to elections. Moreover, the rules that European political groups designed to ensure a fair distribution of MEPs into influential positions make it even more difficult for European party leaders to reward or sanction their MEPs (Kreppel, 2002).

The weak evidence of the electoral connection between European-level parties and European voters further weakens EPG's influence over their MEPs and explains why national parties still matter in EP elections (Faas, 2003; see also Hix and Høyland, 2013). As mentioned above, EP elections are fought on "national grounds" (Faas, 2003: 844). Therefore, EPGs are less likely (and less able) to sanction their members' voting disloyalty before elections, as MEPs have weaker incentives to vote cohesively during the election campaign period in cases of conflict between the two principals. Since the electoral success of national parties also benefits the EP group in terms of seat share and power in the Parliament, EP groups may even strategically acquiesce, if not encourage, MEPs to side with their national parties in such cases during election campaign periods (Koop et al., 2018) For an MEP, this means that defection from the EP group is less risky and costly during election periods.

To sum up, I expect that while voting cohesion within EP groups is generally high in non-election times, MEPs are more likely to show disloyalty to their EP group in the run-up to European elections when the ideological distance between their national party and the EP group increases, mainly driven by *their own* incentives, increased level of *national party*'s control and disciplining, and relatively weaker sanctioning mechanisms of their *EP group*. Based on these theoretical expectations, I propose the second hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 2*. The closer an EP election is, the stronger the effect of the ideological*

distance between the national party and the EP group on the likelihood of an MEP's defection from the EP group.

4.5. Research Design

In this section, I put forward a research design to test the hypotheses. I perform a multi-level logistic regression analysis, estimating the likelihood of MEPs' voting defection from their European party group on *final* roll-call votes. The main analyses include 431,030 observations of individual MEPs' vote decisions on 1,069 proposals (final votes), 168 national party delegations, 7 EP party groups, and 6 policy areas in total for the 7th–9th EP (from September 2019 to June 2022)[19]. The analyses also cover 28 member states of the EU during the 7th–8th EP terms and 27 countries in the 9th EP term[20]. The following sub-sections explain how each key variable in this study is operationalised and measured. A more detailed data codebook with data sources can be found in Appendix C (see Table C1).

4.5.1. Dependent Variable

The unit of analysis in this study is individual MEPs' vote choice on each proposal, compared

[19] Due to data unavailability, the period of this study ends in June 2022 and does not cover the full period of the 9th EP term.

[20] Regarding the United Kingdom, observations of the vote decisions of MEPs from the UK are included in the analysis only for the 7th and 8th EP terms for the following reasons. MEPs from the UK still voted in the EP until Brexit officially took effect on 1st February 2020, but as one of the main explanatory variables for testing H2 is proximity to EP elections, I decided to exclude the ninth term for the UK entirely. Assuming that MEPs from the UK would take into account the 2024 EP elections when voting in the first few months of the ninth term makes no theoretical sense, as official Brexit had already been decided and no future EP election was anticipated/scheduled for the country.

to how the majority of their EPGs voted on the same proposal. The dependent variable is a dichotomous variable, measuring individual MEP's voting defection from the EP group: it takes the value of 1 if an MEP voted against the majority of the EP group and 0 if an MEP voted in line with the majority of the EP group. Hence, the value of 1 indicates voting defection of an MEP from the EP group, and 0 indicates voting unity between an MEP and the EPG. If an MEP was absent or did not vote, the vote decision is treated as missing. In addition, if the total number of 'Yes' votes is precisely equal to the total number of 'No' votes within an EP group, these cases were dropped as it is impossible to measure the majority opinion of the European group on the given proposal. I draw on the Votewatch Europe dataset (Hix et al., 2022) to compute MEPs' voting defection (DV).

In this study, I only look at strict 'Yes' and 'No' votes, excluding abstentions, since existing literature points out that abstention votes do not show clear policy preferences and hence do not serve as a clear sign of defection (Klüver and Spoon, 2015). Furthermore, unlike in the Council in which the qualified majority voting rule (QMV) is mostly used, most vote decisions in the EP are taken under the simple majority rule (unless for votes on amendments in the second reading), which stipulates that a proposal is adopted when the number of 'Yes' votes is greater than 'No' votes (European Parliament, n.d.). Therefore, under the simple majority rule, abstentions do not play a substantive role in affecting the outcome of the votes. Moreover, all votes in the estimation sample of this study were taken under the simple majority rule.

Regarding roll-call votes, there have been some concerns about potential selection bias (e.g., Carrubba et al., 2006; Thiem, 2006; Yordanova and Mühlböck, 2015; Mühlböck, 2012, 2017; Trumm, 2015; Hix et al., 2018). However, as I look at only final votes since 2009 in this study, the selection bias is not a problem. Since the 2009 reform, all final votes on legislation have been required to be taken by roll call instead of being selectively requested (Yordanova

and Mühlböck, 2015; Mühlböck, 2017).

4.5.2. Explanatory Variables

The main explanatory variables in this study are the ideological distance between national parties and EP groups, issue salience to national parties, and proximity to European elections. First, for Hypothesis 1, I include an interaction term between the *ideological distance* between a national party and the EP group and the *issue salience* the national party attaches to in different policy areas. To measure the level of positional distance and salience in each issue area, I use the Euromanifesto Project database (Carteny et al., 2023). While both the Manifesto Project database (MARPOR; formerly known as CMP) and the Euromanifesto Project database (EMP) provide information about the policy positions and issue salience of each national party on a wide range of issues ahead of elections, the reason that I decided to use the latter one is as follows. While the Manifesto Project database (Lehmann et al., 2023) codes party programmes for national parliamentary/presidential elections, the EMP dataset contains party programmes issued by political parties ahead of EP elections in all EU member countries. Policy issues/domains that parties emphasise may differ between the domestic sphere and the European sphere, and parties take into account the issues of European integration and EU-level governance when drafting their election programmes for EP elections (Klüver and Spoon, 2015). Therefore, the Euromanifesto database better captures each party's issue emphasis and positions at the European level rather than at the domestic level.

The EMP dataset measures parties' issue emphasis based on quasi-sentences in their election manifestos, which is defined as an 'argument' of a political issue that each party makes (Lehmann et al., 2023). In this study, six policy areas are included in total: '*Agriculture', 'Justice and home affairs', 'Development and international trade', 'Economic and financial*

affairs', 'Employment and social affairs', and *'Environment'*. The policy areas in the EP roll-call dataset (VoteWatch Europe) are matched with the ones in the EMP dataset, following the policy categorisation scheme presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 presents additive policy scales constructed for this study in each policy area/domain based on three existing studies: Klüver and Spoon (2015), Veen (2011), and Lowe et al. (2011). Each policy domain in Table 4.1 is comprised of at least a pair of 'left' and 'right' policy categories, which indicate opposing positions within the same issue domain. Following Klüver and Spoon (2015), I employ a proportional scaling approach, an original MARPOR and EMP scaling method, for extracting both *ideological distance* and *issue salience* variables[21].

To measure the *ideological distance* between a national party and its EP party group, I first get each party's ideological positions by subtracting the total sum of the percentage of quasi-sentences on the 'left' policy scale from that on the 'right' policy scale in each policy domain. As each policy domain has a different number of policy categories for extracting party positions, the scales are then adjusted to commonly range from -100 to 100 across policy areas. Finally, I compute the *distance* between the national party and its EP group by taking the Euclidean distance between these two groups in each policy area.

[21] Lowe et al. (2011) suggest a policy scaling method based on log odds ratios between the right and the left positions. They point out that the proportional scaling approach can be vulnerable to the number of neutral quasi-sentences in the manifesto. However, I chose to use the proportional scaling method, as the original EMP variables are presented, to compute ideological positions and issue salience for the following reasons. While the proportional scales have, by their definition, clear theoretical endpoints ranging from -1 to +1 (-100 to +100 if converted into percentages), the logit scale proposed by Lowe et al. (2011) does not posit any endpoints and can take any values depending on the level of extremity of positions. Having clear theoretical endpoints allows me to rescale the range of data points across policy areas in my dataset, which is particularly important since each policy scale in Table 4.1 has different ranges due to the asymmetrical pairs of left-right policy positions. Without rescaling them into a common range, I cannot validly infer the effect of ideological distance and issue salience on the variation of voting defection rates across policy areas.

Next, *party-level issue salience* is operationalised as the total sum of the percentage of quasi-sentences on both the 'left' and 'right' policy scales in each policy domain. As the number of policy categories in each policy domain is all different, the indices are then rescaled to range from 0 to 100 so that the variable has a common range across policy areas (see also Costello and Thomson (2016) for operationalising issue salience to range between 0 and 100).

This study looks at six policy areas in total for the following reasons. First, as the policy difference between each national party and its EP group is one of the main explanatory variables in this study, subtracting the 'left' position from the 'right' position is crucial in gaining data; therefore, the areas that have no clear opposing categories had to be excluded when constructing left-right positions for each area. Moreover, other policy areas, such as budget, fisheries, constitutional and inter-institutional affairs, and transport and telecommunications, which the EMP dataset does not cover in their coding scheme, had to be excluded from the analysis.

Table 4.1: Additive policy scales matching EP policy areas and EMP categories

EP policy area	**"Left" position (EMP policy categories with codes)**	**"Right" position (EMP policy categories with codes)**
Agriculture	7031b Agriculture and Farmers (Negative)	7031a Agriculture and Farmers (Positive)
Development and International Trade	107a Internationalism (Positive) 406b Protectionism (Negative)	107b Internationalism (Negative) 406a Protectionism (Positive)
Environment	501a Environmental Protection (Positive) 416a Anti-Growth Economy (Positive)	410a Productivity (Positive)
Justice and Home Affairs	2011a Freedom (Positive) 7053a Underprivileged Minority Groups (UMG): Immigrants and Foreigners in the Manifesto Country (Positive)	605a Law and Order (Positive) 6011b Immigration (Negative)
Economic and Financial Affairs	4086b European Financial Union/European Currency (Negative) 3141b Mentions of the European Central Bank (Negative)	4086a European Financial Union/European Currency (Positive) 3141a Mentions of the European Central Bank (Positive) 414a Economic Orthodoxy (Positive)
Employment & Social Affairs	504a Welfare State: General (Positive) 701a Labour Groups (Positive) 503a Social Justice (Positive)	504b Welfare State: General (Negative) 701b Labour Groups (Negative)

Note: These policy scales have been constructed following the categorisation suggested by Klüver and Spoon (2015), Veen (2011), and Lowe et al. (2011).

Next, for Hypothesis 2, proximity to EP elections is operationalised as the number of days (in 100 days) left until the next scheduled European election from the date of each MEP's

voting in the EP.[22] I draw on the Parlgov database (Döring et al., 2023) for information about EP election dates and VoteWatch Europe (Hix et al., 2022) for roll-call voting dates. To test Hypothesis 2, an interaction term between ideological distance and electoral proximity is included in the analysis.

4.5.3. Control Variables

I include several control variables in the analysis. To start with, I control for a series of EP-related and vote-related factors: EU membership duration, voting procedure, closeness of votes, Eurosceptic seat share in the EP, and whether national party delegations (NPDs) hold an EP group leadership position.

First, *EU membership duration* is operationalised as the number of years since a country joined the EU. It is expected that longer membership duration decreases the likelihood of MEP voting against the majority of their EP groups (e.g., Klüver and Spoon, 2015). This is because MEPs from countries with longer membership duration are more likely to have been accustomed to the institutional framework, norms, and practices of the EP. They may also have been better integrated into the internal party system and supranational political dynamics within the EP compared to those from newer member states. This deeper integration fosters internal EP group cohesion and increases MEPs' alignment with the group line.

Second, I include a dummy variable for the *voting procedure*, coded as 1 if the vote was taken under the co-decision procedure (now known as the Ordinary Legislative Procedure) and

[22] Although EP elections take place concurrently on the same date across most member states, they can sometimes last more than one day in some countries (e.g., the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Italy). In such cases, the last date of an EP election for the country is used to compute the number of days between the next EP election and the EP voting date. This is also in line with the original coding in the ParlGov dataset (Döring et al., 2023).

0 otherwise. I expect a higher likelihood of MEPs' voting defection from their EP group under the co-decision procedure for the following reason. Under co-decision, the EP holds enhanced legislative power, including the right to veto EU legislation. As legislative stakes increase, national parties will be more incentivised to assert influence over MEPs' voting behaviour to safeguard national interests, resulting in higher rates of MEP defection from EP groups.

Third, I control for *closeness of votes*, calculated as the ratio between 'Yes' and 'No' votes on each legislative proposal. This ratio was rescaled to range from 0 to 1, where values closer to 1 indicate an equal number of 'Yes' and 'No' votes, signifying a more contested vote, while values closer to 0 indicate a predominant majority on one side. Previous research suggests that MEPs are more likely to defect from their EP group in highly contested votes (Klüver and Spoon, 2015). Contested votes, characterised by a narrow division between 'Yes' and 'No' votes, often reflect underlying conflicts between party lines and national interests. When such conflicts arise, national parties may exert pressure on their MEPs to align with the national party stance. This pressure can increase the likelihood of MEP displaying disloyalty to their EP group.

In addition, to account for the effect of the rise of Eurosceptic MEPs in the EP on voting behaviour and party cohesion, I control for *Eurosceptic seat share*. This variable is operationalised as the total number of seats secured by MEPs from Eurosceptic national parties in each EP election. Following Börzel et al. (2023: 1102), national parties are classified as Eurosceptic if they are "at least somewhat opposed to [European] integration," corresponding to a CHES score of 3 or below on the "eu_position" variable. I expect that a higher seat share of Eurosceptic MEPs will lead to increased voting unity within EP groups, thereby decreasing the likelihood of MEPs defecting from their EP groups. Under such circumstances, group leadership is likely to tighten control over MEPs and strengthen group cohesion to counteract the growing influence of Euroscepticism in the Parliament.

Last, another dummy variable is included to indicate whether *national party delegations (NPD) have an EP group leader* (coded as 1). Findings from previous research suggest that MEPs are less likely to defect from their EP group if their national party holds a leadership position within that group (Coman, 2009; Meserve et al., 2009; Mühlböck, 2012, 2017). The leadership role of a national party within an EP group can enhance monitoring, party discipline, and career incentives within the EP, thereby deterring MEPs from voting against the group's line.

Alongside these EP-related and vote-related variables, I also control for several party-related variables, including party size, party participation in government, and intraparty dissent over EU issues. First, I account for the sizes of both NPDs and EP groups. Existing literature suggests that the sizes of the NPDs and EP groups with which MEPs are affiliated influence their voting patterns in the EP (e.g., Hix et al., 2007; Coman, 2009; Mühlböck, 2012, 2017; Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Costello and Thomson, 2016). General consensus is that the larger the NPD, the more likely MEPs are to follow the position of their European groups, as larger NPDs tend to exhibit lower cohesion and less disciplinary power over their MEPs. A similar dynamic applies to EP group size. Larger EP groups are generally less organised and less capable of maintaining voting discipline within the group (Coman, 2009: 1111). Consequently, I expect that MEPs affiliated with larger EP groups will be more likely to defect from their transnational party groups. *NPD size* is measured by the number of MEPs that each national party has within its EP group during each EP term, while *EP group size* is measured by the share of seats each transnational group holds per EP term.

Second, I include a dummy variable to indicate whether the national party is *in government* at the time of MEPs' voting (Coman, 2009; Willumsen, 2018; Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Koop et al., 2018; see also Willumsen and Öhberg, 2017 for floor dissent in the context of national parliaments). Drawing on the ParlGov dataset (Döring et al., 2023), government

parties are coded as 1, while parties not in government are coded as 0. As discussed in the previous theory section, MEPs from government parties are expected to be less likely to defect from their EP group. This is because ministers from governing parties are typically inclined to uphold agreements reached in the Council, thus reducing the incentives for government parties to instruct their MEPs to vote against their EPGs (Willumsen, 2018).

Third, I include *intraparty dissent over EU issues* (Mühlböck, 2012, 2017; see also Braun et al., 2016; Font, 2023). When a national party is internally divided on EU issues, MEPs are less likely to defect from their EPGs, as national party leadership struggles to deliver clear and unified voting instructions or messages to their MEPs (Mühlböck, 2017). Intraparty dissent over EU integration is measured on an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 (party is completely united) to 10 (party is completely divided), using the "eu_dissent" variable from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

Finally, I control for the effect of *electoral systems* used in EP elections on MEPs' voting behaviour. Research suggests that MEPs elected under party-centred closed list systems are more likely to be subject to national party discipline, compared to those from countries using candidate-centred open lists or single transferable votes (e.g., Faas 2002, 2003; Hix, 2004; Coman, 2009; Koop et al., 2018). Therefore, I expect that the party-centred closed list system will increase the likelihood of MEP defection from EPGs. Based on Däubler and Hix's (2018: 1800) classification of electoral systems, this variable is included as a dummy: countries with party-centered closed list systems (Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, and the UK) are coded as 1, while those using open lists or single transferable voting systems (the rest of the EU member states) are coded as 0 (Font, 2023). In the cases of Greece and Estonia, which used closed lists for the 7th term but switched to open lists from the 8th term onwards, this change is reflected accordingly in the dataset.

4.6. Results and Discussion

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics (estimation sample)

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
MEP's defection from EPG (DV)	0.02	0.16	0	1
Ideological distance	12.09	13.44	0	48.35
National party issue salience	0.98	1.31	0	14.58
Days until EP elections (in 100 days)	7.75	5.24	0.35	17.75
Co-decision	0.77	0.42	0	1
Closeness of vote	0.13	0.17	0	0.98
NPD has EPG leader	0.14	0.35	0	1
NPD size	12.05	9.63	1	36
EPG size	165.92	75.68	35	265
Membership duration (in years)	36.76	19.69	2	64
Government party	0.51	0.50	0	1
Internal EU dissent	2.78	1.50	0	8.67
Electoral system	0.51	0.50	0	1
Eurosceptic seatshare	0.16	0.04	0.12	0.21
Observations	431,030			

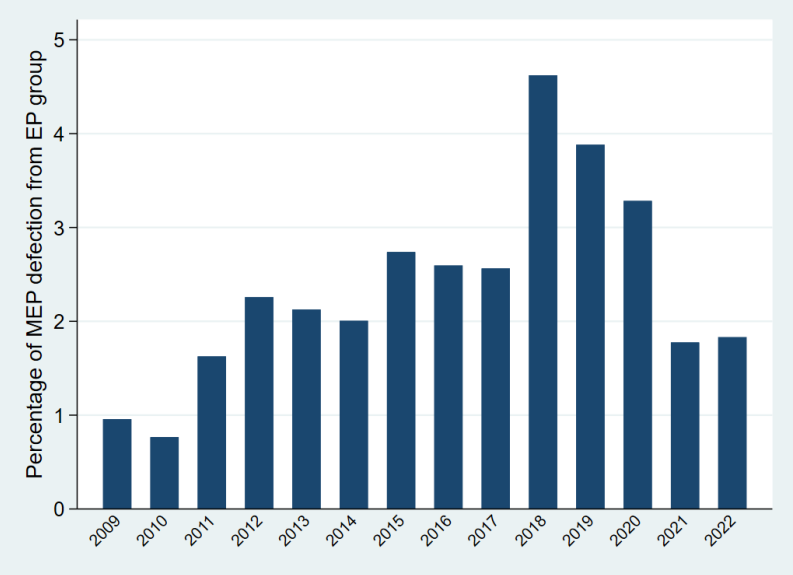
Now, I present some descriptive statistics and empirical findings. To begin with, Table 4.2 reports summary statistics of variables included in the main analysis. The overall voting defection rate of MEPs from their EPGs in the estimation sample is 2.48% (10,678 votes out of 431,030 total votes in the estimation sample). That is, individual MEPs voted against the majority of their EP group only 2.48% of the time, which clearly shows that disloyalty to EPG is rare and that party cohesion is considerably high. The low level of defection rate in the estimation sample consisting of vote decisions on final votes is also in line with theoretical and empirical expectations in previous literature that roll-call votes that are taken mandatory due to the rule change in 2009 (as is in the case of this study) are likely to show far more voting unity between EP groups and their MEPs, as opposed to roll-call votes that are requested on amendments (e.g., Yordanova and Mühlböck, 2015).

Table 4.3: MEPs' defection rates by EP legislative term (estimation sample)

EP term	Number of votes against the majority of EPG	Number of votes in line with the majority of EPG	Total votes	**Defection rate**
7th term	3,440	186,527	189,967	1.81%
8th term	5,575	161,332	166,907	3.34%
9th term	1,663	72,493	74,156	2.24%
Total	10,678	420,352	431,030	2.48%

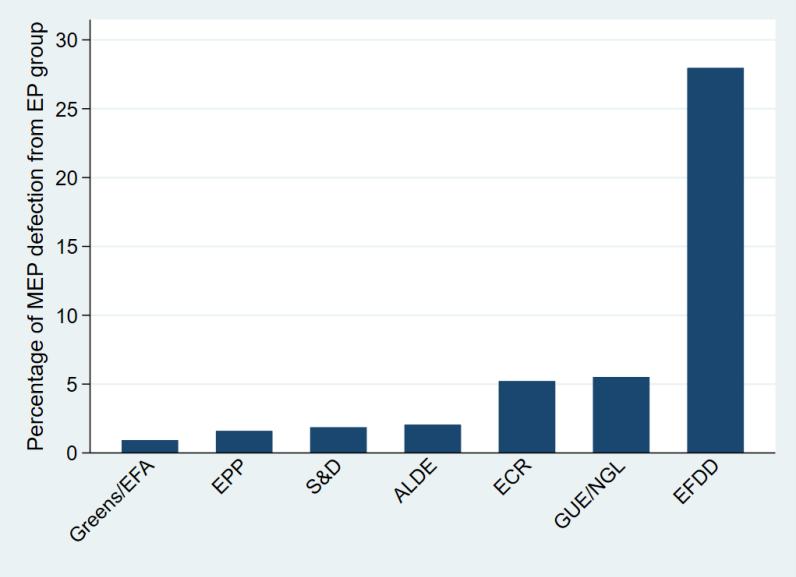
Turning to MEPs' defection rates, Table 4.3 reports the MEPs' defection rates by EP term. According to the table, the 8th EP term showed the highest defection rate in the estimation sample. It should also be noted, however, that the total number of observations for the 9th term is much lower than the 7th or the 8th term since the period under study ends in June 2022 and does not cover the entire 9th term. Next, Figure 4.2 presents defection rates in more detail by each year. According to Figure 4.2, MEPs' voting defection rate from their EPGs was the highest in 2018 (4.62%), followed by the second-highest 3.88% in 2019, and the lowest in 2010 (0.77%) of all the years under study.

Figure 4.2: Percentage of MEPs' defection from EP group by *year* (estimation sample)



Last, Figure 4.3 reports the percentage of MEPs' voting defection by EP group in the estimation sample. In my dataset covering the 7th – 9th EP legislative terms, larger EP groups, such as EPP, S&D (PES), and ALDE, displayed lower levels of MEP defection and thus higher levels of party cohesion than smaller party groups that are ideologically more extreme and Eurosceptic; this overall trend is also in line with previous literature (e.g., Faas, 2003). In contrast, MEPs from the far-right Eurosceptic group, Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), showed a strikingly high level of defection (27.96%).

Figure 4.3: Percentage of MEPs' defection from EP group, by *EP group* (estimation sample)



To test the hypotheses, I employ a multi-level logistic regression analysis. Given that individual MEPs are nested into their own national parties, each observation (individual MEP's vote decisions, which is the unit of analysis in this study) is not independent from one another. To account for the hierarchical structure of the dataset, I include random effects for national parties. It would be ideal to run a three-level logistic regression analysis, taking into account the fact that each MEP (first level) is clustered into national parties (second level), and each national party is then clustered into European party groups (third level). However, as there are only seven EP groups, the number of groups is not large enough to yield stable estimates (e.g., for similar methodological concerns, see Vestergaard, 2021: 337; Klüver and Spoon, 2015: 559; Willumsen, 2022: 18). Alternatively, I instead chose to include fixed effects for EP party groups in the main models, Models 1 through 4 in Table 4.4, to account for the third level[23].

[23] For robustness tests, I also ran Model 4 without EPG dummies (see Robustness Model 1 in Table C3 in Appendix C) to take into account concerns that including EPG fixed effects only captures changes within party groups and misses cross-group variation. However, the results show that with or without the inclusion of EPG

Table 4.4: Multi-level logistic regression on MEP defection from EPG

DV: MEP's defection from EPG	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Ideological distance	0.004***	-0.001	0.011***	0.006***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
National party issue salience	-0.037***	-0.138***	-0.040***	-0.129***
	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.010)	(0.021)
Distance		0.005***		0.004***
× Issue salience		(0.001)		(0.001)
Days until EP elections	-0.016***	-0.016***	-0.004	-0.005
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Distance			-0.001***	-0.001***
× Days until EP elections			(0.000)	(0.000)
Co-decision	0.371***	0.363***	0.378***	0.371***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Closeness of vote	3.499***	3.505***	3.496***	3.501***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)
NPD has EPG leader	-0.020	-0.015	-0.031	-0.026
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)
NPD size	-0.039***	-0.037***	-0.038***	-0.038***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
EPG size	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Membership duration	0.019***	0.018***	0.019***	0.019***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Government party	-0.084***	-0.082***	-0.081***	-0.080***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Internal EU dissent	0.013	0.020	0.013	0.019
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Electoral system	-0.632***	-0.645***	-0.633***	-0.644***
	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)
Eurosceptic seat share	-2.860***	-2.911***	-2.784***	-2.824***
	(0.619)	(0.619)	(0.620)	(0.620)
Constant	-5.447***	-5.368***	-5.551***	-5.474***
	(0.229)	(0.229)	(0.229)	(0.230)
Observations	431,030	431,030	431,030	431,030
Number of party	168	168	168	168
EPG FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	78912.96	78882.25	78871.39	78848.23
BIC	79143.41	79123.67	79112.82	79100.63
ICC	.20 (.02)	.20 (.02)	.29 (.03)	.20 (.02)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

dummies, these models yield consistent and almost identical results, while the inclusion of EPG fixed effects (Model 4 in Table 4.4) leads to a better model fit than the model without EPG fixed effects.

Table 4.4 presents the main results of the multi-level logistic analysis. Model 1 is a baseline model with all the explanatory variables without interaction effects. In Model 1, the effect of ideological distance itself is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which is in line with the established literature that MEPs are more likely to defect from the EP group and instead toe the national line when the national party's ideological position differs from that of the EP group (e.g., Hix, 2002; Hix et al., 2007). Electoral proximity, operationalised as *days until EP elections*, is also in line with previous work (e.g., Meserve et al., 2017; Koop et al., 2018; Lindstädt et al., 2011): the negative coefficient means that MEPs are more likely to show disloyalty to their EPGs when EP elections are proximate (or, to put it differently, when not many days are left until EP elections). On the contrary, the negative effect of issue salience in Model 1 is puzzling, which indicates that the more salient an issue is to the national party, the less likely MEPs are to vote against the majority of the EP group.

However, when interaction effects – the main focus of this study – are introduced, they show a full, detailed picture of the relationship. Models 2 through 4 investigate the conditioning effects of issue salience and electoral proximity, as hypothesised in the previous theory section. Model 2 examines the interaction effect between ideological distance and issue salience, while Model 3 looks at the interaction effect between ideological distance and proximity to EP elections. Model 4 is a combined model that includes both interaction terms. The statistical significance of both interaction effects across these models indicates that the effect of policy distance between national parties and EP groups on MEPs' defection is not constant and is instead conditioned by issue salience and electoral proximity. Models 2 and 4 suggest that the effect of policy divergence gets stronger if the policy issue at hand is more salient and, thus, more important to national parties. Furthermore, Models 3 and 4 show that greater policy differences increase the likelihood of MEPs' defection from EP groups when European elections approach. Including interaction terms also improves model fits: all interaction models

(Models 2 through 4) have lower AIC/BIC statistics than the baseline model without interaction terms (Model 1). In addition, of all the main models in Table 4.4, the combined model that incorporates both interaction terms (Model 4) has the best fit compared to when interaction terms are non-existent or when only one interaction term is included.

The ICC (interclass correlation coefficient) values in Table 4.4 indicate that roughly 20% (29% for Model 3) of the variation in MEP defection is attributable to differences among national parties. This suggests that there is a meaningful level of clustering at the national party level. Ignoring this clustering could lead to potentially biased estimates. Therefore, the use of multi-level models is justified, as they can properly account for the hierarchical nature of the data and to enable more reliable inferences about the factors influencing MEP defection.

To better visualise the interaction effects, I present the predicted probabilities of MEP voting defection. First, Figure 4.4 illustrates the predicted probabilities of MEPs' voting defection as a function of ideological distance between national parties and EP groups at different levels of issue salience based on Model 4, with 95% confidence intervals. Issue salience is set at its minimum and maximum values in the figure. The solid line represents the predicted probability when issue salience is at its minimum, while the dotted line shows the predicted probability when it is at its maximum value. I set the other variables as follows: *government party* at non-government, *electoral system* at candidate-centred (open-lists and single transferable voting) systems, continuous variables at their mean values, and all the other categorical and dummy variables at their median values[24]. Figure 4.4 clearly shows that issue

[24] I also simulated predicted probabilities, setting these variables at other values. For example, when computing the predicted probabilities of MEPs' defection who are from government parties and countries using the closed-list electoral system, all else being equal, the substantial size of the effect gets smaller (figure not reported). When issue salience is set at the maximum, the likelihood of defection increases from 0.19% to 3.67% as ideological distance moves from minimum to maximum. However, when issue salience is at its minimum value, the likelihood of defection stays relatively constant across all levels of ideological distance. Although the magnitude of the

salience conditions the effect of ideological distance on the likelihood of MEPs voting against the EP group. According to the figure, the predicted probability of defection increases as the ideological gap between MEPs' two principals becomes larger when issue salience is at its maximum value (*dotted line*). When there is ideological congruence between a national party and the EP group, MEPs' defection rate is merely 0.38%, whereas the likelihood of defection rises to 7.05% when the ideological distance is at the maximum. On the other hand, however, greater policy distance does not increase MEPs' voting defection when the issue is not salient at all (minimum value), as can be seen from the flat solid line. Therefore, there is enough evidence to support Hypothesis 1: the effect of ideological distance on the likelihood of MEP defection from the EP group gets stronger when the national party prioritises the issue.

Admittedly, however, Figure 4.4 also reveals an unexpected pattern at low levels of ideological distance between national parties and EP groups. While the results at high levels of ideological distance are in line with the hypothesis, those at low levels of ideological distance show inconsistency with the theoretical expectations. Specifically, Figure 4.4 indicates that MEPs are more likely to defect from their EP group at low levels of ideological distance when their national party's issue salience is at its minimum (zero) than when issue salience is at its maximum. In other words, MEPs are more likely to vote against their EP group on policy issues that their national party does not prioritise when the ideological positions of both principals are not divergent enough. Moreover, the histogram of observations (Figure C1 in Appendix C), which illustrates the distribution of ideological distances between national parties and their EP groups in the estimation sample, shows that these unexpected findings are not due to a lack of data or few observations at lower distances[25].

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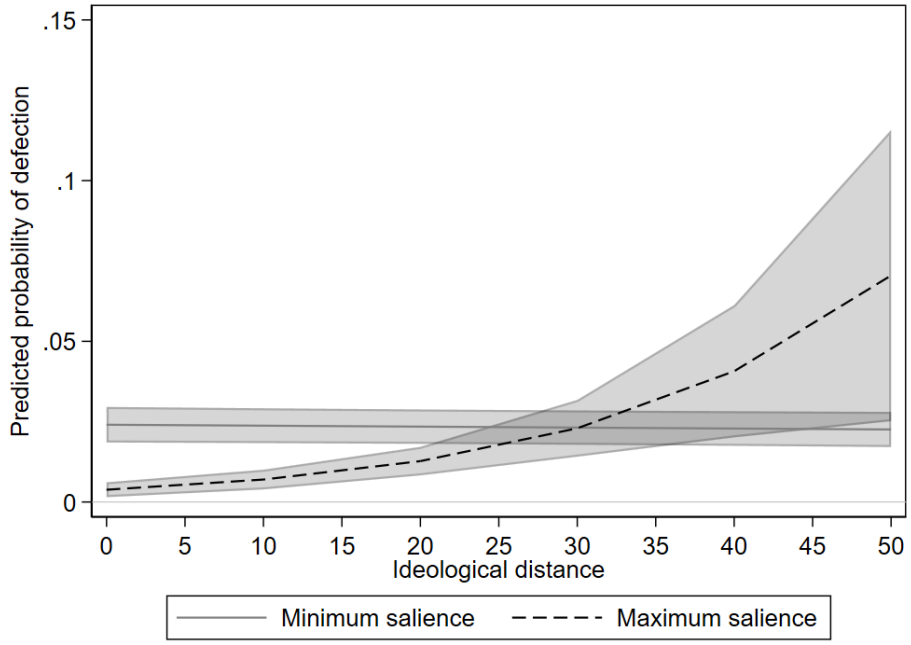
interaction term varies depending on the values at which other variables are set, the interaction effect still holds statistical significance, and the expected direction is all the same across different settings.

[25] The clustering of a considerable number of observations at low ideological distances, as shown in Figure C1

Figure 4.4: The effect of ideological distance on MEPs' defection at different levels of issue salience (based on Model 4), with 95% CIs



Note: This figure illustrates the effect of ideological distance on the predicted probability of MEPs' defection from EP party groups at different levels of party-level issue salience (minimum and maximum salience presented). It is estimated based on Model 4.

One possible explanation for such inconsistency at low levels of ideological distance is as follows. When ideological distance is low, it implies that the national party and the EP group are already closely aligned on the policy issue. In this context, if an MEP were to vote against the EP group, they would also be voting against the national party's position. On high-salience issues, this means that an MEP votes against both of their principals on an issue that the national party considers highly important. Since MEPs would have little incentive to oppose both of their principals on a highly salient issue due to career risks or party discipline, they are more likely to remain loyal to their EP group under these conditions. In contrast, on low-salient issues, MEPs may have flexibility to vote based on their personal preferences or strategic signalling

(Appendix C), empirically confirms existing literature suggesting that most national parties join EP groups with which they share significant ideological similarity (e.g., McElroy and Benoit, 2010).

to their domestic constituency when the ideological divergence between their two principals is minimal. When the national party is indifferent about an issue, MEPs may feel less constrained and have greater autonomy to vote according to personal preferences or strategic calculations, which helps explain to some extent why the likelihood of defection is higher at low ideological distance when issue salience is at its minimum.

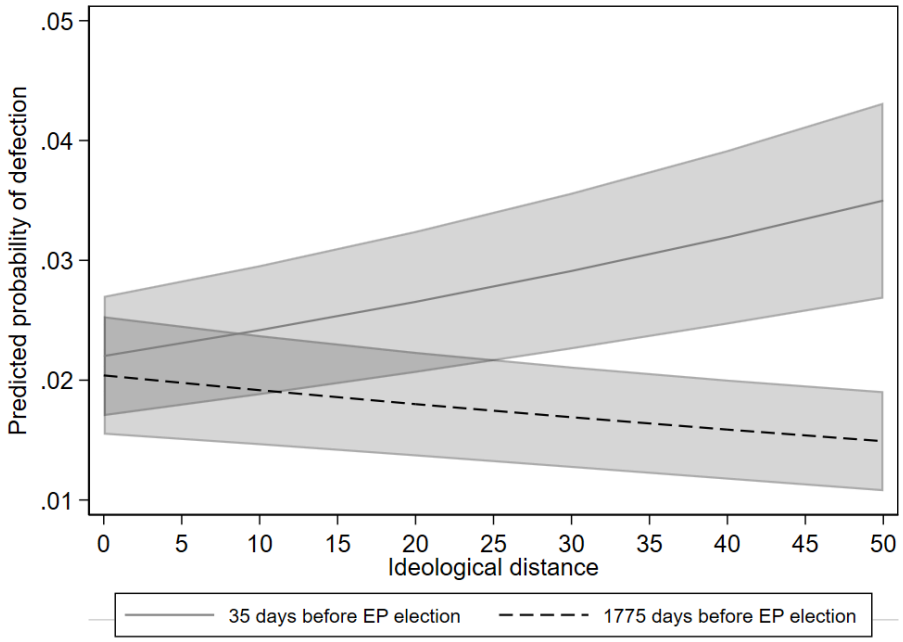
While this inconsistency at low levels of distance is acknowledged, the main takeaway of this study remains valid nonetheless: greater ideological distance increases the likelihood of MEP defection when issue salience is high.

Next, Figure 4.5 depicts the predicted probabilities of MEPs' defection at different levels of ideological distance and proximity to EP elections, based on Model 4. The shadowed areas in the figure represent 95% confidence intervals. Like the previous figure, electoral proximity is set at its minimum and minimum values. I also set the other variables the same way as above: continuous variables at mean values, categorical/dummy variables at median values only except for two variables – *government party* set at non-government and *electoral system* at candidate-centred systems[26]. Figure 4.5 shows that electoral proximity also conditions the effect of policy differences on the likelihood of MEPs' defection, yet the magnitude of the conditioning effect is rather small. During EP election campaign periods (when EP elections are only 35 days away, as represented in the solid line), the predicted likelihood of defection increases slightly from 2.20% to 3.50% as ideological distance moves from its minimum value (no distance at all) to the maximum value. In contrast, during non-election times (when EP elections are as far away as 1775 days, as represented in the dotted line), the mechanism

[26] Again, computing predicted probabilities based on various combinations of these values, I find that the magnitude of the interaction term between ideological distance and electoral proximity varies depending on how the values of other variables are set. However, the expected direction and the significance of the interaction effect remain unchanged.

between national party control and MEPs' voting defection is broken. The downward dotted line suggests that national parties are not incentivised to discipline their MEPs during non-election times, even when they disagree with the EP groups. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed. To sum up, these empirical findings provide evidence in support of the conditioning effects of both issue salience and electoral proximity, although the moderating effect of electoral proximity is limited in a substantial sense.

Figure 4.5: The effect of ideological distance on MEPs' defection at different levels of proximity to EP elections (based on Model 4), with 95% CIs



Note: This figure illustrates the effect of ideological distance on the predicted probability of MEPs' defection from EP party groups at different levels of proximity to EP elections (minimum and maximum days left until EP elections presented). The estimates are based on Model 4.

To validate the findings, I conducted several robustness checks, the results of which are reported in Appendix C. First, I ran robustness tests using different model specifications. Table C3 in Appendix C presents robustness models with different fixed effects included (EP term,

party family, and EP party group and EP term simultaneously), along with the model without any fixed effects included, as extensions to the main model 4. Moreover, Table C4 in the appendix reports results when random effects for countries are used. No matter what model specification is used, the main findings of this study remain largely unchanged. I also replicated my models by employing a different operationalisation of the dependent variable by treating abstentions as opposition (Table C5) and including additional control variables – i.e., East-West differences (Table C6), proximity to national elections (Table C7), and individual MEP-level characteristics such as age and whether they are new to the EP (Table C8). Even with different model specifications and additional covariates, these robustness models are consistent with the main results. (See Appendix C for full tables and further explanations).

Last, I turn to the effects of control variables. The magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of the control variables are consistent across all four main models in Table 4.4. MEPs are more likely to show disloyalty to their EP group under the co-decision voting rule and in closely contested votes. On the other hand, MEPs from larger national party delegations and government parties are less likely to defect from the majority of the EP group, which is in line with existing literature (e.g., Klüver and Spoon, 2015; Koop et al., 2018). Moreover, when Eurosceptic seat share increases in the EP, EP group cohesion tends to strengthen, with MEPs becoming less likely to vote against the majority opinion of their EP group. This result suggests that EP groups may seek to enhance voting unity among members by instructing or monitoring MEPs' voting behaviour through EP group leadership in response to rising Euroscepticism in the EP.

However, several control variables are either statistically insignificant or show results contrary to the expected directions suggested by previous research. First, while the aforementioned control variables have significant effects on MEPs' voting (dis)loyalty at the 0.01 level, EP group size, a national party's internal dissent over EU integration, and whether

national party delegations have an EP group leader do not have systematic effects on MEPs' voting behaviour.

Next, contrary to previous research (e.g., Klüver and Spoon, 2015), the significant positive coefficient of membership duration suggests that MEPs from newer member states are less likely to defect from their EP group during the period under investigation. This finding implies that MEPs coming from political systems with less experience in EU decision-making are more inclined to align with their EP groups as they adapt to the new institutional environment and prioritise internalising EP group norms (see Coman, 2009).

In addition, the effect of electoral systems also yields somewhat puzzling results that contradict the expectations of most established literature. The broad consensus in the literature on legislative behaviour in the EP is that national parties tend to exert more control over MEPs in countries with party-centred, closed-list systems in which national parties have a greater control over candidate selection than the countries with candidate-centred electoral rules in which voters can choose MEP preferences (e.g., Faas, 2003; Coman, 2009; Hix, 2004; Koop et al., 2018). However, the negative effect of the electoral system variable across the main models indicates that the likelihood of individual MEPs' disloyalty to the EP group is lower in party-centred closed-list electoral systems than in candidate-centred open-list systems. This result is also consistent across robustness checks, only except when random effects are used for countries instead of national parties, in which the variable *electoral system* even loses statistical significance (for the full results, see Tables C3 through C8 in Appendix C). At least, Klüver and Spoon (2015) also found that whether candidate selection is centralised does not systematically affect MEPs' voting behaviour. Therefore, my results add to the mixed empirical evidence of the impact of ballot structure on a national party's control over MEPs.

4.7. Conclusion

In this study, I find some conditionality on the effect of positional distance between a national party and a European party group on MEP's voting defection from the EP group. First, I examined the moderating effect of issue salience on the relationship between ideological distance and MEPs' (dis)loyalty to EP party groups. I find that not only does the ideological distance itself have a systematic effect on MEPs' voting defection, but its effect gets stronger on the likelihood of an MEP voting against the EP group when the national party puts higher emphasis on that issue in its election programme, which implies that a national party tries to discipline its MEPs when the policy gap is large and when the party prioritises the policy issue at hand. Second, when interacting electoral proximity with ideological distance, I also find that the effect of policy distance between a national party and its EP group in each policy domain is conditioned by how close EP elections are, although to a limited extent in a substantial sense. Only when EP elections approach and when there is a sufficient gap between a national party's policy position and the EP group's policy position does the national party attempt to influence MEPs to toe the party line against the EP group. In non-election times, however, the control mechanism is broken.

The findings of this study have several implications. First, this study adds to the literature on legislative behaviour in the supranational setting, in which 'one agent' (MEPs) serves 'two principals' (EP groups and national parties). I have examined conditions that affect the incentives and interests of actors in the supranational setting by looking at interaction effects. The findings show that despite the high levels of EP party group cohesion, national parties affect MEPs' chance of re-election and thus exert control over MEPs' legislative behaviour in the European Parliament. Furthermore, this research points out the interplay between national politics and supranational decision-making. Building on Klüver and Spoon (2015), I

demonstrate that even in the more recent period (the 7th–9th EP terms), the moderating effect of party-level issue salience on EU-level decision-making still holds when more EP party groups and policy areas are included in the analysis. EP elections also matter to national parties in disciplining their MEPs to some extent in cases of conflict. Although MEPs are delegations to the supranational institution, the results show that they are still subject to domestic pressures and control from their national party when conflicting interests exist between the national party and the transnational party group and when certain conditions are met.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, it is limited in that not all policy areas were included in the analysis. The number of policy areas had to be restricted to six areas in the analysis, mainly due to the fact that constructing policy scales based on clear opposing pairs of policy positions to derive the policy distance between national parties and EP groups was only possible for some areas. Moreover, not all policy areas in the VoteWatch Europe dataset were covered in the Euromanifesto Project dataset. Although this study has expanded policy areas further, along with EP terms and party groups, from where Klüver and Spoon (2015) left off, a more comprehensive issue-based analysis covering broader policy areas would bring more insights into the field.

In addition, it would be interesting to investigate further the "threshold of intolerance" when it comes to policy incongruence between a national party and its EP group. If the positional distance between a national party and a European party group goes "beyond some threshold of intolerance", then the national party is likely to switch its party group affiliation at some point to a group that has more similar policy positions with their own (McElroy and Benoit, 2010: 396). How much distance would be needed across different policy areas when a national party decides to switch party group affiliation, or how much distance is tolerable for a national party to stay in the party group and instead try to discipline their MEPs from within? Does issue salience play a role in these dynamics? I leave these questions as an avenue for

future research.

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Chapter 5. Conclusion

Under the overarching theme of how national delegations behave in supranational institutions, this thesis has examined the voting behaviour of national representatives in two primary decision-making bodies of the EU. Chapters 2 and 3 looked at party ministers' voting behaviour in the Council of the European Union, while Chapter 4 focused on MEPs' voting behaviour in the European Parliament.

First, Chapter 2 examined whether different types of public opinion – the preferences of the general electorate and those of party supporters – over EU issues have different effects on government parties' voting behaviour in the Council. By distinguishing types of public opinion, I evaluated two conflicting models – the *general electorate model* and the *partisan constituency model* – and examined whose opinion government parties respond to in the Council. Drawing on five rounds of European Election Studies from 1999 to 2019 and various other sources, my empirical findings lend support for the partisan constituency model: government parties respond to party supporters' preferences over EU integration issues when voting in the Council. When domestic party supporters hold more Eurosceptic attitudes towards European integration, government parties are more likely to cast opposition votes on EU legislative proposals in the Council. On the other hand, the results suggest little evidence of party responsiveness to the general electorate mood on the pro-/anti-EU position, nor to the voters who support other parties. However, these party-supporter linkages appear to be a British phenomenon rather than a European one. As discussed in Chapter 2, the robustness findings reveal the UK acts as an outlier in driving the party-supporter responsiveness dynamics in the sample during the period under investigation. While this remains as a limitation, it also offers important implications for the UK's unique status compared to the rest of Europe.

Building on Chapter 2, I zoomed into the domestic conditions under which *party-supporter linkages* are enhanced when government parties vote in the Council in Chapter 3. In doing so, Chapter 3 focused more specifically on how voter Euroscepticism translates into party Euroscepticism by looking at the moderating effects of party-level negative EU issue salience and proximity to national elections on party-supporter linkages. The results show that the moderating effect of negative EU issue salience on party responsiveness to the Eurosceptic disposition of its supporters is strikingly high. When voting in the Council, parties that are more vocal about their Euroscepticism in election programmes are more likely to cater to the preferences of Eurosceptic party supporters by casting opposition votes in the Council. The results also find some evidence of the interaction effect between proximity to the next national parliamentary elections and party supporters' EU preferences on the government party's voting behaviour in the Council, yet to a limited extent.

Last, Chapter 4 turned its focus to another decision-making body of the EU, the European Parliament, and examined the conditions under which individual MEPs are disloyal to their EP party groups through voting, given a considerably high level of EP group cohesion over time. Taking into account the incentives and interests of each actor involved in the voting process, as well as costs associated with defection, I hypothesised that the effect of ideological distance between MEPs' two principals, national parties and the EP party groups, on a given policy area is conditioned by two factors: how much importance national parties attach to that issue area and how proximate the next European elections are. Mainly drawing on the VoteWatch Europe and the Euromanifesto Project datasets, I find that the effect of policy distance on the probability of an individual MEP voting against the majority of the EP group gets stronger when the national party places higher importance on that policy issue area in its election manifesto. Moreover, MEPs are more likely to defect from EP groups when European Parliament elections are proximate *and* when the ideological positions of their two principals

are farther apart. These findings suggest that despite high internal cohesion among EP groups and costs associated with defecting from these groups, national parties are incentivised to tighten up control over MEPs in cases of conflicts when specific conditions are met out of cost-benefit calculations.

This thesis makes several contributions to the field of political representation, mass-elite linkages, party politics, and legislative behaviour. First, by considering different types of public opinion and various domestic factors that affect national delegations' voting behaviour in the European sphere, this thesis provides a more nuanced, detailed answer to the logic of the opinion-policy nexus at the European level, thus contributing to bridging two strings of literature on political representation and strategic party behaviour. Not only does this thesis confirm the arguments in the growing body of literature that the EU decision-making process is not insulated from domestic pressures, but the party-supporter linkages I newly found in this thesis bring crucial insights into the literature on party responsiveness.

This thesis also highlights the interplay between domestic politics and EU-level decision-making. Contrary to the belief that EU decision-making is insulated from domestic pressures, this thesis found that national delegations representing national parties are bound to domestic contexts, interests, and constraints when voting in EU institutions. Examining the conditions that affect party-supporter linkages and party-MEP linkages, I demonstrate that domestic factors and electoral calculations matter in actors' voting behaviour in the EU. The empirical findings overall suggest that decision-making in these EU institutions is, after all, party politics, hence pointing out the critical role of national parties in the European sphere. Considering strategic position-taking, signalling, and issue emphasis that parties employ, this thesis also adds to the literature on party strategies and electoral politics.

I would like to suggest some avenues for future research. First, starting from the findings

of Chapters 2 and 3, future research could examine whether different types of public support have differentiated impacts on government responsiveness in EU-level decision-making. There are two types of public support for the EU. Based on Easton's classification of political support (Easton, 1965, 1975), public opinion towards the EU can be categorised into diffuse support and specific support. Diffuse support refers to *regime* support – i.e., support for EU membership or the EU as a polity. On the other hand, specific support refers to *policy* support – i.e., support for specific EU policies (Hobolt and de Vries, 2016: 415-416). Distinguishing between these two types of support would be useful in providing a nuanced answer to the impacts of public support on national delegations' decision-making in EU institutions, especially as regime and policy support do not necessarily go in sync with each other. Empirically, there are stark discrepancies across regions and within regions. For example, regime support was higher in Northern Europe in the 2010s, whereas general policy support was higher in the South. Even within the same Southern region, regime and policy support show different patterns over time (Hobolt and De Vries 2016: 419). Support for the EU membership and the single currency (Euro) has decreased sharply in the South since the Eurozone crisis, yet general policy support remains high in the same region. Therefore, considering both types of support will allow us a complete, detailed understanding of mass-elite linkages and party responsiveness.

Furthermore, not only do voters have different types of support for the EU, but party positions on EU issues can also be distinguished into two kinds: positions on EU polity and policy issues, respectively. For example, Braun et al. (2019) find that parties' position-taking and issue emphasis depends on different types of EU issues. Eurosceptic parties are more likely to emphasise "constitutive issues" in their election programmes, whereas Europhile parties are more likely to focus on "policy"-related issues in their manifestos (Braun et al., 2019: 587). Against the backdrop, it would be interesting to look at party-partisan linkages in more depth

by linking different types of public support with the party competition strategies that parties take based on their emphasis on different types of EU issues. For example, one could investigate whether parties that emphasise constitutive EU issues are more likely to respond to regime support among their supporters than to policy support and whether parties that emphasise policy-related issues care more about how their voters think about specific EU policies.

Next, future research could take into account the bicameral decision-making process between the Council and the European Parliament. The main focus of this thesis was on the mechanisms explaining the voting decisions of national delegations in these two EU institutions separately (the focus of Chapters 2 and 3 on the Council and Chapter 4 on the European Parliament). However, admittedly, EU legislative proposals are jointly adopted in the Council and the European Parliament, which makes the bicameral interplay more and more important. Since the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP), formerly known as the co-decision procedure, has become the primary decision-making procedure, under which both the Council and the European Parliament have equal power to discuss, agree on, and jointly adopt a legislative text. Therefore, the bicameral interplay between the Council and the Parliament plays a substantive role in the outcome of legislative votes under the OLP (Mühlböck, 2017). One could investigate whether domestic party competition dynamics influence/condition national delegations' incentives in the bicameral setting. Moreover, one could also examine whether and to what extent positions party groups in the European Parliament take on given issues affect governments' vote decisions in the Council or whether decisions made in the European Parliament influence party-partisan linkages in the Council.

Last, expanding the empirical findings of this thesis, future research could conduct a qualitative case study to examine the underlying motivations and incentives of national

delegations' voting decisions both in the Council and the European Parliament in more depth. Quantitative analysis can establish empirical patterns, but the real-world relevance of the empirical findings cannot be solely gauged without a more profound knowledge of the actors' motives and strategies. Only when insights from qualitative analysis complement statistical analysis would one be able to see a fuller, broader picture of the real-world dynamics and implications.

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Appendix A (for Chapter 2)

A1. Variable operationalisation

Table A1 below presents variable definitions and sources I employed for creating the dataset.

Table A1. Variable operationalisation and data sources

Variable	Operationalisation	Data Source
Opposition vote (DV)	Dichotomous dependent variable: 1 for 'No' and 'Abstention' votes and 0 for 'Yes' votes cast by each national government on EU proposals in the Council of the European Union	VoteWatch Europe & Hagemann et al. (2017)'s dataset
General electorate EU position	Average of all valid responses of survey participants by country on the pro-/anti- EU dimension: support for European integration (on a 0-10 scale)	European Election Studies (EES): 5 rounds (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019)
Party supporter EU position	Average of all valid responses of the survey participants by country who reported that they voted for the prime ministerial party on the pro-/anti- EU dimension: support for European integration (on a 0-10 scale)	European Election Studies (EES): 5 rounds (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019)
Non-supporter EU opinion	Average of all valid responses of survey participants by country who reported that they voted for a political party other than PM's party on the pro-/anti- EU dimension: support for European integration (on a 0-10 scale)	European Election Studies (EES): 5 rounds (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019)
Government L-R position	Variable "*RILE*" for prime ministerial parties	Manifesto Project Database
Government EU position	"*per108*" (percentage of quasi-sentences of positive mentions of the EU) - "*per110*" (percentage of quasi-sentences of negative mentions of the EU) for prime ministerial	Manifesto Project Database

	parties	
Co-decision	Dummy variable: 1 for the Codecision procedure, 0 otherwise (e.g., Consultation procedure or Non-Legislative Procedure)	VoteWatch Europe
Post-enlargement	Dummy variable: 1 if council votes were made after 1st May 2004 (the Eastern Enlargement), 0 otherwise	Author's own assignment, following Hagemann et al. (2017)
Council presidency	Dummy variable: 1 if a country took the rotating Council presidency at the time of voting, 0 otherwise	European Council[27]
Inflation	Percent change of growth of harmonised consumer price index (CPI) from the previous year	Comparative Political Dataset (Armingeon et al., 2021)
Unemployment	Yearly unemployment rate, percentage of civilian labour force	Comparative Political Dataset (Armingeon et al., 2021)
Eurosceptic challenger parties	Sum of the percentage of votes cast for all Eurosceptic challenger parties in a national parliamentary (lower house) election most prior to the Council vote date	ParlGov & Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) database

Next, Table A2 below displays country names with abbreviations, country protocol codes, and years for each country included in this study. Every effort has been made to find data for all member states to be covered for all the years under investigation; however, mainly due to data unavailability and the timing of member states joining the EU, this was not possible. For example, as Croatia joined the EU in 2013, Croatia is only included for 2014 and 2019. Bulgaria and Romania are also missing for 2004 as both countries joined the EU in 2007. For

[27] Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/presidency-council-eu/

Romania, the year 2014 had to be additionally excluded as it was impossible to distinguish party supporters' attitudes towards European integration (variable "*qpp5_ees"*) who supported the PM's party (Social Democratic Party) due to the fact that the EES 2014 dataset did not provide a distinctive party code for that variable. In the case of Lithuania, data for 2004 is missing due to unavailability in the EES dataset[28]. Last, years 2014 and 2019 for Belgium had to be excluded; since the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al., 2021) does not include the MR (Reformist Movement) party in its coding scheme at the time of writing, I was not able to measure the party's position on both left/right and pro-/anti-EU issue dimensions.

Table A2: Country codes

Protocol Code	Country	Country Abbreviation	Years (included in this study)
1	Belgium	BE	1999, 2004, 2009
2	Bulgaria	BG	2009, 2014, 2019
3	Czech Republic	CZ	2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
4	Denmark	DK	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
5	Germany	DE	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
6	Estonia	EE	2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
7	Ireland	IE	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
8	Greece	EL	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
9	Spain	ES	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
10	France	FR	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
11	Croatia	HR	2014, 2019
12	Italy	IT	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014
13	Cyprus	CY	2014, 2019
14	Latvia	LV	2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
15	Lithuania	LT	2009, 2014, 2019
16	Luxembourg	LU	2014

[28] Lithuania was included in the EES 2004 Vote Study, but the observations of the overall mean voter position and the party supporters' position are entirely missing in the dataset; hence, I was unable to collect the public opinion data for Lithuania 2004.

17	Hungary	HU	2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
18	Malta	MT	None (due to data unavailability)
19	The Netherlands	NL	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
20	Austria	AT	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
21	Poland	PL	2009, 2014, 2019
22	Portugal	PT	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
23	Romania	RO	2009, 2019
24	Slovenia	SI	2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
25	Slovakia	SK	2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
26	Finland	FI	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
27	Sweden	SE	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019
28	United Kingdom	UK	1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019

Policy areas for legislative acts

Table A3: Classification of Council acts into policy areas[29]

Policy area	**Council reference categories**
Agriculture and fisheries (1)	Agriculture; Agriculture and Fisheries; Agriculture & Fisheries; Fisheries; Agriculture and Rural Development
Budget (2)	Budget; Budgetary Control
Civil liberties, justice and home affairs (3)	Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs; Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Justice and Home Affairs; Legal Affairs
Constitutional affairs and administration (4)	Constitutional Affairs & Inter-Institutional Relations; General Affairs (Constitutional Affairs & Admin)
Development and international trade (5)	Development & International Trade; Development; International Trade; Trade
Economic and financial affairs (6)	Economic & Financial Affairs; Economic & Monetary Affairs; Budgetary Control; Financial Affairs
Employment, education, culture and social affairs (7)	Employment, Education, Culture & Social Affairs; Culture & Education; Education; Education, Youth & Culture; Employment; Employment & Social Policy; Employment and

[29] I follow VoteWatch Europe's original categorisation of policy areas, along with Hagemann et al. (2017)'s classification.

	Social Affairs; Employment, Social Policy and Consumer Affairs; Employment, Social Policy, Health & Consumer Affairs; Gender Equality; Consumer Affairs & Tourism (Culture); Labour and Social Affairs; Social Affairs
Environment and energy (8)	Environment & Energy; Energy; Environment; Environment & Public health; Environment, Public Health and Food Safety
Foreign and security policy (9)	Foreign & Security Policy; Enlargement; External Relations; General Affairs & External Relations (Foreign & Security Policy); General Affairs (Foreign & Security Policy); Foreign Affairs
Internal market and consumer affairs (10)	Internal Market & Consumer Affairs; Competitiveness; Consumer Affairs; Health; Industry; Industry, research & energy (Internal Market); Internal Market, Consumer Affairs & Tourism (Internal Market & Consumer Affairs); Internal Market, Industry and Research; Internal Market & consumer protection; Regional development; Research
Transport and telecommunications (11)	Transport & Telecommunications; Aviation; Communications; Telecommunications; Transport; Transport & Tourism (Transport); Transport, Telecommunication and Energy (Transport & Telecommunications); Transport, Telecommunications and Energy (Transport & Telecommunications)

(Source: Hagemann et al (2017)'s Web Appendix)

More Notes on the Main Independent Variable

Measuring different types of public opinion

The main independent variables (IVs) are the voter preferences on the pro-/anti-EU issue dimension, drawn from five rounds of the European Election Studies (EES) database (1999-2019). I distinguish different types of public opinion – the preferences of the general electorate, of government party supporters, and of supporters of other parties – over EU issues (see Table A1 for how each public opinion variable is operationalised). I use the following question to measure respondents' level of support for European integration in the EES datasets. The same question/wording was used across all EES rounds:

"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?"

0 Integration has already gone too far	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Integration should be pushed further

I assign missing values to '*DK / Refused / etc.*' responses.

All public opinion variables are measured on a 0-10 scale. Where an original scale was different, I rescaled and recoded the range of the public opinion variable in the EES datasets so that each round has the same 0-10 scale. For example, for the year 1999, as the variables were originally measured on a 1-10 scale instead of a 0-10 scale in the EES Vote Study datasets, I recoded the scale using the following formula so that all the public opinion variables across different EES rounds are on the same range:

*Rescaled variable = 10/9 * (original variable (var117) in the EES 1999 Vote study) - 1)*

More Notes on Control Variables

Left-right position of PM's party

Regarding a government party, this study focuses on the PM (Prime Minister)'s party. PM's parties were identified with the help of the ParlGov database (Döring et al., 2022) and were

cross-checked using the Comparative Political Dataset (Armingeon et al., 2021). Once PM's parties were classified, the left-right ideological positions of PM's parties were measured using "*RILE"* variable in the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al., 2021). RILE is an aggregate measure of the difference between the percentages of the rightest and leftist quasi-sentences on collective issues in parties' election manifestos. I construct the PM's party left-right position variable based on each party's election manifesto data at the last elections before the Council vote date. Missing values were assigned if no parties constituted the cabinet (e.g., caretaker governments).

PM's party left-right position (RILE)
= (per104 + per201 + per203 + per305 + per401 + per402 + per407 + per414 + per505 + per601 + per603 + per605 + per606)
- (per103 + per105 + per106 + per107 + per403 + per404 + per406 + per412 + per413 + per504 + per506 + per701 + per202)

According to the formula, the higher the number is, the more to the right a PM's party is located on the left-right ideological spectrum.

Pro-/anti-EU position of PM's party

As mentioned above, a government party is operationalised as the PM's party in this study. The pro-/anti- EU position of a PM's party is measured as the difference between the percentages of positive quasi-sentences about the EU and negative quasi-sentences about the EU in the party manifesto, using the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al., 2021). This measure is also based on each party's election manifesto data at the last elections before the Council vote date:

PM's party pro-/anti- EU position = per108 - per110

According to the formula, the higher the number is, the more pro-EU a PM's party is on the pro-/anti-EU issue dimension.

List of PM (Prime Minister)'s Party

Table A4 below displays a list of governing parties of each member state of the EU over the period of study, which was used for coding party supporters' attitudes towards European integration, as well as governments' left-right and pro-/anti-EU issue positions as my control variables. The list was manually constructed with the help of ParlGov database (Döring et al. 2022). In this study, governing parties are defined as the Prime Minister (PM)'s party.

Table A4: List of Prime Minister's party

Country[30]	**Year**	**PM's party**[31]
Austria (20)	1999	SPÖ (Social Democratic Party of Austria)
	2004	ÖVP (Austrian People's Party)
	2009	SPO (Social Democratic Party of Austria)
	2014	SPO (Social Democratic Party of Austria)
	2019	OVP (Caretaker government with no party affiliation: *2019-06-03 ~ 2019-12-31*)
Belgium (1)	1999	CD&V (Christian Democratic & Flemish People's Union); PVV|VLD (Party of Liberty and Progress | Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats)
	2004	PVV|VLD

[30] Country codes in parentheses.

[31] Semi-colon (;) distinguishes the change in prime ministerial parties if an election was held in the year under the investigation of this study.

	2009	CD&V
Bulgaria (2)	2009	KzB|DL (Coalition for Bulgaria | Democratic Left); GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria)
	2014	Caretaker government (*until 2014-11-06)*; GERB
	2019	GERB
Croatia (11)	2014	SPH (Alliance of SDP & HNS & HSU & SDSS & IDS)
	2019	HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union)
Cyprus (13)	2004	DIKO (Democratic Party)
	2009	AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People)
	2014	DISY (Democratic Rally)
	2019	DISY (Democratic Rally)
Czech Republic (3)	2004	CSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party)
	2009	ODS (Civic Democratic Party); Caretaker government: *after 2009-04-09*
	2014	CSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party)
	2019	ANO (Action of Dissatisfied Citizens)
Denmark (4)	1999	Sd (Social Democrats)
	2004	V (Liberal Party)
	2009	V (Liberal Party)
	2014	Sd (Social Democrats)
	2019	V (Liberal Party); Sd (Social Democrats)
Estonia (6)	2004	ERP (Res Publica Party)
	2009	ERe (Estonian Reform Party)
	2014	ERe (Estonian Reform Party)
	2019	EK (Estonian Centre Party)
Finland (26)	1999	SSDP (Social Democratic Party of Finland)
	2004	KESK (Centre Party)
	2009	KESK (Centre Party)
	2014	KOK (National Coalition Party)
	2019	KESK (Centre Party); SSDP (Social Democratic Party of Finland)
France (10)	1999	PS (Socialist Party)
	2004	UMP|LR (Union for a Popular Movement | The Republicans)
	2009	UMP|LR
	2014	PS (Socialist Party)
	2019	UMP|LR
Germany (5)	1999	SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
	2004	SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
	2009	CDU+CSU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany;

		Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
	2014	CDU+CSU
	2019	CDU+CSU
Greece (8)	1999	PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement)
	2004	PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement); ND (New Democracy)
	2009	ND (New Democracy); PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement)
	2014	ND (New Democracy)
Hungary (17)	2004	MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party)
	2009	MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party)
	2014	Fi-MPSz (Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union)
	2019	Fi-MPSz (Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union)
Ireland (7)	1999	FF (Soldiers of Destiny)
	2004	FF (Soldiers of Destiny)
	2009	FF (Soldiers of Destiny)
	2014	FG (Family of the Irish)
	2019	FG (Family of the Irish)
Italy (12)	1999	DS (Democrats of the Left)
	2004	FI-PdL (Go Italy – The People of Freedom)
	2009	FI-PdL (Go Italy – The People of Freedom)
	2014	PD (Democratic Party)
Latvia (14)	2004	JL (New Era); ZZS (Green and Farmer's Union); TP (People's Party)
	2009	LPP/LC (Latvian First Party / Latvian Way Party); JL (New Era)
	2014	V (Unity)
	2019	V (Unity)
Lithuania (15)	2009	TS-LK (Homeland Union)
	2014	LSDP (Lithuanian Social Democratic Party)
	2019	LVLS/ LVŽS (Lithuanian Peasant Union)
Luxembourg (16)	2014	DP (Democratic Party)
The Netherlands (19)	1999	PvdA (Labour Party)
	2004	CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal)
	2009	CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal)
	2014	VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)
	2019	VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)
Poland (21)	2004	SLD (Democratic Left Alliance)
	2009	PO (Civic Platform)
	2014	PiS (Law and Justice)
	2019	PiS (Law and Justice)
Portugal (22)	1999	PS (Socialist Party)

	2004	PSD (Social Democratic Party)
	2009	PS (Socialist Party)
	2014	PSD (Social Democratic Party)
	2019	PS (Socialist Party)
Romania (23)	2009	PDL (Democratic Liberal Party)
	2014	PSD/FDSN (Social Democratic Party)
	2019	PSD (Social Democratic Party); PNL (National Liberal Party)
Slovakia (25)	2004	SDKU-DS (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party)
	2009	Smer (Direction – Social Democracy)
	2014	Smer (Direction – Social Democracy)
	2019	Smer (Direction – Social Democracy)
Slovenia (24)	2004	LDS (Liberal Democracy of Slovenia); SDS (Slovenian Democratic Party)
	2009	ZL-SD (United List – Social Democrats)
	2014	LZJ-PS (Zoran Jankovic's List – Positive Slovenia); SMC (Modern Center Party)
	2019	LMS (List of Marjan Sarec)
Spain (9)	1999	AP-P (People's Alliance Party)
	2004	AP-P (People's Alliance Party)
	2009	PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party)
	2014	AP-P (People's Alliance Party)
	2019	PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party)
Sweden (27)	1999	SAP (Social Democrats)
	2004	SAP (Social Democrats)
	2009	M (Moderate Party)
	2014	M (Moderate Party); SAP (Social Democrats)
	2019	SAP (Social Democrats)
United Kingdom (28)	1999	Labour
	2004	Labour
	2009	Labour
	2014	Conservatives
	2019	Conservatives

Eurosceptic challenger parties

I control for the existence of Eurosceptic challenger parties in the domestic electoral context, which is measured as the percentage of votes received by Eurosceptic challenger parties in a

national parliamentary election most prior to the Council vote date. A full list of Eurosceptic challenger parties and their respective vote share per country is presented in Table A5 below.

A Eurosceptic challenger party is defined as a non-mainstream party which opposes the idea of European integration and pushing the boundaries of the EU (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012; De Vries, 2018; Persson et al., 2022; Braun et al., 2019). First, Euroscepticism can be classified into two categories: soft Euroscepticism and hard Euroscepticism. Hard Euroscepticism fundamentally opposes the EU as a regime and the country's EU membership, hence calls for the withdrawal from the EU. On the other hand, soft Euroscepticism is rather policy-based – opposition to specific EU policies – while not necessarily questioning the existence of the EU as a regime (De Vries, 2018).

In my analysis, I focus on the concept of "hard Euroscepticism", instead of soft Euroscepticism, to control for the share of votes for strong Eurosceptic challenger parties in the domestic electoral context. To classify whether a party represents hard Euroscepticism or not, I rely on the positioning of political parties in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) database (Bakker et al., 2020). The "EU_POSITION" variable in the CHES database measures the overall party positioning toward European integration based on expert evaluations: 1 means that a party is strongly opposed to European integration, whereas 7 means that a party is strongly in favour of European integration. Hard Eurosceptic parties are measured as parties that score below 2.7 regarding their EU positions on a 1-7 scale in the CHES database (De Vries, 2018: 134; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016b).

Furthermore, a "challenger" party is defined as one that challenges governing parties but does not normally form a government. Unlike mainstream parties that frequently participate in the government composition (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016: 974), challenger parties rarely become part of the government. I follow the criteria Hobolt and Tilley (2016) put forward in

deciding whether a party is a challenger party or a mainstream party. To sum up, if a political party has an EU position score lower than 2.7 based on the CHES database and if it is qualified as a "challenger" party based on Hobolt and Tilley's (2016) party classification list, it is regarded as a "Eurosceptic challenger party" in my analysis.

Based on the classification criteria, Austria's FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) is excluded as it occasionally participates in government composition; hence, it does not fully suffice the definition of a "challenger" party. Similar to Austria's FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria), Italy's LD (Northern League) and FdI (Brothers of Italy), the UK's Conservative Party (year 2019), and the Netherland's PvdA (year 2019) were excluded due to the fact that they are classified as the mainstream right-wing parties (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016: Appendix p.8). Furthermore, as I am interested in the aggregate share of votes for all the Eurosceptic challenger parties in domestic party systems, I add up all the percentage of votes won by these parties if there are more than one Eurosceptic challenger party gaining electoral support in national elections. If a Eurosceptic challenger party received no share of votes in national elections (for example, in the case of the Swedish JL (Junilistan) party in 2006 and 2010), then I simply coded it as 0%. If a national parliamentary election was held in the year that falls into the period under study, I reflected this in my coding and distinguished share of votes before/after the election.

Table A5: List of Eurosceptic challenger parties

Country[32]	Year	Eurosceptic Challenger Parties	Vote share (combined)[33]
Austria (20)[34]	1999 – 2004	None	0
	2009	BZO	10.7%
	2014 – 2019	None	0
Belgium (1)	1999	VB & FN	10.11%; 11.32%
	2004	VB	11.59%
	2009	VB	12.0%
Bulgaria (2)	2009	NOA/ATAKA	8.14%; 9.36%
	2014	ATAKA	7.3%; 4.52%
	2019	None[35]	0
Croatia (11)	2014	None	0
	2019	ZZ	5.92%
Cyprus (13)	2004 – 2009	-	-
	2014 – 2019	None	0
Czech Republic (3)	2004	None	0
	2009	KSCM	12.81%
	2014	USVIT & SVOBODNI	9.34%
	2019	SPD & KSCM	18.4%
Denmark (4)	1999	DF & EL & FP	10.1%
	2004	DF	12.0%
	2009	DF & EL	16.1%
	2014	DF & EL	19.0%
	2019	DF & EL	28.9%; 15.6%
Estonia (6)	2004 – 2019	None	0
Finland (26)	1999	PS (True Finns) & SKL & KIPU	4.3%; 5.6%

[32] Country codes in parentheses

[33] Semi-colon (;) distinguishes vote share before and after the national parliamentary election if an election was held in the year under this study.

[34] As noted above, although Austria's FPÖ showed hard-Eurosceptic stances according to the CHES dataset, it is excluded from the category of Eurosceptic challenger party in this study, as it is classified as the mainstream-right party (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016).

[35] In the 2017 Bulgarian parliamentary election – the election that was held most prior to the year 2019 - ATAKA joined the United Patriots alliance, along with NFSB and IMRO, which later served as a junior coalition partner in the coalition government led by Boyko Borisov of GERB. For this reason, ATAKA's vote share, despite its CHES score of 2.2 on Euroscepticism, is not counted for 2019.

	2004	PS	1.6%
	2009	PS	4.1%
	2014	PS	19.1%
	2019	PS	17.65%; 17.5%
France (10)	1999	FN & RPF	17.35%
	2004	FN & PCF & MPF	16.96%
	2009	FN & MPF	5.49%
	2014	FN & MPF	13.83%
	2019[36]	RN	13.2%
Germany (5)	1999	DVU & Rep	3.0%
	2004	None	0
	2009	None	0
	2014	AfD & NPD	6.0%
	2019	AfD	12.6%
Greece (8)	1999	KKE	5.61%
	2004	KKE /& DIKKI	5.52%; 7.69%
	2009	KKE	8.15%; 7.54%
	2014	KKE & ANEL & XA	18.93%
Hungary (17)	2004	MIEP	4.4%
	2009	None	0%
	2014	JOBBIK	16.67%; 20.22%
	2019	JOBBIK	19.06%
Ireland (7)	1999	SF & SP	3.25%
	2004	SF	6.51%
	2009	SF & SP	7.58%
	2014	SP & PBPA	2.18%
	2019	S-PBP	3.9%
Italy (12)[37]	1999	MS	.9%
	2004	None	0
	2009	None	0
	2014	M5S & RC	28.18%
Latvia (14)	2004 – 2019	None	0
Lithuania (15)	2009 – 2019	None	0
Luxembourg (16)	1999 – 2009	-	-
	2014 – 2019	None	0

[36] The DLF (Debout la France; Arise the Republic) is hard-Eurosceptic in terms of its CHES score (1.43), yet its vote share is not included as the party is classified as mainstream-right.

[37] Similar to the case of Austria, LD and FdI are excluded from the EU challenger classification, following Hobolt and Tilley (2016), despite these parties presenting hard-Eurosceptic tendencies.

The Netherlands	1999	SP	3.53%
(19)	2004	None	0
	2009	SP & PVV	22.47%
	2014	SP & PVV & SGP	21.82%
	2019	PVV & FvD	14.9%
Poland (21)	2004	LPR	7.9%
	2009	S & LPR	2.83%
	2014	KNP	1.06%
	2019	Konfederacia	0 / 1.16%
Portugal (22)	1999	CDU[38]	8.74% / 9.18%
	2004 - 2009	None	0
	2014	CDU	8.23%
	2019	CDU	8.56% / 6.66%
Romania (23)	2009 - 2019	None	0
Slovakia (25)	2004	None	0
	2009	KSS	3.88%
	2014	SNS	4.55%
	2019	LSNS	8.04%
Slovenia (24)	2004	SNS	4.39% / 6.27%
	2009 – 2014	None	0
	2019	SNS	4.17%
Spain (9)	1999 – 2019	None	0
Sweden (27)	1999	V & MP	16.48%
	2004	V & MP	13.0%
	2009	V & MP	11.0%
	2014	V & SD	11.3% / 18.58%
	2019	SD	17.53%
United Kingdom	1999	UKIP	.3%
(28)	2004	UKIP	1.5%
	2009	UKIP	2.2%
	2014	UKIP	3.1%
	2019	UKIP & BREXIT	1.8% / 2.11%

[38] CDU stands for Coligação Democrática Unitária (the Unified Democratic Coalition).

A2. Full results of Table 2.5 in the main chapter (excluding '*Agriculture and Fisheries*' policy area)

Table A6: Mixed effects logistic regressions of opposition votes
(Excluding *'Agriculture & Fisheries'* policy area)

DV: Opposition vote	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
General electorate EU position	-0.316		
	(0.203)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.494***	-0.546***
		(0.125)	(0.129)
Non-supporter EU position			0.327*
			(0.178)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.004	-0.008	-0.007
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
PM's party: EU position	-0.215***	-0.134**	-0.104*
	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.055)
Co-decision	1.095***	1.065***	1.089***
	(0.280)	(0.281)	(0.282)
Post-enlargement	-0.125	-0.239	-0.199
	(0.331)	(0.334)	(0.335)
Council presidency	-0.362	-0.312	-0.455
	(0.637)	(0.629)	(0.635)
Unemployment	-0.030	-0.033	-0.014
	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.038)
Inflation	-0.054	-0.039	-0.032
	(0.087)	(0.089)	(0.088)
EU Challenger Party	0.019	0.026	0.036**
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Constant	-3.367**	-2.625***	-4.436***
	(1.397)	(0.935)	(1.360)
Observations	13,577	13,577	13,577
N of act	670	670	670
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	2152.492	2138.851	2137.483
BIC	2423.073	2409.431	2415.58
ICC	.43 (.04)	.44 (.04)	.44 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A3. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Table A7 below displays a full report of 'variance inflation factor (VIF)', when replacing the *general electorate EU position* variable with *non-supporter EU position* for computing Model 3 in Table 2.4.

Table A7: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

	VIF (Before model correction)[39]	VIF (After model correction: Model 3 in Table 2.4)
General electorate EU position	6.00	
Party supporter EU position	6.27	3.76
Non-supporter EU position		3.60
PM's party: L-R position	1.09	1.09
PM's party: EU position	1.40	1.41
Co-decision	1.18	1.18
Post-enlargement	1.25	1.25
Council presidency	1.03	1.03
Unemployment	1.23	1.23
Inflation	1.23	1.23
EU Challenger Party	1.17	1.16

[39] Due to the multicollinearity issue, as explained in Section *2.5.*, this model had to be corrected and is not reported in my main analysis.

A4. Robustness Checks

Table A8: Robustness tests with fixed effects on both countries and policy areas

DV: Opposition vote	(1)	(2)	(3)
General electorate EU position	0.062		
	(0.157)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.243**	-0.351***
		(0.096)	(0.101)
Non-supporter EU position			0.537***
			(0.148)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.000	-0.001	-0.002
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
PM's party: EU position	-0.247***	-0.213***	-0.165***
	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.043)
Co-decision	0.460**	0.389*	0.449*
	(0.231)	(0.230)	(0.232)
Post-enlargement	-0.230	-0.323	-0.264
	(0.248)	(0.248)	(0.250)
Council presidency	-0.540	-0.432	-0.592
	(0.409)	(0.404)	(0.407)
Unemployment	0.027	0.023	0.047*
	(0.028)	(0.027)	(0.028)
Inflation	-0.014	-0.002	9.56e-06
	(0.064)	(0.067)	(0.065)
EU Challenger Party	0.034**	0.032**	0.046***
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Constant	-4.403***	-2.805***	-5.598***
	(1.037)	(0.667)	(1.019)
Observations	17,750	17,750	17,750
N of act	880	880	880
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
Area FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	3137.469	3131.26	3119.993
BIC	3495.539	3489.331	3485.848
ICC	.42 (.04)	.42 (.04)	.42 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A9*:* Robustness *tests* with different *operationalis*ation of government parties (Including all cabinet members that constitute the government)

DV: Opposition vote	(1)	(2)	(3)
General electorate EU position	0.062		
	(0.164)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.224**	-0.364***
		(0.107)	(0.116)
Non-supporter EU position			0.523***
			(0.161)
Government party: weighted L-R position	-0.245*	-0.295**	-0.273*
	(0.144)	(0.147)	(0.148)
Government party: weighted EU position	-0.528***	-0.432***	-0.256**
	(0.092)	(0.102)	(0.115)
Co-decision	0.200	0.152	0.221
	(0.208)	(0.207)	(0.209)
Post-enlargement	-0.247	-0.348	-0.274
	(0.245)	(0.245)	(0.248)
Council presidency	-0.655	-0.526	-0.568
	(0.416)	(0.417)	(0.417)
Unemployment	0.041	0.036	0.047
	(0.031)	(0.031)	(0.031)
Inflation	0.013	0.026	0.011
	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.067)
EU Challenger Party	0.042***	0.043***	0.057***
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Constant	-5.038***	-3.692***	-6.238***
	(1.050)	(0.678)	(1.039)
Observations	17,189	17,189	17,189
N of act	884	884	884
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	3078.484	3074.254	3065.625
BIC	3365.309	3361.079	3360.202
ICC	.43 (.04)	.43 (.04)	.44 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A10. Robustness tests excluding two policy areas: *'Agriculture and Fisheries'* and *'Economic and Financial Affairs'*

DV: Opposition vote	(1)	(2)	(3)
General electorate EU position	-0.194		
	(0.214)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.432***	-0.496***
		(0.134)	(0.139)
Non-supporter EU position			0.388**
			(0.190)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.008	-0.011*	-0.011*
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
PM's party: EU position	-0.232***	-0.162***	-0.126**
	(0.056)	(0.057)	(0.059)
Co-decision	0.801***	0.775**	0.801***
	(0.300)	(0.301)	(0.302)
Post-enlargement	-0.063	-0.178	-0.126
	(0.350)	(0.352)	(0.355)
Council presidency	-0.237	-0.180	-0.358
	(0.644)	(0.638)	(0.644)
Unemployment	-0.028	-0.035	-0.015
	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.041)
Inflation	-0.044	-0.037	-0.033
	(0.091)	(0.094)	(0.092)
EU Challenger Party	0.028	0.033*	0.044**
	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Constant	-3.643**	-2.491**	-4.614***
	(1.465)	(0.995)	(1.439)
Observations	10,669	10,669	10,669
N of act	529	529	529
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	1878.887	1869.132	1866.952
BIC	2140.791	2131.036	2136.131
ICC	.43 (.05)	.43 (.05)	.44 (.05)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A11: Robustness tests excluding three 'borderline' policy areas: *'Agriculture and Fisheries', 'Economic and Financial Affairs',* and *'Internal Market and Consumer Affairs'*

DV: Opposition vote	(1)	(2)	(3)
General electorate EU position	-0.259		
	(0.240)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.502***	-0.575***
		(0.151)	(0.157)
Non-supporter EU position			0.410*
			(0.216)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.008	-0.013*	-0.013*
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
PM's party: EU position	-0.247***	-0.170***	-0.136**
	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.065)
Co-decision	0.692**	0.662**	0.687**
	(0.335)	(0.338)	(0.339)
Post-enlargement	0.151	0.023	0.062
	(0.407)	(0.409)	(0.412)
Council presidency	-0.560	-0.456	-0.615
	(0.790)	(0.779)	(0.783)
Unemployment	0.001	-0.004	0.018
	(0.044)	(0.042)	(0.044)
Inflation	-0.116	-0.116	-0.112
	(0.099)	(0.101)	(0.100)
EU Challenger Party	0.018	0.024	0.037*
	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Constant	-3.529**	-2.378**	-4.588***
	(1.648)	(1.119)	(1.615)
Observations	7,863	7,863	7,863
N of act	405	405	405
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	1526.978	1516.812	1515.183
BIC	1770.925	1760.759	1766.101
ICC	.45 (.05)	.46 (.05)	.46 (.05)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Regarding the robustness results of Model (1) in Table A11, I note that my findings differ from previous research on government responsiveness in the Council of the EU. Specifically, one might wonder why the findings on government responsiveness to the general electorate

(Hypothesis 1 of my study) are different from those of Hagemann et al. (2017), although both studies look at the same kind of responsiveness, measured the dependent variable – i.e., governments' voting behaviour in the Council – in the same way, and included mostly identical control variables in the analysis. Unlike my study, Hagemann et al. (2017) did not differentiate different types of public opinion and only examined the effect of public opinion as an aggregate whole; nevertheless, it is striking why my findings about government responsiveness to the general electorate (Model (1) in Table A11) turned out insignificant whereas Hagemann et al. (2017) found a significant causal relationship between the average electorate's EU attitudes and governments' voting behaviour in the Council.

Different data sources and time periods employed in both studies could be potential reasons for the differences in findings. First, both studies use different data sources to estimate public opinion toward European integration. Hagemann et al. (2017) used the Eurobarometer surveys, while I used the EES survey data. The reason I chose EES is that the Eurobarometer survey question on EU membership has been discontinued since 2011. In addition, as the Eurobarometer surveys do not consistently include the variable on "Which political party did you vote for in the previous national parliamentary election?", it is impossible to identify respondents' partisan identification and thus partisan preferences on the EU dimension using the Eurobarometer. The EES database, instead, enabled me to distinguish the overall mean voter position and the party supporters' position on EU matters and compare their effects on governmental parties' voting in the Council.

Second, regarding time periods Hagemann et al. (2017)'s research covers continuous years from 1999 to 2011, whereas this research focuses on every five years between 1999 and 2019 to match the EES waves. As a result, this research covers some more recent years than Hagemann et al. (2017), which is an advantage. However, the fact that I had to focus on selective years instead of continuous years in my analysis due to time restrictions remains a

limitation. In sum, my analyses based on the distinction between the preferences of the general electorate and those of party supporters for different periods find a lack of evidence of government responsiveness to the general electorate, while providing evidence in support of the *partisan constituency model*.

Table A12: Robustness tests with the inclusion of year-specific effects

DV: Opposition vote	(1)	(2)	(3)
General electorate EU position	0.281		
	(0.176)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.180*	-0.257**
		(0.101)	(0.103)
Non-supporter EU position			0.634***
			(0.159)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.001	-0.002	-0.001
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
PM's party: EU position	-0.190***	-0.175***	-0.124***
	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.042)
Co-decision	-0.216	-0.219	-0.216
	(0.229)	(0.229)	(0.230)
Post-enlargement	-1.415***	-1.307***	-1.493***
	(0.481)	(0.475)	(0.485)
Council presidency	-0.584	-0.486	-0.625
	(0.413)	(0.412)	(0.410)
Unemployment	0.068**	0.060**	0.079***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Inflation	0.014	-0.005	0.034
	(0.070)	(0.072)	(0.071)
EU Challenger Party	0.021	0.018	0.033**
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Constant	-6.344***	-3.817***	-7.329***
	(1.138)	(0.692)	(1.118)
Observations	17,824	17,824	17,824
N of act	884	884	884
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	3133.088	3132.472	3118.33
BIC	3452.408	3451.792	3445.439
ICC	.44 (.04)	.44 (.04)	.45 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A13: Robustness tests with the inclusion of a 'Brexit' dummy variable

DV: Opposition vote	(1)	(2)	(3)
General electorate EU position	0.004		
	(0.159)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.262***	-0.343***
		(0.096)	(0.100)
Non-supporter EU position			0.447***
			(0.150)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.001	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
PM's party: EU position	-0.217***	-0.181***	-0.146***
	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.042)
Co-decision	0.060	-0.004	0.068
	(0.214)	(0.213)	(0.215)
Post-enlargement	-0.500**	-0.610**	-0.519**
	(0.255)	(0.255)	(0.257)
Council presidency	-0.600	-0.532	-0.641
	(0.414)	(0.411)	(0.411)
Unemployment	0.066**	0.064**	0.079***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Inflation	-0.057	-0.047	-0.036
	(0.066)	(0.068)	(0.067)
EU Challenger Party	0.025*	0.025*	0.038***
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Brexit	1.010***	1.068***	0.897***
	(0.279)	(0.277)	(0.284)
Constant	-4.703***	-3.348***	-5.696***
	(1.039)	(0.660)	(1.025)
Observations	17,824	17,824	17,824
N of act	884	884	884
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	3141.521	3134.078	3127.104
BIC	3437.477	3430.034	3430.848
ICC	.44 (.04)	.44 (.04)	.45 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A14: Robustness tests excluding the United Kingdom (for all policy areas)

DV: Opposition vote	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
General electorate EU position	-0.082		
	(0.086)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.030	0.114
		(0.079)	(0.132)
Non- supporter EU position			-0.196
			(0.143)
PM's party: L-R position	0.008**	0.008**	0.008**
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
PM's party: EU position	-0.073**	-0.072**	-0.087**
	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.036)
Co-decision	0.248	0.257	0.235
	(0.249)	(0.249)	(0.249)
Post-enlargement	-0.638**	-0.627**	-0.665**
	(0.267)	(0.267)	(0.268)
Council presidency	-0.708*	-0.714*	-0.729*
	(0.374)	(0.375)	(0.375)
Unemployment	-0.035*	-0.035*	-0.040**
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.020)
Inflation	0.020	0.015	0.015
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)
EU Challenger Party	0.011	0.012	0.009
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Constant	-4.442***	-4.734***	-4.353***
	(0.565)	(0.501)	(0.574)
Observations	16,958	16,958	16,958
Number of act	884	884	884
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	2680.952	2681.708	2681.848
BIC	2766.076	2766.831	2774.71
ICC	.52 (.04)	.52 (.04)	.52 (.04)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A15: Robustness tests excluding the United Kingdom (excluding '*Agriculture and Fisheries*')

DV: Opposition vote	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**
General electorate EU position	-0.226		
	(0.227)		
Party supporter EU position		-0.051	0.075
		(0.174)	(0.209)
Non- supporter EU position			-0.289
			(0.262)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.002	-0.002	-0.000
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
PM's party: EU position	-0.123**	-0.117**	-0.138**
	(0.051)	(0.053)	(0.057)
Co-decision	1.694***	1.722***	1.684***
	(0.390)	(0.389)	(0.390)
Post-enlargement	-0.760*	-0.724*	-0.778*
	(0.400)	(0.399)	(0.401)
Council presidency	-0.574	-0.637	-0.588
	(0.644)	(0.643)	(0.644)
Unemployment	-0.009	0.001	-0.010
	(0.039)	(0.038)	(0.039)
Inflation	-0.047	-0.048	-0.049
	(0.091)	(0.090)	(0.090)
EU Challenger Party	0.024	0.028*	0.021
	(0.018)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Constant	-4.858***	-5.933***	-4.823***
	(1.538)	(1.189)	(1.554)
Observations	12,927	12,927	12,927
Number of act	670	670	670
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	1715.687	1716.596	1717.377
BIC	1977.034	1977.944	1986.192
ICC	.54 (.05)	.54 (.05)	.54 (.05)

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Appendix B (for Chapter 3)

B1. Variable operationalisation

Table B1: Variable operationalisation and data sources

Variable	Operationalisation	Data Source
Opposition vote (DV)	Dichotomous dependent variable: 1 for 'No' and 'Abstention' votes and 0 for 'Yes' votes cast by each national government on EU proposals in the Council of the European Union	VoteWatch Europe & Hagemann et al. (2017)'s dataset
Party supporter EU opinion	Average of all valid responses of the survey participants by country who reported that they voted for the prime ministerial party on the pro-/anti- EU dimension: support for European integration (on a 0-10 scale). This variable was rescaled so that values closer to 10 indicate more anti-EU stances among party supporters, while values closer to 0 indicate more pro-EU stances.	European Election Studies (EES): 5 rounds (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019)
Government Left-Right position	Variable "*RILE*" for prime ministerial parties	Manifesto Project Database
Government EU position	"*per108*" (percentage of quasi-sentences of positive mentions of the EU) - "*per110*" (percentage of quasi-sentences of negative mentions of the EU) for prime ministerial parties	Manifesto Project Database
EU negative mentions	"*per110*" (percentage of quasi-sentences of negative mentions of the EU) for prime ministerial parties	Manifesto Project Database
Days until next election	Number of days (in 100 days) left until the next national parliamentary election at the time of Council voting: [(next national	Author's own assignment drawing on ParlGov and

	election date) – (Council voting date)]	VoteWatch databases
Co-decision	Dummy variable: 1 for the Codecision procedure, 0 otherwise (e.g., Consultation procedure or Non-Legislative Procedure)	VoteWatch Europe
Post-enlargement	Dummy variable: 1 if council votes were made after 1st May 2004 (the Eastern Enlargement), 0 otherwise	Author's own assignment, following Hagemann et al. (2017)
Council presidency	Dummy variable: 1 if a country took the rotating Council presidency at the time of voting, 0 otherwise	European Council[40]
Inflation	Percent change of growth of harmonised consumer price index (CPI) from the previous year	Comparative Political Dataset (Armingeon et al., 2021)
Unemployment	Yearly unemployment rate, percentage of civilian labour force	Comparative Political Dataset (Armingeon et al., 2021)
Eurosceptic challenger parties	Sum of the percentage of votes that Eurosceptic challenger parties received in a national parliamentary (lower house) election most prior to the Council vote date	ParlGov & Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) database

B2. Robustness checks

In this section, I conduct several robustness checks to validate my main findings. Table B2 below reports results from the robustness checks. All the models for robustness checks presented in Table B2 are variations of *Model 4* in Table 3.2 (the combined interaction model).

[40] Information available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/presidency-council-eu/

Table B2 shows that although some control variables slightly vary in terms of their significance across different model specifications, the overall magnitude and significance of the key variables remain consistent throughout all the models included in the robustness checks.

Model B1 includes additional fixed effects for different policy areas, along with country fixed effects. The results show that the main findings, including the significance, direction, and magnitude of the variables, remain consistent with those in Model 4 in Table 3.2.

Next, I use an alternative operationalisation of a 'government party' in Model B2. Instead of focusing solely on prime ministerial parties, this robustness check includes *all* parties participating in the cabinet, considering that it may yield different results, particularly in countries where coalition governments with multiple coalition partners are common. Due to the additional missing party codes and manifesto information in the Manifesto Project Database, the number of observations decreases to N = 16,363 in Model B2. While the overall direction and magnitude of both interaction terms remain unchanged, governments' ideological positions on the pro-/anti-EU dimension no longer have a systematic effect on voting behaviour in the Council when all the coalition members in office are taken into account.

Through Models B3–B5, I address concerns in existing literature regarding the 'well-established' policy areas in which the EU is believed to have successfully extended its authority. Although I decided to include all the policy areas in my analysis to allow more variation in the degree of contestation and politicisation of issue areas, I conduct additional robustness checks by gradually excluding so-called 'well-established' policy areas identified in the literature on the scope and competences of the EU (e.g., Hagemann et al., 2017; Börzel, 2005).

Model B3 presents the results after excluding the *'Agriculture and Fisheries'* area, which is widely regarded as the most integrated policy area that falls into the EU's competences. Model B4 further excludes *'Economic and Financial Affairs'* in addition to *'Agriculture and*

Fisheries'. Finally, Model B5 excludes three policy areas in total by additionally excluding *'Internal Market and Consumer Affairs'* from Model B4, following Hagemann et al. (2017). The main results are largely consistent across these models despite minor changes in the significance of some control variables. For example, *a PM party's left/right position* loses significance in Model B3, and *post-enlargement* becomes insignificant across all three robustness models. It is also worth noting that *co-decision* gains significance across these models when the 'well-established' EU policy areas are excluded from the analysis, which indicates that parties are more likely to vote against EU proposals in the Council under the co-decision procedure (the Ordinary Legislative Procedure).

To address the concern that years included in my analysis are not randomly selected and may lead to potentially biased results, I additionally control for *year* in Model B6. The years in my analysis were chosen to match the EES voter survey rounds (1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019). However, due to the 'selective' years, there might be year-specific effects that were not accounted for in the main analysis. The results from Model B6 suggest that the magnitude and direction of the coefficients, as well as their statistical significance, are in line with the main findings from Model 4 in Table 3.2, except for one control variable, unemployment, gaining statistical significance.

Last, Model B7 reports the results when an additional dummy control variable, *Brexit*, is included to account for the potential impact of the UK's exit from the EU on governments' voting decisions in the Council. In 2019, a significant proportion of EU legislative acts dealt with details regarding Brexit negotiations. The *Brexit* variable is a dummy variable, coded as 1 for the year 2019 and 0 otherwise. The inclusion of this variable does not substantially alter the main results. The Brexit variable itself also has a statistically significant effect on government voting behaviour, indicating that government parties are more likely to oppose EU legislation after Brexit.

Table B2: Robustness tests (expanded from Model 4 in Table 3.2)

DV: Opposition vote	**Model 1**	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
Party supporter EU opinion	-0.063	0.068	0.430*
	(0.180)	(0.199)	(0.220)
EU negative mentions	-2.172***	-1.730***	-1.212**
	(0.532)	(0.506)	(0.570)
Party supporter EU opinion	0.480***	0.437***	0.253**
× EU negative mentions	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.105)
Days until next election	0.196**	0.196**	0.249**
	(0.094)	(0.097)	(0.117)
Party supporter EU opinion	-0.040**	-0.043**	-0.047**
× Days until next election	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.023)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.011**	-0.546***	-0.010
	(0.005)	(0.165)	(0.007)
PM's party: EU position	-0.206***	-0.143	-0.150***
	(0.042)	(0.124)	(0.058)
Co-decision	0.322	0.109	1.050***
	(0.233)	(0.213)	(0.282)
Post-enlargement	-0.524**	-0.576**	-0.421
	(0.259)	(0.261)	(0.346)
Council presidency	-0.573	-0.390	-0.600
	(0.400)	(0.414)	(0.633)
Unemployment	0.037	0.037	-0.012
	(0.029)	(0.033)	(0.038)
Inflation	-0.089	-0.055	-0.101
	(0.068)	(0.071)	(0.088)
EU Challenger Party	0.047***	0.063***	0.033*
	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.018)
Constant	-4.165***	-6.073***	-7.520***
	(0.971)	(1.140)	(1.256)
Observations	17,750	16,363	13,577
Number of act	880	884	670
Country FE	yes	yes	yes
AIC	3078.567	2977.953	2130.351
BIC	3467.774	3278.361	2430.997
ICC	.42 (.04)	.45 (.04)	.44 (.04)
Notes	Fixed effects on both countries and policy areas	Different operationalisation of 'government parties'	Excluding policy area 1

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

(continued)	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**	**Model 7**
Party supporter EU opinion	0.418*	0.509*	-0.094	-0.025
	(0.238)	(0.265)	(0.181)	(0.179)
EU negative mentions	-1.176*	-1.115	-2.047***	-2.129***
	(0.612)	(0.695)	(0.529)	(0.526)
Party supporter EU opinion	0.251**	0.245*	0.447***	0.457***
× EU negative mentions	(0.113)	(0.127)	(0.095)	(0.095)
Days until next election	0.325***	0.357**	0.189**	0.189**
	(0.126)	(0.144)	(0.093)	(0.092)
Party supporter EU opinion	-0.059**	-0.065**	-0.037**	-0.037**
× Days until next election	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.018)	(0.018)
PM's party: L-R position	-0.014*	-0.015*	-0.009*	-0.009*
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.006)	(0.006)
PM's party: EU position	-0.185***	-0.189***	-0.180***	-0.190***
	(0.064)	(0.069)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Co-decision	0.773**	0.670**	-0.196	0.003
	(0.303)	(0.340)	(0.232)	(0.216)
Post-enlargement	-0.352	-0.150	-1.473***	-0.734***
	(0.368)	(0.426)	(0.487)	(0.264)
Council presidency	-0.518	-0.752	-0.571	-0.624
	(0.642)	(0.775)	(0.402)	(0.403)
Unemployment	-0.010	0.030	0.066**	0.067**
	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.030)	(0.030)
Inflation	-0.115	-0.190*	-0.076	-0.114*
	(0.093)	(0.102)	(0.073)	(0.069)
EU Challenger Party	0.039**	0.030	0.033**	0.039***
	(0.019)	(0.021)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Brexit				0.725**
				(0.294)
Constant	-7.189***	-7.994***	-4.754***	-4.935***
	(1.357)	(1.525)	(0.982)	(0.967)
Observations	10,669	7,863	17,824	17,824
Number of act	529	405	884	884
Country FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	1856.472	1506.709	3091.214	3091.539
BIC	2147.476	1778.536	3441.688	3418.648
ICC	.43 (.05)	.46 (.05)	.45 (.04)	.45 (.04)
Notes	Excluding policy area 1 and 6	Excluding policy areas 1, 6, and 10	Including year fixed effects	Including "Brexit" dummy

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Appendix C. (for Chapter 4)

C1. Variable operationalisation

Table C1: Variable operationalisation and data sources

Variable	Operationalisation	Data Source
MEP's defection from EPG (**DV**)	Dichotomous variable: 1 if an MEP voted against the majority of the EP group, and 0 if an MEP voted in line with the majority of the EP group	VoteWatch Europe dataset
Ideological distance	Euclidean distance between the position of a national party and that of its EP party group on a given policy domain (Ideological positions of a national party and an EP group are taken by subtracting the total percentage of quasi-sentences on the 'left' policy scale from that on the 'right' policy scale on each policy domain (see Table 4.1), which are then rescaled to range from -100 to 100 before finally computing Euclidean distance between NPD and EPG.)	Euromanifesto Project Database
National party issue salience	Total sum of percentages of quasi-sentences on both the 'left' and 'right' positions (see Table 4.1), which is then rescaled to range from 0 to 100.	Euromanifesto Project Database
Days until EP election	Number of days (in 100 days) to the next European parliament election at the time of MEP's voting in the EP: [(next national election date) – (EP voting date)]	Author's own assignment drawing on ParlGov dataset and VoteWatch Europe
Co-decision	Dummy variable: 1 = under OLP (codecision); 0 = otherwise	Author's own assignment based on the VoteWatch Europe
Closeness of vote	The ratio between 'Yes' and 'No' votes on a proposal, rescaled to range from 0 to 1	VoteWatch Europe; rescaling based on

	where 1 means equal parity between yes and no votes, 0 means one side's predominance	author's own calculation
NPD has EPG leader	Whether NPD has EPG leader (dummy variable) 1 = NPD has an EPG leader; 0 = otherwise	Author's own assignment
NPD size	Number of MEPs that each national party has in its EPG	VoteWatch Europe
EPG size	The share of seats that an EPG has in the European Parliament	Euromanifesto Project Database
Membership duration (in years)	Number of years since the country joined the EU	Euromanifesto Project Database
Government party	Dummy variable: 1 = if NPD is in national government; 0 = NPD not in government	ParlGov dataset
Internal EU dissent	Internal dissent within a national party over EU integration, using "*eu_dissent*" variable in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset on an 11-point scale (0 – 10); 0 = party is completely united, 10 = party is extremely divided.	Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset
Electoral system	Dummy variable: 1 = Party-centred systems (closed lists); 0 = candidate-centred systems (open lists and single transferable vote)	Däubler and Hix (2018)
Eurosceptic seat share	Total number of seats that MEPs from Eurosceptic national parties secured in each EP election. National parties whose CHES scores are 3 or below are classified as 'Eurosceptic'.	Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset & ParlGov dataset & Euromanifesto

Table C2: List of national party delegations and European party groups included in the analysis (estimation sample)

Country	National party delegations (NPD)	European party group (EPG)
Belgium	Centre Démocrate Humaniste	EPP
	Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams	
	Parti Socialiste	S&D
	Socialistische Partij.Anders	
	Mouvement Réformateur	ALDE (Renew)
	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	
	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (8^{th}-9^{th} EP)	ECR
	Groen	Greens/EFA
	Ecolo	
	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (7^{th} EP)	
	Parti du Travail de Belgique	GUE/NGL
Bulgaria	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	EPP
	Bulgarian Socialist Party	S&D
	Movement for Rights and Freedoms	ALDE (Renew)
	National Movement for Stability and Progress	
Czech Republic	Křesťanská a Demokratická Unie – Československá Strana Lidová	EPP
	TOP 09 a Starostové	
	Starostové a Nezávisli	
	Česká Strana Sociálně Demokratická	S&D
	ANO 2011	ALDE (Renew)
	Občanská demokratická strana	ECR
	Piráti	Greens/EFA
	Komunistická Strana Čech a Moravy	GUE/NGL
	Strana Svobodných Občanů	EFDD
Denmark	Det Konservative Folkeparti	EPP
	Socialdemokratiet	S&D
	Det Radikale Venstre	ALDE (Renew)
	Venstre - Danmarks Liberale Parti	
	Dansk Folkeparti	ECR
	Socialistisk Folkeparti	Greens/EFA
	Enhedslisten	GUE/NGL
	Folkebevægelsen mod EU	
Germany	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	EPP
	Christlich Soziale Union	
	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	S&D
	Freie Demokratische Partei	ALDE (Renew)

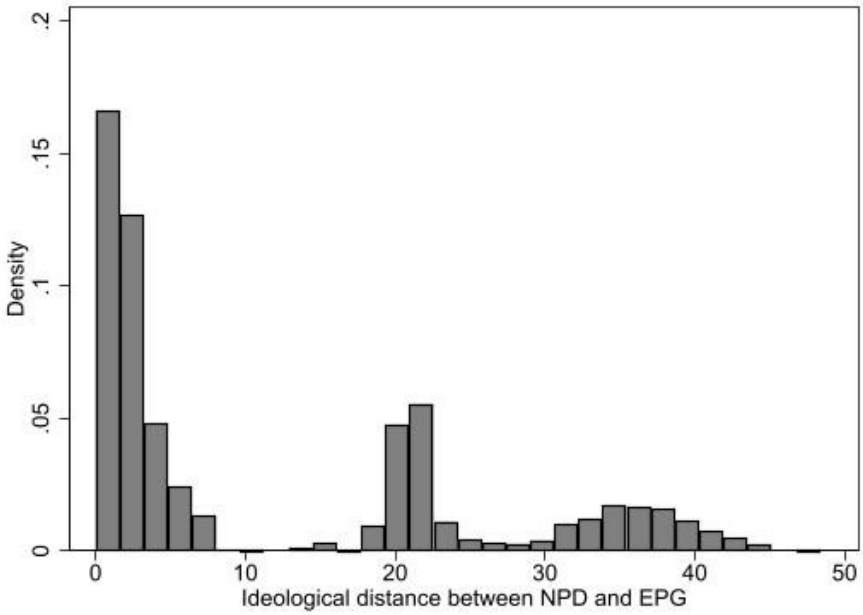
	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Greens/EFA
	Piratenpartei Deutschland	
	Die Linke	GUE/NGL
	Alternative für Deutschland	EFDD
Estonia	Isamaa / Erakond Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit	EPP
	Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond	S&D
	Eesti Keskerakond	ALDE (Renew)
	Eesti Reformierakond	
Ireland	Fine Gael Party	EPP
	Labour Party	S&D
	Fianna Fáil Party	ALDE (Renew)
	Green Party	Greens/EFA
	Sinn Féin	GUE/NGL
Greece	Nea Demokratia	EPP
	Elia Dimokratiki Parataxi	S&D
	To Potami	
	Elliniki Lysi	ECR
	SY.RIZ.A. (Synaspismos Rizospastikis Aristeras)	GUE/NGL
	Kommounistiko Komma Ellados	
Spain	Partido Popular	EPP
	Partido Socialista Obrero Español - Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya	S&D
	Ciudadanos – Partido de la Ciudadanía	ALDE (Renew)
	Partido Nacionalista Vasco	
	Unión, Progreso y Democracia	
	Vox	ECR
	Bloque Nacionalista Galego	Greens/EFA
	Catalunya en Comú	
	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya	
	Podemos	GUE/NGL
	Izquierda Unida	
France	Les Républicains	EPP
	Parti Radical / Union des Démocrates et Indépendants (7th EP)	
	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire	
	Parti socialiste	S&D
	Mouvement Démocrate	ALDE (Renew)
	Union des Démocrates et Indépendants (8th EP)	
	Europe Écologie (9th EP)	
	Europe Écologie	Greens/EFA

	La France Insoumise	GUE/NGL
Croatia	Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica	EPP
	Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske	S&D
Italy	Forza Italia Il Popolo della Libertà Südtiroler Volkspartei	EPP
	Partito Democratico	S&D
	Italia dei Valori - Lista Di Pietro	ALDE (Renew)
	Fratelli d'Italia	ECR
	Movimento 5 Stelle	EFDD
Cyprus	Democratic Rally	EPP
	Democratic Party Movement for Social Democracy EDEK	S&D
	Progressive Party of Working People	GUE/NGL
Latvia	Jaunā Vienotība	EPP
	Saskaņa Sociāldemokrātiskā Partija	S&D
	Attīstībai/Par! (Coalition AP!) Zaļo un Zemnieku Savienība	ALDE (Renew)
	Coalition Nacionālā Apvienība	ECR
	Par Cilvēka Tiesībām Vienotā Latvijā	Greens/EFA
	Politisko Partiju Apvienība 'Saskaņas Centrs'	GUE/NGL
Lithuania	Tėvynės Sąjunga - Lietuvos Krikščionys Demokratai	EPP
	Lietuvos Socialdemokratų Partija	S&D
	Darbo partija Lietuvos Respublikos Liberalų Sąjūdis	ALDE (Renew)
	Lietuvos Lenkų Rinkimų Akcija – Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjunga	ECR
	Lietuvos Valstiečių ir Žaliųjų Sąjunga	Greens/EFA
	Partija Tvarka ir Teisingumas	EFDD
Luxembourg	Parti Chrétien Social Luxembourgeois	EPP
	Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Luxembourgeois	S&D
	Parti Démocratique	ALDE (Renew)
	Déi Gréng - Les Verts	Greens/EFA
Hungary	Fidesz-KDNP Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	EPP
	Demokratikus Koalíció Magyar Szocialista Párt	S&D
	Momentum	ALDE (Renew)
	Lehet Más A Politika	Greens/EFA
Malta	Partit Nazzjonalista	EPP

	Partit Laburista	S&D
The Netherlands	Christen Democratisch Appèl	EPP
	Partij van de Arbeid	S&D
	Democraten 66	ALDE (Renew)
	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	
	GroenLinks	Greens/EFA
	Partij voor de Dieren	GUE/NGL
	Socialistische Partij	
Austria	Österreichische Volkspartei	EPP
	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	S&D
	Die Grünen	Greens/EFA
	NEOS – Das Neue Österreich	ALDE (Renew)
Poland	Platforma Obywatelska	EPP
	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	
	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	ECR
Portugal	Partido Popular	EPP
	Partido Social Democrata	
	Partido da Terra	
	Partido do Centro Democrático Social-Partido Popular	
	Partido Socialiste	S&D
	Bloco de Esquerda	GUE/NGL
	Coligação Democrática Unitária (PCP-PEV)	
Romania	Partidul Naţional Liberal (8^{th}-9^{th} EP)	EPP
	Partidul Democrat-Liberal	
	Partidul Mișcarea Populară	
	Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România	
	Partidul Social Democrat	S&D
	PRO Romania	
	Partidul Naţional Liberal (7^{th} EP)	ALDE (Renew)
Slovenia	Slovenska Demokratska Stranka	EPP
	Nova Slovenija – Krščanski Demokrati	
	Slovenska Ljudska Stranka	
	Socialni Demokrati	S&D
	DeSUS	ALDE (Renew)
	Liberalna Demokracija Slovenije	
	Lista Marjana Šarca	
Slovakia	Kresťanskodemokratické Hnutie	EPP
	Slovenská Demokratická a Kresťanská Únia - Demokratická Strana	
	Strana Maďarskej Komunity - Magyar	

	Közösség Pártja	
	Smer - Sociálna Demokracia	S&D
	OĽaNO	ECR
	Sloboda a Solidarita	
Finland	Kansallinen Kokoomus	EPP
	Suomen Kristillisdemokraatit	
	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue	S&D
	Suomen Keskusta	ALDE (Renew)
	Svenska Folkpartiet	
	Perussuomalaiset	ECR
	Vihreä Liitto	Greens/EFA
	Vasemmistoliitto	GUE/NGL
Sweden	Kristdemokraterna	EPP
	Moderaterna / Moderata Samlingspartiet	
	Arbetarepartiet- Socialdemokraterna	S&D
	Feministiskt Initiative	
	Centerpartiet	ALDE (Renew)
	Liberalerna (Folkpartiet Liberalerna)	
	Sverigedemokraterna	ECR
	Miljöpartiet de Gröna	Greens/EFA
	Vänsterpartiet	GUE/NGL
United Kingdom	Conservative Party	EPP / ECR
	Labour Party	S&D
	Liberal Democrats	ALDE (Renew)
	Plaid Cymru	Greens/EFA
	Green Party	
	Scottish National Party	
	United Kingdom Independence Party	EFDD

Figure C2: Distribution of ideological distance (estimation sample)



C2. Robustness checks

Table C3: Robustness tests with different fixed-effects specifications (Extended versions from Model 4 in Table 4.4)

DV: MEP defection from EPG	(1) Basic without any fixed effects	(2) EP term FE	(3) Party family FE	(4) EP party group & EP term FE
Ideological distance	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
National party issue salience	-0.129***	-0.131***	-0.130***	-0.131***
	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)	(0.021)
Distance × Issue salience	0.004***	0.004***	0.004***	0.004***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Days until EP elections	-0.004	-0.009***	-0.004	-0.009***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Distance	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***	-0.001***
× Days until EP elections	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Co-decision	0.370***	0.361***	0.369***	0.361***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Closeness of vote	3.502***	3.505***	3.501***	3.505***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)
NPD has EPG leader	-0.014	-0.004	-0.022	-0.014
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)
NPD size	-0.043***	-0.044***	-0.039***	-0.041***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
EPG size	-0.001*	-0.001*	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Membership duration	0.022***	0.015***	0.021***	0.013***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Government party	-0.073**	-0.080***	-0.073**	-0.088***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Internal EU dissent	0.011	0.023	0.019	0.032*
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Electoral system	-0.762***	-0.717***	-0.659***	-0.596***
	(0.142)	(0.141)	(0.131)	(0.127)
Eurosceptic seat share	-3.093***	-1.257*	-2.902***	-0.927
	(0.602)	(0.711)	(0.570)	(0.720)
Constant	-4.492***	-4.511***	-3.453***	-5.545***
	(0.193)	(0.191)	(0.283)	(0.226)
Observations	431,030	431,030	431,030	431,030
Number of party	168	168	168	168
Fixed effects?	*no*	*EP term*	*party family*	*EPG & EP term*
AIC	78927.45	78909.07	78902.79	78827.42
BIC	79114.01	79106.6	79188.11	79090.8
ICC	.29 (.03)	.28 (.03)	.21 (.02)	.20 (.02)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table C4: Robustness tests: Random effects for country

DV: MEP's defection from EPG	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological distance	0.004***	0.000	0.012***	0.008***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
National party issue salience	-0.043***	-0.125***	-0.047***	-0.117***
	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.010)	(0.020)
Distance		0.004***		0.003***
× Issue salience		(0.001)		(0.001)
Days until EP elections	-0.011***	-0.011***	0.002	0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Distance			-0.001***	-0.001***
× Days until EP elections			(0.000)	(0.000)
Co-decision	0.374***	0.368***	0.381***	0.376***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Closeness of vote	3.441***	3.446***	3.438***	3.442***
	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.038)
NPD has EPG leader	-0.374***	-0.375***	-0.382***	-0.382***
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)
NPD size	-0.013***	-0.012***	-0.013***	-0.012***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
EPG size	-0.001*	-0.002**	-0.002*	-0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Membership duration	0.017***	0.017***	0.017***	0.017***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Government party	-0.150***	-0.151***	-0.148***	-0.149***
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Internal EU dissent	-0.000	-0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Electoral system	-0.009	-0.022	-0.013	-0.022
	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.102)
Eurosceptic seat share	-1.391**	-1.446**	-1.321**	-1.364**
	(0.581)	(0.582)	(0.584)	(0.584)
Constant	-5.931***	-5.858***	-6.036***	-5.969***
	(0.171)	(0.172)	(0.172)	(0.173)
Observations	431,030	431,030	431,030	431,030
Number of country	28	28	28	28
EPG FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	80467.82	80447.28	80421.95	80407.69
BIC	80698.27	80688.71	80663.38	80660.09
ICC	.06 (.02)	.06 (.02)	.06 (.02)	.06 (.02)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table C5: Robustness tests using different operationalisation of DV, including abstention votes

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
DV: MEP defection from EPG	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Ideological distance	0.002***	-0.002**	0.009***	0.005***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
National party issue salience	-0.013*	-0.095***	-0.016**	-0.088***
	(0.007)	(0.016)	(0.008)	(0.016)
Distance × Issue salience		0.004***		0.004***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
Days until EP elections	-0.012***	-0.012***	-0.000	-0.001
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Distance			-0.001***	-0.001***
× Days until EP elections			(0.000)	(0.000)
Co-decision	0.241***	0.235***	0.246***	0.240***
	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.021)	(0.022)
Closeness of vote	2.847***	2.853***	2.846***	2.851***
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.033)
NPD has EPG leader	-0.173***	-0.168***	-0.182***	-0.177***
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.037)
NPD size	-0.043***	-0.042***	-0.043***	-0.042***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
EPG size	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Membership duration	0.010***	0.010***	0.011***	0.010***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Government party	-0.138***	-0.137***	-0.137***	-0.135***
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.024)
Internal EU dissent	-0.002	0.003	-0.002	0.003
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
Electoral system	-0.291***	-0.298***	-0.293***	-0.298***
	(0.099)	(0.099)	(0.099)	(0.099)
Eurosceptic seat share	-0.018***	-0.018***	-0.017***	-0.017***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Constant	-4.176***	-4.116***	-4.282***	-4.225***
	(0.189)	(0.189)	(0.189)	(0.189)
Observations	445,726	445,726	445,726	445,726
Number of party	168	168	168	168
EPG FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	121098.7	121066	121034	121009.2
BIC	121329.9	121308.1	121276.2	121262.4
ICC	.16 (.02)	.16 (.02)	.17 (.02)	.16 (.02)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

To check the robustness of my findings, Table C5 uses a different operationalisation of DV in the analysis: instead of strictly looking at 'Yes' and 'No' votes, robustness models in Table C5 include 'Abstention' votes as consisting of 'dissent'. The main reason for excluding abstention

votes in the main analysis was that all the vote decisions in my entire estimation sample were under the simple majority rule, which is also the most commonly used rule in the EP. In addition, due to this rule, abstentions do not show clear opposition or dissent in the EP, compared to abstentions cast in the Council.

However, following Willumsen (2022: 5), I run robustness models with an alternative dependent variable that captures 'dissent with abstain'. As the number of observations (N = 445,726) in these robustness models is different from that in the main analysis (N = 431,030) due to the different conceptualisation of DV in computing how an individual MEP voted vis-à-vis the majority of the EPG, direct comparison of model fits between my main models and these robustness models cannot be made. Nevertheless, these robustness models confirm that the coefficients' directions and magnitude remain unchanged, even when accounting for 'Abstention' votes as comprising opposition.

Table C6: Robustness tests controlling for the East-West geographical division

DV: MEP's defection from EPG	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological distance	0.004***	-0.001	0.011***	0.006***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
National party issue salience	-0.039***	-0.139***	-0.043***	-0.131***
	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.010)	(0.021)
Distance × Issue salience		0.005***		0.004***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
Days until EP elections	-0.020***	-0.020***	-0.007**	-0.008***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Distance			-0.001***	-0.001***
× Days until EP elections			(0.000)	(0.000)
Co-decision	0.365***	0.357***	0.372***	0.365***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Closeness of vote	3.502***	3.508***	3.499***	3.505***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)
NPD has EPG leader	-0.012	-0.007	-0.023	-0.019
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)
NPD size	-0.041***	-0.040***	-0.041***	-0.040***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
EPG size	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Membership duration	0.011**	0.011**	0.012***	0.011**
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
East-West	0.298	0.309	0.284	0.294
	(0.206)	(0.206)	(0.206)	(0.206)
Government party	-0.087***	-0.085***	-0.085***	-0.083***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Internal EU dissent	0.023	0.030	0.023	0.029
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Electoral system	-0.624***	-0.636***	-0.626***	-0.635***
	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.127)
Eurosceptic seat share	-0.024***	-0.024***	-0.024***	-0.024***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Constant	-5.283***	-5.212***	-5.382***	-5.312***
	(0.239)	(0.240)	(0.240)	(0.240)
Observations	431,030	431,030	431,030	431,030
Number of party	168	168	168	168
EPG FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	78895.26	78865.26	78853.7	78831.14
BIC	79136.69	79117.66	79106.11	79094.52
ICC	.19 (.02)	.19 (.02)	.19 (.02)	.19 (.02)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

To test whether MEPs from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) act differently from MEPs from Western European (EU-15) countries (e.g., Coman, 2009; Lindstädt et al., 2012), I control for the East-West geographical distinction in my robustness models. I include an additional control

variable called “eastwest”, a dummy variable coded as 1 for West European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and 0 for CEE countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia), based on the classification of the variable “*eastwest*” in the CHES dataset (Jolly et al., 2022).

However, results in Table C6 show that the inclusion of the variable “eastwest” does not have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of MEPs’ voting defection from their European group across all robustness models, nor does it improve the model fit when compared to my main models in Table 4.4. The statistical insignificance of this variable adds to the fact that there has been mixed empirical evidence in previous literature of a relationship between the geographical divide and MEPs’ voting behaviour, as explained in the Theory section *4.2*.

Table C7: Robustness tests controlling for proximity to national elections

DV: MEP's defection from EPG	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological distance	0.004***	-0.001	0.011***	0.006***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
National party issue salience	-0.041***	-0.139***	-0.045***	-0.130***
	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.010)	(0.021)
Distance × Issue salience		0.005***		0.004***
		(0.001)		(0.001)
Days until EP elections	-0.018***	-0.018***	-0.006**	-0.007**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Distance			-0.001***	-0.001***
× Days until EP elections			(0.000)	(0.000)
Days until national elections	0.012***	0.012***	0.012***	0.012***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Co-decision	0.364***	0.357***	0.372***	0.364***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Closeness of vote	3.501***	3.507***	3.498***	3.503***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)
NPD has EPG leader	-0.014	-0.009	-0.025	-0.021
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)
NPD size	-0.042***	-0.041***	-0.042***	-0.041***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
EPG size	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Membership duration	0.016***	0.016***	0.017***	0.016***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Government party	-0.097***	-0.096***	-0.095***	-0.094***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Internal EU dissent	0.017	0.024	0.018	0.024
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Electoral system	-0.602***	-0.612***	-0.604***	-0.613***
	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.126)
Eurosceptic seat share	-0.025***	-0.025***	-0.025***	-0.025***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Constant	-5.283***	-5.212***	-5.384***	-5.315***
	(0.236)	(0.236)	(0.236)	(0.236)
Observations	428,655	428,655	428,655	428,655
Number of party	167	167	167	167
EPG FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	78524.08	78495.27	78482.82	78461.32
BIC	78765.38	78747.55	78735.09	78724.56
ICC	.20 (.02)	.20 (.02)	.20 (.02)	.20 (.02)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

As the theoretical expectations and empirical focus of my main analysis are on unravelling the moderating effect of proximity to EP elections, not on proximity to national parliamentary elections, I chose not to control for the latter variable in my main models. However, some

studies report that proximity to national parliamentary elections affects MEPs' disloyalty to their party group (e.g., Koop et al., 2017; Klüver and Spoon 2015), though to a lesser extent than to European elections. To take this into account, I present in Table C7 the results of further robustness tests, controlling for proximity to national parliamentary elections. This variable is operationalised as the number of days (in 100 days) left until the next scheduled national elections, the same way as how proximity to EP elections is operationalised. It should be noted that the total number of observations drops to N = 428,655 in these robustness models since the periods between MEPs' voting dates and unplanned future elections that do not yet have a fixed date at the time of writing had to be treated as missing.

In Table C7, proximity to national parliamentary elections turns out statistically significant across all robustness models. The direction of the coefficients can be interpreted as follows: the closer the next national election, the less likely an MEP is to defect from the EP group. This is rather puzzling, as it contradicts the findings from previous research (Koop et al., 2017; Klüver and Spoon 2015). Nevertheless, these robustness models that additionally control for proximity to national elections confirm the consistency of my main findings: the directions, magnitude, and statistical significance of the main coefficients remain consistent.

Table C8. Robustness tests controlling for MEP-level variables

DV: MEP's defection from EPG	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological distance	0.004***	-0.001	0.011***	0.006***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)
National party issue salience	-0.037***	-0.138***	-0.041***	-0.130***
	(0.010)	(0.021)	(0.010)	(0.021)
Distance		0.005***		0.004***
× Issue salience		(0.001)		(0.001)
Days until EP elections	-0.016***	-0.016***	-0.004	-0.004
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Distance			-0.001***	-0.001***
× Days until EP elections			(0.000)	(0.000)
Co-decision	0.371***	0.363***	0.379***	0.371***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Closeness of vote	3.499***	3.505***	3.496***	3.501***
	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.039)
NPD has EPG leader	-0.021	-0.016	-0.031	-0.027
	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.044)
NPD size	-0.040***	-0.039***	-0.040***	-0.039***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
EPG size	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Membership duration	0.019***	0.018***	0.019***	0.019***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Government party	-0.083***	-0.081***	-0.081***	-0.079***
	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Internal EU dissent	0.014	0.021	0.014	0.020
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Electoral system	-0.623***	-0.636***	-0.625***	-0.635***
	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.129)
Eurosceptic seat share	-2.938***	-2.990***	-2.862***	-2.903***
	(0.619)	(0.619)	(0.620)	(0.620)
MEP age	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
New MEP	0.062**	0.062**	0.061**	0.062**
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Constant	-5.444***	-5.366***	-5.546***	-5.470***
	(0.240)	(0.240)	(0.241)	(0.241)
Observations	431,030	431,030	431,030	431,030
Number of party	168	168	168	168
EPG FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
AIC	78910.51	78879.76	78869	78845.78
BIC	79162.91	79143.14	79132.37	79120.13
ICC	.20 (.02)	.20 (.02)	.20 (.02)	.20 (.02)

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Finally, Table C8 addresses the concern that individual MEP-level characteristics should be

controlled for in the model. Specifically, I control for MEPs' age and whether they were newly elected to the EP. *MEP age* is calculated as the yearly difference between the voting date and their date of birth. *New MEP* is a dummy variable, coded as 1 for first-term MEPs and 0 for MEPs who already served in previous term(s). Information for both variables was retrieved from the MEP directory on the official EP website[41] and manually coded.

Regarding MEPs' age, younger MEPs, particularly with career ambitions in their national political arenas, may be more inclined to prioritise the interests of their national parties over EP party group cohesion and therefore are expected to defect more frequently from the EP group than their older counterparts (Meserve et al., 2009; see also Coman, 2009). I also expect that first-term MEPs will exhibit a higher likelihood of disloyalty to the transnational group whip compared to their more experienced colleagues. Newly elected MEPs may not yet have developed strong ties to their EP party groups, and their limited experience within the parliamentary framework can result in voting behaviour that deviates from the EP party line when national and European party positions conflict.

The robustness models in Table C8 show that new MEPs are more likely to defect from their EP group, which is in line with the theoretical expectation. MEPs' age, however, does not have a statistically significant effect on the likelihood of defection. For all the other variables, the inclusion of MEP-level controls leads to substantially identical results as those presented in Chapter 4 (Table 4.4). The direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the coefficients remain consistent, confirming the robustness of the main findings. Moreover, when comparing AIC/BIC statistics, robustness models that include MEP-level controls does not significantly improve model fit in terms of AIC, while BIC statistics are even higher than those in the main models without MEP-level controls.

[41] Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/directory/s