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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report on "Voter Turnout for the European Parliament and Political Equality in the EU" (D.8.6) provides a combined empirical and normative-theoretical analysis of political equality in the EU and discusses ways to overcome political inequality related to low voter turnout in European Parliament elections.

It has two main findings: firstly, low turnout in European elections creates political inequality among EU-citizens. The empirical analysis of EP elections 2004-2014 (ch. III.2) shows that low turnout is related to social inequality of voting. Socially weak EU-citizens are overrepresented in the group of non-voters. At the same time, they are more inclined towards left of centre parties and redistributive policies. This in turn creates inequality in the democratic representation of EU-citizens through EP elections. Secondly, the political inequality among EU-citizens is related to the EU's current institutional architecture. Despite the European Parliament's growing competences, it remains secondary to national governments' role in the EU's political process. This imbalance between a representation of citizens and a representation of states in the EU is one of the main reasons for the extraordinarily low turnout in EP elections and hinders a politicisation of controversial issues concerning European public policies. Based on these findings it is suggested that reforms of the EU's electoral law (such as the standardisation of national voting registration procedures) are necessary, but not enough. The report concludes that in order to overcome political inequality among EU-citizens due to low turnout, the second order character of EU elections has to be overcome and politicisation of EU politics is, therefore, required. Concrete reform proposals are suggested which would empower the European Parliament up to a level where it would act as a true co-legislator with the Council in all European affairs. A twofold effect could be expected from this: firstly, it would establish equality between EU-citizens and national demoi as well as developing the EU into an EU-democracy. Secondly, it would change the character of European elections into first-order, remove a main obstacle to higher turnout and thus foster political equality among EU-citizens. Both effects would contribute considerably in removing barriers to democratic EU-citizenship.

The report is structured in three parts. First, it analyses the relation between voter turnout and political equality in democratic theory. Second, it describes genuine features of the EU as a multilevel polity in transition and the implications for political equality. There are two kinds of political subjects in the EU: national demoi and the EU-citizenry. As a consequence, political equality in the EU has to be three-dimensional: among EU-citizens, between national demoi and in their respective political representation. The second part turns to empirical electoral research, starting with an overview on voter turnout and its consequences for democratic equality. This is followed by an empirical study of the European elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014 that tests the main hypothesis on voter turnout and political equality found in the literature. The third and final part pulls the threads of the previous chapters together and develops a normative critique of political equality in the EU. Based on the concept of an EU-democracy, it identifies different dimensions of political inequality in the EU and how they are related to low turnout in EP elections. Lastly reforms to overcome these barriers against political equality are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

Political equality is *the* crucial feature of modern democracy. It involves more than just a form of government but entails an inevitable tendency towards an equalisation of societal conditions (Tocqueville 1835: 83). In liberal democracies the principle of individual equality translates into individuals' equal rights to political participation. Irrespective of all social differences, all citizens should have their voices heard in the political process. Essentially, democratic participation is based on voting in general elections. Accordingly, every citizen can participate equally in the process of appointing the highest legislative authority in a democracy – no citizen is superior to another, no voice counts more than another.

However, since the 1990s one can observe a worldwide trend of decreasing voter turnout in democratic elections. If elections are essential in realising political equality, what does decreasing voter turnout tell us about the state of political equality in democratic societies?

For the European Union (EU) the question of relationship between voter turnout and political equality arises in a specific form. On the one hand, the issue of decreasing voter turnout seems to be particularly salient in the EU. Contrary to turnout in national elections, voter turnout in the European elections has been comparatively low from the start. While turnout in Germany, for example, decreased from 88,6% in 1980 to 71,3% in 2013, at the same time turnout to the European elections shrank from 61,99% in 1979 to 42,61% in 2014. On the other hand, one might wonder whether or not European elections are comparable with national elections. The EU differs crucially in regard to some typical features of nation-state democracy. Most importantly, elections to the European Parliament do not lead to the formation of an EU-government. For this reason European elections are widely perceived as so-called 'second-order elections' (Reif/Schmitt 1980).

Thus, what is the significance of low (and decreasing) voter turnout to the European Parliament elections for political equality in the EU? Does low turnout signify a barrier against democratic EU-citizenship or do European elections play only a minor role for political equality in the EU? Moreover, what could be done to foster democratic citizenship and political equality in the EU?

This report deals with these questions in three steps.

The first part discusses the relation between equality, democracy and voter turnout in democratic theory. It establishes two alternative evaluative perspectives on the relationship between voter turnout and equality in democracy differently, which, broadly speaking, may be termed as liberal and republican (chapter I).

It then continues by focusing on the peculiar context of the EU's political order. The fact that the EU encompasses two types of political subject (national demoi and EU-citizens) implies particular requirements concerning political equality (chapter II).

The second part turns towards empirical electoral research (chapter III), starting with findings concerning the relationship between turnout and political equality (III.1). While the effects of low turnout are well researched in the US-context, only a few studies focus on European elections. The results of our empirical study involving the European elections of 2004, 2009 and 2014 follow, which also support some of the main electoral research findings for European elections: low voter turnout is tantamount to socially unequal turnout that seems to come along with a partisan effect (III.2).

The third part draws the threads of the previous parts together for a normative critique covering the conditions of political equality in a democratic EU. Starting from the concept of an EU-demoicracy as a democracy of democracies, it discusses the status quo and possible ways to foster political equality in the EU (chapter IV). It focuses particularly on voter turnout as well as the role of European elections and the European Parliament for

political equality. It concludes with concrete reform proposals for removing the main obstacles for higher voter turnout and political equality in the EU.

PART I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This part operationalises political equality as citizens' legal entitlement to equal participation in political decision-making. Firstly it confronts liberal and republican understandings of the political process and elaborates on why from each perspective low voter turnout matters in different ways. In the liberal account political equality and voter turnout are not related as long as every citizen is *de jure* free to decide on whether or not to vote. For a republican approach what matters is *de facto* making use of one's right to vote since low voter turnout compromises the aim of common self-determination. In a second step, we introduce the characteristics of the EU as a polity, combining international together with supranational dimensions, and derive implications for political equality on three different levels: between individual European citizens, between member states as well as between national demoi and EU-citizenry

I. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL EQUALITY AND VOTER TURNOUT IN DEMOCRATIC THEORY

I.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTRINSIC EQUALITY AND POLITICAL EQUALITY

In the self-perception of today's democracies the relationship between individual equality and democracy appears almost self-evident But in more specific terms, how are they related? According to Robert Dahl (2000), the relationship becomes apparent when considering an assumption that has a fundamental status in modern consciousness, namely, that of intrinsic equality. The judgement that all human beings are of equal worth and no one person is intrinsically superior to another is basic to most moral reasoning and systems of ethics. It follows that the interests of each and every person must be given equal consideration. Besides moral judgement, intrinsic equality also suggests itself as the basic principle of government for reasons of political prudence (Dahl 2000: p. 66-7). Even if a person or a group has enough power to promote self-interest over that of others, it is unlikely (or at least uncertain) that this person or group will always prevail. Thus to ensure the long-term cooperation of others needed to achieve political ends, it is safer to rule in accordance with the principle which is acceptable to most other people, namely, equal consideration of interests.

But even if intrinsic equality is accepted as the basic moral standard for government, the question of how to organise collective decision-making in a way that reflects this principle remains. It is by no means obvious that the principle of intrinsic equality also requires political equality or, in other words, democracy. What form of government is needed to realise the equal consideration of interests in politics depends on what equal consideration of interests means.

As Christiano (2002) argues, equal consideration of interests might be understood in two different ways. In a substantial (or output-oriented) sense it means that political decisions make every citizen equally well-off. How does this presuppose democratic government? As a form of government, democracy is the name for a method of collective decision-making according to which every citizen has equal political influence. However, the principle of equal well-being is logically independent from the way in which political decisions come about. A strict output-oriented legitimacy argument (Scharpf 1999: ch. 1) states that any form of government is as good as another, so long as it brings about the equal well-being of every citizen. From this perspective even a benevolent dictatorship is compatible with the equal well-being of all, if only the ruler assesses the needs and interests of citizens correctly and takes them into account. Thus intrinsic equality in the sense of equal well-

being does not imply political equality and a need for democracy. Even more, some argue that due to the lack of competence and virtue among citizens, a government of experts who are deeply committed to the common good is superior to democracy.

Note that although this expertocratic view violates the requirement for political equality, it follows the principle of intrinsic equality – if the latter is understood as output-oriented. The reason is that it does not see the interests of experts as being superior to those of other citizens. It assumes only the superiority of political experts' knowledge of what is in the best interests of all and what are the best means of achieving that objective.

But expert rule faces some serious difficulties that point to weaknesses in a purely output-oriented view of the intrinsic equality principle which require political equality. The justification of expert rule rightly draws upon the analogy of experts' roles in politics and everyday-life. Dahl (1998: 70-8) gives the following example: we accept a physician's diagnosis and suggestion for treatment when we are sick. Why, then, do we not also lay government into the hands of experts? Dahl provides three reasons:

Firstly, delegating tasks to experts in everyday-life does not mean ceding control over decision-making. Despite the recommendations of your physician, you remain the final authority in deciding whether or not treatment is undertaken.

Secondly, even if you trust in the good faith and competence of politicians, political decisions are governmental decisions enforced if necessary by coercion. Control over political decision-making thus is control over political power. Accordingly, the case for expert-rule not only entails the claim of experts' superiority regarding knowledge, but it also presumes their incorruptibility: in other words, they are better qualified to resist the temptations of using political power to enforce (their own) particular interests. But, as Dahl argues by quoting Lord Acton, this presumption is groundless. If there is one historically proven fact it is that "power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." (Dahl 2000: 73)

Thirdly, political decisions involve more than strict scientific knowledge. They concern the kinds and appropriate levels of public goods to be provided in a society. However, contrary to scientific practice, there is no 'objective' standard for the common interest in politics. Citizens disagree about the norms of justice and identify with different cultural traditions. Conflicts and disagreements about what public goods to pursue in politics do, therefore, abound. Moreover, even in the case of agreement about ends, there is uncertainty and dispute over the best means of achieving them as well as their possible impact and side-effects. In short, because every citizen is a 'self-originating source of valid claims' (Rawls 1980: 543), there is an insurmountable epistemic uncertainty about what is in the best interest of all, what equal well-being means and, accordingly, what policies will provide it efficiently. It follows that virtually every political decision entails ethical judgement. If this judgement does not violate intrinsic equality, equal participation of citizens in political decision-making is needed.

For these reasons, intrinsic equality cannot be understood as output-oriented only, but additionally requires a procedural view of individual equality in decision-making. Any government that fails to provide political equality, be it expert rule or even the rule of a benign and all-knowing hegemon, also fails to provide the moral requirement for intrinsic equality on two grounds: It neglects the fact that political decision-making inevitably involves the lure of power and the epistemic uncertainty about what is acceptable as a common good. Equal political participation is thus needed to establish effective control of political power and political will-formation that responds to the plurality of societal views and interests. Only a form of government that empowers citizens to influence political decisions equally meets the moral requirement for equal consideration of interests. Intrinsic equality requires political equality or, in other words, democracy. But what are the conditions of political equality in the democratic process?

I.2 Voter Turnout and Political Equality – Two Perspectives

In modern national democracy, political equality finds expression in the principle of 'one person, one vote' during the general election for the legislative assembly – no citizen is superior to another, no voice counts more than another. Political equality is primarily understood as individual equality in general elections. But how does voter turnout affect political equality? At this point, two perspectives on democratic equality come to different conclusions. Let us call these two perspectives, which are at opposite ends of a large continuum, the liberal and the republican understanding of democracy. Both differ in their assumptions about the nature of democratic politics, the concept of the citizen as well as the status of political rights and elections.[1]

The liberal view conceives of the state as an administrative power opposing society which is seen as a system of market-like interactions by private persons. Analogously, democratic politics is understood in terms of an exchange process, in which citizens aim to bring to bear their private interests against the state and the interests of other citizens. This view is closely connected with a particular concept of the citizen. In the liberal understanding, individuals enjoy natural freedom. Citizenship is established through a bundle of subjective rights that serve to protect the citizens' individual freedom vis-à-vis interventions from the state or other citizens. Liberals envisage the citizen as a bearer of subjective rights, which guarantee every citizen a domain with freedom of choice in which she can pursue her interests without external compulsion. As with other subjective rights, political rights are also understood in terms of negative rights, in that they are viewed as the means of defending individuals' freedom of choice.[2]

This resonates with an understanding of the democratic process, the rationale of which comes down to competition and struggle over administrative power. In casting their votes, citizens exert influence over the state administration and, by combining with others, pursue and protect their interests. Elections function as the primary means of societal control over the use of political power by the state administration and programme the state in the interests of society, thus hindering the ruling classes to make politics in their particular interest. Accordingly, in the liberal view legitimacy of the state does not depend primarily upon democratic self-determination through political participation in elections. It is rather established by the state's effective and equal protection of citizens' pre-political individual interests. The democratic procedures contribute to this objective by aggregating citizens' private interests formed prior to entering or dealing with politics for conversion into a winning majority.

Thus in the liberal view every citizen already has a pre-political interest that is expressed only in elections. What comprises the citizen's interest and where it originated is just as much his private concern as is the reason for his not making use of his right to vote. The liberal perspective, therefore, completely shifts the problem of electoral participation to the level of the individual. It is blind to the process and the societal conditions for the formation of individual political interests. The logical liberal conclusion is: where no interest is communicated in the form of a vote, there is no interest and accordingly no need for responsive politics. As long as the equal right to vote legally prevails, there is no problem from a lack of democratic equality.

In contrast to the liberal view, republicans do not conceive of democratic politics in terms of a market-like exchange process, but as crucial for social integration. Society integrates through a political public that is likewise separated from the state administration as well as the market-based private economy. From the republican perspective, democratic politics is the reflexive form of societal life. Democracy is modelled on the principle of dialogue rather than markets. Democratic politics is the medium within which members of society

[1] For the following see Habermas (1999b) and Michelman (1988, 1989).
[2] For a distinction between negative and positive concepts of liberty see Berlin (1969) for a critique of negative freedom see Taylor (1985).

become aware of their interdependence and commonly shape societal relations. This view translates into a concept of democratic citizenship that differs from the liberal. In the republican understanding freedom is not naturally given, but a social concept. Individual freedom depends on equal participation in the societal determination of life conditions. Accordingly, the essence of citizenship is not being a bearer of subjective rights, but rather an active and equal participant in public affairs. Thus the difference between republican and liberal citizenship parallels the difference between Athenian and Roman conceptions of citizenship respectively (Pocock 1992). Michelman describes the republican view of democratic community as follows:

"In civic constitutional [republican, D.G./S.S.] vision, political society is primarily the society not of rights-bearers, but of citizens, an association whose first principle is the creation and provision of a public realm within which a people, together, argue and reason about the right terms of social coexistence, terms that they will set together and which they understand as comprising their common good." (Michelman 1988: 284)

Accordingly, and in contrast to the liberal view, republicans interpret the right to vote as being in the service of political self-determination. The first political task is not to combat interference, but to render possible the equal determination of societal conditions. For republicans the right to vote is fundamental, because it responds alike to crucial democratic values which are in tension with one another: communitarisation [Vergemeinschaftung] and individual autonomy. It establishes simultaneously the realms of the public and the private. On the one hand, the right to vote is a paradigmatic feature of the legal order as such because it underlines the latter's nature as being collectively determined. Communitarisation takes place through the channel of collective self-determination. On the other hand the right to vote realises the individual freedom to make one's voice heard. From a republican perspective, communitarisation and individual autonomy can co-exist only if everyone is interested in the common good beyond his or her own particular interests.

'The [republican, D. G./S.S.] claim is that we all take an interest in each others' enfranchisement because (i) our choice lies between hanging together and hanging separately; (ii) hanging together depends on reciprocal assurances to all of having one's vital interests heeded by the others; and (iii) in the deeply pluralized conditions of contemporary American [and European, D. G./S.S.] society, such assurances are...attainable...only by maintaining at least the semblance of a politics in which everyone is conceded a voice.' (Michelman 1989: 484)

Thus, in the republican view, elections are crucial to the state's legitimation. The function of elections is not only to control state power, but also despite all societal differences and conflicts to maintain a public dialogue about what is good for every citizen and thus in the common interest (Urbinati 2006). In normative terms, the democratic process makes public deliberation possible. By participating in public deliberation citizens realise common problems, mediate conflicting societal views as well as concerns and, in doing so, first form their own individual political interests. The aggregation of societal interests is just a pragmatic means of transforming differing societal views into political decisions after deliberation, which does not usually lead to a consensus.

I.3 Two Views of Democratic Equality – Liberal and Republican

These considerations suggest an interpretative framework in which liberal and republican democratic theory concludes differently about the connection between voter turnout and political equality. In the liberal account, political equality and voter turnout are not related. Possible explanations for the turnout and its social composition thus refer to the level of the individual citizen: she is free to decide how to use her right to vote; and her reasons for this decision must not be the subject of public discussion but rather respected without questioning. Political equality in the liberal sense is equality *de jure*: it matters only that every citizen has the same right to vote rather than whether or not he makes use of that right.

In contrast, republicans view the right to vote in the context of societal and political conditions which affect the citizens' opportunities to make use of this right. Beyond the equal right to vote, citizens must also find similar conditions in their life-world to make use of their right to vote (Seubert 2016). The reason can be found in the republican understanding of freedom and democracy. For republicans, freedom is not primarily individual, but social (Honneth 2014). The individual acquires full freedom first through equal participation in the common determination of societal living conditions. Accordingly, democracy is not seen as a means of protecting individual freedom, but rather a means of realising political freedom. Democratic politics derives its legitimacy from a societal communication process. As such, democracy functions only if all citizens have the chance to participate actively in this process under more or less equal conditions. Thus, from this perspective low turnout is problematic. Any missing voice compromises the aim of common self-determination. For republicans, political equality is equality *de facto*: if electoral non-participation is caused by social conditions that keep citizens from participating in the democratic practice of common self-determination, this is a problem for the whole society. While for liberals how much citizens do actually participate is of secondary importance, for republicans higher turnout means more political equality. Common self-determination, democracy, remains a chimera if actual political participation is low.

II. The Characteristics of European Integration and Implications for Political Equality in the EU

Both liberal and republican accounts of democratic citizenship have been established in the context of the democratic nation-state. In both cases election of the parliamentary assembly is crucial to political equality in a modern democracy – albeit, as argued above, for different reasons. In the context of national democracy, democratic representation essentially means parliamentary representation. Democratic representation is mainly understood as mandatory action of elected representatives making voters' interests heard in the political process (Pitkin 1967). Elections establish a mandate relationship between citizens and their representatives and so bind collective decision-making to the principles of political equality and individual autonomy (Böckenförde 1987).

However, the EU is neither a state nor a parliamentary democracy. The interplay between its institutions in the political process generates a unique order of political authority and makes the EU a polity of its own kind (Jachtenfuchs/Kohler-Koch 1996, Lepsius 2000). For a long time the European Commission has underlined EU-citizenship that was introduced in 1992 as a cornerstone of the EU's democratic nature. It indicates the right to vote in European elections that establishes the direct representation of citizens at EU-level. But is EU-citizenship a fully-fledged democratic citizenship that creates political equality amongst EU citizens? According to a widespread view this is not so because the European Parliament (EP) does not appoint a (EU) government and thus is no fully-fledged legislative assembly. European elections are often described as 'second-order elections' (Reif/Schmitt 1980) the results of which are no more than a reflection of the current mood in the respective national politics. They do not generate relationships of democratic representation as in the case of national elections. This view derives from the EU's particular institutional structure and the unique order of political authority it establishes. To this day the core of political authority in the EU has remained similar to that of an international organisation. Despite important institutional developments, the EU's political authority still rests on consensus and compromises reached in diplomatic bargaining among national executives.

The EU is the outcome of cooperation among European democratic states. From the outset it has been of a unique nature, in that it has an exogenous tendency to transcend its own character as an international

organisation. This peculiarity most notably shows firstly in its core aim of an 'ever closer Union' among the peoples of Europe initially put down in the Treaty of Rome (1953). The EU's raison d'être exists in the political, economic and social integration of democratic states. Its aspiration thus exceeds that which is typical for an international organisation, namely, the cooperation among states for a certain purpose. According to that, secondly, the Commission has been established as a supranational institution with the competence to take measures autonomously in order to pursue this aim.

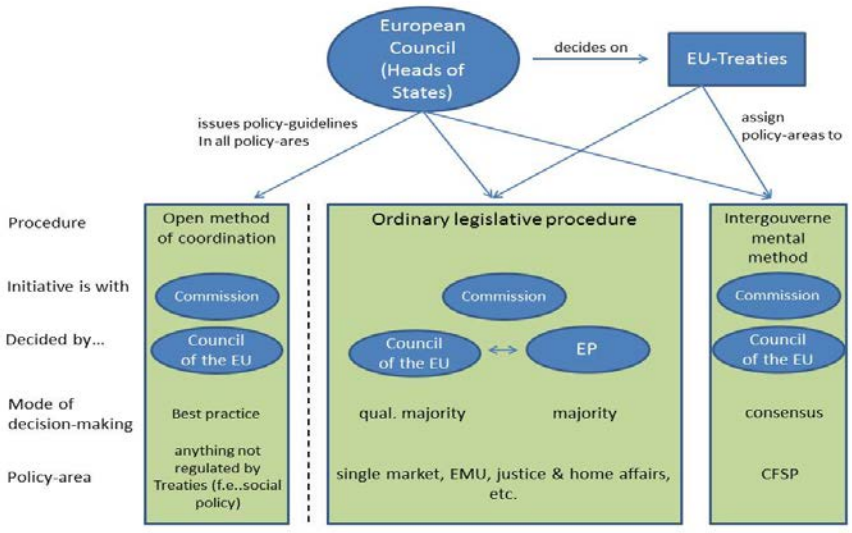
Thus the sui generis character of European integration lies in combining the international, supranational and transnational dimension of politics in a new way: European integration is a project of international actors (states) that voluntarily establish a common supranational political organisation aiming at an ever closer transnational social and economic integration in order to defend their state capacity against the challenges of a globalising world.

Given that the EU is no parliamentary democracy but a polity of its own kind, do national standards of political equality apply in EU politics? Mindful of this question, the following section considers particular challenges of political equality deriving from the EU's political order. For the relation between voter turnout and political equality, two features that distinguish the EU from the democratic nation-state are of particular importance: its international order of political authority (II.1) and the openness of its institutional architecture (II.2). Today the EU is a polity in transformation that has not yet found a durable institutional structure. This has consequences for the conditions of political equality in the EU (II.3)

II.1 The International Structure of Political Authority in the EU and the Second-Order Character of European Elections

Considering the EU's origins as a project of cooperating democratic states with a particular raison d'être, it comes as no surprise that its institutional order has supranational and transnational traits, but ultimately remains international to this day as the highest political authority continues to rest with national governments. In accordance with the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, the EU's political process is determined mainly by the relationships between four institutions: the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the European Commission and the European Parliament (figure 1).

Figure 1: Order of political authority in the EU



In the European Council the heads of state and government determine the content of the European Treaties by consensus. It is thus the EU's highest constitutional organ and holds the highest political authority. Although not involved in EU law-making directly (which is with the Council of the EU, or Council of Ministers), it establishes who decides what in the EU. By determining the contents of the Treaties, the European Council decides not only which policy areas should be dealt with in EU-politics and which should remain part of national politics but also which decision-procedures should apply in which policy-areas.

The policy-areas that are assigned to the EU are dealt with by different procedures. Some areas (for example, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and social policy) are acted upon intergovernmentally by the national ministers in the Council of the EU. In other areas (most importantly, the single market, EMU, justice and home affairs) the ordinary legislative procedure applies. Here the national executives in the Council of the EU and the European Parliament are at par in regard to decision-making.

At this point crucial differences between the order of political authority in the EU and a democratic nation-state come to the fore. In national democracy the authority to change the constitution lies with the parliament. It is the supreme legislative power that is, in principle, free to decide which policy-area to utilise. While the parliament is normally the highest legislative authority in national democracy, the situation is different in the EU. Here the European Council of the heads of state and government, an internationally organised institution, holds the highest legislative authority which assigns responsibilities for the respective policy-areas in EU politics. The other EU institutions are authorised to feature in EU law-making only those issues that have been assigned to them by the national governments in the European Treaties. Depending on the policy-area, these issues are then dealt with in the EU-process, either intergovernmentally or in the ordinary legislative procedure. Only in the latter case does the European Parliament function as a (co-)legislator.

These considerations are important because they have implications for the conditions of political equality in the EU. So far, and contrary to national democracy, parliamentary representation is neither at the core of democratic representation in the EU, nor consequently political equality. Instead, the EU has an order of political authority in which (in line with its raison d'être) international and transnational democratic representation are interrelated, but not on a par. The international dimension consists in the national governments which function as representatives of the respective national demoi in the European Council and the Council of the EU. The superior position of the European Council provides the EU with an *indirect* democratic legitimation, because nationally elected governments determine the content of the EU-Treaties by consensus. In this regard it is important to note that the subjects of political equality are not individual European citizens but the national demoi. They are represented by their governments in the EU's political process. The transnational dimension of democratic representation, conversely, is established by elections to the European Parliament. Here the individual is not represented indirectly as a national demos member, but directly based on the principle of one person, one vote as an EU citizen. However, this type of *direct* democratic representation is different from that in nation-states for two reasons: firstly, because the allocation of seats is based on the principle of degressive and not direct proportionality (see below IV.3.1.2.). Accordingly, the votes of citizens from small member states have more weight than those from large member states. This undermines political equality in EU parliamentary representation. Secondly, democratic legitimation via elections to the European Parliament is of minor relevance, because it does not lead to the appointment of the highest legislative authority, but only to a co-legislator in some selected policy-areas. In institutional terms this is the reason why European Elections are considered to be second-order: there is political inequality between the two types of political subjects in the EU. Consensus and compromise between national demoi and not among EU-citizens is the source of political authority in the EU.

II.2 The EU as a Polity in Process of Constant Transformation

The second particular feature of the EU polity relevant to its conditions of political equality is that it has yet to find a stable and durable form. Even today the EU remains a constantly transforming polity. The relationship between its institutions has been changing throughout European integration. This is hardly surprising, but rather to be expected, if one takes into account the inverse relation between the EU's raison d'être and its organisational form. As mentioned, the EU is a project of democratic states that voluntarily establish a common supranational political organisation that aims at an ever closer transnational social and economic integration in order to resist the challenges of a globalising world. It follows, broadly speaking, that the more successfully the EU follows its rationale and transnational integration progresses, the more deficient is the EU's legitimacy drawn from its international organisation of political authority. The more policy-areas are communitarised and the more far reaching the consequences of EU-decisions are for individual EU citizens' life chances, the higher is the need for a direct and transnational democratic legitimation for the EU.

This connection reflects in the course of European integration. On the one hand, the EU's depoliticised international decision making process with a superior European Council accords with the basic motive of an ongoing cooperation among democratic states (Dawson/de Witte 2013). The vitality of the EU's international character also shows after the Treaty of Maastricht in the form of a 'new intergovernmentalism' (Bickerton/Hodgson/Puetter 2014) and has gained new momentum both through the Libson Treaty's integration of the European Council into the EU's institutional order and the intergovernmental management of the recent EU's financial crisis (Fabbrini 2013). To this day the EU operates on a double depoliticised decision-making process: seen *institutionally*, it is a process technocratically initiated and monitored by the Commission, in which national executives determine the course of EU politics (Brunkhorst 2014b); furthermore, and seen *substantially*, the scope of EU politics is limited by the European treaties. They limit the topics negotiable in EU politics and, moreover, determine the EU's political aims (especially with regard to the politics of Economic and Monetary Union) (Dawson/de Witte 2015).

Conversely, establishment of the European Parliament and the steady expansion of its competences (Polin 2014) are indicative of the increasing demand for a direct transnational democratic legitimation resulting from moving towards the aim of an "ever closer Union". With every new step of integration, transnational interdependence among the member states is growing and creates a need for political discretion at odds with the depoliticised intergovernmental mode of decision-making in the EU. In particular Economic and Monetary Union has posed problems that seem to require European decisions with redistributive effects (Chalmers 2012, see below IV.2). However, for redistributive EU politics the indirect democratic legitimation that current EU decisions obtain as compromises between nationally elected governments is not sufficient (Scharpf 2013).

II.3 Consequences for the Conditions of Political Equality in the EU: A Three Dimensional Perspective

The conditions of political equality in the EU can be summarised as follows: the EU is a polity of its own kind, in which the conditions of political equality differ from those in the democratic nation-state due to its particular raison d'être and resultant institutional order. The requirements for political equality in the EU are not limited to individual political equality being established by elections to the European Parliament. Besides individual EU citizens, the national demoi represented by their national governments are subjects amongst whom political equality in the EU has to be achieved. Moreover, the relationship between both political subjects – national demoi and EU-citizens – has not yet been stabilised. On the one hand, the EU's central political authority is still located in the European Council representing national demoi. On the other hand, the European Parliament,

representing the EU-citizens, has steadily gained political power – even if it has not overcome its overall secondary status and become the unambiguous representative of EU-citizens' common good.

Accordingly, parallel to national democratic elections, political equality between EU citizens in connection with European elections has to be taken into consideration. In European elections EU citizens commonly appoint a legislative that plays an important role in the EU's law-making process. Here, two problems concerning political equality must be considered: First, political equality of individuals seems to be undercut by the principle of degressive proportionality in the EU's electoral law. Beyond this a second problem occurs with regard to the actual use of the right to vote, which has not as yet been discussed: the phenomenon of social inequality in electoral participation, which is also observable in European elections, has consequences for individual political equality in the EU.

Notwithstanding that, the democratic relevance of European elections compared with national elections remains limited. The reason is, as mentioned, the still basically intergovernmentally organised political authority of the EU, in which national governments act as representatives of the national demoi in the European Council and set the terms of EU politics. The objection often raised that European elections are second-order elections of limited relevance (and thus also for the generation of political equality in the EU) cannot be easily dismissed.

Besides these two problems, there is a third that transcends the dimension of political equality of individuals. Although European elections establish a (co-)legislative in the EU, their relevance to democratic legitimacy is limited when compared with national elections. The reason for this lies in the EU's internationally structured political authority with national governments still determining the rules of the game for EU-politics. The widespread objection that European elections are of minor relevance to political equality in the EU is hard to reject. This second-order nature of the European Parliament brings a third problem of political equality into focus that stems from the power asymmetry between the European Council and the European Parliament, established to realise a depoliticised decision-making process: the problem of equality between the status of national demoi (represented by their governments), on the one hand, and the status of individual EU-citizens (represented by the European Parliament), on the other.

Complexity with the issue of political equality in the EU results from the fact that all three problems are interrelated as a result of the EU-polity's peculiar rationale. Because the social inequality of voter turnout for the European Parliament and how it affects political equality in the EU lacks attention, it will be elaborated more extensively in the following part II. It results partly from the second-order nature of European elections, which in turn relates to the EU's particular raison d'être suggesting the supreme position of national demoi as justified, which brings itself to bear both in the supreme status of the European Council and degressive proportionality in the EU's electoral law. This complex conundrum of political equality within the EU will be taken up again in part III/chapter IV. It also elaborates the interrelationship between the three problems of political equality in the EU more extensively and discusses possible solutions.

PART II

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This part details findings from empirical election research. It first introduces explanations for turnout rates found in the literature. These references refer to socio-economic differences and suggest a 'representational distortion' which affects the realisation of redistributive policies. With regard to the EU, empirical findings suggest that public endorsement of European integration positively affects turnout in European elections. The comparative study of 2004, 2009 and 2014 EP-elections confirms the hypothesis of a connection between social structure and turnout as well as a link between social structure and political orientation: the weaker the social class, the more probable the abstention and the smaller the political interest. In addition, a correlation was found between social class, left of centre party affinity and support for redistribution.

III. VOTER TURNOUT AND POLITICAL EQUALITY IN EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVE

III.1 STATE OF THE ART OF ELECTORAL RESEARCH ON VOTER TURNOUT AND POLITICAL EQUALITY

Political science research did not pay much attention to voter turnout and non-voters until late in the 1980s. The reason is that for a long time voter turnout remained largely at a constantly high level, reaching values above or close to 90 percent in Germany, for instance, in the 1970s. Lavies' (1973) findings in any case fall into line with the low number of non-voters. The reason why about half of the non-voters do not go to the polls is not because of protest or indifference, but because they are 'fictitious non-voters', who erroneously show up in the statistics despite having moved away, being deceased, or because they are impeded for non-political reasons such as illness. There was a research gap on vote abstention until the beginning of the 1990s. Non-voters were considered 'unknown entities' (Falter/Schumann 1994).

The situation has changed since the end of the 1980s. Voter turnout moved within a tight range between the 1950s and the 1980s but dropped dramatically in all OECD countries over the last 20 years. It is striking that this phenomenon appears to be independent from other known elements of change in party democracy. For instance, whereas people's identification with a particular party has steadily decreased since the 1960s (Dalton 2000), a clear turnout decline emerged only in the 1990s and has continued up to the present day (Wattenberg 2002: ch. 1). Which empirical findings show up in empirical electoral research that are relevant for assessing the connection between voter turnout and political equality in the EU? Two thematic foci can be identified in the literature. The first one looks at explanations for turnout rates. The second one concentrates on possible consequences for democracy, which could arise from lower or declining turnouts. The following section recapitulates the state of research on both issues. First, general trends will be considered; then, findings on elections to the European Parliament will be covered.

III.1.1 GENERAL TRENDS

III.1.1.1 Voter Turnout and the Social Inequality of Voting

Studies that aim at explaining turnout are oriented towards Anthony Downs' 'calculus of voting' model (1957). According to this model, voters behave instrumentally rationally and weigh the opportunity costs of their participation in the election against the utility. That is, they weigh the effect of their vote on the election result.

Three kinds of factors are quoted, which influence voter turnout: socio-economic factors such as the size of the electorate, political factors such as the expectation of a tight election outcome (Franklin 2004) as well as institutional factors such as compulsory voting, the complexity of voter registration, concurrent elections and the electoral system (Geys 2006). The trend towards declining voter turnout is not necessarily seen as a crisis phenomenon of democracy. The legitimacy of rulers decreases when the proportion of voters decreases (Dahl 2006). However, the core function of democratic elections, namely the equal representation of voter concerns, is not touched by a decrease in the proportion of voters.

Among the large number of key factors, one takes centre stage which has led to controversial discussions: the socio-economic status of citizens. According to Arend Lijphart (1997) the 'unresolved dilemma' consists in the following: Despite enjoying the same right to vote, there are differences in political participation, which could endanger not only the quality of democracy, but also its survival in the years to come. This point of view leans on the assumption that a systematic bias in the will of the electorate will be caused, when the concerns and preferences of non-voters differ from those of the voters. Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) have formulated their 'representational distortion'-hypothesis for the context of the US. According to this hypothesis, the political views of better-off citizens in terms of income and education differ from those of the socially disadvantaged. Moreover, the participation of better-off citizens (also through alternative channels of participation) is above average compared with the participation of socially disadvantaged citizens.

Against this hypothesis it can be objected that voter turnout differences are minor in most of the developed democracies and that they do not present cause for concern (Przeworski 2010: 94). In his study of sixteen European countries between 1960 and 1992, in the majority of cases Topf (1995: 48-9) identified a higher turnout among the more educated compared with the poorly educated. However, the differences are not marked. Topf (1995: 48) concludes: "we find no generalized effect for education on voting, and no generalized trend over time". Likewise, merely ten percentage points lie on average between turnout among the lowest and the highest income quintiles, as well as between those without a school leaving qualification and university graduates in 18 democracies examined by Norris (2002: 94-5). Similarly, studies that establish a connection between education and turnout do not interpret this connection as a crisis symptom (Eilfort 1994). According to those studies, it is not the social background, but rather other attitudes that are crucial for turnout. For example, party identification and especially political interest (Kleinhenz 1995; Krimmel 1996). Subsequently, decreasing voter turnout is welcomed as a means of positively identifying those who are better informed and interested. It is also associated with an increasing quality of democracy (Armingeon 1994).

In contrast, recent findings show that attitudes against participation increasingly correlate with social inequality. There is a connection between social background and attitudes such as political interest and party identification. Well-educated and high-income classes show a greater political interest than socially weaker classes (Solt 2008). This is manifested, inter alia, in the social inequality of voter turnout which has increased conversely to turnout reduction since the 1990s. Whereas in the 1970s members of all classes voted with a similarly high probability, in the German federal context Schäfer (2011) ascertains that in 2009 only every other respondent of the lower class claimed to have voted in contrast to 94 percent of those from the upper class. Voter turnout can, therefore, be seen as depending increasingly on the social status of the electors (Bödeker 2012; Schäfer 2012). This trend has continued in the past decade (Abendschön/Roßteutscher 2014). Contrary to widespread opinion, it is not the satisfied who do not vote. Quite the contrary, there are more and more low status and dissatisfied citizens among non-voters in EU member states, as shown by Kohler (2006).

It is worthy of note that the connection between social inequality and unequal turnout is especially pronounced among young electors. An obvious social divide has become established in the course of the last three decades among young adults in Germany (Roßteutscher/Abendschön 2014). Whereas turnout remains stable, if not increasing, among young adults with higher or intermediate-level education, it decreases in the

case of young adults without a school-leaving qualification or with a secondary modern school qualification. Lamers and Roßteutscher (2014) show, that there are relatively small differences in turnout among citizens over the age of 55. Whereas only around ten percentage points separate high-school graduates and secondary school pupils, the difference among adults under the age of 36 amounts to 50 percentage points. This is especially startling since young people are regarded as a seismograph or an early warning system for future developments (Belwe 2003: 2; Roller et al. 2006: 7; Massing 2003: 110). Due to the long-term effectiveness of political socialisation, it is assumed that people who do not participate in democracy at an early age, generally do not participate in later years either.

III.1.1.2 Consequences of Social Inequality in Voting – A Controversy

Whereas social inequality in voter turnout is well documented (Dalton 2002; Smets/van Ham 2013), its consequences remain a matter of debate. If the political attitudes and preferences of voters as well as non-voters are distinct, it is to be expected that the will of the people in a democratic election will be distorted (Campbell et al. 1960, 96–115). Does the increasing social gap in turnout indicate a representational distortion and thus have consequences for political equality in democracy?

The potential relevance of the connection between voter turnout and election outcome has been the subject of numerous studies. Based on the wealthier classes' stronger potential to participate, most studies focus on reassessing the assumption that left-of-centre parties or candidates profit from a higher turnout. Hence the 'representational distortion'-hypothesis was developed by Verba et al. (1995), which establishes a connection between non-voters in the US and certain preferences regarding socio-moral beliefs as well as attitudes about the welfare state. According to the hypothesis, non-voters disproportionately prefer a distributive state, whereas voters remain sceptical about socio-political measures. Notwithstanding all investigations to date, it has yet to be clarified with certainty whether or not this entails a relevant distortion for the legitimacy of democratic politics. The span of empirical findings goes from high voter turnout working for the advantage of the Democratic Party and its candidates (Radcliff 1994) to analysis showing no evidence whatsoever of a turnout effect on the vote (Erikson 1995).

Two research approaches dominate in the literature. The first type of study examines the question of whether or not the left-wing share of the vote would increase in the election outcome, if voter turnout was higher. On the basis of survey results, it is first determined how party preference differs amongst voters and non-voters. Then, possible variations in the election outcome were derived by simulating higher turnout, as a result of which many studies identify only marginal effects. Bernhagen and Marsh (2007) found minor benefits for small parties and non-incumbents, but few systematic gains for left-of-centre parties. Van der Eijk and Egmond (2007) point out in their comparison of European countries, that left-of-centre parties suffer significant, but exceptionally small losses due to low turnout (see also Pettersen/Rose 2007). Kohler and Rose (2010) find for 29 European countries plus the United States that even if a higher turnout meant that left-of-centre parties received an increased share of the vote, this in itself is insufficient to alter an election result. Lutz and Marsh (2007), in turn, consider that potential bias on low turnout is generally misplaced, being rather small and not in a specific direction – sometimes the left would benefit, sometimes small parties and sometimes the right. Highton and Wolfinger (2001) similarly ascribe small effects to the overrepresentation of socially weaker classes among non-voters such that the 'party of non-voters' overall remains heterogeneous.

Other simulation studies acknowledge a clear linkage between left-of-centre parties' share of the vote and voter turnout (Citrin/Schickler/Sides 2003). In the case of Norway, Finseraas and Vernby (2014) confirm advantages for social democratic parties. However, they note that radical right parties profit in equal measure. Martinez and Gill (2005) observe advantages for the Democratic Party from higher turnout and advantages for the Republican Party from lower turnout in US elections (similarly Nagel/McNulty 1996). These advantages

have decreased since 1960. Hajnal and Trounstine (2005) find that lower turnout leads to substantial reductions in the representation of the less-educated, and African American and Latino minorities. Tóka (2004) comes to the conclusion that higher turnout as well as citizens' greater level of political knowledge may systematically lead to other election results.

A second type of study uses aggregate data which clearly confirms the linkage between voter turnout and election results. Radcliff (1994) identifies a relationship between the Democratic Party's share of the vote and turnout in the US, which seems to have become more pronounced after 1960. Hansford and Gomez (2010) demonstrate similarly that even small variations in turnout lead to notable changes in Democratic Party vote shares. However, Fisher (2007) points out that whilst there is a correlation between turnout and the results of left parties, a causal relation cannot be proven. A further question is whether or not turnout is connected to the orientation of policy in a country. Some studies support the hypotheses that redistributive and welfare politics are stronger when turnout is higher (Kenworthy/Pontusson 2005). Mueller and Stratmann (2002) conclude from a cross-national study that high levels of democratic participation are associated with more equal distributions of income. In the case of India, Nooruddin and Simmons (2015) prove that higher turnout leads to higher spending on public goods. Hill and Leighley (1992) notice that low turnout brings along less redistributive policies in the US. Mahler (2008) also confirms this connection, pointing out that the link between turnout and redistribution is especially strong for social transfers (as opposed to taxes). Thus, vulnerable classes are the most affected.

The finding that elected representatives are more responsive to the preferences of the voters than to those of the non-voters, speaks in favour of the connection between turnout and redistribution policies. Griffin and Newman (2005) show that voter preferences predict the aggregate roll-call behaviour of Senators while non-voter preferences do not. The authors attribute this to three causes: voters tend to vote for like-minded candidates; they tend to communicate their preferences in a stronger way and only they can re-elect representatives.

III.1.2 European Parliament Elections

III.1.2.1 European Parliament Elections as 'Second-Order Elections'

The 'calculus-of-voting' model (Downs 1957) forms the background for the analysis of turnout in EP elections. Nevertheless, in the context of European Parliament (EP) elections, little attention is given to all other explanatory factors in election research. Up to 10% of cross-country variation in turnout can be explained by institutional factors such as compulsory voting, the date of the election (weekend or weekday), as well as the number of simultaneous elections (Mattila 2003). The different focus is due to the widespread assumption that EP elections are considered to be 'second-order elections' (Reif/Schmitt 1980). An essential aspect in explaining low turnout is voters' attributing less importance to EP elections than to national parliamentary elections because no government results from the former (Eijk/Franklin 2007; Hobolt et al. 2008; Marsh 2008; Schmitt 2005; Schmitt/Eijk 2007). The following are typical characteristics of 'second-order elections': (1) low turnout, (2) higher percentage of invalid votes, (3) losses for national governing parties as well as (4) better chances for small and new parties compared with general elections (Reif/Schmitt 1980). The majority of studies are devoted to the examination of different aspects of the second-order model.

Overall, there is no doubt that EP elections are considered to be an electoral sideshow even today (Clark 2014; Franklin 2014; Hix/Marsh 2007; Marsh/Mikhaylov 2010; Träger 2015). At the same time, new studies indicate the need to expand the model by including specific European variables (Flickinger/Studlar/Bennett 2003). For instance, Hix and Marsh (2011) reveal pan-European trends, which can be observed despite the second-order character of EP elections. Pan-European trends also show in certain families of parties' electoral success as, for

example, with the clear though brief ascendancy of green parties in 1989 as well as the strikingly bad electoral outcome for social democratic parties in 1999 and 2009. They conclude that: "a genuinely 'European' election might not in fact be an election where citizens are motivated by their attitudes towards the European Union … but rather a contest where across Europe citizens respond to current policy concerns in similar ways." (Hix/Marsh 2007: 12-3) It is in fact not clear to what extend attitudes towards the European Union affect participation in European elections. Steinbrecher and Rattinger (2012) indicate that attitudes about the EU do not have any influence on participation in European elections. According to them, low participation cannot be attributed either to anti-European inclinations or alienation from the EU's political system. As a consequence, Rose and Borz (2010) emphasise that initiatives at EU level for the mobilisation of voters would have little prospect of success. The results of other studies speak against these pessimistic viewpoints, since they recognise with certainty that specific attitudes about the EU do have an effect. According to Clark (2012), perceiving insufficient representativeness and influence on the part of the European Parliament leads to abstention or voters behaving differently than they would in national elections. Conversely, there is a positive correlation between trust in the EU and turnout (Clark 2014). The higher the level of public endorsement of European integration is in a member state, the higher turnout is in EP elections (Stockemer 2012; see also Flickinger/Studlar 2007). Torcal (2012) confirms this finding and states that the strength in the effect of EU endorsement on turnout depends on whether or not European integration is subject to national political disputes. If the latter is the case, it leads to a stronger mobilisation of voters, even when EU endorsement is weak.

Overall, findings suggest that politicisation of EU topics has the potential to mobilise voters. This assumption is supported by the findings of Hobolt and Wittrock (2011) which show that voters base their EP vote choices primarily on domestic preferences. However, this second-order effect is limited when voters are given additional information about the European integration dimension. Bellucci, Garzia and Maseda (2012) observe a significant impact from European parties' election campaigns on the election outcome for the 2009 EP elections. Thanks to this impact, larger parties could compensate somewhat for the losses expected due to the second-order character of the election. Moreover, Schmitt, Hobolt and Popa (2015) identify a clear mobilisation effect, which took place with the first-time nomination of lead candidates (*Spitzenkandidaten*) for the European Commission presidency in the 2014 EP elections. The results from Söderlund, Wass and Blais (2011) also speak for the unused mobilisation potential through the politicisation of European topics. According to them, individual political interest is more important for participating in EP elections than national elections (see also: Giebler 2014). When there is more at stake, the importance of individual political interest for turnout fades into the background. Currently, citizens who are informed about institutions, actors and EU processes have priority because they have a positive image of the EU and, therefore, go to the polls (Pickel/Smolka 2015). As Weßels (2006) holds, EP elections are not only lacking an instrumental incentive to participate (which is hardly present given its second-order character), but also an effective incentive: The EU is not yet perceived as a political community with its fate determined by EU citizens through participation in democratic EP elections.

III.1.2.2 Low Turnout in European Elections and its Consequences

Social inequality in EP elections is largely unresearched, contrary to the EP elections model, as a second-order election. Whereas social inequality in turnout is generally well-documented within a variety of analyses, there are only a few studies, which examine this connection in the case of EP elections. Fauvelle-Aymar and Stegmaier (2008) identify a clear linkage between regional unemployment rates and turnout in an analysis of post-communist member states: more unemployment leads to a lower turnout in EP elections. A picture similar to the one in general election research emerges regarding the consequences of low turnout in EP elections. There is disagreement as to whether or not low turnout in EP elections has consequences for the equality of democratic representation. Here too, simulation studies demonstrate a significant debilitation of left-of-centre parties caused by low turnout. However, this debilitation has only marginal consequences for the electoral

outcome (Bernhagen/Rose 2014; Eijk/Egmond 2007; Eijk/Schmitt/Sapir 2010; Fisher 2007; Rosema 2007). In contrast, there are aggregate data analyses which establish a clear, distorting effect of low turnout on the electoral outcome (Pacek/Radcliff 2003). The contradiction between the results of simulation and aggregate data analyses can be explained by the findings of Gosselin and Henjak (2004). They first confirm in a simulation study that higher turnout alone barely changes the election outcome. However, when every citizen entitled to vote is brought up to the information level of the 15% best informed, changes of up to 10 percentage points emerge, especially in favour of social and green parties.

There is broad agreement regarding another consequence of low turnout in EP elections. It is known that political socialisation into voting has a strong influence on turnout. It is believed that participation in three consecutive elections is necessary in order to internalise the social norm of voting (Butler and Stokes, 1975; Plutzer 2002; Franklin, 2004). The EP election, as a side election that offers only a small incentive to participate, appears as an obstacle for internalisation of the voting habit. Because of that, it is anticipated that the habit will decrease in the long-term, which it is anticipated will lead to a further decrease in turnout not just in EP elections (Franklin/Hobolt 2011; Górecki 2013).

III.2 Social Inequality in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 European Elections – An Empirical Study[3]

Two findings from the electoral empirical research are of outstanding importance for assessing the connection between political equality and turnout in EP elections. On the one hand, EP elections being perceived as second-order elections that do not lead to the creation of a European government has consequences for political equality in the EU. Given that the second-order character of EP elections is undoubtedly proven, further examination will not be made here. However, the subject will be raised again in the later normative discussion (ch. 5). On the other hand, evidence of social inequality in elections is of special significance. Are there indications that the low and, since the first EP elections in 1979, decreasing turnout comes along with a 'representational distortion'? Contrary to the second-order character of EP elections, social inequality therein and the possibly associated consequences are less well-researched. Whereas the connection between increasing social inequality in elections and simultaneous decline in turnout as a general trend is well documented, the same linkage is not sufficiently proven in the specific case of EP elections. Likewise, the consequences that possibly accrue from a social asymmetry present in EP elections demand further attention. As with general electoral research, EU specific electoral research leads at this point to diverging views.

In what follows, the social inequality of the election as well as possible consequences for the quality of democratic representation by the EP are examined using a comparative study of the 2004, 2009, and 2014 EP elections. The European Election Study serves as our data basis, which includes surveys with 1000 citizens from each member state in the EU after the 2004, 2009, and 2014 EP elections. The analysis focuses on two questions: First, can the connection between social structure and turnout be confirmed for EP elections? Second, can a link between social structure and political orientation be established? These considerations are motivated by the assumption that an above-average abstention from socially vulnerable EU citizens paired with very strongly pronounced specific political orientations speaks for a 'representational distortion' at the expense of politics preferred by socially vulnerable citizens. A brief presentation of the data and methods (III.2.1) will be followed by reports about findings regarding connections between social status, political interest, and voter participation (III.2.2), between social status and political orientation (III.2.3), between age and voter participation (III.2.4), as well as between age and gender (III.2.5).

[3] Conducted with the help of Ayse Guel.

III.2.1 Data and Method

As mentioned above, the European Elections Study (EES) from 2004[4], 2009 and 2014[5] serves as our data basis. Between 1000 and 1300 citizens from each member state were surveyed for all three data sets, whereby the final number of respondents changes among countries and data sets. In the 2014 EES citizens were surveyed split into those from East or West Germany. In order to obtain data about Germany as a whole, a weighting variable (w3) was needed in the analyses. Moreover, it should be noted that all variables relevant to our analyses were cleared from the answers "don't know" or "no answer" and "rejected". This step can be justified in order to avoid biases in the analyses.

In this section it is necessary first to find empirical evidence for the connection between inequality and participation in EP elections. To do this, various bivariate correlations were carried out by means of the correlation coefficients Spearman (ordinal scale level) or Pearson (metrical scale level) between two variables. These correlations will be discussed in detail below.

Social status was determined by the variables social class and education. In the case of social class, the variable was ordinal and it rested upon self-assessment. The variable social class comprises 5 categories in the 2004 and 2009 EES: 1. Working Class, 2. Lower Middle Class, 3. Middle Class, 4. Upper Middle Class, 5. Upper Class. Regarding the 2014 EES, the variable social class encompassed only 3 categories – 1. Working, 2. Middle and 3. Higher Class. There are also differences in the data sets for the variable 'education'. The variable in question is expressed in a metrical scale level in the 2004 and 2009 EES, where the age of completing compulsory schooling is stated, whereas in the 2014 EES the variable is ordinal and merely comprises 3 categories (1. 15, 2. 16-20, 3. 20+). These differences are by no means tangential to the comparability of bivariate analytical results.

Political orientation is reproduced in total by 4 variables per data set. So, those polled were first asked to position themselves within the left-right spectrum. Here the variable is metrical too and respondents can align themselves on a 0-10 scale between left (value 0) and right (value 10). Secondly, the question covered affinity to a certain party, where corresponding parties themselves were ranked on a left-right scale. For this purpose, a re-coding of the relevant variable into a new, metrical variable took place. The following 8 families of parties are represented in the EP: 1. European United Left/Nordic Green Left, 2. The Greens, 3. Party of European Socialists, 4. Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, 5. European People's Party, 6. Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists, 7. Alliance for Direct Democracy in Europe, 8. European Alliance for Freedom. According to these 8parlamentary parties, a re-coding into an 8 point scale took place, in which each party was assigned to one group. As a last step, this comprehensive 8 point variable was re-coded into a new dummy variable that contained only two codes, code 0 for right and code 1 for left. Here it is important to point out that all parties that were assigned codes 1 to 3 in the 8 point scale, are assigned code 1 (left) for the dummy variable, whereas the rest of the parties with codes 4 to 8 are now assigned code 0 (right).

Furthermore, a re-coding of the variables about respondents' choice in the last national election (variable 3) as well as in the last EP election (variable 4) took place following the same 8 point scale or rather the left-right dummy variables.

[4] Some important comments should be made beforehand on the 2004 EES. Data about Lithuania is deficient. Though 1005 respondents from Lithuania are included in the dataset, we obtain invalid values for all of our relevant empirical analyses. Furthermore, data about Malta is missing completely meaning that citizens in Malta were not surveyed. Belgium shows invalid values only in the question about going to the polls for the 2004 EP election. Nevertheless, the question as to what party was voted for in the last EP election shows valid results. Thus, the question of participation in Belgium can be resolved and be included in the analysis.

[5] Given that the EU has expanded since 2004, 2007 and 2013, the country composition in the 2004 EES, the 2009 EES and the 2014 EES is different. Bulgaria and Romania are first featured in the 2009 EES, Croatia in the 2014 EES.

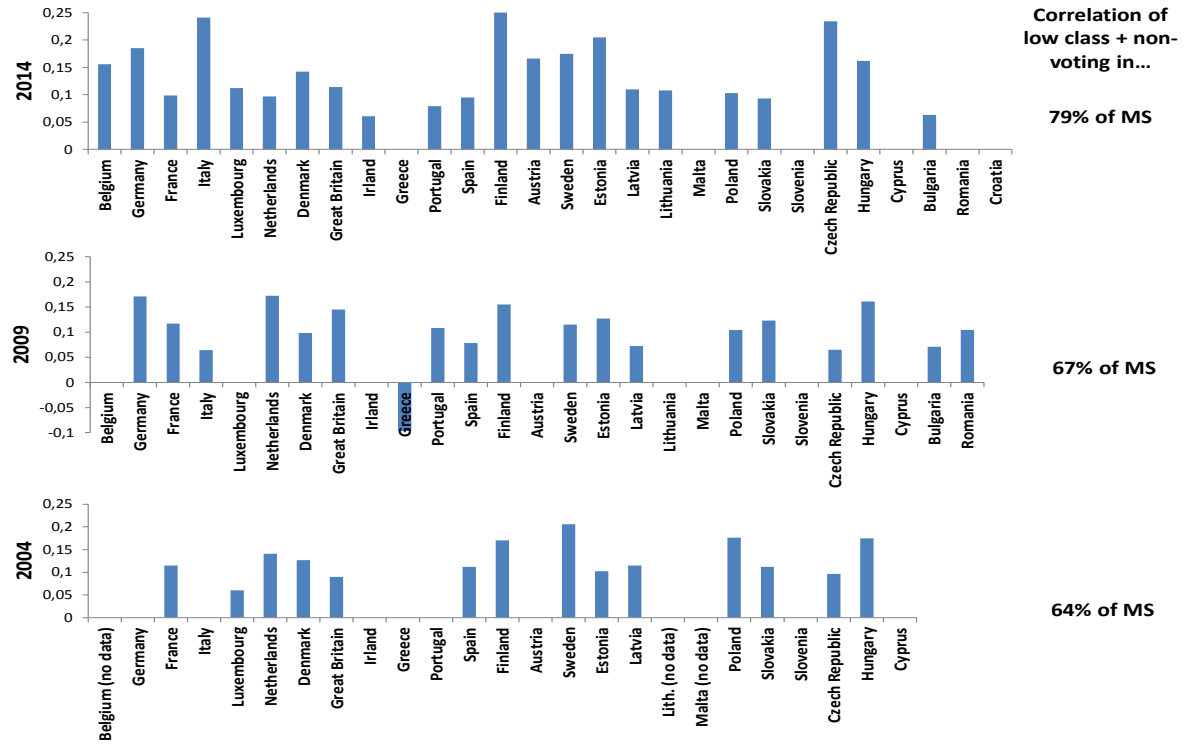
At the end of this section about data and methods it is necessary to mention a problem, according to which especially the re-coded variables recently discussed assessing party affinity as well as vote decision in national and EP elections show a high rate of 'missings'. These are invalid responses which vary from 20 to sometimes beyond 50% between different countries in the case of variables assessing party affinity and vote decision in EP elections. Error rates per country are smaller in the case of vote decision at the national level, but they still vary in any case between 10 and 40%. The absence of valid answers is primarily associated with the fact that all respondents always had the option to state that they had no party affinity and also that they did not vote in the last national or EP election. These groups of people are not included in the new variable based on the 8 point left-right scale and thus they show as 'missings' or as invalid cases. This in turn complicated a multivariate analysis significantly. A logistic regression was also performed in which the influence of several variables (social class, education, political interest, left-right self-assessment, left-right scale, party affinity, and national election's vote decision as independent variables) on the vote or non-vote in the last EP election (dependent variable) was explored. However, due to the extremely high number of invalid cases, the results of the logistical regression have to be considered as inconclusive. When a considerable part of the respondents is excluded from an analysis, there is no longer a guarantee of representativity from the results of multivariate data analyses. For this reason, we eventually decided to focus primarily on bivariate correlations. Admittedly, the same problem remains for the aforementioned variables regarding parties. However, correlations are not about empirical probability statements (see logistical regression) where multiple variables can be simultaneously included in the analysis, but rather about simple connections between two variables. The error rate concerning party identification and choice seems to verify the gap between voting and inequality since within all three data of 2004, 2009 and 2014 the working class and also lower middle class (as well as lower education level) have stronger missing rates in "did not vote" or "no party identification" than the higher classes (see Appendix).

III.2.2 Social Status, Political Interest and Voter Participation

The empirical election research establishes a connection between social status and voter participation. This is also confirmed for the 2004, 2009 and 2014 EP elections. Voting seems to be connected to class membership in particular. There is a correlation between social class and participation in 14 out of 22 member states[6] for the 2004 EP elections, in 19 out of 27 member states in the elections of 2009, and in 22 out of 28 member states for 2014. With one exception (Greece 2009), all correlations go in the same direction: the weaker the social class, the more probable is abstention. It is also clear that this correlation increased in the period examined. The correlation between weak social class and abstention probability is present in 64% of the member states in 2004, 67%, in 2009 and 79% in 2014 (figure 2).[7]

[6] Data for Belgium, Malta and Lithuania are defective; Bulgaria and Romania are not included.
[7] All included correlations in fig. 2 onwards show at least a significance level of 5%.

Figure 2: Social Class and Abstention in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 EP Elections



The hypothesis of a social discrepancy in voting behaviour can be graphically illustrated in a bar diagram.[8] As the table below shows for the election of 2014, in all EU-member states taken together in the middle class turnout is 26,4 per cent higher than in the working class:

EU AS A WHOLE

Social Class, dichotomous

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Valid	Working Class	5604	34,0	36,8	36,8
	Middle Class	9615	58,3	63,2	100,0
	Total	15219	92,2	100,0	
Missing	System	1282	7,8		
Total		16501	100,0		

[8] The exact percentages of the bar diagram can be seen in the table above (see valid percentages). Data were weighted with a weighting variable in order to reproduce the population size of the individual member states in a representative way. Only cases in which respondents stated to have voted in the last EP election were considered or filtered for the creation of the bar diagram. Then, the frequency distribution of the aforementioned respondents was graphically represented in the bar diagram according to their social class. It is also important to note that a dichotomised class variable was used which solely comprises the working and middle class. The higher class was deliberately ignored since the small percentage lead to distortions in the diagrams.

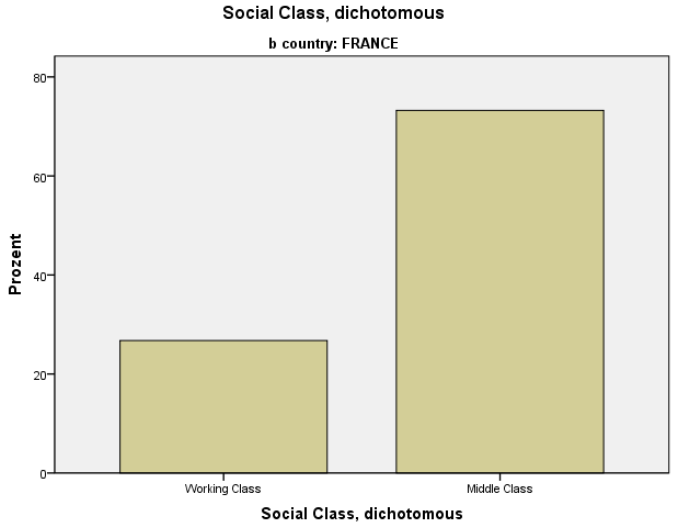
To different degrees the tendency is the same in selected member states: France and Italy show a very high social discrepancy, Great Britain a rather low one. Interesting exceptions are Greece and Spain showing the opposite tendency (see below).

FRANCE

Social Class, dichotomous[a]

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Valid	Working Class	134	25,7	26,7	26,7
	Middle Class	367	70,4	73,3	100,0
	Total	501	96,2	100,0	
Missing	System	20	3,8		
Total		521	100,0		

a. b country = FRANCE



ITALY

Social Class, dichotomous[a]

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Valid	Working Class	163	21,3	24,1	24,1
	Middle Class	513	67,0	75,9	100,0
	Total	676	88,3	100,0	
Missing	System	90	11,7		
Total		766	100,0		

a. b country = ITALY

GREAT BRITAIN

Social Class, dichotomous[a]

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Valid	Working Class	247	45,6	47,8	47,8
	Middle Class	270	49,8	52,2	100,0
	Total	517	95,4	100,0	
Missing	System	25	4,6		
Total		542	100,0		

a. b country = GREAT BRITAIN

GREECE

Social Class, dichotomous[a]

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Valid	Working Class	440	50,4	51,5	51,5
	Middle Class	414	47,4	48,5	100,0
	Total	854	97,8	100,0	
Missing	System	19	2,2		
Total		873	100,0		

a. b country = GREECE

SPAIN

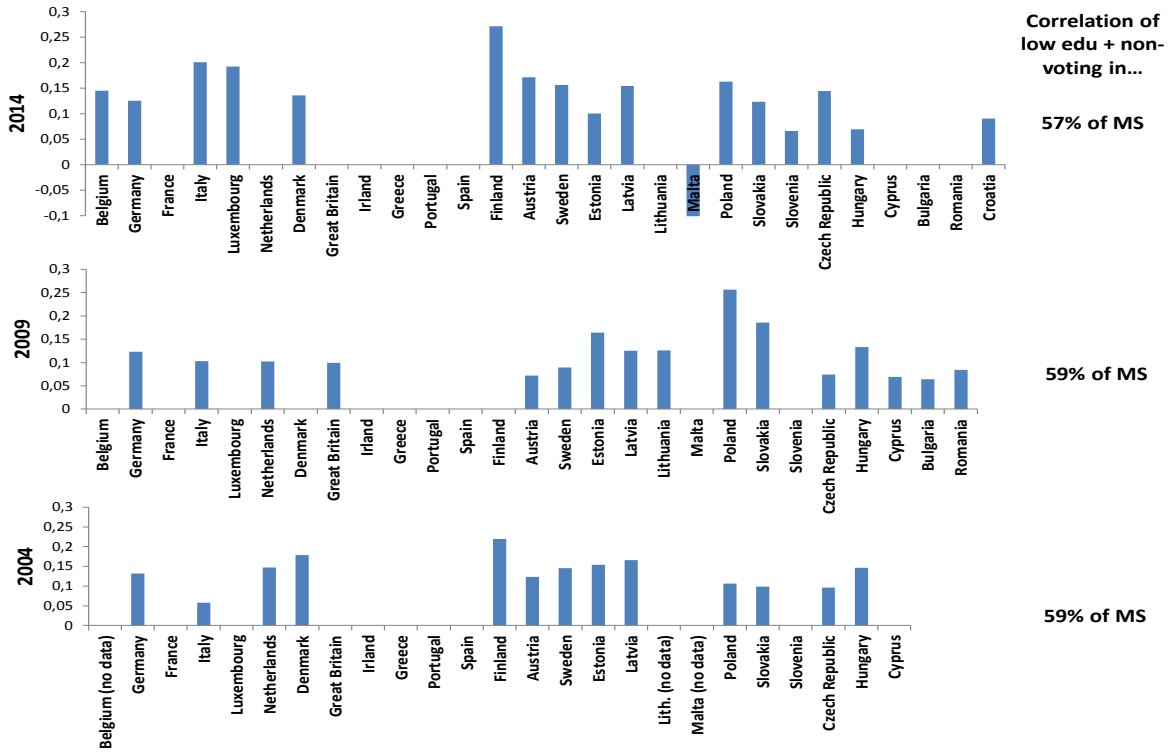
Social Class, dichotomous[a]

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated Percentage
Valid	Working Class	404	65,7	66,8	66,8
	Middle Class	201	32,7	33,2	100,0
	Total	605	98,4	100,0	
Missing	System	10	1,6		
Total		615	100,0		

a. b country = SPAIN

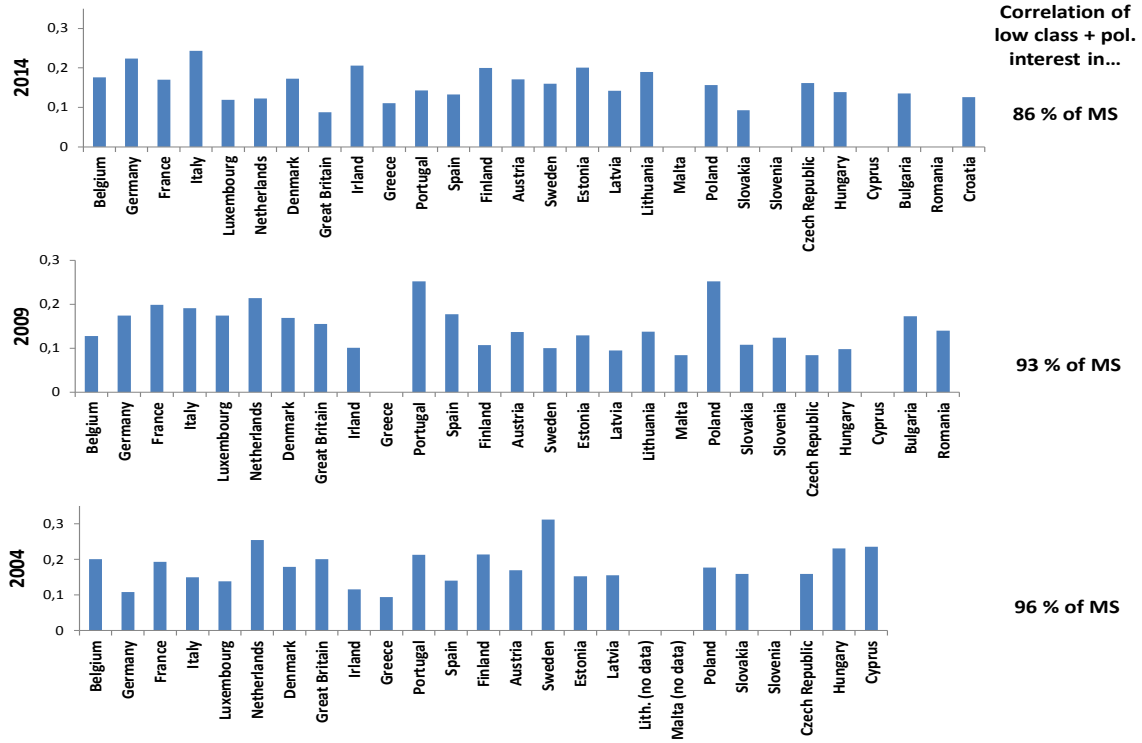
The correlation between education and voter participation is slightly less pronounced, affecting member states as follows: 13 out of 22 in 2004, 16 out of 27 in 2009, and 17 out of 28 in 2014. The known trend is present with one exception (Malta 2014): the weaker the level of education, the more probable is abstention. Contrary to the correlation between social class and voter participation, this trend remains constant for all three elections. The trend is seen as 59% of the member states in 2004, 59% in 2009, and 57% in 2014 (figure 3).

Figure 3: Education and Abstention in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 EP Elections



These results confirm the largely shared finding of social inequality in voter participation. Against this, it is argued that social status is not crucial for participation, but rather that other attitudes, primarily political interest, are. This objection loses credibility when contemplating the correlation between social status and political interest that is quite pronounced in all three elections. Membership in a weak social class correlates with little political interest in the 2004 EP election for 22 out of 23 member states (96%), 25 out of 27 (93%) in 2009, and 24 out of 28 (86%) in 2014 (figure 4).

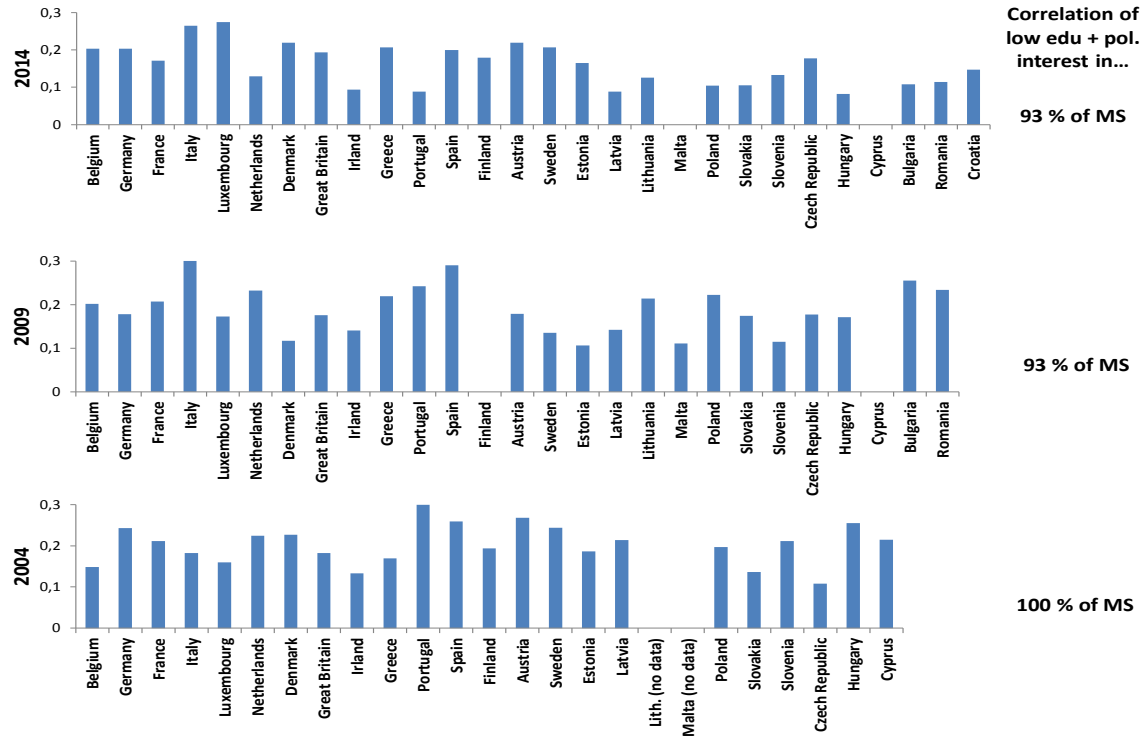
Figure 4: Social Class and Political Interest in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 EP Elections



The picture is similar for the correlation between low education and little political interest which features in all three EP elections. In the 2004 EP election this correlation exists in all member states[9], for 2009 in 25 out of 27 (93%), and 2014 in 26 out of 28 (93%) (figure5).

[9] Exceptions: Lithuania and Malta because both countries were lacking valid data.

Figure 5: Education and Political in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 EP Elections

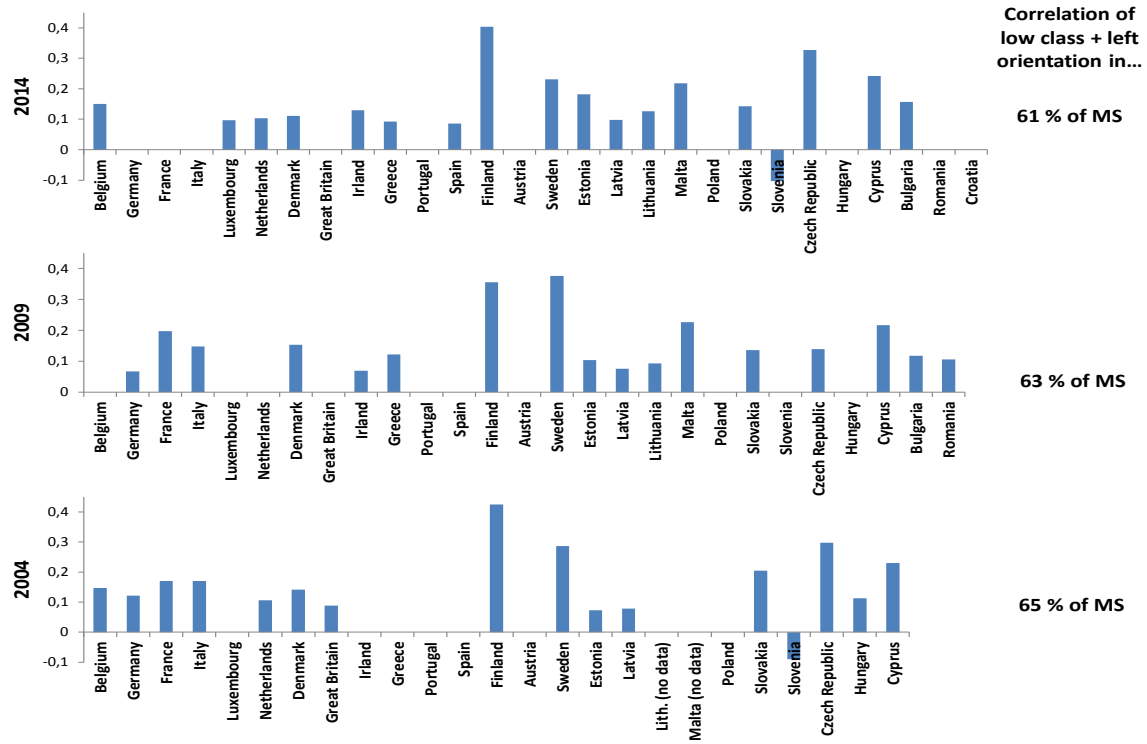


III.2.3 Social Status and Political Orientation

The correlation between social status and voter participation is confirmed in our analyses. But is there an associated problem with the level of democratic equality? In the next step, the correlation between social status and political orientation will be considered in order to find out more. Whereas social status is again captured by the variables of social class and education, political orientation is measured by means of the following four variables: self-assessment of the respondents on the political left-right scale; affinity of the respondents to a party, as well as respondents' choice in the last national election and also in the last EP election. Variables about party preference as well as the respondents' party choice in the last EP election and in the last national election were recoded – as explained above – in order to achieve a more precise placement of those polled within the political left-right spectrum. For this purpose, all national parties that competed in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 elections as well as the respective, more recent national elections were located on a left-right scale in accordance with their affiliation to family parties represented in the EP. The classification of European party families follows the typical categorisation and was divided into two factions, left and right.[10] For the correlation between social class and self-placing within the left-right spectrum, results are as follows (figure 6):

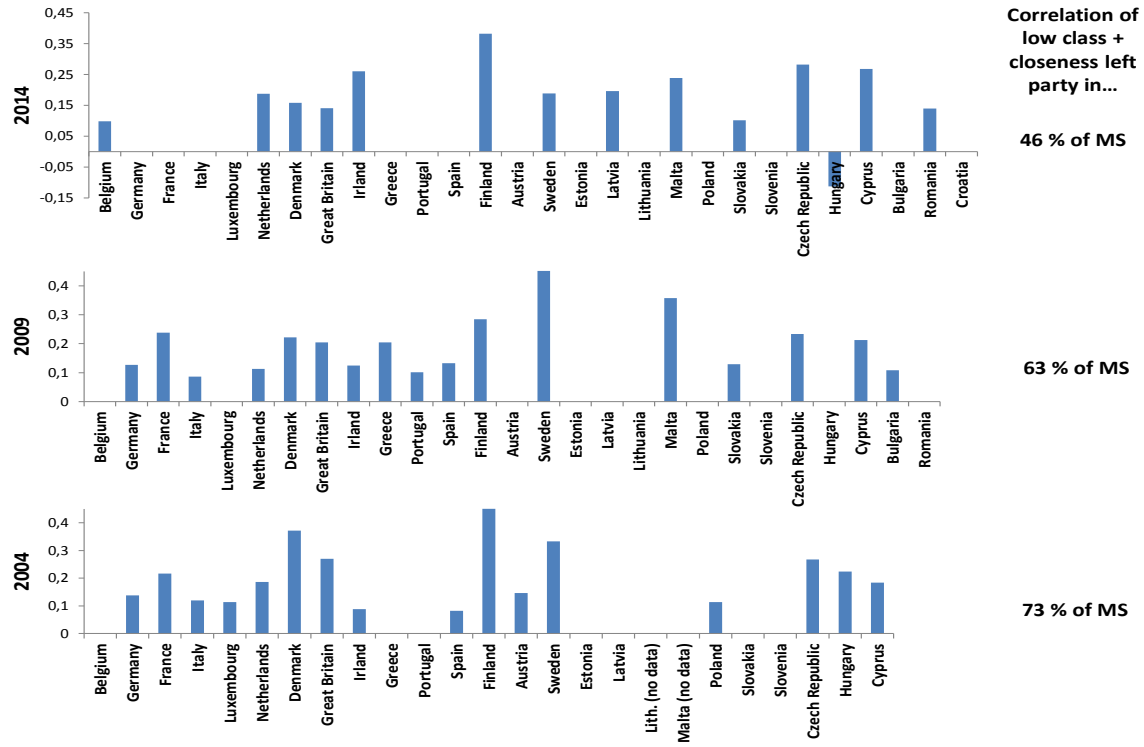
[10] Left to right: 1. GUE-NGL, 2. Greens/EFA, 3. S&D, 4. ALDE (form the left camp), 5. EPP, 6. ECR, 7. AECR, 8. ADDE, 9. European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) (constitute the right camp).

Figure 6: Social Class and Left-Right Self-Placing



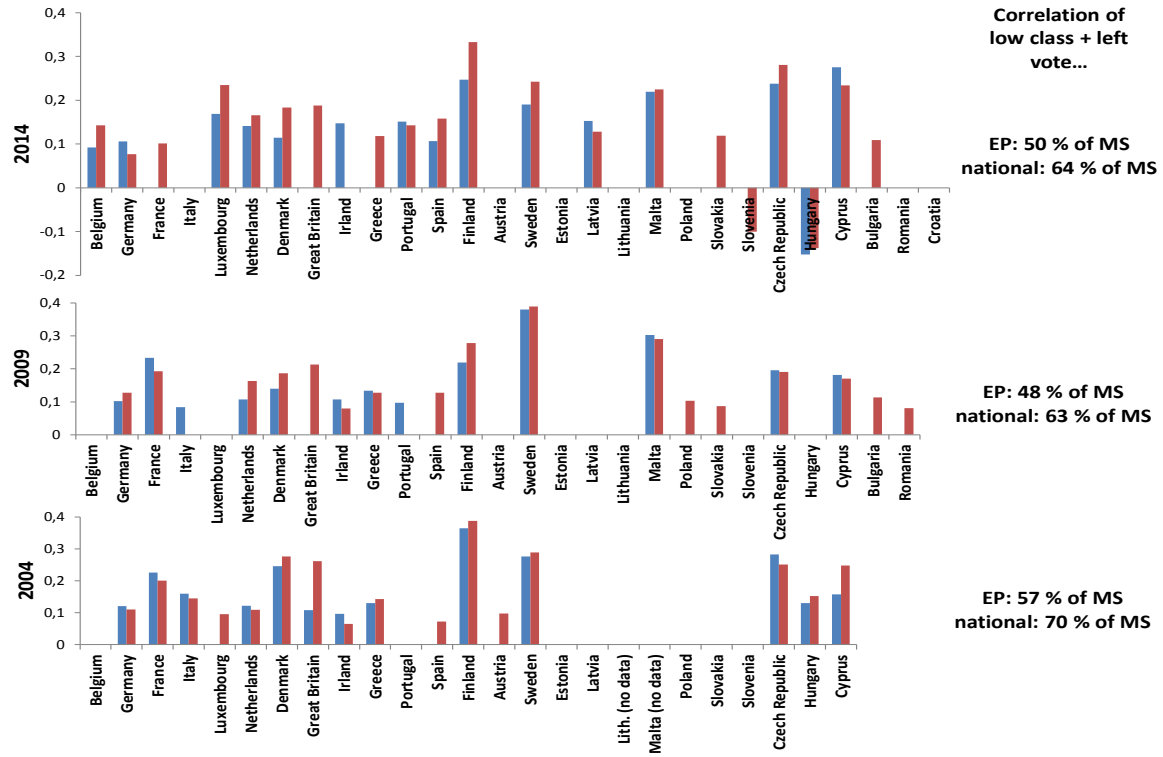
A correlation between class and left-right placing exists for 16 out of 17 member states in 2004, 17 out of 27 member states in 2009, and 18 out of 28 member states in 2014. With two exceptions (Slovenia in 2014 and 2004) there is a tendency for members of weaker social classes to rate themselves rather towards the left. This trend shows for 65% of the member states in 2004, 63% in 2009, as well as 61% in 2014. Similar, although not quite as pronounced, is the correlation between social class and party affinity. With one exception (Hungary 2014), all significant correlations show a tendency among members of weaker social classes to see themselves near a left-wing party (73% of the member states in 2004, 63% in 2009, and 46% in 2014) (figure 7).

Figure 7: Social Class and Party Affinity



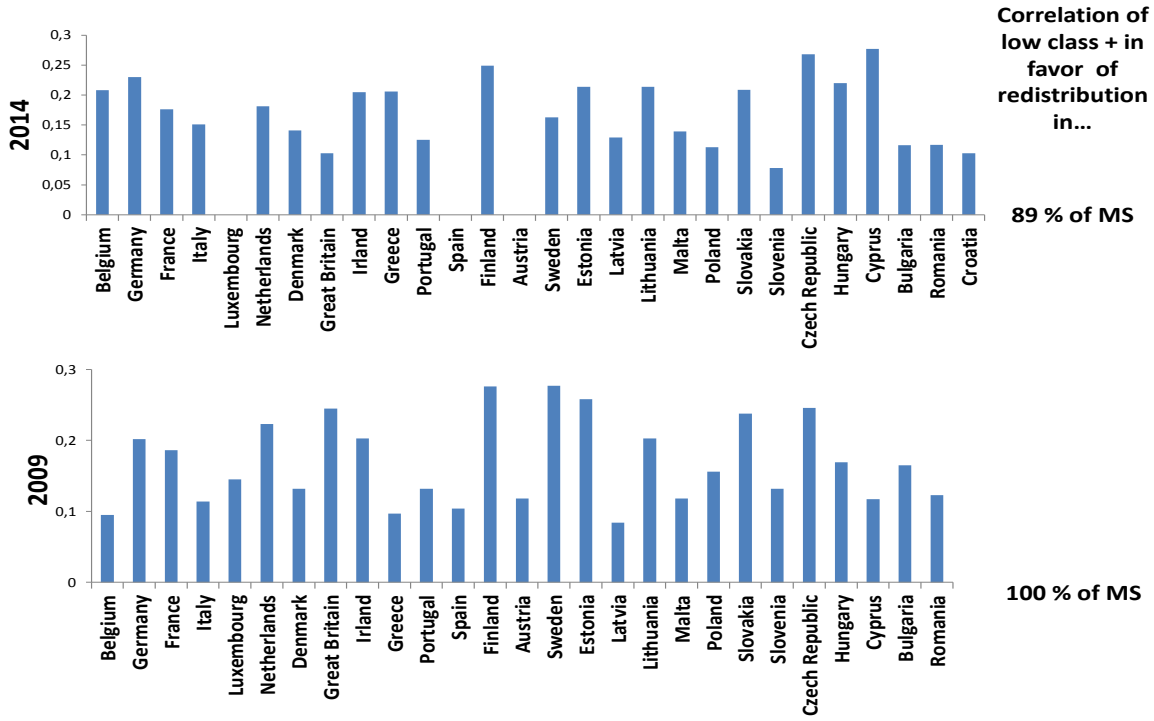
Social class is also clearly connected with voting decisions in favour of a party from the right or the left camps. In 2004, members of weaker social classes chose rather left-of-centre parties when they were asked how they voted in the last EP elections. This holds true for 57% of the member states and in the most recent national election for 70% of the member states. In 2009 this correlation remained respectively for 48% and 63% of the member states, in 2014 for 50% and 64% of the member states (figure 8).

Figure 8: Social Class and Vote Decision in the Last EP and National Election



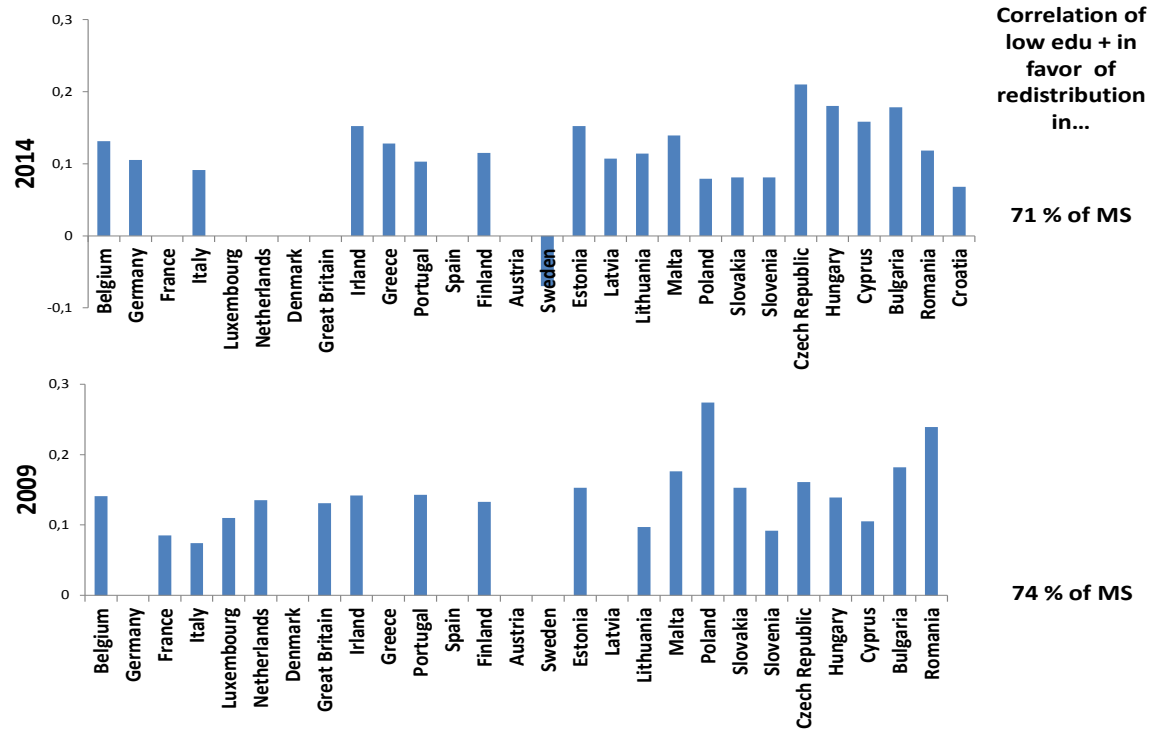
It is in the question about redistribution of income and wealth where the correlation between weaker social status and political orientation becomes most visible. The question of whether or not one supports redistribution of income and wealth in favour of poorer members of society was not included in the EES survey in 2004; the results available, therefore, are from 2009 and 2014 only. However, those are unequivocal. In 2004, 89% of the member states showed the tendency that socially weaker classes favour redistribution more than those who are financially better off, whereas the correlation exists in all member states in 2009 (figure 9).

Figure 9: Social Class and Endorsement of Redistribution



Equally clear is the correlation between respondents' level of education and their attitude towards redistribution. Support of redistribution policies by citizens with low education was greater than by the better educated for 20 out of 27 member states (74%) in 2009, and for 20 out of 28 member states (71%) in 2014 (figure 10). Interestingly, the only exception within this trend is Sweden in 2014, which shows the reverse correlation: the better the education, the more support of redistribution policies.

Figure 10: Education and Endorsement of Redistribution



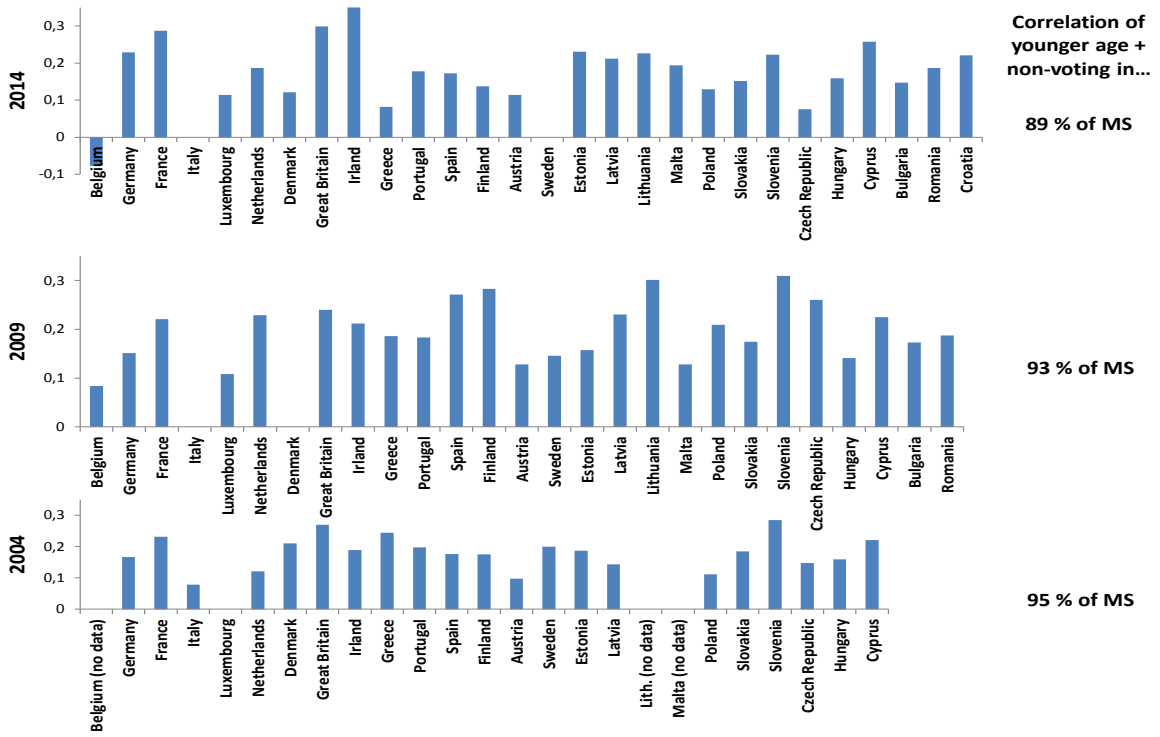
Examination of the connection between education and political orientation provides markedly less clear results beyond the correlation between education and the approval of redistribution. Contrary to social class, analyses show significant correlations consistently in far fewer member states. Moreover, the tendencies of these significant correlations go in different directions. For instance, in 2004 education and party affinity correlate in only 8 member states: a correlation exists between lower education and affinity to left-of-centre parties in 5 member states, whereas citizens of socially weaker classes state affinity to right-of-centre parties in 3 countries. Although significant correlations exist between education and political orientation in some cases for the majority of the member states, it is consistently the case that these correlations exist in both directions. For example, there is a significant connection between education and the left-right self-assessment of those polled in 14 out of 23 member states (61%) in 2004. However, it was found that in 8 member states respondents with low education assessed themselves rather as being to the left, while they rated themselves as being rather to the right in the 6 other member states.

III.2.4 Age and Voter Participation

All three elections show a clear correlation between age and participation (figure 11). All significant correlations (exception: Belgium 2014) show the tendency that older citizens participate more in EP elections, whereas young people rather abstain. The correlation exists in 21 member states (95%)[11] in 2004, in 25 member states (93%) in 2009, and in 25 member states (89%) in 2014.

[11] No data for Belgium, Lithuania, and Malta.

Figure 11: Age and Participation



A closer examination by age group (over 50 years old, 30-49 years old, and 18-29 years old) of the correlation between social background and participation as well as political orientation did not provide any usable results. The reason for this is the small number of valid cases in the 18-29 age group and a proper comparison is not, therefore, possible.

III.2.5 Gender and Participation

Gender seems to have no influence on participation in any of the three EP elections. A very weak correlation exists between gender and participation for 5 out of 22 member states (23%) in 2004. While in four cases a very weak correlation between female gender and abstention exists, one case shows the reverse correlation. Although a correlation shows for only 4 member states (15%) in 2009, there is a correlation for 10 member states in 2014, albeit with a different tendency. In 6 countries the female gender correlates with a tendency to stay away from the EP election, while the male gender correlates in the other 4 countries.

III.3 Dimension 1: Political Equality among EU-Citizens?

Democratic citizenship crucially depends on the political equality of individuals. As with national democracy, equality among EU-citizens is generated by elections to the European Parliament based on the principle of 'one person, one vote'. As outlined above, we consider the political equality of individuals to be the *first* dimension of a three-dimensional perspective on political equality in the EU (see II.3.). The discussion so far has outlined two conditions undermining political equality on this level: social inequality in electoral participation in European elections (see III.2 above) and degressive proportionality in the allocation of seats to the European Parliament (see II.3 above). Both will now be covered in the light of particular features within the EU's political order.

III.3.1 Social Inequality in European Voting – A Republican Perspective

Social inequality in voting is well-documented as a result of electoral research (see above III.1). This finding is supported by our analysis based on the European Election Studies for the European Elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014 (see III.2 above).

What are the consequences for democracy of social inequality in voting? As argued above (see I.2 and I.3), democratic theory offers two main evaluative accounts: the liberal and the republican. From a liberal perspective, low voter turnout does not pose a challenge to political equality. On the contrary, it recognises the decision for or against participation in elections as a private matter for the individual and moreover a sign of citizens' satisfaction. If citizens see their interests represented in democratic politics anyway, opportunity costs can easily exceed the benefit of casting a vote.

But this interpretation becomes doubtful in light of a puzzle produced by the empirical results on participation in European elections. It is demonstrably not the satisfied but the unsatisfied citizens who refrain from casting their vote (Kohler 2006). And it is those whose life chances are comparably restricted (due to low income and education) who do not vote. Thus the puzzle of social inequality in voting is: why do those who are least able to improve their own life conditions and most dependent on policy change towards stronger social and redistributive policies, make least use of the right to vote? And what follows from this for democracy?

Claus Offe (2013) suggests a republican answer to the puzzle of social inequality of voting, which rests on two assumptions. First, he argues that besides the formal equal right to vote, political equality depends on certain social conditions. Drawing on Robert Dahl (1989: 323-4), he holds that political inequality is caused by 1) "differences in resources and opportunities for employing violent coercion"; (2) differences "in economic positions, resources, and opportunities"; and (3) differences "in knowledge, information, and cognitive skills". Societal distribution of these resources is not naturally given, but to a large extent the outcome of previous politics. The second assumption is that democratic elections function not only as a medium for transmitting citizens' interests into politics, but also vice versa. They open up the way for public contestation through political debate among citizens, by means of which their political interest is first stimulated. Offe's republican perspective thus differs from the liberal version in two important respects: first, individual interests are not previously given but first generated through the participation in political contestation, especially in the context of elections; and second, the degree to which citizens dispose of the necessary (economic and cognitive) conditions for the equal political participation is itself to a large extent the outcome of previous politics. The important consequence is that non-participation is evidently not "freely chosen", or it is freely chosen in a different sense, as the conditions that are statistically correlated with this choice are themselves not freely chosen but consist of circumstances that are "given in a way that, at any moment, is beyond the control of those affected by them" (Offe 2013b: 199).

Against this background, Offe develops an explanation for the increasing abstention of socially weak citizens from voting. Political decisions have societal outcomes that affect citizens' ability and motivation to generate political interests, participate in and shape democratic politics. There is a feedback loop between politically (co-)created life conditions, on the one hand, and the conditions of equal participation in the democratic process, on the other. Thus, Offe argues, it hardly comes as a surprise to find that the less privileged more often refrain from voting. For political elites in democracies it is rational to supply policies in the interests of their electorate, if they want to stay in power and "optimize the allocation of pains to [known] non-voters" (Streeck in Offe 2013: 198). Taking up issues that address the camp of (known) non-voters means risking politicisation. This might cause their voters to turn to other, risk-avoiding parties. Consequently, Offe holds with Schattschneider (1960) that the agenda of democratic politics will shift towards the interests of those who are known for having a higher propensity to vote. Even if this relationship may be hard to capture theoretically, less privileged

citizens know it from their own political experience. Herein lies the answer to the growing social inequality of democratic voting: although policy change would be in their interest, socially weak citizens lack the trust that their electoral participation is changing the political agenda and the belief that their own voice actually matters:

*"Those who do not, or do not fully, participate in political life fail to do so because they perceive the state, governments and political parties as lacking both the necessary **means** and the credible **intent** to 'make a difference' on matters (such as employment, equality, education, the labour market, social security and financial market regulation) that form the core concerns of those who do not participate; they fail to participate **because** they have come to understand that lack perfectly well" (Offe 2013: 202; emphasis original)*

The explosive issue is the likelihood that both the inclination of the worse-off to non-participation and the inclination of political elites to supply policies in the interest of the well-off will feed back on each other. If the socially weak section of society lacks trust in the promise of democratic equality and turns its back on democratic politics, this creates a vicious circle. The result is a self-enforcing downward spiral of democratic participation that poses a serious threat to democracies:

"as people are conditioned to 'waste' their rights and political resources, and as competing political elites and political parties come to understand that parts of the electorate are less likely than others to make use of their political resources, those elites will concentrate their platforms, campaigns and mobilization strategies upon those segments of the citizenry who actually 'count' and neglect others, launching a negative and exclusionary learning cycle of mutual alienation between elites and underprivileged citizens." (Offe 2013: 203; italics original)

III.3.2 Degressive Proportionality in the Allocation of Seats to the European Parliament

Apart from the social inequality of voting for the European Parliament, a second way of undermining individual political equality in the EU is caused by degressive proportionality in seat allocation. The allocation of parliamentary seats in accordance with the size of member states (a maximum of 96 and a minimum of 6 seats per member state) causes a considerable asymmetry in the weight of individual votes: while in France 869000 EU-citizens send one representative to the European Parliament, in Malta only 67000 EU-citizens have exactly the same representation. In national democracies it is common to restrict voting equality to keep democracy functioning. For example, electoral thresholds in national elections are justified with the argument that otherwise a stable governing majority and working capacity of parliament is threatened. However, for elections to the European Parliament the German constitutional court rejected electoral thresholds, arguing that it restricts electoral equality in unjustifiable ways (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2014). It reasons that fragmentation does not undermine the working capacity of the European Parliament, because it does not establish a government requiring stable majorities. In similar terms the court also rejected a case against degressive proportionality some years before in the Lisbon-ruling (Bundesverfassungsgericht 2009) – although it considerably restricts electoral equality.

The court justifies its ruling by pointing to the structure of the EU's political system. According to this, the function of the European Parliament differs insofar as national parliament forming and controlling the government are concerned. Equal individual representation is secondary to the European Parliament, the court holds, because there is no 'European people' to be represented. Instead, the EU still has the basic form of a confederation [Staatenbund] in which the member states delegate competences. The court accordingly assumes that the primary function of the European parliament is not the representation of EU-citizens, but rather the representation of national demoi. For this reason both the allocation of seats according to the national population's size and the minimum number of 6 representatives per member state is justified. Without the latter, the democratic conditions in a national community could not be adequately mirrored by the group of European delegates appointed by this national demoi. The court concludes that only if the EU is given

a constitution that assigns the European Parliament powers of government formation, does degressive proportionality becomes illegitimate and need to be substituted by direct proportionality.

III.3.3 Consequences for the (In)Equality among EU-Citizens

Given the context of the EU as an order of states *and* citizens, both sources of political inequality in European elections have to be evaluated differently. The German constitutional court justifies degressive proportionality in seat allocation by arguing for the EU, and thus also for the European Parliament, that individual political equality has to be subordinated to another kind of political equality: equality in representation of national demoi. Only if an EU constitution substitutes for the national constitutions and turns the European Parliament into an institution with the power of government formation, does degressive proportionality become illegitimate. As Lord and Pollack (2010) rightly point out, the court severely restricts the range of possibilities concerning the further constitutional development of the EU by holding on to the alternative confederation or federal state [Staatenbund or Bundesstaat]. This is unfortunate as it threatens to block the further development of the EU into a democratic order of states *and* citizens as written in the Treaties and suggested by the concept of EU-demoicracy.

However, striking a balance between individual and state-equality does not necessarily imply voting equality through direct proportionality in the European Parliament. Lord and Pollack stress that a distribution/separation, according to which state-equality is a matter of the Council and citizens' equality in the European Parliament, is just one possible way to balance both. Another is to balance them inside each of those institutions. To a certain extent this is already so. Majority decisions in the Council have to meet the criterion of double majority. A majority of member states (55%) must represent a majority of EU-citizens (65% of the EU-population). Likewise, the electoral system of the European Parliament based on degressive proportionality can be seen as a compromise that contains the individual equality among EU-citizens ('one person, one vote') by also acknowledging the principle of state-equality in the Parliament (European Parliament 2011a).Nevertheless, one might well ask if the degree to which degressive proportionality compromises the equal representation of citizens to the advantage of the representation of national demoi is not too high (Brunkhorst 2014b: 123-7).

Thus, in the ordinary legislative procedure each of the principles – equality among EU-citizens and state-equality – takes the lead in one institution without ignoring the other. In this light, degressive proportionality in the European Parliament's electoral law could be justified as compatible with the conditions of political equality in a demoicracy without refuting (as the German constitutional court does) the European Parliament's primary function of representing EU-citizens.

This is not to say that EU-citizens would already be democratically represented in adequate ways. For one thing, the subordinate status of the European Parliament in the EU's political process stands against that (as will be taken up later). For another thing, social inequality of voting in European elections is a serious challenge to individual political equality in the EU. From a republican perspective, democratic practice is seen in terms of a discourse in which all voices are heard and conflicts between citizens' views and interests are mediated in order to determine societal conditions commonly and equally. The abstention from voting in European elections by the socially weak means that a crucial societal interest gains less and less weight in the common regulation of EU-affairs – and, as a consequence, EU politics more and more departs from the ideal of democratic self-determination. The results from our study of the European elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014 support Offe's thesis claiming a self-enforcing downward spiral of democratic participation in European elections. The connection between weak social status and non-participation has become stronger in the course of the financial crisis. At the same time, the trust of the less privileged in the will and the capacity of left wing parties to stand for their interests seems to have eroded.

The social inequality of voting is fuelling the political inequality among EU-citizens. It indicates a growth in the number of unsatisfied citizens who no longer believe in the promise of democratic equality, who find dealing with political alternatives to be a waste of time and, consequentially, turn their backs on politics. To the degree that re-entry into the democratic game becomes harder for these citizens (because their social conditions increasingly hamper political participation), they grow more open to the promises of populist parties that reject democratic values outright. As Offe stresses, this tendency will be aggravated and democracy will be seriously threatened if political elites focus primarily on maintaining power. As long as politics is shaped by focusing on the concerns of those who will most likely put up resistance in the event of conflict (that is, the more privileged citizens), the signal for the socially weak that their voices count for less becomes increasingly stronger. "The net result is a nominally democratic political system that is systematically biased to favour the middle class and everyone above it" (Offe 2013: 198).

With this, the current EU fails to fulfil a crucial democratic condition for an EU-demoicracy. "Democracy is that set of institutions by which individuals are empowered to form and change the terms of their common life together, including democracy itself." (Bohman 2007: 2). To meet this requirement of any democracy, and thus also of an EU-demoicracy, the downward spiral of democratic participation must be brought to a halt. A precondition for this is the trust of *all* citizens that (a majority in) the European Parliament is able to (co-)determine EU politics in the interests of all EU-citizens. Rebuilding this trust calls for a change of attitude amongst the political elite. They have to show in a credible way that they do not play the democratic game simply to maintain power at any cost, but are aware of the presuppositions for democratic practice and act accordingly. They also have to demonstrate the will and capacity to defend the equal value of all societal interests against resistance (say, of market actors) even if this leads to a short-term loss of governing power (which is not certain) (Habermas 2015, Offe 2013).

For rebuilding citizens' trust in the promise of democratic equality, another issue is at least equally important. It refers to the relation of political equality of individuals and the EU's institutionalised political process. As long as the EU's decision-making process, particularly in economic governance, remains a non-public and depoliticised process driven by national executives in which the European Parliament plays only a subordinate role or no role at all, EU citizens (and most of all the socially weak from all member states) will not have their voices heard. The problem of voting social inequality in European elections cannot be captured without taking the status of the European Parliament within the EU's institutional architecture into account. The secondary role of the European Parliament, which translates into a particularly low voter turnout, is a crucial factor that reinforces the social inequality of voting and thus inequality among EU citizens in parliamentary representation.

Both problems of political equality of individuals – the social inequality of voting and the degressive proportionality in electoral law – are related to the broader institutional context of the EU's political process. As will be discussed in the following part, the EU can be a democracy of democracies only if it balances equally all three dimensions of political equality – among citizens, among states and among citizens and states.

PART III

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This part assesses the degree of political equality in the EU with reference to the three-dimensional perspective elaborated above. It introduces the concept of EU-demoicracy in order to apply the principles of democracy to the particular EU-context in which a sustainable equilibrium between two types of political subjects has to be achieved: national demoi and individual EU-citizens. It outlines how far the EU is still away from a 'democracy of democracies' since decision-making procedures are arranged to avoid political conflict, thus taking a variety of salient, in particular redistributive issues, off the agenda. It is argued that this depoliticised mode of governance is no longer a guarantor of European integration. Particularly in times of crisis it causes tensions that endanger the EU's continued existence. Finally, therefore, there is a discussion of measures to be taken for the advancement of political equality in the EU and associated obstacles to democratic citizenship: among more practical measures the focus is on politicising the EU and empowering the European Parliament up to a level where Council and Parliament take an equal share of political authority.

IV. TOWARDS EU-DEMOICRACY - CRITICAL REVIEW OF POLITICAL INEQUALITY IN THE EU AND WAYS OF OVERCOMING IT

The main goal of this final part is to bring together the previous *empirical* analyses of political equality and participation, with the *normative* discussion assessing the degree of political equality in the EU. The aim is finally to examine how political equality can be fostered in order to advance the EU to a democracy of democracies, i.e. *demoicracy*. A special weight is given to the European Parliament and the importance of participation in EP elections. Which consequences result from the low voter turnout in EP elections for political equality in the EU? To what extent does this create barriers for democratic EU-Citizenship?

This section is divided into four parts. First, EU-demoicracy is introduced as a concept of democracy tailored to the EU-specific context which identifies three conditions for political equality in the EU (IV.1). It is necessary to examine briefly the constitutional reality of the EU before and after the financial crisis since the character of the EU has changed considerably with the crisis management measures introduced (IV.2). The consequences that arise from this transformation with regard to the individual conditions of political equality will then be examined in more detail. The EU had already failed the ideal of political equality in an EU-demoicracy before the crisis; with the establishment of a new economic governance system the EU diverges even more from this ideal (IV.3). Finally, some possible reform steps will be discussed regarding the question as to whether and how they can help to promote political equality and thereby contribute to overcoming the barriers for a democratic EU-Citizenship (IV.4).

IV.1 EU-DEMOICRACY

IV.1.1 EU-DEMOICRACY AS A MODEL OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

The problem of political equality in the EU can be traced back to the question about the specific character of the EU as a polity. The EU is not a parliamentary constitutional state, but an order sui generis, which has not

yet found its stable institutional form. The ongoing transformation of the EU that continues to this day can be explained by its special raison d'être: European integration is a project undertaken by international actors (states) that mutually and collectively establish a supranational political organisation for the purpose of ever closer transnational, economic and social integration in defence of their ability to act against the challenges of a globalising world. The question of what political equality and democratic representation can mean in this special kind of polity cannot be separated from this objective. In short, democratisation and the strengthening of political equality in the EU require a conception of democracy that can accommodate the principles of democracy within the specific conditions of European integration. It is only against the background of a normative ideal of European multi-level democracy that existing obstacles to political equality and a democratic EU-Citizenship can be identified.

The most advanced proposal for a conception of democracy that is tailored to the conditions of the EU can be found in the concept of an EU-demoicracy (Nicolaïdis 2012, Cheneval 2013, Cheneval/Lavenex/Schimmelfennig 2015). This draws on the key question concerning the puzzle of European democracy: should democracy and political equality be primarily located at the national democracy level or at the level of EU institutions, and how should this relationship be shaped? The two most well-known positions in the debate about EU democratisation disagree on this question. Internationalists assume that democracy cannot break away from the nation state. Because the lack of a European people implies the lack of necessary solidarity in the EU, the latter can achieve indirect democratic legitimation only as an international organisation of democratic states (Miller 2009, Moravcsik 2002). Internationalists are confronted with supranationalists who urge democratising the EU by pushing it towards a federal state (Duff 2011; Fischer 2000; Verhofstadt 2006). The conception of an EU-demoicracy can be understood as a third way, which distances itself from the alternative objectives of confederation and federation despite some overlapping. The model of an EU-demoicracy is essentially based on three assumptions. First, national member states are the principal vehicles of democracy in Europe and they should also remain so in future. Second, there is no EU demos, but this is not a problem, because a European democracy beyond the national state can also function without a European demos. For demoicrats the main distinctive feature of the EU consists in the kind of association, which turns to a common political order in order to rule its relations democratically. Contrary to the notion of a uniform EU demos which consists of individuals ready to confer equal rights to each other, the community of the EU is pluralist and comprises the already constituted demoi of the member states on the one hand, and the individual EU citizens on the other. In this sense, proponents of demoicracy share the diagnosis of a missing demos at EU level ('no-demos hypothesis'), albeit they do not draw the conclusion that as a consequence the EU has to remain undemocratic. The reason for this lies in the third assumption. Demoicrats propose that European democracy should not be associated with the organisational form of a European state, but rather be considered as a European 'democracy of democracies' (Cheneval 2013). On that note Nicolaïdis defines the ideal of an EU-demoicracy as the "Union of peoples who govern together, but not as one. However much shared kratos or power to govern, we must contend with the plurality of demoi; but also crucially, however many demoi, we need a common kratos to define and deliver, through mutually agreed disciplines, the responsibilities we owe to one another."(Nicolaïdis 2013: 351-352) Accordingly, the purpose of an EU-demoicracy consists in simultaneously keeping intact national demoi as equal democratic subjects whilst encouraging their mutual opening and recognition in the joint handling of political issues at EU level.

The distinguishing feature of an EU-demoicracy is, therefore, that it applies the principles of democracy to the EU on condition that a sustainable equilibrium between two types of political subjects is achieved: national demoi and individual EU citizens. But how should the EU be shaped institutionally in order to stabilise this equilibrium in the context of a democratic decision-making process? To date there are very few published views on the matter. Fritz Scharpf regards EU-demoicracy as an attractive, normative concept albeit with a problematic aspect. Currently, the focus of demoicratic argumentation is directed towards emphasising the differences between an EU-demoicracy and the concept of a democratic federation. In order to avoid giving the

impression of making the case for a European federation, the EU's status quo is implicitly affirmed and institutional changes rejected. For Scharpf this is problematic because he sees the constitutional reality of the EU as a long way from the normative ideal of a demoicracy:

„By focusing on European legislation, authors [of EU-demoicracy, D.G./S.S.] tend to downplay the constraints imposed on the plural demoi through negative integration and the supranational euro regimes, as well as the constraints imposed on effective political action at the European level through the multiple-veto system of the Community Method." (Scharpf 2015: 400)

In order to ascertain to what extent the actual institutional arrangements of the EU fulfil the conditions for political equality in an EU-demoicracy it is necessary to cast a glance at the constitutional reality of the EU before and after the financial crisis.

IV.1.2 Three Dimensions of Political Equality in EU-Demoicracy

According to the model of demoicracy, the primary task of the EU as a democracy of democracies consists in facilitating greater democratic interdependence between national demoi without undermining the EU's basis of legitimacy. The normative demands for an EU-demoicracy are thus considerable: whereas generating European decisions itself needs to meet democratic standards, EU-regulations are not allowed to undermine the integrity of national demoi either, and they must preserve their democratic autonomy to the greatest possible extent. The requirements of an EU-demoicracy encompass the two kinds of political subjects mentioned above (citizens and states) as well as three dimensions of political equality that need to be established.

In the first dimension, political equality needs to be established among individual EU citizens. This core condition of every democratic order, regardless of the organisational form, also holds true for an EU-demoicracy. When pan-European regulations are to be created democratically, the principle of equal individual participation has to be fulfilled in their realisation. For the EU as well as national democracies, elections to the European Parliament are the medium through which this equality condition should be realised.

The second dimension of political equality affects equality among member states. Individual states' weight must be equilibrated in such a way that those, which are larger and economically more powerful do not dominate those that are less so. Institutionally, this equality principle is implemented primarily by the European Council or the Council of the EU (formerly the Council of Ministers). This equality condition is implemented in two ways. First, for majority decisions in the Council of Ministers the procedures followed are those of weighted votes and the double majority rule (according to Council member votes and shares of the population). Second, the principle of unanimity applies in the European Council, which is responsible for issuing European directives and deciding on the content of European treaties. For demoicrats this marks the core of an EU-demoicracy which guarantees that national demoi, represented by their governments, face each other as equals.

From the first two dimensions a third dimension of equality can be derived, which affects neither the relationship among EU citizens nor the relationship among national demoi, but rather the relationship between the entirety of the EU citizens on the one hand and the same citizens as members of their national demoi on the other (Habermas 2012). EU-demoicracy aims at a stable democratic order beyond the alternatives of confederation and federation. In that case, EU decisions can be traceable neither solely to a consensus between member states nor solely to a majority in the European Parliament. In the first case EU politics would be dominated by a national/international cleavage and the EU would adopt the quality of a confederation or an international organisation. In the second case it would be the other way round and the EU would take on the quality of a democratic federation. In an EU-demoicracy both alternatives should be avoided for good reasons.

Influences from both types of political subjects need to be balanced across the EU. In order to prevent member states from making politics in the name of their national citizens at the expense of the citizens from other member states, EU decisions that generate wins and losses need to be democratically legitimised in the pan-European interest. Conversely, it must be ensured that decisions reached in the general European interest do not erode national democratic communities' self-determination ability. The political equality among EU citizens on the one hand, and national demoi on the other, aims at maintaining this balance. In the EU institutional framework this means retaining power equilibrium between the European Parliament on one side and the European Council on the other.

IV.2 From Regulation to Redistribution: On the Transformation of the EU during the Financial Crisis

Most proponents of an EU-demoicracy see the three conditions for political equality realised by means of the ordinary legislative procedure (formerly the Community method). Here, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament decide together on an equal footing. Consequently, advocates of an EU-demoicracy consider the institutional architecture of the EU to be worth preserving. Furthermore, a change to the institutional order of the EU is considered by many to be a departure from the democratic ideal which should thus be avoided: '[T]he EU's legitimacy deficit will not be addressed by tinkering with its institutions.' (Nicolaïdis, 2013: 351)

However, there are doubts about this view. Looking at the special circumstances of European integration and the EU's development process (see above Ch. II) has clarified two points. Firstly, there is no reason to accept the current state of the EU as its final organisational form. Its sustained transformational dynamics accrue from the rationality of the project as a continuously advancing political, economic and social integration of democratic states. The more successful the EU is in achieving these objectives and further advances towards transnational social integration, the more urgent is the EU's need for an independent democratic legitimation. Thus the increasing importance of the European Parliament in the EU is understandable. Secondly, the EU nevertheless continues to be characterised by an international structure of political authority up to the present time, which is generated especially by the prominent position of the European Council, comprising Heads of State and Government. In this respect the EU neglects a crucial equality condition that is presupposed in the model of EU-demoicracy: equality between national demoi on the one hand and EU citizens on the other. To date, the European Parliament still remains limited in its political significance and EU elections remain second-order elections.

IV.2.1 Before the Crisis: Regulatory EU, Redistributive Member States

The positive view of the EU's institutional status quo, shared by many demoicrats, can be traced back to an assessment of the EU that had been well received until the beginning of the financial crisis. As with any other political order, the legitimacy of the EU depends ultimately on the democratic principles of individual and collective self-determination. In contrast to a national state, whose political system aims at determining and accommodating the wills and points of view of single citizens, the principles of self-determination in the EU are different and translated indirectly. Instead of direct democratic representation, legitimation of the EU has been based from its inception on the objective of completing tasks that the member states alone could not manage, and thereby it left the democratic autonomy of member states as intact as possible. In other words, although the EU has a weaker basis of legitimation than its component member states, it did not need anything stronger because it was much more limited in its competencies as well as in its remit than any national democracy.

Dawson and de Witte (2013) sum up the basis of the EU's legitimation before the crisis with the term 'constitutional balance', which has stabilised a relationship with divided responsibilities in the acquisition of democratic legitimacy between member states and the EU. This constitutional balance includes three dimensions: a substantial, an institutional, as well as a spatial balance, which are now briefly outlined.

Regarding the managing of policy fields, there was a division of labour between the EU and its member states before the financial crisis that Dawson and de Witte refer to as a 'substantial balance'. While the EU has been responsible for a common economic policy from the outset, it has no competence in the area of social policy which remains part of member states' sovereignty. The underlying belief is that economic policy on the basis of technocratic expertise leads to an increase in prosperity for all and is, therefore, politically uncontroversial, whereas social and labour market policy, which have strong redistributive effects, presuppose the higher legitimation of national democratic processes.

At the institutional level, Dawson and de Witte emphasise a balance between different EU institutions and the respective stakeholders, which they represent – national interests in the European Council or Council of Ministers, transnational interests in the European Parliament, and supranational interests that mediate between the former two in the European Commission. The Community method is paradigmatic for this balance. Two crucial principles for the EU are brought to bear in the Community method. Firstly, this method is strongly related to the principle of pluralism. EU legislation within its framework requires a vast consensus among different stakeholders. Secondly, the sovereignty of each single institution is limited so as to counteract an accumulation of power. According to Dawson and de Witte, an EU specific translation for the separation of powers principle manifests itself in the Community method.

Finally, there was a spatial balance in the EU before the crisis, that is, a balance in the weight of smaller and bigger member states. This resulted from the contribution of different mechanisms: small states are overrepresented in majority voting by the Council of Ministers; the Commission as a neutral actor has the right of initiative, whereby a monopolisation of the political agenda by large member states is counteracted; and, particularly important, EU competencies that have been contractually established can be changed only by means of a contract amendment subject to the unanimity rule. Hence every member state has a veto right. Without such precautions it would be expected that larger and economically stronger countries could marginalise smaller states to a permanent minority and that as a consequence integration would be impeded. These mechanisms help to protect the principle of national self-determination by providing possibilities for defence against over- extensive interference on the part of the EU in the national democratic autonomy.

IV.2.2 After the Crisis: Redistributive EU without Democratic Legitimation

As many observers have noticed, this 'constitutional balance' has been upset by the measures that were introduced not only to combat the financial crisis, but also to safeguard the future stability of the Eurozone. The imbalance created is gradually depriving the EU of its legitimation. The crisis forced EU decision-makers to admit that fiscal discipline cannot be achieved if member states are given too much leeway in interpreting social and labour market policy. With expansion of the Stability and Growth Pact, this needs to be considered within the terms of the European Fiscal Compact. The instruments of the Fiscal Compact de facto remove member states' sovereignty over decisions about their national budgets to the supranational level. The previous substantial division of labour – economic policy: European, social and labour market policy: national – is thereby annulled in the course of managing the financial crisis.

A (temporary) consequence of these measures may be the fiscal stabilisation of the Eurozone and with it an averting of the acute crisis. However, a further (at worst life threatening) consequence is an extensive deprivation of the EU's legitimation. This results from the Fiscal Compact having turned the EU from a regulatory order (Majone 1994) into an order with regulations that redistribute considerable assets within its

territory. The EU has turned into a "redistributive state" (Chalmers 2012). This is characterised by the EU being less and less associated with the production of rather uncontroversial common public goods (such as the internal market, a clean environment etc.) and instead increasingly associated with conflicts that are fuelled by the redistributive impact of its economic policy decisions. It is precisely such political conflicts, which always need to be renegotiated because there is no fundamental solution for them; thus they require stronger democratic legitimation, that should be avoided by means of the EU's 'constitutional balance' which existed before the crisis.

The core of the problem is that the Fiscal Compact has caused a removal of fiscal policy decisions with strong redistributive effects to the EU level without simultaneously establishing political procedures, by way of which such conflicts could be dealt with in a public and democratic way. "An EU redistributive State has emerged but one with a diminished sense of public law." (Chalmers 2012: 693) The EU still claims to govern in regulatory governance mode. Thus, new politico-economic instruments also restrict themselves to monitoring and sanctioning national implementation of allegedly clear European legal requirements. In practice, criteria informing about the balance of a national budget, the introduction of an 'excessive deficit procedure', and necessary measures for the amendment of so-called national 'macroeconomic imbalances' are far less clearly regulated than national executives and the EU Commission would have us believe. On the contrary, there is a large margin of interpretation which could be filled with political arguments (Chalmers 2012: 676-84).

The decision favouring an increased centralisation of technocratic-regulatory decision-making competence with regard to the enforcement of austerity measures is, therefore, not an inherent necessity without alternative, but rather an eminently political question. The alleged lack of alternatives is usually justified by reference to a missing European demos ('no demos hypothesis'), which would not allow far-reaching policy-making procedures at EU level. However, two reasons speak against this. Firstly, even today's apparently self-evident national states are not 'natural' communities, but were 'invented' in the course of earlier political disputes (Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm/Ranger 1992, Habermas 1999a). Thus, why should the EU too not be able to grow from an institutionalised democratic dispute, especially when its citizens are familiar with handling political conflicts?

Secondly, recourse to the TINA strategy ('There Is No Alternative') disguises the political nature of the decision to take one side in the profound conflict between democracy and capitalism, which has characterised western societies in modern times – namely, to choose the promotion of liberal capitalist markets. According to Wolfgang Streeck (2015), with introduction of the Fiscal Compact the EU has taken another step towards an 'authoritarian-liberal state' and is about to surrender to the ideology of ordoliberalism. The essence of an authoritarian-liberal state consists in covering the conflict between democracy and capitalism instead of confronting it openly and dealing with it in a democratic manner. An authoritarian-liberal state is based on the assumption that a prosperous market economy can be stabilised only when markets and the right to the accumulation of private property are immunised from the unpredictable interference of democratic decisions. The uppermost order for stabilising markets is, therefore, depoliticisation. The economic sphere becomes the basis for the political, public democratic discussions which are dried out by the constantly repeated reference to alleged economic inherent necessities (TINA strategy). The authoritarian-liberal state is strong and weak at the same time:

'strong in its role as protector of "the market" and "the economy" from democratic claims for redistribution – to the point of being able to deploy the public power to suppress such claims – and weak in its relationship to the market as the designated site of autonomous capitalist profit-seeking, which government policy was to protect and if necessary expand without, however, entering it.' (Streeck 2015: 362)

The EU after the crisis corresponds largely to the image of an authoritarian-liberal state. The neutralisation of democratic claims certainly does not take place through open repression, but through the shift of economic

governance to the EU level, where a common procedure for a democratic dealing of conflicts over economic policy is missing. National democratic claims are blocked or terminated quickly in the name of an allegedly necessary European austerity culture. The examples are numerous: Merkel and Schäuble's enforcement of austerity policy in the EU with the justification "there is no alternative" (Reuters 2012); the installation of technocrats Monti and Papademos at the head of two member states; reactions of EU elites to the imminent election victory of Syriza in Greece; the rigidity of the EU troika's stance towards debtor states. This list of events that support the hypotheses of a transformation of the EU into an authoritarian-liberal state could be extended. European integration has changed from a project for the protection of national democracies against the uncertainties of globalisation into a hazard for European liberal democracies (Wilkinson 2013). Streeck succinctly describes the legitimation trap of the current EU: "Where there are still democratic institutions in Europe, there is no economic governance anymore…and where there is economic governance, democracy is elsewhere." (Streeck 2015: 366).

The transformation of the EU into a market protective, ordoliberal order is not the only way open for the EU in responding to the crisis. Although the contractual foundations do indeed justify a temporary steering towards an austerity policy, these are not ends in themselves. Article 119 of the Treaty deals with the EU's functioning:

"For the purposes set out in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, the activities of the Member States and the Union shall include, as provided in the Treaties, the adoption of an economic policy which is based on the close coordination of Member States' economic policies, on the internal market and on the definition of common objectives, and conducted in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition." (Art. 119, TFEU)

At this point it is worthwhile taking a closer look at the goals referred to in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, to which the European internal market and a European economic policy should contribute. Price stability and a competitive market economy for the EU appear, therefore, not to be aims in themselves, but rather the means of achieving higher-ranking values for European integration. Besides the EU's commitment to be an organisation in conformity with the principles of representative democracy (Art. 10 TEU), Article 3 lays down the promotion of a social market economy, social justice, and solidarity between member states as the aim of the internal market:

"The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment… It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection… It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States." (Art. 3, TEU)

The transformation into an authoritarian-liberal state is thus not the only narrative of European integration, to which the EU can resort in response to the crisis (Brunkhorst 2014a: 435-62; Chalmers 2012; Habermas 2012; Somek 2014; Wilkinson 2013). The path currently chosen, the centralisation of economic decision-making power with a simultaneous depoliticisation of political and social conflicts associated with it, does not contribute to the strengthening of the now precarious legitimacy of the EU. On the contrary, this path takes the EU increasingly away from the goal of political equality in all three equality dimensions that are decisive for an EU-demoicracy as a democracy of democracies. This will be examined next.

IV.3 Ideal and Reality of Political (In-)Equality in the EU-Demoicracy

EU-democracy requires political equality in three dimensions: equality among EU-citizens, equality among member states and equality among the political representation of EU-citizens on the one hand, and member states on the other. While the first dimension has already been discussed in the concluding paragraph of part II, in what follows, the two other dimensions will be brought into focus, with two specific issues deserving special attention. First, as mentioned above, even before the financial crisis the EU's constitutional reality departed from the demoicratic ideal of triple political equality. With the actions taken to overcome the crisis, this situation has been drastically aggravated. Second, due to the EU's nature as a polity of both citizens and states, the three dimensions of political equality are interrelated. The aim of political equality among EU-citizens is in tension with the aim of political equality among member states. Neither can fully be realised if both are to be balanced and the EU shaped neither as confederation of states [Staatenbund] nor as a federal state [Bundesstaat] but as a demoicracy. This has an important consequence for the relation of voter turnout and political equality, which is at the centre of this enquiry: the adequate degree of political equality of individuals to be established by European elections cannot be evaluated without taking into account the wider institutional architecture of the EU and its political process. This also pertains to possible ways of strengthening political equality in European elections, which will be discussed in the next part (IV.4).

IV.3.1 Dimension 2 and 3: Political Equality among Member States and Political Equality among Member States and EU-Citizens?

IV.3.1.1 Before the Crisis: Political Equality through the EU's Dual Constitutional Structure

Before the financial crisis, political equality among the member states and to a small extent the member states and EU-citizens rested on a particular 'constitutional balance' (Dawson/de Witte 2013, see above IV3.1). It restricted the EU's responsibility and secured its legitimacy based on a fixed division of labour between the member states and EU-institutions. These balances could be traced back to a particular institutional configuration which made it possible on the one hand to view the EU as both a supranational Union with parliamentary quality, whilst on the other hand seeing it as an international organisation configured as a confederation of states (Fabbrini 2015).

The Three-Pillar-Structure of the EU, which was laid down in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), ascribed EU policy-areas to two different modes of supranational and intergovernmental integration. The first pillar comprised single market policies and was dealt with in the community method (today: ordinary legislative procedure). This procedure rests on the equal interplay of two legislative bodies, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. The European Commission functions as an executive body, which performs the initiative competence in the boundaries of implementing the Treaties. Thus, up to this day issues concerning the single market are decided in a procedure that approximates a genuine democratic legitimation through a balance between the member states (represented by the governments in the Council) and the EU-citizens (represented by the European Parliament). The second and third pillars comprised those policy-areas that traditionally mark the core of national sovereignty (foreign and security policy as well as police and judicial matters). For the common regulation of these areas, procedures were established in which national governments seek agreement without significant participation from the Commission and the European Parliament. Here, EU-regulations are generated by intergovernmental coordination and so obtain the character of voluntary cooperation among member states. In this intergovernmental mode of integration the unanimity principle, which also applies to matters of Treaty change, guarantees political equality among member states.

Although the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) removes the pillar-structure, it basically maintains a compromise between the supranational and the intergovernmental decision-making regime. However, it also introduces some

remarkable changes (Fabbgrini 2013). By bringing the European Council of the Heads of States and Government into the EU's legal framework, it brings a fourth institution into the political process (alongside the EU Council, the European Parliament together with the Commission) and shifts the weight between the supranational and intergovernmental mode of integration. From now on the European Council takes the role of a political executive that sets the general guidelines and priorities of EU politics (Puetter 2012). In so doing, it also frames the political agenda of the supranational mode, which is now the ordinary legislative procedure, although formally it has no part in EU-legislation. Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty ascribes the area of economic and monetary policies to intergovernmental decision-making, with national executives in the European Council as well as the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) having their say. Even after Lisbon, one may argue that in principle the EU has a constitutional structure which allows for political equality in both dimensions among member state and among member states and EU-citizens: "The terms of coexistence between the supranationalism of the policies for the single market and the intergovernmentalism of the CFSP and the EMU in particular were left uncertain by the Lisbon Treaty. In both realms, the Treaty has given a strategic role to the European Council, which is now the real political head of the Union." (Fabbrini 2013: 110)

IV.3.1.2 Europe's New System of Economic Governance

However, during the financial crisis the relationship between both modes of integration shifted significantly towards the now dominating intergovernmental decision-making. To withstand the pressure of the markets and prevent future crises, new institutions and procedures have been established leading to the empowerment of (some) national executives in the EU's political process. A closer view on Europe's new economic governance reveals this. The reform of the Stability and Growth Pact through the introduction of the European Semester, the regulations of the Six-Pack and finally the Fiscal Compact establish a system of rules, implementation, sanction and monitoring mechanisms (European Commission 2013).

Beyond the limits on governmental debt and budget deficit set by the Stability and Growth Pact, a new expenditure benchmark has been introduced, which is based on the relationship between public spending and expected GDP growth in a member state. With this fiscal measure, surveillance of the member states is extended beyond national budgets and now also covers national economic policies. The regular evaluation of the expected macro-economic development within the member states is now part of the EU's economic governance. Moreover, member states are now obliged to anchor medium-term budgetary objectives and, if they are breached, introduce measures to reduce public spending in their national law.

Monitoring and implementation of these rules is organised under the terms of the so-called European Semester. Every year the Euro-States must hand in their budget plans and all member states must present their Stability/Convergence Programmes to the Commission for review. If the Commission finds an excessive public deficit or a 'macro-economic imbalance', it develops country-specific recommendations. This monitoring-regime is backed by two sanctioning mechanisms which the Commission can initiate: the Excessive Deficit Procedure and the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure. In the former, the Council imposes measures for deficit-reduction to be implemented by the respective member state. In the latter the member state is requested to provide a detailed time-table listing measures to correct its macro-economic development together with suggestions of how to control for the success of these measures. In both procedures the Council can impose financial sanctions on the member state if the latter does not implement the measures suggested by or to the Council respectively. If the Commission recommends that the Council should impose sanctions on a member state, the Council decides using the newly introduced procedure of reversed qualified majority. This means that, contrary to the common procedure of qualified majority, financial sanctions are effective so long as they not opposed by a qualified majority.

All member states (except Great Britain, Czech Republic and Croatia) have ratified the Fiscal Compact and thus accepted these rules. Agreement to the Fiscal Compact is a precondition for member states in fiscal emergency to borrow from the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). A borrowing member state is obliged to implement an imposed macro-economic adjustment programme. Decisions in the ESM are reached either by consensus (that is at least 85% of the votes), qualified majority (80% of the votes) or simple majority. The weighting of votes is based on the financial contribution of the member state to the ESM.

The EU's new system of economic governance establishes a process of economic 'co-government' for member states. It is not only about "debt reduction but about extensive reform which will limit the State's need to borrow, either because it has smaller expenditure requirements (i.e. a smaller welfare state) or has secured higher tax receipts. The partnership will, therefore, go to the structure and rationale of a State's fiscal and welfare systems." (Chalmers 2012: 680) This abolishes the substantial division of labour – common economic policy at the EU level as well as social and welfare policies at the member state level. Moreover, the new system of economic governance also destabilises the spatial and institutional balance of the pre-crisis EU and contributes to a significant increase in political inequality among the member states as well as among the member states and the EU-citizens.

IV.3.1.3 Consequences for the (In)Equality among Member States

The new system of economic governance generates political inequality among the member states. This is mainly because many of the new instruments are established outside the legal framework of the EU, without reproducing the balancing mechanisms with which the asymmetry between small and large member states was contained (Dawson/de Witte 2013: 836-42). This pertains, for example, to the shape of decision procedures. The weighting of the member states' votes in the ESM is based on their financial contribution to it. As a consequence, Germany, which has the highest number of votes (26.96%), can block decisions regularly made with a qualified majority (80% of votes) single-handedly. Credit to a member state in need and the imposed macroeconomic programme that comes with it, are not accepted if Germany (or, for that matter, France) does not agree. Conversely, this means that the interests of small and economically weak states cannot prevail, even if they all form a coalition. The introduction of the reversed qualified majority has the same effect concerning decisions on financial sanctions against member states in the excessive deficit and the macro-economic imbalance procedure. While deciding with qualified majority as is common in the Council makes it harder for larger states to decide against the interest of small member states, this advantage to the latter is not only removed, but converted into a disadvantage.

This also concerns the role of the Commission, which is supposed to use its right of initiative as a neutral supranational actor mediating between the interests of all member states. However, in the economic governance the Commission is encouraged to foster the interests of the larger states if it wants to facilitate decision-making. This is because with new decision procedures as well as the new weighting of votes, even the biggest coalition of smaller states cannot decide alone.

Finally, Dawson and de Witte stress that even the procedure of Treaty change is affected by the new regulations, if only indirectly. Although the unanimity principle remains untouched, the status of the Treaty change procedure is weakened by the fact that the Fiscal Compact (because of Great Britain's veto) has been established outside EU-law and thus the unanimity rule does not apply. The ratification of the Fiscal Compact, which has the status of a common international contract, required agreement from only 12 states. In the EU Treaty change procedure small states used their veto to bargain changes. This was impossible in the ratification procedure of the Fiscal Compact because it did not depend on unanimity. Combined with the necessity to sign the Fiscal Compact if member states want to borrow from the ESM, the result is dominance by the big and economically strong members. Thus, smaller and economically weaker states face a considerable potential for

blackmail by bigger states under the new economic governance. What is more, this potential does not concern just any policy-area but national budgetary and economic politics which are at the basis of member states' social and welfare systems. These are exactly those policy-areas which were protected from EU-influence in the 'constitutional balance' of the pre-crisis EU.

This situation is aggravated by the legal provisions of the Fiscal Compact that decide upon measures, obligations and sanctions for the member states leaving much room for interpretation and thus are far from establishing a system of technocratic regulation (Chalmers 2012: 682-4): firstly, the criteria according to which the Council declares an 'excessive deficit' or a 'macro-economic imbalance' require interpretation; secondly, there are no normative or legal criteria to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable recommendations, measures and obligations for member states; thirdly, there are no unambiguous criteria for when a member state has implemented the suggested measures insufficiently. This leaves a large scope for interpretation that has to be filled politically in the EU's economic governance. In combination with the salience of the decisions, this scope creates an enormous conflict potential that calls for a democratically legitimated decision-procedure (in contrast to technocratic regulation).

IV.3.1.4 Consequences for the (In)Equality among Member States and EU-Citizens

In dealing with these conflicts, the new system of economic governance neither draws on existing modes of democratic legitimation (via national parliaments and the European Parliament), nor does it establish an alternative political procedure. Monitoring and steering of national budgetary and economic politics rather consciously ignores existing democratic processes on the national and European level. While national parliaments exert their budgetary rights only within the strait-jacket of EU fiscal policies, the latter is shaped and implemented without any powers for the European Parliament in this process. In this way the European multi-level process systematically restricts democratic control in economic governance – and thus comes close to what Streeck (2015) calls a liberal-authoritarian state.

Doubtless the competences of the European Parliament have been extended considerably with the Lisbon Treaty (Rittberger 2012). Even in the new economic governance the European Parliament has gained additional competence/powers compared with its role in the previous Stability and Growth Pact. Nevertheless, the reorganisation of EU economic governance has brought a de facto loss of power for the European Parliament. This is so for two reasons. Firstly, with the establishment of effective monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms, EU fiscal policy has changed its character from a paper tiger into an instrument of macroeconomic redistribution. As a consequence, the European Parliament's lack of participation turns into a serious problem of democratic legitimation. Secondly, the growth of the European Parliament's competences in EU economic governance has been considerably lower than that of the Council and the Commission. While the Council has the sole decision-making power in all matters of EU fiscal policy, this extension of powers brings with it a considerably strengthened role for the Commission. Given the procedure of reversed qualified majority in the Council, the Commission's recommendations for sanctions against member states are quasi-automatically enforced. The Commission's significance in monitoring national budgetary and economic policies has thus substantially increased.

This contrasts with the minor role of the European Parliament in EU fiscal policy (Fasone 2014). The European Parliament did not prevail with its suggestion to establish the new procedures of economic governance within the ordinary legislative procedure: "economic governance, with converging economic, fiscal and social policies, must be organised using the Community method and steered by the Union institutions, with national parliaments being fully involved" (European Parliament 2011b). Instead, EU fiscal policy is decided intergovernmentally with extremely modest participatory rights for the European Parliament: the latter has to

be informed and heard by the Council and the Commission on some occasions; it is allowed to organise hearings with national parliaments, but has no decisional power whatsoever (Fasone 2014: 175-81).

The EU's extended competences in economic governance thus leads to a dramatically increased power asymmetry between the national governments gathering in the Council, on the one hand, and the European Parliament, on the other. This means that the political inequality between the member states and the EU-citizens increases considerably. Could their inequality before the crisis be justified by the overall 'constitutional balance' in the EU with restricted tasks and competences at the EU-level, this justification loses power to the extent that the intergovernmental enforcement of the regime of austerity succeeds.

IV.4 Measures for the Strengthening of Voter Participation and Political Equality in the EU

The relation between political equality and voter participation is the core of democratic citizenship. For democratic citizenship, it is not only decisive that all citizens can actively contribute to the political moulding of common living conditions, but also that their votes count the same. In this regard, the normative discussion has shown that the liberal demand for a formal equal right to participate in the election does not suffice. Rather, according to the republican perspective, the fair value of the equal formal right to vote is essential. In other words, supporting social conditions for the informed use of the vote must be given for all citizens and the effectiveness of their votes must be visible.

In the context of the EU, the relation of democratic citizenship is realised in the light of special demands, which arise from the EU's character as an association of democratic states and citizens, and which partly deviates from the conditions of democracy in the nation state. The special requirement placed on a democratic EU as a "democracy of democracies" (Cheneval 2013) consists in taking decisions during the common handling of political issues at EU level that could reclaim an independent democratic legitimation without at the same time subverting the democratic self-determination ability of national demoi. The normative ideal of a democracy offers an appropriate model showing how conditions of democratic citizenship are to be accommodated within the special context of the EU. Accordingly, it is essential for an EU-demoicracy to emphasise equally three dimensions of political equality. The analysis of political practice in the EU made it clear that the EU had already missed this ideal in the state of 'constitutional balance' (Dawson/de Witte 2013) before the crisis. With the new system of economic governance which was established for dealing with the financial crisis, the EU has dramatically diverged further from it – in fact with regard to all three dimensions of political equality: equality among EU citizens, equality among member states, as well as equality between EU citizens and member states.

What measures can be taken for the advancement of political equality in the EU to overcome the associated obstacles to democratic citizenship? At this point solutions need to be sought. It has become clear that the dimensions of equality among EU citizens as well as equality between EU citizens and member states are of outstanding importance for the relationship between political equality and voter participation. Social inequality of participation in EP elections is correlated with low voter participation. This in turn is closely related to the status of the European Parliament in the political process of the EU. Accordingly, the following discussion focuses on the question of what reform proposals could contribute to the increase in EP elections' turnout. Besides proposals that affect reform to electoral law (IV.4.1), measures that can strengthen the importance of the European Parliament should be examined in order to balance out the asymmetry between the voices of member states and those of EU citizens in regard to EU policy. On the one hand this requires stronger politicisation and a public settlement of conflicts, especially in relation to the EU's economic policy, and on the other hand an upgrading of the European Parliament in the EU's constitutional framework without thereby providing it with the authority to take final decisions for transforming the EU into a federal state (IV.4.2).

Although the question as to how political equality among member states can be restored (third dimension of political equality) is also pressing, it cannot be debated here.

IV.4.1 Standardisation of the Electoral Law to the European Parliament

Various proposals are discussed in the literature which aim at reforming the European Parliament's electoral law. The implementation of European electoral law is subject to national regulation and this has two consequences. Firstly, resulting differences create political inequality among EU citizens. Secondly, the perception of EP elections as genuine European elections involving EU citizens is impeded. Against this background, three types of measures for reforming the European Parliament's electoral law can be distinguished. The first are general measures that aim at increasing voter participation and can also be used for strengthening national representative democracies despite the peculiarities of EP elections (IV.4.1.1, IV.4.1.2). Second are measures that aim at establishing equality among citizens in EP elections by standardising formal conditions for participation (IV.4.1.3, IV.4.1.4). Third, there are measures that can increase the importance of EP elections as European elections to encourage higher voter participation (IV.4.1.5, IV.4.1.6).

IV.4.1.1 Reduction of the Costs of Participating

It is expected that voter participation will increase to some extent by simplifying accessibility to the ballot. In this context, the introduction of electronic or online voting in particular is significant. Shaw (2015: 97-8) points out that young and 'internet-savvy' voters in particular would be addressed and motivated by the possibility of online voting. Considering the well documented significance of voting as a social norm (Butler and Stokes, 1975; Plutzer 2002; Franklin, 2004), which is internalised only through early repeated participation in democratic elections, the mobilisation of young voters is especially important in order to halt the trend of declining turnout in the long term. As in the case of postal voting which facilitates participation for the group of older voters, electronic voting could counteract the argument of young voters that they had not participated in the elections due to time constraints. Furthermore, an electronic processing of electoral lists could counteract the impression of complexity that originates partly from the very long lists of candidates on the ballot paper. As Shaw (2015: 98) rightly remarks: "when it comes to putting across complex information in an accessible format design does matter."

IV.4.1.2 Reducing Voting Age

A measure for increasing voter participation that has been discussed in many democracies and by many democratic parties is reducing the voting age from 18 years at present (generally) to 16 years (as is already the case in Austria). Critics argue openly or covertly that at the age of 16 young persons lack the necessary maturity to form a balanced political opinion. Its advocates maintain that at the age of 16 they could still be approached by their reference persons (parents, teachers etc.) and be motivated to participate in elections. As in the case of online voting, reducing voting age for EP elections could be an important step towards a stronger internalisation of voting as a social norm.

IV.4.1.3 Overcoming Inequality in Voter Registration to EP Elections[12]

Whereas the introduction of online voting and the reduction of voting age could be applied in all representative democracies, other reform proposals aim at overcoming differences that result from the national implementation of European electoral law. National differences in the procedures of voter registration represent such an obstacle to citizen equality in the context of EP elections.

[12] Thanks to Clàudia Fabó Cartas for enquiries on the following issue.

Obstacles or procedural barriers to EU citizens' exercising their electoral rights in the context of EP elections result not only in lower turnout, but also in undermining the principle of non-discrimination and citizens' political equality. On the one hand, there is a lack of uniformity with respect to the exercise of electoral rights in the context of EP elections among EU member states. On the other hand, electoral rights of first country citizens (FCCs) and second country citizens (SCCs) in member states are subject to different conditions.

Regarding the first case, registration for resident FCCs to vote in EP elections is automatic in every country except Cyprus, France, and the United Kingdom, where registration is active.[13] Establishing registration as automatic in every Member State would be a means of promoting political equality among citizens as it would remove an administrative barrier to the equal enjoyment of rights.

In the case of non-resident FCCs, there is not merely a lack of common principles among member states, but rather a substantial difference in the exercise of electoral rights between resident and non-resident FCCs. The first difference concerns registration. Whereas registration of resident FCCs is automatic in almost every Member State, it generally requires more effort on the part of non-resident FCCs. There are also additional barriers. For example, the United Kingdom's requirement for non-resident FCCs to have their registration applications countersigned by second non-resident British citizens in order to be able to vote. This presupposes that every British voter abroad knows a fellow British citizen (Arrighi et al. 2013: 32). Active and passive electoral rights are also affected in the case of non-resident FCCs. Non-resident FCCs from some member states are generally enfranchised to vote and stand as candidates when living in any country. Non-resident FCCs from other member states are enfranchised only when living in another EU Member State. For example, non-resident FCCs of Belgium and Denmark are granted the right to vote and stand as candidates only in other EU member states, whereas the right to stand as a candidate is granted to non-resident FCCs of Greece and Italy in every country, but they are not allowed to vote unless they live in the EU. The most severe case of political inequality for non-resident FCCs is the case in which they are disenfranchised. This happens in Cyprus and Ireland (loss of the right to vote only), Lithuania, Poland and Romania (loss of the right to stand as a candidate only), Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta and Slovakia (loss of both the right to vote and the right to stand as a candidate). The UK is a special case (loss of both rights after having lived abroad more than 15 years).[14] If non-resident FCCs are disenfranchised in their state of origin, they retain the right to vote in EP elections provided this right is granted for SCCs in their EU host Member State. However, Council Directive 93/109/EC concerns the exercise of electoral rights of EU citizens in a Member State of which they are not nationals. Thus, the Directive does not address cases where EU citizens live in third countries.

As in the case of non-resident FCCs, for SCCs there is a lack of common principles throughout the EU as well as a substantial difference in the exercise of electoral rights between resident FCCs and SCCs of a Member State. In Preambles to the Council Directive 93/109/EC it is stated that

"[w]hereas the purpose of Article 8b (2) of the EC Treaty is to ensure that all citizens of the Union, whether or not they are nationals of the Member State in which they reside, can exercise in that State their right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament under the same conditions; whereas the conditions applying to non-nationals, including those relating to period and proof of residence, should therefore be identical to those, if any, applying to nationals of the Member State concerned".

All transposition issues identified by the Commission before the 2014 EP elections were successfully addressed and national laws of transposition were amended where necessary (European Commission 2015: 14). Nonetheless, there is evidence about specific barriers that EU citizens faced when voting for EP elections in the

[13] http://eudo-citizenship.eu/electoral-rights/comparing-electoral-rights
[14] http://eudo-citizenship.eu/electoral-rights/comparing-electoral-rights

United Kingdom. SCCs of the United Kingdom wanting to vote there had to sign a declaration form, separate from the electoral registration form, stating that they were not voting in their home Member State. As a consequence, the number of non-British EU citizens registered to vote for the EP elections fell from 1,043,629 registered to vote in 2009 to 327,883 registered to vote in 2014 (House of Commons 2014: 42). The Commission has since been in dialogue with the authorities in the United Kingdom (European Commission 2015: 14).

Concerning the right to stand as a candidate, there are still barriers or problems with the transposition of directives that hinder political equality. With respect to the transposition of Council Directive 2013/1/EU, the Commission is in dialogue with Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Slovenia in order to solve problems of incorrect or incomplete implementation of this directive. Some member states did not grant the right to found or become members of political parties to SCCs (see Rodríguez 2013: 6 for the case of Spain, and Kruma 2013: 11 for the case of Latvia). While a solution has been found in some cases, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Spain announced future legislative change, and the Commission took action in the cases of the Czech Republic, Latvia, and Poland (European Commission 2015: 14). There is another example of an administrative barrier for the exercise of the passive electoral right. According to the Directive, conditions for the exercise of electoral rights applying to SCCs should be identical to those applying to FCC. However, in Italy additional conditions apply to EU citizens wanting to stand as candidates. SCCs

"must submit a formal declaration to the Court of Appeal in which they must clearly state all the relevant biographic information (full name, Member State nationality, abode in Italy); that they enjoy full electoral capacity in their Member State of origin and that no court judgment has deprived them of the right to vote in their MS of origin; the electoral constituency where they are enrolled as electors in their home MS; and that they will not submit another candidacy in any other MS. The declaration must be certified by the authorities of the MS of origin" (Tintori 2013: 8).

All these difficulties and differences in the procedures of voter registration constitute obstacles to EU citizens' exercising of their electoral right. They create a certain degree of political inequality among EU citizens and contradict the European principle of non-discrimination. The introduction of a "European Voter Card" (Shaw 2015: 60-1) might help to remedy this problem as it would lead to an easier participation in EP elections based on place of residence in a EU country. A consistent European Voter Card would be issued to every EU citizen by a yet to be established "European Electoral Authority" , and would counteract the difficulties and differences in the procedures of voter registration for EU citizens residing in another Member State, as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

IV.4.1.4 Uniform Electoral Threshold and Overcoming Degressive Proportionality

Both, different (or no) electoral thresholds in the election of national delegations to the European Parliament as well as degressive proportionality in the allocation of seats generate a certain degree of inequality among EU citizens. As can be read in the reaction of the German Constitutional Court to both topics, they address the question about the importance of EP elections in the political process of the EU (in contrast to the question about the standardisation of procedures of voter registration). For that reason and because both questions were discussed earlier (see above IV.3.1.2) they will be approached here together.

In 2014 the Federal Constitutional Court decided to reject a three percent hurdle for electing a German delegation to the European Parliament. It argued that such a hurdle is an inadmissible restriction of the principle of (German) citizens' equality in the EP elections. At the same time, an electoral threshold (at different levels) is effective in most other member states. Two aspects are interlocked here. On the one hand, different electoral thresholds in the member states create inequality among EU citizens beyond nations that

could be overcome by a standardisation of national electoral thresholds. This inequality among EU-citizens would also be avoided by establishing a European threshold (Shaw 2015: 96-7). In addition, such a measure would strengthen the perception of EP elections as genuine European elections.

On the other hand, the Federal Constitutional Court argues that thresholds in EP elections generally constitute an inadmissible restriction in the principle of voting equality. According to the Court preventing fragmentation of the European Parliament by the application of thresholds is not required as long as the Parliament does not form an EU government. The Federal Constitutional Court's view can be interpreted in such a way that the European Parliament does not primarily fulfil the function of representing an EU citizenry but essentially the function of representing national demoi. For this reason, measures that strengthen the pan-European character of EP elections (like uniform thresholds) should be rejected if in this way other democratic principles (such as voting equality) are restricted. As explained above, in 2009 the Court nevertheless defended the legality of digressive proportionality in the allocation of seats recurring under the same premise – although individual EU citizens' political *in*equality follows from it. In this respect the assumption in the precedence of representing national demoi over representing citizens is again the decisive evaluation criterion applied by the Court. The Court obviously holds that rules of procedure that restrict the political equality of EU citizens are permissible as long as they appear necessary for the establishment of the EU as a confederation of states.

The Federal Constitutional Court conducts normative assessment of electoral law in the light of the constitutional framework that it considers valid for the EU: it regards the EU essentially as a confederation of states. If, instead, the model of an EU-demoicracy is laid down as the objective for the EU, this leads to a different picture. In that case, there is reason to promote political equality among EU citizens by means of the standardisation of thresholds. Nevertheless, degressive proportionality in the EU would also appear justifiable to some extent from this point of view as it would allow two different dimensions of political equality to be acknowledged within the European Parliament. While in an EU-demoicracy the European Parliament plays the primary role of representing the EU citizenry, degressive proportionality in European electoral law additionally puts forward the principle of balance between member states. However, the question may be asked as to whether or not the current relation between the representation of EU citizens and member states within the European Parliament meet the requirements of a demoicracy.

This assessment of this question cannot be isolated from an overall view of the EU's political process and the extent to which the principle of citizen and member state representation is realised. Given the strong inequality in favour of member states' representation present in the EU (more on this later), strengthening the European Parliament as EU citizens' representative body seems pertinent. In this sense, revising the allocation of seats and mitigating the inequality of EU citizens' votes without completely abolishing the principle of digressive proportionality would be a step in the right direction.

IV.4.1.5 A Transnational EU-wide Constituency

Proposals to establish an EU-wide constituency in the European Parliament elected on transnational lists in addition to national delegations go in the same direction. Insofar as transnational lists serve the promotion of transnational interests they are a key part of a demoicratic strategy (Nicolaïdis 2013). Jo Shaw (2015: 56-8) points towards the positive effects that a transnational constituency could have on the strengthening of citizen representation within the EU. First, the representation of citizens' interests along the national cleavage that currently dominates in the EU would partly be broken up, and the representation of citizens' genuine transnational concerns would be promoted. Second, the status of European parties would be strengthened because Members of Parliament would be elected not only via national parties but also directly. Third, by means of a transnational list, parties could also have the opportunity of competing for votes in member states where they have only a small representation (for instance the Green Party in Eastern Europe). Finally, a

transnational list would draw media attention to EU-policy issues beyond the frontiers of national language communities. This would represent an important step towards the formation of a European public that to a large extent still exists in the form of simultaneous but nationally different reporting about European political events (Eder/Kantner 2000).

Nevertheless: If the proposal for transnational lists goes along with the proposition that each citizen would obtain an additional vote for electing the EU constituency's composition in the Parliament besides the vote for the election of its national delegation, it is confronted with several objections: First, there is a risk that two kinds of parliamentarians would emerge in the European Parliament. Second, an additional EU constituency would lead to a further expansion of the Parliament. Third, since the reform would have implications for the degressive proportionality principle and affect the balance across member states it could strengthen the impression that the Parliament is too far removed from its people.

IV.4.1.6 Simultaneous Closing of Polling Stations

Greater media, attention and a stronger European character of EP elections could eventually be achieved through the establishment of a common time for closing polling stations in all member states, as Shaw proposes (2015: 98). Although currently EP elections take place in all member states within the same time window (for the 2014 EP elections from May 22nd to May 25th 2014) polling stations are open at different hours during that period and on different days. To dramatise EP elections as a common European moment, it would be helpful, according to Shaw (2015: 98), "to institute a single end point for European voting, such as 21.00 CET on Sunday, thus creating a pan-European electoral evening. This will certainly increase the drama of the event, especially if it were combined with the simultaneous release of exit polls or other vote predictions across all 28 Member States".

IV.4.1.7 Political Equality among EU-Citizens through Electoral Law Reform?

How can the measures presented for reforming EU electoral law be assessed? Could they establish political equality among EU-citizens? In the light of our discussion, a differentiated view on the proposals suggests itself. As shown above (ch. III., IV.), voter turnout is primarily relevant to political equality because it correlates with social inequality of voting. The puzzle in the social inequality of voting is that it is those who depend most on a policy change towards more redistribution who make the least use of their right to vote. A republican view offers an explanation by pointing to the political socialisation of socially weak citizens (see ch. IV.3.1.1): they have come to understand that their interest in stronger redistributive politics is not taken up by political parties or cannot be implemented because they give in to the pressures of market-actors. Perceiving the parties in the European Parliament as actors that cannot be addressed in order to shape their own life-situations, there is no weighty reason for (socially weak) citizens to cast their vote. "Once you learn that the trains are not running any more, it makes no sense to wait on the platform any longer." (Offe 2013: 208).

The proposals for electoral law reform that point directly to raising the turnout – like the introduction of electronic voting or the reduction of voting age – are doubtlessly appropriate to strengthen representative democracy (not only at the EU level). Likewise, measures seeking to overcome differences in European elections by standardising, for example, voter registration procedures and national electoral thresholds are equally important. However, despite being significant themselves, these measures hardly help in overcoming the two problems fundamental to the connection between voter turnout and political equality in the EU: the social inequality of voting aggravated by low turnout, which in turn has a major cause in the secondary relevance of the European Parliament. In order to increase voter turnout permanently, measures are required to increase the European Parliament's significance in the EU's political process, especially from the perspective of socially weak EU citizens. Dramatising European elections by closing the polling stations at the same time

also points in this direction. However, in the eyes of citizens such a dramatisation would be seen as a farce, unless the staging of European elections could be accompanied by de facto measures to increase their relevance. The establishment of a transnational EU-constituency would be a major step towards this objective. It would send a clear signal to break up the national cleavage that is still connected with EU politics. But, as the discussion of digressive proportionality has shown, any proposal to change EU electoral law – also an EU-wide constituency – has to be assessed from the perspective of the European Parliament's status in the overall institutional architecture and the political process established by it.

IV.5 Politicising the EU and Empowering the European Parliament

The relation between voter turnout and political (in)equality is intensified because it is not only the European parties that lack trust in their will and capacity to shape European politics but also the European Parliament in its entirety. The well-documented perception of European elections as second order is a major cause for the remarkably low turnout. The EU's political system as one with multiple veto points oriented towards consensus was designed in light of the EU's huge heterogeneity. "Compared with consociational democracies [such as Belgium and Switzerland, D.G./S.S.], the economic, institutional, cultural and political heterogeneity of European states is extreme." (Scharpf 2015: 395). To this day, decision-making procedures in the EU are arranged to avoid public political conflict. The international structure of political authority guides European will-formation towards a consensus among national governments. Even the co-legislatorship of Council and Parliament in the ordinary legislation procedure does not alter this for two reasons. Firstly, the scope of policy-areas dealt with in the ordinary legislation procedure is restricted. Secondly the EU process is depoliticised because, in contrast to national constitutions, a large number of policy goals are constitutionally entrenched in the EU Treaties:

"monetary policy is geared towards 'price stability' instead of 'full employment', energy policy focuses on competitiveness and energy security instead of democratic access, non-discrimination policy fosters labour market access over dignity in the workplace, the Court's interpretation of Article 125 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union entails that financial assistance must be based on conditionality instead of solidarity, the excessive deficit procedure prefers austerity over Keynesian solutions and the free movement provision themselves already express a very particular understanding of the interaction between state and market." (Dawson/de Witte 2015: 9-10)

In this way a variety of salient issues are taken off the political agenda and policy-preferences steering the course of EU politics are cemented regardless of possible changes in societal interests.

Depoliticisation and the international structure of political authority in the EU gained their legitimacy from enabling stepwise peaceful integration among extremely heterogeneous nation-states, the course of which was largely agreed. With Economic and Monetary Union and fall-out from the financial crisis, this situation has changed. Tacit consent for the course of integration has evaporated in light of the conflicts sparked off by the redistributive impact of EU economic policy following the crisis. Moreover, the financial crisis has shown that conflicts in the EU cannot be dealt with as conflicts among societal interests but emerge as conflicts along national lines. The transformation of the EU into a redistributive order has largely undermined its legitimacy: while the depoliticised, internationally structured political system was a guarantor of European integration before the crisis, thereafter it has caused tensions that endanger the EU's continued existence.

Against this background, there is no way to avoid politicising the EU and empowering the European Parliament in order to overcome the national cleavage. This would allow for institutionalised resolving of political conflict among societal cleavages (for example, investors and bankers against workers, pensioners and jobless). This

appears necessary to foster political equality among EU-citizens as well as political equality among member states and EU-citizens. On the one hand, a European Parliament with an unrestricted political agenda and a stronger say in the EU process would make possible European elections that effectively contribute to shaping the living conditions of EU citizens. On the other hand, European politics would no longer be driven by the lowest common denominator among national interests. The assessment of political alternatives would no longer solely hinge on the question of whether or not they can gather a large intergovernmental consensus. In addition they would require the majority support of EU-transnational societal interests. Consequently, a genuinely demoicratic will-formation process would precede EU decisions that would balance all three dimensions – a compromise between national interests in the Council, a compromise between transnational societal interests in the European Parliament and an inter-institutional compromise between national interests (Council) and transnational interests (European Parliament).

Further developing the EU into a demoicracy would not only overcome the second-order character of the European Parliament, but also politicise EU decisions through public contestation in the European Parliament, between the European Parliament and the Council, but presumably also within the Council.

Meanwhile, the EU's heterogeneity only ostensibly constitutes an obstacle to this. The financial crisis has created a noteworthy learning process. It has become obvious by now that with the founding of the Economic and Monetary Union member states have established a relationship of mutual dependence that cannot be turned back without plunging national economies into chaos with unforeseeable consequences. Regardless of whether the economic interdependence was originally intended or not, for the EU there is "no return to square one" (Offe 2015: 48-55). Moreover, it has become clear that a predominantly internationally structured EU is incapable of adequately dealing with political conflicts triggered by the financial crisis and containing the centrifugal forces which make disintegration of the EU a real possibility today. The "revolution from above" (Balibar 2011) brought about by national executives with the establishment of the new system of economic governance has rather aggravated than alleviated this. In short, heterogeneity or not, there are only two alternatives: further integration or failing integration. "Unless it finds the capacity to start again on radically new bases, Europe is a dead political project" (Balibar 2010).

Besides this change of perspective on European integration, there is another reason for why heterogeneity is not an obstacle to political integration per se. Political conflict itself has an integrating effect, if dealt with under certain conditions as is the case in a democratic process. This and other positive consequences from political conflict as well as the role a parliament plays for establishing an according democratic process will now be briefly addressed (IV.5.1). Finally, some proposals for constitutional reform will be discussed that could push the EU towards an EU-demoicracy and foster political equality among EU-citizens and among EU-citizens and member states (IV.5.2).

IV.5.1 Positive Effects of Political Conflict in Democracy

For Claude Lefort the uniqueness of modern democratic societies is that they maintain integration based on institutionalised political conflict. Lefort explains this by drawing on the difference in kind between democracy and medieval monarchy. In medieval monarchy, the person of the prince not only embodied absolute power but also the unity of society. In the physical body of the prince society could view itself as an organic unity. The revolutionary turn with modern democracy, Lefort argues, is that this view of society as an organic unit has dissolved. Power is no longer ascribed to any person in society. Instead it is bound to a procedure that generates power in a competition, that periodically bestows it anew and the rules of which are determined by the constitution.. Although political power remains the integrating point of reference for societal conflicts and is bestowed to particular persons based on elections, as a purely symbolical point of reference it is nowhere visible or tenable in society. "The locus of power becomes *an empty place*." (Lefort 1988: 17; italics original).

Modern democracies overcome the disintegrating force of social inequalities by relocating social conflict onto the symbolic sphere of political competition. Based on institutionalised rules, societal conflicts under conditions of social inequality are transposed symbolically into a democratic conflict amongst equals. In doing so, democracies transform the disintegrative power of social conflicts into a constructive force that makes social integration possible under conditions of heterogeneity.

Against this background, Dani (2012: 622-5) describes three positive effects of institutionalised political conflict for the integration of modern democracies drawing on the sociology of conflict. Firstly, giving public expression to competing claims, passions and interests creates a dynamic that keeps society vital. No doubt, social conflicts can also be destructive. However, if mediated by democratic rules and the need for finding compromises, they foster synthesis between rivalling viewpoints thereby changing the relationship between conflicting parties. Secondly, democratic conflict contributes to identity-building both at society-level as well as amongst individuals and particular groups. On the one hand, it is often in the course of democratic competition that groups and individuals first learn what distinguishes them from rival groups as well as what views and interests they share. At the same time, on the other hand, they learn about the views of their 'enemies', which makes radical rejection more difficult and fosters the recognition of diversity (Wenman 2013). Finally, democratic competition stabilises societies by creating a valve for the "disciplined release of aggressive forces by antagonists" (Dani 2012: 624).

Seen in this light, societal integration does not so much depend on homogeneity but rather on the tension created by solidarity in heterogeneity. For Lefort, this tension is most visible in the institution of the general elections:

"It is at the very moment when popular sovereignty is assumed to manifest itself, when the people is assumed to actualize itself by expressing its will, that social interdependence breaks down and that the citizen is abstracted from all the networks in which his social life develops and becomes a mere statistic. Number replaces substance." (Lefort 1988: 18-9)

Concerning the institutionalisation of political competition that brings about these positive effects, the institution of a parliamentary legislative is indispensable for three reasons (see Gaus 2015).

Firstly, a parliamentary legislature constitutes politics in terms of a cooperative, albeit conflictual practice among equals. General elections are a collective act through which citizens institutionalise the highest legislative authority. By engaging in this act, citizens publicly renew their mutual pledge to regulate their relationships through equal and inclusive decision-making. In this sense, elections to a democratic parliament do not simply mirror a pre-existing community, but constantly recreate it (Lefort/Gauchet 1971) and at the same time affirm the social validity of the democratic principle as a guiding norm.

Secondly, the interplay between parliament—as the highest democratic legislative authority—and the electoral process, ties administrative decision-making to non-exclusive public deliberation (Brunkhorst 2002; Habermas 1996: ch. VIII). The fact that parliament is the locus within the deliberative system where the general public regularly exercises its power to decide, makes it a focal point of public deliberation. It becomes a channel (*Schleuse*) through which decentralised and non-institutionalised (in the EU: national or functional) publics can feed views effectively and equally into the political process (Gaus 2013: 15 f.). The existence of a parliamentary legislature is thus a precondition for citizens' belief that their views have actual political impact.

Thirdly, the process of majoritarian decision-making in parliament sets up an oppositional logic. This in turn triggers constructive mediation between conflicting societal views and, crucially, demonstrates that all views are accorded equal respect in the decision-making process. Competition for the support of the majority shapes public political deliberation in two ways—spatially and temporally (Rummens 2012). Spatially, the ongoing

political competition that results from the oppositional logic forces political actors to develop justificatory narratives in order to win over the majority (Manin 1997: 161–92). This creates a public space in which competing political views and options can be ascribed to particular political actors and are opened up to the broad mass of citizens. Temporally, the oppositional logic ensures that political deliberation in the form of an ongoing process of contestation is kept open. At this point the detrimental effects of depoliticised consensus-orientation in the current EU system become clear. True consensus in political decision-making is not only unlikely but also potentially costly for democratic will-formation in epistemic terms, since it suggests that all objections have been met, the best alternative has prevailed and that political deliberation is, therefore, complete (Anderson 2006: 15 ff.). By contrast, majoritarian decision-making leaves us with a minority-position as an indelible reminder of the fact that any decision is open to contest and that political deliberation is, therefore, never complete. Minority views do not vanish into thin air; they remain part of the collective memory and add to the pool of arguments available for use in future decision-making. The epistemic dimension of parliamentary practice thus helps in "overcoming disaffection and sustaining ongoing commitment to the democratic project" (Rummens 2012: 36).

IV.5.2. Reconstruction of the Constitutional Architecture – Towards EU-Demoicracy

Borrowing from Balibar, one can say that the EU has to 'restart or die' – in order to overcome political inequality among EU-citizens and among EU-citizens and member states as well as strengthening its capacity for political action, the EU requires constitutional reform. In light of the EU's development in recent years, even former critics now call for stronger representative democracy at EU level (Scharpf 2015). But what would be necessary to develop the EU further into a true demoicracy? Two ways can be distinguished which now, and finally, will be discussed: a stronger role of national parliaments in the EU-process (IV.5.2.1) and strengthening the status of the European Parliament (IV.5.2.2).

IV.5.2.1 Stronger National Parliaments?

It is a widespread view that stronger involvement by national parliaments in decision-making is needed to democratise the EU. The proposals range from creating a network of national parliaments (Crum/Fossum 2013) to establishing a second chamber of the European Parliament as a "permanent conference of parliaments" (Jospin 2001). There can be no doubt that a stronger role for national parliaments is democratically needed. However, it is important to note that national parliaments could hardly contribute to solving the problems of political inequality discussed here. If the EU is to draw its own legitimacy from being a democracy of democracies – an EU-demoicracy – then it must balance the principle of democratic self-determination at the national and European level. Today the principle of national self-determination is primarily realised in the Council whereas the principle of individual self-determination for EU-citizens is primarily realised in the European Parliament. However, due to the minor status of the European Parliament in the EU system, the principle of national self-determination is dominant. Neither a stronger involvement of national parliaments nor extending the European Parliament with a second chamber of delegates from national parliaments would foster the principle of individual self-determination for EU citizens. To the contrary, both would only aggravate the very dominance of the national cleavage which is to be overcome. One of the major sources of today's tendencies for disintegration in the EU would thus remain unbalanced in the best case scenario and be fuelled in the worst case.

Instead, even in an EU-demoicracy that gives a stronger role to national parliaments, there is no way around strengthening the European Parliament if politics in terms of national advantages, fostered by the institution of the Council, shall be balanced with politics in terms of transnational interests. Only a European Parliament as a European (co-)legislator can unfold the dynamic needed to change the nature of destructive political conflicts in the EU and transform them into a constructive and integrative competition about how to shape European

living conditions. The European Parliament as a parliament of EU-citizens is "the only European institution where different points of view are represented often regardless of the national origins of parliamentarians (MEPs) and of the possible opting out of their Member State." (Fasone 2014: 168)

IV.5.2.2 EU-Demoicracy: Balancing Citizen and State-Equality without Final Decision-Making Power

For Dawson and de Witte (2015) two reforms are required to transform the core rationality of the multi-level EU "from substantive balance to substantive conflict". Firstly, they see an opening up of the EU's political agenda as crucial. One condition of democratic self-determination is that any issue concerning the common living conditions can be dealt with in the political process. Currently this condition fails because of the many provisions in the EU Treaties that determine policy goals for various issues. For this reason, they argue for "loosening up the Treaty objectives to encourage contestation about the Union's objectives and direction." (Dawson/de Witte 2015: 9)

Secondly, the dominance of the national cleavage in the EU has to be overcome. The international structure of political authority that keeps a hold of the EU to this day conceals the profound and far reaching nature of conflicts as being between societal interests caused by the EU's economic policies. "The disintegration of national cleavages and political allegiance and their reconstitution on the transnational level are thus crucial to ensure that conflicts are played out within the Union's political system." (Dawson/de Witte 2015: 9) To this end they suggest far-reaching changes to the EU's constitutional order that would create movement towards a federal state, close to the German model. In order to substitute the national for 'functional' cleavages and to foster intermediate structures that collect, structure and channel transnational societal voices (that is, European parties, media and social movements), they hold it to be crucial that the number of actors in the EU process be reduced. They propose to bestow the monopoly of political will-formation and decision-making upon the European Parliament. For this the European Parliament's electoral law would need to be altered. Members of European Parliament would be elected from transnational lists of European parties, with degressive proportionality making way for direct proportionality in the allocation of seats. In this way, Dawson and de Witte maintain, the European parliament would represent the citizens as true Europeans. The Council would be transformed into a second chamber to which each member state would delegate two representatives of its national parliament and two representatives of the national government. As a chamber of States it would be participating equally in EU law-making and deciding with simple majority. The Commission would function as EU government formed by parliamentary majority, entrusted with the usual tasks of a national government and answerable to the Parliament.

The roadmap towards a democratic EU suggested by Dawson and de Witte doubtless parallels the ways in which political conflict is institutionalised and has proven to promote integration in national democracies (see above IV.5.1.). However, along with Fritz Scharpf one may ask if such a roadmap is compatible with the principle of mutual accommodation basic to the idea of an EU-demoicracy, namely that "Member States must defer to democratic majorities at the European level, whereas European majorities must respect the legitimate diversity of democratic Member States." (Scharpf 2015: 399) Dawson and de Witte's model strongly resembles a parliamentary-majoritarian democracy in a federal state. Even if the lack of a homogenous European people is no objection to the empowerment of majoritarian procedures in the EU, the strong heterogeneity of the highly integrated national democracies has to be acknowledged in composing the EU as a democratic multi-level polity. Scharpf points to the fact that the issue of permanent minorities to be dealt with in every majoritarian democracy poses a particular problem to the EU because of its strong heterogeneity. It is this point that makes the ideal of an EU-demoicracy so attractive because it neither conceives of the EU as an intergouvernmental order nor of a parliamentary-majoritarian democracy: Instead, it suggests the EU as a polity in which both sides compete with each other on par and thus establish ongoing demoicratic contestation.

Regarding the overall direction of reform, Scharpf is fully in line with Dawson and de Witte: "Democracy is meant to empower non-elites in relation to governing elites. And as depoliticised integration through law and the depoliticised euro regime have led Europe into its prese[n]t impasse, a fundamental change of direction will presuppose the politicisation of policy choices under conditions of political accountability on both levels of government" (Scharpf 2015: 398). Also with regard to the first reform-step Scharpf and Dawson de Witte agree: "Politicisation without the possibility of autonomous policy choices is more likely to produce frustration, alienation, apathy or rebellion" (Scharpf 2015: 398). For this reason he too supports the deconstitutionalisation of European law. Clearly the EU Treaties should entail the rules for the organisation and procedures of the EU to ensure the protection of individual and civil rights, but: "All other rules of the present Treaty and the *acquis* should remain in force but would lack constitutional status" (Scharpf 2015: 400). In other words, the Treaties should contain no policy goals whatsoever and all those currently in the Treaties would be politically negotiable. However, with respect to the EU's institutional architecture, Scharpf distances himself from full parliamentarisation. The key assumption is to politicise the EU in all policy-areas and to weaken the effect of vetos in order to increase the EU's capacity for political action but without ignoring heterogeneity and the right to national democratic self-determination. For this Scharpf suggests the following:

- Firstly, the Commission's monopoly of legislative initiative should be given up and also minorities in the European Parliament and Council have the right of initiative.
- Crucial to the EU's politicisation would, secondly, be to adopt ordinary EU legislation by simple majority votes in Parliament and Council, combined with
- Thirdly, the possibility for individual member states to opt out of ordinary legislation. Both measures would facilitate legislative initiatives in general and lead to a broad politicisation, including a revision of the provisions of the *acquis*. This way the majority principle would gain much more weight. But at the same time the issue of permanent majorities in the EU would be defused and the right to national democratic self-determination taken into account.
- Fourthly, legislation denying national opt-outs should be based upon absolute majority in the European Parliament together with qualified majority in the Council. This might be necessary in cases where uniform regulations are required, for example, in order to circumvent the free-rider problem.
- Finally, individual or groups of member states should have the possibility to opt-out from (parts of) the *acquis* if this is not rejected by joint majorities in Parliament and Council. This is necessary in case European regulations run counter to salient national interests and if there is no chance to mobilise a European majority for a general revision.

Scharpf's model empowers the European Parliament considerably. It leaves the European Council untouched as the highest political authority, but strengthens the position of the European Parliament remarkably by increasing the significance of the ordinary legislative procedure, on the one hand, and weakening the potential of national interests to block EU legislation, on the other.

However, Scharpf's model lacks the final step to establish the demoicratic principle of equality among member states and EU-citizens in the EU's political process. It is questionable if the perception of the international structure of political authority and the second-order character of the European Parliament can be broken without putting the European Parliament on equal footing with the authority of national executives entirely – and this means: equality not only with the Council in the ordinary legislative procedure, but also with the European Council in changing the EU Treaties. Only if a (qualified) majority in the European Parliament becomes a veto-player in questions concerning the (in Scharpf's sense: core) Treaties would national demoi and EU-citizens be represented on equal terms in the EU's political process. The European Parliament would be on par with the (European) Council and lose its status of a second-order parliament but without obtaining final decision-making power (Gaus 2014). Together they would form a tandem of the highest political authorities. This would trigger a particular dynamic of an institutionalised *European* political conflict while keeping the

international dynamic of mediating between national demoi intact. In this way, the EU would develop into a genuine democracy of democracies the citizens of which could effectively shape European living-conditions by taking part in European elections. It would become an EU-demoicracy.

CONCLUSION

All Western democracies face the challenge of social inequality in voting. Lower turnout means more unequal turnout because socially weak citizens show a stronger tendency to refrain from voting. Contrary to a long-held view, non-voting is not randomly distributed among citizens, but a lower class phenomenon. This report has shown that the same applies to European elections, with the additional finding that weaker social class is also related to political orientation. From a republican viewpoint the link between class and voting hardly comes as a surprise, since the equal use of democratic rights is dependent on a certain amount of social equality. In the absence of the latter, a vicious circle of non-participation is set in motion: the (self-) exclusion of the less well-off from European elections undermines the EU's capacity for democratic self-determination; at the same time increasing non-voting amongst the socially weak silently shifts the political agenda towards the interests of the well-off citizens, pushing aside the formers' concerns and so forth. Against this background, the extraordinarily low turnout in European elections poses a barrier to political equality among EU citizens, and hence to democratic EU-citizenship.

Simple solutions for strengthening citizens' political equality by way of increasing voter turnout are not in sight, as the major cause for low turnout in the EU is neither a poorly informed citizenry nor a lack of understanding about EU politics. Quite the opposite, EU citizens have come to understand one thing perfectly well: that the European Parliament and thus their individual voices play only a minor role in the EU's political process, while at the same time EU decisions significantly affect their life chances. Low turnout in European elections traces back to the (still) weak political authority of the European Parliament. In this sense the issue of the EU citizens' political equality is connected to the status of the European Parliament in general, together with the balance of power between the Parliament and the European Council in particular.

The supreme position of the European Council had long been justified by the particular rationale of European integration. After all, the EU is a polity made up not only by individual citizens but also, and originally primarily so, by nation-states. For a long time political equality was rightly assumed to be an issue among member states only. The success of the integration process, culminating in the Economic and Monetary Union, has changed this. Transnational social and economic integration has made political equality in today's EU a matter that requires a balance along three dimensions: among member states, among EU citizens as well as among the member states and the EU citizenry. The conundrum of democratic citizenship in the EU is how to reshape its polity towards an EU-demoicracy that establishes this threefold political equality.

The report suggests that the way ahead towards EU-demoicracy lies in balancing citizen and state-equality by further empowering the European Parliament up to the level where Council and Parliament share political authority in the EU equally, with neither of them having the final decision-making power. If the EU wants to become a demoicracy, that is, a democratic community of states *and* citizens, it must balance the current national cleavage in EU politics with a genuine transnational cleavage. Only by becoming a European (co-) legislator that is on par with the Council in *all* political matters can a European Parliament create the dynamic needed to transform destructive political conflicts within the EU into constructive and integrative competition about how to shape European living conditions. This would turn European elections into first-order, remove a

main obstacle for a higher turnout and thus foster political equality among EU-citizens, without further undermining the significance of national elections.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

With regard to policy implications this suggests the following conclusions:

- Political authority of the Parliament and the Council should be balanced in all political matters, because a major source of political inequality in the EU is the subordinate status of the European Parliament in the EU's political process. Accordingly, the EU's political process should be revised by
    - extending majority voting in the ordinary legislative procedure;
    - combined with extending the possibility for national opt-outs;
    - opening the acquis for political renegotiation in the ordinary legislative procedure;
    - giving European Parliament a veto in matters of Treaty change

- Reforming EU's electoral law in order to strengthen the representative dimension of democracy in the EU. On this condition, in particular,
    - political inequality could be reduced through standardising voter registration procedures
    - transnational voting lists could be introduced in order to balance national cleavages and strengthen European Parties
    - downgrading degressive proportionality, uniform electoral thresholds
    - creating a 'common European moment' by simultaneous dates and opening/closing hours of polling stations
    - voter turnout in the EU could also be increased through the introduction of electronic voting and reducing voter age.

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APPENDIX

EES 2004

Bivariate correlations between EP-WBT 2004 (v111) and social class (v224), education (v226), and age (v218), respectively

States	Social class	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Education	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Age	Valid cases in % (absolute)
LUX	-0,060*	98,4 (1314)				
IT			-0,058*	86,3 (1340)	0,078**	99,4 (1544)
IE					0,189***	96,7 (1116)
EL					0,244***	95,8 (479)
CY					0,221***	100,0 (500)
NL	-0,141***	97,1 (1540)	-0,147***	95,8 (1519)	0,121***	99,2 (1573)
PT					0,197***	95,7 (957)
FI	-0,170***	94,7 (852)	-0,219***	88,3 (745)	0,175***	99,1 (892)
DK	-0,127***	95,5 (1258)	-0,179***	85,0 (1120)	0,210***	99,8 (1314)
ES	-0,112***	94,3 (1139)			0,176***	97,2 (1174)
DE			-0,116**	93,3 (556)	0,166***	97,1 (579)
FR	-0,115***	99,1 (1393)			0,231***	99,4 (1347)
BR	-0,090***	92,5 (1387)			0,270***	98,1 (1471)
AT			-0,123***	93,6 (945)	0,097**	99,0 (1000)
HU	-0,175***	92,1 (1105)	-0,146***	96,3 (1155)	0,159***	99,5 (1194)
CZ	-0,096**	95,4 (848)	-0,096**	94,9 (842)	0,147***	99,9 (888)
LV	-0,115***	88,9 (889)	-0,166***	91,1 (911)	0,143***	99,7 (997)
SE	-0,206***	60,6 (1273)	-0,145***	59,0 (1238)	0,199***	99,9 (2089)
EE	-0,102***	93,3 (1498)	-0,154***	97,1 (1560)	0,187***	99,3 (1595)
SI					0,284***	98,8 (990)
PL	-0,176**	92,2 (885)	-0,106***	94,2 (904)	0,111***	99,7 (957)
SK	-0,112**	96,7 (1028)	-0,099**	92,8 (986)	0,185***	99,1 (1053)

[1] Remarks: significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between social class (v224) and political interest (v154) and party affinity (v211_partei_lire_dummy)

States	V154	Valid cases in % (absolute)	v211_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	-0,200***	93,9 (835)		
LUX	-0,138***	98,4 (1314)	-0,113***	67,2 (897)
IT	-0,150***	79,0 (1227)	-0,120***	58,5 (909)
IE	-0,116***	95,4 (1101)	-0,088*	58,0 (668)
EL	-0,094*	96,0 (480)		
CY	-0,235***	99,2 (496)	-0,184***	64,4 (322)
NL	-0,254***	97,2 (1542)	-0,186***	80,3 (1274)
PT	-0,213***	94,5 (945)		
FI	-0,214***	95,2 (857)	-0,456***	51,3 (462)
DK	-0,179***	95,6 (1259)	-0,371***	50,3 (663)
ES	-0,140***	96,4 (1164)	-0,082*	61,9 (748)
DE	-0,108**	96,5 (575)	-0,138*	46,0 (274)
FR	-0,193***	99,6 (1400)	-0,216***	48,7 (685)
BR	-0,200***	92,2 (1383)	-0,270***	35,2 (528)
AT	-0,169***	97,9 (989)	-0,146***	54,7 (552)
HU	-0,231***	92,3 (1107)	-0,224***	34,8 (418)
CZ	-0,159***	94,9 (844)	-0,268***	55,5 (493)
LV	-0,155***	89,0 (890)		
LT				
MT				
SE	-0,312***	60,6 (1273)	-0,333***	49,0 (1030)
EE	-0,152***	93,8 (1506)		
SI			-0,114*	31,6 (317)
PL	-0,177***	92,1 (884)		
SK	-0,159***	96,6 (1030)		

[1] Remarks: significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between education (v216) and political interest (v154) and party affinity (v211_partei_lire_dummy)

States	v154	Valid cases in % (absolute)	v211_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	-0,148***	89,7 (797)		
LUX	-0,160***	91,7 (1224)		
IT	-0,182***	84,7 (1315)		
IE	-0,133***	92,6 (1069)		
EL	-0,169***	88,2 (441)		
CY	-0,215***	91,4 (457)		
NL	-0,224***	96,0 (1522)		
PT	-0,299***	83,0 (830)		
FI	-0,194***	88,9 (800)	-0,114*	48,1 (433
DK	-0,227***	85,1 (1121)	-0,147***	45,5 (599)
ES	-0,259***	84,4 (1020)	0,124**	53,6 (647)
DE	-0,243***	93,6 (558)	0,121*	45,5 (271)
FR	-0,211***	91,7 (1290)		
BR	-0,182***	98,9 (1483)		
AT	-0,268***	93,5 (944)		
HU	-0,255***	96,5 (1158)	-0,209***	36,0 (432)
CZ	-0,108**	94,3 (838)	-0,154***	55,5 (493)
LV	-0,214***	91,2 (912)		
LT				
MT				
SE	-0,244***	59,0 (1238)	-0,148***	47,3 (994)
EE	-0,186***	97,7 (1569)		
SI	-0,211***	85,6 (858)	0,224***	29,5 (296)
PL	-0,197***	94,1 (903)		
SK	-0,136***	93,1 (990)		

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between social class (v224) and vote decision in the last EP election (v112_partei_lire_dummy) and national election (v113_partei_lire_dummy)

States	v112_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)	v113_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE				
LUX			-0,095**	76,8 (1025)
IT	-0,159***	67,7 (1052)	-0,145***	63,0 (978)
IE	-0,096**	78,7 (908)	-0,065*	85,0 (981)
EL	-0,130*	66,4 (332)	-0,143**	79,2 (396)
CY	-0,157***	77,6 (388)	-0,210***	82,6 (413)
NL	-0,122***	63,7 (1010)	-0,109***	88,0 (1395)
PT				
FI	-0,365***	53,7 (483)	-0,388***	70,2 (632)
DK	-0,246***	59,0 (777)	-0,276***	81,0 (1067)
ES			-0,072*	72,4 (874)
DE	-0,121*	43,6 (260)	-0,110*	72,8 (434)
FR	-0,226***	46,7 (656)	-0,201***	68,2 (959)
BR	-0,108***	45,4 (681)	-0,261***	67,7 (1016)
AT			-0,098**	78,8 (796)
HU	-0,130***	42,9 (515)	-0,152***	64,9 (779)
CZ	-0,282***	43,8 (389)	-0,248***	58,2 (517)
LV				
LT				
MT				
SE	-0,276***	28,8 (605)	-0,289***	51,8 (1088)
EE				
SI				
PL				
SK				

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between education (v216) and vote decision in the last EP election (v112_partei_lire_dummy) and national election (v113_partei_lire_dummy)

States	v112_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)	v113_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE				
LUX	0,082**	74,1 (989)		
IT				
IE	0,098**	76,8 (886)		
EL				
CY	0,103*	73,8 (369)	-0,128*	77,6 (388)
NL				
PT				
FI			-0,141***	67,1 (604)
DK	-0,091*	53,9 (710)	-0,148***	74,5 (981)
ES	0,094*	46,9 (566)	0,105**	63,5 (767)
DE				
FR				
BR				
AT				
HU	-0,145***	44,3 (531)	-0,143***	67,3 (808)
CZ	-0,223***	44,2 (393)	-0,144***	58,9 (524)
LV				
LT				
MT				
SE	-0,195***	27,5 (578)	-0,144***	50,0 (1051)
EE	0,115***	37,1 (596)		
SI			0,101*	48,5 (486)
PL				
SK				

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between left-right self-placing (v134) and social class (v224), and education (v216), respectively

States	V224	Valid cases in % (absolute)	V216	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	0,147***	75,6 (672)		
LUX			-0,144***	86,4 (1153)
IT	0,170***	71,1 (1104)		
IE			-0,127***	86,7 (1000)
EL				
CY	0,230***	96,2 (480)	0,170***	88,6 (443)
NL	0,106***	89,1 (1413)		
PT			-0,102**	75,2 (752)
FI	0,425***	91,0 (819)	0,109**	84,1 (757)
DK	0,142***	90,4 (1190)	-0,158***	80,9 (1066)
ES			-0,159***	68,2 (824)
DE	0,122**	88,4 (527)	-0,154***	85,9 (512)
FR	0,170***	97,8 (1375)		
BR	0,088**	81,2 (1218)		
AT			-0,112***	89,2 (901)
HU	0,113***	82,2 (986)	0,089**	85,6 (1027)
CZ	0,298***	88,5 (787)	0,204***	88,1 (783)
LV	0,079*	74,5 (745)		
LT				
MT				
SE	0,286***	56,6 (1189)	0,113***	54,7 (1149)
EE	0,073*	72,0 (1157)		
SI	-0,090*	74,0 (741)	-0,150***	65,9 (660)
PL				
SK	0,205***	80,7 (858)	0,151***	78,0 (829)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

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Bivariate correlations between EP-WBT (Q24) and social class (Q114), education (Q100), and age (Q103), respectively

States	Social class	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Education	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Age	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE					0,084**	96,1 (963)
MT					0,128***	98,5 (985)
DK	-0,098**	99,3 (993)				
IT	-0,064*	96,6 (962)	-0,103**	89,5 (895)		
LUX					0,108***	98,5 (986)
IE					0,212***	97,4 (975)
CY			0,069*	91,1 (911)	0,225***	99,1 (991)
SE	-0,115***	97,1 (973)	-0,089**	92,9 (931)	0,146***	99,7 (999)
AT			-0,072*	94,7 (947)	0,128***	99,1 (991)
DE	-0,171***	97,8 (982)	-0,123***	95,7 (961)	0,151***	98,2 (986)
EL	0,097**	97,1 (971)			0,186***	98,4 (984)
LV	-0,072*	96,3 (964)	-0,125***	92,6 (927)	0,230***	99,4 (995)
ES	-0,078*	98,7 (987)			0,271***	99,3 (993)
FI	-0,155***	97,7 (977)			0,283***	99,6 (996)
NL	-0,172***	97,2 (977)	-0,102**	95,7 (962)	0,229***	99,2 (997)
FR	-0,117***	96,4 (964)			0,221***	98,2 (982)
PT	-0,108***	98,5 (985)			0,183***	99,3 (993)
EE	-0,127***	93,9 (946)	-0,164***	93,5 (942)	0,157***	99,1 (998)
SI					0,309***	98,4 (984)
BG	-0,071*	93,8 (938)	-0,064*	93,8 (938)	0,173***	97,5 (975)
UK	-0,145***	95,4 (954)	-0,099**	94,3 (943)	0,240***	97,6 (976)
HU	-0,161***	97,1 (976)	-0,133***	95,4 (959)	0,141***	99,1 (996)
RO	-0,104**	94,8 (951)	-0,084*	90,6 (909)	0,187***	97,3 (976)
CZ	-0,065*	96,6 (985)	-0,074*	91,5 (933)	0,260***	97,6 (996)
SK	-0,123***	96,1 (976)	-0,186***	95,2 (967)	0,174***	98,3 (999)
PL	-0,104***	89,5 (897)	-0,256***	90,4 (906)	0,209***	97,5 (977)
LT			-0,126***	86,9 (869)	0,301***	97,1 (971)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between social class (Q114) and political interest (Q78) and party affinity (Q87_partei_lire_dummy)

States	Q78	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Q87_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	-0,128***	92,2 (924)		
MT	-0,084**	96,9 (969)	-0,358***	46,8 (468)
DK	-0,169***	99,3 (993)	-0,222***	56,9 (569)
IT	-0,191***	96,1 (961)	-0,086*	60,7 (607)
LUX	-0,174***	97,7 (978)		
IE	-0,101**	95,0 (951)	-0,124*	35,4 (354)
CY			-0,213***	67,0 (670)
SE	-0,100**	97,0 (972)	-0,454***	63,0 (631)
AT	-0,137***	97,8 (978)		
DE	-0,174***	98,2 (986)	-0,127**	48 (482)
EL			-0,204***	57,4 (574)
LV	-0,095**	96,6 (967)		
ES	-0,177***	98,8 (988)	-0,133**	52 (520)
FI	-0,107***	97,9 (979)	-0,285***	55,8 (558)
NL	-0,214***	97,3 (978)	-0,113***	81,0 (814)
FR	-0,199***	96,8 (968)	-0,238***	49,3 (493)
PT	-0,252***	98,5 (985)	-0,101**	65,2 (652)
EE	-0,129***	94,0 (947)		
SI	-0,124***	97,8 (978)		
BG	-0,173***	93,4 (934)	-0,108*	52,3 (523)
UK	-0,155***	95,6 (956)	-0,205***	39,4 (394)
HU	-0,098**	97,6 (981)		
RO	-0,140***	95,5 (958)		
CZ	-0,084**	96,8 (987)	-0,234***	49,0 (500)
SK	-0,108***	96,4 (979)	-0,129**	51,2 (520)
PL	-0,252***	90,2 (904)		
LT	-0,138***	90,9 (909)		

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between education (Q100) and political interest (Q78) and party affinity (Q87_partei_lire_dummy)

States	Q78	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Q87_partei_lire_ dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	-0,202***	87,5 (877)		
MT	-0,111***	94,0 (940)	-0,303***	44,7 (479)
DK	-0,117***	90,1 (901)	0,170***	52,6 (526)
IT	-0,300***	89,3 (893)		
LUX	-0,173***	94,3 (944)		
IE	-0,141***	93,0 (931)		
CY				
SE	-0,135***	92,7 (929)		
AT	-0,179***	94,7 (947)		
DE	-0,178***	96,2 (966)	0,131**	47,7 (479)
EL	-0,219***	86,9 (868)		
LV	-0,142***	93,0 (931)		
ES	-0,290***	92,5 (925)		
FI				
NL	-0,232***	95,7 (962)		
FR	-0,207***	92,5 (925)		
PT	-0,242***	93,4 (934)		
EE	-0,106***	93,4 (941)		
SI	-0,115***	90,7 (907)		
BG	-0,255***	93,3 (933)	-0,089*	52,3 (523)
UK	-0,176***	94,5 (945)		
HU	-0,171***	96,0 (965)		
RO	-0,234***	91,3 (916)	-0,141***	50,3 (505)
CZ	-0,177***	91,6 (934)	-0,123**	47,3 (482)
SK	-0,174***	95,5 (970)	-0,094*	51,4 (522)
PL	-0,222***	91,0 (912)		
LT	-0,214***	88,5 (885)		

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between social class (Q114) and vote decision in the last EP election (Q25_partei_lire_dummy) and national election (Q27_partei_lire_dummy)

States	Q25_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Q27_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE				
MT	-0,303***	54,8 (548)	-0,290***	59,0 (590)
DK	-0,140***	84,4 (844)	-0,187***	89,5 (895)
IT	-0,084*	55,4 (554)		
LUX				
IE	-0,107**	67,1 (672)	-0,080*	70,8 (709)
CY	-0,181***	67,2 (672)	-0,170***	74,7 (747)
SE	-0,380***	72,3 (724)	-0,389***	84,5 (847)
AT				
DE	-0,102***	55,9 (561)	-0,128***	70,0 (703)
EL	-0,134***	60,3 (603)	-0,128***	77,8 (778)
LV				
ES			-0,128***	71,3 (713)
FI	-0,219**	58,0 (580)	-0,278***	74,3 (743)
NL	-0,107**	61,8 (621)	-0,163***	84,1 (845)
FR	-0,233***	44,6 (446)	-0,193***	57,7 (577)
PT	-0,097*	44,3 (443)		
EE				
SI				
BG			-0,113**	51,7 (517)
UK			-0,213***	70,7 (707)
HU				
RO			-0,081*	62,0 (622)
CZ	-0,196***	40,1 (409)	-0,191***	63,2 (645)
SK			-0,087*	67,5 (686)
PL			-0,103*	56,5 (566)
LT				

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between education (Q100) and vote decision in the last EP election (Q25_partei_lire_dummy) and national election (Q27_partei_lire_dummy)

States	Q25_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Q27_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	0,087*	62,2 (623)		
MT	-0,266***	52,6 (526)	-0,309***	57,8 (578)
DK	0,113**	76,5 (765)	0,124***	83,1 (831)
IT			0,098*	49,0 (490)
LUX				
IE				
CY				
SE			-0,072*	81,7 (819)
AT	0,110***	49,4 (494)	0,094*	72,8 (728)
DE	0,116**	54,7 (549)		
EL				
LV	-0,171***	58,5 (586)	-0,156***	53,4 (535)
ES				
FI				
NL	0,101*	61,4 (614)		
FR				
PT				
EE	0,171***	43,6 (439)	0,144***	60,9 (613)
SI			0,105**	70,0 (700)
BG			-0,110*	51,5 (515)
UK	0,155***	41,9 (419)		
HU				
RO	-0,148**	40,5 (406)	-0,113**	59,3 (595)
CZ	-0,196***	39,3 (401)	-0,186***	62,2 (634)
SK			-0,160***	68,0 (691)
PL				
LT			-0,087*	51,2 (512)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between left-right self-placing (Q46) and social class (Q114) and education (Q100), respectively

States	Q114	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Q100	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE				
MT	0,226***	54,6 (546)	0,101*	52,7 (527)
DK	0,153***	97,8 (978)	-0,081*	88,4 (884)
IT	0,148***	80,0 (800)		
LUX				
IE	0,069*	87,3 (874)		
CY	0,217***	91,6 (916)		
SE	0,376***	95,5 (957)		
AT			-0,154***	88,8 (888)
DE	0,067*	94,6 (950)	-0,107***	92,4 (928)
EL	0,122***	93,1 (931)		
LV			0,072*	76,1 (762)
ES	0,076*	95,2 (952)	-0,067*	89,4 (894)
FI	0,356***	94,6 (946)		
NL			-0,104**	92,3 (928)
FR	0,197***	89,4 (894)		
PT				
EE	0,103**	72,9 (734)		
SI			-0,123***	82,5 (825)
BG	0,117***	76,5 (765)	0,146***	76,3 (763)
UK			-0,171***	85,9 (859)
HU				
RO	0,106**	65,3 (655)		
CZ	0,139***	89,1 (909)		
SK	0,139***	80,9 (822)		
PL			-0,086*	73,8 (739)
LT	0,093*	67,5 (675)	0,072*	64,1 (641)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between endorsement of redistribution (Q63) and social class (Q114) and education (Q100), respectively

States	Q114	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Q100	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	0,095**	89,0 (892)	0,141***	85,0 (852)
MT	0,118***	88,7 (887)	0,176***	85,2 (852)
DK	0,132***	87,0 (870)		
IT	0,114***	92,6 (926)	0,074*	85,7 (857)
LUX	0,145***	93,2 (933)	0,110***	89,6 (897)
IE	0,203***	92,7 (928)	0,142***	90,6 (907)
CY	0,117***	94,4 (944)	0,105***	87,5 (875)
SE	0,277***	91,7 (919)		
AT	0,118***	94,4 (944)		
DE	0,202***	95,8 (962)		
EL	0,097**	94,9 (949)		
LV	0,084*	92,2 (923)		
ES	0,104***	95,7 (957)		
FI	0,276***	95,6 (956)	0,133***	86,5 (865)
NL	0,223***	96,1 (966)	0,135***	94,4 (949)
FR	0,186***	93,1 (931)	0,085*	88,4 (884)
PT	0,132***	94,0 (940)	0,143***	89,4 (894)
EE	0,258***	88,1 (887)	0,153***	87,8 (884)
SI	0,132***	97,1 (971)	0,092**	90,0 (900)
BG	0,165***	89,6 (896)	0,182***	89,3 (893)
UK	0,245***	92,7 (927)	0,131***	91,5 (915)
HU	0,169***	94,0 (945)	0,139***	92,4 (929)
RO	0,123***	83,3 (835)	0,239***	80,4 (806)
CZ	0,246***	93,8 (957)	0,161***	88,7 (905)
SK	0,238***	89,8 (912)	0,153***	89,3 (907)
PL	0,156***	85,1 (853)	0,274***	85,4 (856)
LT	0,203***	84,0 (840)	0,097**	81,8 (818)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

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Bivariate correlations between EP-WBT (QP1) and social class (D63), education (D8), and age (VD11), respectively

States	Social class	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Education	Valid cases in % (absolute)	Age	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	0,156***	97,3 (1055)	-0,145***	95,3 (1033)	0,077*	99,9 (1083)
MT			0,101*	96,3 (524)	-0,194***	99,8 (543)
SE	-0,175***	96,0 (1098)	-0,156***	95,5 (1093)		
EL					-0,082**	100 (1085)
DK	-0,142***	98,2 (1067)	-0,136***	93,6 (1016)	-0,121***	99,9 (1084)
LUX	-0,112*	96,8 (521)	-0,192***	93,9 (505)	-0,114**	99,6 (536)
IT	-0,241***	91,3 (1003)	-0,201***	90,5 (987)		
LT	-0,108***	98,0 (1074)			-0,226***	99,8 (1094)
NL	-0,097**	96,7 (1065)			-0,187***	99,9 (1100)
IE	-0,061*	96,4 (1042)			-0,352***	99,8 (1079)
DE	-0,185***	93,6 (1543)	-0,125***	91,6 (1510)	-0,229***	99,7 (1643)
AT	-0,166***	92,5 (1031)	-0,171***	86,9 (968)	-0,114***	99,5 (1108)
BL	-0,063*	90,1 (1012)			-0,147***	99,4 (1116)
FI	-0,256***	93,3 (1023)	-0,271***	92,4 (1013)	-0,137***	99,8 (1094)
ES	-0,095*	98,5 (1089)			-0,172***	99,7 (1103)
CY					-0,258***	99,8 (529)
EE	-0,205***	91,7 (997)	-0,100***	94,2 (1024)	-0,231***	99,9 (1086)
RO					-0,187***	99,5 (1103)
BR	-0,114***	94,1 (1019)			-0,299***	99,8 (1181)
HU	-0,162***	94,5 (1043)	-0,069*	94,6 (1044)	-0,159***	99,7 (1101)
PT	-0,079*	94,1 (972)			-0,178***	99,6 (1029)
FR	-0,099***	97,3 (1045)			-0,287***	99,9 (1073)
LV	-0,110***	94,3 (995)	-0,154***	93,7 (989)	-0,212***	99,8 (1053)
SI			-0,066*	91,3 (1044)	-0,223***	99,1 (1142)
HR			-0,090**	90,6 (977)	-0,221***	99,6 (1074)
PL	-0,103***	91,7 (1121)	-0,163***	88,3 (1080)	-0,129***	99,7 (1219)
CZ	-0,234***	95,1 (1119)	-0,144***	93,5 (1101)	-0,075**	99,8 (1175)
SK	-0,093**	97,7 (1070)	-0,123***	95,9 (1050)	-0,152***	100 (1095)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between social class (D63) and political interest (QP6_9) and party affinity (QPP21_EES_partei_lire_dummy)

States	QP6_9	Valid cases in % (absolute)	QPP21_EES_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	-0,176***	97,0 (1052)	-0,098**	63,4 (687)
MT			-0,238***	59,7 (325)
SE	-0,160***	95,9 (1097)	-0,188***	77,2 (883)
EL	-0,111***	98,5 (1069)		
DK	-0,173***	98,1 (1064)	-0,158***	78,7 (854)
LUX	-0,119**	96,8 (521)		
IT	-0,243***	91,6 (999)		
LT	-0,190***	97,8 (1072)		
NL	-0,123***	96,8 (1066)	-0,187***	67,6 (744)
IE	-0,206***	95,7 (1034)	-0,260***	37,7 (407)
DE	-0,224***	93,7 (1545)		
AT	-0,171***	92,6 (1032)		
BL	-0,135***	89,3 (1003)		
FI	-0,200***	92,8 (1017)	-0,382***	56,7 (621)
ES	-0,133***	98,6 (1091)		
CY			-0,268***	45,8 (243)
EE	-0,201***	91,1 (990)		
RO				
BR	-0,088**	93,9 (1017)	-0,141**	41,6 (450)
HU	-0,139***	94,1 (1039)	0,113**	58,8 (649)
PT	-0,143***	93,9 (970)	-0,139**	35,4 (366)
FR	-0,170***	96,6 (1037)		
LV	-0,142***	93,9 (991)	-0,196***	33,5 (353)
SI				
HR	-0,126***	97,0 (1046)		
PL	-0,157***	88,7 (1085)		
CZ	-0,162***	94,8 (1116)	-0,280***	58,0 (683)
SK	-0,153***	97,1 (1063)	-0,101*	48,4 (530)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between education (D8) and political interest (QP6_9) and party affinity (QPP21_EES_partei_lire_dummy)

States	QP6_9	Valid cases in % (absolute)	QPP21_EES_partei_lire_dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	-0,203***	95,1 (1031)		
DK	-0,219***	93,5 (1014)		
DE	-0,203***	91,7 (1512)	0,079*	55,1 (908)
EL	-0,207***	93,4 (1013)		
ES	-0,200***	93,8 (1037)	0,140**	42,0 (464)
FI	-0,179***	92,0 (1008)	-0,120**	55,8 (612)
FR	-0,171***	93,3 (1002)	0,135**	50,7 (545)
IE	-0,094**	93,5 (1011)		
IT	-0,265***	90,0 (982)		
LUX	-0,274***	93,9 (505)		
NL	-0,129***	94,0 (1035)		
AT	-0,219***	86,9 (968)		
PT	-0,088**	95,7 (989)		
SE	-0,207***	95,5 (1092)		
GB	-0,193***	92,3 (1000)		
BG	-0,108***	89,1 (1001)		
CY			-0,220***	44,3 (235)
CZ	-0,177***	93,2 (1097)	-0,170***	56,8 (669)
EE	-0,165***	93,4 (1015)		
HU	-0,082**	94,1 (1039)		
LV	-0,088**	93,3 (984)	-0,113*	32,5 (343)
LT	-0,126***	90,3 (990)		
MT				
PL	-0,104***	85,4 (1045)		
RO	-0,114***	90,4 (1002)	-0,093*	43,6 (483)
SK	-0,105***	95,3 (1043)		
SI	-0,133**	91,2 (1042)	0,244***	36,4 (416)
CRO	-0,147***	90,0 (970)	0,133**	34,7 (374)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between social class (D63) and vote decision in the last EP election (QP2_EES_partei_lire_dummy) and national election (QPP5_EES_partei_lire_dummy)

States	QP2_EES_partei_lire_ dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)	QPP5_EES_partei_lire_ dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	-0,092*	70,7 (766)	-0,143***	67,0 (726)
MT	-0,219***	64,5 (351)	-0,225***	69,5 (378)
SE	-0,190***	78,0 (892)	-0,242***	85,5 (978)
EL			-0,118**	61,7 (669)
DK	-0,114**	70,3 (763)	-0,183***	82,1 (891)
LUX	-0,169**	46,5 (250)	-0,235***	45,4 (244)
IT				
LT				
NL	-0,141***	59,9 (660)	-0,166***	79,7 (877)
IE	-0,147***	45,1 (487)		
DE	-0,106**	47,3 (779)	-0,077*	63,6 (1048)
AT				
BL			-0,109*	47,3 (531)
FI	-0,247***	49,0 (537)	-0,333***	67,9 (744)
ES	-0,107*	34,0 (376)	-0,158***	47,9 (530)
CY	-0,275***	32,1 (170)	-0,234***	53,2 (282)
EE				
RO				
BR			-0,188***	48,2 (522)
HU	0,152**	37,9 (418)	0,138**	39,7 (438)
PT	-0,151**	31,6 (326)	-0,143**	46,4 (479)
FR			-0,101*	51,9 (557)
LV	-0,153**	30,6 (323)	-0,128***	60,2 (635)
SI			0,100*	50,7 (580)
HR				
PL				
CZ	-0,238***	26,8 (315)	-0,281***	49,8 (586)
SK			-0,119**	51,8 (567)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between education (D8) and vote decision in the last EP election (QP2_EES_partei_lire_dummy) and national election (QPP5_EES_partei_lire_dummy)

States	QP2_EES_partei_lire_ dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)	QPP5_EES_partei_lire_ dummy	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE				
MT			-0,106*	68,2 (371)
SE				
EL	0,137***	56,4 (612)	0,081*	59,9 (650)
DK				
LUX				
IT				
LT				
NL	0,085*	58,9 (648)		
IE				
DE			0,089**	61,8 (1019)
AT				
BL				
FI	-0,088*	46,9 (514)	-0,088*	67,0 (734)
ES				
CY			-0,136*	52,6 (279)
EE			0,084*	60,0 (652)
RO	-0,140**	35,0 (388)		
BR				
HU			0,118*	38,8 (428)
PT			-0,098*	47,6 (492)
FR	0,161**	32,3 (347)	0,151***	50,8 (546)
LV	-0,131*	30,1 (318)		
SI	0,148**	26,4 (302)	49,0 (560)	49,0 (560)
HR	0,158**	26,7 (288)	0,131**	42,4 (457)
PL				
CZ	-0,193***	26,1 (307)	-0,179***	48,8 (574)
SK			-0,093*	51,5 (564)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between left-right self-placing (QPP13) and social class (D63) and education (D8), respectively

States	D63	Valid cases in % (absolute)	D8	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	0,150***	89,9 (974)		
MT	0,218***	56,4 (307)		
SE	0,231***	94,1 (1077)		
EL	0,092**	82,1 (891)	-0,090**	77,4 (840)
DK	0,111***	93,5 (1014)		
LUX	0,097*	82,2 (442)		
IT				
LT	0,126***	70,6 (774)		
NL	0,103***	93,0 (1024)		
IE	0,129***	77,7 (840)		
DE				
AT				
BL	0,157***	70,2 (788)	0,109**	70,7 (794)
FI	0,403***	85,7 (939)	-0,204***	84,3 (924)
ES	0,086**	87,3 (965)	-0,074*	82,9 (917)
CY	0,242***	74,2 (393)	0,138**	69,2 (367)
EE	0,182***	66,7 (725)	0,088*	67,4 (733)
RO				
BR				
HU				
PT				
FR			-0,147***	80,7 (869)
LV	0,098**	71,9 (759)		
SI	-0,104**	70,4 (805)	-0,190***	66,1 (756)
HR			-0,136***	68,9 (743)
PL			-0,080*	65,7 (804)
CZ	0,327***	84,0 (989)	0,207***	81,7 (962)
SK	0,143***	81,8 (896)	0,098**	80,2 (878)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between endorsement of redistribution (QPP17_2) and social class (D63), and education (D8) respectively

States	D63	Valid cases in % (absolute)	D8	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE	0,208***	96,8 (1049)	0,131***	94,8 (1028)
MT	0,139**	90,6 (493)	0,139***	88,6 (482)
SE	0,163***	94,5 (1081)	-0,070*	93,9 (1074)
EL	0,206***	97,3 (1056)	0,128***	92,0 (998)
DK	0,141***	96,9 (1051)		
LUX				
IT	0,151***	88,3 (963)	0,091**	84,9 (926)
LT	0,214***	90,9 (996)	0,114***	84,6 (927)
NL	0,181***	94,7 (1043)		
IE	0,205***	94,2 (1018)	0,152***	91,4 (988)
DE	0,230***	91,1 (1502)	0,105***	88,7 (1461)
AT				
BL	0,116***	80,4 (903)	0,178***	80,9 (908)
FI	0,249***	91,1 (998)	0,115***	90,0 (986)
ES				
CY	0,277***	95,7 (507)	0,158***	89,8 (476)
EE	0,214***	84,8 (922)	0,152***	86,2 (937)
RO	0,117***	91,3 (1012)	0,118***	86,1 (954)
BR	0,103***	88,0 (953)		
HU	0,220***	90,4 (998)	0,180***	90,3 (997)
PT	0,125***	91,3 (943)	0,103***	93,1 (962)
FR	0,176***	94,3 (1013)		
LV	0,129***	83,6 (882)	0,107**	82,8 (874)
SI	0,078*	92,2 (1054)	0,081*	86,4 (987)
HR	0,103***	94,4 (1018)	0,068*	87,6 (944)
PL	0,113***	78,4 (959)	0,079*	74,7 (914)
CZ	0,268***	90,4 (1064)	0,210***	88,5 (1042)
SK	0,209***	92,1 (1008)	0,081*	90,2 (988)

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

Bivariate correlations between EP-WBT (2004: v111; 2009: Q24; 2014: QP1) and gender ()

States	EES 2004	Valid cases in % (absolute)	EES 2009	Valid cases in % (absolute)	EES 2014	Valid cases in % (absolute)
BE						
BG						
CY	0,107*	100 (500)				
CZ					0,078**	99,8 (1175)
CRO					0,067*	99,6 (1074)
DK	0,062*	99,8 (1314)				
DE					0,050*	99,9 (1646)
EE	-0,106***	98,6 (1584)	-0,074*	99,5 (1002)		
EL			0,077*	99,8 (998)		
ES						
FI						
FR					0,088**	99,9 (1073)
GB						
HU						
IE						
IT	0,052*	99,4 (1544)				
LUX						
LV					-0,071*	99,8 (1053)
LT					0,059*	99,8 (1094)
MT					-0,091*	99,8 (543)
NL			0,066*	99,9 (1004)		
AT						
PL	0,069*	99,7 (957)			0,083**	99,7 (1219)
PT					0,068*	99,6 (1029)
SE					-0,066*	99,8 (1142)
RO			0,072*	98,2 (985)		
SK						
SI						

[1] Remarks: Significance level: *=p ≤ 0,05 **= p ≤ 0,01 ***=p ≤ 0,001

List of Variables[15]

Variable	Dataset	Category
Social Class	V224 (EES2004) Q114 (EES2009 D63 (EES2014)	1. Working Class 2. Lower Middle Class 3. Middle Class 4. Upper Middle Class 5. Upper Class 1. Working Class 2. Middle Class 3. Higher Class
Education	V216 (EES2004) Q100 (EES2009) D8 (EES2014)	Age when stopped full-time education 1. 15- 2. 16-19 3. 20+
Age	V218 (EES2004) Q103 (EES2009) VD11 (EES2014)	Year of birth Age
Gender	V217 (EES04), Q102 (EES09), D10 (EES14)	1. Male 2. Female
EP-Participation	V111 (EES2004), Q24 (EES2009), QP1 (EES2014)	1. Yes, did vote 2. No, did not vote
Political Interest	V154 (EES2004) Q78 (EES2009) QP6_9 (EES2014)	1. Very 2. Somewhat 3. A little 4. Not at all 1. Yes, definitively 2. Yes, to some extent 3. No, not really 4. No, not at all
Left-Right Self-Placement	V134 (EES04), Q46 (EES09), QPP13 (EES2014)	0. Left 10. Right
Party Affinity	V211_partei_lire_dummy (EES2004) Q87_partei_lire_dummy (EES2009) QPP21_EES_partei_lire_dummy (EES2014)	0. Right 1. Left
Vote Decision in the Last EP Election	V112_partei_lire_dummy (EES2004) Q25_partei_lire_dummy (EES2009) QP2_EES_partei_lire_dummy (EES2014)	0. Right 1. Left

[15] Please be aware that all variables in the list were cleared from the answers “don’t know”, “no answer”, and “rejected”. In the case of variables regarding education in the EES2014 data set, the answer “still studying” was cleared as “missing” as well, whereas the answer “no full-time education” was added to code 1 as low, or lack of, education.

Vote Decision in the Last National Election	V113_partei_lire_dummy (EES2004) Q27_partei_lire_dummy (EES2009) QPP5_EES_partei_lire_dummy (EES2014)	0. Right 1. Left
Endorsement of Redistribution	Q63 (EES2009) QPP17_2 (EES2014)	1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree 0. Fully in favour 10. Fully opposed

Missing Analysis

Based upon weighted data in order to get representative results for the total European Union

EES2004 (V112, V113, V211)

Social Class	Vote decision EP election (%)	Vote decision last national election (%)	Party affinity (%)
Working Class	44,6 not vote 4,5 dk/na	16,5 14,0	46,0 No party ID 5,2
Lower Middle Class	35,3 5,9	12,2 12,0	35,3 7,5
Middle Class	31,4 6,7	10,9 12,7	35,2 7,1
Upper Middle Class	25,9 6,1	8,2 10,0	31,3 4,8
Upper Class	32,3 1,3	12,4 9,8	33,4 2,5

Education	Vote decision EP election (%)	Vote decision last national election (%)	Party affinity (%)
Low	34,7 not vote 4,6 dk/na	12,6 13,9	36,1 No party ID 8,0
High	26,1 8,1	7,5 11,9	31,8 6,5

EES2009 (Q25, Q27, Q87)

Social Class	Vote decision EP election (%)	Vote decision last national election (%)	Party affinity (%)
Working Class	11,3 Ref. 40,7 not vote	9,5 Ref. 8,1 dk. 12,5 not vote	39,9 No party ID 4,7 Ref. 4,5 dk.
Lower Middle Class	14,2 33,7	12,5 7,9 10,3	36,4 7,1 5,2
Middle Class	14,7 26,6	12,9 6,0 8,4	33,6 7,0 5,0
Upper Middle Class	11,6 19,7	8,5 5,3 6,8	26,4 5,6 3,7
Upper Class	11,9 25,0	11,5 5,3 11,8	26,5 6,2 6,7

Education	Vote decision EP election (%)	Vote decision last national election (%)	Party affinity (%)
Low	17,6 Ref. 31,3 not vote	14,4 Ref. 8,5 dk. 9,5 not vote	33,8 No party ID 6,8 Ref. 5,9 dk.
High	13,5 21,7	12,1 5,6 6,1	30,7 6,6 4,3

EES2014 (QP2_EES, QPP5_EES, QPP21_EES)

Social Class	Vote decision EP election (%)	Vote decision last national election (%)	Party affinity (%)
Working Class	7,6 Ref. 53,5 not vote	8,5 Ref. 35,5 not vote	7,9 dk. 6,4 Ref. 35,2 No party ID
Middle Class	8,1 38,5	8,6 23,9	6,9 7,0 25,7
Upper Class	7,0 30,1	7,3 17,2	6,4 6,7 19,0

Education	Vote decision EP election (%)	Vote decision last national election (%)	Party affinity (%)
Low	9,8 Ref. 45,7 not vote	10,7 Ref. 27,7 not vote	6,7 dk. 8,3 Ref. 30,4 No party ID
High	8,2 37,1	8,7 20,7	7,1 6,7 26,1