CITIZENS AND THE LEGITIMACY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Recent developments, in particular the overwhelming majority voting rejecting the draft constitutional treaty in the referendum in 2005 have been a reason to question the traditional strong support of the Dutch population for European Unification. The very legitimacy of the European project all of a sudden seems to be questioned.

Against this background this paper will try to make a systematic assessment of the legitimacy of the Union from a Dutch perspective. However, it should be obvious that such an assessment almost by definition asks for a European perspective. Therefore, whenever appropriate, we will work from a European or comparative perspective in order to come to a better understanding of the legitimacy problem from a purely Dutch perspective.

In order to being able to make such an assessment we will first develop a conceptual framework and a number of evaluation criteria. In subsequent sections of the paper we will then assess the legitimacy of the Union according to each of these criteria.

2 LEGITIMACY AND THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY

There are two main methods for assessing the legitimacy of a political system. The first is to evaluate the political system against normative theory, inquiring to what extent a political system conforms to certain normative criteria. The second is to empirically determine to what extent the political system is right in the eyes of the relevant beholders - the members of a particular polity.

In order to apply the first method, it is necessary to elaborate a normative theory and then specify criteria against which political reality can be evaluated. In order to determine these criteria we rely on the work of Beetham and Lord (Beetham and Lord 1998). These authors distinguish two key normative principles of liberal democracy, *popular sovereignty* and *the proper ends and standards of government*. The first principle refers to the main components of the concept of democracy, *demos* and *kratos* (literally: rule by the people). It assumes that the only source of political authority lies with the people. This belief that the people constitute the ultimate source of political authority makes the question 'who constitutes the people' one of the most fundamental aspects or dimensions of legitimacy, and makes issues of political identity equally crucial for political legitimacy (Beetham and Lord 1998: 6). Therefore, any idea of democracy in the European Union must start with a description of the European *demos*. This we will refer to as the first dimension of legitimacy in this paper.

In addition to the *demos,* popular sovereignty also refers to the question of what it means for the people to rule. Because modern democracy is nearly identical with representative democracy, this aspect of popular sovereignty refers to the electoral authorisation of government and stipulates the requirements of *representation and accountability* (Beetham and Lord 1998: 6). In order to understand what democracy in a specific context means, we need to specify the mechanisms of representation and accountability that are needed within a given polity with a given *demos*. This we refer to as the second dimension of legitimacy.

The second principle of liberal democracy, 'the proper ends and standards of government', can be summarised in its most classic form as the protection of the Lockean rights (life, liberty and property), complimented more recently with welfare rights and securing the conditions for economic growth (Beetham and Lord 1998: 4-6). This principle yields criteria to judge the *performance* of government, the third dimension of legitimacy that we distinguish.

Summarising, from the main principles of liberal democracy three dimensions of legitimacy can be deduced - *identity, representation and accountability, and performance.* For each of these dimensions more specific criteria for evaluating a specific political system can and will be developed. These three dimensions are reflected in most normative theories of democracy,

although different words may be used. The most concise summary is Abraham Lincoln's famous triad requiring government *of, by* and *for* the people.

The second method for assessing the legitimacy of a political system, by determining to what extent the political system is right in the eyes of the people, requires an analogous approach. In order to apply this method, we should first determine with regard to which aspects of the political system we consider people's attitudes relevant. It would be hard to do this without once again referring to criteria deduced from a normative view.

Most empirical research using this method to assess the legitimacy of a political system as perceived by the people, is based on the theoretical framework originally developed by David Easton (Easton 1965). He makes a distinction between three objects of support: the *political community*, the *political regime* and (the performance of) the *authorities*. Although Easton's original framework is more encompassing and refined, for the purposes of this project we will interpret the political regime in terms of political institutions. As can be seen in table 1, the three objects of support basically are referring to the same normative dimensions of democratic legitimacy distinguished in the first column.

Therefore, this conceptual triad helps us to develop and apply both methods of assessing the legitimacy of the European Union. As they stand for fundamental normative principles they form the basis for the development of criteria against which the performance of a democratic system can be evaluated. Although in principle it is possible to apply both methods to each of the three dimensions we will not do so in this paper. In the next sections we will make an assessment of the legitimacy of the European Union based on people's individual perceptions, assessments and feelings with regard to the three dimensions of *identity and citizenship*, *political institutions* and the *performance*. Thereafter we will evaluate the *process* of political representation in the European Union against criteria that can be deduced from normative theories of democracy. Therefore, in the next section we will first try to asses to what extent people in the Netherlands support the European Union from the perspective of each of the three objects of support distinguished in table 1.

Table 1 Three dimensions of democratic legitimacy and objects of support

Dimensions of Democratic Legitimacy	Objects of Support
Identity and citizenship	Political community
Representation and accountability	Regime- political institutions
Performance	Performance of authorities

But before getting into this, we should address a preliminary question. The normative principles outlined above have been developed in the context of the nation-state. It is still a matter of dispute whether they are applicable to the European Union. As long as decisions of the European Union were taken according to the intergovernmental regime by unanimous vote, it could be maintained that there was no need of a democratic legitimisation at the level of the Union because each and every national government was accountable to their national parliaments and electorates for the positions they took in the European arena. Binding decisions were thus taken by representatives of the *peoples of Europe* rather than of the *European people*. But ever since the Single European Act opened the possibility for the Council of Ministers to decide by majority vote instead of unanimity, national parliaments have lost part of their power to scrutinise and control the positions taken by their national governments in the European arena. Also, as much as it would be wrong to regard the European Union as a state 'the output of European governance is like that of a state, even a superstate: an endless stream of laws in increasingly varied areas of public and private life. They are binding on governments and individuals as part of the law of the land. Indeed, they are a higher law of the land – supreme over conflicting state laws' (Weiler, Haltern, and Mayer 1995). The EU is the source of authoritative rules and allocations which impinge directly on citizens, and which require *their* acknowledgement of them as authoritative and binding (Beetham and Lord 1998: 13).

The very characteristic of the European Union is that the borders between the jurisdiction of the member states and the European Union are blurred instead of being clearly defined. The concept of *multi-level government* refers to these jurisdictions being interwoven. Still, for the clarity of the argument we hold as a basic principle of democracy guiding this paper, that authorisation, political representation and accountability should occur at the same level where decisions are taken. In other words, if decisions are taken at the European level according to a supranational regime, the *demos* should be defined at the level of the European people. Once one accepts this argument, it is only a matter of consistency to apply

the normative principles underlying the three dimensions distinguished above to the European Union as well.

In order to do so, we will expand our argument for each of these dimensions and develop empirical research questions that should lead to a refined assessment of the democratic quality of the present Union. In the next three sections we will mainly follow the logic of the second column of table 1, whereas in section six we will extensively discuss the quality of the process of political representation in the European Union.

European citizenship and community

It is beyond dispute that the very idea of democracy, and of people's sovereignty, presupposes the existence of a people, a *demos*. What is disputed though is what 'the people' really means. A basic issue is whether 'the people' is more or less a legal construct, in the sense of all people who are subject to the jurisdiction of a particular polity, or whether the notion of 'the people' is based on a more sociological or even ethnic concept which stresses the subjective affiliation of the people with a community as a prerequisite for the constitution of a *demos* as a collective actor. In the next subsection we will present a short summary of this debate. We will argue that one needs to distinguish between people's identification with a political community or sense of citizenship and their sense of communal identity. The latter might enhance the former but the two concepts are not identical. In subsection 2 we will develop an operationalization of these two concepts. In section five and six we will present a preliminary descriptive analysis of the degree to which people across the European Union have developed both an identification with the European Union as a political community and a sense of a European social community.

2.1   Demos and community

Different views on the feasibility of a legitimate democratic system at the level of the European Union are partly due to different historical views on the relationship between citizenship and nationhood. In the traditional German view, established in the 19th century by philosophers like Fichte and Herder (Bruter 2003) nations are based on a common culture, in particular a common language. This view that the pre-existence of a collective identity is the very condition for the establishment of a legitimate democracy is well represented in the German academic literature on the feasibility of a legitimate European democratic political system. According to Graf Kielmansegg the concepts of *demos* ("*Volk*"), community ("*Gemeinschaft*") and nation are almost identical. Once one accepts this view, it is obvious what the verdict on the feasibility of a European democracy will be. European democracy cannot succeed because a democratic constitution in itself cannot establish a legitimate

European democracy. As long as there is no European community, every attempt to establish a democratic Europe is bound to fail. Against this background, it is easy enough to demonstrate that the European Union is far removed from a community with a common identity. The European peoples do not share a common language; they lack memories of a common history that might help to develop a collective identity; and they do not take part in a common "European" public sphere ("*Oeffentlichkeit*"); there are only national public spheres (Kielmansegg 1993). In a similar vein Scharpf argues that the democratic principle of majority rule will only be accepted in polities with a 'thick' collective identity, i.e. in polities based on pre-existing commonalities of history, language, culture, and ethnicity. Because such a collective identity does not exist at the level of the Union, input-oriented legitimacy is out of reach for the EU for the foreseeable future:

> "Given the historical, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and institutional diversity of its member states, there is no question that the Union is very far from having achieved the 'thick' collective identity that we have come to take for granted in national democracies -- and in its absence, institutional reforms will not greatly increase the input-oriented legitimacy of decisions taken by majority rule" (Scharpf 1999)

According to this view input oriented legitimacy requires a pre-existing collective identity. This same philosophy is reflected in the famous decision of the German Federal Constitutional Court on the compatibility of the Treaty of Maastricht with the German Basic Law (BVerfGE 89, 155 – Maastricht). According to the decision, as no European *demos* has developed yet, democracy cannot be exclusively grounded at the European level (Shaw 1997). However, the argument that a *demos* and *citizenship* require the pre-existence of a community with a collective or national identity is disputable. It presumes a conception of citizenship along the lines of the *ius sanguinis*, the rights of kinship. Until quite recently this *ius sanguinis* defined the German concept of citizenship. However, at least since the French revolution there has been a competing notion of citizenship that is based on the *ius solis* whereby citizenship is acquired through permanent residence (under specific conditions) within a certain territory (Brubaker 1992). This alternative concept of citizenship is predominant in Europe. It allows for the possibility that European citizenship need not be the political projection of a cultural idea of Europe, but can essentially be regarded as a legal construct: 'Citizenship should be the ultimate basis of legitimation for institution-building, not ambiguous cultural identities'(Delanty 1995). This seems to be consistent with the history of many nation states. The argument that a shared common identity, a *demos* in the ethno-cultural sense, should precede the constitution of a *demos*, that is a community of citizens sharing the rights and duties of citizenship, has little ground in history. In many European countries the formation of the state preceded the development of the nation (Fuchs 2000).

This view is shared by Easton. First, he makes a clear distinction between a *sense of social community* and a *sense of political community*. Sense of *social* community is an indication of the cohesiveness of *society*. The sense of *political* community "indicates political cohesion of a group of persons [ ] the feeling of belonging together as a group which, because it shares a political structure, also shares a political fate." (Easton 1965: 185). But in Easton's view even a sense of political community is not a prerequisite for a feasible political system.

> "........this approach does not compel us to postulate that before a political system can exist or even if is to persist, a sense of political community must first rise to some specified level. Although we may adopt the degree of mutual identification as one kind of measure of the input of support for the political community, it is conceivable that for considerable periods of time, the sense of political community may be low or non-existent. [ ] It is possible for a political structure to bind a group together before feelings of mutual identification have emerged. We may go further. Frequently the imposition of a common division of political labor has itself made possible the slow growth of sentiments of political solidarity; this reverses normal expectations of the significance of sentiments of solidarity as a pre-condition for the emergence of a political community. A political community may precede and become a condition for the growth of a sense of community." (Easton 1965: 185-6)

While this view explicitly accepts the reciprocal reinforcement of ideas of community and the practice of citizenship, the causal sequence is reversed. Therefore, one may well argue that the constitution of a European democratic polity and the establishment of a European citizenship, first by the Treaty of Maastricht ("Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union" (Article 8.1)) and confirmed by the draft constitution (article I-10.1) is a prerequisite of the development of a European identity. To borrow a phrase from O'Leary: European citizenship may be regarded as an "evolving concept": starting from the free movement of persons, through its legal formalisation, to a full-fledged identity (O'Leary 1996).

However, the argument that the *demos* need not be defined in terms of an exclusive identification of the people with a cultural or social community does not imply that there is no empirical relationship between the two or that this relationship would be unidirectional. It is generally recognised that the feasibility and stability of a democratic political system are related to its political culture. Not withstanding a formal definition of a *demos*, a democratic community undoubtedly benefits from citizens identifying themselves with the *demos* as a collective entity and with other members of this *demos* (Fuchs 2000: 219). Also, a *democratic* political community requires that people identify with the norms and values underlying a democratic political system, not only in the abstract but also to accept them as being applicable to all their fellow citizens (Klosko 2000). But the essential thing is that the

identification with a European *political* community is not the same thing and takes priority over any cultural identification with a European collective community (Habermas 1994).

To a large extent this is a normative debate. Different positions taken in this debate can have far reaching implications for the further process of European integration as the verdict of the German Constitutional Court on the Treaty of Maastricht proves. However, the two different views on the meaning of a European demos and their mutual relationship have empirical implications as well. It is to these empirical implications we now turn.

2.2   Conceptual framework and operationalization

Concepts

The argument in the previous section implies that social, cultural or national identity should conceptually be clearly distinguished from the concept of citizenship. McCrone and Kiely define the difference as follows: Nationality and citizenship actually belong to different spheres of meaning and activity. The former is in essence a cultural concept which binds people on the basis of shared identity – in Benedict Anderson's apt phrase as an "imagined community" – while citizenship is a political concept deriving from people's relationship to the state. In other words, nation-ness and state-ness need not be, and increasingly are not, aligned (McCrone and Kiely 2000). Citizenship is usually conceptualised as a package of rights and duties bestowed on individuals by the state. T.H. Marshall described citizenship as "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (Marshall 1950): 28-29, as summarised by Jamieson (Jamieson).

In our operationalization of citizenship we will try to stay as close as possible to Marshall's definition. In our view the concept of European citizenship implies, first, that European citizens are prepared to accept without exception all citizens of the (enlarged) Union as their fellow citizens, and to accept that all EU-citizens are therefore entitled to all rights that come with the citizenship of the Union. Examples of these rights are the rights of free movement and residence, voting rights in municipal elections, diplomatic protection and the right of appeal to EU-institutions (art. I-10 draft constitution). The extent to which people in different member states are aware of these rights and their consequences and their willingness to accept them as applying equally to the citizens of each and every member state, is an indicator of the support for the very idea of European citizenship. A second indicator of European citizenship is that people do *consider* themselves as citizens of the European Union, in addition to, not necessarily instead of, considering themselves as citizens of their country.

As an indicator of the cultural or social component of identity we prefer to use the "sense of community" as originally developed by Deutsch et al. It is defined as "a matter of mutual sympathy and loyalties; of "we-feeling", trust and mutual consideration; of partial identification in terms of self-images and interests; of mutually successful predictions of behaviour, and of cooperative action in accordance with it". (Deutsch et al. 1957; Niedermayer 1995; Scheuer 1995) (Sinnott 1995)

Operationalization

In the European Election Study 2004, which was conducted in 24 of the 25 member states[1], an attempt was made to operationalize the three concepts developed above:

- The acceptance of citizens from other EU-countries as fellow European citizens;
- The sense of being a European citizen;
- The sense of (a European) community.

The following set of questions refers to the extent to which people across Europe are willing to accept citizens from other EU-countries as fellow European citizens, entitled to all the rights coming with European citizenship, although only the second question refers to a formally recognised right.

1. *"Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following three statements. When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to [Dutch] people over citizens from other EU-member-countries who want to work here."*
   - *strongly agree*
   - *agree*
   - *disagree*
   - *strongly disagree*
2. *"Citizens from other EU member-countries who live in [the Netherlands] should be entitled to vote in local elections."*
   - *strongly agree etc*
3. *"Citizens from other EU member-countries who live in [the Netherlands] should not be entitled to social security or unemployment benefits."*
   - *strongly agree etc*

Two questions trying to measure respondents' sense of European citizenship were included:

1. *"Do you ever think of yourself not only as a [Dutch] citizen, but also as a citizen of the European Union?"*
   - *often*
   - *sometimes*
   - *never*
2. *"Are you personally proud or not to be a citizen of the European Union? Would you say you are...*
   - *very proud*
   - *fairly proud*
   - *not very proud*
   - *not at all proud"*

The "sense of community" as introduced by Deutsch has several components. Because of the limited space in the questionnaire the operationalisation had to be limited to only one of these components, mutual trust. This is an important component as it can be considered as a measurement of European social capital. This aspect of the sense of community is measured by the following question:

"Now I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in people from various countries. Let's start with the Austrians: do you trust them a lot or not very much? And the Belgians?" Etcetera

This question was then repeated for the people of 28 countries in total, including the Bulgarians, the Romanians and the Turks in addition to the people of the 25 member states.

2.3 Empirical findings

The basic question we are interested in refers to the development of a sense of citizenship and a sense of community and their mutual relationship. Does the development of a sense of citizenship depend on the pre-existence of a sense of community, or can it develop despite a lack of a feeling of community and can it in turn be instrumental in the development of feelings of community?

In this paper we will limit ourselves to a simple descriptive analysis at the country level in order to get a first impression of these developments.

2.4   Citizenship

In the previous subsection two sets of survey questions on citizenship were introduced, two on people's self orientation as a European citizen and three on people's recognition of the citizen rights of their fellow European citizens. In table 2 a descriptive analysis of the variables on citizenship is presented per country. For this purpose the five variables were dichotomised. Only the pro-European answers are presented. The countries are grouped in order of their admission. A summary measure for each group of countries is added.

Table 2 Attitudes on European citizenship (% pro-European)

Country	European Citizenship				
	Labour market	Elections	Social Benefits	European Citizen	Proud to be European citizen
Belgium	34		57	67	62
France	48	60	66	73	75
Germany	54	60	25	61	54
Italy	31	60	81	78	76
Luxembourg	31	63	82	70	79
Netherlands	28	59	72	49	29
Original six	**38**	**60**	**64**	**66**	**63**
Britain	43	61	51	40	47
Northern Ireland	25	33	43	36	32
Ireland	26	71	61	69	76
Denmark	51	63	61	57	54
1973 enlargement[2]	**40**	**65**	**58**	**55**	**59**
Greece	18	60	68	75	63
Portugal	27	70	69	79	77
Spain	19	74	76	59	77
1980s enlargement	**21**	**68**	**71**	**71**	**72**
Austria	37	62	65	56	41
Finland	20	64	70	66	38
Sweden	30		49		38
1990s enlargement	**29**	**61**	**61**	**61**	**39**
Cyprus	9	46	81	84	77
Czech Republic	9	48	48	46	36
Estonia	16	47	58	46	28
Hungary	5	40	41	24	59
Latvia	11	37	53	42	26
Poland	10	79	70	53	54
Slovakia	8	63	59	51	46
Slovenia	15	55	63	60	46
2004	**10**	**52**	**59**	**51**	**47**

The percentages in the first column of table 2 leave little doubt about people's attitudes towards a free labour market. In all member states but Germany and Denmark a clear majority is against it, in some countries this majority is even close to a 100 percent. There is a clear difference between the older member states in North-western Europe and the new member states in Central and Eastern Europe. All six founding states are among the ten most liberal countries of the enlarged Union, although the Netherlands clearly is in the tail of this group of countries. On this criterion it is the least pro-European country of the original group of six. Because of this difference between the original six and the newer member states, it is tempting to attribute this difference to the longer process of socialisation into the idea of a European political community that the people of these countries have been subjected to. However, since Austria, Britain, Denmark and Sweden are also part of this group of ten, this interpretation is disputable. The more positive attitudes in these countries might just as well be due to a longer tradition in liberal democracy with its self-evident value of equality for all citizens. But an equally plausible explanation is that the differences are due to differences in economic development. It is remarkable that despite the fact that 'Polish plumbers' have become proverbial for the fear that after enlargement Western Europe will be flooded by cheap labourers from Central and Eastern Europe, this fear is not reflected in these figures. Not the people in Western Europe, but those in Central and Eastern Europe are most inclined to reject a free labour market. On average not more than 10 percent of the people from these countries are willing to accept this. It is not unlikely that a general feeling of being economically behind Western Europe is responsible for this more negative attitude. Compares to the attitudes on an open labour market a surprisingly large number of Europeans accepts the entitlement of people from other EU-countries to national social security and unemployment benefits. The length of membership does not really make a difference. The Netherlands fit in the general pattern.

In most countries the right to vote in local elections is accepted by a clear majority. There is hardly a difference between the older members of the Union, including the Netherlands. But half of the 10 new member states are staying behind in this respect. The percentage of people who see themselves at least sometimes as European citizens in addition to being citizens of their own country is on average above 50 percent. Also, in just above half of the countries a majority of the people are proud to be a citizen of the European Union. However, on both questions there are huge differences between countries. There is not much of a pattern in the extent to which people across Europe differ in their reaction to either question, at least not if we try to interpret the existing differences in terms of geography or the length of membership of people's home country. In general the people from the new member states in Central and Eastern Europe are less inclined to see themselves as a European citizen or to be proud of

being a citizen of the Union than people in the older member states, but this is not a uniform pattern. The differences between some of the founding member states (the Netherlands and Luxembourg for instance) are as large as between any other pair of countries. This is mainly due to the deviant position of the Netherlands. The percentage of Dutch citizens considering themselves as a European citizen (in addition to being a Dutch citizen) or being proud of being European does not even come close to the numbers in the other 5 original member states. In particular the low percentage in the Netherlands on the second question is strikingly low. It is less than half of the average of the other five countries. Why the Netherlands has such a deviating position is not immediately clear. But at least we can see how this sense of citizenship has developed over time.

Figure 1: Feelings of citizenship: those who think of themselves as European citizens (percentage 'only European', 'European and national' and 'national and European')
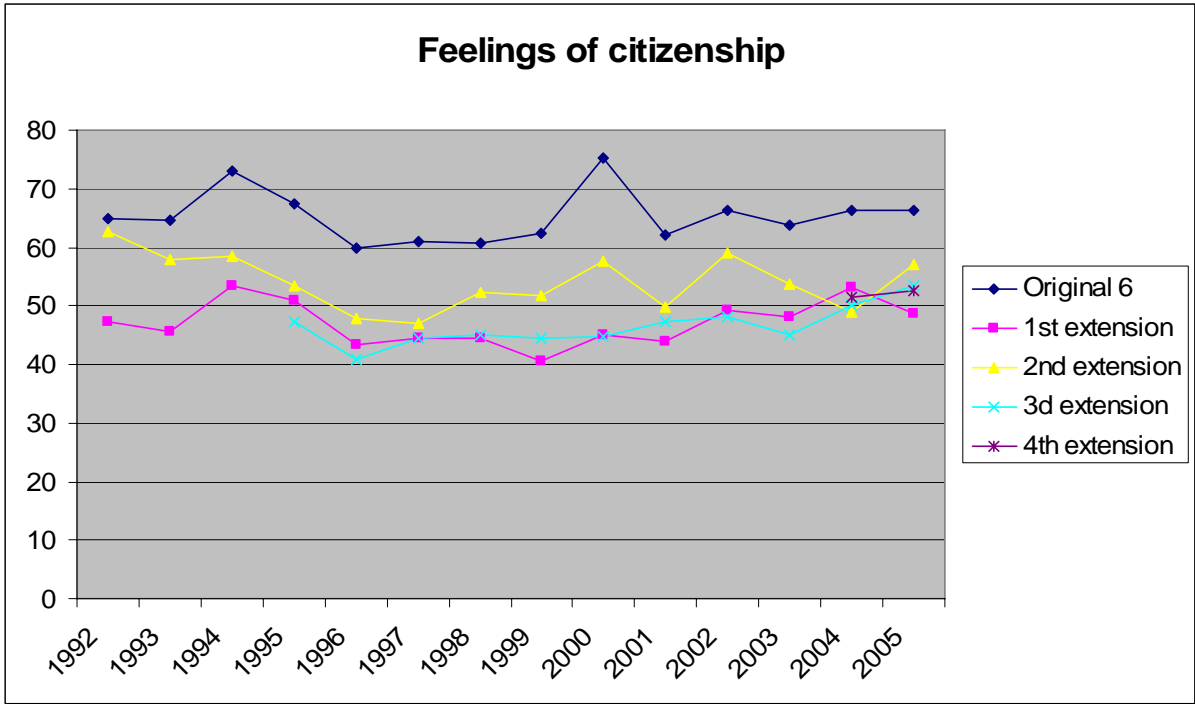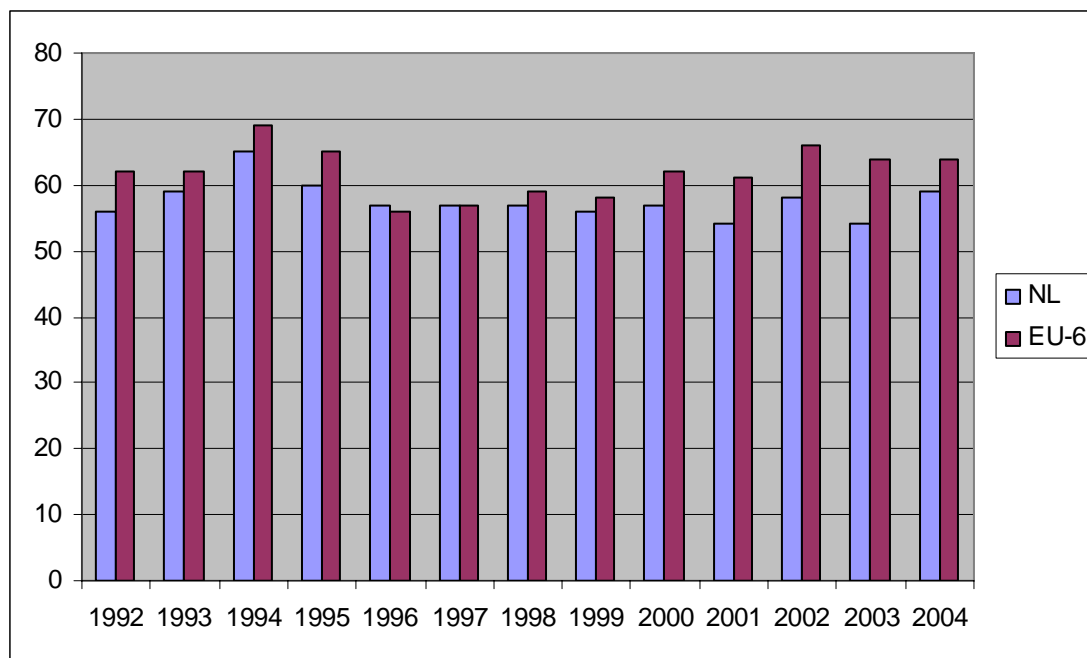

Feelings of citizenship

Figure 2: Those who think of themselves as European citizens, Netherlands vs other original member states

In the Eurobarometer a question on citizenship has frequently been asked since 1992. In figure 1 the trend of the answers to this question is shown for each of the successive enlargements separately. What is most striking in this figure is the clear difference between the groups of countries that joined the Union in the successive enlargements. The percentage of people willing to think of themselves as European citizens is highest in the original six member states. This is what we should expect if the sense of citizenship, or the sense of political community, is a function of the length of membership, i.e. if formal membership breeds a sense of citizenship. However, we then should also expect that the sense of citizenship in new member states would gradually increase and move towards the level of the older member states. This, however, is not really the case at all. There are no linear trends towards an ever higher level of citizenship but only fluctuations that affect the several groups of countries to more or less the same extent. As a consequence the differences between these groups of countries are not becoming smaller over time. At the contrary, they seem to become even larger. The first enlargement in 1973 brought in three new member states two of which (Britain and Denmark) were exceptionally eurosceptic and have remained so ever since. Only since the turn of the century they seem to move a bit in a more positive direction, but because this is a general turn, the differences remain at least as large as they were. The southern enlargement countries came in at a much higher level, at about the same level as the original six, and remained close to them. In figure 2 the position of the Netherlands compared to the other five countries of the original six is presented. The sense of citizenship during the whole

period is somewhat lower in the Netherlands than the average in the other five countries, but the differences are not as large as table 2 seems to suggest. The general conclusion suggested by these findings is that feelings of being part of a European political community have historical roots and are hardly affected by the duration of membership. Therefore, admitting new member states with a eurosceptic citizenry might have a persisting effect on the development of a European political community.

2.4.1 Trust

As mentioned above mutual trust is one of the main components of Deutsch his concept of sense of community. A sense of community can only exist if the people of the EU evaluate each other positively, i.e. if they trust each other. An increase in the level of mutual trust over time would indicate a growing sense of community (Niedermayer 1995: 228). Mutual trust was measured repeatedly in Eurobarometer surveys from the 1970s on. From previous analyses of these data two conclusions can be drawn.

First, the mutual trust between the people of EU countries substantially increased during the 1970s and 1980s, but fell somewhat back in the early 1990s (Niedermayer 1995; Scheuer 1995). In particular the trust in the people from the countries of the second enlargement (Greece; Portugal and Spain) increased during this period. This might suggest that the establishment of common political institutions does indeed enhance a sense of community as was suggested by a.o. David Easton. Secondly, previous research makes it highly unlikely that the same level of trust will immediately extend to the people from the 2004 accession countries. In the European Election Study 1994 people from the then 15 member states were asked whether they would welcome each of a number of countries as new member states of the EU. Whereas countries like Switzerland and Norway would have been most welcome, this did not apply to most candidate member states in Central and Eastern Europe, let alone to Turkey. These countries were hardly or not at all part of the 'mental map of Europe' of the people of the then mostly West-European Union (Scheuer 1995: 41). Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the recent enlargement has a negative effect on the sense of community in the European Union as a whole.

Figure 3 Trust in people from other countries
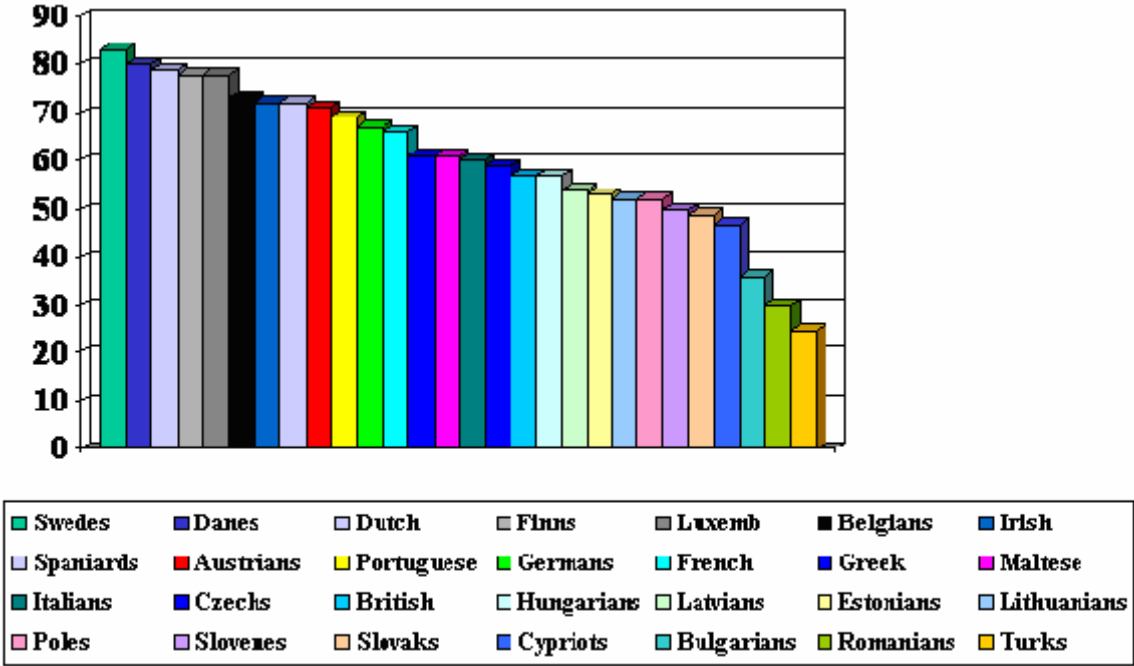
In figure 3 countries are ordered according to the level of trust people across Europe have in the people of these countries. This figure contains one very clear message. The further East we move in Europe, the less peoples are trusted by their fellow Europeans. The left part of the figure is occupied by West-European countries. In particular the people from the Nordic and Benelux countries are well trusted. All of them are relatively small countries. Of the older member states the Italians and British are traditionally the least trusted. With the exception of the Maltese the people of all the new member states are in the right tail of the figure. But the very tail of the figure is occupied by the people from the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey. Trust in the people from these countries is very low.

What we are basically interested in is the extent to which there is a sense of community across the several countries of the European Union. Figure 3 gives a clear indication that the recent enlargement might have increased the tensions in the Union by admitting countries whose people are far less trusted than the people from the older member states. Why this is the case is not immediately clear. Is it because their countries have only just entered the Union, is it because of their weak economy or is it for the simple reason that from the perspective of Western Europe they are far away and unknown? It is all but impossible to disentangle these possible explanations because each of them lead to the same categorization of countries.

The bars in figure 3 refer to the level of trust in the people of a particular country as expressed by *all* the people in the 24 member states in the 2004 European Election. What might help to understand these feelings is to see to what extent they are mutual and whether there are sub-communities of countries within the EU the people of which trust each other but not the people from other parts of Europe.

Table 3 Levels of Trust by Admission Year

	Original 6	1973 Enlargement	1980's Enlargement	1990's Enlargement	2004 Enlargement	Bulgaria & Romania	Turkey
Original 6[a]	77.74	72.46	75.89	83.56	51.73	29.28	24.02
1973[b] Enlargement	74.22	75.92	68.45	84.17	50.74	35.35	28.05
1980's Enlargement	65.54	56.71	64.47	66.94	45.27	33.97	22.2
1990's Enlargement[c]	74.74	77.57	70.45	85.92	57.24	30.8	28.7
2004[d] Enlargement	62.46	64.84	64.13	67.38	52.62	34.02	23.11

[a] Question not asked in Belgium
[b] Question not asked in Great Britain
[c] Question not asked in Sweden
[d] Question not asked in Malta and Lithuania.

Table 4 Levels of Trust by Geographic Location

	Western Europe	Nordic	Southern Europe	Central Europe	Baltic States	Bulgaria & Romania	Turkey
Western Europe[a]	75.05	86.32	71.56	50.87	55.57	31.65	26.75
Nordic[b]	84.06	93.72	67.31	56.85	55.22	37.03	30.65
Southern Europe	62.95	71.81	64.57	43.87	40.42	29.16	19.6
Central Europe	65.88	75.25	65.38[d]	62.21	49.38	43.07	28.96
Baltic[c] States	63.37	73.56	43.55	46.38	73.75	35.12	18.2

[a] Question not asked in Belgium and Great Britain.
[b] Question not asked in Sweden.
[c] Question not asked in Lithuania.
[d] Hungarians didn't rate the Portuguese

In tables 3 and 4 we have grouped the member states in two different ways. In table 3 according to the length of membership, in table 4 according to geographic location. Both tables are asymmetric because people in EU countries were asked to what extent they trust the Bulgarians, the Romanians and the Turks but not the other way around as no survey was conducted in these three countries.

Year of admission does not explain very much. If social integration would be an effect of EU membership, of the existence of a European polity, we should expect the highest levels of mutual trust among the people from the six founding member states. This, however, is not the case. Although trust among them is relatively high (78%), it is even lower than the trust people from these countries have in the people from Austria, Finland and Sweden, countries that did not join the Union until the 1990s. Therefore, any attempt to explain these differences in trust in terms of a clear distinction between who belongs and who does not belong to the *political* community of the EU is bound to fail.

The only indisputable finding is that trust in the people from the 10 new member states is relatively strikingly low. Only the people from the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are trusted even less. A remarkable finding is that people from the new member states trust the people from the older ones more than they do each other. But other than the clear difference between the newcomers and the older member states the length of membership does not explain very much.

In table 4 countries are classified according to their geographic location. The reason to do so is that as far as mutual trust is mainly based on familiarity and a common culture, geographic vicinity is a proxy for familiarity and a certain commonality of cultural traditions. We have grouped together Western Europe the original six minus Italy but including Britain and Ireland, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden and Finland), the Southern European countries (Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain), the new member states in Central Europe, and the Baltic states[3]. Geographic proximity seems to breed trust indeed[4]. In particular the countries in Northern and Western Europe form a community of countries where mutual trust is very high. The mutual trust between these countries and the Southern European countries is somewhat lower but still clearly on the positive side.

But the relationship between the people of the European Union as it existed before the recent enlargement and the people from the new member states, let alone the people from the three candidate countries, is a totally different story. It is quite obvious that the recent enlargement

had an enormous negative effect on the mutual trust of the peoples now constituting the European Union.

2.5   Citizenship and sense of community: in conclusion

In this part of the paper we have tried to make a clear conceptual distinction between European citizenship in the sense of a legal construct on the one hand and a sense of European communal identity on the other hand. According to the first theory a sense of European communal identity is a necessary condition for the development of a legitimate European political community. The second theory claims that there is indeed an empirical relationship between these two concepts, but the causal sequence is not necessarily unidirectional. Once a political community is established it can breed a sense of community.
The available evidence offers little evidence in support of the hypothesis that formal citizenship breeds communal identity or even a sense of political community. Countries that entered the Union with a low sense of European citizenship remained at a low level. In Western Europe mutual trust in general is high but there is no relationship with the length of European Union membership, as one would expect.

Trust in the people of at least some of the accession countries, not to speak of candidate countries like Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey is so low among the citizens of the older member states that one should wonder whether formal citizenship can gradually remedy this serious blow to what at least might have been the beginning of a European community.
If the Union extends too fast beyond the borders within which its citizens feel more or less comfortable, this is bound to have a negative effect on people's support for the European project. This might be at least part of the explanation for the misgivings people across Europe apparently have with the development of the Union, as became so obvious in the recent referenda in France and the Netherlands. According to the criteria used in this section the Netherlands is not extremely Europe minded. Compared to the other original six member states the sense of European citizenship is poorly developed whereas the sense of a European (social) community was severely affected by the 2004 enlargement.

3   TRUST IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

In figure 4 the development of trust in the European parliament in the Netherlands and the other five original member states since the turn of the century is presented. Also, in order to have a frame of reference trust in the national parliaments is presented in figure 5.

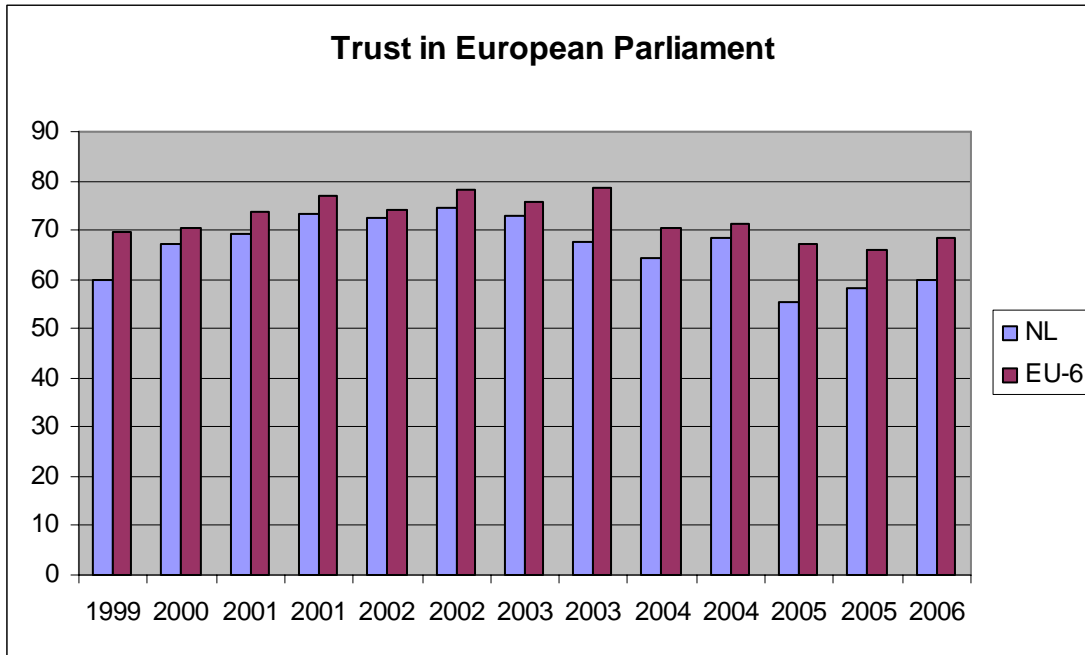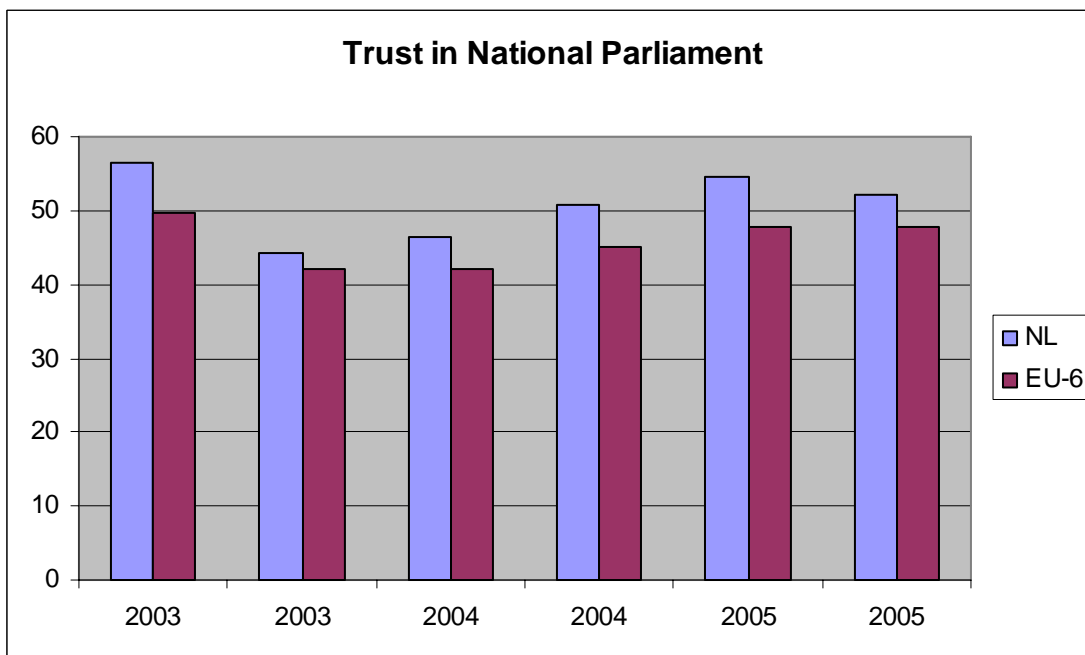*Figure 4 Trust in European Parliament*

Figure 5 Trust in National Parliament

Against the background of the ongoing debate on the alleged democratic deficit, trust in the European parliament is surprisingly high, both in the Netherlands and the other original member states. On average the percentage of people tending to trust the European Parliament is above 60 percent. This is way above the percentage of people trusting their own national parliament! In the original member states this figure is systematically lower than fifty percent. This probably tells more about the dramatically low trust of people across Western Europe in their own national political institutions than about the legitimacy of European institutions. But again, one cannot possibly conclude that the legitimacy of European institutions is disproportionably low. As far as developments over just a few years time have any meaning at all, one can observe a slight decline after 2002. Comparing the Netherlands with the other five countries we can observe that in particular in recent years, the level of trust in the European Parliament is slightly lower than in the other five countries. This is due to the fact that in the Netherlands trust in European institutions declined more than in the other countries, probably due to the quite negative campaign before the referendum in 2005. But as far as this explanation is a valid one, the effects of it do not seem to last. Already in the second half of 2005 one can observe a partial recovery.

This is not to say that people are satisfied with the functioning of democracy in the European Union. The Dutch in particular are very critical of it and over the years have become more critical compared to the people in the other five founding states (figure 6). In the early nineties the Dutch were still more satisfied, or rather less dissatisfied than the other countries. After 2001 the gap between the Netherlands and the other five is growing. This is only partly due to a growing dissatisfaction in the Netherlands though, and at least as much to the growing satisfaction in the other countries.

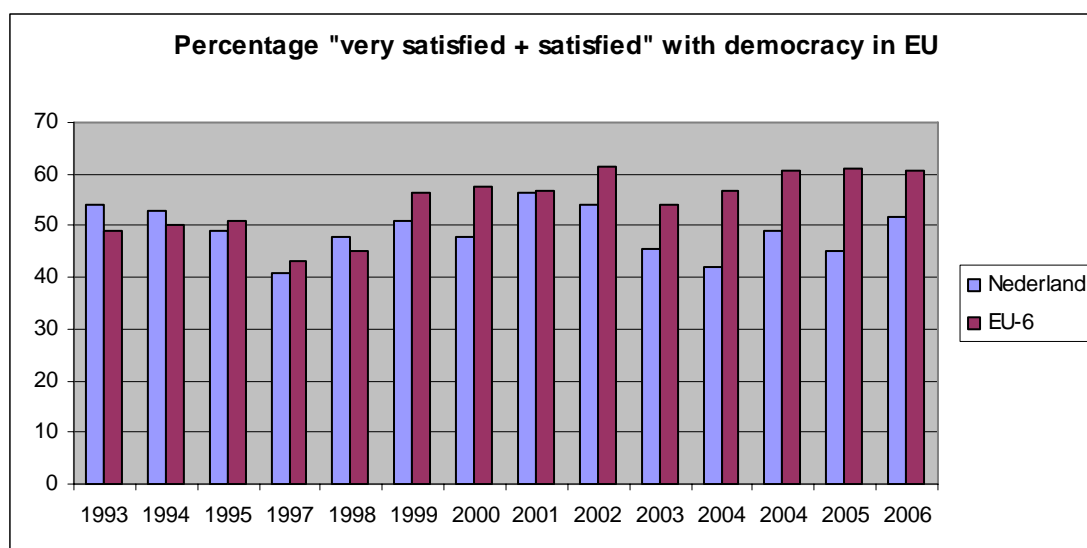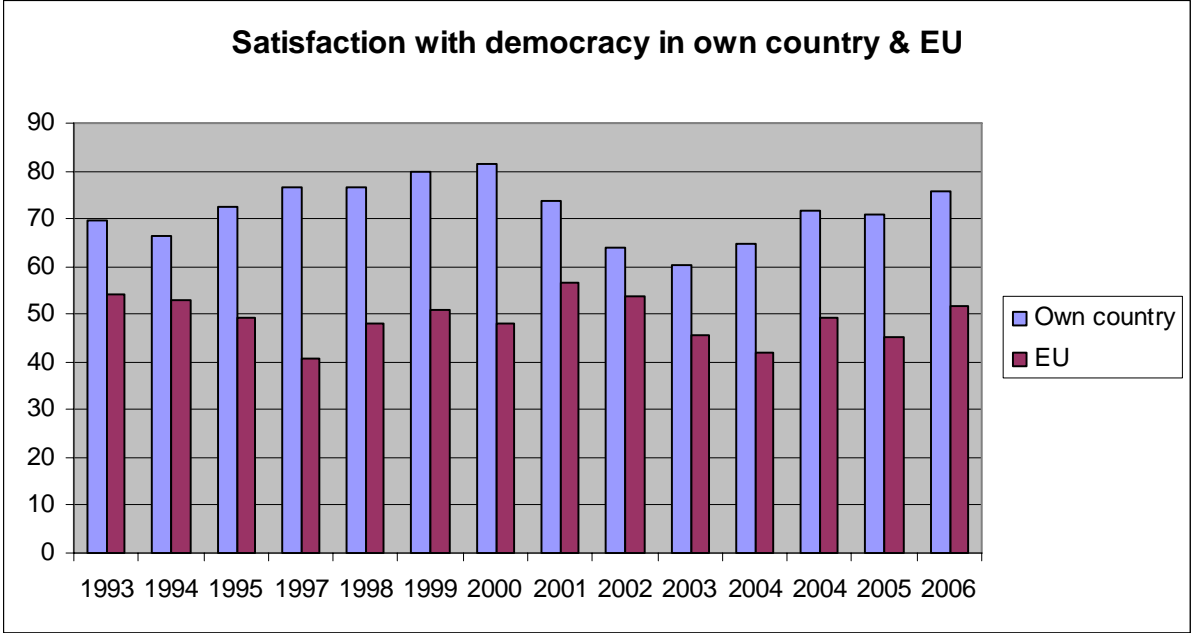*Figure 6 Percentage 'Very satisfied + satisfied" with democracy in EU*

Figure 7 Satisfaction with democracy in own country and EU

Satisfaction with democracy in own country & EU

In figure 7 we can observe that there is a huge difference in the Netherlands between the satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in the Netherlands and in the European Union. People are far more satisfied with democracy in their own country. An interesting question is to what extent satisfaction with the function of democracy in the EU is a reflection of the satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in one's own country. If one looks at the development of both indicators in the Netherlands there seems to be some support for this hypothesis. Both tend to go up and down in tandem, but not consistently so.

4   PERFORMANCE AND SPILL OVER EFFECTS

The third dimension of legitimacy we distinguished refers to *performance*. The question as to which decision-making level is most appropriate to deal with different policy problems is a central aspect of the legitimacy of the European political system. In the mid 1990s a surprisingly high percentage of the people across the European Union were inclined to entrust the European Union with the responsibility for more rather than less policy areas. Ten years later people have lost their enthusiasm for the EU as the most appropriate level for solving the most important problem they perceived. This is not due to the enlargement of the Union. There is not much of a difference in this respect between older and newer member states. The Netherlands still is among the countries that are most inclined to consider the European level as the appropriate level of government for solving the problems they consider as the most important ones. (De Winter and Swyngedouw 1999)

A good indicator of the extent to which people are satisfied with the performance of the European Union is a question that has been asked in the Eurobarometer for over twenty years. It asks people whether they think their country has benefited from its membership of the Union. Figure 8 offers a general impression of the development of people's perceptions of the performance of the Union in the original member states. It is obvious that from this perspective the Union has been a success story. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s on average more than seventy percent of the people were convinced that their country had benefited from its membership. In the Netherlands even eighty per cent or more were convinced of this. From the early 1990s we see a gradual decline of this positive judgment (although in the Netherlands to a less extent than in the other countries), followed by a slight recovery. In the Netherlands the percentage of people having a positive judgment on the benefits from the membership of the Union started to decline since the turn of the century and hardly deviates anymore from the average of the other countries. Nevertheless, in 2006 close to seventy per cent of the Dutch population is still convinced that their country has benefited from the membership of the Union.

Figure 8 Percentage saying "Country has benifited"

Percentage saying "country has benefited"
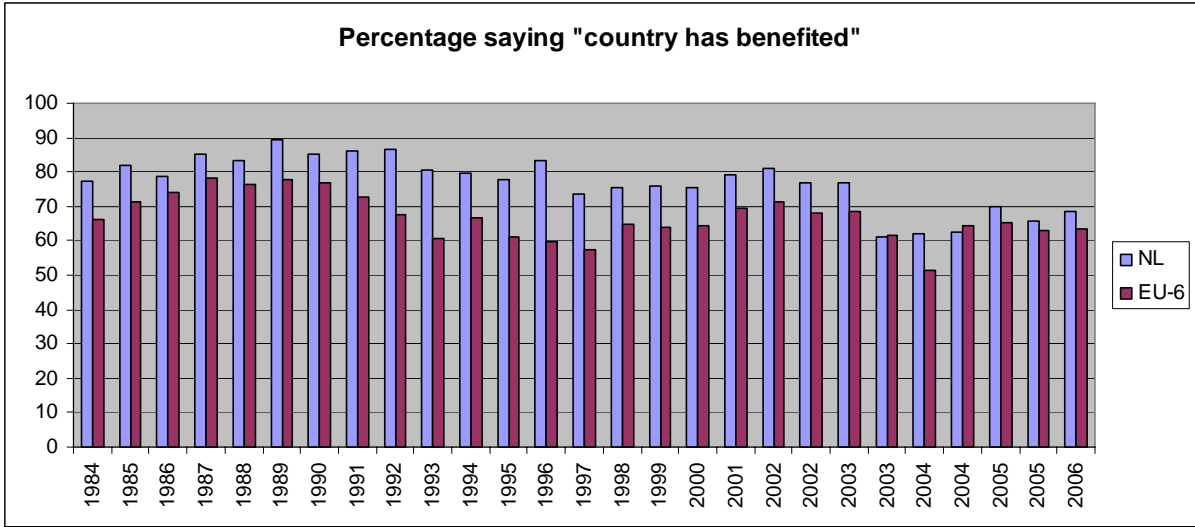
This brings us to the end of our analysis of the legitimacy of the European Union as perceived by the people. The general conclusion with regard to the three dimensions of legitimacy distinguished in the second column of table 1 is that people in the Netherlands and the countries that are most comparable with it, the other five original member states, have a positive perception of the benefits the Union has brought their country. Although perceptions have become less positive over the years of membership, they still are rather positive. Also, feelings toward the political institutions of the Union are rather positive. What is missing though is a feeling of community among the people of Europe. This lack of common bonds makes the Union into a weak political system. Theoretically one should expect a spill over effect from people's satisfaction with the performance of the system towards their evaluation of the political institutions and finally to their feelings of community. This might have happened with regard to the political institutions of the Union (although people are anything but satisfied with democracy in the Union), but it most certainly did not happen with regard to the feelings of community. This is mainly due to the successive enlargements of the Union. The mutual feelings of trust among the people of the original six member states have gradually increased. It is still to be seen to what extent this process can be repeated within a European Union of 25, 27 or perhaps even more member states. For the time being the lack of a sense of community makes the European Union into a weak and vulnerable political system. It has often been argued that if the support of the people for a political system only is based on its performance there is no support left once performance is temporarily failing. Then people will be inclined to reject the system as such instead of waiting for better times as people would do in political systems that can rely on a 'reservoir of good will', that is on the legitimacy of its political institutions and political community.

5   POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We now turn to an evaluation of the legitimacy of the European Union from a normative perspective. In a representative democracy elections have the function of linking the policy preferences of the people to the policy views and acts of members of parliament and indirectly to public policy.[5] According to many observers the referendum on the draft constitutional treaty in the Netherlands revealed a big gap between the people and the political elite and proved that elections were failing as a mechanism of linkage. In this section we will try to answer the question to what extent elections are failing indeed with regard to European issues. In order to do this we first need to answer three preliminary questions. First, how do elections function as a mechanism of linkage (subsection 2). Secondly, what do we mean by European issues and thirdly, which elections should provide a mechanism of linkage on these issues (subsection 3)?

5.1   Political Representation as a mechanism of linkage

Elections will only be able to perform their function as a mechanism of linkage when a number of requirements are met. These requirements are systematically spelled out in the so called model of *Party Government* or *Responsible Party Model*. According to this model the will of the majority of the electorate will be reflected in government policy if the following requirements are met:[6]

1. Voters do have a choice, i.e. they can choose between at least two parties with different policy proposals
2. The internal cohesion, or party discipline, of political parties is sufficient to enable them to implement their policy
3. Voters do vote according to their policy preferences, i.e. they choose the party that represents their policy preferences best. This in turn requires that:
    i. Voters do have policy preferences
    ii. Voters are aware of the differences between the programmes of different political parties.
4. The party or coalition winning the elections takes over the government.

These requirements that need to be met in order to make elections into an effective mechanism of linkage are mostly self-evident. Parties can only convey a clear and unequivocal message to the voters if they are united and well disciplined. Still, the democratic effect of elections would be futile unless the elected (majority in) parliament has a say in the formation and the policies of the government. If the formation of the government and the policies adopted by the government were not derivative of the elected parliament, there would be no direct linkage between the will of the electorate and government policy. Voters

will only be able to vote for the party closest to their own policy preferences when they have such preferences and also know where the parties stand on these issues.

However, even when all these conditions are met, a single vote does not necessarily convey an electoral mandate with respect to any specific policy domain. Political parties offer a package deal to the voter. By voting for a particular party, voters are forced to vote for the whole package. The voter who is in favour of party A with respect to policy domain 1, but of party B with respect to domain 2, has no alternative but to choose for either one of them on the basis of his own idiosyncratic weights given to the different policy domains. This may be an acceptable solution for the individual voter, but at the level of the political system it means that there is no logical relationship between the electoral majority and the policy majority on any specific issue. This phenomenon is known as the Ostrogorski paradox (Rae and Daudt 1976; Thomassen 1991; Thomassen 1994). As a consequence, as Dahl puts it, "all an election reveals is the first preference of some citizens among the candidates standing for office," for "we can rarely interpret a majority of first choices among candidates in a national election as being equivalent to a majority of first choices for a specific policy" (Dahl 1956).

The only solution to this so-called Ostrogorski paradox is that both political parties, in the composition of their programs, and voters, when they decide which party they will vote for, are constrained by the same one-dimensional ideology. Only then it is absolutely clear where the electoral majority stands in policy matters (Aarts and Kolk 2005; Thomassen 1991; Thomassen 1994). This, of course, is a very severe requirement. In Western Europe the Left-right dimension is the most likely candidate to serve as the single dimension being able to connect the policy views of the electorate with public policy. Research into party manifestos, the policy views of political elites and of the mass public have shown that the left-right dimension is indeed an important instrument of communication in the relationship between voters, political elites and public policy. Differences between the party manifestos of different parties to a large extent can be reduced to this one dimension. The electorates in West European democracies in general have no difficulty to position themselves on the Left-Right-dimension. Also, most of them seem to be well aware of the relative positions of the political parties on the left-right dimension and in large numbers they vote for the party that is closest to their own position on a left-right scale. Therefore, to the extent voters' positions on specific issues are constrained by the left-right dimension, most of the requirements of the Responsible party Model, as severe as they are, seem to be met at the national level. However, the real problem is caused by the additional requirement formulated above, the uni-dimensionality of the issue space. Even though the left-right dimension in most West-European countries has developed into the main *dimension of competition* (Sani and Sartori

1983) it is still strongly defined in terms of the social-economic cleavage, even though over the years it has been able to encompass other cleavages. The less related an issue is to this cleavage structure, the less constrained it will be among the mass public by the left-right dimension and the lower the consensus between the political elites and the mass public on that particular issue probably will be. As a consequence the effectiveness of the process of political representation is different for different issues. In general political parties and political elites seem to be fairly representative of their voters on social-economic issues, such as income policy. But representativeness is less on issues in the domain of foreign policy and there usually is a world of difference between party elites and their rank and file with respect to libertarian values, in particular within the traditional parties on the left. Here we will evaluate how well elections serve as a mechanism of linkage on European issues.

5.2   Political representation and accountability in the European Union

However, in order to do so, we first should specify which elections should serve this purpose and what we mean by European issues. Despite the fact that the political system of the European Union can best be described as a system of multilevel governance in which national and supranational responsibilities are interwoven, it might – for the sake of the argument – make sense to make a distinction between two modes of decision making, the supranational and the intergovernmental mode. These modes ask for a different model of political representation. As long as European decision making occurs according to the intergovernmental model, we do not really need a model of political representation at the level of the European Union. In this case there is no European *people* to be represented, but only European *peoples* that each are represented by their national governments. The relevant system of political representation is at the national level, where the 'normal' system of party government applies, as sketched in figure 11. Once the European Union shifts into its supranational mode, the model as sketched in figure 10 might be said to be applicable, at least as a heuristic device, even though the Union is not a state (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999a). Because of the existence of these two distinct channels of political representation the question as to what extent the process of political representation in the European Union meets the requirements of the Responsible party Model needs to be answered for these levels separately.

European Council /

Council of Ministers

National Government 1 ... National Government

National Parliament 1 ... National Parliament

National Parties ... National Parties

National Electorate 1 ... National Electorate
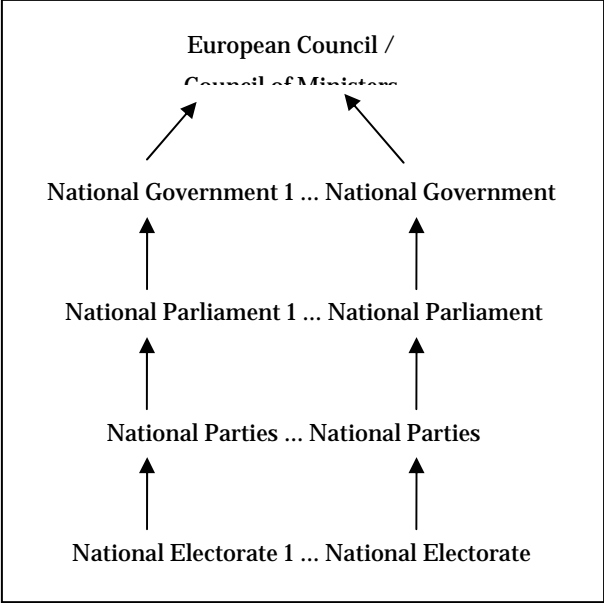
Fig. 9   the intergovernmental model of European
*   political representation*

European Government

European Parliament
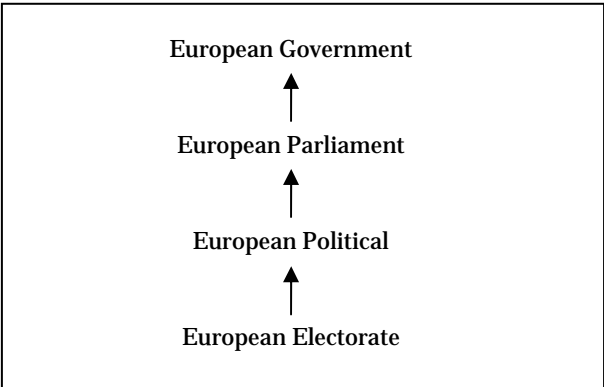
European Political

European Electorate

Fig. 10   the supranational model of European
*   political representation*

Let us start with the European level. Here it seems easy enough to confirm the democratic deficit of the European Union. This deficit usually is defined in terms of the power of the European Parliament. But the heuristics of the Responsible Party Model enable us to put the problem of the democratic deficit in a broader perspective, encompassing all levels distinguished in figure 10. Evaluated from the perspective of this model the political reality of the EU is a far cry from the concept of party government. Despite the increased - and perhaps underestimated - powers of the European parliament, it does not form and control a European government, for the simple reason that there is no such thing as a European government, at least not in any traditional sense of the concept of a government, let alone a *responsible* government. Also, because there is no government to form or to support at the European level, the concept of government vs opposition parties, so essential in any parliamentary democracy, has no meaning at the European level.

Therefore, it hardly needs to be argued that at least one requirement of the system of party government, formation and control of the government by a majority in parliament, is not met. The European political system does not meet the minimal definition of a representative democracy, offering the voters the possibility to *throw the rascals out*. In this sense the democratic deficit is obvious: elections are not translated into political power, the commission is not elected, and the Council of Ministers and European Council are not properly controlled or accountable (Newman 1996).

This conclusion refers to the translation of the outcome of elections into executive power and the legislative-executive relationships at the European level. How does the process of representation, i.e. the process of linking the will of the European people to the composition and indirectly to the decision-making in the European parliament function? The traditional verdict on this process is well known. According to the Responsible party model political parties are supposed to supply different policy platforms for the voters to choose from. At the European level this does not occur. European political parties as such do not compete for the votes of a European electorate. European elections are still the arena of national political parties. They are fought by national parties and mainly on national issues. Also, voters make their choice on the basis of their opinions on national issues and their perception of national political parties on these issues. As a consequence, European elections fail as an instrument of democracy at the European level, i.e. they fail to express the will of the European people on European issues. The remedy for this failure, according to some observers, is for political parties to organize themselves at the European level and fight elections on European rather than national issues. Perhaps even a reshuffle of political parties is needed according to their position with regard to European Unification, on the dimension of pro- anti further European

integration. Then elections would finally be able to serve as a linkage between the policy views of the European electorate and European politics. However, as we argued elsewhere (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999b), this argument is disputable. The very idea that elections for the European Parliament should be fought on so-called European issues is based on a fundamental misunderstanding. It makes little sense to base a system of representation, and therefore a party system, on issues that are decided at a different level. Formal decisions on a further transfer of sovereignty from the national to the European level and on enlargement are subject to the intergovernmental regime of European decision-making. They need the consent of national governments and are, at least in principle, under the control of national parliaments and national electorates. Therefore, the interesting paradox is that what usually are called *European* issues are basically *national* issues. As far as the existing party system fails to offer a meaningful choice to the voters, this is a problem at the national rather than the European level.

In a healthy and stable democracy the political debate and political conflict will usually refer to substantive policy issues within the constraints of a constitutional order. The constitutional order itself should not be a matter of permanent dispute. If the unification of Europe is at all viable, major political disputes must gradually shift from constitutional to substantive policy issues. The relative consensus among political elites across Europe about the future of Europe is not a *problem* but rather a *condition* for further development of the European Union as a democratic political system. Once we accept this argument our judgment on the functioning of the system of political representation at the European level might be less negative. There is no reason why the basic structure of the party system at the European level should differ from that at the national level. Quite the contrary: one of the main reasons to consider the development of a European system of political representation feasible at all is the existence of common roots in the party systems of the member states. The party systems in Europe, at least in Western Europe, are based on a more or less similar cleavage structure. This means that even when national parties dominate European elections and voters vote on the basis of national cleavages, the aggregation of these national systems in the European parliament results in a party system that is hardly less competitive, in the sense of consisting of distinct parties, and cohesive than party systems at the national systems are. Due to the same process party groups in the European Parliament are quite representative of the policy views of their aggregated electorate across the European Union. The pro-anti-European integration dimension hardly plays a role in the process of decision-making within the European Parliament. Roll call votes can to a large extent be explained by MEPs' position on the left-right dimension, whereas the European dimension is of minor importance only (Thomassen, Noury, and Voeten 2004). Also, European party groups are

organised according to their position on the left-right dimension. The large party groups in the middle of this dimension are all in favour of European Unification whereas the small parties on the left and the right are more eurosceptic. As a consequence, a reshuffling of the party system according to their position on the pro-anti-unification diemension would bring together strange bed-fellows who would have a common stand on this dimension but would disagree on all issues that are really important in the decision-making of the European Parliament. It would totally paralyze the European Parliament and focus the debate on issues that hardly play a role in the agenda of the Parliament and on which parliament is not competent.

As much as it is in contrast with many observations our conclusion with regard to the *outcome* of the process of political representation *at the European level* is that it is functioning much better than often assumed, despite the fact that the *process* of political representation does not meet most of the normative requirements. Despite the fact that there is not much of a process of political representation at the European level the aggregation of the outcomes of national processes still leads to a reasonable congruence between the European electorate and the European Parliament.

However, all this is mainly true with regard to the left-right dimension and issue domains that are clearly related to it. It is not true for European issues, i.e. issues referring to the issue of European unification. The fundamental cause of this was discussed above. Because the national party systems and processes of political representation are mainly based on the left-right cleavage, they form, both separately and aggregated at the level of the Union effective channels of political representation with regard to this dimension and related issues.[7] The issue of European unification does not belong to these related issues. Therefore, with regard to this issue the existing party system(s) and processes do not form an effective channel of political representation. On this issue the major party groups are hardly distinct, differences of opinion between members of the European Parliament are more related to their national background than to their party affiliation, voters have a problem recognizing what the views of the party groups are, and hardly take these issues into account when deciding which party to vote for. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that there is little congruence between voters and representatives on these issues (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999c).

Of course, these findings are grist to the mill of those who perceive a failure of the European system of political representation. However, it is our contention that as far as there is a gap between voters and political elites on these issues it is a problem to be solved at the national rather than the European level. This, of course, does not solve the problem. It is still to be

seen to what extent national systems of political representation are functioning as a mechanism of linkage on these issues. This is the question we will turn to in the next subsection.

5.3 Political representation with regard to European issues at the national level

Again, the requirements of the Responsible Party Model offer a number of criteria that enable us to assess the effectiveness of the process of political representation with regard to European issues at the national level. The first requirement is that voters do have a choice, i.e. that they can choose between at least two parties with different policy proposals. In order to assess to what extent this is the case in the Netherlands we will rely on a survey among members of parliament conducted in 2001. In this study members of parliament were asked to position themselves on a seven point scale, running from "European integration has gone too far" to "European integration should go even further". The great advantage of this method as compared to other methods is that later on it will enable us to compare the position of political parties with both where the voters think the parties are and with the self location of the voters of each party. These positions were obtained from the National Election Studies of 2002 and 2003. In order to have a frame of reference we will compare our findings with those on the left-right dimension, which as we argued above can be considered as the main dimension of contestation, in the Netherlands no less than in other West-European countries.

Table 5 Positions on European Unification

Party	Self-placement MPs 2001	Perception party by voters 2002	Self-placement voters 2002
SP	6,2	4,3	4,3
GreenLeft	2,1	3,8	3,7
PvdA	2,6	3,3	3,6
D66	2,3	3,4	3,6
CDA	3,6	3,3	4,1
VVD	3,9	3,6	3,9
ChristenUnie	5,4	-	4,5
LPF		5,0	4,6
SGP	5,7	-	5,8

Table 6 Positions on Left-right dimension

Party	Self-placement MPs 2001	Perception party by voters 2002	Self-placement voters 2002
SP	1,2	3,3	4,1
GreenLeft	2,1	3,3	4,0
PvdA	2,7	4,4	4,5
D66	3,3	5,4	5,2
CDA	3,9	7,3	7,2
VVD	4,6	8,0	7,5
ChristenUnie	4,3	7,6	7,3
LPF	-	8,6	7,6
SGP	5,0	7,8	9,1

In tables 5 and 6 the position of each party on both dimensions is presented. These positions confirm previous findings from international comparative research. First, the rank order of parties on the European dimension is different than on the left-right dimension. Whereas the major parties in the middle of the left-right scale on average are in favour of further unification, the more eurosceptical parties are found at the extremes of the left-right distribution. SP, Christen-Unie and SGP are the only (small) parties whose MPs on average are on the eurosceptical side of the scale. Therefore, there are two conclusions we can draw with regard to the question whether voters have a choice on the European dimension. The answer clearly is: yes they do. But one should add to this that in case they want to vote for a eurosceptical party they are forced to vote for a party at the extreme left or the extreme right. There is not much of a difference between the major parties. This is consistent with the argument frequently made both in the academic literature and the public debate that political parties do compete on the left-right dimension and not on the European dimension. Therefore, in contrast to the left-right dimension voters don't have much of a serious choice on the European dimension. However, one should not exaggerate this argument. The differences between the major parties on the European dimension are not much smaller than on the left-right dimension. Whereas the difference between PvdA and VVD on the European dimension is 1.3, it is not more than 1.9 on the left-right scale (although this brings these parties on different sides of the middle of the scale, whereas they are on the same side on the European dimension).

However, 'objective' differences between political parties are a necessary but not a sufficient requirement for an effective process of political representation. At least as important is that voters meet the requirements spelled out above and are aware of the policy differences between political parties.

The first requirement is that people have an opinion on the issue in the first place. If they do not there is nothing to take into account when they make up their mind at election time. A first rough indication of the number of people having an opinion on the issue of European integration is how many people are able to place themselves on the European integration scale. Even compared to the left-right dimension this number is surprisingly high. In the 2002 national election study not more than 3 percent admitted not to have an opinion on the issue of European integration. This is hardly more than on the left-right dimension (1,6%). Also, opinions on this issue are widely distributed across the full length of the scale and somewhat skewed in the direction of 'unification has gone too far'. Therefore, if voters can find a party representing their position, the basic requirements for issue voting would be met. Again, a first indication of people's awareness of where the parties stand is the number of people who admit not to know the position of a party. This number varies between parties, from 15 percent for PvdA and VVD to 24 percent for the LPF. Although these percentages are considerably higher than for the left-right scale, where they are between 2 percent and 5 percent, one cannot possibly say that people in general have no opinion on where the parties stand on this issue. The next question is whether they see much of a difference between parties. Table 5 clearly demonstrates they do not.

Whereas voters perceive large differences between parties on the left-right dimension, they hardly see a difference between the parties on the European dimension[8]. Only the SP and in particular the LPF, the party of Pim Fortuyn are perceived as different from the other parties which on average are perceived as having more or less the same position. The fact that most parties end up at more or less the same place, is not because all voters perceive them at the same position, but because they locate them all over the scale. In other words, as far as voters cannot effectively connect a political party to their own position it is not really due to a lack of alternatives but rather to a lack of clarity of the positions of political parties. Therefore, the requirement that people should be aware of the differences between political parties in order to be able to vote according to their policy preferences is hardly met. As a consequence, it is most unlikely that there will be much of a relationship between voters' position on this issue and their party choice. A simple analysis of variance with party choice as an independent variable and opinion on the issue of European unification clearly indicates that party choice is hardly related to people's opinions on these issues. Not more than 6 percent of the variance in people's opinions on this issue is explained by party choice, as compared to a high 49 percent in the case of left-right position.
This confirms how dominant the left-right dimension still is in the interaction between voters and political parties. As we argued above, people's opinions on the issue of European

unification will only be reflected in the outcome of elections if either of two conditions is met. The first possibility is that opinions on European Unification are highly correlated with the main dimension of contestation, i.e. the left-right dimension. In that case elections automatically bring voters to the party where they 'belong' in this respect if they vote according to their left-right position, even if they do not deliberately take their position on this issue into account when deciding how to vote. Past research clearly proves that such a correlation does not exist. The dimensions of European unification and the left-right dimension are orthogonal to each other (Thomassen, Noury, and Voeten 2004). The second possibility is that for a large number of people the European dimension will replace the left-right dimension as the main dimension determining their party choice. In that case the European issue might get a large effect on the election outcome.

5.3.1   European issues and electoral democracy: an impossible combination?

If these are the only two possibilities to make elections into an instrument of linkage with regard to European issues, the solution seems to be obvious. Then one should either try to link the policy debate with regard to European issues to the left-right divide, or encourage voters to make their vote choice on the basis of their opinion on European issues. Neither solution needs to be illusorily. Parties' and citizens' stands on European issues are orthogonal to their position on the left-right dimension as long as European issues are formulated in terms of pro- vs. anti-Europe, or with regard to the institutional framework of the Union. However, if the debate is framed in terms of the kind of Europe we want, this is no longer the case. For instance opinions on the question to what extent the Union should enforce a free market, not only for trade and commerce, but also for labour and services, or whether the EU and its member states should regulate these markets in order to protect the achievements of the welfare state, are strongly correlated with positions on the left-right dimension. Therefore, once the debate is framed in such terms the problem of unrelated dimensions does no longer occur.

Also, there are speculations that the European dimension is indeed becoming more important in national elections. This would mean that the second solution is not out of reach either. Van der Eijk and Franklin coined the metaphor of a 'sleeping giant' in this connection. In their view the European dimension is a sleeping giant for the reasons we dealt with above: most people have clear opinions on this issue and they differ considerably in their opinions, even more so than on the left-right dimension. Therefore, the ingredients for contestation over EU integration are even more powerful than over the more traditional issues that are subsumed under the left-right divide. But because the left-right dimension and the European dimension are not correlated with each other, voters are forced to choose between either

expressing in their party choice their left-right ideological concerns, which forces them to ignore their preferences regarding European integration, or the other way around: choosing parties on the basis of their positions regarding Europe, at the cost of not being able to select the party they would have preferred in left/right terms. According to Van der Eijk and Franklin at present in most countries voters are willing to put their preferences regarding the EU on ice and make their choices between parties on other grounds. But they think this might quickly change. In their view the pro-/anti-EU policy dimension already appears much more ripe for politicization (in terms of the number of voters who hold opinions and the extremity of these positions) than does the left/right dimension. This being the case, it is surely only a matter of time before policy entrepreneurs in some countries seize the opportunity presented to their parties by these quite polarized opinions, to differentiate themselves from other parties in EU terms. Indeed, as they argue, this already appears to have happened in some countries where small parties of the far left or far right have already taken up distinctly pro- or (more often) anti-EU stances. In some countries these stances even appear to have paid electoral dividends by attracting voters who would not otherwise have voted for a party at the extreme of the left/right spectrum (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004). If they are right, elections might be an instrument of linkage for European issues.

But how likely is this scenario? In the Netherlands the idea of a sleeping giant might be even more convincing than elsewhere, for two reasons. First, there is the outcome of the referendum on the draft constitutional treaty in which no less than 63 percent of the Dutch electorate turned out to reject the draft treaty with a 61 percent majority. This at least suggests, not only a big gap between the mass public and the political elites on this issue but also intense (mostly negative) feelings on this subject. Secondly, the Netherlands recently experienced how a sleeping, not to say sedated, giant can turn the world of politics upside down, once awake. In 2002 Pim Fortuyn –apparently out of the blue - managed to mobilise an astonishing large part of the electorate on issues related to the immigration of foreigners. Only when he started to mobilise people on this issue it became obvious that a giant had been lying in hiding. Moreover, only then it became obvious that the cartel of the major political parties for a long time had been able to keep this issue from the political agenda. It had been declared a taboo and the giant of which no one seemed to be aware was kept sedated until Pim Fortuyn woke him up.

At the surface the issue of immigration and the European issue seem to be very similar. Political parties until shortly did not compete on either issue. On both issues people have clear but different opinions. Also, neither issue is strongly correlated with the left-right dimension. Therefore, as long as this is the case, either issue can only have a large impact on

the outcome of elections when voters are mobilized on this dimension instead of the left-right dimension. This is exactly what happened in 2002. Fortuyn did not fight the established parties on the left-right dimension, but brilliantly changed the political arena by mobilizing people on a different dimension. If that could be done on the issue of immigration why would it not be equally possible for a political entrepreneur to mobilize a large part of the electorate on the European issue?

As convincing as this analogy may sound, it cannot really convince me. In order for an issue dimension to have an effect on electoral behaviour, people should not only have an opinion on it and be aware of the position of political parties, but the issue should also be salient, i.e. it should be important to the voters. If it is not, why would they waste their vote on it?

In this respect the immigration issue is different from the European issue. In the national election study that has been conducted at the occasion of each parliamentary election since 1971, respondents are asked what in their view the most important problem in the country is. As early as 1994 the problem of foreigners and related issues was the most important issue in the country according to no less than half of the population. In 2002 it was again the most salient political issue. Compared to this European unification does not even exist as an issue. In a random sample of 1500 tot 2000 people it over the years was never mentioned by more than 1 to 3 people, i.e. well below 1 percent. Therefore, it is very unlikely that many voters will make their party choice dependent on the European issue. Against this background it is quite unlikely that the major political parties will play their role in the model; that is to politicize the European issue and compete for votes on the basis of this issue. Apart from the question whether it makes sense to require political parties to emphasize differences between them that hardly exist, there is not much of an incentive for political parties to do so. It is often argued that there is a kind of conspiracy of the major political parties to keep the European issue from the political agenda in order to hide their internal differences of opinions. Politicizing this issue therefore would only lead to tensions within political parties. However, there is not much evidence to sustain this argument, at least not in the Netherlands. But if we consider political parties as rational actors it is hard to think of a reason why they would want to politicize the European issue. Even Schumpeter, the early champion of elitist democracy, argued that if an issue is really important to the people politicians and political parties will include it in their platform for no other reason than their own interest, i.e. maximizing their vote. But for the same reason less salient issues simply will be neglected. The European issue clearly fits in that category. Secondly, the major political parties at election time will try to emphasize the issues on which they differ from each other, not the issues on which they agree. Finally, for the same reason the major political parties, being in favour of European integration, have nothing to win by politicizing the issue. They can only scare off their own

voters as far as they are against European Unification. Therefore, as both at the elite and the mass level the incentives for politicising the issue are missing, national elections will not easily develop into an effective mechanism of linkage for issues related to the European dimension. As far as there is a sleeping creature, it is a sleeping dwarf rather than a sleeping giant.

6   ELECTORAL DEMOCRAY IS NOT EVERYTHING

However, if we accept that elections at the national level do not and perhaps cannot function as an effective instrument of linkage with regard to European issues, does this necessarily mean that policy making with regard to European issues is not legitimate? It does not. In this part of the paper we are trying to evaluate decision-making with regard to European issues at the national level against criteria deduced from normative theories of representative democracy. However, representative democracy is an essentially contested concept and there is not a single unanimously accepted normative theory of representative democracy.

The normative view on representative democracy behind the model of *Party Government* or the *Responsible Party Model* is based on the so called *collectivist* theory of democracy. According to this theory representative democracy is a 'sorry substitute for the real thing', the real thing being direct democracy (Dahl 1982). The policy views of the majority of the electorate should determine government policy. Therefore, the model is presented as a chain of command: (the majority of) parliament is supposed to implement the will of the (majority of the) electorate, the government more or less coincides with the majority in parliament and is supposed to implement the will of the party (or parties) in parliament (see figure 11). If all requirements of the model are met, government policy will be consistent with the will of the majority of the people. This model is characterized by a political rather than an institutional separation of powers (Van Thijn 1967).

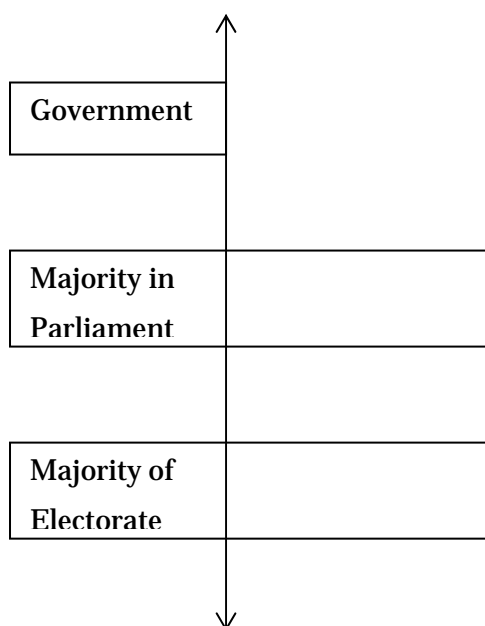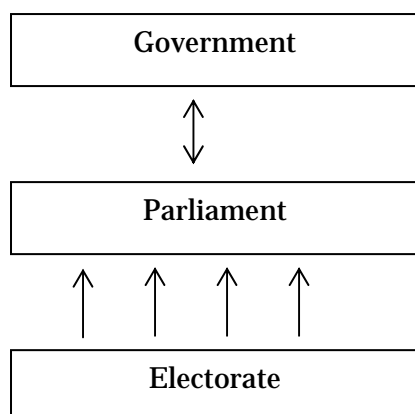*Figure 11   Majoritarian model of representative*

Figure 12   Consensus model of representative democracy

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          ┌─────────────────────────┐
          │       Government        │
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                      ↕
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          │       Parliament        │
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          │       Electorate        │
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However, one might wonder how realistic this model is, not only for European issues, but in general. As we have seen above, the model requires that all political issues can be reduced to a single policy dimension. Also, in order to take decisions by a majority it requires that all issues can be reduced to a binary decision. Critics of the model consider it as a contorted attempt to approach direct democracy that in practice is doomed to fail. As Riker famously argued:

'Simple majority decision on binary alternatives requires some social embodiment of Procrustes, who chopped of the legs of his guests to fit them into the bed in his inn. The number of alternatives must be reduced to exactly two, and this means that some alternatives worthy of consideration must be excised.' (Riker 1982)

An alternative and supposedly more realistic normative view of representative democracy more in line with the Dutch tradition of parliamentary democracy is the so-called liberal theory of representative democracy. This theory is based on the idea of the *Rechtsstaat* and its system of *separation of powers* and *checks and balances* rather than on the idea of the sovereign will of the people. Instead of being related to each other by a chain of command, all actors in figure 12 have a more or less independent position towards each other. Members of parliament are entrusted to represent the general interest of the one nation, not to follow simply the will of the people. Parliament is a deliberative assembly: in parliament representatives of the people meet in order to find an optimal solution for the problems the country is faced with. The exchange of arguments rather than the opinions of the electorate determine the outcome of the process of decision-making. Government is not simply an agent of the majority in parliament but has its own responsibilities. The relation between government and parliament is characterized by an institutional rather than a political separation of powers. In the Dutch context this is often referred to as a dualistic rather than a

monistic relationship. It is the role of parliament as an institution to scrutinize the government and government policy. In the Netherlands this still is the dominant normative theory of representative democracy, at least among political elites. From the perspective of this theory a discrepancy between what a majority of parliament decides and the opinion of a majority of the people is not necessarily much of a problem. Members of parliament have been elected to act on behalf of the people, not to follow their will on each and every issue. However, it is disputable to what extent this view is still tenable. First, in order to serve as a legitimizing doctrine this model of representative democracy should be fully followed. However, one of the major problems with the Dutch system is that political practice is only partly in line with the model. One of the major complaints with regard of the present system of government is that the relationship between government and parliament can no longer – if it ever could- be characterized as a dualistic rather than a monistic relationship. To cut a long story short, the relationship between government and parliament is more in line with figure 11 than with figure 12, whereas the relationship between parliament and electorate is more like in figure 12. This means that the system of representative democracy cannot be legitimized by either model. Whereas in the Responsible Party Model the monistic relationship between government and the party or parties in government is legitimatized by a mandate of the majority of the electorate, in the Dutch system it is not. Coalitions are formed after the elections on the basis of a policy agreement between the participating parties and are not a coercive outcome of the elections. And because the coalition parties in parliament are bound to this policy agreement the idea of an institutional separation of powers is a matter of theory rather than of political practice. As a consequence, one of the complaints about the functioning of the Dutch parliament is that it fails in its role of scrutinizing the government and government policy. A survey among members of parliament both in 2001 and 2006 reveals that this is particularly true with regard to European issues. Close to 80 percent of them thinks that parliament fails in this respect (Andeweg and Thomassen 2007). Secondly, the idea that members of parliament should follow their own mature judgment rather than the will of the people is less evident than it used to be. The Dutch system of proportional representation is based on the idea that all groups in society should be equally represented in parliament. This idea was implemented in the early twentieth century when it was obvious what was meant with groups in society, what later became known as the pillars (zuilen) of Dutch society. Those major groups in society were well defined and each had its own ideology or *Weltanschauung.* Within that system voters would almost automatically vote for a representative of their pillar. By acting according to their own wisdom members of parliament would never be far removed from the mainstream of their electorate because they were all united behind the same ideology. Also, the willingness of people to follow their societal and political leaders was high.

However, most of this system has become history. Very few voters still consistently vote for a particular party for better or worse, only because it represents their group in society. Voters are more and more inclined to take the specific issue positions of political parties into account when deciding how to vote. As a consequence they expect political parties to take their opinions seriously. But this brings us back to the problem of the Ostrogorski paradox: a single vote can never convey an indisputable mandate on a range of issues.

Also, people are less inclined to accept the limited role assigned to them in the traditional system of representative democracy. This is a well documented international trend that is due to what often is referred to as a process of cognitive mobilization (Dalton 2004; Inglehart 1977; Klingemann and Fuchs 1995). Because of the enormous increase of the level of education and mass communication modern citizens are much better informed, self-confident and autonomous in their judgment than their parents and grand parents. They want a more direct role in decision making. In the literature it is hardly a matter of dispute anymore that as far as people are dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy it is not because they are tired of democracy, but because they want more and more direct forms of democracy. Most advanced industrial democracies are trying to cope with this development. One of the possibilities to meet this demand is to offer people the possibility to vote on a single issue in a referendum. Then it does not have to compete with other – possibly more salient – issues. The only threshold for people to make their opinion heard is whether the issue is important enough for them to cast a vote.

For more than 60 percent of Dutch citizens the issue of European integration obviously was important enough to cast their vote in the 2005 referendum. The referendum not only demonstrated a big gap between the position of a far majority of the political parties in parliament and their voters, it also offered the electorate a possibility to overrule the parties representing them. Whether this is enrichment or an undermining of representative democracy is a matter of normative judgment. In reaction to the outcome of the 2005 referendum the leaders of the major political parties at first accepted their defeat graciously. They called the referendum a feast for democracy that should be celebrated more often. However, a recent survey among members of parliament shows that according to about 75 percent of MPs the party should be over. They are against any future referenda on European treaties (Andeweg and Thomassen 2007). The argument of many of them is that a referendum is an inappropriate instrument in the case of such a complicated issue as the draft constitutional treaty. The complexity of the issue is hard to deny. However, part of the complexity of the issue can be reduced by holding a referendum *after* parliament has taken a decision, at the request of a particular number of people. The question to be decided upon

then is whether the people are willing to accept the decision of parliament or want to correct it[9]. Then at least it is totally clear where the government and political parties stand and what their arguments are[10]. Referenda can be an enrichment of representative democracy as long as they do not replace it. It is about the only instrument available to the voters to correct political parties on issues that are not related to the main dimension of contestation in politics. Such an instrument is more effective and more realistic than the call for a somewhat artificial politicization of the European issue, let alone for a reshuffling of the party system along the lines of this issue. If most political parties more or less agree on the issue, or at least are on the same side of the dividing line, and a majority of the voters of each of these parties is on the other side of it, it is a superior instrument because it forces *all* these parties to reconsider their stand on the issue. This is exactly what happened after the 2005 referendum. A totally different way of involving the people in complex decisions is the use of citizen panels or citizen assemblies. The Netherlands recently gained experience with a citizen assembly. A citizen assembly, at the request of the government, prepared an advice on the future of the electoral system. This experience justifies two conclusions. First, a citizen assembly is capable of mastering a subject as complex as the 'science' of electoral systems and their possible consequences. Secondly, it is most unlikely that such an assembly will come up with a proposal that is totally at odds with what is acceptable for a political majority. But such assemblies can increase the legitimacy of decisions at times of distrust in the political elites as presently is the case. Referenda and citizen a assemblies are totally different instruments. Assemblies can be useful at the very beginning of the process of decision making, in preparation of a decision of government and parliament. Referenda come (or at least should come in our view) at the very end of the process as a last resort for citizens to correct their representatives.

7   IN CONCLUSION

In this paper we have tried to make an assessment of the legitimacy of the European Union, in particular in the Netherlands. In order to do so we first distinguished three dimensions of legitimacy: *Identity and Citizenship, Representation and Accountability, and Performance*. On the first dimension we made a distinction between a sense of citizenship and a sense of (a European) community. If we accept the measurement of these attitudes as a valid indicator of the legitimacy of the Union, we can only conclude that legitimacy has declined, mainly due to recent enlargements. First, successive enlargements have brought in a number of countries whose population is less inclined to identify themselves as European citizens. Secondly, the acceptance of fellow Europeans as fellow citizens in terms of equal rights that normally come with citizenship is limited. Thirdly, mutual trust among the people of the European Union has strongly declined in particular because of the 2004 enlargement. In itself this might be a temporary phenomenon. When the original six members signed the treaty of Rome, their mutual trust was not much higher than what we can now observe in the mutual relationship between the people from Western Europe on the one hand and those from Central and Eastern Europe on the other hand. However, it is still to be seen to what extent this analogy is valid. We found little evidence in support of the hypothesis that membership breeds community. The lack of trust between old and new members might be due to geographical and cultural differences rather than to the length of membership. As long as the European Union does not have clear borders that people can identify with, the legitimacy of the Union in terms of the first dimension of legitimacy will continuously be jeopardized. The Netherlands, as part of the original six members, confirms the general picture. But among the people of the six founding states, the Dutch are not exceptionally Europe minded. To the contrary, the tendency among the Dutch to consider themselves as citizens of the Union is much lower than among the other five countries. This is not a new phenomenon but was already the case in the early 1990s. Also, the Dutch are more inclined to protect their labour market against workers from other EU countries.

The data available to assess the legitimacy of European institutions present somewhat paradoxical evidence. Whereas trust in European institutions in the original six member states is higher rather than lower than trust in national parliaments, people are not very satisfied with the functioning of democracy in the Union and in general less so than with the functioning of democracy in their own country. In the Netherlands trust in European institutions is high, but not as high as in the Dutch parliament. This is because trust in the national parliament is not as dramatically low as in other countries. Also, compared to the people from the other founding members the Dutch are exceptionally critical of the functioning of democracy in the European Union.

The third dimension of legitimacy we distinguished refers to *performance*. The question as to which decision-making level is most appropriate to deal with different policy problems is a central aspect of the legitimacy of the European political system. In the mid 1990s a surprisingly high percentage of the people across the European Union were inclined to entrust the European Union with the responsibility for more rather than less policy areas. Ten years later people have lost their enthusiasm for the EU as the most appropriate level for solving the most important problem they perceived. This is not due to the enlargement of the Union. There is not much of a difference in this respect between older and newer member states. The Netherlands still is among the countries that are most inclined to consider the European level as the appropriate level of government for solving the problems they consider as the most important ones. A criterion generally used as an indicator for people's perception of the performance of the Union is the extent to which they think their country has profited from the membership of the Union. Over the last twenty years on average a clear majority of the people of the original six member states from this perspective had a positive view on the European Union. In the Netherlands this judgment always was considerably higher than in the other five original member states. This, however, has changed since a couple of years. Although there is still a clear majority of people thinking that the Netherlands benefited from the membership of the Union, this majority has recently declined to the average in the original six member states.

Making an overall assessment of the attitudes of the Dutch people towards the European Union as compared to the people in the other original member states we might come to the conclusion that the attitudes of the Dutch towards the Union are relatively speaking less positive than perhaps often thought. They are more positive on the third dimension only and decreasingly so. This suggests that the traditional positive view of the Dutch towards Europe was of a strong utilitarian nature and hardly led to a sense of European identity. Utilitarian support as the only source of legitimacy is a very weak and vulnerable basis.

In our assessment of the functioning of the European system of representation as an instrument of linkage we made a distinction between the intergovernmental or national channel of representation and the supranational or European channel. We came to the conclusion that although there is not much of a European *process* of representation the outcome of that process is quite satisfactory. At the same time we argued that it is the national system of political representation with regard to European issues that is obviously failing as an instrument of linkage. This is because it is neither related to the left-right dimension, the main dimension of political contestation, nor salient enough to replace it as the main dimension of contestation. This lack of salience makes it quite unlikely that an

attempt to politicize the European issue during national elections will be successful as a strategy to gain many votes.

If one still wants to give the people a strong voice in important decisions with regard to the future of the European Union, several alternatives are available. Citizen assemblies can be useful in the early stages of the process of decision making on matters as complex as the constitutional treaty. However, they do not involve many people and cannot be decisive. A referendum could, legally or de facto. A referendum will temporarily politicize the European issue. It might increase the interest in the issue of European unification but it is an illusion to think that it will necessarily lead to more positive feelings toward Europe. As long as political elites are more positive towards Europe than the rank and file, politicising the issue can only emphasize this difference. A referendum is not an instrument of the political elite but of democracy.

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NOTES

[1]   For more information on the specifics of the 2004 surveys, see www.europeanelectionstudies.net.

[2]   Northern Ireland was excluded here because otherwise its weight compared to Britain would have been too high.

[3]   Cyprus and Malta were left out. They might be included in the group of South Western Europe, but given their size they would have a disproportionate effect on trust in these countries.

[4]   The reverse side of the proximity argument is of course that neighbouring countries often have a long history of wars. It is obvious indeed that the Irish hardly trust the British. In principle the same argument might be applied to the rest of Europe, in particular to Germany and its neighbouring countries. However, taking into account that bigger countries in general are less trusted, 60 years of peaceful cooperation in Western Europe had a very positive effect on trust. As figure 2 shows, Germans are pretty well trusted, in particular in Western Europe.
This, of course, is a normative statement. Political representation is an essentially contested concept. It can take on several meanings depending on one's normative conception of political representation. One of the classic issues of contestation refers to the independence mandate debate: should members of parliament simply implement the policy preferences of their principals, i.e.. their voters, or act *on behalf* of their principals, but according to their own judgment. A more or less similar debate on the functions of elections follows naturally from this dispute. Do elections have the function of linking the policy preferences of the people to public policy, or is the function of elections limited to the selection of the members of parliament who then serve the interests of their principals by acting on the basis of their own wisdom. This paper is not the place to contribute to this debate, but paraphrasing Hanna Pitkin's famous study, one might wonder what the democratic function of elections is when they are not a mechanism to ensure such congruence on at least the most important policy dimensions.
As we argued elsewhere (Thomassen 1990; 1994) it is a matter of dispute to what extent this model is even close to being a realistic model of political representation at the level of the national state. But the merit of the model is at least that it helps to study the role of different actors in the process of political representation in a systematic way and that each of the requirements of the model can be used as a benchmark to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular system of political representation.

[7]   One of the major challenges of the 2004 enlargement with ten new member states that went mostly unnoticed was whether the effectiveness of this indirect process of political representation would be undermined by the entry into the European parliament and its party groups of parties from these new member states with these weakly established party systems. However, the limited evidence so far shows that it hardly affected the distinctiveness and the cohesion of these groups. (Schmitt and Thomassen 2006)

[8]   Unfortunately, the two scales have different lengths. Whereas left-right positions are measured on a ten point scale, the 'European' scale is a seven point scale. However, although these differences might relatively enlarge the differences on the left-right scale, this cannot be the real explanation. In the 2004 European Elections Study positions on both dimensions were measured on the same scale. Still, this study showed the same differences.

[9]   In a formal sense this can be either a consultative or a decisive referendum.

[10]   See also the proposal of the National Convention.