

European Elections and Domestic Politics

**Lessons from the Past
and
Scenarios for the Future**

Editors

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CHAPTER 2

European Elections as Counterfactual National Elections

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European Parliament (EP) elections are not national parliamentary elections. Yet it is tempting to speculate about the consequences of EP election outcomes as if they were national parliamentary (NP) elections. Indeed, politicians and the media often discuss the outcomes of the European elections in terms that refer to the national, not the European political arena. In doing so it is commonplace to present the election outcome in terms of the composition of the national parliament had this election been a national one. Such a counterfactual representation, in which European parliamentary elections are presented as national parliamentary elections, will form the central perspective of this chapter.

There are several reasons why a counterfactual representation of EP election outcomes may be of interest to us. If voters act similarly in European and national parliamentary elections, the outcomes of European parliamentary elections may have considerable consequences for the *national* political arena. Parties that fared well in the EP elections – when compared to the preceding NP elections – may see an increase in their national political clout. A coalition partner with a particularly successful EP result may want to cash in on its European success at the national level by demanding a greater say in government – even though their *national* vote share has not changed. The consequences may vary from a change in the direction of a government's policies to a complete collapse of the coalition, and fall of the government.¹ All on the basis of European elections that were treated as if they were national elections. However, the counterfactual representation may also show us the flipside of the coin: what if voters do *not* act the same in European and national parliamentary elections? What if they would not decide to back the same party in EP and NP elections, but instead support one party in European, and another one in national parliamentary elections? As will be shown below, some voters do actually vote for different

¹ To illustrate various national consequences of the 1989 European elections: the outcome of the European Elections played a role in the eventual downfall of British Prime Minister Mrs Thatcher (Franklin & Curtice, 1996, p. 95); in Spain, electoral success in those same EP elections prompted the ruling PSOE to call early national elections (del Castillo, 1996, p. 266); while the reverse was the case in Italy, where the governing parties decided against calling early national elections following their disappointing showing in the European Elections (Mannheimer, 1996, p. 200).

parties in the different elections, even in those countries where these two elections are held on the same day. This outcome is not surprising at all. Since national and European elections are different elections for different representative bodies in different political arenas, there is no compelling need for voters to support the same party in both instances. In countries where national and European parliamentary elections are held concurrently, the actual election outcome offers us an opportunity to see to what extent party choice in European and national elections actually differs. In countries where the two elections are not held concurrently, we need to use the counterfactual approach which involves assessing how people would have voted had not European elections but national ones been on the calendar. This chapter explores the differences in election results between the 1999 EP election outcome and a NP election that would have been held on the same day (or that actually was concurrent, as happened in a few countries).

There are several leads available to us if we want to answer the puzzles set out above. Existing research into EP elections has already taught us a few things, including the notion that these elections may be viewed as second-order national elections (Reif & Schmitt, 1980), dominated mainly by *national*, not European political issues. Other scholars (van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996) have reported on previous European parliamentary elections and explored the possibilities to treat these as counterfactual national parliamentary elections. Both these strands of research will be further discussed below. In some countries however, we need not make counterfactual comparisons, since EP and NP elections were held concurrently in these countries. In Luxembourg, EP and NP elections have been held concurrently ever since the first European Parliament elections of 1979. In other countries, the concurrence of the two elections is due to happenstance – both electoral cycles ended at the same moment, as was the case in Belgium where the two elections were held concurrently as well. These coinciding elections enable us to compare turnout and voting patterns for both elections directly.² The distribution of votes for both elections in Luxembourg and Belgium is presented in Table 2.1.³

2 One could wonder whether the differences between the results of concurrent elections are caused by differences in eligibility. Although such differences do indeed exist, all available evidence suggests that they concern such small numbers of people that the differences documented in Table 2.1 and further down in this chapter cannot be attributed to them.

3 In Table 2.1, the outcome for national and European elections is presented for Belgium as a whole. The party systems of Wallonia and Flanders, the two regions that make up the Belgian federal state, differ

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Are European parliamentary elections a good indicator of the outcome of national parliamentary elections? Table 2.1 shows that in Luxembourg and Belgium, the differences in outcomes between the two elections are small. Nevertheless, in both countries the two elections do not result in identical outcomes, and in some cases the differences are substantial. Some parties – *Déi Greng* in Luxembourg, the *Parti Socialiste* and *Ecolo* in Belgium – did markedly better in the European elections than in the national elections. The reverse is true for *ADR* in Luxembourg and all of the Flemish parties, who fared better in the national elections than they did in the European elections. Clearly, the outcome of European and national elections are not identical, even if the two elections are held on the same day. In addition, minor aggregate level shifts may conceal substantial variation at the individual level in the form of vote switching or split ticket voting (see also Table 2.4, below). On the other hand, the aggregate level differences are rather small, at least in these two countries, which suggests that one can very well regard the outcome of the EP elections as a proxy for NP elections at the same moment in time — they indeed seem to be second-order *national* elections.

What then if we want to make inferences about the national political situation based on European elections in countries where no concurrent national parliamentary elections were held? In those cases we need to revert to a counterfactual comparison. The European Election Survey of 1999 makes such a comparison possible, by asking respondents what party they would have voted for, if national parliamentary elections would be held the next day. On the basis of these answers, we can get an insight into what the distribution of votes would be at the national level. Since the respondents were also asked what their voting behavior was in the EP elections, we can compare the differences and similarities in voting behavior and aggregate outcomes for the two arenas. To what degree differ European Parliament elections from national elections in the different countries? Is there any systematic pattern in the differences that occur that is comparable across countries, or are these differences purely national affairs?

fundamentally, however. In the remainder of this chapter, Flanders and Wallonia will therefore be analyzed as separate political systems.

Comparing European and National parliamentary elections

The respondents in all countries of the European Union were asked what they would have voted, were national parliamentary elections being held the next day.⁴ Respondents were asked to indicate the party they would have voted for, or that they would not participate in the elections. Table 2.2 presents, as an example, the results for Germany, first for the European Parliament elections, followed by the (hypothetical) national parliamentary elections, and the difference between the two.⁵ For illustrative purposes, the actual election results for the preceding 1998 national parliamentary elections have been included.

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Table 2.2 shows that parties fare differently in the European Parliament and in (hypothetical) national elections in Germany. This pattern is repeated in the other EU countries, the results of which are presented in the Appendix. As was the case in Luxembourg and Belgium, the German electorate distinguishes between European and national parliamentary elections, and adjusts its voting behavior accordingly, even if these are hypothetical elections. The differences must not be exaggerated: on the whole, no electoral landslides occur. A four percent-point difference between elections, however, as the Christian democratic CDU/CSU would experience, is a substantial difference. For the social democratic SPD, the difference amounts to well over two percent-points. Both parties do worse in the European elections than they would have in national parliamentary elections.

A crucial advantage of the comparison of EP and *counterfactual* NP elections is illustrated if we compare the 1999 EP result with the actual parliamentary elections in Germany of 1998. A straightforward comparison of the two outcomes suggests that the German electorate had a considerable change of heart in the period of about one year, with the CDU/CSU the clear winner and the SPD in the doldrums. But that would be comparing apples and pears, as one can imagine the SPD response would be: the German electorate may simply prefer the CDU/CSU for the European Parliament, while still supporting the SPD for the national Bundestag. In other words, different political arenas may create different political winners. The counterfactual results disprove this reasoning, however. As the counterfactual

4 In Belgium and Luxembourg the actual voting behavior was asked.

5 Note that the sample has been weighted so that the distribution of votes for the European Parliament reflects the distribution of the actual election outcome.

1999 NP vote shows, the CDU/CSU is winning in the EP elections, and it would do so in national elections as well. The electoral tide in Germany is indeed shifting away from the SPD. Regardless of the fact that the SPD would improve their vote share in NP elections, the gap between SPD and CDU/CSU would still increase from the actual 18.1 percent in the EP elections to 19.6 percent, had NP elections been held. And more importantly, the CDU/CSU would have gained an absolute majority – a feat not achieved since the mid-1950s.

Using the Pedersen index as a measure of change between the European and the national parliamentary elections, the change for Germany is 6.7 percent.⁶ . This underlines what was stated before, namely that no political landslides occur between concurrent elections for different parliaments, fought by the same set of parties. Germany is slightly below average in this respect, compared to the rest of the European Union member states, as Table 2.3 testifies.

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Table 2.3 shows that the Pedersen index for change between the European and national parliamentary vote shares varies between a low 4.2 percent in Spain to a high of 31.6 percent in Denmark. The average Pedersen index for the whole of the EU is 11.7 percent.⁷ Denmark's high score on this measure is explained by the fact that two of its political parties – the *Juni Bevaegelsen* and the *Folke Bevaegelsen* – do not compete in national elections, but only in European Parliament elections, and do so very successfully. Supporters of these two parties will have to switch to a different party in national elections, leading to a high Pedersen index.

Sources of vote share variation

6 The Pedersen index is defined as the sum of the absolute differences in vote share for all parties, divided by two.

7 The analyses presented here exclude Northern Ireland. The party system of Northern Ireland differs to such a degree from the British system that inclusion in that system would not be fruitful, while the small sample size for Northern Ireland precludes inclusion in the analyses as a separate system.

Two causes can be distinguished for the differences between EP and (counterfactual or concurrent) NP election results presented in the previous section. Voters may either vote for different parties in the two elections, or they may participate unevenly in them.

Quasi-switching

One obvious explanation for differences in party distributions between elections is that voters support different parties in each election. Over time, this change is of course – to a certain degree – common to any party landscape: parties evolve in terms of performance, policies, leaders and so on, and individual voters may change in their political experiences, outlook and opinions. Together, they almost unavoidably result in different choices of individuals in different elections, a major source of differences in election results over time. But our focus here is on comparison of simultaneous choices (one of which is of a counterfactual nature). Apparently, for whatever reasons, some voters prefer one party for the European parliament and a different one for the national parliament. This is not an uncommon feature in electoral behavior; it is comparable to what is called split-ticket voting in American elections, where voters often support a presidential candidate from one party and a congressional candidate from the other party. In this chapter, this concept of split-ticket voting will be referred to as switching, or rather as *quasi-switching*, since we are referring to hypothetical national elections for all but two countries.⁸ Part of the variation in party vote share may be caused by quasi-switching.

Table 2.3 suggests that the impact of quasi-switching is likely to be limited in most countries, if we look at electoral outcomes at the aggregate level. Shifting the focus to the level of the individual voter shows that this would actually be a rash conclusion, as Table 2.4 demonstrates.

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Table 2.4 presents the percentage of EP voters that qualify as quasi-switchers. As the table shows, in most countries this is a substantial number of voters, with the EU-average varying between 17.6 and 20.5 percent for different European election years. This means that on average no less than one out of every five voters votes for a different party in the EP elections than they would in a national parliamentary election at the same moment.

⁸ Confer for the concept of quasi-switching to Van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996.

Table 2.4 also shows that the percentage of quasi-switchers is not constant; it varies between countries, and within countries over time. Some countries, such as Denmark and Ireland, show particularly high numbers of quasi-switchers, while others, such as Greece and Portugal are consistently low in this respect. France and Spain show considerable variation in the percentage of quasi-switchers over time. This variation within and between countries may have several causes, which makes this variable by itself worthy of further exploration. The degree of quasi-switching may be a characteristic of the political culture of a country: a high degree of party loyalty in a system will depress the number of quasi-switchers, while the opposite creates the potential for high numbers of quasi-switchers. But the variation may also be influenced by characteristics of the party system. In Denmark, two of the most successful parties in the EP elections do not compete in the national parliamentary elections, forcing its following to choose a different party in the NP elections. This will, by definition, create high numbers of quasi-switchers, as mentioned above.

Turnout effects

Currently, one significant feature of European parliamentary elections is their rather poor turnout in most EU countries (see also Chapter 1). In the absence of compulsory voting, turnout levels for the 1999 elections were half, or even less than half of the level of turnout common for national parliamentary elections in many EU countries. Table 2.5 presents an overview of the EP participation rate, compared to the previous national parliamentary elections in the respective countries.⁹ In countries where compulsory voting laws are in effect (Belgium, Greece, Italy and Luxembourg), turnout is very similar in European and national parliament elections. In countries without compulsory voting, EP turnout is on average 32.3 percent lower.

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By itself, turnout variations need not influence the distribution of votes. If supporters of all parties participate in both elections in equal proportions, no variations in vote shares will occur. The point is, of course, that we cannot beforehand rule out that turnout may be

⁹ For Belgium and Luxembourg, this comparison involves the concurrent national election, not the most recent previous one.

selective, and indeed it is often suggested by politicians and commentators alike that supporters of different parties do not participate in equal proportions in both elections. Selective turnout effects may cause variation in the electoral success of parties between the two types of elections, and are therefore a second possible source for variation in party vote shares.

Of course, it is impossible to determine from aggregate numbers to what degree differences in parties' vote share in the EP and NP can be attributed to quasi-switching, or to turnout effects. The two effects may even work in different directions: a positive quasi-switching effect may be offset, partially or completely, by a negative turnout effect, and vice versa. To determine what effect worked in what direction for a particular party in a given EU country we need more than mere election outcomes.

Fortunately, the EES data is able to give us an insight into the importance of quasi-switching and turnout effects for the difference between national and European election outcomes. This is because we not only know what party each respondent (would have) voted for in the two elections, but also whether they would (or did) participate in the elections.¹⁰ By comparing the voting behavior of participants of the EP election with those who did not turn out to vote, we can determine which parties lost out because of selective turnout effects, and which parts of the electorate switched from one party in the EP elections to another party in the national elections.

Establishing quasi-switching effects and turnout effects

Table 2.6, below, presents a partial repeat of Table 2.2, above, showing how the German parties fared in the European Parliament elections, and how they would have done were a national parliamentary election held at the same time. In addition Table 2.6 presents the extent to which these differences were brought about by quasi-switching and by selective turnout. To determine which part of the vote share variation for a party can be attributed to quasi-switching or to a turnout effect, we need to know three things: choice of party in the

10 Of course, this data is not without its flaws. There is some discussion in the literature as to the validity of questions regarding electoral participation (Cf. Katosh & Traugott, 1981; see also Visscher, 1995; Smeets, 1995). Typically, respondents would rather not admit that they did not participate in the election, leading to an inflated rate of participation. In our case, the problem is not so great. The rate of participation in the EP elections in most countries of the EU is so low that most respondents appeared to have no qualms admitting they did not participate.

European elections, the choice of party in the (hypothetical) national elections for the whole of the sample, and again the choice of party in the (hypothetical) national elections, but now only for participants in the European elections.¹¹ The turnout effect is determined as the difference in NP-vote share for participants in EP elections, compared to the vote share of that party for all respondents in the sample. In other words, the popularity of the party amongst those who turned out to vote in EP elections is compared to the popularity of the party amongst the whole of the electorate. To determine quasi-switching, we compare the vote share of a party in the EP elections to the vote share of that party in the (hypothetical) national elections, for participants in the EP elections only. Both of these effects can be positive or negative, and the sum of the two equals the difference in party success in EP and national elections.

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Table 2.6 shows that the CDU/CSU combination polled over 4 percent points lower in the EP elections than it would have if a national parliamentary election would have been fought. However, this change cannot be attributed solely to voters making different choices in different types of elections, nor can it be attributed solely to the effect of selective turnout. As the negative quasi-switch effect in Table 2.6 shows, 5.9 percent of the electorate would have voted for the CDU/CSU if this were a national election, but instead opted for another party in the EP elections. Compensating this, however, is the fact that CDU/CSU voters prove to have a higher tendency to participate in the EP elections than the German electorate in general. As a consequence, there is a positive turnout effect of 1.8 percent, pushing up the CDU/CSU vote share in the European elections. The net effect is therefore a vote share that is 4.1 percent lower than it would have been in a national parliamentary election.

In overview, Table 2.6 shows us several findings regarding quasi-switching and turnout effects. The first is that most of the differences are small in magnitude. No great shifts occur – neither in total, nor in terms of the two components separately. In addition, there is little regularity to be observed in the direction of turnout and quasi-switching effects: both may occur in the same direction or in conflicting directions, and no clear patterns in positive

¹¹ On this matter, see van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996, Chapter 3.

of negative effects can be observed.¹² However, in general turnout effects tend to be substantially smaller than quasi-switching effects, a pattern that is repeated in all countries of the European Union but one – the Netherlands – as Table 2.7 shows (below).

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Table 2.7 shows that there is considerable similarity in size for the quasi-switching effect in the different countries of the European Union, as is the case for the turnout effects in the different countries.¹³ For quasi-switching, the largest value is found in Denmark. This is not surprising, considering the fact that there are a number of successful anti-EU parties active in Denmark that participate only in EU elections. As mentioned, their success is by definition a manifestation of quasi-switching: in national elections their supporters will have to choose another party. Turnout effects prove smaller than quasi-switching effects in all countries except the Netherlands, where the average turnout effect is nearly 4 times larger than the quasi-switching effect. No ready explanation that reaches beyond the level of *ad hoc* explanations is available here.¹⁴ Findings for other countries are in line with findings for previous EP elections (Cf. van der Eijk, Franklin & Mackie, 1996).

Explaining Quasi-switching and Turnout effects

The previous section showed that it is possible to distinguish between two sources of differences between outcomes of European and national parliamentary elections, namely quasi-switching and turnout effects. As Table 2.6 and the tables in the Appendix show, the magnitude of these two effects varies considerably between parties. In this section, these variations in turnout and quasi-switching effects will be investigated at the party level by

12 Correlation coefficients per country for the relations between quasi-switching and turnout effects prove significant in only 3 out of 16 cases: Italy (-.55), Finland (-.91) and Portugal (+.96). The magnitude of the correlation in especially these last two countries suggests that further investigation into this matter (especially over time) is warranted. Such lies outside of the scope of this chapter, however.

13 Separate country tables reporting quasi-switching and turnout effects per party are presented in the Appendix.

14 In the 1994 EP elections in the Netherlands, the turnout effect was larger than the quasi-switching effect too, though to a far lesser degree. In the 1989 elections however, the turnout effect was slightly smaller than the quasi-switching effect.

means of OLS-regression analysis. Our units of analysis will be the political parties participating in the European Parliament elections of 1999. In all, 111 parties are available for analysis. Can the characteristics of these parties explain why some of them encounter a positive, while others a negative turnout or quasi-switching effect? And what determines the size of these effects?

Quasi-switching

It has been argued frequently that European Parliament elections are elections that are *not* about European issues, but instead about national issues. In this respect, the term *second-order* national elections has been coined by Reif and Schmitt (1980). Such elections are dominated by the domestic political system. The elections are thus not fought on the issues that concern the body to be elected – *i.e.*, the European Parliament – but rather on issues that are of importance to the domestic political arena, such as for instance a vote in favor or against the national government.

If indeed EP elections would be dominated by national policy issues, a party's policy stance on European issues would be of no consequence for its electoral success in European elections. We will therefore analyze whether a party's perceived position regarding European integration is of influence on the degree of quasi-switching for that party. The party stance on EU-integration is measured as the interpolated median of a party's stance as perceived by the respondents of the European Election Study 1999. Low values indicate an adverse, while high values indicate a positive stance towards EU integration. Absence of a statistically significant effect for this explanatory factor would indicate that parties' enthusiasm or skepticism regarding European integration is no reason for voters to switch parties between EP and NP elections. A significant effect would put some limitations on the second-order theory. The direction of any significant effect indicates what kind of parties benefit from a quasi-switch effect: negative when Euroskeptic parties benefit from quasi-switching, positive when pro-integration parties benefit. Previous research (Oppenhuis, van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996) could not establish a statistically significant effect of this variable.

A tendency that could be established in previous research (Oppenhuis *et al.*, 1996) was the propensity of voters to vote for smaller or politically more extreme parties in European elections. The reasoning for this can again be connected to the second-order theory. If elections appear to be less consequential to voters, they may be more willing to vote for more radical, or less influential parties. Such parties may actually better reflect a voters' political preference in the national political arena, but at the same carry too little political clout or

appear too much of a risk to be supported in a first-order election. Second-order elections would then prove an excellent opportunity for these voters to support the party they actually prefer – without any of the possibly nasty consequences. This thesis will be tested through the use of three variables. Two of these variables measure the extremity of a party's stance on the aforementioned EU-integration issue and on the left-right dimension, by calculating the distance of a party's perceived median position and the midpoint (5.5) of each of the two scales. Positive effects for these variables would suggest that extreme parties are more successful in the EP elections than in a national parliamentary election at the same time. The third variable is the size of a party, measured as its vote share in the preceding national election. Smaller parties are expected to do better in EP elections than in NP elections (*i.e.*, negative relation between size of party and quasi-switching), since they will be less burdened by their limited size in EP elections than in NP elections. The last party characteristic included in the model is a party's perceived left-right position. Although of potential interest, no prior assumptions towards both the existence as well as the direction of any effect of this variable will be specified here.

Any of the effects of party characteristics mentioned in the previous paragraph may be influenced by characteristics of the election or of the political context. Several such contextual characteristics have been suggested in the literature: the state of the economy, the position of the EP election in the domestic electoral cycle, and so on. National parliamentary elections following shortly on the European Parliament elections may turn the latter into a crucial last rehearsal, of particular importance for government contenders. To test for such potential interactions, a variable indicating the position of the EP election in the domestic electoral cycle is included in the model. In the analyses, the electoral cycle is standardized to correct for differences in term length between countries, and runs from zero to one. Zero indicates that the EP elections were held 'the day after' national parliamentary elections, while '1' indicates that both elections are held concurrently.¹⁵

Table 2.8 presents the outcome of a regression analysis on quasi-switching in which the explanatory potential of the factors described above was tested. Only few of the factors yielded statistically significant coefficients, and only these were included in the model

15 The specification of the model tests for a linear effect of this variable, although a curvilinear relationship, in which more emphasis is put on the period shortly before or after a national election can be conceived of as well. Additional analyses proved that the two operationalizations produced virtually identically fitting models.

presented in Table 2.8. Variables not included in the model did not prove influential in explaining quasi-switching.¹⁶

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Table 2.8 presents a model that attempts to explain quasi-switching effects in European Parliament elections. The model is based on a regular OLS regression analysis, with political parties as the units of analysis. Robust standard errors (Huber/White/sandwich estimation, Huber 1967; White 1980) are used, because the dependent variable is related for subgroups of the sample: one party's gain in an election means other parties will have to lose.

The first variable of the model in Table 2.8 indicates that, although at times it is argued otherwise, EP elections are, at least to a certain degree, influenced by European issues. The significant and negative estimate of a party's stance on EU integration indicates that this issue is of importance to voters: parties that take a negative stance towards EU integration benefit systematically (albeit slightly) from quasi-switching in the 1999 EP elections. EP elections are thus, at least to some extent, also about European issues, or more precisely about anti-European issues.

The left-right position of parties is included in the model in two ways. The negative estimate for left-right position by itself indicates that left-wing parties fared better in the EP elections of 1999 than right-wing parties did. This estimate is, however, not statistically significant, in contrast to findings of for instance Pacek and Radcliff (2003). When controlling for left-right position, the extremity of a party's left-right position *is* of significant influence. Perhaps surprisingly in view of previous findings (cf. Oppenhuis *et al*, 1996), and in view of what second-order election theory suggests, extreme parties do *not* systematically benefit from quasi-switching, but do rather worse in these terms, as is indicated by the negative estimate (at least as far as 1999 is concerned).

The most influential factor of the model is size of party, measured here as vote share (0-100 percent) in the previous national parliamentary election. In the model it is the most

¹⁶ The estimated model presented in Table 2.8 consists of the variables presented in that table only. A number of variables (measures of the potential and unshared electorate of a party) did show a significant bivariate relationship with quasi-switching. However, none of these produced statistically significant effects in the multivariate regression models.

influential factor, and, in accordance with expectations, smaller parties perform better than larger parties.

Lastly, two factors concerning the electoral context are examined. Although the EP elections are all held at virtually the same moment – June 10 or 13, 1999 – this moment can take a different position in the domestic electoral cycle each country. In some countries, such as Finland, the EP elections followed shortly upon the national parliamentary elections, while in other countries such as Ireland they fell somewhere in the middle of the cycle. In Austria and Portugal the 1999 EP elections fell shortly before the national elections, while, as we have seen, in Belgium and Luxembourg the EP elections actually coincided with national elections. As Oppenhuis *et al* (1996) argued, EP elections held shortly before a national election may take on a role of increased importance, giving voters a last option to air their opinions without too many consequences for government power, while parties may get a last indication about their electoral position. Large parties may thus fare better late in the cycle, compared to how they would have done in EP Elections following shortly after a national election.

The influence of the electoral cycle by itself does not allow for substantive interpretation.¹⁷ It is included in the model because its interaction with size of the party is significant. This interaction term indicates whether the effect of party size on quasi-switching varies over the course of the domestic electoral cycle. The positive sign of this effect (see Table 2.8), indicates that larger parties are less hurt by quasi-switching in EP elections towards the end of the cycle, in other words, when a European election is held shortly before national elections. This interaction term therefore offsets the negative effect of party size, although it fully compensates for this negative effect only at the very end of the cycle: at 94 percent of the cycle, to be exact.¹⁸ In a standard 4 year term, this would mean that the size of a party will have a positive impact only if the EP election is held in the last trimester before the national elections. If the EP elections are held earlier in the cycle, the size of the party has a negative impact.

17 The position of the EP election in the electoral cycle is a system characteristic, and thus applies to all parties in a system equally. As quasi-switching can have a positive effect for some parties and a negative effect for other parties within a political system, a uniform system characteristic such as the electoral cycle cannot explain quasi-switching. The electoral cycle may be of influence on the *absolute* size of the quasi-switching effect, but that requires a different analytical approach from the one presented here.

18 Direct effect of party size (.240) divided by interaction between electoral cycle*party size (.256) = .9375. Therefore, if electoral cycle is .937 or larger, party size will have a positive influence.

Turnout effects

Turnout effects are actually selective turnout effects: some parties benefit, while others are being hurt by the typically lower turnout rates in European Parliament elections (see also the tables in the Appendix of this chapter). It may be that certain parties are particularly susceptible to a turnout effect because their electorate proves particularly unwilling to participate in EP elections, or because they manage poorly in mobilizing their potential voters for lack of effort, or sundry other reasons. Conversely, some parties may benefit because their electorate shows a particularly high propensity to participate. Parties that are able to mobilize their support can gain considerably in elections where turnout is relatively low.

Explanations of turnout effects should therefore be cast in terms of characteristics of parties that would be related to the stability and dedication of their support base. A series of similar regression analyses as reported above was conducted with parties' turnout effect as dependent variable. As independent and contextual variables we used the same factors as in the analyses of quasi-switching. None of these showed any statistically significant relationships, however.¹⁹ The implication is that although parties are differentially affected by selective turnout, the factors that determine the direction and the magnitude of these effects are largely idiosyncratic in nature, not captured by general party characteristics (size, government status, ideological position or extremity).

Conclusion

It was the aim of this chapter to explore the differences between parties' electoral success in European and national parliamentary elections. The outcomes of EP elections were compared to concurrent (actual and counterfactual) NP elections. The results showed that EP and NP elections are different. Parties' vote shares differ in European election from what they are or would have been in national elections at the same moment in time. Moreover, as Table 2.5 showed, substantial numbers of voters support different parties for different jobs – national or

¹⁹ Cross-national analyses of turnout effects will suffer from heteroskedasticity problems, as the differences in turnout – and hence possible turnout effects – vary substantially between countries. Various approaches can be taken to amend this problem, including the use of quasi-likelihood estimation (Papke & Wooldridge, 1996) or the inclusion of the size of the national drop in turnout as a controlling factor (signed positive or negative, in accordance with the turnout effect. Cf. van der Eijk & van Egmond, forthcoming). Both approaches were applied in separate analyses, without leading to a change in outcomes.

European. The differences in electoral success in the two kinds of elections are the sum of two different components: the effect of differential turnout on the one hand, and the –on average much larger– effect of quasi-switching on the other. When looking at parties, we found that how they are affected by differential turnout is largely inexplicable by general party characteristics. This contrasts sharply with how they are affected by quasi-switching. As the regression analysis of Table 2.8 showed, these differences can to a considerable extent be explained by characteristics of the political parties. The analysis showed that their position pro or contra further integration plays a significant role. Parties touting an anti-integration stance proved to benefit from quasi-switching in the 1999 EP elections, something which could not be established in previous EP elections. In line with expectations, smaller parties also largely benefited from this, although progressively less so towards the end of the national electoral cycle, where the relationship is reversed.

Appendix

This appendix contains country tables reporting the outcomes of the 1999 European Parliament elections. For each party in the different countries, the following figures are reported: vote share in the 1999 European Parliament elections; the counterfactual vote share, had national parliamentary elections been held instead; followed by the signed difference in percentage points between these two figures. This difference is subsequently assigned to Quasi-switching and Turnout effects, both reported in percentage points (positive effects indicate gain in European election, compared to hypothetical national elections). The country tables can be seen as a contraction of the more detailed tables that were presented for Germany in Tables 2.2 and 2.6 in the main text of this chapter.

Asterisks indicate government parties at the time of the EP elections. For Luxembourg and Belgium, actual NP vote was registered. For France and the Netherlands, ballot list agreements required that for several parties only combined figures can be presented. The party names for these parties are reported in italics.

AUSTRIA	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
SPÖ*	31.7	35.9	-4.2	-7.0	2.8
ÖVP*	30.7	24.1	6.6	5.5	1.1
FPÖ	23.6	29.2	-5.6	-0.6	-5.0
Grüne	9.1	6.5	2.6	1.5	1.1
Liberales Forum	2.6	2	0.6	0.4	0.2
Other	2.3	2.3	0.0	0.2	-0.2
Pedersen index			9.8	7.6	5.2
BELGIUM: FLANDERS	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
SP*	14.1	15.2	-1.1	-1.2	0.1
VLD	21.7	16.4	5.3	5.2	0.1
Agalev	12	12.6	-0.6	-0.7	0.1
CVP*	21.6	21	0.6	1.1	-0.5
Vlaams Blok	15.1	20.8	-5.7	-5.8	0.1
VU-ID21	12.1	8.4	3.7	3.6	0.1
Other Dutch language party	1.8	1	0.8	0.8	0.0
Pedersen index			8.9	9.2	0.5
BELGIUM: WALLONIA	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
PS*	25.6	25.4	0.2	0.9	-0.7
PRL-FDF-MCC	26.8	31.4	-4.6	-4.8	0.2
Ecolo	22.5	24.7	-2.2	-2.3	0.1
PSC*	5.7	3.4	2.3	2.1	0.2
FN	1.6	3.3	-1.7	-1.9	0.2
Other: French language party	8.1	5	3.1	3.3	-0.2
Pedersen index			7.1	7.7	0.8
BRITAIN	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
Conservative	35.7	31.9	3.8	-0.1	3.9
Labour*	28.1	45.3	-17.2	-6.2	-11.0
Liberal Democrat	12.6	15.2	-2.6	-5.5	2.9
SNP	3.3	1.9	1.4	0.9	0.5
Plaid Cymru	2.8	1	1.8	0.0	1.8
Green Party	6.2	2.5	3.7	2.9	0.8
UKIP UK INdependentParty	7	0	7.0	7.0	0.0
Uk Unionist Party	0	0.5	-0.5	-0.7	0.2
SDLP	0	0.3	-0.3	-0.3	0.0
Other	4.2	1.5	2.7	1.8	0.9
Pedersen index					
DENMARK	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
Socialdemokratiet*	16.5	24.1	-7.6	-7.8	0.2

Venstre	23.3	34.7	-11.4	-11.4	0.0
Det Konservative Folkeparti	8.6	6.2	2.4	2.5	-0.1
Socialisk Folkeparti	7.1	14.9	-7.8	-7.7	-0.1
JuniBevaegelsen	16.2	0	16.2	16.2	0.0
FolkeBevaegelsen mod EU	7.3	0	7.3	7.3	0.0
Dansk Folkeparti	5.8	6.1	-0.3	1.3	-1.6
Centrum-Demokraterne	3.5	2.2	1.3	1.4	-0.1
Det Radikale Venstre*	9	5	4.0	2.7	1.3
Enhedslisten - Dei RodGronne	0	2.2	-2.2	-2.8	0.6
Kristeligt Folkeparti	2	1.6	0.4	-0.1	0.5
Fremskridtpartiet	0.4	1.8	-1.4	-0.5	-0.9
other	0.3	1.2	-0.9	-1.0	0.1
Pedersen index			31.6	31.4	2.8
FINLAND	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
SDP*	17.8	21.4	-3.6	-4.4	0.8
Keskustas	21.2	20.5	0.7	1.3	-0.6
Kokoomus*	25.4	28.4	-3.0	-8.5	5.5
RKP*	5.4	4	1.4	0.2	1.2
Vihreät*	13.4	12.5	0.9	5.2	-4.3
Vasemmistoliito*	9.1	7.6	1.5	3.0	-1.5
Krisrilliset	1.8	2.4	-0.6	0.4	-1.0
other	6	3.2	2.8	3.0	-0.2
Pedersen index			7.3	13.0	7.6
FRANCE	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
UDF	9.3	8.6	0.7	0.8	-0.1
PC*	6.8	6.2	0.6	-0.4	1.0
Les verts*	9.7	8.5	1.2	1.5	-0.3
<i>Lutte Ourvier-LCR (Laguiller/Krivine)</i>	4.7	3.8	0.9	1.1	-0.2
Rassemblement pour la France	13	0	13.0	13.0	0.0
<i>PS-PRG-MDC (Holland/Chevenement)</i>	22.1	33.8	-11.7	-11.5	-0.2
<i>RPR-DL (Sarkozy/Madelin)*</i>	12.8	22.5	-9.7	-10.0	0.3
FN (Le Pen)	2.9	1.9	1.0	0.8	0.2
MN Megret	1.2	0	1.2	1.2	0.0
CNPT Saint Josse	4.1	1.3	2.8	3.3	-0.5
PR Leotard		0.2	-0.2	-0.2	0.0
UDC		1	-1.0	-0.4	-0.6
other	13.5	12.2	1.3	1.0	0.3
Pedersen index			22.7	22.6	1.9
GERMANY	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
CDU/CSU	48.7	52.8	-4.1	-5.9	1.8
SPD*	30.6	33.2	-2.6	0.9	-3.5
Bundis90/Grünen*	6.4	5.9	0.5	0.0	0.5
FDP	3	2	1.0	0.8	0.2
PDS	5.8	1	4.8	4.7	0.1

other	5.4	5.1	0.3	-0.6	0.9
Pedersen index			6.7	6.5	3.5
GREECE	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
PASOK*	32.9	34.7	-1.8	-1.8	0.0
New Democracy	36	42.1	-6.1	-6.3	0.2
KKE (communists)	8.7	7.3	1.4	0.8	0.6
Synaspismos	5.2	3.9	1.3	1.1	0.2
DIKKI	6.9	5.5	1.4	1.5	-0.1
other	10.3	6.4	3.9	4.7	-0.8
Pedersen index			8.0	8.1	1.0
IRELAND	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
Fianna Fail*	38.5	42.7	-4.2	-5.9	1.7
Fine Gael	24.6	24.4	0.2	-1.4	1.6
Labour	8.7	11.9	-3.2	-2.8	-0.4
Progressive Democrats*	0	2	-2.0	-2.7	0.7
Sinn Fein	6.3	8.2	-1.9	0.3	-2.2
Green Party	6.7	7	-0.3	1.0	-1.3
Democratic Left	0	0.2	-0.2	-0.3	0.1
Independent	13.1	0	13.1	13.1	0.0
other	2	3.5	-1.5	-1.4	-0.1
Pedersen index			13.3	14.5	4.1
ITALY	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
Forza Italia	25.2	26.4	-1.2	-2.1	0.9
Democratici di sinistra*	17.4	21.3	-3.9	-3.9	0.0
Alleanza nazionale	10.3	13.8	-3.5	-3.8	0.3
Lista Panella/Bonino	8.4	6.4	2.0	2.2	-0.2
I Democratici*	7.7	7.1	0.6	0.8	-0.2
Lega Nord	4.5	4.1	0.4	0.7	-0.3
Rifondazione comunista	4.3	5.3	-1.0	-1.1	0.1
PPI partito Popolare Italiane*	4.3	3.1	1.2	1.0	0.2
CCD Centro Dristiano Democratico	2.6	2.1	0.5	0.6	-0.1
SDI Scoialistici Democratici Italiani	2.1	2.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.0
CDU Cristiani Democratici Uniiti	2.1	0.9	1.2	1.1	0.1
Comunisti Italiani	2.2	1.5	0.7	0.7	0.0
Federazione dei Verdi	1.8	1.5	0.3	0.4	-0.1
UDR Unione Democratici per europa	1.6	0.9	0.7	0.8	-0.1
Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore	1	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.1
Liberali\Repubblicani	0.1	0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Rinnovamento Italiani	1.1	0.5	0.6	0.7	-0.1
Pensionati	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.0
other	2.5	1.6	0.9	1.4	-0.5
Pedersen index			9.8	11.0	1.7
LUXEMBOURG	EP Vote	Counterfactual	Difference	Quasi-	Turnout

	(%)	NP Vote (%)	(EP-NP)	switching	Effect
CSV/PCS*	31.9	30.3	1.6	1.1	0.5
DP/PD	20.8	23.8	-3.0	-3.0	0.0
LSAP/POSL*	23.1	22.2	0.9	0.9	0.0
ADR	8.6	9.8	-1.2	-1.6	0.4
Déi Greng	10.7	11.1	-0.4	0.7	-1.1
other	4.8	2.8	2.0	1.8	0.2
Pedersen index			4.6	4.6	1.1
THE NETHERLANDS	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
PvdA*	20	24.7	-4.7	0.9	-5.6
CDA	26.9	20.9	6.0	1.2	4.8
VVD*	19.8	23.3	-3.5	-0.5	-3.0
D66*	5.8	7.7	-1.9	0.0	-1.9
Groen Links	11.9	12.6	-0.7	-1.0	0.3
SP	5	4.8	0.2	-0.9	1.1
RPF, GPV, SGP	8.7	4.8	3.9	-0.3	4.2
Other	1.9	1.3	0.6	0.5	0.1
Pedersen index			10.8	2.7	10.5
PORTUGAL	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
PS*	43.1	50.2	-7.1	-4.8	-2.3
PSD	31.1	30	1.1	0.9	0.2
CDS/PP	10.3	7.6	2.7	2.2	0.5
CDU	13.8	8.8	5.0	3.1	1.9
Other	1.7	3.4	-1.7	-1.4	-0.3
Pedersen index			8.8	6.2	2.6
SPAIN	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
	(%)		(EP-NP)		
PP Partido Popular*	39.8	43.6	-3.8	-3.8	0.0
PSOE	35.3	33.2	2.1	1.0	1.1
Izquierda Unida	5.8	6	-0.2	-0.2	0.0
CiU Convergencia i Unio*	4.4	3.4	1.0	0.6	0.4
BNG Bloq nacionalista Galego	1.9	1.6	0.3	0.3	0.0
P Coalicion Nacionalista & Europa de los Pueblos	0.4	0	0.4	0.4	0.0
CE Coalicion Europea	0.4	0	0.4	0.4	0.0
Other	12	12.2	-0.2	1.2	-1.4
Pedersen index			4.2	4.0	1.5
SWEDEN	EP Vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
Vänsterpartiet	15.9	21.7	-5.8	0.6	-6.4
Socialdemokraterna*	26.1	27.1	-1.0	-3.0	2.0
Miljöpartiet	9.4	5.5	3.9	3.5	0.4

Centerpartiet	6	4.7	1.3	2.3	-1.0
Folkpartiet	13.7	5.8	7.9	5.3	2.6
Kristdemokraterna	7.7	8.4	-0.7	-0.5	-0.2
Moderaterna	20.6	26.4	-5.8	-8.4	2.6
Other	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.3	-0.1
Pedersen index			13.3	12.0	7.7

TABLES AND GRAPHS**Table 2.1: European (EP) and national (NP) parliamentary election results in Luxembourg and Belgium – distribution of valid votes**

Country	Party	EP vote (%)	NP vote (%)	Difference (EP – NP)
Luxembourg	CSV/PCS	31.9	30.2	1.7
	DP/PD	20.8	22.0	-1.2
	LSAP/POSL	23.1	24.2	-1.1
	ADR	8.6	10.5	-1.9
	Déi Greng	10.7	7.5	3.2
	other	4.8	2.8	2.0
Belgium: Flemish parties	SP	7.7	9.6	-1.9
	VLD	11.9	14.3	-2.4
	Agalev	6.6	7.0	-0.4
	CVP	12.2	14.1	-1.9
	Vlaams Blok	9.0	9.9	-0.9
	VU-ID21	6.6	5.6	-1.0
Belgium: Walloon parties	PS	11.6	10.2	1.4
	PRL-FDF-MCC	12.1	10.1	2.0
	Ecolo	10.2	7.4	2.8
	PSC	2.6	5.9	-3.3
	FN	0.7	1.5	-0.8
	Other	9.0	4.4	4.6

Table 2.2: Germany, distribution of votes in European parliamentary and (hypothetical) national parliamentary elections - 1999

	EP vote (%)	Counterfactual NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Actual 1998 NP Vote (%)
CDU/CSU	48.7	52.8	-4.1	35.1
SPD	30.6	33.2	-2.6	40.9
Bundis90/Grünen	6.4	5.9	0.5	6.7
FDP	3.0	2.0	1.0	6.2
PDS	5.8	1.0	4.8	5.1
Other	6.4	5.1	1.3	6.0
<i>Pedersen index</i>			6.7	

Table 2.3: Pedersen index: difference between EP and NP party vote share

<i>Country</i>	<i>Difference EP-NP</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Difference EP-NP</i>
Austria	9.8	Greece	8.0
Belgium: Flanders	8.9	Ireland	13.3
Belgium: Wallonia	7.1	Italy	9.8
Britain	20.5	Luxembourg	4.6
Denmark	31.6	Netherlands	10.8
Finland	7.3	Portugal	8.8
France	22.7	Spain	4.2
Germany	6.7	Sweden	13.3
<i>EU average</i>			<i>11.7</i>

Table 2.4: Quasi-switchers as percentage of all EP voters, per country 1989-1999

<i>Country</i>	1989	1994	1999	<i>Country</i>	1989	1994	1999
Austria	--	--	13.4	Greece	8.1	12.4	9.6
Belgium: Flanders	15.6	16.5	10.9	Ireland	28.7	23.8	32.3
Belgium: Wallonia	10.3	20.0	23.3	Italy	19.7	20.7	32.0
Britain	13.0	16.0	22.3	Luxembourg	15.0	14.3	15.5
Denmark	35.4	42.9	39.8	Netherlands	12.4	19.6	13.9
Finland	--	--	17.7	Portugal	9.7	12.7	7.5
France	27.2	40.8	25.4	Spain	22.2	12.5	15.5
Germany	11.8	14.2	16.9	Sweden	--	--	24.2
<i>EU average</i>							
<i>(12 countries)</i>					17.6	20.5	20.4
<i>(15 countries)</i>					--	--	20.0

Note: Data for 1989 and 1994 from van der Eijk, Franklin and Mackie, 1996, Table 17.3.
No 1989 and 1994 data available for Austria, Finland and Sweden.

Table 2.5: Turnout rates in European and most recent preceding national elections

<i>Country</i>	<i>Turnout EP</i>	<i>Turnout preceding NP</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Turnout EP</i>	<i>Turnout preceding NP</i>
Austria	49.4	86.0	Ireland	50.2	66.1
Belgium* [∞]	91.0	90.6	Italy [∞]	70.8	82.9
Britain	24.0	71.5	Luxembourg* [∞]	87.3	86.5
Denmark	50.5	86.0	Netherlands	30.0	73.2
Finland	31.4	65.3	Portugal	40.0	66.3
France	46.8	68.0	Spain	63.0	78.1
Germany	45.2	82.2	Sweden	38.8	81.4
Greece [∞]	75.3	76.4			
<i>EU average</i>				52.9	77.4
<i>EU Average (non-compulsory voting countries only)</i>				42.7	74.9

Note *: National parliamentary elections concurrent with European parliamentary elections

Note [∞]: Compulsory voting.

Table 2.6: Germany, Quasi-switching and turnout effects EP 1999 (*Positive effects indicate gain in European election, compared to counterfactual national election*)

	EP Vote (%)	NP Vote (%)	Difference (EP-NP)	Quasi-switching	Turnout Effect
CDU/CSU	48.7	52.8	-4.1	-5.9	1.8
SPD*	30.6	33.2	-2.6	0.9	-3.5
Bundis90/Grünen*	6.4	5.9	0.5	0.0	0.5
FDP	3	2	1.0	0.8	0.2
PDS	5.8	1	4.8	4.7	0.1
other	5.4	5.1	0.3	-0.6	0.9
<i>Pedersen index</i>			6.7	6.5	3.5

Table 2.7: Pedersen index: Total, Quasi-switching & Turnout effects, EU countries

	Total Difference	Quasi-switching	Turnout
Austria	9.8	7.6	5.2
Belgium: Flanders	8.9	9.2	0.5
Belgium: Wallonia	7.1	7.7	7.1
Britain	20.5	12.7	11.0
Denmark	31.6	31.4	2.8
Finland	7.3	13.0	7.6
France	22.7	22.6	1.9
Germany	6.7	6.5	3.5
Greece	8.0	8.1	1.0
Ireland	13.3	14.5	4.1
Italy	9.8	11.0	1.7
Luxembourg	4.6	4.6	1.1
Netherlands	10.8	2.7	10.5
Portugal	8.8	6.2	2.6
Spain	4.2	4.0	1.5
Sweden	13.3	12.0	7.7
<i>Average</i>	11.7	10.8	4.3

Table 2.8: Determinants of Quasi-switching (OLS regression, robust standard errors, n=111)

	B	Beta	Sig
Party stance on EU integration (adverse-favorable)	-0.836	-.327	.007
Party left-right position	-.323	-.167	.065
Extremity of party left-right position	-.968	-.300	.000
Size of party (votes share in last NP election)	-.240	-.739	.001
Electoral Cycle (0-1)	-3.074	-.231	.049
Electoral Cycle (0-1) * size of party	.256	.550	.027
Constant	10.200		.000
R-square		.34	

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