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Polarizing Without Legitimizing: The Effect of Lead Candidates' Campaigns on Perceptions of the EU Democracy

Abstract:

Has the presence of *Spitzenkandidaten*—"lead-candidates"—in the 2014 European parliamentary election mobilized citizens in support of the EU? A core goal of this innovation was to bring the EU closer to its citizens and to boost turnout. We therefore examine how the presence of leading candidates affects perceptions of the EU democracy. Contrary to what innovators had hoped for, we find that the presence of lead candidates has polarized the European public. Those who support the EU believe the EU has become more democratic as a result of the leading candidates. But those who generally view the EU skeptically oppose it even more when they are aware of the presence of pro-EU candidates.

1. Introduction

Has the presence of *Spitzenkandidaten*—“lead-candidates”—in the 2014 European parliamentary election achieved its desired goals? The main objective of this new institutions was to personify the EU and thus to make the Europe-wide polity more palatable to voters. In the long run, so the argument goes, visible candidates will convey to electorates the fact that they have a choice in the European parliamentary election, via the policy reputation of candidates and their parties. In short, hopes were pinned to the expectation that the EU becomes more relevant and democratic. Has this objective been achieved? This paper attempts to provide an answer of this question by testing three models theorizing the impact of lead candidates on voters in significantly different ways.

In order to systematically assess the influence of lead candidates in the 2014 election on the EU’s democratic profile as it is perceived by its citizens, we consider three models. The first is the “legitimization” model that captures the logic of support of the idea of lead candidates. Along with its proponents, it argues the presence of the candidates helps to remedy the EU’s democracy deficit by reducing the gap between citizens and the decision making process in the EU. This model—favored by supporters of the lead candidate model—suggests that lead candidates have a broadly positive impact on perceptions of EU democracy. We contrast this model with two perspectives derived from the research literature that arrive at decidedly different predictions. A “polarization” model stipulates that the impact of lead candidates depends on prior orientations about the EU: lead candidates have a positive impact on those citizens who are positive about the EU (because they reinforce their positive priors); and they have a negative impact if citizens dislike the EU (because they remind them about all the things that are wrong with the EU). In short, the presence of lead candidates may not just have the desirable effect of mobilizing pro-EU sentiments but may actually polarize assessments of the EU. Third, we consider a “partisan” model. In contrast to the legitimation and polarizing hypotheses, this model is based on the familiar mechanism by which partisans of a party like their candidates; those who identify

with a different party or belong to the camp of independents, do not support the candidate in question. The partisan model takes the central role of domestic parties as its starting point and suggests that the presence of a *Spitzenkandidat* of one's European party group, if recognized, improves the likelihood of a positive evaluation of EU democracy. In sum, the three models provide three predictions how lead candidates potentially affect electorates: improving the EU's democratic image (1); contributing to polarization over integration (2); and politicize the EP elections by highlighting partisan divides at the EU level (3).

Normatively, it would be important to show that the presumed effect of lead candidates indeed materializes because the EU's acceptance among publics is at a historic low (Hobolt, 2012; Roth et al., 2013). Especially the onset of the economic crisis around 2007 and the more recent transnational migration issues put enormous pressure on the EU to show that it can represent the preferences of its citizenry. Since 2007, non-elected actors, like financial markets and international economic organizations like the IMF increasingly shape public policies especially in crisis countries. Citizens in Greece, Portugal, and Spain have clearly noticed this development as they not only demonstrate against austerity policies but increasingly support new political parties that articulate this loss of sovereignty. The success of SYRIZA in Greece symbolizes this turn away from political parties which support (or merely accept) the austerity policy of the Eurozone government. Other countries may experience similar political developments as the popularity of the Italian M5S and, more recently, the Spanish Podemos is fueled by a growing disapproval of the way the EU has designed financial rescue policies. In short, current economic conditions raise the marked possibility that national and EU-wide institutions increasingly fail to articulate the interests of mass publics. A new institution like that of lead candidates makes sense if it can help boost the EU's acceptance among a skeptical publics.

On the whole, our study finds support for the polarization model but no evidence for the legitimization and partisan mechanism. Our analyses clearly show that the presence of lead candidates

has had a polarizing effect on citizens' perceptions of EU democracy based on individuals' prior sympathies, or dislike, for the EU: lead candidates bolster the support for the EU of those voters who generally support integration. But they further bolster opposition among those who generally dislike integration.

To establish these models, and test them, we first discuss the three theoretical models. This leads to three hypotheses which we test in the empirical section. The conclusion highlights the broader implications of the study.

2. Perceptions of Representation.

The central idea of the lead candidate concept is as appealing as it is simple: candidates provide voters with a chance to assign credit and blame to the *personalized* policies of the EU, and they will better understand who is in charge, who performs well, and who deserves to be punished at the ballot box. Additionally, lead candidates provides a visible and common focal point for the programmatic platforms offered by actors that is visible across nations rather than have national parties articulate EU policies. Inventors of the lead candidate concept thus hoped that competition among highly visible lead candidates would convey to citizens the notion that EU institutions care about the preferences of Europe's voters.

The institutionalization of lead candidates thus stepped right into a protracted problem the EU has faced for decades: how can a remote and new polity convey to citizens the idea that it articulates publics' preferences (Follesdal and Hix, 2006)? For much of the time, and certainly after the end of the permissive consensus (cf. Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970), the answer has been that the EU suffers from a democracy deficit—the gap between the aspirations that citizens have and the perceived performance of the system (Norris, 2014, p. 5). Research has shown that citizens believe the EU is fairly unresponsive

and that citizens think they have limited influence on EU policies (Rohrschneider and Loveless, 2010; Rohrschneider, 2002; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). Additionally, the second-order election model has shown time-and-again that there is only a fairly tenuous connection between citizens' EU policy preferences and their vote choice in European Parliament elections (Hobolt, 2012; Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Schmitt, 2005), presumably because it is difficult for citizens to connect individual preferences to the behavior of political parties within the framework of EU institutions. While EU elections may slowly turn into first-order elections (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2009), and some scholars argue that the EU is clearly democratic (Majone, 1998; Moravcsik, 2002; Zweifel, 2002), many citizens nevertheless view the EU's democratic character skeptically or outright negatively (Hobolt, 2012). Thus, regardless of how academics characterize the EU, publics are ambivalent about the EU's representational capacity.

3. Representation and lead candidates.

Against this backdrop, how may the presence of lead candidates influence citizens' evaluations of the EU's democratic performance? We present three models, starting with one that articulates the premise of supporters of the lead candidate concept.

The Legitimation Model. The core idea was to politicize and personalize the choice into the EP election campaigns by having competing Commission President candidates with alternative political agendas nominated by Euro-parties, and in turn by having the winning party group nominate their candidate as the future President of the Commission (Hix, 1998, 1997). Such a change was expected to lead to "public identification of the policy options on the EU table ... In short, there would be democratic politics in the EU for the first time" (Hix, 2008, p. 164). These hopes were also echoed by both the Parliament and Commission, which expressed the expectation that the candidates would contribute to creating a direct link between EU citizens and the future president of the Commission (European Parliament 2012; European Commission 2013). In a word, lead candidates may enhance perceptions of representation.

In addition, a general expectation was that lead candidates would increase perceptions of procedural representation by increasing the accountability of the Commission, and more generally the democratic legitimacy of EU policy-making. In other words, the EP elections would now allow voters to provide the EU executive with a genuine democratic mandate, and to subsequently reward or punish the office holders for the relative realization of this mandate. The increase in electoral accountability in EP elections would also contribute to the legitimacy (so-called input legitimacy) of the European Union (Hobolt, 2014; Schmitt et al., 2015a).

Clearly, the intent of the EU was to strengthen the EU's legitimation of abstract and remote institutions to citizens. By putting a 'face' on the competing Europarties/EP party groups, so the argument goes, lead candidates personify the programs and platforms of their respective political parties (both on national and EU levels). This is all the more so the case because the candidates of the larger parties were well-known politicians that occupied visible offices in the institutional framework of the EU (e.g., the presidency of the Eurozone in the case of Juncker and of the European Parliament in the case of Schulz). Backing up the importance of leadership cues is a significant strand in the research literature about the influence of candidates. Several studies suggest that cleavage-based partisan identities decline and that individual candidates become increasingly important in shaping the policy image of parties in national elections (Aarts et al., 2011; Amanda, 2011; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). Voters increasingly judge parties on the basis of who articulates programs effectively, rather than relying on their partisan heuristics to decide which parties to support. Consistent with this argument, one cross-national study shows that both party identities and individual entrepreneurship reinforce each other in shaping perceptions of representation in western democracies (Wagner and Weßels, 2012). When parties and candidates are perceived to agree on policies, then voters are especially positive about the effectiveness of the representation process.

There are, then, plenty of political and theoretical reasons to suggest that lead candidates help to link citizens' interests and policy preferences to the prime EU executive, the Commission. They put a face to Europarties/EP party groups. They personify programs. They may thus reduce the perceived distance between parties and voters to the European Parliament. If this is indeed the case, then we would expect that, all else being equal, voters who are aware of the lead candidates are more likely to evaluate the EU's democratic performance positively than citizens who are unaware of their role:

Hypothesis 1 (legitimization hypothesis): All else being equal, citizens who are aware of the lead candidates are more likely to evaluate the democratic performance of the EU positively than citizens who are unaware of their role.

The Polarization Model. As plausible as the reasons underlying the legitimization hypothesis are, however, there is another possibility. It is conceivable that the campaign activities of broadly EU positive lead candidates¹ *polarize* supporters *and* opponents over the EU. For the legitimization hypothesis (advocated by the EP and the Commission) assumes that lead candidates will remind voters of the virtues of the EU. But it ignores the possibility that the impact of lead candidates may be condition upon individuals' prior attitudes about integration: those who endorse European integration may become more positive when they are aware of candidates; but when they are critical about the EU, lead candidates may remind them of the EU's negative features.

The reason is this. Voters do not evaluate the EU and candidates in a vacuum. Instead, many of them hold either positive *or* negative priors about the EU, especially several years into the economic crisis which moved many voters from ambivalence about the EU outright into the camp of critics (Bernauer and Vatter, 2012; de Vries, 2013; Roth et al., 2013). Accordingly, because lead candidates are

¹ This holds at least for the candidates of the three major political groups – EPP, Socialists and Liberals, which are the ones on whom we focus in this paper. However, we could not test the recognition of the lead candidates of all five parties (we left the Greens and the Far Left out), and two outright Euro-sceptic groups did not present lead candidates to start with.

evaluated against voters' general predispositions about their views regarding the EU both supporters of the EU as well as opponents may be influenced by the presence of the lead candidates. On one hand, since the lead candidates are well-known EU-proponents who broadly support Europe's integration, proponents may indeed be encouraged to think that the EU is articulating their interests more effectively via visible politicians. On the other hand, however, opponents, who are aware of the pro-EU stance of lead candidates, may also be reminded by the perceived flaws of the EU given that the lead candidates do not offer a choice to EU-critics. In the absence of a strong Eurosceptic candidate² some might argue that any polarizing effect might be the result of the fact that Eurosceptic voters felt unrepresented in the 2014 pan-European election campaign. While this may well be the case, we also think that if there had been clear and vocal Euro-skeptic candidates, they would have sent an even stronger signal to anti-EU voters. Such a candidate would benefit from the media exposure that candidate generally get and most likely use the occasion to highlight the problems of the EU. Ultimately this would have the potential to further alienate Eurosceptic voters as the presence of more anti-EU cues would further highlight the democratic deficit of the EU and thus emphasize the polarizing effect of the candidates. In short, the presence of lead candidates, who are well-known EU supporters, likely raises the salience of pro *and* anti-EU arguments among voters, depending on their predisposition towards the EU. Thus, there is a distinct possibility that the presence of lead candidates not only generates more positive judgments about the EU's democratic performance, but also more negative judgments among those who generally oppose integration:

² Although some consider that Alexis Tsipras (Party of the European Left) is a representative of the Eurosceptic camp, empirically this is not the case. His party (i.e. Coalition of the Radical Left) is placed in the middle of the anti-pro EU scale according to 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data. Furthermore according to same data source only eight (i.e. Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, People's Movement against the EU, Left Alliance, Left Front Sinn Féin, Socialist Party, Portuguese Communist Party and Left Party) out of the 20 parties which are part of the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left have clear anti-EU stances.

Hypothesis 2 (polarization hypothesis): All else being equal, citizens who are aware of the lead candidates will evaluate the EU more positively or negatively, depending on their prior EU views.

The Partisanship Model. A third model is based on the well known partisan mechanism. As previously mentioned partisan identities have the potential to reinforce the effect of candidate evaluations in shaping perceptions of representation (Wagner and Weßels, 2012). And this is not at all surprising given that it is widely accepted that citizens tend to evaluate the political arena through a partisan lens (Bartels, 2002; Bartle and Bellucci, 2009; Campbell et al., 1960). Partisanship provides a sense of “we feeling” that is stronger than other psychological constructs and attitudes (Campbell et al., 1960; Green et al., 2002; Lazarsfeld et al., 1949) and which has a considerable influence on how citizens perceive the political world (Bartle and Bellucci, 2009; Campbell et al., 1960; Lodge and Hamill, 1986; Popa, 2015). Some might argue that party competition at the EU level is not yet fully developed given that national parties rather than genuine EU parties compete in the election, and that partisanship therefore might have only a limited role to play. Previous research has shown, however, that “partisanship structures political attitudes and behaviors even in ‘party-averse’ electoral environments” (Samuels and Zucco, 2014). This is why we would expect even in such a party-averse context that partisans are more likely to recognize the lead candidate of their European party group who is running for Commission presidency (see Appendix 3) . And this is even more so when we take into account that the three leading candidates, which are also the focus of this paper, belong to the three party groups which are most supportive of the EU – the Christian-democrats, the Social-democrats and the Liberals (Benoit and Laver, 2012; Helbling et al., 2010; Hix, 1999; Schmitt and Thomassen, 2009). Therefore we expect that the supporters of parties, which support the EU, to have a higher propensity to hold positive views about the EU’s democracy when they are aware of these candidates. This is especially the case for supporter of the two largest party groups (i.e. EPP and S&D) whose candidates – Juncker and Schulz – stood a real chance to succeed in the EP nomination for presidency of the European Commission. All in all, according

to the partisan model, the party attachments of voters and the recognition of candidates together leads to our next hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (domestic partisanship hypothesis): All else being equal, lead candidates have a stronger effect on the evaluations of the EU's democratic qualities if partisans of a member-party of their EP group are able to recognize them."

4. Data, measures and methods.

The present paper is one of the first that uses the European Election Study (EES) 2014 Voter Study (Schmitt et al., 2015b). This is a nationally representative post-election survey that was realised in each of the 28 member countries of the EU. One of the main innovations of the 2014 study entails a battery inquiring about respondents' recognition of the lead candidates (or *Spitzenkandidaten* as they often were called using the German expression) of the three major political groups at the EU level.

The perception of representation at the EU level is conceptualized by taking into account the procedural aspect of representation and measured as an additive index of three items that captures the subjective evaluation of EU's democratic performance. These three items are: whether R trusts in the institutions of the EU, whether R perceives that the European parliament takes into consideration the concerns of citizens, and whether R perceives that one's voice counts in the EU. All items are measured on a 4 point scale ranging from "totally agree" to "totally disagree", the reliability score of the index is 0.74 (for further details regarding question wording see Appendix 1).

The main instrument which we use to measure the perception of the *Spitzenkandidaten* (i.e. lead candidates) is a "name-party" recognition battery. This requires respondents to identify which EP party group or which national party supports the nomination of the three most important candidates: Jean-Claude Juncker, Martin Schulz and Guy Verhofstadt. Although the question is not put in an open-ended format, the respondents were offered four response options and thus not only the three that applied

to one of the candidates but also a fourth and false one: “Socialists & Democrat (S&D)” (identified e.g. in Germany by mentioning the SPD), “European People's Party (EPP)” (identified in Germany by the CDU/CSU), “Liberals and Allies Group (ALDE)” (identified in German by the FDP) and finally “The Greens” (identified in Germany by Die Grünen)³. The correct answer was therefore neither a trivial one nor easy to guess. In addition, in order to further discourage guessing, the “Don't know” option was also offered. All in all, the battery does not only measure the (subjective) familiarity with the *Spitzenkandidaten* but it also capture the broader knowledge about the *Spitzenkandidaten* system as in the process of learning about who the list leading candidates are and which party they represent it is inevitable for citizens to also learn about what the list leading candidates system implies for the EU. We can safely assume that those who respond correctly to these items are aware that the candidates represent electoral alternatives competing for the EP nomination as President of the European Commission. As the three items are highly correlated and constitute a reliable scale (the alpha level computed based on polychoric correlation is 0.88) we chose to build an additive index⁴.

We measure the attitude of the respondents towards the EU by using an 11 point scale indicator, ranging from 0 “European integration has gone too far” to 10 “European integration should be pushed further”. This is a trend indicator that was commonly employed in the European Election Studies from 1999 on, to measure both the position of citizens and their perception of the location of nationally relevant parties, towards the EU (e.g. Schmitt, 2010; Thomassen, 2009; van der Brug and van der Eijk, 2007).

Although it is clear that respondents only had the chance to learn about the importance of the list leading candidate, their relevance and who they are in the two-three months before the interview,

³ In countries where two or more parties were expected to join an EP group, the biggest party was mentioned. In countries where there was no party supporting one of the four EP groups, only the name of the EP group was provided.

⁴ Using a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondents recognized any of the candidates and 0 otherwise, revealed substantively identical results.

while knowledge about the EU could have been acquired over a much longer long time span, it might be argued that the effect of recognition only captures the level of political knowledge or political engagement of the respondents. Thus we control for this possible endogenous effect by including the level of political interest in and knowledge about the EU in our models⁵. Furthermore we also control for a number of factors that have been previously associated with attitudes towards the democratic performance of the EU: perceptions of the democratic performance of the respective member country, and respondents' education, age, gender, church attendance, union membership, perception of the personal economic situation, subjective social class and employment status⁶.

Finally, at the country level, we also control for the quality of governance (QoG) in a given country (measured using an additive index of the six Worldwide Governance Indicators: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption) and the wealth of a given country, since both factors were shown to impact on perceptions about representation at the EU level (Rohrschneider and Loveless, 2010; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000).

All variables were rescaled to a range between 0 and 1, thus allowing for straightforward evaluation and comparison of the strength of their effects (see online appendix for a complete description of all variables).

In order to test our hypothesis we make use of a series of multilevel regressions. We use random intercepts and random slopes for the variables measuring candidate recognition and grand mean

⁵ Further tests indicate that knowledge and recognition are indeed independent constructs. The correlation between the two is very low (see Appendix 5), and including them separately or together in models does not change the effects (see Table 2 and Appendix 6). There is also no indication of multicollinearity between the two (a Variance Inflation Factor performed on Model 2 in Table 2 shows values well below 2). Last but not least the results presented in Model 2, Table 2 show that they have opposite effects.

⁶ For a complete description of the data and all variables used in this paper see Appendix 1.

centering for aggregate level variables (Enders and Tofighi, 2007). The analysis is conducted in R, using the lme4 package version 1.1-11.⁷

5. Empirical Analysis.

Table 1 shows that the proportion of respondents, who recognized the candidates (i.e. was able to link them to the correct party). The overall recognition rates are far from being impressive. While the two front runners, i.e. Junker and Schulz, are recognized by 17% and 19%, respectively, of the respondents in our sample, only 9% of the sample was able to recognize Guy Verhofstadt. Of course there are significant country differences as the candidates were better known in their countries of origin and the countries that have the same mother tongues with the candidates.

[Table 1 around here]

We report the results of our analysis in Table 2. The Empty Model, which serves as a baseline for comparison, shows that around 13% of the variance in the subjective evaluation of EU's democratic performance is at the country level, with the remainder being located at the individual-level.

[Table 2 around here]

The results in Table 2 reveal that the unconditional effect of recognition is nearly zero. Candidate recognition by itself has little influence on citizens' evaluations of EU democracy. This finding therefore does not support our first hypothesis. Of course, this is the first time lead candidates ran as the 'face' of their party and it may well be the case that future elections will produce stronger effects.

⁷ Simultaneous analyses were conducted using STATA13 and HLM6.01 which yielded virtually identical results.

For the time being, however, substantively, this finding means that the 2014 election did not produce one of the two desired outcomes that the designers of the *Spitzenkandidaten* procedure had envisioned.⁸

Equally important, we find evidence undercutting the optimistic premise of H1 when we examine the “polarization” hypotheses (model 3). The model includes an interaction term between those who are aware of lead candidates and the general orientation of respondents about the EU. The term is statistically highly significant; and the marginal effects graph provides considerable support for the idea that lead candidates primarily *reinforce prior orientations about European integration* (Figure 1), rather than overcoming them. On the one hand, citizens who support more European integration in general evaluate the democratic performance of the EU positively when they are aware of the role of lead candidates. This may be because they agree with the policies these candidates symbolize, thus reinforcing citizens’ prior beliefs; it may also be because they are aware that the choice of the EC President is (at least to some degree) a result of a competitive electoral process in which they have a voice, which further legitimizes the EU.

It is true that these statistical effects are quite small for both those who are totally opposed to European integration and those who fully support European integration. Recognizing all the candidates leads to a change in their evaluation of the democratic performance of the EU of approximately 0.06 (equivalent to a change of quarter of standard deviation) (see Appendix 9 for a visualization of these effects). But this was the first time that the system of lead candidates was in place. In addition, the pre-election ambiguities about the final outcome of the process needs to be considered. Given that context, the fact that we find some rather small but significant effects represents evidence, however tentative, for the polarization effect we are predicting. What is more, this pattern cannot be reconciled with the

⁸ We are talking about the desired outcome of a closer democratic linkage; the other desired outcome was an improvement of electoral mobilisation at the occasion of EP elections which we found was modestly achieved (see Schmitt, Hobolt & Popa 2015).

legitimation hypothesis. One possibility is that these effects increase in future elections as citizens get more accustomed to the system and Eurosceptic parties as well field candidates for the EC presidency.

[Figure 1 around here]

[Table 3 around here]

The results presented in Table 3⁹ mostly speak to our domestic partisanship *hypothesis* (H3). Here we find that in a context where it is national rather than genuine EU parties who are competing in the electoral race, (national) party attachments are still relevant as perceptual filters. Partisans are more likely to recognize the lead candidate of their European party group (see results in Appendix 3). However, we find no evidence to support the core of our domestic partisanship hypothesis. Across all the three main party groups we do not find any statistically significant difference in EU democracy evaluations between the partisans who recognize “their” lead candidate and those who are not aware that such a candidate is competing for the presidency of the Commission. This suggests that the polarization effect we presented in table 2 is hardly driven by partisanship.

[Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 around here]¹⁰

⁹ Over the past years, the EPP has no member party in the UK; as a consequence, there cannot be any partisans of the EPP in this country. Therefore in Model 5 and Model 6 the UK was excluded from our analysis and the N of countries dropped here to 27. The same issue can be noted in the case of liberal parties (ALDE) in Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Malta. Therefore in Model 8 and Model 9 these countries were dropped from the analysis..

¹⁰ In these figures we plot the difference in the predicted evaluation of EU’s democratic performance between those who recognize a candidate and those who do not recognize him depending on their partisan affiliations.

We do find a marginally significant interaction between partisanship and recognition in the case of the S&D (Model 5). However, contrary to the domestic partisanship hypothesis, Figure 2.1 suggests that this result is not driven by S&D partisans. The statistically significant difference is found among those who are not S&D partisans.

But be that as it may, this finding generally does not add support to our partisanship hypothesis (H3). In the case of S&D partisans there is no statically significant difference between those who recognize Schulz and those who do not. The same pattern can be noted in the case on Junker (Figure 2.2) and Verhofstadt (Figure 2.3). Their candidacy for the presidency of the EC did not have an impact on evaluations of the democratic performance of the EU among the partisans of the parties supporting their candidacy.

All in all we found no evidence that the lead candidates were able to politicize the European Parliament election along the classical partisan fault lines. The only aspect that moderates the effect of recognizing the candidate is previous attitudes towards the EU. Therefore we could safely say that the presence of lead candidates did indeed manage to polarize attitudes towards the EU. Contrary to the expectation of the European Parliament and the European Commissions, this institutional innovation did not manage to legitimize the EU in the 2014 election. While we do not wish to overstate our central results given the novelty of lead candidates in EU elections, they do raise questions about the degree to which this institutions—if continued—helps to overcome scepticisms about the EU's democratic character. For now, there is no evidence that it really helps the EU; a point that should be monitored in future EU-wide elections.

6. Discussion.

Elections to the European Parliament have come a long way from the appointment of MEPs to the direct election of them since 1979. Against this historical background, our central research question was whether the introduction of lead candidates had an effect on citizens' perceptions of the performance

of representative democracy at EU level. We investigated whether those who correctly identify (and thus recognise) the lead candidates are more favourable about the performance of EU democracy than those who do not. Our main findings, in a nutshell, are the following. First, we find *tentative* support for the polarization hypothesis: the influence of candidates on EU perceptions is moderated by individuals' prior orientations about European integration. Citizens who are aware of the lead candidates and positive about the EU applaud this development and evaluate the performance of EU democracy even more positively; citizens who are generally negative about integration are even more negative when they are aware of the role of lead candidates. While we do not wish to overstate our findings given the novelty of direct candidate competition, our findings are sobering for those who hoped for a result captured by the legitimization mechanism: when viewed from the intended goals, the presence of lead candidates backfired, or at least had the unintended consequences of galvanizing those voters who are generally opposed to integration. These voters are reminded of what they dislike about the EU, and thus are more negative about the EU's democratic capacity than they would have been without the presence of *Spitzenkandidaten*. Secondly, against the high hopes of both the Commission and the Parliament regarding the capacity of the lead candidates to involve EU citizens in the investiture of the president of the European Commission through the election of the members of the European Parliament, we found that this institutional innovation fell short of this intended politicization of the EU electoral arena. As far as we can tell, partisan differences which drive the perception of electoral politics at the national level remained alien to popular evaluations of the democratic performance of the EU. While this institutional innovation unintentionally contributed to the polarisation of citizens on the EU dimension, it did not succeed in contributing to the politicisation of EU politics along partisan lines.

Overall, then our assessment about whether the procedural innovation of lead candidates helps the EU to overcome its diagnosed democratic deficit (see for many Follesdal and Hix, 2006; Hix, 2008) must remain skeptical for the time being. The polarizing tendency that we identified in the interaction of

EU support and candidate recognition is worrisome for those who support greater integration. One of the main reasons for this might be that the campaigns of the lead candidates – at least as far as we could measure it – did not articulate a credible Eurosceptical position that no doubt does also exist in the EU citizenry, and that did receive quite some electoral support in the 2014 election. But we must not forget – 2014 was just a beginning. A more complete field of lead candidates might enter in the campaign in 2019, including in addition to those political forces that ran in 2014 some prominent Eurosceptical political actors. And the effects that we do find might increase in strength when the lessons from 2014 are learned – by the candidates themselves, by the national parties that support them, and last but not least by the inter-institutional coordination between Parliament, Council and Commission. The Parliament’s motto for the 2014 election was “This time is different”. We might well expect by the time of the 2019 election that the electoral process will again be different—and display by then an increased effect of lead candidates on citizens’ electoral mobilization and on their evaluations of political representation at EU level.

Table 1: Candidate recognition rates (i.e. percent of the sample correctly identifying the candidates)

	Juncker	Schulz	Verhofstadt
Austria	43.90%	39.77%	15.80%
Belgium	31.09%	25.55	69.46
Bulgaria	13.45%	17.63%	4.63%
Croatia	11.97%	10.58%	4.08%
Cyprus	17.17%	12.08%	5.66%
Czech Republic	4.5%	5.69%	3.40%
Denmark	17.42%	11.34%	3.23%
Estonia	4.32%	5.24%	2.12%
Finland	25.18%	17.24%	11.50%
Flanders	34.40%	26.72%	77.28%
France	12.48%	16.67%	2.42%
Germany	63.65%	66.93%	8.01%
Great Britain	8.4%	2.03%	1.2%
Greece	21.84%	18.25%	1.76%
Hungary	9.15%	9.69%	6.16%
Ireland	13.41%	5.00 %	13.15%
Italy	13.20%	20.26%	8.71%
Latvia	14.69%	4.17%	2.75%
Lithuania	5.47%	7.48%	4.11%
Luxembourg	80.48%	45.91%	23.05%
Malta	34.37%	49.82%	4.23%
Netherlands	23.44%	16.00 %	24.16%
Northern Ireland	10.36%	9.17%	4.73%
Poland	5.56%	6.79%	5.15%
Portugal	12.58%	9.20%	4.94%
Romania	5.42%	11.64%	3.34%
Slovakia	6.58%	6.48%	5.11%
Slovenia	17.67%	15.84%	8.92%
Spain	10.94%	10.32%	3.35%
Sweden	21.15%	11.54%	5.16%
UK	8.87%	3.73%	2.04%
Wallonia	25.58%	23.97%	58.82%
EU mean	18.91%	16.87%	8.78%

Table 2: Explaining the subjective evaluation of EU's democratic performance

	Empty Model	Model 2: Effect of recognition (H1)	Model 3 Effect of recognition moderated by attitudes towards the EU (H2)
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Intercept	0.489*** (0.016)	0.156*** (0.011)	0.156*** (0.011)
Recognition		0.001 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.006)
Support EU integration		0.154*** (0.013)	0.153*** (0.013)
Demo performance (country)		0.545*** (0.005)	0.546*** (0.005)
EU knowledge		-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.016*** (0.004)
Interest in politics		0.00003 (0.003)	0.0001 (0.003)
Education secondary		0.012*** (0.003)	0.012*** (0.003)
Education tertiary		-0.073*** (0.007)	-0.073*** (0.007)
Age		0.018*** (0.002)	0.018*** (0.002)
Female		0.030*** (0.004)	0.030*** (0.004)
Religiosity		-0.004 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.003)
Union		0.092*** (0.004)	0.092*** (0.004)
Economic situation		0.025*** (0.004)	0.026*** (0.004)
Subjective class		0.055*** (0.008)	0.054*** (0.008)
Unemployed		-0.002 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)
QoG		0.003 (0.053)	0.002 (0.052)
GDP		-0.137* (0.065)	-0.136* (0.065)
Recognition X Support EU			0.070*** (0.014)
<i>Random effects (variance)</i>			
Intercept	0.0077	0.0020	0.0020
Recognition		0.0045	0.0005
Support EU integration		0.0043	0.0043
Residuals	.0541	0.0298	0.0297
N (individuals)	23380	23380	23380
N (country)	28	28	28
LL	889	7966	7978
AIC	-1774	-15884	-15905

standard errors in parenthesis; Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.00

Table 3: Explaining the subjective evaluation of EU's democratic performance, by partisanship

	Model 4: Schulz recognition and partisanship, SD	Model 5: Schulz recognition and partisanship, SD	Model 6: Junker recognition and partisanship, EPP	Model 7: Junker recognition and partisanship, EPP	Model 8: Verhofstad recognition and partisanship, ALDE	Model 9: full recognition and partisanship, ALDE
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Intercept	0.085*** (0.012)	0.088*** (0.013)	0.079*** (0.015)	0.082*** (0.015)	0.079*** (0.015)	0.082*** (0.015)
Recognition (party candidate)	0.003 (0.004)	-0.010 (0.007)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.028** (0.010)	-0.004 (0.006)	-0.028** (0.010)
Party ID	-0.004 (0.011)	0.001 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.005)
Support EU integration	0.156*** (0.013)	0.148*** (0.013)	0.164*** (0.015)	0.159*** (0.015)	0.164*** (0.015)	0.159*** (0.015)
Demo performance (country)	0.555*** (0.006)	0.555*** (0.006)	0.563*** (0.006)	0.563*** (0.006)	0.563*** (0.006)	0.563*** (0.006)
EU knowledge	-0.017*** (0.004)	-0.017*** (0.004)	-0.017*** (0.004)	-0.017*** (0.004)	-0.017*** (0.004)	-0.017*** (0.004)
Interest in politics	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)
Education secondary	0.012*** (0.003)	0.012*** (0.003)	0.009* (0.004)	0.009* (0.004)	0.009* (0.004)	0.009* (0.004)
Education tertiary	-0.072*** (0.007)	-0.073*** (0.007)	-0.070*** (0.008)	-0.070*** (0.008)	-0.070*** (0.008)	-0.070*** (0.008)
Age	0.019*** (0.002)	0.019*** (0.002)	0.019*** (0.003)	0.019*** (0.003)	0.019*** (0.003)	0.019*** (0.003)
Female	0.027*** (0.004)	0.027*** (0.004)	0.034*** (0.005)	0.034*** (0.005)	0.034*** (0.005)	0.034*** (0.005)
Religiosity	-0.006 (0.003)	-0.006 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)
Union	0.091*** (0.004)	0.091*** (0.004)	0.089*** (0.004)	0.089*** (0.004)	0.089*** (0.004)	0.089*** (0.004)
Economic situation	0.023*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.004)
Subjective class	0.055*** (0.008)	0.055*** (0.008)	0.052*** (0.009)	0.052*** (0.009)	0.052*** (0.009)	0.052*** (0.009)
Unemployed	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.005 (0.005)
QoG	-0.127** (0.049)	-0.124* (0.049)	-0.052 (0.065)	-0.050 (0.064)	-0.052 (0.065)	-0.050 (0.064)
GDP	0.004 (0.039)	0.002 (0.039)	-0.026 (0.053)	-0.028 (0.052)	-0.026 (0.053)	-0.028 (0.052)
Candidate visits (weighted by N of MEP)	0.182*** (0.036)	0.181*** (0.036)	-0.043 (0.037)	-0.049 (0.038)	-0.043 (0.037)	-0.049 (0.038)
Recognition X Party ID		-0.020* (0.008)		-0.005 (0.011)		-0.005 (0.011)
Recognition X Support EU		0.035*** (0.011)		0.050** (0.016)		0.050** (0.016)
<i>Random effects (variance)</i>						
Intercept	0.0015	0.0016	0.0013	0.0013	0.0017	0.0017
Support EU integration	0.0040	0.0041	0.0034	0.0034	0.0047	0.0049
Recognition	0.0002	0.0002	0.0001	0.0001	0.0003	0.0003
Party ID	0.0033	0.0032	0.0029	0.0029	0.0002	0.0002
Residuals	0.0328	0.0294	0.0289	0.0289	0.0295	0.0295
N (individuals)	21249	21249	20362	20362	18612	18612
N (country)	28	28	27	27	24	24
LL	7215	7223	7099	7104	6306	6311
AIC	-14370	-14382	-14137	-14154	-12552	-12558

standard errors in parenthesis; Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.00

Figure 1: Marginal effect of recognition depending on support for EU integration

Figure 2.1: Marginal effect of recognition Schulz depending on SD partisanship

Figure 2.2: Marginal effect of recognition Juncker depending on EPP partisanship

Figure 2.4: Marginal effect of recognition Verhofstad depending on ALDE partisanship

Appendix

1. Variable description.

Dependent variable:

Democratic performance of the EU: additive index computed as the mean of three variables: R trusts in the institutions of the EU (original question wording Qp6.2), whether R perceives that the European parliament takes into consideration the concerns of citizens (original question wording Qp6.4), and whether R perceives that one's voice counts in the EU (original question wording D72.1). The three items form a reliable scale as denoted by the Cronbach's alpha score, i.e. 0.74. Rescaled to take values between 0 (lowest evaluation) and 1 (highest evaluation).

Explanatory variables, individual component (level 1), original question available at the following link: eeshomepage.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/EB0817UKXTRA.pdf

Recognition: computed as the summation of three variables **Junker recognition**, **Schulz recognition** and **Verhofstad recognition**, rescaled to take values between 0 (did not recognize any of the candidates) and 1 (recognized all three of the candidates).

Junker recognition: original question QPP24, recoded 1 for those who correctly identify the European People's Party/(NATIONAL PARTY) as supporting Junker's nomination and 0 otherwise. 'Don't Know' answers were coded as incorrect answers as we consider that they reflect a degree of ignorance similar to the one reflected by incorrect answers (see Luskin and Bullock, 2006; Sturgis *et al.*, 2008; Hansen, 2009a.)

Schulz recognition: original question QPP24, recoded 1 for those who correctly identify the Socialist & Democrats/(NATIONAL PARTY) as supporting Junker's nomination and 0 otherwise. 'Don't Know' answers were coded as incorrect answers as we consider that they reflect a degree of ignorance similar to the one reflected by incorrect answers (see Luskin and Bullock, 2006; Sturgis *et al.*, 2008; Hansen, 2009a.)

Verhofstad recognition: original question QPP24, recoded 1 for those who correctly identify the Liberals and Allies Group/(NATIONAL PARTY) as supporting Junker's nomination and 0 otherwise. 'Don't Know' answers were coded as incorrect answers as we consider that they

reflect a degree of ignorance similar to the one reflected by incorrect answers (see Luskin and Bullock, 2006; Sturgis *et al.*, 2008; Hansen, 2009a.)

Note: in countries where two or more parties were expected to join an EP group, the biggest party was mentioned. In countries where there was no party supporting one of the four EP groups, only the name of the EP group was provided.

Partisanship: original question QP21, recode 1 for those who consider themselves close to a party supporting a specific candidate(parties belonging to the SD party group in the case of Schulz, parties belonging to the EPP party group in the case on Junker and parties belonging to the ALDE party group in the case of Verhofstad) and 0 otherwise.

Support EU integration: original question wording QPP18 order was reversed and rescaled in the analysis, the final variables takes values for 0 reflecting that the respondent considers that “European unification has already gone too far” to 1 reflecting that the respondent considers ‘European unification should be pushed further.

Demo performance (country): index computed as the mean of three variables: R trusts in the institutions of country (original question wording Qpp9.1), whether R perceives that the national parliament takes into consideration the concerns of citizens (original question wording Qpp9.2), and whether R perceives that one’s voice counts in the country (original question wording D72.2) . Rescaled to take values between 0 (lowest evaluation) and 1 (highest evaluation).

EU Knowledge: measure of political knowledge that ranges from 0 to 2, reflecting the correct True/False answers given by each respondent to. “Don’t Know” answers were coded as incorrect answers as we consider that they reflect a degree of ignorance similar to the one reflected by incorrect answers (see Luskin and Bullock, 2006; Sturgis *et al.*, 2008; Hansen, 2009a).

QPP23.1. Switzerland is a member of the EU. True/False

QPP23.2 Each Member State elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament.
True/False

Interest in politics: original wording QP6.9 Answers order was reversed and rescaled in the analysis, the final variables takes values for 0 reflecting ‘No, not at all’ to 1 reflecting ‘yes totally’.

EU membership: original question wording QP7, recoded to take 1 ‘EU membership is a good thing’ and 0 otherwise.

Married: original question D7c, recoded to 1 married and 0 otherwise.

Secondary education: original question VD11, recoded 1 for those who ended their education between the age of 16 and 19 and 0 otherwise.

Tertiary education: original question VD8, recoded 1 for those who ended their education after the age of 20 and 0 otherwise.

Age: original question VD11.

Female: original question D10, recoded to 1 'female' and 0 'men'.

Unemployed: original question C14, recoded to 1 'unemployed' and 0 'otherwise'.

Rural: original question D25, recoded to 1 'rural residence' and 0 'otherwise'.

Religious: original question D75, recoded to take values between 0 'never attends religious services' to 1 'attends religious services more than once a week'.

Union member: original question D76, recoded 1 if respondent and/or somebody else in the household is union member and 0 otherwise

The above variables were collected as part of the European Election Study (EES) 2014 Voter Study (Schmitt et al. 2015). This study continues the EES tradition of post-election surveys at the occasion of European Parliament election which started in 1989 (and actually in 1979 with an added section to the questionnaire of the "fall Eurobarometer" at the time, EB13). It is worth mentioning that for the first time in the history of EES, this study was commissioned in collaboration with the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit of the European Parliament. The EES part of the study was funded by a consortium of private foundations and benefited in addition from the generous support of TNS Opinion. The data collection was carried out by TNS Opinion in collaboration with its local partners between 30 May and 27 June 2014 (it started five days after the European Parliament elections and lasted for four weeks). The sample is representative at the country level and consists of roughly 1,100 respondents in each EU member country, the total number of interviews is 30064. All these interviews were carried out face to face by way of computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI). Excluding demographics, the survey comprises approximately 60 question units, summing up to a total of 220 items. The core of the questionnaire is similar to that of the EES 2009 Voter Study, including traditional items such as left-right and pro-anti EU self- and party-placements, a propensity to vote (PTV) battery, media use items, an open ended "most important issue" question, and so on.

Explanatory variables, macro component (level 2)

QoG: an additive index, compute as the mean the six Worldwide Governance Indicators (cites): voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness,

regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption, measured in 2013 (source: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#home>) the six indicators are highly correlated and constitute a reliable scale ($\alpha=0.95$); rescaled to takes values between 0 (minimum) and 1 (maximum).

GDP: natural logarithm of GDP per capita as reported by EUROSTAT for 2013 (source:); rescaled to takes values between 0 (minimum) and 1 (maximum).

Candidate visits: number of campaigning days a given candidate spent in a given country in the two month before the EP elections divide by the number of MEPs (as a control for population size) of the country.

2. Robustness check, measuring recognition using a dichotomous variable, i.e. recognized any of the candidates vs. did not recognized any of the candidates

	Model A1: Empty Model	Model A2: effect of GDP (H1b)	Model A3: Effect of recognition moderated by attitudes towards the EU (H2)
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Intercept	0.489*** (0.016)	0.156*** (0.011)	0.156*** (0.011)
Recognition		-0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Support EU integration		0.154*** (0.013)	0.144*** (0.013)
Demo performance (country)		0.546*** (0.005)	0.546*** (0.005)
EU knowledge		-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.015*** (0.004)
Interest in politics		0.0001 (0.003)	0.0001 (0.003)
Education secondary		0.012*** (0.003)	0.012*** (0.003)
Education tertiary		-0.073*** (0.007)	-0.073*** (0.007)
Age		0.018*** (0.002)	0.018*** (0.002)
Female		0.030*** (0.004)	0.030*** (0.004)
Religiosity		-0.004 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.003)
Union		0.093*** (0.004)	0.093*** (0.004)
Economic situation		0.025*** (0.004)	0.026*** (0.004)
Subjective class		0.054*** (0.008)	0.054*** (0.008)
Unemployed		-0.002 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)
QoG		-0.135* (0.064)	-0.140* (0.064)
GDP		-0.002 (0.052)	-0.0001 (0.051)
Recognition X Support EU			0.035*** (0.009)
<i>Random effects (variance)</i>			
Intercept	0.0077	0.0021	0.0021
Recognition		0.0001	0.0001
Support EU integration		0.0042	0.0043
Residuals	.0541	0.0298	0.0298
N (individuals)	23380	23380	23380
N (country)	28	28	28
LL	889	7965	7973
AIC	-1774	-15882	-15895

3: Explaining the effect of partisanship on recognition

	Model A4: Schulz recognition	Model A5: Junker recognition	Model A6A: Verhofstadt recognition
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Intercept	-3.798** (1.404)	-6.296*** (0.968)	-5.001** (1.608)
Party ID	0.274** (0.085)	0.162* (0.076)	0.340** (0.115)
Support EU integration	0.311*** (0.071)	0.275*** (0.068)	0.477*** (0.091)
Demo performance (country)	0.381*** (0.114)	0.373*** (0.110)	0.308* (0.148)
EU knowledge	0.856*** (0.082)	0.866*** (0.079)	0.408*** (0.102)
Political discussion	0.264*** (0.064)	0.229*** (0.064)	0.199* (0.082)
Political efficacy	-0.002 (0.110)	-0.026 (0.109)	-0.149 (0.151)
News consumption	0.251 (0.149)	0.310* (0.146)	0.240 (0.184)
Exposure to campaign	0.170** (0.052)	0.074 (0.050)	-0.072 (0.065)
Campaign involvement	1.044*** (0.119)	0.947*** (0.114)	0.946*** (0.151)
Contact by politician	0.017 (0.060)	0.043 (0.056)	0.163* (0.075)
Education secondary	0.267*** (0.059)	0.249*** (0.057)	0.245** (0.077)
Education tertiary	0.456*** (0.061)	0.530*** (0.059)	0.360*** (0.078)
Age	1.023*** (0.129)	1.166*** (0.123)	0.246 (0.163)
Female	-0.495*** (0.042)	-0.493*** (0.040)	-0.374*** (0.054)
Religiosity	-0.118 (0.074)	-0.096 (0.071)	-0.201* (0.092)
Union	-0.013 (0.054)	0.056 (0.050)	-0.057 (0.066)
Interest in politics	1.183*** (0.083)	1.206*** (0.080)	0.812*** (0.108)
Economic situation	0.250** (0.076)	0.267*** (0.073)	0.137 (0.097)
Subjective class	0.418** (0.138)	0.287* (0.131)	0.282 (0.176)
Unemployed	-0.126 (0.087)	-0.022 (0.081)	-0.066 (0.106)
QoG	-0.009 (0.005)	0.032*** (0.010)	-0.044** (0.015)
GDP	1.114*** (0.288)	0.554* (0.252)	0.504 (0.410)
Party support	-0.141 (0.081)	0.055 (0.061)	0.006 (0.104)
Visited country	1.450** (0.531)	1.707*** (0.387)	1.722** (0.594)
Population size (log)	-3.798** (1.404)	-6.296*** (0.968)	-5.001** (1.608)
Candidate nationality	0.274** (0.085)	0.162* (0.076)	0.340** (0.115)
<i>Random effects (variance)</i>			
Intercept	0.711	0.413	0.952
Party ID	0.108	0.070	0.128
N (individuals)	20992	20992	20992
N (country)	28	28	28
LL	7917	8504	7917
AIC	15889	17065	10836

standard errors in parenthesis; Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

4. Correlations between attitudes towards the EU , EU knowledge and partisanship

	anti-pro EU integration	EU knowledge	EPP partisanship	SD partisanship	ALDE partisanship
Support EU integration		-0.025**	0.070**	0.047**	0.015*
EU knowledge	-0.025**		0.016**	-0.017*	0.026**

Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01;

5. Correlations between EU knowledge and recognition

	Support EU integration (Extremity	Recognition all	Recognition any	Junker recognition	Schulz recognition	Verhofstad recognition
EU knowledge	0.128***	0.130**	0.108**	0.123**	0.109**	0.049**

Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01;

6. Robustness check: Models evaluating separately the effects of knowledge and recognition

	Model A7 Main effect of recognition, no knowledge	Model A8: Main effect of knowledge, no recognition
<i>Fixed effects</i>		
Intercept	0.144*** (0.010)	0.143*** (0.011)
Recognition	0.001 (0.006)	
EU knowledge		-0.015* (0.007)
Support EU integration	0.151*** (0.013)	0.154*** (0.013)
Demo performance (country)	0.544*** (0.005)	0.546*** (0.005)
Interest in politics	0.0002 (0.003)	-0.0003 (0.003)
Education secondary	0.012*** (0.003)	0.012*** (0.003)
Education tertiary	-0.077*** (0.007)	-0.072*** (0.007)
Age	0.019*** (0.002)	0.018*** (0.002)
Female	0.027*** (0.004)	0.030*** (0.004)
Religiosity	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.003)
Union	0.094*** (0.004)	0.093*** (0.004)
Economic situation	0.024*** (0.004)	0.025*** (0.004)
Subjective class	0.058*** (0.007)	0.055*** (0.008)
Unemployed	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)
QoG	-0.140* (0.065)	-0.140* (0.066)
GDP	0.005 (0.052)	0.020 (0.053)
Recognition X Support EU	0.144*** (0.010)	0.143*** (0.011)
<i>Random effects (variance)</i>		
Intercept	0.0020	0.0020
Recognition	0.0049	0.0041
Support EU integration	0.0030	
EU knowledge		0.0008
Residuals	0.0302	0.0298
N (individuals)	25619	23380
N (country)	28	28
LL	8404	7976
AIC	- 16762	- 15906

standard errors in parenthesis; Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

7. Robustness check: Model evaluating the Recognition X Party ID interaction separately.

	Model A9: Schulz recognition X partisanship	Model A10: Junker recognition X partisanship	Model A11: Verhofstad recognition X partisanship
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Intercept	0.084*** (0.013)	0.081*** (0.012)	0.079*** (0.014)
Recognition (party candidate)	0.008 (0.005)	-0.008* (0.004)	-0.003 (0.006)
Party ID	-0.0003 (0.011)	0.042*** (0.011)	-0.003 (0.005)
Support EU integration	0.156*** (0.013)	0.150*** (0.012)	0.165*** (0.015)
Demo performance (country)	0.556*** (0.006)	0.554*** (0.006)	0.563*** (0.006)
EU knowledge	-0.017*** (0.004)	-0.014*** (0.004)	-0.017*** (0.004)
Interest in politics	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.004)
Education secondary	0.012*** (0.003)	0.013*** (0.004)	0.009* (0.004)
Education tertiary	-0.073*** (0.007)	-0.070*** (0.007)	-0.070*** (0.008)
Age	0.019*** (0.002)	0.018*** (0.002)	0.019*** (0.003)
Female	0.029*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.004)	0.034*** (0.005)
Religiosity	-0.006 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)
Union	0.090*** (0.004)	0.088*** (0.004)	0.089*** (0.004)
Economic situation	0.023*** (0.004)	0.025*** (0.004)	0.023*** (0.004)
Subjective class	0.055*** (0.008)	0.055*** (0.008)	0.052*** (0.008)
Unemployed	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.006 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.005)
QoG	-0.096 (0.051)	-0.085 (0.056)	-0.057 (0.060)
GDP	0.010 (0.041)	-0.001 (0.045)	-0.026 (0.049)
Recognition X Party ID	-0.018* (0.008)	0.007 (0.008)	-0.005 (0.011)
<i>Random effects (variance)</i>			
Intercept	0.0018	0.0014	0.0015
Support EU integration	0.0041	0.0034	0.0047
Recognition	0.0002	0.0001	0.0003
Party ID	0.0032	0.0032	0.0002
Residuals	0.0294	0.0289	0.0295
N (individuals)	21429	20362	18612
N (country)	28	27	24
LL	7205	7093	6306
AIC	-14350	-14126	-12552

standard errors in parenthesis; Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

8. Robustness check “domestic partisanship” hypothesis: Models testing for interaction between recognition and support for Eurosceptic parties.¹¹

	Model A12: Schulz recognition X Eurosceptic partisanship	Model A13: Junker recognition X Eurosceptic partisanship	Model A14: Verhofstad recognition X Eurosceptic partisanship
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Intercept	0.080*** (0.015)	0.078*** (0.015)	0.079*** (0.015)
Recognition (party candidate)	0.008 (0.005)	-0.004 (0.004)	0.002 (0.007)
Eurosceptic Party ID	-0.040*** (0.007)	-0.040*** (0.007)	-0.041*** (0.007)
Support EU integration	0.163*** (0.015)	0.164*** (0.015)	0.164*** (0.015)
Demo performance (country)	0.560*** (0.006)	0.561*** (0.006)	0.560*** (0.006)
EU knowledge	-0.019*** (0.005)	-0.018*** (0.005)	-0.019*** (0.005)
Interest in politics	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Education secondary	0.013*** (0.004)	0.014*** (0.004)	0.013*** (0.004)
Education tertiary	-0.079*** (0.008)	-0.077*** (0.008)	-0.078*** (0.008)
Age	0.022*** (0.003)	0.021*** (0.003)	0.021*** (0.003)
Female	0.026*** (0.005)	0.026*** (0.005)	0.026*** (0.005)
Religiosity	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)
Union	0.088*** (0.005)	0.090*** (0.005)	0.088*** (0.005)
Economic situation	0.033*** (0.005)	0.034*** (0.005)	0.034*** (0.005)
Subjective class	0.047*** (0.009)	0.047*** (0.009)	0.048*** (0.009)
Unemployed	0.001 (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)	0.002 (0.005)
QoG	-0.102* (0.048)	-0.103* (0.049)	-0.111* (0.050)
GDP	0.026 (0.037)	0.035 (0.038)	0.032 (0.039)
Recognition X Eurosceptic	-0.021 (0.011)	-0.019 (0.010)	0.013 (0.014)
<i>Random effects (variance)</i>			
Intercept	0.0015	0.0015	0.0015
Support EU integration	0.0041	0.0042	0.0041
Recognition	0.0003	0.0004	0.0004
Eurosceptic Party ID	0.0004	0.0004	0.0004
Residuals	0.0292	0.0292	0.0292
N (individuals)	16,838	16,838	16,838
N (country)	21	21	21
LL	5795	5794	5793
AIC	-11530	-11527	-11523

standard errors in parenthesis; Notes: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

¹¹ Eurosceptic parties are those which have a score lower than 3 on the EU_POSITION variable (measured from a scale ranging from 0 to 7) in the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (two parties having a score of 3: Solidarna Polska and Alternative Democratic Reform Party, Luxembourg where also considered Eurosceptic) (Bakker et al., 2015). Only countries that have a Eurosceptic parties were included in the analysis.

9. Predicted values of recognition depending on support for EU (based on Model 3, Table2)

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