

Voter Turnout in the 2009 European Elections: Media Coverage and Media Exposure as Explanatory Factors

Abstract

This study examines the impact of European Union (EU) news coverage and of media exposure on voter turnout in the 2009 European Parliament elections in the 27 EU member states. Using multilevel modeling, it analyses media content data and voter survey data from the PIREDEU project and builds the hypotheses on the existing literature on media coverage, media exposure, voter turnout, and the second-order elections theory. The study matches data on the visibility of EU news in countries' media outlets with voters' usage of these outlets. This allows for examination of the effects of exposure to individual outlets on voters participation in the European elections. The study argues that people exposed to media in which the EU news coverage is highly visible are more likely to vote in the European election. The study looks into the differences between established and post-Communist EU member states. The findings of the study offer a comparative perspective on voter turnout in the European elections which is lower than in national elections and is much lower in the post-Communist member states than in the established member states. Such low voter turnout may signify voters' lack of interest in the EU and low level of their knowledge about the EU. The results further indicate the lack of EU's external communication and a further deepening of the democratic deficit in the EU.

Marketa Bilka

Sabanci University, Istanbul

marketa@sabanciuniv.edu

Paper prepared for presentation at the "Advancing Electoral Research - ELECDEM closing conference". EUI, Florence, Italy. 28 - 30 June 2012.

INTRODUCTION

Media play a very important role in the democratic political process and especially during election campaigns. As Esser and D'Angelo (2006) stated, "election campaigns are a staple of modern democracies" and receive much attention from the media (44). However, if campaign is not salient, such as in the case of European Parliament (EP) elections, then the media coverage is equally low and often leaves voters uninformed about the particular election or about politics in general. The consistent availability of information is necessary for a quality decision making for both the public and policy makers, for the public to vote for those who really represent their views and beliefs, and for policy makers to respond to people's needs (Norris 2004). However, it is only politicians' and political scientists' wishful thinking that citizens of the European Union (EU) have the ability and desire to learn about the EU in order to be able to make an informed and rational choice when electing their country's representatives to the EP. The turnout figures show that Europeans do not take advantage of their unique opportunity to participate in the EU's democratic process of decision making. The voter turnout at European election has been decreasing since the first direct election in 1979. The average turnout then for nine member states was 61.99 percent while in 2009 it dropped to 43 percent among 27 states (European Parliament 2009). Despite the fact that the EP has gained more power and responsibilities since 1979 and the EU itself has enlarged and become a part of many people's daily lives, the EU citizens are unaware of these changes and do not seem to be concerned about them.

Turnout varies greatly among the EU member states; therefore, there is a need to find the factor that determines such varying turnout in European elections. Some studies have found that although the act of voting is done by individuals, individual characteristics do not have as strong explanatory power as systemic and contextual factors, such as the country-level characteristics (van der Brug and Franklin 2005). This paper provides evidence that some individual-level characteristics, such as exposure to media during the election campaign, matter in determining the turnout.

In the Western countries, country-level variables, such as compulsory voting, time until next national election, Sunday voting, and holding initial elections explain 80 percent of between-countries variation in turnout in the European elections (Franklin 2006). Such analysis, however, is not fitted well to the post-Communist countries because these variables mostly do not change within this group of countries. The time until next national election differs among the countries, but studies have shown that the position of the European election

in the national election cycle does not affect voting behavior in the post-Communist member states (Schmitt 2005; Franklin and Wessels 2010). This paper searches for additional variables that explain the turnout in not only the post-Communist member states but in the whole EU by utilizing media exposure and media content as independent variables.

This paper goes one step further from Franklin and Wessels (2010) who “unwrapped” a “black box” of post-Communist countries which “were thought to be inexplicably low turnout countries” to find two equally inscrutable “black boxes of low mobilization and lack of habitual voting” (Franklin and Wessels 2010: 17). By utilizing media content and voters’ exposure to it, this paper unwraps the black box of low mobilization. Media content and voters’ exposure to this content serve as indicators of the strength and intensity of the election campaign.

Voting is the central element of democratic political systems. The EU is a democratic entity, so a high turnout in European elections is a prerequisite for a well-functioning democracy in the EU (de Vreese et al. 2006). The high visibility of news about the EU in the media is thus desirable because media are the most important source of information for the public, especially about remote issues such as the EU elections (de Vreese et al. 2006; Mughan and Gunther 2000). Considering it from the rationalist perspective, voting is an act with low benefits and high costs. Especially in the European elections, the benefits are barely present. To boost the participation rate, the benefits need to be increased and/or the costs decreased. Having easier access to information, such as from media, can lower costs associated with voting. Higher campaign coverage in national media could thus increase turnout as it would decrease the cost of voting by providing information to the citizens. More politically informed citizens are more likely to be interested in the matters of politics and are then more likely to vote. Low turnout is undesirable for any democratic entity as it signifies distorting patterns of representation and decreasing legitimacy of democratic institutions because those who do not vote are usually the less well-off citizens who are subsequently underrepresented in the EP (in the case of European elections) (Lassen 2005; Mattila 2003: 449-450).

Despite the notion that the turnout in the European elections has declined greatly over the years, it has actually decreased only slightly among the established member states. It is the new member states from the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that brought in the trend of very low turnout in the 2004 European election which is in contradiction to the “first-election boost” theory (see Franklin 2006; Mattila 2003). The average turnout in the national elections is somewhat similar in both these groups (75.2% in the established members, 69%

in the new members in the last national elections), but the difference in the average turnout in the European elections is larger: 52.8% in the old members and 40.3% in the new member states (Rose 2004: 4). This is a division strictly between old and new members. If we divide the countries according to "established democracies" and "post-Communist countries" (i.e. move Malta and Cyprus from the new member states group to the old members), we get an even more striking difference: 55.6% in the established members and 31.1% in post-Communist countries in 2004, 54.35% and 32.49% in 2009.

This study presents a new method of analyzing media effects. The majority of previous studies examining media effects use aggregate level data of media content and are not able to control exactly what media content individual voters are exposed to. Thanks to the uniqueness of the data sets¹ of the 2009 European Election Studies (EES) of the PIREDEU² project, this paper utilizes individual-level data of media exposure and matches them to the media content that the voters were actually exposed to. This way, precise individual-level measures of voters' exposure to specific media content were created. This method also helps to avoid the persisting chicken-egg problem of media effects research: whether people read newspapers, for example, because they are interested in politics and are already likely to vote, or if reading the newspapers makes them interested in politics and more likely to vote (see, for example, Newton 1999). This paper utilizes a measure of media content that respondents were exposed to, which is an independent measure because the respondents had no control of how much news about the EU the media publish, but they simply followed the news. We can then measure if being exposed to this content made them more politically aware, or, as in this paper, more likely to vote, than if they were not exposed to it.

This paper examines media effects on voter participation in the 27 EU member states and is concerned with the variations between the established and the post-Communist EU member states. Despite the persisting idea that the post-Communist countries are different simply because they are post-Communist, the data analysis here reveals that these countries are not in fact so different from the established EU member states, and the persisting differences are due to specific variables (the impact of campaign and mobilization in this case) rather than due to being 'post-Communist'. The next section examines the existing literature about voter turnout in national and European elections, media and campaign effects, and the characteristics of the CEE countries that relate to voting behavior and media effects.

¹ The data sets were specifically designed to allow them being combined with one another and their characteristics will be discussed in the methods section.

² Providing an Infrastructure for Research on Electoral Democracy in the European Union (www.piredeu.eu).

Then, the data and methods used in this paper are presented, followed by the results of data analysis.

TURNOUT IN NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

There have been many studies on what factors affect voter turnout in national elections, and these studies usually agree that the most important determinants are education, level of political information, and country specific characteristics, such as those describing the political, party and electoral systems (Lassen 2005; Mattila 2003). Blais (2006) offers an excellent literature review of the various factors affecting turnout. Turnout in European elections is often examined using the same explanatory factors as turnout in national elections, but there are some additional variables that need to be considered. It has been agreed that the turnout in European elections is lower than in national or local elections and that it varies between countries. It has also been constantly decreasing since the first European election. Whether one casts a vote or not depends on a great number of factors which can be divided according to the level of explanation: systemic and individual. System-level indicators include institutional and social context, such as type of electoral system, compulsory voting, Sunday voting, linkages between parties and citizen groups, the number of choices voters have, the existence of concurrent national election, and the position of European election in electoral cycle. The individual level variables are age, education, income, gender, group membership, knowledge about the EU, the support for the EU, and political interest (Franklin et al. 1996; Marsh and Franklin 1996; Mattila 2003).

Apart from the traditional variables explaining turnout, it is necessary to also consider the specific characteristics of European elections. Reif and Schmitt (1980) called European elections the “second order national election” because they play no role in deciding who rules the country and because there is “less at stake” than in national elections. Yet, at the same time, often the same candidates and parties compete in both first and second order elections and they both are often about the same national issues (Franklin and van der Eijk 1996; Franklin 2006; Schmitt 1980). Of the following three characteristics of the second order election theory, the first one forms the basis for this paper: turnout in second order elections is lower than in first order elections, major and government parties do poorly, and small parties do better than in the preceding national elections (Marsh and Franklin 1996: 11). Furthermore, despite the situation changing since the first European election and voters knowing more about the EU today, they still have little knowledge about the EU politics compared to their national politics, and they often see the EU affairs as irrelevant to their

everyday lives. Voters also rarely have preferences for EU policies because they believe that they do not affect them, which makes them less likely to vote in the European election (Mattila 2003). This paper searches for additional explanations of why few European citizens vote in the elections to the EP.

MEDIA EFFECTS

The impact of media exposure on voter participation has been studied and discussed extensively. Many have agreed that although media are such an important source of information, they are often rightly blamed for the lack of EU news (Semetko et al. 2000; Banducci 2005; de Vreese 2007; Toka 2007). The low media coverage may as well be a consequence of the lack of EU's external communication, referred to as the communication deficit, that is related to the widely discussed democratic deficit (Peter and de Vreese 2004). It is not likely that if there actually were a large-scale political discussion about the EU, the media would not cover it. The studies about EU news coverage agree that the coverage of EU issues in the news is generally very low and only peaks around important events, such as European elections, the introduction of Euro or referenda about EU issues (de Vreese et al. 2006; Peter and de Vreese 2004: 5; Semetko et al. 2000). The possible effects of media on participation are usually discussed along with the content of the news and the tone of the news, measured by whether they portray the EU in a negative or a positive tone³. In his analysis of information effects on voting behavior in European elections, Toka (2007) suggested an explanation for the low turnout in European elections: parties and candidates do not campaign enough; therefore, media do not cover the elections enough, and, consequently, citizens do not have enough information and do not vote (see also Schmitt 1980; Banducci 2005).

Media are one of the most common channels of communication between parties and voters as they allow parties to reach a wide audience, including less partisan voters (Norris 2006: 6). When examining the effects of media coverage of election campaigns on voter behavior, both context of media (content, media system) and media use (patterns of exposure of individuals to media) need to be considered. Two main theories are discussed concerning the possible influence of media on turnout: the videomalaise theory, claiming that media drive voters away from voting by covering politics unfavorably and creating distrust in and cynicism toward not only media outlets themselves but also politics and political elites; and

³ Examining the effects of different tone of news are beyond the scope of this study; therefore, I concentrate only on the visibility/amount of EU news in the media.

cognitive mobilization, suggesting that the information in media makes people more likely to vote (Baek 2009; de Vreese and Semetko 2002; Newton 1999; Norris 2006). My analysis shows that the direction of media effects depends on the actual content of the media (here, the content refers to the visibility of the news about the EU). The data analysis here shows that people exposed to media outlets with more news about the EU are more likely to vote.

Voting is an act that rational actors undergo if they evaluate it as having more benefits than costs. Voting in European elections has extremely low benefits for a voter; therefore, the costs need to be lowered in order for the voters to come to the polls. Media can reduce costs of voting, thus increasing turnout by providing information about the election and candidates. Numerous studies based mainly in the USA have found that exposure to newspapers and television affects (increases) turnout, increases voters' level of political knowledge by providing information, and is also likely to alter voters' opinions and preferences or reinforce their preexisting preferences (Della Vigna and Kaplan 2006; Gerber, Karlan, and Bergan 2006; Goldstein and Freedman 2002; Iyengar and Simon 2000). This paper adds these arguments together by examining how content of the media – by providing more news about the EU – provides more information about the EU and eventually boosts turnout. Additionally, political knowledge and interest also play a role in whether people are exposed to the media and how they are influenced by the media's message (McGuire 1968; Zaller 1992). Therefore, it is necessary to include variables measuring these traits in one's analysis of media effects.

When it comes to vote choice, media are generally believed to have minimal effects regarding voting behavior, but there are several roles they can fulfill. They can strengthen one's preferences (reinforcement), point out salient issues (agenda-setting), shape parties' images and voting preferences (persuasion), and urge people to go vote or to vote for a specific party (mobilization) (Norris 2006). To predict the correct effects, the content of the media need to be considered along with exposure to the media, as it is done in this paper.

Despite the European election not being a first-order election and not being preceded by a well-visible campaign, political scientists often study the campaign effects on voting in the European elections because of the availability of appropriate and well-designed data. It is the case for this paper as well. When examining the media campaign effects in the European elections, three aspects of media coverage have been found to influence public perception of the EU: visibility of EU news (the amount of news about the EU and EU-related issues among other political and economic news), the European nature of the news (whether the EU news actually talk about the EU or about national issues that are being related to the EU), and

the tone (how the news evaluate the EU and its institutions) (de Vreese et al. 2006). Higher intensity of a campaign and higher visibility of news about European elections could also increase turnout as voters would perceive elections as of greater importance (Banducci and Semetko 2003; Banducci 2005). However, the European election campaigns and their media coverage are rarely as prominent as the campaign for national elections, keeping the turnout low and unaffected. This paper considers the effects of the visibility of the EU news in the context of 27 EU countries during the campaign of the 2009 European Parliament elections and assumes that higher visibility of the news about the EU increases voter participation.

POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

Many studies about the EU distinguish between the old and the new EU member states, but the proper distinction should be, and sometimes is, made between the established and post-Communist democracies, i.e. shifting Malta and Cyprus into the first group. The voting context in post-Communist countries can be described as “limited electoral experiences and underdeveloped norms of electoral participation” that lead to lower turnout than in the West (Schmitt 2005: 9). Low turnout in Poland as well many other CEE countries can be explained by the lack of tradition of voting. "Poles are not particularly keen on using their vote in any type of elections, as shown by the statistics of the last 20 years of independent statehood" (Gagatek et al. 2009: 141). This hypothesis is supported by the data used in this paper which show that there is significantly less habitual voters in the post-Communist countries than in the established EU members. On the other, the lack of habitual voters does not keep voter turnout low in national elections. As mentioned earlier, it is well comparable to the turnout in national elections in Western countries. This would suggest that it is the context of the EU, little election campaign and the lack of public discussion about the EU preventing citizens in CEE from voting in the European elections.

The voting behavior of CEE citizens in the European elections has challenged previously well-supported “first-election boost” theory. This theory claims that turnout in European elections is likely to increase when the election takes places for the first time because of the initial enthusiasm about EU membership (Franklin 2006; Mattila 2003). This hypothesis is well supported by evidence from the established EU member states, but it does not hold for the new member states: in 2004, turnout in the new members was lower than in the old ones, and in 2009, four of the new members had higher turnout than in 2004. Some suggest that in 2004, voters in the new member states suffered from “election fatigue” as only a year earlier many of them voted in referenda on EU accession and many also had general or

presidential elections. For many voters and political elites in the post-Communist countries, the EU accession was an issue of the highest priority, and once that was achieved, the voters did not find a strong enough reason to go to the polls in European elections, and the elites did not bother to put much effort into creating a salient campaign that would mobilize the voters (Franklin 2007: 54; Lodge 2005). Lack of public debate about the EU and the elections was typical in the CEE countries before the 2009 European elections. And, if there actually was any public debate, it was rather negative, often describing the Members of the European Parliament as making lots of money for very little work. All this discourages voters from going to the polls.

There are numerous reasons for why the turnout in European elections in the CEE countries is so low. For example, the EU is often perceived as too far from people's daily lives⁴ thus the election itself or the little-visible campaign are not able to gain much interest from voters (Batory 2005). Also, many CEE countries have not completely consolidated their democracies, thus they have volatile party systems and volatile voters as their citizens do not have developed party ID, and their governments often go through crises and corruption scandals. Some of them, including the Czech Republic, Poland and Latvia, went through such time during their first European election, which may have prevented many voters to cast their votes (Guerra 2010; Rovna 2005a; Schmitt 2005; Szczerbiak 2005). Additionally, small countries such as Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia have only a few representatives in the EP which make them see the EP and thus the European elections as irrelevant and not worth leaving their home to go vote (Brinar: 2005).

Furthermore, the political environment in CEE countries is still somewhat under the influence of their Communist past which is reflected in voters' distrust in politics and politicians, a trend that originated with the corruption and bribery scandals during the transformation and has projected into the perception of EU politics as well (Guerra 2010, Schmitt 2005). Nevertheless, the trust in EU institutions is higher than trust in domestic institutions in many CEE countries because "the EU accession was perceived as a chance to 'substitute', or at least control, those domestic authorities that do not work properly" (Karnikova 2009: 66).

Distrust in media and the belief that they are influenced by the government, opposition parties, or political elites are widely spread among citizens of the post-Communist countries (Guerra 2010; Schmitt 2005). Because of the distrust, media have lower potential to

⁴ This was the context around the 2009 European elections. The situation is different today when the EU and its economic crisis is one of the main topics of political discussions on many EU member states.

affect turnout by covering the European election campaigns (Guerra 2010). This paper, however, bases its arguments on the assumption that when people are exposed to media with intensive information flow and, in this case, a high amount of news about the EU, they are likely to be affected by the messages even if they do not trust the media.

The explanation above proves that the post-Communist countries of CEE have different characteristics leading to different voting behavior than the countries in the Western Europe. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between these two groups of countries when looking for a common factor affecting voting behavior: the media. This paper thus compares the effects of media exposure these groups of countries. It pulls together existing arguments and evidence and examines whether the content of media and voters' exposure to the media affected voter participation rate in the 2009 European elections. The paper "unpacks" the low mobilization "black box" introduced by Franklin and Wessels (2010). It uses empirical evidence to support the following research questions: After controlling for contextual and individual level variables, to what extent do media (content and exposure) explain voter participation in the 2009 European Parliament elections? How does the strength of the effects differ between the established EU member states and the post-Communist countries? I expect to confirm a hypothesis that higher visibility of EU news in media increase voter participation. Furthermore, I expect to find only small differences in the strength of the effects of media content and exposure in the post-Communist countries when compared to the established EU members.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

To investigate the hypotheses stated above, this study uses voter survey data for the 27 EU countries⁵ from the 2009 European Election Study (EES 2009; van Egmond et al. 2009) and media content analysis data from the Media Study (Schuck et al. 2010), both part of PIREDEU. The dependent variable is a dummy variable indicating whether a respondent voted in the 2009 EP election or not⁶.

⁵ 28 country contexts are examined here as Belgium is taken as two contexts: Wallonia and Flanders.

⁶ Every voter survey faces the problem of respondents' over reporting of turnout. This problem has been widely discussed (see, for example, Cassel 2003, Karp and Brockington 2005, Franklin and Wessels 2010). To avoid false estimation of coefficient and standard errors, I weighted the self-reported turnout by the actual country's turnout. When used in analysis, however, using both the weighted and self-reported turnout yielded very similar results (as also in, for example, Franklin and Hobolt 2011). Therefore, the tables presented in this paper were carried out using non-weighted turnout.

The Media Study analyses content of three newspapers and two evening news on television channels in each country⁷ three weeks before the European elections. In total, 52,009 news stories were coded. The list of outlets can be found in Schuck et al. (2010). The Voter Study was carried out during four weeks after the European elections in June 2009. It consists of independently-drawn samples of about 1,000 respondents in each of the 27 EU member states. These two datasets are designed to be matched. The voter survey contains questions that ask respondents how many days in a typical week they are exposed to a particular news outlet (for example, *The Sun* in the UK). The media dataset then contains information about the content of the same outlet.

Numerous country-level variables that are traditionally used in turnout studies are applied in my model: compulsory voting, time until the next national election, year of EU accession, and a post-Communist dummy. Additionally, the aggregated country-level measure of the amount of EU news is also used in the data analysis in this paper⁸.

The individual level variables constitute of the control variables and the media variables of interest. Habitual voting, party ID, education (age when respondent finished full-time education and a still studying dummy), age, and gender are used as control variables. Furthermore, the data analysis also examines variables indicating respondent's interest in politics, evaluation of the goodness of EU membership, and the level of satisfaction with democracy in respondent's country. The main interest of this paper is media and the election campaigns in the media; therefore, variables indicating respondent's interest in the election campaigns and actual involvement in the campaign are also used⁹.

The independent variables of interest are made up of media content and media exposure data. Using the media data, I created variables describing the amount of EU news for each media outlet in each country¹⁰. These media content variables were matched with media exposure data from the voter surveys. Respondent's exposure to individual outlets was originally measured on a scale from zero to seven (days), and it was recoded to values between zero and one to be used in this paper. The creation of the media variables went as follows (as suggested by Banducci and Xezonakis 2010): for example, if a UK voter A

⁷ There are three newspapers in each country and two television channels in most countries except for Germany (four television channels), Slovenia and Spain (three television channels) and Luxemburg (one television channel). For the analysis in this paper I used two television channels for all countries (except for Luxemburg that has only one) because the additional channels in the three countries did not add up statistically significant explanatory power to the analysis.

⁸ The average for the three newspapers and two television channels in each country examined in the content analysis of the Media Study.

⁹ See Appendix 2 for detailed description of these variables.

¹⁰ See Appendix 1 for detailed description of the questions and variables used.

reported reading *The Sun* four times per week and *The Sun* contained 14 percent of EU news out of its total news coverage, the weighted exposure of voter A to *The Sun* concerning visibility of EU news was calculated as $0.4 \times 14 = 5.6$. This was then repeated for every voter and every media outlet (in the corresponding country). As the score gets higher, I expect to find stronger effect on the respondent's likelihood to vote.

I am not interested in the effects of individual media outlets, but in the overall effect of all media a voter is exposed to with relation to the visibility of EU news in these media. Therefore, in the analysis I use the average of respondent's weighted exposure to all media outlets¹¹. I used the averages of the individual exposure and content because it gives an idea of what people were really exposed to. Many respondents were exposed to more than only one newspaper and one television, thus the impact of the different media outlets is very likely to mix given the varying content of the media¹².

To explain the variation in participation in the European elections within and across the EU countries, this paper utilizes multi-level random-intercept logit analysis with fixed effects because neglecting the hierarchical structure of the EES data could lead to an underestimation of standard errors and spurious inferences (Hox 2010; Rabe-Hesleth and Skrondal 2008; Steenbergen and Jones 2002).

FINDINGS

Figure 1 shows the average voter turnout and the amount of EU news in countries' media outlets for two groups of countries: the established/Western member states and the post-Communist CEE member states. For both indicators, the percentages are higher for the established EU member states than for the post-Communist countries. Such a picture suggests that it is not only the turnout that differs among these groups of countries but that also the media coverage of the European election campaign differs as media in different countries pay different attention and give assign different important to the EU issue. The media agenda, however, is often a reliable indicator of the intensity and nature of an election campaign. This would suggest, as theorized earlier, that the EP election campaign is less visible in the post-Communist countries as opposed to the Western countries.

¹¹ These averages (averages of media content and exposure) were created from the interaction terms of the exposure to an outlet with the amount of EU news in this outlet using *rowmean* Stata function.

¹² Some have used different measures - the most used media outlets (Banducci and Xezonakis 2010) which gave very similar results to the model used here, but the model with averages fits better to the data used in this paper.

Figure 2 summarizes the media and campaign variables for the same two groups of countries¹³. It is obvious that citizens of Western Europe are exposed to more news about the EU, more motivated and engaged by the election campaign and more interested in the campaign. The only media variable that has slightly higher values in the post-Communist countries is the exposure to media, but this does not affect my expectations because this difference is very small¹⁴ and also because sole exposure to media, without accounting for the content of the media, will show to have negative effect on the likelihood of voting in the EP elections. The difference between the exposure to media and weighted exposure to controlled content of the media (EU news) suggest that is crucial to combine respondents' exposure to the media with the actual content of the media to get a proper picture of the different patterns in the two groups of countries.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 show the centered means for weighted exposure to EU news, mobilization/motivation by the election campaign, and respondents' interest in EP election campaign, respectively, for individual countries. It is obvious that the values for these three variables differ among countries, and it is also apparent that the values are generally lower for the post-Communist countries (white dots) compared to the Western countries, although this pattern is not clear.

There is evidence that the two groups of EU countries do, in fact, differ in their media exposure patterns, in the content of their media (pertaining to EU news), and in their citizens' attitudes toward the EP election campaign. Since the voter participation differs as well, I will examine the relations between these variables. Most of the variables described in the table have different values for Western and CEE countries, whether these differences are larger or smaller, so they are considered in the analysis.

I will now turn to the results of data analysis. The results in Table 2 are obtained from multilevel random intercept logit models run in Stata using *gllamm*¹⁵. I report odds ratios and standard errors are in the parentheses. The table includes eight models which are described below¹⁶.

Model 1 is a random intercept model only. I ran it to determine how much variance at the country there is to explain when looking at respondents' likelihood to vote in the 2009 EP

¹³ See Table 1 for descriptive characteristics of all variables used in this study.

¹⁴ The values are 0.23 for Western countries and 0.27 for CEE countries. These numbers present the average of respondent's exposure to particular media outlets; measured in days per week, recoded on scale between 0-1.

¹⁵ I used *gllamm*, *xtmelogit* and *xtlogit* commands in Stata and obtained very similar results from all of them. I report the coefficients, odds ratios and variance components from *gllamm*.

¹⁶ The equations for the models can be found in Appendix 3.

elections: 56.8%. The following models aim to decrease this variance at level 2: adding variables (as theorized earlier) to the model allows me to find whether it is the individual-level or country-level indicators better explaining the variations in turnout among the 27 EU members and what role the weighted exposure to EU news plays in this relationship.

Model 2a includes only the level 2 post-Communist dummy as an explanatory variable to see to what extent the cross-country differences can be explained by this dummy. This single predictor, when included by itself in the model without any other level 1 or level variables, explains about 51%¹⁷ of the level 2 variance and its effect is negative, as expected, decreasing the odds of voting for those in post-Communist countries by 67%. This is a strong effect but when more variables are added to the model, we see this effect diminish a bit.

Let's now look at the effects of all level 2 variables (*Model 2b*). Table 2 shows only the post-Communist dummy from all level 2 variables. Its effect is smaller compared to when it is included by itself in the model, but still, being a citizen of a post-Communist country decreases one's odds of voting by about 50%. Four other country-level variables are included in this model but are not shown in the table: the country's year of accession to the EU (this variable is correlated with the post-Communist dummy and has slightly negative but not significant effect on the odds of voting); compulsory voting (which is, as expected, the strongest predictor of voting in the EP election, increasing the odds by 178% on average in all models); time until the next national election (its effect is significant and, surprisingly, increasing the odds of voting with more time left to the next national election, but the effect is very small); and the visibility of EU news in the country's media (this variable shows a very little effect which is not significant¹⁸). The level 2 variables have very strong explanatory power for cross-country differences, decreasing the level 2 variance component to only about 20.1%; thus these five level 2 predictors explain almost 64% of the cross-country differences. This number is large, confirming previous research findings that country-level variables account for most of the variance in turnout across countries. Nevertheless, there still is level 2 variance left to be explained, and the next paragraphs will show whether my theorized individual-level variables can help with this. But first, I will separately examine the effects of level 1 variables.

¹⁷ This is calculated as (level 2 variance of model 1 – level 2 variance of model 2a)/level 2 variance of model 1).

¹⁸ This finding somewhat contradicts my expectations as I was expecting the overall amount of EU news in countries' media to affect turnout. On the other hand, this suggests that the content of the media is not enough to have an effect but needs to be considered along with the exposure to these media, which is what the variables 'weighted exposure to EU news' does.

Model 3a contains only one level 1 variable: individual's weighted exposure to EU news. Since this is the predictor of my main interest, I was curious to see how much level 2 variance it can explain on its own. The answer is, not much. Although the variable is significant, its power to explain cross-country variance (as opposed to variance among individuals) is only about 7%. Its effect on voting is not very strong either: being exposed to an extra unit more of EU news increases one's odds of voting by 7.5%.

Model 3b then includes all level 1 predictors. Yet, this does not, almost at all, decrease the level 2 variance. Also, the effect of individual's weighted exposure to EU news decreases: it now increases the odds of voting by only about 3%. It is likely that the power of this variable is captured in the two other media-related variables: mobilization by campaign and interest in the campaign. They both show strong, mobilizing effects. Exposure to media variable, on the other hand, is likely to decrease one's odds of voting by approximately 40%. This variable, however, only captures the amount of time a respondent is exposed media and is not related to any news about the EU or the EP election; therefore the respondent may watch television but does not obtain any information relating to the EU from there. Such a finding supports my expectations that it is indeed the content of the media (as contained in the 'weighted exposure to EU news' variable) that matters and that can have an effect on one's likelihood to vote.

The table does not show, all level 1 variables used in the analysis. These include interest in politics, habitual voting, party identification, gender, age, education, still studying dummy, evaluation of EU membership as a good thing, and satisfaction with democracy in one's country. Their effects are all statistically significant and increasing the odds of voting in the European election; only gender (being a woman) and the still studying dummy (being still studying) decrease the odds of voting. Additionally, the effects of these variables do not change significantly when included in various models.

I will now examine a model including variables from both levels. *Model 4* is made up of the level 2 post-Communist dummy, individual's weighted exposure to EU news and their interaction. The level 2 variance is not reduced significantly, compared to *Model 2a*, and the positive effect of the weighted exposure to EU news in the post-Communist countries seems to be out weighted by the negative effects of the post-Communist country itself. Although this result confirms my hypothesis that the effect of weighted exposure to news about the EU is stronger in the post-Communist countries than in the Western countries, the effect of this interaction is very small, suggesting that citizens in the post-Communist countries are only about 2% more likely to vote with a unit increase of the EU news that they are exposed to.

The next model, *Model 5*, includes all level 1 predictors and the dummy variable for post-Communist countries, without the interaction from previous model. Compared to *Model 3b*, the level 2 variance in this model drops, showing that whether a country is post-Communist or not explains about 38% of the cross-country differences in voting in the EP elections, when all level 1 variables are included.

The final *Model 6* includes all level 1 and 2 variables and three cross-level interactions. This model reaches the lowest level 2 variance, 19.8%, suggesting that there still is space for additional variables that would explain the cross-country differences. As mentioned earlier, the strength of effects of individual-level predictors does not change much throughout the different models. The demobilizing effect of a post-Communist dummy has decreased: in *Model 6*, being a citizen of a post-Communist country decreases one's odds of voting by about 40% which is a 20% decrease compared to *Model 2a*. However, this dummy is no longer statistically significant which suggests that when all other variables are included in the model, they explain the differences in turnout; in other words, then, being a post-Communist country does not make a difference on whether one votes or not.

Additionally, three cross-level interactions are included in this model. They all examine the effects of individual-level predictors in the post-Communist countries. My main variable of interest - the weighted exposure to EU news in post-Communist countries, significant in *Model 4*, is not significant here and it is apparent it has almost no effect. Similarly, one's interest in the election campaign does not play an important role in the post-Communist countries. The interaction variable which is significant here and which is likely to have captured some of the effects of the weighted exposure to EU news in post-Communist countries is the campaign mobilization in the post-Communist countries. This variable suggests that being in some way (through newspapers, television, internet, attending public rallies or talking with friends or family) exposed to news about the EP election increases the odds of voting in the EP election in the post-Communist countries by about 37%. This finding is similar to what Franklin and Wessels (2010) in their study¹⁹.

This last finding is not surprising and goes along with my expectations. However, I was also expecting that the variable of one's exposure to media that controls for the content of the media and the frequency of the exposure would be better able to explain the variations in turnout in the EP elections. This is not the case. It is a statistically significant but the size of

¹⁹ They looked at this issue in connection with the position of the country in its election cycle. They also considered the mobilization/motivation by campaign and the interest in campaign together in one variable while I use them separately.

its effect is very low. Figure 5 indeed shows that the predicted probabilities of vote in the EP election (from *Model 6*) do not differ much depending on the respondent's weighted exposure to EU news and they do not differ very much between the Western and post-Communist countries either. Nevertheless, the campaign mobilization variable may capture some of the effects of the weighted exposure to EU news (although they are not highly correlated) which may be the reason for the weak effect of that variable. One additional problem with this campaign exposure variable is that it is highly correlated with interest in the campaign and in politics. Hence, the people mobilized by the election campaign are mostly those who are already interested in politics and who would be very likely to vote anyway.

CONCLUSION

The EU and its policies often seem very remote and complicated to the ordinary European citizens. They usually cannot experience or learn about the EU first-hand; therefore there is an enormous need for an effective political communication to give the public information about the EU and to ensure that the EU functions properly and legitimately. European citizens participate in the EU policy making by voting in the European election and delegating their countries' representatives to the EP. To make a sensible and educated decision and vote for a candidate that really represents voters' values, the voters need to have enough substantial information about the candidate and the EU. The low turnout in European elections shows, however, that citizens mostly choose to not be a part of the European democratic process. By an extensive EU news coverage especially in the weeks before the European elections, media can increase the level of political information of voters, thus help reduce the costs of voting and boost the participation rate. The turnout rate in the European elections is lower than in national elections, and it is especially low in the post-Communist countries. This problem has been researched extensively by political scientists, yet no clear, satisfying conclusions have been reached.

Using data from the media and voter study of the PIREDEU, this paper examines the factors affecting turnout in the 2009 European elections in the 27 EU member states. It specifically considers the effects of exposure to newspapers and television when the content of these media, the visibility of EU news, is matched to the exposure indicators. This paper uses a unique method of matching individual media exposure data with media outlet-specific content data. Thus, it offers an innovative approach to the variables used to explain the turnout by utilizing individual measures of exposure to media while controlling for the content of the media.

The paper follows Franklin and Wessels (2010) who “unwrapped” a “black box” of “inexplicably low turnout” in post-Communist countries to find two “black boxes of low mobilization and lack of habitual voting” (Franklin and Wessels 2010: 17). By utilizing media content and voters’ exposure to this content, this paper unwraps the “black box of low mobilization”. The main finding of this paper is that being often exposed to more news about the EU has only a small, positive effect on one’s likelihood to vote in the EP election. Therefore, my hypothesis that higher visibility of EU news in media and exposure to it increases voter participation is supported only with weak but statistically significant effects. Furthermore, as hypothesized, I found only small differences in the strength of the effects of media content and exposure in the post-Communist countries when compared to the established EU members.

On the other hand, the analysis has showed that even after the traditional country-level variables are included, such as compulsory voting or the post-Communist country dummy, there still remains enough cross-country variance to be explained by individual-level predictors. Exposure to EU news and exposure to EP election campaign captures some of this variance. Furthermore, the latter variable has a stronger mobilizing effect in the post-Communist countries than in the Western countries. It shows that being in some way, either through newspapers, television, internet, attending public rallies or talking with friends or family, exposed to news about the EP election increases the odds of voting in the EP election in the post-Communist countries by about 37%. One needs to be careful with interpreting these results as the people mobilized by the election campaign are mostly those who are already interested in politics and who would be very likely to vote anyway. Besides, this variable is very likely to capture the effects of exposure to news about the EU, as it is one of its components although not being able to control for the exact content that a respondent is exposed to. Thus, a better method needs to be designed to capture precisely the effect of being exposed to EU news.

Finally, although being a post-Communist country explains turnout variations when it is the only independent variable included in the model, when other individual and country level variables are included in the model, the effect of this dummy loses its strength and statistical significance. Such finding suggests that post-Communist countries are different because of other reasons than simply due to their common Communist history. More research needs to be devoted to the campaign-related predictors of voting in these countries, such as the campaigning style of parties, its amount or effectiveness. Voters in the post-Communist countries have not developed strong party loyalties or a habit to vote and need to be

motivated to go to the polls in some other way. An intensive election campaign that would be reflected in rich campaign coverage in the media could help bring voters to the polls, but political parties and candidates in these countries fail to realize this and do not give the European election much importance on their agendas. The media then fail to report on the EP elections, as was discussed earlier in this paper. Consequently, citizens in the post-Communist countries receive little information about the EP election and about the EU in general, and they do not find any reason to vote in the EP election.

APPENDIX 1

Media Study; Content Analysis (see Schuck et al. 2010)

AMOUNT OF EU NEWS/VISIBILITY

In the 2009 media study codebook, there is a filter variable (V13) asking, “Does the story mention either the European Union (EU*), its institutions or policies or the European Parliamentary elections or the campaign?”

* or synonyms such as ‘Brussels’ (when EU is meant), Europe (when EU is meant), EU countries (if explicitly referred to as such), EU member states (if explicitly referred to as such). EU institutions include the European Central Bank (ECB), for instance” (Schuck et al. 2010).

1 = no

2 = yes

When chosen “yes”, the coder was directed to answer numerous questions about content. One of these questions asked to choose a topic from the specific EU- topic list. This filter variable allowed me to use this measure directly and by simple cross tabulation get the share of EU news from there.

APPENDIX 2

Voter study (see van Egmond et al. 2009) – construction of measures; 2009 EES Questions (using UK survey wording)

VARIABLE	SURVEY QUESTION/NOTES
<i>Dependent variable</i>	
Vote in the 2009 European election	Q24. A lot of people abstained in the European Parliament elections of June 4, while others voted. Did you cast your vote? (1) yes, voted (2) no, did not vote
<i>Media variables</i>	
	<p>Respondents' exposure to news outlets was obtained from the following questions; 0 -7 (days) answers were recalculated into 0-1:</p> <p>Q8: In a typical week, how many days do you watch the following news programmes?</p> <p>Q12. In a typical week, how many days do you read the following newspapers?</p> <p>For media data information see Appendix 1.</p>
Weighted exposure to the amount of EU news	The measures between 0 - 1 were then multiplied by the visibility (amount in %) of EU news in each news outlet a respondent was exposed to. Respondent's weighted exposures to each outlet were then aggregated (<i>rowmean</i> function in Stata), obtaining an average measure of how much EU news a respondent was exposed to during the campaign.
<i>Campaign</i>	
	<p>How often did you do any of the following during the four weeks before the European election? How often did you:</p> <p>(see below)</p> <p>Answers are then: often/sometimes/never</p>
Read about election in newspapers	Q17. read about the election in a newspaper?
Watched tv program about election	Q16. watch a program about the election on television?
Looked into website about election	Q20. look into a website concerned with the election?
Attended public meeting/rally	Q19. attend a public meeting or rally about the election?
Talked to friends/family about election	Q18. talk to friends or family about the election?

Campaign mobilization	Factor of the previous five variables, they all load on one factor with the factor Eigenvalue of 2.37, with all factor loadings higher than 0.45 and $p > 0.01$; recoded onto scale 0-2
Interest in campaign	Q23. Thinking back to just before the elections for the European Parliament were held, how interested were you in the campaign for those elections: very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?
<i>Sociodemographics</i>	
Interest in politics	Q78. To what extent would you say you are interested in politics? Very, somewhat, a little, or not at all?
Habitual voter, i.e. voted in the last national election, dummy	Q27. Which party did you vote for at the General Election of xxxx? --then a list of parties was offered. I recoded all responses answering a name of a party or 'voted blank' as 1 and the others as 0
Party ID	Q87. Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to? --I created a dummy variable: answers mentioning a party we coded as 1 (i.e. as identifying with a party), others as 0
Male	Dummy; Q102. Are you male or female? 1=Male
Age	Q103. What year were you born? Variables recoded into years – how old a respondent is.
Education (age when finished full time education)	Q100. How old were you when you stopped full-time education? (age in years, 2 digits) (98) still studying
Still studying	Dummy; 1=respondent still studying
EU membership is good	Q79. Generally speaking, do you think that [your country's] membership of the European Union is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?
Satisfaction with country's democracy	Q84. On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [your country]?
<i>Country level variables</i>	
Country-level amount of EU news in a media	See Appendix 1
Post-Communist	Dummy; 1=post-Communist
Year of EU accession	Year
Compulsory voting	Dummy; 1=compulsory voting country, 0.5 for Italy
Time till next national election	In months

APPENDIX 3

1. Random intercept model

$$\text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

2a. Model with only post-Communist dummy variable

$$\text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\text{CEE}_j + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

2b. Model with all level 2 variables

$$\text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\text{CEE}_j + \gamma_{02}\text{Accession}_j + \gamma_{03}\text{Compulsory_vote}_j + \gamma_{04}\text{Next_election}_j + \gamma_{05}\text{Country_visibility_EUnews}_j + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

3a. Model with only the individual's weighted exposure to EU news

$$\text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\text{Weighted_exposure}_{ij} + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

3b. Model with all level 1 variables

$$\text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\text{Weighted_exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{20}\text{Exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{30}\text{Campaign_exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{40}\text{Campaign_interest}_{ij} + \gamma_{50}\text{Politics_interest}_{ij} + \gamma_{60}\text{Habit_vote}_{ij} + \gamma_{70}\text{PartyID}_{ij} + \gamma_{80}\text{Male}_{ij} + \gamma_{90}\text{Age}_{ij} + \gamma_{100}\text{Education}_{ij} + \gamma_{110}\text{Still_study}_{ij} + \gamma_{120}\text{cEUmembership_goodd}_{ij} + \gamma_{130}\text{Democratic_satisfaction}_{ij} + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

4. Model with the post-Communist dummy, individual's weighted exposure to EU news and their interaction

$$\text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\text{Weighted_exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{01}\text{CEE}_j + \gamma_{11}\text{Weighted_exposure}_{ij} * \text{CEE}_j + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

5. Model with all level 1 variables and the post-Communist dummy

$$\text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\text{Weighted_exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{20}\text{Exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{30}\text{Campaign_exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{40}\text{Campaign_interest}_{ij} + \gamma_{50}\text{Politics_interest}_{ij} + \gamma_{60}\text{Habit_vote}_{ij} + \gamma_{70}\text{PartyID}_{ij} + \gamma_{80}\text{Male}_{ij} + \gamma_{90}\text{Age}_{ij} + \gamma_{100}\text{Education}_{ij} + \gamma_{110}\text{Still_study}_{ij} + \gamma_{120}\text{cEUmembership_goodd}_{ij} + \gamma_{130}\text{Democratic_satisfaction}_{ij} + \gamma_{01}\text{CEE}_j + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij}$$

6. Model with all level 1 and level 2 variables and cross-level interactions

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Logit}(\text{epvote})_{ij} = & \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\text{Weighted_exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{20}\text{Exposure}_{ij} + \gamma_{30}\text{Campaign_exposure}_{ij} + \\ & \gamma_{40}\text{Campaign_interest}_{ij} + \gamma_{50}\text{Politics_interest}_{ij} + \gamma_{60}\text{Habit_vote}_{ij} + \gamma_{70}\text{PartyID}_{ij} + \gamma_{80}\text{Male}_{ij} + \\ & \gamma_{90}\text{Age}_{ij} + \gamma_{100}\text{Education}_{ij} + \gamma_{110}\text{Still_study}_{ij} + \gamma_{120}\text{cEUmembership_goodd}_{ij} + \\ & \gamma_{130}\text{Democratic_satisfaction}_{ij} + \gamma_{01}\text{CEE}_j + \gamma_{02}\text{Accession}_j + \gamma_{03}\text{Compulsory_vote}_j + \\ & \gamma_{04}\text{Next_election}_j + \gamma_{05}\text{Country_visibility_EUnews}_j + \gamma_{11}\text{Weighted_exposure}_{ij} * \text{CEE}_j + + \\ & \gamma_{22}\text{Campaign_exposure}_{ij} * \text{CEE}_j + \gamma_{33}\text{Campaign_interest}_{ij} * \text{CEE}_j + \sigma_{0j} + \sigma_{1j}x_{ij} \end{aligned}$$

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Descriptive statistics (uncentered)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Weighted exposure to the amount of EU news	6.4223	6.6981	0	57.994
--- Western Europe	6.9559	7.3357	0	57.994
--- CEE	5.5193	5.3315	0	45.202
Exposure to media	0.2471	0.1695	0	1
--- Western Europe	0.2338	0.1646	0	1
--- CEE	0.2696	0.1752	0	1
Read about election in newspapers	0.8383	0.7664	0	2
--- Western Europe	0.9218	0.7832	0	2
--- CEE	0.6969	0.7150	0	2
Watched tv program about election	0.9687	0.7202	0	2
--- Western Europe	0.9823	0.7313	0	2
--- CEE	0.9454	0.7004	0	2
Looked into website about election	0.2566	0.5451	0	2
--- Western Europe	0.2889	0.5672	0	2
--- CEE	0.2018	0.5007	0	2
Attended public meeting/rally	0.1160	0.3821	0	2
--- Western Europe	0.1228	0.3965	0	2
--- CEE	0.1044	0.3562	0	2
Talked to friends/family about election	1.0112	0.7070	0	2
--- Western Europe	1.05e0	0.7086	0	2
--- CEE	0.9445	0.6992	0	2
Campaign mobilization	0.6372	0.4009	0	2
--- Western Europe	0.6721	0.4068	0	2
--- CEE	0.5781	0.3833	0	2
Interest in campaign	2.3317	0.9432	1	4
--- Western Europe	2.4037	0.9366	1	4
--- CEE	2.2097	0.9416	1	4
Interest in politics	2.5614	0.8992	1	4
--- Western Europe	2.6715	0.8922	1	4
--- CEE	2.3749	0.8801	1	4
Age	50.2913	16.8152	18	99
--- Western Europe	50.1136	16.4216	18	96
--- CEE	50.5922	17.4577	18	9
Education	24.673	19.0529	9	98
--- Western Europe	25.3180	19.7084	9	98

--- CEE	23.5813	17.8368	9	98
EU membership is good	1.3591	0.8796	0	2
--- Western Europe	1.4655	0.8268	0	2
--- CEE	1.1792	0.9351	0	2
Satisfaction with country's democracy	1.4776	0.8534	0	3
--- Western Europe	1.6580	0.8228	0	3
--- CEE	1.1722	0.8166	0	3
Country-level amount of EU news in media	35.9680	11.7374	14.326	61.992
--- Western Europe	38.6197	12.4903	14.326	61.992
--- CEE	31.4806	8.6523	15.528	45.202
Time till next national election	1.8711	1.3339	0	5.7751
--- Western Europe	1.9047	1.4299	0	5.7751
--- CEE	1.8141	1.1511	0.0109	3.4465
	Obs. = 1	% = 1	Obs. = 0	% = 0
Vote in the election	19,111	70.60	7,958	29.40
--- Western Europe	13,386	78.67	3,629	21.33
--- CEE	5,725	56.94	4,329	43.06
Habitual voter	19,017	70.25	8,052	29.75
--- Western Europe	12,538	73.69	4,477	26.31
--- CEE	6,479	64.44	3,575	35.56
Party ID	14,483	53.50	12,586	46.50
--- Western Europe	9,720	57.13	7,295	42.87
--- CEE	4,763	47.37	5,291	52.63
Male	11,941	44.11	15,128	55.89
--- Western Europe	7,821	45.97	9,194	54.03
--- CEE	4,120	40.98	5,934	59.02
Still studying	1,580	5.84	25,486	94.16
--- Western Europe	1,059	6.22	15,959	93.78
--- CEE	521	5.18	9,533	94.82

Observations: for all 27069, Western E. 17015, CEE 10054

Table 2: Multilevel logit , y=vote in the 2009 EP election

	MODEL 1 (random intercept only)	MODEL 2a (only CEE)	MODEL 2b (level 2 vars.)	MODEL 3a (only weighted exposure)	MODEL 3b (level 1 vars.)	MODEL 4 (CEE, weighted exposure, interaction)	MODEL 5 (level 1 vars. + CEE)	MODEL 6 (full model)
Constant	0.992 (0.146)***	0.990 (0.102)***	0.984 (0.083)***	0.574 (0.141)***	1.253 (0.141)***	0.576 (0.101)***	1.251 (0.111)***	1.238 (0.095)***
Individual-level predictors								
Weighted exposure to EU news			1.075 (0.003)***	1.029 (0.006)***	1.074 (0.003)***	1.028 (0.006)***	1.031 (0.006)***	
Exposure to media				0.548 (0.102)***		0.564 (0.105)**	0.508 (0.098)***	
Campaign mobilization				2.376 (0.129)***		2.376 (0.130)***	2.067 (0.148)***	
Interest in campaign				2.042 (0.046)***		2.043 (0.046)***	2.110 (0.064)***	
Country-level predictors								
CEE/Post-Communist		0.330 (0.070)***	0.489 (0.142)*			0.358 (0.074)***	0.398 (0.092)***	0.586 (0.184)
Cross-level interactions								
Weighted exposure to EU news*CEE						1.024 (0.006)***	1.009 (0.007)	
Campaign mobilization*CEE							1.369 (0.146)**	
Interest in campaign*CEE							0.934 (0.040)	
Level 2 variance component	0.568 (0.157)	0.278 (0.078)	0.206 (0.052)	0.526 (0.145)	0.525 (0.146)	0.265 (0.074)	0.326 (0.091)	0.198 (0.056)

Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Dependent variable: epvote; gllamm, odds ratios reported (eform): N level 1=27069, N level 2 (countries)= 27

Figure 1: Country's visibility of EU news in media and turnout: Western Europe vs. CEE

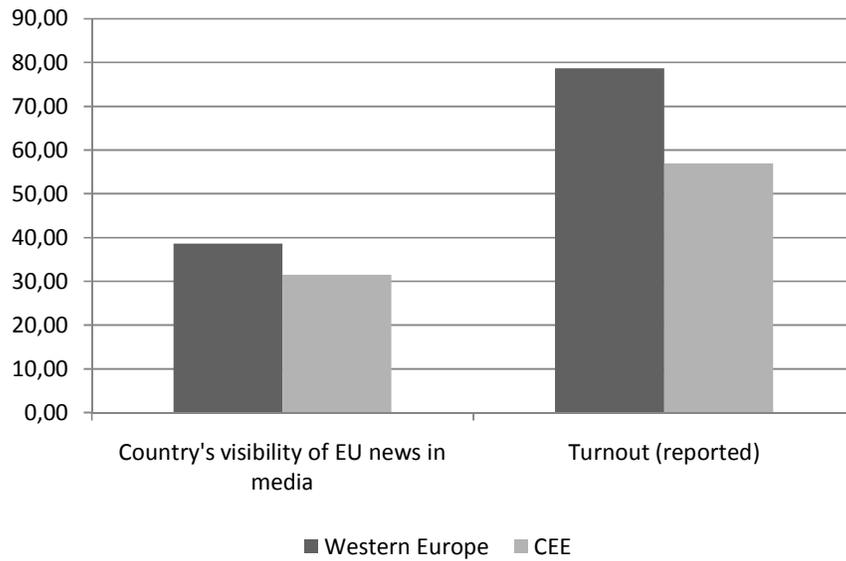


Figure 2: Media and campaign variables: Western Europe vs. CEE

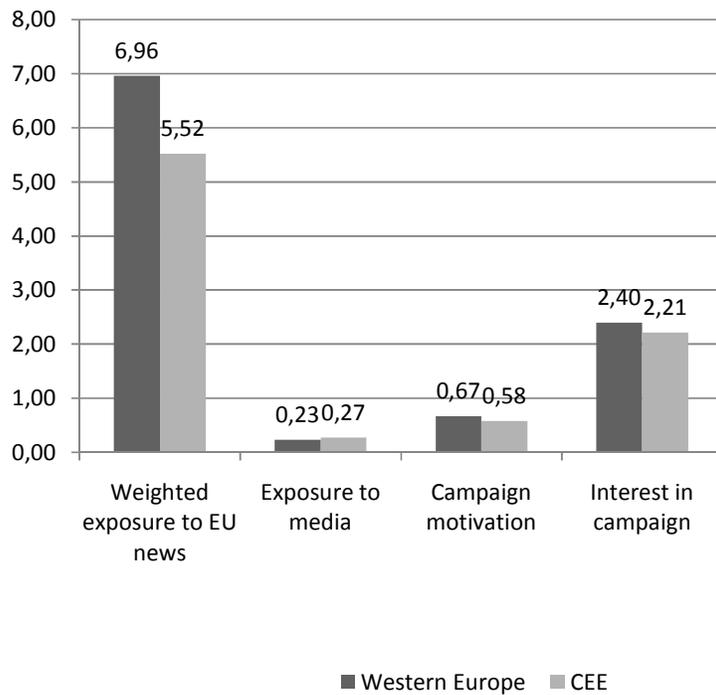


Figure 3: Mean of the weighted exposure to EU news per country (white=post-Communist country)

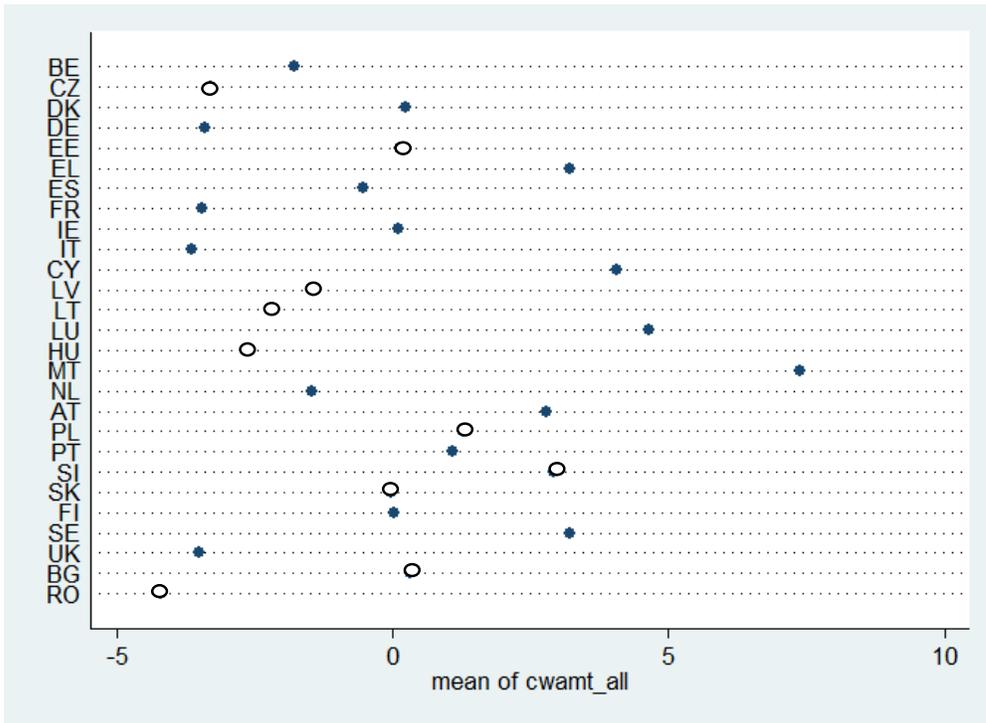


Figure 4: Mean of mobilization/motivation by the election campaign per country (white=post-Communist country)

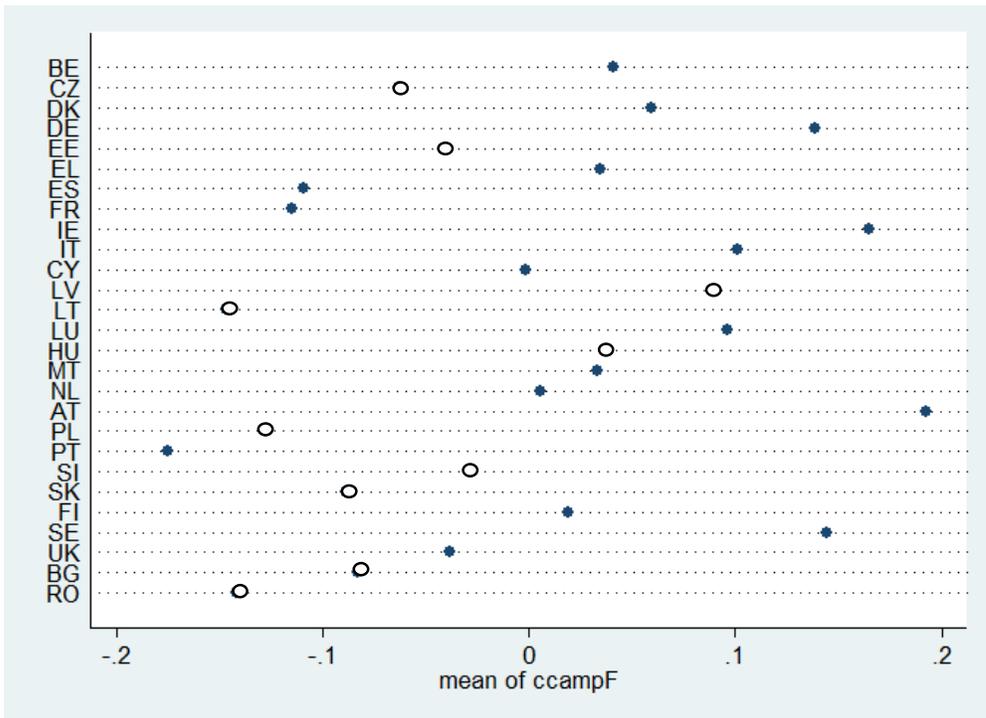


Figure 5: Mean of respondents' interest in EP election campaign per country (white=post-Communist country)

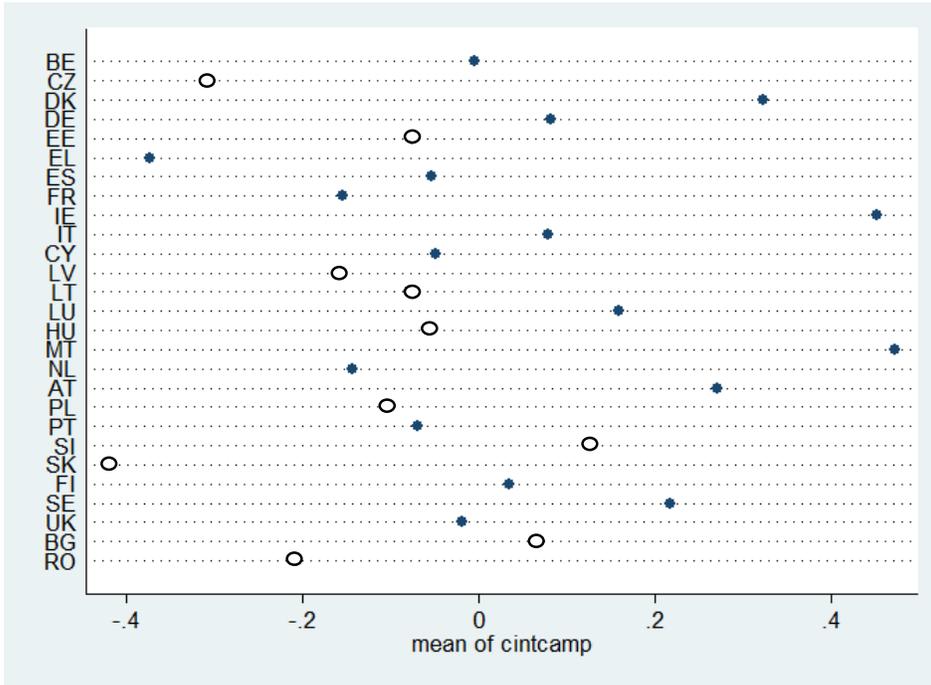
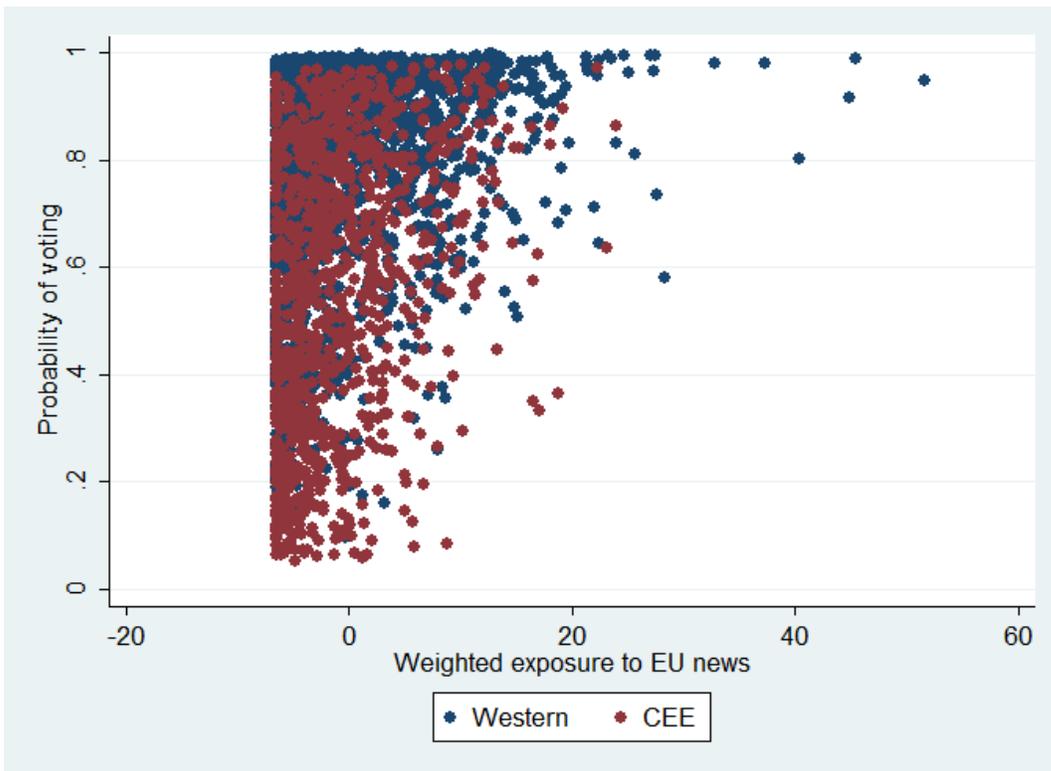


Figure 6: Predicted probability of voting (Model 6, 10% sample of all observations)



REFERENCES

- Alvarez-Rivera, M. 2010. Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Estonian Riigikogu. Available from <http://electionresources.org/ee/>.
- Alvarez-Rivera, M. 2010. Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly. Available from <http://electionresources.org/hu/>.
- Alvarez-Rivera, M. 2010. Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Latvian Saeima (Parliament). Available from <http://electionresources.org/lv/>.
- Alvarez-Rivera, M. 2010. Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Polish Sejm. Available from <http://electionresources.org/pl/>.
- Ansolabehere, S., Iyengar, S. and A. Simon. 1999. Replicating Experiments Using Aggregate and Survey Data: The Case of Negative Advertising and Turnout. *American Political Science Review*. 93(4): 901-910.
- Ansolabehere, S., Iyengar, S., Simon, A. and N. Valentino. 1994. Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate? *American Political Science Review*. 88(4): 829-838.
- Baek, M. 2009. A Comparative Analysis of Political Communication Systems and Voter Turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*. 53(2): 376-393.
- Banducci, S. A. 2005. Turnout in the 2004 European Parliamentary Elections: Campaigns and the Mobilization of Eurosceptic Voters. Paper prepared for presentation at the Institute for Governance Conference, Workshop Innovation of Governance. June 16-17, 2005. Universiteit Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands.
- Banducci, S. A. and H. A. Semetko. 2003. Media, Mobilization and European Elections. Working Paper, Democratic Participation and Political Communication in Systems of Multi-level Governance. Available from <http://www.ucd.ie/dempart/workingpapers/media.pdf>.
- Banducci, S. A. and G. Xezonakis. 2010. Measuring Exposure to News Media Content in Cross-National Electoral Studies. Paper prepared for presentation at the PIREDEU Final Conference, 18-19 November, 2010, Brussels, Belgium.
- Batory, A. 2005. "Hungary." In: Lodge, J. ed. *The 2004 Elections to the European Parliament*, pp. 138-145. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.
- Batory, A. 2009. "Hungary." In: Gagatsek, W. ed. *The 2009 Elections to the European Parliament: Country Reports*, pp. 101-105. European University Institute, Florence, Italy.
- Blais, A. 2006. What Affects Voter Turnout? *Annual Review of Political Science*. 9: 111-25.
- Brinar, I. 2005. "Slovenia." In: Lodge, J. ed. *The 2004 Elections to the European Parliament*, pp. 223-229. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.
- Burden, B. C. 2000. Voter Turnout and the National Election Studies. *Political Analysis*. 8(4): 389-398.

- Cassel, C. A. 2003. Overreporting And Electoral Participation Research. *American Politics Research* 31: 81-92.
- Della Vigna, S. and E. Kaplan. 2006. The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting. NBER Working Paper No. 12169.
- De Vreese, C. H. and H. A. Semetko. 2002. Cynical and Engaged: Strategic Campaign Coverage, Public Opinion, and Mobilization in a Referendum. *Communication Research*. 29(6): 615-641.
- De Vreese, C. H., Banducci, S. A., Semetko, H. A. and H. G. Boomgaarden. 2006. The News Coverage of the 2004 European Parliamentary Election Campaign in 25 Countries. *European Union Politics*. 7(4): 477-504.
- De Vreese, C. H. 2007. A Spiral of Euroscepticism: The Media's Fault? *Acta Politica*. 42: 271-286.
- EES (2009). *European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, Advance Release*, 7/4/2010 (www.piredeu.eu).
- Esser, F. and P. D'Angelo. 2006. Framing the Press and Publicity Process in U.S., British, and German General Election Campaigns: A Comparative Study of Metacoverage. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. 1: 44-66.
- European Parliament. 2009. "Turnout at the European elections (1979-2009)." Available from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout_en.html.
- Franklin, M. 2006. "European elections and the European voter." In: Richardson, J., ed. *European Union: Power and Policy Making*. 2nd edition. Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Franklin, M. N. and S. B. Hobolt. 2011. "The legacy of lethargy: How elections to the European Parliament depress turnout." *Electoral Studies*, 30: 67-76.
- Franklin, M., van der Eijk, C. and E. Oppenhuis. 1996. "The institutional context: turnout." In: van der Eijk, C. and M. N. Franklin, eds. *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*, pp. 306-331. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Franklin, M. and C. van der Eijk. 1996. "The problem: Representation and Democracy in the European Union." In: van der Eijk, C. and M. N. Franklin, eds. *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*, pp. 3-10. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Franklin, M. 2007. "Turning out or turning off? How the European Parliament Elections of 2004 shed light on turnout dynamics." In: Marsh, M., Mikhaylov, S. and H. Schmitt, eds. *European Elections after Eastern Enlargement*, pp. 53-61. CONNEX Report Series No 01, Mannheim, CONNEX.

Franklin, M. and B. Wessels. 2010. Stimulus, response and turnout variations at a European Parliament election: understanding turnout differences between post-communist and other EU member states at the European Parliament elections of 2009. Paper prepared for presentation at ASCoR, University of Amsterdam, March 2011.

Gagatek, W., Grzybowska-Walecka, K. and P. Rozbicka. 2009. "Poland." In: Gagatek, W. ed. *The 2009 Elections to the European Parliament: Country Reports*, pp. 137-141. European University Institute, Florence, Italy.

Gerber, A., Karlan, D. and D. Bergan. 2006. Does The Media Matter? A Field Experiment Measuring the Effect of Newspapers on Voting Behavior and Political Opinions. *Mimeo*, Yale University.

Goldstein, K. and P. Freedman. 2002. Campaign Advertising and Voter Turnout: New Evidence for a Stimulation Effect. *The Journal of Politics*. 64(3): 721-740.

Guerra, S. 2010. Miscommunicating Europe? Evidence from Central and Eastern Europe Paper presented for the closing conference on 'Communicating European Citizenship' London, 22 March 2010.

Hobolt, S. A. and J. Spoon. 2010. Motivating the European Voter: Parties, Issues, and Campaigns in European Parliament Elections. Paper prepared for presentation at the PIREDEU Final Conference, 18-19 November, 2010, Brussels, Belgium.

Hox, J. J. 2010. *Multilevel Analysis. Techniques and Applications*. Hove and New York: Routledge.

Iyengar, S. and A. F. Simon. 2000. New Perspectives and Evidence on Political Communication and Campaign Effects. *Annual Review of Psychology*. 51: 149-169.

Karnikova, A. 2009. "Czech Republic." In: Gagatek, W. ed. *The 2009 Elections to the European Parliament: Country Reports*, pp. 65-70. European University Institute, Florence, Italy.

Karp, J. A. and D. Brockington. 2005. Social Desirability and Response Validity: A Comparative Analysis of Overreporting Voter Turnout in Five Countries. *The Journal of Politics*. 67(3): 825-840.

Lassen, D. D. 2005. The Effect of Information on Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. *American Journal of Political Science*. 49 (1): 103-118.

Lodge, J. 2005. "Euro-Elections 2004 – A Defining Point in European Integration?" In: Lodge, J. ed. *The 2004 Elections to the European Parliament*, pp. 3-7. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.

Marsh, M. and M. Franklin. 1996. "The Foundations: Unanswered Questions from the Study of European Elections, 1979 – 1994". In: van der Eijk, C. and M. N. Franklin, eds. *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*, pp. 11-32. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Martin, P. S. 2004. Inside the Black Box of Negative Campaign Effects: Three Reasons Why Negative Campaigns Mobilize. *Political Psychology*. 25(4): 545-562.
- Mattila, M. 2003. Why bother? Determinants of turnout in the European elections. *Electoral Studies*. 22: 449-468.
- McGuire, W. 1968. "Personality and Susceptibility to Social Influence." In Borgatta, E. F and W. W. Lambert, eds. *Handbook of Personality Theory and Research*, pp. 1130-1187. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Mieñkowska-Norkiene, R. and E. Kavoliunaite. 2009. "Lithuania." In: Gagateg, W. ed. *The 2009 Elections to the European Parliament: Country Reports*, pp. 119-123. European University Institute, Florence, Italy.
- Mughan, A. and R. Gunther. 2000. "The Media in Democratic and Nondemocratic regimes: A Multilevel Perspective." In: Mughan, A. and R. Gunther, eds. *Democracy and the Media. A Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Newton, K. 1999. Mass Media Effects: Mobilization or Media Malaise? *British Journal of Political Science*. 29(4): 577-599.
- Norris, P. 2004. "Global Political Communication. Good Governance, Human Development, and Mass Communication." In: Esser, F. and B. Pfetsch, eds. *The Comparing Political Communication. Theories, Cases and Challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. 2006. Did the Media Matter? Agenda-Setting, Persuasion, and Mobilization Effects in the British General Election Campaign. *British Politics*. 1: 1-27.
- Peter, J. and C. H. de Vreese. 2004. In Search of Europe: A Cross-National Comparative Study of the European Union in National Television News. *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. 9: 3-24.
- Rabe-Hesketh, S. and A. Skrondal. 2008. *Multilevel and Longitudinal Modeling Using Stata*. Texas: Stata Press.
- Republic of Slovenia: Decision making by citizens. 2010. Available from <http://www.volitve.gov.si/en/index.html>.
- Rose, R. 2004. Europe Expands, Turnout Falls: the Significance of the 2004 European Parliament Election. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Stockholm.
- Rovna, L. 2005a. "Czech Republic." In: Lodge, J. ed. *The 2004 Elections to the European Parliament*, pp. 81-87. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.
- Rovna, L. 2005b. "Slovakia." In: Lodge, J. ed. *The 2004 Elections to the European Parliament*, pp. 218-222. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.
- Szczerbiak, A. 2005. "Poland." In: Lodge, J. ed. *The 2004 Elections to the European Parliament*, pp. 201-209. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.

- Schmitt, H. 2005. The European Parliament Election of June 2004: Still Second-Order? *West European Politics*. 28(3): 650-679.
- Schuck, A., Xezonakis, G., Banducci, S. and C. H. de Vreese. 2010. *EES (2009) Media Study Data Advance Release Documentation*, 31/03/2010. (www.piredeu.eu).
- Semetko, H. A., de Vreese, C. H. and J. Peter. 2000. Europeanised politics - Europeanised media? European integration and political communication. *West European Politics*. 23(4): 121–141.
- Sikk, A. 2009. European Parliament Election Briefing No. 41: The European Elections in Estonia. EPERN. Available from <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epernep2009estonia.pdf>.
- Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. 2010. Available from <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=5684>.
- Steenbergen, M.R., and B. Jones. 2002. Modeling Multilevel Data Structures. *American Journal of Political Science*. 461: 218-37.
- The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. 2010. Available from <http://www.vrk.lt/en/>.
- Toka, G. 2007. “Information Effects on Vote Choices in European Elections.” In: Marsh, M., Mikhaylov, S. and H. Schmitt, eds. *European Elections after Eastern Enlargement*, pp. 141-179. CONNEX Report Series No 01, Manheim, CONNEX.
- van der Brug, W. and M. Franklin. 2005. One Electorate or Many? Testing the distinctiveness of electoral behavior in new and established member states during the 2004 elections to the European Parliament. Paper prepared for the Conference on the 2004 European Parliament Elections, May 2005, Budapest, Hungary.
- Volby.cz. 2010. Czech Statistical Office. Available from <http://www.volby.cz/>.
- Wessels, B. 2007. “Mobilization and Attitudes Equals: Turnout - A Simple Equation?” In: Marsh, M., Mikhaylov, S. and H. Schmitt, eds. *European Elections after Eastern Enlargement*, pp. 205—229. CONNEX Report Series No 01, Manheim, CONNEX.
- Zaller, J. 1992. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.