

The political preferences of political elites, voters and non-voters in Europe

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Abstract

Concerns that low turnout leads to a bias in political representations have existed for a long time. Research, however, has shown that low turnout has little influence on the distribution of votes and seats; election outcomes would not have been different if more people had voted. Using data from the 2009 European parliament elections, we can show nevertheless that low turnout leads to a biased representation, on both a socio-economic and a cultural political dimension. Comparing preferences of elites, voters and non-voters in a systematic way, we find differences in policy preferences: non-voters tend to be more in favour of re-distribution and more against immigrants than voters and political elites. This effect remains once we control for differences in the socio-economic background of voters and non-voters.

1 Introduction

In this paper we argue that low turnout becomes a problem when it creates a bias in the political process, more precisely when political elites take the political preferences of voters better into account than preferences of non-voters. We explore this by comparing policy preferences of voters, non-voters and political elites using data from the European parliament election 2009, where the same set of issue preference questions has been asked to citizens and elites in separate surveys.

Turnout has been declining in many elections in the past decades. Although the picture is not coherent regarding the national elections, second order elections such as European parliament elections have seen turnout rates lower than 50% in recent elections.¹ As a consequence, debates on the possible problems related to low turnout have intensified not only among politicians but also among scholars. (Lijphart 1997) for example, has called low turnout democracies unsolved dilemma arguing that low turnout means unequal participation means bias in the political process.

This general perception, that low turnout is a problem of some sort for the functioning of democracy remains central in the debate, although it is often not so clear why there is a problem. For example there is little evidence that low turnout undermines the legitimacy of democratic processes in general (Scully, Jones, and Trystan 2004: 62, Salisbury 1975: 326). Countries like Switzerland or the US have experienced turnout rates of 50% or lower for many decades and this has not lead to a democratic disaster in those countries. The most important reason for electoral abstention is not distrust or dissatisfaction with political processes or with political institution but the lack of political interest (Bühlmann, Freitag, and Vatter 2003).

Nevertheless there are some arguments which may lead researchers to come to an evaluation that low turnout is a problem: The first concern is connected to the strong social bias in participation. Citizens with high education, high income as well as older citizens tend to show up at the polls way more often than the less educated, the poor and the young (Franklin 2004, Nevitte et al. 2009). This pattern of socio-economic explanations of non-voting is consistent throughout most western democracies. The

¹ See <http://www.idea.int/vt/viewdata.cfm> for turnout figures on national and European Parliament elections.

argument then is that non-voters and voters differ in their social composition, which leads to an assumed distortion in the outcome of political processes since elites will more likely take the views of the voters into account and ignore the views of the non-voters.

There are two different theoretical effects of low turnout. First, a bias in the distribution of votes and seats in elections, second a distortion in policy outcomes. Those two effects do not need to be the same, policy effects can exist independent from a bias in the distribution of votes and seats if voters have the same party but different policy preferences. The other way around, a bias in the distribution of votes and seats due to low turnout may not lead to a bias in policy preferences.

Traditionally the class bias hypothesis (Hill and Leighley 1992; Hill and Leighley 1996) makes the following link between turnout and disadvantages of the left in elections. (A) Lower class citizens (which means citizens with lower income and lower education) tend to abstain more often. (B) Lower class citizens tend to vote for left parties; (C) From A and B concludes: If lower class citizens vote less, the left parties and left positions are disadvantaged, because their electorate abstains from the polls more frequently or in other words, the left would be better off if turnout were higher.

Step A is generally not disputed, given the empirically strong link between socio-economic status and participation. Citizens with low socio-economic resources tend to abstain much more often than the wealthier, better educated. As a consequence, it is assumed that the voices and interests of the rich and well educated enter the political process much better than the interests of the poor.

Step B and as a consequence C are, however, theoretically and empirically not so clear anymore. Although we have a strong inequality in participation, this does not mean that it brings inequality into decision making. Whether low turnout creates a political bias cannot just be assumed theoretically it has to be empirically tested. Maybe it was true at some stage that the low educated and badly paid working class systematically voted for left parties. However citizens with low socio-economic status do not systematically vote for left parties anymore. They tend to vote for different parties and often even for radical right parties (Norris 2005; Oesch and Rennwald 2010). As a consequence there is no systematic link between low turnout and bias towards left parties anymore. In fact, how Lutz and Marsh (2006) conclude in a special issue on the

consequences of low turnout for the advantage or disadvantage of certain parties: “turnout does not matter a great deal, no matter what method, dataset or period of time the authors apply”.

This finding about party voting, does not yet tell anything about a bias in policy preferences between voters, non-voters and elites. There are theoretical arguments, why we would expect no differences. Elites don't know for sure who will show up at the polls. They cannot completely ignore preferences and demands of non-voter because they may show up in future elections and punish incumbent governments if their preferences are ignored. In addition, elites may have little knowledge of the preference of citizens in general and how preference between voters and non-voters differ.

However, voters and non-voters could have similar party or candidate preferences but nevertheless have different policy preferences and as a consequence elite preferences could be closer to voters' preferences than to non-voter preferences because elites in general are more responsive to voters than to non-voters. Studies tend to find little differences in the preferences between voters and non-voters (Shaffer 1982; Teixeira 1992; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Studlar and Welch 1986), but differences exist on socio-economic issues in many cases, where non-voters tend to be more to the left than voters (Gant and Lyons 1993; Bennett and Resnick 1990; Highton and Wolfinger 2001). As a consequence, we would also expect differences in policy preferences on socio-economic issues between voters, non-voters and elites in our sample.

However, there are other issues that may matter in politics. Many studies have found that the political space in many countries is two-dimensional (Bornschieer 2010; Kriesi et al. 2008; Oesch and Rennwald 2010). In addition to the socio-economic cleavage, a cultural cleavage divides the political landscape in many western countries. The importance of this cultural cleavage, which divides individuals with authoritarian and libertarian views, has been fuelled in particular by issues related to migration (Stubager 2010) and has gained in importance in many European countries (Kriesi et al. 2008). With regard its social basis, the cleavage tends to be structured by education, with lower educated citizens having more authoritarian views, while those more educated tend to be more libertarian (Stubager 2010). Knowing that highly educated citizens tend to turn out more, we could also expect that on issues related to immigration, voters and non-voters differ in their policy preferences.

In this paper we test our hypothesis that voters are closer to the preferences of political elites than non-voters and this is so due to the social composition of the groups. Below we first present the data, variables and measurements used for the analysis. Then we provide a descriptive account of the central tendencies of political preferences of voters, non-voters and elites on two salient political issues. Third, we turn to a multivariate analysis with which we aim to explain the distance between the opinions of an individual respondent to the political elites. In the last part of the paper we summarize our results in view of the stated hypothesis.

2 The data

We argue in this paper that to determine how citizens' preferences enter the political arena it does not suffice to focus solely on voters and non-voters. From the fact, that voters and non-voters differ in their preferences, it is not directly possible to conclude, that elite preference differ more from the preferences of voters than from the differences of non-voters. We have argued above, that elites have to take non-voter preferences into account too, to some degree, since non-voters could turn into voters at a later point in time. Although unlikely it is even possible that elites are closer to non-voters than to voters. Thus it is more sensible to compare voters, non-voters and elite preferences simultaneously in order to study possible distortion in representative democracies with low turnout. Such a comparison enables us to assess, whether political decisions follow the preferences of certain citizens (but not others) in a systematic way.

To study the link between citizens and elite preferences is often difficult, because they have to be measured in different ways. Usually citizens' preferences are determined through opinion surveys. Equivalent survey measures usually don't exist for political elites. Elite preferences have to be retrieved from secondary sources such as party manifestos, expert surveys or roll call votes. This differences in measures leads to significant methodological problems. Both wording and scales used in survey question are often very different from elite measures. As a consequence and since it is almost impossible to create similar scales of voters and elite preferences for different issues, most such studies rely on the "super-issue" left-right (Gabel and Huber 2000; Powell 2000), simply because this seems to be the easiest to construct and it is most

comparable across different context, which is not the case with other issues. However we also know, that left-right may be problematic for various reasons. First, the structure of policy preferences of elites and citizens can differ systematically with the pattern of policy preferences well of elites integrating well in a one-dimensional space, while citizens tend to have preferences on various policies that are less ideological (e.g. Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009). As a result, it is not clear whether the meaning of the left-right scale is the same for citizens and elites. Second, it is not clear how citizens chose their position on the left-right scale and in particular whether their placement is linked to party identification or to policy preferences and in the latter case what policy dimensions really matter in that placement (see Milic 2008). Third, many citizens might find it difficult to place themselves on a left-right scale and as a result a very large share of them place themselves on a rather uninformative middle position (5 on a classical 0-10 left-right scale).

To overcome those difficulties we compare political preference of elites, voters and non-voters making use of new candidate surveys that have become part of various election studies in this paper. For our research, we make use of the European Parliament Election Study 2009, conducted within the PIREDEU project. This study contains a voter and a candidate survey both of which were carried out in the 27 member states of the EU, right after the European Parliament Election that took place between June 4th and 7th 2009 (EES 2009a; EES 2009b). These surveys contain a set of identical questions regarding policy preferences over a wide range of issues. In this paper, we focus specifically on two of these questions related to redistribution and to immigration. Respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

“Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people”;

“Immigration to [country] should be decreased significantly”.

In each of these cases, the same question has been asked to citizens as well as to candidates and the possible answer categories were: ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’. The answers of respondents were coded using integer values from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

We selected these questions precisely because both of them represent salient political themes across a wide range of countries and because we expect preferences on these

questions to be tightly linked the socioeconomic background of citizens. Indeed, these questions are in some ways related to the perceived self-interest of some social groups and are thus likely to influence their preferences.

We make use of these questions in order to assess the policy preferences of voters, non-voters and of elites. For the latter, we compute a country specific measure of the political elites' position on these questions by using the answers of individual candidates to the questionnaire. To obtain this measure we first estimate the position of national parties by taking the average position of candidates coming from a given party on these questions. We then weight these positions by the share of the seats in the EP won by the different parties for a given country.

Thus we use a mean elite position and not one for individual parties, because we want to know how the entire elite preferences differ from all voters and non-voters. Theoretically, it might even be more appropriate to use the median elite position or the position of the median party, however because of data problems this was not possible. Additionally, it is likely that the mean and median position do not differ too much anyway, assuming that opinions distribute in a non-skewed way around the mean.

The use of this data can be criticised, notably because of the limited number of candidates and the low response rate in the candidate survey in some countries, which can result in biased estimates. Indeed, with a cross-country mean of 24% in the response rate, there are parties for which we have only a very limited number of respondents and sometimes even none.

Nevertheless, we believe this is an accurate measure because members of the same party very rarely have completely opposite policy preferences on most issues and especially on the issues we have chosen. This can notably be observed in the relatively low standard deviations in the answers of candidate from the same party. Therefore, we argue that despite the low number of respondents, the candidate survey still provides a useful indicator. It has the advantage over other sources of information from which we can derive policy positions of elites (e.g. manifesto analysis, roll call analysis or expert surveys) that the questions asked are exactly the same as in the case of voter surveys and that the possible answers and the scale on which they are measured are

directly comparable. Our analysis so far is restricted to fourteen countries². In addition to Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxemburg who all have compulsory voting, we had to drop from the analysis nine other countries due to the lack of data for at least one of the parties or because the number of declared non-voters was extremely low. Voter surveys suffer from over-reporting of voting, which is caused by both higher non-response of non-voters and the social desirability of some non-voters to report that they have voted, even if they haven't.

3 Elites, votes and non-voters compared

In the first step of the analysis we provide a descriptive account of the central tendencies of political preferences of voters, non-voters and elites. We are interested in observing differences on two different levels. On the one hand, we focus on the differences in the policy preferences between voters and non-voters and, on the other, we observe the positions of these two groups relative to the position of the political elites. Regarding these two relations, we have specific expectation. Because of the socio-demographic bias in political participation, we expect that if we find systematic differences between preferences of voters and non-voters, the latter would favour redistribution and the welfare state more than do voters. The reason for that is that more affluent citizens, who tend to participate more also have less incentives to favour redistribution from a self-interest perspective. The picture might be different on cultural issues, with the non-voters being possibly more conservative with regard to immigration than voters. This hypothesis is linked to the classical argument in the literature on immigration attitudes that lower class citizens tend to feel more directly threatened by immigration, as they perceive migrants as potential competitors on the job market (Esses, Jackson, and Armstrong 1998; Hello, Scheepers, and Slegers 2006).

With regard to the proximity of the policy preference of each of these two groups with the preferences of the political elites, we hypothesise that voters should be closer to the preferences of political elites than non-voters. This hypothesis is based on the idea that voters as opposed to non-voters directly influence the outcome of elections and therefore decide who gets elected. This can have consequences on their proximity

² Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Sweden.

with the political elites through different mechanisms. First of all, assuming that voters chose a party or candidate who holds similar policy preferences as them and that there are systematic differences in the policy preferences of voters and non-voters, we would expect that the representatives chosen through elections would have policy preferences that match more closely the preferences of voters than non-voters. Additionally, one can argue that voting does not only have a direct effect but is also a way to voice policy preferences and make them visible in the public sphere, which might in turn influence the preferences of parties and candidates who are likely to take election results as a indicators for the preferences of citizenry as a whole. In that respect, it has been shown in the American context that the congress was more responsive to the shifts in the policy preferences of voters than of non-voters (Griffin and Newman 2005).

In tables 1 and 2, we present the mean policy preferences of voters, non-voters and of elites with regard to redistribution (table 1) and immigration (table 2). Although there are differences across countries on those questions, we find a rather consistent pattern. Indeed, with regard to preferences on redistribution, we observe that in all countries but Malta, non-voters favor redistribution more than voters. The difference in the mean position of these groups varies between 0.11 in Portugal and in Hungary and 0.35 in Poland where we find the largest difference. Even though the differences between the policy preferences of voters and non-voters are not particularly high, it is striking to observe that the pattern is rather consistent across very different countries. Interestingly, we also find that the political elites tend to be less favorable to redistribution than voters. This is true in almost all countries, exceptions being the Czech Republic and Denmark. As result, we observe that non-voters have almost systematically policy preferences that are further away from political elites than are the preferences of voters. This is the case in twelve of the countries under consideration with only Denmark and Malta showing a different pattern.³

In sum, what we find in relation to redistribution is that generally non-voters tend to be more pro-redistribution than voters who themselves are more in favor of redistributive policies than political elites.

³ While for Malta the high turnout and compulsory voting may be relevant for this, the explanation for Malta is less clear.

Table 1 about here

The picture is in many ways similar when we look at preferences of voters, non-voters and political elites on immigration. The main difference is that while non-voters had most “left” policy preferences on redistribution, they have most “right” or in other words anti-immigration preferences with regard to immigration. Here we also find that the political elites systematically differ from the population and are less against immigration than the citizens of their countries. Despite of this general pattern, there are differences across countries with non-voters exhibiting more pro-immigration stands than voters in Malta, Estonia and Latvia and in the countries where non-voters are more against immigration than voters the magnitude of this difference vary extensively, with countries such as Sweden or Germany having very large differences while they are almost unnoticeable in Portugal or Poland for example. These differences might be due to the large differences in the role that immigration plays in different countries and also different immigration patterns. The overall picture of this first analysis, however, is that non-voters are generally more against immigration than voters and that political elites are far more tolerant towards immigration than each of these groups. Consequently non-voters tend to be even further away from political elites than are voters.

Table 2 about here

4 Explaining distance between voters and elites

The results of the preliminary analysis shown above confirm differences in terms of policy preferences between voters and non-voters. They also show that generally, voters tend to have policy preferences that are closer to the stands of the political elites than non-voters. Interestingly while non-voters have more “left” preferences on redistributive issues than voters, they also tend to have more “right” preferences with regard to immigration.

In this part we try to explain these findings by turning to a multivariate analysis in which we are interested in explaining the distance between the opinions of an indi-

vidual respondent to the political elites. More precisely, we are interested in testing whether the differences in the distance to the political elites documented above can be at least partially explained by the social composition of the group of voters and non-voters. We are interested in this question because we have argued that we expect differences in terms of policy preferences between voters and non-voters because of the social composition of these groups. The distance between citizens' policy preferences and the preferences of the elites might not be directly linked to the act of voting, but rather to other socio-economic characteristics that also have an influence on turnout. Indeed, despite characteristics such as for instance the anonymity of the vote that make voting egalitarian in comparison with other forms of political participation, there is also clear pattern of who votes and who doesn't. In particular, there is wide evidence that social groups differ in their propensity to vote. While the causal mechanisms for the participation or non participation of various social groups in the elections are likely to differ, it has generally been found that education (e.g. Blais, Gidengil, and Nevitte 2004; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980), income (Leighley and Nagler 1992) and age are correlated with turnout. Historically there has also been an important gender difference in participation, even though this difference seems to be eroding (Norris 2001). In this analysis we control for those socio-economic variables in order to assess whether compositional effects can explain the fact that non-voters are further away from political elites than voters. In addition to this group of explanatory variable, we also consider interest in politics as well as the feeling of having a party that represents one's view. The rationale behind that is that these factors play an important role in determining participating in politics. At the same time, at least regarding interest in politics, it is likely that this characteristic plays a role in shaping ones policy preferences. Indeed, citizens interested in politics are expected to have more information about the various policies, which is likely to influence their preferences (e.g. Bartels 1996; Gilens 2001). The feeling of being represented by a party is also a relevant independent variable as citizens who decide not to turn out to vote might do so because they do not find a party that represent their views. If this is the case, the presumed underrepresentation of non-voters could be partly explained by an auto-selection mechanism, with citizens not feeling represented abstaining from voting.

Our dependent variable in this analysis is the absolute distance between an individual's policy preference and the stand of the political elites in the same country. This measure is computed for each individual in the citizen survey. Because there might be some systematic differences across countries in the various variables observed, we cannot consider all the individual observations as independent. In other words, an individual from a particular country is likely to share more characteristics with an individual from the same country than with an individual from another country, simply because they live in the same environment, political system, etc. In order to take that into consideration in our analysis, we use a 2 level multi-level model in which individuals are nested in countries.

Our analysis is conducted in three major steps. First we introduce a model in which we simply add non-voter as the only independent variable. This allows us to test whether non-voters are systematically further away from their representatives in EP. Second, we add socio-demographic variables in order to verify the hypothesis that non-voters are less well represented at least partly because of the socioeconomic composition of the group. In a last step, other independent variables such as interest in politics and feeling close to a party are also inserted in the model as they are generally associated with turnout, and could mediate the relation between turnout and policy preferences.

We provide the same models for explaining the distance to the elites on each of the two statements we are interested in and which concern redistribution and immigration. There is however a small difference between the two sets of models presented. For the preferences on redistribution letting the slope of "non-voter" vary across countries does not improve the fit of the model⁴. Therefore, we present models that have random intercepts and fixed effects to explain the distance to the elites on redistribution. This is not the case for the distance to the elites on immigration as on that topic, the effect of being a non-voter varies more across countries. This is why we present the models that have both a random intercept and a random slope for immigration.

⁴ According to the BIC measure of goodness of fit.

Table 3 about here

In relation to redistribution (table 3), the empty model (model 0), suggests that only a very tiny proportion of the variance can be explained by the country level. The effect of declaring having to vote in the EP election is small but as expected negative and significant. This means that the policy preferences of citizens who voted in the EP election were closer to the policy stand of the elites than those who did not vote. Interestingly, in model 2 where socio demographic variables are added, the effect of voting does not decrease but on the contrary slightly increases. We also find that the distance to the elites tend to increase with age, that citizens who have gone through tertiary education are closer to the average position of the elites and that the distance between ones' policy preferences and elites increased with the standard of living. Women also tend to be slightly further from their representatives, but this effect is not significant. Adding interest in the EP election campaign, interest in politics and feeling close to a party in model 3 does not alter the effects observed in model 2, and generally these variables seem not to be related to one's distance to the political elites. We nonetheless find a counterintuitive and marginally significant effect of interest in politics, which seems to increase the distance to political elites. All in all, our findings in relation to redistribution are that the voters are closer to the political elites than non-voters, that socio-demographic variables also influence the distance to the political elites in the expected direction, but that they cannot explain why voters are better represented than non-voters.

The model that focuses on immigration is presented in table 4. Generally, we find similar picture with voters having preferences that are closer to the elites than non-voters. Socio-demographic variables do not alter that effect, but it is worth noting that compared to issues related to redistribution, we find a much more important effect of education with highly educated citizens being much closer to the elites, while the subjective standard of living influences less the proximity with the political elites. This can be explained by the simple fact that given individual self-interest economic status is tightly linked to redistribution, while there is no such direct link in relation to immigration. Contrary to redistribution, interest in politics does decrease the distance with the elites with regard to immigration. This factor also slightly reduces the

effect of non-voting, suggesting that part of the distance between elites positions and non-voters can be explained by the fact that the latter are not as much interested in politics.

More generally, the analysis of the two policy fields shows that indeed voters are better represented by elites. It also confirms our expectation that socio-demographic characteristics are correlated to the distance of an individual's preferences to the stand of the political elites. However, the different socio-demographic composition of the groups of voters and non-voters do not explain why the former are better represented. In other words, our hypothesis that generally non-voters are less well represented is confirmed but the main explanation for that hypothesis - the varying socio-demographic characteristics of voters and non-voters - does not find support in our analysis.

The causal mechanisms that could explain a better representation of voters remain thus unclear. On the one hand, a possible interpretation would be that the political elites take policy preferences of voters more into account because these preferences are voiced during election which has consequences on the result of the vote and on the information about the public mood that is communicated in the public sphere. On the other hand, it is also likely that alienated citizens, or in other words citizens whose policy preferences are not channelled by the political elites might decide not to vote. In this latter case, it is the positioning of the political actors that would explain turnout rather than the other way around. However, this line of reasoning finds little support in our analysis as we do not find any relation between the feeling that there is a party that represents one's view and the distance to the political elites. As a result, the proposition that the elites take more into account the preferences of voters than non-voters remains a plausible interpretation. But this interpretation is so far largely speculative, as we are unable to test it directly.

5 Conclusion

This paper argues that despite the often reported lack of difference in party and candidate preferences between voters and non-voters, low turnout may lead to a policy bias in representation. The analysis above shows a rather consistent pattern in the differences in policy preferences of voters and non-voters, with non-voters being

clearly more to the “left” than voters on redistribution and more to the “right” on immigration than voters. On both dimensions, political elites are closer to voters than to non-voter. This pattern remains, once we control for social characteristics between voters and non-voters. Therefore, our hypothesis that voters and non-voters are diversely represented because of the social composition of these groups finds little support in the analysis. The differences with regard to political interest between voters and non-voters provide a limited explanation for the underrepresentation of the latter on immigration but not on redistribution. Finally, we do not find any relation between the feeling that there is a party that represents one’s view and the distance to the political elites.

As a result, the reasons for which the policy preferences of voters are better reflected by political elites remain unclear. A further investigation of the topic could help us understanding these differences. Such an analysis would ideally more finely distinguish between on the one hand explanations for a difference in policy preferences of voters and non-voters and on the other the mechanisms through which the views of voters and non-voters are channelled to the political elites. Further research could also integrate contextual factors such as the electoral system or the country-specific level of turnout which are likely to mediate the relation between individual turnout and the distance the political elites stands.

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*Table 1. Policy preferences of voters and non voters on
“Income and wealth should be redistributed towards poorer people”*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Political elites</i>	<i>Voters in EP election</i>	<i>Non-voters in EP election</i>	<i>Difference in preferences between voters and non-voters^a</i>	<i>Difference in absolute distance to the elites^b</i>
Austria	3.21	2.91	2.76	0.15	-0.15
Czech Republic	3.11	3.12	3.00	0.12	-0.10
Denmark	2.45	2.86	2.69	0.17	0.17
Estonia	3.56	3.08	2.89	0.19	-0.19
Finland	2.45	2.23	2.02	0.21	-0.21
Germany	3.32	3.00	2.76	0.24	-0.24
Hungary	2.88	2.15	2.04	0.11	-0.11
Latvia	2.37	2.22	2.07	0.15	-0.15
Malta	2.90	2.18	2.21	-0.04	0.03
Netherlands	3.14	2.55	2.40	0.15	-0.15
Poland	3.56	2.92	2.57	0.35	-0.35
Portugal	2.72	2.48	2.36	0.11	-0.12
Slovakia	3.69	2.88	2.76	0.12	-0.12
Sweden	3.11	3.09	3.05	0.04	-0.04

^a Formula used: (Voters-Nonvoters). Thus positive numbers mean that non-voters agree more with the statement than voters

^b Formula used: |voters-elites| – |non-voter – elites|. Positive values mean that the mean policy preference of non-voters is closer to the position of political elites.

*Table 2. Policy Preference of voters and non-voters on
“Immigration to [country] should be decreased significantly”*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Voters in EP election</i>	<i>Non-voters in EP election</i>	<i>Political elites</i>	<i>Difference in preferences between voters and non-voters^a</i>	<i>Difference in absolute distance to the elites^b</i>
Austria	2.55	2.30	2.80	0.26	-0.26
Czech Republic	2.21	2.03	3.56	0.18	-0.18
Denmark	3.29	2.71	3.84	0.58	-0.58
Estonia	2.58	2.64	3.92	-0.06	0.06
Finland	2.93	2.68	4.02	0.25	-0.25
Germany	2.97	2.53	3.91	0.44	-0.44
Hungary	2.29	2.13	3.71	0.16	-0.16
Latvia	2.35	2.39	3.38	-0.04	0.04
Malta	1.50	1.71	1.95	-0.21	0.21
Netherlands	2.91	2.81	3.10	0.10	-0.10
Poland	2.93	2.85	3.72	0.08	-0.08
Portugal	2.21	2.19	3.77	0.02	-0.02
Slovakia	2.43	2.30	3.24	0.13	-0.13
Sweden	3.55	2.95	4.57	0.60	-0.60

^a Formula used: (Voters-Nonvoters). Thus positive numbers mean that non-voters agree more with the statement than voters

^b Formula used: |voters-elites| – |non-voter – elites|. Positive values mean that the mean policy preference of non-voters is closer to the position of political elites.

Table 3. Multi-level model explaining distance to the political elites on redistribution

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Voter in EP election		-.03(.01)**	-.04(.01)***	-.04(.01)***
Age			.00(.00)***	.00(.00)***
Female			.02(.01)	.02(.01)
Tertiary education			-.08(.01)***	-.08(.01)***
Subjective standard of living			-.03(.01)***	-.03(.01)***
Interest in the EP election Campaign (higher number means less interested)				.00(.01)
Interest in politics (higher number means less interested)				-.02(.01)*
Feeling close to a party				.02(.01)
Constant	1.01 (.02)	1.12(.03)	1.17(.04)	1.21(.05)
Variance (countries)	.01(.00)	.01(.00)	.01(.00)	.01(.00)
Variance (individuals)	.42 (.01)	.42 (.01)	42.(.01)	42.(.01)
N (Countries)	14	14	14	14
N(Individuals)	13'294	13'294	12'820	12'758
Log likelihood	-13143.25	-13143.78	-12634.54	-12573.23

Table 4. Multi-level model Distance to the political elites on immigration

	<i>Model 0</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Voter in the EP election		-.12(.04) ^{***}	-.12(.04) ^{***}	-.10(.04) ^{**}
Age			.00(.00) ^{***}	.00(.00) ^{***}
Female			.01(.01)	-.00(.01)
Tertiary education			-.28(.01) ^{***}	-.27(.01) ^{***}
Subjective standard of living			-.01(.00) [*]	-.01(.00)
Interest in the EP election Campaign (higher number means less interested)				.01(.01)
Interest in politics (higher number means less interested)				.03(.01) ^{**}
Feeling close to a party				.00(.00)
Constant	1.36 (.10)	1.45(.10)	1.34(.11)	1.19(.11)
Variance (countries)	.13(.01)	.13(.01)	.13(.01)	.13(.01)
Variance (individuals)	.76 (.01)	.76 (.01)	.73(.01)	.73(.01)
Random slope: Variance (voter in EP election)		.02(.01)	.02(.01)	.02(.01)
N (Countries)	14	14	14	14
N(Individuals)	13'429	13'429	12'939	12'878
Log likelihood	-17292.2	-17258.43	-16405.34	-16332.16