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## Introduction

### Consequences of European Elections

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#### Introduction

Elections should be purposeful. They are the key moments when electorates hold representatives accountable, when new power holders are granted legitimacy, and, ideally—following open and engaged campaigns—when large contingents of informed citizens take part. European elections were first organized in 1979, and they were explicitly intended to provide parliamentarians with direct electoral mandates and to increase public involvement in European politics, hence strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the European Union (EU). In this volume, we investigate whether elections for the European Parliament (EP) live up to these expectations. We answer the fundamental question, ‘What are the consequences of European elections?’. Our primary focus is on the intended, desired effects that have materialized, but we also address a number of possibly unintended (and even undesirable) consequences, for which we find clear evidence. As shall be seen, our conclusions are mixed. While we find that some intended consequences have been (partially) realized, European elections have by no means lived up to the original optimistic expectations. Moreover, we find clear evidence that European elections have unintended consequences as well.

Prior to 1979, the Consultative Assembly—consisting of parliamentarians from the member states of the European Economic Community (EEC)—served as its advisory body. As more and more policies became regulated at the level of the EEC, however, the need grew for greater democratic legitimacy and accountability in the form of a direct electoral mandate at the European level. Eight EP elections have now been held, spanning more than three decades. These elections provide an adequate basis for evaluating whether

their desired outcomes have been achieved. Do they increase interest in and support for the 'European project'? Do these elections help to increase legitimacy and accountability?

When elections are free and fair,<sup>1</sup> they normally present voters with the opportunity to hold incumbents accountable for their past actions and provide representatives with electoral mandates to make decisions on the voters' behalf. By and large, national elections in stable democracies fulfil this function, obviously with some variation. But as a consequence of the complex, multilevel governance of the EU, European Parliament elections are less likely to function in the same way as national elections. The most important EU decisions are ultimately made by majority votes of the heads of state in the European Council, who are, in turn, accountable to the national parliaments. EP elections, therefore, do not provide voters with an opportunity to hold politicians accountable for their actions. In addition, parties rarely discuss the contents of European policies, thus making it difficult for voters to give electoral mandates for those policies. Consequently, we have sufficient cause to believe that EP elections are not performing as elections are supposed to perform.

Previous research on the European elections has demonstrated that voters—faced with elections that do not serve a clear purpose (e.g. Franklin 2014)—treat them as second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980), mostly using them as referendums on the performances of national parties. If voters are dissatisfied with their current national governments, they are more likely to cast protest votes at EP elections than they are at national elections (e.g. Van der Eijk, Franklin, and Marsh 1996). Even though the second-order election thesis has been criticized (e.g. Hobolt et al. 2009; Hobolt and Spoon 2012), it remains a dominant perspective on European elections.

One might be inclined to think that even if European elections do not perform as well as they ideally could, or perhaps should, little harm is done. We argue, however, that European elections likely have unintended consequences that are undesirable. EP elections may well provide a platform for Eurosceptics, in that by organizing direct elections for the EP, the EU is facilitating its own oppositional forces. Such elections may stimulate protest voting. Alternatively, or even simultaneously, they may reinforce the belief—particularly among younger voters—that elections are a waste of time. This attitude has consequences for voter turnout not only at EP elections but also at future national elections. Studying the intended as well as the unintended consequences of European elections is therefore of the utmost importance.

From the outset, the EU and its predecessors have been elite-driven projects; elites have initiated ongoing economic and political integration, and elites

<sup>1</sup> By free and fair we mean that potential representatives get a fair chance of being elected, that they have access to the media, and that neither candidates nor voters are intimidated.

have made decisions to enlarge the Union with new member states. Until the 1990s, this process experienced little opposition from citizens. Even after the introduction of EP elections, citizens were quite unconcerned about the direction in which 'Europe' was heading. The lack of interest was unsurprising because the EU's institutions and policymaking were at a level far removed from its citizens. Existing national identities, many different languages, and the ingrained tendency of citizens, parties, interest groups, and media to direct attention primarily to their own domestic politics obstruct the emergence of a Union-wide sphere of political discourse and debate.

Two other important differences between national and European elections are evident. First, even though the candidate of the largest parliamentary group of parties became the president of the European Commission in 2014 (a procedure made possible with the Lisbon Treaty of December 2007 and intended to continue as a feature of future EP elections), hardly any linkage exists between the composition of the EP and the composition of any executive body—particularly since the other twenty-seven European commissioners are put forward by national governments. Second, put bluntly, many voters are unaware of the activities of EP members (MEPs). Even those who pay close attention remain uncertain because the Parliament influences policies through parliamentary committees (which operate outside the limelight) and not through proposed motions or amendments, which might be reported in the media. Thus, even attentive citizens are unlikely to observe how European election outcomes affect the direction of EU policies. Parties, politicians, and the media have done little to alter this state of affairs. Campaigns for the EP have generally been lacklustre, and they have seldom, if ever, been fought on the expected consequences for EU policymaking. As a case in point, campaigns during the 2014 EP elections barely addressed the austerity measures and other economic and financial policy measures that had been initiated by the EU in order to save the euro. Since EU policies are not discussed in European election campaigns, voters have made choices during those elections largely on the basis of their evaluations of domestic parties—making plain why EP elections are often portrayed as second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980).

The process of European integration has been described as a period of permissive consensus, with elites freely pursuing new policies amidst public disinterest in the European project. There are good reasons to think that this period is now over (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2009). During the last two decades, parties and organized groups of citizens have increasingly opposed the European project. Opposition strengthened when the European 'troika' responded to the economic crisis by demanding that southern European countries take various austerity measures. But growing resistance had already been evident in previous years, when citizens obstructed the Treaty of Nice, the Constitutional Treaty, and the Lisbon Treaty in referendums in the Netherlands, France, and Ireland—three

countries that had traditionally shown strong support for European unification. However, even if the period of permissive consensus is indeed over, its cessation does not automatically imply that European elections will become first-order elections. Even if many voters were to be discontented with the EU, they could nonetheless continue to base their votes on their evaluations of national parties. After all, national parties—not MEPs—decide how much power is transferred to the transnational level (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999).

As second-order national elections, EP elections are unlikely to have their intended consequences, such as increasing democratic legitimacy and accountability. The second-order model implies that European voters do *not* use these elections to hold European politicians accountable for their actions. For this reason, several contributions to this volume either explicitly or implicitly work with the notion of European elections functioning as second-order national elections. Below, we will discuss state-of-the-art research on how voters, journalists, and parties behave in European elections. Before we do so, we will first briefly discuss the EP's role in the system of multilevel governance.

### European Parliament Elections

The EP has existed since 1958, when it was founded as a parliamentary institution for two communities—the EEC and the European Atomic Energy Community (Meny et al. 2008). At the time, the Parliament was called the European Parliamentary Assembly, and it comprised representatives from national parliaments who served part-time in the European Parliament. While the Assembly was officially granted the right to exercise control over the executive body (then called the High Authority), its main function was to debate the activities of the EEC. In 1962, the Assembly changed its name to the European Parliament, and it was gradually granted greater powers of scrutiny so that by 1975, it officially controlled the entire EEC budget.

As EEC member states gradually transferred power to the transnational level, concern grew about a 'democratic deficit'. National parliaments did not control EEC decisions and citizens from member states did not directly elect the EP (Wille 2013). Direct elections for the EP were organized, in part, to fill this democratic deficit (Hix et al. 2007) and also to remedy some other problems. Before 1979, MEPs were appointed by national parliaments and they were often recruited from governing parties alone. On occasion, members were selected from the opposition, but parties considered to be anti-European—such as communist parties—were generally excluded. Moreover, since MEPs felt that they had a commitment to voters in their own countries, most dedicated little time and effort to European affairs. These circumstances

contributed to the perceived lack of democratic legitimacy. Direct election would give each MEP a direct electoral mandate and it would make the Parliament more representative. Increased representation, in turn, would not only make the governance of the EC more democratic, it would also shorten the 'distance' between citizens and their representatives (Meny et al. 2008).

Almost two-thirds of eligible voters participated in the first direct elections to the EP in 1979. Many MEPs saw this turnout as a big success, and it stimulated the Parliament's self-confidence, which now felt that it operated with a clear electoral mandate. Pessimists noted, however, that the turnout was much lower than at national elections. Moreover, research showed that voters based their choices mostly on their evaluations of national parties. The elections, the pessimists concluded, were mainly second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980). Optimists argued, however, that if the campaigns were to focus on European issues, interest in these issues would intensify among voters, parties, and journalists; increased turnout would follow (Meny et al. 2008). European politicians appear to largely agree that the EP is crucial in safeguarding principles of democratic accountability. Consequently, a series of treaties (Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001), and Lisbon (2007)) extended the powers of the Parliament—a process referred to as the 'parliamentarization of the EU' (Judge and Earnshaw 2008; Rittberger 2012).

The EP's powers have gradually expanded and the EU exercises power in many areas of public policymaking. The second-order election theory, nonetheless, continues to underpin the dominant perspective on European elections. According to this perspective, voters use these elections to signal discontent to their incumbent governments by voting for parties that are more radical than any they would be inclined to support in elections considered to be more important. Hix and Marsh (2007) estimate that almost 40 per cent of the changes in party vote shares between national and European elections can be explained by vote transfers from large governing parties (in national elections) to small opposition parties (in EP elections). A second characteristic feature of second-order elections is that turnout is relatively low.

As Figure 1.1 shows, turnout rates dropped substantially after the first election, from roughly 66 per cent on average across all member states in 1979 to 44 per cent in 2014. Much of this drop in turnout is due to the EU's changing composition; turnout is much lower in the new member states—in particular, in East-Central Europe—than it is in the countries that formed the EU in 1979. If we examine only the original member states (excluding Germany because of the unification with former East Germany), a picture emerges of the change in turnout without these composition effects. In those countries, we also notice a drop between 1979 and 1994, which is followed by stability. Although turnout is not structurally declining, it is low—certainly

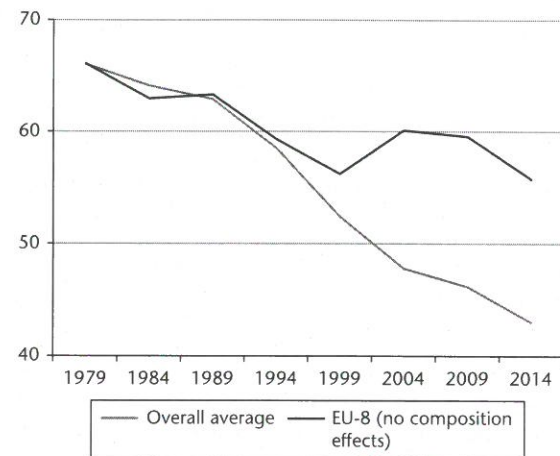


Figure 1.1 Turnout in European elections.

much lower than in national elections. What are the possible reasons for this lack of interest and enthusiasm among voters in the European elections?

One likely reason is that no executive power is at stake. Although most EU member states are parliamentary democracies where the executive is not directly elected, the outcome of a national parliamentary (first-order) election clearly has an impact on a government's composition. This impact is greatest in countries where the parliament is dominated by two large parties (or party blocks), such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, and, more recently, Italy. In multiparty systems, election outcomes are also perceived to be important for the composition of the government because they make certain coalitions impossible; in addition, the largest party usually leads coalition negotiations. Consequently, election campaigns revolve around the various problems and issues that confront national governments. In the European elections, the situation is quite different. The outcomes of these elections are almost inconsequential for the allocation of power in the EU's executive and policy-initiating bodies—the Commission and the Council. Even though the EP has an ultimate veto on the Commission's composition, the commissioners' appointments are mainly decided by member state governments through an invisible lobbying process. In 2004, the EP used its veto power to ensure that Rocco Buttiglione, the Italian candidate for the European Commission was not appointed in 2004, and in 2014, it threatened to use its veto power if Jean-Claude Juncker was not appointed president of the Commission. Notwithstanding such events, EP election outcomes are irrelevant to the Commission's ideological complexion. We will revisit this topic at the end of the book. EP elections also fail to play a role in the Council's composition, which is determined by national (first-order) elections. Clearly, EP election outcomes bear no relation to the composition of

executive bodies. Furthermore, the EP does not have recourse to other avenues of influencing policies that are open to national parliaments—such as the right of initiative.

Other reasons for the disinterest in European elections are not so much related to the EP's role or the elections themselves but to a lack of interest in European politics in general. Many decisions that are made at the European level are of a technocratic nature and are discussed in technocratic language, thereby adding to their remoteness from citizens' direct experience. While the EP does have budgetary power, decisions are often made by committees and remain invisible to voters. With as many as twenty-eight member states, citizens are unconvinced that their own countries have much influence nor that their representatives have much leverage in an oversized parliament—let alone that citizens' votes would matter. For all of these reasons, Van der Brug and Van der Eijk (2007, p. 230) argued that 'the design of the EU shields these institutions well against direct popular influence via European elections' (see also Hix 2008). Two additional factors add fuel to the fire—the mass media, which pay little attention to European politics (De Vreese et al. 2006), and the political parties, which dedicate only a small part of their budgets to European election campaigns.

## Developments and Expectations

The design of EU institutions, including the European Parliament, makes it unlikely that EP elections will ever become first order. Yet, certain events and observations indicate that the nature and significance of these elections are changing.

First, citizens' interest in EU politics appears to be growing. As power has shifted to the European level, citizens have become increasingly aware of the EU's importance in deciding public policies. Research has established that, slowly but surely, attention to European politics is on the rise, made evident by a partial Europeanization of national public spheres (as opposed to the development of a full-blown, pan-European public sphere) (Koopmans and Statham 2010). National media today pay more attention to EP elections than previously (e.g. Schuck et al. 2011).

Second, national politicians tend to shift the blame for unpopular policies to Brussels (De Vries and Van der Brug 2009). Even before the financial crisis, national politicians sought to implement changes in welfare state arrangements, arguing that these measures were required by the EU. Thus, the message to citizens is that unelected European officials, like José Manuel Barroso and Herman van Rompuy, can overrule democratically elected national leaders.

On the one hand, this belief is likely to increase interest in and attention to European politics. On the other hand, it is likely to fuel criticism of the EU.

Third, the EU is held responsible for the way the big economic crisis was handled. In southern Europe, many blame the EU for imposing financial austerity rules, which have brought the affected countries into economic recession. In northern Europe, many criticize the EU for 'wasting the taxpayers' euros on helping incompetent and corrupt regimes in southern Europe'. These sentiments are expressed most strongly by both left- and right-wing populist parties, which have surged in the 1990s and 2000s in many European countries. These parties are clearly trying to make the future of Europe an issue in European as well as national election campaigns. We would therefore expect the EU's future to become increasingly a core topic of contestation in both EP and national elections. Moreover, the initial 'EU-phoria', which was widespread in the new democracies that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, appears to be cooling. The uncertainty of the 'dream project's' future prospects is reflected in decreased public support for EU membership and in resistance to Europe's penetration into domestic politics.

The basic expectation, therefore, is that the EU will become both more salient and more contested—in particular during EP election campaigns and the elections themselves. We expect increased contestation on such issues as EU membership and policymaking: which countries will be allowed to join the EU and which areas of policymaking should be decided at the national and European levels? At election time, politicians are held accountable for their past actions, and they ask voters for mandates for future policies. In first-order national elections, election campaigns focus on the closeness of the election race, the candidates' personalities, the policy decisions made or promised, and so on. But the European elections, being of a different mould, produce a different sort of campaign. MEPs are not well known and they are not expected to carry out any policies themselves, so their characters are much less of an issue. 'Horse-race news' is important in first-order elections because the largest party will have an impact on government formation. Polling news in European elections is mainly on parties gaining or losing, which informs us about their *national* popularity. When we see horse-race news during European elections, we expect the primary motivation for that news to be the media's interest in the popularity of national parties (a topic that will be studied in Chapter 2). Debates are seldom on the actual EU policies that are decided by the MEPs; instead, they centre on the question of whether decisions on these matters should be made at a European rather than a national level.

In summary, we conclude that European elections highlight two main topics: the popularity of particular parties in the voters' own countries, and which decisions should be taken at the European level. Both are irrelevant to the work of MEPs. Whether these elections produce desired outcomes—such

as creating an avenue for public accountability and increasing public interest and involvement in European affairs—is questionable.

We should also consider whether European elections have secondary, unintended consequences when the intended consequences are not realized. The EU's function and reach as core topics of contestation during elections might either increase or decrease support for the EU. In this volume, we focus on questions such as whether the nature of the European elections is changing. Further, do heated discussions on the EU's role change attitudes towards the EU and the evaluation of politics?

An election campaign for the EP is very different to a campaign for a national parliament. Since politicians' characters are unlikely to become issues, we do not expect the kind of negative campaigning that we see in the United States. However, Eurosceptic parties may seize the opportunity provided by these elections to criticize the EU, thus forcing mainstream parties to speak in its defence. In this volume, we seek to better understand the consequences of EP elections. The consequences can be intended, such as increased salience of European issues for parties and the media, or increased engagement on the part of citizens. Or they can be unintended; the EU itself, rather than policy issues, may become the election's object, or politics may be negatively evaluated overall. We focus on three clusters of potential consequences: consequences for public debate and political involvement; consequences for party systems (because patterns of electoral behaviour are different in European elections compared to national elections); and consequences for public support for European integration. In each of these domains, EP elections might have positive or negative consequences. We briefly discuss each of these clusters.

#### *Consequences for Public Debate and Political Involvement*

A potentially positive aspect of European elections is that they generate more media attention to politics in general and to European politics and the work of European parliamentarians in particular. Critical media reporting on politicians' activities that informs the public about policymaking at the European level would be beneficial to the development of either a European public sphere or Europeanized national public spheres (Koopmans and Statham 2010). In theory, such news reporting could lead to the general public becoming more involved with European politics or being better informed about the importance of MEPs' work. Increased involvement and understanding could lead to more positive attitudes towards the EU, higher turnout, and less scepticism. Previous content analyses of European election campaign news, however, point to lacklustre campaigns (e.g. De Vreese et al. 2006). Lacking such positive consequences, European elections could have the

opposite effect. Although negative campaigns have been shown to increase cynicism towards politics (e.g. Cappella and Jamieson 1997), little is known about the effect of lacklustre campaigns. It seems plausible that they convey the message that EP elections are unimportant, generating a widespread belief that EU politics and the work of MEPs is unimportant as well. Such attitudes could decrease involvement in the EU and lead to low turnout. As argued by Franklin and Hobolt (2011), due to socialization effects, low turnout in European elections may have spillover effects to national elections. Since people 'get stuck in their ways', the first election in which someone is allowed to vote can have a strong effect in determining whether this person becomes a habitual voter or a habitual non-voter. Voters whose first elections happen to be European (i.e. second-order) elections may be socialized into thinking that elections in general are not important.

#### *Consequences for Party Systems*

European elections have consequences for party systems. Electoral researchers have shown that patterns of electoral behaviour are different in second-order elections and national (first-order) elections. In elections where executive power is at stake, the larger and more centrist governmental parties do relatively well, whereas smaller, more radical, or protest parties tend to have their best election results in second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Van der Eijk, Franklin and Marsh 1996). European elections have provided opportunities for parties such as the German Republikaner, the French Front National, the British Greens, and the UK Independence Party to make their first (albeit for some only temporary) electoral breakthrough. Moreover, debates on further European unification or enlargement have added a new dimension of conflict to European party systems. Contestation over European unification has been shown to be advantageous for smaller, more radical parties. Thus, the EU and European elections may have contributed in two ways to the success of radical parties from the left and the right. Little remains known, however, about the magnitude of the effects and about the possibly increasing impact of EU issue voting. Several contributions to this volume explore these questions further.

#### *Consequences for Public Support for European Integration*

There are good reasons to expect the EU's future—in terms of integration or enlargement—to become an increasingly important topic of contestation in EP elections. Several studies have shown increased EU issue voting in both national (e.g. De Vries 2007; De Vries and Tillman 2010) and European elections (e.g. Van der Brug et al. 2007; Hobolt et al. 2009). EU issue voting could well affect public support for European unification and this topic's

saliency. Whether EU issue voting increases or decreases Euroscepticism, however, will depend on the popularity of the parties that support or oppose the EU. Citizens that support anti-EU parties for whatever reason may take their messages on board and become more Eurosceptic. The stronger the support for anti-EU parties, the better the position they are in to put the issue of 'Europe' on the political agenda and to contrast their stance with that of established parties. In order to understand whether European elections help generate EU support or Euroscepticism, we need to study systematically the mutual relationships between the positions of parties and their supporters' attitudes.

#### **Exploring the Intended and Unintended Consequence of European Parliament Elections**

Our volume explores the three kinds of possible intended and unintended consequences of EP elections. We are neither the first to argue that EP elections may have unintended consequences, nor are we the first to study this question empirically. In this volume, however, we bring together multiple disciplines in a large collection of studies. The studies focus on different potential consequences of the European elections in an integrated framework, which takes into account parties, voters, and the mass media. Most of the scholars involved in this project are participants in the European Elections Study Group, which has produced collectively four edited volumes. This volume builds in a logical way on the previous four.

The first volume, *Choosing Europe?*, was edited by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). It focused on the extent to which electoral behaviour in the EU member states was conditioned by national contexts. Its conclusion was that voters arrived at their decisions in remarkably similar ways; differences in electoral processes, therefore, were due to differences at the supply side rather than the demand side. The second volume, entitled *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union*, was edited by Schmitt and Thomassen (1999). They concluded that the preconditions for effective and legitimate representation were clearly present at the EU level. The third volume, *European Elections and Domestic Politics*, edited by Van der Brug and Van der Eijk (2007), focused on the mutual ways in which European and national politics influence each other. It demonstrated that European elections are highly dominated by domestic politics and that European integration could become an increasingly important issue in national politics. If it does, it has the potential to cause large changes in the party systems of the member states. The fourth volume, *The Legitimacy of the European Union After Enlargement*, was edited by Thomassen (2009). He concluded that the EU's enlargement with ten new member states did not

undermine its legitimacy, although the lack of mutual trust between citizens of the various member states is worrying.

When reviewing the work produced so far, all the previous studies have focused primarily on explaining the behaviour of parties, voters, and journalists during European election campaigns. When analysing the election outcomes, the studies have mainly focused on the question as to whether these elections result in an effective representation of voters' attitudes. None of the previous volumes, however, has explored the *consequences* of European elections in a systematic way. The current volume focuses on this new question while simultaneously building on insights from the earlier studies and frequently referring to them.

### Data

The questions that are dealt with in this volume stem from observations of the EP elections and their role since the parliament's inception in 1979 until today. As much as possible, the authors provide a dynamic perspective. The volume relies strongly, but not exclusively, on the European Elections Studies (EES). These studies provide a unique database to test assumptions on the way elections contribute to increasing or decreasing support for particular political systems or for politics in general. At the time of writing, six EES studies have been conducted—in 1979, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, and 2009—each consisting of a voter study using a representative sample of adult citizens from each of the member states (nine in 1979 and twenty-seven in 2009). Insofar as the relevant documents could be retrieved, the EES studies also include content analyses of election manifestos of all parties represented in the EP. In 1994 and 2009, surveys were conducted among candidates for the EP, and in 1999, 2004, and 2009, media content analyses (using media reports of the campaigns) were conducted. Different parts of the volume rely on different data sources.

### Outline of this Volume

Given that elections are held with a purpose, including the possibility to hold politicians accountable, providing legitimacy, and engaging the public, it makes sense to assess whether these ambitions are realized. In this book, we examine how far EP elections meet these expectations. It consists of three parts, each dealing with a different potential consequence of the EP elections. Part I focuses on the consequences of European elections for public debate and political involvement. Within Part I, Chapter 2 by Hajo Boomgaarden and Claes de Vreese considers whether European elections have helped create a European public sphere. A content analysis of the news during election

campaigns shows that European elections attract more media attention than in the past, but the media's focus is more on domestic politicians than previously. We cannot therefore say that a truly European public sphere is developing. In Chapter 3 Susan Banducci and Chris Hanretty assess the degree to which the media portray the European elections as a genuine electoral contest and explore the antecedents of this type of coverage. In Chapter 4 Jürgen Maier investigates whether European elections have gone hand in hand with an increase in public political interest and knowledge about the EU. European Parliament elections have not been accompanied by a more knowledgeable electorate and knowledge is not distributed equally. In the fifth and final chapter of the first part of the volume, Mark Franklin and Sara Hobolt analyse the implications of European elections for turnout and electoral participation. They identify an important unintended consequence—namely, that EP elections socialize first-time voters into a habit of non-voting that decreases future turnout, also in subsequent domestic elections. Collectively, this section investigates key indicators of public debate and political involvement over time.

Part II of this volume focuses on the consequences of European elections for party systems. Chapter 6, by Catherine de Vries and Sara Hobolt, asks whether the issue of European integration is more important in European than in national elections. The authors find hardly any evidence for this suggestion and conclude that 'Europe' has become an important issue in both types of elections. In Chapter 7 Radosław Markowski examines how EP elections can change the configuration of parties and party systems when new parties use the EP elections to enter the party system. He concludes that European elections do offer a venue for parties to enter the party system and to sustain their success—particularly those parties that have clear ideological profiles. Chapter 8, by Silke Adam and Michaela Maier, discusses the circumstances in which parties, as issue entrepreneurs, strategically use the Europe issue. They conclude that party campaigns are neither 'true EU campaigns' nor merely second-order national campaigns. This section's final chapter (Chapter 9), by Sylvia Kritzinger and David Johann, focuses on (a) the extent to which voters deviate from the party they are closest to in left-right terms in order to vote for a Eurosceptic party, and (b) which role news media exposure plays in this regard. They conclude that few voters deviate from their left-right preferences in order to choose a Eurosceptic party and that the media hardly exert an influence on Eurosceptic vote deviations. Together, these chapters assess the EP elections' consequences for parties and party systems, and how European issues have reconfigured existing arrangements.

Part III of this volume focuses on the consequences of European elections for attitudes towards Europe. Chapter 10, by Laurie Beaudonnet and Mark Franklin, looks at aggregate level changes over time in support for Europe. They demonstrate that each election produces a small, temporary dip in

support, which then slowly recovers. In Chapter 11, Hajo Boomgaarden assesses the conditional relationship between talking about Europe and democratic satisfaction with European politics. In Chapter 12, Claes de Vreese and Hajo Boomgaarden investigate the effects of media coverage of EU politics on public EU attitudes across three different elections. Chapter 13, by Wouter van der Brug, focuses on the question of whether European elections help to increase Euroscepticism and generate support for anti-EU parties. He finds only a few indications of these unintended consequences—but neither does he find much evidence for the intended consequences.

The final chapter (Chapter 14), by Claes de Vreese and Wouter van der Brug, summarizes the main findings and conclusions. Since the findings are mixed, optimists might say that the glass is half-full, while pessimists could see the glass as being half-empty. On the one hand, European elections have produced some of their intended consequences. The salience of these elections has increased and media attention to EP election campaigns has intensified. European elections have also witnessed more political contestation. On the other hand, the contestation is not so much about the issues that MEPs grapple with but rather about the polity itself; that is, how much European integration do we want? This question, however, is ultimately decided by national politicians, and it is therefore not surprising that European integration has increasingly become an issue in domestic politics. Moreover, the more salient the European elections become, the more these campaigns are dominated by national politicians. So—although these elections enable citizens to have their attitudes represented—several results are still in line with the second-order model that was originally proposed by Reif and Schmitt (1980) when they evaluated the first EP elections of 1979.

Some consequences are unintended. The most notable ones are that European elections cause a temporary dip in EU support and that European elections have a decreasing effect on turnout in both European and national elections by socializing cohorts of first-time voters into non-voters. After discussing the implications of our findings, we propose some possible improvements to the EU's design, which would enable European elections to perform better at achieving what they were intended to achieve.

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