Democratic Freedom,
through Democratic Constraint:
The Consequences of Political Responsiveness

By

Jos Meester

S0714119

Leiden University

Democratic Freedom, through Democratic Constraint:

The Consequences of Political Responsiveness

By Jos Meester

Abstract

Over the past few decades a considerable literature, based on the populist notion of democracy, attempted to explicate the more or less successful translation of citizen demands into policy by the political system. Yet maximizing political responsiveness need not be the highest good a democracy can aspire too. Following a liberal theory of democracy this paper moves political responsiveness to the position of the independent variable and shows that there is a connection high political responsiveness (and the risks for a tyranny of the majority this entails) and the freedom of the people living within the state. Drawing on data from the OECD and the Eurobarometer a measure of political responsiveness is developed based on behaviour, rather than attitudinal congruence. This allows the author to show the negative association between responsiveness and freedom (as captured through the CIRI Human Rights Project) in a sample of Western and Eastern European countries between 2006 and 2010.

Introduction

Over the past few decades a vast literature has emerged focussing on political responsiveness, that is the translation of citizens' demands into policy in different political systems. Attempting to account for states' and the European Union's non-perfect translation of citizens' demands research has examined the incentives and obstacles to governmental responsiveness. By now it is clear that the electoral procedures, federalist state structures, presidential systems and several other institutions affect the accurate and timely translation of citizen-demands into policy (Canes-Wrone & Shott, 2004; Soroka & Wlezien, working paper). The general thought underlying this research program seems to be that political responsiveness is essential for the proper functioning of democratic institutions (Franklin & Wlezien, 1997). Several studies for instance take the degree of responsiveness as a proxy for

democracy (Brooks, 1985 & 1990; Hakhverdian, 2010; Lijphart, 1984; Hobolt & Klemmemsen, 2005).

Equating democracy with popular sovereignty, measured as politicians' responsiveness to the population, is heavily reliant upon the populist theory of democracy. It presupposes that citizen control of policy is the highest goal of a democratic system (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011: 22; Hopkin, 2004). Yet the institutions that have been found to limit responsiveness are often designed to do just that. The alternative conception of liberal democracy instead recognizes the dangers inherent in unbridled majority power (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011: 22-23; Hopkin, 2004). Aspiring to high levels of responsiveness may force a state to suboptimal or even dangerous policy outcomes as the state's citizens may not always be motivated and/or capable of providing high quality input that can serve as a basis for policy. It is this concern of the attempt to directly translate citizen preferences into policy, irrespective of liberal constitutional constraints, that is one of the driving forces behind the discussion on populism (Mudde, 2004: 561). To limit the dangers inherent in democratic decision making, liberal democratic theorists advance that properly functioning democracies should have limited responsiveness to their citizens' demands (Machiavelli, 2007: 122-124). Institutions need to constrain, as well as facilitate, the translation of citizen demands into policy if the aim is to preserve the freedom of the population as a whole.

In other fields of research the concept of democracy is often given more depth. Rather than looking merely at citizens' control of policy, a comprehensive view including democratic institutions and citizens' rights is used. Frequently used standard measures of democracy such as those published by Freedom House give democratic rights an important role in their analyses. In an attempt to go beyond the populist model of democracy this paper therefore investigates the implications of high responsiveness from a liberal perspective. It does so by shifting the focus from the determinants of responsiveness to the implications of responsiveness for a citizen's prospects to live a free life in the state in question. The question it seeks to answer is: 'Does high political responsiveness increase or decrease the ability of citizens to live a free life in the state?' First of all this requires some further discussion of the two democratic models linking them to the tension between responsive and responsible governance developed by Mair (2009). Following this, the linkage between responsiveness and freedom, as well as a clear definition and operationalization of these concepts, will be explicated. Finally the results of the responsiveness measure are discussed and related to the freedom within the country.

Translating Responsiveness into Freedom

The populist and liberal models of democracy revolve around different views of representation. While the liberal model takes politics as a separate realm that represents the interests of the public from above, the populist model focuses on representation from below through rule by the people (Holmberg, 2011: 57; Hopkin, 2004: 636-642). The latter model seeks to make a strong and clear link between the exercise of state power and the wishes of the population, ultimately aspiring to complete popular sovereignty. Policy is thus legitimized as the will of the people, and therefore reliant on citizens' equal participation in its formulation. Assuming everyone's vote has been weighted equally, support from the majority is the only possible justification for state policy as the general will is thought to be inherently good. From the same argument it also follows that any impediment to the formation or the implementation of the general will is illegitimate, as it would violate the principle of equal participation since by definition there can be no majority next to the general will (Hopkin, 2004: 636-640).

The liberal conception of democracy on the other hand thrives on exactly these impediments to the implementation of majority opinion. Rather than relying on equal representation to ensure collectively good policies, this democratic theory seeks to defend the rights of individuals (Andeweg & Thomassen, 2011: 23; Hopkin, 2004: 641). This branch of thought sees state-power, rather than inequality, as the biggest threat to the citizens. It is not the government's task to do as citizens please, but to allow citizens to do as they themselves please (in so far as they do not infringe upon one another's ability to do so) (Held: 2006:36-38). This branch of democratic theory thus focuses on keeping government from infringing upon the life and liberty of individual citizens, regardless of the government's motivation for doing so. Rather than having public (or majority) opinion guiding policy, the limited responsiveness achieved through politicians' rational anticipation of election results should be enough to keep them in check.

In the populist view voters actively select delegates and give them a mandate to implement their policies (Hopkin, 2004: 638; Mair, 2009: 11). It is this perception that informs the idea of party-democracy, in which parties become a liaison for the public to translate their will into policy. Parties are expected to cement the link between voter and policy, which is inherently problematic as they face a trade-off between responsive and responsible governance (Mair, 2009). The demands of the more liberal ideal of 'good governance' can clash with the demands made by the population.

3

If one assumes self-interested and boundedly rational citizens, chances are that, at some point, they will attempt to translate this self-interest into policy. Policy is the primary means through which the legislature can effectuate the redistribution of resources in society. As the ability to formulate policy forms the basis of the state's regulatory power, a certain amount of citizen influence is a given in any democratic state. Yet unbridled policy responsiveness poses the familiar risk of the tyranny of the majority as foreseen by for instance Aristotle (2005: 143-154), Tocqueville (2002: 282-286) and Madison (1787). Though some citizen control of policy is a necessary condition for the freedom entailed in a democratic state, responsiveness beyond this threshold may have a detrimental effect on the citizens' freedom. After all, any kind of redistribution and most forms of regulation entail a loss of resources and / or freedom for some citizen in favour of others. Worse yet, these resources are redistributed on the basis of electoral incentives instead of allocation efficiency. The redistribution may thus not be efficient, and when heavily implemented may leave groups of citizens worse off.

A 'proper' democratic state capable of providing the liberal goal of a free life for all of its citizens thus needs to constrain its ability to make policy. The institutional design of the state is paramount in achieving this goal. Taking a cue from Madison suggests that a system with ample checks and balances is necessary to ensure the liberty of the population, even though it may render that system prone to deadlock thereby constraining its ability to be responsive. Whoever rules the state (even if that is the majority population as in a democratic state) should be so constrained that it becomes impossible to threaten the liberty of others.

In the republican tradition one of the primary means to constrain policymaking is by putting legislative power in the hands of a large number of actors. As each chases his own self-interest, the group will be unresponsive to particularistic demands. Only when significant pressures mount will their preferences align, only when a clear common good is at stake will they be able to make policy. The more veto players, the less policy will be produced (Tsebelis, 1995 & 1999). The 'impossibility of significant departures from the status quo' caused by a high number of veto players ensures political stability (Tsebelis, 2002: 13), and thereby the continuation of the democratic political system and the freedom it grants its citizens.

Yet participation in governance is not alien to the liberal theory of democracy either. For a population to be truly free it need not only be incapable of threatening one another's freedom, it need also internalize the democratic nature of the system. Through participation in the state's institutions citizens are socialized in the norms of their system (Ichilov, 2003;

4

Machiavelli, 2007: 104 & 149). Democratic power should find its basis with the common people, rather than with a ruling class, since they lack the motives and means for oppression (Machiavelli, 2007: 106-9). Putting the power in the hands of common people should also give them a clear stake and responsibility for maintaining this freedom, inspiring them to put in their best efforts. Socialization through participation in government allows for a vibrant and powerful population (Machiavelli, 2007: 112). The maintenance of democratic institutions is thus also a concern. Institutions that allow for high responsiveness are unlikely to be very durable, as the legislation that passes through them could also amend them. Rigid institutions are the best safe-guard of the democratic nature of the state.

Following the liberal view of democracy, responsiveness within a state cannot be the endpoint of a study. The liberal view stresses the dangers to the citizens' freedom inherent in high political responsiveness, while the populist model sees high responsiveness as a necessary safe-guard for a population's freedom. In this paper responsiveness will thus be shifted to the position of the independent variable and be linked to the citizens' ability to live a free live within the state, so as to see to which of these two conceptions of democracy holds.

Conceptualization & Operationalization

To test the theory that less-responsive democratic states are more capable of maintaining their citizens' freedom one needs a clear framework within which to compare the different states. It thus pays to explicate the conceptualization and measurement of the components of this study. The dependent variable, political freedom, will be understood as the extend to which individual citizens have the liberty to set and pursue their own goals (Held, 2006: 36-38). Political freedom is quite a difficult concept to measure, yet the abundant attention it has received has produced some standard measures for it. In this paper the Empowerment Rights Index from the Cingranelli and Richards' (CIRI) Human Rights Project will be used. This 14-point index is an aggregate of countries governments' respect for it's citizens' rights to free movement, free speech, freedom of religion, political participation and worker's rights. It is based on the U.S. Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices and Amnesty International's Annual Reports (Poe *et al.*, 2001). The project seeks to measure the countries' governments' human rights practices, not the actual conditions in the country as these might be influenced by non-state actors (CIRI, 2012). The measure thus fits well with the liberal perspective stressing the need to protect citizens' rights from their governments. In contrast to other established measures such as the Freedom House Index (Freedom House,

2012), the Polity IV Projects's index (Center for Systemic Peace, 2012), and the Bertelsmann-Transformation Index (Bertelsman Stiftung, 2012) it also shows variance through the years in established democracies, which is necessary for the longitudinal perspective that will be taken in this research.

When it comes to responsiveness, throughout the substantive literature on the topic several ways of measuring it have been employed. One approach to measuring responsiveness is through repeated measures of the attitudinal congruence between citizens and politicians, regardless of the actual policy output (van der Kaap, 2006). The attitudes to be compared are derived from either average positions on politicized issues, or average positions on the left-right dimension (Hakhverdian, 2010; Holmberg, 2011; Kang & Bingham Powell, 2011). Unfortunately, the first option suffers from a lack of availability of consistent longitudinal and cross-sectional data, due to changing saliency of the issues. No single issue remains salient long enough over a wide array of cases to come to approximate a consistent measure of responsiveness. In a comparable way, the second method relying on left-right dimensions fails as well. The content of the left-right dimension is highly context specific, making cross-sectional and cross-temporal comparison impossible (van der Brug, 2001). Though a measure of responsiveness could still be calculated for a given year, it could not be compared to the responsiveness in other years or countries as the left-right dimension these figures are based may be different.

On top of these data problems the attitudinal measures also suffer from a methodological problem. Any measure based on attitude congruence is actually a measure of representation, rather that responsiveness, as it fails to incorporate the element of change essential to responsiveness (Andeweg, 2011: 39; Stimson *et al.*, 1995: 543). Congruence does not equal change in the same direction. Moreover, these measures often ignore the behavioural aspect that the concept of responsiveness implies. Congruent attitudes (assuming they are sincere) may motivate politicians to try to act as their voters would have, but the real test comes when the policies they enact affect the voters' daily lives. This is especially relevant considering the (liberal) institutions and non-state actors that influence the policymaking process and constrain legislators' ability to simply translate preferences into policy. Simply determining citizens' appreciation of the policy output of government is also an inadequate test of responsiveness however. According to van der Kaap citizens are unlikely to be informed enough to critically appraise policy output, thus rendering the validity of these measures questionable (2006).

As previous measures are problematic for the design of this study, a new measure suited for longitudinal cross-sectional comparisons, which incorporates the impact of institutions on policy, is necessary. Regarding the demand component I take the commonly used question: '*What do you consider to be the most important problem facing your country?*' present in the Eurobarometer (see for instance Bara, 2001; Burden & Sanberg, 2003; Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2005 & 2008; MacKuen & Coombs, 1981). The question entails a clear demand for governmental action to address this problem, and the standardized answer categories provide data on citizens' demands on government comparable across national contexts. By calculating the percentage of respondents indicating each answer-category as the most important problem over the years allows one to compare the importance of different area's, as well as register changes over time. From the question providing the citizen's demands 8 of the 14 categories could be directly linked to governmental spending (see Appendix 1 for these categories). One of these has to be excluded however, as spending on unemployment benefits is in large part determined by economic fortunes, besides politicians decisions on policy. The 7 remaining categories covered one or both of the most important problems facing the country defined by 54.8 percent of European citizens in 2010.

As indicated by Soroka & Wlezien (2005: 670) an even clearer demand for governmental action could be derived from the question '*Do you think government is spending too much, too little or about the right amount on [policy]?*' from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). The problem with this kind of demand measure is that the interval between measures is about 5 to 10 years, thus making it nigh impossible to determine what it actually was that drove the change in the citizens perceptions. Other measures from the ISSP, such as the one used by Soroka & Wlezien (2004), suffer from the same problem. Data with intervals as long as this can only be used to establish congruence, not responsiveness.

Regarding the reply of government to citizens' demands '*spending levels provide the clearest, most unambiguous indicators of governmental commitments to address various problems*' (Jacoby & Schneider, 2006: 548) (though it should be kept in mind that government can also respond in other ways, see Eulau & Karps, 1977). One way to acquire these spending figures is through the annual opening speeches outlining the policy goals for the upcoming year, such as the 'Queen's Speech' in England and the 'Prime Minister's Opening Speech' in Denmark (Hakhverdian, 2010; Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2005: 385-386). These speeches are fraught with a comparable problem as the attitudinal data above however, as they only state intent, not behaviour. To ensure the actual behaviour is captured, spending

data is drawn from the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) database. To attain a single measure of government responsiveness, the demand and supply in each policy area will be compared through a regression analysis in which all policy areas serve as cases of equal importance (more information on this method can be found in the next section).

In this situation, a case can be made for a lagged measure of policy output, to capture government responding to citizen preferences after they become known. Theoretically politicians should not have to wait for an independent survey to adjust policy if they are indeed responding to pressures from particular groups. Some have made the argument that the majority of politicians are not dependent on the same poll as used in this research for their information on public opinion, as politicians supplement their information with other polls, media coverage and other antenna's in society (Kingdon, 1984: 153; see also Stimson *et al.*, 1995: 545). Drafting legislations, building coalitions to get a bill through parliament and implementing the policy do take considerable time however. In this paper government action will thus be compared with one and two-year lagged measures of citizen's demands.

Much the same applies to the effects of policy. Though money may have been spent, it still takes time for projects to be set up and for personnel to (re-)train. Some time will pass between the initiation of policy and its effects. Responsiveness scores will thus be compared against the next year's freedom measure, as a policy's effects are likely to be underestimated if one looks at those effects during the year the policy is being drafted or implementation is just starting.

On the other hand it could be argued that for policies threatening the citizens' freedom the rights upon which these policies infringe have to be suspended before the actual policies are made. In this case the citizens' freedom would be curtailed in the process leading up to a policy, rather than after implementation. This line of argumentation does not hold with the freedom measure used in this study however. The CIRI Human Rights Project's coding is not based on human rights written into law, because governmental practices may not necessarily follow the law (Cingranelli & Richards, 2008: 4). Any changes in CIRI's scores are thus due to governmental actions stemming from policy, not the changes in the laws that made these policies possible. For example: Though human rights may have to give way for anti-terrorism legislation, the human rights infringements that CIRI codes do not occur until the police force starts executing the anti-terrorism policy making use of its newfound competencies.

Another concern with measuring responsiveness is the potential endogeneity captured by the measure. While several authors have found that it is mainly public opinion causing

policy change, rather than the other way around (Brettschneider, 1996; Kang & Bingham Powell, 2011; Page & Shapiro, 1983; Stimson *et al.*, 1995) or that citizens merely adjust their demands for policy when that policy is indeed produced by politicians (Franklin & Wlezien, 1997; Soroka & Wlezien, working paper), others found that public opinion is heavily influenced, if not dominated, by politicians (see for instance Holmberg, 2011). It is unclear whether these differing findings are a product of the different national contexts or of the different measures, but it is clear that the bottom-up effect that is supposed to be the driving force of politics cannot simply be assumed.

Both the tyranny of the majority and the tyranny of the opinion shaping minority in office would lead to high responsiveness measures, but imply a qualitatively different processes that pose different threats to the rights of the citizen. It is thus important to be able to distinguish between these two processes. To guarantee that the responsiveness measure reflects policy based on citizens' demands, and not the other way around, government's spending on a policy area is only compared to citizens' demands prior to government's spending. As any casual effect requires the cause to precede the effect, this effectively eliminates the option of policy shaping public opinion.

Some control variables are introduced into the analysis as well. One such is GDP growth, as the economic fortunes of a country condition the discretion that the government has in changing its expenditures. Governmental parties are not completely free to allocate funds as they see fit, as running programs need to stay funded. In cases of GDP growth, the additional funds could increase a government's ability to be responsive to citizens' concerns, while a GDP decline makes any spending decision a though one. Another control needs to be implemented for the democratic experience of a country, as both politicians and institutions may cope with citizens' demands differently in old and new democracies. Descriptive statistics of these variables can be found in Appendix 2.

Cases are drawn from all democratic European countries. Data is available from 2003 till 2010 for the following cases: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. This sample provides ample variation in the institutional set-up and respect for democratic rights. All countries in the sample are also functioning democracies. The gains in citizens' freedom associated with the increased responsiveness through the transition from a non-democracy to a democracy are thus present in each of these countries. The variation in responsiveness in

these countries is occurs beyond minimum threshold necessary for a democracy to function, risking the tyranny of the majority.

Putting a Number on Responsiveness

Considering the lively debate on the meaning and measurement of responsiveness in the literature, the figures derived from the novel approach described above merit attention as they form the main input for all further analyses in this paper. The conceptual basis of the measure has been clarified above, but its quantification has so far escaped attention. The components of responsiveness (citizens' demands and government's spending) will here be combined into a single measure of responsiveness by means of a linear regression. The variance in spending explained through the regression (R^2) forms the indicator of the share of governmental spending that can be accounted for by the citizens' demands. Higher explained variance thus indicates a more responsive government, while a lower amount of explained variance indicates a less responsive government.

The regression analysis seeks to account for governmental spending through both a one-year and a two-year lagged citizens' demand variable, as making policy takes time (and to avoid endogeneity problems). Using two lagged variables next to one another introduces the risk of auto-correlation, which is the case here (Pearson's $r = 0.237$; $P < 0.05$; $N = 98$). To avoid overestimating responsiveness by adding up the country specific variance explained by both variables, the two variables are entered in the same regression. This produces some slight multi-colinearity (VIFs around 2.0), driving the variables' significance up, but it allows for a more accurate estimate of the responsiveness. The sample is analysed in separate regression analyses by country and year, so as to acquire comparable measures for every nation over time. The six policy area's thus become the cases in the regression on the basis of which each country's responsiveness throughout each year is established. This cuts the number of datapoints in the regression analysis down to the six policy area's, thus only highly systematic covariance between citizen's demands produces a (close to) significant impact of the demand variables and associated high R^2's. Responsiveness figures of every country per year are thus based on separate analyses. A graphic summary of the outcomes of these analyses can be found in Figure 1, a comprehensive report can be found in Appendix 3.

Figure 1 displays the average responsiveness per country based on the R^2 of a single regression analysis for each country per year, in which both the one and two-year lagged citizens' demand variables have been entered. The spending accounted for by public demand

Figure 1: Countries' average levels of responsiveness in the period from 2006 till 2010. Responsiveness is based on the R^2's of regression analyses of both the one and two year lagged citizens' demand variables against governmental spending. The dotted line represents the whole sample's average.
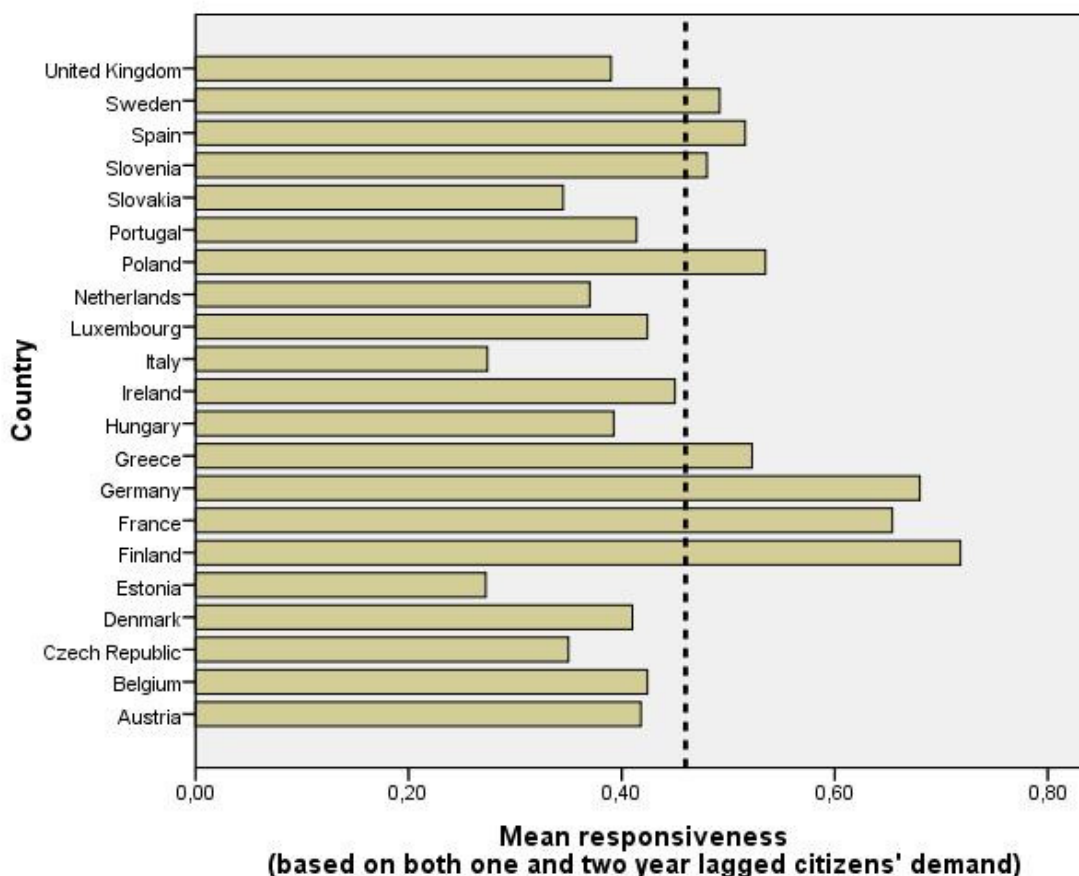
throughout the sample ranges from 0.27 (Estonia) to 0.72 (Finland), with an overall mean of 0.46 (the dotted line in figure 1; standard deviation equals 0.27). In the whole sample individual years ranging as low as 0.01 (Estonia and Italy in 2010, Ireland in 2006) and as high as 0.95 (Finland in 2009) can be found. The full sample consists of 98 country-year datapoints. Within the sample Finland and Germany attain consistently high levels of responsiveness, while the lower responsiveness scores are not as clearly grouped around several countries. Most countries show a considerable range of variation in their responsiveness, and almost all countries have at least one year during which their responsiveness score approaches zero.

Besides a few high and low scoring countries there does not appear to be any clear pattern in the data. Both Eastern and Western European countries score above as well as

below the mean. A T-test comparing the two indicates there are no significant differences. Democratic tradition thus does not seem to be a very influential factor when it comes to politicians being responsive to their citizens. The same goes for electoral systems, contradicting findings by Hobolt & Klemmensen, (2005 & 2008), Kang & Bingham Powell (2011) and Soroka & Wlezien (2010 & working paper). The majoritarian system ends up somewhere in the middle of the pack, while proportional systems can be found round the average as well as the higher scores. Mixed member proportional systems have no clearer position either, as they give rise to responsiveness scores falling anywhere from the lower end till the higher end of the pack.

The populist democratic thought of citizens supplying politicians with a mandate upon which to act does not find strong support either. Looking at responsiveness over the years there seems to be no clear effect of the occurrence of elections. Figure 2 displays how responsiveness (chequered bar) and its component based one year lagged citizens' demands (black bar) and the component based on a two year lag (white bar) change as time passes since the last election. The supposed mandate given at the elections would be expected to translate into high responsiveness to the citizens' demands expressed one year ago during the year following the elections. The same goes for the period two years after the elections, during which high responsiveness to the demands citizens' expressed two years ago is to be expected. In other words, governments would be expected to be responsive to the mandate given at the time of the last elections. Responsiveness does not seem to change as expected however. In practice, responsiveness to citizens' demands of both one and two years ago increases in the first two years after the elections. During these years the one year lagged component even remains slightly stronger than the two year lagged component. There is no clear effect of government sticking to the mandate it derived at the elections.

In a society rife with opinion polls politicians could potentially still function as delegates, without sticking to a programmatic mandate derived from elections however. They could also follow current public opinion, and attempt to legislate in accordance to that. This would lead one to expect politicians to be more responsive to more recent citizens' demands for policy, but this dynamic is not present in the data either. The one year lagged component is nigh equal to the two year lagged component (respective averages 0.27 and 0.25).

It could also be that politicians only attempt to function as delegates when properly motivated to be responsive, for instance by upcoming elections. Yet responsiveness does not noticeably rise as the supposedly office seeking politicians approach the elections either (data not shown). Lacking support for such basic populist democratic propositions it seems justified

to question the thought of democracy based on the expression of the general will and its normative goal of high political responsiveness, and look at other dynamics regarding responsiveness instead.

Figure 2: Average responsiveness in post-election years. The horizontal axis displays the amount of years that have passed since the last election, the bars represent to what extend spending can be related to citizen demands of one year ago (black), two years ago (white), and the two added up (chequered).
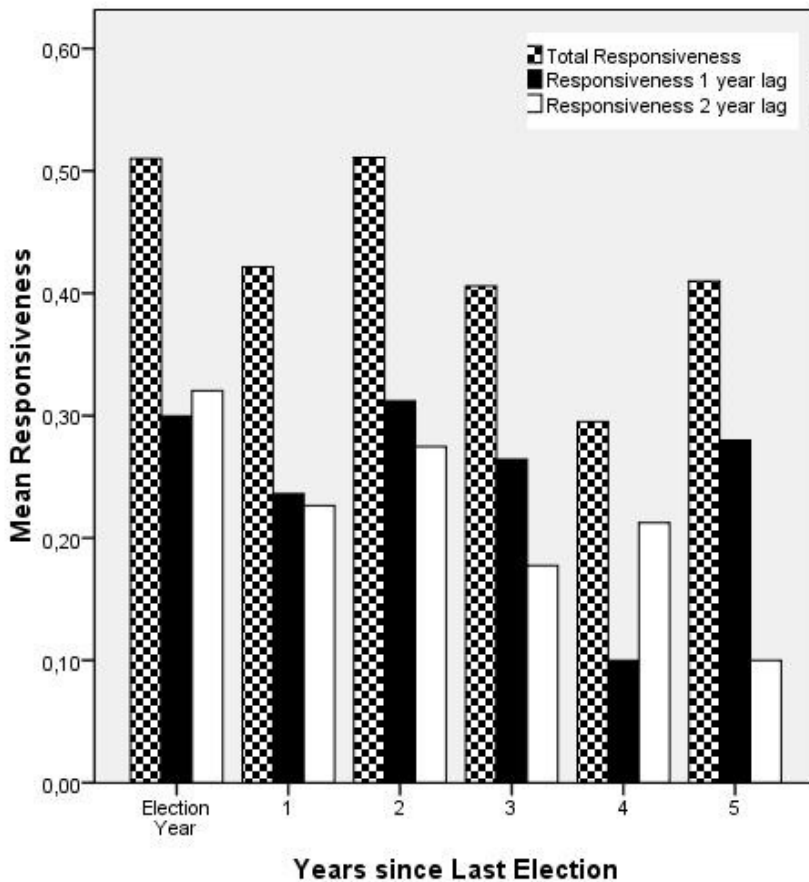
The Link to Freedom

After having provided an overview of responsiveness throughout the sample, it is now time to turn one's attention to liberal democratic theories' claim regarding responsiveness' impact on these countries. Does high political responsiveness indeed threaten the liberty of the citizens living within the state? Given the responsiveness data calculated above and the already available data on freedom, this question can now be answered by means of a simple linear

regression. The results of the regression analysis can be found in Table 1. The first model seeks to account for political freedom solely in terms of political responsiveness. It turns up a non-significant relation (b = -0.865; P > 0,05), accounting for a mere 2.7 percent of the variation. A second model that does include control variables (democratic experience and GDP growth) fares far better and manages to account for about 12.2 percent of the variance in countries' citizens' freedom.

Table 1: A linear OLS-regression of current political responsiveness against the following year's freedom (N=77, R^2 = 0.122)

	Variable	Coefficient	Significance
Model 1	Coefficient	12.487 (0.316)	
	Political Responsiveness	-0.865 (0.596)	0,151
Model 2	Coefficient	11.918 (0,404)	
	Political Responsiveness	-1.149 (0,584)	0.053
	Democratic Experience (in years)	0.012 (0,005)	0.022
	Yearly GDP Growth	-0.051 (0,035)	0.146

In this second model the effect of responsiveness on the freedom within the country turns out to have a close to significant effect (P = 0.053). Given the modest sample size (N = 77), especially compared to the amount of variables in the regression, it is plausible to assume that there is indeed an effect of responsiveness on freedom, and quite a substantial one at that.

Political responsiveness has a substantial impact on freedom, and its effect is in the expected direction (b = -1.149). A move from a fully responsive system to an unresponsive system can thus account for a gain of over one point on the 14-point CIRI index. That is the equivalent of the effect of a democratic tradition of about a century. A graphic representation of the effect of political responsiveness can be found in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Country's average political responsiveness and freedom, and the regression line showing the relation between the two variables (not based on average positions).
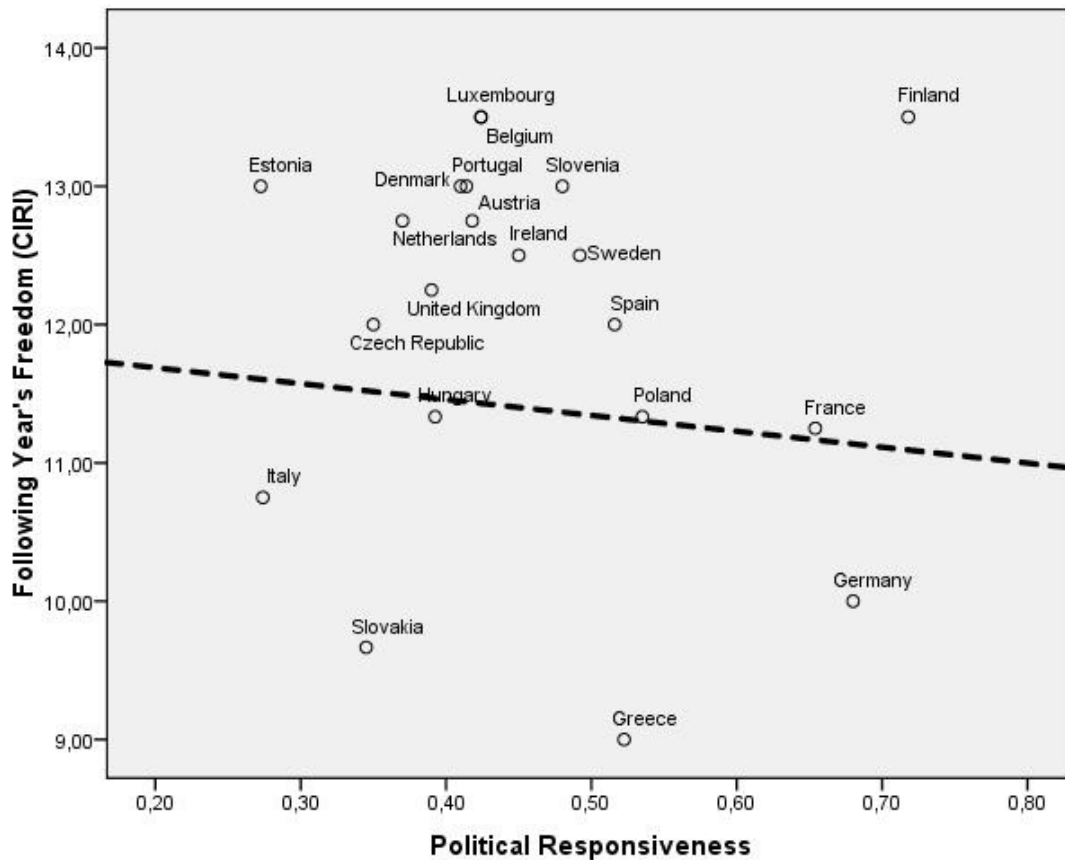
As can be seen in figure 3 more responsive countries tend to rank somewhat lower on the freedom scale. The effect can be hard to distinguish however, given the large difference in democratic experience between Western and Eastern Europe and its impact on the freedom within a country. Still, highly responsive countries such as France and Germany fall somewhat lower at 11.5 and 10 respectively than the bulk of the countries (which are located between 12 and 13.5). Interestingly Finland, the country that consistently proved to be most responsive, still manages to maintain a position at the top of the freedom scale. It is also the oldest democracy in the sample however, potentially explaining its outlying position. Italy

and Slovakia appear to be outliers with their relatively low levels of political responsiveness as well as freedom. Though ascertaining the cause of the exceptional positions of these outliers is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that without these three cases there would be an even stronger connection between responsiveness and freedom. If a third variable could account for the position of Italy, Finland and Slovakia the regression line would have a considerably steeper downward slope. It also has to be kept in mind however that Figure 3 under-represents the variance present in the sample, as it only reflects average positions instead of yearly figures, thus forcing cases to cluster together in the middle.

Obviously, the effect of democratic experience is also significant, yet it only has a substantial impact because of the large age differences between the democracies in the sample ($b = 0.012$; $P < 0.05$). Its effect is essential to teasing out the effect of responsiveness however, as can be seen in the different significances and explained variance of model 1 and 2. No matter the substantial size of the effect of responsiveness, the differences of almost a century in democratic experience provides enough variation to obscure the effect of political responsiveness. An effect thus only shows once a country's democratic experience is added to the model to filter out its effect. Responsiveness appears to account quite effectively for the changes in freedom democratic experience fails to account for.

There seems to be no significant effect of annual GDP growth ($b = -0.051$; $P > 0.05$). GDP growth was introduced into the model as a positive growth in GDP might condition the room for manoeuvre the government has. High economic growth should allow for greater changes in expenditure for a government equally motivated and capable of being responsive, as it simply has more money to allocate freely. Lower measures of governmental responsiveness in times of economic downturn on the other hand may still reflect a government being maximally responsive within its spending limits. As it turns out there is no significant impact of GDP growth on the freedom within the country. Potentially a heavily responsive government sees opportunity to adept the limits to its expenditures by borrowing extra money to facilitate the expenses.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper departs from the populist democratic notion that political responsiveness is a goal in itself. Following a liberal perspective, responsiveness should not be the endpoint of research regarding democratic institutions however. The alternative, liberal

democratic goal of democratic institutions is to ensure a life in freedom for the citizens of the state, thus posing the question whether or not high responsiveness contributes to a country's citizens' freedom. Responsiveness is thereby shifted to the position of the independent variable, rather than the dependent.

As previous studies have focussed on establishing the causes, but not the consequences, of political responsiveness, previous measures of political responsiveness were unsuitable for aims of this paper. A measure of political responsiveness was developed, specifically incorporating the spending behaviour of a responsive government, rather than merely establishing changes in attitudinal congruence. After all, the actions of government, not the opinions nor promises of legislators, affect to the conditions within the country.

With this new measure of political responsiveness it can be shown that a government's responsiveness is indeed related to the political freedom within the country. Liberal democratic theorists' fears of a tyranny of the majority are thus not unfounded. The effect of political responsiveness is only distinguishable if one controls for the effects of the years a country has been democratic.

However, the study also has its limitations. It examines the relation between political responsiveness and political freedom from at the macro level, but does not prove a causal relationship. Further research on a lower lever of abstraction is necessary to establish the existence of such a causal link. A more detailed look at the cases of Italy, Finland and Slovakia might also prove to be informative. These three cases fall outside the general pattern by combining either high responsiveness with high freedom, or low responsiveness with low political freedom. These three countries, especially Finland, may prove to be very informative deviant cases, capable of enriching our understanding of the causal link (and its limitations) between political responsiveness and political freedom.

Sources:

- Andeweg, R. (2011) 'Approaching Perfect Policy Congruence: Measurement, Development, and Relevance for Political Representation' in Rosema, M., Denters, B. & Aarts, K. (eds) *How Democarcy Works: Political Representation and Policy Congruence in Modern Societies*, pp. 39-52. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Andeweg, R. & Thomassen, J. (2011) *Van Afspiegelen naar Afrekenen? De Toekomst van de Nederlandse Democratie*. Leiden: Leiden University Press.

- Aristotle (2005) 'Politics' in Cahn, S. (ed.) *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*, pp.133-168. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bara, J. (2001) 'Tracking Estimates of Public Opinion and Party Policy Intentions in Britain and the USA' in Laver, M. (ed.) *Estimating the Policy Positions of Political Actrs*, pp. 183-192. London: Routledge.
- Bertelsmann Stiftung (2012) *Index*, http://www.bti-project.org/index/ (visited on 27-6-2012).
- Brettschneider, F. (1996) 'Public Opinion and Parliamentary Action: Responsiveness of the German *Bundestag* in Comparative Perspective', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* v.8(3), pp. 292-311.
- Brooks, J. (1985) 'Democratic Frustration in the Anglo-American Polities: a Quantification of Inconsistency between Mass Public Opinion and Public Policy', *Political Research Quarterly* v.38(2), pp. 250-561.
- Brooks, J. (1990) 'The Opinion-Policy Nexus in Germany', *Public Opinion Quarterly* v.54, pp. 508-529.
- Burden, B. & Sanberg, J. (2003) 'Budget Rhetoric in Presidntial Campaigns from 1952 to 2000', *Political Behaviour* v.25, pp. 97-118.
- Canes-Wrone, B. & Shotts, K. (2004) 'The Conditional Nature of Presidential Responsiveness' *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4): pp. 690-720.
- Center for Systemic Peace (2012) *Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (NSCR) Data Page*, http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/inscr.htm (visited on 27-6-2012).
- Cingranelli, D. & Richards, D. (2008) *The Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Data Project Coding Manual Version 2008.03.13.*, http://ciri.binghamton.edu/documentation/ciri_coding_guide.pdf.
- CIRI (2012) 'Frequently Asked Questions', http://ciri.binghamton.edu/faq.asp (visited on 5-10-2012).
- Eulau, H. & Karps, P. (1977) 'The Puzzle of Representation: Specifying Components of Responsiveness', *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 2(3): pp. 233-254.
- Farr, W., Lord, R. & Wolfenbarger, J. (1998) 'Economic Freedom, Political Freedom and Economic Well-being: A Causality Analysis', *Cato Journal* 18(2): pp. 247-262.
- Franklin, M. & Wlezien, C. (1997) 'The Responsiven Public: Issue Salience, Policy Change and Preferences for European Unification', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* (9): pp. 347-363.

- Freedom House (2012) *Freedom in the World: 2012 Freedom in the World*, http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world (visited on 27-6-2012).

- Golden, M. (2003) 'Electoral Connections: The Effects of the Personal Vote on Political Patronage, Bureaucracy and Legislation in Postwar Italy', *British Journal of Political Science* (33): pp. 189-212.

- Hakhverdian, A. (2010) 'Political Representation and its Mechanisms: A Dynamic Left-Right Approach for the United Kingdom, 1976-2006', *British Journal of Political Science* v.40, pp. 835-856.

- Held, D. (2006) *Models of Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Hobolt, S. & Klemmensen, R. (2005) 'Responsive Government? Public Opinion and Government Policy Preferences in Britain and Denmark', *Political Studies* v.53, pp. 379-402.

- Hobolt, S. & Klemmensen, R. (2008) 'Government Responsiveness and Political Competition in a Comparative Perspective', *Comparative Political Studies* v.41, pp. 309-337.

- Holmberg, S. (2011) 'Dynamic Representation from Above' in Rosema, M., Denters, B. & Aarts, K. (eds) *How Democarcy Works: Political Representation and Policy Congruence in Modern Societies*, pp. 53-76. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

- Hopkin, J. (2004) 'The Problem with Party Finance: Theoretical Perspectives on the Funding of Party Politics', *Party Politics* v.10(6), pp. 627-651.

- Ichilov, O. (2003) 'Education and Democratic Citizenship in a changing World' in Sears, D., Huddy, L. & Jervis, R. (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, pp. 637 -669. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Jacoby, W. & Schneider, S. (2006) 'Variability in State Policy Priorities: An Empirical Analysis', *The Journal of Politics* v.63(2), pp. 544-568.

- Kang, S. & Bingham Powell, G. (2011) 'Representation and Policy Responsiveness: The Median Voter, Election Rules, and Redistributive Welfare Spending, *The Journal of Politics* v.72, pp. 1014-1028.

- Kingdon, J. (1984) *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies.* Boston: Little, Brown.

- Lijphart, A. (1984) *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Machiavelli, N. (2007) *Discorsi: Gedachten over Staat en Politiek*, translated by Heck, P. Amsterdam: Ambo (Originally published in 1531).

- Mackuen, M. & Coombs, S. (1981) *More than News: Media Power in Public Affairs.* Beverly Hills CA: Sage Publications.

- Madison, J. (1787) 'Federalist 10', in Hamilton, A. Madison, J. & Jay, J. (eds) *The Federalist Papers.* New York: Penguin (1981).

- Mair, Peter (2009). 'Representative versus Responsible Government', MPIfG Working Paper 09/8. Cologne: Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies.

- Mudde, C. (2004) 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition* 39(4), pp. 541-563.

- Page, B. & Shapiro, R. (1983) 'Effects of Public Opinion on Policy', *The American Politican Science Review* v.77, pp. 175-190.

- Pitkin, H. (1985) *The Concept of Representation.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Poe, S., Carey, S. and Vazquez, T. (2001). 'How are these pictures Different? A quantitative comparison of the US State Department and Amnesty International human rights reports, 1976-1995.', *Human Rights Quarterly* v.23(3), pp. 650-677.

- Roll, R. & Talbott, J. (2003) 'Political Freedom, Economic Liberty, and Prosperity', *Journal of Democracy* v.14, pp. 75-89.

- Soroka, S. & Wlezien, C. (2004) 'Opinion Representation and Policy Feedback: Canada in Comparative Perspective', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* v.37(3), pp.531-559.

- Soroka, S. & Wlezien, C. (2005) 'Opinion-Policy Dynamics: Public Preferences and Public Expenditure in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Political Science* v.35, pp. 665-685.

- Soroka, S. & Wlezien, C. (2010) *Degrees of Democracy: Politics, Public Opinion, and Policy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Soroka, S. & Wlezien, C. (working paper) 'Political Institutions and the Opinion-Policy Link'.

- Stimson, J., Mackuen, M. & Erikson, R. (1995) 'Dynamic Representation', *American Political Science Review* v.89(3), pp. 543-565.

- Tocqueville, A. (2002) *Democracy in America.* Hazleton: Pennsylvania State University.

- Tsebelis, G. (1995) 'Veto Players and Law Production in Parliamentary Democracies' in Döring, H. (ed) *Parliaments and Majority Rule in Western Europe*, pp. 83-111. New York: St. Martin Press.

- Tsebelis, G. (1999) 'Veto Players and Law Production in Parliamentary Democracies: An Empirical Analysis', *The American Politican Science Review* v.93, pp. 591-608.
- Tsebelis, G. (2002) *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton: Russel Sage Foundation.
- Van der Brug, W. (2001) 'Analysing Party Dynamics by taking Partially Overlapping Snapshots' in Laver, M. (ed.) *Estimating the Policy Positions of Political Actors*, pp. 115-132. London: Routledge.
- Van der Kaap, H. (2006) *Politieke Representatie en Lokale Democratie*. Enschede: Universiteit Twente.

Appendix 1: Problem categories & Spending categories

'Most important problem facing the country' answer categories (Eurobarometer)	Corresponding category of spending data (in OECD-database)
Crime	Public Order & Safety
Economic situation	/
Inflation	/
Taxation	Taxation
Unemployment	Social Protection
Terrorism	/
Defence	Defence
Housing	Housing & Community Amenities
Immigration	/
Health care	Health
Educational system	Education
Pensions	/
Environment	Environmental Protection
Energy	/

Appendix 2: Variables' descriptive statistics

Variable (scale range / unit)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Freedom (CIRI) (1 - 14)	12.09	1.41	7	14
Responsiveness (0 - 1)	0.46	0.27	0.01	0.95
Democratic Experience (years)	60.95	30.69	15	103
GDP Growth (percentages)	0.61	4.43	-14.26	10.49

Appendix 3: Responsiveness figures

Country	Year	1 year lag	2 year lag	1 & 2 year lag
Austria	*2006*	*0,09*	*0,18*	*0,31*
	2007	0,69	0,01	0,78
	2008	*0,27*	*0,63*	*0,63*
	2009	0,00	0,26	0,26
	2010	0,02	0,07	0,11
Belgium	2006	0,44	0,07	0,45
	2007	*0,20*	*0,08*	*0,46*
	2008	0,05	0,29	0,33
	2009	0,18	0,04	0,31
	2010	*0,46*	*0,11*	*0,57*
Czech Republic	2007	0,33	0,05	0,20
	2008	0,05	0,37	0,62
	2009	0,01	0,18	0,20
	2010	*0,00*	*0,12*	*0,38*
Denmark	2006	0,28	0,10	0,41
	2007	*0,35*	*0,09*	*0,50*
	2008	0,19	0,35	0,51
	2009	0,48	0,03	0,48
	2010	0,00	0,14	0,15
Estonia	*2007*	*0,29*	*0,31*	*0,41*
	2008	0,35	0,26	0,37
	2009	0,12	0,21	0,30
	2010	0,00	0,01	0,01
Finland	2006	0,59	0,48	0,69
	2007	*0,86*	*0,72*	*0,88*
	2008	0,78	0,31	0,93
	2009	0,00	0,95	0,95
	2010	0,03	0,12	0,14
France	2006	0,07	0,47	0,56
	2007	*0,22*	*0,68*	*0,73*
	2008	0,25	0,33	0,39
	2009	0,24	0,00	0,87
	2010	0,72	0,20	0,72
Germany	2006	0,33	0,69	0,89
	2007	0,74	0,09	0,75
	2008	0,05	0,45	0,51
	2009	*0,61*	*0,59*	*0,89*
	2010	0,19	0,02	0,36
Greece	*2007*	*0,83*	*0,36*	*0,88*
	2008	0,06	0,29	0,32
	2009	*0,52*	*0,46*	*0,61*
	2010	0,28	0,02	0,28
Hungary	2007	0,00	0,02	0,02
	2008	0,61	0,71	0,75
	2009	0,00	0,09	0,40
	2010	*0,34*	*0,24*	*0,40*
Ireland	2006	0,01	0,00	0,01
	2007	*0,33*	*0,05*	*0,39*
	2008	*0,03*	*0,37*	*0,42*
	2009	0,46	0,14	0,54
	2010	0,62	0,55	0,89

Country	Year	1 year lag	2 year lag	1 & 2 year lag
Italy	*2006*	*0,27*	*0,31*	*0,33*
	2007	0,13	0,00	0,13
	2008	*0,14*	*0,25*	*0,25*
	2009	0,07	0,59	0,65
	2010	0,00	0,00	0,01
Luxembourg	2006	0,69	0,23	0,59
	2007	0,08	0,00	0,13
	2008	0,14	0,37	0,39
	2009	*0,08*	*0,00*	*0,10*
	2010	0,89	0,34	0,91
Netherlands	*2006*	*0,02*	*0,02*	*0,03*
	2007	0,28	0,40	0,40
	2008	0,01	0,02	0,03
	2009	0,71	0,01	0,83
	2010	*0,46*	*0,03*	*0,56*
Poland	*2007*	*0,13*	*0,83*	*0,87*
	2008	0,22	0,07	0,22
	2009	0,77	0,75	0,86
	2010	*0,00*	*0,17*	*0,19*
Portugal	2006	0,07	0,06	0,09
	2007	0,51	0,70	0,83
	2008	0,11	0,35	0,35
	2009	*0,30*	*0,55*	*0,57*
	2010	0,08	0,23	0,23
Slovak Republic	2007	0,25	0,01	0,41
	2008	0,00	0,03	0,03
	2009	0,02	0,12	0,15
	2010	*0,23*	*0,63*	*0,79*
Slovenia	2007	0,67	0,09	0,69
	2008	*0,01*	*0,05*	*0,06*
	2009	0,13	0,08	0,27
	2010	0,49	0,39	0,90
Spain	2006	0,13	0,12	0,17
	2007	0,28	0,17	0,40
	2008	*0,33*	*0,04*	*0,43*
	2009	0,22	0,61	0,81
	2010	0,72	0,56	0,77
Sweden	*2006*	*0,48*	*0,22*	*0,60*
	2007	0,02	0,00	0,06
	2008	0,25	0,11	0,42
	2009	0,65	0,13	0,74
	2010	*0,18*	*0,61*	*0,64*
United Kingdom	2006	0,25	0,23	0,72
	2007	0,08	0,25	0,44
	2008	0,04	0,04	0,07
	2009	0,18	0,01	0,22
	2010	*0,09*	*0,49*	*0,50*

Election years in italics.