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How Does the Mainstreaming of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties Impact the Performance of Liberal Democracies in Western-Europe?

Larède, Arthur

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How Does the Mainstreaming of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties Impact the Performance of Liberal Democracies in Western-Europe?



**Universiteit
Leiden**
The Netherlands

Name: Arthur Larède

Student number: S2036444

Study program: International Relations & Organisations

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First reader: Dr. Josh Robison

Second reader: Dr. Michael Meffert

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ABSTRACT

This research will provide a look into the emergence of radical right-wing populist parties across Western-Europe. It aims to see what happens when radical right-wing populist parties and established party policy ideologies converge, also known as mainstreaming. By doing so the research delves into the impact this has on the level of liberal democracy these countries hold. However, current studies lack the information what impact mainstreaming has on liberal democracy. This research tries to uncover that by answering the following question: What impact does the mainstreaming of radical right-wing populist parties have on the performance of liberal democracies? The research will dive into theories on the core tenets of liberal democracy. The value system providing freedom and security for its people. Furthermore, the emergence of radical right-wing populism will be explored, including what it means for a liberal democracy. For this, theories on mainstreaming will be used to uncover how radical right-wing populist parties interact with established parties. The expectation is that radical right-wing populist parties' ideologies converge with those of the established parties, which leads to a decline in the level of liberal democracy. A quantitative analysis on a sample of Western-European liberal democracies will be employed. The data features evaluations by experts on the policy ideologies of parties within these countries, and the level of liberal democracy these countries hold across different points in time. Previous studies on the movement between policy ideology of established and the radical right-wing populist parties will be replicated. The data from this is then used to set it off against the levels of liberal democracy to test for its impact. This is done through the IBM SPSS data analysis software. The study finds that across the broader sample, there is no convergence between party ideologies, and the level of liberal democracy increases. When looking at every country separately, however, what is found is that the general model does not explain movement between liberal democracies and party convergence adequately. The findings present no relationship between the mainstreaming of radical right-wing populist parties and an impact on liberal democracy. Future research could focus on a couple of things to test for further interaction. The policy ideology should be weighed on the amount of votes a party received, to test for the impact the policy actually has.

Keywords: *Liberal Democracy, Populism, Radical right-wing populism, mainstreaming.*

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INTRODUCTION

Liberal democracies have been prevalent in the Western-European political system since the ending of the second world war. What gave rise to this system? To uncover this, it is important to take a quick look at what the liberal democracy exactly entails. Liberal democracies function in a way that seeks to guarantee individual freedoms through liberal principles. Liberal principles mainly refer to the way in which the economy is structured in tandem with a functioning legal system (Meyer, 2020). Meaning that a liberal democracy would function in short “when the liberal market economy is linked to a genuine democracy that also includes freedom of the press and freedom of information” (Meyer, 2020, p. 8). This notion of freedom is formed by a value system that is shared within a liberal democracy. In short, this includes common ideas and common rules of behavior for a group of people, that allows to strive towards a common goal. These values include the development of human rights, the separation of church and state, and a democracy with a separation of powers within the structure of the state. Free and fair elections are key to keeping these aspects in check. The liberal market economy creates prosperity for the population but is prone to create inequalities within said population (Meyer, 2020; Sandrin, 2021). Free and fair elections help overcome this danger of inequality, based on the premise that “if every citizen has a vote, the laws ensure that everyone shares in prosperity” (Meyer, 2020, p. 8).

In a liberal democracy there are checks and balances to the system with the goal of preventing abuse. As mentioned above, one of these checks comes in the form of free and fair competitive elections (Meyer, 2020). However, what if these checks and balances were the same thing posing a threat to the system? Over recent years, Western-European elections have seen a rise in political parties and candidates attacking the system from within (Sandrin, 2021; Fukuyama, 2006). In Western-Europe, these parties often can be characterized as radical right-wing populist parties (RRWP-parties) (Taggart, 2017; Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). They largely base their platforms around cultural tensions threatening the common rules and ideals of the people (Vachudova, 2021). Dealing with these new parties in liberal democracies has shown to be a difficult challenge. This challenge is posed no less because when elected, these parties have been given the mandate to represent a certain group of people within the country based on beliefs directly challenging the system. These “authoritarian attitudes” (Bartle, Sanders, and Twyman, 2020) are the driving force behind these parties and often directly challenge the value system (Meyer, 2020) of a liberal democracy. The way this is done

is through campaigning and adopting policy ideologies that do not guarantee the values associated with liberal democracy for everyone. This is exactly where the problem lies. As argued above, every citizen having the right to vote, the laws ensure that they share in prosperity (Meyer, 2020). However, this shared prosperity is ensured by people voting, but these votes can also lead to the election of people that do not want to share this prosperity with everyone, but only those they deem worthy. This is a thing that is often visible in the programs of RRWP-parties (Mudde, 2017).

This paper will argue that the threat within liberal democracy in Western-Europe comes in the form of radical right-wing populism. Populism, though more thoroughly explained later on, boils down to a political ideology rooted in anti-elitism where the people are essentially betrayed by the political establishment, and express their resentment through ways that often clash with the values of liberal democracy (Mudde, 2017; Sandrin, 2021). Reason for this being that populism is a symptom of the general unhappiness of the course a country is going. It serves as a symptom rather than a corrective, as the stances that clash with liberal democracy, can permanently damage the value system (Mudde, 2017). Populism is not an exclusively right-wing concept, however in Western-Europe this form is the most prevalent (Taggart, 2017). There are three factors that can cause people to start expressing resentment towards the government. These include economic, migratory, and political factors (Sandrin, 2021). In Western-Europe migratory factors are the main notion in which RRW-populists try to enter the minds of the general public and the political playfield.

When populists enter the political playfield in Western-Europe, they often do so on a platform that clashes with the earlier stated liberal principles, by going against the value system (Pappas, 2016). They will, however, have to operate in ways that often involve other established parties as well. A process that can occur when this happens is mainstreaming (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). Mainstreaming is the process where the parties that are part of the conventional political landscape converge with the radical parties, often as they enter the political landscape with large amounts of support (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). However, convergence is a two-way street. RRWP-parties becoming more moderate as a consequence of mainstreaming, directly implicates that the established parties will become more radical.

RRWP-parties pose a threat to liberal democracy because of their exclusionary nature, which goes directly against the defense of individual rights. RRW-populists do not seek to guarantee the rights for everyone, but only the ones they deem to belong to the pure people

(Rummens, 2017). Ways for established parties to deal with this threat is by adopting forms of populist ideals, while operating within the value system.

To see the impact of mainstreaming by RRWP-parties on liberal democracy, this research will employ cross-sectional studies looking at the impact RRWP-ideology has on the policy ideology as set by established parties. This will be done in reverse as well, as mainstreaming is a two-way street. The goal of this research is to show whether the emergence of RRWP-parties has had an impact on the level of liberal democracy. However, even more important is to see the impact when they have to work within the existing political system of a liberal democracy, through mainstreaming. To understand this, the central question to this thesis is the following. How does the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties impact the performance of liberal democracy in Western-Europe?

THEORETICAL SCOPE & CONCEPTS

Liberal Democracy

Liberal democracy functions by the self-governing of its people in a given country. Individual liberty is held in high regards, however, this individual liberty is constrained by a framework of human rights. Universal human rights should be guaranteed through common determination by the people. However, guaranteeing these universal human rights limits the full unbound development of the individual. This leads to the paradox where both perfect liberty and perfect democracy cannot be achieved at the same time (Mouffe, 2002). Though this is not necessarily a negative notion, as it guarantees common rights and freedoms. It is best described as “a specific form of organizing politically human coexistence which results from the articulation between two different traditions: (...) political liberalism and (...) the democratic tradition of popular sovereignty” (Mouffe, 2000, p. 18). Combining the two establishes a relation between individual rights and majority rule, forming checks and balances between majority rule and individual human rights (Plattner, 2010). Equal prosperity is one of the key promises of liberal democracy (Meyer, 2020). This means that every member of society accumulates the wealth they deserve. Liberal democracies generally operate in a capitalist liberal free market system (Meyer, 2020). This can raise inequalities by exploitation of the working class through exploitation by the wealthy. Were this to happen, these grievances can be overcome through bargaining between these parties on how to prosper together again (Meyer, 2020). This bargaining is a process where individual preferences are set off against what is best for society as a whole (Meyer, 2020; Plattner, 2010)

Shared prosperity is not only an economic aspect, however. Grievances can also come in other forms. One of the key aspects where grievances are found today is through the pluralism of liberal democracy (Sandrin, 2021; Plattner, 2010). Pluralism is essential to liberal democracy. It means the many angles members of society can hold towards both economic interest and culture stimulates the development of the individual self (Plattner, 2010, p. 89). The regulation of this diversity would then help people achieve a common identity through their differences. It is essential to know the broader conceptualization, as it has been used in the past, to understand the mechanics behind it today. After World War II, Western-European countries had to rebuild and unify themselves following the devastating damage they had suffered. To make sure that political developments could never lead to such destruction again, political scientists seemed to agree on the following importance of pluralism as essential; “the view that

in liberal democracies power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites” (the Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, as cited in Plattner, 2010, p. 89). What is described here is exactly what is meant by a democracy with separation of power (Meyer, 2020). Here no one gets to rule alone, but instead ruling is a bargaining process between the diverse groups in society to achieve common goals through a variety of ideals (Galston, 2018).

While diversity in ideals is a great concept, it is important to take into account the inherent differences between liberal democracies. As earlier described liberal democracy holds a value system (Meyer, 2020), but that can differ in set-up and execution (Joshi, 2013). Examples are the set-ups of elections. Rules on distances between polling stations, time of elections can influence the willingness of people to partake in the earlier described bargaining process (Galston, 2018; Joshi, 2013; Meyer, 2020). The way votes are then divided and eventually elections decided can influence the execution of common goals (Joshi, 2013). A proportional system, where every vote counts would yield more pluralism in the bargaining process than a district system, where the most votes within the district is the deciding factor (Joshi, 2013). In Western Europe, not all systems function the same way across countries, some systems are proportional, while others are majoritarian (Joshi, 2013; Lijphart, 1991). Thus, the diversity of ideas may not be expressed as thoroughly in every liberal democracy compared to others.

Pluralism does not only come with the diversity in ideas. It also guarantees the separation of church and state, as religious institutions now have to operate under the laws as set by the state and the common people (Meyer, 2020). However, pluralism these days seems to be more interchangeably used with the term multiculturalism (Fukuyama, 2006; Plattner, 2010). Multiculturalism has emerged as a form of pluralism that poses a challenge to the achievement of common goals. Western-Europe witnessed a surge in new cultures from different parts of the world after World War II often as a consequence of immigration (Taggart, 2017). These new cultures awakened new tensions within the people, with the consequence that it became more difficult to set and achieve common goals, as the people are not seen as common anymore (Fukuyama, 2006; Taggart, 2017).

Radical right-wing populism

Defining populism has been one of the most hotly contested debates in political science (Rummens, 2017). A commonly used definition of populism is; “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus the “corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, as cited in Mudde, 2017, p.3) Populism generally holds an anti-elitism viewpoint. It views the people as a homogeneous group. This group of people is often described as ‘pure’. This means that they are the innocent bystanders fighting for the common good. This fight is tarnished by the ‘corrupt elite’ (Mudde, 2017). This corrupt elite is characterized by their overt self-interest, only wanting to gain from the fight what is good for their individual selves. An important caveat here is that it does not only exert anti-elitist sentiment, but also resentment towards the agents of the elite. In their talking points representing the sentiment above, populist leaders often claim to be speaking for the majority. This majority can be seen as the aforementioned pure people. In their words, they claim that this is the general will of the people, as they would be speaking out what the majority thinks (Mudde, 2017; Plattner, 2010, Vachudova 2021). An example of this would be Dutch populist politician criticizing other politicians of taking in asylum seekers, but not in their big mansions, in the big cities. Rather he suggests they would leave the issue of housing these asylum seekers to the common man (Wilders, 2015)

RRWP-politicians view the common people as a homogeneous group, often based on national identity (Mudde, 2017). This means that the people all share cultural and economic similarities. Anyone who falls outside of this, is not seen as part of the people, and thus a potential threat to the will of the majority. A large part of the cultural and economic similarities is found in the traits the pure people share with each other, such as nationality, religion, etc. (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016; Mudde, 2017). Everyone sharing these traits belongs to said group, those that do not fall outside of it. Visible here is the exclusionary nature of RRW-populism (Rummens, 2017). What comes out of this is the nativist approach that RRWP-leaders operationalize to bring about their view of the people. Nativism is an ideology rooted in two other constructs: Nationalism and xenophobia (Mudde, 2017). Nationalism in short is the love one holds for the people they are part of, country they belong to, and the culture it brings with it. Xenophobia is the fear of the unknown. In the eyes of RRW-populists this is often regarded as people that fall outside of the defined homogeneous groups. Consequentially,

immigrants and immigration are seen as threats to the homogeneous people (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016; Mudde, 2017; Plattner, 2010; Taggart, 2017; Vachudova, 2021).

RRWP-parties clash with the institutions of liberal democracy especially because they do not hold dear the value system assigned to it. Their exclusionary nature does not guarantee the development of human rights (Meyer, 2020; Rummens, 2017). RRW-populists seem to operate in ways that fall outside of the value system. In Hungary for example, the higher court has been entirely replaced by judges that are loyal to Orbán's Fidesz party and its ideology, not the liberal democratic system. The court is no longer impartial (Amnesty International, 2021). Here the democracy no longer holds a separation of power. Another example could be Poland and its ban on abortion. The highly confessional and extremely right-wing PiS party, wants to outlaw abortion throughout the entire country, while also pushing further back on sexual education. This is all done through ways that are being backed by the church, and not decisions made solely in the political realm (the Guardian, 2020), thus eradicating the separation between church and state. Though it is important to note that the instances where this happened, the parties were also the ruling parties. A good thought on the way these radical ruling parties were able to perform their will is to say that they are democratic, but never liberal (Pappas, 2016).

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming can be defined as the process where the parties that are part of the conventional political landscape converge with the radical parties, often as they enter the political landscape with large amounts of support (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). However, this definition is too short, and leaves out the dimensions of the process. Though this research holds the implication that mainstreaming, specifically that of RRWP-parties, is a negative factor. However, that is not always necessarily the case. Mainstreaming can also be seen as making radical parties more "coalitionable" (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016, p. 6). When policy ideologies of two different parties start to move towards each other, or cross over into overlapping, it makes working together easier. Adaptation of the policy ideologies from a radical party by an established parties is also a way to deal with the threat of RRWP-parties, as it can make the latter seem obsolete.

Over recent years mainstreaming has almost always been the case regarding RRWP-parties. As mentioned before, they represent a certain resentment (Sandrin, 2021) a portion of the population has towards the current system. Thus, it can be assumed that these issues within

the general population are something that the established parties partake in too, as they would otherwise lose a part of their electorate to RRWP-parties (Bale 2003; Sandrin, 2021) To do so, the notion of mainstreaming will take place.

Mainstreaming is not a one-way street. RRWP-parties moving more towards the mainstream parties, also includes that the established parties start moving toward RRWP-parties. The process in which this happens for established parties is called “radicalization” (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016, p. 6). To understand the concept of mainstreaming, one must first understand what the mainstream exactly is. Take a classical left-right scale, here established parties would lie in the center, in direct opposition to radical and niche parties on the ends of the scale (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). Often times centrist positions come with loyalty to the political system, in this case liberal democracy (Abide, 2004; Capoccia, 2002; Santori, 1976, as cited in Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). An implication of established parties radicalizing, thus moving away from the center, is that it brings more salience to the issues as set by RRWP-parties (Bale, 2003). This would mean that the center would radicalize, thus moving the center further to the right. The justification for this statement is that RRWP-parties often hold policy ideologies standing in direct opposition to the value system of liberal democracy (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016).

An example of mainstreaming where established parties pick-up more radical standpoints as earlier set by RRWP-parties is seen in Dutch politics. Here party members of the largest party, a right-wing liberal party, the VVD (Kiesraad, 2021) started adopting relatively harsh stances on immigration and integration. These moves were subsequently dubbed as ‘PVV-Corvee’ (Zondag met Lubach, 2018). A term used to describe politicians of established parties taking RRWP-party cues to appeal to a certain demographic. Loosely translated, it means that the politician that has to do said ‘PVV-Corvee’, is awarded the dishonorable duty of adopting anti-immigrant rhetoric to appeal to the electorate usually associated with the PVV. It is dishonorable in the sense that ‘corvee’ means janitorial duties. The PVV is the largest RRWP-party in the Netherlands, becoming the third biggest party in the last national elections, earning almost 11% of the votes (Kiesraad, 2021). The term was coined by a satirical weekly news show on national television. Meanwhile, the term has become so big that it has now been used by other members of parliament to describe similar acts. Recently a politician for the party Volt accused another politician of the VVD of partaking in such ‘PVV-Corvee’ (Gündoğan, 2021).

Indicators for whether a party has mainstreamed or not can be found in four different dimensions by Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn (2016). The first indicator is whether policy positions are centrist, if they are, parties belong to the mainstream (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). The second indicator is the broadness of the policy agenda, if it spans a broad spectrum of policy issues, it can indicate that a party belongs to the mainstream. Limited agendas indicate niche parties. For RRWP-parties this often focuses on immigration policy (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016; Bale, 2003). Anti-establishment parties as an indicator are measured on two levels. Parties that moderate anti-establishment cues while remaining loyal to the system, belong to the mainstream. Is anti-establishment ideology widespread, while also challenging the system, then it can be classified as an anti-establishment party (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). The last indicator is specific to mainstreaming in the extreme right-wing fashion. Extreme right reputation is measured on two levels. Whether a party itself holds Anti-Semitic views and/or ties with extremists, it can be filed outside of the mainstream. Does it not hold any of these views, ties and actively work against suppressing these views and severing the ties, it falls in the mainstream. These four indicators can then decide whether a party can be considered a RRWP-party, as these do not run in the mainstream (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016).

RRWP-parties stepped into the void that was left by the lack of addressing the public concerns regarding cultural differences by established parties (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016; Bale, 2003, Taggart, 2017). What previous studies have shown exemplifies that established parties try to address the concerns of these illiberal practices (Pappas, 2021) by RRWP-parties. Though, often the ways in which this was done raises the concern that established parties themselves will then negatively impact the values of liberal democracy by converging towards the radical right.

While previous studies have greatly broadened the theoretical scope on what may happen when RRWP-parties converge with established parties, there is still a great void to be filled regarding what actually happens. Research on the actual impact of mainstreaming of RRWP-parties and its impact on liberal democracies remains scarce (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). Previous studies mainly show the difference between policy ideologies of established and RRWP-parties and if they converge, but not on its impact on the system.

Combining the theories

Mainstreaming is not an occurrence that is exclusive to RRWP-parties and established parties. It has happened before during the latter decades of the 20th century, where the green party cues were adopted by mainstream parties across Western-Europe. This was the case due to the fact that environmental politics saw an insurgence as a matter becoming more and more pressing for the broader public (Bale, 2003). As a consequence of mass immigration, migration politics became a more contested topic in the political landscape (Fukuyama 2006). Reason for this being that mass immigration leads to more pluralism in society. The new cultural and religious aspects introduced by this immigration, often led to new challenges in the public opinion regarding immigration policy.

RRWP-parties stepped into the void that was left by the lack of addressing the public concerns regarding cultural differences by established parties. However, the way these issues were addressed often clashed directly with the values held by liberal democracies and its guardians in the form of established parties. What previous studies have shown exemplifies that established parties try to address the concerns of these illiberal practices by RRWP-parties. Though, often the ways in which this was done raises the concern that established parties themselves will then negatively impact the values of liberal democracy by converging towards the radical right. While previous studies have greatly broadened the theoretical scope on what may happen when RRWP-parties converge with established parties, there is still a great void to be filled regarding what actually happens. Research on the actual impact of mainstreaming of RRWP-parties and its impact on liberal democracies remains scarce (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). Theories suggest that RWPP-parties can have an impact on the way a liberal democracy functions by their characteristics. However, what this research is trying to uncover is the impact they have on party ideologies of the established parties. Do they converge, and if so, how does that affect liberal democracy?

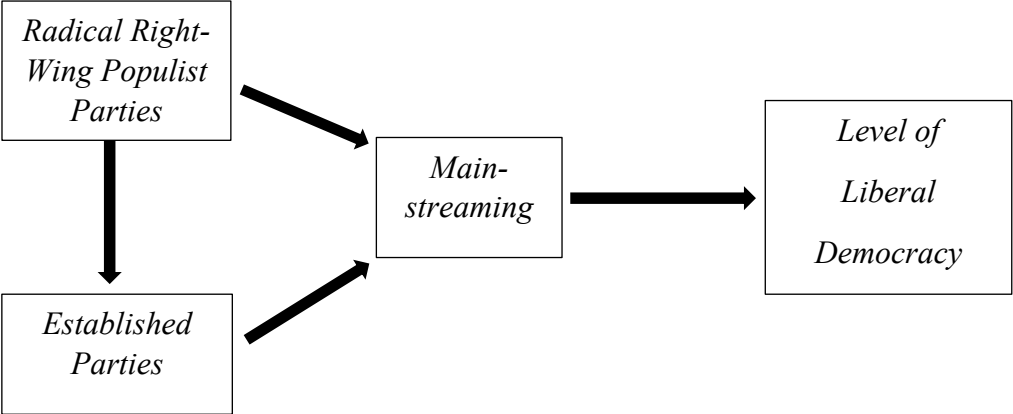
Livid debates still arise on the issue of the mainstreaming of radical right-wing populism. Most studies state it as a symptom of the value system held by liberal democracies being in decline (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016; Mudde, 2017; Plattner, 2010; Rummens, 2017; Taggart, 2017; Vachudova, 2021). A great reason for the debates regarding populism is that there is still a lot of contestation regarding what populism actually means. However, it is the definition as given by Mudde (2017) that is the most cited in recent studies (de la Torre and Mazzoleni, 2019). Mudde's (2017) definition has given such a wide theoretical scope on the subject that it has been a workable definition for scholars in many studies.

Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn’s (2016) contributions to Mudde’s (2017) theory, with their work on mainstreaming and the radical right, offers this study a justified theoretical scope to put research on the impact of the mainstreaming of radical right-wing populism on liberal democracies. As demonstrated by the extensive theoretical scope given above, a relationship between the concepts of liberal democracies, radical right-wing populism and mainstreaming can be established.

As radical right-wing populism and its ideals are not separable from each other, due to their anti-liberal nature, it is easy to see the mainstreaming of illiberal ideals into the politics of a liberal democracy as a notion specific to radical right-wing populism. Even when they are excluded by other parties, this often happens through the occurrence where established parties pick up illiberal issue policies, or versions that are less liberal than before. These are often adopted through previous party cues by radical-right wing populist parties. Reason for this is that the work of Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn (2016) offers a clear set of indicators for mainstreaming adjusted specifically for RRWP-parties, and the mainstream parties they interact with. Liberal democracy in itself is a value system that is guarded by these mainstream parties. As earlier established, they are declared to be loyal to them. However, the emergence of RRWP-parties demands this loyalty to be tested. Ways for the established parties to deal with this threat have been described, but they come at a cost. That cost being the upholding of the value system by liberal democracies. This allows for the research to work according to the following hypothesis:

H1: RRWP-parties’ ideologies converge with those of the established parties, this leads to a decline in the level of liberal democracy.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the relationship between the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties and the impact on liberal democracy



RESEARCH DESIGN

To test the impact of the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties on liberal democracy, a stepwise process is employed. First previous studies on mainstreaming (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016) will be validated through replication. Using a sample of liberal democracies, the analyses on overtime differences in policy ideology between parties will be replicated. This will allow for a cross-sectional analysis on differences between parties over time against the levels of liberal democracy. Doing so, will allow for the visibility of whether converging ideologies result in lower levels of liberal democracies.

The data used in this study stems from two different datasets. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey on trend files from 1999 until 2019 (CHES-2020), regarding policy positions of political parties. The second dataset used is the Varieties of Democracy 2021, (V-Dem 2021), which measures the level of liberal democracy per country per year. The expectation is a negative impact of the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties on the level of liberal democracy. Mainstreaming in the literature is measured on four indicators (Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn, 2016). These indicators include one or more variables on which they are measured.

Two variables are given for the first indicator of whether a party belongs to the mainstream or not. This is called the radicalness (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). In the methodology measuring mainstreaming this is done through the placement of scores on European integration. This is a seven-point range in which 1, the lowest, means strong opposition towards European integration, and 7 means strongly in favor. The second measure for radicalness is the GALTAN-scale. A left-right economic dimension, that is also an abbreviation for “Green-Alternative-Libertarian versus Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalism” (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016, p. 33). This measure works on a ten-point scale, where 0 means a very lenient view regarding personal freedoms such as sexual orientation, religion, etcetera, while a 10 means that the views held by the party are very traditional, authoritarian and/or nationalist. This means that they often restrict personal freedoms. Personal freedoms can be seen as an aspect of human rights (European Convention on Human Rights, 2017), thus are very intertwined with liberal democracy.

The second dimension on which mainstreaming is measured is where the issue agenda of the party operates. As stated in the literature, RRWP-parties often work based on a program centered around immigration and integration. The CHES-2020 offers some great improvements

upon previous versions in this aspect. The existing literature suggests that previous versions of this dataset lacked the data for these issues. However, for the version used in this research, the CHES-2020 offers new variables in which immigration policy and integration salience are measured. Immigration policy is measured on a ten-point scale from liberal policy preferences to restrictive policy preferences. Integration salience is measured through the party's stances on multiculturalism. Multiculturalism in a party's program is defined as the "position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers" (Bakker, et al, 2020).

The nicheness of the party is measured through socio-economic issues and how important they are to the party. Again, this is where the most recent version of CHES-2020 has made great improvements. Previously this was not measured in the data. This new version, however, has gained a variable regarding the party's views on state intervention in the economy. Socio-economic issues focus on aspects like the welfare state, free trade, etcetera. These are all aspects obtained through economic intervention by the state. This variable allows us to see a party's stance on these types of intervention.

The last indicator for measuring mainstreaming is found through the anti-establishment stances of the party. CHES-2020 offers a great variable for this notion in the sense of the salience of anti-elitist rhetoric. Measured on a ten-point scale, it shows how entrenched anti-elitist rhetoric is in a party's program. This data is generated through analyzing various party programs and scan for words and their meanings that can be viewed in an anti-elitist sense (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016).

Methodology

Given the indicators above, the average mainstreaming can be calculated. The CHES-2020 offers data on the six indicators described above across time for every single country. This allows for the measurement of mainstreaming through comparison of policy ideology fluctuation over time. When policy ideology stances move towards each other, between RRWP-parties and the other parties, it means their standpoints are converging. To measure this, the difference between the RRWP-party's policy positions and the position of the other parties is calculated. If this difference becomes smaller, policy stances are converging, thus mainstreaming between them is occurring. The difference on all six policy positions is calculated into a mean variable for both RRWP-parties and the other parties.

The V-Dem 2021 allows for categorization of liberal democracy per year, per country. This variable of liberal democracy is coded through various components determining what a

liberal democracy entails. The liberal components of a state are measured and aggregated together. These liberal components include the protecting individual rights against tyranny by the majority and the limits of the government. This is then set off against the level of electoral democracy a country holds. Meaning the responsiveness of rulers to citizens in situations where suffrage is extensive (Coppedge et al., 2021). Though measured on a scale from 0 to 1, the variable, which was merged from the V-Dem 2021 into the CHES-2020, needed some adjustments. All scores rewarded have been multiplied by a factor of 10. Reason for this is that this makes it easier to visualize the differences in Liberal democracies.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of liberal democracy and difference in policy ideology.

		N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Broader Sample	Liberal Democracy	46	8,24	0,36	7,56	8,91
	Difference in policy ideology	46	3,41	0,72	1,14	4,57
Belgium	Liberal Democracy	5	8,18	0,08	8,13	8,30
	Difference in policy ideology	5	4,03	0,27	3,79	4,39
Denmark	Liberal Democracy	5	8,86	0,07	8,75	8,91
	Difference in policy ideology	5	3,42	0,40	2,91	4,01
Germany	Liberal Democracy	2	8,60	0,09	8,53	8,66
	Difference in policy ideology	2	3,89	0,79	3,32	4,45
Greece	Liberal Democracy	4	8,23	0,11	8,12	8,38
	Difference in policy ideology	4	3,38	0,65	2,56	3,94
France	Liberal Democracy	5	8,09	0,08	8,02	8,19
	Difference in policy ideology	5	3,44	0,46	3,09	4,10
Italy	Liberal Democracy	4	7,70	0,12	7,56	7,83
	Difference in policy ideology	4	2,45	0,83	1,68	3,38
The Netherlands	Liberal Democracy	5	8,19	0,12	8,04	8,34
	Difference in policy ideology	5	2,89	1,03	1,14	3,65
United Kingdom	Liberal Democracy	4	8,06	0,06	7,99	8,11
	Difference in policy ideology	4	3,66	0,44	3,21	4,26
Austria	Liberal Democracy	5	7,92	0,06	7,87	8,00
	Difference in policy ideology	5	3,10	0,66	2,29	4,26
Finland	Liberal Democracy	4	8,28	0,40	7,68	8,55
	Difference in policy ideology	4	3,52	0,44	3,10	4,14
Sweden	Liberal Democracy	3	8,81	0,05	8,76	8,86
	Difference in policy ideology	3	4,23	0,47	3,69	4,57

Important to note is that the liberal democracy variable will be lagged. Meaning that it is the value of liberal democracy of the previous time point of evaluation that will be set off against the following difference time point of evaluation (e.g., Liberal democracy in 1999 against differences of policy ideology in 2002).

Looking at the broader sample, to see the impact of mainstreaming, a mean variable for both the DV and IV is calculated. This is done to see the impact of mainstreaming of RRWP-parties on liberal democracy across Western-Europe. What becomes visible, however, is that while there is a statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.05$), it does show signs of auto-collinearity. While both the tolerance- and VIF-levels are at an acceptable grade, the Durbin-Watson value is below 1. This is solved by analyzing the differences in policy ideology's impact on per country. This divides the broader sample into groups of samples (time-periods) avoiding auto-collinearity. Following up on this, a possible confound is found in the salience of the issues analyzed, which are mainly important for RRWP-parties and may not be as important to mainstream parties. This control variable is aggregated on the salience variables of the indicators measuring mainstreaming as found in the CHES-2020.

ANALYSIS

Replicating the data by previous studies generally overlapped for the comparisons that were able to be conducted almost entirely through the CHES-2020, as they were in previous versions. However, the new measures of the indicators that weren't analyzable through the previous versions of CHES-2020 also proved difficult for this version of the analysis. Often data was missing across years, as some indicators were not measured in every point of evaluation. Nevertheless, the produced models provide a clear overview of policy distances between RRWP-parties and other parties. However, to test the hypothesis, it is important to look at the salience of these ideologies as well. Therefore, two regression models are shown below, one showing the impact of the difference between policy ideologies, mainstreaming, across liberal democracy in the broader sample. The second model, the salience of these policy ideologies is taken into account as well. This salience measure shows the general importance of these policy ideologies to the parties, and whether these issues really matter as much to the other parties as they do for the RRWP-parties.

Results across the broader sample

What becomes visible from the regression ran across the entire sample of Western-European countries over time, is a statistically significant relationship between the level of liberal democracy across the broader sample and the difference in policy ideology between RRWP-parties and other parties (in other words the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties). The analysis yields a statistically significant result at the $p < 0.01$ level when it is purely the difference in ideology is measured against the level of liberal democracy. For every unit the difference in policy ideology increases, the level of liberal democracy increases with 0,19. When the salience of the policies that are differentiated against each other is taken into account, the result is still statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Here it still means that for every unit the difference in policy ideology increases, liberal democracy increases with 0,19. What becomes noticeable, however, is that the salience of this issues has no effect on the relationship between the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties and the level of liberal democracy. That is not the only problem with this model, however. As explained earlier, the model below does show a statistically significant relationship, but it also holds the issue of auto-collinearity, as the Durbin-Watson value is less than 1, shown in the appendix. Another problem is that the R^2 -values are relatively low. This means that the movement of the dependent variable is not properly explained by the movement of the independent variable. While there is a slight

increase in the R^2 -value when controlling for the salience of the policies of which the differences serve as the measure for mainstreaming, that increase is not large enough to explain dependent movement of liberal democracy against the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties. Across the broader sample, the null-hypothesis is therefore not rejected. Though the results may look to be statistically significant, the model does not explain a dependent movement in the level of liberal democracy when the difference in policy ideology converges or diverges.

Table 2. Linear regression model of RRWP-parties mainstreaming on liberal democracy:

Broader sample

	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	7,60	8,16
	(0,24)	(0,48)
Difference in policy ideology	0,19**	0,19*
	(0,07)	(0,07)
Average salience of policy ideology		-0,09
		(0,07)
R^2	0,14	0,18
Adj. R^2	0,13	0,14
N	46	46

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

Results per country

When looking at the results per country, one of the previous assumption checks that held back the significance of the results is immediately solved for. By limiting the analysis to just seeing overtime changes per country across the given timeframe of 1999-2019, the Durbin-Watson value increases. It does so to the essential value for almost every single country in the

sample. Only Belgium and Germany show some issues. These issues for Belgium however are very small, as it just barely does not reach the threshold value of 1 with a score of 0,95. For Germany, the analysis was not able to calculate this value, as the number of observations did not allow for the inclusion of the aggregated salience variable. For the other countries in the sample no statistically significant relationships were found. When the level of liberal democracy is measured against the difference in policy ideology between RRWP-parties and the other parties, it shows that for some countries in the sample there is a very slight decrease, while others yield a very small increase. What becomes visible across all countries here is that there is just a very small effect of the difference in party ideologies on the level of liberal democracy a country holds. This effect becomes even smaller when the salience of these issues is controlled for. The only exception in the sample would be Finland. Here a coefficient of 0,67 is found for an increase in liberal democracy whenever there is a unit increase in difference in policy ideology, and a coefficient of 0,65 is found when the salience of these policies is controlled for. However, for every single coefficient across the sample, the standard errors are so large that the difference in policy ideology between RRWP-parties and other parties does not explain movement of the level of liberal democracy. No statistical relationships between the difference in policy ideology and the level of democracy is found, even when controlled for the salience of these policies. In several countries we see that policy ideology converges, as the regression coefficient is negative, yet this does not seem to hold a significant relationship with the level of liberal democracy. Difference in policy ideology converging is therefore not a good explanator for eventual decrease on the level of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy in the dataset is of course an aggregation of several measures of the value system within a liberal democracy. It seems that this value-system in itself is stronger than the converging differences between RRWP-parties and others, and thus is not negatively impacted by their mainstreaming. The analysis fails to reject the null-hypothesis.

Table 2. Linear regression model of RRWP-parties mainstreaming on liberal democracy per country

	Belgium		Denmark		Germany		Greece		France		Italy		Netherlands		United Kingdom		Austria		Finland		Sweden	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	8,79 (0,59)	8,56 (0,74)	8,97 (0,34)	9,28 (0,19)	9,05 (0,00)	-	8,15 (0,40)	9,49 (0,49)	8,50 (0,25)	8,98 (0,62)	7,76 (0,27)	7,22 (2,36)	8,00 (0,17)	8,72 (0,37)	7,77 (0,29)	5,46 (1,45)	8,06 (0,16)	8,40 (0,13)	5,91 (1,57)	4,03 (7,83)	9,13 (0,32)	10,63 (0,00)
Difference in policy ideology	-0,15 (0,15)	-0,00 (0,27)	-0,03 (0,01)	0,03 (0,01)	-0,12 (0,00)	-	0,03 (0,12)	0,29 (0,11)	0,03 (0,12)	-0,08 (0,08)	-0,02 (0,11)	-0,03 (0,15)	0,07 (0,06)	0,09 (0,04)	0,08 (0,08)	0,19 (0,09)	-0,04 (0,05)	-0,01 (0,03)	0,67 (0,44)	0,65 (0,61)	-0,08 (0,08)	-0,20 (0,00)
Average salience of policy ideology		-0,07 (0,11)		-0,09 (0,03)		-		-0,33 (0,11)		-0,01 (0,11)		0,09 (0,38)		-0,14 (0,07)		0,32 (0,20)		-0,07 (0,02)		0,34 (1,36)		-0,17 (0,00)
R ²	0,26	0,40	0,03	0,85	1,00	-	0,02	0,89	0,49	0,63	0,03	0,08	0,30	0,78	0,34	0,82	0,20	0,88	0,54	0,56	0,50	1,00
Adj. R ²	0,01	-0,20	-0,29	0,71	-	-	-0,47	0,70	0,32	0,25	-0,46	-1,77	0,08	0,55	0,01	0,45	-0,07	0,75	0,31	-0,31	0,00	-
N	5	5	5	5	2	-	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	3

Note: OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in brackets.

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

CONCLUSION

The literature established that mainstreaming of RRWP-parties may hold negative consequences for the future of liberal democracy (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn; 2016; Bale, 2003). This would be a consequence of the fact that radical right-wing populism would be a symptom of liberal democracy being in decay (Akkerman, de Lange & Rooduijn, 2016; Mudde, 2017; Plattner, 2010; Rummens, 2017; Taggart, 2017; Vachudova, 2021). These parties that often ran with anti-democratic and anti-liberal tendencies would often go directly against the value system which was often held so dear by the countries known to be liberal democracies. When looking at the ways RRWP-parties moved around the political playfield in liberal democracies, the concept of mainstreaming was introduced. This offers the notion that RRWP-parties would converge their policy standpoints towards those of existing parties, while the same would happen vice-versa. The often-exclusionary nature (Rummens, 2017) of the original policies as held by RRWP-parties would then lead to a decay in the value system of liberal democracy, as the established parties would move their positions towards these viewpoints as well. After all, RRWP-parties emerged from a portion of the electorate that the established parties seemed to have lost. Analyzing the differences between the established parties and RRWP-parties overtime, however led to a different insight. Here it became visible that the impact of the movement between these differences rarely had a statistically significant impact on the level of liberal democracy a country holds. Only when looking at the broader sample, such a relationship was found, but this was confounded by the auto-collinearity of the data. When analyzing the countries separately it seemed that the value-system in itself was too strong to be impacted by differences in ideologies between RRWP-parties and other parties.

Limitations and future research

The models did not offer statistical significant relationships, and thus the findings are not great predictors of RRW-populism's impact on liberal democracy. However, to test for the difference in policy ideology, limitations were shown both from an internal and an external perspective regarding the replication data and the methodology used (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). The external limitations lie in this research itself. As the new version of the CHES-2020 offers for variables that were previously not in earlier CHES-versions. Though the new dataset offers variables that express the same thing measured through other means in previous research, the data available is often of a more limited timeframe than measured in the

work replicated. Though this does not mean that there were no results visible for this data in the CHES-2020, it could not provide the same results needed for total replication.

Another great limitation came in the form of the methodology used by Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn (2016). Though their theoretical contributions on both radical right-wing populism and mainstreaming are not to be understated, the methodology for how they measured mainstreaming is flawed to say the least. When trying to replicate the data for the analyses that included variables that were available in all CHES datasets, some limitations showed themselves. First off, the theory is clear about how to measure mainstreaming, the indicators, but not on who should be analyzed. In their analyses showing the differences between RRWP-parties and other parties, they aggregated the means in ways that simply do not seem logical from a theory perspective. When setting the differences of policy ideology by RRWP-parties against other parties, they include the policy ideology stance of the RRWP-parties in the sample as well. This seems illogical as they're trying to see the difference between two cases. When calculating for the difference between cases it seems unwise to include the party it is compared to in the average as well. This is especially illogical in the way it is worded. They set off the RRWP-parties against the other parties in theory. In reality they set off the RRWP-parties against all parties in the case. Evidence of this is provided in the appendix, when setting it off against the replication data in the literature (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016). Doing so showed severe limitations on the replicability of their measured data, and was of direct impact on this research, as it became a hindrance to find out where the fault in the replication of this research was found.

A second limitation is found in the form of information bias. Though it makes for a more easily analyzable dataset, the CHES-2020 holds only fixed points for time of evaluation on policy ideology. These fixed points of time are the same across the broader sample. In other words, every country is accounted for at the same time. Though this may not seem like a huge risk, election dates differ across countries. This holds the implication that policy ideology can be exaggerated at some points of evaluation, as it may have been more campaign talk than actual policy ideology. It often seems that parties take harder stances when they are actively campaigning for election or re-election than they do when they're in office. These times of campaigning differ per country, so one country may hold parties with more exaggerated stances than the other countries at the same point of time measured. A way to overcome this could be to analyze by policy ideology regarding the European Parliamentary elections, as these happen at the same time for every country across the broader sample.

Another aspect, though not exactly a limitation, but more a premise for future research would be to account for the proportionality of the impact of policy stances. Previous studies account for all cases in the sample to hold the same amount of impact in their policy ideology. In practice this is actually not the case. It would make sense to weigh cases by votes received in future research, as this shows the proportionality in the impact of the policy ideology. It is known that this has not been done yet. Though it is not explicitly stated in the theory on how to measure mainstreaming (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn, 2016), when replicating the data, it became apparent that cases had not been weighed for the number of votes they had. Evidence of this is provided in the appendix. Weighing cases by the amount of votes a party received offers already some kind of indicator on the strength the impact of party ideology can have on the policy ideology of others. For example, when a RRWP-party receives more votes over time, it shows that the issues RRWP-parties campaign on gain more salience across the public. This also leads to the consequence that the mandate given to work on these policy ideologies has been expanded, as more votes result in more seats in government. RRWP-parties with more votes received will be able to make a larger case for their stances than those with a lesser number of votes received.

Broader implications

Though this research offers an extensive look at the impact of the mainstreaming of RRWP-parties on the level of liberal democracy, this research does not stand on its own. Without the replication data from previous studies, this study would not have been able to gain such a clear view of the impact mentioned above. It became visible, that even after 9 years of newly aggregated data, RRWP-parties rarely mainstream, and their impact on the level of liberal democracy remains very little. However, since 2020, a new factor has been in play. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown to be another polarizing factor in party politics. A polarizing factor that many RRWP-party has taken notice of and started to implement certain stances in their own programs. For example, Forum voor Democratie in the Netherlands, a RRWP-party that previously mainly focused on the nativist identity of the people in the Netherlands, has radically changed their program. Though they may not have abandoned their previous RRW-populist stances, their new running policy ideology emerged in going against government mandated restrictions and incentives on overcoming the pandemic. It even goes as far as its party leader making baseless claims regarding the vaccine's effectiveness and the systemic underestimating of the virus (Baudet, 2021). In light of the pandemic, it seems that RRWP-parties have found a new demographic to label as their "pure people" (Mudde, 2017). It is not

known how long the pandemic will last for, but it seems it is not going away anytime soon. Even with the virus gone, the way the pandemic has affected people will result in long-lasting divisions within society. Therefore, it may be wise to from this point on, also include a measure of COVID-stances in measuring mainstreaming, as it has become entrenched in our society. The measures needed to fight COVID-19 are surely impacting the freedoms previously held by the individuals within a liberal democracy. On the other hand, the politicians willingly able to ignore the danger and graveness of the virus, and that immediately discard all measures used to combat it may even be of a graver threat to liberal democracy.

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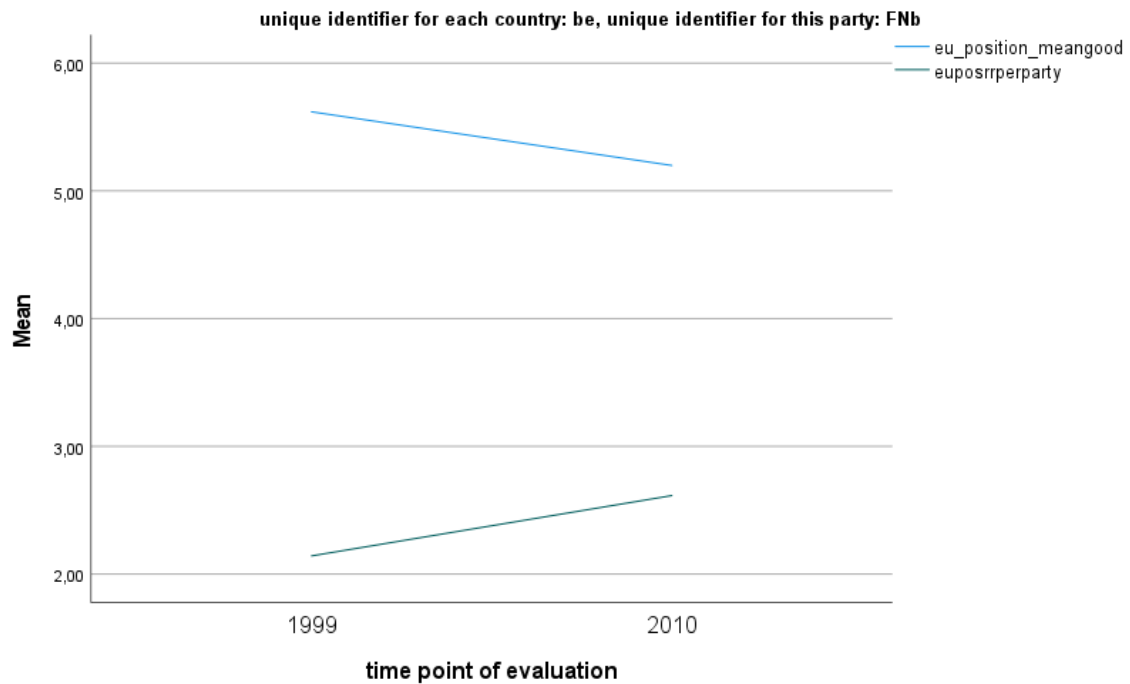
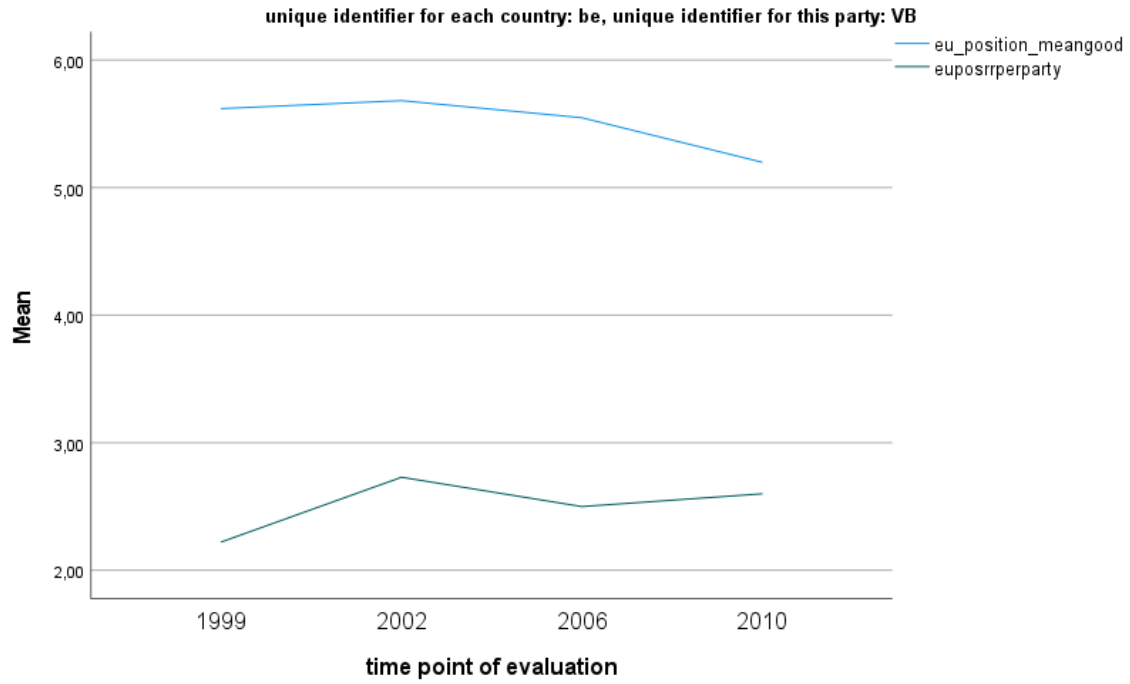
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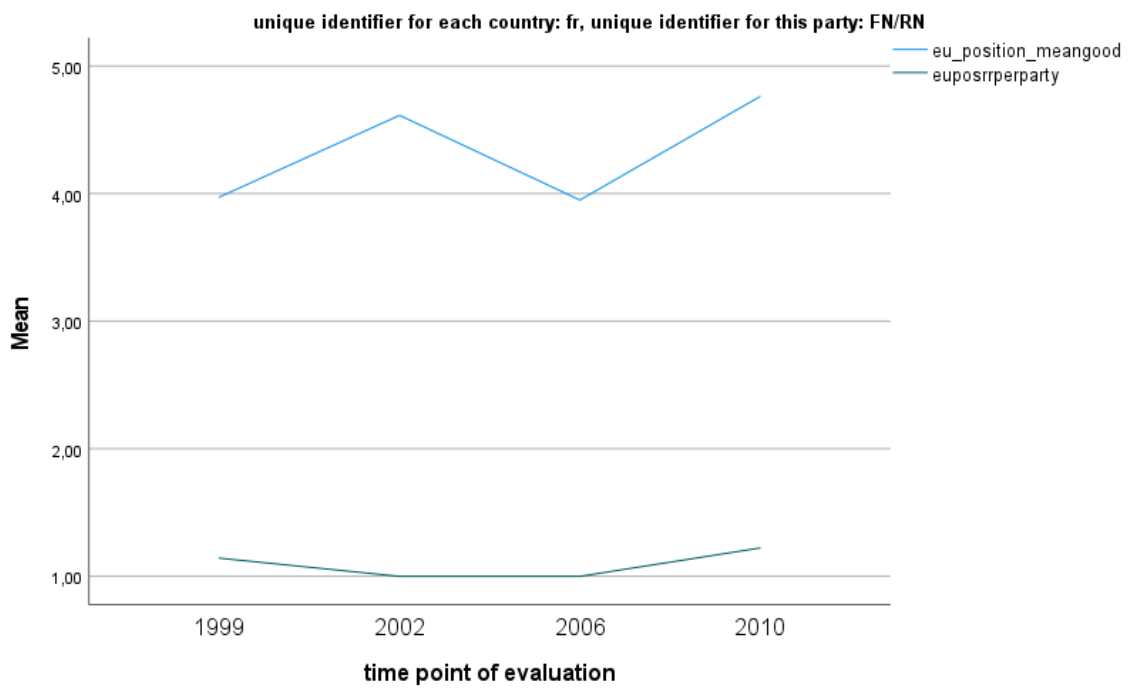
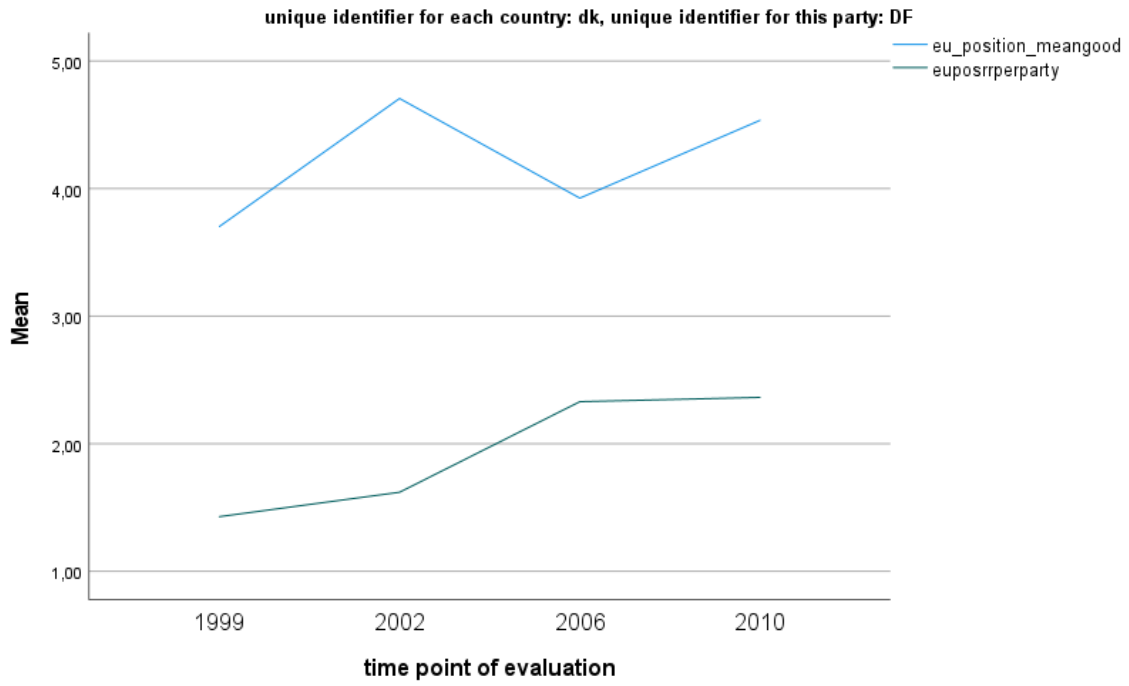
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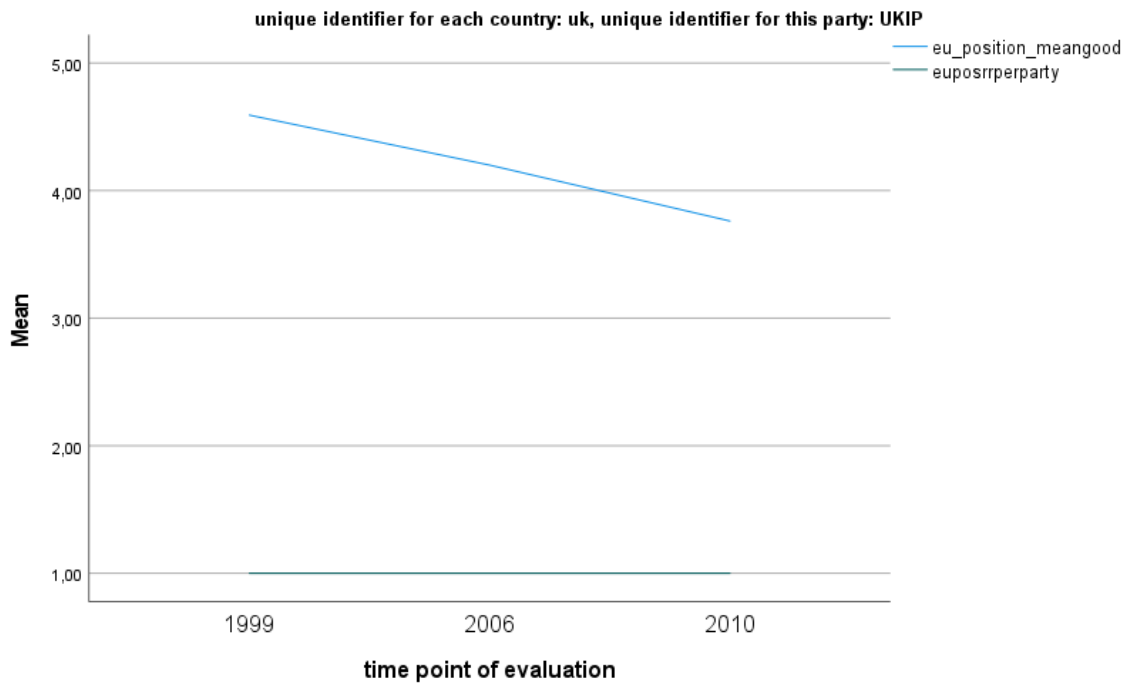
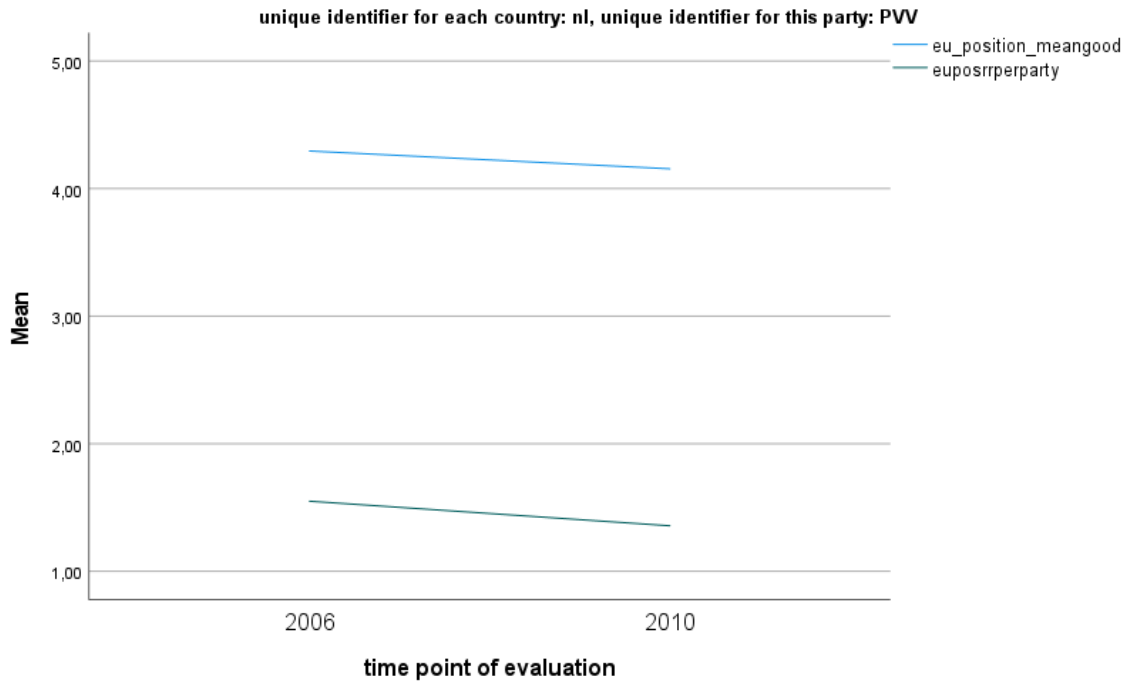
APPENDIX

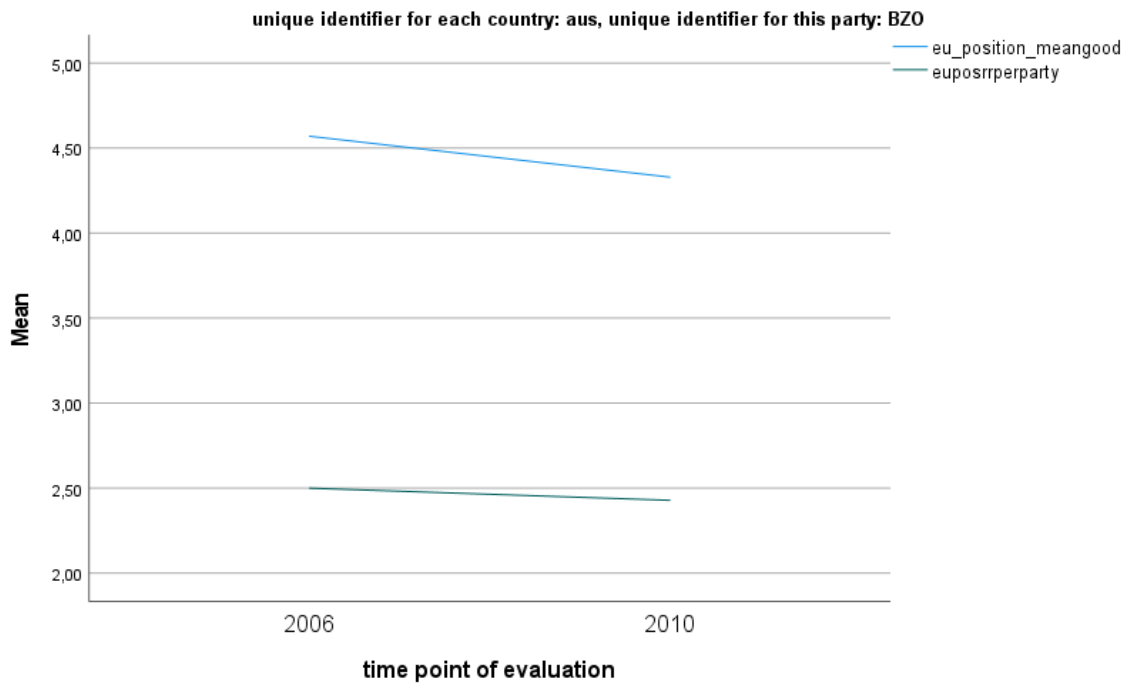
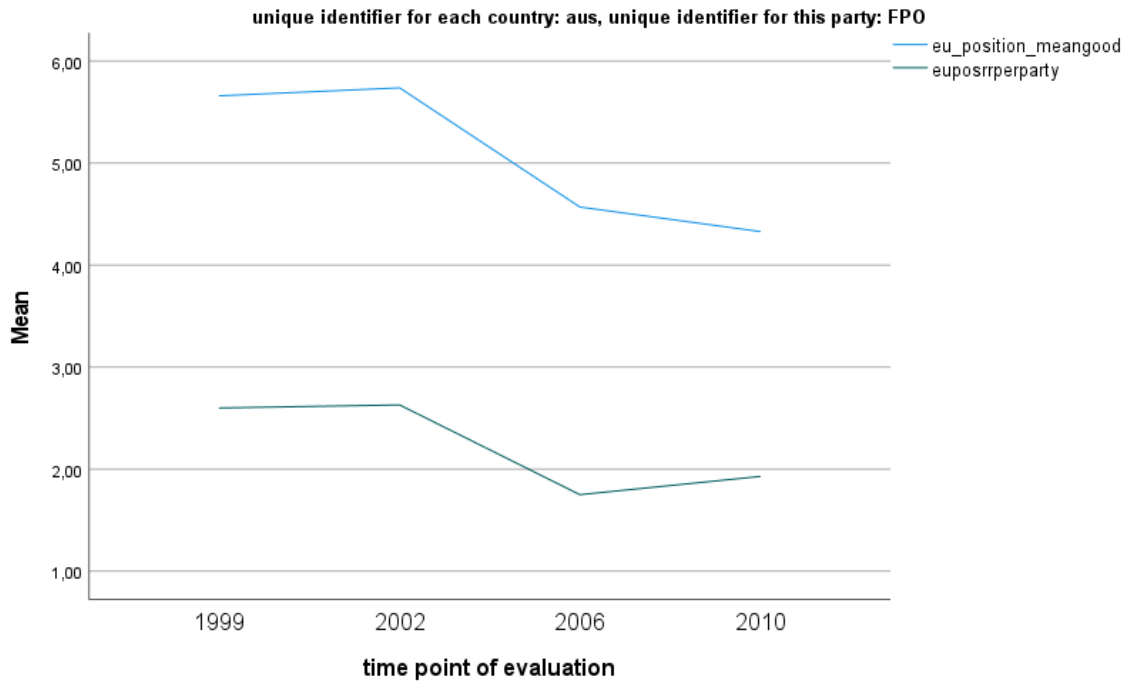
Replication data measuring mainstreaming by Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn;
party mean overtime against other parties overtime

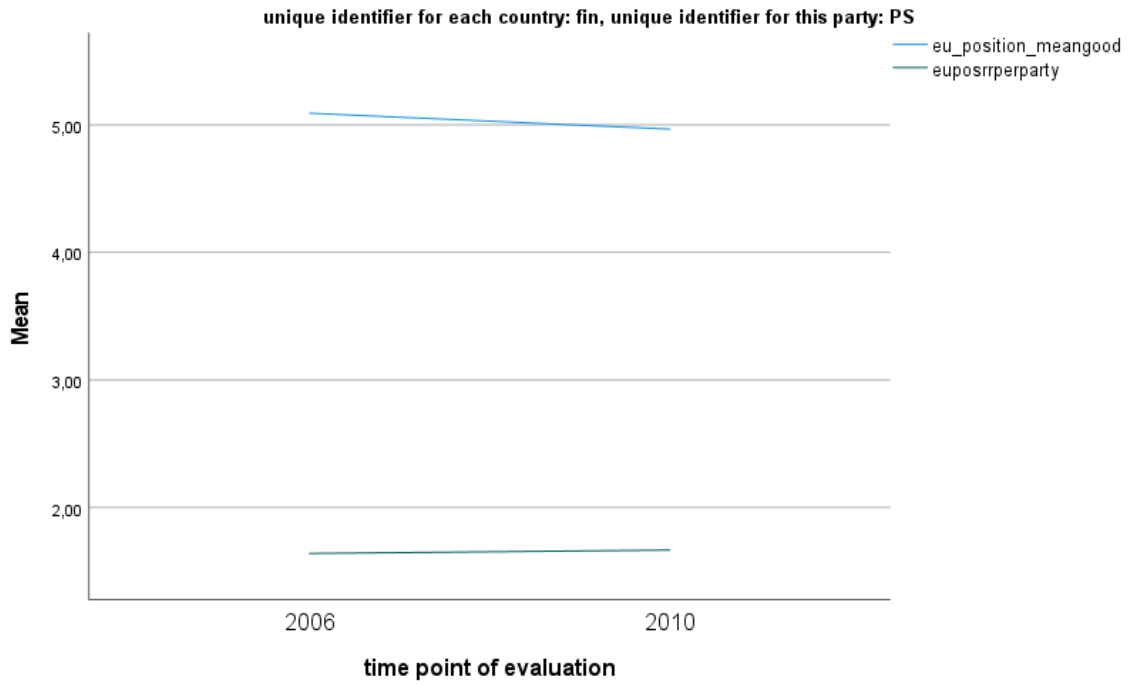
EU-position.



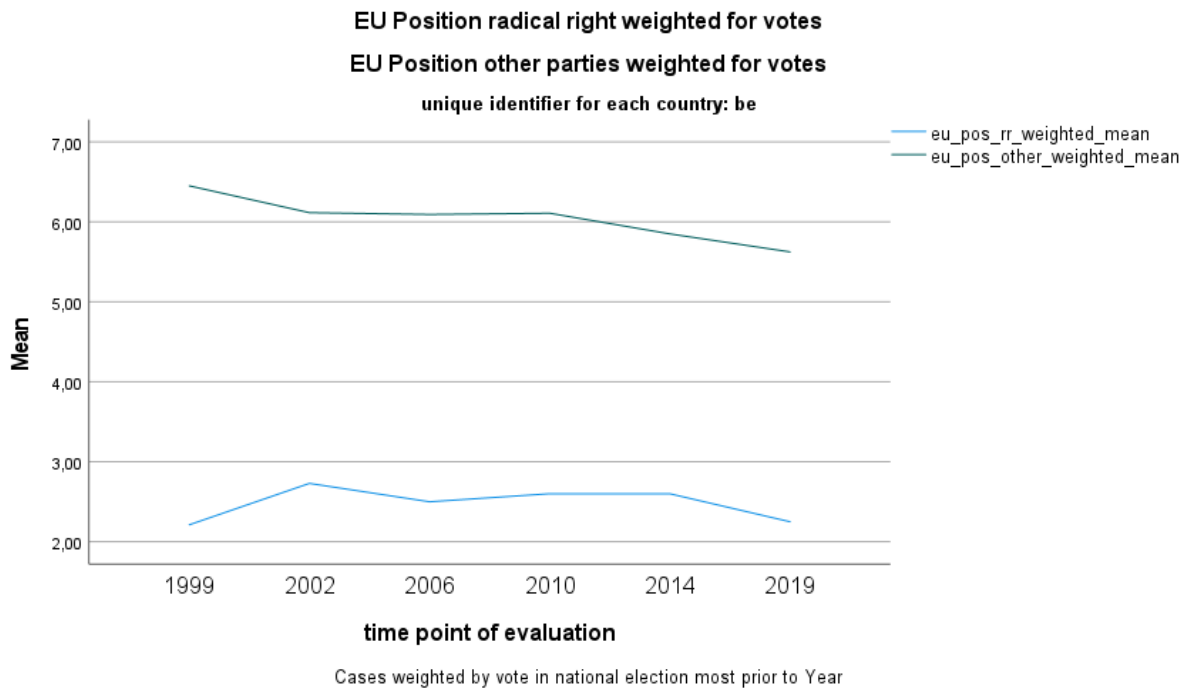


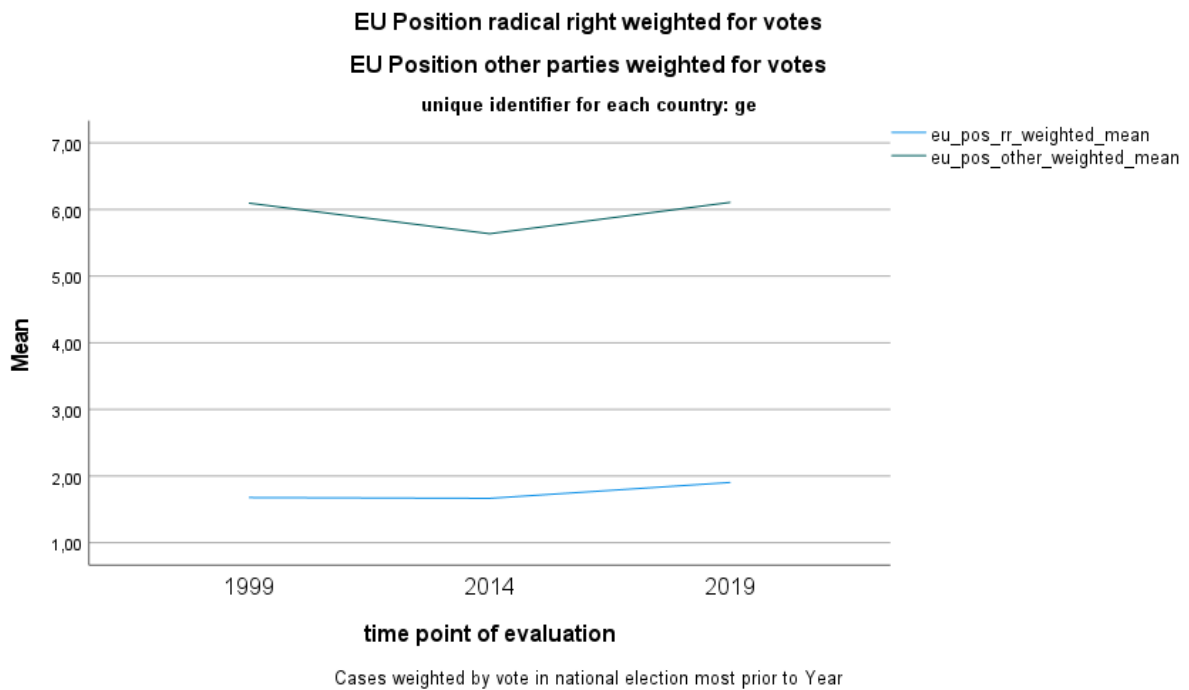
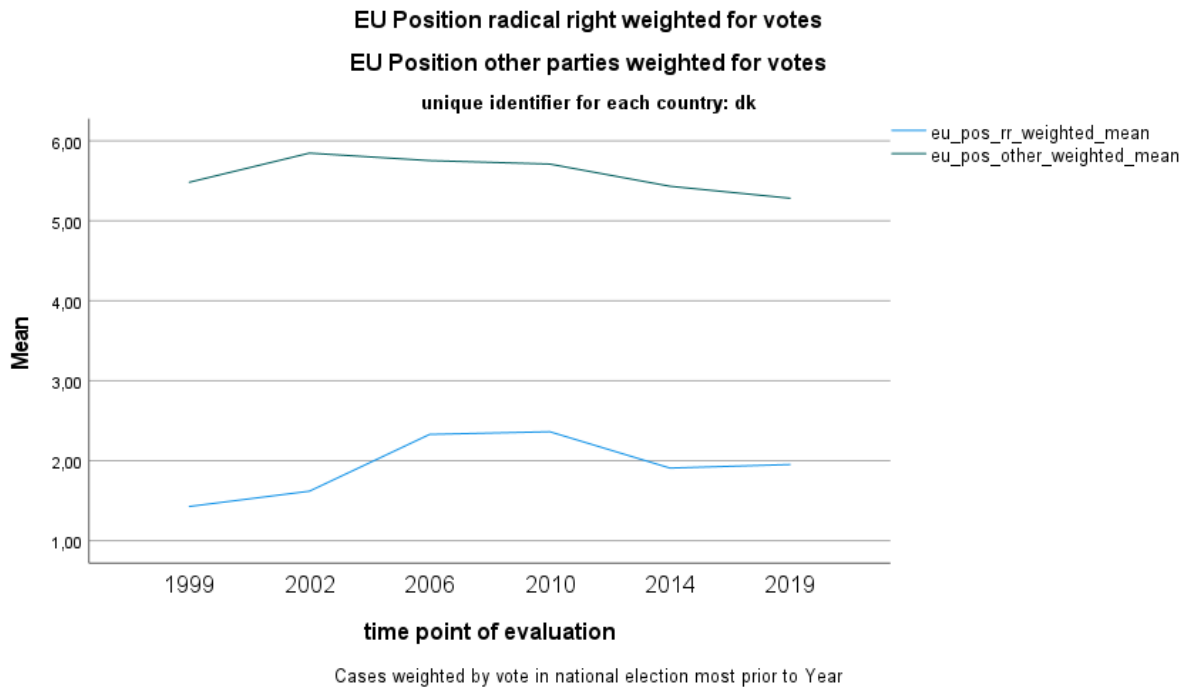


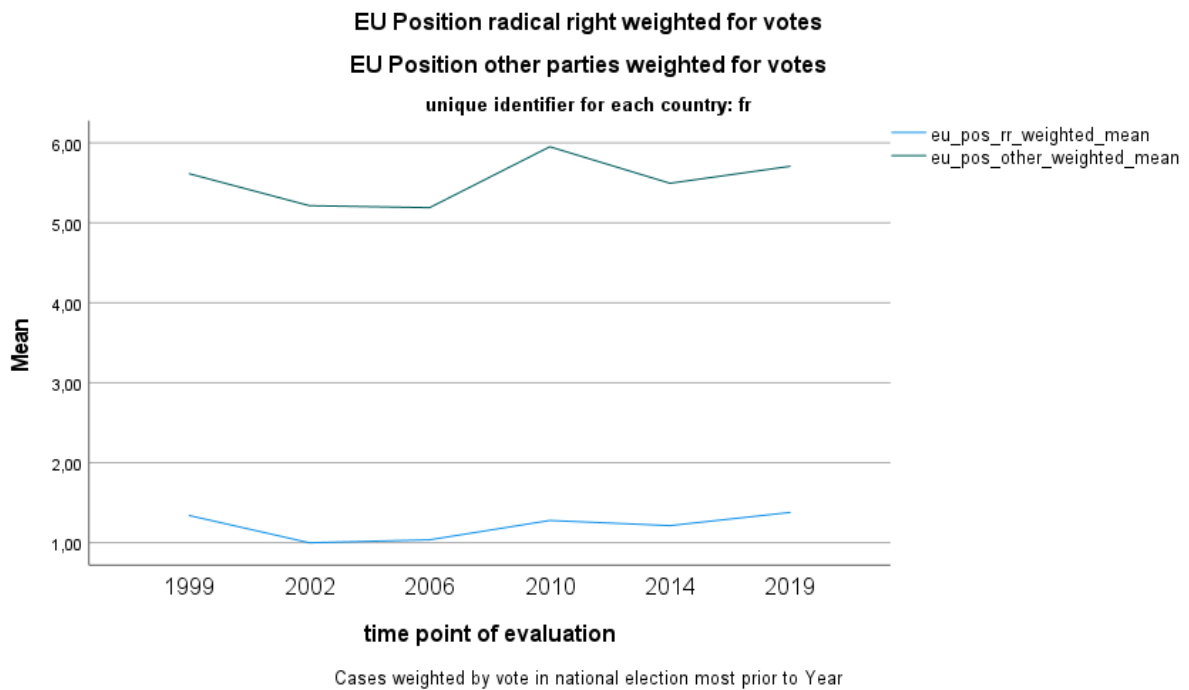
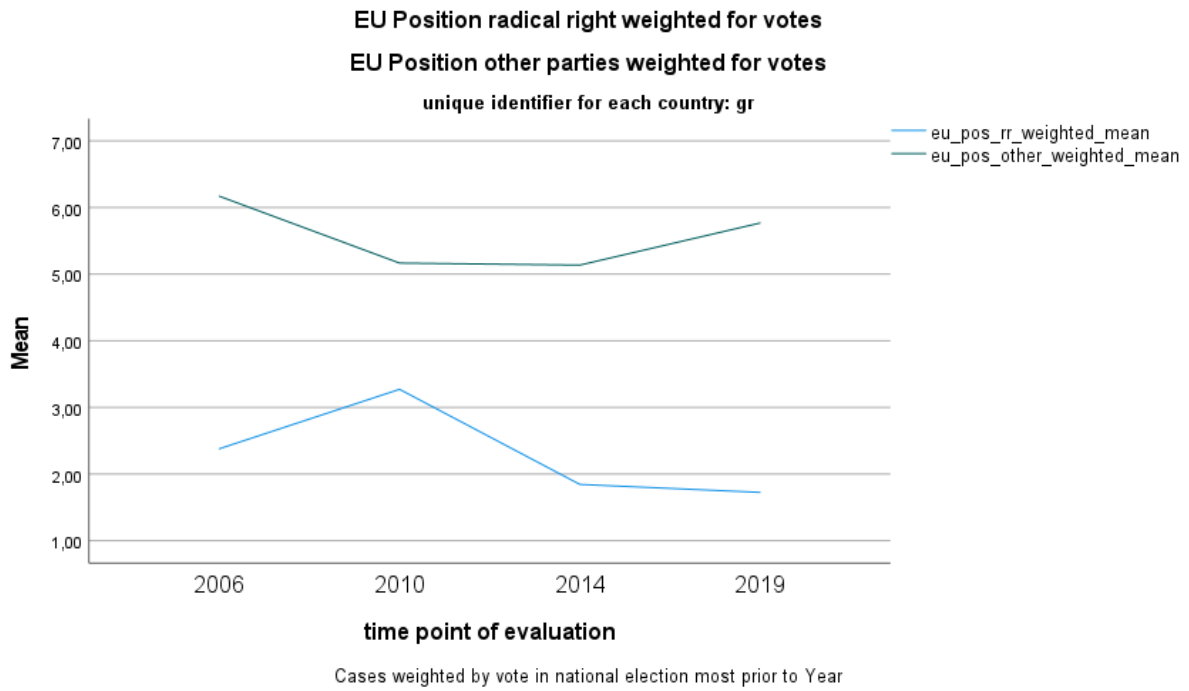


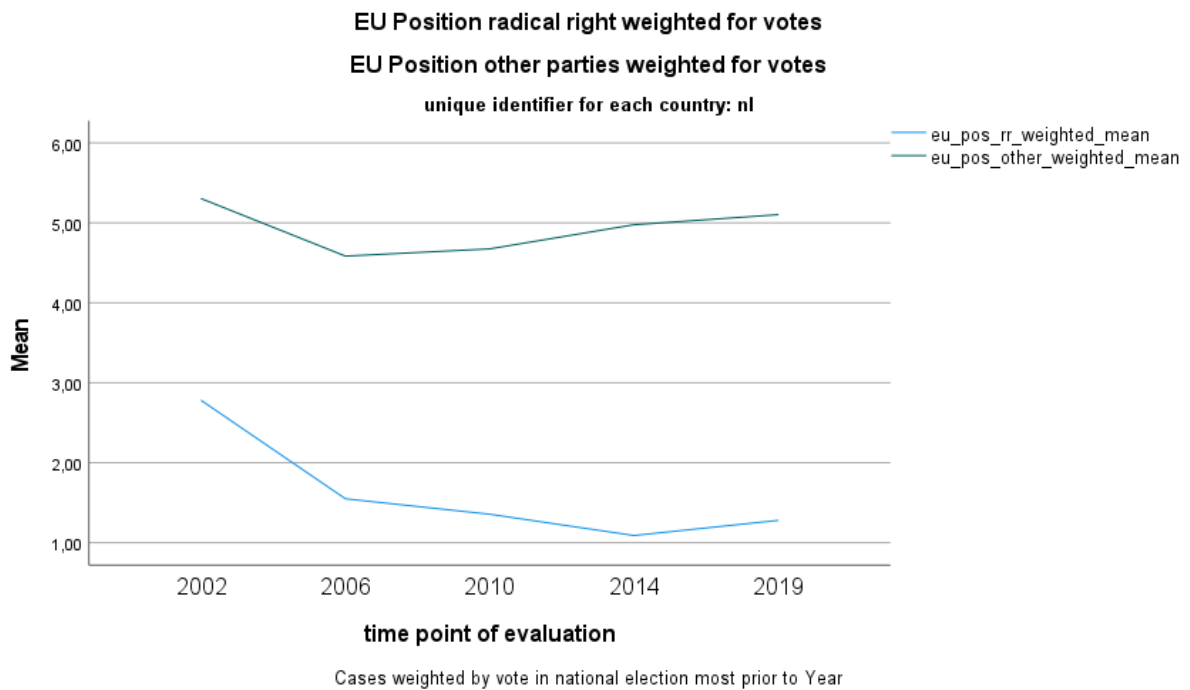
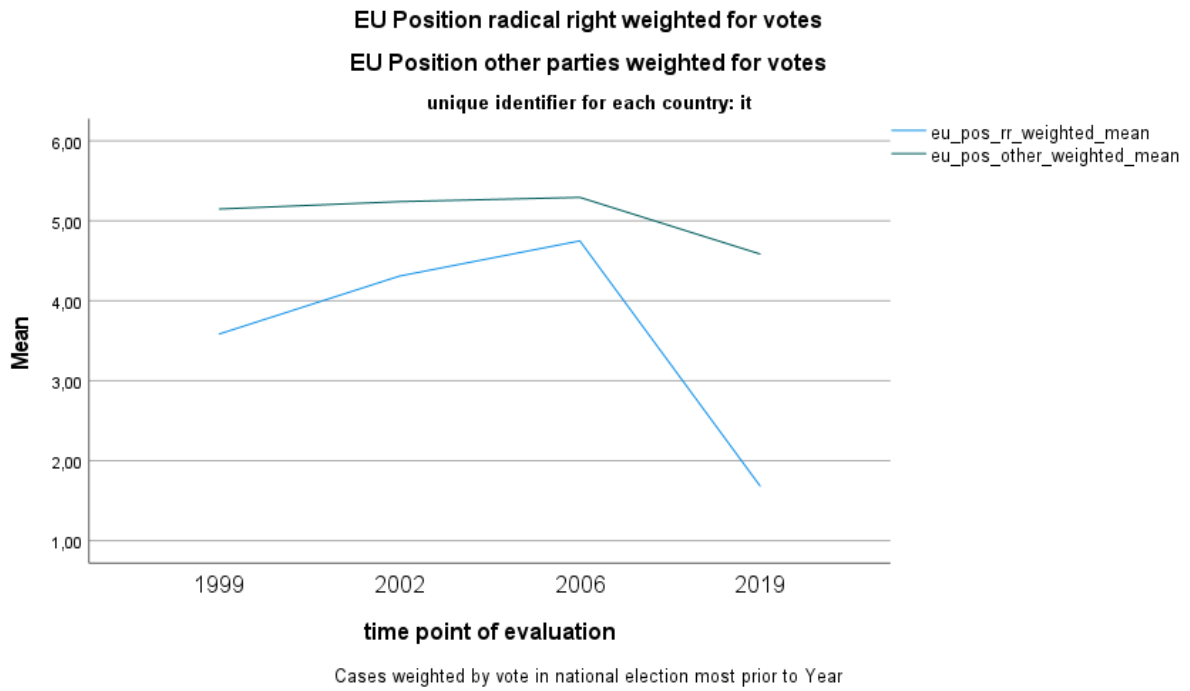


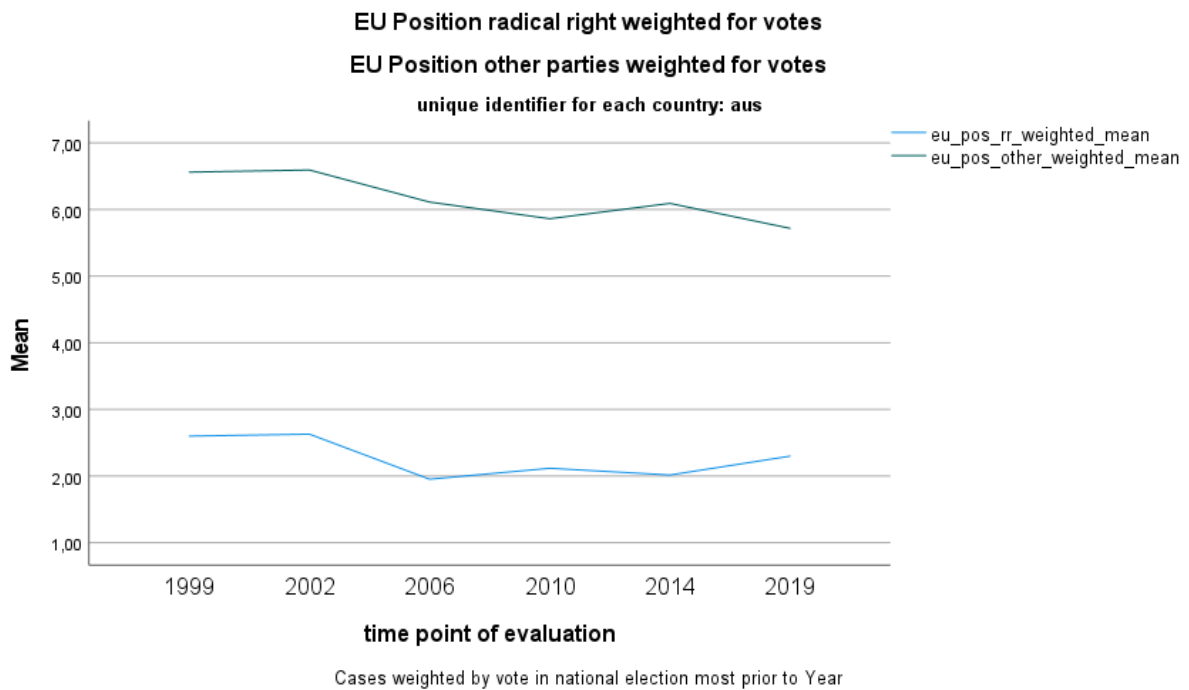
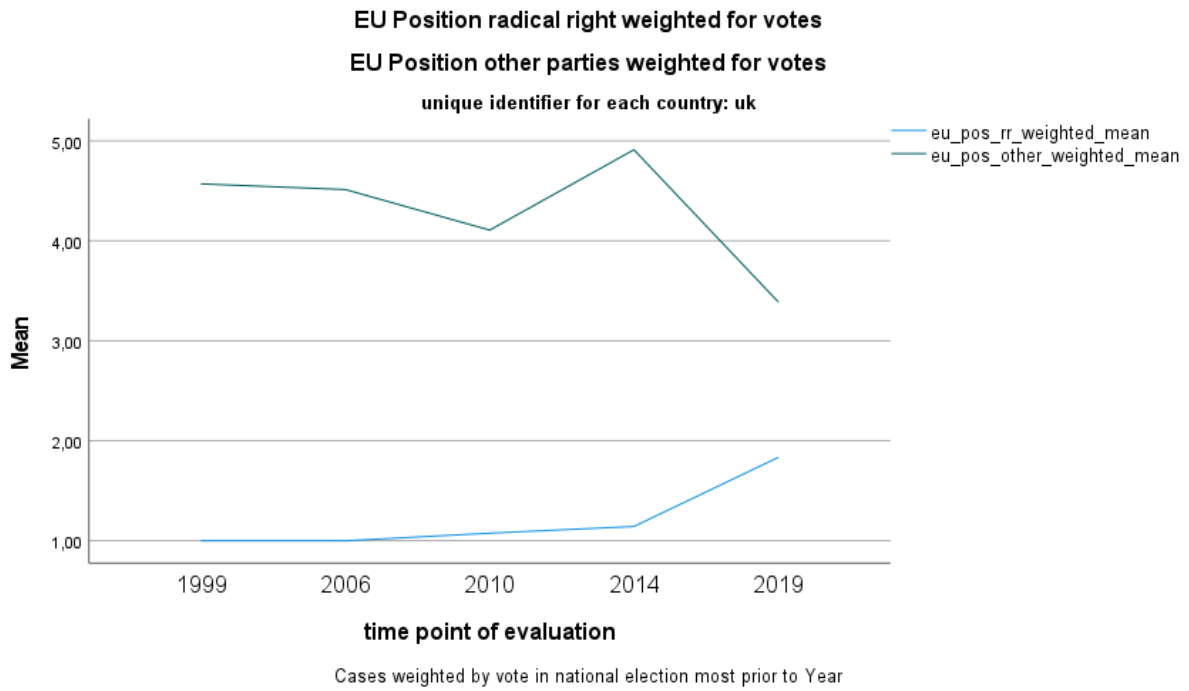
EU position weighed for votes

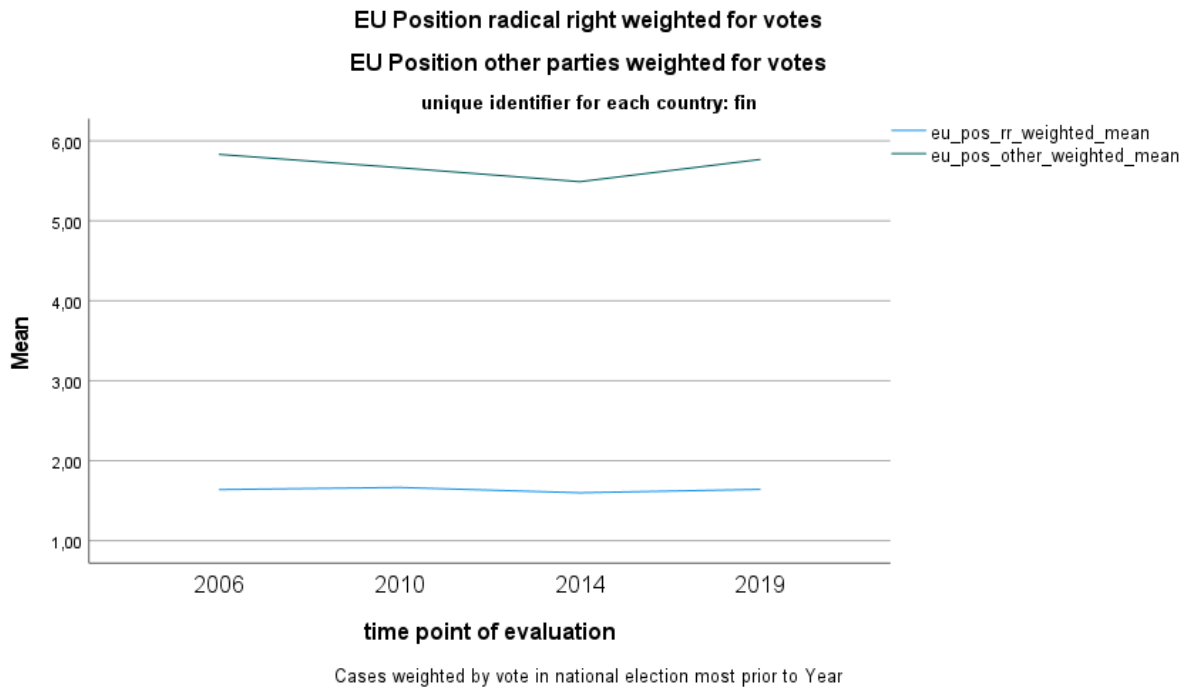




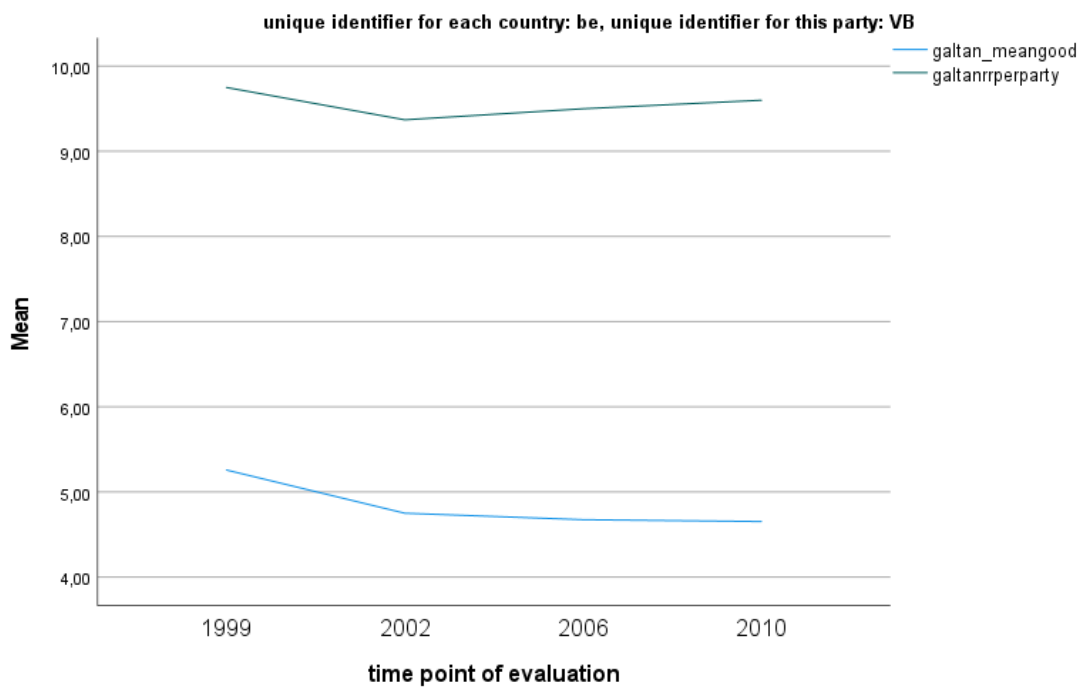


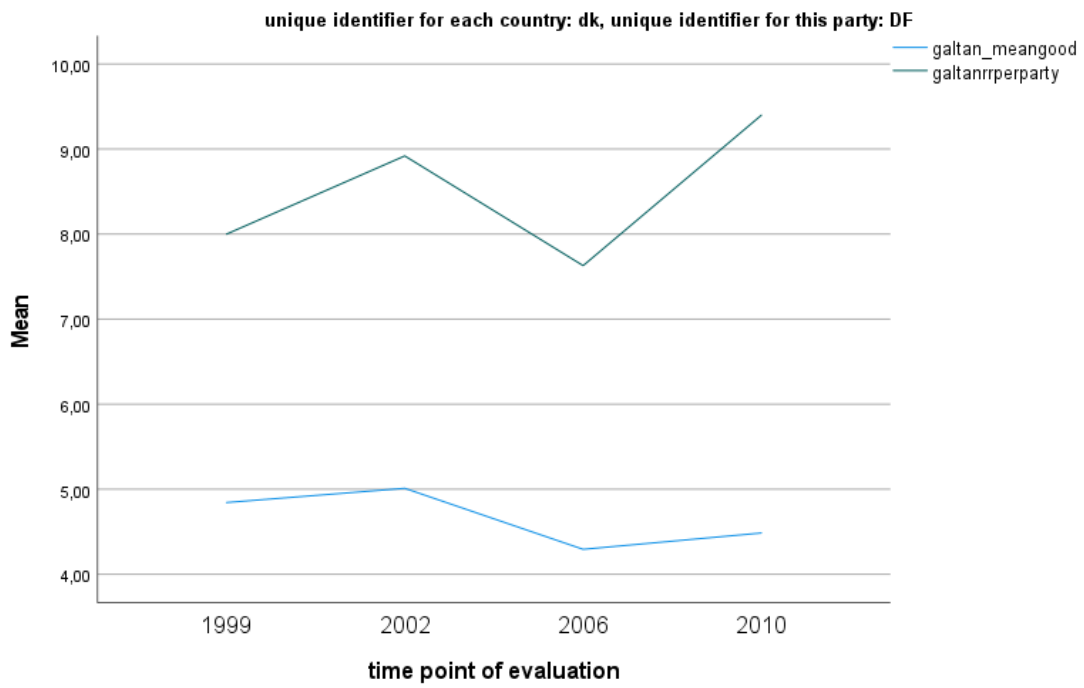
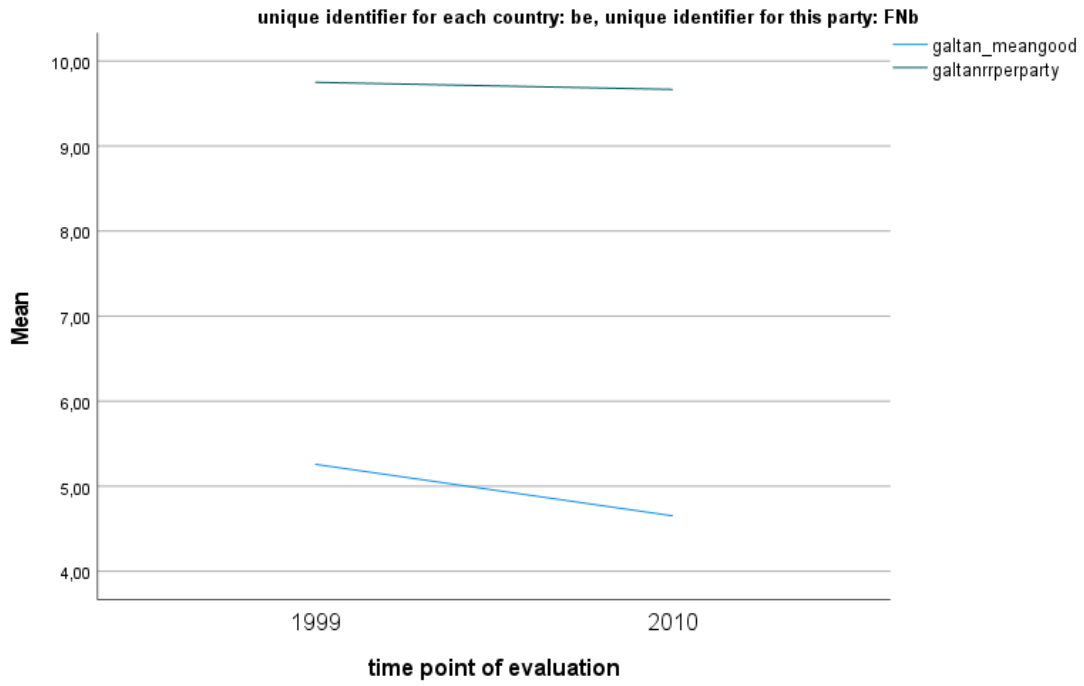


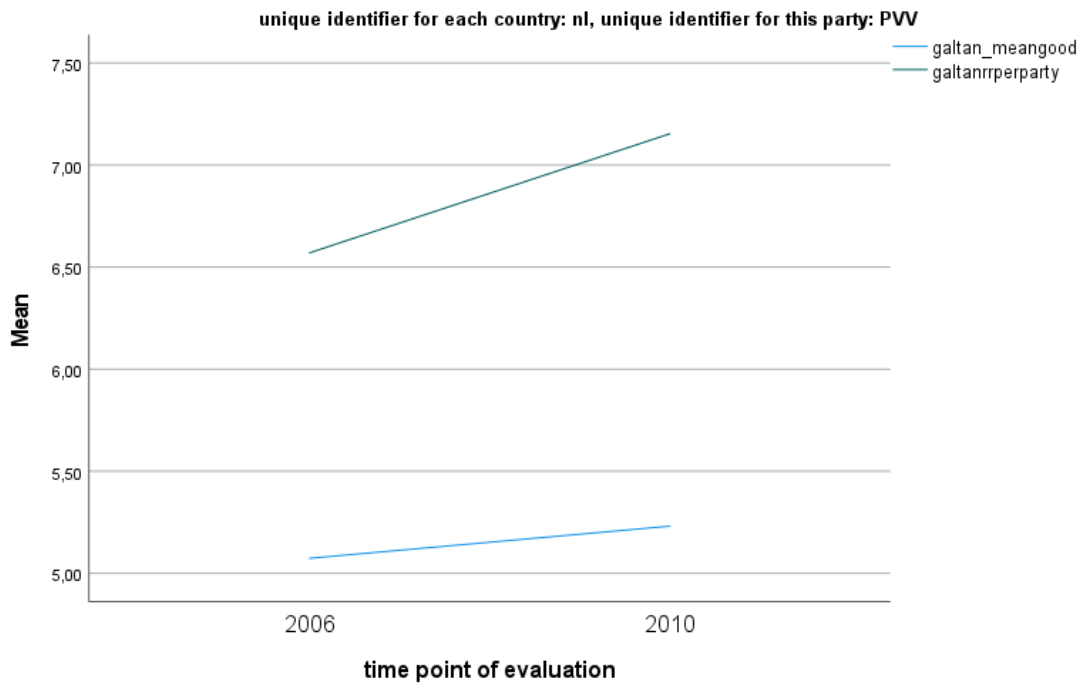
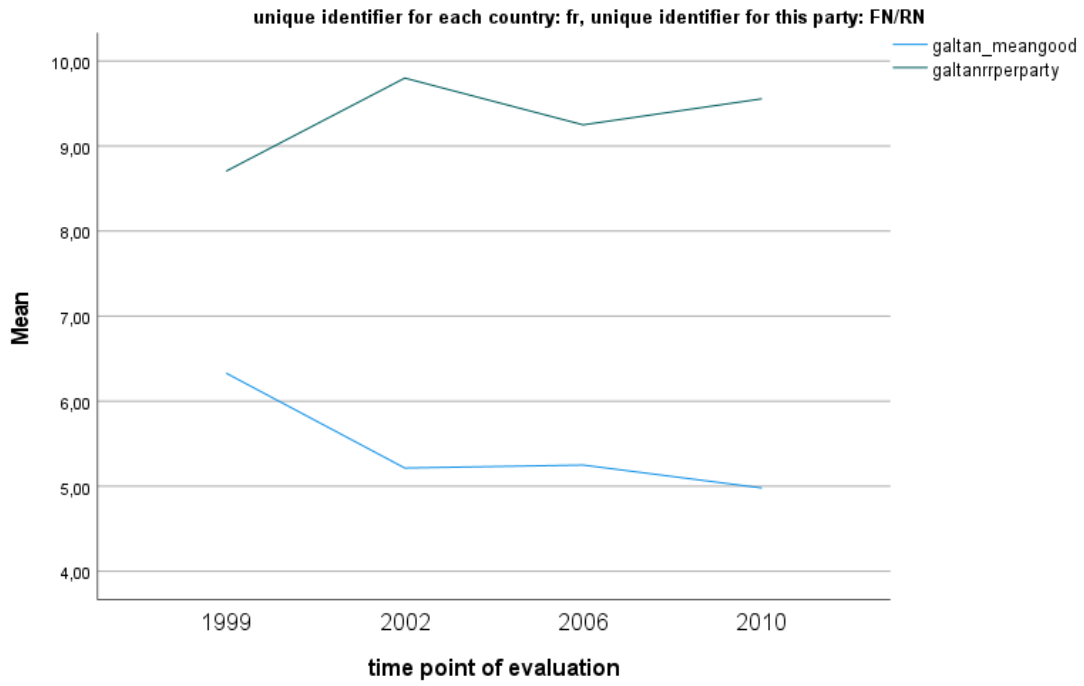


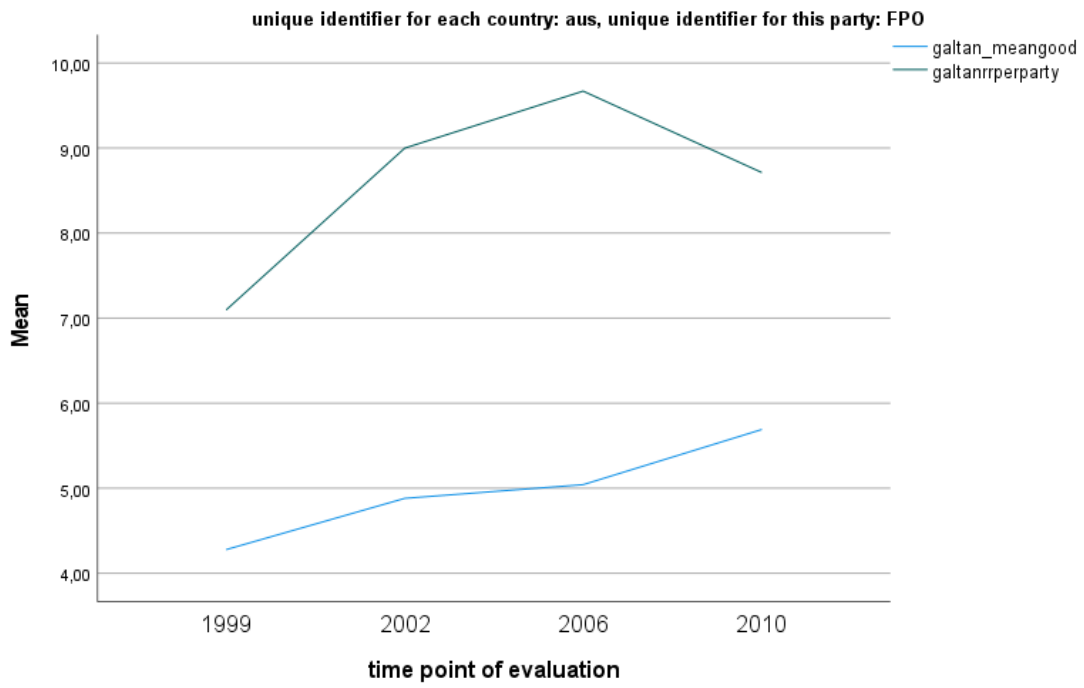
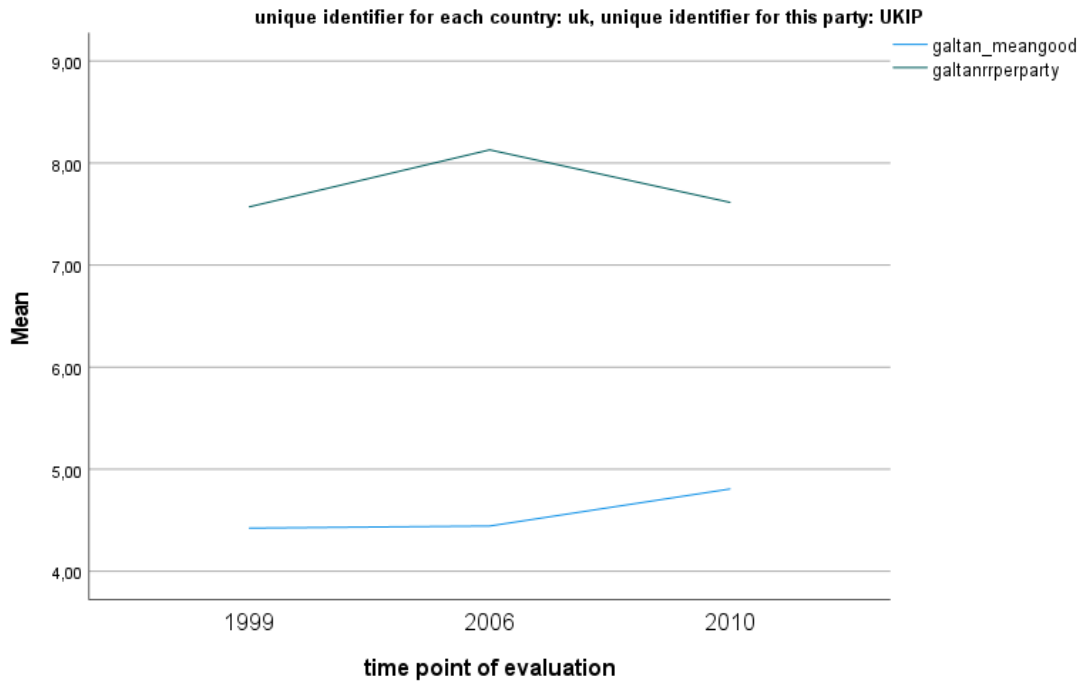


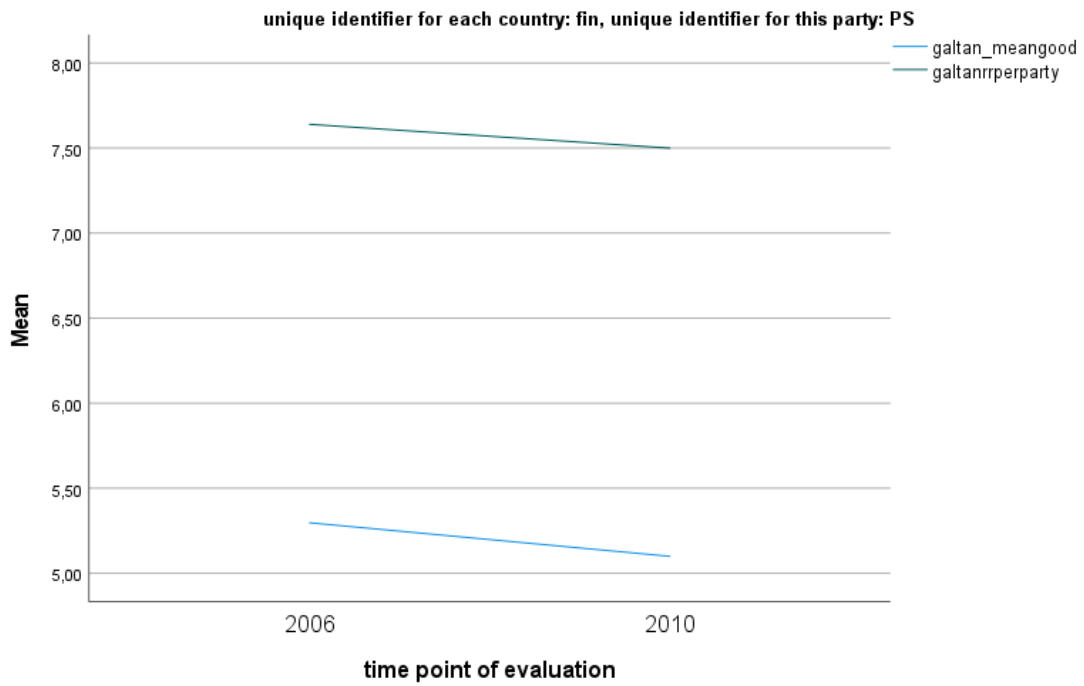
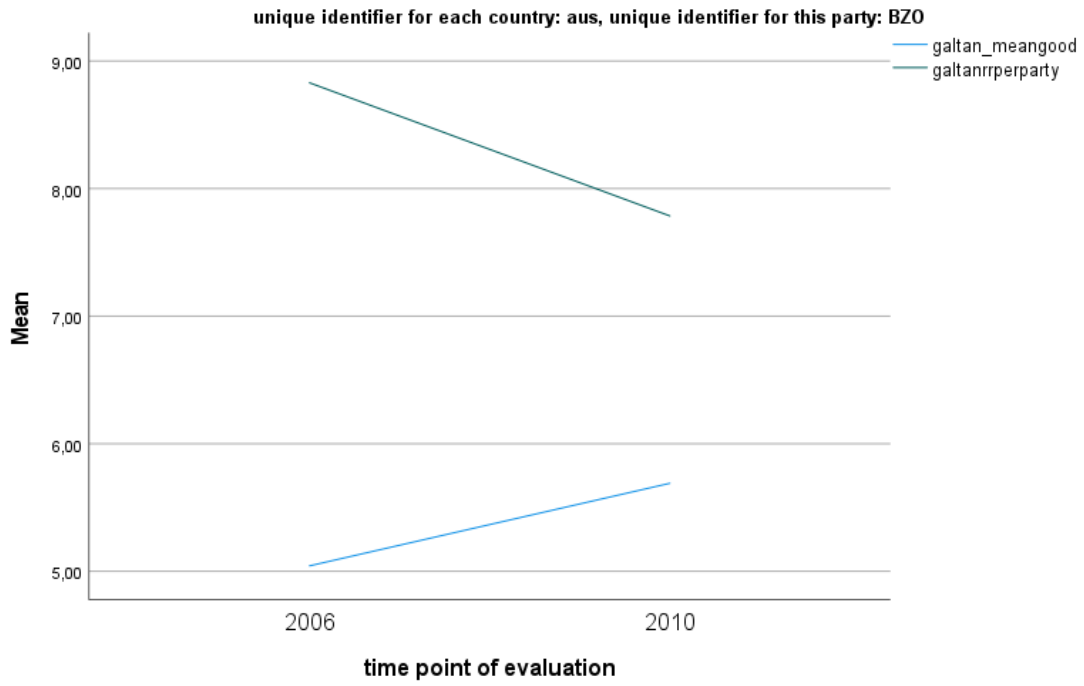
GALTAN Position



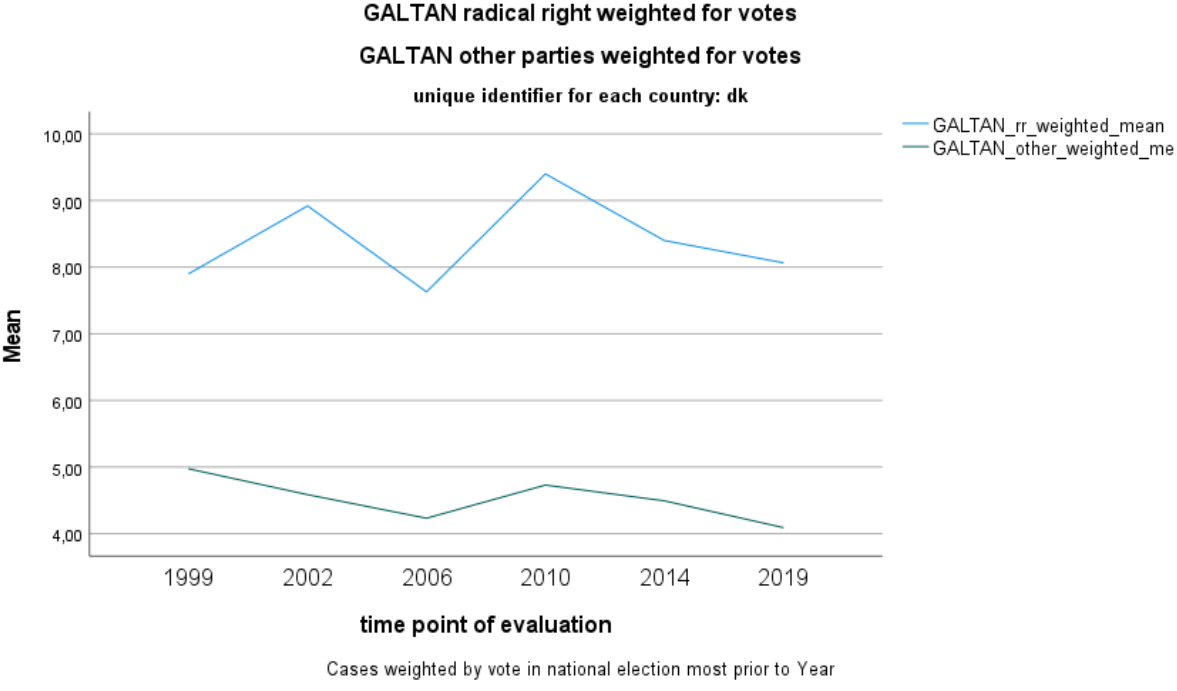
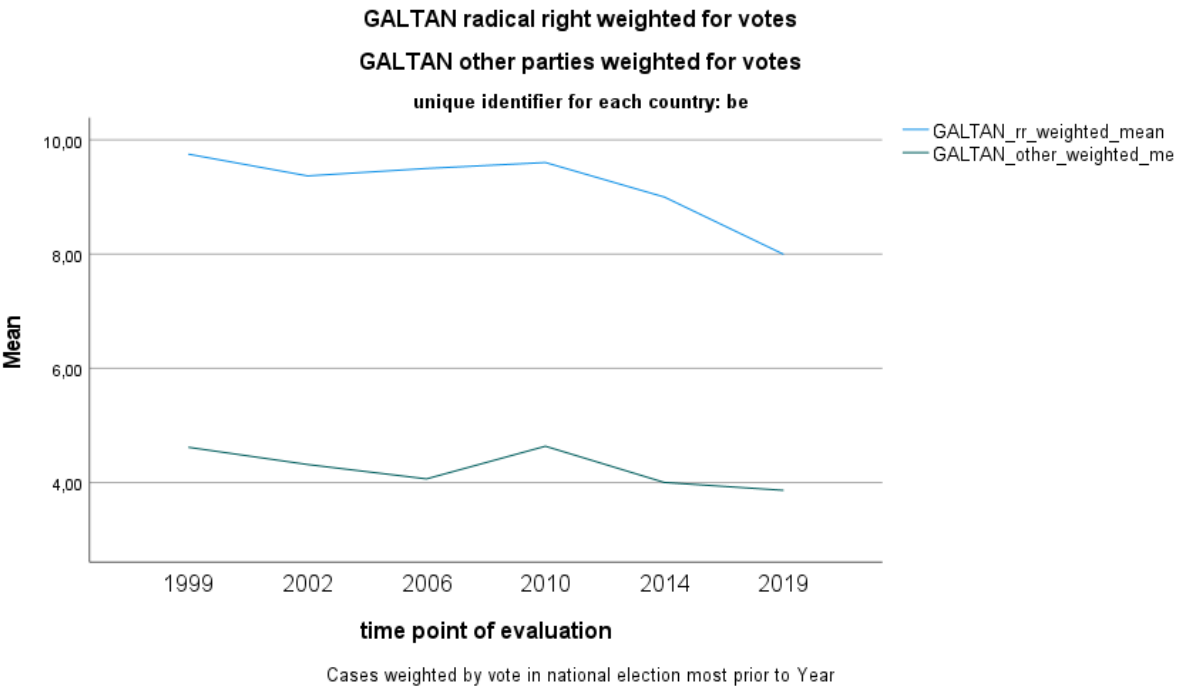


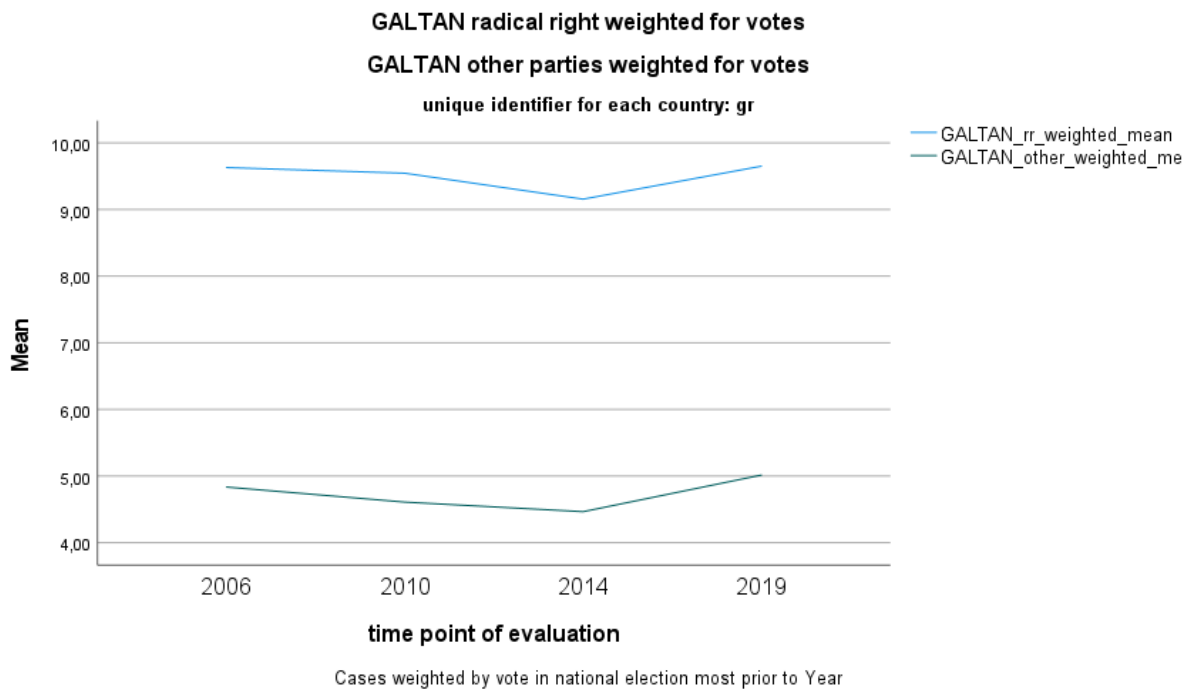
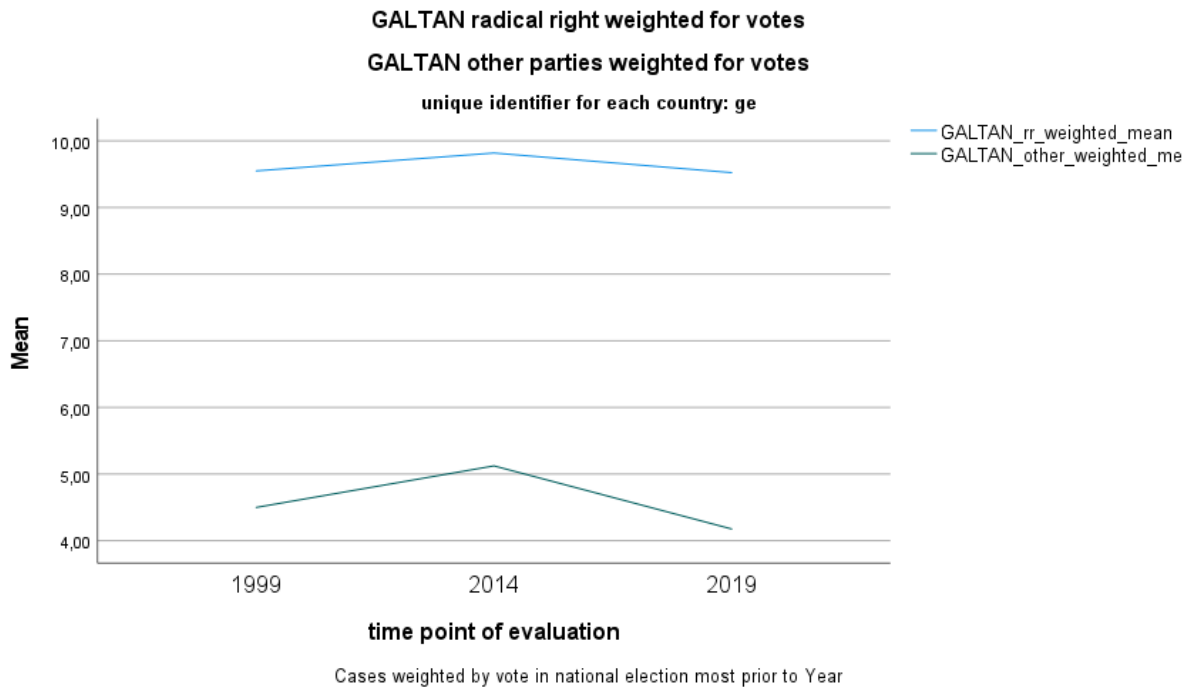


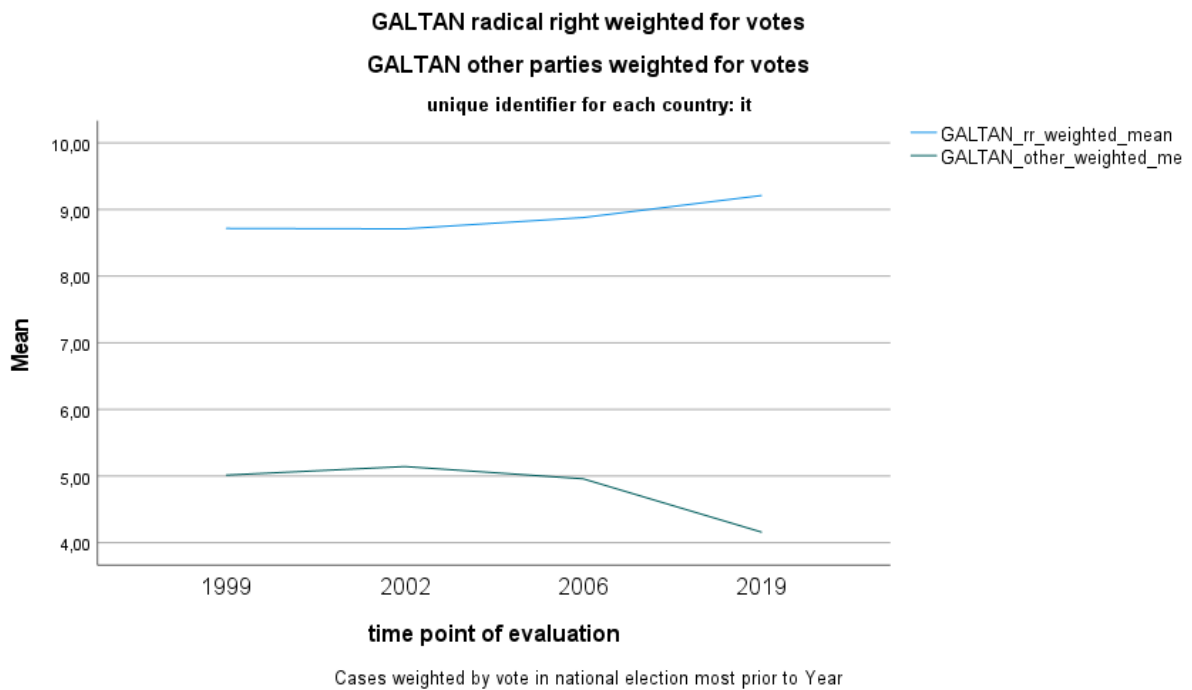
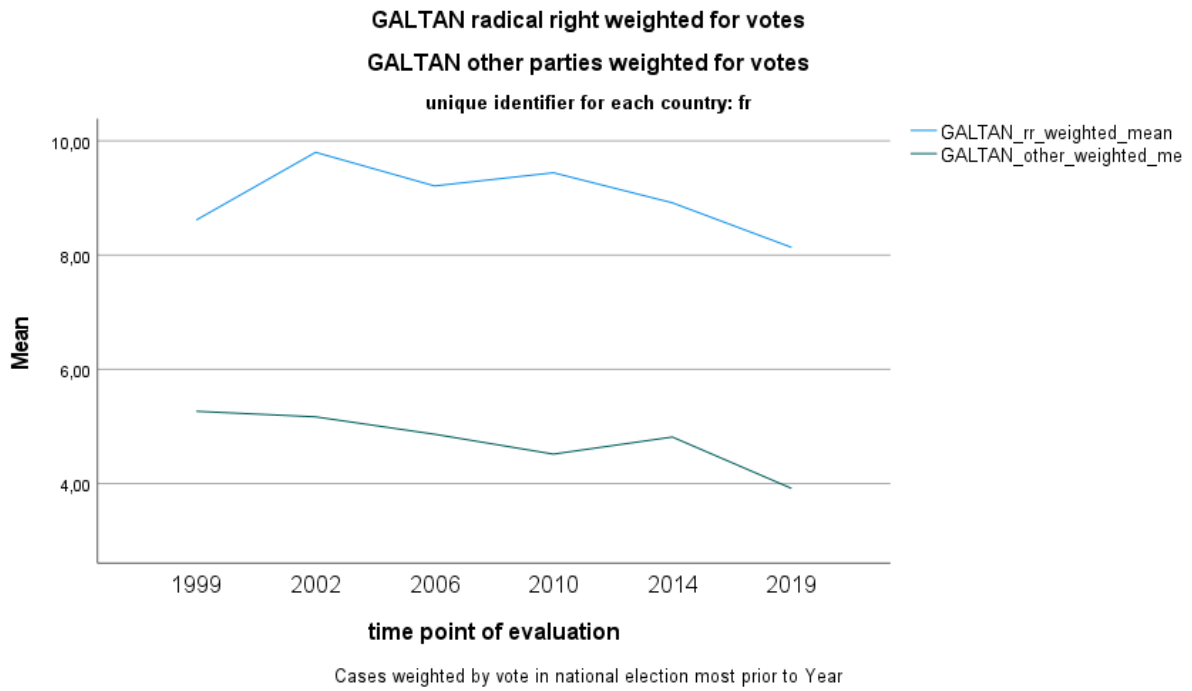


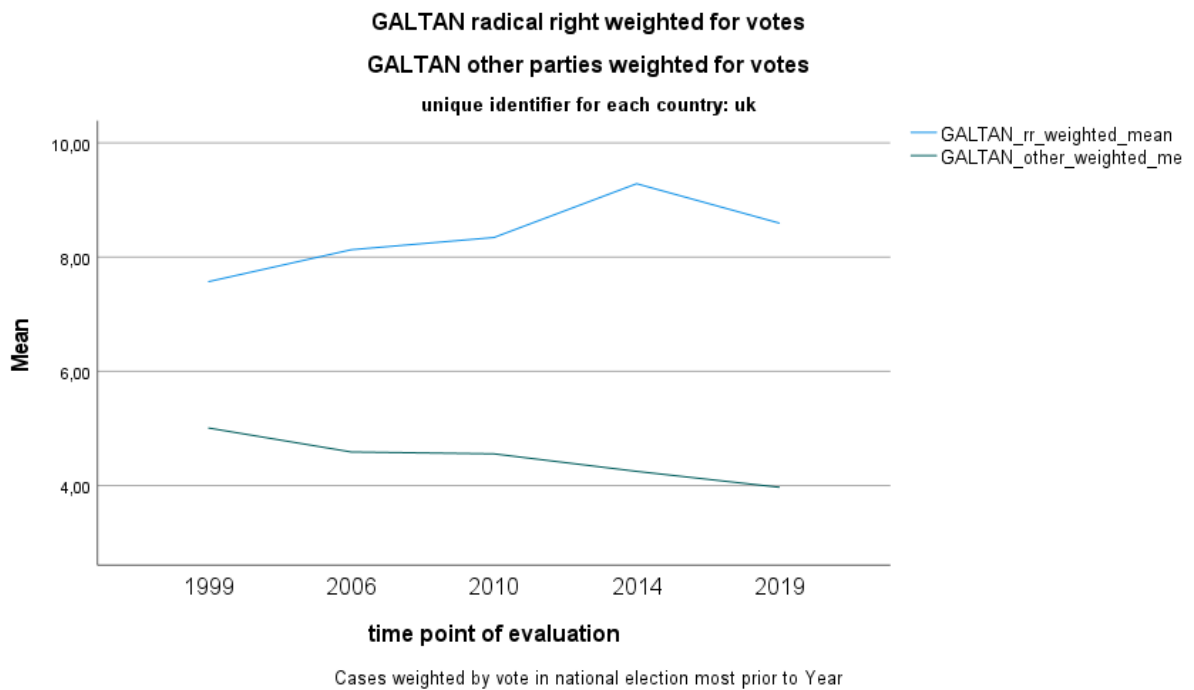
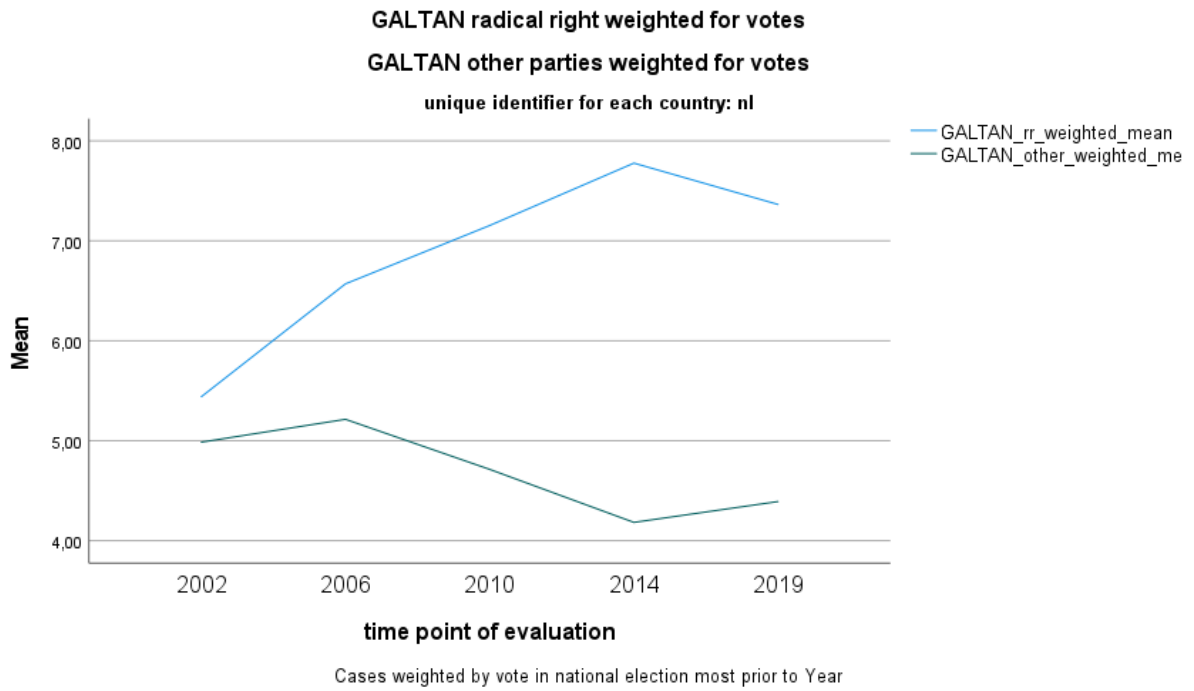


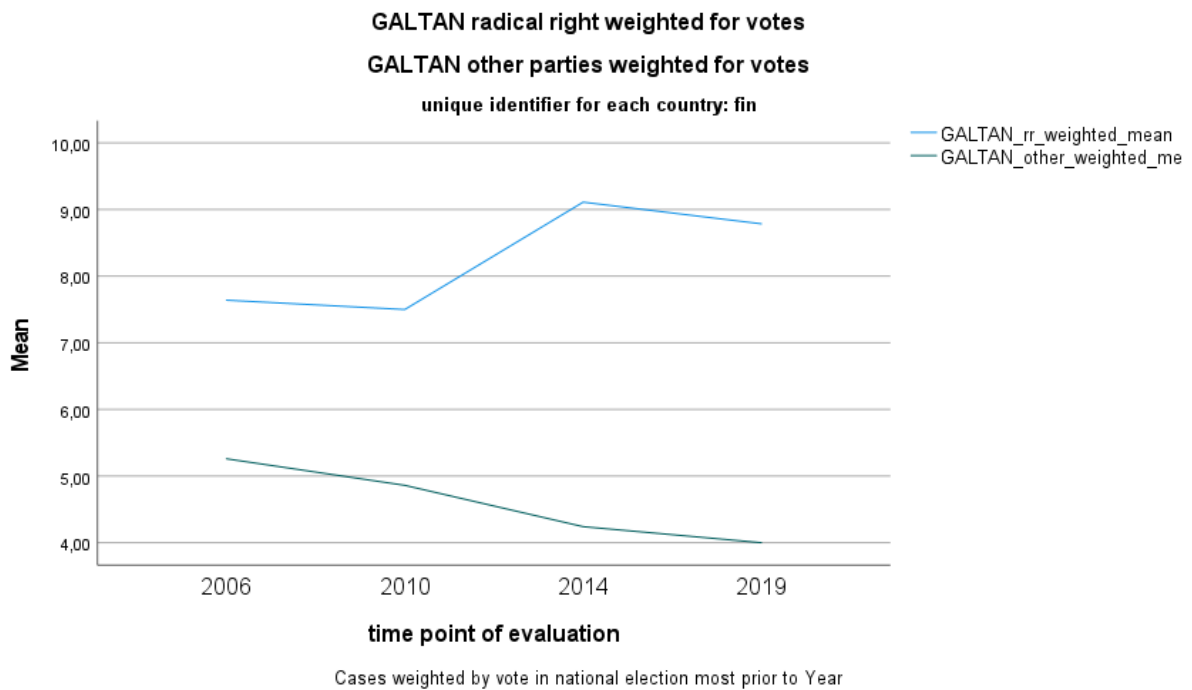
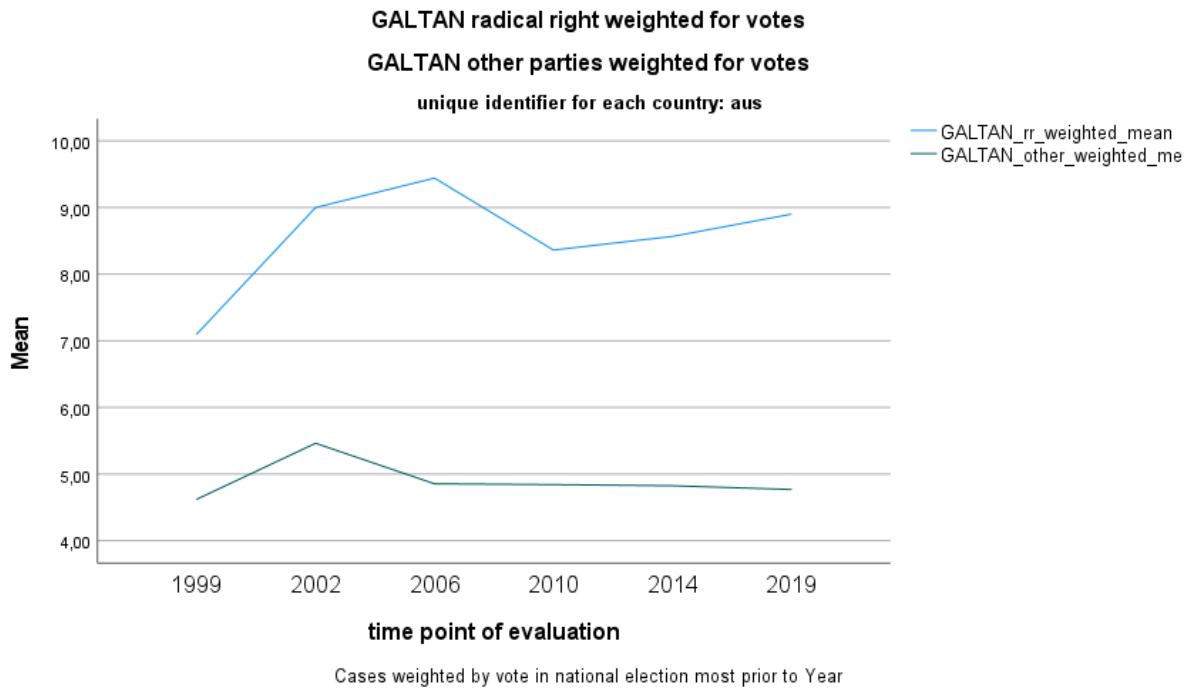
GALTAN Position weighted for by votes

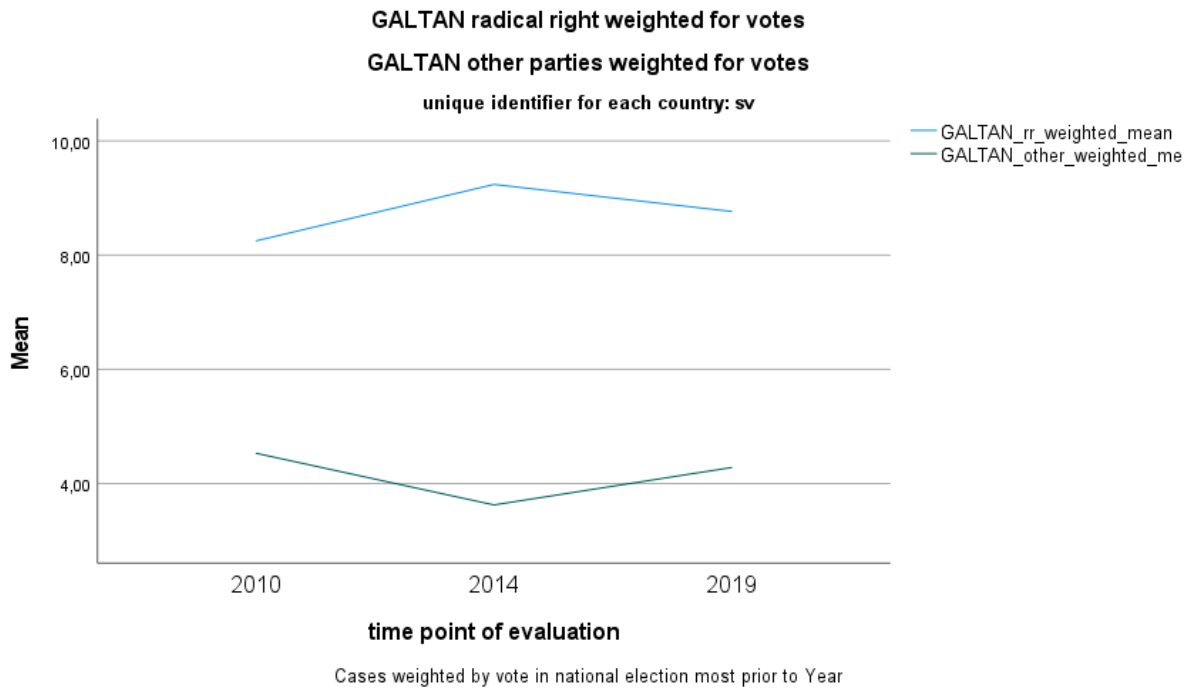












Descriptive statistics for the average salience of policy issues across the broader sample and per country.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of liberal democracy and difference in policy ideology.

		N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Broader Sample	Liberal Democracy	46	8,24	0,36	7,56	8,91
	Average salience of policy issues	46	6,00	0,73	4,05	7,69
Belgium	Liberal Democracy	5	8,18	0,08	8,13	8,30
	Average salience of policy issues	5	5,02	0,79	4,05	5,94
Denmark	Liberal Democracy	5	8,86	0,07	8,75	8,91
	Average salience of policy issues	5	6,18	0,89	5,43	6,02
Germany	Liberal Democracy	2	8,60	0,09	8,53	8,66
	Average salience of policy issues	2	5,72	0,42	5,43	6,02
Greece	Liberal Democracy	4	8,23	0,11	8,12	8,38
	Average salience of policy issues	4	6,85	0,61	6,27	7,03
France	Liberal Democracy	5	8,09	0,08	8,02	8,19
	Average salience of policy issues	5	6,43	0,36	6,12	7,03
Italy	Liberal Democracy	4	7,70	0,12	7,56	7,83
	Average salience of policy issues	4	6,21	0,32	5,88	6,48
The Netherlands	Liberal Democracy	5	8,19	0,12	8,04	8,34
	Average salience of policy issues	5	5,52	0,61	4,89	6,23
United Kingdom	Liberal Democracy	4	8,06	0,06	7,99	8,11
	Average salience of policy issues	4	5,98	0,21	5,79	6,22
Austria	Liberal Democracy	5	7,92	0,06	7,87	8,00
	Average salience of policy issues	5	6,60	0,84	5,46	7,29
Finland	Liberal Democracy	4	8,28	0,40	7,68	8,55
	Average salience of policy issues	4	5,74	0,20	5,53	6,00
Sweden	Liberal Democracy	3	8,81	0,05	8,76	8,86
	Average salience of policy issues	3	5,68	0,41	5,24	6,04

Table 4. Assumption checks

		Tolerance	VIF	Durbin-Watson
Broader Sample	Model 1	1,00	1,00	0,66
	Model 2	0,99	1,01	
Belgium	Model 1	1,00	1,00	0,95
	Model 2	0,35	2,82	
Denmark	Model 1	1,00	1,00	2,80
	Model 2	0,86	1,16	
Germany	Model 1	1,00	1,00	0,00
	Model 2	-	-	
Greece	Model 1	1,00	1,00	1,90
	Model 2	0,26	3,80	
France	Model 1	1,00	1,00	1,75
	Model 2	0,73	1,37	
Italy	Model 1	1,00	1,00	1,22
	Model 2	0,99	1,01	
Netherlands	Model 1	1,00	1,00	2,43
	Model 2	0,92	1,09	
United Kingdom	Model 1	1,00	1,00	1,75
	Model 2	0,39	2,56	
Austria	Model 1	1,00	1,00	2,47
	Model 2	0,83	1,21	
Finland	Model 1	1,00	1,00	1,89
	Model 2	0,98	1,02	
Sweden	Model 1	1,00	1,00	1,00
	Model 2	0,26	3,79	