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democratise and relegitimate the EU polity in the eyes  
of its citizens. An analysis of the congruence between  
MEPs and their voters on the EU political system**

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Report on alternative institutional options to democratise and re-legitimate the EU polity in the eyes of its citizens

An analysis of the congruence between MEPs and their voters on the EU political system

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# Report on alternative institutional options to democratise and re-legitimate the EU polity in the eyes of its citizens

## An analysis of the congruence between MEPs and their voters on the EU political system

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

On 24 March 2021, the work of the Conference on the Future of Europe officially started. This Conference, which consists in a series of initiatives involving citizens and EU institutions with the aim of looking at the future of the European Union (EU) and what reforms should be made to its policies and institutions, is yet another attempt to respond to the enduring crisis of legitimacy that the EU has been facing since at least the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty. The broad and blind consensus in favour of the integration process, which prevailed from the 1950s until the early 1990s, was indeed replaced in the early 1990s by a questioning of the process, famously known as the shift from the ‘permissive consensus’ to the ‘constraining dissensus’ (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). The success of parties expressing Euroscepticism or even calling to put an end to the EU in the most recent European Parliament (EP) elections (in 2019) confirmed this trend and showed the extent of distrust, and even outright hostility, toward European integration among large shares of the electorate (Treib, 2021). Likewise, the outcomes of the referendums on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in France and the Netherlands in 2005 as well as the vote on Brexit in the United Kingdom in 2016 do not only bring another proof of the depth of Euroscepticism; these events also epitomize the widening gap between pro-European political elites and electorates, the latter being increasingly dubious about the European integration process (Vogel & Göncz, 2018). Thus, the willingness to actively involve citizens in the Conference on the Future of Europe can be interpreted as an attempt to bridge this gap. Yet, the future set up of the EU remains fundamentally under the control of European leaders and institutions which will dominate the work of the Conference and which will need to approve its final outcome. Therefore, at the very moment when the Conference is starting its work, the aim of this report is to examine whether EU institutions represent adequately the views of citizens as regards potential EU reforms and the future of Europe broadly speaking.

Among the various institutions, the EP - the only directly elected EU institution - is often thought to be the one institution representative of the people and hence in a privileged position to voice citizens’ concerns. Indeed, at the EU level, popular representation and participation is mostly exerted by the EP, be it ‘by default’ (Katz & Wessels, 1999: 6). The EP has been created and developed with the explicit aim to ‘reconnect’ citizens with the EU institutional architecture. Not only have succeeding treaty changes often consecrated an increased role and powers of the EP (Crombez, 1997; 2000) - most often measured in terms of its legislative influence (Kreppel, 1999) - but furthermore they have been designed by purposely targeting the link between citizens and the EU through the transnational democratically elected assembly (Costa & Magnette, 2003; Rozenberg, 2009). Integrating the voice of citizens is hence the *raison d’être* of the EP and a failure to do so through a lack of congruence would resonate with critics of its usefulness.

At the same time, EP elections, which should by definition provide the main linkage mechanism between citizens and their representatives, have been described as second-order national elections (Kritzinger *et al.*, 2020; Reif & Schmitt, 1980; Reif, 1984; Viola, 2015). This characterisation has two implications that are relevant in terms of political congruence at the EU level. On the one hand, EP elections are less salient and result in lower turnout than national

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(first order) elections. In other words, large shares of the electorate do not seize the opportunity to express their opinion when it comes to EU politics and are therefore not really represented at the supranational level. On the other hand, EP elections are fought on national cleavages rather than truly European ones, which limits the MEPs' capacity to speak on behalf of the citizens when it comes to supranational issues. The EU is notoriously pointed out as producing outputs that are beneficial (or recognized as such) only to a small part of the population, often the most well-off (Magnette, 2000; Rozenberg, 2009). In mirror, among the oft-cited questions on which the elites are notably known to differ from the people are issues related to European integration (Müller, Jenny & Ecker, 2012). Normatively, in the (empowered) EP, such deviation is of course particularly problematic in that it is meant to represent the people at large.

Perhaps precisely because in other settings the existence and implication of a public sphere to legitimize the system is less questioned, the many attempts at gauging ideological (in)congruence almost invariably consider policy preferences. The extant literature covers a diversity of fields such as the economy (Traber *et al.*, 2018), immigration (Morales *et al.*, 2015) or bioethical issues (Arzheimer, 2020). In other words, while congruence is about input democracy, they heavily rely on a preference that deals with opinions on what should come out of the political system (see: André & Depauw, 2017). Despite the renewed focus on input democracy (Schmidt, 2013), only few have considered whether preferences on the system itself are congruent. This is all the more surprising that dissatisfaction does not necessarily come from the functioning, as there is high congruence between masses and elites on the role of representatives (von Schoultz & Wass, 2016) and that it is generally admitted that MPs do not necessarily act as *delegates*, but may also be *trustees* (Pitkin, 1967). This paper argues that, in the case of the EU, gauging citizen-elite congruence should rely on input democracy instead. There are at least two reasons for that: the questioning of the system as well as the idea that the polity is under constant building and not achieved yet (as witnessed by the depiction of the system as a 'construction'). In other words and in normative perspective, agreement on the polity itself is needed for the polity to perform, and preferences for the system of representation should hence be measured on the 'shape' of this system as well.

In its simplest form, this report asks how congruent the preferences of elected representatives and voters are as regards democracy at the supranational level and the reform of EU institutions. As such, looking at congruence is the mere observation of the extent to which political representatives share the views of voters; it does not account for how MEPs may change their positions to match those of the people they seek to represent - a process rather known as responsiveness. We therefore follow Beyer and Hänni (2018) in drawing a clear line between congruence, defined as the *static* overlap between citizens and their representatives' preferences, and responsiveness, which suggests a dynamic (and, even, causal) relationship between the movements of public opinion and the *response* of elites. The report further explores the extent to which individual features of the MEPs can explain their degree of agreement with their voters. To do so, we draw our expectations from different streams of theories, dealing respectively with the EU policy drift, second-order elections and the role of MEPs. We evidence that it is the parties, not the voters that drive polarization on issues debated in the EU, and that specific individual-level features of the MEPs, such as their local anchor or the ways in which they conceive their mandate are correlated with a specific level of agreement with their party's voters.



## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Why congruence?

The founding idea of representative democracy is that citizens elect officials which are committed to act on their behalf. According to democratic theory, policymakers are responsive to the opinion of the mass public, whose preferences are ultimately translated into public policies (Erikson *et al.*, 1993). It is thus little surprising that congruence between political elites and citizens has become in turn one of the major criteria against which the quality of democracy is assessed. Congruence, that is, the alignment of preferences of the public and those of elected elites, is nothing less than a major assumption on which representative democracy rests. It is in particular positively linked to satisfaction with democracy (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2011; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2016; Reher, 2015). As a corollary, the crisis of representative democracy is often epitomized in terms of a mismatch between citizens and elected officials.

The analysis of congruence entails more than comparing the views of the elites and the citizens at an aggregate level. It supposes the existence of mechanisms conducive of agreement between citizens and elected officials. After all, elections are one way for citizens to express their views by choosing among the candidates those who are closer to their own preferences, or at least this is a basic expectation of the electoral studies literature. According to the Responsible Party Model, political parties play a key role in aggregating preferences - they are the major actors in the system that connects the citizenry and the governmental process' (Klingemann, Hofferbert & Budge, 1994: 269) - and this should then be made visible when comparing their views with that of the voters.

In this context, a conventional wisdom developed as regards the EU political system is its inability to deliver to the European citizens and fail to respond to their policy preferences, labelled as the 'policy drift' (Scharpf, 1997; 1999). This critique overwhelmingly points at the EU supposed neo-liberal agenda (Follesdal & Hix, 2006). Yet, the picture is not that simple as citizens do not form a homogenous group. Van Ingelgom (2012) for instance defends the idea that many citizens are more clearly indifferent to the EU. Much like some have envisaged the emergence of a new cleavage forming between the 'winners' and 'losers' of the globalisation process (Kriesi *et al.*, 2008), Fligstein (2008) sees a rise of a political conflict between the beneficiaries and the losers of European integration. Simply put, while the well-off citizens would support the output of a system that favours them, the worse-off one would oppose it.

Admittedly, the EU political system does not, however, fully reflect individual political actors' preferences either. The only directly elected institution is the EP, but European elections are not fought nor won on the basis of EU preferences. They are second-order national elections (Reif, 1984; Reif & Schmitt, 1980;) and have been repeatedly confirmed as such (De Sio, Franklin & Russo, 2019; Marsh, 2020; Marsh & Mikhaylov, 2010). What this means, essentially, is that due to the fact that voters, parties and the media all consider that there is less at stake in EP elections (in particular, when compared to national elections), voters are more inclined to cast a sincere vote, remote of strategic calculations. As a result, they tend to defect from governing parties and even from mainstream parties, either to abstain or to support opposition, newer and smaller political forces (Reif & Schmitt, 1980; for a current account, see: Emanuele & Marino, 2019). In terms of congruence, because neither the campaign nor the vote are thus



about the parties at European level or EU policies, this would tend to suggest that preferences on EU issues are either non-existent (see in particular: Van Ingelgom, 2014) or difficult to grasp.

In what follows, we seek to answer two interrelated questions: To what extent are the preferences of MEPs and voters congruent as regards the future of European integration? What are the factors explaining the varying degrees of congruence? In this section, we elaborate our expectations regarding where we expect to find congruence and what factors may explain the level of congruence between MEPs and their voters.

## **2.2. Where do we expect to find congruence?**

Based on previous research, it is safe to expect citizen-elite congruence to vary across political issues. In particular, congruence has been found to be highest on issues at the centre of the political debate (Esaïsson & Holmberg, 1996: 88-89; Lax & Phillips, 2012). This is both the consequence of their higher visibility for voters and representatives and of their importance in defining the voters' choice. To put it bluntly, voters have a better knowledge of the candidates' positions on the questions which are the most salient and representatives can more easily figure out what their voters expect from them on these issues. In addition, voters determine their votes on questions that are most important to them.

As such, relying on the second-order model which contends that EU elections are fought primarily on national matters (and not European ones) precisely because they are considered more important, we thus expect to find less congruence on specific EU related issues than on those related to the national level or with a more general and comprehensible outreach. This is in line with previous research which suggests that MEPs and voters are congruent on the left-right dimensions as well as on policies that can be traced back to such cleavage (Mattila & Raunio, 2006; Vasilopoulou & Gattermann, 2013). Further, if agreement between voters and their representatives on EU issues was found to be high at the beginnings of the European integration project (Schmitt & Thomassen, 2000; van der Eijk & Franklin, 1991), there has since then been an alleged policy drift (Scharpf, 1997; 1999), away from voters' preferences, which is possibly the result of a lower voters-party congruence on the EU dimension (Mattila & Raunio, 2006; Vasilopoulou & Gattermann, 2021).

In the meantime, the EU is now more politicised than ever before. Some have claimed that this should lead to a legitimization of the integration process, as clearer positions of the parties on EU issues should be accompanied with voters being able to decide (and vote in EP elections) based on these positions, and hence lead to a higher level of congruence. This is the reason why Mair and Thomassen have been able to argue that 'despite a poor process of political representation at the European level, European elections and political parties appear to serve quite effectively as instruments of political representation' (Mair & Thomassen, 2010). Others have found, however, that instead of contesting issues, it is the system itself that has come to be contested through politicization as protest-based considerations have taken the lead in the debates (Vasilopoulou & Gattermann, 2021). Relatedly, one of the main critiques to the concept of congruence sees it as a 'moving' concept as citizens may change their opinion over time (Lesschaeve & Meulewater, 2015). The EU level is precisely an era where we might expect such low levels of congruence as the electorate of a given party in the EP elections is likely to have voted for another one at other tiers of government. Even in the case of concomitant

elections, the EU ticket is the most likely to be split (Van Aelst & Lefevere, 2012; Willocq & Kelbel, 2016).

Besides, we expect citizen-elite congruence to vary across political parties. According to earlier research, parties located at the centre (on various conflict positions) tend to display higher levels of congruence with their voters than parties standing further on the left or on the right (Esaiasson & Holmberg, 1996: 89). As such, we anticipate that parties defending extreme positions regarding (the reform of) the EU will be less congruent with their voters than parties holding moderate positions.

### 2.3. Factors influencing congruence between individual MEPs and their voters

In her seminal analysis of the concept of representation, Pitkin characterizes good political representation as ‘acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them’ (1967: 209). In this perspective, elections are a prime mechanism ensuring that representatives defend the views of citizens. On the one hand, through elections, voters have the opportunity to choose representatives who are as close as possible to their own political preferences. On the other hand, the prospect of future elections incentivizes re-election seeking elected officials to constantly pay attention to their voters’ expectations. As in any delegation, however, agents’ and principal’s preferences may be divergent, either because of the initial set-up of the relationship (*adverse selection*) or because of drifting positions afterwards (*moral hazard*) (for an overview of the principal-agent theory, see: Miller, 2005). Regarding parliamentary representation in particular, several circumstances may negatively affect the level of citizen-elite congruence. First, when deciding whom to support, voters may be ill informed about their representatives’ true preferences. Second, given the multiplicity of issues at stake in one election, voters may select their representatives based on a few (key) issues although diverging on other matters, or even base their vote choice on other considerations than issue positions. Thirdly, representatives’ views may drift away from those of their voters during the course of their mandate.

In other words, voter-representative congruence can never be taken for granted, and its level can be affected by different factors either at the time of the election or in the course of the parliamentary term. The literature has particularly evidenced the impact on congruence of macro-level factors such as the type of electoral system (Blais & Bodet, 2006; Golder & Stramski, 2010; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2012) and of the intensity of a parliament’s media coverage (Morales *et al.*, 2015). In the case of the EU, however, such factors are likely to affect voter-elite congruence more or less evenly given that all MEPs are elected through proportional representation (with only minor variations) and that EU politics suffers from a general lack of politicisation in most countries. We thus instead focus on potential determinants of the representative link that vary at the individual level. In particular, three competing micro-level explanations of voter-MEP congruence may be derived from the literature on parliaments and parliamentarians. The first explanation stresses the impact of the norms, beliefs and values that MEPs have acquired and internalized either before or while sitting in the EP. It finds its roots in the structural-functionalist approach that dominated the early theories of parliamentary behaviour. Indeed, according to Wahlke and colleagues, legislative roles derived from a combination of personal attributes and ‘ecological’ characteristics (Wahlke *et al.*, 1962: 22). From this sociological perspective emphasising the effects of *socialisation* processes, the career pattern and previous political experience are thus important (e.g. Cotta & Best, 2007) but

institutional socialisation is equally essential (e.g. Rush & Giddings, 2011). A second strand in the literature interprets MEPs' attitudes and behaviours as interest-maximising strategies of rational actors (Strøm, 1997), that is practically as geared toward their reelection (Mayhew, 1974). Still others insist on the role of normative ideas about democracy and representation in driving parliamentarians' attitudes and behaviours (Navarro, 2009; 2012). In order to test which theory is better at explaining congruence, we elaborate and develop hypotheses along these three broad approaches.

A first set of hypotheses relates to the political trajectory of MEPs. The literature is quite clear on the virtue of local mandates to maintain connections with citizens. Those who have substantial experience in representing the local level might have developed personal ties with their voters and become acquainted with locally-bound policy issues. Besides, for Tavits (2009; 2010), political experience at the local level makes representatives more independent (in their daily activities including votes) from their party, suggesting that their ties are more with their constituents. In legislatures where MPs have strong local roots, this tends to result in a focus on case-work at the expense of the oversight function of assemblies (Gallagher on Ireland, 1985), again pointing at a possible congruence on policy issues. According to the pre-parliamentary socialisation theory, our first hypothesis reads:

*H1: MEPs who have held an elected position at the local and/or regional level in the past should be closer to their voters and should therefore be more congruent with them.*

Yet, an alternative view suggests that it is the ongoing involvement at the local level that matters. If local ties reshape the role that representatives set for themselves, then maintaining a link with their constituency should lead to take an even more parochial view on issues and hence better congruence. Localness, often measured through the frequency of contact with the voters is associated with parliamentarians sidelining their roles as representatives of the general interest (Dogan, 2007). And indeed, recent comparative research has established that the practice of dual mandate-holding, *i.e.* the simultaneous occupation of a political mandate at the national and the local levels, is associated with a local focus of representation (Van de Voorde & de Vet, 2020). Likewise, MEPs who hold a local mandate tend to address more questions with a local dimension to the European Commission and are slightly more likely to vote against the line of their party group (Navarro, 2013), thus suggesting that they are more attentive to their voters.

*H2: MEPs currently holding an elected position at the local and/or regional level should be more congruent with their party's voters.*

There is a large body of literature arguing that MEPs' attitudes and behaviours are ultimately determined by the perceptions of their key principal and that this is the one that (re)selects them. The preparation of lists or the designation of candidates often determines the composition of elected assemblies: by recruiting candidates for an election, political parties essentially choose who will have the right to sit in the corresponding assembly (Norris & Lovenduski, 2010: 135; Rahat, 2007: 159). It is hardly surprising, then, that when attempting to understand the problems of social and political representation the question of party recruitment arises almost automatically (Norris & Franklin, 1997; Spies & Kaiser, 2014). It has been repeatedly shown that the appointment processes influence the behavior of members of the legislative assembly once elected, on the cohesion of the parliamentary group and

therefore of the party, but also on the policies which they adopt (Bowler *et al.*, 1999: 98; Carey, 2007; Crisp *et al.*, 2004; De Luca *et al.*, 2002; Depauw & Martin, 2009; Hix, 2004; Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997; Pennings & Hazan, 2001; Sieberer, 2006).

As we tend to favor those who resemble and think like us, the composition of the lists in terms of sociological characteristics and ideological preferences is likely to reflect the composition of the (party) body in charge of nominations. One of the benefits pushing parties to open up their selection processes is the idea that primary elections would produce better candidates in terms of eligibility and therefore increase the chances of the parties that put them in place at the time of elections. This larger group should mathematically maximize the chances of having 'good' candidates and ultimately 'good elected officials' (Adams & Merrill, 2008; Caillaud & Tirole, 2002; Ichino & Nathan, 2013; Serra, 2011), hence matching the preferences of the electorate. Beyond who is selected and in a next step, the ways parties select their candidates affect how M(E)Ps conceive of their mandate once elected.

Clearly, intuitively, if they are then elected, those candidates may have preferences that better converge with that of their broader electorate, which also selected them. Although empirical investigation of the relation between congruence and open candidate selection methods is scarce, Mikulska and Scarrow (2010) evidenced in the case of the UK that more inclusive selection methods led to more candidates-voters congruence on the most salient electoral issue they identified, namely the economy. This is in line with research in the US having found that when parties make use of the most open processes to designate their candidates, those candidates display positions closer to the median voter (Persily, 2001). Allegedly, when non-party members participate, candidates tend to rely on their ideology more, while those chosen by party delegates are likely to favour loyalty and party cohesion as this matters to their selectorate (Hazan & Rahat, 2010: 116).

By contrast, representatives' closeness to the party in central office (Deschouwer & Depauw, 2014; Jenny *et al.*, 2014) might play against congruence with citizens. Elected representatives are often constrained in their work by their party, as explained by Müller: 'Party representatives in public office are ultimately the agents of the extra-parliamentary party organization' and the latter plays thus a crucial role in determining attitudes and behaviours of the former (Müller, 2000: 309). This is especially true at the EU level where previous works have suggested that MEPs' loyalty to their national party during their legislature stems from the party's authority over the candidate selection processes, through which they can reward or punish incumbents (Faas, 2003; Frech, 2016; Hix, 2002; 2004). In sum, we expect that :

*H3: MEPs selected through more open candidate selection methods should be more congruent with their voters.*

Complementing the three preceding hypotheses which stress the impact of non-parliamentary factors, one may expect the level of congruence to be impacted by the pervasive socialisation of elected representatives within the supranational parliamentary arena. According to neo-functional theories as well as more recent neo-institutionalist and constructivist theories of European integration, political actors' norms and values are shaped by the institutional environment in which they evolve and, more specifically, their interactions at the supranational level. According to Beauvallet, MEPs even go through 'a sort of initiatory socialization (a series

of trials) characteristic of groups establishing a closure with the secular environment' (Beauvallet, 2003: 112). Undergoing such a process entails for MEPs to distance themselves from the national political sphere and develop a distinct *esprit de corps*, a process that others have termed 'going native' (Scully, 2005). It follows that the congruence between MEPs and their voters should be conversely correlated with their degree of supranational integration. In line with earlier studies that have related parliamentary socialisation to the length of institutional membership (Mughan, Box–Steffensmeier & Scully, 1997), we expect that:

*H4: MEPs with a longer tenure should be associated with lower levels of agreement with their voters than more junior MEPs.*

Finally, we consider the possibility that the MEPs' contrasted normative views about their role influence their level of ideological convergence with their voters (Önnudóttir, 2014). In this respect, the concept of role, defined as a configuration of goals, attitudes and behaviours that are characteristic of people in particular positions (Searing, 1991), is critical to understanding and explaining how representatives relate to their 'principals'. Within the extant literature on parliamentary roles (Blomgren & Rozenberg, 2012), one particular area of interests relates to MPs' representational focus, *i.e.* roles based on the representational link (like 'trustees' or 'delegates' to borrow Burke's classic terminology) (Wahlke *et al.*, 1962: 269). There is indeed a broad consensus that MPs face a multiplicity of potential principals and hold different conceptions about what it means to be a representative and whom they should represent (Navarro, 2009; 2012). As regards the EP, MEPs notably have to choose between the principals who control their election (the national parties) or the principals who control their influence in the EP (the EP party groups) (Hix, 2002). More generally, and beyond this partisan dimension, however, MEPs put a varied level of emphasis on the representation of different groups, be them their voters, people in their constituencies, their home country or all people in the EU. Even though there is some controversy as to whether role conceptions (as captured through surveys) are a good predictor of actual behaviours (Andeweg, 2012), we assume MEPs to align their views (at least partially) with those they claim to represent and we therefore surmise the representative focus to affect the degree of congruence. Consequently, we hypothesise that:

*H5: MEPs who put more emphasis on the representation of their party's voters are more aligned with their voters' preferences than the other MEPs.*

In the empirical sections, we test these (sometimes competing) hypotheses using original data on the most recent European elections and the ongoing EP legislature.

### 3. Data and methods

#### 3.1. Operationalisation of congruence and data

The operationalisation and measurement of congruence present major challenges. It notably requires defining who is congruent to whom. While some have looked at congruence at the constituency level (Miller & Stokes, 1963), the party level seems more appropriate to the EU institutional and electoral framework where MEPs are elected through proportional list representation. The peculiarities of this framework, nevertheless, involve some ambiguity as to

the role of partisan organisations in linking voters to representatives in that the party system is two-fold. On the one hand, since the very beginning of European integration, members of the EP have sat in party groups organised along ideological cleavages. Beyond the EP, EU-level political organisations have emerged at the EU level, and have been recognised in EU law since the Maastricht Treaty. On the other hand, European elections are organised in national (or even infranational) constituencies and fought based on national party systems and within a national context (as predicted by the ‘national second-order elections’ model). In this paper, since we focus on this electoral link, we analyse congruence at the level of national parties. We thus choose to rely on party-voters congruence since constituencies do not present a homogenous picture for European elections, from those being country-wide to those enabling voters to choose just one MEP. In terms of operationalisation, we match ‘national parties’ to their corresponding candidate lists in the last 2019 EP elections (see: Appendix 1). Empirically, we are thus able to compare the preferences of the national party delegations - as well as those of individual MEPs - to those of their voters.

The empirical analysis relies on two datasets built in the framework of the RECONNECT project. Regarding the views of citizens, we use data from the RECONNECT 2019 citizens’ survey conducted simultaneously in seven EU member states (Denmark, Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Spain). The RECONNECT project team at the University of Vienna ran a two-waves citizen-level survey five weeks before and then immediately after the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections. The panel structure of the data allows us to detect in the second wave those voters that declared having voted for one of the party lists for which the MEPs of our MEP survey ran (see: Appendix 1). We are then able to isolate the views of these citizens by grouping them by parties.

To measure in turn the opinions and attitudes of MEPs, we make use of the ESPOL-EPRG 2020 MEP survey conducted by the RECONNECT team at the Lille Catholic University. This study thus makes use of part of the data hence collected - questions are reproduced in Appendix 2. The MEP survey was designed in part with the view of comparing MEPs and citizens’ views on a host of issues. Therefore, some of the questions were expressly designed in line with that of the RECONNECT 2019 citizens’ survey. In addition, questions from the EPRG survey (Whitaker *et al.*, 2017) that have been most often used in previous research were also reproduced (and sometimes slightly adapted). The final questionnaire is made of 58 questions, split into five sections: 1) the MEP’s background and career; 2) elections, electoral system and campaign; 3) his/her work as an MEP; 4) interinstitutional relations; and 5) political and EU attitudes. In view of increasing the response rate and the quality of the collected data, the questionnaire was translated in several different EU languages (namely: English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Polish, Romanian, Dutch, Greek, Hungarian and Czech). As of January 2020, the data collection started using an online platform called Qualtrics, we started to distribute the questionnaire *via* email. In some cases, party delegations or party groups were contacted as well. While most data was collected directly online through the links we sent, some MEPs were interviewed on the phone or *via* a video call.

As of July 31<sup>st</sup>, we had received answers from 122 MEPs (out of 751). This sample covers all countries but one, and all party groups. We subsequently evaluated the representativeness of the sample by calculating the Duncan index of dissimilarity as well as the correlations (see: Appendix 3). Both indicators produced satisfactory results, very close to previous rounds



(Whitaker *et al.*, 2017). In this paper, we make use of the answers of a subset of MEPs: those who can be matched with voters from the citizens’ survey, in other words, those from the seven countries represented in the survey and for whose party at least some voters indicated a vote choice. This makes a total of 57 MEPs.

### 3.2. Methods for the measurement of congruence

Our operationalisation of congruence mostly relies on the methodology developed by Golder and Stramski (2010). First, at the conceptual level, we approach congruence as a many-to-one relationship - that is, a situation in which we have many citizens (or voters) on the one hand, and a single representative on the other. Empirically, however, it follows from the theoretical discussion above that this ‘single representative’ can be embodied either as an individual MEP or as a political party. Indeed, even though we can expect some degree of ideological convergence among MEPs elected on the same list of candidates, parties are not perfectly homogeneous and we are also interested in explaining the congruence of MEPs at the individual level. Consequently, we measure congruence at two complementary levels: (1) by comparing the views of the (many) citizens to those of individual MEPs belonging to the party for which they voted *and* (2) by comparing the views of the (many) citizens to those of the party for which they voted. In the latter case, we approximate the position of parties in the EP to the median (or modal) position of MEPs belonging to these parties.

Besides, Golder and Stramski (2010) point out that citizens’ preferences are likely to be heterogeneous and that this heterogeneity in turn affects the capacity of representatives to adequately match their voters’ preferences. They therefore suggest that the measurement of citizen-elite congruence should take into account the dispersion of citizens’ preferences, what they name ‘relative congruence’. The Relative Citizen Congruence (RCC) captures the average distance of a citizen ( $C_i$ ) from the position of the median citizen (MC) relative to the average distance of a citizen ( $C_i$ ) from the representative (R). It is noted:

$$RCC = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N |C_i - MC|}{\sum_{i=1}^N |C_i - R|}$$

where N is the number of voters,  $C_i$  is the ideal point of the  $i^{th}$  voter, MC the voters median position and R the location of the representative (either a party or an individual MEP). RCC ranges from 0 to 1. If the ideological location of the representative is at the position that minimizes the sum of absolute distances between all the citizens (MC), then RCC will be 0. The further the representative’s position is away from MC, the closer the RCC score will be to 1.

Because it takes into account the dispersion of citizens’ preferences, RCC can be considered as the golden-standard for the measurement of congruence and will be employed extensively. However, while RCC is well fitted to measure the absolute distance between representatives and their voters, it does so in a very abstract manner and does not indicate in which direction the citizens’ and their representative’s preferences diverge. We therefore complement RCC with the more simple and intuitive Median Citizen Congruence (MCC), that is the ideological distance between the median position of the citizens (MC) and the position of their



representative (R), which has the advantage of clarifying the direction of the relationship. As such, we operationalise MCC as follows:

$$MCC = MC - R$$

These two measures of congruence work well in cases where the ideological position of citizens and parties can be located on a continuous dimension captured through a numerical (or ordinal) variable. Categorical variables require a specific treatment. For such a variable, the ‘position’ of the citizens and that of the parties are equated to their modal (rather than median) positions, and the degree of ideological agreement corresponds to the percentage of citizens who hold the same preference than their representative. Besides, in order to reflect the differences in the dispersion of voters, we also take into consideration the ‘rank’ of the representatives’ preference among their voters’ preferences (did they choose the preferred option of their voters, their second preferred option, their third one? *etc.*). In order to harmonize on a 0-1 scale the congruence measure for categorical variables (and although we can achieve this goal only partially), we operationalise congruence as follows:

$$RCC_{cat} = (1 - R \cap C) \times rank \div 4$$

where  $R \cap C$  is the percentage of citizens who have the same preference as their representative and *rank* is the the rank of the representatives’ preference among their voters’ preferences. Even though this adapted measure is not statistically similar to RCC, it can be interpreted in a similar way: the greater the citizen-representative congruence, the closer the score will be to 0. Before turning to the description of our independent variables, it should be stressed again that the distinct measures of congruence (RCC, MCC, and, for categorical variables,  $RCC_{cat}$ ) can be implemented taking either individual MEPs or national party delegations in the EP as the reference point (thus corresponding to the ‘representatives’) whose preferences are compared to the citizens’ ones.

### 3.3. Independent variables

It follows from the theoretical discussion above that we hypothesise four types of factors to influence the level of political congruence between MEPs at the individual level and their voters. These factors relate to the subnational political career of MEPs, the selectorate which nominated them for the EP elections, the length of their membership in the EP and their representative role conception. All data originate from the ESPOL MEP survey. Descriptive statistics of the independent variables are presented in Appendix 5.

The variable relating to MEPs’ subnational political career - that is, to their past or ongoing elected position at the local and/or regional level - is constructed from MEPs’ responses to the following question: ‘Have you previously held, or do you currently hold, any of these positions?’. MEPs were asked to answer that question as concerns both ‘regional elected office’ and ‘local elected office’. Four answer options were offered for each question: 1. Previously held, but not now; 2. Previously and now; 3. Currently held; and 4. Never held. We merged the responses to the two sub-questions into one single variable to distinguish between MEPs who never held an elected position at either the local or the regional level (option 4 for the two sub-questions), those who held such a position in the past but did not hold it anymore

when answering the survey (*i.e.* who chose the option 1 for both sub-questions), and finally those who combine an elected position at either the local or the regional level with their European parliamentary mandate (*i.e.* having chosen at least once the option 2 or 3). The three categories for our ‘subnational mandate(s)’ variable are termed respectively: ‘Never’, ‘In the past’ and ‘Ongoing’. It should be noted that MEPs belonging to the ‘Ongoing’ category may however have the experience of a local or regional elected position prior to their election to the EP.

The variable ‘Selectorate’ is constructed from MEPs’ responses to the following question of the ESPOL MEP Survey: ‘Which party organ or body within your party was the first most important in selecting you to become a candidate for the 2019 EP elections?’ Four response options were offered which we maintain as four categories: 1. Party executive; 2. Party congress; 3. Party members; 4. Party supporters.

The variable ‘Tenure’, which captures MEPs’ length of institutional membership, originates from MEPs’ answer to the following question: ‘When did you first become an MEP?’. MEPs had to indicate in which month and year they first entered the EP. We recoded these answers into three categories: 1. Newcomer (elected in 2019 or after); 2. Second mandate (elected between 2014 and 2019); 3. MEP before 2014 (elected before 2014).

Finally, we operationalise MEPs’ role conception and orientation through two distinct independent variables. First, the variable ‘Individual interest representation’ is based on MEPs’ responses to the following question: ‘When thinking about your work as an MEP, how important are the following aspects of your work?’. MEPs had to rate on a 5-point scale (from 1 ‘Of little importance’ to 5 ‘Of great importance’) several items including ‘Representation of individual interests of individual citizens’ on which we rely here. We coded MEPs’ answers into two categories: ‘Not so important’ (those who selected the answer options 1 to 3) and ‘Very important’ (those who selected the answer options 4 and 5). Likewise, the variable ‘Party voters representation’ is built on MEPs’ responses to the following question: ‘How important is it for you to represent the following groups of people in the European Parliament?’ where MEPs had to rate several groups (All people in Europe; All people in my member state; All the people who voted for my party; All the people in my constituency/region; My national party; My European political group; Women) on a 5-point scale (from 1 ‘Of little importance’ to 5 ‘Of great importance’). Based on the scores given to the ‘All the people who voted for my party’ item, we constructed a dichotomous variable distinguishing MEPs for whom ‘Party voters representation’ is ‘not so important’ (score 1 to 4) and those for whom it is ‘of great importance’ (score 5).

## 4. Empirical findings

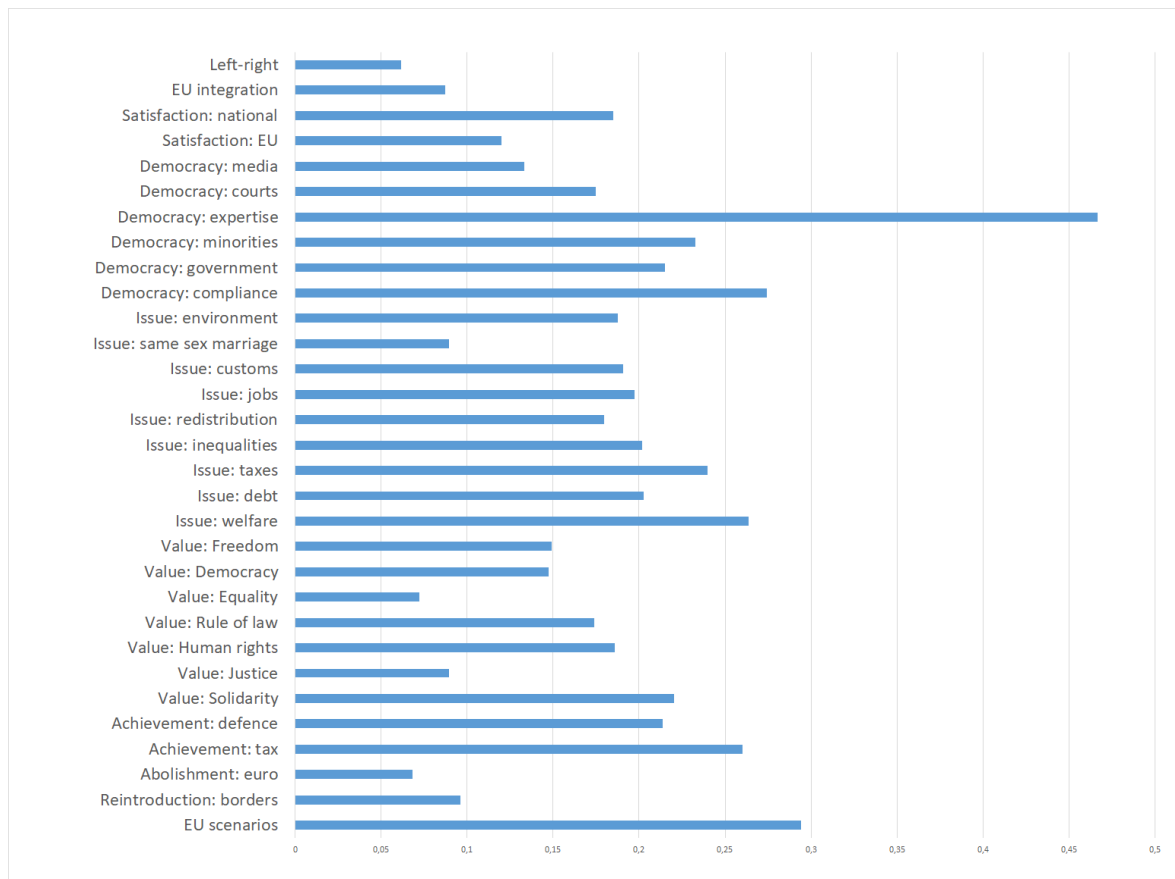
In this section, we first analyse congruence at an aggregated (party) level to assess the overall degree of convergence between parties and their voters as regards the future of European integration. Second, we seek to gauge the impact of different factors expected to affect the ideological agreement of individual MEPs with their voters.

### 4.1. Where do we find congruence?

- *Political parties are more congruent with their voters on more salient or engaging questions*

Figure 1 displays the level of relative citizen congruence (RCC) for each of our questions of interest. As a reminder, RCC may vary from 0 (total congruence) to 1 (no congruence at all). In line with previous research and our theoretical expectations, congruence is higher on the left-right dimension, which is also the one around which party competition is generally thought to be organised. Voters-parties agreement is also fairly high as regards attitudes toward European integration. This means that MEPs are well representing their voters on the two most salient dimensions that are generally used in other studies. Yet, our empirical investigation seeks to go further by measuring congruence on specific policy issues and the future of European integration. Our data show in particular that there is less congruence between MEPs and their voters on those questions relating to socio-economic and welfare policies. Among the values, solidarity is the one where there is less congruence. Interestingly, the role of expertise is one where the gap between voters and MEPs is the widest. Respondents were indeed asked whether they agree that it would be better if important political decisions were made by independent experts and not by elected politicians. As could be expected, compared to voters, MEPs have greater reservations toward this assertion. When it comes to specific scenarios regarding the future of the EU, the agreement between MEPs and their voters appears to be rather limited. In fact, on average, the preferred scenario of the political parties has been chosen by only 27 percent of their voters.

Figure 1 Weighted mean congruence by question (Relative Citizen Congruence, 0 to 1)



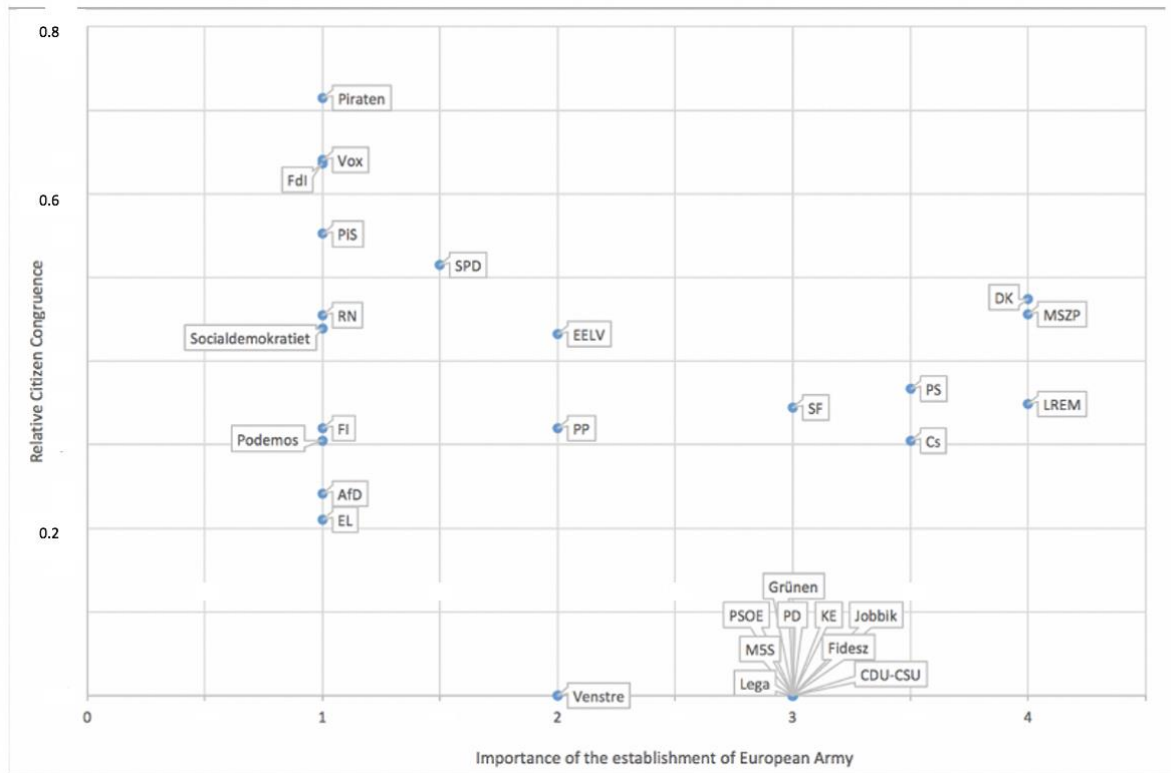
It should also be noted that the levels of congruence across variables are only weakly correlated (see Appendix 4). In most cases, the correlation coefficients remain below 0.3, although the question about the choice between environmental protection and economic growth (Issue: environment) and the core EU values questions appear to be quite strongly correlated. Overall, this contributes to our argument that congruence is issue-specific and must be analysed across its various empirical dimensions.

The level of agreement between MEPs' and citizens' positions on different issues related to European integration can then be presented more precisely. Keeping in mind that MEPs are grouped by national election lists, two main results appear. On the one hand, MEPs of the national parties that have the most central positions relative to their competitors' positions on most issues are those who best represent their voters. By contrast, MEPs defending more extreme positions in our survey are not matched by their party's electorate. On the other hand, on the question of the future of the EU, national parties that advocate in favour of European integration are more congruent with their voters. If the first result is congruent with our expectations and literature, the second one is more unexpected.

- ***Parties that have the most central positions relative to their competitors better represent their constituents.***

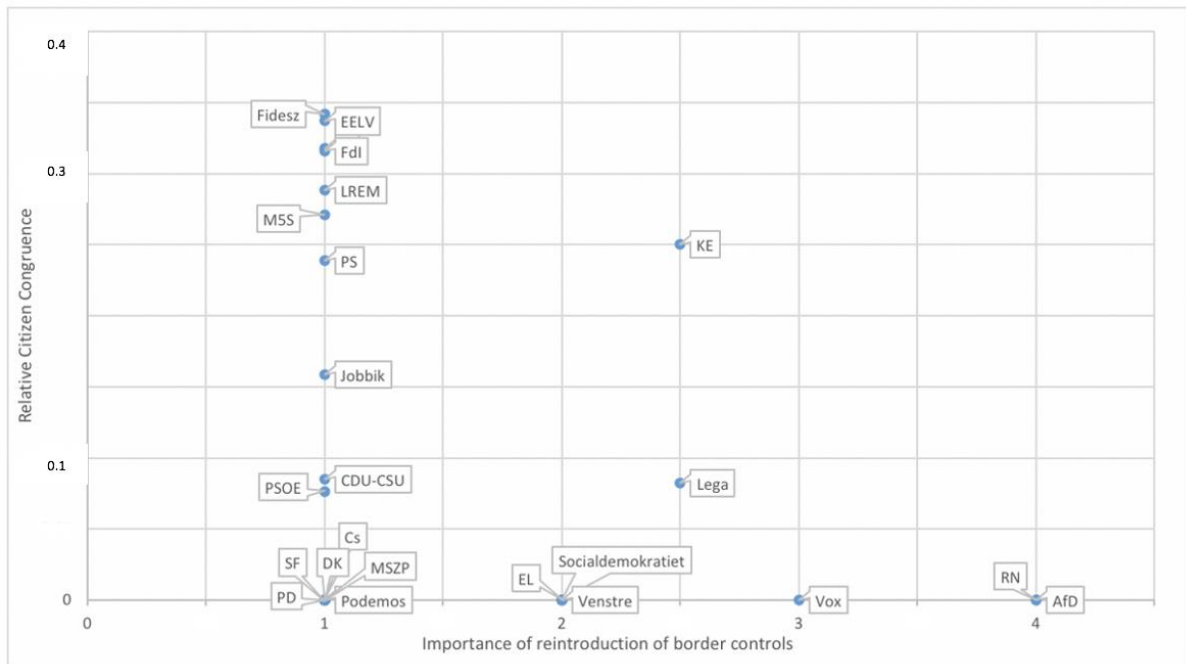
To illustrate our results, Figures 2 to 6 below represent the levels of congruence between the positions of MEPs from different national parties and that of their voters (as measured by the Relative Citizen Congruence), according to the median MEP position within each different national party on different issues concerning European integration (see: Appendix 6 for complementary information). The trend outlined is rather clear: the more MEPs' attitudes are closed to the median of those of their colleagues (*e.g.* located between 2 and 3 for Figure 2 and around 2 for Figure 3), the more congruent their positions with those of the citizens who voted for them (with a level of congruence being close to 0).

Figure 2. Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the establishment of a European Army (RCC)



Where 0 means not important at all and 4 very important

Figure 3. Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the reintroduction of border controls (RCC)

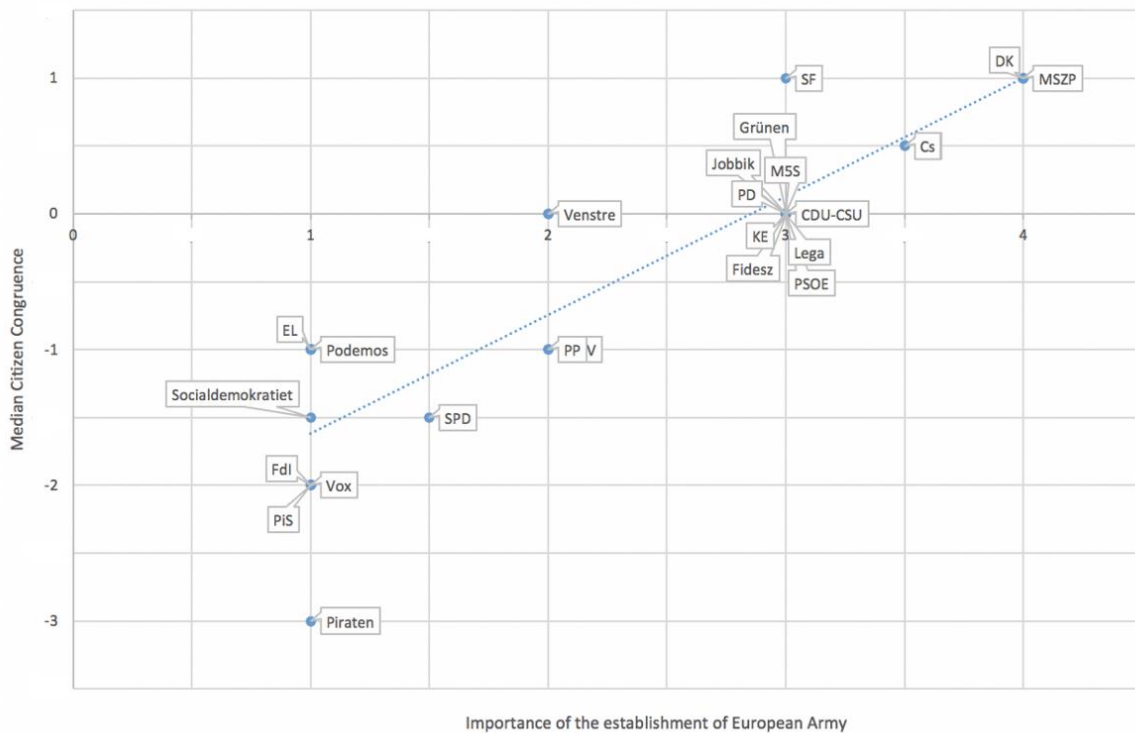


Where 0 means not important at all and 4 very important

Nevertheless, if the calculation of relative citizen congruence is particularly interesting in that it takes into account the degree of dispersion of positions between different individuals - citizens and MEPs - it has the disadvantage - as an absolute value - of not indicating the direction of the relationship between the difference between the position of MEPs and the position of citizens. Thus, it does not make it possible to know whether, for the parties that are the least congruent with their voters, it is because these parties have more positive or negative attitudes than their voters on the range of issues presented in the two surveys. For instance, the RCC measure does not allow to understand whether MEPs are more in favour of the importance of a European army and the re-establishment of borders (as in Figures 2 and 3), or on the contrary, if they are less so. For this reason, this first calculation of relative citizen congruence is complemented by the calculation of median citizen congruence, which calculation is explained in the methods sub-section.

It should be noted that, unlike the calculation of relative citizen congruence, this calculation does not take into account the dispersion of the voters' positions. Below are therefore presented the figures obtained for the two questions already presented, (*i.e.* congruence on the attitudes toward the importance of a European army and the importance of national borders), replacing on the y-axis the relative citizen congruence by the median citizen congruence.

Figure 4. Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the establishment of European Army (MCC)

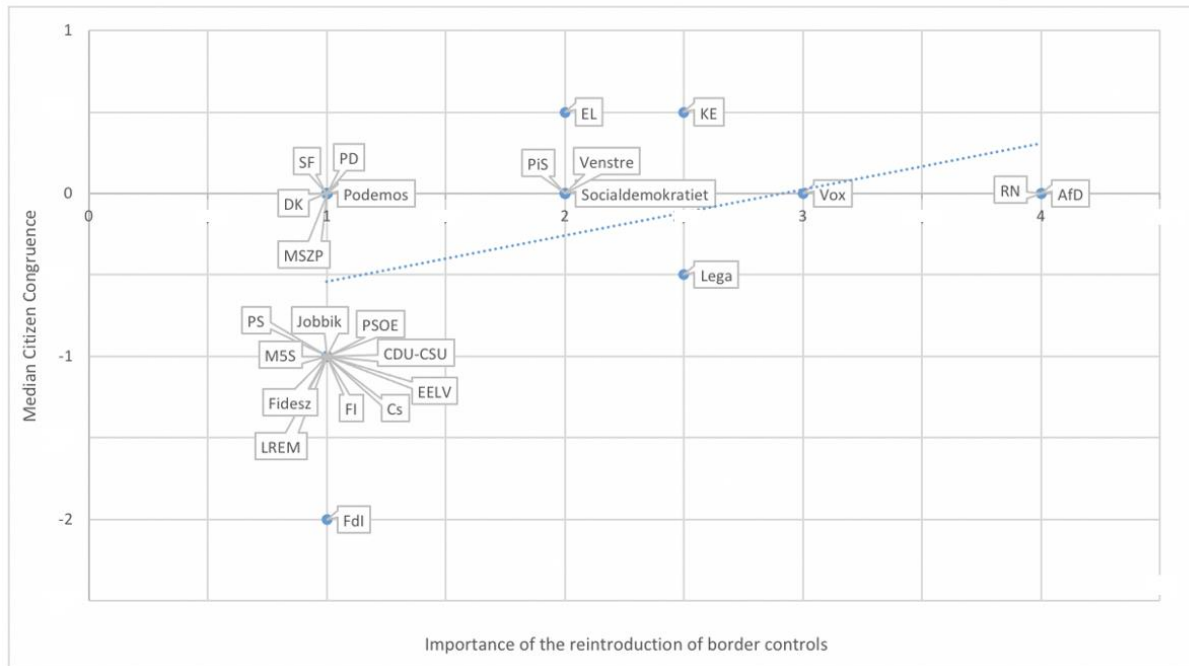


Where 0 means not important at all and 4 very important

As evidenced in Figure 4, the voters of the parties *Piraten* and *Fratelli di Italia* (Fdl) are thus much more in favor of the establishment of a European army than their deputies. The voters of *Democraticus Koalicio* (DK) by contrast, are much more reluctant than their deputies on the subject. The most congruent parties (congruence=0), hence illustrating our main result, are

those with the most median positions: Venstre (for which the establishment of a European Army is ‘not very important’) and *CDU-CSU, Grünen, Partido socialista y obrero español (PSOE), Jobbik, Fidesz, KE coalition (KE), Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF), Partido democratico (PD), Movimento cinque stelle (M5S) and Lega* (the establishment of a European Army is ‘quite important’).

Figure 5. Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the reintroduction of border controls (MCC)



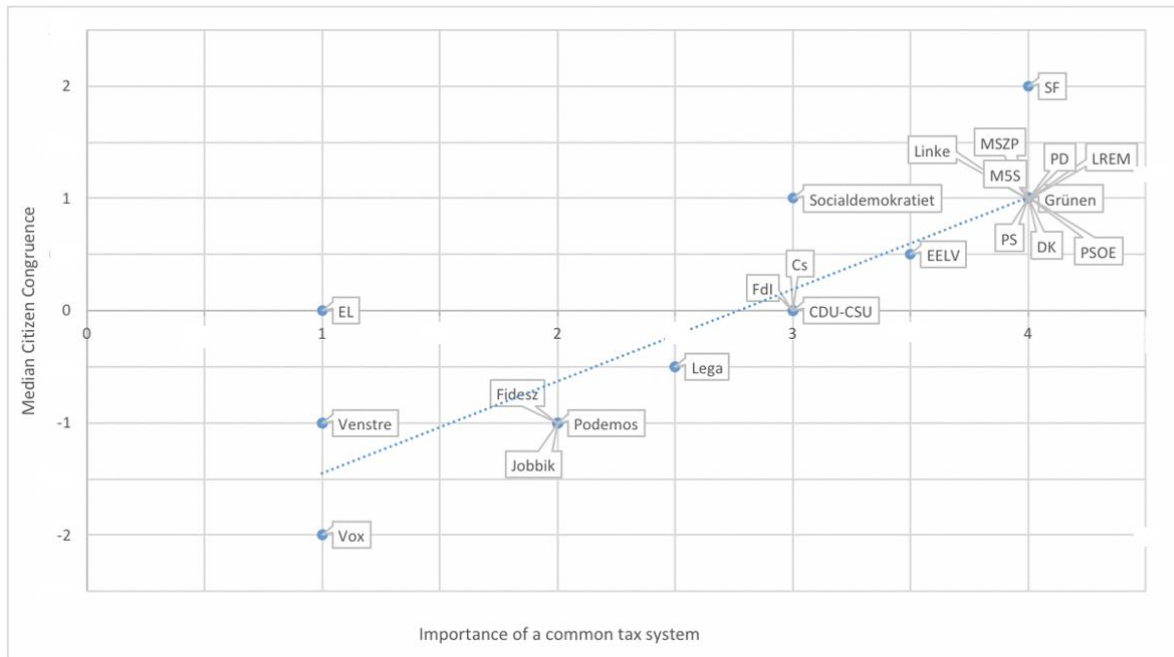
Where 0 means not important at all and 4 very important

In Figure 5 too, the dispersion of congruence levels is lower for parties that adopt median positions (‘not very important’ or ‘quite important’). Certainly, the *Rassemblement National (RN)* and *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)* deputies, although adopting a strong position (the reintroduction of border controls is ‘very important’) seem very congruent with their voters. Arguably, this rather high level of agreement with their voters can be explained by the fact that the question of borders is particularly salient for these two parties and their voters.

Our finding may be further illustrated by the analysis of congruence on other issues, such as the importance of the achievement of a common tax system (see: Figure 6).



Figure 6. Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the achievement of a common tax system (MCC)



Here as well, the most congruent deputies with the voters are opting for a middle-range position (in that case: ‘quite important’), namely the deputies of *CDU-CSU* and of *Fratelli d’Italia* (*Fdi*). It should be further noted that the citizens of several parties traditionally considered as being unfavourable to further European integration are more in favour of such a common system than their deputies (*Vox*, *Fidesz*, *Lega*).

- *It is not the general position of the parties in the political arena that influences the level of congruence, but rather the precise position of each party on a given issue.*

On the whole, a party of the extreme right or of the extreme left may thus be more congruent with its voters than a centrist party that would adopt an extreme position on a given issue if such extreme party would adopt a median position on the same issue.

- *MEPs, not the voters, drive polarization.*

Together with the earlier observation that national parties that have the most central positions relative to their competitors better represent their constituents, this latest result leads us to contend that the political parties (and not the voters) are the ones who exacerbate the polarization of the political space. Indeed, voters seem less polarized than the MEPs supposed to represent them. This result is in line with the finding that, in the United States, public policies at the state level are polarized relative to public opinion (Lax & Phillips, 2012), as well as with the observation of more intense issue polarization among elites than among voters in Australia (McAllister, 1991). At the EU level, the question then arises of the ability of deputies to pursue their constituents’ preferred policies and to defend visions of European integration that their voters approve of.

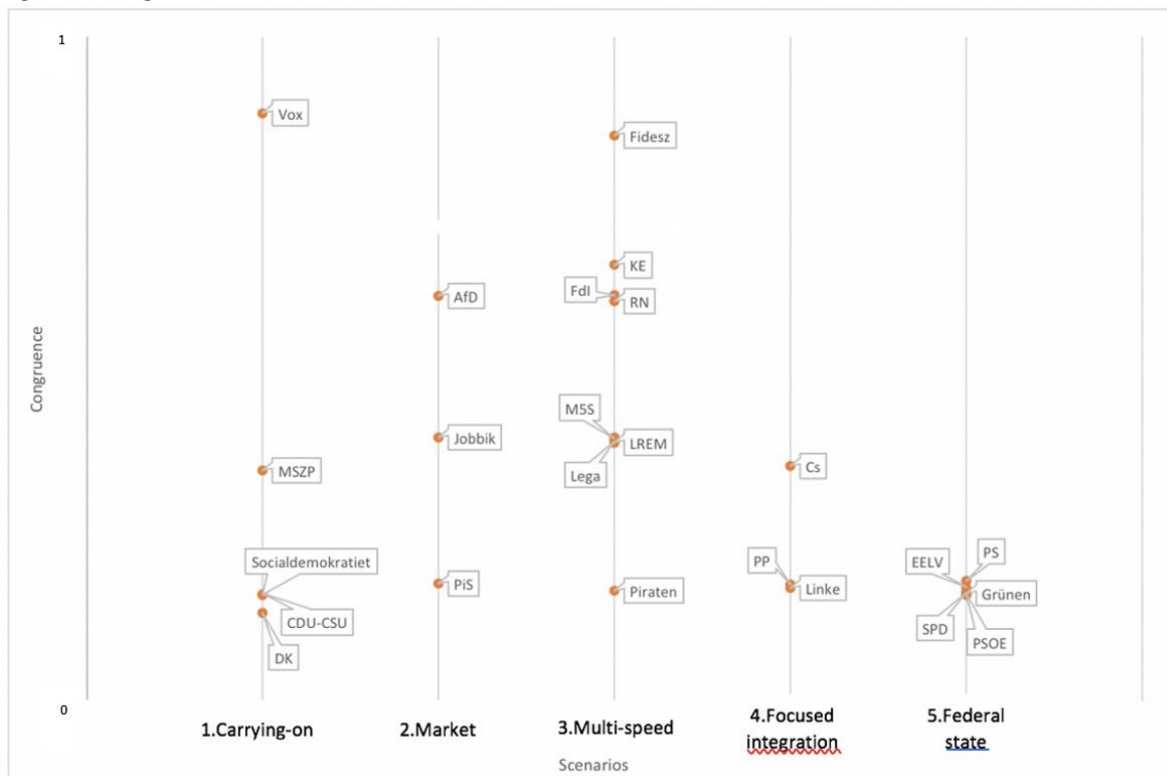
- *On the question of the future of the EU, the parties which advocate the most European integration are more congruent with their voters.*

To evaluate the congruence of MEPs and citizens on the future of the EU and their vision thereof, they were asked which of the following five scenarios for the future of the EU they would most favour:

- Scenario 1: ‘Carrying on, with only small and incremental progress in the deepening of European integration.’
- Scenario 2: ‘A shift of focus towards market integration between EU countries only.’
- Scenario 3: ‘Emergence of a multi-speed EU, in which selected countries cooperate and integrate more closely than others.’
- Scenario 4: ‘Focus on deeper integration amongst all EU countries in a limited number of areas, such as in foreign policy and defense.’
- Scenario 5: ‘EU countries integrate more deeply than ever before across policy areas, resulting in the European Union becoming a federal state.’

The congruence of the positions of the MEPs with those of their voters on this issue is presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the future of UE



Congruence reaches its highest point (approx. 0.2) for Scenario 5, which is the one that advocates the most for a push of the integration process. Voters and deputies of the following parties have both chosen this option: *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)*, *Grünen*, *Parti Socialiste (PS)*, *Europe Écologie-Les Verts (EELV)*, *PSOE*, *DK*. The more ‘anti-European’ parties seem least congruent with their electorate on that issue - whatever the scenario they retain (as illustrated by the low congruence scores of *Vox*, *AfD*, *Fidesz*, *Fdi*, *RN*, *KE*).

In addition, whatever the scenario embraced, the ten parties whose MEPs are the most congruent with their voters are as follows: *CDU-CSU, SPD, Grünen, Linke, Piraten, EELV, Partido popular, PSOE, DK, Socialdemokratiet*. Most of them, with the exception of *Die Linke*, are quite favorable (although some are more so than others) to deeper European integration. However, the wording of the question may have influenced this result. Indeed, individuals less favorable to the overall increase in integration could choose between different scenarios, while those very favorable to integration in general were likely to end up around Scenario 5. This bias, which comes from the scenarios borrowed to the European Commission (2017), may explain part of our results.

## 4.2. Explaining individual congruence

In a final step, we seek to explain the varying degree of congruence between voters and individual MEPs. Based on the theoretical discussion above, we explore the impact of factors related to MEPs' political career at the subnational level, the selection method employed by their party in constituting the party list for the last EP elections, their tenure in the EP and their representative focus. Given the low number of cases, it is not possible to test these different factors simultaneously; we thus proceed to separate analyses of variance.

Our first and second hypotheses posit a relationship between MEPs' political career and congruence with their voters. Yet, contrary to our expectations, a past elected experience at the local or regional level does not increase voters-MEP congruence. In fact, compared to the rest of our sample, MEPs who held an elected subnational mandate in the past but do not hold it anymore display less (or equivalent levels of) agreement with their voters. This is true for 17 indicators out of 25, including that on the left-right position (see: Table 1). Even though there are a few noteworthy exceptions, such as questions on the potential future abolishment of the euro and the choice of scenarios for the future of the EU, for which locally rooted MEPs are more congruent with their voters, our data do not evidence the impact of a pre-parliamentary socialisation process, thus invalidating our first hypothesis.

The picture is somewhat different as regards ongoing local and or regional elected mandates. Indeed, what we observe is that those MEPs currently holding a local or regional mandate are systematically more congruent with their voters than those who never held one or only held one previously but not anymore (except for one question about the capacity of government to stick to planned measure, even if the majority of citizens oppose it - 'Democracy: government' variable) (see: Table 1). The difference between those three groups is even statistically significant for many items on societal issues (Customs, Redistribution, Taxes and Welfare) and for the 'Abolishment: euro' variable. In other words, in line with our second hypothesis, it is not so much their political experience (and the acquired political know-how) that explains MEPs' ideological proximity to their voters but their continuous involvement at the subnational level and, presumably, their intention to keep on holding local or regional mandates.

Our third hypothesis stated that MEPs selected through more open candidate selection methods should be more congruent. The data provides mixed results in that regard. We find a higher level of agreement with their voters in the chief of MEPs selected through open primaries on a number of issues, including EU integration, satisfaction with EU democracy, but

also on questions related to minority rights. They fare also relatively well (although less so than MEPs selected by party members) on several societal items related to the national level, such as same-sex marriages, or the differences in standard of living acceptable in a fair society (labelled 'Issue: inequalities'). Yet, above all and to a large extent contradictory to our expectations (as we simply foresaw little congruence on such issues), it is on EU issues that we find MEPs designated by the most inclusive selectorates to be better aligned with their national electorate. More precisely, on the abolishment of the euro and on the reintroduction of borders, MEPs designated through open primaries do better than any other category. By contrast, they display the lowest levels of congruence on questions about the freedom of media to criticise government ('Democracy: media') and the possibility for courts to stop government acting beyond authority ('Democracy: courts').

Table 1. MEPs congruence (RCC) with their voters according to selected factors

		Left-right	EU integration	Satisfaction : national	Satisfaction: EU	Democracy : media	Democracy: courts	Democracy: expertise	Democracy: minorities	Democracy: government	Democracy: compliance	Issue: environment	Issue: same sex marriage	Issue: customs	Issue: jobs	Issue: redistribution	Issue: inequalities	Issue: taxes	Issue: debt	Issue: welfare	Core values	Achievement: defence	Achievement: tax	Abolishment: euro	Reintroduction: borders	Scenarios
Subnational mandate(s)	In the past	0.11	0.09	0.25	0.27	0.16	0.26	0.42	0.31	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.09	<b>0.29</b>	0.22	<b>0.23</b>	0.20	<b>0.38</b>	0.26	<b>0.33</b>	0.18	0.28	0.27	<b>0.03</b>	0.13	0.32
	Ongoing	0.03	0.04	0.22	0.11	0.15	0.09	0.38	0.28	0.24	0.29	0.05	0.15	<b>0.01</b>	0.08	<b>0.03</b>	0.07	<b>0.01</b>	0.16	<b>0.09</b>	0.11	0.37	0.22	<b>0.10</b>	0.07	0.33
	Never	0.10	0.11	0.26	0.20	0.11	0.22	0.46	0.38	0.20	0.24	0.21	0.08	<b>0.24</b>	0.21	<b>0.23</b>	0.20	<b>0.24</b>	0.23	<b>0.35</b>	0.13	0.28	0.28	<b>0.14</b>	0.13	0.45
Selectorate	Executive	0.08	0.09	0.23	0.21	<b>0.16</b>	0.24	0.40	0.32	0.23	0.30	0.19	0.15	0.21	0.20	0.18	0.18	0.24	<b>0.17</b>	0.29	0.12	0.34	0.24	0.08	0.14	<b>0.45</b>
	Congress	0.12	0.12	0.25	0.25	<b>0.01</b>	0.14	0.43	0.37	0.28	0.17	0.26	0.06	0.29	0.23	0.17	0.20	0.28	<b>0.34</b>	0.37	0.19	0.19	0.37	0.09	0.05	<b>0.28</b>
	Members	0.05	0.11	0.25	0.33	<b>0.05</b>	0.23	0.59	0.41	0.02	0.11	0.06	0.00	0.23	0.13	0.25	0.11	0.41	<b>0.26</b>	0.31	0.21	0.33	0.25	0.08	0.17	<b>0.20</b>
	Supporters	0.09	0.07	0.32	0.19	<b>0.26</b>	0.31	0.41	0.24	0.17	0.23	0.12	0.03	0.33	0.17	0.26	0.16	0.27	<b>0.19</b>	0.36	0.12	0.30	0.30	0.05	0.04	<b>0.44</b>
Tenure	Newcomer	0.10	0.09	0.25	0.20	0.15	0.26	<b>0.42</b>	0.33	0.22	0.25	0.21	0.11	0.24	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.28	0.23	0.32	0.16	0.30	0.29	0.11	0.15	0.39
	Second mandate	0.09	0.06	0.23	0.27	0.01	0.17	<b>0.61</b>	0.36	0.12	0.20	0.18	0.08	0.18	0.09	0.13	0.09	0.24	0.26	0.35	0.15	0.33	0.33	0.08	0.04	0.26
	MEP before 2014	0.09	0.12	0.27	0.26	0.15	0.16	<b>0.40</b>	0.34	0.21	0.21	0.13	0.05	0.31	0.23	0.22	0.15	0.28	0.23	0.32	0.11	0.22	0.17	0.03	0.12	0.40
Individual interests representation	Not so important	0.08	0.10	0.24	0.22	<b>0.07</b>	0.22	<b>0.47</b>	0.40	0.21	0.26	0.18	0.10	0.23	<b>0.16</b>	0.18	<b>0.14</b>	0.26	0.22	0.31	0.16	<b>0.24</b>	0.32	0.10	0.11	0.38
	Very important	0.11	0.08	0.27	0.24	<b>0.24</b>	0.23	<b>0.37</b>	0.22	0.17	0.22	0.22	0.09	0.25	<b>0.25</b>	0.24	<b>0.24</b>	0.29	0.25	0.32	0.14	<b>0.37</b>	0.18	0.07	0.16	0.38
Party voters representation	Not so important	0.08	0.11	0.25	0.24	0.11	0.21	0.50	0.38	0.24	0.23	0.16	0.08	0.18	0.20	0.20	0.18	0.24	0.24	0.29	0.13	0.29	0.28	0.11	<b>0.16</b>	0.38
	Of great importance	0.12	0.08	0.24	0.21	0.16	0.25	0.35	0.27	0.18	0.23	0.22	0.10	0.34	0.21	0.19	0.18	0.31	0.21	0.35	0.18	0.30	0.28	0.07	<b>0.08</b>	0.39

NB: The 'core values' variable corresponds to the mean congruence for the five item responses of this question.

Shaded areas indicate categories with the highest level of congruence.

Fisher-test: bolded figures=significant at .10 level; underscored figures=significant at .05 level; bolded and underscored figures=significant at .01 level

Turning to MEPs selected by their party's members (closed primaries) - which, as a reminder, make up the second most inclusive selection methods considered here -, we observe higher congruence levels than representatives designated by other means as regards their left-right positioning, the question about the capacity of government to stick to planned measures even if the majority of citizens oppose it (labelled 'Democracy: government'), but also concerning the question about whether the democratic decisions must be followed, even against the respondents' own interests ('Democracy: compliance'), the choice between environmental protection and economic growth ('Issue: environment'), the question of same sex marriages ('Issue: same sex marriage') (that relation being statistically significant), the question on whether immigrants should adapt or keep their own customs ('Issue: customs'), the question on whether immigrants take or do not take away jobs from national citizens ('Issue: jobs'), as well as the question of the differences in standard of living in a fair society ('Issue: inequalities'). These MEPs are also the most in line with their voters on the choice of scenarios for the future of the EU. Overall, however, this method of selection is clearly associated with the most mixed picture in terms of congruence, producing MEPs that are in turn most or least congruent, depending on the issue at stake. This is somewhat unexpected as the literature generally foresees party members to be somewhat more politicised and hence more extreme than the overall electorate, which should lead to a lower level of representation in its delegated version.

In fact, it is MEPs who owe their (s)election to their party's delegates (as gathered in a Congress) who are the least congruent on the highest number of issues retained in our analysis. Despite the bias possibly introduced by our choice of questions, this tends to show that this mode of selection is not conducive of a high level of citizens-representatives agreement of preferences. Exceptions in our sample include the questions about the freedom of media to criticise government (labelled 'Democracy: media'), the possibility for courts to stop government acting beyond its authority (Democracy: courts), wealth redistribution from rich to poor ('Issue: redistribution') and the possible future establishment of a European common army ('Achievement: defense'). In all these cases, this type of designation is linked with higher levels of congruence than others. But for the rest (especially the left-right placement, the attitude toward EU integration, a number of our 'issue' labelled questions, as well as those questions on the potential future abolishment of the euro and that of the potential future achievement of a common tax system, this group of MEPs is consistently less congruent with its party's voters.

Finally, MEPs who were placed on the list thanks to their party's executives appear as reasonably congruent with their electorate. They are the most congruent group on the satisfaction with national democracy dimension, on the question to know if important political decisions should be made by experts (labelled 'Democracy: expertise'), on the question of the potential future achievement of a common tax system ('Achievement: tax'), on a large number of the remaining 'issue'-labelled questions (the ones on the debt, taxes, customs, welfare). Importantly, they also make up the group of MEPs who best aligns with the preference of their voters on EU core values. The latter is not particularly surprising as party executives have been often and repeatedly found in the literature to draft rather balanced lists of candidates compared, for instance, with delegates or party members. Besides, our result is in line with earlier studies linking candidate selection methods to political congruence in Belgium (Vandeleene *et al.*, 2017).

According to our fourth hypothesis, MEPs undergo an institutional socialisation process whereby they become more integrated at the supranational level and drift away from their voters. We expect the impact of this process on congruence to increase with the length of MEPs' stay in the Parliament (H4). To test this hypothesis, Table 1 distinguishes three categories of MEPs: newcomers (which are MEPs who were first elected in 2019), MEPs who are in their second mandate (that is, those who have been elected for the first time in 2014 or who have become MEPs during the 2014-2019 parliamentary term), and thirdly, those who have held their position for a longer period of time. The analysis of voters-MEPs congruence across these three categories does not support the hypothesis. First, no clear-cut pattern emerges from the data as there are only minor differences between the three groups. With one partial exception for the 'Expertise' variable (but in this case, the most experienced MEPs are also the most congruent with their voters), the differences between those three groups are not statistically significant. Actually, if one trend can be identified (with great caution), it runs against our theoretical expectation, since the most experienced MEPs seem to be comparatively slightly more congruent with their voters than newcomers. In sum, while the 'going native' hypothesis can be rejected, the data suggest that long-time MEPs are able to maintain some kind of ideological proximity to their voters. Possibly, the hypothesised impact of the integration at the supranational level is counterbalanced by the progressive acquisition of a specific expertise in 'being a representative', that is in particular the ability to perceive accurately the demands and preferences of their constituents.

Finally, we consider the relationship between MEPs' representation role and their level of congruence with voters (H5). As explained above, we rely on two complementary indicators to evaluate how MEPs conceive of their role, and more precisely, who (or which group) they intend to represent. The empirical findings contradict our hypothesis for both the 'Individual interest representation' variable and the 'Party voters representation' variable. The differences between the categories are generally not significant and rather limited. Actually, in several instances (such as 'Democracy: compliance', 'Issue inequalities' and 'Achievement: tax'), the level of congruence is strictly similar between groups - that is, whatever the importance MEPs give to the representation of the people who voted for their party. Even more strikingly, and in total contradiction with our fifth hypothesis, the congruence is more than once the highest for MEPs who do not particularly focus on the representation of voters' individual interests and for those who do not judge the representation of their party voters as being of great importance. Hence, looking at the results for the 'Individual interest representation' variable, there is a mismatch between the MEPs' representation role and their agreement with voters on the question about the freedom of media to criticise government ('Democracy: media'), the question on whether immigrants take or do not take away jobs from national citizens ('Issue: jobs'), wealth redistribution from rich to poor ('Issue: redistribution'), and on the preferences on EU core values. These observations suggest that the intention - or the ambition - to speak on behalf of one's voters does not suffice to guarantee that MEPs correctly identify their voters' preferences.

## 5. Conclusion

In the wake of the Conference on the Future of Europe, this report looks at the congruence between citizens and elected officials in the EP as one of the main channels of representation and legitimacy at the EU level. To do so, it rests on the assumption that at the time of the elections, agreement between candidates and voters are best embodied by national parties



which, despite all institutional developments, still structure and crystallise the political debate. Through an in-depth analysis of their answers to two separate surveys, we were able to confront the positions of MEPs and their party's voters on a series of issues pertaining to various aspects of the decision-making process and the future of the EU.

The empirical analysis has revealed that, on the whole, MEPs are more congruent with their voters on the most salient (or englobing) questions. Concretely, the ideological convergence is at its maximum on the left-right dimension which constitutes the main cleavage of national politics. That said, citizens' views on more specific issues (such as same-sex marriage) or hypothetical EU reforms (in particular the abolishment of the EU) are also largely shared by their representatives in the EP. Another major finding has been that the political views of the elites are more polarized than those of the citizens. Notably, extreme positions of MEPs are the ones that are less matched by those of their voters. In addition, on the question of the reform of the EU, the parties that are the most favourable to deeper European integration are also the most congruent with their voters.

While considering the factors that might be associated with higher or lower level of MEPs-voters congruence, we turned to individual level explanations and pointed at a sustained effect of holding a local (or regional) mandate as resonating with MEPs being more in phase with their party's voters. While the ways in which parties designate their candidates for election is often foreseen to be a main driver of their attitudes and behaviours once elected, we were not able to identify one type of selectorate conducive of a better congruence. In line with our expectations, there is a great issue-to-issue variation, although entrusting the members or the executives with that task seem more often to be associated with a better representation outcome. Similarly, we have evidenced that MEPs' role conceptions and representative *foci* do not alter their level of political congruence with their party's voters: this might seem counterintuitive, but MEPs who declare to care the most for the citizens' individual interests and their party's voters are not particularly congruent with their electorate. Finally, tenure does not seem to affect congruence in the hypothesized direction. Indeed, contrary to our expectation, MEPs do not drift away from their voters by exercising several consecutive mandates. As a matter of fact, MEPs in their second or third (or even fourth) mandate tend to be ideologically closer to their voters than the newcomers.

Nevertheless, once elected, the dynamic becomes somewhat different; the EP debate is also structured through its parliamentary groups which have become important principals to the MEPs, alongside their national party and other allegiances. Therefore, to analyse representation in the EP, further research should qualify the concordance of citizens and other actors that frame the chain of representation. If EP party groups were to be found to better match the preferences of voters than national parties do, then this would (re)pave the way for the debate on transnational lists. To the contrary, if agreement were to be found between MEPs and all the citizens of their constituency (whoever they voted for), then this would point at a retreat of EU-level politicization.

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## Appendix 1: The “matching” of MEPs and their Voters

In order to analyse the opinion congruence between MEPs and their voters, we need to match the ‘party’ of the voters with that of MEPs who responded to our survey.

Regarding voters, we rely on responses to question W2\_Q60a of the RECONNECT Voter Survey asking voters their vote choice among the candidate lists for the EP 2019 elections. We then matched these responses with the corresponding list on which each MEP was elected.

Gaps between the Voter Survey lists and MEPs party affiliation, as well as specific cases, are discussed in the last column of the table below.

Table A1.1 The ‘matching’ of MEPs and their Voters

Country	MEP party group (according to ESPOL MEP survey)	Lists on which MEPs were elected ( <a href="#">webpage of the EP</a> accessed on 20 January 2021)	RECONNECT Voter Survey Party lists (W2_Q60a)	Remarks on special cases
Germany	PPE	CDU - CSU	101 ‘CDU/CSU’	
Germany	S&D	SPD	102 ‘SPD’	
Germany	Renew	FDP	103 ‘Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)’	
Germany	Greens-EFA	GRÜNE	104 ‘Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Grüne)’	
Germany	GUE/NGL	DIE LINKE	105 ‘Die Linke (Linke)’	
Germany	I&D	AfD	106 ‘Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)’	
Germany	Renew	FREIE WÄHLER	107 ‘Freie Wähler (FW)’	
Germany	Greens-EFA	PIRATEN	109 ‘Piratenpartei Deutschland (PIRATEN)’	
Germany	Greens-EFA	VOLT	No appropriate choice	This case has to be dropped from the analysis as no corresponding party was proposed to voters.
Germany	NI	Tierschutzpartei	No appropriate choice	This case has to be dropped from the analysis as no corresponding party was proposed to voters.
France	S&D	Coal (PS + RDG + PP + N)	202 ‘Parti socialiste (PS)’	The proposed lists in the Voter Survey did not exactly correspond to the electoral offer in the EP elections: <i>Nouvelle Donne</i> , which was indicated as forming a coalition with <i>Génération.s</i> (207 ‘G.s/Nouvelle Donne’), should in fact have been listed as standing on the same list as the Socialist Party. We rely on this latter response as it is the most proximate to MEPs in our sample.

France	Renew	Coal (LREM + MoDem + A + MRSL)	203 'LREM/MoDem'	
France	Green	EELV	204 'Europe Écologie-Les-Verts (EELV)'	
France	GUE/NGL	FI	205 'La France Insoumise (FI)'	
France	I&D	RN	206 'Rassemblement National (RN)'	
Spain	PPE	PP	301 'Partido Popular (PP)'	
Spain	S&D	PSOE/PSC	302 'PSO'	
Spain	GUE/NGL	Coal (UP + IU + Catalunya en Comú + Barcelona en Comú)	303 'Podemos-IU/Catalunya en Comú-Podem'	
Spain	Renew	C's	304 'Ciudadanos (Cs)'	
Spain	ECR	VOX	305 'VOX'	
Spain	NI	Coal (PdCat + JxCat)	312 'Junts per Catalunya (JxCat)'	In Spain, the proposed lists in the Voter Survey did not exactly correspond to the electoral offer: several parties which formed a coalition in the EP elections were presented separately in the Voter Survey. Here will match the MEPs with the declared voters of their party (as distinct from the voters of their electoral list).
Spain	Renew	Coal (EAJ-PNV + CC + CxG + Atarrabia Taldea + El Pi + Demòcrates Valencians)	313 EAJ/PNV	Same as above.
Hungary	NI	JOBBIK	401 'JOBBIK'	
Hungary	S&D	Coal (MSZP + Párbeszéd)	402 'MSZP-PM'	
Hungary	S&D	DK	403 'Demokratikus Koalíció (DK)'	
Hungary	PPE	Coal (FIDESZ + KDNP)	406 'FIDESZ-KNDP'	
Poland	ECR	PiS	501 'PiS/Zjednoczona Prawica'	
Poland	PPE	Coal KE (PO + PSL + SLD + .N + Z)	502 'PSL-PO-.N-SLD-Zielo'	
Denmark	S&D	A (S)	602 'Socialdemokraterne (A)'	
Denmark	Renew	V (V)	603 'Venstre (V)'	

Denmark	Green	F (SF)	605 'Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF)'	
Denmark	GUE/NGL	Ø (EL)	606 'Enhedsliste'	
Italy	S&D	PD	702 'Partito Democratico (PD)'	
Italy	NI	M5S	703 'Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S)'	
Italy	ECR	FDI	705 'Fratelli d'Italia (Fdi)'	
Italy	I&D	LN	706 'Lega'	

## Appendix 2: List of questions asked in both the MEP Survey and the Citizen Survey

Table A2.1 List of questions asked in both the MEP Survey and the Citizen Survey

Questions	Short name	Text	Type of question	MEP Survey	Citizen Survey
<b>Views on Democracy</b>	Democracy Democracy: media Democracy: courts Democracy: expertise Democracy: minorities Democracy: government Democracy: compliance	<b>One can have different views on what constitutes democracy and how decisions should be made in a democracy. Please state to what extent you agree with each of the following statements.</b> - The media should be free to criticise the government. - The courts should be able to stop the government acting beyond its authority. - It would be better if important political decisions were made by independent experts and not by elected politicians. - Minority rights must be protected against majority decisions. - The government should stick to planned measures, even if the majority of citizens oppose it. - Democratically made decisions must be followed in any case, even if they contradict my own interests.	Likert scale Options: Strongly disagree - Disagree - Neither agree nor disagree - Agree - Strongly agree	Q5.1	W1_Q73
<b>Satisfaction with democracy (National level* and EU level)</b>	Satisfaction: national Satisfaction: EU	<b>On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the European Union, where 0 means 'not at all satisfied' and 10 means 'completely satisfied'?</b>	Scale 0-10	Q5.3 Q5.4	Q9 Q10
<b>Left-Right Positionment</b>	Left-right	<b>In political matters, people talk of the 'Left' and the 'Right'. Where would you place each of the following on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means 'Left' and 10 means 'Right'? Choose one box per line.</b> - Yourself - Your national political party - Your party's voters - Your European political group	Scale 0-10	Q5.5	Q16
<b>Pro-anti EU integration Position</b>	EU integration	<b>Some say European integration should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. Where would you place each of the following on the question of European integration? Choose one box per line.</b> - Yourself - Your national political party - Your party's voters - Your European political group	Scale 0-10	Q5.6	Q21, 22
<b>Future EU achievements and reverses</b>	Achievements Achievement: defense Achievement: tax Abolishment: euro Reintroduction: borders	<b>How important is it that the European Union achieves the following in the future?</b> - Establishment of a European army for common defense - Common tax system - Abolishment of the common currency, the Euro - Reintroduction of border controls between EU member states (i.e. abolishment of Schengen)	Likert scale Options: Not at all important - Not very important - Quite important - Very important	Q5.7	Q28
	Issues	<b>Now a few questions on your views on various issues. For each issue, please</b>	Scale 0-10	Q5.10	Q39

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Societal issues statement's scale</b></p>	<p>Issue: environment Issue: same sex marriage Issue: customs Issue: jobs Issue: redistribution Issue: inequalities Issue: taxes Issue: debt Issue: welfare</p>	<p><b>position yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you fully agree with the statement on the left, and 10 means you fully agree with the statement on the right. What number on the scale describes your position best?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protection of the environment, even at the cost of economic growth / Support economic growth, even at the cost of damage to the environment</li> <li>- Same sex marriages should be forbidden / Same sex marriages should be allowed</li> <li>- Immigrants should adapt to your country's customs / Immigrants should be free to keep own customs</li> <li>- Immigrants take away jobs from your country / Immigrants do not take away jobs from your country</li> <li>- Wealth should be redistributed from the rich to the poor in your country / Wealth should not be redistributed from the rich to the poor in your country</li> <li>- For a fair society differences in standards of living should be small / For a fair society differences in standards of living do not matter</li> <li>- Taxes should be raised to increase public services / Taxes should be cut, even at the expense of cutting public services</li> <li>- Unemployment needs to be fought, even at the expense of high national debt / Unemployment should not be fought if this means higher national debt</li> <li>- Restrict welfare benefits for immigrants / Maintain welfare benefits access for immigrants</li> </ul>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Importance of core EU values</b></p>	<p>Core values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Freedom</li> <li>- Democracy</li> <li>- Equality</li> <li>- Rule of law</li> <li>- Human rights</li> <li>- Justice</li> <li>- Solidarity</li> </ul>	<p><b>How important do you think the following values should be to the European Union? Please allocate a total of 100 points. Give more points to those values that you consider more important, and fewer points to those values you consider less important.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Freedom</li> <li>- Democracy</li> <li>- Equality</li> <li>- The rule of law</li> <li>- Respect for human rights</li> <li>- Justice</li> <li>- Solidarity</li> </ul>		<p>Q5.11</p>	<p>Q87(W2)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EU Scenarios</b></p>	<p>Scenarios</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carrying-on</li> <li>Market</li> <li>Multi-speed</li> <li>Focused integration</li> <li>Federal state</li> </ul>	<p><b>In 2018, the European Commission outlined five potential future visions for European integration. Which of the following future visions is preferred by you?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carrying on, with only small and incremental progress in the deepening of European integration.</li> <li>- A shift of focus towards market integration between EU countries only.</li> <li>- Emergence of a multi-speed EU, in which selected countries cooperate and integrate more closely than others.</li> <li>- Focus on deeper integration amongst all EU countries in a limited number of</li> </ul>	<p>MCQ</p>	<p>Q5.13</p>	<p>Q88(W2)</p>



		areas, such as in foreign policy and defense. - EU countries integrate more deeply than ever before across policy areas, resulting in the European Union becoming a federal state.			
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*\* Not analysed*

## Appendix 3: MEP sample (descriptive statistics)

Table A3.1 MEP sample by Member State

Member state	Number			%		
	European Parliament	ESPOL MEP Survey	Congruence Sample	European Parliament	ESPOL MEP Survey	Congruence Sample
Austria	19	5	0	2.7	4.1	0
Belgium	20	9	0	2.8	7.4	0
Bulgaria	17	5	0	2.4	4.1	0
Croatia	12	2	0	1.7	1.6	0
Cyprus	6	1	0	0.9	0.8	0
Czech Rep.	21	3	0	3.0	2.5	0
Denmark	14	4	4	2.0	3.3	6.7
Estonia	7	2	0	1.00	1.6	0
Finland	14	3	0	2.0	2.5	0
France	79	14	14	11.2	11.5	23.3
Germany	96	16	14	13.7	13.1	23.3
Greece	21	1	0	3.0	0.8	0
Hungary	21	6	6	3.0	4.9	10
Ireland	13	3	0	1.8	2.5	0
Italy	76	5	5	10.8	4.1	8.3
Latvia	8	1	0	1.1	0.8	0
Lithuania	11	3	0	1.6	2.5	0
Luxembourg	6	1	0	0.9	0.8	0
Malta	6	1	0	0.9	0.8	0
The Netherlands	29	5	0	4.1	4.1	0
Poland	52	4	4	7.4	3.3	6.7
Portugal	21	4	0	3.0	3.3	0
Romania	33	6	0	4.7	4.9	0
Slovakia	14	0	0	2.0	0.0	0
Slovenia	8	3	0	1.1	2.5	0
Spain	59	13	13	8.4	10.7	21.7
Sweden	20	2	0	2.8	1.6	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>703*</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table A3.2 MEP sample by Political Group

Political Groups	European Parliament	ESPOL MEP Survey	Congruence Sample	European Parliament	ESPOL MEP Survey	Congruence Sample
EPP	187	34	10	26.6	27.9	16.7
S&D	147	28	16	20.9	23.0	26.7
Renew	98	19	11	13.9	15.6	18.3
Greens/EFA	67	11	5	9.5	9.0	8.3
I&D	76	9	7	10.8	7.4	11.7
ECR	61	7	3	8.7	5.7	5.0
GUE/NGL	38	10	5	5.4	8.2	8.3
NI	29	4	3	4.1	3.3	5.0
<b>Totals</b>	703*	122	60	100	100	100

\*Au 9.03.20 : <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/fr/search/chamber>

## Appendix 4: Correlation matrix of RCC at the party-level

Table A4.1 Correlation Matrix of RCC at the party-level

	Left-Right	EU Integration	Satisfaction: national	Satisfaction: EU	Democracy: media	Democracy: courts	Democracy: expertise	Democracy: minorities	Democracy: government	Democracy: compliance	Issue: environment	Issue: same sex marriage	Issue: customs	Issue: jobs	Issue: redistribution
Left-Right	1.00	0.29	0.09	-0.01	0.01	0.10	-0.26	0.13	0.10	-0.12	0.20	-0.13	0.68	0.59	0.06
EU Integration		1.00	0.05	0.39	0.14	0.35	-0.33	0.25	0.27	0.13	0.09	0.28	0.01	0.15	-0.04
Satisfaction: national			1.00	-0.06	0.02	0.57	-0.40	0.50	0.11	0.18	0.13	-0.13	0.05	0.21	0.07
Satisfaction: EU				1.00	-0.03	0.21	-0.17	0.21	0.27	0.09	0.05	0.00	-0.07	-0.25	-0.13
Democracy: media					1.00	0.25	-0.58	-0.29	0.13	0.48	0.32	0.17	-0.05	0.33	0.24
Democracy: courts						1.00	-0.33	0.44	0.08	0.09	0.26	0.12	0.11	0.25	0.03
Democracy: expertise							1.00	-0.22	-0.28	-0.32	-0.40	-0.14	-0.22	-0.41	-0.25
Democracy: minorities								1.00	0.25	-0.19	0.17	-0.12	0.00	0.16	-0.04
Democracy: government									1.00	0.27	0.47	-0.21	-0.03	0.26	-0.10
Democracy: compliance										1.00	-0.11	0.26	-0.14	-0.03	-0.20
Issue: environment											1.00	0.12	0.33	0.56	0.26
Issue: same sex marriage												1.00	-0.03	-0.08	-0.24
Issue: customs													1.00	0.49	0.17
Issue: jobs														1.00	0.29
Issue: redistribution															1.00

	Issue: inequalities	Issue: taxes	Issue: debt	Issue: welfare	Value: freedom	Value: democracy	Value: equality	Value: rule of law	Value: human rights	Value: justice	Value: solidarity	Achievement: defense	Achievement: tax	Abolishment: euro	Reintroduction: borders
Left-Right	-0.23	0.35	0.44	0.43	-0.04	-0.19	-0.14	0.01	-0.01	0.36	0.17	0.18	0.34	0.04	-0.22
EU Integration	0.12	0.05	0.19	-0.15	-0.10	0.04	-0.10	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.29	0.36	0.30	0.22	-0.24
Satisfaction: national	-0.04	-0.15	0.09	0.08	-0.10	0.14	0.15	-0.01	0.35	0.09	-0.14	0.03	-0.04	-0.07	0.15
Satisfaction: EU	-0.07	0.06	0.06	-0.21	0.13	0.10	0.09	0.39	-0.28	0.13	0.33	0.24	0.23	0.11	-0.31
Democracy: media	0.57	0.02	0.28	-0.21	0.04	0.14	-0.14	0.16	0.17	-0.05	0.00	0.12	0.01	0.10	0.12
Democracy: courts	0.20	-0.09	0.10	-0.12	0.06	0.37	0.05	0.16	0.40	0.32	-0.06	0.41	0.06	0.15	0.11
Democracy: expertise	-0.28	-0.15	-0.41	-0.03	-0.18	-0.03	-0.05	-0.21	-0.19	-0.23	-0.21	-0.14	-0.15	-0.13	0.08
Democracy: minorities	0.05	0.07	-0.07	0.05	0.15	-0.03	0.29	0.33	-0.01	0.36	0.19	0.13	-0.17	-0.06	0.18
Democracy: government	0.50	0.11	0.23	0.03	0.50	-0.07	0.01	0.39	0.01	0.40	-0.02	0.13	0.16	-0.30	-0.22
Democracy: compliance	0.25	-0.29	-0.14	-0.06	-0.12	-0.20	-0.52	0.05	-0.08	-0.28	-0.38	-0.20	0.29	-0.09	-0.07
Issue: environment	0.40	0.39	0.48	0.02	0.68	0.30	0.36	0.63	0.33	0.76	0.10	0.28	-0.09	-0.11	-0.12
Issue: same sex marriage	0.00	-0.33	-0.18	-0.20	-0.06	0.22	-0.07	-0.02	0.08	-0.09	0.03	0.02	0.06	0.35	-0.11
Issue: customs	-0.21	0.42	0.28	0.24	0.21	0.02	0.06	0.17	0.27	0.55	0.04	-0.03	0.20	0.36	-0.09
Issue: jobs	0.44	0.32	0.37	0.53	0.22	0.05	0.09	0.27	0.39	0.43	-0.09	0.14	0.04	-0.12	0.07
Issue: redistribution	0.27	0.46	0.50	-0.12	0.38	0.19	0.26	0.16	0.36	0.25	0.37	0.27	0.19	0.18	-0.17
Issue: inequalities	1.00	0.09	0.13	0.00	0.53	0.18	0.00	0.36	0.37	0.26	0.00	-0.03	0.00	-0.17	-0.09
Issue: tax		1.00	0.62	0.25	0.42	-0.04	0.42	0.32	0.23	0.55	0.39	0.39	0.17	-0.19	-0.09
Issue: debt			1.00	0.21	0.36	0.16	0.28	0.25	0.27	0.44	0.34	0.51	0.41	-0.01	-0.31
Issue: welfare				1.00	-0.12	-0.26	-0.15	0.01	0.11	0.05	-0.21	-0.09	0.23	-0.42	0.15
Value: freedom					1.00	0.34	0.33	0.69	0.21	0.74	0.21	0.25	0.04	-0.13	-0.37
Value: democracy						1.00	0.34	0.30	0.36	0.19	0.24	0.40	-0.09	0.13	-0.01
Value: equality							1.00	0.27	0.30	0.38	0.42	0.38	-0.29	-0.07	0.06
Value: rule of law								1.00	-0.04	0.67	0.25	0.26	0.14	-0.17	-0.07

Value: human rights	1.00	0.34	-0.02	0.09	-0.09	0.13	0.29
Value: justice		1.00	0.30	0.29	0.10	0.02	-0.15
Value: solidarity			1.00	0.41	0.27	0.11	-0.20
Achievement: defense				1.00	0.24	-0.06	-0.12
Achievement: tax					1.00	-0.07	-0.43
Abolishment: euro						1.00	-0.24
Reintroduction: border							1.00

## Appendix 5: Independent variables (IV) in our study (Table 1)

### IV: Subnational mandate(s)

Table A5.1 Answers to the questions on the regional and local mandates

Options	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizens was possible		Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey	
	Local mandate	Regional mandate	Local mandate	Regional mandate
Previously held, but not now	20 MEPs (35.1 %)	19 MEPs (33.3 %)	51 MEPs (41.8 %)	43 MEPs (35.2 %)
Previously and now	1 MEPs (1.8 %)	1 MEP (1.8 %)	3 MEPs (2.5 %)	2 MEPs (1.6 %)
Currently held	3 MEPs (5.3 %)	1 MEP (1.8 %)	8 MEPs (6.6 %)	3 MEPs (2.5 %)
Never held	31 MEPs (54.4 %)	34 MEPs (59.6 %)	55 MEPs (45.1 %)	67 MEPs (54.9 %)
Missing data	2 MEPs (3.5 %)	2 MEPs (3.5 %)	5 MEPs (4.1 %)	7 MEPs (5.7 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

Table A5.2 Recoding of the questions on the regional and local mandates

Categories	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizens was possible (n=57)	Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey (n=122)
In the past	25 MEPs (43.9 %)	59 (48.4 %)
Ongoing	6 MEPs (10.5 %)	15 (12.3 %)
Never	26 MEPs (45.6 %)	42 (34.4 %)
Missing data	0 MEPs (0.0 %)	6 MEPs (4.9 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

### IV: Selectorate

Table A5.3 Answers to the question on the selectorate

Options	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizen was possible	Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey
Party executive	12 MEPs (21.1 %)	50 MEPs (41.0 %)



Party congress	7 MEPs (12.5 %)	21 MEPs (17.2 %)
Party members	20 MEPs (35.1 %)	25 MEPs (20.5 %)
Party supporters	9 MEPs (15.8 %)	15 MEPs (12.3 %)
Missing data	9 MEPs (15.8 %)	11 MEPs (9.0 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

#### IV: Tenure

Table A5.4 Answers to the question on tenure

Categories	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizen was possible	Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey
Newcomer	36 MEPs (63.2 %)	73 MEPs (59.8 %)
Second mandate	7 MEPs (12.3 %)	25 MEPs (20.5 %)
MEP before 2014	14 MEPs (24.6 %)	24 MEPs (19.7 %)
Missing data	0 MEP (0.0 %)	0 MEP (0.0 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

#### IV: Individual interests representation

Table A5.5 Answers to the question on individual interests representation

Options	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizen was possible	Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey
1	12 MEP (21.1 %)	20 MEP (16.4 %)
2	10 MEPs (17.5 %)	23 MEPs (18.9 %)
3	14 MEPs (24.6 %)	24 MEPs (19.7 %)
4	9 MEPs (15.8 %)	24 MEPs (19.7 %)
5	11 MEPs (19.3 %)	26 MEPs (21.3 %)
Missing data	1 MEP (1.8 %)	5 MEPs (4.1 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

Table A5.6 Recoding to the question on individual interests representation

Categories	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizen was possible (n=57)	Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey (n=122)
1 to 3	36 MEPs (63.2 %)	67 MEPs (54.9 %)
4 and 5	20 MEPs (35.1 %)	50 MEPs (41.0 %)
Missing data	1 MEP (1.8 %)	5 MEPs (4.1 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

#### IV: Party voters representation

Table A5.7 Answers to the question on the party voters' representation

Options	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizen was possible	Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey
1	0 MEP (0.0 %)	1 MEP (0.8 %)
2	4 MEPs (7.1 %)	6 MEPs (4.9 %)
3	15 MEPs (26.3 %)	23 MEPs (18.9 %)
4	12 MEPs (21.1 %)	27 MEPs (22.1 %)
5	25 MEPs (43.9 %)	60 MEPs (49.2 %)
Missing data	1 MEP (1.8 %)	5 MEPs (4.1 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

Table A5.8 Recoding to the question on the party voters' representation

Categories	MEPs for which calculation of the congruence with citizen was possible (n=57)	Total number of respondents to ESPOL MEP Survey (n=122)
1 to 4	31 MEPs (54.4 %)	57 MEPs (46.7 %)
5	25 MEPs (43.9 %)	60 MEPs (49.2 %)
Missing data	1 MEP (1.8 %)	5 MEPs (4.1 %)
Total	57 MEPs (100.0 %)	122 MEPs (100.0 %)

## Appendix 6: Congruence - Supplementary graphs

### 1. Relative citizen congruence

Figure A6.1.1 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the left-right positioning

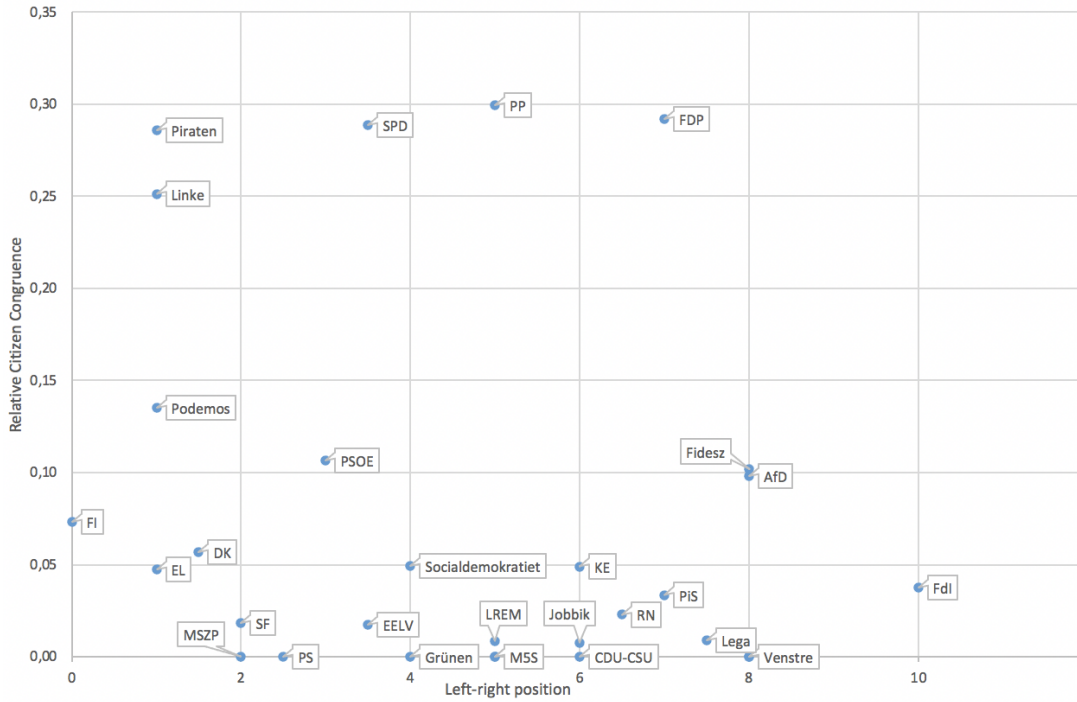


Figure A6.1.2 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the EU integration

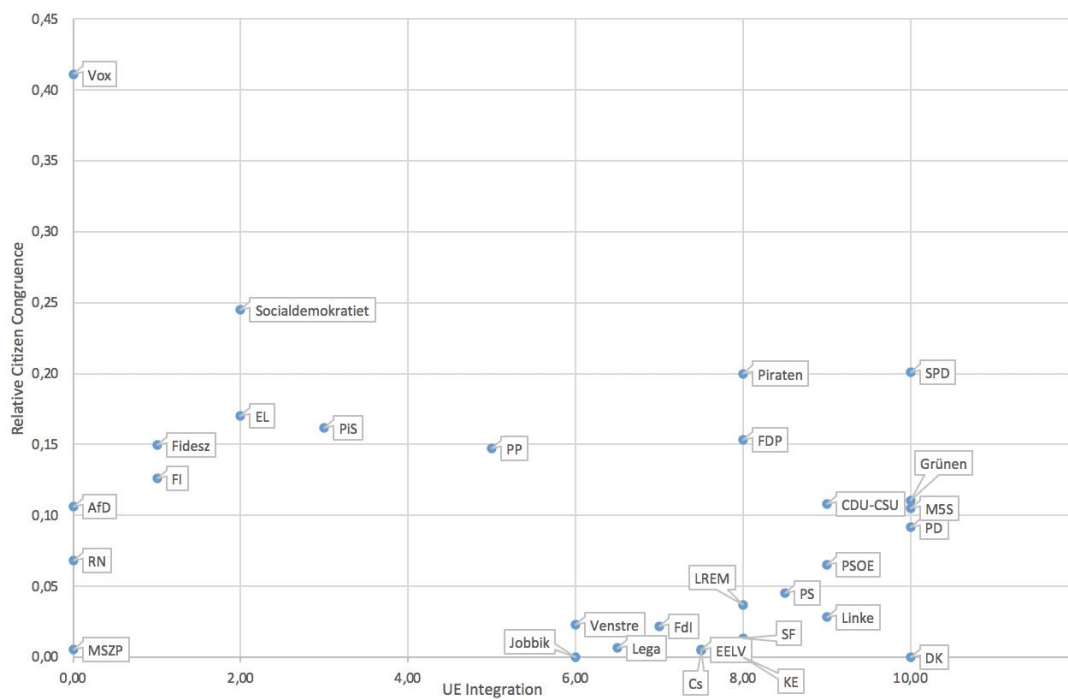


Figure A6.1.3 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the satisfaction with national democracy

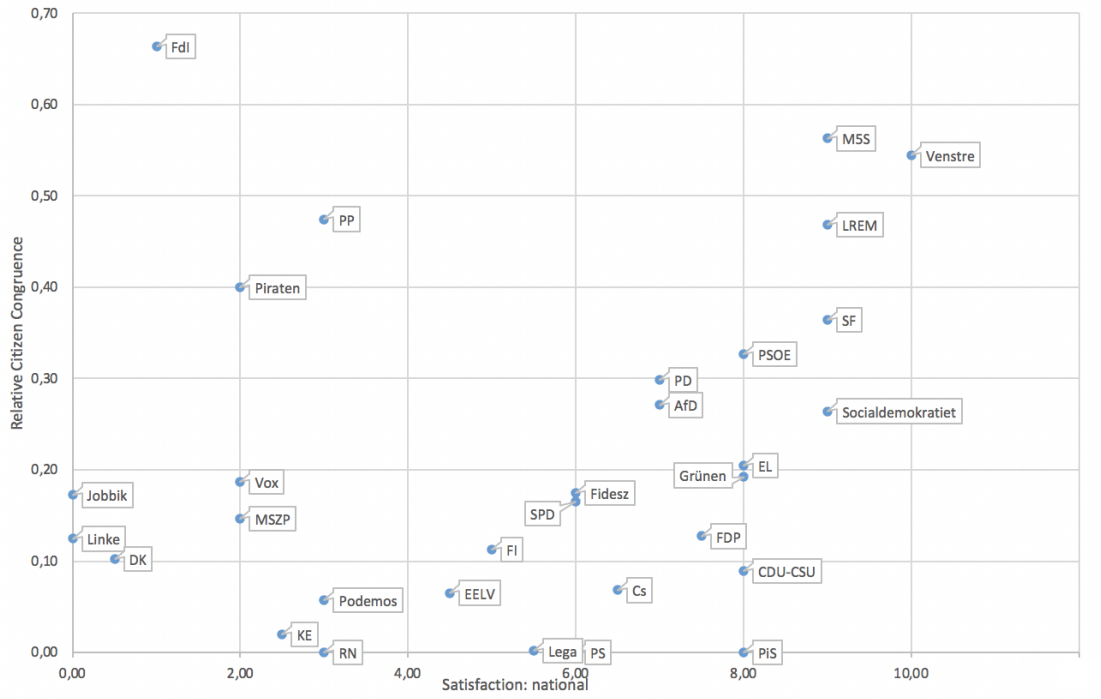


Figure A6.1.4 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the satisfaction with EU democracy

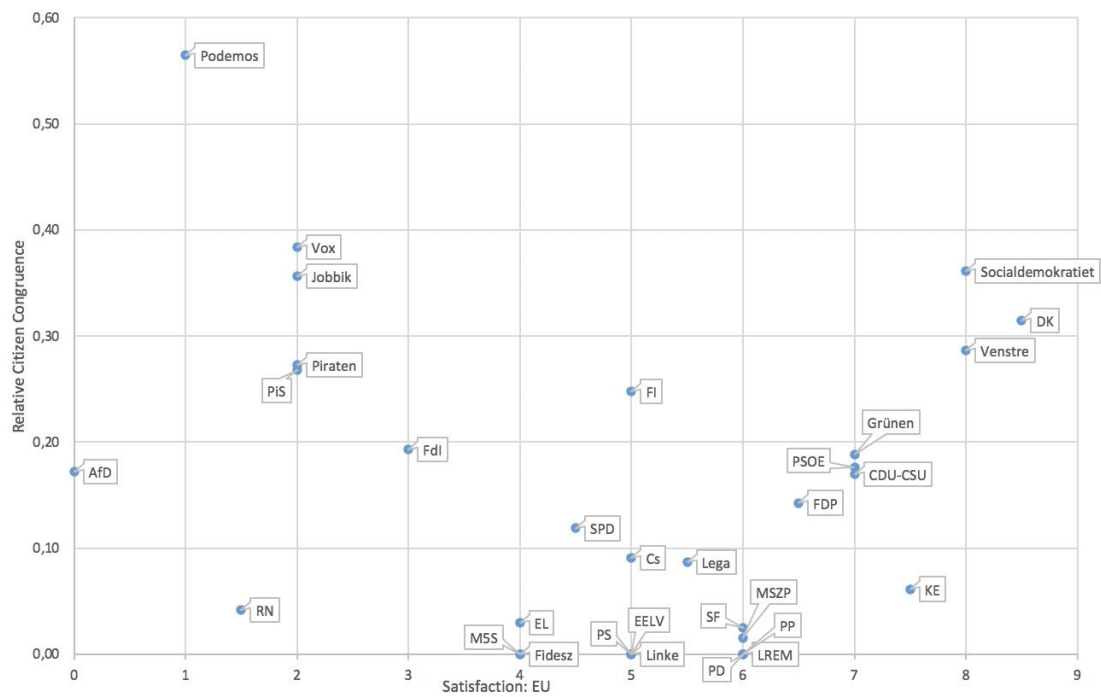


Figure A6.1.5 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the right of media to criticize government

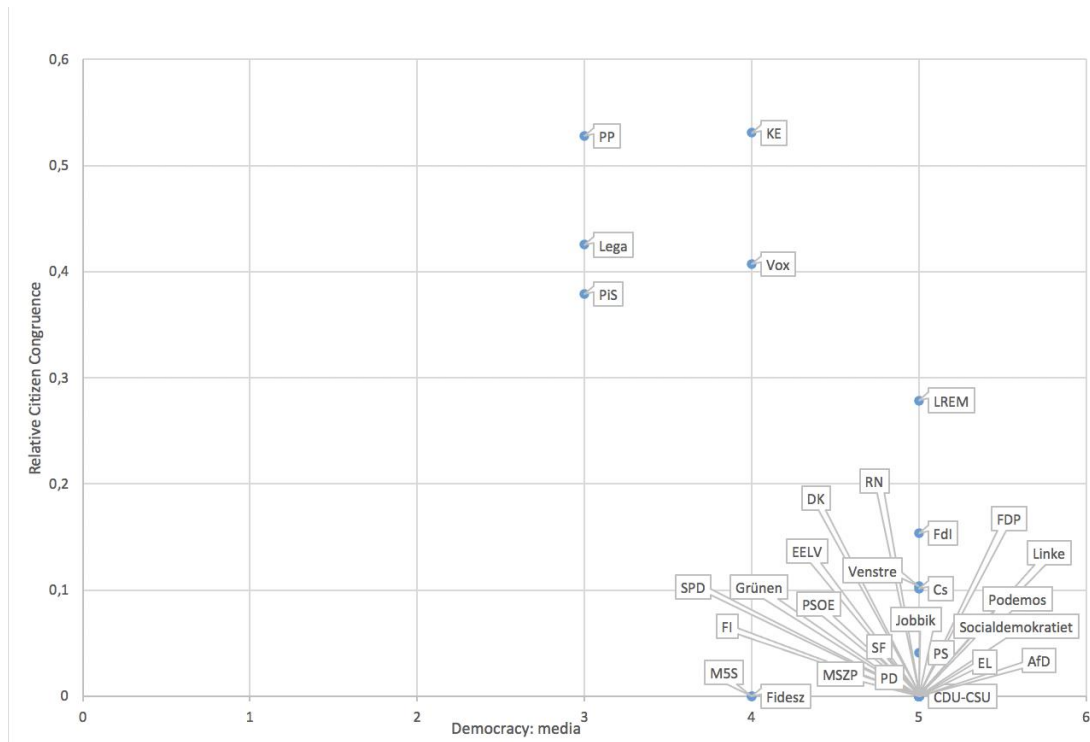


Figure A6.1.6 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the capacity of courts to stop government acting beyond its authority

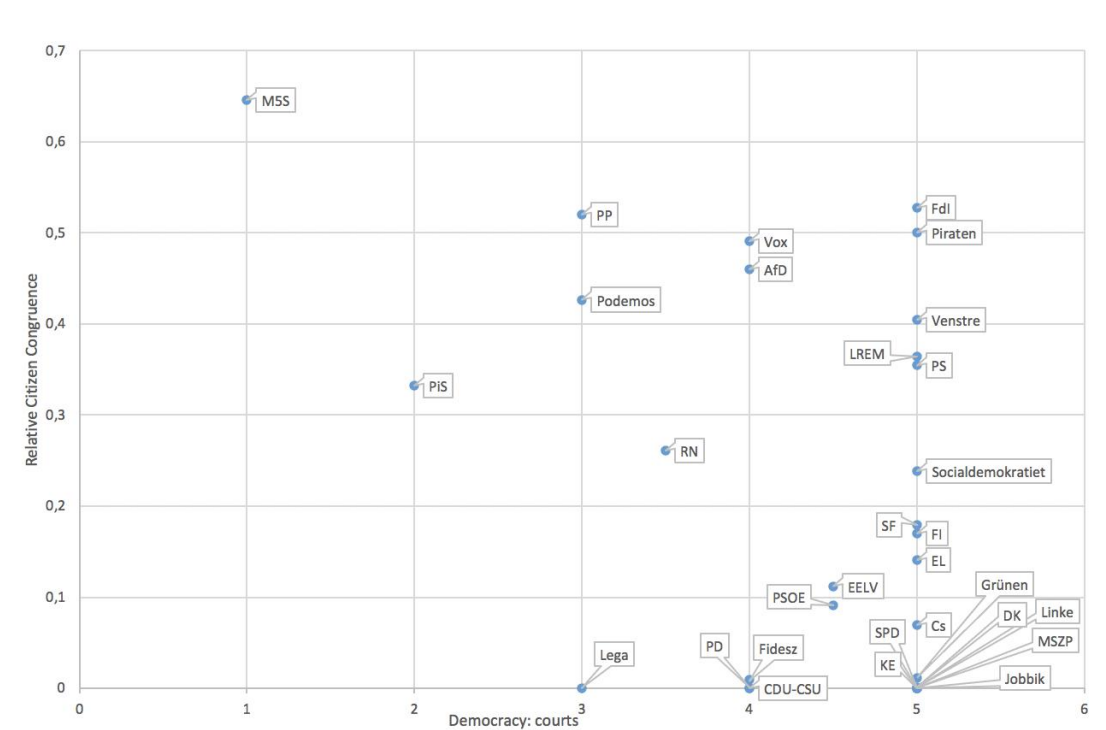


Figure A6.1.7 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that it would be better if important political decisions were made by independent experts and not by elected politicians

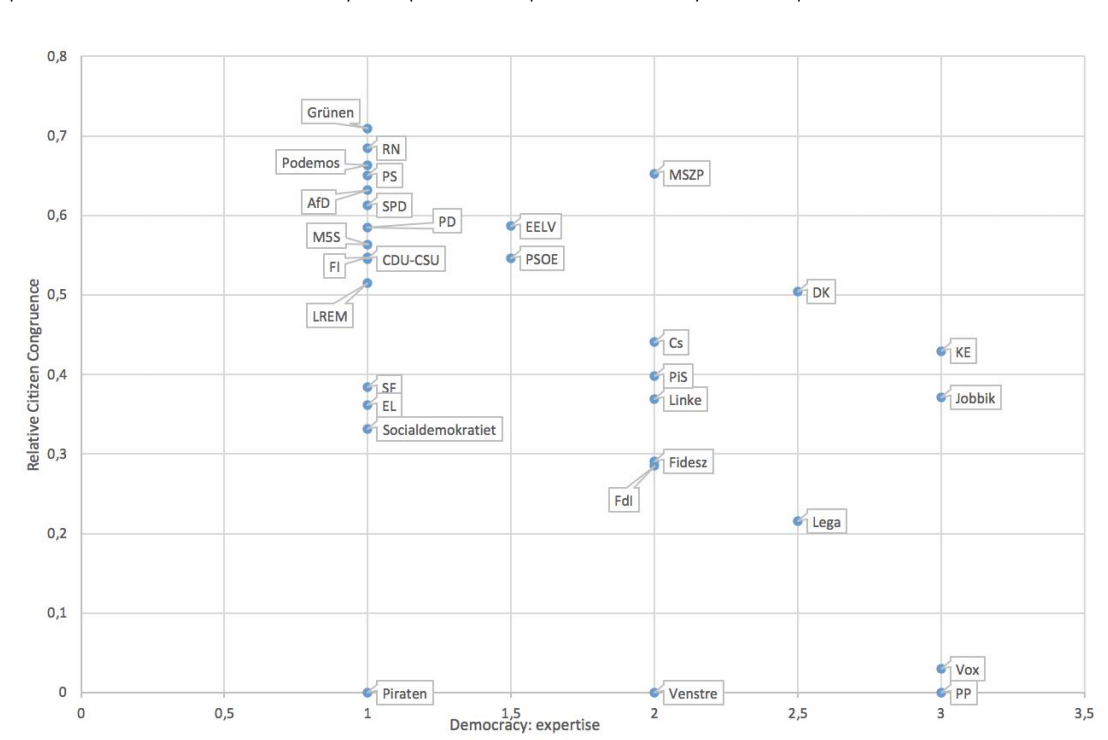


Figure A6.1.8 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the protection of minority rights against majority decision

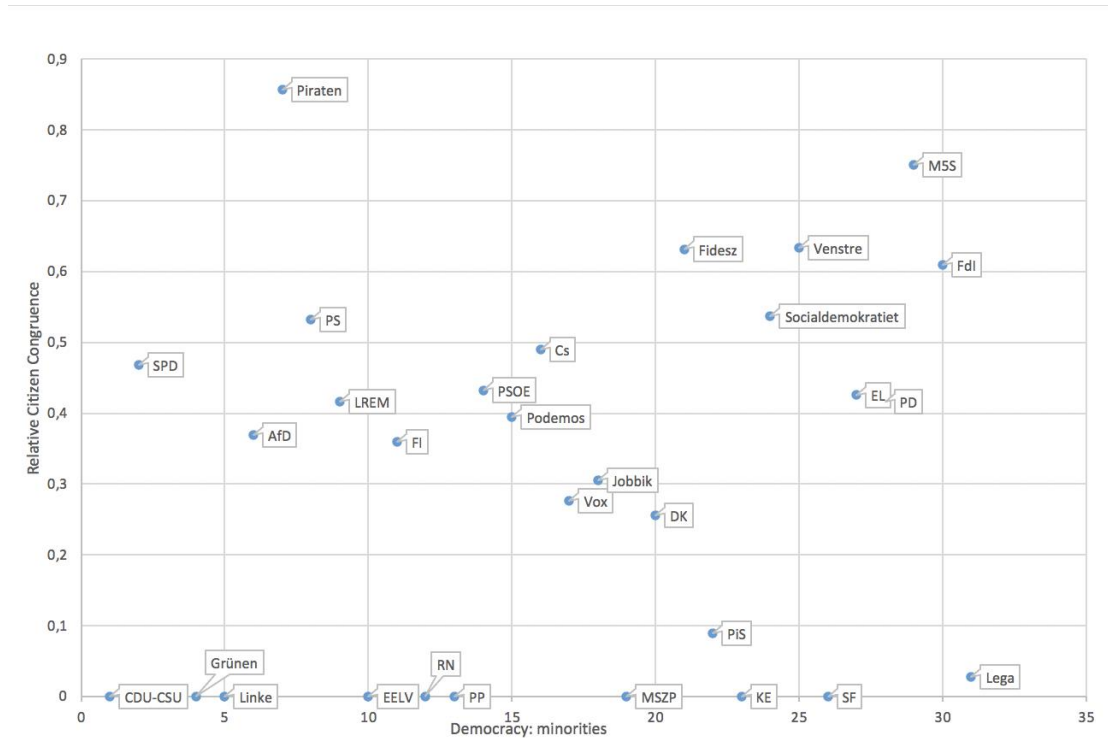


Figure A6.1.9 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that government should stick to planned measures, even if the majority of citizens oppose it



Figure A6.1.10 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that democratically made decisions must be followed in any case, even if they contradict with our own interests

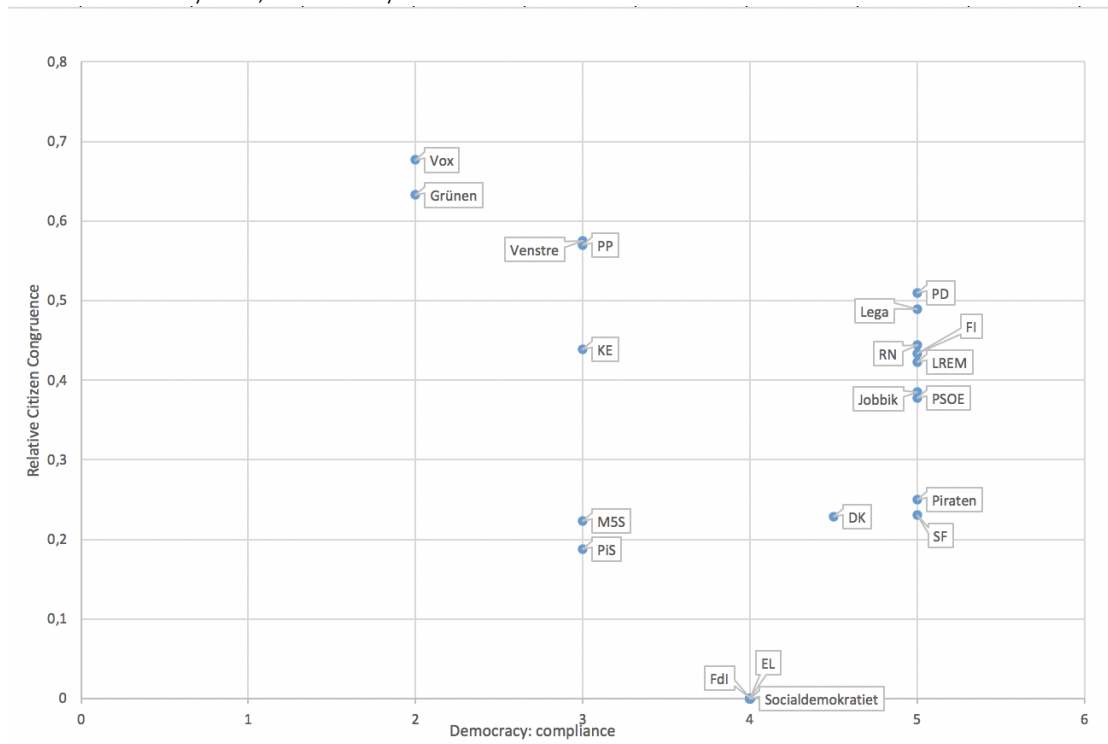




Figure A6.1.11 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the protection of environment

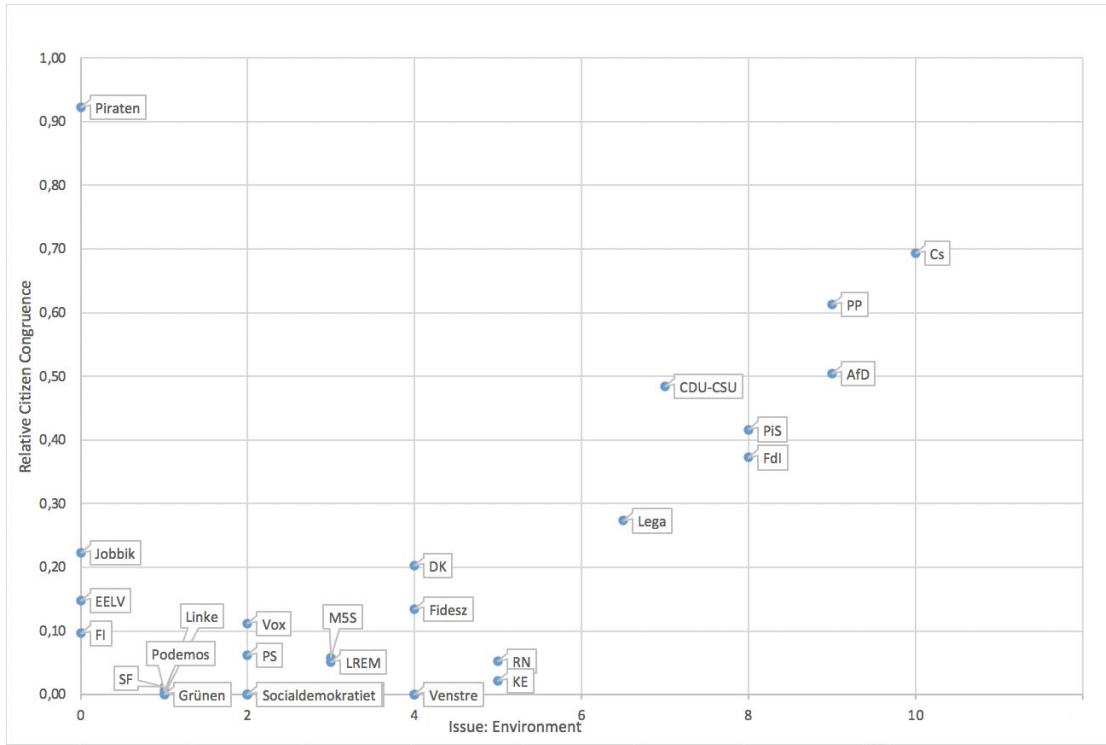


Figure A6.1.12 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the same sex marriage

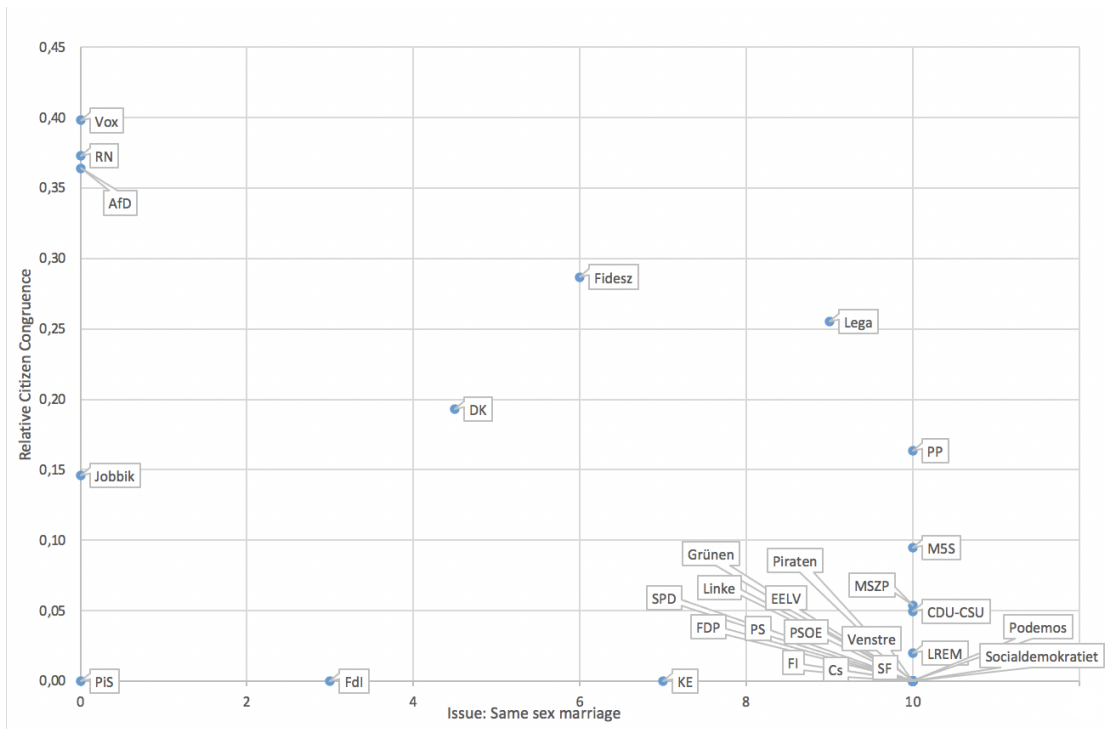


Figure A6.1.13 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the possibility for migrants to keep their own customs in their immigration country

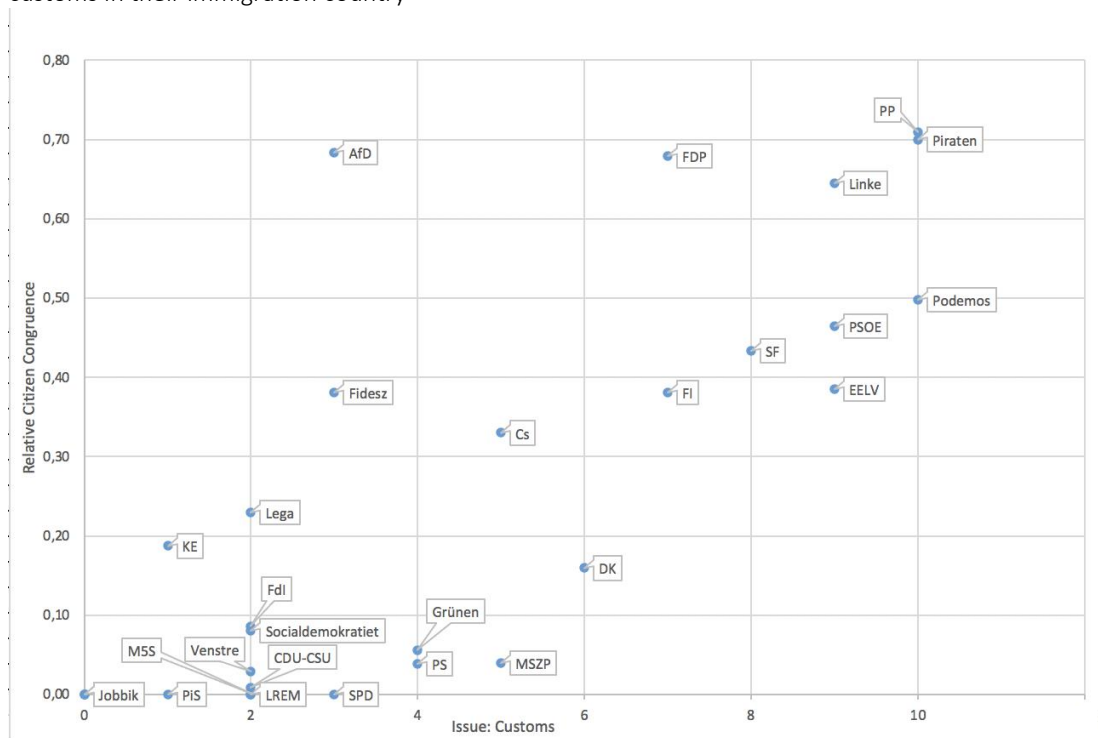


Figure A6.1.14 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that immigrants take away jobs from their country of immigration

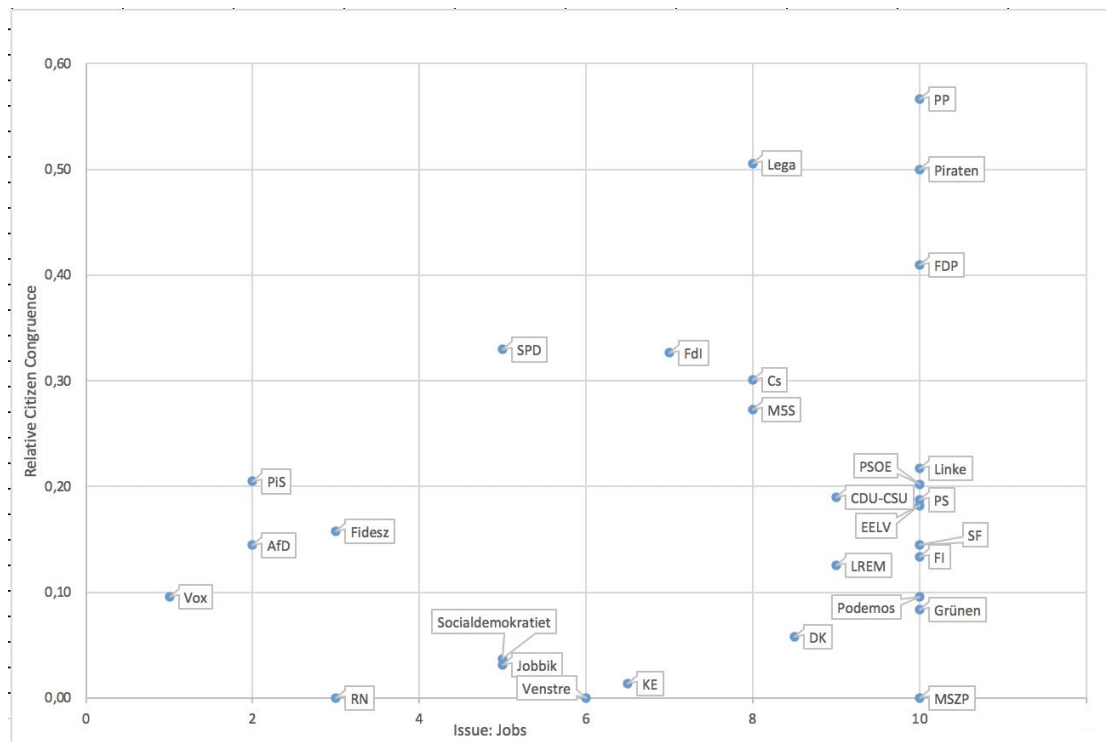


Figure A6.1.15 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the redistribution of wealth

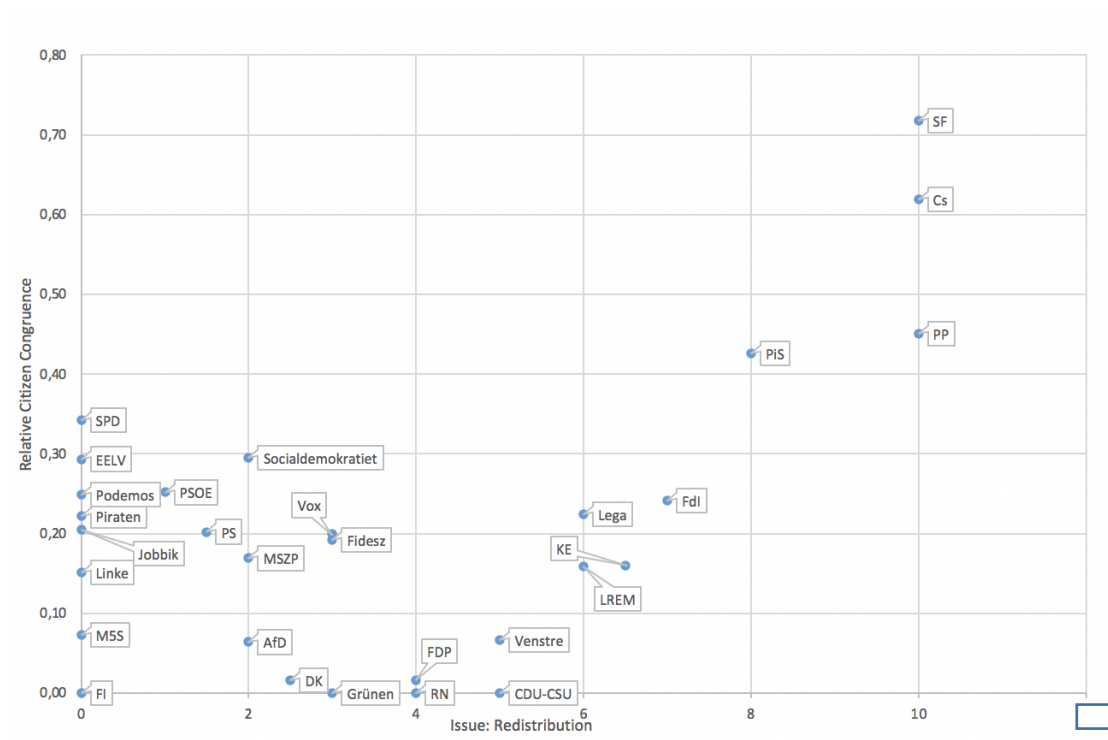


Figure A6.1.16 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of differences in standards of living in a fair society

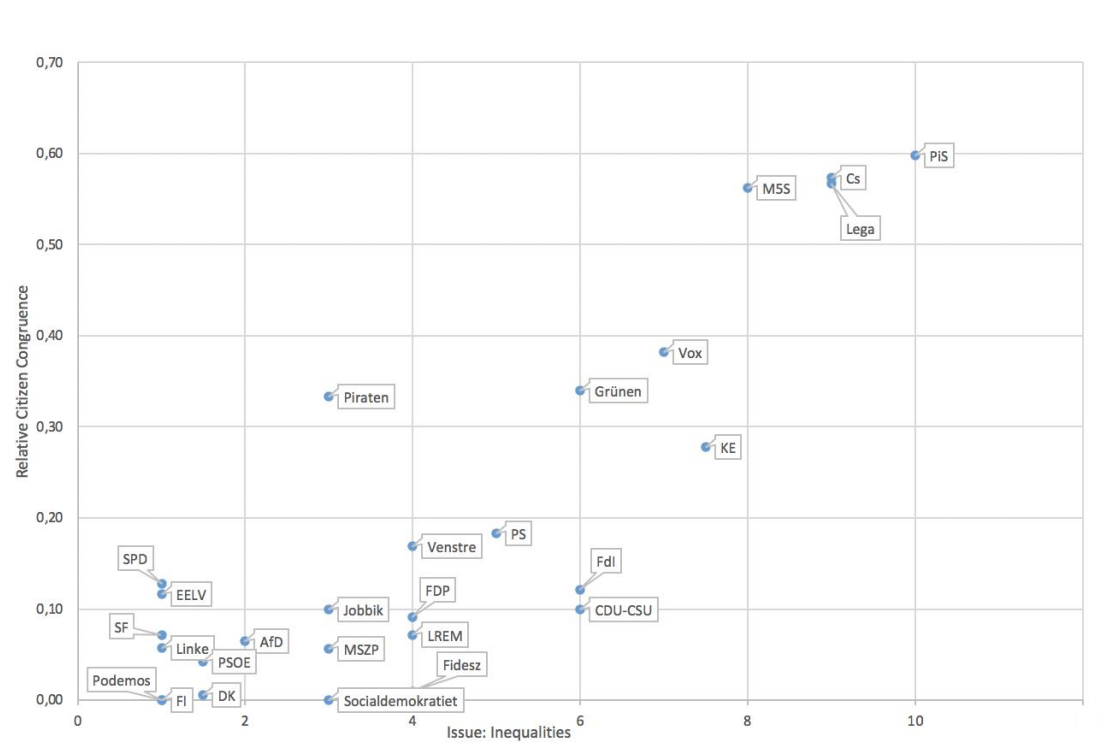


Figure A6.1.17 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of raising taxes to increase public services

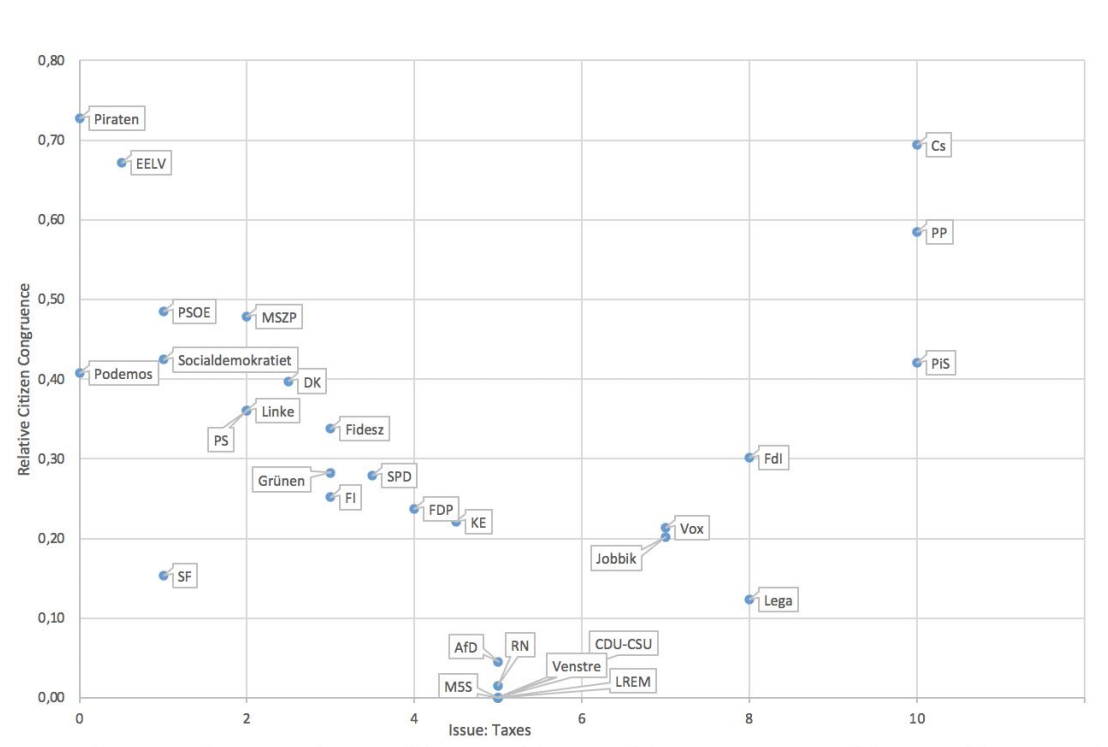


Figure A6.1.18 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the national debt

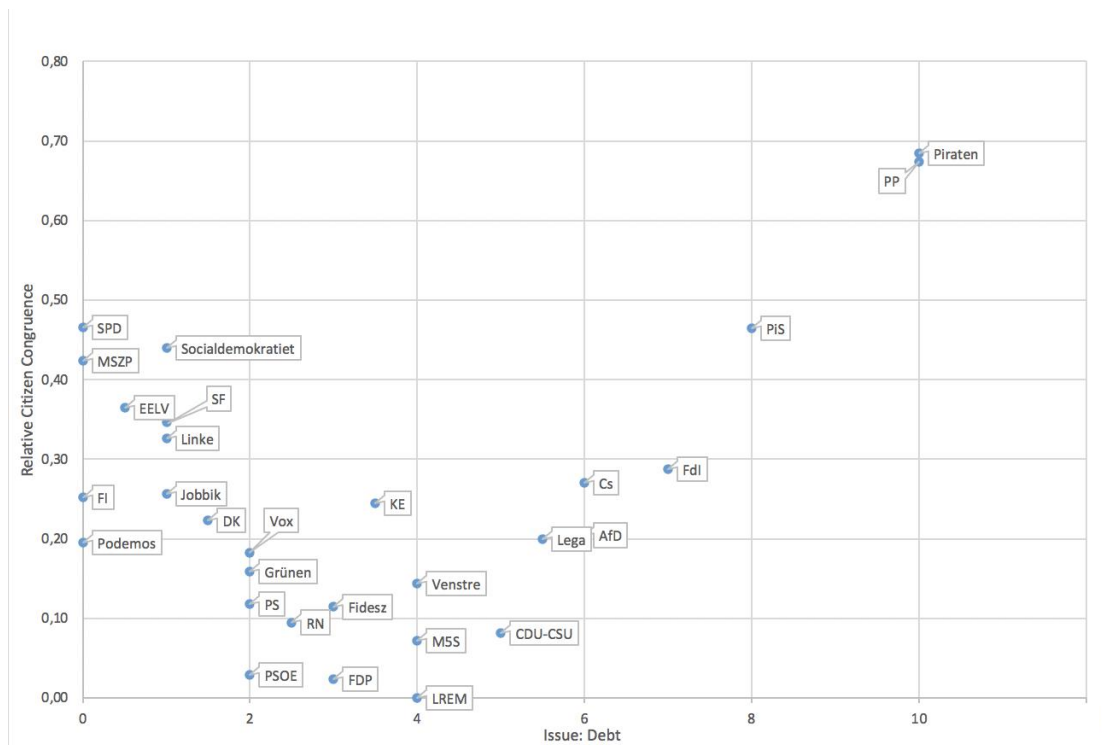


Figure A6.1.19 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the restriction (or not) of the access to welfare benefits for immigrants

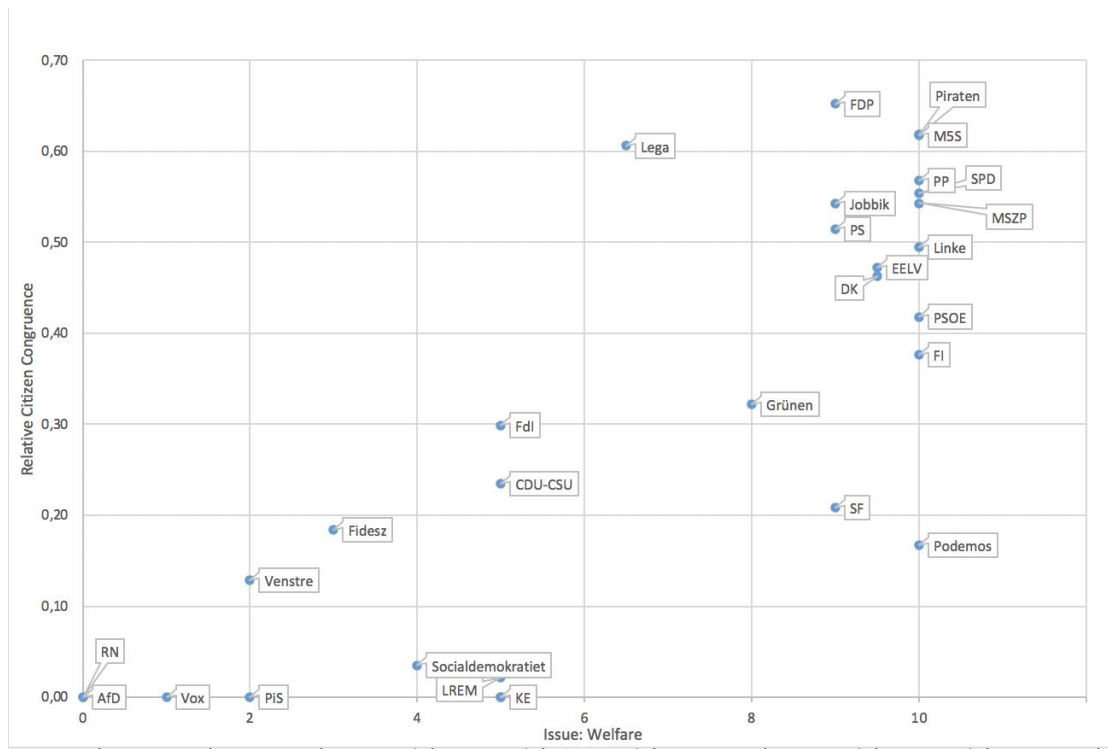


Figure A6.1.20 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of freedom in EU

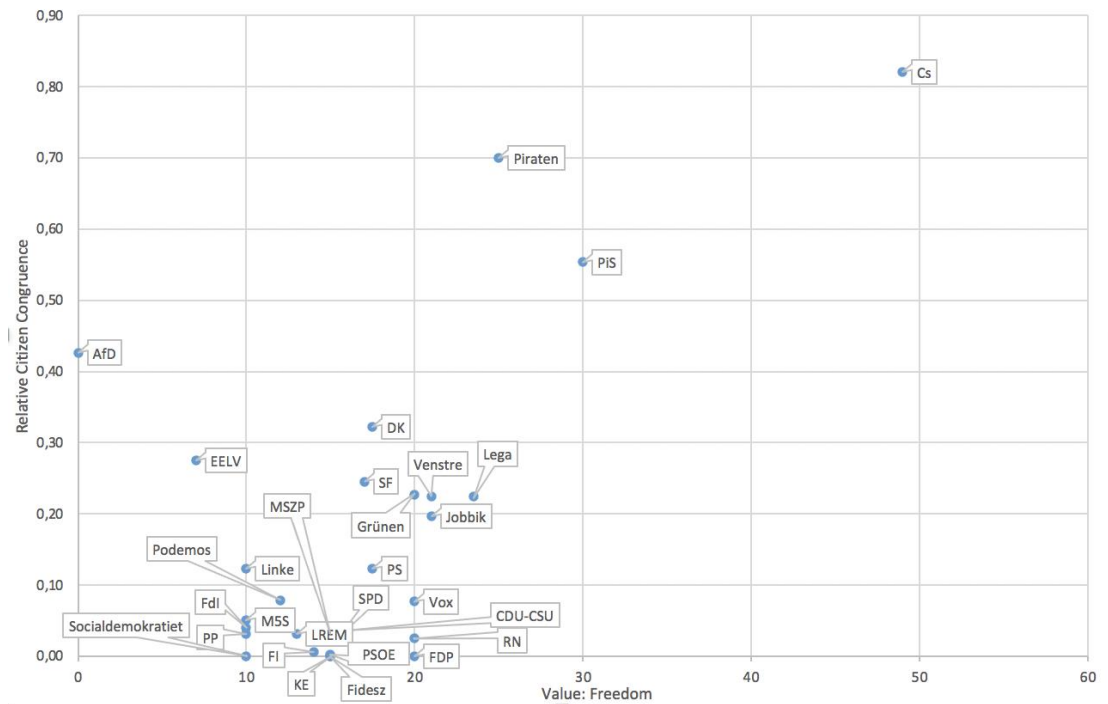


Figure A6.1.21 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of democracy in EU

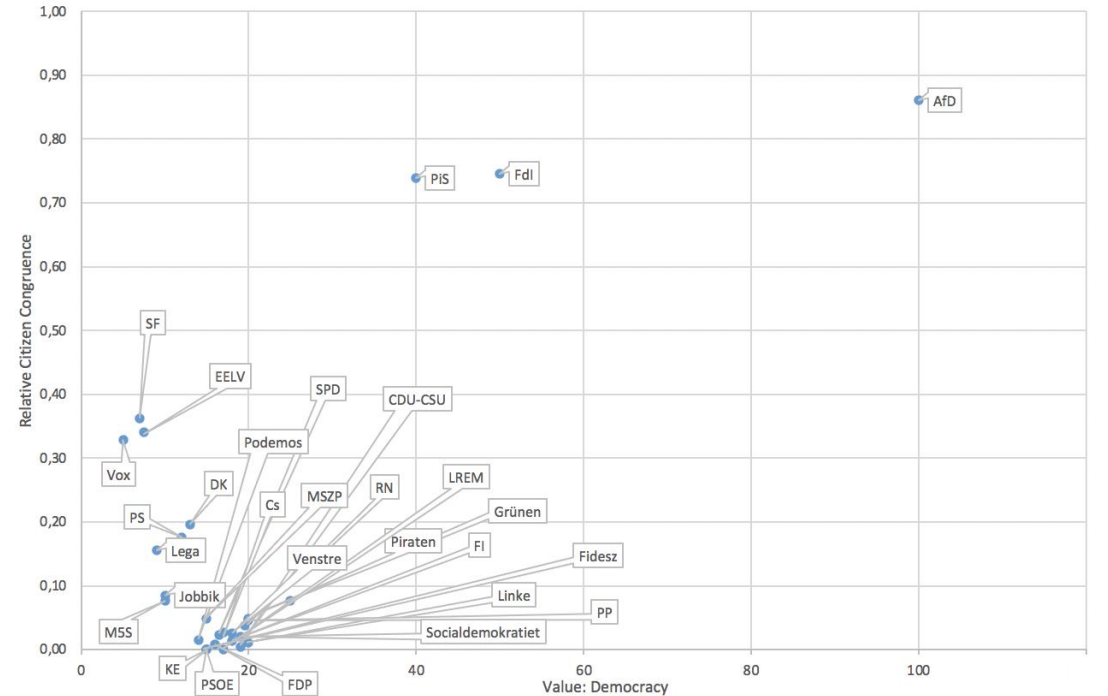


Figure A6.1.22 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of equality in EU

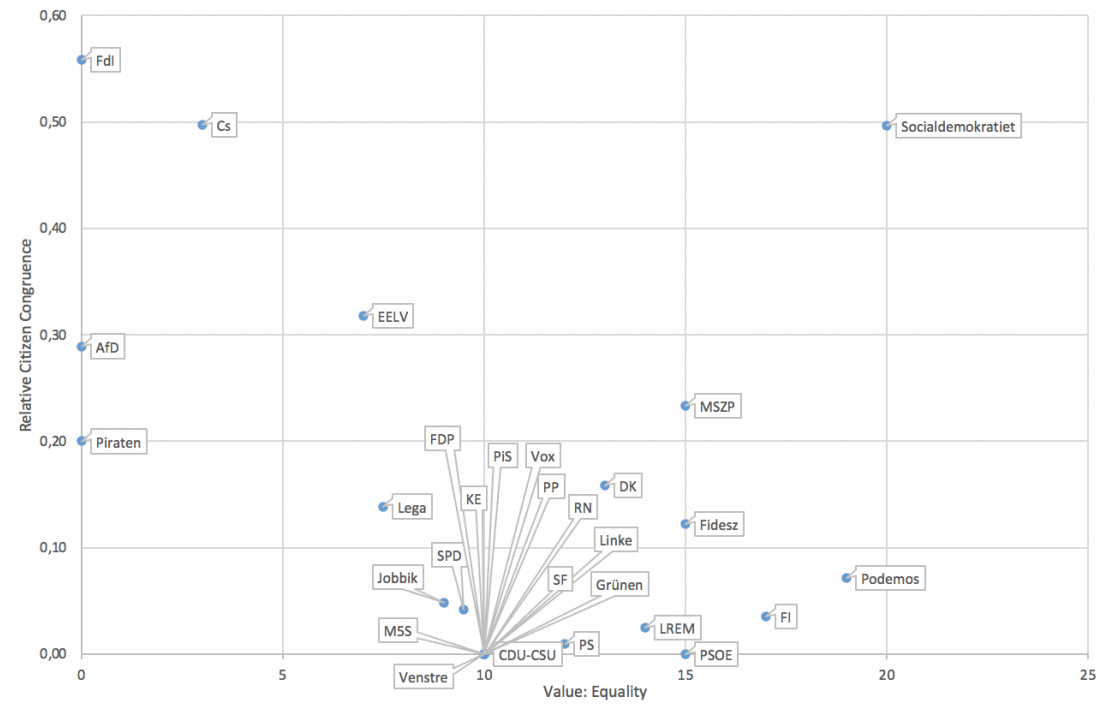


Figure A6.1.23 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the rule of law in EU

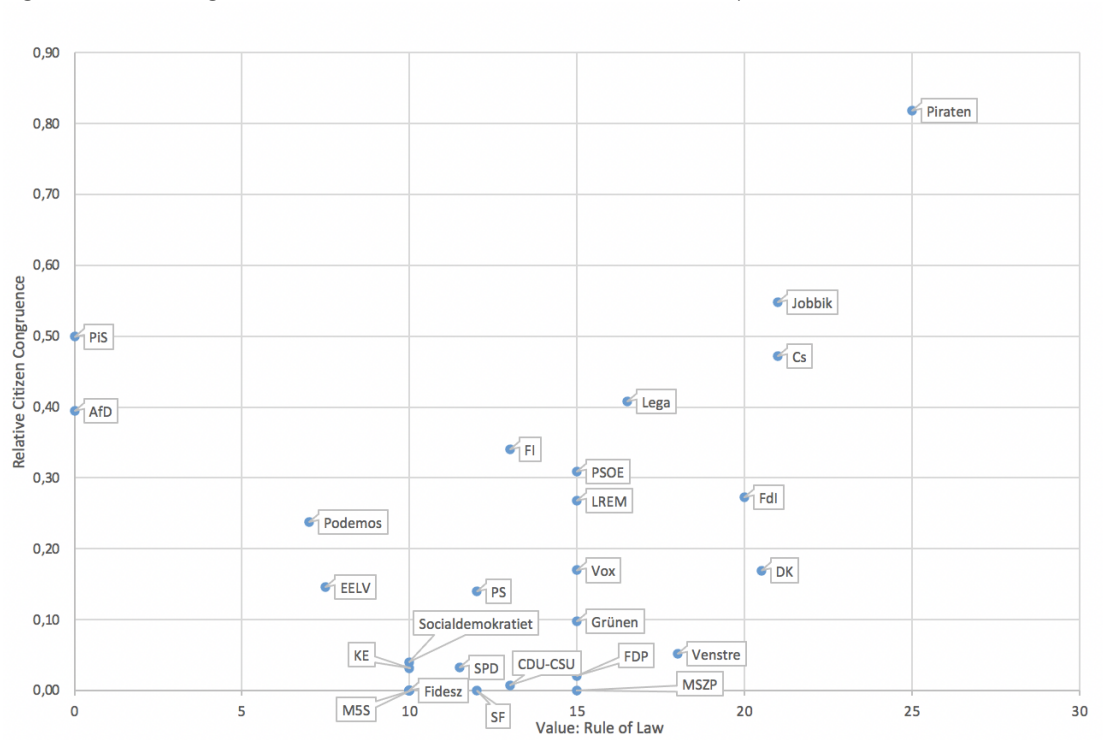


Figure A6.1.24 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of human rights in EU

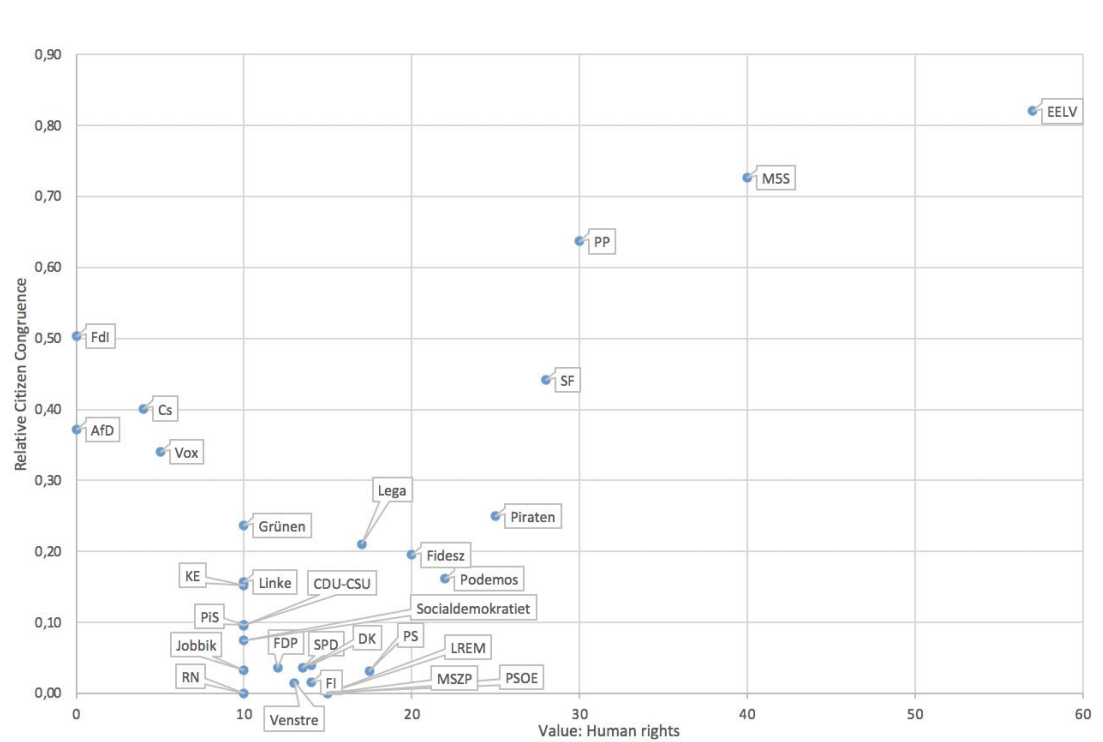


Figure A6.1.25 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of justice in EU

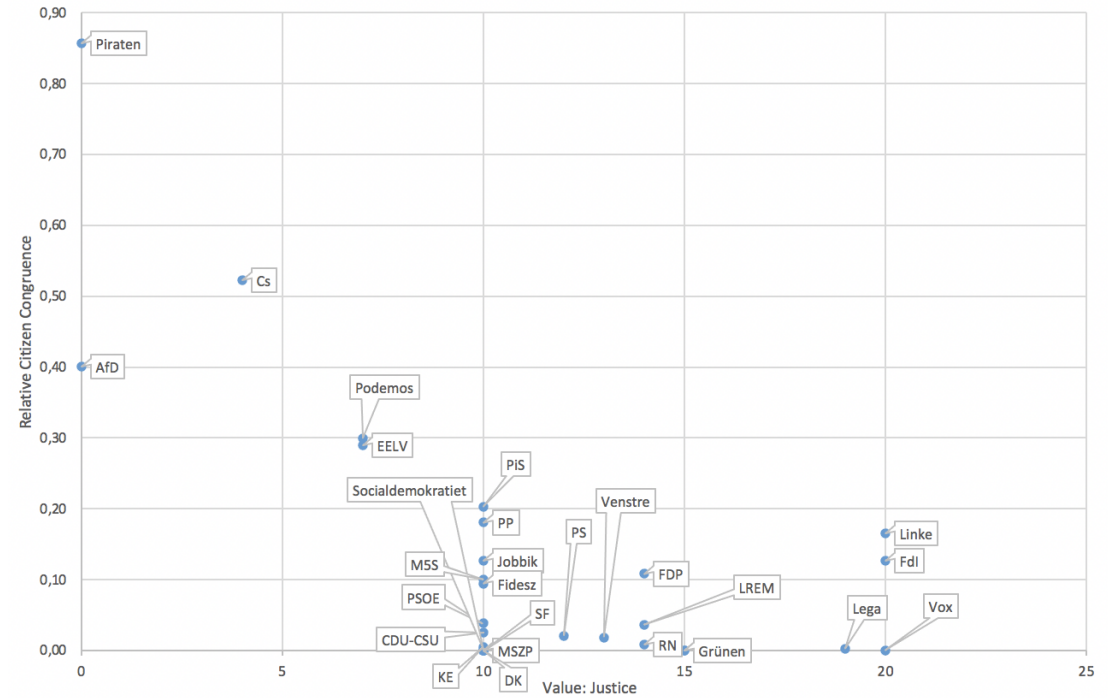


Figure A6.1.26 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of solidarity in EU

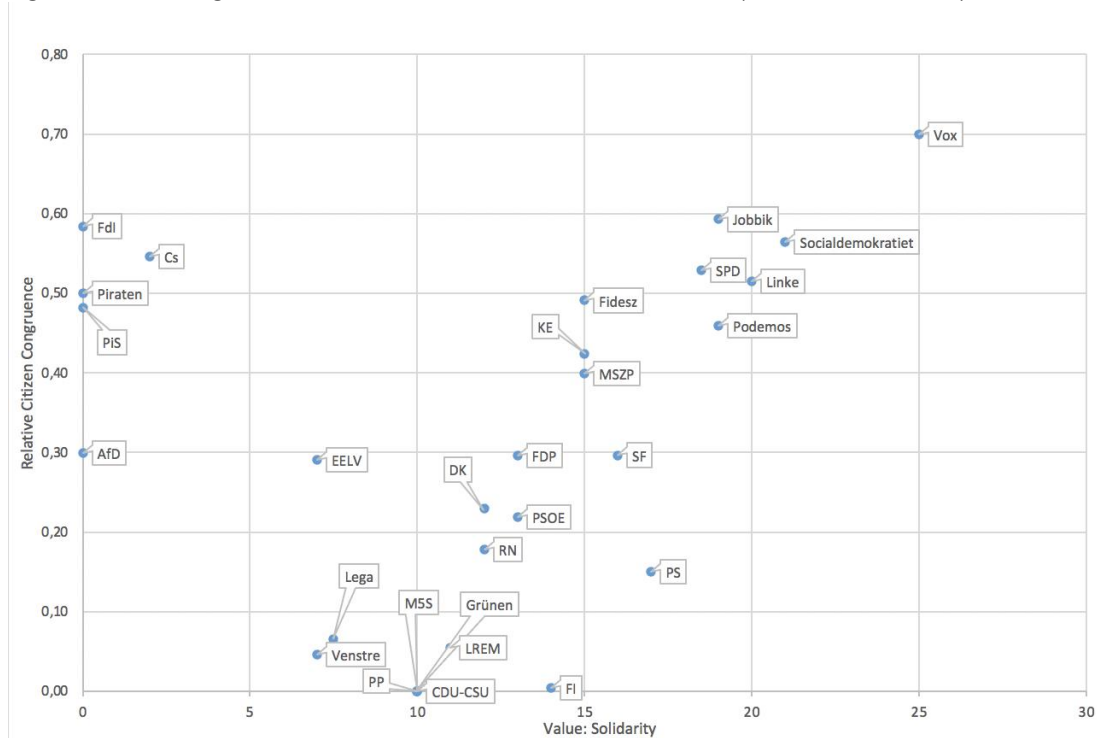




Figure A6.1.27 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of a European army for common defense in EU

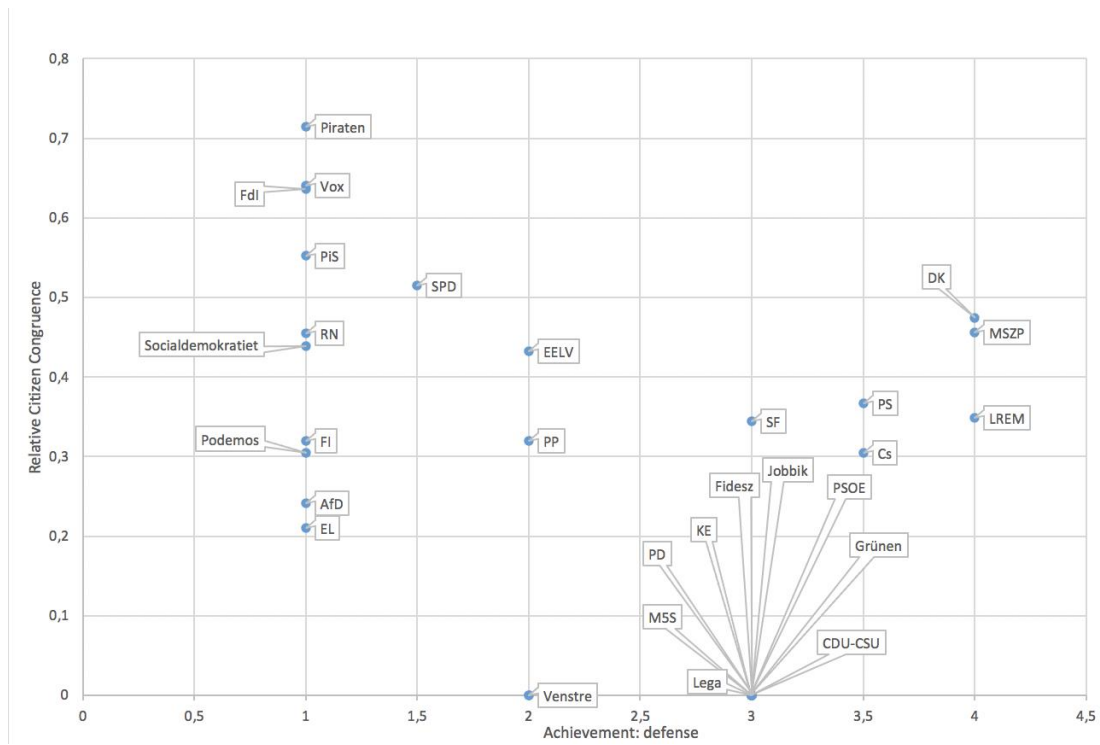


Figure A6.1.28 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the achievement of a common tax system in EU

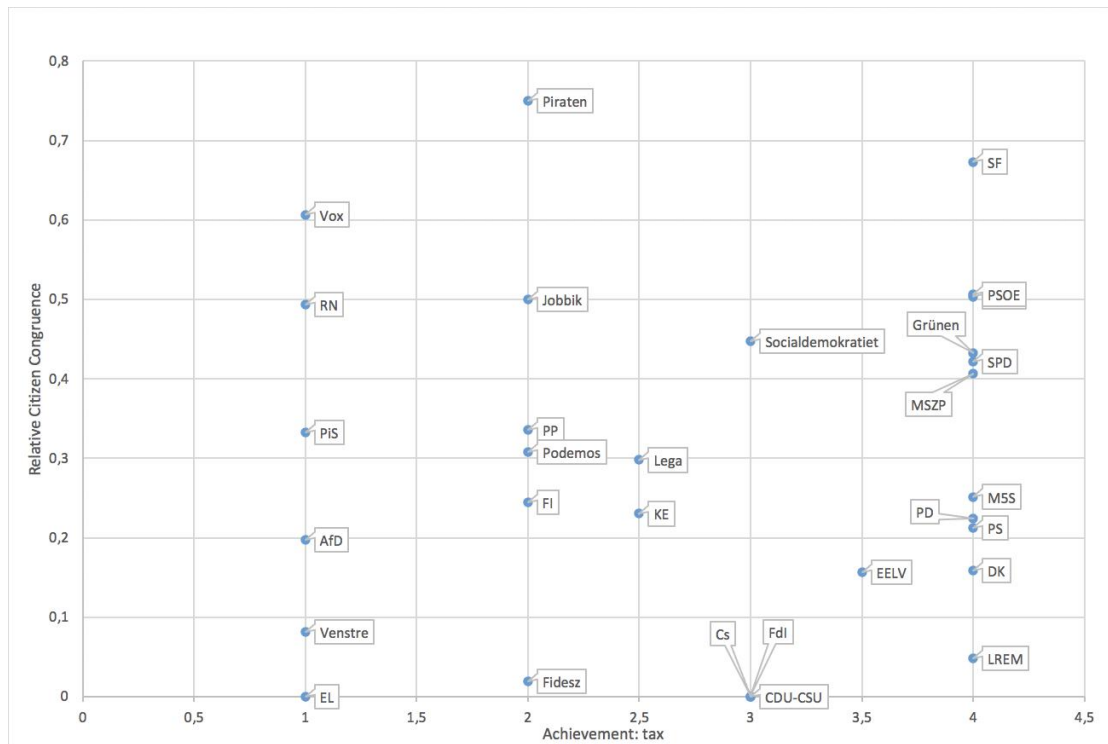


Figure A6.1.29 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the abolishment of the common currency, the Euro

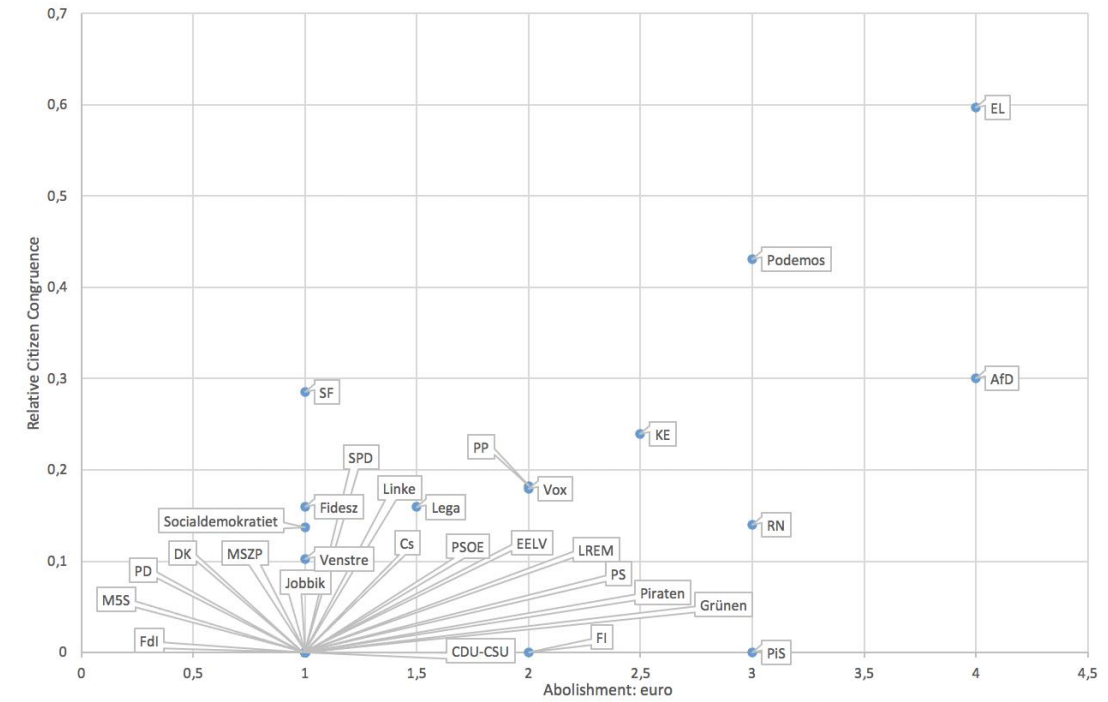
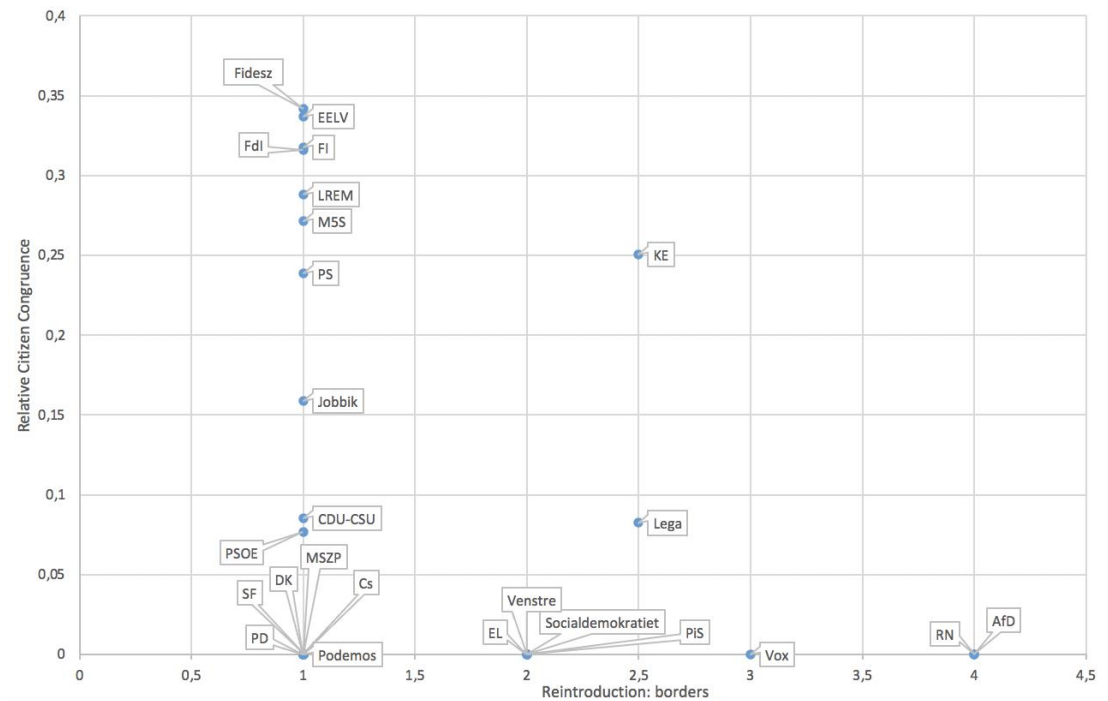


Figure A6.1.30 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the reintroduction of border controls between EU member states



2. Median citizen congruence

Figure A6.2.1 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the left-right positioning

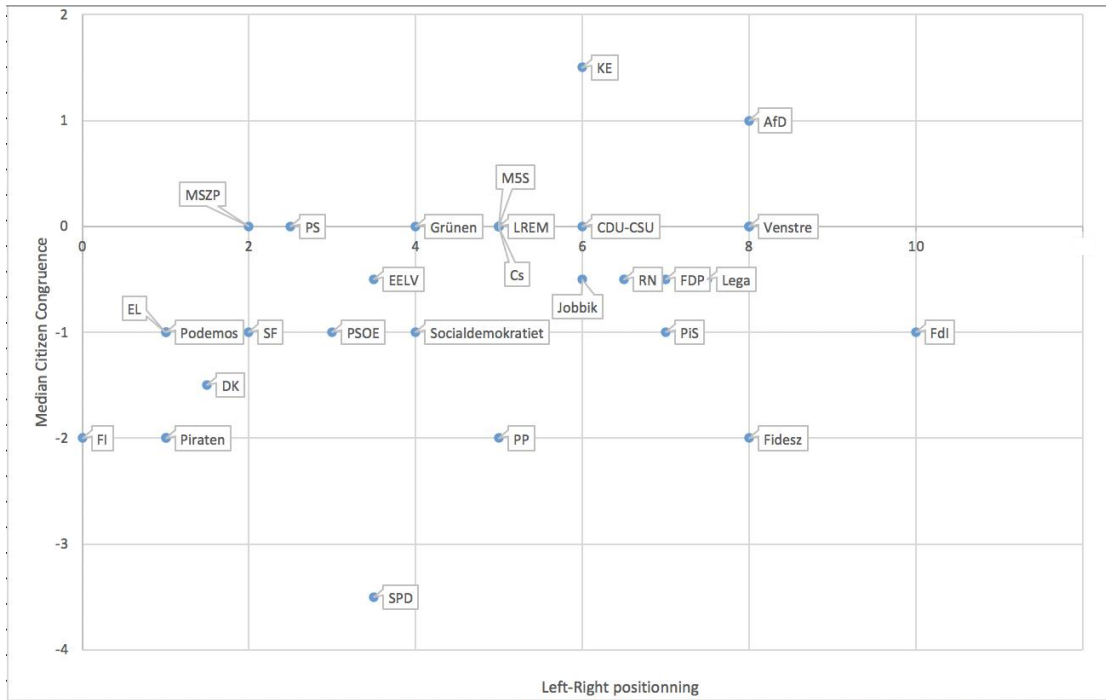


Figure A6.2.2 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the EU Integration

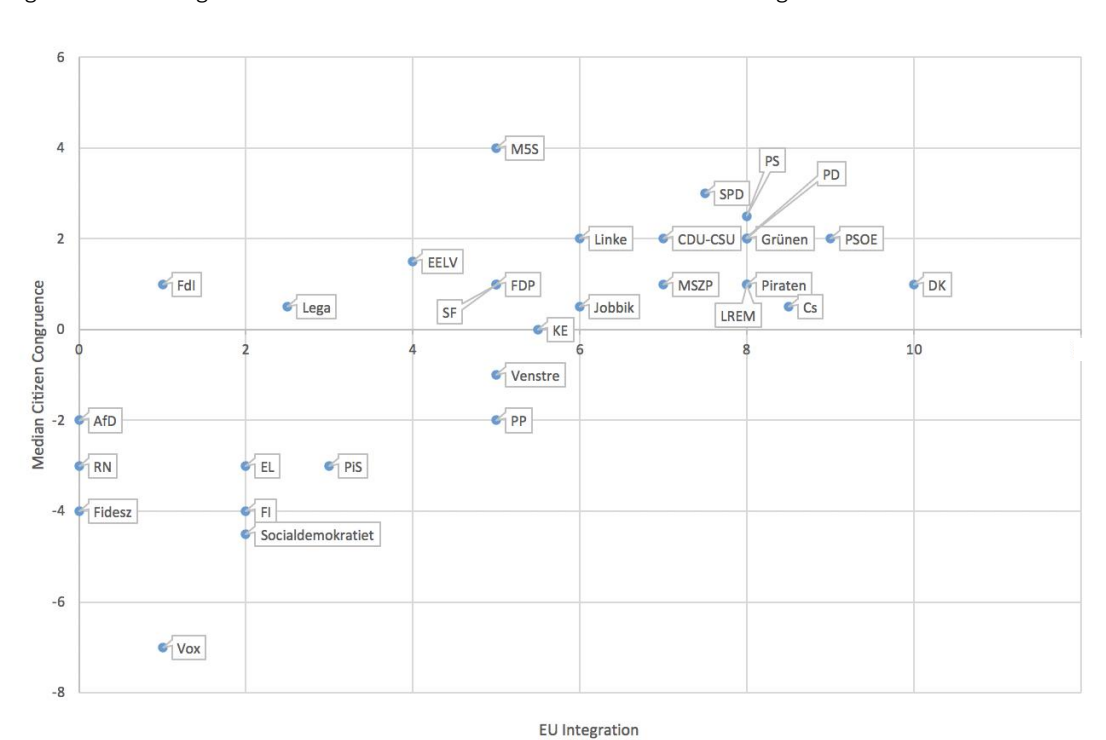


Figure A6.2.3 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the satisfaction with national democracy

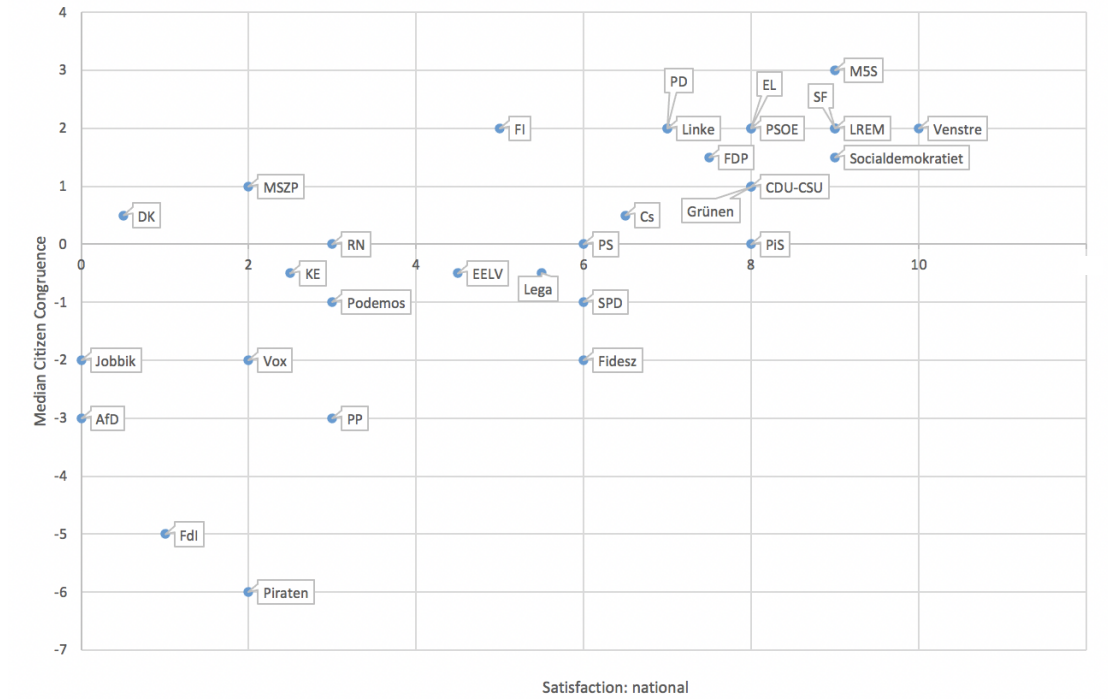


Figure A6.2.4 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the satisfaction with EU democracy

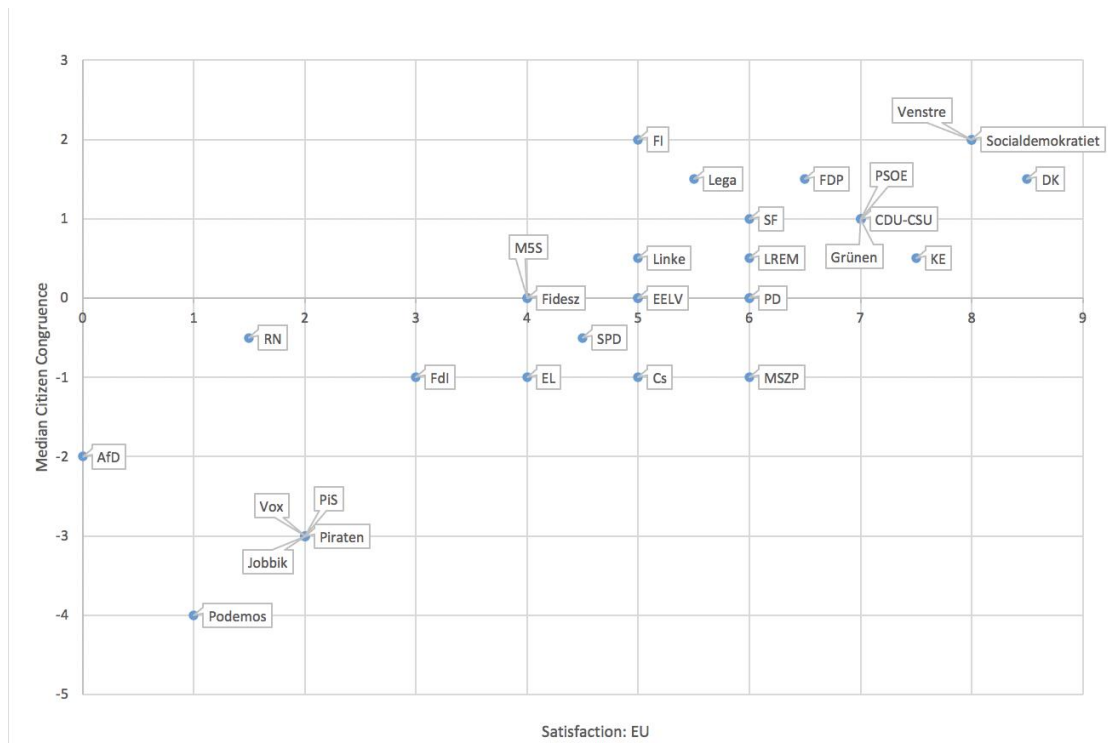


Figure A6.2.5 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the right of media to criticize government

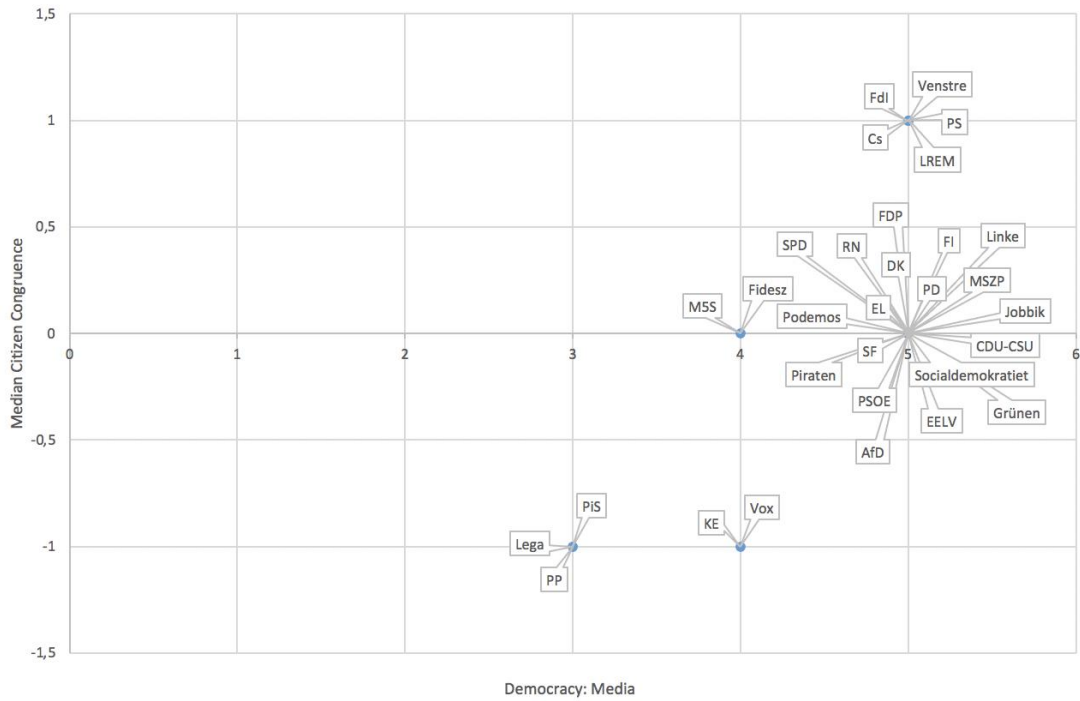


Figure A6.2.6 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the capacity of courts to stop government acting beyond its authority

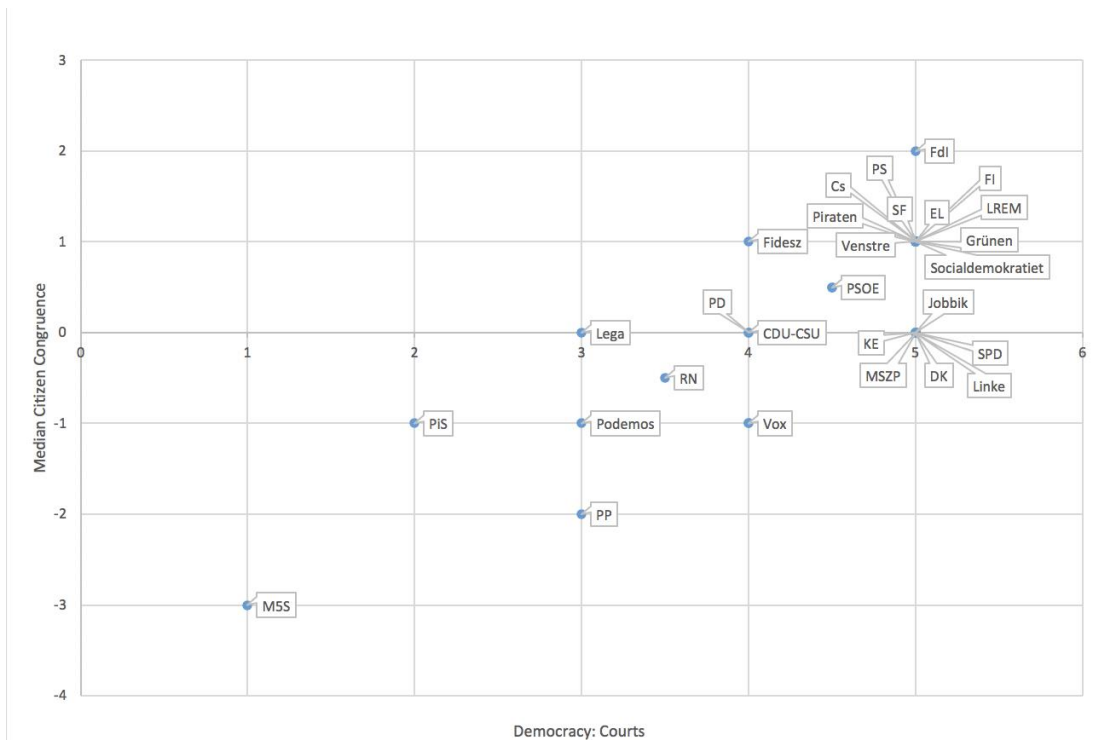


Figure A6.2.7 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that it would be better if important political decisions were made by independent experts and not by elected politicians

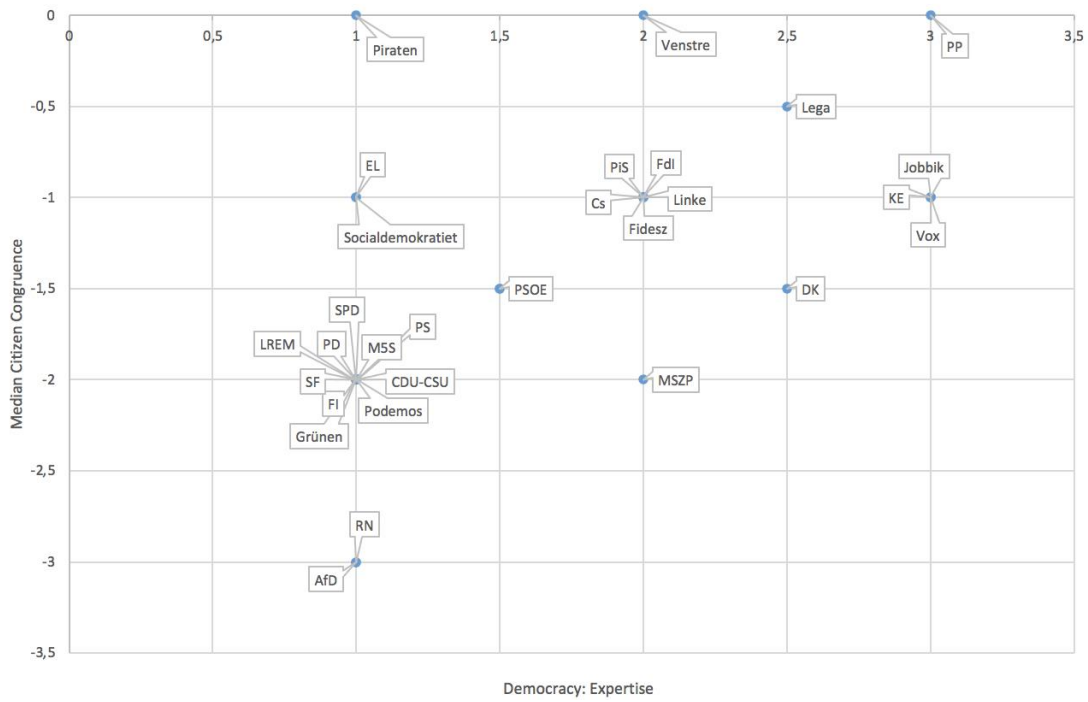


Figure A6.2.8 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the protection of minority rights against majority decision

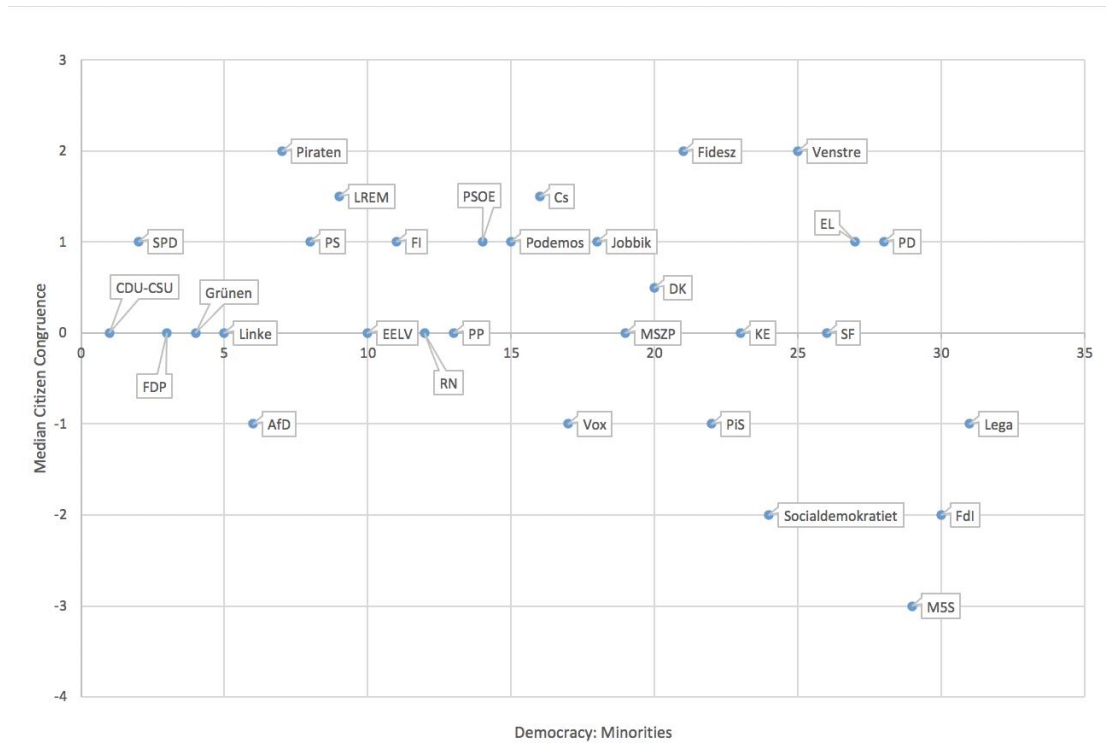


Figure A6.2.9 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that government should stick to planned measures, even if the majority of citizens oppose it

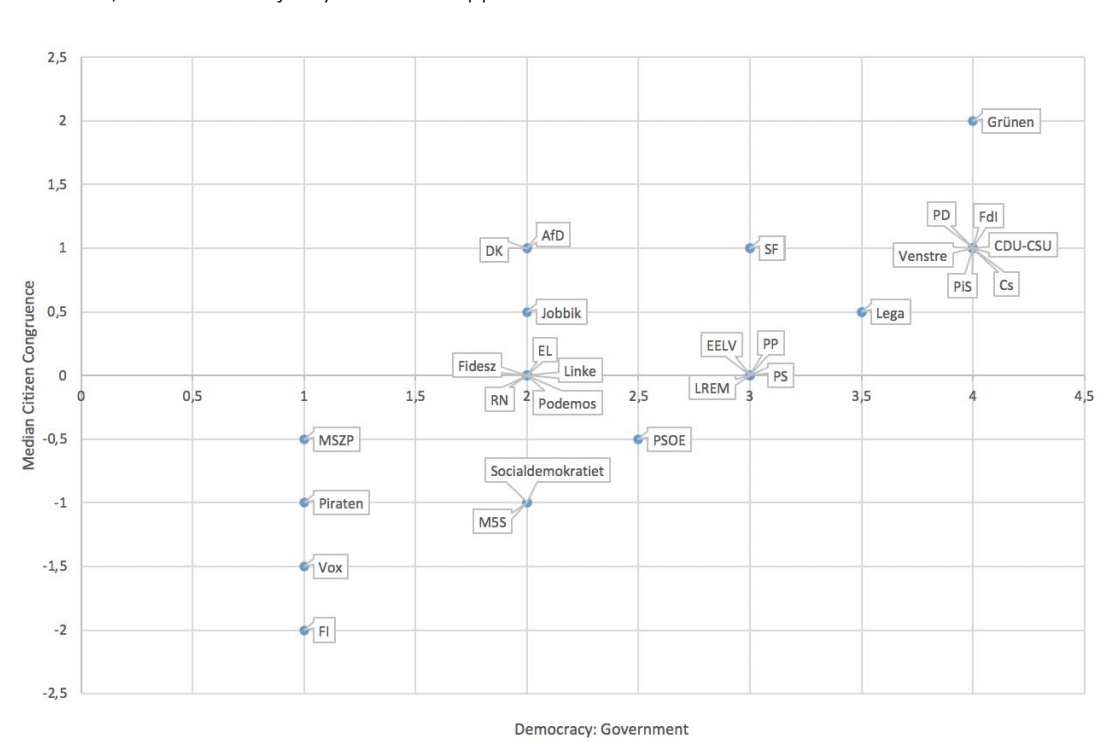


Figure A6.2.10 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that democratically made decisions must be followed in any case, even if they contradict with our own interests

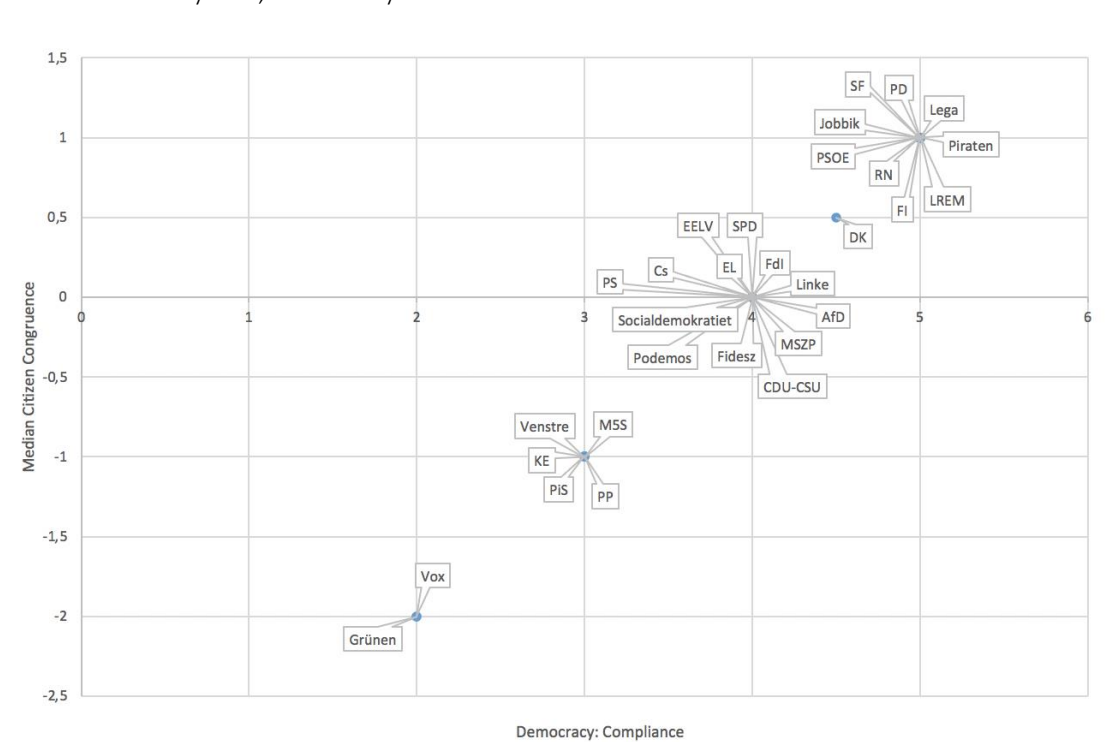


Figure A6.2.11 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the protection of environment

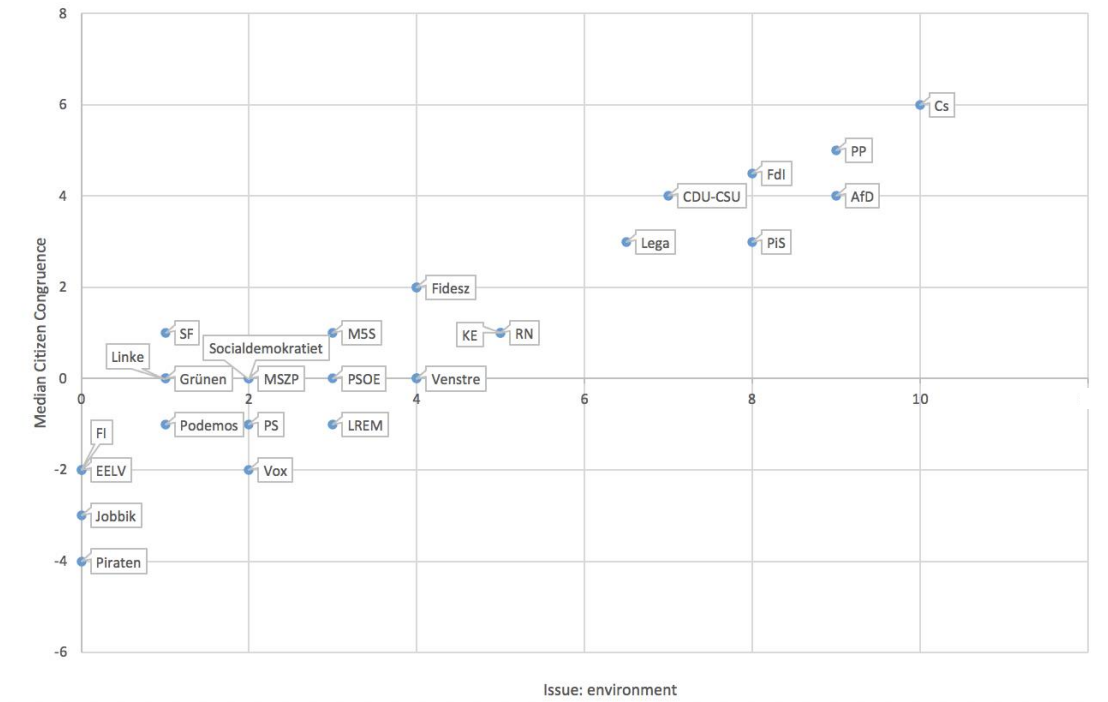


Figure A6.2.12 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the same sex marriage

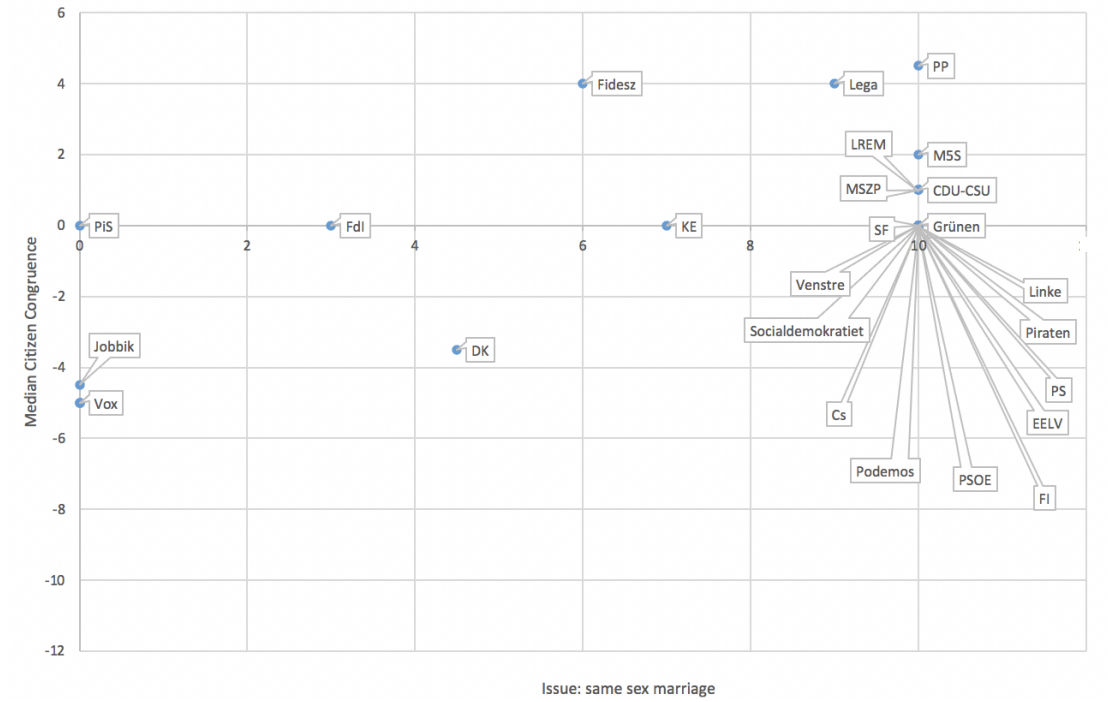




Figure A6.2.13 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the possibility for migrants to keep their own customs in their immigration country

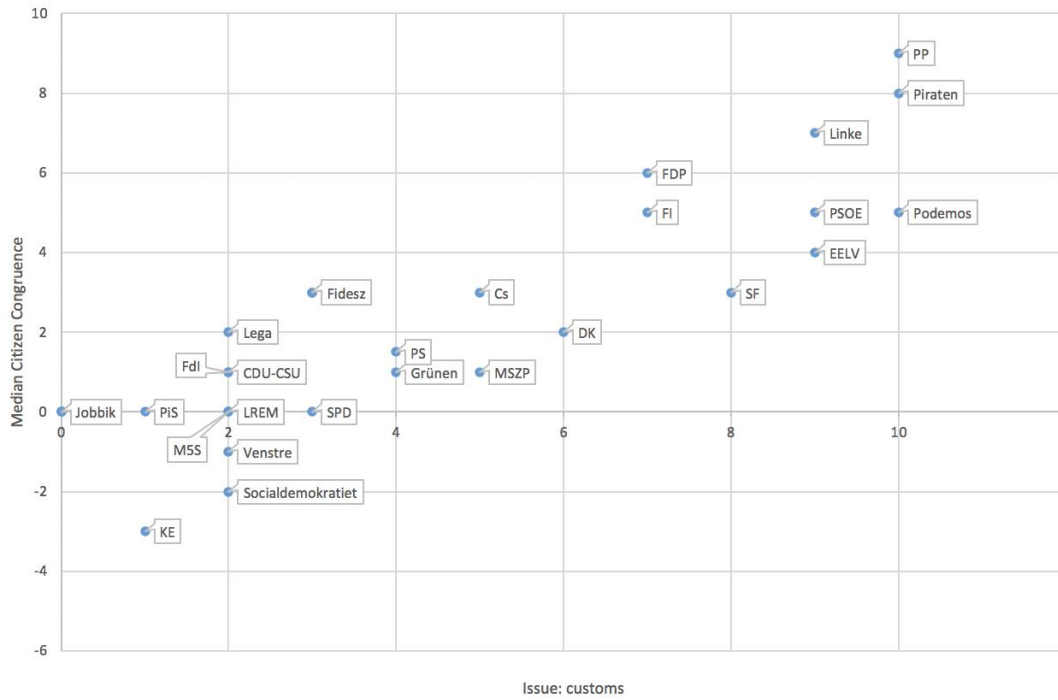


Figure A6.2.14 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the idea that immigrants take away jobs from their country of immigration

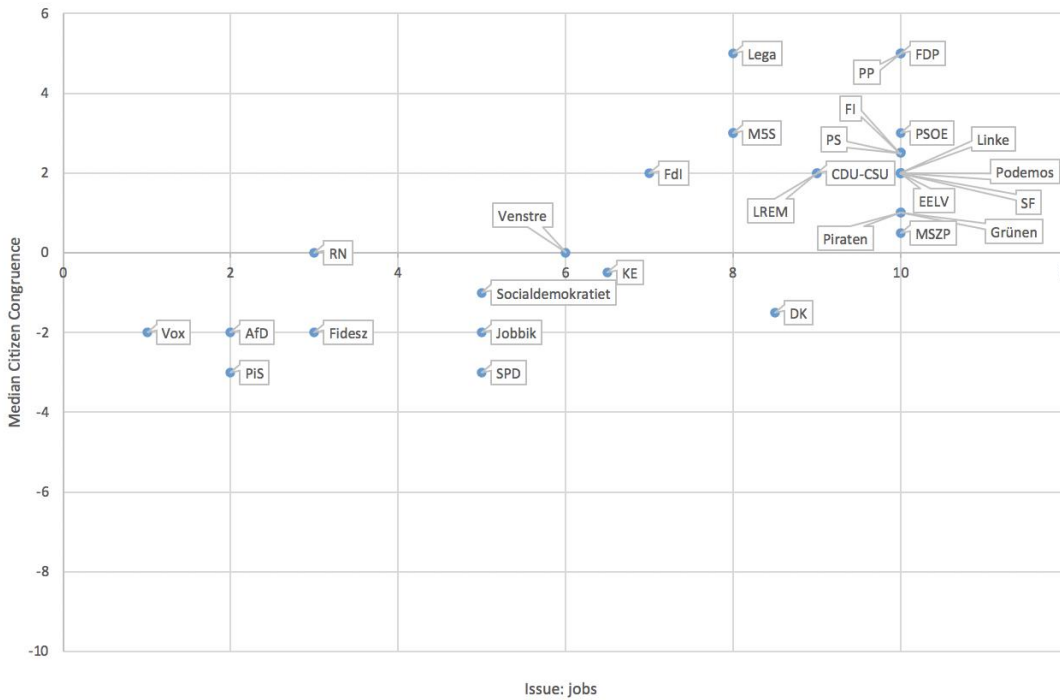


Figure A6.2.15 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the redistribution of wealth

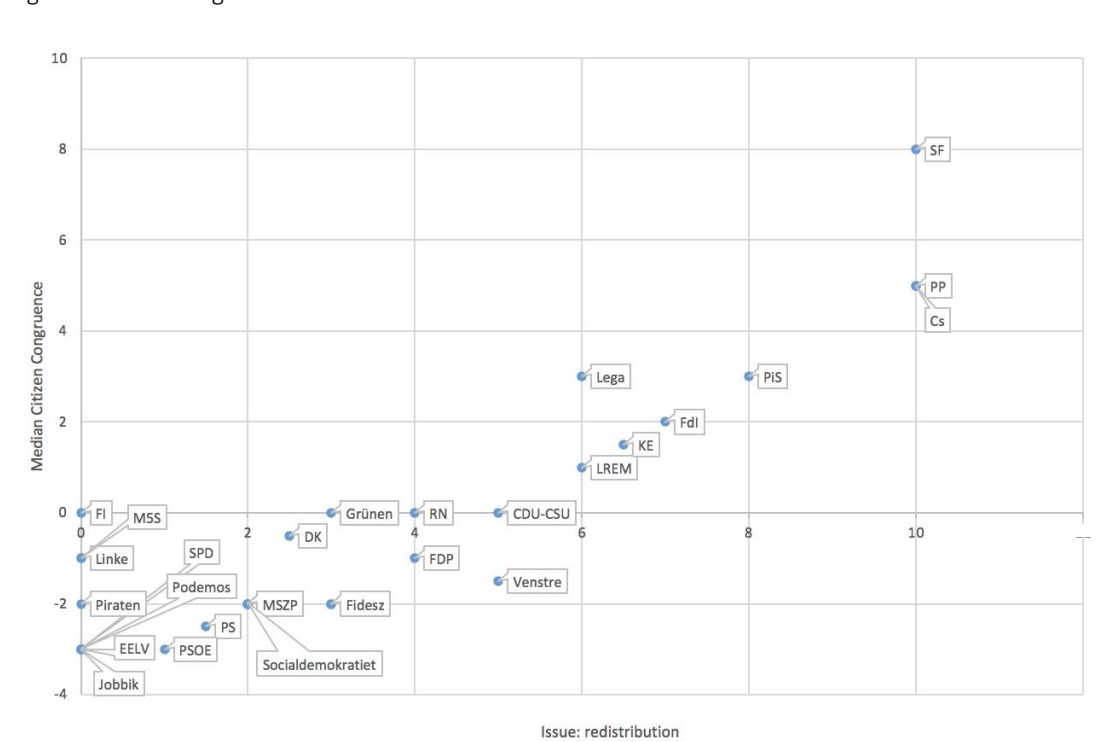


Figure A6.2.16 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of differences in standards of living in a fair society

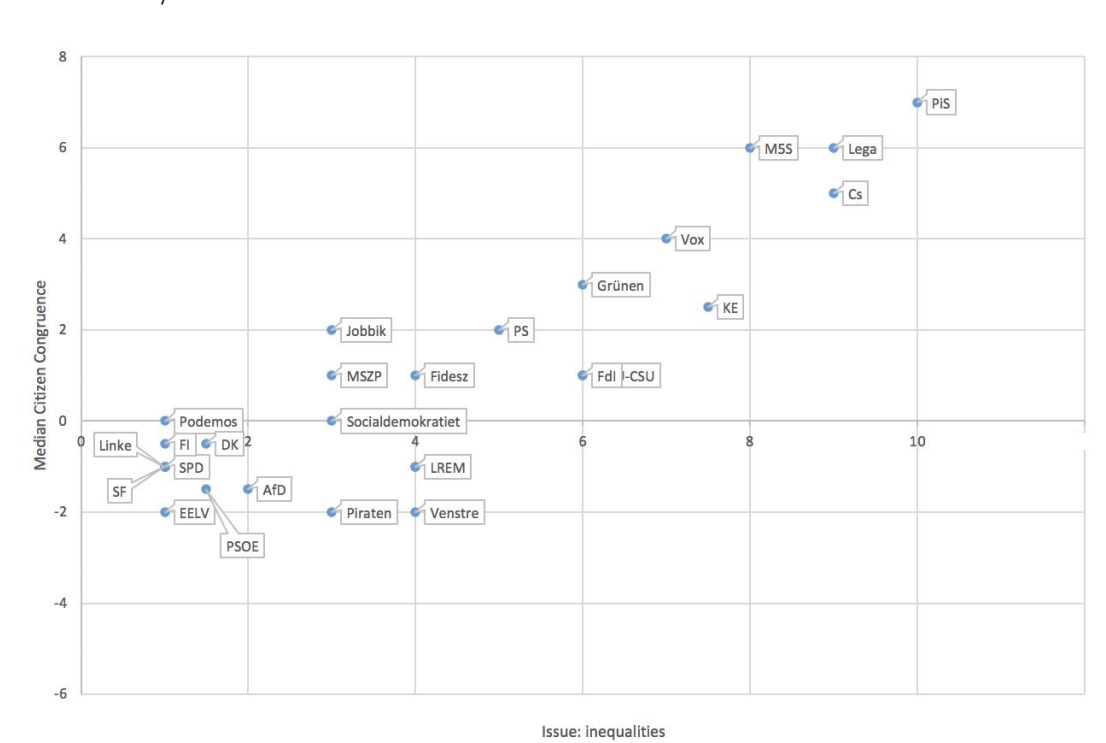


Figure A6.2.17 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of raising taxes to increase public services

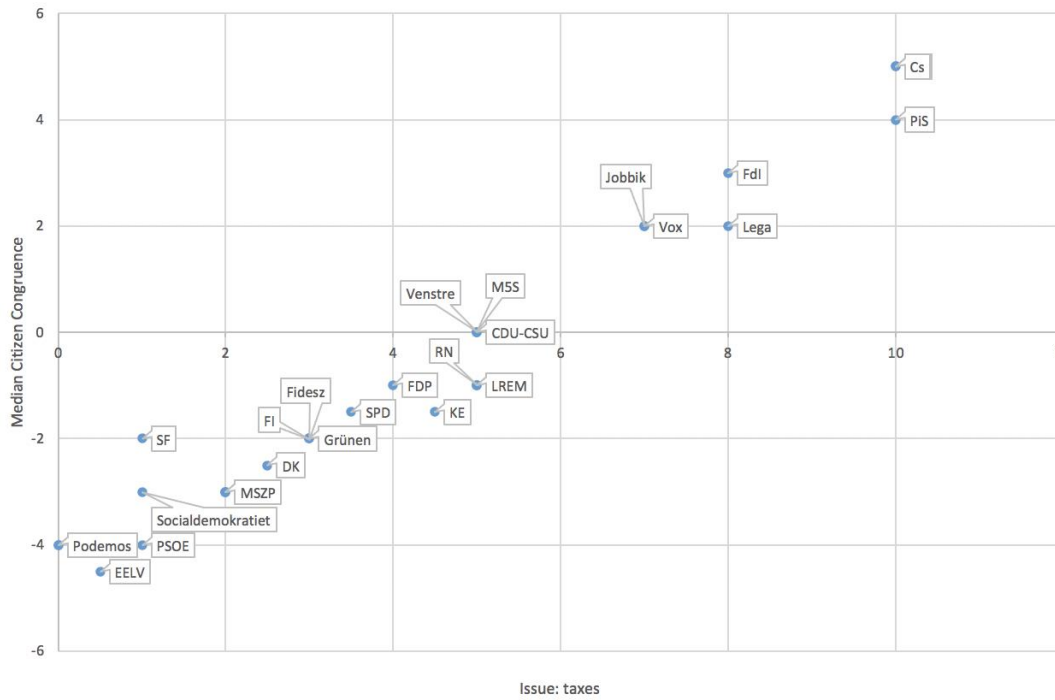


Figure A6.2.18 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the national debt

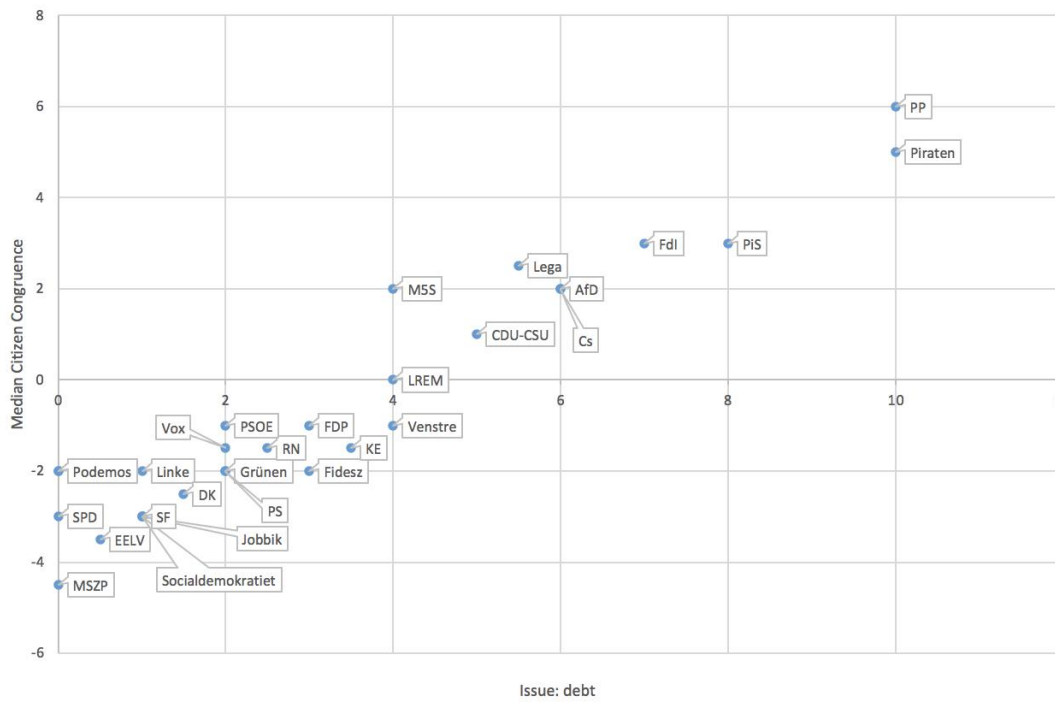




Figure A6.2.21 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of democracy in EU

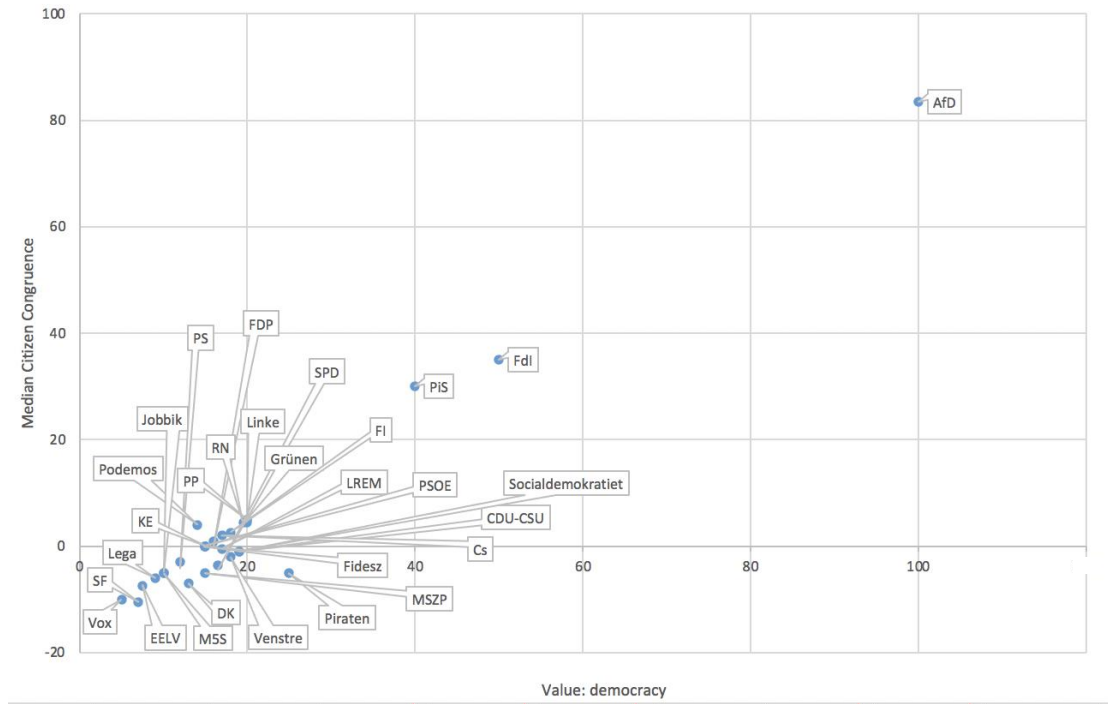


Figure A6.2.22 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of equality in EU



Figure A6.2.23 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the rule of law in EU

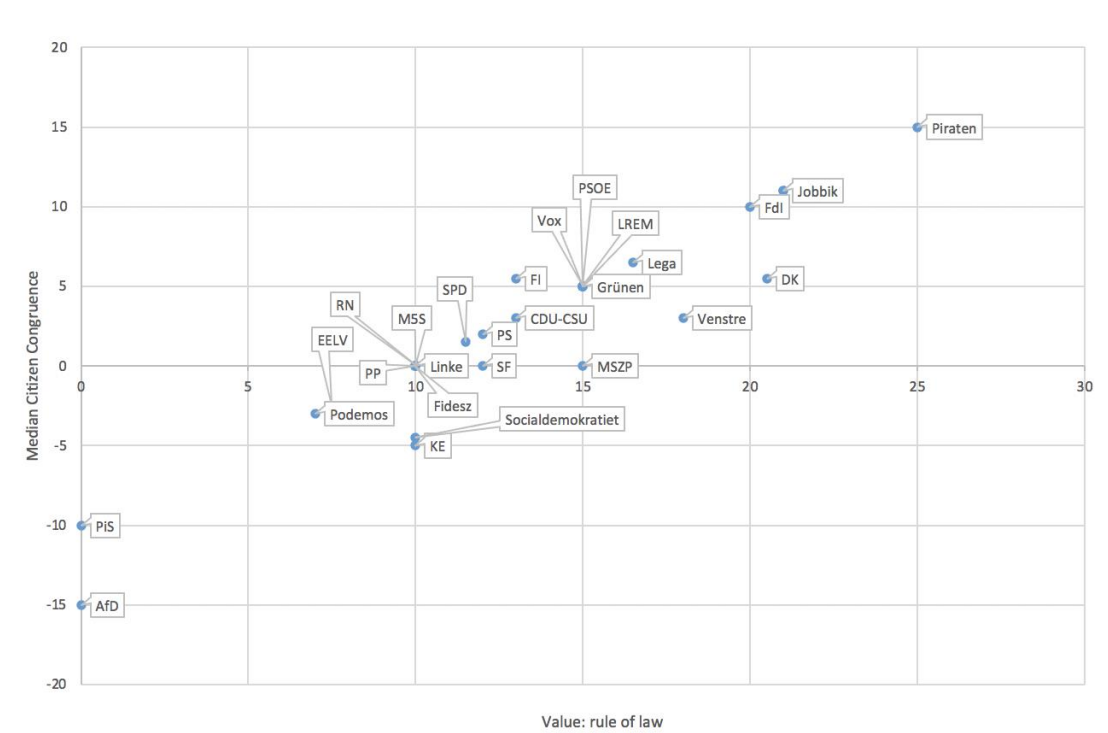


Figure A6.2.24 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of human rights in EU

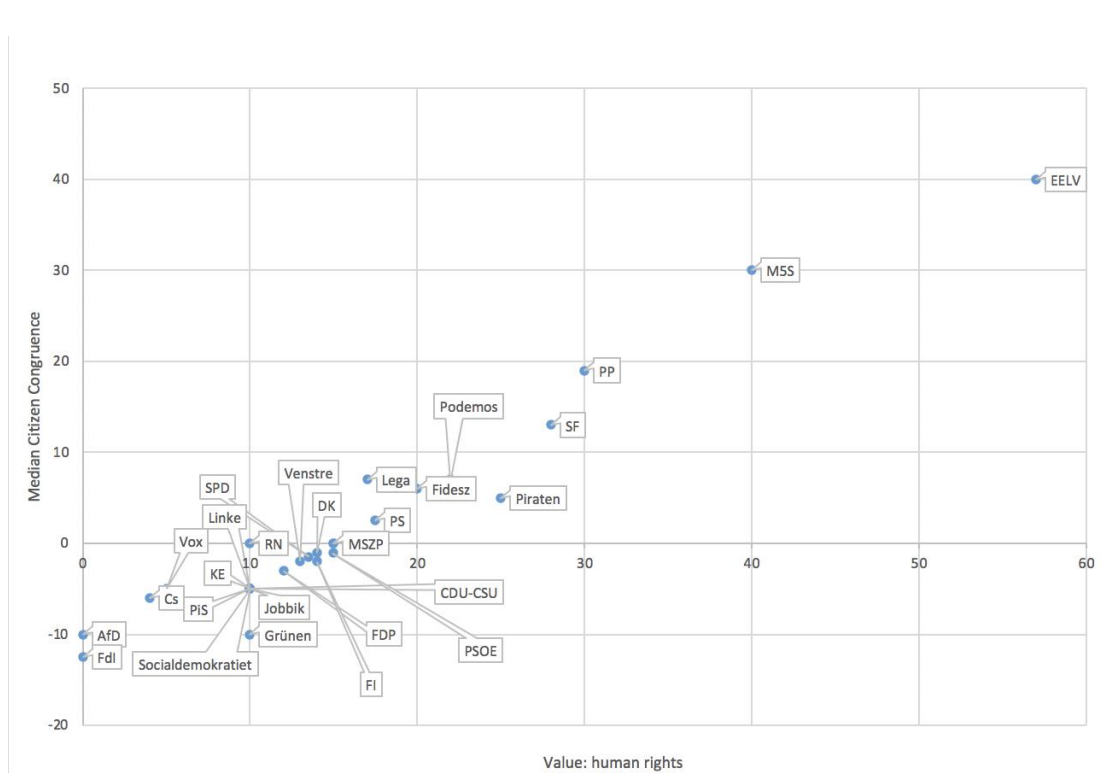


Figure A6.2.25 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of justice in EU

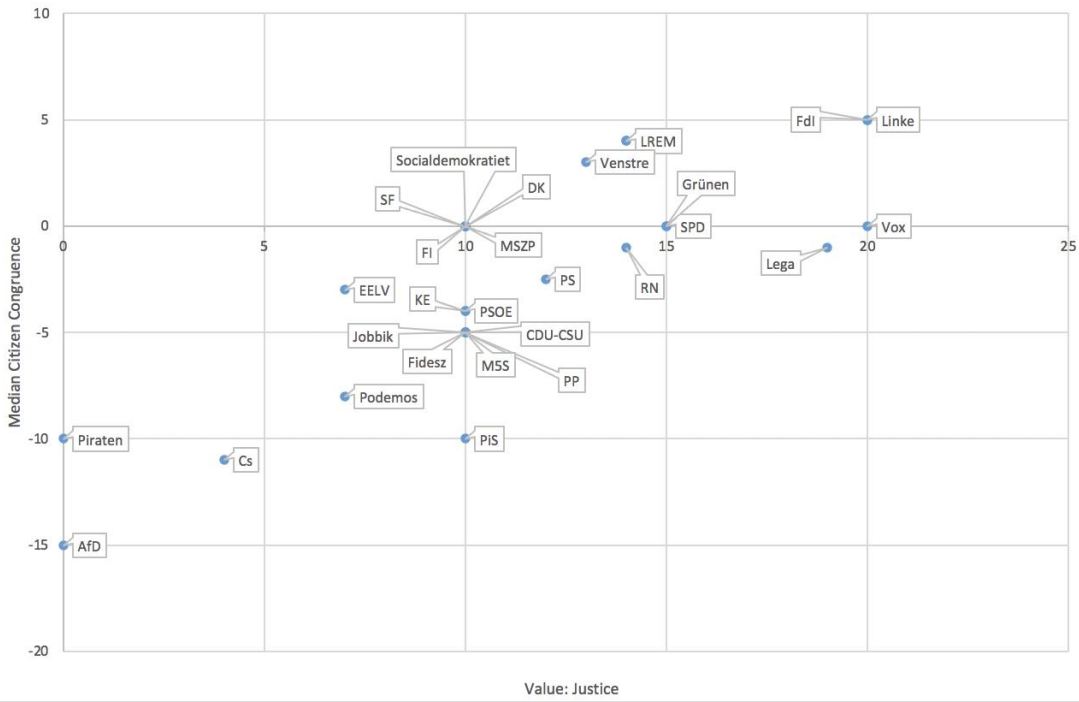


Figure A6.2.26 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of solidarity in EU

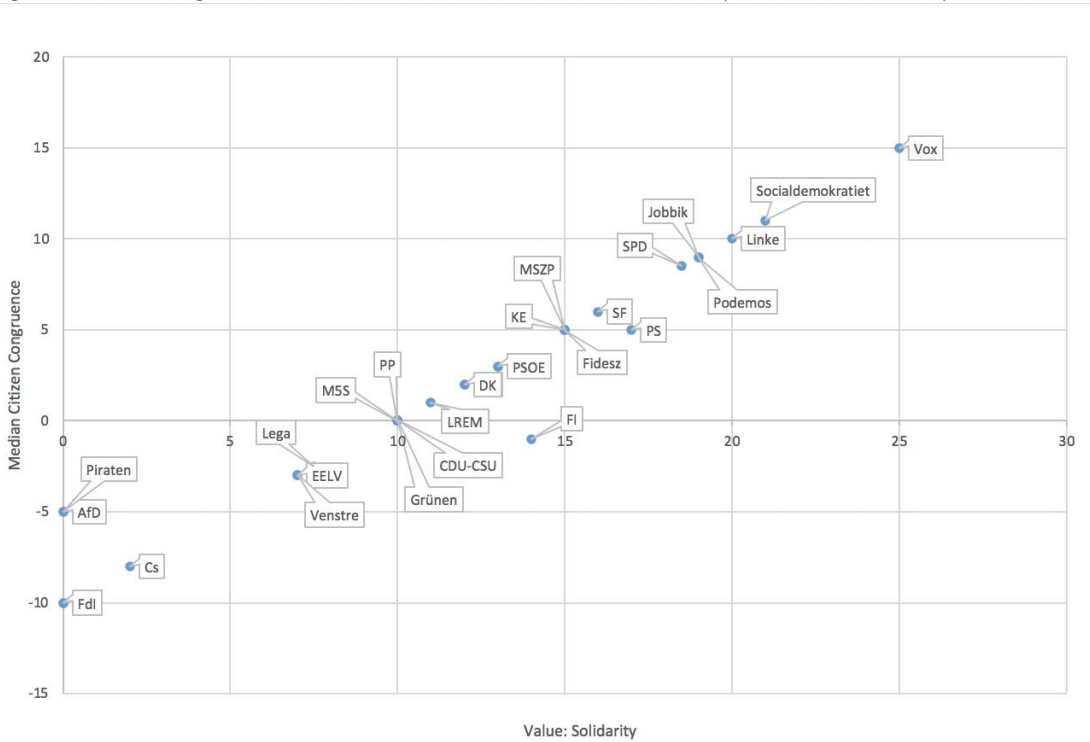


Figure A6.2.27 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of a European army for common defense in EU

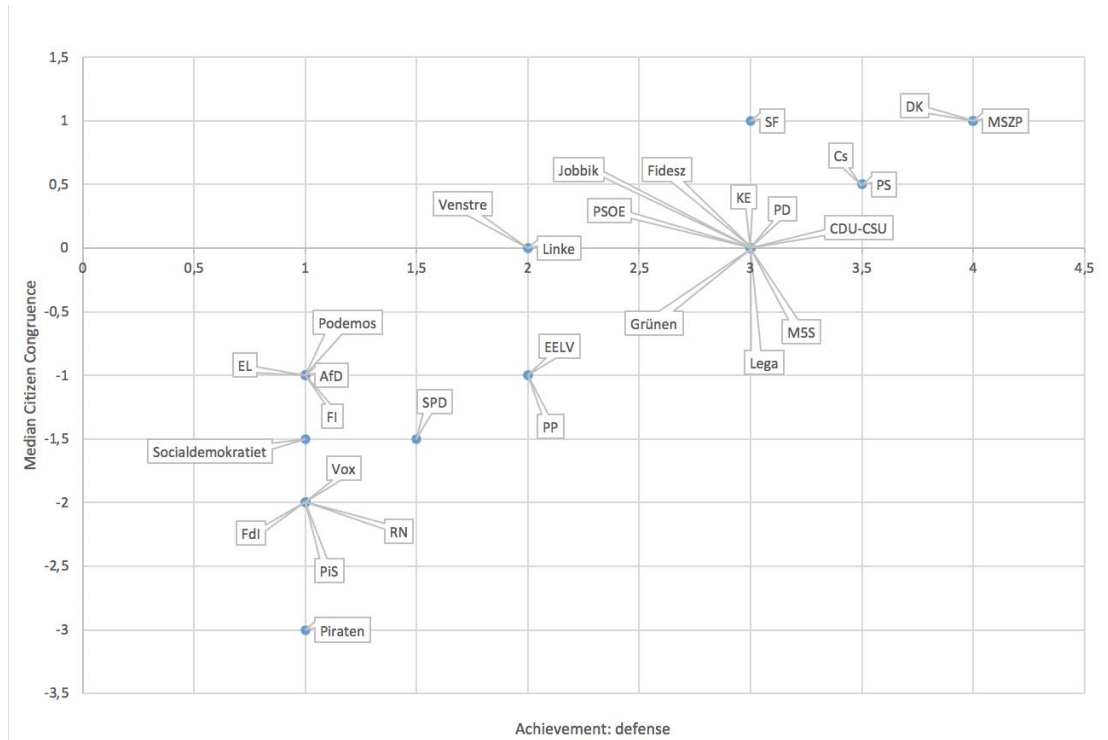


Figure A6.2.28 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the achievement of a common tax system in EU

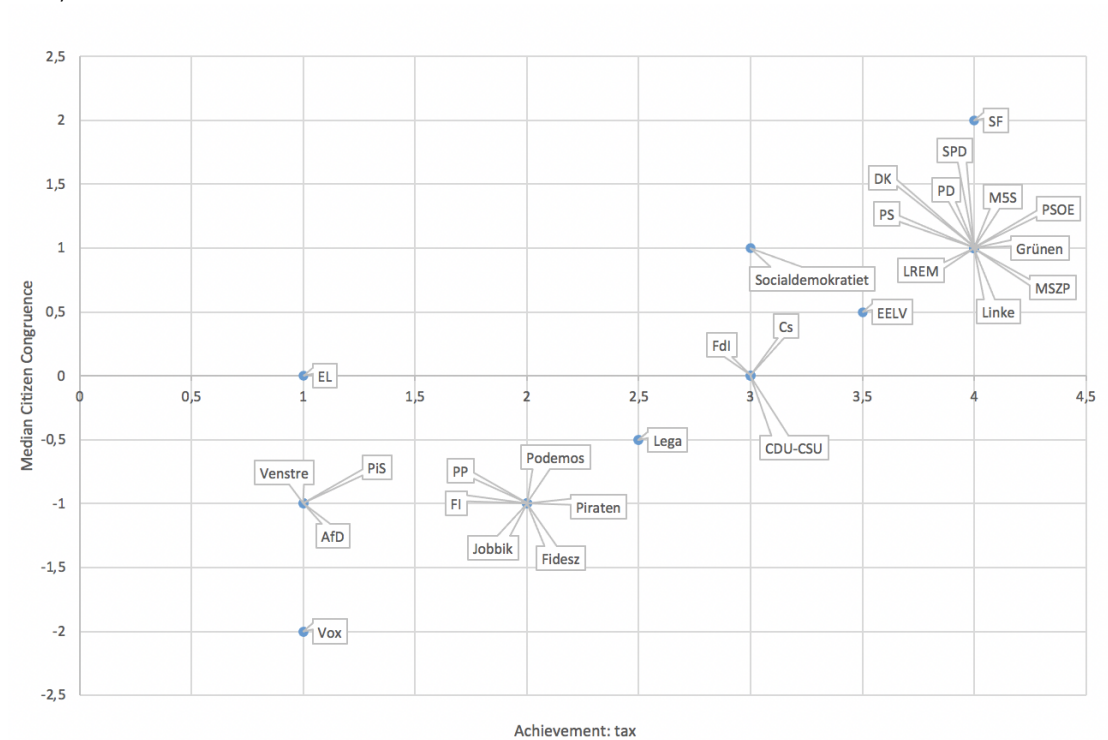




Figure A6.2.29 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the abolishment of the common currency, the Euro

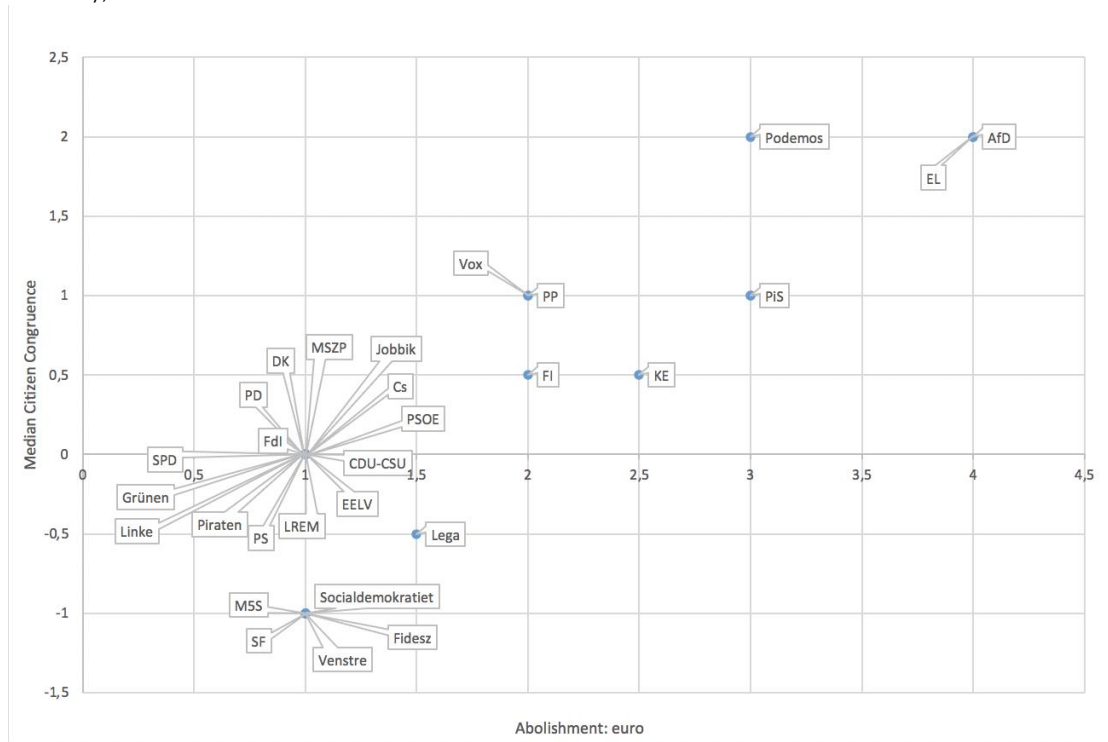
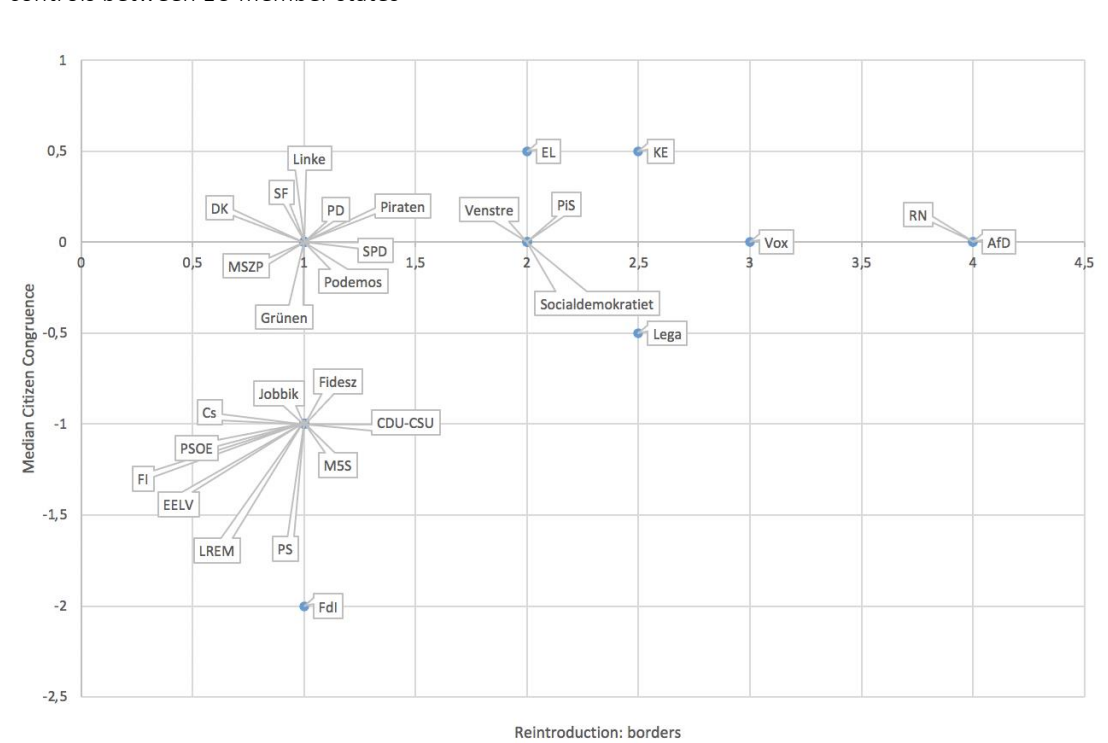
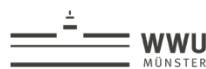


Figure A6.2.30 Congruence between MEPs and citizens about the importance of the reintroduction of border controls between EU member states



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