

Online Appendix

Italy in the Council of the European Union: votes and statements

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Dataset and code @ Harvard Dataverse: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/1JRWIW>

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Descriptives

Figure A.1 supports the conception of the Council of the European Union as ‘a consensus machine’ at the voting stage (Veen 2011). On average, from 1995 to 2019, more than 78% of the legislation was approved without abstentions or votes cast against it. At the same time, the graph shows a slight reduction in unanimity, which is partially connected with the enlargement of the EU.

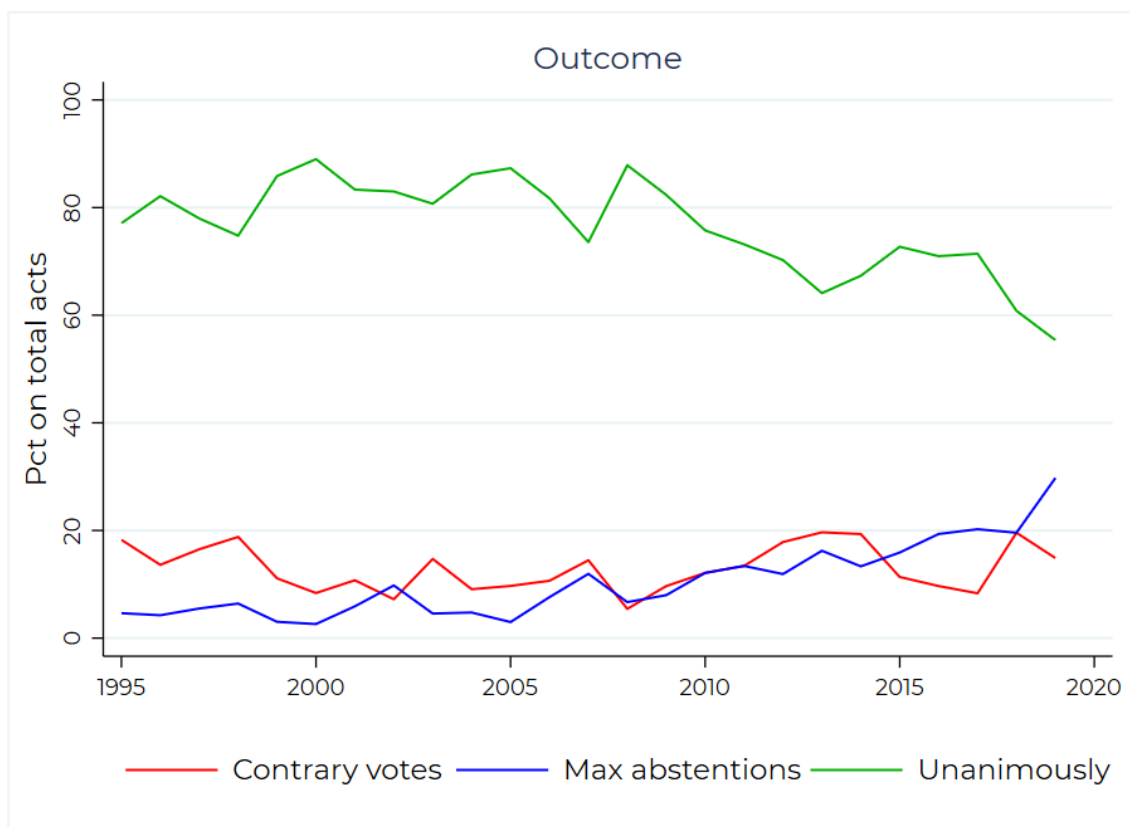


Figure A.1 Outcomes as percentages of total legislation (1995-2019)

Figure A.2 takes a closer look at the various indicators of disagreement. It considers negative votes and abstentions to be equivalent forms of opposition, and it introduces statements as constituting a first level of dissent.

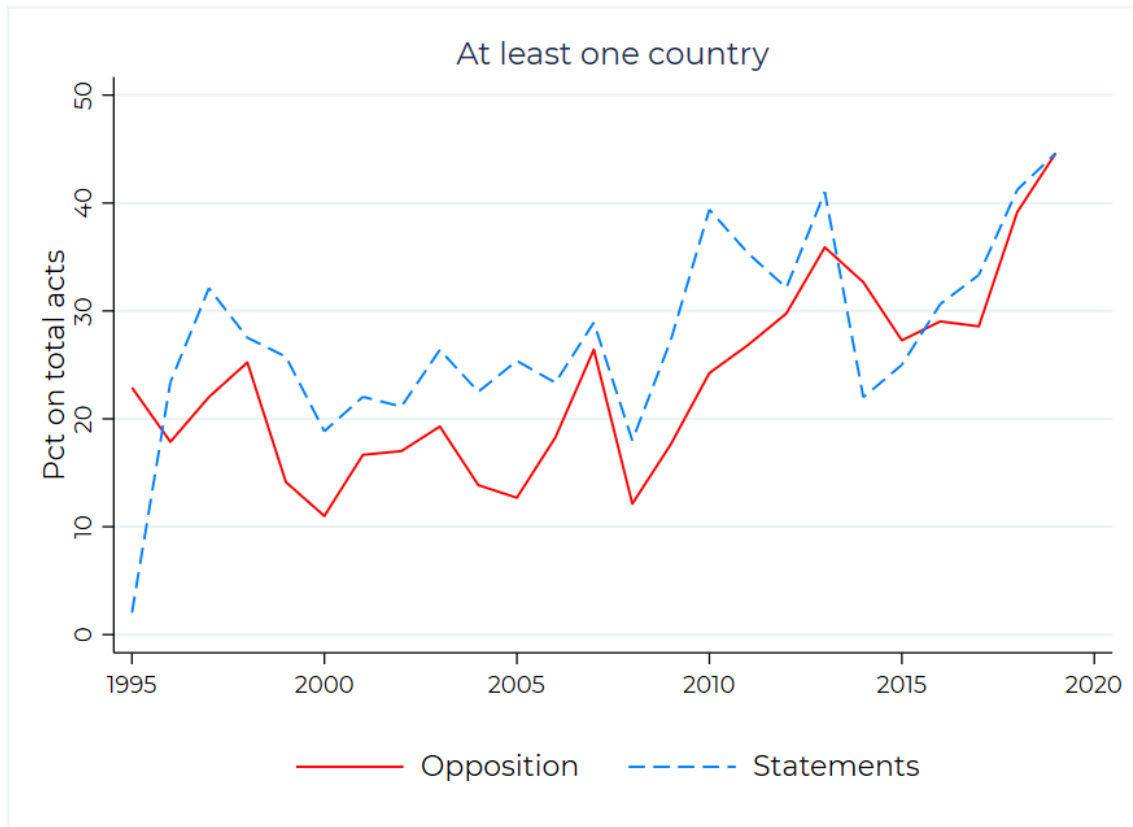


Figure A.2 Percentage of legislation with the opposition of at least one country, or with at least one country statement

In the overall sample, opposition and statements are clearly correlated, confirming that they are different manifestations of similar forms of disagreement, although they are probably characterised by different degrees of intensity. This also justifies the use of an ordinal conflict scale to summarize governments' positions, where statements are the weakest expression of dissent, followed by abstentions and finally by negative votes.

In the four graphs in Figure A.3 we detail the position of each cabinet on the left-right

scale and on the European integration dimension, while, at the same time, using the range between the two most extreme parties of the coalitions as a measure of their heterogeneity (Tsebelis 2001). The colours used in the graphs intuitively refer to the ideological leaning of their respective prime ministers.

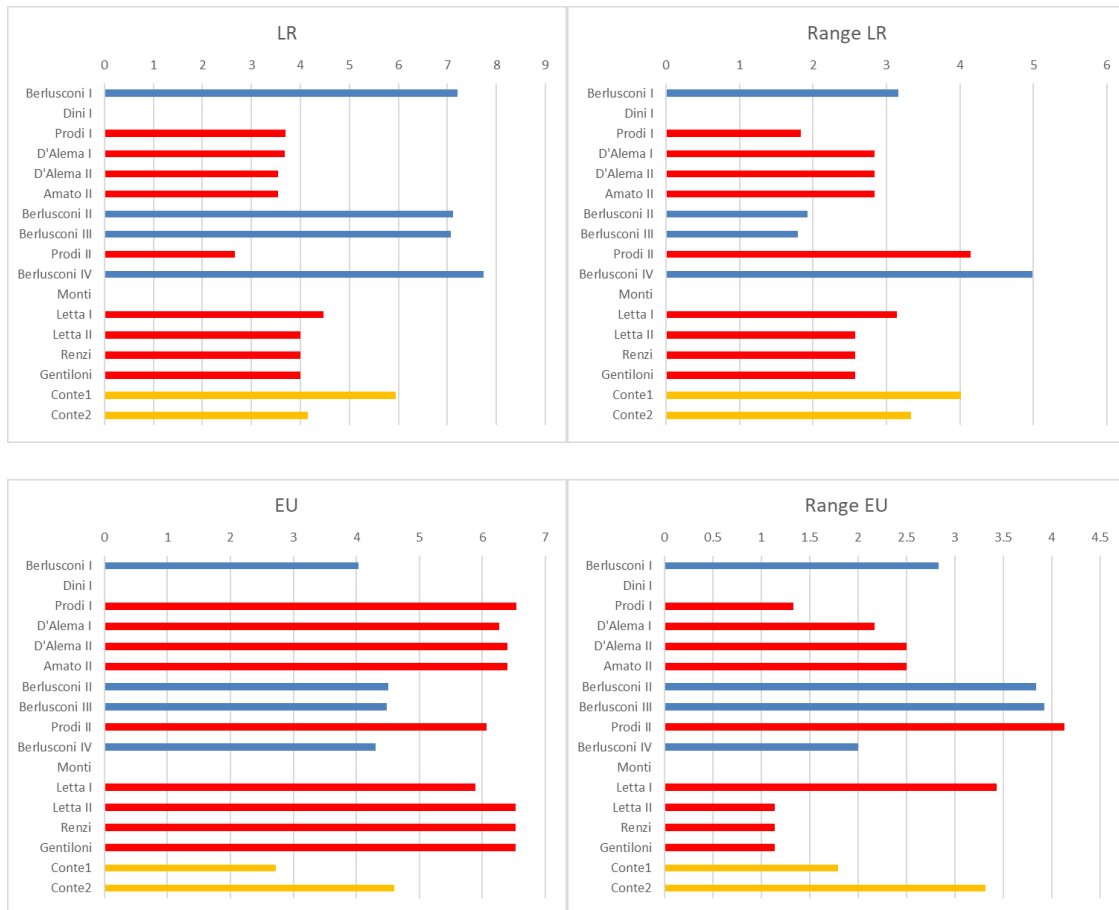


Figure A.3 Position and heterogeneity of Italian cabinets on the left-right and European integration dimensions

Complementary analyses

Table A.1 reports the coefficients of a series of regression models cited as additional tests in the article. More specifically, the first two regressions indirectly demonstrate the importance of controlling in the same equation for both political dimensions – the ideological one and that of EU integration. If we separate them, as in models 1 and 2, in the case of an overlap between the two dimensions we miss what can be attributed to each one of them. Whereas in the article the ideological dimension shows some systematic association with the scale of opposition, here there is no statistically significant relationship. Importantly, the EU dimension (level and heterogeneity) remains significant also when introduced on its own into the regression model.

Model 3 refers to the association between Italian disagreement, in its various forms, and the opposition of countries belonging to different European regions.¹ While the usual associations between institutional and political variables and the scale of Italian opposition are confirmed, most of the dummy variables signalling the opposition of at least one country belonging to the diverse European regions are highly significant. This confirms the fact that governments look for allies in their resistance to the adoption of new common policies. However, the coefficient for the presence of other Southern opposition is at least twice as large as the one derived by opposition in other regions.

¹ Southern Europe is considered to be composed, besides Italy, of Spain, Greece, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta; Western Europe by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria and Germany; Northern Europe by the United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland; Eastern Europe by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia. In order to maintain the usual number of observations, new member states have been supposed not to have opposed policies approved before their entry. Limiting the analysis only to the legislation approved after the Eastern enlargement does not modify the role of these international variables.

Table A.1. Ordered logistic regression with ideological and European dimensions separately, and with geographical alliances

	Scale of opposition					
	(1) Only LR		(2) Only EU		(3) Geography	
Presidency	-0.55***	(0.17)	-0.48**	(0.19)	-0.54***	(0.15)
Left-Right	-0.03	(0.05)			-0.10**	(0.05)
EU integration			-0.15**	(0.07)	-0.31***	(0.11)
Range LR	0.02	(0.18)			-0.07	(0.20)
Range EU			-0.34***	(0.07)	-0.35***	(0.05)
Avg opposition	6.50***	(1.21)	6.51***	(1.32)		
EU formula						
EU25	-0.93***	(0.19)	-0.72***	(0.11)	-0.70***	(0.07)
EU27	-0.96***	(0.35)	-1.32**	(0.55)	-1.09*	(0.65)
EU28	-0.97	(0.63)	-1.43**	(0.71)	-1.36*	(0.72)
Rule						
Nice	0.04	(0.47)	0.28	(0.47)	0.18	(0.52)
Lisbon	0.35	(0.68)	0.35	(0.61)	0.09	(0.71)
SOUTH opp.					1.12***	(0.18)
WEST opp.					0.53***	(0.13)
NORTH opp.					0.67***	(0.19)
EAST opp.					0.06	(0.39)
/cut 1	2.35	(0.54)	0.74	(0.50)	-0.82	(1.21)
/cut 2	3.54	(0.53)	1.94	(0.49)	0.38	(1.19)
/cut 3	3.97	(0.56)	2.37	(0.47)	0.82	(1.18)
Observations	3,597		3,597		3,597	

Note: Clustered standard errors in parentheses: *p < 0.10 **p < 0.05 ***p < 0.01

This international pattern of opposition is confirmed by running cluster analyses on the voting choices of the 15 older member states, and on their decisions to accompany their votes with a statement. Countries are clustered in succession according to the similarity of their behaviours, with the more dissimilar pattern aggregated only in the later phases. The dendograms in Figure A.3 and A.4 represent these successive patterns of aggregation of similar countries.

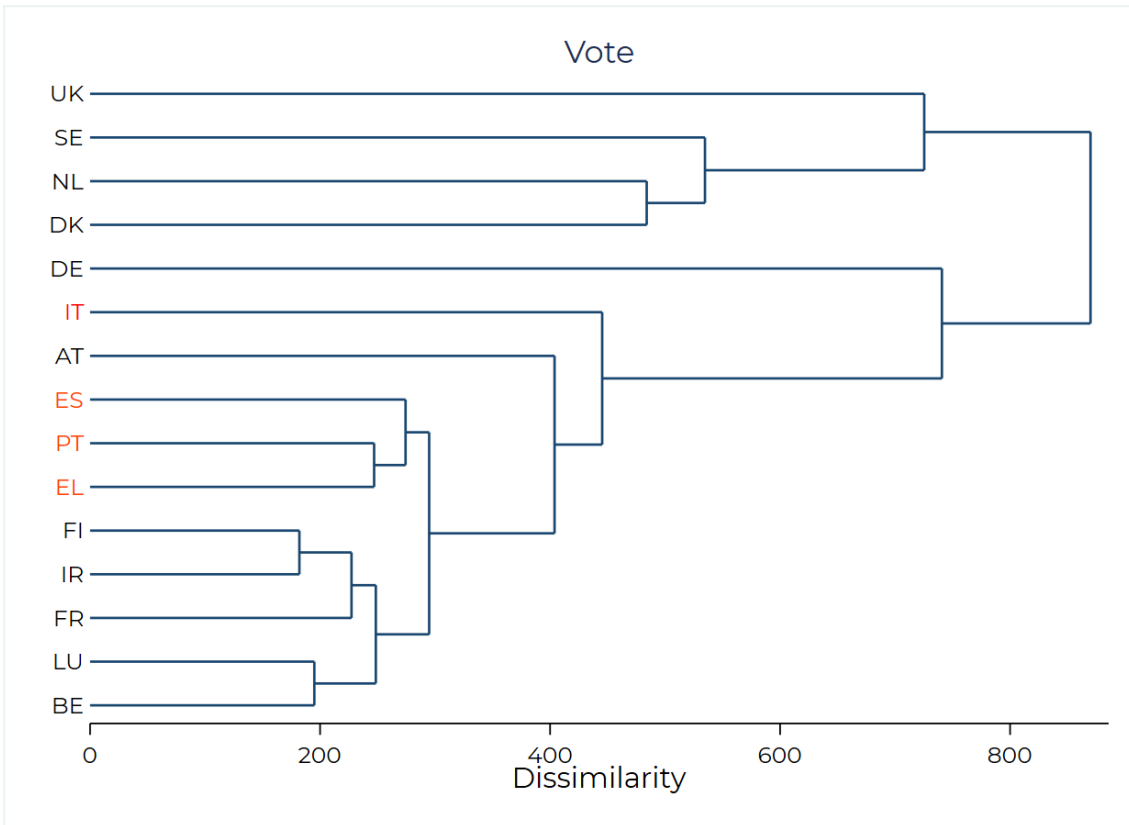


Figure A.3 Dendrogram resulting from a cluster analysis (Ward method) of voting decisions (positive, negative and abstentions) of 15 EU member states (1995-2019)

Italy is reported in red, and the other Southern European member states in orange, to highlight the similarity. With regard to voting decisions, apart from Austria, a neighbouring country, Italy aggregates itself at the second stage with the other three Southern states, which immediately cluster together. As far as statements are concerned, Italy, Portugal and Spain immediately show the similarity of their decisions, and only Greece is an outlier in the Southern group.

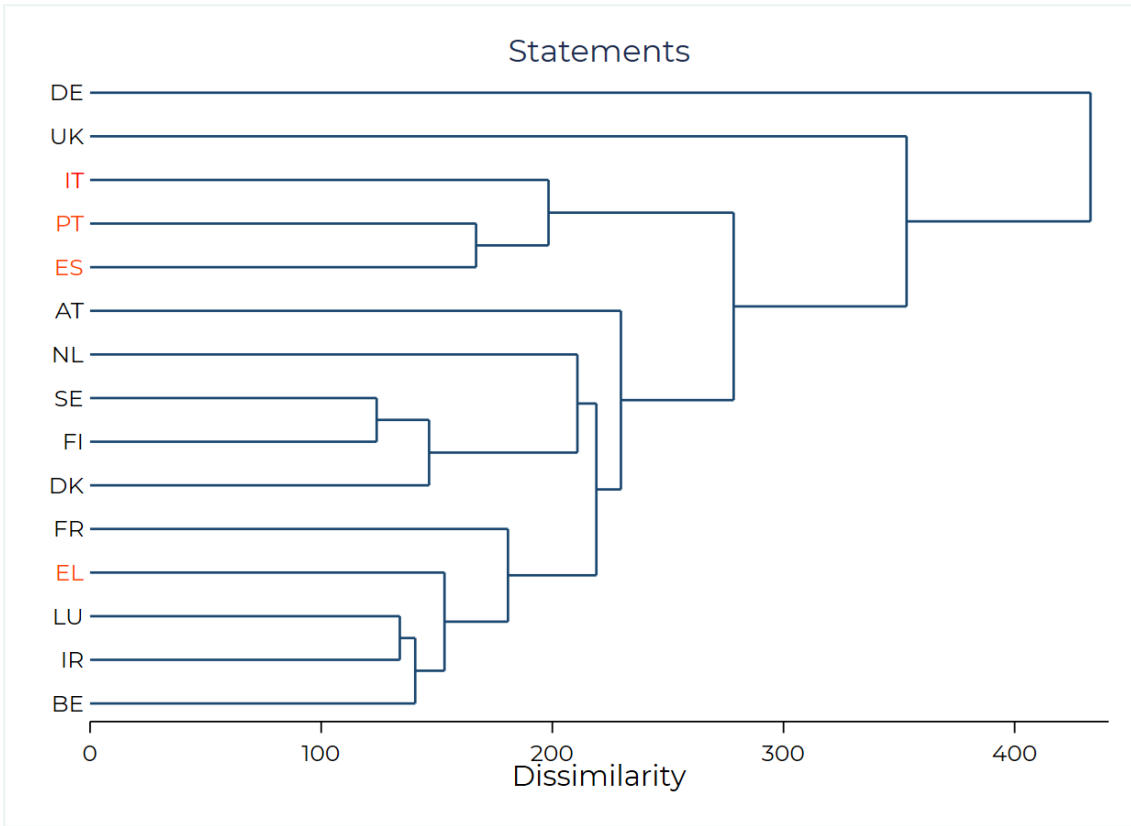


Figure A.4 Dendrogram resulting from a cluster analysis (Ward method) of statements advanced by 15 EU member states (1995-2019)

Robustness

Table A.2 sets out the results of a series of regression models used as robustness tests of some of the results reported in the article.

Given the problems of the variable ‘Post-election’ with the assumption of proportionality of ordinal regressions, in the article we decided to eliminate it from the proposed model, also considering that it was never statistically significant in the previous logistic models. Alternatively, it is also possible slightly to modify the dependent variable, using an ordinal scale that keeps positive votes without comments as the baseline and statements as the first level, but combines abstentions and negative votes as second level. This new ordinal variable, summarising the position of Italian representatives, is used in model 4, which includes the post-election variable and respects the proportionality assumption. The results of the main covariates of interest are entirely similar to those reported with the more fine-gained measure used in the article.

Table A.2. Ordered logistic regressions with a different dependent variable or operationalisation of the ideological dimension

	Scale of opposition					
	(4) Position 3 levels		(5) Party manifestos		(6) Manifestos + geo	
Post-election	-0.29	(0.39)				
Presidency	-0.48***	(0.18)	-0.43**	(0.18)	-0.50***	(0.16)
Left-Right/RILE	-0.11**	(0.06)	0.00	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)
EU integration	-0.31**	(0.12)	-0.05*	(0.03)	-0.05*	(0.03)
Range LR/RILE	-0.08	(0.21)	0.02***	(0.01)	0.02***	(0.01)
Range EU	-0.35***	(0.05)	-0.11	(0.08)	-0.10	(0.18)
Avg opposition	6.50***	(1.29)	6.55***	(1.31)		
EU formula						
EU25	-0.67***	(0.06)	-0.68***	(0.06)	-0.69***	(0.06)
EU27	-1.03	(0.66)	-1.12**	(0.46)	-1.12**	(0.47)
EU28	-1.34*	(0.70)	-0.10	(0.76)	-0.13**	(0.75)

Rule						
Nice	0.25	(0.52)	0.31	(0.60)	0.25	(0.60)
Lisbon	0.17	(0.69)	0.32	(0.77)	0.27	(0.79)
SOUTH opp.					1.14***	(0.19)
WEST opp.					0.54***	(0.13)
NORTH opp.					0.68***	(0.19)
EAST opp.					0.04	(0.38)
/cut 1	-0.90	(1.32)	2.85	(0.27)	2.89	(0.27)
/cut 2	0.31	(1.31)	4.05	(0.26)	4.10	(0.26)
/cut 3			4.48	(0.29)	4.53	(0.30)
Observations		3,597		3,597		3,597

Note: Clustered standard errors in parentheses: *p < 0.10 **p < 0.05 ***p < 0.01

Models 5 and 6 are based on different operationalisations of the ideological and EU integration dimensions, for both the location and the heterogeneity of coalitions. For simplicity, we tested only the final ordinal models, without and with the international variables.

The original results appear robust for institutional variables, as well as for the interesting control regarding the average opposition of other countries. However, the ideological left-right dimension does not appear statistically significant, as in model 1 of Table A.1 and in some of the comparative studies cited. Nonetheless, the positive sign of its coefficient is consistent with the original expectations because the RILE index of the party manifestos project goes from right to left, and not from left to right. The European dimension has the appropriate negative sign, yet remains only weakly significant in models 5 and 6, while its internal heterogeneity loses the systematic effect shown by the models in the article and by the other replications here in the appendix. The odd result concerns the positive and significant effect of the coefficient for the variable capturing the cabinet's ideological diversity. However, as anticipated in the main text, that result could be explained by the fact that, in some elections, several

parties presented a common electoral platform responding to the challenges of a mixed electoral system that triggered electoral alliances. The corresponding measure of heterogeneity thus automatically assumed a value equal to zero, which clearly does not represent the actual divergences between coalition partners. Furthermore, there is a well-known issue of validity of party manifestos data regarding Italy (Flentje *et al.* 2017), for both the RILE index (Pelizzo 2003) and, more generally, for measures of EU integration (Ray 2007). These results also suggest that the expert measures used in the article are to be preferred to other sources of information regarding party locations.

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