

Partisan Sorting and Niche Parties in Europe

JAMES ADAMS, LAWRENCE EZROW and DEBRA LEITER

Earlier research has concluded that European citizens do not update their Left–Right policy preferences or their party attachments in response to the content of parties’ election manifestos – i.e. partisan sorting is not observed in the mass public in response to shifts in the Left–Right tone of these manifestos. Here we extend this research to analyse whether we observe partisan sorting patterns that correspond with political experts’ perceptions of parties’ Left–Right policy shifts. Given that these experts plausibly consider all pertinent information when estimating parties’ Left–Right orientations – including party elites’ speeches, elite interviews, coalition behaviour, and legislative voting patterns – such a finding would imply that citizens do weigh the wider informational environment when updating their Left–Right orientations and their party support, even if they do not attach great weight to the parties’ policy manifestos. Our analyses provide support for this hypothesis with respect to niche parties, i.e. green, communist, and radical right parties, but not for mainstream parties.

According to the responsible party model, the link between parties’ policy positions and their supporters’ policy beliefs is crucial for representative democracy (Sartori 1968). The mass–elite linkages emphasised by the responsible party model have been examined empirically by prominent scholars of political representation (e.g. Dalton 1985; Iversen 1994), who identify close matches between the Left–Right positions of party elites and the positions of their supporters (Dalton 1985).

In a dynamic setting, where parties and voters shift their policy positions over time, the policy correspondence between party elites and their supporters can be maintained through some combination of elites responding to their supporters and these supporters responding to political elites. Specifically, party elites may adjust their policy positions in response to shifts in their supporters’ beliefs (which we label party elite responsiveness), or conversely, party supporters may dynamically adjust their

Correspondence Address: ezrow@essex.ac.uk

preferred policy positions in response to shifts in their preferred party's policy stances (party persuasion). Party supporters may also switch their partisan loyalties in response to parties' policy shifts (partisan switching). The latter two processes, party persuasion and partisan switching, are collectively referred to as partisan sorting (see e.g. Carmines and Stimson 1989; Erikson *et al.* 2002).

In previous research Adams *et al.* (2011) presented empirical evidence that European citizens do not update their perceptions of parties' Left–Right positions in response to the statements the parties publish in their election manifestos, and, furthermore, that European citizens adjust neither their own Left–Right policy orientations nor their party support in response to shifts in the Left–Right tone of these manifestos. However, in related research Fortunato and Stevenson (forthcoming) report remarkable findings that European citizens update their estimates of Left–Right party positions in response to an important facet of parties' observed behaviour, namely the compositions of governing coalitions.¹ Here we extend the research dialogue between Fortunato and Stevenson and Adams *et al.* in two new directions. First, we ask whether we observe partisan sorting in European electorates (Carmines and Stimson 1989), i.e. shifts in citizens' Left–Right policy orientations and/or their party support, in response to the wider informational environment that encompasses all relevant information pertaining to parties' Left–Right positions, not simply the content of parties' manifestos. We evaluate this issue by analysing whether the partisan sorting that we observe in European electorates tracks experts' perceptions of parties' Left–Right position shifts. Because these experts, namely the political scientists and journalists who have responded to the Chapel Hill expert surveys (see e.g. Hooghe *et al.* 2010), are free to weigh all relevant information when estimating parties' Left–Right positions – including the content of party elites' speeches, interviews, and policy manifestos, along with elites' coalition bargaining behaviour and their actual roll-call votes – these experts' perceptions plausibly provide reliable measures of the parties' positions based on all relevant evidence. Second, we evaluate whether we observe greater degrees of partisan sorting in the electorate with respect to niche parties than with respect to mainstream parties, where niche parties are defined as communist, green, and radical right parties – that is, parties that either stake out extreme positions on the Left–Right dimension (communist and radical right parties) or parties that cater to a tightly focused, ideological clientele (green parties).² Our focus on niche parties is motivated by previous research which documents that citizens are disproportionately responsive to niche parties' Left–Right shifts, and which argues that this pattern arises because niche parties' supporters are more politically engaged and expressive than are mainstream parties' supporters (Adams *et al.* 2006; Ezrow *et al.* 2011; Hobolt and Spoon 2010).

Our empirical study of mass–elite policy linkages in 14 Western European democracies over the period 1984–2002 supports the hypothesis that the

partisan sorting patterns in European electorates track political experts' perceptions of parties' Left–Right policy shifts, but that this pattern is substantively (and statistically) significant for niche parties but not for mainstream parties – a pattern we label the niche party dynamic. Specifically, we find that when the political experts who were interviewed in the Chapel Hill expert surveys perceived that a focal niche party had shifted its ideological position to the left (right), then the mean Left–Right preferences of the niche party's supporters displayed strong tendencies to shift in a direction consistent with these experts' perceptions, a pattern that is consistent with a partisan sorting process whereby rank-and-file citizens update their own Left–Right orientations and/or their party support in response to niche parties' Left–Right shifts. Specifically, we observe a lagged relationship whereby experts' perceptions of niche party shifts were associated with lagged shifts in party supporters' Left–Right positions, a pattern that supports the partisan sorting hypothesis for niche parties and which cannot be explained by a reciprocal process whereby niche party elites respond to their supporters' policy preferences. We label this finding the lagged effects dynamic. By contrast, we uncover no statistically (or substantively) significant evidence of partisan sorting with respect to mainstream parties – i.e. parties that are members of social democratic, liberal, conservative, or Christian democratic party families. We also present evidence that niche party supporters are indeed significantly more politically engaged than are the supporters of mainstream parties (or political independents), a pattern that supports our finding of stronger partisan sorting patterns with respect to niche parties (although we do not claim to definitively parse out the causal mechanisms that underpin our results). Finally, consistent with the results reported in Adams *et al.* (2011), we find no evidence of partisan sorting – from either niche party or mainstream party supporters – in response to shifts in the Left–Right tone of parties' election manifestos.

Our finding, that mass–elite policy linkages differ for niche parties compared to mainstream parties, is consistent with earlier research on this issue. Thus Adams *et al.* (2006) conclude that niche parties suffer sharp electoral reverses when they moderate their Left–Right positions, while mainstream parties' vote shares are (on average) unresponsive to their policy shifts. Ezrow *et al.* (2011) conclude that niche party elites respond disproportionately to their supporters' Left–Right attitudes, in contrast to mainstream party elites who weigh the policy preferences of the entire electorate; as we show below, niche party elites' responsiveness to their supporters makes sense given that these supporters are significantly more politically engaged than are mainstream parties' supporters. Furthermore, our finding that citizens exhibit lagged responses to niche parties' policy shifts meshes with the findings of Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009), who conclude that time lags intervene before citizens update their party evaluations in response to changes in party elites' Left–Right positions.

In toto, our findings imply that while members of the mass public do not systematically update their policy beliefs or their party support in response to the policy statements in party manifestos (as demonstrated by Adams *et al.* 2011), rank-and-file citizens do respond to the wider informational environment – an environment that encompasses party elites’ speeches and interviews, their coalition behaviour, and their legislative voting patterns – with respect to niche parties. This is because the mean Left–Right positions of niche parties’ supporters track experts’ (lagged) perceptions of these parties’ Left–Right positions, and these experts, namely the political scientists and journalists who have responded to the Chapel Hill expert surveys, plausibly weigh this wider informational environment when estimating parties’ Left–Right positions. However our finding, that mainstream party supporters’ Left–Right position shifts do not track shifts in political experts’ perceptions of these parties’ positions, extends the earlier results reported by Adams *et al.* (2011) that mainstream party supporters’ Left–Right shifts also fail to track shifts in the Left–Right tone of these parties’ manifestos.

The Link between Parties’ Left–Right Images as Perceived by Political Experts and Partisan Sorting in the Electorate: Hypotheses and Empirical Specifications

Hypotheses on Partisan Sorting

Our first hypothesis on partisan sorting in European electorates is motivated in part by the empirical work of Kitschelt (1994), D’Alimonte (1999), Tarrow (1989), and Adams *et al.* (2006), who have analysed the policy attitudes and the personal characteristics of the political elites belonging to green, communist, and radical right political parties, along with the characteristics of these parties’ political supporters:

H1 (the Niche Party Hypothesis): Partisan sorting processes in the mass public will be stronger with respect to niche parties than with respect to mainstream parties.

The studies cited above report several findings that imply the Niche Party Hypothesis. First, these studies suggest that niche parties’ elites, along with niche parties’ activists and rank-and-file supporters, place greater emphasis on policy debates than do the elites and supporters from mainstream parties, who frequently emphasise their party elites’ leadership abilities and superior competence to govern the country. In particular, Kitschelt (1994) and D’Alimonte (1999) report findings that niche parties’ core supporters are strongly policy-oriented and are highly resistant to ideological ‘compromises’ by their party’s elites – i.e. that these niche party supporters are prepared to abandon the party if they disapprove of its policy direction. To

the extent that this is true, we should expect to observe stronger partisan sorting processes with respect to niche parties. Second, and related, niche party supporters are more likely to perceive and react to their preferred party's policy shifts than are mainstream partisans. In this regard, Adams *et al.* (2006) present aggregate-level analyses that document that niche parties' vote shares decline precipitously when they moderate their Left–Right positions – but that there is no systematic relationship between mainstream parties' policy shifts and changes in their support – a finding consistent with the hypothesis that niche party supporters' disproportionately monitor and react to their preferred party's policy positions.

Our second hypothesis relates to the timing of partisan sorting effects in the mass public, specifically to the likelihood that significant time lags may intervene between when party elites shift their policy positions, and when members of the mass public react to these elite-level shifts by changing their party support and/or their policy positions:

H2 (the Lagged Effects Hypothesis): Significant time lags may intervene before the mass public reacts to party elites' policy shifts.

The research on issue evolution and macro-partisanship in the United States motivates the Lagged Effects Hypothesis (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Erikson *et al.* 2002). When party elites' policy behaviour changes, these studies report significant temporal lags with respect to when rank-and-file voters perceive and react to these shifts. For instance, in the case of the issue of racial desegregation, Carmines and Stimson (1989: chapter 7) identify four-year lags between the time when partisan elites' voting patterns change in the US Senate, and when the mass public perceives this change in voting. In addition, Erikson *et al.* (2002: chapter 7) estimate significant lags in the effects of party positions on presidential vote share. These authors argue that when citizens estimate parties' current policy images, they account for the parties' current and past policy positions, and this observation motivates our own perspective on this process:

where the parties stand in the eyes of the electorate will incorporate both the present platform and past platforms. In the end, while the parties are able to use the platforms as a vehicle for altering the image of where they stand, they can alter that image only slowly over time. (Erikson *et al.* 2002: 258)

Similarly, Pelizzo (2007) documents that Italian voters' perceptions of parties' positions are not highly responsive to parties' current policy manifesto shifts, or to party MPs' current parliamentary voting behaviour, because voters' perceptions are anchored by the parties' *previous* policy behaviour, a strong inertial component which reflects voters' 'historical knowledge' of party positions (Pelizzo 2007: 8).

Finally, Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) present evidence from 15 Western European democracies which documents that time lags intervene between when political parties shift their Left–Right positions and when their vote shares change, a pattern that supports the Lagged Effects Hypothesis on partisan sorting.

Model Specifications

We analyse the dynamics of citizens' responses to shifts in European parties' Left–Right positions, as these positions are perceived by political experts who might be expected to weigh all information that is pertinent to estimating parties' positions, including party elites' policy statements (in speeches, interviews, and election manifestos) along with their observed behaviour (including coalition behaviour and legislative voting patterns). We ask: when these political experts perceive that a focal party has shifted its Left–Right orientations, do we observe partisan sorting in the electorate that is consistent with these expert perceptions – i.e. do we observe patterns which suggest that citizens are shifting their own Left–Right positions in the same direction as the focal party (a party persuasion process) and/or that citizens are updating their partisan loyalties in response to parties' policy shifts (partisan switching)? Furthermore, do we observe that partisan sorting processes are stronger with respect to niche parties than mainstream parties (the Niche Party Hypothesis), and that time lags intervene before partisan sorting in the electorate occurs in response to party elites' policy shifts (the Lagged Effects Hypothesis)?

In analyses based on panel data we might parse out the extent to which partisan sorting in the electorate reflects partisan switching as opposed to party persuasion (see e.g. Carsey and Layman 2006; Goren 2005; Highton and Kam 2011; Milazzo *et al.* 2012). However, because the data we analyse is time-series cross-sectional, we instead assay the simpler task of estimating the extent to which *either* of these processes is taking place – i.e. we will search for any evidence of voters' partisan sorting that is consistent with political experts' perceptions of parties' Left–Right policy shifts. Our logic is simple: to the extent that parties' Left–Right shifts – as perceived by experts – prompt reactions in the electorate that reflect either partisan switching and/or party persuasion, we should observe that when a party shifts its Left–Right position the mean position of the party's supporters shifts in the same direction. This is because either causal process – party persuasion or partisan switching – generates an aggregate-level pattern whereby the mean Left–Right position of a focal party's supporters tracks the mean position of the party's elites. This test is very simple, and it is also incomplete in that even if we find evidence that party shifts as perceived by political experts correlate with shifts in the mean Left–Right positions of party supporters, we cannot conclude that these associations reflect a causal process of voters reacting to parties, rather than vice versa. However in

keeping with the Lagged Effects Hypothesis we will address this causal inference issue via analyses of lagged relationships between parties' policy shifts and shifts in their supporters' positions. On this basis we proceed.

We require longitudinal, cross-national measures of parties' Left–Right positions as perceived by experts, along with measures of the mean Left–Right positions of these parties' supporters, in order to carry out our analyses. Our measure of experts' perceptions of the parties' Left–Right positions is derived from the Chapel Hill expert surveys (CHES) (Hooghe *et al.* 2010). In these surveys, respondents who were considered as experts on the politics of a focal country were asked to place each party in the country's party system on a scale running from 0 ('extreme left') to 10 ('extreme right'), expert placements that we rescaled between 0 and 1. We used these survey responses to compute experts' perceptions of the parties' positions, for each party at each date the Chapel Hill survey was administered (1984, 1996, 1999, and 2002, which were dates oriented towards elections to the European Parliament).³ For the observations prior to 1999, we note that the CHES study compiles data from previous surveys of experts by Castles and Mair (1984), Huber and Inglehart (1995), and Hix and Lord (1997).

Our longitudinal measure of voters' Left–Right positions and their partisan loyalties is derived from Eurobarometer studies, which have been administered in the following Western European democracies beginning in the early 1970s: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.⁴ These surveys contain the same item in each year in each country, asking approximately 1,000 respondents per country to place themselves on a scale running from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right), and also to indicate the party (if any) that they supported.⁵ We have rescaled the Eurobarometer Left–Right scale to run between 0 and 1 so that it is consistent with the CHES Left–Right scale. Our measure of the Left–Right position of each party's partisan constituency in the focal year is the mean Left–Right self-placement of all Eurobarometer respondents from that year that reported support for the party. We note that the Eurobarometer surveys discontinued the party support question after 2002, so that our analysis of partisan sorting patterns runs from 1984 (the first year of the Chapel Hill expert surveys) until 2002 (the last year the Eurobarometer surveys included the party support question).

We specify a multivariate regression model to search for evidence of partisan sorting in European electorates in response to parties' Left–Right shifts, as perceived by the Chapel Hill experts. As we are interested in how the mean positions of party supporters shift in response to experts' perceptions of parties' Left–Right shifts, we specify a model in which the dependent variable is the change in the party supporters' mean Left–Right position in the year t of the current CHES, compared to party supporters' positions in the year $(t - 1)$ of the previous CHES, as measured by Eurobarometer respondents' Left–Right self-placements and reported party

support. We label this variable [*Party j supporters' Left–Right shift (t)*]. Our key independent variables are [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*], which denotes the shift in party *j*'s Left–Right position between the year of the current and the previous Chapel Hill expert surveys, based on the experts' Left–Right party placements, and a lagged version of this variable, [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*], which denotes the shift in party *j*'s perceived Left–Right position between the previous Chapel Hill expert survey and the survey before that. We include this lagged variable in order to evaluate the Lagged Effects Hypothesis, which specifies that time lags intervene before partisan sorting in the electorate occurs in response to party elites' policy shifts. We also include a lagged version of the dependent variable to control for autocorrelation issues that are otherwise present in the data.⁶ Thus our basic specification is:

$$\begin{aligned}
 [\textit{Party } j \textit{ supporters' Left–Right shift}(t)] = & b_0 + b_1[\textit{Expert perceptions of } j\textit{'s} \\
 & \textit{Left–Right shift}(t)] + b_2[\textit{Expert perceptions of } j\textit{'s} \textit{Left–Right shift}(t - 1)] \\
 & + b_3[\textit{Party } j \textit{ supporters' Left–Right shift}(t - 1)]
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{1}$$

where

Party j supporters' Left–Right shift (t) = the change in the mean Left–Right position of party *j*'s supporters in the year *t* of the current Chapel Hill expert survey, compared to the mean supporter position at the year *t – 1* of the previous Chapel Hill expert survey, based on Eurobarometer respondents' Left–Right self-placements and their party support. The variable [*Party j supporters' Left–Right shift (t – 1)*] is similarly defined.

[*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] = the change in party *j*'s Left–Right position in the year *t* of the current Chapel Hill expert survey compared to party *j*'s position in the year *t – 1* of the previous Chapel Hill expert survey, based on the mean party placements by the experts interviewed in these surveys. The variable [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*] is similarly defined.

Results

Our analysis encompassed 162 Left–Right shifts by parties and their supporters in 14 European party systems: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. In order to attenuate error in our measures of the mean Left–Right positions of party supporters, we confined our analyses to policy shifts by political parties that obtained the support of at least 50 Eurobarometer respondents per survey, over the time period for

which we measured the change in the mean Left–Right position of the focal party’s supporters.⁷ (Below we report supplementary analyses that apply to all partisan constituencies that featured at least 10 supporters per Eurobarometer survey). The complete set of parties and elections included in the analyses are reported in Appendix A. Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations of the observed values of the variables in our data set.

Our analyses encompassed 65 parties, each observed over an average of 3.5 elections, and should thus be regarded as time-series cross-sectional data. Estimating a simple regression on the pooled data can lead to erroneous conclusions if there are unobserved differences between partisan constituencies (Hsiao 2003); we address these concerns through the use of robust standard errors clustered by party (Rogers 1993). The lagged dependent variable included in our specifications helps to address the concern of serially correlated errors (Beck and Katz 1995), and a Lagrange multiplier test fails to reject the null hypothesis of no serial correlation.

The parameter estimates for the alternative models that we investigated are reported in Table 2, where the dependent variable [*Party j supporters’ Left–Right shift (t)*] represents the change in the mean Left–Right self-placements of all Eurobarometer respondents who reported support for the focal party *j* in surveys conducted in the year of the current Chapel Hill expert survey, compared to the mean Left–Right placements of all Eurobarometer respondents who reported support for the focal party *j* in the year of the previous Chapel Hill expert survey.

Column 1 in Table 2 reports the parameter estimates when the model is estimated over all niche parties in our data set, where, following Adams *et al.* (2006), niche parties are defined as parties that are members of the communist, green, and radical right party families, based on the party family codings published by the Comparative Manifesto Project (see Klingemann *et al.* 2006). (Below we report supplementary analyses for alternative definitions of what constitutes a niche party.) To the extent that citizens update either their own Left–Right positions or their party support in response to niche parties’ Left–Right shifts – as these shifts are perceived by the Chapel Hill experts – we expect positive and statistically significant

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS: DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

	Mean value	Standard deviation
<i>Party j’s supporters’ Left–Right shift (t)</i>	–0.020	0.290
<i>Party j’s Left–Right shift (t) – experts</i>	0.014	0.496

Note: All of the variables are calibrated along a 0–1 scale, for which higher numbers denote a more right-wing position. The measures of party supporters’ Left–Right shifts are drawn from Eurobarometer survey data from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. The measures of parties’ Left–Right positions as perceived by experts are drawn from the Chapel Hill expert surveys. The definitions of these variables are given in the text.

TABLE 2
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHIFTS IN PARTY SUPPORTERS' LEFT–RIGHT POSITIONS, AND PARTIES' LEFT–RIGHT SHIFTS AS PERCEIVED BY EXPERTS

	Niche parties (1)		Mainstream parties (2)		Interaction model (3)	
<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left–Right shift (t)</i>	0.05	(0.05)	0.08	(0.05)	0.08	(0.06)
<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)</i>	0.39**	(0.12)	0.02	(0.06)	0.02	(0.07)
[<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left–Right shift (t)</i>] × <i>Niche Party</i>					–0.03	(0.04)
[<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)</i>] × <i>Niche Party</i>					0.37**	(0.14)
<i>Niche Party</i>					0.01	(0.01)
<i>Party j supporters' Left–Right shift (t – 1)</i>	–0.26*	(0.13)	–0.33**	(0.09)	–0.33**	(0.10)
[<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left–Right shift (t)</i>] × [<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)</i>]					0.04	(10.05)
Intercept	0.01	(0.01)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
<i>N</i>	42		120		162	
<i>R</i> ²	0.23		0.13		0.17	

*** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; two-tailed tests.

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. For these analyses the dependent variable was the change in the mean self-placement of the focal party's supporters on the Left–Right scale between the year of the current Chapel Hill expert survey and the year of the previous Chapel Hill expert survey, based on Eurobarometer respondents' self-placements. For the analyses reported in column 1, niche parties are defined as members of the communist, green, and nationalist party families, according to the party family codings of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), and the analyses encompass all parties which had at least 50 supporters in the Eurobarometer surveys. For the analyses in column 2, mainstream parties are defined as members of the Social Democratic, Socialist, Liberal, Conservative, and Christian Democratic party families, according to the CMP party family codings. The independent variables are defined in the text.

coefficient estimates on either the [*Party j's perceived Left–Right shift (t) – experts*] variable, a result that would be consistent with contemporaneous partisan sorting in the mass public in response to niche parties' Left–Right shifts (although as we discuss below this pattern would also be consistent with a reciprocal relationship whereby party elites respond to their supporters' policy preferences), or a positive and significant coefficient estimate on the lagged version of this variable, which would support the Lagged Effects Hypothesis, that time lags intervene before the mass public reacts to party elites' policy shifts. The coefficient estimates in column 1 in Table 2 reveal that there is no significant contemporaneous statistical association between shifts in niche party supporters' mean Left–Right positions and niche party shifts at the elite level as perceived by experts – i.e. the coefficient estimate on the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] variable is near zero and is statistically significant. However we estimate a statistically significant coefficient ($p < 0.01$) on the lagged version of this variable, [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*], indicating that –

consistent with the Lagged Effects Hypothesis – time lags intervene between when political experts perceive niche parties' Left–Right shifts and when rank-and-file voters perceive and react to these shifts. Note, furthermore, that the magnitude of the coefficient estimate on the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*] variable, +0.39, is also substantively significant: it implies that a one-unit shift in a niche party's Left–Right position in the previous time period, as perceived by political experts, is associated with a shift of nearly 0.4 units in the mean Left–Right position of the party's supporters during the current time period, where both parties' and the party supporters' shifts are calibrated along identical 0–1 scales.

Our finding, of a lagged relationship between experts' perceptions of niche parties' Left–Right shifts and shifts in the mean positions of niche party supporters is in fact more revealing than a finding of a contemporaneous relationship would be, because it is far easier to sort out the causal processes that underlie this lagged relationship. For a contemporaneous relationship, a tight fit between niche parties' Left–Right shifts and their supporters' Left–Right shifts would be consistent with a causal process whereby rank-and-file voters respond to niche party elites or a process whereby niche party elites respond to their supporters' shifting policy viewpoints. By contrast, our finding that shifts in niche party elites' Left–Right positions (as perceived by experts) are associated with lagged shifts in their supporters' Left–Right positions cannot be due to niche party elites responding to their supporters. Hence we interpret our parameter estimates as evidence of partisan sorting in the mass public with respect to niche parties – i.e. that citizens adjust their own Left–Right policy orientations and/or their party support in response to niche parties' Left–Right shifts (as these shifts are perceived by political experts).

Column 2 in Table 2 reports the parameter estimates when our model is estimated over the set of all mainstream parties in our data set, where mainstream parties are defined as parties that are members of the socialist, social democratic, liberal, conservative, and Christian democratic party families, based on the party family codings published by the Comparative Manifesto Project. Here the parameter estimates on the current and lagged versions of our key independent variable are both near zero and statistically insignificant – i.e. we do not identify any tendency for the (current and lagged) shifts in the mean Left–Right positions of mainstream parties' supporters to match up with shifts in these parties' Left–Right positions, as perceived by political experts. These estimates on mainstream parties, in conjunction with the earlier estimates on niche parties reported in column 1, support the Niche Parties Hypothesis, that partisan sorting processes in the mass public are stronger with respect to niche parties than with respect to mainstream parties. And column 3 in Table 2 reports coefficient estimates for a model where we interact the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] variable (and the lagged version of this variable) with a dummy variable for niche parties. The coefficient estimate on the lagged interactive variable,

[*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1) × Niche Party*], +0.37, is statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), which again supports the Niche Parties Hypothesis.

Sensitivity Analyses

We performed several tests in order to evaluate whether our central findings, that there is strong evidence of partisan sorting with respect to niche parties and that these effects are lagged, were robust to the inclusion of small parties in our analyses; to an alternative definition of niche parties; and, to the possibility of error in the measurements of our key independent variables, namely parties' current and lagged policy shifts.⁸ In order to evaluate the effects of including small parties in our analyses, we re-estimated the parameters of equation 1 on the set of all niche parties in our data set that featured at least 10 supporters in each relevant wave of the Eurobarometer surveys (recall that the analyses reported above were conducted on the set of niche parties that featured at least 50 Eurobarometer supporters per survey). This expanded definition increased the number of relevant niche party supporters' Left–Right shifts in our data set from 42 to 90. Column 2 in Table 3 reports the parameter estimates with these small niche parties included, while for comparison purposes column 1 presents the parameter estimates with small niche parties excluded (column 1 in Table 3 is therefore identical to column 1 in Table 2). This comparison shows that our conclusions are robust to the inclusion of small niche parties: the parameter estimate on the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] variable is again near zero and is statistically insignificant, indicating that there is no evidence of contemporaneous partisan sorting with respect to niche parties, while the coefficient estimate on the lagged version of this variable, [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*], is again positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), which provides evidence of lagged partisan sorting with respect to niche parties. Furthermore the coefficient estimate on the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*] variable when estimated on the set of all niche parties regardless of size, +0.36, is nearly identical to this coefficient when estimated on the set of larger niche parties only (+0.39).

Column 3 in Table 3 reports coefficient estimates using an alternative definition of niche parties, one that includes green and radical right parties but excludes communist parties, a definition that matches the perspective on niche parties advanced by Meguid (2008) and Spoon (2011).⁹ With communist parties excluded from the niche party category, the number of niche party supporters' Left–Right shifts in our data set drops from 42 to 25. However, our conclusions are robust to this alternative definition of niche parties: the parameter estimate on the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] variable is again near zero and is statistically insignificant, while the coefficient estimate on the lagged version of this variable, [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*] is +0.44, which is again

TABLE 3
 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHIFTS IN NICHE PARTY SUPPORTERS' LEFT-
 RIGHT POSITIONS, AND NICHE PARTIES' LEFT-RIGHT SHIFTS:
 SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSES

	Basic model (1)		Small niche parties included (2)		Communist parties omitted (3)		Errors-in-variables analyses (correlation between experts' perceptions and actual party shifts)			
							Correlation set to 0.8 (4)	Correlation set to 0.6 (5)		
<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left-Right shift (t)</i>	0.05	(0.05)	-0.09	(0.13)	0.11	(0.09)	0.06	(0.12)	0.11	(0.15)
<i>Experts' perception of party j's Left-Right shift (t - 1)</i>	0.39**	(0.12)	0.36*	(0.18)	0.44**	(0.11)	0.49*	(0.18)	0.66**	(0.23)
<i>Party j supporters' Left-Right shift (t - 1)</i>	-0.26*	(0.13)	-0.28*	(0.13)	-0.26	(0.15)	-0.26*	(0.13)	-0.28*	(0.11)
Intercept	0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.00)	0.01	(0.00)
<i>N</i>	42		90		25		42		42	
<i>R</i> ²	0.23		0.10		0.28		0.27		0.33	

** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; two-tailed tests.

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. For these analyses the dependent variable was the change in the mean self-placement of the focal niche party's supporters on the Left-Right scale between the year of the current Chapel Hill expert survey and the year of the previous Chapel Hill expert survey, based on Eurobarometer respondents' self-placements. For the analyses reported in all columns except for columns 2-3, niche parties are defined as members of the communist, green, and nationalist party families, according to the party family codings of the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), and the analyses encompass all parties which had at least 50 supporters in the Eurobarometer surveys. Column 2 reports results when these analyses are expanded to encompass all niche parties which had at least 10 supporters in the Eurobarometer surveys. Column 3 reports results when communist parties are excluded from the definition of niche parties. Columns 4-5 report errors-in-variables (EIV) analyses, in which we specify correlations between the measured values of the experts' perceptions of the focal party's (current and lagged) Left-Right shifts, and the true values of these shifts. Column 4 reports the coefficient estimates when this correlation is specified as 0.8, and column 5 reports the coefficient estimates when this correlation is specified as 0.6.

substantively and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).¹⁰ These coefficient estimates thereby continue to support the Niche Parties Hypothesis and the Lagged Effects Hypothesis.

Finally, we explored the possible effects of errors in our measures of niche party elites' Left-Right shifts, which are based on over-time changes in the CHES respondents' mean party placements. Although the CHES experts' party placements have been extensively validated (see e.g. Hooghe *et al.* 2010) it is plausible that some experts are imperfectly informed about the

parties' positions, and furthermore these experts may have differing interpretations of the Left–Right scales on which they placed the parties (see Budge 2000), a possibility that can lead to errors in the measures of party Left–Right shifts if the identities of the country CHES expert respondents change over time. For these computations we employed errors-in-variables (EIV) analysis, in which the analyst can specify the degree of reliability of the measured variable values, where reliability is defined as the correlation between the measured and the true or underlying values of the focal variables. Specifically, in EIV analysis the reliability of the measured value of each independent variable is specified on a 0–1 scale, where 1 denotes perfect reliability (i.e. that the correlation between the measured value and the true value of the variable is 1.0) and 0 denotes complete unreliability (i.e. that the measured and true values of the variable are uncorrelated).¹¹ To explore the effects of different degrees of measurement error on our substantive conclusions, we re-estimated the parameters of equation 1 on the set of niche parties while successively specifying the reliability of the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] variable, and the lagged version of this variable, to 0.9, 0.8, 0.7, and 0.6, where the reliability level 0.8, for instance, denotes that the correlation between the CHES experts' perceptions of niche parties' Left–Right shifts and the true or underlying values of these Left–Right shifts is 0.8. Columns 4–5 in Table 3 display the coefficient estimates when the reliability levels for the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] variable and the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*] variable were set to 0.8 (column 4) and to 0.6 (column 5).¹² These estimates continue to support the Niche Party Hypothesis and the Lagged Effects Hypothesis: the coefficient estimates on the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t)*] variable remain near zero and are statistically insignificant, while the estimates on the lagged version of this variable, [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*], remain positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Indeed, as we specify greater degrees of error in our measures of niche party elites' Left–Right shifts, the coefficient estimate on the [*Expert perceptions of j's Left–Right shift (t – 1)*] variable increases: this coefficient estimate is +0.39 when we specify no error in our measure of party Left–Right shifts (column 1), but the coefficient estimate increases to +0.49 when we specify a reliability measure of 0.8 for this variable (column 4), and the estimate increases to +0.66 when we specify a reliability measure of 0.6 for this variable (column 5). This latter estimate implies that when niche party elites shift their party's Left–Right position by one unit along the 0–1 scale, the mean Left–Right position of the niche party's supporters will shift by roughly two-thirds of one unit during the subsequent period, along an identical 0–1 scale. Thus when we specify realistic degrees of error in our measures of niche party elites' policy shifts, our coefficient estimates imply that these elite shifts will prompt (lagged) shifts of comparable magnitude in niche party supporters' Left–Right positions.

Finally, we note that we have replicated the analyses reported in Tables 2–3 using the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) codings of party Left–Right positions in place of the CHES experts’ perceptions of these positions, and these analyses reveal no statistical association – for either niche or for mainstream party supporters – between shifts in the parties’ Left–Right positions and shifts in their supporters’ (current or lagged) Left–Right positions. These analyses thereby support the results reported in Adams *et al.* (2011), that rank-and-file voters do not perceive or react to shifts in the Left–Right tone of parties’ election manifestos.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to parse out the causal processes that drive our findings of empirical support for the Niche Parties Hypothesis, Table 4 reports comparisons of the levels of political engagement among niche party supporters, mainstream party supporters, and political independents, which suggest that the stronger partisan sorting processes in the mass public with respect to niche parties may arise because niche party supporters are disproportionately engaged in politics. The table reports the proportions of Eurobarometer respondents across 1992–2002 who reported that they frequently discussed politics (row 1), along with the proportions of respondents who were classified as opinion leaders – i.e. those who reported that they discussed politics ‘frequently’ and that they attempted to persuade others to change their political viewpoints ‘often’ or ‘from time to time’ (row 2), stratified by the respondent’s partisanship. These computations demonstrate that niche party supporters displayed substantially higher degrees of political engagement than did mainstream parties’ supporters (and that both types of partisans were more engaged than were non-partisans).

TABLE 4
INCIDENCE OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION AND OPINION LEADERSHIP

	Niche party supporter	Mainstream party supporter	Independent
Frequently discusses politics	20.0%	15.4%	8.6%
Discusses politics and attempts to persuade others (opinion leader)	16.3%	12.1%	6.2%
<i>N</i>	3,876	26,549	3,288

Note: The percentages reported in the row labelled ‘Frequently discusses politics’ show the proportions of Eurobarometer respondents who chose the response category ‘frequently’ in answer to the question ‘When you get together with friends, would you say that you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally, or never?’ The percentages reported in the row labelled ‘Discusses politics and attempts to persuade others (opinion leader)’ show the proportions of Eurobarometer respondents who stated that they discussed politics ‘frequently’ and who also stated that they attempted to persuade friends ‘often’ or ‘from time to time’. The percentages in the table are calculated over Eurobarometer survey data from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden, over the period 1992–2002 for all parties with at least 50 supporters, plus all respondents who did not identify with a party.

Conclusion

The linkage between the policy positions of party elites and rank-and-file citizens is central to representative democracy. We analyse whether citizens respond to shifts in the Left–Right ideologies of party elites in Western Europe. Our project is motivated by two recent studies: that of Adams *et al.* (2011), which reports analyses suggesting that rank-and-file citizens do not systematically perceive and react to the Left–Right tone of the policy statements that parties publish in their election manifestos, and a study by Fortunato and Stevenson (forthcoming), which presents remarkable evidence that citizens update their perceptions of parties' Left–Right positions in response to an important feature of party elites' behaviour – namely, parties' decisions to enter (or forgo) governing coalitions with particular sets of rival parties.

This set of findings motivated us to analyse partisan sorting in the electorate in response to parties' Left–Right policy shifts, as these shifts were perceived by political experts. Our reasoning was that because these experts plausibly weigh all relevant information when estimating parties' positions – including the content of party elites' speeches, interviews, and policy manifestos, along with elites' coalition bargaining behaviour and their roll-call votes – these experts' perceptions arguably provide reliable measures of the parties' Left–Right positions based on all relevant evidence. And hence, to the extent that we observe partisan sorting in the mass public that is consistent with these experts' perceptions of party positions, this will provide evidence that citizens react to the wider informational environment when updating their own Left–Right positions and their party support, even if citizens do not specifically cue off parties' election-year manifestos. Our empirical analyses suggest that this is indeed the case, at least with respect to mass–elite policy linkages between citizens and niche parties. Specifically, in situations where experts perceive that niche parties – namely green, communist, and radical right parties – have shifted their Left–Right positions, we observe large, substantively (and statistically) significant shifts in the mean Left–Right positions of these niche parties' supporters – a finding that supports our Niche Parties Hypothesis. Moreover, the timing of these niche party supporters' Left–Right shifts, specifically that these shifts are lagged relative to niche party elites' policy shifts, strongly implies a causal process whereby niche party supporters are reacting to niche party elites' shifts, not vice versa. Our finding of lagged effects supports our Lagged Effects Hypothesis. Our findings are robust to alternative definitions of niche parties (including definitions that include and those that exclude communist parties and ethno-territorial parties), to the inclusion or exclusion of very small niche parties in our data set, and to accounting for possible error in our (expert-based) measures of niche parties' policy shifts. By contrast, we find no evidence that citizens exhibit (current or lagged) reactions to mainstream parties' policy shifts, as these shifts are perceived by political experts.

Our findings raise the question of what individual-level processes explain the aggregate-level patterns that we identify, whereby we observe significant degrees of mass-level partisan sorting in response to niche parties' – but not mainstream parties' – Left–Right policy shifts. In this regard, the argument of Adams *et al.* (2006) – that in comparison to mainstream parties, niche parties tend to attract more policy-focused supporters – seems relevant here. To the extent this is the case, we might expect niche party supporters to be disproportionately sensitive to parties' policy shifts, and thus to abandon their party more quickly when it shifts its policies in ways of which these supporters disapprove, while supporting their party more enthusiastically when the party's policies mirror these supporters' beliefs. While we do not fully parse out this argument, we have reported preliminary support for this explanation in the Eurobarometer data, in that we find that the supporters of niche parties display markedly greater degrees of political engagement than do the supporters of mainstream parties.

We emphasise that our (non-)findings on partisan sorting in the mass public in response to mainstream parties' Left–Right shifts do not preclude other types of mass-level reactions to mainstream parties' policies. For instance Wlezien's (1995, 1996; see also Erikson *et al.* 2002; Soroka and Wlezien 2010) thermostatic model posits that citizens respond to government policy outputs by shifting their policy preferences in the opposite direction from the government's current policies – i.e. Wlezien concludes that aggregate citizen demand for government spending decreases when governments spend more, and vice versa. Note that such effects operate at the level of the mass public as a whole, not just the governing parties' current supporters, so that our (non-)findings on partisan sorting with respect to mainstream parties do not rule out this type of thermostatic effect. In addition, Ezrow and Xezonakis (2011) report evidence that parties' Left–Right positions influence citizens' satisfaction with democracy, a pattern that is unrelated to the types of partisan sorting analyses that we report here. Finally, both Meguid (2008) and Milazzo *et al.* (2012) conclude that mainstream political parties can, via their policy positions, influence the salience that citizens attach to different policy dimensions, i.e. that mainstream parties influence the 'terms of the debate' in the mass public via their policy positioning. *In toto*, this research suggests that both niche and mainstream parties' policy positions may prompt a variety of reactions from rank-and-file voters. Our contribution is to present analyses that imply that, with respect to partisan sorting processes relating to Left–Right policy debates, citizens react more strongly to niche parties' policy shifts than they do to the policy shifts of mainstream parties.

A further caveat to the present study is that we limit our analysis to the Left–Right dimension. Studies by Carmines and Stimson (1989) and de Vries (2007) suggest that voters are more likely to take cues from parties on new dimensions of political conflict, such as civil rights in the United States or on support for European integration in Western Europe. Whereas

citizens may hold deeply embedded attitudes with respect to classic Left–Right debates (Tavits 2007), voter attitudes may be more malleable with respect to new and emerging dimensions of political debate. With respect to the countries in Western Europe in our study, conducting parallel analyses matching elite–supporter preferences for European integration would be worthwhile.

For now, however, we are left with the empirical pattern that there is little (or no) evidence of partisan sorting with respect to mainstream parties' Left–Right positions, regardless of whether these party positions are measured based on the codings of parties' election manifestos (as demonstrated by Adams *et al.* 2011), or whether parties' positions are measured based on the perceptions of political experts (as we document here). While we do not discount the possibility that alternative measures of mainstream parties' Left–Right positions – or alternative measures of their supporters' positions – may support different substantive conclusions, we believe these patterns raise important issues for future research on mass–elite policy linkages. By contrast, our finding that niche party supporters' (lagged) Left–Right shifts track experts' perceptions of elite-level shifts by niche parties, in combination with the earlier Adams *et al.* (2011) finding that this relationship does not hold when niche party elites' Left–Right shifts are measured based on their election manifestos, suggests that partisan sorting processes occur with respect to niche parties because their supporters respond to the wider informational environment that encompasses all relevant information pertaining to niche parties – including the content of party elites' speeches and interviews, along with elites' coalition bargaining behaviour and their actual roll-call votes – not simply the content of niche parties' election manifestos. This finding on niche parties supports the earlier thesis of Adams *et al.* (2006), that niche parties and their supporters are indeed fundamentally different from mainstream parties, in ways that have important implications for political representation.

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Notes

1. Fortunato and Stevenson find that citizens perceive that parties that jointly participate in a governing coalition are more similar on Left–Right policy than is implied by these parties' manifesto-based policy statements alone, and that citizens' perceptions of party positions are also mediated by parties' past coalition behaviour.

2. As we discuss below, our conclusions are robust to alternative definitions of what constitutes a niche party, namely to the inclusion of ethno-territorial parties and also to the exclusion of communist parties (see e.g. Meguid 2008; Spoon 2011).
3. We note that we do not include the 2006 Chapel Hill expert survey in our analyses because our measures of party supporters' positions, described below, stops at 2002.
4. We note that Spain and Portugal were not included in the Eurobarometer surveys until 1981 and 1986, respectively. Finland was first included on the Eurobarometer survey in 1993, and Sweden and Austria were first included in 1994.
5. In each Eurobarometer survey respondents are asked to indicate their party support by answering the question: 'If there were a "general election" tomorrow, which party would you support?'
6. We also estimated the parameters of our model while omitting the lagged independent variable, and these estimates supported substantive conclusions that were identical to those we report below.
7. Since the Eurobarometer surveys typically feature approximately 1,000 respondents, the condition that at least 50 respondents support the focal party entails that the party command a minimum of roughly 5 per cent support.
8. We thank two anonymous reviewers for suggesting the analyses we report in this subsection of the paper.
9. We note that several additional definitions of niche parties exist. There are recent studies that classify niche parties based on their emphasis of non-Left-Right issues (Wagner forthcoming; see also Meyer and Wagner 2011). We do not employ this measure, because we are analysing responsiveness on the Left-Right dimension.
10. We note that we also estimated the parameters of our model for an expanded definition of niche parties that included ethno-territorial parties along with green, communist, and radical right parties, and that the parameter estimates continued to support our substantive conclusions.
11. In standard regression analysis the analyst implicitly specifies that all variables are accurately measured, i.e. the assumed reliability of each variable is set to 1.0.
12. The coefficient estimates with the reliability levels set to 0.9 and to 0.7 (available upon request) support identical substantive conclusions.

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APPENDIX
PARTIES INCLUDED IN ANALYSES

	Party name	Abbreviation	Years
Belgium	Socialist Party (Francophone)	PS	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Socialist Party (Flemish)	SP	1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Ecologists (Francophone)	ECOLO	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Ecologists (Flemish)	AGALEV	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Christian Social Party (Francophone)	PSC	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Christian People's Party (Flemish)	CVP	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Flemish Bloc (Flemish)	VB	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
Denmark	Social Democratic Party	SD	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Radical Party	RV	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Conservative People's Party	KF	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Centre Democrats	CD	1988, 1992
	Socialist Peoples' Party	SF	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Liberals	V	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Progress Party	FP	1988, 1992
Germany	Christian Democratic Union	CDU	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Social Democratic Party	SPD	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Free Democratic Party	FDP	1988, 1992
	Republikaner	REP	1988, 1992
Greece	Pan Hellenic Socialist Movement	PASOK	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	New Democracy	ND	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Progressive Left Coalition	SAP, SYN	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Communist Party of Greece	KKE	1996, 1999
Spain	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party	PSOE	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Popular Party	PP	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	United Left	IU	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Convergence and Union (Catalan)	CiU	1988, 1992
France	French Communist Party	PCF	1988, 1992, 1996
	Socialist Party	PS	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Ecologists	VERTS	1988, 1992
	Rally for the Republic (Gaullist)	RPR	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	National Front	FN	1988, 1992, 1996
	Union for French Democracy	UDF	1996, 1999
Ireland	Fianna Fail	FF	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Fine Gael	FG	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Labour Party	LP	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
Italy	Christian Democrats/ Popular Party	DC/PP	1988, 1992

(continued)

APPENDIX
(Continued)

	Party name	Abbreviation	Years
	Newly Founded Communists	RC	1996, 1999
	Italian Socialist Party	PSI	1988, 1992
	Italian Social Movement-Right National/ National Alliance	MSI-DN, AN	1988, 1992
Netherlands	Christian Democratic Appeal	CDA	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Labour Party	PvdA	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Liberal Party	VVD	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Democrats '66	D'66	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999
	Green League	GL	1996, 1999
United Kingdom	Conservative Party	TORY	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Labour Party	LAB	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
	Liberal Democratic Party	LDP	1988, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2002
Portugal	Portuguese Socialist Party	PSP	1996, 1999, 2002
	Popular Democratic Party/ Social Democratic Party	PPD/PSD	1996, 1999, 2002
Austria	Austrian People's Party	ÖVP	1996, 1999, 2002
	Socialist Party	SPÖ	1996, 1999, 2002
	Austrian Freedom Party/ Freedom Movement	FPÖ	1996, 1999, 2002
	Green Alternative/ Greens	GA	1996, 1999, 2002
Finland	Social Democratic Party	SSDP	1996, 1999, 2002
	National Coalition	KOK	1996, 1999, 2002
	Finnish Centre	KESK	1996, 1999, 2002
	Finnish People's Democratic Union/ Left Wing Alliance	SKDL/VL	1996, 1999, 2002
	Swedish People's Party	RKP/SFP	1996, 1999
	Green Union	VIHR	1996, 1999, 2002
	Christian League	SKL	1996, 1999
Sweden	Left Communists Party, Left Party	VK, V	1996, 1999, 2002
	Social Democratic Labour Party	SAP	1996, 1999, 2002
	Liberal People's Party	FPL	1996, 1999
	Moderate Coalition Party	MSP	1996, 1999, 2002
	Christian Democrats	KdS	1996, 1999, 2002
	Green Party, Green Ecology Party	GRONA, MP	1996, 1999

Note: Parties and Acronyms taken from Chapel Hill Expert Survey 1984–99 Codebook. The parties chosen overlap with both the Chapel Hill Expert Survey and Eurobarometer Surveys, are available for at least two waves of both the Chapel Hill Expert Survey and the Eurobarometer, and have at least 50 supporters in the Eurobarometer survey.