What Helps Citizens to Have Consistent Attitudes? A Cross Country Analysis of the Individual and Contextual Determinants of Attitude Constraint.

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Abstract:
The inconsistency of the beliefs citizens have about political issues is neither a new nor a surprising finding for political scientists (Converse 1964). Still at least from a normative point of view attitude constraint is a desideratum that is important for the quality of electoral decisions and ultimately for the quality of democracy (Friedman 2006). Under these circumstances it is not surprising that several studies examined the constraint between the attitudes of the citizens (Converse 1964; Converse and Pierce 1986; Peffley and Hurwitz 1985; Zaller 1990; 1992 Sturgis, Roberts and Allum 2005; Granberg and Holmberg 2006). One factor that is especially important is the level of political knowledge, more informed voters should have higher levels of attitude constraint as they are better able to identify their preferences (Althaus 1998; Carmines and Stimson 1980; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Lau and Redlawsk 1997; 2006; Downs 1957; Dahl 1989; Converse 1964). But at the same time as most voters are politically ignorant, a simple heuristic such as having a party ID might help them have consistent political attitudes, compensating for lower levels of political knowledge (Lupia 1994; Popkin 1994; Lau and Redlawsk 2001; Zaller 2004). This paper will further investigate the determinants of attitude/issue constraint with an emphasis on political knowledge and party ID, as a simple heuristic. Its major contribution is that it will go further than the single country environment in which this was studied before. Using the 2009 European Election study, will also allow me to bring context into the picture by analyzing how the level of attitude constraint varies across the institution rich environment provided by the 27 member states of the EU. The empirical analysis shows that while political knowledge and the constraint of elites have a consistent effect of attitude constraint, the effect of polarization and partisanship is at best limited.

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Introduction

One of the most interesting findings presented by Converse in his essay "Belief Systems in Mass Publics" is that most citizens manifest high inconsistencies when it comes to their attitudes (1964). The normative implications of this finding are worrying for at least two reasons. First, from a macro perspective, the inconsistency of attitudes has profound implications for the democratic theory (as it impacts the quality of electoral decisions) and, ultimately, for the quality of democracy (Peffley and Hurwitz 1985; Friedman 2006). Second, from a micro perspective, it casts doubt on the sophistication of citizens and their capacity to make rational decisions (Key 1966; Downs 1957; Peffley and Hurwitz 1985).

Even if most citizens have inconsistent attitudes, we cannot expect that this is equally true for everybody. Indeed previous research showed that the level of attitude consistency is higher among the most knowledgeable/sophisticated part of the population (Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Feldman 1989; Jacoby 1995; Zaller 1992; Sturgis 2003; Luskin 1987; Rosenberg 1988; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Carmines and Stimsons 1982). Also, we can expect people who use cognitive heuristics can act as though they were well informed (Popkin 1994; Lupia 1994; Page and Shapiro 1992), and using this sort of mechanism would lead to a higher level of attitude constraint.

Therefore the research question to be tested in this paper builds on previous research by further testing if a higher level of political knowledge or relying on a simple heuristic, such as partisanship, can lead to a higher level of attitude constraint: It might seem that the answer to this question is trivial as previous studies showed but, these mostly focused on single country analysis (the US) or, at best, engaged in two country comparisons (Granberg

and Holemberg 1988). Hence building on the previously observed difference between Sweden and USA (Granberg and Holemberg 1988), I expect that this relation is not uniform across all countries. More exactly, contextual factors might directly influence attitude constraint and also moderate the relation between political knowledge/heuristics and attitude constraint. For this reason I chose to test the relation between political knowledge and partisanship (as a simple heuristic) on the one hand, and attitude constraint on the other hand, using the institutional diversity and the different informational environments of the European Union.

Attitude constraint and its determinants

Attitude constraint is a phenomenon that received attention since the early studies of voting behavior (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964) and it refers to the level of consistency between attitudes within an individual belief system that is based on a combination of logical, social and psychological factors (Converse 1964). Its general conceptualization requires consistency between concrete issue positions (Converse 1964). Although an alternative conceptualization is based on the consistency between abstract principles and concrete issue positions (Peffley and Hurwitz, 1985), this paper relies on the initial conceptualization of Converse which was also used in several other studies (see e.g. Sturgis et al. 2005; Granberg and Holemberg 1988; 1996; Feldman 1989; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Carmines and Stimsons 1982; Nie and Anderson 1974).

Despite the fact that the initial findings of Converse regarding low levels of consistency of the average citizen are still seen as controversial since researchers are offering

mix evidence about the overall level of consistency of the general population (Converse 1964; . Sturgis et al. 2005; Granberg and Holemberg 1988; 1996; Feldman 1989; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Carmines and Stimsons 1982; Nie and Anderson 1974; Nie Verba and Petrocik 1974; Strugis et al. 2005; Sulivan et al, 1978 ; Feldman 1989). This previous research is especially relevant for this paper because it shows that there is substantial variance in the level of attitude constraint depending on the selected issues and most importantly across different contexts.

Less controversial is the positive impact that political knowledge should have on issue constraint. As people with higher level of political knowledge are better able to identify their preferences and own interests (Althaus 1998; Bartels 1996: Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996, 223; Dahl 1989; Downs 1956, 79-80; Moore 1987, Sturgis 2003; Somin 2006; Kroh 2009) we can expect them to have higher levels of issue constraint. Thus, it is not surprising that the political behavior literature identified political knowledge/sophistication as the primary reason for the variance in issues constraint. Initially Converse was the one who pointed out that the more sophisticated voter manifests higher level of consistency between issue positioning (Converse 1964). This finding has been successfully replicated across time and, more importantly, across different countries (Converse 1964; Converse and Pierce 1986; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Feldman 1989; Jacoby 1995; Zaller 1992; Sturgis 2003; Luskin 1987; Rosenberg 1988; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; Carmines and Stimsons 1982; Sturigs et al. 2005). Still, not all the evidence points in the same direction. The results from deliberative poll experiment carried out by Sturgis et al. (2005), hat should theoretically bring an increase in the level of political sophistication (Fishkin 1996; Fishkin 2003; Fishkin and

Luskin 2005; Brady et. al 2003), presented mixed evidence. Hence, not only under most circumstances the deliberation process did not contribute to increasing the level of issue consistency, but in the case of some issues and for some participants (especially the lower informed) the deliberation process lead to a decrease in consistency (Sturgis et al. 2005).

Even if we ignore this last piece of evidence and accept that a higher level of political knowledge could increase the level of issue constraint, the normative implication of holding inconsistent attitude is still a matter of concern. And this is the case when we consider that most citizens are widely ignorant about politics and have low levels of political knowledge (Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), thus are also expected to have less consistent attitudes. If the problems concerning the quality of democracy could be solved by aggregation, i.e. the society as a whole could function according to democratic principles irrespective of the quality of the people it is made up of (Page and Shapiro 1992), the (in)capacity of these least knowledgeable citizens (who represent the majority) to hold consistent issue positioning remains problematic. This is especially true if we take into account the fact that issue positioning is one of the factors which influences vote choice, hence the quality of representation among lower informed voters, who were shown to manifest lower levels of issue constraint, remains problematic.

Consider this last point, the fact that heuristics can compensate for the lack of information that most voters face in making political decisions and make them act as though they were well informed (Popkin 1994; Lupia 1994; Page and Shapiro 1992) comes as a relief. It was shown that mechanisms such as party affiliation, ideology, endorsements, poll results, candidate appearance, representativeness, framing, are indeed employed effectively

by voters when making political decisions (Brady and Sniderman 1985; Hamill, Lodge, and Blake 1985; Iyengar 1990; Jervis 1986; Lodge and Hamill 1986; Lupia 1994; Popkin 1994; Ottai 1994; Scholz 1998; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991) and contribute to the proper functioning of democracy even if most voters work with limited information (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Simon 1985). So we can expect that by employing the same type of cognitions individuals could have high levels of issue constraint even in they have lower levels of political knowledge.

If until now only individual level determinants of issue constraint where taken into account, in the next part I will bring up the possible role that context might have in explaining the variance in issue constraint. Even though it was argued that there is substantial variance in the level of issue constraint both across time (Carmines and Stimsons 1982; Nie and Anderson 1974; Nie Verba and Petrocik 1974) and across countries (Converse and Pierce 1986; Granberg and Holmberg 1988) a systematic analysis of the causes of this variance was not carried out until now. Granberg and Holmberg (1988) point to the fact that cross country difference in issue constraint and stability could be a function of the "strength" of the party system, yet this assumption is only supported by a rather simplistic comparison between USA and Sweden. Consequently, one of the main goals of this paper is to provide a more detailed analysis of how the context (specific country characteristics) could impact the level of attitude constraint.

The impact of two specific contextual variables will be analyzed in this paper. The first is the overall level of political polarization. Since it was shown that a highly polarized party system would make options and issues clearer for voters (Alavarez and Nagler 2004;

Carmines and Stimson 1986; Pomper 1972), I also expect that this clarity would lead to higher levels of issue consistency. This was shown to be true using an experimental design (Levendusky 2008) or in the US context (Baldassarri and Gelman 2008), but not in cross country analysis.

Second it has been acknowledged that the attitudes of citizens are influenced by the ones of the elites (Carmines and Stimson 1986; Zaller 1992), hence, we can expect that in countries where elites have higher levels of attitude constraint, those of the citizens will also be higher. The principle through which elite constraint should influence the constraint of citizens is similar to the case of polarization, higher elite constraint would mean higher clarity (Carmines and Stimson 1986) which would make it easier for citizens to have consistent issue positions.

Methodology, Measurements and Case Selection

The data used for the statistical analysis comes from the European Election Survey 2009, a cross national survey that comprises the 27 member countries of the EU. Although this survey happens to be carried out in the context of the EU elections, none of the variables used for the analysis is specific to these elections. On the contrary, all the variables focus on national issues and national parties, with the European Parliament elections only providing an opportunity to collect comparable data (see Appendix 1, 2, and 3). Hence, possible criticism related to second order election influencing the behavior of voters (Hix & Lord, 1997; Schmitt 2005; Heath, McLean, Taylor, & Curtice, 1999; Weber, 2011), is not applicable. Furthermore, we can expect that in these elections citizens express beliefs that are

closer to their everyday beliefs, since they are less influenced by the flow of the campaign - lower than in first order elections, due primarily to the failure of parties to campaign (Cayrol 1991; Norris & Reif, 1997; Vreese, 2003).

Using this data set allows for testing the way in which political knowledge and party ID influence issue constraint across different institutional settings. Consequently, any future findings could be generalized to a large array of electoral democracies because of the large diversity of the cases selected.

The operationalization of issues/attitude constraint used in this paper will build on the approach that evaluates attitude/issue constraint by using the correlation between policy attitude/policy issues (e.g. Campbell et al. 1960, Converse 1964, Nie and Andersen 1964, Carmine and Stokes 1982; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; 1996; Sturigs et al. 2005). Thus, the 11 out of the 12 issue dimensions present in the EES 2009 voter study and which are relevant for the general left-right competition will be used[2]. In line with previous research they will be split up into two categories economic and moral (Marks et al. 2006; Benoit and Laver 2006), but I also use them together as they should general reflect the left-right political competition.[3]

Two different operationalization of attitude constraint will be computed. The first one is based on the classical correlation approach (see e.g. Campbell et al. 1960, Converse

[2] the attitudes towards EU were dropped since they are generally regarded as being orthogonal to the left-right completion (Hix 1999), as parties opposing the EU tend to be at the extreme of the left-right axis (Hix and Lord; Marks et al. 2002)

[3] Since there is a debate regarding the belonging of immigration issues to the economic axis (Benoit and Laver 2006) or to the moral axis (Marks et al. 2002) they were not included in either of the domains, but only used to reflect general left-right competition.

1964, Nie and Andersen 1964, Carmine and Stokes 1982; Granberg and Holmberg 1988; 1996; Sturigs et al. 2005) and measure attitude constraint as the average correlation across the issue domains in a given country. Using this operationalization the average moral, economic and combined (taking into account both moral and economic issue) constraint will be computed for all countries. Unfortunately this measurement does not allow for the investigation of individual level determinants of issue constraint (the dependent variable will be at the country level). Therefore, in order to test for the macro determinants (i.e. polarization and elite constraint) of attitude constraint an OLS country level regression will be used. In this stage the average level of political knowledge in a country and the percent of partisans will be considered as proxy for the general influence of political knowledge and party ID on attitude constraint.

The second operationalization will be based on a proximity logic and takes into account the within individual variance of issue placements (Fazekas 2012). Hence in the first step the variance of placements across issues for each respondent was computed. But since not all individuals respond to all issue questions, the variance for individuals with a higher item non-response might be higher (the sum of squares is divided by a smaller denominator). Thus, in order to allow for between individual variance to be comparable across individuals, I correct for the theoretical maximum given by the number of issues (Fazekas 2012). Therefore the variance score will take values between 0 and 1. Finally as high variance reflects low attitude constraint I choose to invert the scale, so that high values will reflect high issue constraint.

In this case the knowledge questions in this survey also provide a reliable measure of political knowledge (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Also, the effect of party ID/party closeness is considered a simple heuristics that acts as a proxy for both "cues" and "sources" of information (Lau, Andersen and Redlawsk 2008).

In the case of both operationalization the level of ideological polarization will be measured based on the placement of parties by the respondents of the Voter Study. Last but not least, the elite constraint will be operationalized using the classical correlation approach. More exactly as the average correlation across the issue domains among political elites in a given country, measured based on the data provided by the Candidate Survey of EES 2009. (See Appendix 3 for details).

Empirical analysis

It should be firstly noted that (after inverting the scale so in both cases low values reflect leftist attitudes) the average cross country correlations between issues seem rather low (see Figures 1 to 3). But when comparing the results to the ones presented in similar papers (e.g. Baldassarri and Gelman 2008) they match previous findings. Even more important to note is that there is substantial cross country variation on all 3 domains (economic, moral, and the combined one reflecting the left-right supper issue)

[Figure 1 to 3 around here]

Starting from this point analyzing what determines individuals to have higher levels of issue constraint and why this is so different across countries becomes even more interesting. As mentioned above, the first step of the analysis will consist in a series of country level regression predicting the average issue consistency in a country. But before this, I will investigate how the strength of-the average cross-country correlations differs across individuals having different levels of political knowledge and across partisans and non-partisans.

Comparing the attitude constraint (mean strength of the correlation across issue in a domain) of individuals having different levels of political knowledge (see Table 2) clearly shows that across all the 3 issue domains the highest level of attitude constraint is reached by the most knowledgeable respondents. This supports the initial expectations predicting that the higher levels of attitude constraint could be expected among the better informed voters.

[Table 1 around here]

A similar situation can be observed in the case of party ID (see Table 3). Hence those who can rely on a simple heuristic such as having a party ID, generally have a higher level of attitude constraint when compare to both the non-partisans and the entire sample. It also needs to be noted that across all three issue domains the difference between groups is stronger in the case of knowledge than in the case of partisanship. This suggest that although being a partisan might be associated with higher level of attitude constraint, political knowledge is the more important factors in attaining high levels of attitude constraint

[Table 2 around here]

The second part of the analysis concentrates on the contextual factors that can explain the cross county difference in attitude congruence. It is important to remember that besides polarization and elite consistency, the average level of political knowledge and the percent of partisans in one country were included into the analysis as indicators of the impact that political knowledge and party ID have on attitude constraint.

Table 3 presents separately the results of country level OLS analysis for each issue domain (moral, economic and a general left right which includes the previous two together with immigration issues).

[Table 3 around here]

Looking at the results we can notice with the exception of the moral domain, elite consistency has a positive and statistically significant impact on attitude constraint. Therefore, confirming initial expectations, in countries where elites have more coherent issue positions we expect that the overall level of issue consistency among citizens will be higher. On the other hand higher levels of polarization, which was show to make options and issues clearer for voters (Alavarez and Nagler 2004; Carmines and Stimson 1986; Pomper 1972), do not help. Furthermore, even if in the results are not statistical significant, the effect of polarization is negative.

Looking at the average levels of political knowledge in the country, the results in Table 3 show mixed evidence. In the case of the moral domain and the general left-right domain political knowledge has, as expected, a positive and statistically significant domain. While for the economic domain, although the effect is positive, it is not statistically significant.

The last parameter to be analyzed is the percent of party identifiers in the country. The initial expectation is that using a simple heuristic such as party ID has a positive impact on attitude constraint (expectation confirmed by the results presented in Table 2). Therefore, in countries where the percent of partisans is higher we can expect that more individuals rely on this simple heuristic; hence the average level of attitude constraint is also higher. But the results in Table 3 do not support this expectation as for none of the domains the effect of partisanship reaches statistical significance.

All in all the using the traditional operationalization of attitude constraint the analysis shows that as expected the level of political knowledge and the elite constraint of political elites has a positive impact on attitude constrain. Last but not least the explanatory power of these simple models is quite remarkable, as in the case of the general left-right domain the model explains almost 40% of the cross country variance in attitude constraint.

In what follow the results of a series multilevel models, using an operationalization of attitude constrained based on the within individual variance across issue placements, will be presented. Again 3 issue domain covering 11 issues present in the EES 2009 were considered: moral domain, economic domain, and the combine left-right domain. It needs to

be mentioned that the results using this operationalization has the benefit of allowing to test for individual level difference in attitude constraint.

The results presented in Table 4 confirm both the initial expectations and the previous finding (see Table 3) regarding the positive effect of political knowledge. Still for the moral the result statistical significant for $p<0.1$ which is rather modest taking into account the large N. This casts doubt about the effect of knowledge in the case of moral issue constraint. Therefor the results seem to follow the differentiation between 'hard' and 'easy' issues as described by Carmines and Stimson (1980). Thus it confirms the fact that political knowledge is only important for consistency in the case of "hard" issues (i.e. the economy), while in the case of "easy" issues it does not have an impact on attitude constraint (Carmines and Stimson, 1980).

Also, contrary to initial expectation but confirming the finding yielded by using the traditional opeartionalization of issue constraint (Table 3), the effect of partisanship is not statistically different from 0.

[Table 4 around here]

Although the rest of the individual level predictors in Table 4 are mainly used as controls that should isolate the effect of knowledge and partisanship, the effect of two of them deserve at least some attention. First across all model we can notice that respondents who identify themselves as being more leftist have higher level of attitude constrain, showing that ideology might have an impact on attitude constraint. Second religiosity has a statistical

significant effect in the case of the moral domain but not in the case of the economic domain. To a certain extent this shows the robustness of the present operationalization. One expects religion to be have a positive effect on the moral attitude constraint since the moral domain is related to issues such as abortion, same sex marriage and family. On the other hand since the economic domain is not linked in any way with religious issues, no connection between economic attitude constraint and religion is expected.

When analyzing the effects of the macro variables the same patterns as in the analysis using the traditional operationalization (see Table 3) can be seen. Thus the constraint of elites has a statistically positive effect of the attitude constraint of the respondents. Furthermore this effect is substantive and robust across issue domains, showing the consistency of political elites is an important predictor is explaining cross country difference in attitude constraint.

As in the case when the traditional operationalization of attitude constraint was used, the effect of political polarization does not reach statistical significance in two out of the three domains. Still, when the constraint across all issues is evaluated (Model 6), political polarization reaches statistical significance (it is true that the effect is only significant at $p<0.1$). But, since polarization is measured taking into account the general left-right dimension, this is where the effect of polarization should be the strongest since the 11 issue should theoretically reflect the two dimensions of the left –right competition (Benoit and Laver, 2006; Marks et al. 2006) in both Western and Eastern Europe (Kitschelt, 1992).This somewhat supports the claim that high level of polarization (Alavarez and Nagler 2004;

Carmines and Stimson 1986; Pomper 1972), by making issues clearer to voters, would lead to higher levels of attitude constraint (Levendusky 2008).

Last but not least, although previous expectations were not formulated for this variables, the number effective number of political parties has a positive and substantial effect on attitude constrain. Also in this case the effect is robust across the three domains. This could be viewed as surprising since a higher number of parties could have a blurring effect (Dalton 2008). But on the other hand a large number of parties should be positively correlated with the "supply" of information, since in a multi-party system individuals are more exposed to information about politics.

Conclusions

The overall level of attitude constraint in the population has been raising controversy since the early days of voting behavior literature. Rather than testing if indeed the low levels of attitude constraint are the reality with which citizens are faced, and if this impacts the quality of their decisions and ultimately the quality of democracy, this paper is more concerned with the factors that influence attitude constraint. Four factors were considered relevant predictors for the variance in the level of attitude/issue constraint.

Two of them are individual level factors, and based on previous findings in the literature, I expected that a higher level of political knowledge and having a party ID will lead to a higher level of attitude constraint. Unsurprisingly, the present analysis confirms these previous findings in the case of political knowledge. Hence, at the both the individual and macro level we can expect that the highest level of attitude constraint is reached by the more

knowledgeable. This supports the views according to which higher level of political knowledge bring citizens closer to a democratic ideal in which voters can make rational electoral decisions based on a consistent set of beliefs.

On the other hand limited evidence was found to support the positive effect of partisanship of attitude constraint. Thus both in the macro, analysis using the traditional operationalization, (see Table 3) and in the multilevel models (Table 4), partisanship failed to reach statistical significance. The limited piece of evidence to support the positive effect of partisanship is revealed in Table 2, where, using the classic operationalization of attitude constraint revealed the fact that partisans are more constrained across all domains.

The next step was to investigate what the contextual factors that favor higher level of attitude constraint were. Although there was the claim that contextual factors matter (Granberg and Holmberg, 1988), this was not yet empirically tested. Due to their impact on the clarity of the political scene, two factors were considered to have a positive impact, high political polarization and high elite constraint. As expected, in countries where the message related to the domains under investigation coming from the elite was clear (high elite constraint) we can expect a higher level of attitude constraint. This points to a possible mechanism through which political elites could have a positive impact on citizens.

On the other hand, although previous research showed that at least in the case of the US we could expect a positive impact of polarization (Levendusky 2008; Baldassarri and Gelman 2008); this paper found at best limited evidence to support this claim.

Table 1: Level attitude constraint depending on the level of political knowledge.

	Low informed voters (answered correctly to maximum 1 out of 7 question)	Entire samples	Highly informed voters (answered correctly to minimum 6 out of 7 question)
Economic domain	-.035	.037	.100
Moral domain	.090	.166	.223
Left-Right	.028	.080	.119

[1] Results from spearman correlations

Table 2: Level of attitude constraint depending on partisanship

Strengths of correlation	Non partisans	Entire samples	Party identifiers
Economic domain	.017	.037	.055
Moral domain	.137	.166	.189
Left-Rigth	.063	.080	.094

[1] Results from spearman correlations

Table 3: OLS regression analysis of contextual determinants of attitude constraint [4][5][6]

	Liberal domain	Economic Domain	Left-right Domain
Elite constraint	.069 (0.087)	0.122 (.062)+	.216* (.054)
Polarization	-.028 (.078)	-0.06 (.005)	-.002 (.004)
Knowledge	.042 (.019)	.029 (.019)	.023 (.013)+
PID	.094 (.078)	-.001 (.079)	.029 (.052)
Intercept	-.088 (.140	-.083 (.083)	-.092 (,054)
Adjusted R square	0.152	.163	.384
N	27	27	27

+sig at p<0.1, *sig at p<0.05, unstandardized coefficients, std. errors in parenthesis

[4] The results are consistent with the ones yielded by an OLS regression (see Appendix 5)

[5] The results of a Bayesian analysis leads to very similar results.

[6] Bulgaria was excluded from the analysis as none of the candidates placed themselves on several issues from both moral and economic domain.

Table 4: Multilevel model explaining attitude constraint.[7][8]

	Model 1 Economic domain	Model 2 Economic domain	Model 3 Moral domain	Model 4 Moral domain	Model 5 General Left-Right	Model 6 General Left-Right
Fixed effects:						
Information	.004** (.001)	.004** (.001)	.004 (.002)+	.004 (.002)+	.006*** (.001)	.006*** (.001)
PID	-.005 (.004)	-.005 (.004)	-.002 (.006)	-.002 (.006)	-.004 (.006)	-.004 (.006)
Union	.002 (.003)	.002 (.003)	-.009* (.004)	-.009* (.004)	-.005 (.003)	-.005 (.003)
TV	-.002 (.002)	-.002 (.002)	-.008 .004	-.008 .004	-.006 (.004)	-.006 (.004)
Paper	.001 (.003)	.001 (.003)	.001 (.003)	.001 (.003)	.004 (.003)	.004 (.003)
Web	.006 (.003)+	.006 (.003)+	.008* (.004)	.008* (.004)	.010** (.003)	.010** (.003)
Interest	-.004 (.002)	-.004 (.002)	.001 (.003)	.001 (.003)	-.006* (.003)	-.006* (.003)
Discussion	-.005* (.002)*	-.005* (.002)*	-.009* (.003)	-.009* (.003)	-.010** (.003)	-.010** (.003)
Placement	-.003*** (.001)	-.003*** (.001)	-.002+ (.001)	-.002+ (.001)	-.003* (.001)	-.003* (.001)
Age	-.002*** (.001)	-.002*** (.001)	-.002** (.001)	-.002** (.001)	-.003*** (.001)	-.003*** (.001)
Education	.002*** (.001)	.002*** (.001)	.003*** (.001)	.003*** (.001)	.004*** (.001)	.004*** (.001)
Urban	-.002 (.003)	-.002 (.003)	-.004 (.003)	-.004 (.003)	-.003 (.003)	-.003 (.003)
Religiosity	.001 (.001)	.001 (.001)	.020*** (.002)	.020*** (.002)	.008*** (.002)	.008*** (.002)
Female	.010** (.003)	.010** (.003)	-.032*** (.005)	-.032*** (.005)	-.012** (.004)	-.012** (.004)
Minority	.005 (.007)	.005 (.007)	.013 (.009)	.013 (.009)	.012 (.008)	.012 (.008)
Age squared	.001** (.001)	.001** (.001)	.001* (.001)	.001* (.001)	.001*** (.001)	.001*** (.001)
Elite consistency		.085* (.028)		.285** (.085)		.222 (.038)
Polarization		.004 (.002)		.008 (.005)		.008 (.004)+
Party nr.		.015* (.005)		.042** (.012)		.035 (.009)
Intercept	.832*** (.011)	.833*** (.012)	.629*** (.016)	. 601*** (.030)	.674***(.152)	.674 (.152)***
Random effects, variance:						
Intercept	.031	.027	.068	.061	.055	.055
Information	.004	.004	.012	.012	.007	.007
PID	.013	.013	.024	.024	.023	.023
Residual	.166	.166	.024	.024	.19	.19
N of systems	27	27	27	27	27	27
N individuals	19155	19155	19176	19176	19181	19181
-2LL	-14322	-14328.4	355.4	346.9	-7580	-7595
AIC[9]	-14272	-14724	404	401	-7532	-7541

+ denotes p<0.1, * denotes p<0.05; ** denotes p<0.01; *** denotes p<0.001; standard errors in parenthesis

[7] All model ran using HLM 6, Models ran using lme4 package in R yield very similar results

[8] Bulgaria was excluded from the analysis as none of the candidates placed themselves on several issues from both moral and economic domain.

[9] The result of the AIC are obtained by doing an ANOVA comparison between models

Figure 1, Results of average Spearman correlation across the 28 political regions

Figure 1.1 Avergate cross country correlations for the economic domain

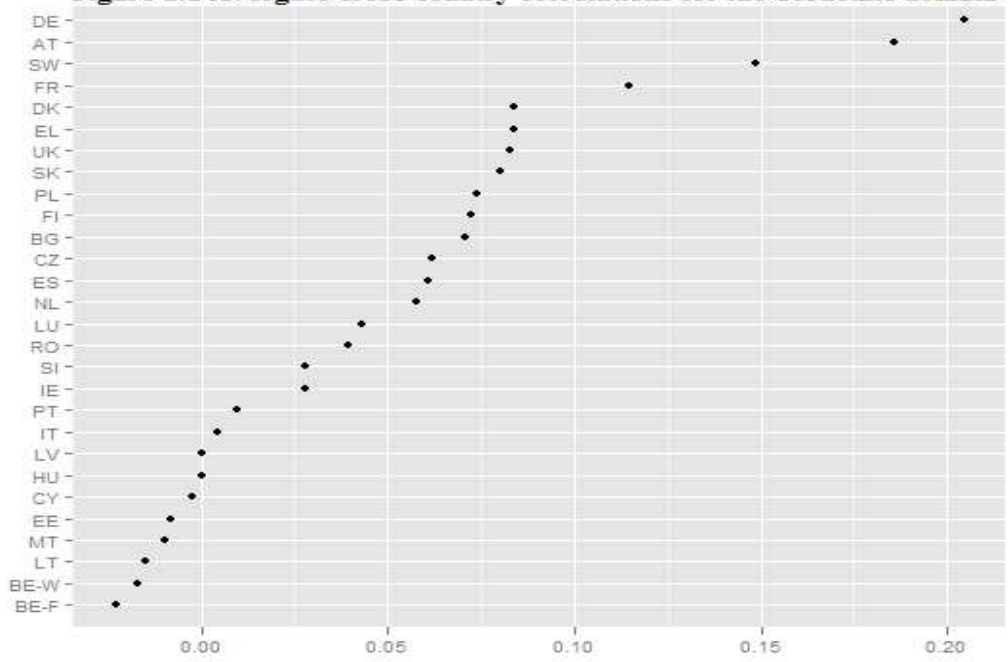


Figure 1.2 Avergate cross country correlations for the moral domain

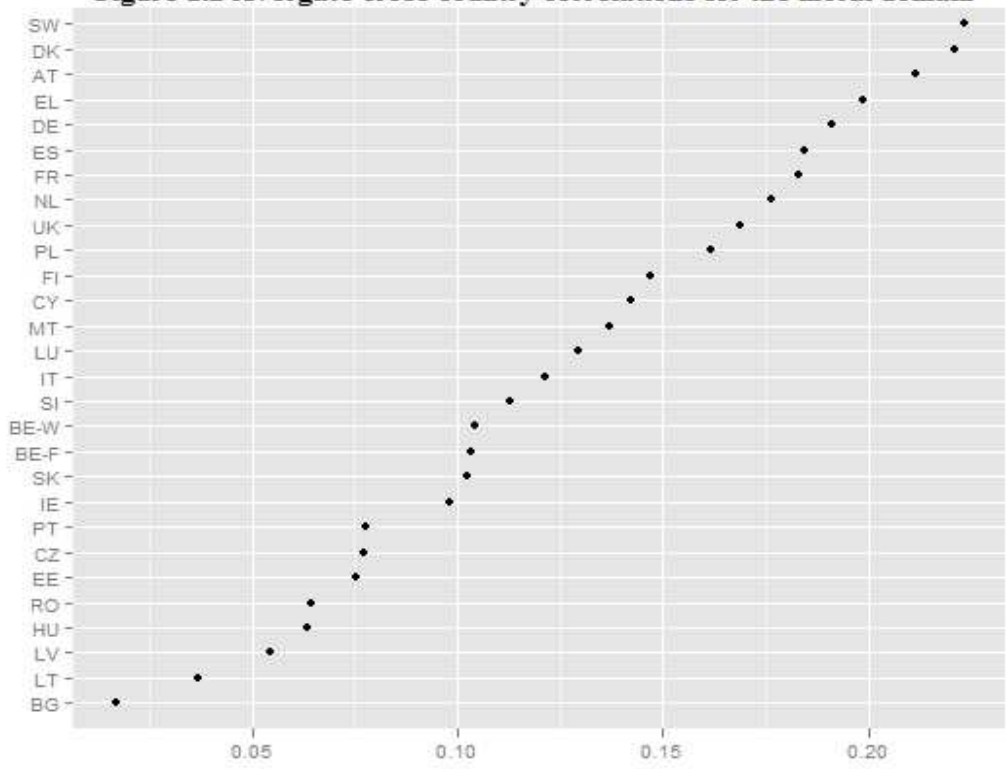
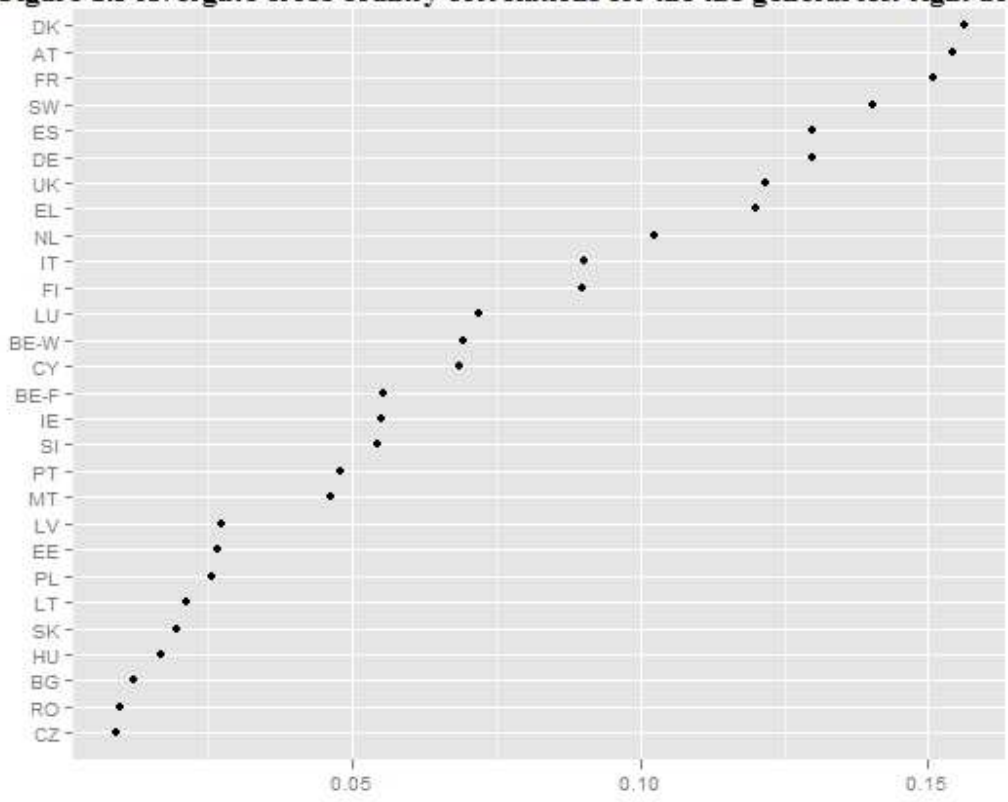


Figure 1.3 Avergate cross country correlations for the the general left-right doma



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Appendix 1, Issue Constraint,

Economic Domain:

Econ1-Q57: "Private enterprise best to solve [country's] economic problem", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly agree" to 4 "strongly disagree";

Econ2-Q59: "Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree"

Econ3-Q61: "Politics should abstain from intervening in the economy", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly agree" to 4 "strongly disagree";

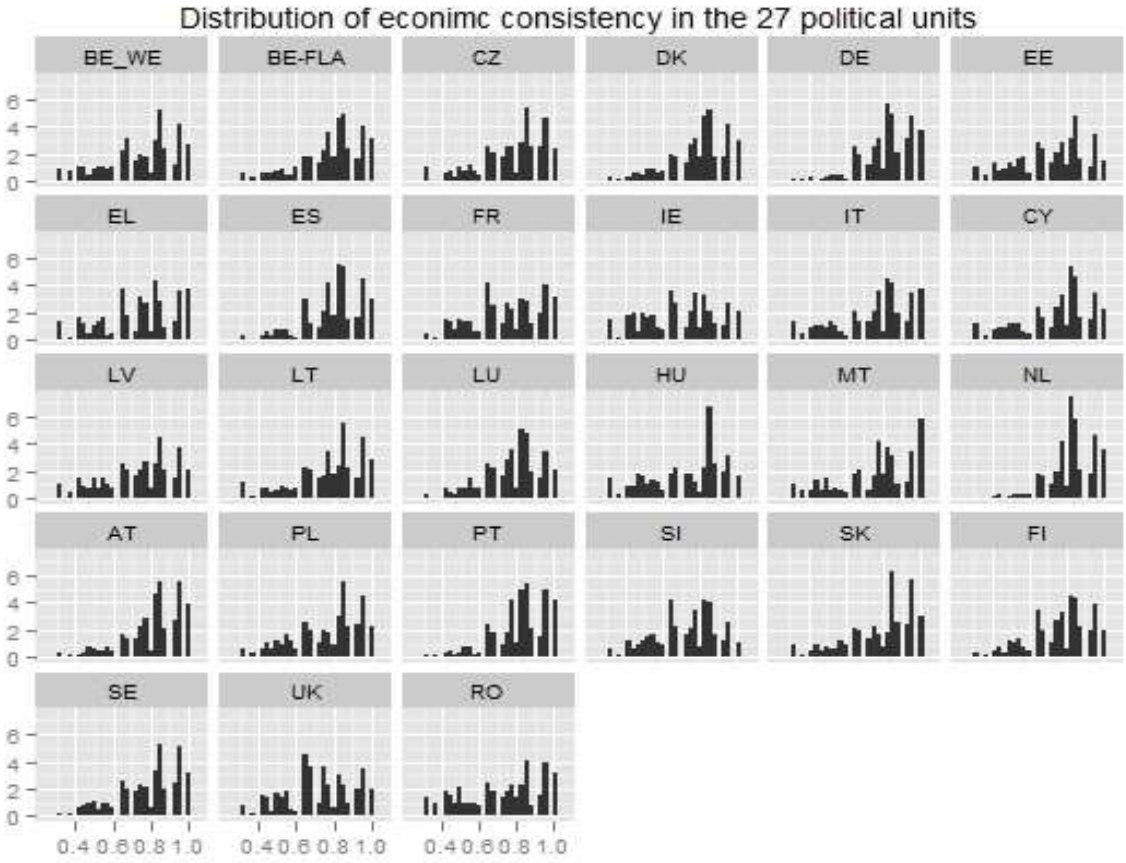
Econ4-Q63: "Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: : 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree"

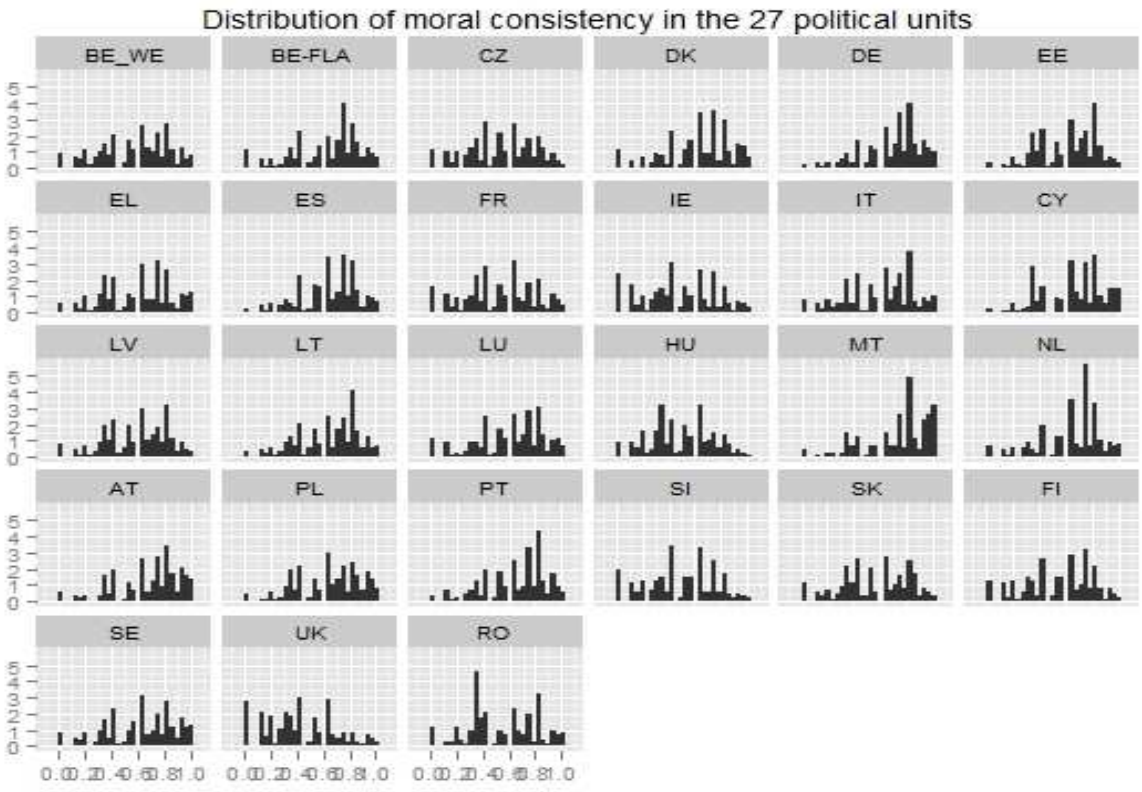
Moral Domain:

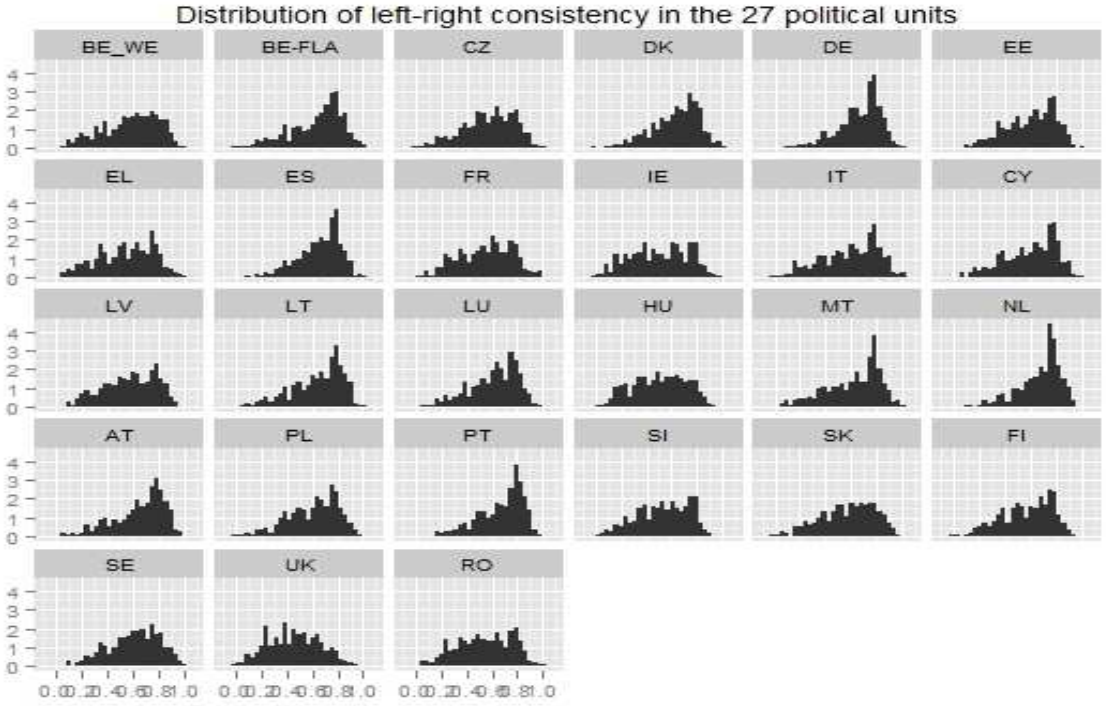
Lib1-Q58: "Same-sex marriages should be prohibited by law", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree";

Lib2-Q60: “Women should be free to decide on matters of abortion”, originally coded from: 1 “strongly agree” to 5 ”strongly disagree”, recoded to take values from: : 0 “strongly disagree” to 4 ”strongly agree”;
Lib3-Q62: ” People who break law should get much harsher sentences than now”, originally coded from: 1 “strongly agree” to 5 ”strongly disagree”, recoded to take values from: 0 “strongly disagree” to 4 ”strongly agree”;
Lib4-Q63: “Schools must teach children to obey authority”, originally coded from: 1 “strongly agree” to 5 ”strongly disagree”, recoded to take values from: 0 “strongly disagree” to 4 ”strongly agree”;
Lib5-Q66: “A woman should cut down on paid work for her family”, originally coded from: 1 “strongly agree” to 5 ”strongly disagree”, recoded to take values from: 0 “strongly disagree” to 4 ”strongly agree”;

Immigration Domain:
Imig1-Q56: “Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of [Country]”, originally coded from: 1 “strongly agree” to 5 ”strongly disagree”, recoded to take values from: 0 “strongly disagree” to 4 ”strongly agree”;
Imig2-Q67: “Immigration to [country] should be decreased significantly”, originally coded from: 1 “strongly agree” to 5 ”strongly disagree”, recoded to take values from: 0 “strongly disagree” to 4 ”strongly agree”;


Distribution of econimc consistency in the 27 political units
BE_WE
BE-FLA
CZ
DK
DE
EE
EL
ES
FR
IE
IT
CY
LV
LT
LU
HU
MT
NL
AT
PL
PT
SI
SK
FI
SE
UK
RO
0
2
4
6
0.4 0.6 0.8 1.0


Distribution of moral consistency in the 27 political units
BE_WE
BE-FLA
CZ
DK
DE
EE
EL
ES
FR
IE
IT
CY
LV
LT
LU
HU
MT
NL
AT
PL
PT
SI
SK
FI
SE
UK
RO


Distribution of left-right consistency in the 27 political units
BE_WE
BE-FLA
CZ
DK
DE
EE
EL
ES
FR
IE
IT
CY
LV
LT
LU
HU
MT
NL
AT
PL
PT
SI
SK
FI
SE
UK
RO

Appendix 2, Spearman Correlation between issues

Economic domain

	econ1	econ2	econ3	econ4
econ1	1,000	,089**	,128**	,027**
N	25130	24463	24365	24138
econ2		1,000	-,151**	,206**
N		25792	24912	24736
econ3			1,000	-,075**
N			25699	24668
econ4				1,000
N				25670

**correlation is significant at p<0.01

Moral Domain

	lib1	lib2	lib3	lib4	lib5
lib1	1,000	,176**	,236**	,207**	,318**
N	25919	25444	25360	25649	25270
lib2		1,000	-,102**	-,059**	,144**
N		26342	25762	26053	25667
lib3			1,000	,351**	,161**
N			26299	26018	25607
lib4				1,000	,191**
N				26629	25908
lib5					1,000
N					26173

**correlation is significant at p<0.01

Immigration domain

	Imig1	Imig2
Imig1	1,000	,368**
N	26465	25490
Imig2		1,000
N		25772

**correlation is significant at p<0.01

Appendix 3, Independent variables

Individual Level Variables

Political knowledge: measure of political knowledge that ranges from 0 to 7, reflecting the correct True/False answers given by each respondent (Cronbach's alpha = 0.618, 7 items). "Don't Know" answers were coded as incorrect answers as we consider that they reflect a degree of ignorance similar to the one reflected by incorrect answers (see Luskin and Bullock 2006; Sturgis *et al.* 2008; Hansen 2009a. Original statements:

Q92. Switzerland is a member of the EU: True/False

Q93. The European Union has 25 member states: True/False

Q94. Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament. True/False

Q95. Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union. True/False

Q96. The [Specific Minister] is [Correct name]. True/False

Q97. Individuals must be 25 or older to stand as candidates in [COUNTRY] elections. True/False

Q98. There are [150% of real number] members of the [COUNTRY Parliament]. True/False

PID: wording of question "Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?" initial coding" . Recoded in 1 yes if R is feeling close to any party and 0 if the response is no

Contextual Level Variables

POLARIZATION: ideological polarization computed using the formula: $f = \sum_{i=1}^{N} p_i (x_i - \bar{x})^2$ where *f*-is the polarization index, p_i -is the vote share of the party, x_i -is the placement on the left right axis as given by the voters' placement on the party in the European Parliament Election Study 2009, Voter Study, $\bar{x}$ - is the mean placement on the

left-right axis of the parties in a certain country based on the coders placement. The natural logarithm was used in order to have a normally distributed variable

ELITE CONSTRAINT: the overall country correlation among elitest between two items reflecting pro market vs. pro state attitudes as given by the Candidate Survey of EES 2009. The two items for the Economic domain are:

V021_4: "Major public services and industries ought to be in state ownership", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree"

V021_9: "Income and wealth should be redistributed towards ordinary people", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: : 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree"

The two items for the Moral domain are:

V021_7:" People who break law should get much harsher sentences than now", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree";

V021_8: "Schools must teach children to obey authority", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly disagree" to 4 "strongly agree";

The two items for the Immigration domain are:

V021_1: "Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of [Country]", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: 0 "strongly agree" to 4 "strongly disagree";

V021_12: "Immigration to [country] should be decreased significantly", originally coded from: 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree", recoded to take values from: : 0 "strongly agree" to 4 "strongly disagree";

Appendix 4, values for country level variables

Political region	Polarization	Elite congruence, economic domain	Elite congruence, moral domain	Elite congruence, economic domain	Mean level of political knowledge	% of partisans
BE-W	3.84	0.46	0.66	0.527	3.47	0.60
BE-F	2.91	0.46	0.66	0.527	3.55	0.84
CZ	7.14	0.34	0.32	0.505	3.78	0.54
DK	3.18	0.76	0.44	0.414	4.83	0.59
DE	3.07	0.65	0.32	0.53	4.20	0.55
EE	3.25	0.54	0.50	0.676	4.03	0.38
EL	3.33	0.31	0.62	0.543	4.63	0.63
ES	5.04	0.55	0.39	0.465	3.12	0.59
FR	4.46	0.65	0.61	0.79	4.11	0.59
IE	1.49	0.60	0.91	-0.007	3.84	0.37
IT	5.53	0.52	0.58	0.68	3.85	0.85
CY	10.88	0.58	0.32	0.763	4.36	0.75
LV	2.75	0.04	0.12	0.499	3.69	0.32
LT	3.32	0.40	0.26	0.263	4.05	0.36
LU	1.89	0.56	0.72	0.68	4.81	0.56
HU	7.2	0.69	0.50	0.707	3.96	0.61
MT	5.39	0.72	0.82	0.118	3.65	0.57
NL	2.37	0.55	0.40	0.469	4.17	0.89
AT	2.2	0.68	0.47	0.792	4.58	0.64
PL	3.52	0.27	0.41	0.175	3.32	0.60
PT	4.68	0.21	0.68	0.466	4.11	0.82
SI	2.72	-0.075	0.48	0.753	4.64	0.55
SK	2.65	0.68	0.47	0.566	3.89	0.58
FI	2.95	0.34	0.39	0.635	4.40	0.66
SE	4.55	0.50	0.43	0.548	4.77	0.69
UK	1.15	0.45	0.59	0.77	3.23	0.41
BG	4.97	0.49	0.71	0.44	3.59	0.68
RO	1.34	0.47	0.45	0.303	2.50	0.58