



MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit

„Issue Based Vote Choice at the European Parliamentary Elections

Case Study: European Parliamentary Elections of 2009“

Verfasser:

Isak Gllogovci BA.

Angestrebter akademischer Grad:

Master of Arts (Ma.)

Wien, 2013

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt: A 824

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt: Politikwissenschaft

Betreuerin / Betreuer: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Sylvia Kritzinger

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ABSTRACT

The European Parliament is an important body of the European Union and the only one elected directly by the citizens. The first elections were held in 1979 (in all 9 member states) and since then they have taken place every five years. Since that time a lot has changed. Today the European Parliament has much more importance and power compared to that time. Now it is a representation body of 736 members which are elected directly in 27 member states. As the European Union evolved, the European Parliament evolved with it.

Citizens got involved through elections and parties started to compete for their votes not only in national elections but also on the European level. This is where the research on voting behavior on the European level starts. What preoccupies the minds of voters and how do they decide whom to vote for when voting for the European Parliament, a body that is supposed to represent them and their interests on a supranational level? While compiling this master thesis, I focused on this question.

The perspective from which I decided to consider the process was through issue based vote choice. This perspective implies that voters' decisions are largely impacted by the issues which are at stake during the election period. Voters use their personal issue stands to affiliate with parties that share the same stands on the respective issues. Parties compete with each other in owning these issues by trying to present themselves as the most competent actor to deal with them. Once the issue ownership has been established in the minds of the voters and has become salient to the voters, the vote eventually floats in direction of the party that owns the issues.

I am going to use this approach in order to study voting behavior on the European level by analyzing elections for European Parliament of the year 2009 as my case study. I believe that this approach is going to enable me to come up with the results that are going to be sufficient to answer my research questions, test my hypothesis and explain better voting behavior and preferences of European voters.

1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Voting is the main form through which citizens exercise political participation. In democratic societies voting is seen as the basic right to actively participate in political life. All governments should derive from the will of the people and that is why they have to go through the process of elections, this way they gain legitimacy. By voting people show their preferences for the parties or candidates who they believe can govern best. But how do people make their decision about who to vote for? What drives them to vote the way they do? What process do they go through in order to arrive at their final vote choice? These are the questions that researchers studying voting behavior deal with.

Studying voting behavior is important because this way we can get clearer explanations of how people vote. Their decision leads to the political establishment that is to lead for years. The outcomes of the elections and voting process will affect lives of all, no matter if one has a right to vote or not, and no matter if one decides to use this right or not.

The object of my study is analyzing voting behavior of European voters during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009. The European Parliament is the only institution of the European Union that is elected directly by the citizens. It is composed of 736 members, shortly called MEPs, which represent a diverse range of political parties from extreme left parties to extreme right, including Euro-skeptics, too. It has been elected directly every five years since 1979 and serves to the largest trans-national electorate in the world with 375 million eligible voters (European Parliament/About Parliament [online] available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>). The European Parliament is not a national parliament; that is why it does not have identical powers and characteristics, but during the course of time it has managed to establish itself as co-legislator; it possesses budgetary powers and exercises control function over other institutions of the European Union. The European Commission is nowadays accountable to the Parliament. The Parliament can veto the European Commission and its president and can force them to resign. Another supervisory power of the Parliament

is its right to call other European institutions to answer questions and, if considered necessary, to take them to court in case they break any EU law or treaty European (Parliament/About Parliament/Power and Functions [online] available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/007c895f4c/Powers-and-functions.html>). Moreover, during the years the European Parliament has managed to shape its political role inside the Union as well. It has become a place where the work of the other institutions of the European Union is presented and it is consulted about all areas of EU policy making starting from Common and Foreign Security Policy to freedom, security and justice affairs (Kreppel 2002). The history and structure of the European Parliament is well studied and documented, nevertheless it is important to continue studying the European Parliament because of its ability to change and develop rapidly in the way that made it a body which heavily impacts legislative outcomes in the EU.

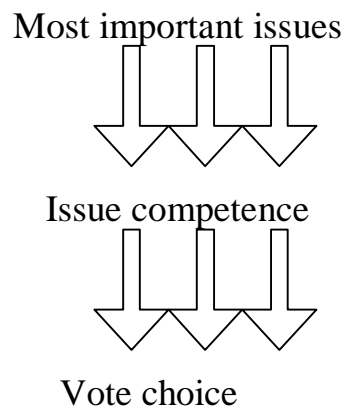
Its uniqueness and its arising powers and importance have made the European Parliament an interesting and tempting object of study (Tsebelis 1994). Scholars have different opinions concerning the approaches to studying voting behavior on the European level. European Parliamentary elections are seen as second-order elections. This implies that they are seen as less important by voters, parties, and media than first order-elections, which are normally national elections. The second-order elections share common characteristics like: a much lower turnout compared to first-order elections, people vote more likely for parties which are not in the center of the national political arena but more on the periphery of the political system, and people use second-order elections to both punish and/or reward current governing parties (Reif and Schmitt 1980). I believe that for such a multi-level system of elections, where one is to vote on local, national, and supranational level (European Parliamentary Elections), issue voting could be the best approach to explaining voting behavior because it sees the voter as a rational actor who well evaluates parties/candidates before casting his/her vote based on issues that are important to him/her. It does not rely on sympathy or emotional attachment of the voter towards the party but on its ability and competence to deal with issues that are important to him/her (Belluci 2006). Simply speaking, issue voting refers to the idea that a voter's decisions are largely determined by the important issues at stake at the moment of the elections, which is known as issue salience and is only one aspect of this theory. The idea that voters choose the party to vote for based on its

ability to maintain or do something to improve these particular issues which are important to the voters fulfills the theory with its ownership aspect (Belanger and Meguid 2008, De Vries 2010). To put it differently, the theory states that first of all, voters measure the importance of the issue (salience). Once this has been done, they start to analyze in order to identify the party that deals with the respective issue in the best way (ownership). These two aspects influence the vote choice.

My research focuses on voting behavior on the European level because this is a political sphere that has a great impact on our daily lives. It is also a sphere that has not been studied and observed enough compared to voting behavior on the national elections level. The aim of my research is to find out which of the issues played the major role during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 as the first step. Afterwards, I want to set the link between the most important issues and the competence of the parties to deal with them and vote choice. This way I will be able to see if issue competence played an important role in the voting decision. Issue ownership affects voting decisions of only those individuals who see the issue as important (Belanger and Meguid 2008:479). This means that the impact of issue ownership on the vote choice is conditioned by issue salience (Budge and Furlie 1983, Belanger and Meguid 2008, DeVries 2010). For this reason, I am going to split my analysis in two parts. In the first part, I am going to filter only the important issue, which are those mentioned by the respondents the most, and identify their owners illustratively in order to show which issues played the major role during the elections, since in this phase I cannot incorporate every single issue that was pointed out by every respondent. But, in the second part of my analysis, I am going to look into issue ownership and consequent vote choice. Here I am going to analyze all answers regarding issue ownership for all the important issues since I am going to look closely at vote choice on the individual level and compare if voters also voted for party which they had considered as owner of the most important issue. Purpose of the second step in my analysis is to no longer identify which issues were considered important but to see if issue owners were granted the vote.

Vote choice is the final decision made by the voters after a long process of calculations and observations about what they think are the most important issues and competence of parties and candidate which are running at the election to deal with them. These two phases both precede decisions in the voting cabin (Budge and Furlie 1983, Belanger and Meguid 2008).

I believe that dividing the process into the issue selection, issue competence and finally vote choice will provide me a clear path to follow in order to come up with explanations and conclusions about the voting behavior of European voters during the European Parliamentary elections of 2009.



(Belanger and Meguid 2005; Abrajano et al. 2001; De Vries 2010).

1.1. Research Question

Taking into account my research interest, goals, and objectives of my research I want to pose the following research questions:

1. *Which of the issues played major roles during European Parliamentary Election of 2009?*
2. *Did issue competence (ownership) influenced vote choice at the European Parliamentary election of 2009?*

I assume that today's voters are rational voters. Their decisions are an outcome of individual calculations and evaluations of the parties' ability and competence to deal with certain issues that are important to the respective voter (Belluci 2006, Miller and Wattenberg 1985). Eventually, people will vote for a party or candidate from whose election they feel they can benefit to a bigger extent in their lives. Simply speaking, this means that voters do not act irrationally when they cast their ballots in the box

(Myerson and Weber 1993). Taking into account that the subject of my work is the European Parliamentary Election, an election of the so-called “second order”, the above-mentioned approach is an inevitable one. Voters who take part in those elections are the ones that break through the borders of national elections and engage in electing representatives who do their work in much more complex environment rather than one of classic national parliaments.

The dataset that I am going to work with is the one of the European Election Study 2009. European Election Study is a survey that was started in 1979 and since then it has prepared six election studies on European Parliament elections. Those studies focus on electoral participation and voting behavior in European Parliament elections, but they do not limit to that; they also tackle other areas regarding the “evolution of an EU political community and a European public sphere, with citizens’ perceptions of and preferences about the EU political regime and their evaluations of political performance” (EES. 2008, European Election Studies [online] available at <http://www.ees-homepage.net/>). I also took part in preparing questionnaires for the European Election Study of 2009 in Austria, and by doing this I had the chance to influence the questions that were included.

In the first part of my work I am going to focus on explaining the theoretical groundwork for my study. I am going to describe the issue voting theory and explain its concepts and definitions. My focus is going to be set on two aspects of the issue voting theory: issue salience and issue ownership. These two aspects present the guidelines for my work.

Afterwards, I am going to devote some time to explain dataset and the method I am going to use for my research. This part will contain information about how, where, and when the data were collected. In addition, I am going to explain what data I consider relevant and the way I am going to interpret it in order to gain the information needed for my research.

The third part of my work is the part where I am going to concentrate on the analyses of data collected for the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009, which is my case study. This is the part where I have to identify all most important issues of the election,

classify them and check the correlations between these issues, party competence and vote choice.

Before presenting general conclusions about the voters' behavior and its relation to issue voting theory on the European level, I am going to focus on the analysis of 15 member states (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Rumania, and Slovakia), which I chose due to the variation in their size, population, geographic position, economic development, period of accession in the European Union, and their different European Union and European Parliamentary elections experience. I think that this way I am going to come up with a good representation of outcomes in order to make conclusions that will cover the whole European Union. Eventually, I am going to present a summary for each country regarding the most important issues of the elections and their impact on voting behavior. This way I am going to be able to make comparisons and finally draw conclusions on the higher/European level.

The procedure explained above will eventually provide me enough of information to answer my research questions and prove my hypothesis as true or false.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social scientists have been trying to explain why people vote as they do for a long time now. Several theories that attempt to cover the complex of problems of voting behavior have emerged. Nevertheless, there are three theories that have been dominating the scene strongly: the sociological model, socio-psychological model, and rational choice model.

The Sociological model uses group-level characteristics in order to explain voting behavior. That means that people's vote is based on their socio-economic status, religion, and place of residence (Rice 2007). The *Socio-psychological model*, on the other hand, explains vote choice as a product of individual attitude rather than group characteristics. It contains some little aspects of issue voting, but it is mostly based on party identification (which means voting for the candidate with the same party affiliation as you) and candidate image/assessment (which means voting for the candidate with better and more desirable personal skills and characteristics); both aspects can be seen as irrational criteria (Rice 2007). The *Rational choice model* argues that people will vote for candidates whose beliefs on issues are most similar to their own in order to gain and benefit most out of their vote. This theory implies that people are rational when voting and vote based on issues. They have an opinion on the issue, know the candidates and their opinions on the issue, care about that particular issue, and see the candidates' different opinions on issues (Rice 2007).

Lately voting studies have shown that the traditional connections between parties and voters have begun to weaken significantly. All of this can be seen as a result of modernization of both political and social life (Franklin, et al. 1992; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Jackson 1975). Because of the weakening of explanatory power of sociological and psycho-sociological determinants, scholars today are turned more to the impact of important political issues on the individual vote choice (Belanger and Meguid 2008: 477). This development in the electoral process has led to an increase of the issue based voting phenomenon. Today voters evaluate the running parties based on their positions regarding various important issues of the election period (Dalton 1996). Based on explanations that other theories of voting behavior provide and recent

developments in this area, I have decided to rely on issue voting theory because I think that its explanations are most convincing and fit best for contemporary voting behavior and as such it provides a very stabile ground for my work.

The increased focus laid on issue voting in recent decades can only be linked to certain changes in today's modern society. The gradually weakening bond between social background and party preference and choice, the rise of educational level and the level of political interest and involvement in society, and the great impact media has and the role it plays in the setting of political agendas during the election period are crucial changes that led to the creation of such voting environment where issue voting plays an important role (Thomassen 2005: 198).

Issue voting in general has its roots in spatial models and the traditional Downsian proximity model of voting. According to this model "issues are judged in strictly rational terms and voters prefer parties closer to their own position on a given issue" (Schantz 2000: 1). This model is very clear in linking issue voting to rationality during voting. It assumes that voters who vote based on issues are rational while doing it, and considers voting based on other considerations as rather less rational than issue voting (Carmines and Stimson 1980: 79). Requirements for issue voting are that the voter has an opinion on the issue, knowledge of the candidate's opinion on the same issue, concern for or care about the issue, and that he sees the difference between each candidate's opinion on the issue (Rice 2007). Generally speaking, voters who fulfill those requirements explained above can be considered as issue voters (Davis et al., 1970; Brody and Page, 1972; Frohlich et al, 1978).

So in order for issue voting to occur for sure issues must become a source of partisan conflict and they must also reach a certain level of salience among voters. If parties share the same position on the same issue plus the issue is not seen as relevant, vote choice cannot be issue based. Weaver (1991) reports his findings and suggests that "increased salience of the deficit issue was accompanied by increased knowledge of its possible causes and solutions, stronger opinions, less likelihood of taking a neutral position, and more likelihood of participating in politics through such behavior as signing petitions, voting, attending meetings, and writing letters". Prior to the elections, parties campaign on more than one issue because voters can decide their vote choice on any of them. One issue can influence voting behavior only if the same is seen as

important; voters have to care about it. Moreover voters have to clearly see the difference in parties' positions towards the issue, only this way issue based vote choice can come into play (Carmines and Stimson 1986: 903).

Consequently one has to raise the question: Why do some issues influence voting behavior while others do not? De Vries (2010: 01) provides an answer for this question by arguing that "issues are more likely to influence party choice when three conditions are fulfilled: 1) voters must render the issue important; 2) voters should perceive party positions on the issue to be different; 3) and the issue should in the eyes of voters be related to the main dimension of political conflict, i.e. the left/right dimension".

It is more than obvious that in order to influence vote choice, first of all, an issue has to be salient, which means it has to be perceived as an important issue by the voters and parties, because unimportant issues do not influence vote choice. Second, parties and candidates have to have a position on that particular issue. What is more, however, they have to have a different opinion on the issue and the difference has to be big enough so that it is obvious for voters. This way, they can identify which party or candidate to them appears most competent to deal with that particular issue or, to put it differently, owns the issue. If eventually the voters cast the vote for the party or candidate owning the issue, we can say that issue voting has accrued (De Vries 2010: 02-03).

Reading the explanations described above, one can easily conclude that in issue voting there are several concepts such as issue salience, issue ownership, and issue position interlace. Being aware of the importance of distinguishing these concepts for the sake of clarification of the theoretical approach for my research, which is based on issue ownership theory, I will explain issue salience and issue ownership separately but chronologically. Issue salience is related to my first research question regarding most important issues of the election period, while the issue ownership part of the theory is related to my second research question regarding issue competence as criterion on which vote choice is made.

2.1. Issue salience

Elections are fought over issues that both voters and parties consider to be important and relevant during the election period (Thomassen 2005: 192). Issue salience does in no way induce issue ownership; it just precedes it as the first step towards building an issue based vote choice. This is the precondition that an issue has to fulfill in order to influence the vote choice; it has to be salient. It doesn't matter if a voter knows which party or candidate owns a particular issue if the same voter does not think that this issue is important (Belanger and Meguid 2005; Abrajano et al. 2001; De Vries 2010, Thomassen 2005, Weaver 1991).

“Voter salience refers to the extent to which voters care enough about an issue to let it influence their choices in the voting booth” (De Vries 2010:2). This means that issue salience is the very first step towards issue based vote choice.

Issue salience should not be left out of any analysis of issue voting because of two crucial reasons: a). It is directly linked to the issue ownership which leads to the issue based vote choice and b). It has a conditional effect on it. This conditional effect of issue salience on issue ownership and eventually vote choice is mentioned in many previous studies (see Budge and Farlie 1983; Mayer and Tiberj 2004; RePass 1971; Belanger and Meguid 2008). All above-mentioned studies are just some of the examples that prove one thing: Issue salience is a step that cannot be left out of the analysis when observing the impact of issues on the vote choice.

But how do issues become salient? This is a process in which both parties and media play an important role. Parties during election campaigns try to push forward issues of which they feel confident owning and present them as salient. Media decide which issues are being talked and written about during the election time and as such influence voters' opinions on the importance of issues. If parties achieve to convince media and voters that particular issues that they own are at the present important, they stand better chances in an upcoming elections. The role of the media is vital in this respect (Petrocik 1996:826; Holian 2004:97).

But the role of the media does not end with that. Their impact and agenda effect is something that always has to be taken into consideration when analyzing issue voting, because they play a very significant role in making issues salient. People may say that

one issue or another is important to them and that they may even vote because of that issue, but there are always some issues that gain more importance during the election campaign than others. At the end of the day, issues that are pushed forward by parties and media will be perceived more as important/salient by the voters as well (Thomassen 2005:198).

Another argument in favor of the importance of issue salience is the fact that many researchers integrate it in their research model because it helps to explain issue voting better. It is the starting point of issue voting. Owners of unimportant issues are consequently irrelevant to the vote choice. If an issue is not salient, the ownership of that issue is unimportant as well and as such does not affect vote choice. On the contrary, if an issue is salient, the ownership also matters and it is expected to affect one's voting decision (Belanger and Meguid 2008:480). Issue salience is the first step that leads to issue based vote choice and it is followed by issue ownership.

2.2. Issue Ownership

The ownership part of the theory clearly states that voters identify the party or candidate who they think can solve, maintain or do something to improve particular issue that is important to them and vote for them in the event. According to this theory voters choose a party/candidate considered most credible and competent to deal with a particular issue and vote for them, while parties/candidates try to reach out to voters by outlining the issues that they believe to own (Belanger and Meguid 2008: 477).

The theory of issue ownership was mostly developed by Budge and Farlie (1983) and Petrocik (1996). It attempts to explain behavior of the parties running at the elections and the way they try to emphasize issues that they believe to own during election campaigns, on one side, and voting behavior which is based on the role that issue ownership plays, on the other (Belanger and Meguid 2008: 478). So issue voting theory aims at explaining both action, the behavior of parties and candidates during the campaigns and issues that they try to push forward as important and present themselves as their owners, and the reaction in the voting behavior as an issue-based mechanism.

According to Borre (2001: 13) "issue voting comprises of three elements: 1) Issues about the goals of politics (values), 2) Issues as discussions about what should be on top

of the agenda (issue salience), and 3) Issue performance in terms of the voter's perceptions of competence and credibility among parties and candidates”.

Issue ownership adds an important aspect to issue voting by giving hints and directions towards which party could receive most votes on the bases of issues because of the advantage of owning salient issues that dominate the election period. Voters see parties' competence in handling salient issues as strong attribute which can easily determinate their voting decision and they tend to vote for parties which are perceived as better to deal with salient issues (Thomassen 2005, Belluci 2006, Miller and Wattenberg 1985).

As already explained parties gain votes from the issues that they own only if these issues are seen as important. That is why they always push them forward during the election campaigns, which are covered by media aiming at turning citizens' attention towards them and consequently increase their salience. When voters attach more importance to one particular issue, according to the issue ownership theory, it is expected that parties that own this issue will benefit most during the elections (Thomassen 2005: 203).

However, voters may assign importance to a wide range of issues, but they also assume that there is a difference in parties' ability to “fix” them. The reputation of having the ability to handle a certain issue is an advantage because the mere association of an issue which needs to be fixed with a party regardless of the means and policies which this party proposes to peruse in that matter also implies that this party has the skills of dealing with the same issue (Petrocik et al. 2003:601).

In many countries there are issues that are generally, in the public eye, considered to be owned by a certain party. A simple example would be the United States where the Democratic Party is generally seen as the owner of issues like education, welfare, and civil rights while the Republicans are seen as the owners of national defense and crime issues (Petrocik, 1996). The United Kingdom would be just another example with the Labour Party generally seen as owners of issues of health care and education and the Conservative Party as owner of taxes, crimes, and defense issues (Budge and Farlie, 1983). But those are states where two big parties dominate the system, while in systems where there are more than two parties often specific issues are linked to parties of a specific profile and that is why these parties target particular issues e.g. Green parties =

environment issues, Socialist parties = workers' rights/affairs, Liberal parties = civil rights.

But owning an issue is a dynamic process. Parties do not own issues forever; they also compete in owning them and try to steal issues from one another. Studies have proven that issue owning is not a static phenomenon, issue owners do change as parties and their leaders change or major shifts occur in party coalitions. Parties can lose ownership over issues also when their policies to deal with them fail. However, they can also win ownership over issues when policies they pursue in order to deal with issues prove to be successful. Plus new issues always surface on the top of the political agenda and do not have an asserted owner, so parties do not have the comfort of leaning back and relaxing on issue owning, because other parties will jump in and take primacy (Blomqvist and Green-Pedersen, 2004; Holian, 2004; Kaufmann, 2004, Petrocik et al. 2003).

Many studies have already proven that issue ownership does influence vote choice. Nadeau et al. (2001), Clarke et al. (2004), Bellucci (2006), Belanger and Meguid (2008), and Thomassen (2005) have all, in their respective studies, proven that perception of party competence has a direct impact on individual vote choice. Analyses of all above-mentioned studies clearly demonstrate that if a voter thinks that a certain issue is important, the owners of that same issue have considerably better chances to also receive his/her vote. Belanger and Meguid go even further by integrating issue salience more explicitly into the formulation of the theory and its empirical testing; they call it a refinement to existing methodology, which brings them to the conclusion that "issue salience acts as significant mediating variable in the relationship between issue ownership and vote choice" (Belanger and Meguid 2008:478).

During my work I will follow the same assumption and integrate issue salience more explicitly in the analysis process because I support their assumption that states that "if an issue is not salient, ownership should not affect, or should have less of an effect, on party support. If the issue is salient, then ownership should have an effect, or more of an effect, on vote choice" (Belanger and Meguid 2005:6).

2.3. Types of issue voting

It is assumed that issue voters are more rational, better informed, and more active in politics than the others because they put more effort in their voting calculus in order to gain most out of it. But not all issue voters are the same or, to put it differently, not all issue voters are issue voters of the same level. On the other hand, not all issues are the same and as such they do not influence vote choice in the same way and on the same level (Carmines and Stimson 1986).

Carmines and Stimson (1986) argue that issue voting is not a single phenomenon and that there are two theoretically different and empirically identifiable types of issue voting. They call it hard-issue voting and easy-issue voting. They assume that voters and issues differ and therefore the decision calculus used by voters to link their policy and issue concerns to voting choice differs, too.

2.3.1. Hard-issue voting

The hard-issue voting has its origins in Downsian intellectual thinking on voting behavior developed in 1957. It assumes that issue voting is an outcome of sophisticated calculations which voters do before they vote and in order to do this they use policy preferences as their guide. During hard-issue voting voters do not limit themselves to only some aspects of issue voting. It involves a much broader and complicated analysis and examination of issue importance, parties' skills and competence to deal and the means and methods that they are planning to use when dealing with the issue, and party policy positions. It is only then when they decide on their vote choice (Davis et al., 1970; Brody and Page, 1972; Frohlich et al., 1978 Carmines and Stimson).

2.3.2. Easy-issue voting

According to Carmines and Stimson (1986) easy-issue voting occurs when a particular issue becomes deep-rooted in the political agenda over a longer period of time that it prompts voters "gut responses" to parties/candidates. So it is the opposite of hard-issue

voting because it does not involve a sophisticated voting calculus but a “gut response”, something which is based on a feeling and superficial analysis.

One can say that easy-issue voting is just a simplified version of hard-issue voting, but they argue that the distinction is fundamental because these two types of issue voting involve “different decision process, different prerequisite conditions, different voters, and different interpretation” (Carmines and Stimson 1986:78-79).

An easy issue would have the following attributes: “1. the easy issue would be symbolic rather than technical, 2. it would more likely deal with policy end than means, and 3. it would be an issue long on the political agenda” (Carmines and Stimson 1986:80). Easy issues are simply easier to render. Voters do not need to put so much effort in analyzing them because they have been in the political agenda for a long time and because they are of a symbolic nature.

But simplicity alone is not sufficient to evoke a “gut response” by voters. The component of time has to be added. The easy issue also has to be a source of conflict that has been going on for a longer time and as such it has been in the public eye for a while. Only then the issue can permeate the electorate (Carmines and Stimson 1986:80).

Hard-issue voting occurs when voters analyze issues that are salient during the election. What is more, it involves a complex calculus with more information about the party and candidates, policy position, and skills and means that they are planning to use to deal with that issue. Afterwards voters will choose a party that they see as the best to deal with this issue but that is also positioned closest to their personal view on how the issue should be dealt with, and eventually they cast their vote for them. On the contrary easy-issue voting involves much less analysis and calculations. It is more like a gut response of the electorate to an issue that has been occupying the political agenda for a longer time, and it is also much easier to be rendered by the voters. The means with which the particular issue is going to be dealt are not as important as to what an end is the issue going to come. The hard-issue voters are better informed, more interested, and more active in politics than easy-issue voters.

In order to understand these two types of issue voting better I have come up with an example for both of them. An example of possible easy issues on the European level would be the accession of Turkey to the European Union. This is an issue that is simpler

to render, it has been on the political agenda since 1999 when Turkey was recognized as a candidate for full membership. It has been debated for a long period of time and as such it came to the point when it initiates a gut response of the electorate. Voters are either for or against Turkey's accession to the European Union, what would be the end of the issue, but they are not focused on the accession conditions anymore or whether they are fulfilled or not, neither on gains or losses that European Union gain or suffer by its non or accession. Voters would only be focused on which party is best to deal with this issue in such a way that would make Turkey's accession possible or impossible.

The global financial crisis of 2008/09 would be a good example of a hard issue. It is an issue that is more difficult to render, it is more of a technical issue that requires deeper analysis by the voters. It cannot be voted based on this issue by a gut response without taking into account the effects of the issue and means with which this issue needs to be dealt, and which party is best or most competent to do it. A voter cannot be for or against the financial crisis. What matters is the question what consequences we are going to suffer from the crisis and which party is most competent (has better experts on the field, more experience in dealing with similar issues) to deal with it. Only after the examination of all parts of the puzzle one can base his or her vote on this issue. It simply requires a more detailed and sophisticated calculus from a voter rather than a choice evoked by an emotion or a gut response.

Distinguishing these two types of issue voting is important because it gives us a clearer and deeper insight into issue voting. It explains the nature of issues and level to which it is difficult to render them. Voters may base their vote choice on both types of issues, but it is important to understand the process they go through whilst doing it. During my work I will distinct most important issues that will come up in my analysis in order to see and compare which of the two was more present at the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

3. HYPOTHESIS DATA AND METHODS

Based on the chosen theory and my own assumptions I have formulated the following hypotheses:

1. *Issues which are seen as most important (salient) during the election period are more likely to influence vote choice rather than the others.*
2. *People are more likely to vote for a party or candidate which or who, based on their perception, is most competent to deal with the most important issues at the time of the elections.*

The dataset that I will use during my research is one of the European Election Study of year 2009. This study carried out a survey among representative samples of enfranchised citizens in all 27 member states of the EU (n=1000 realized interviews per country) immediately after the European elections of June 2009. The survey's goal was to collect representative data for all European Union member states, which could be used both internationally and historically. Topics covered a wide range of questions starting from "electoral behavior (including questions on party choice), past voting behavior, and voting behavior at both national and European level, most important issues/problems to attitudes regarding EU, left-right self placement, placement of parties, and background characteristics including gender, age, education, religion, and media consumption" (EES (2009), European Parliament Election Study 2009, www.pirideu.eu).

To test how issue ownership affected vote choice during European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 I am going to focus on the answers of the three following questions that appeared on EES questionnaire:

1. Which is according to you the most important issue/problem at the moment in your country?
2. Which party/candidate according to you can deal best with this issue/problem?

3. Which party/candidate did you vote for in the European Parliamentary Election of 2009?

Obviously in my pooled analyses of vote choice in the 2009 elections the dependent variable is vote choice, an outcome which is explicitly answered in question number three. But I am interested to see if issue ownership affected this outcome, and it is the independent variable in my analysis. Bearing in mind conditional effects of issue salience on issue owned based vote choice, I have decided to focus on most important issues identified by respondents because only as such they might influence my dependent variable (vote choice). I will emphasize most important issues only as part of my analysis because the questionnaire also contains questions regarding second and third most important issue during the election period but I will neglect those due to the decreased degree of salience of second and third most important issues and also due to the lack of capacities to also include them in this study.

I believe that analyzing the answers of the questions written above can provide me the path to follow in order to understand the voting behavior of European voters when voting in the European Parliamentary elections better and to test if issue competence might have played an important role in their voting decisions. In order to do this I will peruse following logic of work: If a respondent named the most important issue according to his/her perception, and in the following answer identified which party/candidate to his/her opinion could deal best with this issue (what establishes ownership over this issue), and finally stated that he/she was going to vote for that same party/candidate in the answer of question three, then I can draw the conclusion that issues and issue competence could have played an important or maybe even decisive role in his/her vote choice. On the contrary, if a respondent named the most important issue according to his/her perception, and in the following answer identified which party/candidate to his/her opinion could deal best with this issue but the answer to the last questions stated that he/she was going to vote for some other party/candidate rather the ones that he/she believed could deal best with the most important issue then I can draw the conclusion that issues could not have played an important and decisive role on his/her vote choice because the pattern did not fit.

Following this logic I will be able to look into the possible impact that issues and issue ownership have on the voters' decision. I say possible and restrain myself from strong

conclusions during my entire work simply because of the fact that in order to be sure that issue ownership played a decisive role on one's vote choice, the following question would have been needed on the questionnaire: "Did you vote for this particular party because you considered it as the best one to deal with the most important issue?". Since such a question that would prove the crucial role issue ownership plays on vote choice is inexistent in most of the surveys, one cannot make strong conclusions regarding this matter.

The first step of my analysis will be identifying the most important issues mentioned the most during the election period in each country I have selected for my analysis. I will draft a table containing only the most important issues mentioned most by respondents. This way I will highlight the issues that were mentioned as the most important most frequently and be able to see of what type and nature they were. I will next try to identify the parties which owned the respective issues. I am going to limit only on one number of issues, which varies from country to country, trying to cover at least around 70 percent of the respondents because I can come to a point when too many issues emerge and covering every single of them would be impossible.

If one certain issue will be mentioned as most important only by a small number of respondents, this issue will not appear on this table, but that does not mean that I won't include it in my analysis concerning the affect of issue ownership on vote choice. This I have foreseen as the second step of analysis which will be involving the parties best to deal not only with aforementioned most important issues but also every single other issues which has been mentioned by respondents no matter how less frequently but still could impact vote choice of same few respondents which see them as most important. This is important because my work is based on an individual level and if I do not cover 100 percent of the respondents, it will bias the final results.

This is where the party ownership is put to the test. Parties that owned the important issues should have stood better chances to be elected. This way I will have the opportunity to see if voters also voted for the same party that they considered as the best one to deal with the most important issue, no matter which issue it was. In addition to this, I might also be able to compare if respondents in different countries mentioning same issues considered the same profile parties as the best ones to deal with the issue or if the opposite was the case, but also to see if specific issues were linked to specific

profile of parties e.g. unemployment = socialist parties, pollution = green parties, and/or immigration = populist parties.

But my main focus will be put on the vote choice and if the same correlates with the party mentioned to be the best one to deal with the most important issues of the elections. If the course of this procedure proves to be flawless, I can eventually conclude that the issues and issue ownership could have played major role on the voter's choice during the European Parliamentary election of 2009.

I will break down the analysis to smaller units (in my case countries) or sub cases because of two reasons. First, the European electorate is not considered as a single one. Voters of one country cannot elect a party or a candidate of another country even if they feel that this party or candidate would represent them better in the European parliament simply because they are not on their ballot. European Union is, in this case, considered as a group of 27 electorates that elect their respective representatives for the joint parliament, because there is no uniform procedure of principles that are common to all member states, but it is left to the individual member states to choose their own systems (The European Parliament: electoral procedures [online] available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/1_3_4_en.htm). Anyways, there are three criteria which have to be met: the system must be some sort of the proportional representation, it is not necessary that the whole country must be a single electoral area (in some member states like Belgium, Ireland, and Italy national territory is divided in smaller constituencies) as long as it does not affect the proportional nature of the system, and election threshold must not exceed 5 percent on the national level (The European Parliament: electoral procedures (2001), http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/1_3_4_en.htm). Second, if I treated the electorate as one, I would not be able to identify issues that were less important in general for the European Union electorate but still important and could have played a role on vote choice in respective countries and as such were characteristic for those countries.

In order to make my findings more valid, I will use the same procedure for all 15 member states of the European Union selected for my analysis. My country selection is based on their different characteristics (population, territory, and European Union experience, economic and political profile...), what I think will provide good

representation that will enable me to generalize outcomes on the European level. Diverse-case selection comes in hand as a good strategy because its objective to achieve a great variance amongst the cases and as such it is likely to enhance the representativeness of the sample of cases the researcher has chosen (Gerring and Seawright 2008).

I have decided on the chosen countries by taking into consideration several criteria. First, I wanted to cover whole European Union geographically.

Second, I wanted to cover member states according to their experience in the Union and European Parliamentary Elections using the time span since accession as a guideline: founder member states (Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, and Italy), first enlargement (United Kingdom), Mediterranean enlargements (Portugal), post cold war enlargement (Austria and Finland), big enlargement of 2004 (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Malta, and Hungary) and finally last enlargement (Rumania) (From 6 to 27 members (2012), http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/from-6-to-27-members/index_en.htm).

Third, I wanted to analyze countries different in their size and their influence on the European level: big member states (France, Germany, Italy, and United Kingdom), medium member states (Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Portugal, and Czech Republic), and small member states (Slovakia, Malta, and Estonia).

The selected countries differ in some categories and have similarities in others, but I believe that this will give my study an even better representation because the variation between them is still quite present.

Once the different cases (countries) have been analyzed, I will come up with final conclusions and remarks on the aggregate level. I believe that by following the steps explained above, I will be able to answer my research questions and come up with conclusions that will prove my hypothesis as true or false.

4. SUMMERIES OF EACH COUNTRY

In this part of my work I will provide a short summery of my analysis of each of the 15 selected member states of the European Union. The summaries are presented in alphabetical order; the same procedure will be applied to each country. Different tables and/or charts that will explain and better describe the landscape of European voting behavior are included. My analysis is, as explained in an earlier section, based on the following steps: 1. Identification of most important issues and additionally parties which own them; and 2. Cross table combination of answers of respondents concerning the most important issue and the preferred party to deal with it, on the one side, and their vote choice regarding the same party, on the other.

First, I will see which of the issues were seen as salient most frequently and in how far parties owned them. As mentioned before, I will limit to a certain number of issues, because it is impossible for me to cover every single most important issue that might have been mentioned occasionally. This does not cause a big problem since at this point of the analysis, I will not test the effects of issue ownership on vote choice, but only identify those issues mentioned as most important the most and their respective owners. I simply want to see which issues came up most, of what nature and type they were, and be able to compare them between countries.

In the second step of my analysis, I will include each and every respondent that named a most important issue (not matter which issue they named as most important and if it has already appeared during the first step of the analysis or not) and a party as its owner and put them on a cross table with the party they actually voted for (vote choice). Only if they voted for same party of which they had said before it could deal best with the most important issue, then I can say that issue ownership could have influenced the vote choice of these particular respondents. At the same time, in addition, during this procedure I will e able to see and compare which of the parties did better in receiving the votes of the voters in whose eyes they had managed to establish themselves as issue owners.

The analysis of the first country (Austria) will also be used to describe the above-mentioned procedure in greater detail.

4.1. Austria

A wide range of the issues was listed as most important in Austria, but those that preoccupied the minds of most of the interviewed people were the following:

1. **Unemployment** was seen as the most important issue by 268 respondents out of a total of 1,000 interviewed, amounting to 26.8 percent.
2. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were listed as the most important issue by 189 out of 1,000 interviewed respondents, amounting to 18.9 percent.
3. **Economic conditions** were seen as most important issue number one by 93 out of 1,000 interviewed respondents, amounting to 9.3 percent.
4. **Immigration** was listed as the most important issue by 82 out of 1,000 interviewed respondents, amounting to 8.2 percent.

The above listed issues were mentioned most frequently as the most important issues. Many other issues were identified as most important, but by a far less significant number of respondents, what doesn't mean that I am not going to look into them once I am testing impact of issue ownership on vote choice. I just can't focus on identifying their owner because they are many in number and it would be impossible for me to do it in this study. Economic conditions and immigration seem to be of the easy-issue type, while unemployment and effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy are of the hard-issue voting type.

Following the practices of Nadeau et al. (2001), Clarke et al. (2004), and Belanger and Meguid (2008) I will use respondents' perception of competence to deal with issues as measures of issue ownership. In the EES's questionnaire, issue ownership is determinate by the following question: *Which party, according to you, can deal best with the most important issue?* Table 1 gives an overview of issue ownership in Austria. As one could expect, in such a multi-party system there can't be a clear-cut consensus about issue ownership amongst voters (Belanger and Meguid 2008:7). In this case the highest percentage on which respondents agree about issue ownership is 41.5 percent concerning the issue of immigration. Regarding the issue of unemployment two big Austrian parties, the Social-Democratic Party of Austria (a left-centered party with very

strong ties to trade unions) and the People's Party of Austria (a Christian conservative democratic party), stood best, both receiving issue ownership attributes from a bit less than 25 percent. The People's Party held a stronger position regarding the issue of effects of financial crisis and economic conditions by being seen as most competent to deal with it by 34.4 respectively 38.7 percent of the respondents who had seen these issues as the most important ones of the election period. Finally, the issue of immigration was entrusted to the Freedom Party of Austria (which is right-wing Populist Party), namely by 41.5 percent of the respondents who considered it most important.

Table1: Perception of issue ownership in Austria for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Austria	Issue Unemployment		Issue Effects of Financ.		Issue Economic Cond.		Issue Immigration	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	53	19,7	28	14,8	15	16,1	7	8,5
[NONE]	69	25,7	56	29,6	21	22,6	18	22,0
GRÜNE	7	2,6	4	2,1	4	4,3	4	4,9
KPÖ	1	,4	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPÖ	65	24,3	29	15,3	15	16,1	6	7,3
ÖVP	62	23,1	65	34,4	36	38,7	10	12,2
BZÖ	1	,4	3	1,6	0	0	2	2,4
FPÖ	6	2,2	3	1,6	1	1,1	34	41,5
Liste Hans Peter Martin	4	1,5	1	,5	1	1,1	1	1,2
Total	268	100,0	189	100,0	93	100,0	82	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

After identifying owners of the most frequently mentioned most important issues, the second step of my analysis is focused on voters' perceptions about which parties were best to deal with what they thought were the most important issue of the election, but for this part of the analysis, I will include more issues than just those mentioned above. Now I will also take into consideration other issues that had been listed less often but were also important for the vote choice since they also could have had an impact on vote choice, but of course on a lower scale. Consequently I will look into their vote choice of all respondents and see if it fits to party competence attribution because this is where I am going to try to establish the bridge from issue ownership to vote choice. In order to describe this better I will come up with a table that contains information about

the party seen as best to deal with the most important issue (issue competence/ownership) intercepted with the party voted for in the European Parliamentary Elections (vote choice). In this table, I will include all respondents that identified a party as best to deal with the most important issue, on one side, and the party they actually voted for in European Parliamentary Elections of 2009, on the other. The point where these two categories intersect represents the number of respondents which fit fully to my model of voters who identify an issue as most important, specified a party which is best to deal with it, and finally voted for very same party.

Table 2 displays the results of the process described above:

Table 2: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table											
Country: Austria		Which party voted for in EP elections									Total
		OTHER	GRÜNE	KPÖ	SPÖ	Junge Liberale	ÖVP	BZÖ	FPÖ	Liste Hans Peter	
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	19	4	0	6	1	7	0	1	4	190
	[NONE]	144	33	1	24	3	24	9	12	34	284
	GRÜNE	11	30	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	43
	KPÖ	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	SPÖ	36	16	1	68	0	9	2	2	12	146
	ÖVP	79	8	0	9	0	130	4	1	16	243
	BZÖ	5	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	1	11
	FPÖ	22	0	0	5	0	7	2	29	3	68
	Liste Hans Peter Martin	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	14
	Total	397	103	3	129	4	204	25	50	85	1000

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issues ownership.

The highlighted numbers are the actual number of respondents that had identified one party as best to deal with the most important issue and consequently voted for the same. This is where we can see if parties were able to convert the entrusted issue ownership into actual votes and which party succeeded best in doing so. Column “OTHER” includes all other answers such as: I don’t know, refused to answer, voted blank, etc., which don’t determinate issue ownership.

Converting bold numbers into percentage leads to the following results: The Austrian Green Party (GRÜNE) stood best in this respect because they managed to collect 69.8 percent of votes from 43 respondents that considered them as best to deal with the most important issue. They were followed by List Hans Peter Martin which managed to gain 64.3 percent of such votes, the Austrian People's Party with 53.5 percent, the Austrian Social-Democratic Party with 46 percent, the Freedom Party of Austria with 42.6, and Alliance for the Future of Austria with 36.4 percent. After taking a closer look at this table, one cannot ignore that a very big group of respondents (284) answered with NONE to the question which party was best to deal with most important issue. This means that they had identified an issue as most important; however, they did not consider any of the existing parties competent enough to deal with it.

Generally speaking, after looking at the results of table number 2, it can be concluded that issue competence could have influenced the vote choice of a bit more than a half (51.4 %) of the respondents in Austria that had specified an issue and a party best to deal with it. From total of 1,000 respondents interviewed, this amounted to 27.1 percent.

Conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis presented above are: First, voters in Austria mentioned unemployment, the effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, economic conditions, and immigration most frequently as the most important issues of the European Parliamentary Election of 2009. Second, in general, the Austrian People's Party was in a slight advantage when it came to owning different important issues compared to other parties in Austria because it was attributed issue competence most often by the respondents. Third, 27.1 percent of the respondents interviewed in Austria met my model of issue voters, which means that they could have based their vote choice on issue ownership.

4.2. Belgium

The respondents in Belgium, similar to those in Austria, specified many issues to be the most important ones but those that were mentioned most frequently were the following:

1. **Economic conditions** were seen as the most important issue by 178 respondents, or 17.8 percent, out of a total of 1,002.

2. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global Economy** were also rated in Belgium as the second issue number one by 150, or 15 percent, out of 1,002.
3. **Unemployment** was listed as the most important issue by 54 respondents, or 5.4 percent, out of 1,002.
4. **Multiculturalism (cultural diversity, cultural plurality)** ranked fourth named by 50 respondents out of 1,002, or 5 percent.
5. **Federalism, devolution, regional autonomy** followed next; it was seen as the most important issue by 30 respondents out of 1,002, amounting to 3 percent.
6. **Immigration** was pointed out as the most important issue by 24 respondents out of 1,002, amounting to 2.4 percent.
7. **Linguistic groups (policies aimed at, and treatment)** is the last issue, which I have decided to include in this list because of its specificity. It was considered as the most important issue by 19 respondents, or 1.9 percent, out of a total of 1,002.

Table 3 displays a very varied picture of Belgium's political landscape. A big number of parties appear on the list of parties seen as best to deal with the most important issues mentioned most often by the respondents, but also the salience is divided amongst big number of issues. The list of the issues which were mentioned by Belgian respondents is very long and rich in diverse topics. That is why the percentage of respondents that appear on this list is also quite low. It is impossible for me to cover such a high percentage of respondents in this first step of analysis, but I will include them all when it comes to evaluating issue ownership influence on vote choice. In this case, there are three issues which are very specific of this country: 1.) multiculturalism, 2.) federalism, devolution, regional autonomy, and 3.) linguistic groups, and all three seem to be issues of easy-issue voting type together with the immigration issue. On the contrary, the issues of economic conditions, effects of financial crisis, and unemployment are more likely to be of a hard-issue voting type.

Issue ownership in this case was reflected as follows; always bearing in mind low percentage of respondents I was being able to process: The Belgian Social-Democratic Party (PS, which is left-center and also the biggest Francophone party in Belgium) stood better regarding the issues of economic conditions and multiculturalism. This party was seen as most competent to deal with both of them by 20 respectively 26 percent of the respondents that considered these issues as most important. Competence

for handling the issue of effects of financial crisis on the domestic/EU/global economy was most often (36.7 percent) assigned to the Belgian Christian-Democratic and the Flemish Party (which is center-right Flemish Christian-Democratic party with strong ties to both labor unions and corporative organizations). Regarding the issues of unemployment and immigration ownership was very unclear. The respondents attached issue competence for dealing with these issues to more than four parties and the differences were very small. The issue of federalism, devolution, and regional autonomy was owned by the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA, a Flemish center-right political party). Finally issue ownership over the issue of linguistic groups was most commonly asserted to the Humanist Democratic Center, a French-speaking Christian Democratic party.

Table3: Perception of issue ownership in Belgium for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Belgium	Economic Conditions		Effects of financial crisis		Unemployment		Multiculturalism		Federalism		Immigration		Linguistic Groups	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	40	22,4	23	15,3	13	24	11	20,3	5	16,6	3	12,5	6	33,3
[NONE]	43	24,2	17	11,3	8	14,8	13	26,0	4	13,3	3	12,5	4	21,1
Écologistes (ECOLO)	8	4,5	1	,7	2	3,7	3	6,0	1	3,3	1	4,2	1	5,3
Parti du Travail de Belgique	2	1,1	0	0	0	0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Parti Socialiste (PS)	36	20,2	0	,0	6	11,1	13	26,0	1	3,3	2	8,3	1	5,3
PVDA+ (Partij van de Arbeid plus)	1	,6	2	1,3	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Socialistische Partij – Anders SP.a	1	,6	24	16,0	6	11,1	0	,0	4	13,3	1	4,2	0	,0
SLP (was Spirit)	1	,6	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	1	3,3	0	,0	0	,0
Open VLD	5	2,8	10	6,7	4	7,4	0	,0	1	3,3	0	,0	0	,0
Mouvement Réformateur (MR)	20	11,2	1	,7	5	9,3	5	10,0	1	3,3	3	12,5	3	15,8
CD&V	6	3,4	55	36,7	7	13,0	1	2,0	4	13,3	2	8,3	0	,0
Centre Démocrate Humaniste (CDH)	7	3,9			2	3,7	8	16,0	0	,0	3	12,5	4	21,1
Lijst Dedecker (LDD)	2	1,1	2	1,3	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Front National (FN)	2	1,1	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	2	8,3	0	,0
Groen	0	,0	5	3,3	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
N-VA	0	,0	5	3,3	0	,0	0	,0	8	26,7	2	8,3	0	,0
Vlaams Belang	4	2,2	5	3,3	1	1,9	0	,0	0	,0	2	8,3	0	,0
Total	178	100,0	150	100,0	54	100,0	54	100,0	30	100,0	24	100,0	19	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Specific aspects of the Belgian political landscape are also reflected in Table 4 where results about vote choice and issue competence/ownership intercept. Again, highlighted numbers represent the number of respondents that voted for the party to which they had attached issue ownership over the most important issue. Here we can also see if parties managed to collect the votes from respondents which had seen them as best to deal with most important issues and if so to which extent. This approach gives me the possibility to measure whether vote choice could have been influenced by issue ownership.

Table 4: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table																			
Country: Belgium		Which party voted for in EP elections																	
		OTHER	Écologistes (ECOLO)	Groen!	Parti du Travail de	Parti Socialiste (PS)	PVDA+ (Partij van de Arbeid)	Socialistische Partij – Anders	SLP (was Spirit)	Open VLD	Mouvement Réformateur	CD&V	Centre Démocrate	Lijst Dedecker	Front National (FN)	Vlaams Belang	N-VA	Rassemblement Wallonie	Total
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	370
	[NONE]	81	14	9	1	9	0	5	1	7	15	5	11	2	1	2	8	1	152
	Écologistes (ECOLO)	6	31	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	45
	Groen!	2	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
	Parti du Travail de	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Parti Socialiste	19	8	0	0	52	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	86
	PVDA+ (Partij van de Arbeid)	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Socialistische Partij – Anders SP.a	12	0	2	0	0	0	29	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	49
	SLP (was Spirit)	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Open VLD	3	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	28
	Mouvement Réformateur	15	4	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	28	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	52
	CD&V	11	0	8	0	0	0	6	1	10	0	54	0	2	0	3	7	0	102
	Centre Démocrate	4	6	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	19	0	1	0	0	0	38
	Lijst Dedecker (LDD)	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	6
	Front National (FN)	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	5
	Vlaams	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	14	0	0	24
	N-VA	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	3	12	0	26
	Total	310	85	57	2	83	3	62	4	52	66	137	48	10	5	36	41	1	1002

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

The Green Party of Belgium (Flemish Green Party) managed to convince 75 percent of the respondents that had considered this party best to deal with the most important issue to also vote for them, which was quite a high result. They were followed by ECOLO (Belgian Green Francophone Party) with 66 percent, Parti Socialiste (a Francophone Socialist Party) with 60 percent, Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD) also with 60 percent, the Socialist Party Different (Socialistische Partij Anders, a Flemish Socialist Party) with 59 percent, Flemish Interest with 58 percent, Reformist Movement with 53 percent, the Christian-Democratic and Flemish Party with 52 percent, Democratic Center Party with 50 percent, List Dedecker also with 50 percent, New Flemish Alliance with 46 percent, and National Front with 40 percent.

It is to note that smaller parties scored a higher percentage in the cross combination of the factors “party best to deal with most important issue” and “party voted”, meaning that their voters could have been more issue-oriented. Again the group which saw NONE of the parties as best to deal with most important issue was quite high with 152 respondents out of 1,002, amounting to 15 percent. Issue competence could have influenced vote choice of 56.4 percent of the respondents in Belgium, which had specified an issue and party best to deal with it. Out of a total of 1,002 respondents, that amounted to 27 percent of all respondents.

Conclusions to be drawn after examining the Belgian case are the following: First, voters in Belgium mentioned economic conditions, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, unemployment, and multiculturalism (cultural diversity, cultural plurality), federalism, immigration, and linguistic groups most frequently during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009. Second, the Christian Democratic and Flemish Party and the Socialist Party stood better than other Belgian parties in being favored as most competent to deal with different most important issues in general. Third, in Belgium issue ownership could have affected vote choice of 27 percent of the electorate.

4.3. Czech Republic

The respondents in the Czech Republic mentioned the following issues most frequently as the most important ones of the election period:

1. **Unemployment** was seen as most important issue number one by 238 or 23.3 percent out of a total of 1,020 respondents interviewed in the Czech Republic.
2. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were seen as most important issue number two by 163 respondents out of a total of 1,020, amounting to 16 percent.
3. **Political authority: strong government, government stability** was an issue rated as most important by 158 respondents, or 15.5 percent.
4. **National political corruption** was listed as the most important issue by 52 respondents, or 5.1 percent.
5. **Health care** was mentioned as the most important issue by 45 respondents, or 4.4 percent.
6. **Crime story** followed on the list, as it was identified as the most important issue by 30 respondents, or 2.9 percent.

Issues that appear now for the first time in my analysis are political authority, national political corruption, health care, and crime story, which seem to be issues of the hard-issue voting type.

Table 5 displays the results of issue owners of most mentioned most important issue in Czech Republic. In this case two big parties dominated the issue ownership scene. The Civic Democratic Party (largest and conservative party in Czech Republic) was seen, by most respondents, as best to deal with the first four issues of the table: unemployment (21.4 percent), effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy (22.7 percent), political authority: strong government, government stability (22.2 percent), and national political corruption (19.2 percent). The ownership of the following issues was most commonly assigned to the Czech Social Democratic Party (second biggest party in Czech Republic): health care (33.3 percent) and crime story (23.3 percent).

Table5: Perception of issue ownership in the Czech Republic for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

	Unemployment		Effect of Fin. Cri.		Political Authority		National Pol. Corr.		Health Care		Crime Story	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
COUNTRY: Czech Republic												
OTHER	50	21,0	47	28,8	35	22,1	17	32,6	9	20	6	20
[NONE]	65	27,3	38	23,3	59	37,3	15	28,8	8	17,8	6	20
SZ (Strana zelených)	4	1,7	0	,0	3	1,9	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
KSCM	20	8,4	12	7,4	9	5,7	3	5,8	2	4,4	3	10,0
CSSD	43	18,1	22	13,5	12	7,6	5	9,6	15	33,3	7	23,3
ODS	51	21,4	37	22,7	35	22,2	10	19,2	10	22,2	6	20,0
KDU-CSL	5	2,1	7	4,3	5	3,2	2	3,8	1	2,2	2	6,7
Total	238	100,0	163	100,0	158	100,0	52	100,0	45	100,0	30	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Table 6 shows the results regarding the issue ownership and vote choice compliance. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia was seen as best to deal with the most important issue by 63 respondents and 41 voted for it, which means that they got 65 percent. They were followed by the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party with 57.5 percent, the Civic Democratic Party which achieved 51.9 percent in this category, the Czech Social Democratic Party with 45 percent, and lastly the Green Party with 23 percent.

What was also valid for the Czech Republic was that a relatively high share of respondents did not see any party as best to deal with the most important issue. This group comprised 239 respondents. In the Czech Republic 47 percent of respondents who had identified a party as best to deal with most important issue also voted for the same party, which amounted to 22 percent out of the total of 1,020 respondents.

Table 6: Political party best to deal with MI/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table												
Country: Czech Republic		Which party voted for in EP elections										
		OTHER	Strana svobodných občanů	Libertas.cz	SZ (Strana zelených)	KSCM	CSSD	EDS	ODS	KDU-CSL	Národní strana	Total
Political party best to deal with MI	OTHER	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	307
	[NONE]	176	0	1	7	7	15	2	20	11	0	239
	Strana svobodných občanů	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Libertas.cz	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	SZ (Strana zelených)	9	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	13
	KSCM	18	0	0	0	41	2	0	2	0	0	63
	CSSD	73	0	0	1	1	70	1	4	3	0	153
	EDS	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	ODS	88	0	0	0	1	4	2	107	4	0	206
	KDU-CSL	12	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	19	0	33
	Národní strana	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Total	598	2	3	17	58	120	7	163	48	4	1020

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

Conclusions that can be drawn after looking at Czech results are the following: First, unemployment, just like in the case of Austria, was seen as most important issue number one. It was followed by effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, political authority: strong government, government stability, national political corruption, health care, and crime story. Two of the first are more general concerns of the European Union voters but two last ones are more specific for Czech Republic. Second, the Civic Democratic Party was more successful than other parties in regard to issue ownership. Third, respondents in the Czech Republic also showed tendencies towards an issue-based vote choice; at least 22 percent out of 1,020 respondents did so. This means that the issue-voting theory could fit well for explaining voting behavior of this group of Czech voters.

4.4. Estonia

The Estonian respondents mentioned the following issues most often as the most important issues of the election period during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Unemployment** was most often identified as the most important issue. It was mentioned by 415 respondents out of a total of 1,007, or 41.2 percent.
2. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were seen as second most important issue. This answer was given by 112 respondents, or 11 percent.
3. **Executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration** ranked third, identified by 106 respondents, amounting to 10 percent.
4. **Economic conditions** were seen as the most important issue by 69 respondents, amounting to 6.9 percent.
5. **Economic structure/policies/goals/conditions**, which seem to be a broader and more detailed version of the issue mentioned just above, were seen as most important by 61 respondents, or 6 percent.

All of the issues listed above seem to be issues of a hard-issue voting type. In this regard the Estonian Center Party (Eesti Keskerakond, which is a center party of a social liberal profile and also the biggest party in Estonia) was significantly more successful in the issue ownership battle compared to other parties in Estonia. It was able to gain the issue ownership of the following issues: unemployment (29.2 percent), effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy (38.4 percent) and executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration (20.8 percent), and economic structure (29.5 percent). It was only the issue of economic conditions over which they shared ownership (21.7 percent) with the Estonian Reform Party (Eesti Reformierakond, a center-right liberal party) (20.3 percent). Other parties received significantly less trust in regard to being competent to deal with the most important issues of the election period mentioned most often. The specific issue in the case of Estonia would be the issue of executive and administrative efficiency since it now

appears on the table of the most important issues mentioned most often for the first time.

Table7: Perception of issue ownership in Estonia for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Estonia	Unemployment		Effects of Financial Crisis		Executive and Administrative Efficiency		Economic Conditions		Economic Structure	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	92	22,1	19	16,9	20	18,8	18	26	16	26,2
[NONE]	93	22,4	21	18,8	32	30,2	11	15,9	13	21,3
Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised	5	1,2	1	,9	4	3,8	1	1,4	0	,0
Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond	35	8,4	5	4,5	6	5,7	5	7,2	3	4,9
Eesti Keskerakond	121	29,2	43	38,4	22	20,8	15	21,7	18	29,5
Eesti Reformierakond	44	10,6	12	10,7	14	13,2	14	20,3	7	11,5
Eestimaa Rahvaliid	5	1,2	1	,9	2	1,9	0	,0	1	1,6
Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit	20	4,8	10	8,9	6	5,7	5	7,2	3	4,9
Total	415	100,0	112	100,0	106	100,0	69	100,0	61	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

In table number 8 we can see how the results of the questions concerning the party seen best to deal with most important issue and the parties voted for in European Parliamentary Elections cross. For the first time in the analysis a party (in this case, the Estonian Center Party) received the highest share in regard to the question of which party was seen as best to deal with the most important issue, and this share was even higher than the percent of answers given to “NONE”.

The Center Party of Estonia, also a rather big party, managed to convert the trust to deal with the most important issue of the elections into real votes. It had been seen as best to deal with the most important issue by 267 respondents and 154 voted for it, which equaled 57.6 percent. The People’s Union of Estonia (Eestimaa Rahvaliid) followed with 46.6 percent, then the Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica (Isamaa ja Res Publica

Liit) with 46 percent, the Estonian Reform Party (Eesti Reformierakond) with 34.8 percent, the Social Democratic Party (Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond) with 33.3 percent, and then the Estonian Greens (Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised) with 18.7 percent.

Table 8: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table

Country: Estonia		Which party voted for in EP elections											
		OTHER	Dimitri Klenski	Indrek Tarand	Martin Helme	Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised	Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond	Eesti Keskerakond	Eesti Reformierakond	Eesti Kristlikud Demokraadid	Eestimaa Rahvaliid	Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit	Total
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	8	0	1	0	1	3	3	2	0	1	3	244
	[NONE]	45	2	17	0	2	15	16	4	0	2	16	223
	Indrek Tarand	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Erakond Eestimaa Rohelised	1	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	16
	Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond	7	0	8	1	2	22	3	3	0	2	2	66
	Eesti Keskerakond	13	0	0	1	2	6	154	1	0	1	1	267
	Eesti Reformierakond	11	0	3	0	0	5	1	38	0	1	5	109
	Eesti Kristlikud Demokraadid	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Eestimaa Rahvaliid	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	7	0	15
	Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit	15	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	30	65
	Total	538	2	43	2	11	62	199	63	1	17	69	1007

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

So far we have seen that smaller parties were more likely to succeed in convincing voters who had considered them as best to deal with the most important issues to also vote for them.

It is also to note that the biggest party in Estonia was slightly above the 50 percent average in this matter, compared to other big parties in countries analyzed until now. 47 percent of the respondents in Estonia who had identified a party or candidate best to

deal with the most important issue also voted for the same party/candidate. Out of a total of 1,007, this equaled 25.4 percent.

Conclusions that can be drawn after analyzing the Estonian case are: First, unemployment, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration, and economic conditions, as well as economic structure were mentioned most frequently as the most important issues of the election period during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009. Second, this was the first case where the biggest party (Estonian Center Party) is doing best in owning most important issue of elections period. Respondents which see them as most competent and best to deal with most important issue even comprise the biggest group of the table 8, what was not the case in any of the countries analyzed until yet. Even more, for a big party, they did very well in converting issue ownership trust into actual votes with just over 50 percent mark. Third, the tendency of issue-based vote choice continued also in this case as 25.4 percent of the voters in Estonia showed such attributes, leading to the conclusion that issue-voting theory is appropriate to explain the voting behavior of a quarter of the Estonian electorate.

4.5. Finland

The respondents in Finland listed the following issues most commonly as the most important issues of the election period during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Unemployment**, like in most of the countries analyzed until now, was seen as the most important issue most often. 309 respondents out of 1,000 mentioned it, amounting to 30.9 percent.
2. **Economic conditions** ranked second and were seen as the most important issue by 237 respondents, or 23.7 percent.
3. **Social justice** was seen as the most important issue number three by considerably less respondents, namely only 31, or 3.1 percent.

4. **Young people (more precisely policies that are aimed at them and their treatment)** were seen as the most important issue by 29 respondents, which equaled 2.9 percent.
5. **Executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration** was mentioned as the most important issue by 25 respondents, or 2.5 percent.
6. This spot was shared with the issue of **old people (more precisely policies that aimed at them and their treatment)** and **wages and earnings**; each was mentioned by 21 respondents, or 2.1 percent (out of a total of 1,000 respondents).

Again issues that appear on this list seem to be of the hard-issue voting type because they all require knowledge about a party's capabilities, policy means and competence for dealing with them. The National Coalition Party (KOK, which is liberal conservative party) was the owner of the issues of unemployment (17.5 percent), economic conditions (25.3 percent), and executive and administrative efficiency (16 percent). The Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP) was seen as best to deal with the issues of social justice and young people by the majority of respondents (29 and 17.2 percent). The last two issues of table 9 were owned by the Finnish Center Party (23.8 and 19 percent).

Table9: Perception of issue ownership in Finland for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Finland	Unemployment		Economic Conditions		Social Justice		Young People		Exc. and Adm. Effic.		Old People		Wages and Earnings	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	91	29,4	67	28,2	8	25,8	12	41,3	5	20	9	42,8	5	23,8
[NONE]	55	17,8	51	21,5	5	16,1	5	17,2	6	24,0	2	9,5	3	14,3
VIHR	9	2,9	6	2,5	2	6,5	1	3,4	2	8,0	0	,0	1	4,8
VAS	13	4,2	6	2,5	0	0	1	3,4	1	4,0	1	4,8	1	4,8
SKP	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	2	9,5
SDP	48	15,5	18	7,6	9	29,0	5	17,2	2	8,0	1	4,8	2	9,5
KOK	54	17,5	60	25,3	2	6,5	3	10,3	4	16,0	3	14,3	1	4,8
KESK	21	6,8	20	8,4	2	6,5	2	6,9	2	8,0	5	23,8	4	19,0
PS	17	5,5	7	3,0	2	6,5	0	,0	3	12,0	0	,0	1	4,8
KD			2	,8	1	3,2	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	1	4,8
RKP	1	,3	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	21	100,0	0	,0	0	,0
Total	309	100,0	237	100,0	31	100,0	29	100,0	25	100,0	21	100,0	21	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Two of the issues, which were quite specific for the case of Finland, are: young people (policies that are aimed at them and their treatment) and old people (policies that are aimed at them and their treatment).

Table 10, that is about to follow, is a cross table which compares the Finnish results of “party best to deal with the most important issue” and “party voted for”. The Finnish Communist Party (Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue) succeeded most in this category with 66.6 percent. They were followed by the Finnish Center Party (KESK) with 60.8 percent, the Left Alliance with 60 percent, the Green League of Finland with 57.7 percent, the National Coalition Party with 56.6 percent, the Christian Democrats of Finland (KD) with 53.8 percent, the Social Democratic Party of Finland with 49 percent, and True Finns with 38.6 percent. The Swedish Peoples Party (RKP) was the only party which managed to collect 3 votes of 3 respondents which had seen this party best to deal with the most important issue; this mean that they managed to receive 100 percent in this category.

Table 10: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table												
Country: Finland		Which party voted for in EP elections										Total
		OTHER	VIHR (Vihreä liitto)	VAS (Vasemm istoliitto)	Suomen Kommuni stinen Puolue (SKP)	SDP (Suomen Sosialidem okraattinen Puolue)	KD (Suomen Kristillide mokraatit)	KOK (Kansallinen Kokoomus)	KESK (Suomen Keskusta)	PS (Perussuo malaiset)	RKP (Ruotsalain en kansanpuol ue)	
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	2	11	6	0	12	4	14	13	6	2	333
	[NONE]	100	13	8	0	11	7	17	24	11	3	194
	VIHR (Vihreä liitto)	0	26	0	0	3	0	1	1	0	0	45
	VAS (Vasemmistoliitto)	0	3	18	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	30
	Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue (SKP)	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	SDP (Suomen Sosialidemokraattin en Puolue)	2	9	3	1	50	2	1	2	2	0	102
	KD (Suomen Kristillisdemokraatit)	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	0	1	0	13
	KOK (Kansallinen Kokoomus)	2	7	2	0	5	4	90	7	3	1	159
	KESK (Suomen Keskusta)	0	2	0	0	2	4	2	45	0	1	74
	PS (Perussuomalaiset)	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	17	0	44
	RKP (Ruotsalainen kansanpuolue)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
	Total	411	85	39	3	96	33	155	107	50	21	1000

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

Finland is the first case where almost all parties convinced more than 50 percent of voters who had thought that they were most competent to deal with the most important issue to also vote for them. Exceptions were only the Social Democratic Party of Finland, but it wasn't much behind in that matter with 49 percent and True Finns with 38.6 percent. 54.5 percent of the respondents who had identified a party as best to deal with most important issue also voted for the same, meaning that 25.8 percent out of 1,000 respondents did so.

Conclusions that can be drawn from the Finnish case are: First, besides two common issues that were seen as most important in the cases analyzed until now – the issue of unemployment and of economic conditions – the Finns were also preoccupied with social justice, executive and administrative efficiency, and the treatment of young and old people (policies aimed at them). Second, the biggest party of Finland, the National Coalition Party, stood best in owning issues in general, but not only that it also scored high 56, 6 percent in converting issue ownership trust into actual votes. Third, it seems that also in Finland tendencies towards the issue-based vote choice were present. 25.8 percent of the Finnish voters could have based their vote choice on issues. Once again issue-voting theory would be appropriate in explaining the behavior of a quarter of the electorate.

4.6. France

The following issues gained the attention of the respondents in France most commonly during the election period of 2009:

1. **Unemployment** was, as in many other cases, seen as the first most important issue by 271 respondents out of a total of 1,000, amounting to 27.1 percent.
2. **Economic conditions** took second place, seen as the most important issue by 269 respondents, or 26.9 percent.
3. **National employment policies** were seen as most important issue number three by 106 respondents, or 10.6 percent.
4. **Environment** was listed next in France, seen as the most important by 58 respondents out of a total of 1,000, amounting to 5.6 percent.
5. **Wages and earnings** was the last issue on this list. This issue was pointed out as most important by 37 respondents, or 3.7 percent.

Issues that appear on the French list also seem to be issues of a hard-issue voting type.

Table11: Perception of issue ownership in France for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: France	Unemployment		Economic Condition		National Employment Policies		Environment		Wages and Earnings	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	45	16,6	37	13,7	22	20,7	5	8,6	15	40,5
[NONE]	135	49,8	113	42,0	55	51,9	9	15,5	17	45,9
Le front de gauche (Le parti de gauche + PCF)	1	,4	1	,4	4	3,8	0	,0	1	2,7
Les Verts	4	1,5	4	1,5	0	0	27	46,6	2	5,4
PCF	1	,4	2	,7	1	,9	1	1,7	0	,0
Extrême gauche (LO/NPA, le parti d'Olivier Besancenot)	2	,7	4	1,5	1	,9	0	,0	0	,0
PS	20	7,4	13	4,8	6	5,7	2	3,4	2	5,4
MoDem	1	,4	5	1,9	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Europe Écologie	0	,0	1	,4	0	,0	9	15,5	0	,0
UMP	62	22,9	89	33,1	17	16,0	5	8,6	0	,0
Total	271	100,0	269	100,0	106	100,0	58	100,0	37	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

When it comes to the issue ownership of those issues that were referred to as most important most often during the election period in France, the situation is relatively simple. The Union for a Popular Movement (which is a center-right political party) stood best as issue owner regarding the issues of unemployment (22.9 percent), economic conditions (33.1 percent), and national employment policies (16 percent). The environment issue was convincingly owned by the Green Party of France (Les Verts) with 46.6 percent, while they shared issue ownership of the issue of wages and earnings with the French Socialist Party with 5.4 percent each. It is to note that once again the group of respondents that did not see any of the parties as best to deal with the most important issues was significantly high except for when it came to the issue of environment. In the analysis, this issue appeared for the first time in the section of France and therefore it has to be seen as specific for this country.

Table 12 displays the results of the interception of the two factors “party seen as best to deal with the most important issue” and “party voted for in France”.

Table 12: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table

Country: France		Which party voted for in EP elections										Total
		OTHER	Libertas	Les Verts	Europe Écologie	PCF	Extrême gauche (LO/NPA, le parti d'Olivier Besancenot)	PS	MoDem	UMP	FN	
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	3	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	185
	[NONE]	262	2	40	29	3	14	31	9	23	4	417
	Le front de gauche (Le parti de gauche + PCF)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	8
	Les Verts	1	0	22	4	0	0	2	0	3	0	47
	Europe Écologie	1	0	2	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	15
	PCF	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6
	Extrême gauche (LO/NPA, le parti d'Olivier Besancenot)	0	0	1	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	14
	PS	1	0	9	8	1	1	18	1	1	0	66
	MoDem	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	10
	UMP	3	1	16	4	0	0	3	4	115	1	229
	FN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
	Total	542	3	108	67	5	23	65	24	158	5	1000

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

The Democratic Movement (MoDem) did best of all parties in France in this category by convincing 60 percent of the respondents who had seen them as best to deal with the most important issue to also vote for this party. They were followed by the European Ecologists (Europe Écologie), which was in fact a coalition of the Green Party and other ecologists and regionalists in France, with 53 percent, then Union for a Popular Movement with 50.2 percent, The Greens (Les Verts) with 46.8 percent, Extreme Left (Extrême gauche (LO/NPA, Le parti d'Olivier Besancenot)) with 35.7 percent, and the Socialist Party with 27.3 percent. In this case it is to note that a big party (Union for a Popular Movement) – compared to other cases – did quite well in collecting votes from respondents who had seen it as best to deal with the most important issue. In France 43.9 percent of all respondents who had identified a certain party as best to deal with the most important issue also voted for the same party: out of a total of 1,000 respondents

that equaled 17.5 percent, which represents the lowest percentage of all cases analyzed so far.

Conclusions that I have been able to draw after analyzing the French case are: First, unemployment, economic conditions, national employment policies, environment, and wages and earnings were identified most frequently as the most important issues of the election period during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009. It is to note that in France, in contrast to the other countries that have been observed so far in this analysis, the issue of effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy was not mentioned among the most important issues. It could be found further down on the list, named only by two respondents. Second, the biggest party in France (Union for a Popular Movement) stood way better than all other parties in having been seen as issue owner in general. Third, it seems that 17.5 percent of French voters were issue oriented, that was the lowest percentage of all countries observed until now, this means, that the issue-voting theory could be successfully applied to the explanation of the voting behavior of 17.5 percent of the French voters at the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

4.7. Germany

The German respondents mentioned the following issues most often as the most important issues of the election period of the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were seen as most important issue number one in Germany by 363 respondents out of a total of 1,004, amounting to 36.2 percent.
2. **Unemployment** took second place in Germany; it was seen as the most important issue by 262 respondents, or 26.1 percent.
3. **Economic conditions** were the issue seen as most important by 86 respondents out of a total of 1,004, or 8.6 percent.
4. **Executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration** was the last issue on this list, seen as most important by 25 respondents, or 2.5 percent.

Again the issues on the list were of the hard-issue voting type because of their complexity and the importance of the way in which they would be dealt with rather than what to an end they will come. Issue ownership in Germany regarding the most mentioned most important issues of the election period provided a monotone picture where the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (a Christian Democratic and conservative party) stood best of all parties in owning the following three issues: effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, unemployment, and economic conditions. It was only the last most important issue of the list, executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration, over which ownership was claimed by the Free Democratic Party (center-right liberal party).

Table13: Perception of issue ownership in Germany for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Germany	Effects of Financial Crisis		Unemployment		Economic Conditions		Executive and Administrative Efficiency	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	45	12,3	40	15,2	7	8,1	2	8
[NONE]	113	31,1	95	36,3	33	38,4	11	44,0
B90/Die Grünen	7	1,9	5	1,9	3	3,5	0	,0
SPD	28	7,7	36	13,7	8	9,3	3	12,0
Linke	1	,3	9	3,4	2	2,3	1	4,0
FDP	28	7,7	9	3,4	7	8,1	4	16,0
CDU/CSU	140	38,6	68	26,0	26	30,2	3	12,0
Deutsche Kommunistische Partei, DKP	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	1	4,0
Bayernpartei, BP	1	,3	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Total	363	100,0	262	100,0	86	100,0	25	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Table 13 displays a long list of political parties that are actively involved in political scene in Germany, but with a very different level of support. In this table six small German parties appear: the Pirates Party of Germany (Piratenpartei Deutschland), The Grays (Die Grauen), the Ecological Democratic Party of Germany (Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei), the German Communist Party (Deutsche Kommunistische Partei), the Party of Bayern (Bayernpartei), and the National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei). All of them had been identified as best to deal with the most important issues by only one respondent. Except for the Ecological

Democratic Party of Germany none of them managed to convince the same person to also vote for them. The rest of the table is occupied by more serious players when it comes to the issue owning competition. Germany is a rare example where the biggest party also scored the best result in this category. The Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) was in the lead compared to all other parties with 55.5 percent. They were followed by the Social Democratic Party of Germany with 54.6 percent, the German Green Party with 48.3 percent, the Free Democratic Party with 43.9 percent, and the German Left Party (Linke) with 33.3 percent. 52 percent of the German respondents who had identified a party as best to deal with the most important issue also voted for the same. From total of 1,004 respondents, that was 27.6 percent.

Table 14: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table															
Country: Germany		Which party voted for in EP elections													
		OTHER	Piratenpartei Deutschland	Die Grauen	B90/Die Grünen	Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei, ÖDP	Deutsche Kommunistische Partei, DKP	SPD	Linke	FDP	CDU/CSU	Familie	Die Republikaner (REP)	Die Tierschutzpartei (Tierschutz)	Total
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	148
	[NONE]	169	2	3	32	1	1	36	24	15	33	5	1	0	322
	Piratenpartei Deutschland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Die Grauen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	B90/Die Grünen	0	0	0	15	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	31
	Ökologisch-Demokratische	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Deutsche Kommunistische Partei, DKP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	SPD	0	1	3	8	0	0	59	1	2	2	1	0	0	108
	Linke	0	1	1	5	1	0	0	8	0	1	0	0	1	24
	FDP	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	29	17	0	0	0	66
	CDU/CSU	2	1	2	7	0	0	19	0	8	166	0	1	0	299
	Bayernpartei, BP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Nationaldemokratische Partei	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		428	6	10	76	3	1	131	40	61	239	6	2	1	1004

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

Conclusions that I have drawn after examining the German case are the following: First, in Germany issues that were seen as most important during the election period of European Parliamentary elections of 2009 did not differ a lot from the other countries have been analyzed until now: Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy were seen as the most important issue most commonly mentioned, followed by unemployment and economic conditions as well as the issue of executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration. Second, the

CDU/CSU, the biggest party in Germany, stood best in owning issues in general during the election period of 2009. Third, in the case of Germany I have also found the first evidence of possible issue-based vote choice for at least 27.6 percent of the German voters. This means that the issue-voting theory can be applied to almost one third of the German voters.

4.8. United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom the following issues were mentioned most often by respondents as the most important issues of the election period:

1. **Economic conditions** ranked first and were seen as most important issue number one by 222 respondents out of a total of 1,000, or 22.2 percent.
2. **Unemployment** was the second most mentioned most important issue according to the British respondents. 166 of out 1,000 mentioned this issue, a percentage of 16.6.
3. **Immigration** was the third most mentioned most important issue in the United Kingdom. It was mentioned by 111 respondents, or 11.1 percent.
4. **National political corruption (political parties and politicians abusing national funds)** was seen as most important issue number four in the United Kingdom. It was mentioned by 88 respondents out of a total of 1,000, or 8.8 percent.
5. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were seen as the most important issue by 53 respondents, or 5.3 percent.
6. **Political authority (strong government, government stability)** was the last issue, which concluded this list, and mentioned by 41 respondents, or 4.1 percent.

The issues of immigration and political authority seem to be of the easy-issue voting time while all other tend more towards the hard-issue voting type. The issue owning landscape regarding the most commonly mentioned most important issues in the United Kingdom did not differ from the party system at all. As one could expect, two major parties stood best in owning the most important issues, with a slight advantage of the Conservatives with one issue ahead. Concerning the issues that appear on this table the Conservatives were in favor of four to two. The Conservative Party owned the

following issues: economic conditions (28.8 percent), immigration (24.3 percent), national political corruption (17 percent), and political authority (56.1 percent). On the other side, the issues of unemployment (24.7 percent) and effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy (22.6 percent) were owned by the Labour Party. Other parties that appear on the table did considerably worse when it came to being seen as most competent to deal with the most important issues of the election period.

Table15: Perception of issue ownership in the United Kingdom for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: United Kingdom	Economic Conditions		Unemployment		Immigration		National Political Corruption		Effects of Fin. Cris.		Political Authority	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	35	15,7	30	18	20	18	15	17	15	28,3	4	9,7
[NONE]	50	22,5	52	31,3	26	23,4	34	38,6	8	15,1	8	19,5
Labour	52	23,4	41	24,7	6	5,4	7	8,0	12	22,6	5	12,2
Liberal Democrats	18	8,1	6	3,6	3	2,7	5	5,7	4	7,5	0	,0
Conservatives	64	28,8	29	17,5	27	24,3	15	17,0	11	20,8	23	56,1
British National Party (BNP)	1	,5	1	,6	16	14,4	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Scottish National Party	1	,5	1	,6	1	,9	3	3,4	1	1,9	0	,0
Green Party	0	,0	1	,6	0	0	3	3,4	0	,0	1	2,4
Scottish Socialist Party SSP	0	,0	1	,6	0	0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Solidarity – Scotlands Socialist Movement	0	,0	1	,6	0	0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	1	,5	3	1,8	12	10,8	6	6,8	2	3,8	0	,0
Total	222	100,0	166	100,0	111	100,0	88	100,0	53	100,0	41	100

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Table 16 also illustrates the political scene in United Kingdom with the dominance of two major parties: The Conservatives and Labour Party. Nevertheless the Green Party was the one that scored the highest percentage in this category leading the way with 59 percent of collected votes from respondents which had seen them as the best to deal with most important issues of the election period. They were followed by the UK Independent Party with 54 percent, the Scottish National Party with 50 percent, the

Conservative Party with 39.2 percent, the Liberal Democrats with 36.7 percent, the Labour Party with 31.2 percent, and the British National Party with 21 percent.

37.9 percent of the respondents in the United Kingdom who had identified a certain party as best to deal with the most important issue of the election period also voted for the same party. Out of a total of 1,000 respondents, this amounted to 21.1 percent.

Table 16: Political party best to deal with MI/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table

Country: United Kingdom		Which party voted for in EP elections													Total
		OTHER	Animals Count	Green Party	Labour	Scottish Socialist Party SSP	Liberal Democrats	Christian Party	Conservatives	British National Party (BNP)	England Democrats	Plaid Cymru	Scottish National Party	UK Independence Party (UKIP)	
Political party best to deal with MI	OTHER	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	202
	[NONE]	163	0	12	9	0	13	1	21	2	0	1	2	16	240
	Green Party	0	0	13	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
	Labour	3	0	10	49	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	157
	Scottish Socialist Party SSP	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Solidarity – Scotlands Socialist	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Liberal Democrats	1	0	5	4	0	25	0	2	0	0	1	0	4	68
	Conservatives	3	1	5	2	0	6	0	95	2	1	0	2	23	242
	British National Party (BNP)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	3	19
	Plaid Cymru	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	Scottish National Party	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	8
	UK Independence Party (UKIP)	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	20	37
Total		556	1	54	70	2	75	1	132	15	1	4	14	75	1000

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

After examining the case of the United Kingdom I have come to the following *conclusions*: First, the most frequently mentioned most important issues during the election period in the United Kingdom were in this order economic conditions, unemployment, immigration, national political corruption (political parties and politicians abusing national funds), effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global

economy, and political authority. Second, the two biggest parties of the United Kingdom, the Conservatives and the Labour Party, stood best in owning not only the most mentioned most important issues, but also other issues in general, too. What is more, the Conservative Party was seen as the best party to deal with the most important issues of the election period in general making United Kingdom an exception where the group of the respondents who thought that none of the parties was best to deal with most important issues is not the biggest. Third, issues could have had an impact on the vote choice of at least 21.1 percent of the British voters.

4.9. Hungary

The Hungarian respondents mentioned the following issues most frequently as the most important issues of the election period:

1. **Unemployment** was seen as the most important issue by 301 respondents out of 1,005 respondents, a percentage of 30, which is the biggest share of all countries analyzed so far.
2. **Wages and earnings** landed on the second place, seen as the most important issue of the election period by 91 respondents, or 9.1 percent.
3. **Economic conditions** were seen as the most important issue of the election period in Hungary by 73 respondents, or 7.3 percent.
4. **Social justice** was identified as the most important issue by 72 respondents, or 7.2 percent.
5. **Democratic role of political parties** came next and it was pointed out as the most important issue of the election period by 57 respondents, or 5.7 percent.
6. **Political authority (strong government, government stability)** followed. It was seen as the most important issue by 39 respondents, or 3.9 percent.
7. **Political corruption** completed this list and it was seen as the most important issue of the election period by 31 respondents, or 3.1 percent.

The issues of the democratic role of political parties and political corruption were mentioned more often in the Hungarian case than in any other. This makes them specific for the Hungarian case. These two issues seem to be of the easy-issue voting type while others lean more towards hard-issue voting type. The Fidesz-Hungarian

Civic Union, which is a big conservative and people's party in Hungary, stood best in regard to the issues of unemployment (33.6 percent), economic conditions (35.6 percent), social justice (40.3 percent), political authority (41 percent), and political corruption (35.5 percent). It was only the issues of wages and earnings (36.3 percent) and the democratic role of political parties (17.5 percent) that were owned by the Hungarian Socialist Party. Although seven other parties appear on this table, they did not play a serious role in this respect.

Table17: Perception of issue ownership in Hungary for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Hungary	Unemployment		Wages and Earnings		Economic Conditions		Social Justice		Democratic Role of Pol		Political Authority		Political Corruption	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	56	18,6	15	16,4	6	8,2	15	20,8	7	12,2	1	2,5	6	19,4
[NONE]	108	35,9	31	34,1	32	43,8	20	27,8	31	54,4	17	43,6	10	32,3
Lehet más a politika! (LMP-HP)	2	,7	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	1	1,8	0	,0	0	,0
Magyar Kommunista Munkáspárt	1	,3	5	5,5	0	0	0	0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
MSZP, Magyar Szocialista Párt	10	3,3	33	36,3	1	1,4	4	5,6	10	17,5	1	2,6	1	3,2
Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Párt	101	33,6	0	,0	26	35,6	29	40,3	3	5,3	16	41,0	11	35,5
MDF, Magyar Demokrata Fórum	3	1,0	0	,0	0	0	0	,0	1	1,8	0	,0	0	,0
KDNP, Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	1	,3	0	,0	0	,0	1	1,4	0	,0	1	2,6	0	,0
Jobbik	15	5,0	3	3,3	5	6,8	3	4,2	4	7,0	2	5,1	2	6,5
SZDSZ, Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége			1	1,1	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	1	3,2
Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja MIÉP	4	1,3	3	3,3	3	4,1	0	,0	0	,0	1	2,6	0	,0
Total	301	100,0	91	100,0	73	100,0	72	100,0	57	100,0	39	100,0	31	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

In the category where I measure how well parties did in converting the trust of the respondents to deal with the most important issue of the election period into actual votes and at the same time possible issue ownership effect on vote choice, Hungarian parties

are ranked as follows: Magyar Kommunista Munkáspárt (Hungarian Communist Workers Party) with 66.6 percent, followed by the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Párt) which was one of the rare major parties which achieved to score high 63.4 percent. MSZP, Magyar Szocialista Párt (Hungarian Socialist Party), followed with 62.9 percent, Jobbik (Movement For Better Hungary) with 58 percent, SZDSZ, Szabad (Aliance of Free Democrats), with 33.3 percent, MDF, Magyar Demokrata Fórum (Hungarian Democratic Forum), also with 33.3 percent, Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP (Hungarian Justice and Life Party), with 30.7 percent and KDNP, Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (Christian Democratic People's Party), with 20 percent.

Table 18: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table												
Country: Hungary		Which party voted for in EP elections										
		OTHER	Lehet más a politika! (LMP-HP)	Magyar Kommunista a Munkáspárt	MSZP, Magyar Szocialist a Párt	Fidesz- Magyar Polgári Párt	SZDSZ, Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége	MDF, Magyar Demokrat a Fórum	KDNP, Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	Jobbik	Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja MIÉP	Total
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	186
	[NONE]	256	3	1	31	38	5	9	0	12	1	356
	Lehet más a politika! (LMP-HP)	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
	Magyar Kommunista Munkáspárt	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	MSZP, Magyar Szocialista Párt	1	0	0	34	1	1	1	0	0	0	54
	Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Párt	9	0	0	0	200	0	1	0	7	7	315
	SZDSZ, Szabad Demokraták	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
	MDF, Magyar Demokrata Fórum	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	9
	KDNP, Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
	Jobbik	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	32	1	55
	Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja MIÉP	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	4	13
	Total	548	3	5	83	269	10	19	1	53	14	1005

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

In Hungary, the group of respondents who thought that none of the parties was best to deal with the most important issue of the election period was the biggest. However, in Hungary, it was the rare case that two major parties (Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union,

and Hungarian Socialist Party) scored a high percentage in convincing those who had thought that they were best to deal with the most important issue to also vote for them: 59.8 percent of the Hungarian respondents who had identified a party as best to deal with the most important issue also voted for the same and hence could have based their vote choice on issues. Out of a total of 1,005 respondents, these were 27.5 percent.

Conclusions that I have drawn after observing the Hungarian case are: First, the most important issues of election period were: unemployment, wages and earnings, economic conditions, social justice, democratic role of political parties, political authority, and political corruption. The issues of the democratic role of political parties and political corruption appeared for the first time in this classification, making them specific most important issues for this country. Second, the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union did best in owning the most important issues in general, plus it was one of the rare big parties that was very successful in converting voters trust as best to deal with the most important issues into votes by scoring surprisingly high with 63.4 percent. Third, in Hungary there was also a first evidence of issue-based vote choice: 27.5 percent of Hungarian voters showed such tendencies and this means that issue ownership could have had a strong impact on their vote choice.

4.10. Italy

In Italy the respondents mentioned the following issues as the most important ones of the election period of the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Unemployment**, as observed in many other countries, was also most frequently seen as the most important issue of the election period in Italy, to be more precise, by 204 respondents out of a total of 1,000, a percentage of 20.4.
2. **National employment policies** were seen as the most important issue by 162 respondents, or 16.2 percent.
3. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were identified as the most important issue by 153 Italian respondents, a percentage of 15.3.
4. **Immigration** followed next, it was seen as the most important issue of the election period in Italy by 69 respondents, or 6.9 percent.

5. National crime prevention policies and economic conditions were two issues that shared their spots as the most important issue; each was seen as the most important one by 44 respondents, or 4.4 percent.

Except for the issue of immigration, which would be fit for the easy-issue voting profile, all other issues of the list seem to be of the hard-issue voting type. While other issues also appeared in the cases of other countries on the respective list of the most important issues of election period mentioned most often, the issue of national crime prevention policies made it on the list for the first time, making it a specific one for the case of Italy.

Table19: Perception of issue ownership in Italy for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Italy	Unemployment		National Emp. Pol.		Effects of Fin. Cri.		Immigration		Economic Condition		National Crime Prev. Pol.	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	38	18,6	39	24	21	13,7	7	10,1	12	27,2	11	25
[NONE]	72	35,3	61	37,7	52	34,0	10	14,5	14	31,8	2	100,0
Sinistra Arcobaleno	2	1,0	1	,6	1	,7	1	1,4	0	,0	0	,0
Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, PdCI-PRC-S2000-CU	4	2,0	2	1,2	1	,7	1	1,4	0	,0	1	2,3
Partito Democratico	26	12,7	22	13,6	1	,7	5	7,2	3	6,8	2	4,5
Unione di Centro	1	,5	0	,0	24	15,7	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Popolo della Libertà	45	22,1	23	14,2	42	27,5	19	27,5	12	27,3	13	29,5
La Destra	1	,5	1	,6	1	,7	1	1,4	1	2,3	2	4,5
Lega Nord	9	4,4	8	4,9	3	2,0	23	33,3	1	2,3	11	25,0
Forza Nuova FN	1	,5	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Italia dei Valori	5	2,5	5	3,1	6	3,9	2	2,9	1	2,3	2	4,5
Total	204	100,0	162	100,0	153	100,0	69	100,0	44	100,0	44	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Concerning ownership over the most important issues mentioned most often in Italy Popolo dela Libertà (The People of Freedom), a center-right political party, stood best of all. This party owned the issues of unemployment, effects of financial crisis in domestic/EU/global economy, economic conditions, and national crime prevention policies. The leadership in owning the issue of national employment policies was

divided between The People of Freedom and Democratic Party (Partito Democratico), a social-democratic party, while Lega Nord (League North or Northern League, which is a regionalist party that tries to push forward the independence of region Padania) stood best in owning the issue of immigration.

Table 20: Political party best to deal with MI/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table

		Which party voted for in EP elections											
		OTHER	Partito Pensionati PP	Sinistra Arcobaleno	Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, PdCI-PRC-S2000-CU	Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori PCL	Partito Democratico	Partito Radicale /Bonino-Pannella	Unione di Centro	Popolo della Liberta	Lega Nord	Italia dei Valori	Total
Political party best to deal with MI	OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	2	0	230
	[NONE]	187	1	10	7	0	44	6	9	33	8	8	313
	Sinistra Arcobaleno	0	0	8	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	11
	Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, PdCI-PRC-S2000-CU	1	0	1	6	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	15
	Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori PCL	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Partito Democratico	0	0	3	1	0	85	0	0	1	0	7	111
	Partito Radicale /Bonino-Pannella	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Unione di Centro	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	7
	Popolo della Liberta	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	134	12	0	193
	La Destra	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	12
	Alleanza Nazionale, AN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	Lega Nord	0	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	12	33	1	69
	Forza Nuova FN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Italia dei Valori	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	19	34
	Total	463	1	26	18	1	171	10	21	209	64	43	1000

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

The table concerning Italy includes a total of 12 parties. Italy and Belgium are the countries, where the total number of parties is biggest. The Democratic Party led ahead of all other parties in this category with a high share of 76.5 percent. They were followed by Sinistra Arcobaleno (Rainbow Left, which is a federation of Italian left wing parties) with 72.7 percent, The People of Freedom with 69.4 percent, Italy of Values (Italia dei Valore) with 55.8 percent, the Northern League with 47.8 percent, and

Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, PdCI-PRC-S2000-CU (Communist Refoundation Party) with 40 percent.

It is to note that Italy is another rare exception where big parties did as good and in some cases even better than smaller parties in this comparison. 63.4 percent of the Italian respondents who had identified a party as best to deal with the most important issue of the election period also voted for the same parties. Out of a total of 1,000, that made quite a high percentage of 28.9. Subsequently this would mean that the issue-voting theory could be applied to one third of the Italian voters.

Conclusions that I have drawn after examining the case of Italy are the following: First, the most frequently mentioned most important issues of the election period during the European Parliamentary Elections of the year 2009 were: unemployment, national employment policies, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, immigration, economic conditions, and national crime prevention policies. Second, The People of Freedom stood, in this case, best in owning the most important issues in general. Moreover, Italian parties did quite well in convincing those respondents who had attached issue ownership to them to also vote for them. Third, 28.9 percent of all 1,000 Italian respondents seem to have followed the pattern of issue-based vote choice, which has been one of the highest percentages of this analysis so far.

4.11. Malta

The Maltese respondents mentioned the following issues most frequently as the most important issues of the election period of the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Taxes** were the issue that was seen as the most important one most often. 317 out of 1,000 Maltese respondents did so, so that was a percentage of 31.7.
2. **Immigration** occupied the second place and it was seen as the most important issue by 224 respondents, or 22.4 percent.
3. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** ranked third. It was seen as the most important issue by 127 respondents, or 12.7 percent.
4. **Unemployment** completed this list, mentioned in Malta as the most important issue on fourth place. It was identified as such by 97 respondents, or 9.7 percent.

Except for the issue of immigration, which is of an easy-voting type, the other issues of the list more likely fit to hard-issue voting profile. The comparison of issue ownership over the issues mentioned most often as the most important ones of the election period in Malta shows that two major actors split issue ownerships over the four issues mentioned in the list above. In Malta, the issue of taxes was seen as the most important issue by the biggest group of respondents. In my analysis, it is also the first time that this issue appeared, so it can be considered as a specific issue for the country of Malta. This issue was convincingly owned by Partit Laburista (Labour Party of a social-democratic profile) with 41 percent. Besides the issue of taxes this party also owned the issue of unemployment with 25.8 percent. Regarding the two other issues, immigration and effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, the Partit Nazzjonalista (Nationalist Party, a Christian-democratic and liberal-conservative party) stood better and was seen to as best to deal with them by 21.9 respectively 37 percent.

Table21: Perception of issue ownership in Malta for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Malta	Issue Taxes		Issue Immigration		Issue Effects of Financial Crisis		Issue Unemployment	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	79	24,9	65	29	25	19,6	28	28,8
[NONE]	76	24,0	66	29,5	34	26,8	21	21,6
Alternativa Demokratika	1	,3	1	,4	0	,0	0	,0
Partit Laburista	130	41,0	30	13,4	21	16,5	25	25,8
Partit Nazzjonalista	31	9,8	49	21,9	47	37,0	23	23,7
Imperium Europa (IE)	0	,0	7	3,1	0	,0	0	,0
Azzjoni Nazzjonali	0	,0	6	2,7	0	0	0	,0
Total	317	100,0	224	100,0	127	100,0	97	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Table 22, where parties' ability to convince voters which had seen them as best to deal with the most important issues of the election period is put to the test, proves the dominance of the two major parties in Malta. The biggest party in Malta, the Labour Party, achieved a high percentage of 76 in this category. The National Party, the second

biggest party in Malta, also did very well in this category by scoring 70.4 percent. They were followed by Imperium Europa (Empire Europe) with 28.5 percent, Alternativa Demokratika (Democratic Alternative) with 20 percent, and Azzjoni Nazzjonalista (National Action) with 16.6 percent. It is to note that Malta was another rare example where big parties did way better in convincing the voters who had thought that they were best to deal with the most important issue to eventually vote for them than smaller parties. In this regard Malta differs from the other countries analyzed so far.

Table 22: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table								
Country: Malta		Which party voted for in EP elections						Total
		OTHER	Imperium Europa (IE)	Alternativa Demokratika	Partit Laburista	Partit Nazzjonalista	Azzjoni Nazzjonalista	
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	0	0	0	0	1	0	313
	[NONE]	139	4	6	36	61	2	248
	Imperium Europa	0	2	0	2	2	0	7
	Alternativa Demokratika	0	0	1	0	1	0	5
	Partit Laburista	0	0	1	181	5	0	238
	Partit Nazzjonalista	1	0	3	7	129	1	183
	Azzjoni Nazzjonalista	1	1	0	0	1	1	6
	Total	443	8	13	269	262	5	1000

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issues ownership.

71.5 percent of the Maltese respondents who had identified a certain party as best to deal with the most important issue of the election period during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 also voted for the same party. Out of a total of 1,000 respondents, that amounted to 31.4 percent, which is a share that excels the previously analyzed case of Italy.

Conclusions that I have been able to draw after analyzing the Maltese case are the following: First, the most important issues of the election period mentioned most often

were: taxes, immigration, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, and unemployment. The Labour Party owned the issue of taxes, which is characteristic for Malta, and the issue of unemployment, while the second and third issue (immigration and effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy) were owned by the Nationalist Party. Second, two big parties (Labour Party and Nationalist Party) dominated convincingly in issue owning in general in Malta and also both of them did extremely well in getting the votes of those voters who had seen them as best to deal with the most important issues. Third, it seems that the Maltese voters, from all cases observed until now, were most issue oriented. There has been first evidence that a relatively high share of 31.4 percent of the Maltese voters could have based their votes on issues.

4.12. The Netherlands

Respondents in the Netherlands mentioned the following issues most often as the most important ones of the election period of the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Economic conditions** were the issue that was also seen in the Netherlands as most important issue number one. 404 respondents out of a total of 1,004 mentioned it; this amounted to 40.4 percent.
2. **Unemployment** was positioned on the second place and seen as the most important issue by 77 respondents, or 7.7 percent.
3. **National way of life (reference to patriotism/nationalism, support/opposition for established national ideas and/or values)** landed on the third place; it was seen as the most important issue by 74 respondents, or 7.4 percent.
4. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were fourth on the list and seen as the most important issue by 45 respondents, or 4.5 percent.
5. **Immigration** followed on the list and was mentioned as the most important issue by 32 respondents, or 3.2 percent.
6. **Crime story** completed the list. This issue was considered most important by 31 respondents, or 3.1 percent.

From all issues listed above only immigration and crime story seem to be of the easy-issue voting type, the others are more difficult to render and as such seem to be

of the hard-issue voting type. Although ten parties appear on this table, it is four of them that dominated in this category. The leadership in owning the first and second issue of the list (economic conditions and unemployment) was shared between the Labour Party of the Netherlands (a social-democratic party) and the Christian Democratic Appeal (a Christian-democratic party). The issue of national way of life, which appeared in the analysis for the first time in the case of the Netherlands, was owned by Democrats 66 (a progressive and social-liberal party) with 21.6 percent. The issues of immigration and crime story were both owned by the Party for Free (PVV Wilders, a right-wing political party) with 34.4 respectively 25.8 percent.

Table23: Perception of issue ownership in the Netherlands for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Netherlands	Economic Conditions		Unemployment		National Way of Life		Effects of Financial Crisis		Immigration		Crime Story	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	78	19,3	15	19,4	7	9,4	10	22,2	6	18,7	9	29
[NONE]	30	7,4	7	9,1	6	8,1	4	8,9	1	3,1	1	3,2
Partij voor de Dieren (PvdD)	3	,7	0	,0	3	4,1	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Groen Links	13	3,2	2	2,6	10	13,5	1	2,2	0	,0	0	,0
SP	12	3,0	4	5,2	3	4,1	2	4,4	1	3,1	1	3,2
PvdA	83	20,5	15	19,5	5	6,8	8	17,8	1	3,1	2	6,5
D66	35	8,7	10	13,0	16	21,6	4	8,9	4	12,5	1	3,2
VVD	57	14,1	3	3,9	4	5,4	3	6,7	4	12,5	3	9,7
CDA	78	19,3	16	20,8	6	8,1	10	22,2	4	12,5	5	16,1
ChristenUnie	4	1,0	1	1,3	5	6,8	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
SGP	2	,5	2	2,6	2	2,7	1	2,2	0	,0	1	3,2
PVV (Wilders)	9	2,2	2	2,6	7	9,5	2	4,4	11	34,4	8	25,8
Total	404	100,0	77	100,0	74	100,0	45	100,0	32	100,0	31	100

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Table 24 is unique compared to the other countries analyzed so far, because it displays a wide range of parties seen as best to deal with most important issue and all of them did a relatively good job in converting this trust to deal with the issues into actual votes. This shrank the group of respondents who thought that none of the parties was best to deal with the most important issue to only 70, which is a very low number.

Table 24: Political party best to deal with MI: Which party voted for in EP elections cross table

Country: Netherlands		Which party voted for in EP elections															
		OTHER	Partij voor de Dieren	Newropeans	Solidariteitspartij	Europese Klokkenluiders	Libertarissen	Groen Links	SP	PvdA	D66	VVD	CDA	ChristenUnie	SGP	PVV (Wilders)	Total
Political party best to deal with MI	OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	218
	[NONE]	41	1	0	1	0	1	2	2	6	2	3	2	4	0	5	70
	Partij voor de Dieren (PvdD)	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
	Groen Links	0	1	0	0	0	0	39	7	3	4	0	1	2	0	0	72
	SP	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	23	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	44
	PvdA	1	2	0	0	1	1	9	4	40	11	1	11	2	0	1	131
	D66	0	0	1	0	1	0	12	0	9	57	2	4	0	0	1	104
	VVD	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	4	42	1	0	1	7	97
	CDA	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	7	6	5	93	3	0	4	162
	ChristenUnie	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	8	0	1	17
	SGP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	10
	PVV (Wilders)	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	4	4	4	2	0	31	72
	Trots op Nederland TON (Verdonk)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Total	360	20	1	2	2	5	83	53	85	105	66	131	27	11	54	1005

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

Partij voor de Dieren (Party for Animals), which engaged its work towards animals' rights and welfare, got the highest share, namely 87.5 percent, in this category. They were followed by the Reformed Political Party with 70 percent, the Christian Democratic Appeal with 57.4 percent, Democrats 66 with 54.8 percent, Green Left (Groen Links) with 54.1 percent, the Socialist Party with 52.2 percent, Christen Unie (Christian Union) with 47 percent, the Party for Freedom (PVV Wilders) with 43

percent, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) also with 43 percent, and the Labour Party with 30.5 percent.

The case of the Netherlands was one of the rare ones where parties that had been seen as best to deal with the most important issues were also trusted to actually deal with them, because they eventually also received the votes of a high percentage of those voters who had been in favor of them. This is the first case where the group “None” regarding the question of which party was best to deal with the most important issue was very small and almost insignificant. 48.2 percent of the respondents in the Netherlands who had identified a party as best to deal with the most important issue also voted for the same. Out of a total of 1,005 respondents, this amounted to 34.4 percent, the highest share of all countries analyzed until now.

Conclusions that can be drawn after observing the case of the Netherlands are the following: First, the most important issues that caught the attention of the Dutch voters most frequently were: economic conditions, unemployment, national way of life, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, immigration, and crime story. The issue of national way of life which covers patriotism/nationalism, support or opposition for established national ideas and/or values was an issue that only received such an amount of attention in the Netherlands, which made it a specific issue for this country. Second, the Dutch voters, opposed to other countries of the European Union analyzed until now, split their trust concerning the dealing with the most important issues of the election period to a wider range of parties. None of the parties won the issue ownership battle convincingly and all parties did very well in convincing the voters who had entrusted them with dealing with the most important issues to also trust them with their votes. Third, there has been first evidence that 34.4 percent of the Dutch voters could have been issue oriented and that issue ownership has affected their vote choice. This would be the highest result until now. This means that issue-voting theory can be used to explain the voting behavior of this group of the Dutch voters.

4.13. Portugal

The Portuguese respondents most often mentioned the following issues as the most important ones during the election period of European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Unemployment** was seen most commonly as the most important issue in Portugal. 457 respondents out of a total of 1,000 mentioned this particular issue as the most important, which made 45.7 percent.
2. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** was mentioned second most as the most important issue. It was chosen by 136 respondents, or 13.6 percent.
3. **Economic conditions** were the issue that occupied the third place. It was chosen by 61 respondents, or 6.1 percent.
4. **Executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration** completed the list and was seen as most important by 43 respondents, or 4.3 percent.

Table25: Perception of issue ownership in Portugal for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Portugal	Unemployment		Effects of Financial Crisis		Economic Conditions		Executive and Administrative Efficiency	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	59	12,9	28	20,5	12	19,6	8	18,6
[NONE]	277	60,6	59	43,4	23	37,7	28	65,1
Bloco de Esquerda	19	4,2	6	4,4	3	4,9	1	2,3
CDU (PCP/PEV)	11	2,4	4	2,9	2	3,3	2	4,7
Partido Comunista Português (PCP)	1	,2	1	,7	0	,0	0	,0
PS	43	9,4	16	11,8	5	8,2	0	,0
PSD	40	8,8	21	15,4	15	24,6	4	9,3
CDS-PP Centro Democrático e Social - Partido Popular	7	1,5	1	,7	1	1,6	0	,0
Total	457	100,0	136	100,0	61	100,0	43	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

The first aspect that stands out regarding the most important issues mentioned most often and their owners in Portugal is the fact that for every and each of those issues the number of respondents which saw none of the parties as best to deal with them was extremely high. In the case of Portugal these numbers are higher compared to the other countries. All the issues that appear on this table seem to be of the hard-issue voting type. Two parties of more or less the same profile were considered as the owner of the issue of unemployment: The Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Party of Portugal. Regarding the issues of effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, economic conditions, and executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration the Social Democratic Party was in the lead with 15, 4, 24, 6, and 9.3 percent.

Table 26 does not display any different results. The political parties of Portugal were not successful in owning the most important issues of the election period. The group of respondents who saw none of the parties as best to deal with most important issue comprised 54.5 percent and hence is the biggest on the table.

Table 26: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table											
Country: Portugal		Which party voted for in EP elections									Total
		OTHER	Movimento Merito e Sociedade (MMS)	Movimento Esperança Portugal (MEP)	Partido da Terra (MPT)	Bloco de Esquerda	CDU (PCP/PEV)	PS	PSD	CDS-PP Centro Democrático e Social - Partido Popular	
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	165
	[NONE]	344	1	0	1	35	21	57	65	21	545
	Movimento Esperança Portugal (MEP)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Bloco de Esquerda	0	0	1	0	18	1	1	3	0	45
	CDU (PCP/PEV)	0	0	0	0	1	14	0	0	0	26
	Partido Comunista Português (PCP)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	PS	1	0	1	0	0	1	41	3	3	84
	PSD	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	69	7	112
	CDS-PP Centro Democrático e Social - Partido	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	12	20
	Total	550	1	2	1	59	48	126	165	48	1000

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

The Social Democratic Party led ahead of all other parties in this category with 61.6 percent. They were followed by CDS-PP Centro Democrático e Social - Partido Popular (Democratic and Social Center- Peoples Party) with 60 percent, the Democratic Unity Coalition with 53.8 percent, the Socialist Party with 48.8 percent, and Bloco de Esquerda (The Left Block) with 40 percent.

53.1 percent of the Portuguese respondents who had identified a party as best to deal with the most important issue also voted for the same. These were only 15.4 percent out of a total of 1,000, which is also the lowest result of all countries observed until now.

Conclusions that are to be drawn based on the outcome of the analysis of the Portuguese case are: First, issues mentioned most frequently as the most important ones of the election period were: unemployment, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, economic conditions, and executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration. The Social-Democratic Party of Portugal stood best in owning these issues, and overall best in owning issues in general. Second, 54.5 percent of all respondents in Portugal saw none of the parties as best to deal with the most important issues of the election period, which makes the Portuguese, share the highest of the overall analysis so far. Third, in Portugal there seemed to exist tendencies of issue-based vote choice for only 15.4 percent of respondents, which is the lowest number of all countries analyzed.

4.14. Romania

The respondents in Rumania most commonly mentioned the following issues as most important during the election period of the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Economic conditions** were mentioned most often as the most important issue in Romania; to be more precisely by 451 respondents out of a total of 1,003, amounting to 45 percent.
2. **Unemployment** was on second place. It was chosen by 142 Romanian respondents, or 14.2 percent.
3. **National political corruption (political parties and politicians abusing national funds)** was seen as the most important issue by 70, or 7 percent.

4. **Pensions** completed the list of issues. It was seen as most important by 42 respondents, or 4.2 percent.

The issues that were mentioned most often in this case fit better to the hard-issue voting type because of their complexity and the means required to deal with them. When it comes to owning the most important issues that were mentioned most frequently during the election period in Romania the Social Democratic Party (PSD) did best. This party stood best compared to all other parties in being seen as best to deal with the issues of economic conditions, unemployment, and pensions. In regard to owning the issue of national political corruption, competition was tight. For this particular issue three parties were equally seen as best to deal with it: the Social Democratic Party, the Greater Romania Party (PRM, a Romanian radical right-wing party), and the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L).

Table27: Perception of issue ownership in Romania for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Romania	Issue Economic Conditions		Issue Unemployment		Issue National Political Corruption		Issue Pensions	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	60	13,3	28	19,7	13	18,5	14	33,3
[NONE]	158	35,0	54	38,0	30	42,9	14	33,3
Partidul Comunist Român, PCR	1	,2	0	,0	0	,0	0	,0
Partidul Social Democrat, PSD	111	24,6	20	14,1	8	11,4	11	26,2
Partidul Democrat-Liberal, PD-L	70	15,5	18	12,7	7	10,0	2	4,8
Partidul Național Liberal, PNL	37	8,2	14	9,9	3	4,3	1	2,4
Partidul România Mare, PRM	11	2,4	8	5,6	8	11,4	0	,0
Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România, UDMR	3	,7	0	,0	1	1,4	0	,0
Total	451	100,0	142	100,0	70	100,0	42	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Table 28 displays the results of the combination of the factors “Romanian party best to deal with the most important issue” and “party voted for”. The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România) stood best in this regard with 60 percent. It was followed by the two major Romanian parties, the

Democratic Liberal Party with 56.5 and the Social Democratic Party with 49.7 percent. The only other two parties with results in this category were the National Liberal Party (PNL) with 43 and the Greater Romania Party with 42.8 percent.

Table 28: Political party best to deal with MII/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table										
Country: Romania		Which party voted for in EP elections								Total
		OTHER	Elena Basescu	Partidul Social Democrat, PSD	Partidul Democrat-Liberal, PD-L	Partidul Național Liberal, PNL	Partidul România Mare, PRM	Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat, PNȚ-CD	Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România, UDMR	
Political party best to deal with MII	OTHER	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	217
	[NONE]	242	1	28	29	19	8	1	13	341
	Partidul Comunist Român, PCR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Partidul Social Democrat, PSD	0	0	95	5	9	6	0	1	191
	Partidul Democrat-Liberal, PD-L	0	6	4	78	3	1	1	1	138
	Partidul Național Liberal, PNL	0	0	2	2	31	1	1	1	72
	Partidul Conservator, PC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Partidul România Mare, PRM	0	1	0	2	0	15	0	0	35
	Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat, PNȚ-CD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	5
	Total	561	10	155	136	67	37	3	34	1003

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who voted for the same party to which they had attached issue ownership.

Romania is a case where the two biggest parties, the Social Democratic Party and the Democratic Liberal Party, did better than medium and small parties in this category. Hence, Romania differs from the other countries analyzed so far, because this has not been the case so far. 49.8 percent of the respondents in Romania who had identified a party as best to deal with the most important issue of the election period also voted for the same party. These were 22.1 percent out of a total of 1,003 respondents.

Conclusions that I have been able to draw after observing the case of Romania are: First, economic conditions, unemployment, national political corruption (political parties and politicians abusing national funds), and pensions were most frequently mentioned as the most important issues of the election period in Romania. The issue of pensions was mentioned for the first time in the case of Romania, making it a specific issue for this country. Second, the Social Democratic Party and the Democratic Liberal Party stood best in owning issues, in regard to the issues mentioned most often and issues in general. Moreover, they did quite a good job in convincing people who had trusted them to handle these issues to also vote for them. Third, there has been first evidence that 22.1 percent of the Romanian respondents could have been issue oriented and that their vote choice was influenced by issue ownership. Subsequently, the issue-voting theory could be used to explain the voting behavior of 22.1 percent of the Romanian electorate.

4.15. Slovakia

Slovakia is the country that completes the list of sub-cases I have selected for my work. The respondents in this country most often identified the following issues as the most important issues of the election period during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009:

1. **Unemployment** was seen as the most important issue in Slovakia by 342 respondents out of a total of 1,016; this amounted to 33.7 percent.
2. **Effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy** were seen as the most important issue by 297 respondents, or 29.2 percent.
3. **Economic conditions** made it to the third spot of the list, considered as the most important issue of the election period by 61 respondents, or 6 percent.
4. **Health care** was the issue that completed the list. It was seen as the most important issue by 32 respondents, or 3.1 percent.

Also in this case all issues that appear on the list seem to be of the hard-issue voting type. The issue ownership situation in Slovakia concerning the most important issues of the election period mentioned most often was very simple. The biggest party in Slovakia, the Direction- Social Democracy (SMER), which is a center-left party of social-democratic profile, was the undisputed winner in this category. They did way

better than all other parties when it came to being seen as best to deal with all four issues (unemployment, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, economic conditions, and health care). The issue of health care appeared in the case of Slovakia for the first time in my analysis, so it can be considered as a specific issue for this country.

Table29: Perception of issue ownership in Slovakia for European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.

Country: Slovakia	Issue Unemployment		Issue Effects of Financial Crisis		Issue Economic Conditions		Issue Health Care	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OTHER	66	19,2	65	21,8	8	13,1	0	0
[NONE]	104	30,4	77	25,9	16	26,2	10	31,3
KSS	5	1,5	2	,7	1	1,6	0	,0
SMER	99	28,9	86	29,0	17	27,9	9	28,1
KDH	13	3,8	8	2,7	2	3,3	0	,0
Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia, SDKÚ	29	8,5	39	13,1	6	9,8	2	6,3
KDS	1	,3	1	,3	1	1,6	0	,0
Sloboda a Solidarita SaS	1	,3	1	,3	1	1,6	0	,0
SNS	10	2,9	10	3,4	4	6,6	2	6,3
L'S-HZDS	7	2,0	4	1,3	3	4,9		
SMK	7	2,0	4	1,3	2	3,3	2	6,3
Total	342	100,0	297	100,0	61	100,0	32	100,0

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the issue owners.

Table 30 displays the outcome in Slovakia of the combination of the factors “party seen as best to deal with the most important issue” and “party voted for”. The Slovakian case is another where small and medium parties did better than big ones in convincing the respondents who had considered them as best to deal with the most important issues to also vote for them.

The Freedom and Solidarity party (Sloboda a Solidarita) did best in this category and scored surprisingly high: it achieved 100 percent by convincing all four respondents who had seen this party as best to deal with the most important issue to also vote for it.

It was followed by the Christian Democratic Movement with 64.7 percent, the Green Party (Strana zelených) with 50 percent, the Party of the Hungarian Coalition with 47.3 percent, the People's Party – Movement for Democratic Slovakia with 44.4 percent, the Slovak Christian-Democratic Union with 43.3 percent, the Free Forum (Slobodné forum) with 40 percent, the Direction- Social Democracy with 38.8 percent, the Slovak National Party with 34.3 percent, and the Communist Party of Slovakia with 20 percent.

41.7 percent of the Slovakian respondents who had named a party as best to deal with most important issue of the election period also voted for the same. These were 20.5 percent out of a total of 1,106 respondents.

Table 30: Political party best to deal with MI/ Which party voted for in EP elections cross table															
Country: Slovakia		Which party voted for in EP elections													
		OTHER	Strana zelených SZ	KSS	SMER	KDH	Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia, SDKÚ	Slobodné fórum – SF	KDS	Sloboda a Solidarita SaS	SNS	L'S-HZDS	SMK	Total	
Political party best to deal with MI	OTHER	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	243	
	[NONE]	200	2	0	35	6	7	2	0	1	5	3	11	272	
	Strana zelených SZ	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
	KSS	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	
	SMER	0	1	1	104	5	4	2	0	0	3	4	4	268	
	KDH	0	0	0	0	22	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	
	Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia, SDKÚ	0	1	0	8	4	46	0	1	0	0	0	4	106	
	Slobodné fórum – SF	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	
	KDS	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
	Sloboda a Solidarita SaS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	
	SNS	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	11	0	0	32	
	L'S-HZDS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	18	
	SMK	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	9	19	
Total		613	6	3	178	50	71	7	1	7	23	20	37	1016	

Source: European Election Study 2009. Bold numbers indicate the number of respondents who had voted for the same party to which they had attached issues ownership.

Conclusions that I have drawn after observing the final case of my list, Slovakia, are the following: First, the most frequently mentioned most important issues of the election period in Slovakia were: unemployment, effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy, economic conditions, and health care. All of these issues were owned by the biggest party, Direction- Social Democracy. Second, most parties in Slovakia in general did well in convincing voters which had thought that they were best to deal with most important issues of the election period to also vote the same parties. Third, it seems that there were tendencies that 20.5 percent of the respondents in this case leaned towards issue-based voting. Subsequently, the issue-voting theory could be applied to explain the voting behavior of a bit less than a quarter of the Slovakian electorate.

5. FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

In today's politics issues play an important role, especially during the election periods. Parties and candidates try to stress as clearly as it gets how exactly they would be best and most competent to deal with these issues in their campaigns. Voters, on the other hand, categorize issues important to them and try to figure out which parties/candidates appear most competent to deal with these most important issues and eventually cast their vote in that direction (Budge and Farlie 1983, Petrocik et al. 2003, Thomassen 2005, Belanger and Meguid 2008). This is why issues which are most evident during the election period are seen as most important and candidates fight to claim ownership over them because at the end of the day they will be used as evaluators of their political skills and competence by the voters. Parties and candidates are fully aware that they cannot own all the issues. That is why the race for owning the most important ones is crucial.

The European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 were marked by several important issues, but those which were proven to be seen as more important than others could have had a greater impact on voters' choice. Although the European Parliament is elected by 27 member states that all have a different electorate background and experience in the European Parliament elections, during my analysis, I have noticed that some issues remained a common concern for all of respondents. These issues that appeared most frequently in the results of all countries that I have observed as the most important ones are:

Unemployment: This issue was without a doubt the one mentioned most often as the most important issue of this election period. It made it to the top four most important issues in each and every country that I have analyzed. According to Eurostat the overall unemployment rate in the EU-27 reached 9.6 % in 2010. Compared to the year 2009, it rose by 0.6 percent (see <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>). Even though unemployment rates in the member states are diverse and in some countries even relatively low, this issue still preoccupied the voters' minds in all member states on the same level. At the very moment when the European Parliamentary Elections occurred in May 2009, unemployment in the European Union hit the highest rate since June 2005 (see Population and Social Conditions, Eurostat: Statistics in Focus 53/2009).

Economic condition: This was the issue that was mentioned as the most important issue during the European Parliamentary elections of 2009 the second most. Out of the 15 countries I have observed, it was on the list of the most important issues in 12 (the only exceptions were the Czech Republic, Italy, and Malta). Economic conditions in the European Union deteriorated as a consequence of financial crisis of the year 2008. States like Greece and Portugal suffered most in this process, but the others were not spared either.

The fact that *effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy* were the third most important issue of the election period in the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections shows that voters were able to identify these issues but also their linkage and interdependence. This particular issue was seen as most important in 10 out of the 15 states that I have analyzed (the exceptions were Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Hungary, and Romania). The effects of the financial crisis reflected very negatively on all levels of economy: domestic, EU, and global economy. These effects are still being present now and most likely the European Union is going to deal with them seriously also in the future.

All three issues listed above seem to be of a hard-issue voting type because of the following attributes: they are difficult to render, need more complex calculations and knowledge about parties' competence and ways to deal with them, and don't simply cause a gut or emotional response by the voters.

While the majority of the respondents agreed on which issues were the most important ones of the election period, on the one hand, there was no broad compliance when it came to the profile of the parties best to deal with these issues, on the other. During my observations I have noticed that parties of different profile (Social, Center-Right, Center-Left, Christian-Democratic, and Conservative) rose up as owners of these particular issues in different countries. Because of this fact I cannot generally say for any of these issues that one profile of a party was seen as better to deal with them compared to other profiles.

Without doubt, these three issues (unemployment, economic conditions, and effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy) dominated the scene of the election period in 2009. But, besides these three issues, other issues were also present which

were more specific for the respective countries that I have analyzed. Each country was marked by an issue, or sometimes even two, which were specific of the country and did not belong to the complex of problems which was covered by the umbrella of the three most important issues mentioned above.

The issue of *immigration* was specific for Austria. Belgium was marked by the issue of *multiculturalism (cultural diversity, cultural plurality)*. In the Czech Republic the issue of *political authority: strong government, government stability*, was a more specific one. The issue of *executive and administrative efficiency: efficient government and administration* marked Estonia, Germany, and Portugal. The Finnish voters were the only ones concerned with the issues of *social justice* and *young people (more precisely policies that are aimed to them and their treatment)*. The issue of *environment* was important during these elections only to the French voters. In the United Kingdom voters thought that *national political corruption (political parties and politicians abusing national funds)* was an important issue, worthy of basing their vote choice on. Hungary was characterized by the issue of *wages and earnings*. The Italian voters were the only ones who saw the issue of *national employment policies* as an important one of the election period. In Malta the issue of *taxes* was not only specific, but also the most important one. The Dutch voters, opposed to the voters of other countries, were concerned about the issue of *national way of life (reference to patriotism/nationalism, support/opposition for established national ideas and/or values)*. In Romania *pensions* were seen as the important issue of election period, and this was a specific issue for this country. Slovakia was the only country where the issue of *health care* was of big importance.

In addition this shows how the voters in the European Union, on the one hand, shared some concerns regarding the most important issue in the case of the three most important issues of the election period (unemployment, economic conditions, and effects of financial crisis on domestic/EU/global economy), but, on the other hand, there were certain specifics and differences that were dependent on the respective country, its tradition, development and other factors and that emerged because such a wide range of issues was present.

Once the most important issues are established in the minds of the voters, the next step of evaluating a party's and candidates' competence to deal with these issues comes into

play. In order for one party/candidate to get an issue-based vote, first they have to convince the voters that they are the best and most competent political subject to deal with the most important issues.

Both of my hypotheses prove to be true in regard to the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 only to a certain extent; at least it could be the case for a number of respondents who clearly showed tendencies to follow the issue-voting logic: most important issue → issue owner → vote choice. Of course I can't say that these hypotheses are fully correct or that the issue ownership theory explains the voting behavior of European voters completely, but clearly there has been first evidence in this direction for at least one part of the electorate.

Based on my observations, during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 in most of the countries analyzed big parties were normally seen as issue owners by the biggest number of respondents who had identified one of the parties as best to deal with the most important issues. But the big parties did not manage to convert all of this trust of issue ownership into actual votes. The discrepancy between the respondents who had seen big parties as best to deal with the most important issues and those who actually voted for the same parties was relatively high, whereas, on the other hand, medium and small parties did a very good job in this field. Once the voters believed that these parties were best to deal with the most important issues of the election period, they also considered them trustworthy of their vote.

A fact that cannot be overlooked is that during these European Parliamentary Elections a very big group of voters did not entrust issue ownership to any party. In almost all countries the observed group of respondents who had identified a most important issue but then answered next that that none of the parties running in the election was best to deal with the same issue was extremely high. The only exceptions in this field were the Netherlands and Malta, where this group of voters was low compared to the respondents who actually thought that one party or another was best to deal with the most important issues of the election period.

This shows that it can be possible that many voters have lost trust that the parties existing at the time of election can do anything in order to improve current situation regarding the issues in question. If so this could bring a new sphere in issue ownership

Parties before starting to compete with other parties over issue ownership as a second step of the process, first have to convince voters that they are capable and competent to even enter the ownership race. Just because someone does not see any party as best to deal with the most important issues of the election period does not automatically mean that this person could not be an issue voter. But, on the other side, theory states that one party can only win an issue-based vote if the same is perceived as issue owner and that is the precondition. I am simply saying that there could be a group of possible issue based voters who are forced to vote on other bases because they don't see an issue owner for their most important issue. It is very normal when not all voters see one of the parties as issue owner, but it is surprising when it is such a big group like it was during these elections. This problem remains an open question which derives from the analysis I have made during my work.

Nevertheless issue voting accrued during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009. In all countries I have observed a considerable number of voters can be described as issue oriented. The lowest percentage was registered in Portugal and France with 15.4 respectively 17.5 percent of all respondents who followed the two-step path of issue voting, from distinguishing issues from less to most important to choosing a party/candidate best to deal with it to finally voting for the same party/candidate.

On the contrary, the highest percentage was registered in the Netherlands and Malta with 34.4 respectively 31.4 percent, which were quite high numbers. Other states varied between 22 and 27 percent.

The above-mentioned results prove that issue-based vote choice could be quite spread amongst the voters in the European Union when voting for the European Parliament. Issues and issue ownership/competence are those which in considerable number of cases not only influence but also possibly determinate vote choice and play an important role during the campaigns and elections. Moreover, the results lead to the conclusion that the issue-voting theory could be used as a good and powerful tool when explaining voting behavior at the European level in general and during the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009 in particular.

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7. List of Abbreviations:

BZÖ	Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (Freedom Party of Austria)
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democratic Appeal)
CD&V	Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams (Belgian Christian-Democratic and Flemish Party)
CDU	Coligação Democrática Unitária (Democratic Unity Coalition)
CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union
CSSD	Ceská strana sociálně demokratická (Czech Social Democratic Party)
D66	Democraten 66 (Democrats 66)
EDS	Evropská demokratická strana (European Democratic Part)
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)
FN	Front National (French National Front)
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria)
GRÜNE	Green Party of Austria
KD	Suomen Kristillisdemokraati (Christian Democrats of Finland)
KDH	Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie (Christian Democratic Movement)
KDS	Konzervatívni demokrati Slovenska (Conservative Democrats of Slovakia)
KDU-CSL	Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová (Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party)

KESK	Suomen Keskusta (Finnish Center Party)
KOK	Kansallinen Kokoomus (Finnish National Coalition Party)
KPÖ	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (Austrian Communist Party)
KSS	Komunistická strana Slovenska (Communist Party of Slovakia)
KSCM	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy (Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia)
ĽS-HZDS	Ľudová strana – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia)
MII	Most Important Issue
MoDem	Mouvement démocrate (Democratic Movement)
N-VA	New Flemish Alliance
ODS	Občanská demokratická strana (Civic Democratic Party)
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei (Austrian People's Party)
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party)
PS	Parti Socialiste (French Socialist Party)
PS	Perussuomalaiset (True Finns)
PS	Partido Socialista (Socialist Party Portugal)
PSD	Partido Social Democrata (Social Democratic Party of Portugal)
Pvda	Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party of Netherlands)
PVV	Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom Netherlands)

RKP	Suomen ruotsalainen kansanpuolue (Swedish People's Party of Finland)
SDP	Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (Social Democratic Party of Finland)
SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (Reformed Political Party)
SKP	Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue (Finish Communist Party)
SMER	Smer – sociálna demokracia (Direction- Social Democracy)
SMK	Strana maďarskej koalície – Magyar Koalíció Pártja (Party of the Hungarian Coalition)
SNS	Slovenská národná strana (Slovak National Party)
SP	Socialistische Partij (Socialist Party Netherlands)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (Austrian Social-Democratic Party)
SZ	Strana Zelených (Czech Green Party)
UMP	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (Union for a Popular Movement)
VAS	Vasemmistoliitto (Finnish Left Alliance)
VIHR	Vihreä liitto (Finnish Green League)
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)

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9. APENDIX

9.1. Abstract (German)

Das europäische Parlament ist eine wichtige Institution der Europäischen Union und die einzige direkt von den EU-Bürgern gewählte Institution. Die ersten Wahlen wurden 1979 abgehalten (in allen 9 Mitgliedstaaten) und seither fanden sie alle 5 Jahre statt. Seit der damaligen Zeit hat sich vieles geändert. Heutzutage hat das Europäische Parlament viel mehr Bedeutung und Macht im Vergleich zur damaligen Zeit. Nun ist das Europäische Parlament ein repräsentatives Organ mit 736 Mitgliedern, die direkt in den 27 Mitgliedstaaten gewählt werden. Die Europäische Union hat sich weiterentwickelt, und mit ihr entwickelte sich ebenso das Europäische Parlament weiter. Die Bürger involvierten sich bei den Wahlen und die politischen Parteien begannen um deren Stimmen zu konkurrieren, und zwar nicht nur bei den nationalen Wahlen, sondern auch auf europäischer Ebene. Genau hier beginnt die Forschung nach dem Wählerverhalten auf europäischer Ebene. Womit beschäftigen sich die Wähler und wie entscheiden sie für wen sie ihre Stimme abgeben, wenn sie das Europäische Parlament wählen, ein Organ, das sie und ihre Interessen repräsentieren soll auf supranationaler Ebene?

Als Perspektive, aus der ich diesen Prozess betrachten werde, habe ich mich für die „issue based vote choice“ (themenorientierte Wählerentscheidung) entschieden. Diese Perspektive impliziert, dass die Entscheidungen von Wählern größtenteils beeinflusst werden von den Themen, die relevant (aktuell auf dem Spiel stehend) sind während der Wahlkampfzeit. Die Wähler nutzen ihre persönlichen Ansichten zu den Themen um sich den Parteien anzuschließen, die die gleichen Ansichten zu den jeweils entsprechenden Themen teilen. Die Parteien konkurrieren miteinander in Bezug auf den „Besitz“ dieser Themen, indem sie versuchen sich als den kompetentesten Akteur darzustellen im Umgang mit diesen Themen. Sobald sich der Besitz eines Themas in den Gedanken der Wähler etabliert hat und für die Wähler hervorstechend geworden ist, gleitet die Wählerstimme schließlich in die Richtung der Partei, die diese Themen inne hat.

Ich werde diese Betrachtungsweise verwenden um das Wählerverhalten auf europäischer Ebene zu untersuchen, indem ich die Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament aus dem Jahr 2009 analysiere als meine Fallstudie. Ich denke, dass mir dieser Ansatz ermöglichen wird Resultate zu erzielen, die ausreichend sind um meine Forschungsfragen zu beantworten, meine Hypothesen zu überprüfen und besser das Wählerverhalten und die Präferenzen der europäischen Wähler zu erklären.

9.2. Curriculum Vitae

Isak Gllgovci



■ Pre University Education

09/88 - 06/96 „Ismajl Qemajli“ Primary School, Mitrovica, Kosovo

09/96 - 06/2000 „Frang Bardhi“ Gymnasium, Mitrovica, Kosovo

■ University Education

10/2001 - 06/2004 Bachelors of Political Science, Prishtina University, Kosovo

10/2008 - 02/2013 Master of Political Science, Vienna University, Austria (excepted graduation June 2013)

■ Internships

01/2005 - 04/2005 Internship at Austrian Youth Council (Bundes Jugend Vertretung) in area of Youth NGO management

■ Work Experience

09/2000 - 10/2000 Interpreter for Organization for Security and Corporation in Europe Mission in Kosovo

05/2003 - 09/2005 Co-founder and Secretary General of Young European Federalists – Kosovo

06/2005 - 03/2006 Research Officer at Kosovar Institute for Gender Studies