

**Sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy:
An exploratory analysis**

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Citizens' confidence in the problem-solving capacities of the European Union (EU) has been shaken during the severe economic and sovereign debt crisis in Europe. This casts doubt on the future of the European integration process. One key element of EU's attempt to foster citizens' identification with the EU has been (and still is) its cohesion policy (CP). This policy targets regions and cities across the EU with the overall goal of improving citizens' quality of life. Since cohesion policy accounts for almost one-third of the total EU budget in 2014-20 it should attract the attention of political parties—both at the national and regional level—to promote and communicate this policy among citizens, in particular by referring to potentially financial benefits of several structural funds. Although there is data on *national* party positions on European integration and CP, it is surprising that there is no data available on *sub-national* party positions on either European integration or CP. This paper addresses this gap by extracting sub-national party positions on European integration and CP in several EU Member States by using 'Wordscores'. Empirically, the results show that sub-national parties devote much more space in their manifestos to European integration than to CP. Yet, sub-national party positions on European integration and CP differ between countries, regions, parties, and vary even within party branches. Methodologically, the results show that 'Wordscores' is capable of locating sub-national parties on the policy dimensions of European integration and EU cohesion policy.

Introduction

Political parties are important actors in the process of European integration by linking policies of the European Union (EU) to the citizens. Hence, parties' orientations towards European integration and the way in which they communicate EU policies to citizens is important for the democratic legitimacy of the EU. However, research mostly focuses on *national* party positions on European integration, although the *regional* level is a crucial political level of the EU's strategy to foster European integration by devoting approximately one third of the EU's budget to its cohesion policy (CP) (George & Bache, 2001, p. 303)—which is the EU's core element to avoid regional disparities, support job creation, and enhance the economic well-being of European regions, among others.¹ Furthermore, as Bachtler et al. (2013, p. 12) note, “as an expression of solidarity, Cohesion [!] policy buttresses European integration”.

While the measurement of party orientations towards European integration has received increasing attention in recent years, parties' stances on EU cohesion policy can still be seen as *terra incognita*. One reason for this is that CP primarily focuses on the *regional* level and we lack data on how sub-national parties position themselves both on European integration and EU cohesion policy. This contribution addresses this research gap by suggesting ‘Wordscores’ as a fully-computerised method of content analysis to estimate sub-national party policy positions on European integration, in general, and CP, in particular, by using sub-national parties' election manifestos. The usage of ‘Wordscores’ is recommended to estimate sub-national party positions on European integration and CP because *ex ante* position estimates on these two policy dimensions are available (Hjorth et al., 2015). Furthermore, the exploratory results show that ‘Wordscores’ is able to locate sub-national parties on policy dimensions related to European integration and CP. Empirically, the findings show that political representation of European integration and CP differs between political parties, regions, and countries. First, a sub-national party can have distinct positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy. Secondly, there is not only variation *between* parties but also *within* parties, i.e. sub-national party branches differ in their views on European integration and EU cohesion policy. This adds to previous findings showing that sub-national party branches have some leeway in positioning themselves on, for instance, economic and societal issues (Debus et al., 2011; Müller, 2009, 2013, Stefuriuc, 2009a, 2009b). Thirdly, there are also policy differences on European integration and EU cohesion policy between regions. Fourthly, sub-national parties devote much more space of their election manifestos to general EU-related issues than to cohesion policy.

¹ In this paper, ‘cohesion policy’ is used as an abbreviation for EU cohesion, regional and urban policies.

The article is structured as follows. In the next section it is argued why sub-national parties do have incentives to talk about European integration and EU cohesion policy in their election manifestos. In section three, I first give a detailed description of previous measurements of party positions on European integration and CP on the national level before I introduce the sub-national level as a promising level to measure party positions on both policy dimensions. Following that, ‘Wordscores’ is introduced as a technique to measure sub-national party positions on EU integration and CP, and the data used for the analyses is presented. Section five illustrates descriptively the extent to which regional parties talk about EU issues and structural funds in their election manifestos. I present the ‘Wordscores’ estimations of sub-national party positions on European integration and CP over countries, parties, and regions in section six. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the empirical results and its implications for the measurement of EU integration and CP on the regional level.

Why sub-national parties (should) care about European integration and EU cohesion policy

European regions are affected by EU cohesion policy, especially by EU structural funds intended to promote regional growth. Several studies specifically focus on the impact of EU cohesion policy on economic growth of EU regions, showing that regional transfers indeed enhance regional performance and economic convergence (see, e.g., Becker et al., 2010; Maynou et al., 2016 with additional literature). Additionally, EU cohesion policy not only aims to promote economic convergence between EU regions but it also has “a redistributive element” by transferring fiscal resources from higher to lower income regions (Begg, 2008, pp. 295–296) which has been viewed critically by some scholars (Boldrin & Canova, 2001). Sub-national parties are indirectly involved in CP because sub-national governments and administrative levels are part in the formulation and implementation of this policy (Leonardi, 2005, p. 1). For example, in the case of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), sub-national governments have to draft a so-called Operational Programme which has to be approved by the EU Commission in order to receive money. Additionally, many sub-national governments established representations in Brussels to communicate directly with the EU Commission (Marks, 1993, p. 402). This multi-level governance, however, varies both between EU Member States and within EU countries, and is dependent on the competences and powers of sub-national governments (Marks, 1993, p. 404). Nevertheless, this “*decentralization* of decisionmaking [!] to subnational [!] levels of government” (Marks, 1993, p. 401; emphasis in original) creates incentives for sub-national parties to address CP and its role in the European integration process during election campaigns.

EU cohesion policy and European integration are related, but they are not the same. One intention of CP is to foster citizens' views on European integration in a positive way. Osterloh (2011) shows that regional transfers indeed increase the citizens' support for the EU, although this effect is both dependent on the educational level of citizens and on the information sources citizens' use to be aware of benefitting from regional transfers. The last point is crucial for the success of CP because "the visibility of cohesion policy plays a valuable role in fostering support for EU regional policy and, indeed, the EU generally" (Begg, 2008, p. 297). This is also dependent on parties' positions on European fiscal redistribution: if national parties are already in favour of European fiscal redistribution, then citizens in these countries "are not more likely to link EU transfers to their support for European integration" (Chalmers & Dellmuth, 2015, p. 387). They are so, however, if citizens strongly identify themselves with the EU, and if they are politically interested in EU politics (Chalmers & Dellmuth, 2015). Regarding cohesion policy, citizens of EU member states strongly support the regional aid provided by the EU but the support for other policy domains, for instance political asylum, refugee and immigration politics, differs considerably between member states' population (Ahrens et al., 2008). Thus, while 'cohesion' is a political objective intending to decrease regional disparities, 'integration' is a concept of institutional nature intending to establish an ever-closer union (Leonardi, 2005, pp. 8–13) which is widely disputed among countries and parties. This is further reflected in the study of Díez Medrano (2003), who carried out more than 160 semi-structured interviews with European citizens in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom (UK), showing that "people criticized the way the CAP works, the huge EU bureaucracy, the fact that there is too much distance between the EU and the citizens", on the one hand, but "praised the fact that the European union offers a corrective for bad national government, or the existence of the cohesion and regional development funds", on the other (Díez Medrano, 2003, p. 25).

Why should sub-national parties feel differently about European integration and EU cohesion policy than their voters? Even though regional elections can be considered as "second-order" elections (Reif & Schmitt, 1980), regional parties should have an incentive to politicise European integration and EU cohesion policy issues. For example, a new party in Germany—called "The Alternative for Germany" (AfD)—recently entered several state parliaments by having negative orientations towards European integration, among others (Arzheimer, 2015; Berbuir et al., 2015; Franzmann, 2016). The Scottish National Party (SNP) changed its views on European integration throughout the decades and nowadays uses a positive framing of the European Union as an instrument to gather support for its

independence movement (Jolly, 2007). Especially in Scotland, Spain, the Netherlands, and Wales, we see Eurosceptic parties running for national and regional elections, thus politicising EU-related issues in domestic politics (cf. Risse, 2010, p. 245). Furthermore, party families differ in their policy stances on European integration (Jolly, 2007) which could also be reflected on the sub-national level. One could additionally expect that even sub-national branches of a party could have different views on notably EU cohesion policy, depending on if the region is benefitting from EU Structural funds or if they have the feeling that other regions benefit excessively, thus spending other people's money. Several West German states, for instance, were in favour of a fundamental reform of CP at the beginning of the 2000s, while the East German states—benefitting from EU regional transfers much more than the other states—were against this proposal, and these differences between regions have also be pronounced in Belgium, Denmark, Spain, and Sweden (Bachtler et al., 2013, pp. 165–185). Net contributor countries in particular seem to struggle with distinct views on CP between the national government's desire to reduce EU spending and sub-national governments' insistence on still benefitting from EU regional transfer money (Bachtler et al., 2013, p. 198). The sub-national level therefore mirrors the controversies between 'Friends of cohesion' (net beneficiaries of the EU budget) and 'Friends of better spending' (net contributors) on the national level, which clearly was apparent in the negotiation process on CP for the period 2014-20 (Berkowitz et al., 2015, p. 14).

How to measure sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy

Party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy: The story so far

Party positions on policy issues, in general, as well as on European integration and EU cohesion policy, in particular, most of the time are measured by either using expert surveys or content analyses of parties' election manifestos.² Several expert surveys on party positions on the issue of European integration have been conducted in the last decades (Ray, 1999; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2012). Additionally, expert judgements on national parties' policy stances towards European integration are part of broader projects on assessing party positions on a variety of policy issues (Bakker et al., 2015; Benoit & Laver, 2006; Laver & Hunt, 1992). With the exception of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES; see Bakker et al., 2015), however, there is also on the national level a lack of data on party

² Using mass public opinion surveys as a third method for determining the issue positions of political parties will not be discussed here.

policy positions on EU cohesion policy. This is, for instance, also the case for data sets on party positions based on the analysis of party documents. Both the Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MARPOR; see Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006; Merz et al., 2016) and the Euromanifesto Project (EMP; see Braun et al., 2015) manually code ‘quasi-sentences’ referring to European integration issues in parties’ manifestos for national elections and European Parliament (EP) elections. EMP additionally provides data on Europarties’ policy positions on European integration by analysing election manifestos of the transnational party federations of national parties in the EP (see, e.g. Klüver & Rodon, 2013; also see Gabel & Hix, 2002). A special focus on CP, however, is not part of these two projects.

This variety of measurements on party orientations towards European integration led to a vibrant debate on the quality of the different measures (Marks et al., 2007; Netjes & Binnema, 2007; Ray, 2007; Whitefield et al., 2007). To put it in a nutshell, both expert surveys and manifesto data are valid measures of party positions on European integration (Marks et al., 2007; Ray, 2007). Government parties in particular take a positive stance for a further deepening of European integration while opposition parties, radical left parties, and parties leaning towards a more nationalist and authoritarian state are more Eurosceptic (Hooghe et al., 2004). Yet, researchers have to bear in mind that especially “[s]mall, extreme, parties appear more difficult to pin down than larger, centrist ones” (Marks et al., 2007, p. 24). Experts sometimes do not have enough information on small and extreme parties and thus differ in their judgements. To sum up, expert surveys and manifesto data are two sources with valuable information on party positions towards European integration and EU cohesion policy. These sources, however, have one severe weakness: party positions on European integration and CP are *only* available for national parties or Europarties. If and how *sub-national* parties have different policy orientations on these two issues is a question that has not been addressed yet.

Going regional: Estimating party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy on the sub-national level

The measurement of sub-national party policy positions gained momentum in the last years. Scholars focused on sub-national parties’ left-right orientation in a unidimensional policy space or on parties’ orientations towards economic and societal policy issues in a two-dimensional setting (see, e.g., Bäck et al., 2013; Benoit et al., 2009; Debus & Gross, 2015; Stefuriuc, 2013). For example, adapting the MARPOR coding scheme to the regional level in Spain and Great Britain, the Regional Manifestos Project (RMP; see Alonso et al., 2013, 2015) additionally allows scholars to empirically address research

questions on how sub-national parties position themselves on territorial issues, among others. There is, however, no data set based on regional election manifestos dealing with party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, expert surveys on sub-national party policy positions do not exist. Jolly (2007), for instance, evaluates how parties on the regional level perceive the EU using CHES data on party positions on European integration issues, but his study is limited to *regionalist* parties—like the SNP—that are covered in the CHES survey (which asks experts to position parties competing on the *national* level on several policy dimensions). All in all, there is still a lack of data for policy positions of national parties’ regional branches on European integration and CP. This is surprising, given the empirical evidence that party branches’ policy positions both differ from branches of the same party and from the national party’s positions (Debus et al., 2011; Müller, 2009, 2013, Stefuriuc, 2009a, 2009b).

In the following, I propose to use the ‘Wordscores’ technique (Laver et al., 2003; Lowe, 2008) as a fully-computerised automated text analysis to estimate sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy. In doing this, I also discuss the advantages and drawbacks of applying the ‘Wordscores’ technique to the estimation of sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy.

Data and data collection

For a first application of ‘Wordscores’ to the estimation of sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy, I focus on sub-national parties in Germany (16 *Länder*), the United Kingdom (i.e., Scotland and Wales), Spain (17 *Comunidades Autónomas*) and the Netherlands (12 *provincies*). The time period covered ranges from 2003 to 2016. It therefore comprises the two EU funding periods 2007-13 and 2014-20, and at least two elections in each region. Since the data originates from a larger research project, the countries and regions were selected for purposes somewhat different from the ones I pursue here. Nonetheless, the four countries and 37 regions under investigation demonstrate significant variation in countries being net contributors to the EU’s budget (Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) and Spain as a net beneficiary. Additionally, even within countries, i.e. between regions, there is a high variation in EU money allocated to the regions by EU Structural Funds.

Since there exists no expert survey data on sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy (with the exception of regionalist parties), one is left with sub-national parties' election manifestos as a valid source. If one intends to compare these positions cross-nationally and/or over time, coding election manifestos by hand and assigning (quasi-)sentences to different categories is costly and time-consuming. Hence, I propose to apply computer-assisted text analysis via the 'Wordscores' approach to derive sub-national party positions on European integration and CP from election manifestos. These policy positions are unknown, i.e. sub-national election manifestos are so-called 'virgin texts'. To estimate these unknown policy positions, we need documents with known policy positions and, thus, 'Wordscores' requires the identification of 'reference texts' and 'reference scores' (for a detailed description see Bräuninger et al., 2013; Laver et al., 2003; Lowe, 2008). 'Reference texts' are documents—in this case: national election manifestos—where parties' positions on specific policy dimensions are known, for instance, by using expert judgements as 'reference scores'. Briefly speaking, the word distribution of the 'reference text' is compared to the relative frequency of words of the 'virgin text' (Bräuninger et al., 2013, p. 10). If words in a 'virgin text' are used with the exact same relative frequency of words as in the 'reference text' with a 'reference score' of 5 (for instance, on a 0-10 left-right scale), then 'Wordscores' assigns a value of 5 to the 'virgin text'. This is based on the assumption that political actors do not use words randomly, but rather in a deliberate way to send "ideological signals" (Pappi & Shikano, 2004) to voters.

One crucial aspect for the application of 'Wordscores' is that the selected 'reference texts' are of the same character and of the same language as the 'virgin texts'.³ The common way to estimate policy positions of sub-national parties' election manifestos is to use parties' national election manifestos as 'reference texts' and assigning to them 'reference scores' based on expert judgements (see, e.g., Bäck et al., 2013; Bräuninger et al., 2013; Müller, 2009, 2013). Since 'Wordscores' is a policy-blind approach, i.e. the content of a document is not changed (Laver et al., 2003), the estimations of parties' positions on specific policy dimensions are driven by the assignment of the 'reference scores'. This means, for instance, that scholars interested in estimating parties' positions on economic issues have to assign different 'reference scores' than scholars interested in estimating parties' positions on immigration. Fortunately, however, the majority of expert surveys asks experts to locate parties on several policy dimensions, which means that scholars most of the time have the possibility to assign appropriate

³ This is the only language-related issue scholars have to be aware of. Apart from that, 'Wordscores' is a language-blind procedure.

‘reference scores’. Several studies show that national parties’ left-right positions estimated with ‘Wordscores’ positively correlate with left-right estimations based on CMP data and expert survey data, although with some variation between countries (Bräuninger et al., 2013; Klemmensen et al., 2007; Laver et al., 2003).⁴ Furthermore, sub-national party positions estimated with ‘Wordscores’ by and large resemble the pattern of party competition on the national level (Bäck et al., 2013; Bräuninger et al., 2013; Bräuninger & Debus, 2012; Debus & Gross, 2015; Müller, 2009, 2013).

Following the suggestions by Hjorth et al. (2015), I recommend the usage of ‘Wordscores’ to estimate sub-national party positions on European integration and CP for two reasons. First, *ex ante* position estimates of *national* party positions on both policy dimensions are available. The party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy, respectively, from CHES (Bakker et al., 2015) can serve as ‘reference scores’ for the ‘Wordscores’ analyses, while parties’ national election manifestos are used as ‘reference texts’. Experts were asked to evaluate the overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in the years 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014 on a seven-point scale ranging from ‘strongly opposed’ (1) to ‘strongly in favour’ (7). Furthermore, experts should locate parties’ orientations towards EU cohesion policy based on an evaluation of the position of the party leadership in 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014 on EU cohesion or regional policy, again on the aforementioned seven-point scale. Secondly, this availability of expert judgements on *both* dimensions allows researchers to assess if sub-national parties differ in their policy views between European integration and CP, whereas.

To comprise the time period in this study as broad as possible, CHES data in 2006, 2010 and 2014, respectively, are used as ‘reference scores’ and assigned to the respective election manifestos of the parties for the national elections closest to the CHES surveys. In the case of Germany, this paper refers to the 2005, 2009, and 2013 federal election manifestos, using CHES data in 2006, 2010, and 2014.⁵ For Scotland and Wales, this paper refers to the programmatic documents written before the general elections in 2007, 2011, and 2015 in the United Kingdom, using CHES data in 2006, 2010, and 2014.⁶

⁴ Bräuninger et al. (2013) show that national parties’ left-right positions derived by ‘Wordscores’ replicate the left-right positions by the CMP data much better, if ‘reference texts’ cover as much of a policy dimension as possible, and if the percentage of scored words is high, i.e. if a large number of words in ‘reference texts’ is also found in ‘virgin texts’.

⁵ The Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU) adopt a joint election manifesto for federal elections but run in different geographical regions—the CSU in Bavaria, the CDU in the rest of Germany. Hence, the ‘reference texts’ are joint election manifestos while the CHES data provide expert judgements on both the CDU and the CSU. Therefore, the average values of the CDU’s and CSU’s positions are used as ‘reference scores’.

⁶ Only the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru are covered in the CHES data because they also compete in UK general elections. In order to cover both policy dimensions of European integration and EU cohesion policy, national

The Spanish data uses parties' national election manifestos in 2004 and 2011 as 'reference texts' and assigns CHES data in 2006 and 2010 as 'reference scores'.⁷ In the case of the Netherlands, the 'reference texts' are the general election manifestos in 2006, 2010, and 2012, correspondingly assigning 'reference scores' from CHES data in 2006, 2010, and 2014. In all cases, only parties and election manifestos both covered in the *Political Documents Archive* (Benoit et al., 2009) and the CHES trend file, 1999-2014 (Bakker et al., 2015) have been used for the selection of 'reference texts' and the assignment of 'reference scores'.

Before estimating sub-national parties' policy positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy, I investigate if and how sub-national parties devote space in their election manifestos to EU-related issues and to several EU Funds.

Do sub-national parties talk about European integration and EU cohesion policy in their election manifestos?

Analysing sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy only makes sense if parties actually do talk about European politics in their election manifestos. To get a first impression to what extent sub-national parties talk about EU-related issues, sub-national party manifestos in five German states, Scotland and Wales have been manually coded by, first, extracting every paragraph in which EU-related issues are mentioned, and, secondly, assigning these paragraphs to seven EU-related categories.⁸ Table 1 distinguishes between seven categories: (i) general issues on Europe, (ii) general mentioning of EU funding, and five different EU funding categories, i.e. (iii) ERDF, (iv) ESF, (v) Cohesion Fund, (vi) a combined category for agricultural funds, (vii) a combined category for fisheries funds.⁹ Although the two latter categories comprise EU funds that are only partly

election manifestos of the Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal Democratic Party, Green Party, and United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) for the general elections in 2005, 2010 and 2015 are additionally used as 'reference texts'.

⁷ The national election manifestos of 2008 are not used because it is not possible to either assign the expert judgements of 2006 (already assigned to 'reference texts' in 2004) or the ones of 2010 (already assigned to 'reference texts' in 2011) to these manifestos.

⁸ Election manifestos of the following parties have been analysed: Germany: CDU, CSU, FDP, Greens, SPD, and The Left; Scotland: RISE; Scottish Conservative Party, Scottish Greens, Scottish Labour Party, Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Libertarian Party, SNP, and UKIP; Wales: Plaid Cymru, UKIP, Wales Green Party, Welsh Conservative Party, Welsh Labour Party, and Welsh Liberal Democrats.

⁹ The agricultural funds category comprises the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF). Fisheries funding includes the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG), the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

part of EU cohesion policy, they, first, should matter for regional parties because agricultural funds (also being part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)) and the regional and structural funds “account for over three-quarters of EU spending” (George & Bache, 2001, p. 303) and both EAFRD and EMFF are part of the European and Structural Investment (ESI) Funds.¹⁰ Secondly, opposed to receiving regional financial aid from EU’ cohesion policy, the entry into EAGGF “is not dependent on meeting the criteria of ‘need’, and one does not ‘exit’ once a certain level of well-being is achieved” (Leonardi, 2005, p. 26), agricultural funds should matter for sub-national parties since all countries under study receive financial aid for their agricultural sector.

The results in Table 1 are based on the percentage of words sub-national parties devote to European issues in their election manifestos. Overall, the picture seems to be clear: sub-national parties do not talk much about EU-related issues in their election manifestos. In the seven regions analysed here, parties only devote 2.5 to 8 per cent of the manifesto’s content to EU-related issues. Yet, these aggregated data on the *regional* level mask substantial differences between *parties*. For example, in the case of Bavaria the CSU devoted more than 10 per cent of its election manifesto to EU-related issues (both in 2008 and in 2013), whereas the other parties only devoted two to seven per cent of their manifesto to these issues, and this pattern is also apparent in the other German states under investigation (see Table A1 in the appendix). Nevertheless, both across regions and across parties, if sub-national parties talk about EU-related issues in their election manifestos, it is about general aspects of the EU. More than two-thirds of the EU-related content of election manifestos is devoted to EU treaties, directives, regulations (if they do not have any connection to EU funding), and political actors. Regarding the several EU funds, sub-national parties talk to a greater extent about agricultural funds than about other funds (both in Germany and in the UK), but the second most important EU category in five German states under investigation here is the category “EU funding (general)”. An explorative analysis of sub-national parties’ election manifestos reveals that German parties often are talking about regional and structural policies as well as agricultural policies in conjunction with CAP in the same paragraph or even the same sentence, making it impossible to distinguish between these aspects. This has also historical reasons because there existed the possibility to finance various programmes by a combination of funds (Molle, 2007, p. 137). In conclusion, sub-national parties *do* talk about EU-related issues in their election manifestos but they devote more space to EU integration topics than to specific EU cohesion funds.

¹⁰ For an overview of all EU funds and other financial instruments of the EU see (Evans, 1999).

*** Table 1 about here ***

Differences in sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy

Figures 1-5 show sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy, respectively, in Germany, Scotland, Spain, the Netherlands, and Wales.¹¹ There are several findings that are worthwhile to note. First, in all countries there are differences between sub-national party positions on both European integration and CP. However, these policy differences are most of the time more pronounced on the issue of European integration than on cohesion policy. Secondly, the estimations using ‘Wordscores’ have a high face validity because parties are ordered in the exact same order that one would expect based on case-based knowledge. For instance, the ‘established’ parties in Germany with government experience, i.e. CDU, FDP, Greens, and SPD, on average are far more in favour of European integration and cohesion policy than ‘The Left’ and the ‘Alternative for Germany (AfD)’ which are known to have more sceptical views on the EU and the Euro, among others. This finding also holds for Dutch, Scottish, Spanish and Welsh parties.

Thirdly, sub-national parties can have distinct positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy. For example, sub-national party branches of the ‘Free Democratic Party’ (FDP) in Germany are far more in favour of European integration than of CP. This is intuitively plausible since the Liberals promote financial self-responsibility of regions rather than the reallocation of money between regions. This seems also to be the case for VVD and D66 in the Netherlands. Fourthly, the figures show that there is not only variation *between* parties but also *within* parties, i.e. sub-national party branches differ in their views on European integration and EU cohesion policy. This adds to previous findings showing that sub-national party branches have some leeway in positioning themselves on, for instance, economic and societal issues (Debus et al., 2011; Müller, 2009, 2013, Stefuriuc, 2009a, 2009b). Fifthly, however, note that in the case of the Netherlands, ‘Wordscores’ has difficulties to map sub-national party positions on European integration of the PVV by using the transformed scores, i.e. the transformation of the ‘virgin texts scores’ to the same dispersion metric as the one of the ‘reference

¹¹ Note that the results for Scotland and Wales are presented separately because the estimations are based on different ‘reference texts’. For Scotland, the national election manifestos of SNP also have been used as ‘reference texts’ (excluding national election manifestos of Plaid Cymru), whereas for Wales, the national election manifestos of Plaid Cymru have been additionally used as ‘reference texts’ (excluding SNP national election manifestos).

texts' (Laver et al., 2003, p. 316) on the seven-point scales of European integration and CP. The reason why some estimations of party positions lie 'outside' the range of the scale is both due to sometimes rather short PVV election manifestos and, more importantly, because the PVV is a right-wing populist party heavily opposed to further European integration (the same applies to UKIP in the United Kingdom).¹² Apparently, this opposition is far more pronounced in the sub-national election manifestos of the PVV than in the national election manifestos used as 'reference texts'. Nevertheless, this is only a minor nuisance if scholars want to draw graphs. For empirical analyses of sub-national party positions on European integration and CP, however, scholars are well-advised to use the raw scores of party positions if one is not interested in a comparison of positions between the 'reference texts' and the 'virgin texts' (Laver et al., 2003).

***** Figures 1-5 about here *****

Additionally, there are not only policy differences on European integration and EU cohesion policy between *parties* but also between *regions* (see Figures 6 and 7). All regions in Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands are, on average, in favour of European integration and CP. Nevertheless, there are differences both between and within the three countries. First, German and Spanish sub-national parties are more in favour of CP than the parties in the Dutch regions. Secondly, the regional differences between sub-national party positions on European integration and CP are more pronounced in Germany than in Spain and the Netherlands. Thirdly, in the case of Spain, there is actually no variation of sub-national party positions on CP. Virtually all parties in all regions are strongly in favour of CP.¹³ Note, however, that the results for Spain presented here are solely based on sub-national election manifestos of 'Izquierda Unida' (IU), 'Partido Socialista Obrero Español' (PSOE), and 'Partido Popular' (PP). Including election manifestos of regional parties running for regional elections in 2015 is going to draw a more accurate picture of regions' positions on European integration and CP.

***** Figures 6 and 7 about here *****

¹² This is also the case for some of the UKIP election manifestos in Scotland and Wales (see Figures 2 and 5).

¹³ This is why the graph is not shown here.

In conclusion, these empirical results support the premise that ‘Wordscores’ is a usable tool to locate sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy. However, as mentioned above, the estimations of party positions made by ‘Wordscores’ are heavily dependent on the ‘reference texts’ and ‘reference scores’. In the case of mapping sub-national party positions on European integration and CP, using CHES data as ‘reference scores’ has its price—expert judgements on *national* party positions on European integration and CP are highly correlated ($r = 0.76$ for all parties in Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, and the UK between 1999 and 2014).¹⁴ Since ‘Wordscores’ is based on using the entire manifesto of a party to estimate policy positions on several policy dimensions by just changing the ‘reference scores’ (i.e. the ‘reference scores’ are decisive for the location of parties on policy dimensions), sub-national party positions on European integration and CP will also be highly correlated. In four out of five cases, Pearson’s r is higher than 0.80. The only exception here is Spain, but this is due to the fact that Spanish national parties only vary in their policy views on European integration but not in their policy orientations towards CP. Hence, ‘Wordscores’ accurately reflects this lack of variation between Spanish sub-national party positions on CP, too. Furthermore, although the percentage of scored words is high, i.e. more than 90% of information is extracted from the ‘virgin texts’, the range of ‘reference scores’ regarding EU cohesion policy is rather low, especially in the case of Spain because all national parties are highly in favour of CP. If ‘Wordscores’ does not do a good job here (cf. Bräuninger et al., 2013, p. 19), or if the Spanish estimations just reflect the empirical reality should be corroborated in the future by in-depth case studies on Spanish sub-national party stances towards CP.

Conclusion

Regions play a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of EU cohesion policy (CP), one of the most important EU policies to foster economic growth as well as citizens’ views on European integration in a positive way. Sub-national governments and parties are an essential part of this approach. However, scholars lack data on sub-national party positions on European integration and CP. This paper addressed this gap by showing that ‘Wordscores’ as a fully-computerised method of content analysis is capable of extracting European policy positions of parties acting on the sub-national level in several EU Member States.

¹⁴ This corroborates the empirical findings in Marks et al. (2007, p. 24, fn. 2) showing that expert judgements on several EU policies—one of them being CP—are highly correlated with expert judgements on European integration.

Methodologically, this paper showed that ‘Wordscores’ is a reliable and valid tool for estimating sub-national party positions on European integration and CP. Empirically, the results first reveal that sub-national parties devote much more space of their election manifestos to general EU-related issues than to cohesion policy. Secondly, there is variation between sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy. Party positions vary both between parties and regions, as well as within regional branches of national parties. Overall, the results reveal that party competition on the regional level on European integration and EU cohesion policy has similarities to the national party competition on these issues.

This paves the way for future research in several ways. First, by extending the time period under study, scholars could address the question if sub-national parties change their policy views on European integration and CP over time, like the SNP in the last decades (Jolly, 2007). Secondly, it would be worthwhile to investigate why there are differences between regions and between parties. Are some party families also on the sub-national level more in favour of European integration and CP than others? Is this dependent on a region benefitting from EU regional transfers or on a country being a net contributor to the EU budget (saying, that parties are nested in regions which are nested in countries)? Thirdly, the institutional context sub-national parties are involved in could play a role in shaping their policy views on EU politics. Perhaps sub-national parties talk more about European integration and CP in countries where regions have more legislative powers (Marks, 1993, p. 404; Stahl & Kuby, 2015, p. 152). To answer all these questions, data on sub-national party positions on European integration and EU cohesion policy is needed. This paper has taken a first step to generate this data.

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Figure 1: German sub-national party positions on EU integration and EU cohesion policy

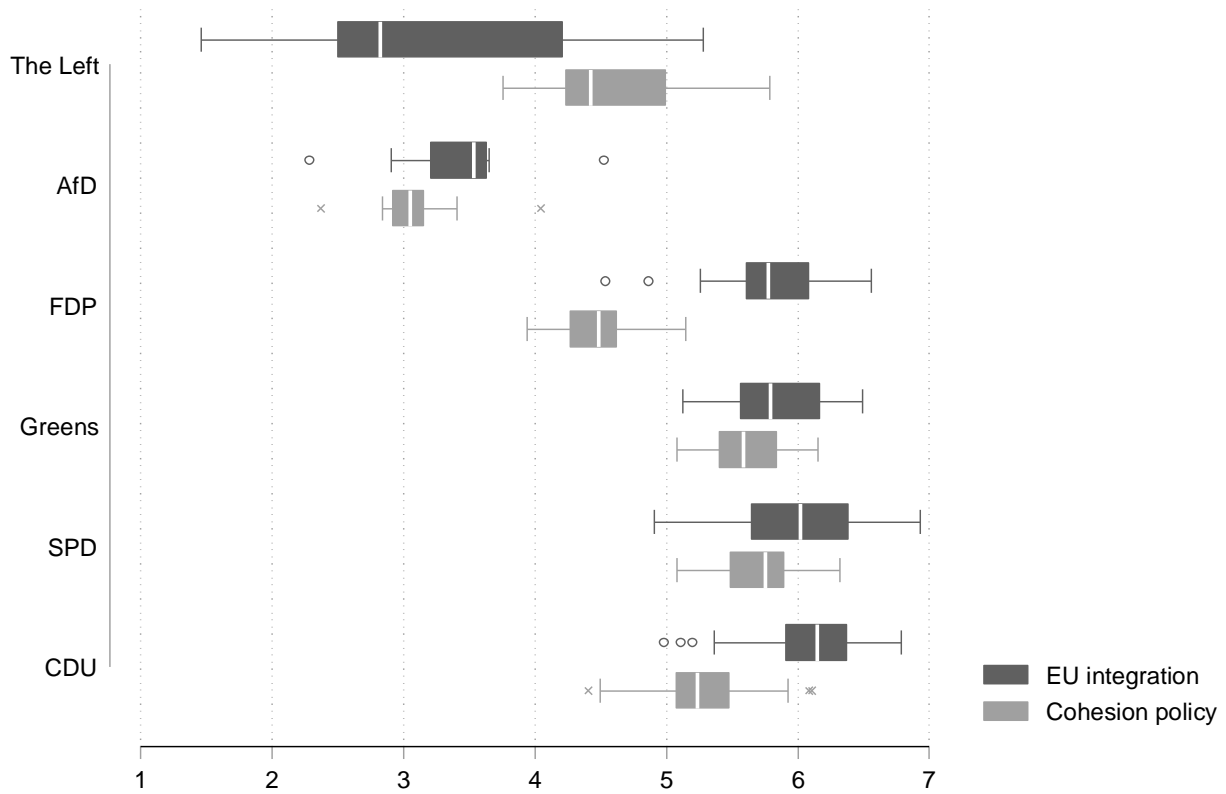


Figure 2: Scottish sub-national party positions on EU integration and EU cohesion policy

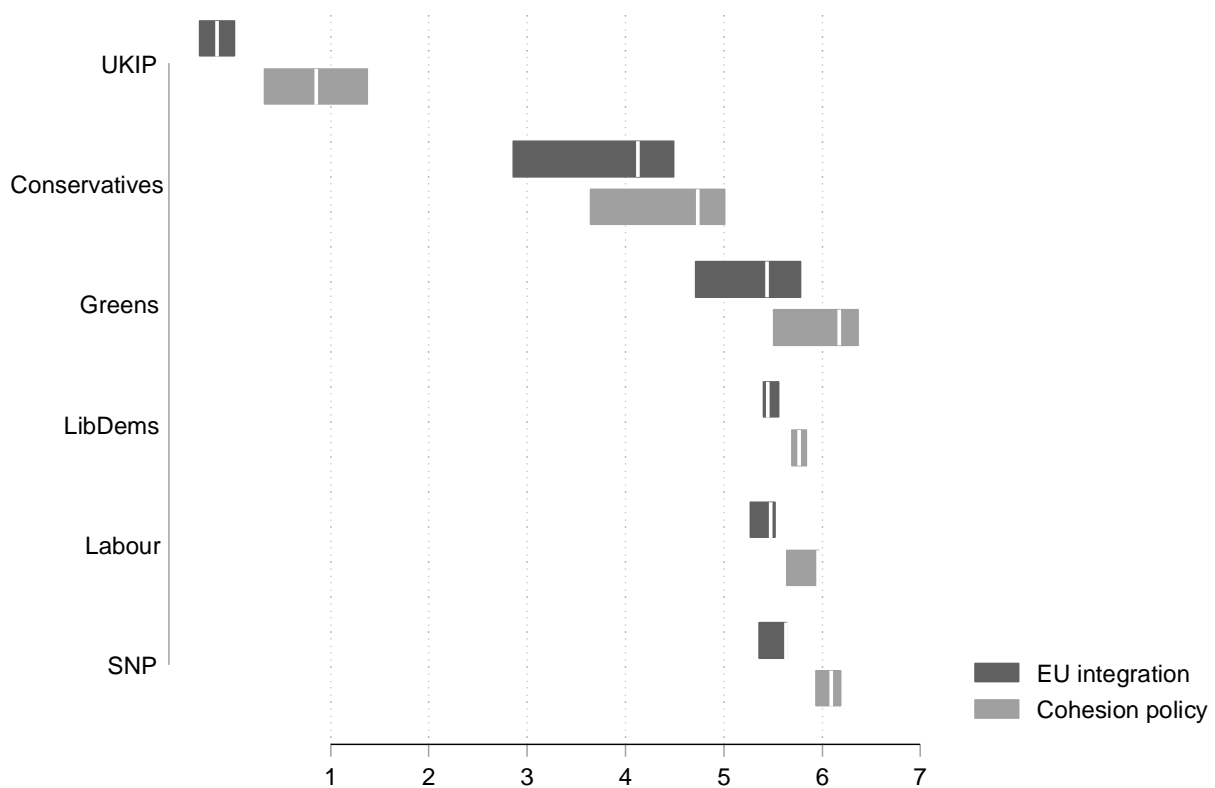


Figure 3: Spanish sub-national party positions on EU integration and EU cohesion policy

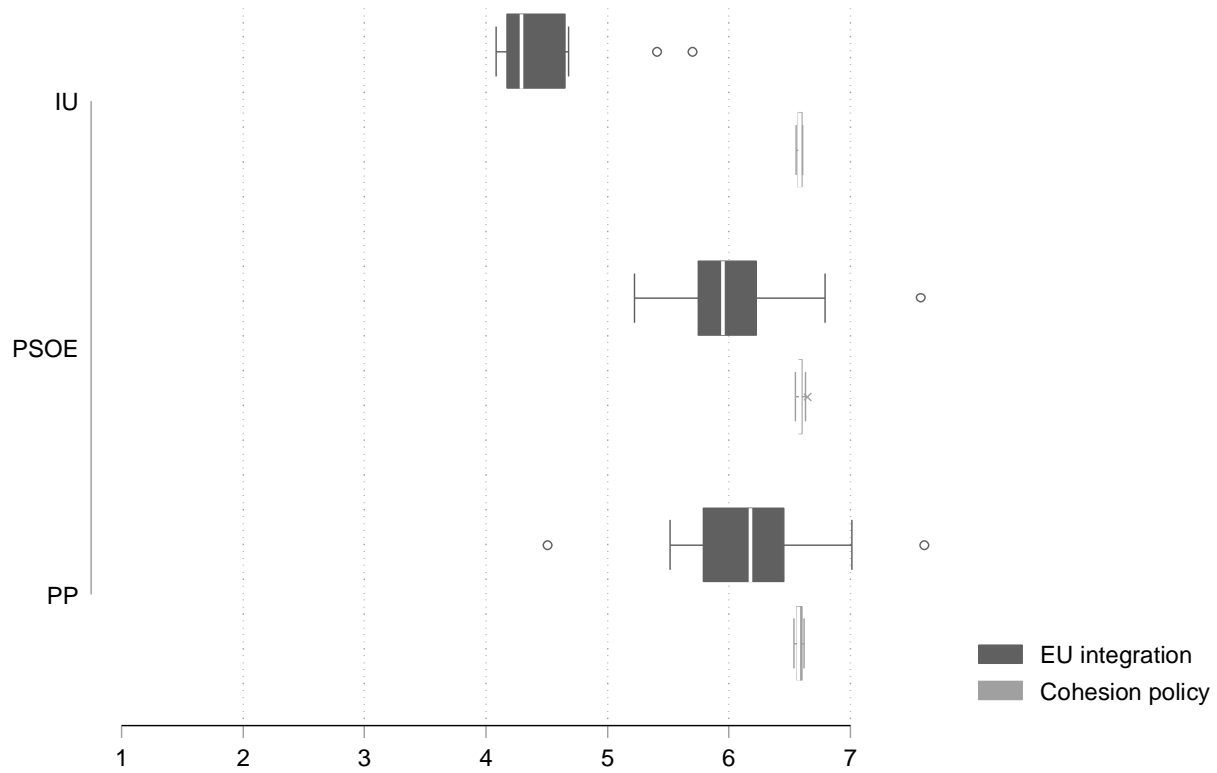


Figure 4: Dutch sub-national party positions on EU integration and EU cohesion policy

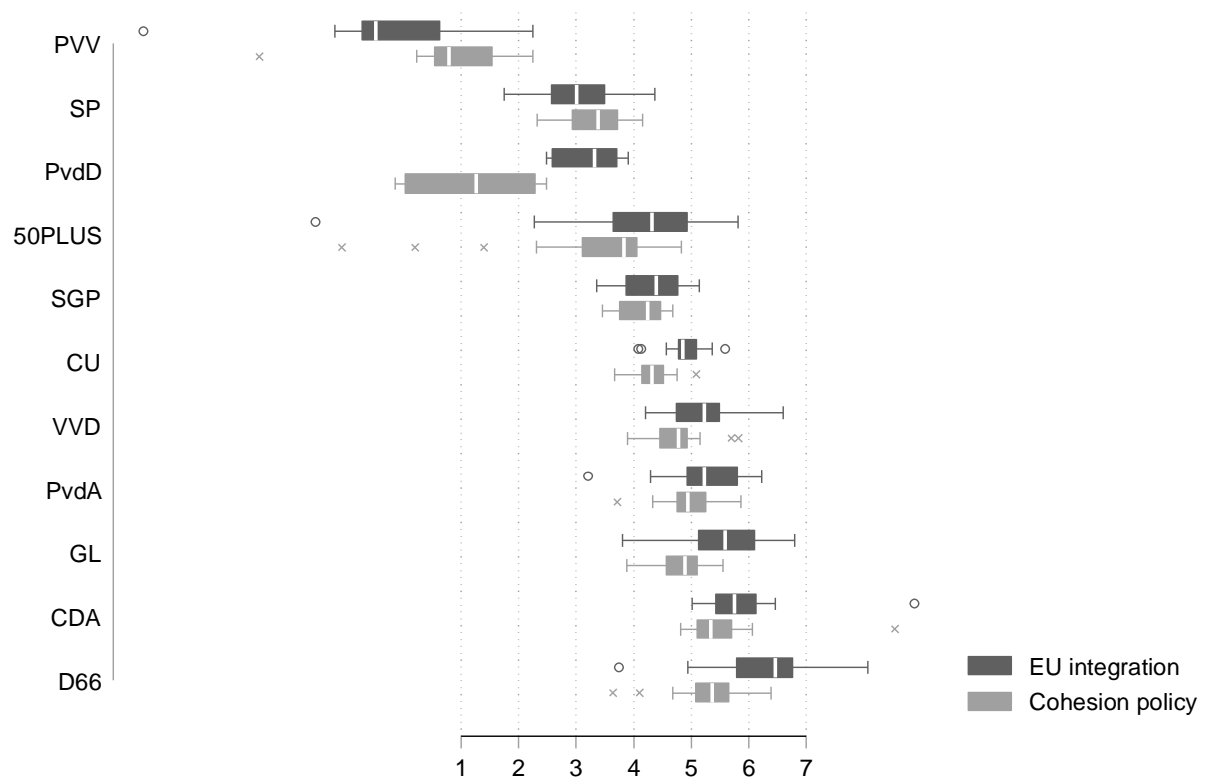


Figure 5: Welsh sub-national party positions on EU integration and EU cohesion policy

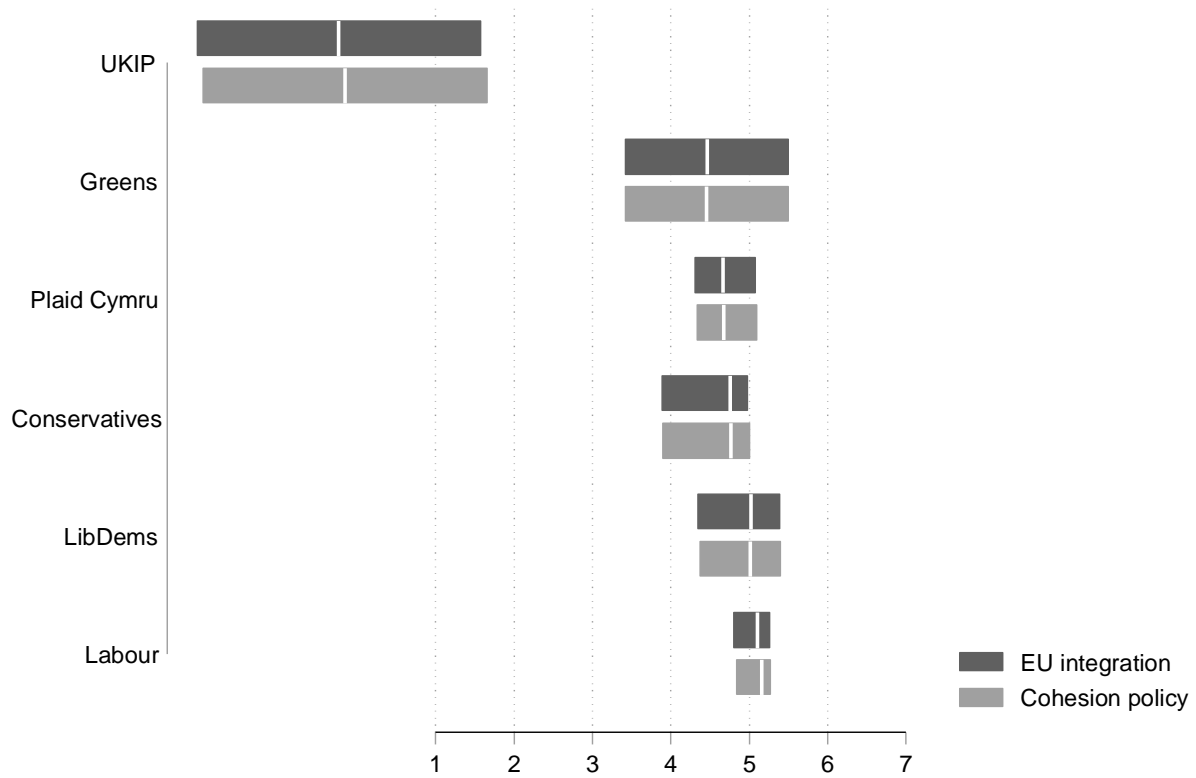


Figure 6: German, Spanish and Dutch sub-national party positions on European integration (over regions)

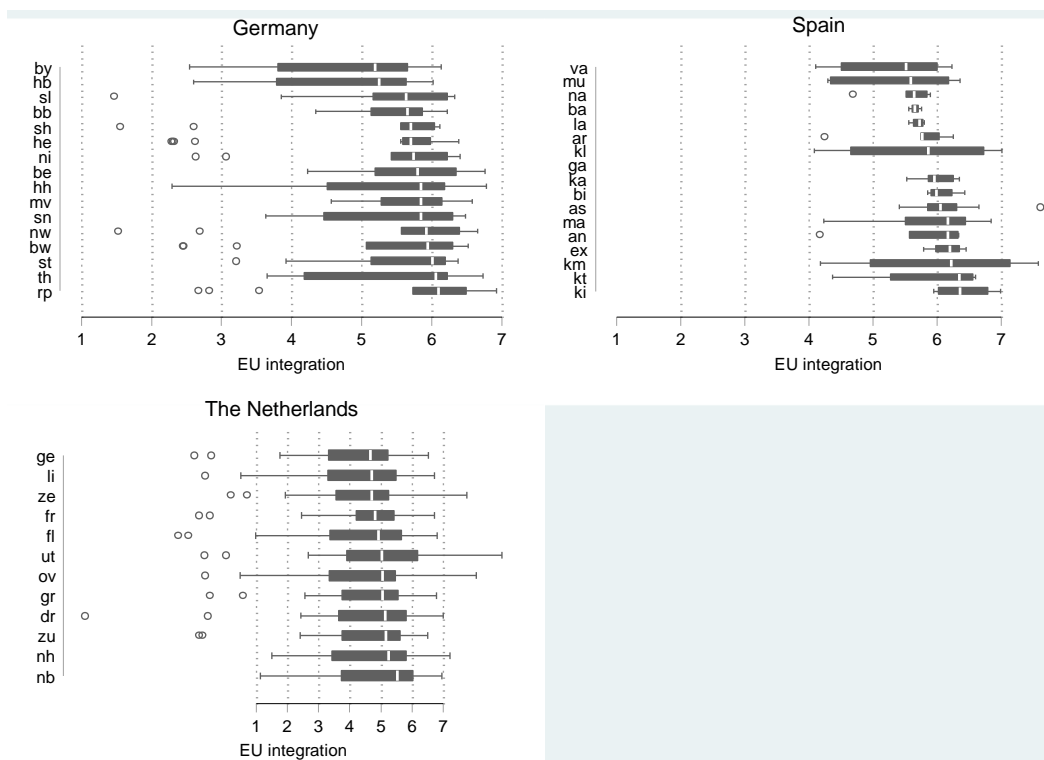


Figure 7: German and Dutch sub-national party positions on EU cohesion policy (over regions)

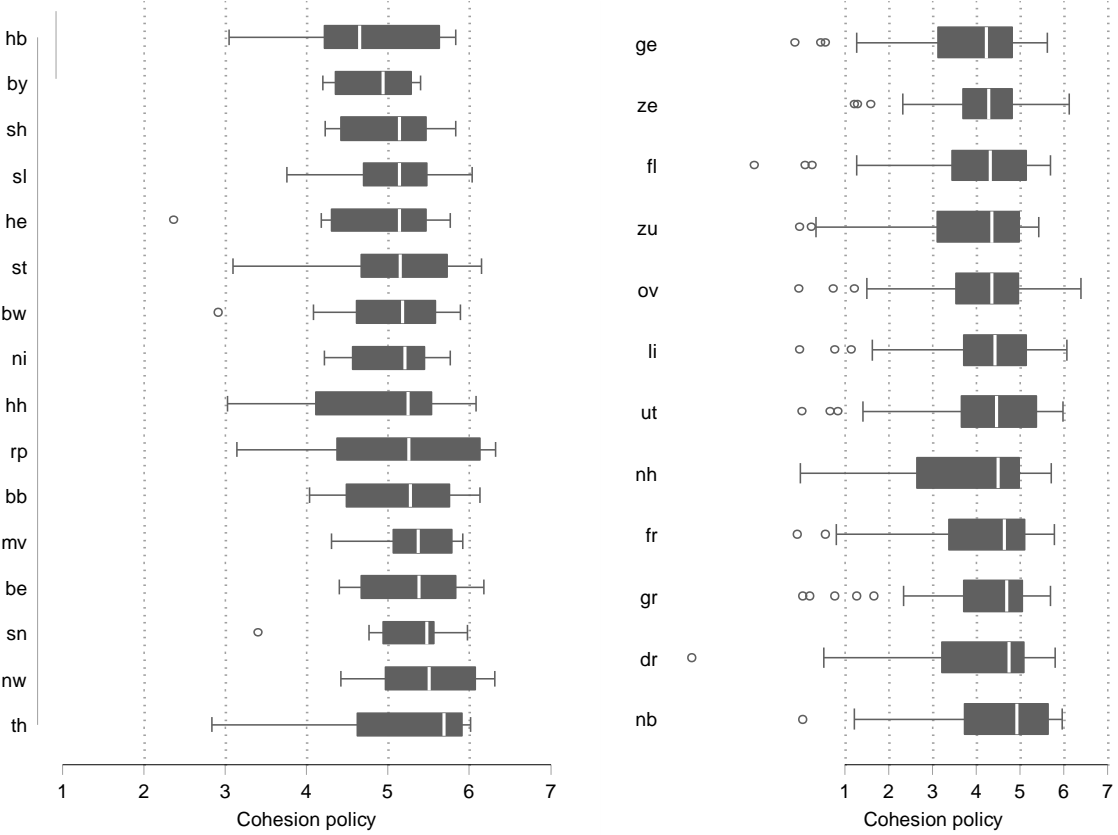


Table 1: Word frequency devoted to EU issues in sub-national party manifestos (by country and region)

Country / region	Election years	EU categories (N words)							N words (EU)	N words (manifestos)	% of words (EU)
		EU / Europe (general)	EU funding (general)	ERDF	ESF	Cohesion Fund	Agric. funds	Fisheries funds			
<i>Germany</i>											
Baden-Württemberg	2006, 2011	4,988	631	0	33	0	1,453	0	7,105	192,969	3,68
Bavaria	2008, 2013	8,184	1,043	194	22	0	1,527	0	10,970	218,226	5,03
Berlin	2006, 2011	3,606	884	29	90	0	0	0	4,609	186,136	2,48
Brandenburg	2009, 2014	6,962	3,310	280	480	0	1,274	0	12,306	154,779	7,95
Thuringia	2009, 2014	5,036	1,874	252	529	0	1,371	0	9,062	185,669	4,88
		<i>Mean (percent of N words (EU))</i>									
		65.32	17.57	1.71	2.62	0	12.77	0			
<i>United Kingdom</i>											
Scotland	2016	3,350	102	0	0	0	828	357	4,637	117,710	3,94
Wales	2016	2,259	355	0	150	32	560	34	3,390	85,092	3,98
		<i>Mean (percent of N words (EU))</i>									
		69.88	5.69	0	1.87	0.40	17.29	4.87			

Appendix

Table A1: Frequency of words devoted to EU issues in sub-national parties' election manifestos in five German states

Party	Election year	EU categories							N words (EU)	N words (manifesto)	% of words (EU)
		<i>EU/Europe (general)</i>	<i>EU funding (general)</i>	<i>ERDF</i>	<i>ESF</i>	<i>Cobesion Fund</i>	<i>Agric. funds</i>	<i>Fisberies funds</i>			
Baden-Württemberg											
CDU	2006	487	0	0	0	0	333	0	820	18208	4,50
FDP	2006	514	123	0	0	0	0	0	637	17179	3,71
Greens	2006	323	0	0	0	0	0	0	323	19186	1,68
SPD	2006	80	0	0	0	0	49	0	129	5593	2,31
CDU	2011	847	219	0	0	0	177	0	1243	22128	5,62
FDP	2011	760	117	0	33	0	260	0	1170	24989	4,68
Greens	2011	1029	0	0	0	0	452	0	1481	43811	3,38
The Left	2011	201	0	0	0	0	182	0	383	22994	1,67
SPD	2011	747	172	0	0	0	0	0	919	18881	4,87
Bavaria											
CSU	2008	615	111	0	0	0	67	0	793	7678	10,33
FDP	2008	220	0	0	0	0	151	0	371	15416	2,41
Greens	2008	712	161	0	0	0	164	0	1037	26355	3,93
The Left	2008	175	37	0	0	0	66	0	278	15423	1,80
SPD	2008	193	0	97	0	0	38	0	328	15435	2,13
CSU	2013	856	0	16	0	0	70	0	942	9052	10,41
FDP	2013	360	250	0	0	0	260	0	870	22962	3,79
Greens	2013	1979	138	0	0	0	410	0	2527	40598	6,22
The Left	2013	677	0	0	0	0	0	0	677	21419	3,16
SPD	2013	2397	346	81	22	0	301	0	3147	43888	7,17
Berlin											
CDU	2006	66	32	0	0	0	0	0	98	12837	0,76
FDP	2006	65	29	0	0	0	0	0	94	10720	0,88
Greens	2006	647	126	0	42	0	0	0	815	26685	3,05
SPD	2006	219	105	0	0	0	0	0	324	8235	3,93
CDU	2011	414	0	0	0	0	0	0	414	26589	1,56
FDP	2011	127	32	0	0	0	0	0	159	15304	1,04
Greens	2011	1291	324	29	48	0	0	0	1692	43763	3,87

The Left	2011	384	150	0	0	0	0	0	534	22649	2,36
SPD	2011	393	86	0	0	0	0	0	479	19354	2,47
Brandenburg											
CDU	2009	79	350	0	0	0	61	0	490	6617	7,41
FDP	2009	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	43	6709	0,64
Greens	2009	1836	874	0	238	0	330	0	3278	38488	8,52
The Left	2009	1254	537	70	190	0	105	0	2156	15451	13,95
SPD	2009	23	56	0	0	0	0	0	79	7697	1,03
CDU	2014	75	236	0	0	0	0	0	311	5624	5,53
FDP	2014	393	245	0	52	0	160	0	850	11033	7,70
Greens	2014	1943	672	0	0	0	618	0	3233	37654	8,59
The Left	2014	1316	340	23	0	0	0	0	1679	17951	9,35
SPD	2014	0	0	187	0	0	0	0	187	7555	2,48
Thuringia											
CDU	2009	0	208	58	0	0	0	0	266	9221	2,88
FDP	2009	412	139	53	0	0	0	0	604	16222	3,72
Greens	2009	436	0	0	58	0	365	0	859	25932	3,31
The Left	2009	89	119	0	0	0	88	0	296	13226	2,24
SPD	2009	264	118	58	0	0	62	0	502	16141	3,11
CDU	2014	341	181	0	0	0	0	0	522	16688	3,12
FDP	2014	1252	568	0	105	0	242	0	2167	18559	11,68
Greens	2014	775	0	0	0	0	115	0	890	25016	3,56
The Left	2014	363	171	0	46	0	284	0	864	17072	5,06
SPD	2014	1104	370	83	320	0	215	0	2092	27592	7,58