Electoral Accountability in Context:
How Political Institutions Condition Performance Voting

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Abstract*

The idea that voters use elections to hold governments to account for their performance lies at the heart of democratic theory, and countless studies have shown that economic performance can predict support for incumbents. Importantly, however, recent literature has shown that the link between economic performance and vote electoral outcomes is conditioned by countries’ institutional set-up, notably the level of ‘clarity of responsibility’. Clarity of responsibility is commonly employed as a rather generic concept that encompasses both formal institutional structures as well as dynamic traits of the incumbent government. In contrast, this paper distinguishes between two distinct dimensions of the political context: institutional and government clarity. The first captures the formal dispersion of government power, both horizontally and vertically. The second captures the cohesion of the incumbent government. Using multilevel modeling to analyze survey data from 27 European countries, we find that voters’ ability to hold governments to account is primarily influenced by the extent to which there is an identifiable and cohesive incumbent, whereas formal institutional rules have a limited impact on performance voting. We also show that the political context matters more to people who are politically informed. These findings have implications for the literature on economic voting and more generally for the debate on electoral accountability.

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Introduction

Elections offer an opportunity to citizens to act as a ‘rational god of vengeance and reward’ (Key 1964:568) and thereby hold governments to account for their actions. This idea of elections as a sanctioning mechanism is at the very heart of the notion of electoral accountability. The voter calculus is deceptively simple: ‘if the performance of the incumbent party is satisfactory…retain the incumbent in office, while if the government’s performance is not ‘satisfactory’…vote against the incumbent’ (Kramer 1971: 134). A vast literature has shown that this reward-punishment model seems to work in the area of the economy, as voters are more likely to reelect the incumbent when the economy is improving but ‘throw out the rascals’ when economic conditions are getting worse (see e.g. Nannestad and Paldam 1994; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000). Yet, studies have also found great variation in the degree of ‘economic voting’ across time and countries (Paldam 1991). In a seminal article, Powell and Whitten (1993) offer a persuasive explanation for this ‘instability paradox’ by demonstrating that economic voting is conditioned by the ‘clarity of responsibility’ of political institutions. More specifically, they argue that complex institutional and governmental structures, such as coalition and divided government, blur lines of responsibility and make it more difficult for voters to assign responsibility and sanction governments on the basis of their performance. In subsequent studies, scholars have extended the original Powell and Whitten index and have moved towards a more dynamic understanding of ‘clarity of responsibility’ (see e.g. Whitten and Palmer 1999; Anderson 2000; Nadeau et al. 2002), but the main discovery of the original study has been broadly corroborated: greater clarity of responsibility facilitates economic voting and therefore electoral accountability.

The Powell and Whitten article and subsequent studies employ rather generic measures to capture ‘clarity of responsibility’ that encompass formal institutional rules as well as traits specific to the incumbent government. The generality of these indices, however, makes it difficult to pinpoint which institutions mediate individual-level behaviour and why. To address this issue, this paper distinguishes between two separate dimensions of the political context, which can mediate the relationship between economic performance and support for incumbents: first, the degree to which institutional power is concentrated, what we term institutional clarity, and second, the degree to which the government is cohesive, what we term government clarity.
Whereas the former focuses on the formal dispersion of power, between the executive and the legislature and levels of government, the latter captures the cohesion of the particular incumbent government of the day. We argue that when it comes to assigning responsibility and holding governments to account, voters are less concerned with formal divisions of power and primarily influenced by the extent to which they can identify a single, cohesive government that they can reward or punish. We also posit that not all individuals respond in the same way to the political context, but that politically sophisticated voters are more aware of divisions within the government and hence more responsive to the political context.

This paper thus extends the literature on economic voting in several ways. First, we distinguish between two ways in which the political context may influence voters’ ability to hold governments to account and show that government clarity is of primary importance. Second, unlike most of the literature on the effect of political context on performance voting, we employ individual-level survey data across different countries to examine how individual performance perceptions and voting behavior are shaped by the political context. Third, the multilevel data also enables us to examine the effect of individual-level as well as context-level heterogeneity, by demonstrating that the political context has a greater effect on politically sophisticated voters. Finally, we go beyond the exclusive focus on the economy and examine the moderating effect of institutions on performance voting in two policy domains: the economy and health care.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we briefly review the literature on economic voting and clarity of responsibility. Thereafter, we present our theoretical propositions concerning effects of political context at the country-level and political sophistication at the individual-level. We test these propositions using multilevel analysis of survey data from 27 European countries. The results show that voters’ ability to hold governments to account is primarily influenced by the specific political context of the current government rather than formal institutional rules, and that this matters more to people who are politically informed. Our results also demonstrate that the mediating impact of the political context on electoral accountability is similar for both policy domains of the economy and health care. The conclusion discusses the wider implications of these findings.
Economic voting and clarity of responsibility

An extensive literature has examined the link between economic performance and electoral outcomes, or so-called ‘economic voting’. At the heart of this research agenda lies the notion that economic voting is an essential component of democratic accountability. This follows the classic tradition of democratic theory, which understands elections as inherently a sanctioning device in which voters reward or punish incumbents on the basis of past performance and thereby make elected officials responsive to public preferences (Fiorina 1981; Key 1966; Manin 1997; Powell 2000). In the economic domain this implies that, ‘the citizen votes for the government if the economy is doing all right; otherwise, the vote is against’ (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000: 183).

Numerous studies have shown a strong link between the economy and electoral outcomes, using both objective indicators of a country’s economic situation and public perceptions of economic conditions (see e.g. Nannestad and Paldam 1994 and Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000 for overviews). Yet, comparative research has also demonstrated that the strength of this link varies considerably across countries (Paldam 1991; see also Anderson 2007). Motivated by this “instability paradox”, scholars have examined how the political context influences the extent to which voters hold incumbents to account for economic performance. In a path breaking article, Powell and Whitten (1993) posit that the ‘clarity of responsibility’ of political institutions mediates the degree of economic voting. Their basic argument is that complex institutional setups blur lines of responsibility and thus make it hard for voters to assign responsibility to the government for economic performance: ‘The greater the perceived unified control of policymaking by the incumbent, the more likely is the citizen to assign responsibility for economic and policy outcomes to the incumbents’ (1993: 398). To test this proposition, Powell and Whitten create an index labeled ‘clarity of responsibility’. The index consists of five political variables that capture low clarity of responsibility: opposition control of committee chairs, weak party cohesion, politically significant bicameral opposition, minority government, and number of parties in government. On the basis of this index, they divide countries into “less clear responsibility” systems (e.g. Germany and Italy) and “clearer responsibility” systems (e.g. Britain and the United States). The authors’ justification for using this dichotomous classification is that:
[M]any of the factors that contribute to lower clarity of responsibility go together. Systems with legislative institutional arrangements that guarantee opposition participation in policymaking tend to be those with proportional representation and more multiparty and minority governments. Thus we can fairly reasonably distinguish systems by their average clarity of responsibility, not having to worry too much about the weighting of the individual variables (Powell and Whitten 1993: 406).

This ‘clarity of responsibility’ index has become very influential in political science and has been widely used to explain variation in economic voting (Anderson 2000; Bengtsson 2004; Hellwig and Samuels 2008; Kiewiet 2000; Nadeau et al. 2000; Powell 2000; Samuels 2004; Whitten and Palmer 1999), and more broadly to explain the effect of institutions on other aspects of democracy, such as levels of corruption (see e.g. Tavits 2007). The consensus in the literature is that political institutions that blur lines of responsibility do indeed restrict economic voting, and thus electoral accountability.¹ This is a significant finding, not only because it helps us understand why economic voting is more pronounced in some countries and some elections than others, but also because it may have normative implications for how we evaluate different institutional designs.

However, when it comes to the lessons that we can draw from this literature to evaluate the impact of specific political institutions on democratic accountability, then the generality of the clarity of responsibility index may be a hindrance rather than a help. Since the clarity of responsibility index encompasses both formal institutional factors (bicameralism, legislative committee structure) and specific characteristics associated with the incumbent government (majority status, number of parties), it may be difficult to identify the exact institutional mechanisms that facilitate democratic

¹ Duch and Stevenson (2005, 2008) have also argued that economic voting is weaker when power is dispersed. But in contrast to most of the economic voting literature they build on a selection model, rather than the traditional sanctioning model. They argue that a more equal distribution of responsibility weakens the signal that the previous economy provides about the competence of the incumbent parties (Duch and Stevenson, 2005, 2008). In other words, whereas the sanctioning model assumes that power-sharing makes it more difficult for voters to assign responsibility, Duch and Stevenson’s model assumes that voters have perfect knowledge of the distribution of responsibility, but argue that power-sharing leads voters to attribute more weight to exogenous factors.
accountability. Several studies building on the Powell and Whitten (1993) argument have sought to improve the index in various ways. Notably, Whitten and Palmer (1999) and Anderson (2000) have introduced a dynamic ‘clarity of responsibility’ index that varies not only across countries, but also over time within countries. Other studies have added various institutional and partisan factors to the index, including the proportion of seats held by the largest party (Anderson 2000; Nadeau et al. 2002); ideological cohesion of the governing coalition (Nadeau et al. 2002); longevity of the government (Nadeau et al. 2002; Bengtsson 2004); party system fractionalization (Anderson 2000; Nadeau et al. 2002; Bengtsson 2004); and federalism (Anderson 2006). By extending the measure of clarity of responsibility, these studies highlight a number of additional important institutional features that may influence the ability of voters to assign responsibility and hold governments to account. However, as these indices conflate formal institutions and dynamic government characteristics, they do not help us much in trying to pinpoint whether some institutions play a more important role than others and why.\(^2\)

Moreover, it is not immediately obvious that the various factors that contribute to lower clarity of responsibility in fact do “go together”, as Powell and Whitten argue in the above quote; especially if we expand the index to include factors such as federalism. A country can have low institutional concentration of power, but a highly unified executive (such as the US with federalism and significant bicameralism, but a one-party executive). This raises the question of whether the formal institutional divisions of power or the cohesion of the incumbent matters to voters when it comes to holding the government to account? We argue that there is an important theoretical distinction between formal institutional divisions of power and the cohesion of the incumbent government. To address this issue, this paper adopts a different approach to the study of how political institutions mediate performance voting. We explicitly distinguish between two dimensions of the political context: institutional clarity, how power is dispersed, and government clarity, whether the government of the day is cohesive or not. We hypothesize that the latter matters much more to the ability of

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\(^2\) Anderson’s (2000) study of economic voting in 13 democracies takes an important step towards disentangling the different ways in which the political context affects the relationship between economic perceptions and vote by distinguishing between 1) institutional clarity of responsibility, 2) governing party target size (size of the largest party in government) and, 3) clarity of available alternatives (effective number of parties in the legislature). However, ‘institutional clarity of responsibility’ in this study is identical to the Powell and Whitten measure, and thus captures both formal institutional rules and dynamic traits of the incumbent.
voters to hold governments to account. This argument is developed further in the ensuing section.

Institutional versus government clarity

How do political institutions facilitate or impede the ability of voters to hold governments to account for their performance in democratic elections? To answer this question, we first need to establish the tasks that voters face when holding governments to account. First, they need to be able to assign responsibility to political actors for policy conditions, such as the state of the economy. Second, they need to be able to use their ballot to punish (reward) the incumbent government on the basis of unsatisfactory (satisfactory) policy outcomes. Assignment of responsibility is a necessary condition for accountability, but the reverse does not necessarily hold (Anderson 2007; Hellwig and Samuels 2008). When we study vote choice (rather than analyzing responsibility evaluations directly, see e.g. Rudolph 2003), we are inevitably observing the influence of institutions on both stages of the process. Clarity of responsibility can be expected to influence both assignment and sanctioning: if lines of responsibility are blurred it is more difficult for voters to establish who is responsible for outcomes and equally it is more difficult to use the ballot box to punish the government. In contrast to the extant literature on clarity of responsibility, this paper distinguishes between two distinct dimensions of the political context: formal institutional divisions of powers and the level of cohesion of the government of the day. It is important to note that these dimensions are theoretically derived, on the basis that they capture distinct ways in which the political context can affect voters’ ability to hold governments to account, rather than

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3 In their study of economic voting in different democratic regimes, Hellwig and Samuels (2008) make a strong case for separating voters’ ability to assign responsibility from their ability to use the vote to at on the basis of that assignment. They identify three factors that they argue are exclusively associated with the latter: separate executive and legislative elections (as in (semi-)presidential systems); concurrence of elections in such systems, and the possibility of cohabitation. We would argue that divisions of powers between the executive and the legislature (as in presidential and semi-presidential systems) and within the executive (as with cohabitation) may also affect the way in which voters assign responsibility. Moreover, since Hellwig and Samuel’s hypotheses concern a rather specific combination of institutional features, it has unfortunately not been possible for us to test them using our data.
empirically, on the basis of the scalability of the items included to measure the dimensions.

The *institutional clarity* dimension is about the institutional concentration of power, which captures the formal division of powers both horizontally between the executive and the legislature, and vertically between different levels of government. Both types of ‘divided government’ lead to dispersion of executive power, and it is easy to see why this might weaken performance voting. First, when institutional rules disperse power either horizontally between the executive and the legislature (such as in presidential systems with the division of power between the president and the legislature or in parliamentary systems with a strong legislative committee system with opposition chairs) or vertically between different levels of government (as in federal systems), it is difficult for voters assign responsibility for policy outcomes because power is dispersed across many political actors. Second, a vote to sanction the incumbent is less likely to punish the actual culprit when power is dispersed, and that may lower incentives to vote on the basis of performance. In Powell and Whitten’s (1993) original index, formal institutional divisions of power were captured using measures of strong committees and significant bicameralism, and subsequent work has extended this to include division of powers in presidential and semi-presidential systems (Samuels 2004; Hellwig and Samuels 2008) and in systems of multi-level governance (Anderson 2006; Arceneaux 2006; Cutler 2004, 2008). According to the institutional clarity approach, the primary contextual factors facilitating, or impeding, performance voting are the formal ‘rules of the game’, i.e. the constitutionally determined level of dispersion. These rules differ considerably between countries, but do not vary much within countries over time. Here we operationalize this system level context as an additive index containing the type of parliamentary committee structures, federalism, semi-presidentialism, and bicameralism.

By contrast, the *government clarity* dimension is not directly concerned with formal institutional rules, but rather the ‘cohesiveness’ of the incumbent government at a particular given time. According to this approach, voters are less concerned with institutionally defined concentration of powers, and more preoccupied with whether they can identify a cohesive political actor (whether it be a person, a party, or a coalition of parties) that they can assign responsibility to and sanction accordingly. There is evidence from the US case that voters do overcome institutional divisions of
power (divided government and federalism) by attributing responsibility to a highly ‘cohesive’ incumbent, namely the president. Norpoth (2001: 420) argues that US voters solve the challenge of divided government ‘by simply holding one of the branches responsible for the economy and absolving (ignoring) the other. The president provides a most inviting target for this exercise in responsibility’. He concludes that divided government poses no noticeable obstacle to the ability of the US voters to reward and punish the government for economic performance, since voting decisions follow the premise that the responsibility that lies with the president, not with Congress (Norpoth 2001: 433).

This argument can be extended beyond the presidential context. In parliamentary systems, performance voting may also depend on the ability of voters to identify a single, cohesive incumbent that they can assign responsibility to for past performance and sanction accordingly in elections. Here the cohesion of the incumbent will depend on whether the government is a single-party government or a coalition (single-party governments are more cohesive), and in the case of coalitions, the dominance of a single party within the government (what Anderson (2000) refers to as “governing party target size”) as well as the ideological cohesion of the government. In semi-presidential systems, government cohesion is also conditioned by whether or not the prime minister and the president belongs to the same party (the government is more cohesive in the absence of cohabitation). In other words, our argument is that in a situation where voters face a single-party government, or an ideologically cohesive coalition dominated by one large party, voters will be likely to assign responsibility for policy outcomes to that incumbent and sanction it accordingly in the election, regardless of whether institutional power is shared with the opposition in legislative committees or upper chambers or with lower levels of government.

Table 1 below summarizes which measures are included in the original Powell-Whitten index and our two new proposed indices. It is worth noting that two of the original Powell-Whitten measures are not included in our new indices: party cohesion and majority government. Neither of these measures captures formal institutional division of powers. We have also refrained from including them in the

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4 The social psychology literature has referred to this phenomenon as ‘personalizing’ attribution, where attribution of responsibility to the president is a cognitive simplification strategy that allows voters to assign credit and blame for outcomes, despite complex institutional structures (see Tyler 1982; Sigelman and Knight 1985).
‘government clarity’ index, since the party cohesion measure typically refers to all parties in the party system (rather than specifically the government party/parties) and because majority government captures government control rather than government cohesion.\(^5\) Hence, the indices used in this paper are only made up by factors capturing formal institutional divisions of power and government cohesion respectively, as outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

We hypothesize that when it comes to electoral accountability the presence of government clarity, of a cohesive incumbent government, is critical for the ability of voters to administer ‘vengeance or rewards’ to elected officials, whereas the complexity of formal institutional structures – of which many voters may be blissfully unaware – is far less important. This leads to our first hypothesis:

**H1:** Government clarity has a greater moderating impact on the degree of performance voting than institutional clarity.

Past empirical assessments of performance voting have focused almost exclusively on the economy. Such a focus can be justified by arguing that ‘the economy is always an important issue to voters’ (Wlezien 2005: 556) and that ‘judging economic performance is more straightforward for average citizens than judging other areas of government performance’ (Anderson 2007: 277). The state of the economy is undoubtedly a crucial aspect of a government’s performance, but that does not make it the only aspect of policy performance that voters care about. Several studies have shown that the public agenda has become more diversified in both the United States and Europe and that economic issues are less dominant (see e.g. McCombs and Zhu 1995; Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005; Green-Pedersen 2007). Moreover, the focus on economic voting for assessing electoral accountability may also be problematic in an

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\(^5\) These omissions are noteworthy, since Powell (2000) in his more recent work has argued that, ‘my judgment is that our best overview of clarity of responsibility will be strongly based on the government majority status at the time of the election, taking further account of the cohesion of the government party’ (Powell 2000:65). Empirically, we do not find strong support for this in our dataset, since including these variable only serves to weaken the moderating effect of ‘government clarity’, and if we include majority government as a separate variable, we do not find any evidence of a moderating effect on performance voting.
increasingly globalized world where governments’ control over the economy is constrained by exogenous factors to varying degrees (Hellwig 2001, 2010). Indeed in a European context, monetary policy is determined by the European Central Bank for the 16 members of the Eurozone (and even to a large extent for many of the Eurozone-outsiders), and this may influence voters’ assignment of responsibility for the economy. Hence, to provide a more comprehensive examination of the influence of political institutions on electoral accountability, we analyze the link between performance evaluation and vote choice not only in the area of economy, but also in the area of health care provision. Since national governments have more exclusive control over health care provision, we would expect that performance voting is more pronounced in this policy domain.

**H2:** Government clarity has a greater moderating impact on performance voting for policies that governments have more control over. Specifically where there is clarity of responsibility, there will be more performance voting on the basis of health care evaluations than evaluations of the economy.

*Political sophistication and the political context*

The arguments above concern the impact of context-level heterogeneity on electoral accountability. But individual-level heterogeneity ought to matter as well (Gomez and Wilson 2001; Tilley et al. 2008; Hellwig N.d.). In particular, we expect that politically sophisticated voters respond differently to the political context than less sophisticated voters. Most work on economic voting has paid little attention to individual-level heterogeneity in conjunction with political context, not least because of the widespread use of aggregate-level data in this literature. Studies that have employed individual-level survey data have tended to focus on how people’s perceptions of policy performance are shaped by their political orientation, notably partisanship (Anderson et al. 2004; Duch et al. 2000; Evans and Andersen 2006; Evans and Pickup 2010; Ladner and Wlezien 2007; Wlezien et al. 1997). These studies challenge the existing economic literature by arguing that the strong relationship between economic evaluations and vote choice ‘has been much overstated’ since ‘popular incumbent parties carry with them an inbuilt bias among the electorate to perceive their economic performance in a more positive light than might otherwise be the case’
These studies thus highlight the potential pitfalls when researchers use individuals’ perceptions of the economy to measure the degree of economic voting in a single context. But in this paper we are not primarily preoccupied with the direct effect of performance evaluations on vote choice, but rather with how political institutions mediate this relationship, and consequently we are less concerned with these endogeneity issues. Moreover, the use of individual-level data in multiple contexts offers several advantages. Not only can we examine how individuals’ perception of policy performance shape their behavior, rather than relying on aggregate measures of performance (such as growth or inflation), but we can also examine whether certain individuals are more sensitive to the political context than others. In particular, we are interested in the effect of individual-level political knowledge.

Recent work has examined how political sophistication shapes economic voting. Gomez and Wilson (2001) show that pocketbook voting is only common among sophisticated voters in the US, whereas sociotropic evaluations matters more to less sophisticated voters. In a European context, Tilley et al. (2008) show that only politically sophisticated voters’ economic assessments are based on objective economic conditions. This work on political sophistication and economic voting has generally had less to say about how individual-level information mediates responses to the political context (an exception is Hellwig N.d.). Yet, just like sophistication mediates how voters respond to the economic context, we would also expect that individuals’ level of political information influences how they respond to the political context. Relatively sophisticated voters are expected to be more aware of whether or not political power in concentrated or dispersed and whether an incumbent is cohesive or internally divided, and assign responsibility accordingly. As Gomez and Wilson (2001:903) note:

High sophisticates are more likely to understand political-economic cycles, to appreciate partisan differences in economic policy and to be aware of major economic decisions made by the President, Congress and others (...) more sophisticated individuals are better able than their less

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6 Other studies have shown only weak causal links between partisanship and economic evaluations (see Lewis-Beck 2006; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008).
sophisticated counterparts to divide credit or blame for economic outcomes between a variety of actors at varying levels of proximity.

If politically sophisticated, or knowledgeable, voters are more aware of the political context and more likely to divide credit or blame for policy outcomes when they perceive power to be dispersed or incumbency to be divided, then this would imply that the political context has a greater mediating effect on the performance voting of politically sophisticated voters. This leads to our third hypothesis:

**H3:** Political context has a greater moderating impact on the performance voting of politically sophisticated voters than less sophisticated voters.

These hypotheses are tested empirically in the subsequent sections.

**Methods and measures**

To test our theoretical propositions, we use individual-level data from the 2009 European Election Study (EES), a cross-national survey of all 27 EU countries immediately following the June 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections (EES 2009; van Egmond et al. 2010). The sample size was almost exactly one thousand respondents in all countries, giving a total sample size of 27,069. Since identical questions were asked in all countries during the same time period, the EES offers an excellent opportunity to examine how cross-national variation in the political context shapes individual-level voting behavior.

Our dependent variable is a measure of national vote intention, using the standard formulation of: ‘If there was general election tomorrow which party would you vote for?’ We use national vote intention rather than European Parliamentary vote choice, since national vote choice, unlike EP vote choice, allows for both assignment of responsibility and the sanctioning of an incumbent. It also enables us to include respondents who did not vote in the EP election (where turnout was only 43 per cent), but would be likely to vote in a national election. Our dependent variable captures

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7 Vote intention in national elections is commonly used as the dependent variable in studies of economic voting, see e.g. Anderson 2000; Nadeau et al. 2000; and Duch and Stevenson 2008.
incumbent vote choice by dividing party preferences into governing and opposition parties. Respondents are roughly evenly divided between government party voters (45 per cent of voters) and opposition party voters (55 per cent of voters). Our models set opposition voters as the reference category.

Our key independent variables are measures of economic and health care evaluations, measures of system clarity of responsibility, and measures of political sophistication. For the first we use a standard question on the economy and a similarly worded question about health care as set out below. We have recoded these two variables so that a lot worse is coded –2, a little worse –1, stayed the same 0, a little better 1 and a lot better 2.

“What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think the general economic situation in [country] has got a lot better, a little better, has stayed the same, has got a little worse or has got a lot worse?”

“And over the last 12 months, has the standard of health care in [country] got a lot better, a little better, stayed about the same, got a little worse or got a lot worse?”

As discussed above, we use three main measures of clarity of responsibility (see Table 1). The first measure is a close approximation of the Powell and Whitten (1993) and Whitten and Palmer (1999) indices. This scale includes all the measures that the former authors include: no bicameral opposition (0 for bicameral opposition, 1 for no bicameral opposition), weak committee structures (0 for strong, 1 for weak), majority government (0 for minority, 1 for majority), strong party cohesion.

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8 We thus exclude non-voters from our analysis: 24% of the total sample said that they would either not vote, would cast a spoilt/blank ballot or didn’t know who they would vote for, and a further 9% declined to answer this question.

9 One country that we should note as potentially problematic with regard to coding parties as government or opposition is the Czech Republic. After the previous general election a three party coalition of ODS, KDU-SSL and the Greens (SZ) governed, but at the end of March 2009 this coalition government fell and an interim, technocratic government took over at the beginning of May 2009 very shortly before the survey in June 2009, with the support of ODS, the Greens and CSSD. Our coding here takes the government parties to be ODS, KDU-SSL and the Greens; nevertheless replacing KDU-SSL with ODS makes little difference to our results.

10 This is measured using Palmer and Whitten’s (1999) method of identifying systems in which the opposition is given proportional control of politically significant committee chairs within the legislature.
(0 for weak party cohesion across the party system, 1 for strong party cohesion)\textsuperscript{11} and single-party government (0 for coalition government, 1 for single-party government). These are then simply added together and divided by 5 to make a scale that runs from most opaque scoring 0 to most clear scoring 1.\textsuperscript{12} The index has an observed minimum of 0.25 and an observed maximum of 1 (see Appendix 1).

In essence, the approach originally adopted by Powell and Whitten (1993) uses both measures of formal institutional or system level variables that reduce clarity, in particular strong committees and bicameralism, and government cohesion variables that reduce clarity (see Table 1). Here we explicitly produce separate indices measuring both dimensions that reflect the key elements of both of those dimensions as detailed earlier in the paper. Our measure of institutional clarity, the degree to which power is concentrated institutionally, includes a dummy variable for weak committee structures (0 for strong committees, 1 for weak), a dummy variable for unitary states (0 for federal, 1 for unitary), a dummy variable for parliamentary systems (0 for semi-presidential, 1 for parliamentary)\textsuperscript{13}, and a dummy variable for unicameralism (0 for bicameralism, 1 for unicameralism)\textsuperscript{14}. These four items are summed and divided by 4. In principle this index therefore runs from 0 to 1, although in practice in our data we see a minimum of 0.25 (for example Germany) and a maximum of 1 (for example the UK).

Our second index is the measure of government clarity, of how cohesive the government of the day is. This includes a dummy for single party government (0 for coalition, 1 for single party), a dummy for no cohabitation within a semi-presidential system (0 for cohabitation, 1 for no cohabitation), a measure of the ideological cohesion of the government which takes the form of the proportion of seats held by parties in government that are of the same ideology as the dominant governing party

\textsuperscript{11} This refers to the internal cohesion in terms of parties’ legislative behavior. Where possible we have relied on Whitten and Palmer data (1999) on strong party cohesion. For Central- and Eastern Europe, we relied on local party expert evaluations and surveys MP surveys (see e.g. Borz 2006).

\textsuperscript{12} There were no cases of bicameral opposition in the 27 EU countries in June 2009, so this item has not been included, and we have divided the other four items by four, to give an index that in principle runs from 0 to 1.

\textsuperscript{13} We adopt Elgie’s institutional definition of semi-presidentialism as characterized by ‘a popularly elected, fixed term president [who] exists alongside a prime minister and cabinet who are responsible to parliament’ (Elgie: 1999: 13).

\textsuperscript{14} This is measured using Lijphart’s (1999) four point scale, in which we have reduced to two groups. The first, which we term unicameral, are systems with only one chamber, or with two chambers that are asymmetrical and congruent, these score 1 or 2 on the Lijphart scale. The other group, which we term bicameral, are systems with asymmetric and incongruent chambers or symmetric and incongruent chambers, these score 3 or 4 on the Lijphart scale.
(this varies from 0.49 to 1, and we have rescaled it to run from 0 to 1), and finally the dominance of the main governing party which we operationalize as the head of government’s party’s share of cabinet posts (this varies from 0.26 to 1, and has been rescaled to run from 0 to 1). Again we simply add these four items together and divide by four to produce an index that in principle could run from 0 to 1, and in practice runs from 0.27 (Finland) to 1 (for example Greece). Appendix 1 shows the individual country scores for all three Clarity of Responsibility indices.  

Finally, in order to test our third hypothesis we need to be able to group people by political sophistication. Here we use factual knowledge questions about national and EU politics (full details of the questions used are in Appendix 2) to provide a proxy for sophistication (Zaller 1992). Respondents answered seven of these questions in total, and their correct responses have been summed to give a scale running from 0 to 7, with a mean of 3.9 for the total sample. In order to present the effects of knowledge more clearly we have divided respondents into high and low sophistication groups, people scoring 4 or below are considered low sophistication and those scoring 5 or above are high sophistication.  

**Results**  

Due to the multilevel nature of our data, we cannot simply pool the EES national surveys and ignore that individuals are nested within a national context. Neglecting the hierarchical structure of the data would lead to an underestimation of standard errors and the likelihood of spurious inferences (Snijders and Bosker 1999). To overcome the statistical challenges and exploit the theoretical opportunities presented by our multilevel data, we employ a hierarchical model in our analysis. A fixed effects model is less suitable for our purposes since it would not enable us to explore the effect of context-level factors. Hierarchical (or random-effects) models allow us to explicitly model differences in vote choices according to the political context. Such models correct for dependence of observations within countries (intra-class correlation) and make adjustments to both within and between parameter estimates for  

15 Here the European Parliament party groupings are used to divide parties into left and right. The European United Left–Nordic Green Left, Progressive Alliance of Socialist and Democrats and Greens – European Free Alliance are coded as leftist parties, and all other parties as rightist.
the clustered nature of the data (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Snijders and Bosker 1999). Table 2 contains three multi-level models with logit links (due to the binary dependent variable), all of which predict incumbent vote intention relative to opposition vote intention. The first model estimates performance voting in the two policy domains, the second examines the moderating effect of the Powell-Whitten (PW) index and finally, the third model explicitly tests hypothesis 1 by including our indices of institutional and government clarity.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

In Model 1, we simply include the two variables relating to government performance, evaluations of health care and evaluations of the economy. These are both positive and highly statistically significant as we would expect. People with rosier views of the economy and health care performance are more likely to be incumbent government voters, with slightly larger effects of the latter evaluations. ¹⁶

Model 2 introduces the Powell-Whitten index and interactions between this index and the two performance evaluations. Although the main effect of the index is rather small, and not statistically significant, the interaction terms are again in the expected direction and both are statistically significant. In systems in which there is a greater clarity of responsibility, as measured by the PW index, economic evaluations and health care evaluations are better predictors of support for the incumbent government. These are reasonably sizable effects too. In the most clear systems, like the UK, we would predict that the proportion of people intending to vote for an incumbent party with the worst economic evaluation, holding health care evaluations at zero, is 32 per cent compared to 76 per cent with the best economic evaluations, a difference of 43 per cent. In the most unclear systems, like Denmark, the equivalent difference is only 21 per cent. There is an extremely similar story for health care evaluations.

So clarity of responsibility matters for individuals and how they make their vote choices. If there is little clarity then individual voters’ evaluations of performance, in terms of both economic outcomes and public service outcomes, have

¹⁶ Note that as we predicting incumbent vote intention across multiple countries, standard control variables of education, income, and so forth make little sense here as some incumbent governments will be leftist, and some rightist.
a weaker impact than if there is a high degree of clarity. This still leaves the test of our first hypothesis, namely that the cohesion of the government has a greater moderating effect on performance voting than formal institutional concentration of power. Model 3 in Table 2 introduces the main effects of our two new indices, institutional clarity and government clarity, and interactions between these two indices and the two measures of policy performance. What is notable is first, the lack of impact of institutional clarity and the large impact of government clarity on support for the government, and second the similar lack of a mediating effect of institutional clarity on performance evaluations and the large, and highly statistically significant, interactions between those evaluations and government clarity. High levels of government cohesion reduce support for the government generally, but increase the impact of that government’s performance, whereas institutional concentration of power makes no difference to general support for the government, and has no impact on how performance affects that support.

FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

Figures 1 and 2 show the predicted probabilities of intending to vote for an incumbent party, on the y-axis, vary with voters’ views of performance on health and the economy (holding the other evaluation constant at zero). Figure 1 illustrates the probabilities if there is a maximum amount of government clarity (a score of 1 on our scale) and a minimum observed amount of government clarity (a score of 0.27 on our scale), holding institutional clarity at its mean. What is striking is the complete lack of impact of evaluations when the governments are not cohesive, and the very large impact of evaluations when governments are cohesive. Moreover this holds, almost identically, for both health care and economic evaluations. On the flip side, Figure 2 shows the degree to which institutional clarity makes little to no difference. Again the y-axis represents the probability of a government party vote intention, and the x-axis the evaluation for health and the economy, this time holding governmental clarity constant at its mean. When we separately plot those probabilities for voters in the most institutionally opaque systems, we find exactly the same results as for those voters in the most institutionally clear systems.

So, overall there appears very strong support for hypothesis 1, the type of clarity of responsibility matters a lot and it is government cohesion that matters; but
little support for hypothesis 2, the type of evaluation does not appear to matter, evaluations of health and the economy have similar effects on incumbent vote intention, and are mediated in very similar ways by the two different dimensions of clarity.

What about differences between individuals? If there is heterogeneity at the country level as to how evaluations might affect vote decisions, it seems sensible to think that there may be heterogeneity at the individual level that affects that vote decision. In particular, as set out in hypothesis 3, we expect that for more politically sophisticated individuals performance evaluations matter more, and they are mediated to a greater extent by both the government type, and institutional set up. Table 3 sets out model 4. Here we divide the sample into two groups, one with low sophistication, scoring below 4 on our knowledge scale, and the other with high sophistication, scoring above 4 on our knowledge scale. For each of these groups we have imposed the same model as Model 3 in Table 2, and as can be seen it is clearly the case that for the higher sophistication group the mediating effect of, at least, government clarity is much greater than for the lower sophistication group. Interestingly, there is no significant conditional relationship between institutional clarity and performance evaluations for either of the political sophistication groups. This corroborates previous finding that formal institutional structures seem to make little difference to any segment of the voting population.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

A large body of literature has shown that the political context influences the degree of electoral accountability we find in individual countries and elections. More specifically, it has been demonstrated in repeated studies that in countries with institutions characterized by higher levels of clarity of responsibility economic voting is more pronounced compared with countries with institutional set-ups that blur lines of responsibility. Our study corroborates this finding, analyzing multilevel data from

\footnote{If we include political knowledge as an interval level variable in a model predicting incumbent vote intention, then the three way interaction between knowledge, evaluation and governmental clarity is statistically significant at the 5 per cent level for both health care and the economy (including all the main effects and all two-way interaction terms).}
27 European countries. Moreover, we have also sought to take this literature one step further by asking which aspects of the institutional context that make individuals unable, or unwilling, to vote on the basis of performance, and to what extent individuals respond differently to the political context.

More specifically, we hypothesized that the clarity of the incumbent government, its cohesiveness, matters more to voters’ ability to hold governments to account than formal institutional divisions of government power. Our argument is that as long as voters face a cohesive incumbent (e.g. a single-party government or an ideologically cohesive coalition dominated by one large party), they are likely to assign responsibility for policy outcomes to that incumbent and sanction it accordingly in the election, regardless of whether institutional power is shared with the opposition in legislative committees or upper chambers or with lower levels of government. We tested this hypothesis by distinguishing between separate dimensions of institutional and government clarity, rather than employing a general measure of ‘clarity of responsibility’ that encompasses both aspects, as has been done in most of the extant literature. Our findings lend strong support to our hypothesis, since only ‘government clarity’ appears to have an impact on performance voting, whereas formal institutional clarity has no effect.

While the empirical literature on electoral accountability has focused almost exclusive on economic voting, we found that our results were robust across two policy domains: the economy and health care. This indicates that the moderating effect of the political context affects electoral accountability more generally than just in the area of the economy. However, we did not find, as we expected, that this effect was greater for health care than the economy, even though governments have more autonomous control over health care than the economy. Instead we found almost identical effects in the two policy domains. Of course, two factors may be at play here: the first is the relative control of the government over a policy area (and thus the assignment of responsibility for performance) and the second is the relative salience of that policy area to voters (and thus their likelihood to vote on that basis). We can speculate that while voters may be aware that governments have less control over the economy, they also place greater weight on performance in this policy area, so these factors may cancel out each other. This conjecture could be tested empirically in future work by incorporating individual- or contextual-level measures of issue salience in the model.
We were also interested in examining individual-level heterogeneity in how voters respond to the political context. As expected, we found that politically sophisticated voters were more responsive to the political context, and hence that the moderating effect of institutions, or at least government clarity, was greater for this group of voters compared to low sophisticates.

These findings potentially have important implications for the study of institutions and electoral accountability, since they suggest that formal institutional divisions might matter less than previously thought. Of course, that does not imply that formal institutions do not matter. Indeed, electoral systems may play an important role in determining the cohesiveness of governments. Yet, it does suggest that more work should be done to disentangle the specific institutional mechanisms that impede or facilitate the extent to which voters’ hold governments to account for their performance. Our study only examined the impact of institutions in 27 different European political systems, and it would be worthwhile to examine whether our findings can be replicated on a broader sample of contexts. Moreover, future research could further examine the interplay between individual-level and context-level heterogeneity to address the question of how different types of voters respond to the political context.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Powell-Whitten index</th>
<th>Institutional clarity</th>
<th>Government clarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak committees</td>
<td>Weak committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong party cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No bicameral opposition*</td>
<td>Unicameralism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single party government</td>
<td>Unitary state</td>
<td>Single party government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentary system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absence of cohabitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dominance of one party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ideological cohesion of government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No cases in the 27 EU countries in 2009, so not included in the indices used here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic evaluation (-2 to +2)</td>
<td>0.33**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care evaluation (-2 to +2)</td>
<td>0.48**</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powell-Whitten clarity (0-1, 1=max. clarity)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PW clarity* economic evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PW clarity* health evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional clarity (0-1, 1=max. clarity)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional * economic evaluation</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional * health evaluation</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government clarity (0-1, 1=max. clarity)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.08**</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government * economic evaluation</td>
<td>0.68**</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government * health evaluation</td>
<td>0.78**</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-10,975</td>
<td></td>
<td>-10,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of countries</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of individuals</td>
<td>17,565</td>
<td></td>
<td>17,565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05 ** p<.01.

Source: European Election Study 2009
For economic evaluations, health care evaluations are held at 0 (‘stayed the same’), and for health care evaluations, economic evaluations are similarly held at 0. The measure of institutional clarity is held constant at the mean level of 0.66. The maximum level of government clarity is that observed in the data of 1, and the minimum level of governmental clarity in the data is 0.27.
FIGURE 2  Predicted probability\(^{19}\) of an incumbent vote intention by performance evaluation from model 3 for opaque and clear responsibilities as measured by the institutional clarity index

\(^{19}\) For economic evaluations, health care evaluations are held at 0 (‘stayed the same’), and for health care evaluations, economic evaluations are similarly held at 0. The measure of government clarity is held constant at the mean level of 0.60. The maximum level of institutional clarity is that observed in the data of 1, and the minimum level of institutional clarity in the data is 0.25.
## TABLE 3  Multi-level logistic regression models of incumbent vote intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low knowledge (0-4)</th>
<th>High knowledge (5-7)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
<td>Coeff.</td>
<td>S.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic evaluation (-2 to +2)</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care evaluation (-2 to +2)</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional clarity (0-1, 1=max. clarity)</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional * economic evaluation</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional * health evaluation</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.30*</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government clarity (0-1, 1=max. clarity)</td>
<td>-1.32***</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>-0.86*</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government * economic evaluation</td>
<td>0.56**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.85**</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government * health evaluation</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.12**</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.01**</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.73*</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Log likelihood               -5927                      -4893
Number of countries          27                             27
Number of individuals        9,647                         7,918

* p<.05 ** p<.01.

Source: European Election Study 2009
References


Arceneaux, Kevin (2004), ‘The federal face of voting: Are elected officials held accountable for the functions relevant to their office?’, *Political Psychology* 27: 731-745.


van der Brug, Wouter, Cees van der Eijk, and Mark N. Franklin. (2007). The Economy and the Vote: Electoral Responses to Economic Conditions in 15 Countries. New York:


Wlezien, Christopher, Mark Franklin and Daniel Twiggs (1997), ‘Economic perceptions and vote choice: Disentangling the endogeneity’, *Political Behavior* 19: 7-17.
### Appendix 1: Clarity of Responsibility indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Powell-Whitten index</th>
<th>Institutional Clarity</th>
<th>Government Clarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Rep.</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>1007</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
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<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
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<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>1016</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27069</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Political knowledge

Details of political knowledge question wordings:

“Now some questions about the European Union and [your country]. For these questions, I am going to read out some statements. For each one, could you please tell me whether you believe they are true or false? If you don’t know, just say so and we will skip to the next one.

a) Switzerland is a member of the EU. (False)
b) The European Union has 25 member states. (False)
c) Every country in the EU elects the same number of representatives to the European Parliament. (False)
d) Every six months, a different Member State becomes president of the Council of the European Union. (True)
e) The [country’s] Minister of Education is [Name of country’s Minister of Education]. (True)
f) Individuals must be 25 or older to stand as candidates in [country] general elections. (False)
g) There are [actual number plus 50%] members of the [country] parliament. (False)

The additive scale has a Cronbach’s alpha of .63.