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**Are Green Political Parties More Post-materialist than Other Parties? An Assessment of Post-Materialist Forecasts**

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# Are Green Political Parties More Post-materialist than Other Parties?

## An Assessment of Post-Materialist Forecasts<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Among other social and political changes, post-materialist theory anticipated the need to strengthen democracy in political institutions in post-industrial societies. This change in political values would mean that in addition to growth in post-materialist values, parties would be pushed to take an alternative view of politics that would entail greater assimilation of democratic procedures. This paper partially and empirically tests the validity of this explanation in four European party systems. The Greens are the focus, since they are considered the parties that best fit the post-materialist profile. In particular, the paper aims to ascertain whether the Greens display a significantly better positioning in respect to support for democracy and the congruence of their voters than other parties, as theory leads us to believe. The explanation of higher levels of party congruence is also expected to be related to post-materialist party features. The findings of this research did not show enough evidence to validate our theoretical expectations.

**Key-words:** post-materialism, Greens, left-right, democracy, congruence.

### Introduction

The change in political culture has been mainly explained by the so-called theories of cultural modernization, in whose precursors and main references Ronald Inglehart is included (see e.g. 1998; Inglehart and Baker 2000). The author believes that a substantial change is occurring in the priority of political values in modern societies, where post-materialist values (related to concerns of a cultural and social nature and

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3 issues of quality of life) are taking the place of traditional materialist values (political  
4 and economic stability and physical safety). This process presupposes the existence of  
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6 the hypotheses of scarcity and socialization<sup>2</sup>, which would lead irreversibly to the *post-*  
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8 *materialization* of societies on a planetary scale. In the post-materialization process, the  
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10 deepening of democratic values is one of the strongest axiological vectors, which  
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12 points, among other things, to the defence of an improvement in the democratic  
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14 functioning of political institutions. In particular, these theories recognise greater  
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16 acceptance of the values of democratic participation and representation in post-  
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18 materialist parties in general and in the Greens in particular (cf. e.g. Mikenberg and  
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20 Inglehart 1989; Inglehart 1990; 1998; Inglehart and Baker 2000; Doherty 2002: Chap. 2  
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22 and 3).

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29 The post-materialist explanation has been widely criticized, especially in view of  
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31 the realization of the non-universal, non-structural and non-axiological nature of the  
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33 change (vd. e.g. Offe 1988: 213-5; Clarke *et al.* 1999). Criticisms of the model do not,  
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35 however, mean rejection of a recognition of significant changes in attitudes, behaviour  
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37 and political preferences in those societies. It is this theoretic framework that forms the  
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39 context for the goals of this research.  
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44 We would like, specifically, to explore the response of parties that are defined as  
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46 being closer to post-materialism to probable stronger support for democratic norms and  
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48 procedures and a closer ideological congruence of their voters. Post-materialist parties  
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50 are expected to position themselves more favourably with regard to democracy and the  
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52 ideological congruence of their voters than other parties. This is our main hypothesis.  
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56 Democracy can be shortly defined as the procedure of collective decision  
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58 making in which citizens can exert control. Defining democracy is not however neither  
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60 so simple nor consensual. The truth is that there are diverse models of democracy (see

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3 e.g. Held 1996) and also different conceptions of representation (see e.g. Thomassen  
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5 and Schmitt 1999: 14, 19). Notwithstanding the relevance of this debate, for analytical  
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7 simplification we opt to follow that straightforward conception of democracy that  
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9 emphasizes citizens' participation in the political decision process, being representation  
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11 measured by MPs-voters' congruence. The operationalization of the concepts will be  
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13 presented ahead.  
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17 Although many authors have studied the validity of post-materialist  
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19 explanations, supporting or criticizing their assumptions and implications, hardly any  
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21 relevant research has been done into our subject. This paper looks into this less explored  
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23 field of research. There is firstly a brief review of the literature on the subject and then  
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25 we present our method, objectives and research data.  
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### 31 ***Cultural Modernization and the Post-Materialist Parties – The Case of the Greens***

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33 Theories of cultural modernization show that, in modern democracies, new  
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35 political parties generated around a multiplicity of social objectives started to conquer  
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37 the political arena after entering the electoral field and even parliament. These parties  
38  
39 address new political issues, basically of a post-materialist nature, to which traditional  
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41 parties have difficulty reacting (Minkenberg and Inglehart 1989; Kitschelt 1990; Dalton  
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43 *et al.* 1990: 10-16; Müller-Rommel 2002). The ideological proximity of these parties is  
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45 especially found in the left wing (Kitschelt 1989; Müller-Rommel 1989; Kitschelt and  
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47 Hellemans 1990: 213; Doherty 2002: Chap.3), although not exclusively (see e.g.  
48  
49 Camcastle 2007: 636-640)<sup>3</sup>. Post-materialist theory provides for a political scenario  
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51 where post-materialist parties are shown as being best qualified to provide an alternative  
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53 form of politics. In this respect, it is important to ask what particular characteristics of  
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55 these parties make them apparently so different.  
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Essentially mobilized by the ideal of a pluralist, participative, libertarian and even anti-capitalist democracy, post-materialist parties are concerned about ecological, feminist and peace issues and collective political matters. Internally, they are expected to be less hierarchical and authoritarian organizations and more open to grassroots participation than established parties. They are also regarded as exhibiting a higher defence of democratic values and rules (cf. e.g. Minkenberg and Inglehart 1989; Kitschelt 1990: 185, 195; Dalton *et al.* 1990: 13-14; Doherty 2002: 68, 72-73).

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Essentially as a result of fragile party leadership and the incipency of partisan loyalties, these new parties lack strategic negotiation capacity and political commitment, as well as stability in electoral support, which constitutes one of their greatest weaknesses from the point of view of party competition (Offe 1988: 179-80; Crook *et al.* 1992: 140; Poguntke 2002b: 60-61). Moreover, these organizations are based on deliberate strategies of rotational leadership and are subject to permanent supervision by their supporters (Kitschelt 1990).

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Post-materialist parties have achieved an increasing number of supporters, essentially among the young, the more educated, and the middle class in most European countries in the last three decades (Kitschelt 1989: 10, 86-90; 1990; Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990; Crook *et al.* 1992: 147; Camcastle 2007: 629-633). Nevertheless, this growth has not been steady (Müller-Rommel 2002). Electoral laws play a considerable role in the Green's success in elections. It is proportional representation systems combined with low election thresholds that help small new parties to obtain seats in parliament and foster greater representation of the electorate (Müller-Rommel 1989; specifically on the *Greens* see Richardson 1995: 18).

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Kitschelt generally labelled this type of party as *left libertarian parties* – left because ideologically they are committed to the principle of social redistribution and

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3 libertarian because they reject the authority of bureaucracies and favour participative  
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5 democracy and the autonomy of groups and individuals (1990). The Greens and  
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7 European ecologists in particular have features that widely identify them with this new  
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9 vision of the left (Müller-Rommel 1989; Inglehart 1990).  
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13 Some authors recognise a variety of perspectives in *ecologist* ideas - 'green',  
14  
15 which concerns conservationism and the protection of nature, 'brown', which focuses  
16  
17 on the issues of pollution and nature erosion and their resulting threats and, more  
18  
19 recently, 'white', associated with the risks of interfering with nature, such as genetic  
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21 manipulation (Pakulski and Tranter 2004: 224-226, 228-230). These perspectives differ  
22  
23 with regard to demands, ideological anchors and social support bases. Nonetheless,  
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25 although *ecologist* ideas are diverse, they still comprise a set of principles that are  
26  
27 essentially post-industrial and non-material. They have generally been recognized as  
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29 advocating quality of life, social and human causes, cultural diversity, tolerance and  
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31 political processes based on participative democracy (see e.g. Goodin 1995; Richardson  
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33 1995: 11; Christoff 1996). Although *ecologism* is sometimes associated with  
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35 conservative thought, in view of scepticism as to the progress and benefits of economic  
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37 growth (see e.g. Poguntke 1989: 190; Richardson 1995), or the Greens are "no longer  
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39 predominantly 'left of centre', 'post-material' and 'libertarian'" (Franklin and Rüdig  
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41 1995: 427-430; Pakulski and Tranter 2004: 227), it has been more commonly associated  
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43 with the post-materialist left, in the form of the Green parties (for a summary of the  
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45 literature, see Franklin and Rüdig 1995: 413-414). Goodin even claims that being *green*  
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47 explains why people are post-materialists (1995: 56-57) and paradoxically regards post-  
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49 materialism as a corollary of *ecologism*. The association of ecologism with the post-  
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51 materialist left is also explained by the social support bases of these parties, which tend  
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53 to be younger, better educated and post-materialist. These segments also show more  
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3 concern for ecological issues (for a summary of the literature, see Franklin and Rüdig  
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5 1995: 414-415).  
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### 10 **Method, Objectives and Data**

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12 Since the literature has been considering Green parties as the kind closest to the  
13 post-materialist prototype, we take the Greens as central cases and compare them to the  
14 other political parties. Our research considered four European party systems in which  
15 Green parties were recognised as playing a significant role, not only because of their  
16 number in each country, but also their relevance in national politics. The four cases  
17 selected were Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxembourg. A lack of available  
18 comparative data placed considerable limitations on the number of variables and  
19 political parties considered and on the development of a broader comparative analysis.  
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31 Among European Green parties, the German Greens are the most paradigmatic.  
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33 Soon after emerging in the late 70s, the party made a name for itself in national politics  
34 and, in spite of some setbacks, asserted itself as one of the most prominent, successful  
35 European Green parties. Die Grünen, allied with their Eastern counterpart, Bündnis 90 –  
36 Alliance 90, in 1993, forming the coalition Alliance 90 / The Greens, turned out to be a  
37 powerful party and formed a government coalition with the SPD between 1998 and  
38 2005. The data supporting our analysis does not always provide individual information  
39 for those parties. Therefore, we are sometimes only able to present figures for the  
40 Greens coalition. Two other examples of success among European Greens are the  
41 Belgian Ecolo and Agalev parties. They were formed in the 70s and divided by the two  
42 language party systems, French and Flemish. With non-political roots, both parties have  
43 cooperated politically and gained growing political power. Unlike the Belgians, the  
44 French Green parties Les Verts and Génération Ecologie are competing rather than  
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3 cooperative parties (except in occasional elections). Les Verts were founded in 1984  
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5 mainly as a response to the nuclear question, while Génération Ecologie, loosely  
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7 associated with the left, was created in 1990 (and disappeared in 1998) in great measure  
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9 as a political strategy to reinforce Socialist Party support. The Luxembourg Greens  
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11 derived from a green party first founded in 1983 that split in 1986 to form Glei and Gap.  
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13 They officially re-merged in 1995. These are the Green parties studied.  
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17 The article has three main goals. The first is to characterize the parties in order  
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19 to understand to what extent they differ from each other in terms of some post-  
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21 materialist characteristics. Are Green parties significantly different from others in  
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23 respect to socio-demographic, political and democratic profiles? This involves MPs'  
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25 and voters' socio-demographic and political features, as well as their position (and their  
26  
27 parties' positions) with regard to democracy. According to the theory, the hypothesis is  
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29 that Green MPs and voters show socio-demographic, political and democratic profiles  
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31 closest to post-materialist expectations and that Green parties are positioned more  
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33 favourably in relation to party democracy than other parties (concerning their party  
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35 manifestoes).  
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41 The second goal is an assessment of how parties differ from each other in  
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43 respect to their representation function. We are especially interested in an estimation of  
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45 the parties' levels of MP-voter congruence, which is considered here as a valid  
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47 instrument for assessing representation in spite of its limitations. In this goal, Green  
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49 parties are expected to show higher levels of ideological congruence than the others.  
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53 The choice of studying congruence has to do with the idea in the theories of  
54  
55 cultural modernization that indicates elites' increasing responsiveness to the public.  
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57 Since the study of congruence based solely on mean positions has proved to be  
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59 problematic<sup>4</sup>, we also intend to replicate the well known but seldom used measure of  
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3 congruence conceived by Achen – *centrism* (1978), which seems to be a much more  
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5 consistent measure (Golder and Stramski 2007). We will come back to this discussion  
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7 later on.  
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10 The third and final goal is to explain different levels of ideological congruence  
11 among European parties. Post-materialist party features – being left-wing, belonging to  
12 a Green party or ecologist party family and being post-materialist – are expected to be  
13 of significant importance in this explanation. These variables do not, however, exhaust  
14 all explanations of congruence. In addition to individual or party variables, electoral  
15 laws can also play an important role. This research focused on the variables listed  
16 before in order to achieve an understanding of their comparative importance.  
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27 *European Representation Studies, World Values Surveys, and Mapping Policy*  
28 *Preferences* are the main research sources. The first has hitherto been the main  
29 European comparative project on political representation. It is composed of four  
30 different studies, of which we use the *European Study of Members of Parliament* (1996)  
31 (EMP), the *European Candidates Study* (1994) (ECS) and the *European Election Study*  
32 (1994) (EES). The first dealt with MPs in national parliaments, the second with  
33 candidates to the European Parliament<sup>5</sup> and the third with European citizens. Since  
34 these studies are available online, we will make no further specifications (see,  
35 respectively, studies ZA3079, ZA3077, ZA2865, at the Zentralarchiv für Empirische  
36 Sozialforschung). The *World Values Surveys* (WVS) is probably the largest and best-  
37 known project on comparative values (for specifications see study ICPSR 3975). All  
38 these studies were based on representative samples, although the first two had some  
39 difficulties due to low response rates. This is not an unusual problem in MP studies (see  
40 for example one of the most important recent works on this subject: Schmitt and  
41 Thomassen 1999), but has important implications in the reading of the data.  
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*Mapping Policy Preferences* (Budge *et al.* 2001) (MPP) provides a vast amount of information on political parties' manifestos. The database results mainly from content analysis, though it also involves some electoral information. The data from this project was used to analyse European parties' positions, while the other projects supported our study of MP's and voters' positions.

### **Parties' Socio-Demographic, Political and Democratic Profile**

Theory on post-materialist parties indicates that, generically, some of the most significant traits of their profile are belonging to left-wing party families, especially to the ecologist family, an electoral performance marked by a recent appearance in political competition and incipient electoral representation. Table 1 shows a preliminary outline of the four party systems in order to clearly identify and position the Green parties. Only contemporary parties are considered (even some that have recently disappeared).

(Table 1. Political parties' ideological and electoral characteristics - ABOUT HERE)

Table 1 reiterates what the literature has widely shown. Green parties first participated in elections in the early 1980s, are left-wing, usually have average electoral results below two digits and, except for Germany, hold a small number of seats in their parliaments.

Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests (Belchior 2007) that the prognoses on the impact of these parties on the ideological reorganization of party systems are not as promising as some authors assumed (Müller-Rommel 1989; Crook *et al.* 1992: 160). Except in the German party system, in no another European country have these parties achieved a consistent, successful electoral performance that has allowed them to achieve

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3 steady parliamentary representation. Generally, in these party systems, Greens have low  
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5 electoral significance, which seems to encourage them to adopt alternative political  
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7 strategies in order to attract specific segments of the public, in which we can include the  
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9 post-materialist agenda.  
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12 In this section, we assess some relevant socio-demographic and political features  
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14 of MPs and their voters, and their positions with regard to democracy, between parties.  
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16 We also analyse the parties' positioning on party democracy (using party manifestoes as  
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18 data source). Tables 2 and 3 briefly describe the MPs and voters in each political party<sup>6</sup>.  
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20 Considering the above literature, Green MPs and voters were expected to show greater  
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22 support for post-materialism, position themselves to the left, belong to younger cohorts  
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24 and possess high levels of education. Moreover, voters were expected to show low  
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26 levels of party attachment.  
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34 (Table 2. Socio-demographic and political characterization of party MPs – 1996 –  
35 ABOUT HERE)

36 (Table 3. Socio-demographic and political characterization of party voters – 1994-  
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38 2002– ABOUT HERE)  
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43 The figures in Table 2 show some of the expected features of post-materialist  
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45 party elites in almost all the Greens considered (data for France were not available).  
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47 Green MPs are likely to be more post-materialist than MPs from other parties, position  
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49 themselves on the left wing, be younger and have higher levels of education (except for  
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51 Glei-Gap, which is, however, based in an extremely narrow sample).  
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55 In respect to party voters, Table 3 also shows some post-materialist features.  
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57 Green voters are more post-materialist and younger than voters for other parties in all  
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59 cases and position themselves on the left wing. Level of education and party attachment  
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3 do not bear the same consistent analysis. The percentage of voters with higher education  
4 and no party attachment, which the theory suggests is likely to be higher than in other  
5 parties, although significant in some cases (as for example education in *Ecolo* or party  
6 attachment in *Ecological Generation*), is not usually higher.  
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13 In general, neither MPs nor voters exhibit any remarkable support of our  
14 suppositions. Concerning the indicators studied, the lack of significant consistency in  
15 the MPs' and voters' post-materialist profile therefore only allows us to moderately  
16 validate Greens as a different type of party.  
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23 Other studies have already noted this mixed view on Greens. Rootes found only  
24 a modest correlation between post-materialism and support for Green parties, justifying  
25 it by the diversity of those parties' social basis (1995: 234). Other authors admit the  
26 existence of polychromatic features in ecological concerns, i.e. not only green, but also  
27 brown and white, which affect the profile of supporters and positioning to the left or  
28 right (Pakulski and Tranter 2004: 224-230). Therefore, since the variables in Tables 2  
29 and 3 are theoretically correlated to post-materialist preferences, the possibility of the  
30 inexistence of a clear correlation between post-materialism and support for Greens  
31 corroborates our findings, i.e. Green MPs' and voters' profiles are not remarkably  
32 correspondent to post-materialist expectations. In the same way, exploring how  
33 European Greens react to *new politics*, Poguntke concluded that the Greens show  
34 characteristics that can be explained by the emergence of post-materialism, but did not  
35 regard these parties as being a new type of party (1989: 184-191).  
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53 A last aspect of the characterization of MPs and voters is their position on  
54 democracy. As mentioned before, post-materialist parties are supposed to be particularly  
55 supportive of democracy (especially participative democracy) and critical of the  
56 traditional performance of democratic institutions. Unfortunately, no straightforward  
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3 measure of support for democracy is available simultaneously for MPs and voters. The  
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5 most valid available variable is “satisfaction with the way democracy works” in each of  
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7 the countries studied. Of course this variable cannot be regarded as a valid measure of  
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9 the orientation towards democracy. Therefore, this variable has been considered solely  
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11 as an assessment of democratic performance. As Greens wish to strengthen the  
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13 democratic functioning of political institutions, they would be expected to be among  
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15 those that disagree more with the way democracy works.  
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20 Figure 1 shows the mean position on the way democracy is perceived to work in  
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22 the country for MPs and voters within each political party<sup>7</sup>. It shows the differences in  
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24 means in respect to the median of the scale (2.5).  
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29 (Figure 1. Satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country (MPs’ versus  
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31 voters’ mean distance from the median point of the scale) – ABOUT HERE)  
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36 It is clear that, although without any exceptional importance, it is possible to find  
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38 some of the Greens in our sample among those most dissatisfied with the way  
39  
40 democracy works in their country (data for France were not available). This is  
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42 especially evident for *Glei-Gap*, and, to a lesser extent, for *Agalev* and *Ecolo*. It is  
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44 important to note that this only applies to MPs.  
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49 The relationship is statistically significant in all countries for MPs (Cramer’s  $V$   
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51 in Belgium=0.42, Germany=0.44, and Luxembourg=0.69 – all with  $p>0.001$ ) and for  
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53 voters, although considerably weaker (Cramer’s  $V$  in Belgium=0.16, Germany=0.14,  
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55 and Luxembourg=0.17 – all with  $p>0.001$ ). These findings suggest that there are  
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57 relevant differences between parties with respect to satisfaction with the performance of  
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59 national democracies that is more acute when it comes to MPs’ positions. While we find  
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3 that Green MPs (in Belgium and Luxembourg) are among the most dissatisfied, the  
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5 scenario is not the same when it comes to voters, who are closer to the median of the  
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7 scale in all parties. This difference can be partially explained by the fact that elites tend  
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9 to be more extreme than supporters in structuring political issues (Dalton 1985: 275;  
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11 Converse and Pierce 1986: 128). In fact, significant differences between elected  
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13 representatives and their electorates can be expected; at least because the former are  
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15 politically more sophisticated than the latter and see politics from a different point of  
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17 view.  
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22 Among the Green parties in Figure 1, only German Green MPs are not  
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24 significantly dissatisfied with the way democracy works in their country. Most of the  
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26 established, more central parties also seem to be satisfied with the national democratic  
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28 performance. As they are closely involved in the functioning of democracy, because  
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30 they are actually or potentially parties in power, they seem to be consequently more  
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32 accustomed to and pleased with it. Since the German Greens have also participated in  
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34 government it is possible that, in the same vein, they may not have preserved all the  
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36 original positioning of Green parties and their foundational points of view may have  
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38 been contaminated, as has already been said by several authors about the Greens'  
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40 participation in government (Müller-Rommel 2002; Poguntke 2002a; Ball 2005: 5).  
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42 Ecolo, Agalev and Les Verts have also participated in coalition governments but for a  
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44 shorter period of time and with less representation. Only the Luxembourg Greens have  
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46 no government experience and their MPs are consistently the most discontent with  
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48 national democracy.  
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55 The first aim of this paper is to analyse the political parties' position on party  
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57 democracy. As an underlying post-materialist explanation, the idea of party democracy  
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59 embraces party support for democratic values and procedures, and especially includes  
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3 the encouragement of grassroots participation, concomitant with a weak emphasis on  
4 party hierarchy and low centralization of power inside the organization (Kitschelt 1989:  
5 67-68). Based on party manifesto data, our view of *party democracy* is intended to  
6 measure how close parties are to that ideal. Limited by the available data, the indicators  
7 underlying the additive index of *party democracy* are a favourable position on  
8 individual liberties and civil rights, democracy as a regime and citizens' involvement in  
9 the political decision process, and an unfavourable position on political authority and  
10 strong governments. Post-materialist parties were expected to show higher levels of  
11 support for party democracy.  
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24 Figure 2 shows the parties' distance from the median point of the index of *party*  
25 *democracy*. The scale of the index varies between 0 for 'minimum democracy' and 1 for  
26 'maximum democracy'. The median point of this scale is therefore 0.5.  
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34 (Figure 2. Political parties' distance from the median point of the index of *party*  
35 *democracy* – ABOUT HERE)  
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41 Although the Greens' strong emphasis on democracy, paradigmatically present  
42 in the German Greens manifesto expression: "democracy is the basis, mode and  
43 expression of our political behaviour" (Alliance 90/The Greens 2002: 7; see also  
44 Doherty 2002: 72), they do not seem to exhibit more noticeable values of support for  
45 party democracy when compared to other parties. Figure 2 suggests that there is not  
46 enough evidence to corroborate the supposition that Green parties are more in favour of  
47 party democracy, considering party manifestoes as data source. To consolidate this, it is  
48 *Ecolo* that exhibits the worse result of all parties. According to our sample, the  
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3 explanation for stronger party democracy does not seem to reside especially in the  
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5 Greens, given that they are not significantly different from others in this respect.  
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### 10 **Political Parties' Levels of Congruence**

11  
12 The second goal of this paper is the assessment of ideological representation  
13 using measures of congruence. A political party is considered congruent with the  
14 ideology of its voters if the distances between the positions of the party representatives  
15 and the voters are zero, and diminishes as representatives and voters positions move  
16 further apart. Congruence is estimated by two measurements - differences in MP-voter  
17 mean positions and centrism<sup>8</sup>. High mean differences and centrism values indicate a  
18 mismatch between the voters and the party elite; low values indicate the reverse.  
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29 Although the Greens are sometimes seen as being neither left nor right, as we  
30 have seen above, the truth is that the left-right dimension is a symbolic, general  
31 reference in relation to which most people can place themselves (see e.g. Klingemann  
32 1995: 192). Therefore, since there are not many relevant variables available to analyse  
33 MP-voter congruence, left-right self-placement is assumed to be a valid option to  
34 measure congruence.  
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43 However, the use of this variable raises some comparability problems that must  
44 be addressed. These problems have to do specifically with different perceptions on the  
45 left-right scale between MPs and voters and between countries. As said by Golder and  
46 Stramski "by normalizing congruence relative to the dispersion of citizen preferences,  
47 relative citizen congruence avoids the use of an abstract left-right scale and provides a  
48 metric free concept of congruence" (2007: 11). The authors note the importance and  
49 exceptionality of Achen's proposal to the conceptualization of congruence in relation to  
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3 the dispersion of citizen preferences. That is why *centrism* is considered the most  
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5 appropriate measure for overcoming potential comparability problems.  
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8 Table 4 shows MPs' and voters' mean self-positioning on the left-right scale, the  
9  
10 differences in means, and, finally, centrism. Accordingly to predictions of the theories  
11  
12 of cultural modernization, the Greens are expected to denote higher levels of  
13  
14 congruence, i.e. lower differences in means and lower values of centrism.  
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19 (Table 4. MPs' and voters' mean left-right self-positioning and centrism – 1994 (1) –  
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21 ABOUT HERE)  
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27 Two main conclusions can be drawn from Table 4. Firstly, the negative signal of  
28  
29 almost all the differences of means shows that, as others have been widely  
30  
31 demonstrating, party elite positions are persistently to the left of their supporters (see  
32  
33 e.g. Dalton 1985: 275; Converse and Pierce 1986: 128; Thomassen and Schmitt 1999:  
34  
35 199-200). This happens in most parties, Greens included.  
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38 Secondly, Greens are not among the most congruent parties and, within their  
39  
40 party systems, do not reveal results that suggest they favour ideological representation  
41  
42 of their electorates. The differences in means are around one or over, and centrism is far  
43  
44 from zero. Only the German Greens and Gap Gleis show values of centrism below one,  
45  
46 which is indicative of moderate MP-voter congruence. Curiously, among the less  
47  
48 congruent parties of all four party systems are two Green parties, Les Verts and Ecolo.  
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52 Similarly, Kitschelt noticed the existence of flaws in the materialization of the  
53  
54 principle of representation of Green parties (1989: 189, 192-193, 276). Additionally,  
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56 research on representation in Europe has reiterated these findings. Greens seem neither  
57  
58 to display higher levels of party-voter linkage (Poguntke 2002b: 54-55, 57-58), nor  
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3 better levels of ideological congruence than other parties (Belchior 2007: Chap.4).  
4  
5 Therefore, from the perspective of ideological congruence, and according to our sample,  
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7 Inglehart's conjectures do not seem to be relevant enough to be validated. Taking into  
8  
9 account that ideological congruence is usually stronger than congruence produced by  
10  
11 other issues (see e.g. Dalton 1985: 283), Green parties do not appear to uphold the  
12  
13 principle of higher standards of political representation of their supporters. Weak party  
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15 affiliation and feeble loyalties, as well as diffuse ideological anchorage, may help  
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17 explain these results.  
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### 25 **Explanations of Levels of Congruence**

26  
27 Our third and last goal is to understand the importance of party characteristics in  
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29 explaining ideological congruence. Many variables play an important role in the  
30  
31 explanation of parties' congruence. At party level, for example, there is party type and  
32  
33 dimension, and degree of centralization or government experience; at institutional level,  
34  
35 there is the electoral system, the number of parties or size of constituencies<sup>9</sup>. Although  
36  
37 we recognize its significance, the purpose here is specifically to assess the comparative  
38  
39 importance of a set of variables directly related to explanations of the theories of  
40  
41 cultural modernization.  
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46 As seen before, theoretical expectations point to significant importance of  
47  
48 variables related to post-materialism. In other words, positioning to the left, belonging  
49  
50 to the ecologist party family and support for post-materialism are expected to contribute  
51  
52 to the explanation of higher MP-voter congruence. Considering this, Table 5 shows the  
53  
54 constraints on ideological congruence exerted by these variables, measured by centrism.  
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56  
57 The sample is now composed of the political parties of the EU15 countries.  
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3 (Table 5. Correlations between parties' characteristics and ideological congruence in  
4 Europe (Pearson's  $r$ ) – ABOUT HERE)  
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10 The constraint exerted by MPs' ideology is clearly the strongest. It works  
11 inversely to expectations, however: the more to the left the less the congruence  
12 (remember that higher values of centristism mean lower levels of congruence). This means  
13 that right-wing MPs are more likely to reflect their supporter's ideological positioning  
14 than their peers to the left. This finding raises serious doubts as to a supposedly higher  
15 capacity of the (new) left for better representation of electors.  
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24 Furthermore, party family appears to have some importance in the explanation  
25 of congruence, but the post-materialist dimension seems irrelevant at European level as  
26 much for MPs as for voters. Previous analyses also suggest that these differences in  
27 party families are not especially favourable to Green parties (Belchior 2007: Chap.5).  
28 Although it has been shown that the Greens have better representation of post-  
29 materialists, this does not appear to be significantly related to better performance by  
30 them in respect to ideological congruence.  
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41 We now turn to the differences between our four European party systems  
42 individually, specifically from the point of view of party voters (Table 6).  
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48 (Table 6. Relations between voters' characteristics and ideological congruence  
49 (Pearsons'  $r$  and Cramer's  $V$ ) – ABOUT HERE)  
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55 The figures corroborate the weak expression that support for post-materialism  
56 has in the improvement of voters' representation. It also shows the relative and  
57 capricious importance of the traditional ideological dimension. Only in two of the four  
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3 countries are relationships processed in the expected direction, i.e. congruence is higher  
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5 in left-wing parties.  
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7  
8 Political party and party family show statistical significance in all countries,  
9  
10 slightly stronger for the latter, indicating that there are important differences at both  
11  
12 levels in respect to ideological congruence. In spite of these differences, the post-  
13  
14 materialist dimension does not seem to be a variable relevant enough to explain them.  
15  
16 Left-right self-positioning appears to have an important role in explaining congruence,  
17  
18 but it is not clear whether left or right voters are better represented (this was also found  
19  
20 in other European party systems: Belchior 2007: Chap.5.1).  
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25 These results reiterate others that have not only shown that the Greens are  
26  
27 beyond the left-right positioning, but that post-materialism is not a factor explaining the  
28  
29 vote in these parties (Franklin and Rüdig 1995: 430-433). The findings suggest that,  
30  
31 more than the variables under consideration, the reasons for higher levels of congruence  
32  
33 lie in the nature and idiosyncrasy of each political party. Accordingly, in his study on  
34  
35 party representation, Dalton noted that similar party characteristics could lead to  
36  
37 conflicting results, suggesting that party characteristics do not seem to be, in general,  
38  
39 particularly important in the explanation of representation (1985: 288-292).  
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#### 45 46 **Concluding Remarks**

47  
48 Theories of cultural modernization supposed that post-materialist parties were an  
49  
50 alternative, more participated and democratic kind of party. Our findings suggest that,  
51  
52 while this may be true in respect to some Green parties, it is not, however, the general  
53  
54 picture for the European Greens (and variables) studied. This paper's main conclusion  
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56 points, therefore, to the rejection of Inglehart's expectations of a scenario where Green  
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58 parties detach themselves from the others, emerging as those most in line with post-  
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3 materialist expectations. To support this statement we now look at the three goals of the  
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5 research.  
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8 In the first goal we noticed that, generally, while it is possible to recognize a  
9  
10 reasonable match with the so-called post-materialist MP and voter profile in most Green  
11  
12 parties studied, there is no evidence strong enough to set them apart from other parties.  
13  
14 Additionally, even though some Green MPs are very critical of democratic  
15  
16 performance, when it comes to support for party democracy, Green parties do not  
17  
18 perform differently from any other parties. In short, Green parties, even those showing  
19  
20 some relevant post-materialist traits, do not seem to carry within them, as a consequence  
21  
22 of their founding ideals, a greater commitment to one of their main principles – the  
23  
24 deepening of party democracy – at least considering their manifestos as a data source.  
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29 Some possible explanations may justify these findings. First, there may be  
30  
31 simply some deficiency in the index, which might affect the validity of the results. This  
32  
33 relationship should therefore be re-examined using other data sources and variables.  
34  
35 Second, the basic data come from content analysis of party manifestos and there may  
36  
37 therefore be some discrepancies between parties' programmes and actions. This could  
38  
39 explain why, of all the parties, Génération Écologie is the most supportive of party  
40  
41 democracy, when we know that this party is not only different from typical Green  
42  
43 parties, but also seems to have weak internal party democracy (Cole and Doherty 1995:  
44  
45 58-59). The third and last explanation has to do with the mere acceptance of the fact that  
46  
47 support for party democracy is not so expressive among the Green parties studied as the  
48  
49 literature might suggest. Other studies have come to this conclusion (Ball 2005).  
50  
51 However, more research on this subject is needed in order to confirm the explanation.  
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57 Our estimate of the degree of representation measured by MP-voter congruence  
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59 in the second goal showed that, consistent with the findings on party democracy, Greens  
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3 do not demonstrate higher levels of congruence than other parties. There seems to be a  
4  
5 gap between idealistic beliefs and pragmatic politics. As Doherty says, “the greens  
6  
7 failed in practice to live up to all the ideals of grassroots democracy” making it  
8  
9 “undoubtedly not the same in practice as intended originally” (2002: 115 and 116). In  
10  
11 addition to imprecise ideological party anchorage, the narrow attachment of supporters  
12  
13 helps to explain the loose ties to ideological parties’ positions and, consequently, the  
14  
15 weak congruence.  
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19  
20 And finally, in the third and last goal regarding the reasons for the variance in  
21  
22 parties’ ideological congruence, we did not find enough evidence to confirm the  
23  
24 importance of post-materialist traits to a better performance of parties’ congruence.  
25  
26 Contrary to Inglehart’s explanation, it is not MPs’ or voters’ post-materialist positioning  
27  
28 that explains higher levels of congruence, but the MPs’ ideology itself. It is essentially  
29  
30 the location to the right that leads to higher levels of congruence. The explanations of  
31  
32 this result need deeper analysis to be discussed properly.  
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37 Green parties apparently form a mixed party type with multiple nuances that  
38  
39 may even be conservative in nature, which therefore goes against the post-materialist  
40  
41 commitment. Although their emergence in time and core issues is more or less the  
42  
43 same, Greens do not form a homogeneous cluster. They can have quite dissimilar  
44  
45 origins, their electoral and parliamentary experiences can be very divergent and their  
46  
47 party elite profiles and party strategies are also heterogeneous. In addition, these parties’  
48  
49 voters are not only motivated by environmental issues, but also by political discontent  
50  
51 (Rootes 1995: 235-236). The parties’ ideological character can also be very different.  
52  
53 For example: the German Greens chose more socialist traditions, the French *Génération*  
54  
55 *Écologie* supports nuclear power, the Portuguese Greens are attached to the Communist  
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57 Party, and so on. Consequently, the designation *green* covers a plethora of different  
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3 party characteristics and political programmes and it is therefore very difficult to  
4  
5 consider these parties as a coherent group of a certain type. So, beyond the discussion of  
6  
7 the findings, it is also necessary to reflect on the assumptions. The core assumption that  
8  
9 “ecology and democracy are inexorably linked” (Alliance 90/The Greens 2002: 20) has  
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11 to be validated in order to understand what we can reasonably expect from the Greens.  
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33 <sup>1</sup> This article is a developed version of a paper presented at the Conference of the Belgian Association of  
34  
35 Political Science (April 2008). The author wishes to thank José M. Leite Viegas, Stefaan Fiers and  
36  
37 Jacques Daloz for their insightful comments and suggestions.

38  
39 <sup>2</sup> The first hypothesis is that people basically favour scarce goods. Those who have experienced war and  
40  
41 economic difficulties favour peace and material wellbeing. Those who have had peace and prosperity  
42  
43 favour quality of life. The second is that the priorities of individual values are consolidated essentially at  
44  
45 the time of primary socialization. The author initially explained this process of change in light of the  
46  
47 Maslow's hierarchy of needs, though this reference has disappeared in more recent works.

48  
49 <sup>3</sup> New movements and political parties also appeared to the right (Offe 1988: 233; Minkenberg and  
50  
51 Inglehart 1989).

52  
53 <sup>4</sup> Essentially because MPs and voters see politics differently, which explains why the distribution of both  
54  
55 types of players on the same scale are different (e.g. voters systematically show greater dispersion than  
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57 MPs) (Achen 1978: 805-815; Pierce 1999: 13-15).

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59 <sup>5</sup> Similar to other research MPs also include parliamentary candidates (Schmitt and Thomassen 1999: 17-  
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<sup>6</sup> The questions were:

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Party identification: “To which party do you feel closest?” (v105 EES).

Post-materialist index: as suggested by its author (Inglehart 1998: Appendix 4) (y002 WVS and v31a-31b EMP).

Left-right self-positioning: “In political matters people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right’. How would you place your views on this scale?” (v114 EES and v14\_1 EMP).

Education: respondents that left full-time education aged 23 or over are considered to have higher education (v345 EES). Only MPs with a university degree are considered to have it (v38 EMP).

Party attachment: “Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? (if yes) Do you feel yourself merely a sympathiser to this party, fairly close to this party or to be very close?” (v103 EES).

<sup>7</sup> The question was: “How satisfied are you, on the whole, with the way democracy works in (country)?” (scale: 1 – very satisfied; 4 – not at all satisfied) (v18 EMP, v144 EES). To voters’ party identification: “Which party did you vote for at the last ‘General Election’?” (v91\_bel, v91\_fra, v91\_wge, v91\_ege, v91\_lux – EES).

<sup>8</sup> *Centrism* measures how representatives actually represent the political preferences of their mean or median voters. *Centrism* is measured by the difference between the *proximity* and the variance with regard to the position of the electorate (Achen 1978: 483-488). Thus,

$$\hat{Y}_j^2 = (a_{ij} - \bar{a}_j)^2 / (n_j - 1)$$

measures the variance for the electorate, where  $\bar{a}_j$  is the median position of the voters; and

$$\hat{C}_j = \hat{S}_j - \hat{Y}_j^2$$

is the measure of the *centrism* in party  $j$ . In this, *proximity* relates to the similarity of the party's position to that of its voters. That is:

$$\hat{S}_j = (a_{ij} - r_j)^2 / n_j$$

$a_{ij}$  being the position of voter  $ai$  in party  $j$ ,  $r_j$  the mean position of the elite in that party, and  $n_j$  the size of the sample.

<sup>9</sup> On this subject see e.g. Dalton 1985: 285-294; Wessel 1999; Belchior 2007: Chap.5.

Table 1. Political parties' ideological and electoral characteristics

Political parties	Political family	Left-right position (1)	First participation in national elections	Average % of votes 1974-98 (2)	Average no. of seats 1974-98 (2)	
Belgium	Ecolo – Ecologists (Francophone)	Ecologist	L	1981	3,3	5
	Agalev – Flemish Greens (Flemish)	Ecologist	L	1981	4,0	5
	SP – Socialist Party (Flemish)	Social Democrat	LC	1978	13,1	27
	PS – Socialist Party (Francophone)	Social Democrat	LC	1978	13,4	33
	PRL – Liberal Reformist Party (Francophone)	Liberal	RC	Before 1974	7,9	18
	CVP – Christian Democrats Party (Flemish)	Christian Democrat	C	Before 1974	21,2	46
	PSC – Social Christian Party (Francophone)	Christian Democrat	RC	Before 1974	8,4	20
	FDV – Francophone Democratic Front (Francophone)	Special Interest	LC	Before 1974	2,7	6
	VU – Flemish Block (Flemish)	Special Interest	R	Before 1974	7,9	15
VB – Flemish People's Party (Flemish)	Special Interest	ER	1978	3,4	5	
France	Les Verts - The Greens	Ecologist	L	1986	3,8	4
	GE Génération Écologie - Ecologists	Ecologist	LC	1992	2,7	0
	PCF – French Communist Party	Communist	L	Before 1974	12,8	41
	PS – Socialist Party	Social Democrat	LC	Before 1974	28,4	188
	UDF – Union for French Democracy	Conservative	C	1978	18,2	127
	RPR – Rally for the Republic	Conservative	R	1978	18,6	193
	FN – National Front	Nationalist	ER	Before 1974	11,7	9
Germany	Die Grünen - The Greens (West Germany)	Ecologist	L	1983	6,9	35
	Bündnis 90 - Alliance 90 - The Greens (East Germany)	Ecologist	LC	1994	5,1	35
	PDS – Party of Democratic Socialism	Communist	EL	1990	4,0	28
	SPD – Social Democratic Party	Social Democrat	LC	Before 1974	38,8	229
	CDU/CSU – Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (Bavaria)	Christian Democrat	RC	Before 1974	43,8	263
Luxembourg	GLEI – Green List, Ecological Initiative	Ecologist	L	1989	6,8	4
	GAP – Green Alternative Party	Ecologist	L	1989	4,0	2
	PCL KPL – Communist Party of Luxembourg	Communist	EL	Before 1974	5,6	3
	POSL LSAP – Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party	Social Democrat	L	Before 1974	26,6	17
	PD DP – Democratic Party	Liberal	RC	Before 1974	20,4	13
	PCS CSV – Christian Social Peoples' Party	Christian Democrat	R	Before 1974	33,1	22
ADR – Alternative Democratic Reform Party	Regional and Ethnic	R	1989	8,5	5	

Notes: (1) The classification results of the average positioning of parties in the left-right scale (1974-1998): EL - extreme left; L - left, LC - left centre, C - centre, RC - right centre, R - right, ER - extreme right. Since there is an acknowledged problem of validity in this variable (Budge et al. 2001: 47), other sources were used to confirm/adjust the positions (particularly experts and official party sites).

(2) Only the years in which parties ran in elections were considered in computing the average percentage of votes and number of seats.

Source: Mapping Policy Preferences, 2001.

Table 2. Socio-demographic and political characterization of party MPs – 1996

Countries	Political parties	Post-materialists (%)	Mean left-right self-placement (1-left – 10-right)	Mean age	MPs with high education (%)	N
Belgium	Ecolo	100	2.2	- 44	71.4	7
	Agalev	100	2.4	45-54	100	7
	SP	71.4	2.4	45-54	55.6	18
	PS	64.7	2.5	45-54	61.1	18
	PRL FDF	54.5	5.9	45-54	86.7	15
	PSC	70.0	5.0	45-54	60.0	10
	VU	83.3	4.6	45-54	100	7
	VB	50.0	9.2	45-54	50.0	4
France	Les Verts	-	-	-	-	-
	GE	-	-	-	-	-
	PCF	100	1.3	+ 55	0.0	6
	PS	90.0	3.0	45-54	78.6	14
	UDF	28.9	6.4	+ 55	56.5	46
	RPR	21.8	7.3	+ 55	58.1	74
Germany	Die Grünen	92.3	3.4	- 44	95.8	24
	PDS	50.0	1.5	45-54	76.9	13
	SPD	77.6	3.3	45-54	69.1	139
	CDU-CSU	10.9	6.1	45-54	64.4	104
Luxembourg	GLEI - GAP	50.0	5.5	- 44	0.0	2
	POSL LSAP	100	2.3	45-54	60.0	10
	PD DP	100	4.0	- 44	50.0	2
	PCS CSV	11.1	6.4	45-54	63.6	11
	ADR	0.0	3.7	45-54	33.3	3

Source: European Study of Members of Parliament, 1996.



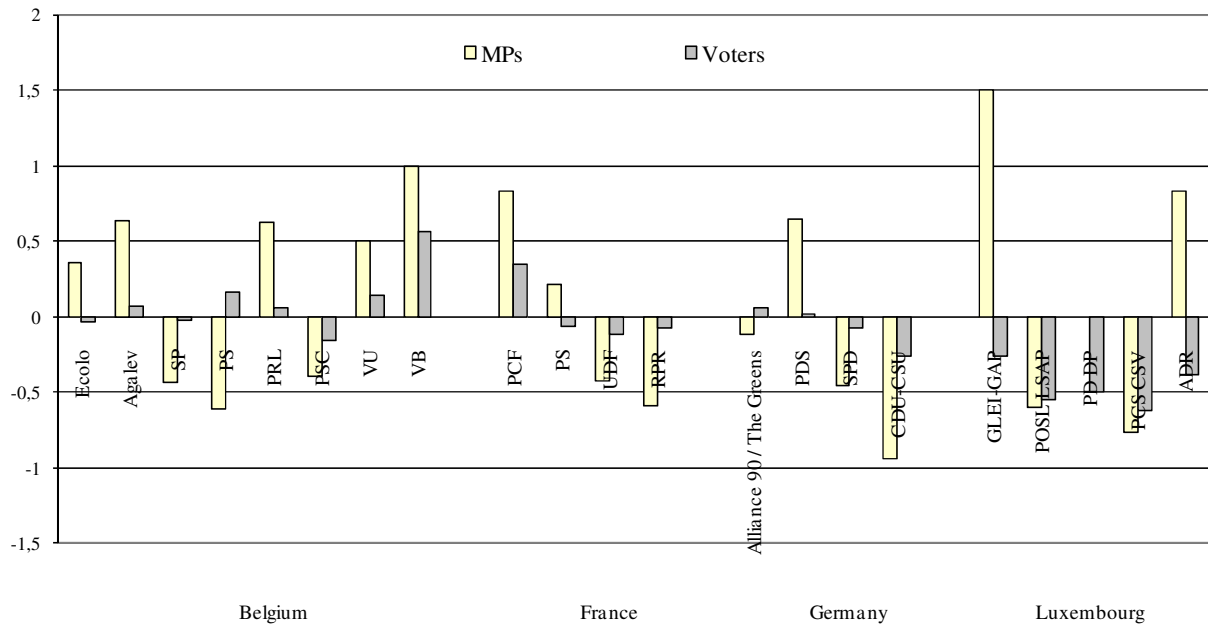
Table 3. Socio-demographic and political characterization of party voters – 1994-2002

Countries	Political parties	Post-materialists (%)	Mean left-right self-placement (1-left – 10-right)	Mean age	Voters with high education (%)	Voters close to no party (%)	N
Belgium	Ecolo	38.0	4.4	35.4	20.0	10.0	30
	Agalev	33.7	4.2	33.0	2.8	2.9	36
	SP	21.2	3.9	42.4	2.3	19.5	43
	PS	24.4	3.4	44.4	9.6	4.8	105
	PRL	-	6.5	41.9	8.2	3.3	60
	PSC	32.4	6.4	43.9	14.6	0.0	41
	VU	31.3	5.5	46.5	0.0	10.0	10
France	VB	2.1	7.1	40.0	11.8	11.8	34
	Les Verts	28.6	3.8	36.7	8.0	15.4	26
	GE	27.6	4.7	26.9	0.0	33.3	11
	PCF	27.9	1.9	42.7	13.0	6.4	46
	PS	19.8	3.2	41.9	14.2	12.0	211
	UDF	13.0	7.0	44.3	11.8	14.9	68
Germany	RPR	10.6	7.5	44.6	9.9	10.0	141
	Alliance 90 / The Greens	34.2	3.4	32.6	11.8	19.2	51
	PDS	22.6	2.7	42.1	17.0	8.8	135
	SPD	20.8	4.2	44.6	13.4	12.3	157
Luxembourg	CDU-CSU	11.8	5.9	45.3	11.6	13.2	189
	GLEI - GAP	33.7	4.1	31.9	11.9	5.0	41
	POSL LSAP	15.5	4.5	42.7	3.7	5.0	81
	PD DP	17.4	5.7	38.3	25.6	15.4	39
	PCS CSV	12.3	6.8	42.1	9.2	5.1	119
	ADR	3.8	5.5	54.9	10.0	10.0	10

Sources: European Election Study, 1994; World Values Survey, 1999-2002.

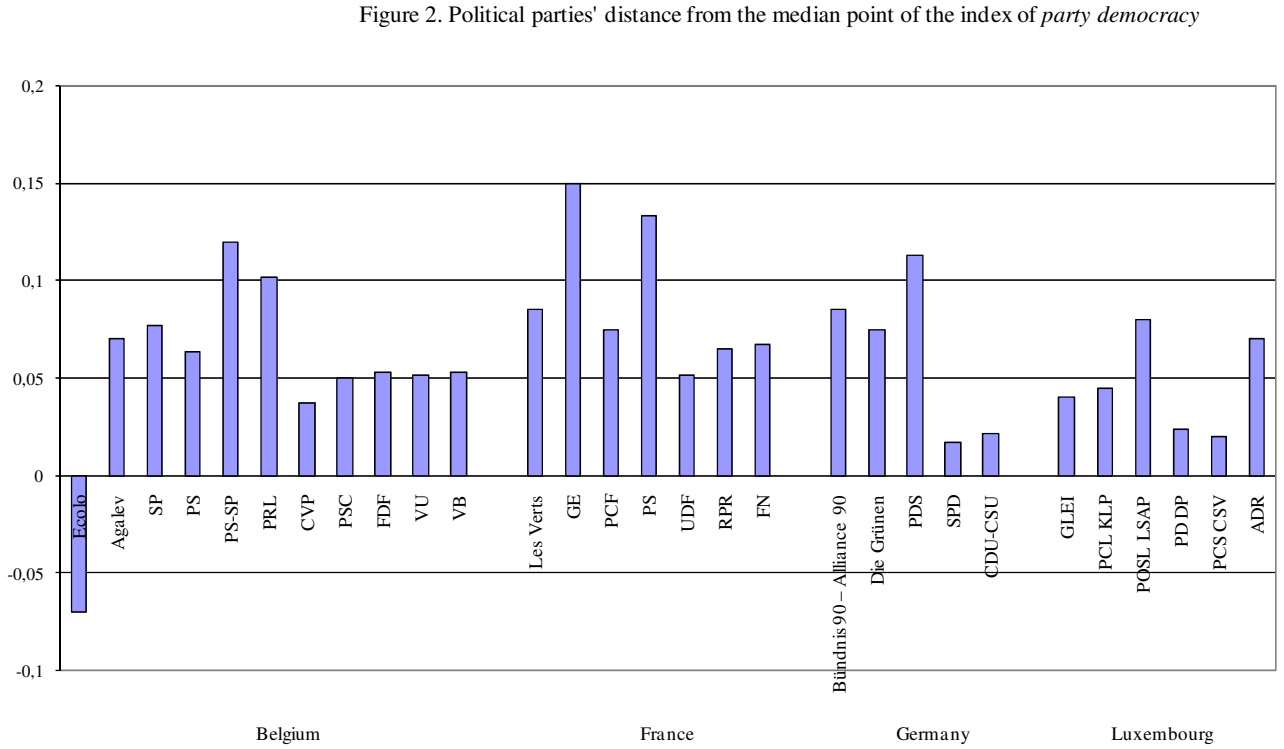
Figure 1. Satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country (MPs' versus voters' mean distance from the median point of the scale)

Figure 1. Satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country (MPs' versus voters' mean distance from the median point of the scale)



Sources: European Study of Members of Parliament, 1996; European Election Study, 1994.

Figure 2. Political parties' distance from the median point of the index of *party democracy*



Source: Based on Mapping Policy Preferences, 2001.

New Only

Table 4. MPs' and voters' mean left-right self-positioning and centrism – 1994 (1)

Countries	Party	MPs (a)	Voters (b)	Difference (a) – (b)	Centrism
Belgium	ECOLO	1.86	4.81	-2.95	8.62
	AGALEV	2.50	4.36	-1.86	3.44
	SP	1.78	4.28	-2.5	6.22
	PS	1.00	3.63	-2.63	6.35
	PRL-FDF	6.10	6.73	-0.63	0.32
	CVP	5.50	5.98	-0.48	0.22
	PSC	4.67	6.21	-1.54	2.31
	VU	4.73	5.69	-0.96	0.77
	VB	9.30	6.93	2.37	4.49
France	Les Verts	2.42	4.19	-1.77	10.74
	GE	4.68	4.68	0	0.79
	UDF-RPR	7.00	6.74	0.26	-0.07
	FN	8.80	7.61	1.19	2.52
Germany	Alliance 90 / The Greens	3.00	3.99	-0.99	0.96
	PDS	1.14	2.93	-1.79	2.21
	SPD	2.82	4.37	-1.55	1.93
	CDU-CSU	6.21	6.52	-0.31	-0.95
Luxembourg	GLEI-GAP	3.38	4.42	-1.04	0.75
	POSL LSAP	1.63	4.58	-2.95	6.19
	PD DP	5.14	5.61	-0.47	-0.17
	PCS CSV	5.25	6.39	-1.14	1.14
	ADR	5.00	5.95	-0.95	0.74

Notes: (1) The variables are those used before.

Sources: European Election Study, 1994 and European Candidates Study, 1994.

Table 5. Correlations between parties' characteristics and ideological congruence in Europe (Pearson's *r*)

Indicator		Centrism
Left-right self-positioning	MPs	-0.44***
	Voters	-0.21
Party family (1)	-	0.24*
Materialism - post-materialism	MPs	0.13
	Voters	0.05

Notes: (1) Party family is measured at a dichotomic level: belonging or not to a left wing party family. The variable is based in the EES typology of party families (v30), and considers Social Democrats, Greens, Left Unity and Rainbow in one indicator; and the remaining families in another. The other variables are those used before.

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .  $N = 69$ .

Sources: European Election Study, 1994; European Candidates Study, 1994; and Mapping Policy Preferences, 2001.

Table 6. Relations between voters' characteristics and ideological congruence (Pearsons'  $r$  and Cramer's  $V$ )

	Belgium	France	Germany	Luxembourg
Left-right self-positioning	-0.11***	0.27***	-0.33***	0.39***
Political party	0.22***	0.34***	0.30***	0.23***
Party family	0.29***	0.39***	0.38***	0.40*
Materialism - post-materialism	0.05*	-0.04	0.05**	-0.07
N	3726	3785	7691	1866

Notes: All the variables are those used before.

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Sources: European Election Study, 1994; European Candidates Study, 1994.