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**To serve and protect:
Parliamentary responsiveness to public preferences in EU fiscal integration**

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Abstract: European citizens consistently indicate a preference for EU integration that is protective, whether from global market forces or transnational security threats. Yet EU policy often reflects other priorities, such as reducing incompatibilities in member states' economic policies. This disjuncture raises questions about the EU's democratic responsiveness, or the extent to which the policies political elites enact reflect the preferences of voters. In this paper we examine responsiveness with reference to national ratification votes on EU treaties establishing the Fiscal Compact and European Stability Mechanism in 2012, which created both constraints on and backstops for member states' fiscal policies. In our initial analysis, we find that members of national parliament were not highly responsive to public attitudes regarding EU fiscal policy priorities—nor did generally strong support across member states for these EU fiscal treaties track other variables typically associated with legislative policy preferences.

Keywords: European Union, democratic responsiveness, fiscal policy

Even as a series of immediate crises buffets the European Union, a longer-term concern festers in the background: the gap between the nature and extent of European integration citizens want and that which is enacted by political elites. European citizens consistently indicate a preference for EU integration that is protective, whether from global market forces or transnational security threats (Eurobarometer surveys; Hooghe 2003). Yet EU leaders and national governments often focus the EU agenda on other priorities, such as promoting market discipline and reducing incompatibilities in member states' economic policies.

Indicative of this elite focus on managing policy externalities was the adoption in 2012 of two treaties, the Fiscal Compact (FC) and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). These treaties were intended to strengthen coordination of member states' fiscal policies and promote short- and long-term solutions to European debt woes emerging in the wake of the 2007-9 global financial crisis. These treaties were ultimately adopted by all relevant member states (except the United Kingdom), though with some variation in the extent of support from members of parliaments (MPs) in national ratification votes. To what extent did national parliaments' support for EU fiscal integration reflect the will of their citizens?

This question taps into a large literature on a possible democratic deficit in the European Union (see among others Moravcsik 2002; Follesdal & Hix 2006; Majone 1998, 2005; Scharpf 1999), focusing in particular on the question of democratic *responsiveness*—the extent to which government policy accurately reflects public preferences within democratic polities (see Dahl 1971). While recent work has examined governments' representation of national public preferences in the European Council (Wratisl 2015), we are interested in the back end of the policy process—national adoption of treaties already agreed at the European level.

Our initial findings suggest limited democratic responsiveness: public opinion on fiscal policies had little discernable effect on the national ratification votes for the Fiscal Compact and ESM. Our analysis considers traditional variables associated with democratic responsiveness—including election proximity, electoral institutions, and ideological congruence—yet none consistently explains cross-national variation in gaps between citizen and policymakers' fiscal priorities. Despite wide cross-national variation in these potential causal variables, elite support for a more coordinated EU fiscal policy was consistently high across all member states. As such, the primary drivers of elite support for more coordinated European fiscal policies remain difficult to account for.

We do not wish to advance the argument, however, that European political elites ignore public preferences or that their support for a coordinated EU fiscal policy is inexplicable. While examining ratification votes on EU treaties has significant advantages in capturing and comparing levels of national elite support for EU integration (see Fogarty & Wallsten 2013), there are limitations to this approach that require caution in interpreting results. Our goal in this paper, then, is simply to describe our approach to the question of democratic responsiveness in the EU, report our initial results, and suggest avenues for future analysis thereof.

Explaining legislative support for EU fiscal treaties

In 2012, most European Union member states signed and ratified the European Stability Mechanism and the Fiscal Compact, two treaties that, together with a set of 2011 reforms,

resurrected a moribund fiscal coordination regime (see Heipertz & Verdun 2009). The ESM, which applies only to countries in the euro area, formalized a standing fund to rescue members facing a payments crisis; such bailouts are conditional on reforms to achieve debt sustainability. The Fiscal Compact imposes disciplines to prevent the need for rescues in the first place, enhancing the prior Stability and Growth Pact by strengthening fiscal surveillance and enforcement for the entire EU membership.¹ Together, these agreements struck a bargain between the financially secure “core” and vulnerable “periphery”: the latter bear the largest costs of austerity, and the former bear the largest costs of rescuing governments facing default. Both imply constraints on public spending for all signatories: the Fiscal Compact limits deficit spending, and ESM replenishments draw from national tax revenues and thus potentially crowd out other public spending.

The negotiation of these treaties was a case of what Crum (2013) referred to as “executive federalism”: a policy model privileging economic integration (i.e., the euro) and national governments’ prerogatives over democratic input. Because these treaties needed to be ratified by national legislatures to be enacted, this ratification vote was the stage of the EU policy process in which democratic influences might have played a larger role. In an ideal-type representative democracy, national MPs would vote largely in line with their voters’ manifest preferences regarding the broad goals of national fiscal policy—e.g., fiscal expansion versus consolidation—and the nature and extent of EU authority thereon, fearing electoral reprisal if they were to stray too far from public preferences.² Across the European Union, variation in national ratification votes should have broadly reflected variation in public preferences across the member states.

Public attitudes toward EU fiscal measures can vary for any number of reasons (see Bechtel et al. 2014; Daniele & Geys 2014; Hobolt & Wratil 2015; Kuhn & Stoeckel 2014; Stoeckel & Kuhn 2015). Yet given the potential limited salience of fiscal policy issues in particular and European Union policymaking more generally, public preferences may be weakly defined—and thus national MPs may be influenced by other factors. These other factors can be grouped in two broad categories: alternative modes of democratic representation and intrinsic policy preferences.

Alternative modes of democratic representation

On low-salience issues, members of parliaments may substitute other public preferences as proxies. On EU-related treaties and legislation, MPs may look instead to more general public attitudes toward the European Union as a guide, supporting such legislation where general support for EU integration is high and rejecting treaties where such support is low. Given that fiscal policy—involving the power to tax and to redistribute resources—is so closely associated with core national sovereignty, MPs may be particularly sensitive to levels of Euroskepticism (a lack of diffuse support for EU integration) in their national electorates and vote accordingly.

Members of parliament may also use levels of citizen identification with the EU as a proxy for levels of public support for fiscal integration. Citizens indicating some sense of European identity are more likely to support EU integration generally (Risse 2014, 2003; Mayer & Palmowski 2014; Stoeckel 2012), and thus might be sanguine about the delegation of fiscal

¹ Only the United Kingdom did not sign and ratify the Fiscal Compact.

² For variations on this democratic responsiveness hypothesis, see among others Lax & Phillips 2009, 2012; Stimson et al. 1995; Ferejohn 1986; Barro 1973.

authority to the EU. Alternatively, citizens with an exclusive, national-only identity are less likely to support European integration (Hooghe & Marks 2004, 2009; Grande & Kriesi 2014; Checkel 2014; Ecker-Ehrhardt 2014), and thus might reject delegation of this area of core national sovereignty to Brussels. Indeed, Bechtel et al. (2014) found that the debate in Germany over EU bailouts turned largely on cosmopolitan versus nationalist sentiments among the public. Overall, then, we should expect MPs to be sensitive their voters' level of identification with the European Union, and perhaps especially to levels of exclusive national identity.

Because electoral accountability is the primary mechanism for ensuring policymakers' responsiveness to voters' preferences, we also need to consider how they respond to incentives within their national electoral institutions—and how these incentives potentially enhance MPs' sensitivity to the abovementioned public attitudes. Timing within the electoral cycle might be one source of relevant incentives. Studies in both the American and European politics literatures have demonstrated that elected officials are more sensitive to policy cues from the public as elections near, when the public may be more attentive and evaluative of these officials' performance (Steenbergen et al. 2007; Wrátil 2015; Huber & Gordon 2004; Lindstädt & Vander Wielen 2011). If voters indicate a preference for medium- to long-term fiscal responsibility, then MPs facing upcoming elections should be sensitive to these goals.

Another institutional factor shaping legislators' votes may be the nature of the electoral system. As several studies have shown (see among others Wrátil 2015; Chang, Kayser, & Rogowski 2008), majoritarian and proportional representation systems tend to produce different incentives for governments and legislators more generally. All else equal, small shifts in parties' vote shares in elections have a greater capacity to produce large shifts in seat allocation in majoritarian, single-member-district systems than in PR systems. As such, legislators in majoritarian, SMD systems may be particularly sensitive to voter preferences regarding fiscal policy.

Intrinsic policy preferences

The primary expectation of the above approaches (as well as an ideal-type democratic representation model) is that electoral incentives drive legislators policy choices. Yet MPs may have more intrinsic sources of policy preferences that are at most indirectly related to voter attitudes and re-election. Two such intrinsic sources of policy preferences are sociotropic benefit and party ideology.

Policymakers may have a utilitarian or sociotropic benefit approach to legislation, and thus evaluate policy options primarily through the lens of their expected effect on the country's economic interests. Two longstanding theories of European integration, neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism, expect political elites—aided by a “passive consensus” among the public—to focus on the expected economic benefits of integration (Stone Sweet & Sandholtz 1997; Moravcsik 1998; Eichenberg & Dalton 1993). While they may choose market-opening policies based on expected mutual gains, they may also choose other forms of economic coordination—such as in fiscal policy—to manage the policy externalities emerging in a single market and a single currency zone. Indeed, according to Hooghe (2003), managing such policy externalities is the primary motivation for political elites' support for European integration. Thus MPs should support treaties such as the Fiscal Compact and ESM to the extent that they believe

European fiscal policy coordination is necessary to ensure the long-term viability of the single market and/or single currency and their country's economic interests therein.

Deriving more specific expectations from this sociotropic benefit approach requires consideration of how each treaty might have been expected to affect the economic interests of EU member states in different ways. Starting from the broad distinction of “core” and “periphery” within the European (and Eurozone) economy, we might expect MPs from the stronger core states (e.g., Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands) to offer greater support to the Fiscal Compact than to the ESM, reflecting their relatively strong fiscal positions and their lesser reliance on—and perhaps only grudging support for—EU transfers to weaker EU and Eurozone states. MPs from these weaker, periphery states (e.g., Greece, Portugal, Ireland) might be expected to offer greater support to the ESM than to the Fiscal Compact, reflecting their country's greater reliance on EU transfers and need for the sort of fiscal flexibility that the Fiscal Compact would limit.

Political ideology may also be a driving force of legislators' policy choices regarding fiscal policy. Focusing on the economic dimension of a left/right political continuum, Hibbs (1977) demonstrated that members of political parties on the left tended to support more expansive fiscal policy to benefit lower-income groups and/or labor, while members of political parties on the right tended to support more orthodox fiscal policy to reflect the interests of business. To develop expectations regarding MPs' voting tendencies regarding EU fiscal coordination, we need to identify the likely fiscal implications of the two treaties under consideration. The ESM is a rescue mechanism, intended as much to forestall rising borrowing rates for governments deemed high-risk (notably in southern Europe) as it is to serve as a lender of last resort to Eurozone members facing default. Thus to the extent that the presence of the ESM reduces market constraints on government borrowing, we should expect it to find higher favor among MPs on the ideological left. Alternatively, the Fiscal Compact institutionalizes greater budgetary discipline, requiring member states to write a “debt brake” into their constitutions and enhancing budgetary surveillance by the European Commission. Because it pushes national governments toward budgetary consolidation and restraint, we should expect the Fiscal Compact to find greater support among MPs on the ideological right.

Summary of hypotheses

Based on the above discussion, we can derive the following hypotheses to explain cross-national variation in legislative votes on the Fiscal Compact and the European Stability Mechanism

Null hypothesis

H₀: MP support for the two EU fiscal treaties closely reflects public preferences regarding appropriate fiscal policies.

Alternative modes of representation hypotheses

H₁: MP support for the two EU fiscal treaties closely reflects general public attitudes toward European integration.

H₂: MP support for the two EU fiscal treaties closely reflects citizens' level of identification with the European Union.

H₃: MP sensitivity to public attitudes—regarding fiscal policy, EU integration, or EU identification—is greater in countries with approaching national elections.

H₄: MP sensitivity to public attitudes—regarding fiscal policy, EU integration, or EU identification—is greater in majoritarian electoral systems than in proportional representation systems.

Sociotropic benefit hypotheses

H₅: MP support for the Fiscal Compact will be higher in core countries—those with relatively low public debt and reliance on EU fiscal transfers—than in periphery countries.

H₆: MP support for the European Stability Mechanism will be higher in periphery countries—those with relatively high public debt and reliance on EU fiscal transfers—than in core countries.

Party ideology hypotheses

H₇: MP support for the Fiscal Compact will be higher in national parliaments whose political center of gravity is on the right.

H₈: MP support for the European Stability Mechanism will be higher in national parliaments whose political center of gravity is on the left.

Descriptive statistics

As an initial step toward evaluating these hypotheses, it is useful to describe variation in national legislators' support for the ESM and Fiscal Compact—and, given our focus on democratic responsiveness, to compare these levels to relevant levels of public support for analogous fiscal policies.

Table 1 – Legislative Votes on FC and ESM by Country

	Fiscal Compact	European Stability Mechanism	Average Elite Support
Austria	76.4%	81.8%	79.1%
Belgium	81.7%	71.9%	76.8%
Bulgaria	72.5%	-	72.5%
Cyprus	-	100.0%	100.0%
Czech Republic	79.5%	-	79.5%
Denmark	74.8%	-	74.8%
Estonia	100.0%	59.6%	79.8%
Finland	78.1%	52.3%	65.2%
France	88.5%	48.2%	68.3%
Germany	94.2%	94.2%	94.2%
Greece	76.7%	76.7%	76.7%
Hungary	87.2%	-	87.2%
Ireland	81.6%	92.5%	87.1%
Italy	82.8%	80.0%	81.4%
Latvia	69.1%	69.1%	69.1%
Lithuania	71.4%	97.6%	84.5%
Luxembourg	82.1%	90.6%	86.4%
Malta	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Netherlands	77.2%	68.5%	72.8%
Poland	68.7%	-	68.7%
Portugal	88.7%	88.7%	88.7%
Romania	98.9%	-	98.9%
Slovakia	98.6%	82.5%	90.6%
Slovenia	97.4%	98.7%	98.1%
Spain	98.0%	99.6%	98.8%
Sweden	80.7%	-	80.7%
Average	84.2%	81.7%	83.1%

Ratification votes on the Fiscal Compact and ESM reveal high levels of MP support across Europe. An average of 84% of legislators voted to ratify the Fiscal Compact and 81% to ratify the ESM. As Table 1 shows, the Fiscal Compact received over 60% support in every legislature that voted on it and the ESM was supported by more than 60% of legislators in every country except Estonia, Finland and France.³ Although most legislatures voted for the Fiscal Compact and ESM at similar rates,⁴ there were a handful of countries where the Fiscal Compact passed more easily than the ESM, and one country, Lithuania, where the ESM received significantly more support than the Fiscal Compact. While these differences serve as a useful reminder that the Fiscal Compact and ESM are distinct instruments with varying levels of support across

³ These figures treat abstentions as indicating a lack of support, and thus equivalent to a ‘no’ vote.

⁴ Legislative votes for the Fiscal Compact and ESM were within ten percentage points of each other in 12 of the 19 countries that voted on both measures.

countries, they should not obscure the fact that there is a high degree of consensus across member states' legislatures on the necessity for fiscal integration.⁵

Our measures of public opinion draw on the 2012 Eurobarometer (EB) surveys. We chose the Eurobarometer because it is the only survey that attempts to track attitudes relevant to fiscal integration across every country in the EU. We chose four survey questions, listed below, to capture both a balance between politics and policy considerations and the essential goals of the ESM and Fiscal Compact.⁶

- In your opinion, which of the following is best able to take effective actions against the effects of the financial and economic crisis (% answering, 'European Union' instead of national government)
- In favor or opposed to measures to be taken by the EU: the introduction of Eurobonds (% answering, 'favor')
- Regarding the EU, please tell me what you expect from it? (% answering, 'deficit/debt: cut states' expenses/stop funding EU countries in crisis/budget-fiscal convergence')
- Regarding the EU, please tell me what you expect from it? (% answering, 'stability: financial security/help in recession/budgetary support/bank support')

Each of the survey items was selected to tap a slightly different dimension of public attitudes on EU fiscal authority. The first question implies a political valuation of the distribution of authority between the EU and national governments, while the Eurobonds question relates to a specific policy instrument of fiscal integration. The latter two questions address the particular policy goals of the Fiscal Compact and ESM respectively, without actually mentioning the treaties. Collectively, they constitute the best available gauge of public attitudes on the specific dimensions of fiscal policy addressed in the Fiscal Compact and European Stability Mechanism.

⁵ These findings are similar to those of Real-Dato et al. (2012), whose cross-national elite survey identified 58.7% of elites as either somewhat or strongly supportive of 'a unified tax system for Europe' in the coming decade.

⁶ To obtain a more reliable estimate of public attitudes, we averaged the results of these questions in EB 77 and EB 78. The differences between national responses in the two surveys were small in every case and the substantive results presented below are not changed by using EB 77 alone or EB 78 alone.

Table 2 – Public Opinion on EU Integration Issues by Country

	Expecting EU imposition of fiscal discipline and convergence (QD.1.1)	Expecting EU help in budgets and recessions (QD.1.1)	Support for "the introduction of Eurobonds" (QC7.4)	EU is "best able to take actions against effects of the financial and economic crisis" (QC3.A)
Austria	29	8	48	20
Belgium	2	12	64	29
Bulgaria	3	21	47	26
Cyprus	8	35	36	20
Czech Republic	2	16	50	10
Denmark	4	7	46	16
Estonia	2	4	31	23
Finland	6	19	37	21
France	8	3	44	21
Germany	14	7	26	23
Greece	3	7	56	28
Hungary	1	12	44	20
Ireland	3	24	53	26
Italy	8	15	52	23
Latvia	2	11	28	20
Lithuania	0	14	33	25
Luxembourg	1	5	47	34
Malta	2	28	38	28
Netherlands	5	14	38	20
Poland	1	2	48	30
Portugal	0	21	50	24
Romania	6	0	49	21
Slovakia	6	8	55	29
Slovenia	1	18	45	24
Spain	2	11	38	23
Sweden	2	18	38	18
Average	5	13	44	23

As Table 2 shows, public opinion on EU integration in 2012 was considerably more divided. The introduction of Eurobonds, confidence in the EU's ability to take effective actions against financial crises and the idea that the EU should impose fiscal discipline and help countries with budgetary problems were unpopular with most Europeans. There was also considerable cross-national variation in responses to these questions. While large numbers of Portuguese respondents, for example, expressed support for Eurobonds and for EU assistance during national budgetary crises, relatively few Germans endorsed these positions.

These data permit a couple of initial observations. First, big majorities of MPs supported both the Fiscal Compact and the ESM in nearly all member states' ratification votes, indicating a consensus among political elites supporting these treaties. Yet there is some variation across the two treaties: in four countries the Fiscal Compact received notably greater support (at least 10 percentage points) than the ESM, and in two countries the ESM received notably greater support (at least 10 percentage points) than the Fiscal Compact. Second, because levels of public support were generally lower than levels of legislator support, the null hypothesis regarding democratic responsiveness may not pass the “sniff test”—i.e., it appears that other factors may be more powerful determinants of legislative votes than public preferences.

Regression results

To account for national variation in legislative votes, we fit four different OLS regression models, one for the lower and upper chamber's votes within each country on the Fiscal Compact and the European Stability Mechanism.⁷ Each regression model included national-level measures corresponding to the hypotheses above: government debt as a percentage of GDP,⁸ a country's net contributions to the EU budget,⁹ whether a country was a recipient of an EU bailout between beginning of global financial crisis in 2008 and 2012, and public attitudes towards EU integration¹⁰ and EU citizenship.¹¹ In order to assess the possibility that legislatures are more responsive to their constituents when an election is on the horizon, we also included two terms that interact our measure of public attitudes (towards EU integration and towards EU citizenship) with a measure of whether an election was taking place within one year of the votes on the Fiscal Compact and the European Stability Mechanism.

The models also included the rate of inflation in 2012,¹² dummy variables measuring the type of national electoral system (majoritarian, proportional representation or mixed), each government's social benefits payments as percentage of GDP and the left-right orientation of each parliament at the time of the legislative vote.¹³ The regression results are depicted in Tables 3 and 4 and Figures 1 and 2, all of which can be found at the end of the paper.

Government debt did not exert an influence on legislative votes for EU economic governance. There was no significant bivariate correlation between government debt as a percentage of GDP and the upper and lower house votes on either the Fiscal Compact or European Stability Mechanism. Additionally, as Tables 3 and 4 show, government debt had no statistically

⁷ In cases where only one chamber voted on the issue, it was included in both our analyses of lower and upper house votes.

⁸ Source: World Bank

⁹ Source: Danish parliament, accessible at English.edu.dk/faq/faq/net_contribution

¹⁰ Source: Eurobarometer. The public's attitudes towards integration were measured with average national responses to the question: “Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it has already gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means unification has already gone too far and 10 means unification should be pushed further.”

¹¹ Source: Eurobarometer. Feelings towards EU citizenship were measured by the percentage of respondents in each country who answered “definitely” or “to some extent” to the question “Do you feel you are a citizen of the EU?”

¹² Source: IMF

¹³ Source: ParlGov. Specifically, we used ParlGov's general left-right measure of the composition of national parliaments, which ranges from 1 (far left) to 10 (far right).

significant relationship with legislative votes even after controlling for all other possible influences.

Net contributions to the EU's budget were similarly inconsequential. In both our bivariate and multivariate statistical analyses, there was no evidence that higher contributions to the EU's budgets were related to more supportive votes towards European Union fiscal integration.

Receiving a bailout from the EU in the years preceding the Fiscal Compact and European Stability Mechanism votes had no effect on legislative votes. A series of t-tests found no meaningful differences in the legislative support in bailout countries compared to non-bailout countries.¹⁴ What's more, our OLS regression analysis found no statistically significant relationship between receiving a bailout and voting in favor of EU economic governance.

Feelings about EU citizenship were not a significant predictor of legislative votes on EU economic governance issues by themselves. Indeed, feelings towards EU citizenship were not significantly correlated with upper ($r=.38$, $p=.07$) or lower house votes ($r=.28$, $p=.19$) on the Fiscal Compact or with upper ($r=.08$, $p=.73$) or lower house votes ($r=.00$, $p=.97$) on the European Stability Mechanism. As Tables 3 and 4 show, the coefficients for EU identification failed to reach statistical significance in all four of our regression models.

Feelings about EU integration had no significant influence votes on the Fiscal Compact. The national average score on our scale of unification attitudes was uncorrelated with lower ($r=.24$, $p=.26$) and upper house Fiscal Compact votes ($r=.09$, $p=.67$) and there was no significant relationship in our multivariate regressions. Interestingly, feelings about EU integration were significantly and positively correlated with votes on the European Stability Mechanism in both the lower ($r=.49$, $p=.03$) and upper houses ($r=.50$, $p=.03$). This relationship did not hold up, however, after statistical controls were added in the multivariate analysis.

Tables 3 and 4 also show how the effects of public attitudes are conditioned by the timing of elections. Because the coefficients for the interaction terms shown in Tables 3 and 4 cannot be easily interpreted, we present these findings by calculating conditional marginal effects. According to Braumoeller (2004), Brambor et al. (2006) and Kam and Franzese (2007), the significance of the marginal effects is far more important and revealing than the significance of the interaction terms presented in Tables 3 and 4. As Gidengil, Giles and Thomas (2008) write, "it is quite possible for the interaction term to be significant in the absence of a significant marginal effect and vice versa. Accordingly, a proper assessment requires that we calculate the marginal effects along with the corresponding standard errors." Following this advice, we focus our attention in the discussion that follows on the substantively relevant marginal effects displayed in Figures 1 and 2.¹⁵

¹⁴ The difference between Fiscal Compact votes in the upper house for bailout and non-bailout countries was small (84.4 to 82.3) and not statistically significant ($p=.74$). The same result held for Fiscal Compact votes in the lower house (82.9 to 82.3, $p=.93$). The difference between European Stability Mechanism votes in the upper house for bailout and non-bailout countries was small (80.9 to 85.9) and not statistically significant ($p=.64$). In the lower house, the differences were also insignificant (79.8 to 83.1, $p=.74$).

¹⁵ When using predicted values in a graph in order to determine statistically significant marginal effects, it is far too conservative to use two separate 95% confidence intervals (Knezevic, 2008). When the standard errors are roughly equivalent, a single 95% test translates into using two sets of 84% confidence intervals (Payton et al., 2003). When

As Figure 1 shows, there were no meaningful differences in the effect of EU integration attitudes on Fiscal Compact votes in countries with or without an election on the horizon. There were, however, important differences between countries that were holding elections within a year and those that were not on European Stability Mechanism votes. As left hand panels of Figure 1 shows, EU integration attitudes had no effect on legislative votes in countries with elections scheduled for more than a year after the ESM vote. In countries with elections scheduled within a year, more supportive attitudes to EU integration produced more legislative votes in favor of the ESM.

As Figure 2 shows, there were also no meaningful differences in the effect of EU citizenship attitudes on Fiscal Compact votes in countries with or without elections in the next year. Once again, there were important differences between countries that were holding elections within a year and those that were not on ESM votes. As Figure 2 shows, in countries with elections scheduled within a year, a larger percentage of people identifying as an EU citizen produced lower levels of legislative support for the ESM (which was not true of countries with elections not scheduled within a year).

Initial conclusions

The absence of robust predictors of legislative votes on EU fiscal measures comes as something of a surprise from a substantive perspective, but perhaps less so from a statistical perspective. MPs' level support for the ESM and Fiscal Compact simply did not differ much from country to country, and thus there is limited variation for causal variables to explain. Moreover, given the small number of cases for the ESM (n=19) and Fiscal Compact (n=25), and the relatively large number of independent variables to be tested, statistical power is highly constrained.¹⁶ Many analytical approaches have been pursued, and as yet consistent results remain elusive. As such, while our analysis does tend to reinforce the claim that EU integration is an "elite project" in which responsiveness to public attitudes is limited, at this point we cannot make this claim or any other regarding the sources of MP voting preferences with confidence.

While it may be possible to pursue alternative statistical approaches, new theoretical approaches may also bear fruit. While the existing hypotheses cover most of the prevailing explanations relevant to democratic responsiveness in general, these hypotheses may not capture a particular substantive feature of our focus on the Fiscal Compact and ESM: as ratification votes, they involve agreements handed *down* from the European Union. In other words, the legislative votes do not establish national ideal points for fiscal policy, but rather are reactions to fiscal Europeanization. Thus we will likely explore explanations associated with the Europeanization literature (e.g., Börzel 2002), especially the extent to which these fiscal treaties involve large or small costs of adjustment not only to existing fiscal practices but also to domestic institutional relations and/or incumbent interest groups.

there is no overlap between these two separate confidence intervals, a significant effect is indicated. Figures 1, 2 and 3 display two separate 84% confidence intervals.

¹⁶ Pooling the data for the two treaties did not produce meaningfully different results. We rejected the n-boosting strategy of adding ratification votes on the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, because doing so would jettison the advantages of focusing on treaties addressing a single, coherent issue (fiscal policy) that could be mirrored in similarly focused survey questions capturing public opinion on this issue.

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Table 3 – Votes on Fiscal Compact

	Fiscal Compact Vote – Lower House	Fiscal Compact Vote – Upper House
Government Debt	-0.178 (0.189)	-0.00281 (0.102)
Inflation	6.950 ⁺ (3.488)	7.208* (2.827)
EU Bailout Recipient	21.09 (13.50)	18.46 (10.67)
Net Contribution to EU Budget	0.512 (3.062)	-2.593 (2.428)
Election in Next Year	96.03 (83.70)	73.92 (49.95)
PR Electoral System	-11.44 (13.73)	-16.51 (11.18)
Mixed Electoral System	-14.23 (13.78)	-13.39 (11.21)
European Unification	8.963 (5.838)	7.027 (4.384)
Election in Next Year*European Unification	-8.888 (9.506)	-5.992 (5.904)
Feelings about EU Citizenship	0.436 (0.540)	0.717 (0.414)
Election in Next Year*Feelings of EU Citizenship	-0.700 (0.651)	-0.647 (0.455)
Left-Right Government Score	-14.78* (6.298)	-10.36* (4.509)
Government Social Benefits Payments	0.129 (1.083)	-0.831 (0.799)
Constant	81.85 (61.11)	68.97 (47.96)
<i>N</i>	23	25
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.145	0.322

Standard errors in parentheses

⁺ *p* < 0.10, * *p* < 0.05

Table 4 – Votes on European Stability Mechanism

	European Stability Mechanism Vote – Lower House	European Stability Mechanism Vote – Upper House
Government Debt	0.0368 (0.295)	0.0731 (0.344)
Inflation	-25.99 ⁺ (10.43)	-28.71 ⁺ (12.15)
EU Bailout Recipient	6.315 (17.93)	9.305 (20.88)
Net Contribution to EU Budget	2.592 (5.003)	0.221 (5.827)
Election in Next Year	-328.9 (172.4)	-301.5 (200.8)
PR Electoral System	-4.412 (18.28)	10.67 (21.29)
Mixed Electoral System	-29.64 (20.91)	-10.98 (24.35)
European Unification	12.45 (8.949)	13.10 (10.42)
Election in Next Year*European Unification	114.0 ⁺ (48.05)	105.7 (55.96)
Feelings about EU Citizenship	0.375 (0.592)	0.560 (0.690)
Election in Next Year*Feelings of EU Citizenship	-5.106 [*] (1.899)	-4.843 ⁺ (2.211)
Left-Right Government Score	-12.55 (7.782)	-10.69 (9.063)
Government Social Benefits Payments	-3.095 (1.736)	-3.550 (2.022)
Constant	199.8 [*] (69.01)	177.7 ⁺ (80.36)
<i>N</i>	19	19
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.426	0.374

Figure 1 – EU Integration Attitudes and Legislative Votes

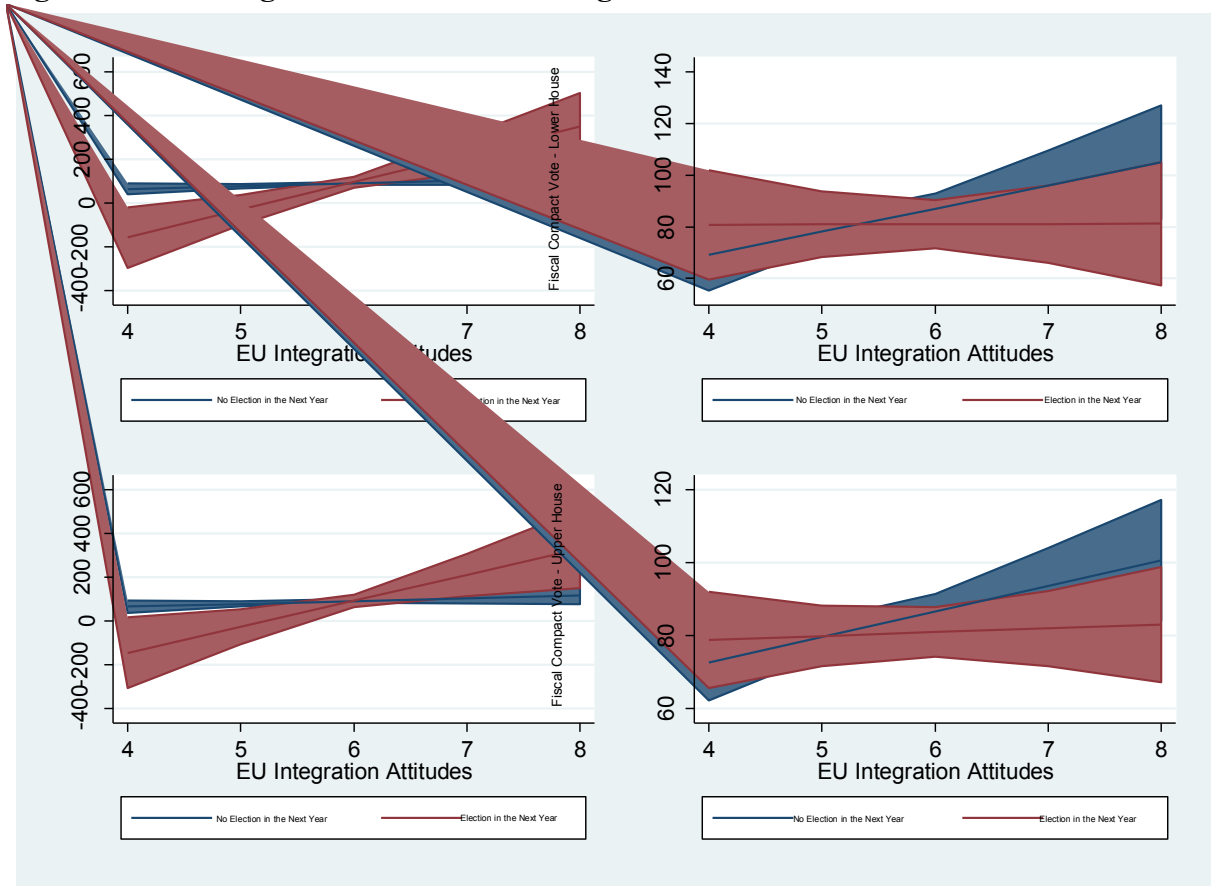


Figure 2 – EU Citizenship Attitudes and Legislative Votes

