## THE EFFECT OF DEMOCRATIC MATURITY ON IDEOLOGICAL CONGRUENCE: THE STUDY OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACIES

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## Abstract

The following research studies one of the most debated topics in political science – political representation in democracies. Particularly one type of political representation – ideological congruence between voters and their representatives which plays a decisive role in many fields of politics. Scholars interested in congruence, have been actively presenting novel measurements of it, analyzing factors influencing it and being influenced by it. Therefore, research on ideological congruence is voluminous and contrasting, including individual level, party level and system level characteristics. However, with this research paper I try to demonstrate that system level variables deserve more attention from scholars, especially the characteristics of the regime. Since experience of democratic governance is often named as one of the main elements affecting different parts of representation, I propose that democratic maturity might affect ideological congruence.

After utilizing CSES Integrated Module dataset (IMD) I analyze 34 European parliamentary democracies from 1996 to 2016, to measure the ideological congruence in the region between the voters and representatives by placement of voters and parties on the left-right scale. Multiple linear regression model used in the paper finds statistical significance for the democratic maturity however other factors like electoral systems and degree of disproportionality together with individual level factors- Human Development Index do no show significance. Therefore, this paper proposes that research on ideological congruence and expand the research including other system level factors that might have a role on political representation of citizens preferences on government level.

*Keywords*: Ideological congruence, left-right scale, democratic maturity, European Democracies, CSES data.

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## Introduction

Good quality political representation is one of the important prerequisites for democratic government to obtain legitimacy from the people. If government is not close to and well-representative of the ideologies of its voters, it will result in less support for the incumbent and dissatisfaction from the voters (Bowler & Donovan, 2012). Therefore, it is in the interests of the government to be representative of its citizens (Powell, 2000). This paper examines substantive representation which focuses on the ideological congruence between the voter and their representatives. One of the main factors affecting ideological congruence is the electoral system, with PR systems being named as forerunners in approximating ideologies of the representatives to that of the people (Powell, 2004). However, this theory has some opponents claiming that the type of electoral systems does not matter for ideological congruence and both majoritarian and PR systems have tools for achieving sufficient degrees of congruence (Ferland, 2020; Golder & Stramski, 2010; Golder & Lloyd, 2014) and other factors, such as the political knowledge of the citizens and party age are more decisive for substantive representation (Dahlberg, 2013).

System level factors that are most frequently discussed in the papers dedicated to congruence are concentrated on the relationship between electoral systems, particularly that of PR systems and ideological congruence since it is believed that PR systems are the most successful in translating votes into seats (Powell, 2006). Therefore, proponents of this line of research emphasize that governments in PR systems will be more representative of their citizens preferences simply because the multiparty system characterizing these regimes offers more choice to voters (Huber & Powell, 1994). However, it is also claimed that majoritarian governments might cause the distortion in translating votes into seats because of the limited amount of parties that can receive seats in parliament in these systems. But they are believed to be better at translating median legislator position to the government level (McDonald & Budge, 2005) On the other hand, post-election bargaining is common in PR systems, resulting in coalition government and changing ideological composition of the parties' in government. Hence, PR systems tend to distort the ideological preference of their voters on the government level due to the bargaining. Such post-election bargaining rarely take place in majoritarian systems hence, distortions does not happen there at the governmental level (Karp & Banducci, 2008).

In addition, party level characteristics such as issue compactness (Alvarez & Nagler, 2004; Giger & Lefkofridi, 2014) and age of the party (Dahlberg, 2013) are also among the often discussed topics influencing ideological congruence. This line of research asserts that the more distributed parties are on ideological scale the easier it is for the voter to identify the party closer to him/herself (Alvarez & Nagler, 2004), while age of the party seems to influence the attachment or the identification of the voter with the party (Dahlberg, 2013). Individual level factors include the education, age, gender and financial status of the voter (Kim, 2013) together with their pollitical knowledge (Busch, 2016; Curini, Jou, & Memoli, 2016; Lupia, 1994). These individual level factors can affect the vote choice and voting behavior of the citizen, hence influencing their political representation.

Overall there are multilevel and multidimension of factors that are considered to influence the ideological congruence. Almost all of these propositions have supporters and opponents hence it is very difficult to discuss with any certainty about one or the other. However, since the experience in democratic governence is considered to have a positive impact on some elements of political representation, such as competitive elections, voter participation (Nový & Katrňák, 2015), trust in political institutions, effectiveness of the government (Karp & Banducci, 2008)

I decided to introduce a new system level variable that might affect the ideological congruence. Hence, I analyze the role of the age of the current regime -which is measured as the numebr of years that have passed after democratic regime came in power - on ideological congruence. I propose that if parties and voters in young democracies are less predictable and more volatile (Bértoa, 2013) and there are significant institutional differences between the old and established democracies one of the factors influencing political representation might be the age of the current regime.

I use CSES Integrated Module Dataset (IMD) which contains voter and expert surveys about the left-right ideological position of the parties and the voter's self-placement. My study focuses on the European region and examines 34 European parliamentary democracies in 93 election years from 1996 to 2016. Since data is longitudinal it can be used for cross-country comparison throughout 20 years period. To measure the age of the current regimes Policy IV score was used, which is integrated in CSES data. The statistical model used in this paper finds statistical significance between the independent and dependent variables, demonstrating that age of democracy might affect ideological congruence. However, it did not find significance for electoral systems and the degree of disproportionality. Hence, this paper proposes that the research on political representation should introduce new approaches to examine factors affecting ideological congruence and start to pay more attention to other system level factors than electoral systems that can distort representation.

#### Roadmap

In the first section of the paper I offer the conceptual definition of ideological congruence and propose the operationalization of the variable combining three levels of the measurement, party level, median legislative level and government level. In the following section I introduce the age of democratic maturity which is interchangeably referred in the paper as the age of the current regime and offer the arguments supporting the importance of examining its role on congruence. In chapter 3 I discus the assumptions of critics of ideological congruence and further analyze the significance of democratic maturity. In chapter 4 I introduction the data and methodology and the analysis part. Analysis section is followed by the discussion of existing trends and weaknesses of ideological congruence and the paper is finished with concluding remarks and expressing ideas and suggestions for future research.

## **1** Concept Definition and Measurement

#### 1.1 Concept of Ideological Congruence

Political Representation is the topic which for a long time has been attracting attention from scholars interested in electoral systems, political parties, voting behavior or democratic governance. Since the topic is probably as old as the discipline of political science itself, it has been examined in numerous dimensions and analyzed on multiple levels. The main distinction found in scholarly literature differentiates between descriptive (Golder & Stramski, 2010) or procedural representation and substantive representation (Powell, 2004). Those interested in the former mostly focus on the vote-seat distribution and institutional arrangements that are responsible for fairly translating votes into seats. While the later focuses on citizens preferences and the degree of congruence between the governments and citizens.

As one of the important determinants of the quality of political representation – ideological congruence provides twofold contribution towards analyzing political consequences and electoral outcomes of the country since it looks at both agent and the principal. So, it can be considered as more in-depth measurement of representation than any other conventional mean. Exploring formal rules and methods of conducting elections and analyzing the outcomes of it is an essential part of studying political representation, however if parties participating in the elections are not well-representative of citizen preferences, no degree of electoral proportionality can guarantee effectiveness of newly formed government. Hence, both forms of representation are important for better understanding the relationship between the agent and the principle, however substantive representation is the topic of our interest because of the

novel developments in conceptualization and measurement of the term offered by Golder & Stramski (2010), which has opened up new opportunities for scholars interested in this topic.

One of the first studies conducted on the substantive political representation was by Miller & Stokes (1963) which examined citizens preferences on different issues as represented by the government and the degree of proximity between the two. However, the correlation measurement used by the authors was criticized by Achen (1977) due to less accuracy in measuring representation and difficulty to use it for across country comparisons. With the idea in mind to improve the measurements of representation available that time he suggested more sophisticated way of measuring representation with statistical regression (1978). Hence, the study of political representation has been significantly impacted by Achen's work and many current scholars (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; McDonald & Budge, 2005; Powell, 2000a; ) still refer back to his contribution since the concepts initiated by him- somewhat modified are still used today. One of the widely used concepts, measured by Achen (1978) is the concept of the median voter. It represents "the mean opinion of a constituency" (P:490), or "the position...that is preferred to all others by a majority of voters" (Huber & Powell, 1994, P:293). Median voter theory corresponds to the liberal democratic theory, where the preferences and interests of the majority are the center of the study (Dahl & Lindblom, 1953). However, when talking about the representativeness of the regime it is important to take into account the preferences of all the citizens and measure how well they are represented at different levels, otherwise it would be difficult to make broad claims about the outcomes of the elections and the effectiveness of the regime.

Substantive political representation defined as an ideological congruence between citizens and their representatives serves the role of not just an important element of democracy but also of

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"the primary touchstone for good representation" (Curini, Jou, & Memoli, 2016; P:105). The legitimacy of the regime is derived from the sense of satisfaction experienced by the citizens with the effectiveness and responsiveness of the government (Donovan & Karp, 2017; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017). And in democracy no government can rule without legitimacy handed over to them by the people, hence it is a necessary condition for the democratic government to be representative of their citizens preferences. However, being able to represent the interests of heterogenous society on a single-issue dimension is almost impossible for one party, this is why there are at least two-parties in the government (Huber & Powell, 1994). Since the choice of political parties is limited to only a few it might be expected that none of the parties can represent citizens well or that several parties can be equally representative (Powell, 2000). Taking this into consideration, together with the heterogeneity of the society and the multiparty system of the government, brings us to the conclusion that measuring political representation is not an easy task.

The problem of providing a valid measurement of political representation, that would be representative of preferences of the most of the citizens has been a concern for scholars of political science for a long time. On the one hand, the definition of ideological congruence seems to be simple but on the other hand, there is a scholarly debate about the formulation of this concept. Some scholars argue that for the operationalization of ideological congruence emphasis should be put on the "distribution of citizens preferences" rather than the "ideological distance" between the median voter and political actors (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017, P:104). Using the concept of the median voter seemed to have performed the role relatively well, however recent studies have shown that the conceptualization of ideological congruence depends on the research question of the paper (Golder & Stramski, 2010) and so does the measurement. Hence, using the median voter in all instances might not guarantee a

comprehensive picture of the degree of regime representativeness. Therefore, recent developments in existing measurements of political representation (Golder & Stramski, 2010) have substantially contributed to the research on this topic and their theoretical arguments have significantly influenced this research.

The definition of ideological congruence adopted in this paper is perhaps closest to the Relative Citizen Congruence concept explained by Golder & Stramski (2010) which measures "the distance between the citizens and their representative.... relative to the dispersion of citizen preferences." (P:93). Therefore, unlike many measures of ideological congruence which put median voter in the center of their analysis, this measurement puts forward the ideological positions of the government and the citizens simultaneously. Hence, it not only focuses on the distance between the median voters and the representatives but the distribution of citizens preferences along the issue-line. It also takes into consideration the degree to which the government is ideologically approximate to the citizens based on the relative terms, hence based on the capacities of the government to diminish the distance between itself and the voters.

The two main advantages of using Relative Citizen Congruence is that it makes comparison across different units of analysis easier since it is eliminating the issue of Differential Item Functioning (DIF) discussed below. And as for the second advantage it puts both government and citizens' ideological positions from different units of analysis on the same scale (Golder & Stramski, 2010). Hence, Relative Citizen Congruence makes it possible to compare two extreme cases with each other, and it makes easier to visualize when governments fail to be representative and when they just do not try sufficiently. If competing parties in the elections are not well-representative of citizens' preferences and electoral systems are so disproportional that voters have to vote strategically then vote-seat distribution alone is not a valid measurement of representation (Powell, 2004). Hence, since we are interested in the ideological composition of the governments and how representative they are of their citizens across different countries and time dimensions Relative Citizen Congruence will be used in this paper as the measurement of representation.

#### **1.2 Measuring Ideological Congruence**

In this paper I offer a threefold way of operationalization of the degree of congruence between citizens and their governments: Firstly, I measure the degree of congruence between citizens and the parties they voted for. Secondly, the degree of congruence between citizens and the median legislature and thirdly, the degree of congruence between citizens and the governments in power.

A measurement very similar to this was used by McDonald & Budge (2005), where they were measuring the representation of the median voter on different stages starting from the electorate to the government stage. Measuring the party-level representation first is important because if parties competing in the elections are not well-representative of citizens ideological preferences then they will not be representative on the legislative level either. "The election is the formal authorization step in the principal-agent relationship" (Powell 2004, P:281), however, citizen representation is not important only on the party level but it is crucial on the legislative level as well, in the period between elections (Powell, 2006). This is why after measuring party-level representation, median legislature and government level representations will be measured too.

Measurements of ideological congruence are limited to the left-right scale which is an important comparative tool that "allows us to see where citizens stand in relation to all the

parties, not just to their final choice" (Powell, 2000, P:240). Hence, the left-right scale will be used to measure citizens self-placement on this dimension and in relations with the parties representing them in the elections and in the legislature. However, this tool has some important limitations. One of the most well-known drawbacks of using the left-right scale is Differential Item Functioning (DIF) which poses a threat for studies using mass surveys to measure citizens positions (Golder & Stramski, 2010; Powell, 2000). Since perceptions of voters about left-right dimension might differ significantly across countries, comparing them on the same scale in different countries might not represent their policy differences thoroughly (McDonald & Budge, 2005). However, one of the solutions to mitigate the problem can be comparing the distances between citizens and their governments rather than their ideological positions (Golder & Stramski, 2010). This is why I construct the operationalization of congruence as the distance of citizens from both, their governments and the median legislator.

#### 1.2.1 Party-level Measurement

The success of the elections can be defined in many different ways depending on what is being measured, what is the research question and what theory is used. In this paper success of elections is defined as the degree of representativeness of citizens preferences by the political parties participating in the elections (Powell, 1994). So, elections play the role of organizers of public preferences (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014) and linking each individual's preference with the parties closest to them. However, this kind of information exchange only rarely results in the expected outcome because elected parties usually form coalitions after the elections and their interests become dispersed in the inter-election period (McDonald & Budge, 2005). Hence, well-defined left-right distribution of parties' interests becomes disrupted after elections. However, the fact that information exchange happened between voters and parties

through elections should hold governments responsible to act in accordance with their citizens interests. The Left-right scale play a very useful and important role in this process of information exchange, because voters cannot be informed thoroughly about every policy but they will have broad information about the party's ideological position which will help them in making a right decision.

In addition, it is important to measure representation on party-level because as studies have shown lowering the level of analysis from system-level to party-level creates clearer picture and makes democratic representation more understandable (Ezrow, 2010). This theory is strengthened with the argument that electoral systems are important for policy representation only to the degree they influence the balance between different parties. And party system is as responsible for electoral distortion as electoral systems (McDonald & Budge, 2005). Also, representatives might have different opinions but they are relatively fixed to certain positions on the left-right scale while the same does not apply to the citizens (Powell, 2004). Especially now when studies have found that citizens are becoming more volatile in their party choices since they do not vote based on party's socio-economic background in the same intensity anymore (Ezrow, 2010). Policy-based voting is becoming more popular among voters (Curini et al., 2016) hence, the left-right scale measurement is turning into a more valuable tool as citizens understanding of the meaning behind left and right is improving (Busch, 2016). Therefore, party-level representation in this paper will be measured as the difference between citizens left-right self- placement and the party placements as perceived by the citizens.

#### 1.2.2 Legislative Level

The second aspect of our analysis is the Parliamentary median or median legislature, since parties entering the legislature might engage in the post-election bargaining, especially in PR systems which might result in distortion of ideological representation of citizens. It has been found that final policy outcomes of the government are the least representative of the position identified by the majority of citizens since governments tend to be more approximate with the median legislature rather than the citizens dispersed around the median voter (Huber & Powell, 1994). Hence, the post-election bargaining process might authorize the government that is ideologically different from what citizens voted for. To analyze how different countries, capture citizens preferences at the legislative level the median legislature will be measured by "the position of the weighted median party" (McDonald & Budge, 2005). That is the left-right alignment of parties in parliament with which median legislature affiliates as identified by the experts.

#### 1.2.3 Government-level Measurement

On the final stage of demonstrating congruence on different levels will be measured how representative the parties that citizens voted for are on the government level. The previous studies have demonstrated that there are no extremist governments in parliamentary democracies because it would be impossible to get the support of the majority for the party with extremist views (Curini et al, 2016). Parties receiving the majority vote are usually located very close to the center of the left-right scale or where the majority of citizens are located but it does not mitigate the importance of providing the measurement. In this research paper I adopt the measurement of governments left-right position used by Powell (2000; Huber & Powell, 1994). They were "calculating the weighted mean positions of the parties in government, where the weights are the parliamentary seat percentages to measure governments ideological position is justified by the argument that parties influence policy making in accordance to the cabinet posts they hold or the decision-making power they have in government (Curini et al 2016;

McDonald & Budge, 2005; Powell, 2000). Hence, one of the crucial conditions that needs to be fulfilled for the successful outcome of the election is that each party receiving sufficient votes from the citizens should be given a fair chance of affecting the policy-making. This is especially important as "a fundamental tenet of democracy is that governments are supposed to reflect the policy preferences of their citizens" (Pitkin, 1967 as cited in Curini et al 2016). Since one party cannot fulfill this goal alone it is important to have more than one party in the government. Hence, to measure governments ideological position it is important to look at the individual parties comprising government.<sup>1</sup>

However, when measuring government position time plays an important role, since the duration of the period when the party was in power matters, whether it is a newly-formed government or not might affect the ideological position of the government. Even though scholars emphasize the importance of measuring the position of the government prior to the elections (Ferland, 2017), the data demonstrating this is limited. To address this issue some studies, use proportionalized time weights (McDonald & Budge, 2005) but since the data I am using only has information about post-election positions, government's position after the elections will be measured. The measurement of government position will be compared to citizens self-placement on ideological positions and citizens placement of political parties in the government.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This only works in parliamentary democracies

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## 2 Factors Affecting Ideological Congruence

#### 2.1 Electoral Systems

There are several factors influencing ideological congruence. However, the most studied and popular factor among all are electoral systems. Scholars have been analyzing the impact different electoral systems have on ideological congruence with the main difference emerging between the majoritarian and proportional systems. It was Powell who first studied the trade-off between identifiability and congruence, whereas the former refers to "a majoritarian property that limits postelection bargaining" (Powell, 2000, P:246) and the later corresponds to the degree the winner party is representative of citizens preferences. Postelection bargaining is very common in proportional representation and usually results in the inclusion of median legislator in parliament, and the median legislator is more representative of median voter than any other political actor. In addition, Powell also asserted that more policymakers approximate to the majoritarian ideals further they are from the citizens (2000). Hence, he was clearly more supportive of PR systems when it came to "substantive" representation than of majoritarian systems. The foundation of his arguments was the idea that in order to establish democratic representation representatives' position should correspond to the position hold by citizens on the issue-dimension (Powell, 2004).

However, drawing decisive conclusions when comparing different electoral systems is not an easy task, since all of them have different advantages and disadvantages. The debate on preferential electoral systems among majoritarian and proportional representation systems, always comes down to the accountability-responsiveness difference. Where majoritarian governments tend to result in more accountable, efficient governance but they also tend to be

less representative of their citizens preferences while proportional systems tend to be more representative and inclusive(Norris, 2010). On the other hand, PR systems tend to be less effective and accountable because of the characteristic of complex decision-making of multiparty system. In addition, parties in PR systems are more ensured that they will be elected in next elections due to lower electoral thresholds, whereas in majoritarian systems this is not guaranteed which explains why parties in majoritarian systems are more accountable to their citizens than in PR. In the end even though the distinction and existing trade-offs between these electoral systems seem straightforward their impact on ideological congruence is not.

Many scholars have built their research on Powell's judgments suggesting that PR systems main characteristic multiparty government promotes better representation of citizens preferences than plurality system (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Ezrow, 2010; McDonald & Budge, 2005). Some argue that main reason behind this is that it is easier for citizens to find a party that better represents their choices when they have a big variety of choices available at hand (Ezrow, 2010). Here the emphasis is put on the fact that in plurality systems one party has to be representative of many citizens hence party representatives cannot approximate party ideology with individual preferences. While in PR systems low threshold guarantee that smaller parties can also get in the legislature hence parties do not need to be oriented on receiving majority of votes since they can surpass the threshold even with small number of voters (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014). This process makes it easier for parties in PR system to take into account individual preferences and be more representative of small groups of societies (Huffman, 2005). Hence, "even if plurality systems motivate parties to attach greater weight to vote-seeking, this will not in turn imply plurality elections motivate policy convergence" (Ezrow, 2010, P:63). These group of scholars share the same opinion that proportionality of electoral systems play an important role in ideological congruence.

The role of post-election bargaining in PR systems are also emphasized significanlty (McDonald & Budge, 2005) since the bargainings there tend to produce legislatures that are closer to citizens preferneces than in SMD systems where post-eletcion bargainings are relatively rare. In addition, PR systems are characterized with less dostortions in representation and less biased than SMD systems since countries with SMD system tend to have twice more distortions in representation than that of PR (McDonald & Budge, 2005). However, it should also be noted that no country is perfectly representative of majority of citizens preferences and distortions occur on every stage in every electoral system. SMD systems show relatively poor performance when it comes to translating votes into parliamentary seats, but PR systems distort representation significanlty when the median legislator or parliamentary median has to be translated into the governmet (McDonald & Budge, 2005). Nonetheless, PR system has its own weaknesses this does not hinder a group of scholars from concluding that PR creates better ground for representing citizens prefernces than SMD ( Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014; Ezrow, 2010; Huber & Powell, 1994; McDonald & Budge, 2005; Powell 2000)

However, this opinion has many opponents in political science. Some studies have shown that electoral systems do not seem to have that much of an impact on congruence ( Donovan & Karp, 2017; Golder & Stramski, 2010), emphasizing that even though PR systems have more representative legislatures they do not result in significantly higher levels of congruence between citizens and governments than majoritarian systems (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017). Also ideological congruence is important on both levels – legislative and government – the importance of proportionality of electoral systems for legislative congruence cannot be generalized to the government level (Golder & Lloyd, 2014; Golder & Stramski, 2010). In addition, since PR systems are characterized with more fragmented governments this might

hinder representation as well, considering that some scholars (Norris, 1997) have asserted that less fragmented systems might be more effective in policy implementation. Therefore, there is no consensus among scholars of political science on the effect of electoral systems on ideological congruence except the often-approved opinion that PR systems better approximate legislatures with citizen preferences than majoritarian systems (Norris, 2010; Powell, 2000).

The main idea behind the concept of ideological congruence is that the elite that is ideologically more approximate with citizens tend to adopt policies that are more representative of citizens preferences, hence, when ideological congruence is high citizens may feel more satisfied with the performance of democracy in their countries (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017). However, studies of citizen satisfaction with political system and democracy have shown that electoral reforms, irrespective of promoting more proportional system or more majoritarian have only limited impact on citizens behavior and their perceptions about the regime (Bowler & Donovan, 2012). One of the arguments behind this judgment is that electoral rules affect only a small part of politics, hence its impact on citizens behavior is very limited.

Direct experiences of citizens such as the perception of economic well-being, corruption and indirect experiences received via media might have bigger impact on voters than electoral rules and reforms (Bowler & Donovan, 2012). In addition, declining trust in politics and elections and diminishing partisan attachment in the current generation of voters does not contribute much to the grip of influence electoral rules might have on citizens (Curini et al 2016). Institutional arrangements play some role in influencing the attitudes and behavior of voters (Karp & Banducci, 2008). However, when other factors like country's economic development is taken into account the impact of electoral systems might seem overestimated (Donovan & Karp, 2017). Hence, many studies have shown that even though when taken alone electoral

systems and rules have some impact on citizen's satisfaction with democracy, they play less important role in combination with other factors such as corruption, decentralization and socioeconomic status (Kim, 2013, Donovan & Karp, 2017). Due to the fact that there is no consensus among scholars about the factors affecting ideological congruence and particularly little has been said about factors other than the institutional arrangements and elections, this research paper will try to explore less conventional elements influencing the congruence.

#### 2.2 Democratic Maturity

When talking about electoral systems and the impact of their outcomes one of the important elements that needs to be considered is the experience of a country in democratic governance and conducting elections, outcomes of which are representative of citizens' preferences and not just a facade. Numerous studies have been dedicated to finding and analyzing differences of electoral and party systems and institutional arrangements in new and old democracies (Bértoa, 2013; Bielasiak, 2005; Birch, 2003; Birch, 2011; Moser & Scheiner, 2012; Rose & Munro, 2003). Some of the most important findings from these studies have included high degrees of party and electoral volatility together with social and political cleavages that characterizes newly established democracies more than old democracies (Bertoa, 2013). In addition, newly established democracies do not have a long history of party politics and young parties there tend to be less stable and short-lived (Busch, 2016). Hence, voters find it more difficult to form partisan attachment with parties in newly established democracies (Moser, 1999) than in old democracies, as a result of which newly established democracies have lower number of effective parties in parliament than old democracies. Hence, neither society nor political environment in newly established democracies are as well-formed for democratic governance as in old democracies.

The research on existing institutional differences between newly established and old democracies has been mostly concentrated on procedural representation and relatively little has been said about substantive representation in this framework. However, few studies analyzing the impact of democratic maturity on countries institutional arrangements have presented significant results. Emphasizing the role of democratic maturity for explaining variations in voter's turnout and finding a significant difference between voters participation in elections in old and new democracies (Nový & Katrňák, 2015). Others have found that older parties are characterized with higher proximity with their voters (Busch, 2016) since citizens have more information about older parties and it is easier for them to form partisan attachments with parties existing in the political spectrum for a while.

In addition, other side – factors of more experienced countries in democratic governance significantly contribute to their overall performance in political representation. For instance, old democracies are relatively better at generating better informed citizens and shaping more favorable beliefs for democratic governance in citizens. Since authoritarian regimes or new democracies tend to be less favorable towards their citizens, the values and beliefs that citizens hold in these regimes are not in favor of elections combined with the lower trust they have in institutions. Voters' perceptions about the regime and effectiveness of their actions are important because citizens awareness of political systems and beliefs about the extent to which they can influence election outcomes considerably affects the levels of voters' electoral participation (Nový & Katrňák, 2015).

The papers examining the impact of democratic maturity on various elements and dimensions of political representation have proven that the age of democracy has some impact on these factors. Based on the analysis of papers of substantive representation it can be assumed that scholars take the relationship between democratic maturity and ideological congruence as granted. Analyzing the relationship based on these papers can result in assumption that there is a cyclic relationship between the three main elements of political representation. Older the democracy better the approximation of ideologies between citizens and parties and citizens and governments; better the approximation more effective and responsive government becomes. Some scholars have studied the second part of this chain, concluding that "the idea that

government is supposed to be for the people suggests that closer the alignment between popular and elite preferences, "better" democracy becomes" (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017, P: 825). As far as I am concerned the first part of this cyclical relationship has not been thoroughly studied yet. Therefore, in this paper I am testing the first part of the theory and conducting statistical analysis for analyzing the relationship. Considering that previous studies have shown significant differences in institutional arrangements between different regime types it would be interesting to study how other elements of political representation such as ideological congruence might also be affected by the characteristics of the democratic regime. Hence, I am suggesting that settings of the regime of the country might affect substantive representation.

**Hypothesis** (**H**): more experienced old democracies should be better at approximating their policies with citizens preferences than newly established democracies.

Some of the scholars have used democratic maturity as a proxy or control variable in their studies of political representation (Busch, 2016). However, how ideological congruence can be directly influenced by different democratic regimes is still understudied. I claim that analyzing the impact of democratic maturity on ideological congruence is important not only for extending the literature on substantive representation but it will significantly contribute to the

research done on party systems, electoral systems, and democratic governance and open new frontiers for future research on this topic.

### **3** Discussion

#### 3.1 When Congruence Matters?

Ideological congruence is a complex phenomenon, influenced by many factors, therefore there are diverse opinions about the role ideological congruence plays in vote choice and voting behavior, some of them strengthening the importance of congruence and others contributing to the opposite.

So far, I have discussed the external factors that can affect political representation, such factors include democratic maturity, electoral systems, and party politics among many others that can bias or distort the representation. However, since the main topic of this paper is substantive representation and the factors that might affect the accuracy of representation of voters' ideological preferences in the government it is worthwhile to review the existing discussion in the literature about the micro level or internal factors that can bias the representation from within. Below I briefly summarize proxy factors distorting representation on micro level since representation starts from the citizens, their ideological position and the position of the parties that should be well-representative of their voters.

One of the significant factors in citizens' vote choice is how well they can identify their own ideological position and that of the party and secondly, what are the factors that might influence their vote choice other than the ideological congruence. So, these factors will be briefly discussed below since they are responsible for shaping the dynamics of political representation as proxy causes biasing vote choice of citizens. Hence, below I offer assumptions from political psychology and spatial models of voting that assert the importance of agreement between the

voters and the parties. Claiming that voters' misperceptions about party positioning can bias the congruence from its roots(Dahlberg, 2013) some scholars are rather skeptical about the significance of ideological congruence in political representation at all.

Even though some scholars assert that political knowledge and ideological congruence on the left-right scale are closely correlated (Boonen, Pedersen, & Hooghe, 2017) voters are not always perfectly informed about their parties' policies or their own ideological preferences (Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1993). Therefore, some scholars are quite critical about the relationship between the information and the choice of the voters, suggesting that voters can make reasonable choices, despite a limited amount of information (Lupia, Mccubbins, & Popkin, 2000, Simas, 2013). Even though some knowledge is required for making a reasonable decision the sufficient amount of knowledge for vote casting can be easily acquired and does not require much effort (Lupia, 1994). Political institutions play a crucial role in this process since they can control for untrustworthy information and protect voters from false information which will have a positive impact on voter's learning process. However, discussing citizen competence leads scholars to contrasting conclusions, asserting that voters are inclined to sending "distorted signals to policy makers" (Lupia, Mccubbins, & Popkin, 2000; P:182) and instead of paying attention to important parts of political campaign voters sometimes become distorted by false cues which results in misguided interpretation of the campaign. Therefore, if this analysis is taken into consideration true distortion of translating voters' preferences to the government level does not start from the party level but from the individual level itself.

Even though, a voter's ideological position is an important determinant factor for making a vote choice this is not the only factor that matters for voters. Scholars emphasize the difference in the criteria's with which voters evaluate incumbents and other parties asserting that

ideological congruence might play a minor role in cases when incumbents are also racing in the elections since they have an advantage over other parties (Simas, 2013). Voters are already familiar with the incumbent's policies, citizens know what incumbent candidates are capable of doing and might engage in retrospective voting (Ferland, 2017). In addition, in some cases parties ideological distance does not play much role in citizens vote choice, as much as citizens realize that the party is capable of handling severe policy issues (Sanders, Clarke, Stewart, & Whiteley, 2011). Hence, if incumbents are performing their duties well, choosing a relatively strange new candidate from another party might be riskier, even if this candidate is ideologically closer to the voter (Simas, 2013). This line of thinking is further strengthened with the assumption that some voters are less likely to be accurate in making their vote choice since they tend to "exaggerate their ideological agreement with the party" (Sniderman & Highton, 2011, P:834) and vote for more extremist parties than their ideological stance (Dahlberg, 2013).

It should also be noted that one of the reasons for the distortion of representing voters' preferences on party level can be that voters might agree with their parties on some issues but not on the others (Brug, 2001). The assimilation process is another important element that might affect voters' decision-making when it comes to choosing their favorite party, emphasizing that because of psychological factors voters might be tricked into believing that they are closer to the party than they really are (Busch, 2016). Society's political culture should also be taken into account, if the majority of voters are not actively involved or interested in politics there is a reduced chance that they will be concerned with the ideological congruence between them and their government (Brug, 2011). Another line of research highlights the importance of ideological "consistency" or alignment between voters and their parties on voters turnout, suggesting that if voters feel that the parties competing in the elections are less

representative of their preferences they might not vote at all (Sniderman & Highton, 2011). Some scholars of political representation also question the direction of ideological congruence between citizens and the party asserting that citizens can be persuaded into supporting one party or the other, hence suggesting that the parties can sometimes influence voter's ideological position (Brug, 2011; Dinas, Hartman, & van Spanje, 2016). Hence, if this assumption is true it makes more difficult to measure the accuracy of voter's ideological representation on the party level.

On the note of parties it should also be mentioned that since parties have ideologically welldefined electorate it is quite risky for them to make extreme changes in their ideological positions, resulting in less freedom for the parties in setting their agenda (Sniderman & Highton, 2011). One of the problems that can result from this is that usually because of this reason minor and unpopular parties find it even more difficult to catch up to the major parties and become real game-changers. Spatial theories assert that the hurdles for minor parties are further intensified by the idea that voters tend to develop habits of voting and sense of attachment towards the party close to their ideological position(Sanders et al., 2011). Therefore, it becomes somewhat difficult for young and minor parties to penetrate the closed cycle of electorate especially if it is a well-established old democracy. This is one of the reasons why party and electorate volatility is low in old and established democratic regimes (Bértoa, 2013).

Several papers have been dedicated to studying the relationship between party identification and issue preferences (Boonen, Pedersen, & Hooghe, 2017; Clarke & McCutcheon, 2009; Dinas, Hartman, & van Spanje, 2016; Lachat, 2015; Simas, 2013) and how one or the other might affect vote choice, even though this is not the main topic of this paper I will briefly discuss how these factors can influence political representation. Ideological position of the voters is sometimes discussed as conditional, depending on the party's or the candidate's ideological position running for the election (Simas, 2013), which therefore limits voters choice to the parties and candidates available in time of elections. Hence, this might result in minor inaccuracy of representing voters' ideological position but the ideological congruence still plays an important role in the process of casting a vote since if parties shift too far away from voter's position, they will be punished by not being elected (Powell, 2000).

Skeptics of ideological congruence assert that ideological position plays a minor role in vote choice especially in certain circumstances (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014). One of the circumstances when the role of ideological congruence is thought to be diminished is when voters strongly identify with certain parties (Jessee, 2010) or when their preferences are dominated by their subjective perceptions of certain parties and candidates (Dinas et al., 2016). However, a recent study has found that even though there is a difference in the importance party identifiers and non-identifiers attach to the ideological distance from the party, party identifiers are not absolutely disregarding of ideological positions of their parties and themselves (Boonen et al., 2017; Lachat, 2015). This argument is further strengthened considering that in the process of forming identification with the party voters use ideological position of parties for orientation (Lachat, 2015).

As already mentioned some scholars question the relevance of ideological congruence (Rosema, Denters, & Aarts, 2011) and the causes of this thinking will be discussed below. Rudy B. Andeweg (2011) suggests two explanations for this, one is more conventional -"hyper-responsiveness" by the government might be harmful for the effectiveness of governance and second is a newly tested assumption by him demonstrating that high ideological congruence does not improve trust for political actors. Hence, voters with a high degree of congruence still show low trust in politics. Even though trust is an important element in political environment, it should be noted that studies have demonstrated that low levels of trust does not create any burdens or impediments for democracy (Muller & Seligson, 1994). Hence, it cannot be assumed that since the ideological congruence does not affect trust it becomes irrelevant all together, if anything it is trust that can take the role of irrelevant predictor of the relationship between voters and citizens. Especially now when the low trust level is just one of the trends of contemporary democracy (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000).

#### **3.2 Why Democratic Maturity?**

It is assumed that the regimes that are characterized by high degrees of congruence receive more support from the public and are less opposed (Rosema et al., 2011). In their work Christian Welzel and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (2011) assert that scholars of substantive representation should take both sides of democracy into account – supply and demand. If democracy is supplied without substantive demand, meaning the public has not demanded it and is not ready for it the regime will be futile and will crumble sooner or later. Since democracy is the "government by the consent of the people" (Dahlberg, 2013, P:670) it is essential that representation starts from the people, if the people cannot accurately identify their ideological position and that of the parties, the future government will be unrepresentative of the voters resulting in unsatisfied voters. If citizens are not supporting democratic values that could be exported to the country by foreign actors the regime will become corrupt (Dalton, Farrell, & McAllister, 2011). Research has demonstrated that when it comes to examining the impacts of system level, party level and individual level characteristics on the agreement between voters perceptions about the parties, individual level and party level characteristics find more significance than system level (Dahlberg, 2013). Therefore, it is as important to have

deep-seated and unshakeable democratic beliefs emerging from the public as it is to have accurate and trustworthy representatives in the government.

Even though I agree with this line of research in my analysis I demonstrate the relevance of system level factors – such as the age of democracy. Because I consider that in order to achieve ideological congruence in the country between citizens and the government certain preconditions should exist. In my analysis I demonstrate the impact of one of these preconditions, the number of years of uninterrupted governance of democratic regime. The studies of political representation or political behavior analyze the relationship between macro and micro level or system level and individual level factors from the different angle. In other words, there are numerous studies on how different voters and parties in post-communist countries are from those of old democracies (Bértoa, 2013; Bielasiak, 2005; Gebethner, 1997; Birch, 2003, 2011; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011),

Naming lack of experience of democratic governance as one of the main causes for these differences. However, the studies that directly link the experience of democracy or the age of democracy to party-voter's relationship are not as common. Hence, in order to analyze the relationship between these two I made assumptions based on the studies analyzing the differences in voter-party relationships in different democratic regimes, which brings us to the conclusion that if the differences in these two regimes are intrinsic then we should look for the causes of the differences not only on individual or party level but on system level as well. The two characteristics of exposure to the non-democratic regimes that might affect the individual perceptions are emphasized in the scholarly literature – the length and the nature of the exposure suggesting that longer the exposure and closer the intensity of exposure will result in less trust in political institutions and elections in general (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011).

Scholars also highlight how citizen engagement in politics is affected by the type of the regime they live in, suggesting that citizens in established democracies are more knowledgeable about politics and more engaged in political matters or activities because they feel the greater influence they can have on political matters (Dalton, 2017). In this case talking about civil engagement in politics scholars mean active civil society, innovative approaches to direct democracy and not voter turnout in elections because it is a diminishing trend in general in all types of democracy of contemporary world (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). However, what should be emphasized alongside this reasoning is that the historical- institutional factors are also significantly shaping the political beliefs of the society (Markowski, 1997). Therefore, the public that has been less exposed to democratic governance is less aware of the ideological positions of their parties and the left-right positioning is irrelevant in these cases because of the low level of predictability (Markowski, 1997).

There are sufficient examples for explaining this patter since parties left-right ideological divide is not consistent with their actions and activities in countries that are less experienced in democracy, such as post-communist Europe (Tavits & Letki, 2009). Bringing the example from Eastern Europe can be relevant here because of the shortage of experience of democratic governance in this region. Studying ideological congruence there has demonstrated that even though economic reforms were highly representative of public preferences, policy reforms in other sectors have demonstrated that younger democracies in East have not been as successful in representing their voters needs as old democracies (Roberts, 2010).

Many party level factors such as party age and accurate ideological positioning on the left-right scale (Dahlberg, 2013) is directly affected by the system level factors, such as the maturity of

democracy. Even though studies of ideological congruence mostly concentrate on individual level or party level factors influencing representation, in this paper I try to demonstrate that system level factors might also play a decisive role. Especially if taken into account that many individual level and party level elements are under the influence of the outcomes of system level changes and reforms. Even after taking into consideration recent trends of partisan voting and incumbent reelection, studies have shown that ideological congruence still plays an important role for voters in elections (Simas, 2013). Hence, I consider that instead of suggesting that ideological congruence is losing relevance in contemporary politics scholars should try to analyze it from unconventional frameworks and expand the list of system level factors that can influence the outcome.

CEU eTD Collection

## **4** Analytical Framework:

#### 4.1 The data and methodology

The analysis part of the paper is divided into two parts. In the first part I show how citizens are represented on different levels, more precisely on party-level, on median legislative level and on government level. I also demonstrate the relationship between citizens self-placement on Left-Right scale (i.e. their ideological position) and the position of the party they voted for. Therefore, the first part of the analysis emphasizes the general trends and settings of political representation in the countries that are analyzed in the second part. In the second part of the analysis the hypothesis is tested via multiple linear regression model and conclusions are drawn based on the results of the analysis.

Hence, this is an observational study of ideological congruence, for the analysis I chose parliamentary democracies in Europe. Selecting scope conditions of the paper was influenced by several factors: first, the data about vote-seat distribution which is one of the crucial variables in my analysis does not exist for presidential systems, simply because of the type of regime they have. Therefore omitting presidential elections from the analysis of ideological congruence is a famous pattern followed by scholars (Dahlberg & Holmberg, 2014). Hence, even though I included some presidential democracies of Europe<sup>2</sup> in the first part of my analysis they were omitted from the second part of the analysis where I needed to calculate vote-seat distribution. Second, unavailability of the data about the distribution of citizens preferences on the left-right scale for some Asian countries<sup>3</sup> and limitation in time resulted in narrow scope of analysis of only one region. Despite this, I consider that focusing on multiple elections in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> e.g. Lithuania 1997, Romania 1996

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> e.g. Japan (1996, 2004) Taiwan (2012), Thailand (2001, 2011), etc.

several European countries prominently displays the patterns and circumstances existing there and creates sufficient ground for generalization.

The data used in the paper is from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. One of the main reasons of using CSES data is that it is a longitudinal data that contains information on multiple elections in various countries starting from 1996 till today. It is also the only country comparative data which comprises information about individuals' assessments of parties, ideological attitudes and regime performance. The data is based on surveys conducted among voters after the elections and CSES also includes the surveys with experts, which makes comparison of the results of voters with the results of the experts possible in order to demonstrate the credibility and validity of different sources. CSES has 5 modules, the fifth module is expected to be finished by 2021. However, I am using CSES Integrated Module Dataset (IMD) which combines first four modules of the data from 1996 till 2016. This gives me a good opportunity to compare different ages of democratic regimes with each other and analyze how ideological congruence in the country changes together with the maturity of democracy throughout years. Overall, I am analyzing 33 European democracies in 96 election years. Hence, the study will be quantitative, using multiple linear regression analysis to test the effect of democratic maturity on ideological congruence.

#### 4.1.1 Dependent Variable

As most of the studies of substantive representation, this paper also adopts congruence as the dependent variable. Even though, till today it is considered as one of the best measures of ideological congruence some scholars have been avoiding to use it for cross-country comparisons due to the problem of DIF (differential item functioning). Since DIF has been

concerning scholars of political representation for a long time (Powell, 2000; 2004) there have been several attempts of addressing this issue and making left-right scale a better comparative tool for cross-country analysis (Golder & Stramski, 2010). In this paper I follow their pace and use same methods, more precisely instead of using median voter position I am using the distance between citizens' and governments' positions. This is calculated as a combined measure, for voters' position I use the mean of respondent's self-placement on the Left-Right scale that ranges from 0 to 10 where 0 represents extreme left and 10 represents extreme right. For calculating governments' position I use the weighted mean of the position of the government in each election year "weighted by each party's share of cabinet portfolios" (Hellwig, Dalton, & Anderson, 2011, P:10). The distance between the government and its citizens is calculated as the absolute difference between these two scores. This way the comparison between various countries and various time dimensions becomes more valid and it also addresses the problem of interpreting median voter's position that can have various interpretations in different spatial and time dimensions. Hence, using the distance between the governments and citizens positions as a measure of ideological congruence instead of the fixed position of the median voter eliminates the DIF at least partially.

#### 4.1.2 Independent variable

Independent variable in this study is a continuous variable of democratic maturity "showing how many years has passed after the democratization of the country<sup>4</sup>" (Nový & Katrňák, 2015, P:4). This variable is derived from the Polity IV Project included in CSES Integrated Module Dataset (IMD) as "the age of the current regime". Since there are included multiple European

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> i.e. how many years of uninterrupted governance has passed since the democracy score reached Seven on the Policy IV score

Countries in my study some of which have 135 years of democratic regime like Great Britain in 2015 while some have 0 years of democratic regime like Romania in 1996 there is a big range of democratic regimes analyzed in the paper. In order to include "age of the current regime" in my multiple linear regression model I replaced its numerical value with a logarithmic value since age and political representation possibly have a non-linear relationship (Busch, 2016).

Since ideological distance between citizens and governments can be affected by multiple factors I control for several micro and macro level characteristics. Political institutions, electoral systems and socioeconomic development are some of the factors that might influence the relationship and therefore my regression model. They also are among commonly used control variables in studies of political representation. On macro-level scholars' control for institutional factors/instruments such as electoral systems, electoral formula and on micro-level individual-related elements (i.e. age, gender, rural-urban divide, etc.). Hence, three control variables will be used in the regression model that includes both macro and micro level elements: Electoral systems, Degree of Disproportionality and Human Development Index.

Since numerous studies have been dedicated to the role electoral systems play in political representation (Powell, 2000; Powell, 2004) there have been drawn multiple, sometimes even contrasting conclusions about the impact of electoral systems (Golder & Lloyd, 2014; Golder & Stramski, 2010) Even though there is no consensus among political scientists about the impact of electoral systems on ideological congruence, the chances that electoral systems somehow affect ideological congruence is high. Hence, I control for electoral systems in my regression model because any relationship and even no relationship between these two will be significant for the studies of political representation. The main debate is between those

preferring PR systems over Mixed or Majoritarian electoral systems (Powell, 2000) while other scholars (Golder & Stramski, 2010) assert that PR systems are not any better when it comes to substantive representation. Since PR systems are better at translating votes into seats, the scholars are asserting that it is a better representative tool of voter's preferences than any other electoral system (Powell, 2004).

To control for the impact of PR system on my model I created a binary variable where PR systems are coded as "1" and other electoral systems are coded as "0". However, it should be noted that my regression model is not a fair measurement of the impact of electoral systems on ideological congruence since most of the elections analyzed in the model are conducted in PR systems, more precisely 70 out of 96 elections. Even though the regression model might be a good representative of the role played by PR systems in the analysis the comparison with the rest of the electoral systems is not justified because of the unequal representation of other electoral systems in the model. In addition, controlling for electoral systems might be effective however as recent studies have demonstrated (Golder & Stamski, 2010) degree of disproportionality is another important element for measuring the impact of proportionality of the electoral systems, the degree of disproportionality is fairer measure of the performance of the system in translating votes into seats, especially because it provides a measurement for all types of electoral systems. Hence, Gallagher's least squares index (LSq) of disproportionality is used as another control variable in the multiple linear regression model.

In addition, for micro level controls numerous studies of political representation have been using socioeconomic factors such as higher living standards, access to education, leisure time and/or access to healthcare that may affect citizens perceptions about the degree and quality of representation and satisfaction with agent's performance. Human Development Index (UNPD) was chosen for this purpose, since it measures: "a long and healthy life; access to knowledge; and a decent standard of living" (CSES IMD codebook part 2). UNPD index is calculated using multiple measures of country's economic performance such as gross domestic product (GDP), per capita in Purchasing Power Parity US dollars (PPP US\$), life expectancy and literacy rates. CSES IMD dataset provides measurement of UNPD at three different time periods, in this paper I used measurement of UNPD in the election year since in most of the cases this corresponds to the time when respondents were questioned and therefore is the most relevant for this research.

#### 4.2 Results

In the first part of my analysis I try to demonstrate how individuals are represented on different institutional levels. However, to compare citizens ideological representation with that of parties, median legislator and the government it is important to first look at the accuracy of how citizens position themselves and then the parties they voted for. CSES IMD dataset contains the survey not only with voters but with the experts as well, which makes it possible to compare the results of this two with each other and draw conclusions about how precise voters are when they evaluate parties' ideological stance. Expert surveys are one of the three methods used for evaluating party positioning, two other popular methods are party positioning by voters and observing the behavior of parties and the content analysis of their manifesto (Curini et al, 2016). Expert surveys are a good way of controlling for the biases that might emerge in surveys centered on voters. Since voters might be driven by partisanship inclinations

or political motives that will bias the results. However, when voters and the parties are the actors of the election, experts are not. On one hand, this might be beneficial for the analysis of party positioning since experts are more knowledgeable about the characteristics of parties' ideological positions than the voters.



Left-Right Placement by Citizens Figure 4.1 Positioning of parties on the Left-Right scale by experts and citizens in 34 European Democracies

**Source**: CSES IMD dataset, own calculations **Note**: The figure plots the mean Left-Right position of parties by the citizens survey from CSES data (0-10 scale) with the mean party position by experts' survey (0-10 scale). Where 0 means extreme left and 10 mean extreme right.

On the other hand, when measuring how representative parties are of citizens preferences, the opinion of citizens matters more because they are the ones voting in the elections, and changing the political environment(Dalton et al., 2011). Therefore, some scholars are rather critical of using only expert surveys for analyzing the ideological position of citizens in relation to the party they voted for (Curini et al, 2016) assuming that experts can also be biased because of the local knowledge they use for evaluating parties (Dalton, Farrell, & McAllister, 2011; Rosema, Denters, & Aarts, 2011). To study the accuracy of citizens voting patterns and analyze whether they are biased or not I compared the results of party positioning by voters and experts. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the distribution of party placement on the left-right scale by voters and by experts based on the analysis of 168 parties in 93 elections ranging between years 1996 and 2016 in 34 European Democracies. The results displayed in the Figure 4.1 are similar to that represented in other studies using CSES data (Dalton et al., 2011). Figure 4.1 shows that there

is a consistency between experts and citizens evaluation of parties positioning. The strong relationship between the two is clearly visualized in the Figure 4.1 illustrating that voters are not as biased or are not characterized with party affinity as much as it was expected by some scholars (McDoland & Burge, 2015).



**Source:** CSES IMD dataset, own calculations. (r=0.840) **Note:** The figure plots the mean Left-Right position of parties by the citizens survey from CSES data (0-10 scale) against the mean of the party positioning by party supporters (0-10 scale). The figure is based on the analysis of 168 parties in 93 elections from 1996 till 2016

In contrast, party positioning by voters is very closely related to that of experts indicating that their evaluation can be considered adequate. However, here it should be mentioned that even though the relationship between the expert and citizen surveys is strong it is not enough to assume that some voters are not driven by partisanship motives that might bias the results. Here should also be considered that some of the countries participating in the analysis are older democracies, and their inclusion might bias the results for younger democracies. Hence, I consider that in-depth case study of younger democracies might display contrasting results. After illustrating voters' trustworthiness by their congruity with experts' survey, I analyze parties' ideological placement using another source. If in the above analysis it was demonstrated that experts and party supporters display high correlation it is also important to see how party supporters resemble the public's position about ideological alignment of the party they voted for. As theoretical arguments have indicated voters and citizens in general are another important source for demonstrating party's ideological position. Hence, I continue my analysis by comparing party's ideological placement on the Left-Right scale by entire public with that of party voters. Figure 4.2 visually demonstrates that these two measures are very closely related with high correlation coefficients (r=0.8402), which strengthens the assumption that voters manage to find parties that are closely related to their broad ideological positions and parties also succeed to be representative of their voters.



Self-Placement by Party Voters Figure 4.3 Positioning of parties on the left-right scale by citizens and self-placement by party voters in 34 European democracies

**Source:** CSES IMD dataset, own calculations. (r=0.679) **Note:** The figure plots the mean Left-Right position of parties by the citizens survey from CSES data (0-10 scale) against the mean selfplacement of party supporters (0-10 scale)

After concluding that citizens are quite concise in evaluating their parties' ideological positions, I continue my analysis by demonstrating how representative parties are of their voters' ideological preferences. Hence, citizens self-placement measured as the mean of the self-placement of the voter of the party on the left-right scale is plotted against the mean placement of the party by entire public in Figure 4.3. As Figure 4.3 visually demonstrates the

relationship is quite strong here as well but the correlation coefficient (r=0.6798) still quite significant is not as high as in the case of Figure 4.2. In addition, the distribution of citizens ideological positions displays that there are more outliers here than in Figure 4.2 and the model is not perfectly fit on the line indicating that the ideological positions of the citizens is somewhat distorted after translating the position to the party level. However, despite some outliers the results of the analysis are still significant and quite promising.

#### 4.3 **Basic Correlation Results**

In the above sections the relationship between the citizens ideological position and that of the parties have demonstrated a relatively strong link between the two. However, this relationship might be distorted after the elected party enters the parliament, since post-election bargaining and creating coalitions between multiple parties might result in shifts of a party's ideological position (McDonald & Budge, 2005).

Table 4.1. what is the relationship between the median

legislator and the voters?

e	
	Correlation
Median voters' self- placement	0.55*
Mean voters' self- placement	0.63*

**Note**: Pearson r correlations were used in this analysis. Correlations significant at P < .05 are denoted by an asterisk.

**Source**: CSES IMD dataset, own calculations

Hence, it is equally important to look at the relationship between citizens ideological position and that of the median legislator. The median legislator as already defined above is a parliamentarian who is affiliated with the median party in the government hence representing the position of that party. In majoritarian systems median parties are representative of the majority party, however in proportional systems this is not as simple.

government's ideological position and the voters		
	Correlation	
Median voter's self-placement	0.59*	

Table 4.2. The relationship between the

**Note**: Pearson r correlations were used in this analysis. Correlations significant at P < .05 are denoted by an asterisk. **Source**: CSES IMD dataset, own calculations

Hence, I calculated the median legislator's position as the weighted median based on the seat shares and left-right alignment of parties in parliament. I then analyzed these results against the mean and the median of voters' ideological self-placement. The results of the correlation analysis between ideological positions of the median legislator and self-placement of the voters are displayed in Table 4.1. Even though the mean and the median of voters' positions seems to be quite similar, the results of the correlation are slightly different demonstrating that the mean voter is closer to the median legislators' position than the median voter. The correlation coefficients are positive and significant with P-values lower than .05, however correlation coefficients are not as high as in the above figures indicating that the strength of the relationship has decreased, this assumption is particularly applicable to the median voter (r=0.55). The results of the analysis are in line with the theories presented above (McDonald & Budge, 2005: Powell, 2000; 2004) that after entering the parliament parties tend to change their ideological positions. Hence, parties are less representative of their voters' preferences after the elections, when they engage in post-election bargaining and start creating coalitions, than they were before or during the elections.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the population sample used in the correlation analysis is relatively smaller than the one used in the figures above. Since instead of analyzing single party positioning during each election year in Table 4.1 I analyze 93 governments in 34

European countries during different election years resulting in a decreased sample of population. In addition, for comparing the results of median legislator's ideological position to that of the voters I used both- the mean and the median of voter's ideological position since studies of political representation use either one or the other and this analysis would benefit from having two measures of the same value for more precision. As results have demonstrated there is no big difference between these two measures. Hence, in further analysis I will be using the median voter placement since the models I constructed are based on the theories and works of the scholars (Powell, 2000; McDonald & Budge, 2005) who have been using the median voter measurement.

Since ideological congruence of the voters were already demonstrated on two levels – party and the median legislator, it is time to also analyze congruence on the government level too. To compare the position of the median voter to that of the government I calculated the weighted mean position of the government "where the weights are the parliamentary seat percentages among parties in government" (Huber and Powell 1994 as cited in McDonald & Budge, 2005; P:115, Powell 2000, P:173), using ideological alignment of the parties and their seat shares. As scholars have discussed using parties seat share for measuring government's position is inspired by the fact that seat share is directly proportionate to the power parties have on decision-making processes (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017). Hence, the actions or ideological alignment of the parties with higher seat shares will most likely dictate the ideological position of the government. Table 4.2 demonstrates the relationship between the median voter and the government in 34 European democracies, the correlation coefficient is positive and significant with p-value < .05 indicating that the ideological positions of the government and the citizens are closely related with each other. There is however, a slight increase in the median voter's ideological congruence on government level compared to that between the median legislator and the median voter.



Distortion of Ideological Congruence on different stages

Figure 4.4 Distortions in representing voters on different levels.

Source: CSES IMD dataset, own calculations

**Note**: Voters position is calculated as a Median Voter self-placement on the Left-Right scale where 0 means extreme left and 10 means extreme right.

To summarize the three measures of voter's ideological congruence and their representation on different levels of political institutions see Figure 4.4 which visually demonstrates how ideological congruence between voters' and their representatives' changes from one level to the other. The Figure 4.4 is inspired by the similar hypothetical example presented in the book by McDonald & Budge (2015). However, here are used real measures of the positions of voters and their representatives. Hence, Figure 4.4 plots the average of the median voter's selfplacement on the Left-Right scale against parties' ideological position calculated as the mean of 168 party's placement on the left-right scale based on the voters' survey in 34 European countries in 93 election years from 1996 to 2016. The median legislator's position is calculated as the mean of the weighted median of legislator's position measured as parties seat share in parliament while the government position is calculated as the mean of 93 governments' position.

As the figure demonstrates median voters' position is translated slightly differently on party level changing from the central (5) to the righter inclined (5.1) position. The distortion continues on median legislator level as well, where the ideological position of median

parliamentarian shifts to further righter position (5.2) increasing the distance between voters and their representative even more. As expected, the distortion of ideological congruence on median legislator level can be explained by post-electoral bargaining and coalition creating. And finally, on the government level representatives are farthest from their voters, and hence, farthest from the central position with righter alignment (5.3). One part of this analysis is in line with previous research demonstrating that the electorate tends to be in the center position (Belchior, 2013) however the righter inclination of the government is an unconventional outcome since scholars propose leftist inclination of the government. This outcome is probably influenced by the inclusion of newly emerged, less experienced democracies in the analysis some of which are characterized with right-wing populist parties. In conclusion, the figure demonstrates that voter's representation gets distorted further at every new stage of political representation and finally, on the government level the distance between the agent and the principal is the greatest.

#### 4.4 **Results of regression analysis**

_	Dependent variable:
	Ideological Congruence (Cont):
Age of the Current Regime	.462*
	(.028)
Human Development Index	.228
	(.202)
Electoral Formula	191
	(.34)
Degree of Disproportionality (LSq)	.185
	(.308)
LSq: Age of the Current Regime	295
	(.081)
Electoral Formula: LSq	.212
	(.218)
Multiple R <sup>2</sup>	.224
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.164
P-value	.003
Residual Standard Error:	.453

**Table 4.3**. Multiple linear regression model for measuring the

 impact of Democratic Maturity on Ideological Congruence

**Note**: Multiple linear regression analysis showing standardized (beta) regression coefficients. P values in parentheses \*significant at P < .05**Source**: CSES IMD dataset; Gallagher's Election indices dataset, 2019

The last step of the analysis is measuring the impact of the age of democracy on ideological congruence. Several studies have analyzed the role of the regime type on political representation and/or the relationship between the regime type and different elements of representation such as party systems (Bertoa, 2013), electoral formula (Huffman, 2005) and etc. I consider that since type of the regime has long been under the attention of scholars as one of the central role players in political representation it is worthwhile to establish what is the actual impact or the influence of one over another. To analyze this relationship, I ran a multiple

linear regression model, results of which are presented in Table 4.3, dependent variable ideological congruence is calculated as the distance between the median voter and the position of the government in 34 European democracies.<sup>5</sup> Independent variable - age of the current regime is a log value of the number of years of uninterrupted democratic governance in the country. The rest of the variables are control variables, often used in the literature of substantive representation. And finally, two interaction coefficients were used to control for combined impact of the degree of disproportionality and the age of the current regime, because of the strong combined influence that highly proportional and old democratic regimes have on political representation (Huffman, 2005). Another interaction effect controlled for in the model is that between the electoral formula and the degree of disproportionality since the more proportional the electoral system is there is the higher chance that translation of votes into seats will be more accurate (Powell, 2000). One of the reasons why I did not control for other micro level variables, age, gender and education level that are often controlled for in studies of political representation is because recent study has found that there is no significant difference between the results provided by different subgroups of society, asserting that if the policy is responsive to the median voter it is responsive to the whole public (Roberts, 2010).

After controlling for every plausible effect and interaction the model shows significance at P-value <.05 for the independent variable of the age of the current regime hence, the hypothesis cannot be rejected. To interpret the analysis of the regression model for the independent variable should be noted that the estimate of the age of the current regime at .462 indicates that every one-year increase in the age of the current regime should decrease the distance between

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> the data about the age of the current regime was not available for Iceland (election years: 1999, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2013), hence it was excluded from the analysis.

the government and the voters by .462 point estimates. Demonstrating that the impact of democratic maturity on ideological congruence is statistically significant. However, the control variables of Human Development Index, Electoral Formula and the degree of disproportionality find no statistical significance at p-values>.05. Therefore, the multiple linear regression model has not proven any impact of electoral systems or degree of disproportionality on ideological congruence, the same applies to the interaction affects with p-values > .05. However, it should be noted that the interaction effect of the degree of disproportionality and the age of the current regime is closer to the significance level with p-value~0.081 than any other control variable. Indicating that it might show statistical significance after some manipulations on the data or the sample size. Here should be noted that the model was tested and it fits the homoscedasticity assumption of the linear model.

The results of the model are important in terms of being different from the conventional studies of the political representation since the impact of electoral reforms and the degree of disproportionality on the ideological congruence do not find statistical significance. Even though this is not the only paper that draws such conclusion (Belchior, 2013) it is still the opposite of what is frequently asserted by scholars. There could be two explanations for this, first is that relatively small sample size of the model might have distorted the results. Second could be that the studies of substantive representation should look beyond the over studied relationships between electoral reforms, proportionality and representation and start exploring alternative explanations of low/high ideological congruence or other factors affecting the ideological distance between the government and the voters. The argument about the impact of the small sample size of the model is less convincing than the second argument. Even though, low R<sup>2</sup> (adjusted R<sup>2</sup>= 0.164) of the model shows that the model does not explain much of the variation of the data, low p-value (p-value<.05) with robust standard errors indicates that the model is significant.

Hence, this analysis demonstrates one step taken into the direction of extending the research on substantive representation and suggests that ideological congruence could benefit from the research concentrating on alternative factors having an impact on congruence other than the electoral systems.

#### 4.5 Limitations

There are several limitations to the multiple linear regression model presented above. First is that the best way of measuring causality are controlled experiments, therefore the statement that "correlation does not imply causation" also applies to my research. Even though the results of the analysis are promising more study is necessary for making broader claims. However, as this paper was only supposed to demonstrate the need for extending the study of the substantive representation the goal of the paper is accomplished. The second important limitation is variables that have not been controlled for that might have distorted the study. As low R<sup>2</sup> indicates there could be several such variables, taking into account that one phenomenon can have multiple causes especially in social sciences or political science (Kellstedt & Whitten, 2018) there is a high chance that dependent variable was affected by other factors that were not omitted from the analysis.

The third and last limitation of the study is the small sample size, even though 93 governments in 34 European democracies were studied for the analysis, the spatial conditions of the paper are still significantly limited and can only be generalized to democratic countries with a parliamentary system. Also, it should be noted that the relationship between socioeconomic development and political representation are characterized with non-linearity (Nový & Katrňák, 2015). This is one of the reasons why human development index has not found statistical significance in my model. This type of data is not very useful for drawing conclusions about the processes or flaws of individual decision-making this is why the data was used only for defining the relationship on the macro level.

## Conclusion

The research paper addresses one of the oldest topics in political science discipline- political representation and the factors influencing it. Since there is a vast amount of research dedicated to this topic, the factors influencing it and the factors that are influenced by it, offering new insight into the study of political representation is a rather challenging task. The paper analyzes political representation and system level factors that might have an influence on it. The type of political representation studied in the paper is substantive representation which corresponds to the ideological congruence between voters and their representatives. The literature on ideological congruence focuses on many individual and party level factors that can influence the ideological congruence between the agent and principal however system level factors are often ignored or found insignificant. Using CSES integrated module dataset this research paper offers a relatively novel approach to the analysis of the factors affecting ideological congruence and proposes that there might be unconventional elements that need to be studied influencing the congruence. Hence, the study examined 34 European parliamentary democracies in 93 election years from 1996 to 2016, most of which use proportional representations and measured the impact of the age of the current regime on ideological congruence between voters and their representatives in these countries.

So far, the most studied and popular factors affecting ideological congruence are electoral systems, party systems and political knowledge. Hence, it is claimed that the PR systems are better at generating the governments that are more representative of their voters (Powell, 2000; 2004) while others oppose with this line of research, claiming that there is no big difference between the types of electoral systems when it comes to the degree of congruence between voters and their representatives (Golder & Stramski, 2010). On the other hand, the multiple linear regression model presented in the paper did not find statistical significance between the

electoral systems and ideological congruence nor between the degree of disproportionality and ideological congruence following the pace of research (Roberts, 2010) claiming that electoral systems might not be as important element in substantive representation as assumed by others. However, statistical significance was reached for the independent variable, demonstrating that every one year increase in the age of democracy should increase ideological congruence approximately by .46 point estimates.

These findings are important for two reasons, first is that it finds no significant relationship between the famously claimed electoral systems and ideological congruence suggesting that the type of electoral system or the degree of proportionality of the government might not be very relevant for achieving high degrees of congruence especially in the countries of European democracies. The second important finding is statistical significance for the system level independent variable - age of the current regime, which opens the new discussion about the often-neglected part of the impact of characteristics of the regime, that might influence the congruence. Scholars assert that in order to generate the need for democracy in people it does not matter how long a democratic regime has been in power, since voters can realize the profits accompanying democracy without experiencing it themselves (Rosema et al., 2011). However, representative democracy and elements that it is comprised from needs time to be shaped and developed, such as individual perceptions about the party's ideologies, parties' experience in participating competitive elections and governments responsiveness and accountability to the people. All of these elements require time and experience. This is why I suggest that system level factors might play a central role in achieving congruence.

On the other hand, I realize that the more research is needed to draw broader claims and causality. This research paper has only focused on one region – Europe which is justified by

the data availability for these countries and variation in the independent variable- age of the current regime in the countries of the region. As a result, this limits the study to only European parliamentary democracies, making generalization of the results troublesome, however large variation in the independent variable could be considered representative of the global trends. The topic would benefit from further research, which would require alteration in the methodology and in the scope of the study as well. The future study would benefit from utilizing more diverse methodology. Even though two sources for measuring congruence – voters and experts survey were used in the paper, the future research will also profit from utilizing manifesto data for analyzing the content of party campaign or candidate profiles. Also, introducing party level controls in the future statistical model such as the age of the party might increase the predicting nature of the model. Benjamin Ferland (2017) has used retrospective ideological representation measuring ideological distance between voters and the government at the end of its office term which is relatively novel approach to the study of congruence and would be interesting to have it integrated in the future research. And finally, testing for system level variables other than what was already discussed in the paper might broaden the research on political representation further and promote its development.

The fact that representative democracies have undergone important changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be rejected, this impacts every element of political representation starting from party systems to voter turnout. Thus as democracies mature the changes in political institutions become inevitable (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). As claimed democratic maturity brings many changes in the regime, for both citizens and their representatives. As more time passes, democratic maturity changes from country to country, old democracies become older and new democracies develop and mature. Hence, in this paper I tried to demonstrate that it might be time to start reassessing what we know about political representation and evaluate it from what

may have been previously conceived as unconventional perspectives. These may result in more interesting outcomes and open new frontiers for research.

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