

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA  
INSTITUTO DE CIENCIAS SOCIAIS



**Parliamentary representative behaviour in times of crisis:  
A comparative perspective with a focus on  
Greece and the Eurozone Crisis**

**Efstratios-Ioannis Kartalis**

Orientadora: Professora Doutora Marina Costa Lobo

Tese especialmente elaborada para a obtenção do grau de Doutor em Ciência Política, na especialidade de Política Comparada

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## ABSTRACT

Much scholarly discussion has been devoted to the impact of the 2009 Eurozone economic Crisis on the functioning of European democracies. Especially for those countries that bailout agreements had to be implemented in, the literature has focused on party systems realignment, quality of democracy, voting patterns and on the quality of representation. Concerning the latter, extant research is not in agreement, with some studies arguing that the crisis has had a negative impact on representation, while others consider that the impact might have had a positive angle as well. As it stands, however, we lack the empirical evidence to uncover the underlying patterns linking the Eurozone crisis with changes in representation. Given the importance of parliaments in the representation process in most European democracies, the question remains as to the particular impact that the economic crisis had on parliamentary representation.

This thesis attempts to answer this research question in two major ways. First, by putting forward a novel way in which to compare pre- and post-electoral party documents which enables us to track party discourse congruence before and after the elections in different economic contexts. Second, by investigating how the Crisis impacted representation by specifically looking at the parliamentary representative behaviour of parties and legislators. It is structured around the conceptualisation and operationalisation of economic crisis as macro-economic conditions of constraint which impinge on different dimensions of parliamentary activity. The impact of these constraints is tested across a multitude of aspects of parliamentary representative behaviour in several crisis-hit countries.

Each chapter examines the empirical impact of macro-economic conditions of constraint on a specific type of parliamentary activity. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of the effects of economic crisis on parliamentary representation. In particular, the thesis places the empirical focus on two important yet not well-researched aspects of parliamentary representative behavior that (together with roll-call voting) constitute the bulk of a legislator's parliamentary activities. Those are speechmaking, which is analyzed in terms of discourse congruence as well as access to the floor, and the use of scrutiny tools through parliamentary questions.

To empirically tackle the research questions, the thesis undertakes a large data collection endeavour. Namely, a large original dataset of around 730,000 unique speeches in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, spanning 24 years of parliamentary plenary debates, 24 elections and 30 political parties was created. Beyond this large corpus, the thesis further narrows its focus on the crucial case of the Greek legislature, the *Vouli*, by constructing a dataset that combines 200,000 plenary speeches and over 12,000 parliamentary current questions spanning 20 years of Greek parliamentary debates. These datasets track the evolution of parliamentary representation before, during and after the Eurozone crisis in contexts of severe but differentiating external economic conditionality.

Methodologically, the thesis relies heavily on text-analysis techniques. First, for the creation of the datasets themselves; second, for the design and validation of a novel parliamentary

mandate fulfillment or discourse congruence measure; and third, for the calculation of a measure of access to the floor and constituency focus in parliamentary questions. Each chapter attempts to determine the impact of economic crisis indicators on different dependent variables measuring parliamentary activity, by employing various regression analysis techniques.

The thesis makes two types of contributions: methodologically, it proposes and validates a novel measure of party discourse congruence, contributing with a tool which can help researchers interested in comparing discursive texts produced by parties, with very large applicability. Empirically, the thesis shows that during times of economic austerity and conditions of constraint, a) both the country's economic performance but also the ensuing conditionality enforced by supranational actors reduce the congruence between pre and post electoral discourse of parties heavily b) access to the floor is restricted with party leaders guarding floor access and refraining from delegating speech time to backbenchers, and c) the likelihood that MPs will table current questions about their constituency decreases. Together, these findings suggest that parliamentary representation was in fact negatively affected by the Crisis, as party's discourse congruence declines, the inclusiveness of access to the floor diminishes, and MPs become less "local" in their speeches.

**Keywords:** Eurozone Crisis, Conditionality, Representation, Parties, Legislators, Parliamentary Behaviour, Speechmaking, Scrutiny, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain

## RESUMO

Grande parte do debate académico tem sido dedicado ao impacto da crise económica da Zona Euro 2009 no funcionamento das democracias europeias. Especialmente nos países que implementaram acordos de resgate, a literatura tem-se centrado no realinhamento dos sistemas partidários, na qualidade da democracia, nos padrões de voto e na qualidade da representação. Relativamente a estes últimos, a investigação existente não é consensual, com alguns estudos a argumentar que a crise teve um impacto negativo na representação, enquanto outros consideram que o impacto poderá ter sido positivo. No entanto, atualmente, faltam-nos as provas empíricas que permitam descobrir os padrões subjacentes que entre a crise da Zona Euro e as mudanças na representação. Dada a importância dos parlamentos no processo de representação na maioria das democracias europeias, a questão que permanece é perceber qual o impacto que a crise económica teve na representação parlamentar.

Esta tese tenta responder a esta questão de investigação de duas formas principais. Primeiro, propondo uma forma inovadora de comparar documentos partidários pré e pós-eleitorais que nos permita acompanhar a congruência do discurso partidário antes e depois das eleições em diferentes contextos económicos. Em segundo lugar, investigando o impacto da crise na representação, analisando especificamente o comportamento representativo parlamentar dos partidos e legisladores. Esta investigação está estruturada em torno da conceptualização e operacionalização da crise económica como condição macroeconómica de constrangimento que colide com diferentes dimensões da atividade parlamentar. O impacto destas restrições é testado através de uma multiplicidade de aspetos do comportamento representativo parlamentar em vários países atingidos pela crise.

Cada capítulo examina o impacto empírico das condições macroeconómicas do constrangimento sobre um tipo específico de atividade parlamentar. Em conjunto, fornecem um quadro abrangente dos efeitos da crise económica na representação parlamentar. Em particular, a tese coloca o enfoque empírico em dois aspetos importantes, mas ainda não analisados do comportamento representativo parlamentar, que (juntamente com a votação nominal) constituem o grosso das atividades parlamentares de um legislador. Estes são: o discurso- analisado em termos de congruência discursiva, bem como o acesso à palavra, e a utilização de instrumentos de escrutínio- através de perguntas parlamentares.

Para abordar empiricamente as questões de investigação, a tese empreende um grande esforço de recolha de dados. Nomeadamente, foi criado um grande acervo de dados originais de cerca de 730.000 discursos únicos da Grécia, Irlanda, Portugal e Espanha, abrangendo 24 anos de debates parlamentares em plenário, 24 eleições e 30 partidos políticos. Para além deste corpus, a tese estreita ainda mais o seu foco no caso da legislatura grega, o Vouli, ao construir um conjunto de dados que combina 200.000 discursos plenários e mais de 12.000 questões parlamentares atuais, abrangendo 20 anos de debates parlamentares gregos. Estes conjuntos de dados acompanham a evolução da representação parlamentar antes, durante e após a crise da Zona Euro em contextos de condicionalidade económica externa severa, mas diferenciadora.

Metodologicamente, a tese baseia-se fortemente em técnicas de análise de texto. Primeiro, para a criação do próprio conjunto de dados; segundo, para a concepção e validação de uma nova medida de avaliação do mandato parlamentar ou de congruência discursiva; e terceiro, para o cálculo de uma medida de acesso à palavra e foco dos círculos eleitorais em questões parlamentares. Cada capítulo tenta determinar o impacto dos indicadores de crise económica em diferentes variáveis dependentes que medem a atividade parlamentar, empregando várias técnicas de análise de regressão.

A tese faz dois tipos de contribuições: metodologicamente, propõe e valida uma nova medida de congruência do discurso dos partidos, contribuindo com uma ferramenta que pode auxiliar os investigadores interessados em comparar textos discursivos produzidos pelos partidos, com uma aplicabilidade muito grande. Empiricamente, a tese mostra que em tempos de austeridade económica e condições de constrangimento, a) tanto o desempenho económico do país como a consequente condicionalidade imposta pelos atores supranacionais reduzem fortemente a congruência entre o discurso pré e pós-eleitoral dos partidos b) o acesso à palavra é restringido com os líderes partidários a guardarem o acesso à palavra e a absterem-se de delegar tempo de discurso aos deputados, e c) a probabilidade de os deputados apresentarem questões atuais sobre os seus círculos eleitorais diminui. Em conjunto, estas conclusões sugerem que a representação parlamentar foi de facto afetada negativamente pela crise económica, à medida que a congruência do discurso do partido diminui, a inclusão do acesso ao uso da palavra diminui, e os deputados tornam-se menos "locais" nos seus discursos.

**Palavras-chave:** Crise da Zona Euro, Condicionalidade, Representação, Partidos, Legisladores, Comportamento Parlamentar, Discurso, Escrutínio, Grécia, Irlanda, Portugal, Espanha

# INTRODUCTION

## The Research Debate and Questions

In most European democracies, “globalisation in general and Europeanisation in particular” (Mair, 2013: 161), has produced circumstances where national governments and parliaments are accountable to many new external stakeholders (Dorussen & Nanou, 2006; Nanou & Dorussen, 2013; Streeck & Thelen, 2005; Schäfer & Streeck, 2013). Policy decision-making centres (mainly in the economic sector) have relocated far from the controlling abilities of domestic actors. Some have even argued that European democracies are “democracies without choice” (Krastev, 2002, Ruiz-Rufino & Alonso, 2017) where, due to external conditionality, the power of national parties and representatives to represent alternative options is constrained and consequently voters’ preferences are not implemented.

The 2009 Eurozone crisis has been considered by some researchers as a classic example of the type of external shocks that further accentuate these negative conditions for representative democracies. The substantial deepening of European fiscal and financial integration that took place as a response to the crisis, introduced a set of new supranational institutions and functions. Among the numerous policy initiatives undertaken during the crisis the most noteworthy were: The expansion and strengthening of the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) which governs the fiscal aspect of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) through the so-called “Six Pack”, the international ‘Fiscal Compact’ agreement and the so-called ‘Two Pack’ regulation. *“The common thread of these substantial initiatives is that they aimed at strengthening the credibility and enforceability of the EMU’s rules-based economic coordination regime through further formal competence transfer”* (Laffan, & Schlosser, 2016: 238). Additionally, the creation of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) in 2010 after Greece’s emergency credit followed by the permanent international financing institution named European Stability Mechanism (ESM), as well as the institution of the Macro-Economic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) and the European Semester which closely monitors national

member-states spending plans, were further significant steps in the deepening of supranational economic integration that took place following the onset of the crisis.

European monetary integration had major conditionality effects that became evident especially for those Member States in the ‘periphery’ of Europe (GIIPS – Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain), where the effects of the crisis were more apparent, and bailout agreements were agreed between national governments and lending institutions. Indeed, these bailout agreements were accompanied by severe conditionality in the form of austerity policies. In most cases, national governments had to adopt policies that not only had further dramatic consequences for the economy<sup>1</sup> but potentially further disrupted the representative links between voters and representatives. The EU has used conditionality to lever domestic reform as a core instrument in the past, especially in cases of accession of new member states (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). However, the crisis elevated this strategy to an unprecedented level (Featherstone, 2015).

The recent Greek parliamentary history illustrates perfectly how conditionality may affect parliamentary representation. In July 2015, during the important and heated parliamentary discussion for the ratification of the required austerity measures for a third bailout agreement, SYRIZA’s leader and then prime minister Alexis Tsipras said he was “willing to implement an irrational proposal he did not believe in so that Greece could avoid a disaster”.<sup>2</sup> Defending the controversial new program as tough but essential came amidst an important rebellion of MPs (about 38) from within the SYRIZA party that voted against or abstained while Tsipras’ government required the backing of their ideological opponents in order to pass the vote.

Greece may well have been the outlier in terms of how manifestly the troika intervened, but other countries had to undergo a series of similar supranational interventions which imposed severe conditionality. Portugal and Ireland were bailed out by the International Monetary Fund and the European Financial Stability Facility in 2011 and 2010 respectively. Spain agreed on a bailout (recapitalization) of its banking sector only, by the European Stability Mechanism in 2012. While Italy, even if not formally bailed out, had to endure “implicit conditionality” committing to an array of structural reforms (Sacchi, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> The IMF itself admitted in a report in 2013 that the austerity implemented in Greece did more damage than expected <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/jun/05/imf-underestimated-damage-austerity-would-do-to-greece>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33535205>

Scholars have often treated the crisis as having an overall negative impact on representative democracy (Bosco & Verney, 2012; Bardi, Bartolini, & Trechsel, 2014; Morlino & Raniolo, 2017). Although the structural reforms and deficit/debt reduction measures that accompanied the bailout agreements required parliamentary validation, they were introduced in swift ‘non-majoritarian’ or ‘special’ majority ways (Morlino & Raniolo, 2017: 111; Moury & De Giorgi, 2015) through the legislative functions of national parliaments. It became apparent that the main reforms on fiscal, budgetary or public administration policy sectors as part of the austerity policies were decided by external actors and enforced on domestic ones. By reading the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) signed between debtor countries and their creditors one can understand that they specify each country’s economic policy in great detail, leaving governments with almost no room for manoeuvre (Alonso, 2014: 11; Moury & De Giorgi, 2015; Ruiz-Rufino & Alonso, 2017; Ruiz-Rufino 2021).

However, the research on the effects of the crisis, has also highlighted some positive effects of the crisis on representation. Studies have shown that the crisis proved an excellent opportunity for the implementation of neo-liberal policies that governments and parties might have been previously reluctant to represent (Alonso, 2014). Indeed, Moury and Freire (2013) showed increased levels of congruence between the favorite policies of centre-right cabinet members and the conditions of the Portuguese MoU. Similarly, Kitschelt (2000) posited earlier that exactly when links between parties and particular constituencies decline, the electoral market competition grows. Morlino and Raniolo (2017) brought evidence to support Kitschelt’s position and argued that, in those countries, the new parties that had the possibility to enter the political arena could bring renewed quality of representation.

Additionally, important findings from the electoral behavior literature showed that the crisis eroded support not only for incumbents but for all mainstream parties, leading to parliamentary fragmentation (Hernandez & Kriesi, 2016). This literature further mapped how the crisis shifted voters’ choices towards challenger parties, based on preferences that directly flow from the euro crisis: EU integration, austerity and immigration (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016). Knowing whether these new parties were capable of better representing their voters becomes very important. Nevertheless, a decade later, the academic jury is still out on the crisis’ specific implications for the quality of representation (Fernandes & Magalhães, 2020). Thus, there is an important puzzle to solve: on the one hand there are studies which point to the decline in quality of representation, whereas others tend to consider that the crisis may have had a positive

effect for the links between the electorate and politicians. This thesis aims to contribute to this debate, through a focus on parliamentary behaviour.

Naturally, national parliaments play a fundamental role in ensuring quality of representation. Parliaments are ‘one of the major pillars of representative democracy’ (Thomassen, 2014). They are also a very important link in the ‘chain of representation’ (Muller, 2000). Parliaments have been extensively studied in comparative contexts and data from various parliaments have been used to investigate, among others, party competition and legislative coalition formation, strategic behavior of individual MPs and legislative parties, party unity and intra-party politics, and MP responsiveness to voters and other outside interests (e.g., Carey 2007; Eggers and Spirling 2016; Hix 2004; Hix and Noury 2016; Sieberer, 2006; Saafeld, 2000) and more recently implementing automated and text-analysis approaches (e.g., Proksch & Slapin 2010).

Understanding the effects of the crisis on parliamentary representative behavior of legislators and parties alike becomes crucial. In fact, we do not know much about whether and how the representative capacity in terms of behavior of parliamentary actors was affected. Research is very limited on how these actors adjust their behavior when governments and legislatures must respond to the claims of external audiences like the international markets or the EU.

Still, there has been research on certain dimensions of the impact of the crisis on parliamentary work, especially concerning EU politicisation and roll-call voting. Indeed, we now have a solid understanding concerning the increased politicization of the EU in national parliaments during the crisis (Kinski 2018; Auel et. al., 2016). These studies have identified certain patterns. Namely, Auel and colleagues using data from plenary activities in seven EU parliaments from 2010 to 2013 showed that political contestation in public opinion has a positive impact on parliamentary communication of EU affairs while contestation within parliament may hamper it. Similarly, with a representative claims’ analysis of plenary debates approach in Austria, Germany and Ireland, Kinski shows us that politicization is not driven by pro-EU MPs. It is mostly Eurosceptic MPs who voice opposition to the crisis measures in the name of European citizens.

The literature also presents important empirical evidence from a variety of cases on roll-call voting. Findings from roll-call voting on crisis measures overall and during the debates with the most heightened inter and intra-party tensions showed that economic conditions can:

change party stances towards austerity (Maatsch, 2016), as well as increase vote shifting in parliament (Moury & De Giorgi, 2015; Blumenau & Lauderdale, 2018; Maatsch 2016). Similarly, conditionality in the form of presence of bailout loans does impact the voting behaviour of parties on anti-crisis measures (Bohle, 2014; Maatsch, 2014). The crisis has also been shown to shift voting alignments in the European Parliament (Braghiroli, 2015, Roger et. al., 2017).

This thesis aims at contributing to this literature. It does so by looking at the potential impact of external shocks and conditions of constraint specifically on parliamentary representation, by answering the following research question:

***What is the impact of supranational economic conditions of constraint on parliamentary representative behavior?***

In order to answer this research question and contribute to the literature on the crisis effects on representation, the thesis draws on the extant literature on parliamentary behaviour. This literature has tended to divide parliamentary activities in two major groups of functions/activities: a) legislative and b) non-legislative (e.g., Green-Pedersen 2010; Kepplinger 2002). Following this categorization, legislative activities are those that derive some material consequences for society by directly impacting current legislation. Non-legislative activities may have no material consequences for society and primarily imply the generation of attention around an issue, for example through the means of a parliamentary debate or an answer from the government. We could argue that the increased politicization, which focuses primarily on non-legislative activity might eventually bring legislative change, but this is certainly different than the direct effects of legislative activities per se.

Within these two broad categories, parliamentarians perform four major functions: a) legislation, b) representation, c) scrutiny and d) oversight. In turn, these functions are linked to the use of specific parliamentary tools that could be summarized as: Roll-Call Voting, Speeches, Scrutiny Tools (and the various forms that those might take within each parliament, i.e., questions, current questions, interpellations, requests, etc.), Bill Initiation and Committee Activities (see for example: Green-Pedersen 2010; Papp & Russo, 2018 and Bouteica et. al., 2019). Each Parliament has its own set of rules that then shape the way parliamentarians can

fulfil their representative functions using different tools. Those are in turn likely to be affected by several factors such as party system, government type, or the electoral system (Bäck, Debus & Fernandes, forthcoming).

Considering all parliamentary activities, and with regards to the crisis, we only have a satisfactory level of empirical evidence on roll-call voting activities (Maatsch, 2016; Moury & De Giorgi, 2015; Blumenau & Lauderdale, 2018; Braghiroli, 2015, Roger et. al., 2017). The present thesis attempts to extend the scope of the literature on the crisis' impact on parliamentary behavior. It focuses on two important yet not well-researched aspects of parliamentary representative behavior that (together with roll-call voting) constitute the bulk of a legislator's parliamentary work. Those are speechmaking and the use of scrutiny tools.

These primarily non-legislative parliamentary functions are an important piece of the parliamentary activities puzzle for a multitude of reasons. Not only do they constitute a significant proportion of parliamentary activities, as discussed earlier, but can also be important tools for parties and MPs alike, in their representative efforts. Among other functions, they have been shown to work as a way to impact the agenda (Akirav, 2021) and a way to enhance substantive representation of under-represented groups like minorities (Saalfeld, 2011).

Additionally, parliamentary speech, other than a largely ineffective method of persuasion during legislative debates, it can be a powerful communication mechanism to the wider public (Proksch, and Slapin, 2015). For example, it has been found to be used to attract media attention and communicate positions to the public (Maltzman and Sigelman 1996). Also, MPs increase salience in speeches on certain issues when elections approach (Quinn et al. 2010), and governing parties use speeches to differentiate their position from competitors or coalition partners come election time (Martin and Vanberg 2008).

Similarly, parliamentary oversight/scrutiny tools have been considered a way for parliamentarians to influence the final outcome of decision-making. MPs and parties can employ scrutiny tools for a number of reasons. If they belong to the opposition, they may use them to pressure or challenge cabinet members over issues of concern. Government MPs, by contrast, may support 'their' cabinets by asking questions that allow ministers to demonstrate and highlight a specific government success. Individual MPs may also use these tools to enhance their own reputation towards, and signal to, their own constituents (e.g. Martin, 2011; Russo and Wiberg 2010).

But non-legislative parliamentary functions are also, and perhaps more importantly, a way to influence the policy-making process. In the last few decades, representative assemblies have been marginalized at least in their traditional role as legislators and decisionmakers and non-legislative tools can be leveraged as a way to counter this development. Griglio (2020) shows how in times of crisis, and in particular, the Covid-19 Pandemic, where executive dominance over parliamentary affairs increases, non-legislative tools become an important mechanism for members of parliament from both opposition and government parties, to engage in the representative process. It is in such circumstances of parliament marginalization, when oversight of the executive becomes a strategic function for the democratic legitimacy of policy-making.

Our knowledge of how speechmaking was affected by the crisis is much more limited in comparison to roll-call voting. What we do know is that the crisis can reduce the legislative agenda to only bills about the economy (Pedrazzani et al., 2018) and reduce mandate fulfillment (Thomson & Costello, 2017). Yet, these studies focused on single country case studies that do not lend themselves to greater generalizations.

With regards to the potential effects of the crisis on the use of scrutiny tools, to the best of my knowledge, the literature has yet to produce any evidence. Certain studies that look into cases that were affected by the crisis and include time frames in their analyses that cover the crisis period (e.g. Fernandes et. al., 2018; Russo, 2011), are not explicitly aiming at responding to these research questions and consequently do not offer satisfactory responses.

Consequently, this thesis aims at contributing to these theoretical, methodological and empirical lacunae. Theoretically, because it widens the scope of parliamentary activities' analysis which studies are normally focused upon, especially when considering parliamentary mandate fulfilment, thus widening the scope of what can be understood as mandate fulfilment. Methodologically, because it operationalizes "parliamentary mandate fulfilment" developed earlier (Louwerse 2012), by proposing a novel extended measure for it. Empirically, since it contributes to the analysis of the specific impact of the crisis on parliamentary representative behavior with a focus on non-legislative activities. Last but not least, all chapters make use of original parliamentary datasets that were elaborated for the purposes of this thesis, and will subsequently be made publicly available for academic research.

## **Empirical Strategy**

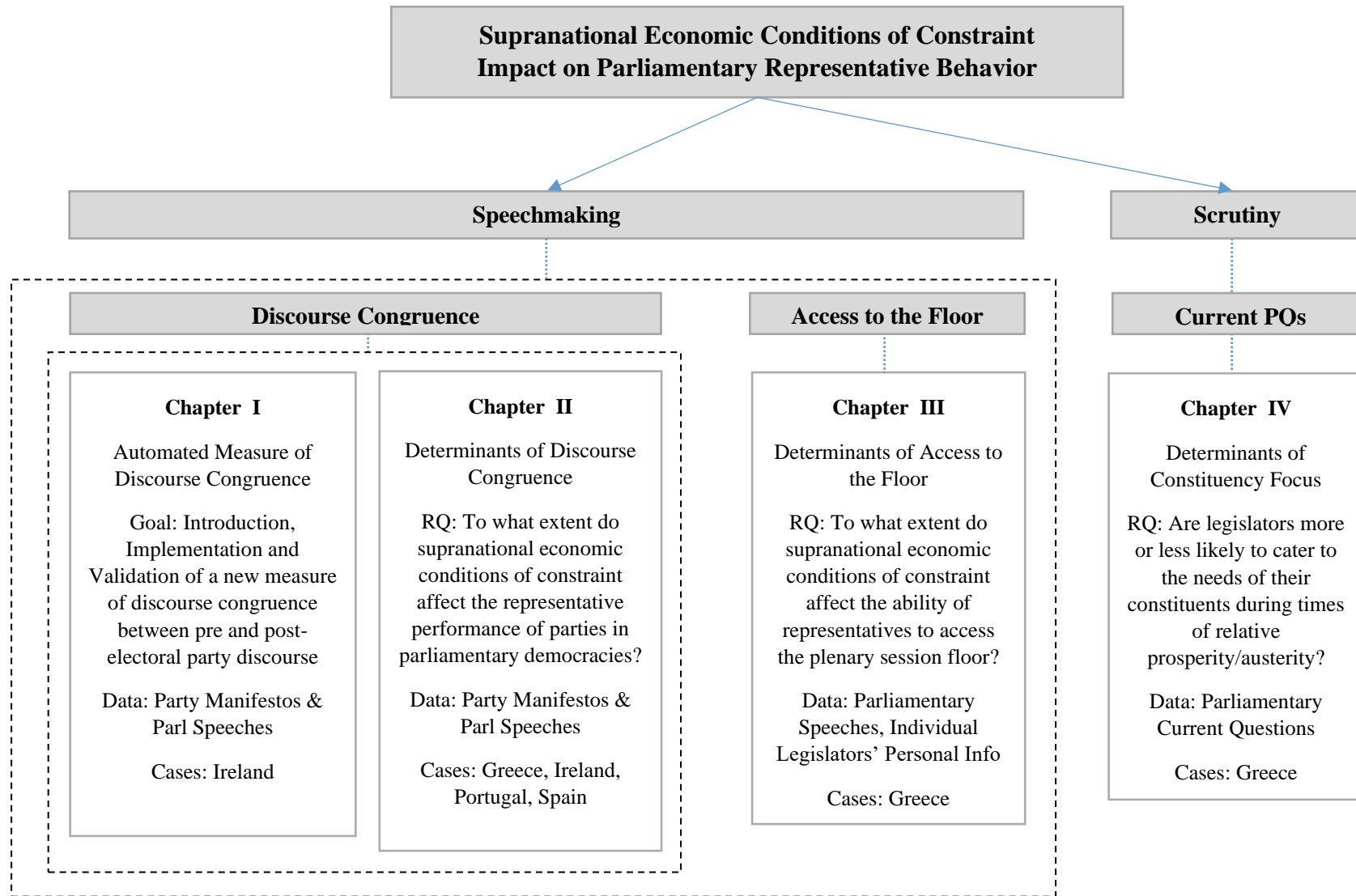
This section presents the research design employed in the attempt to respond to the research question. In order to understand “the impact of supranational economic conditions of constraint on parliamentary representative behaviour”, different dependent variables are operationalized and used throughout the thesis, which are all measures of parliamentary representative behaviour.

For the reasons explained earlier, non-legislative activities are the main research focus, looking at speechmaking and scrutiny in particular. Speechmaking is further broken down into two components which are analyzed in the first three chapters, namely: Discourse Congruence and Access to the Floor. The last chapter focuses solely on scrutiny tools, namely parliamentary current questions. As will be further explained in each of the respective chapters, both types of non-legislative activities are very important for how the quality of representation unfolds post-electorally.

Figure 1.1 presents the structure of the thesis graphically. Chapter one introduces a novel measure of discourse congruence at the party level that is based on the parliamentary mandate fulfillment conceptualization (Louwse 2011, 2012). It conceptualizes, develops, validates and implements a measure of text similarity between party manifestos with post-electoral parliamentary discourse in plenary sessions using data from Ireland and a corpus of 140,000 speeches from 1994 to 2020.

Chapter two utilizes the measure developed and validated in chapter one and implements it in a comparative empirical analysis of four countries severely hit by the crisis: Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. The parliamentary data used include a total of around 730,000 unique speeches, spanning 24 years of parliamentary plenary debates, 24 elections and 30 political parties. It theorizes the possible effects of the country’s worsening economic performance but also the ensuing conditionality enforced by supranational actors. The effects on discourse congruence are statistically tested by means of a panel data multivariate regression analysis in which other standard controls (i.e., incumbency status, seat share, ideological placement) are included.

**Figure 1.1** Thesis Structure



Still focusing on speechmaking, chapter three turns the attention on a very important case when studying the impact of the crisis. This case is Greece, and the third chapter<sup>3</sup> examines the politics of legislative debate in the country's legislature in general and more importantly, looks at the impact of the crisis on access to the floor. It uses parliamentary speechmaking data from all plenary sessions from 2000 to 2019 with a total of almost 200,000 unique speeches and interventions, spanning 20 years of parliamentary debates, 3330 plenary sessions and 7 legislative terms before, during, and after the crisis. Access to the floor is explained in a multivariate model in this chapter, using regression analysis where the unit of analysis is the legislator in each legislative term. The model includes the main economic performance independent variable, as well as other factors (i.e., their gender, their age, their seniority and the incumbency status of their party, among others) and tries to explain the different levels of speech giving in the Greek plenary sessions.

The fourth and last chapter analyses the use of scrutiny tools. It delves deeper into the Greek case once again and presents the impact that the crisis had on how Greek legislators use parliamentary questions. It covers an extended period of six Greek legislatures and over 12,000 parliamentary current questions asked pre-, during and post-crisis between 2006 and 2019. The constituency focus of each question is explained by means of a multivariate logistic regression that includes the main economic performance independent variable as well as other relevant control variables (i.e., incumbency status, ideological placement, electoral vulnerability). Although not intended to introduce or amend legislation, parliamentary questions' use has grown in western European parliaments in the last decades (Green-Pedersen 2010). They are primarily thought to be an ex-post government scrutiny tool but are considered an important component of parliamentary activities. It is an instrument available in most West European democracies, that strikes a fine balance between institutionalized visibility and unconstrained participation opportunities, minimally affected by informal party rules (Martin 2011).

### *Methodological Approach*

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<sup>3</sup> This chapter was co-authored with Dr. Marina Costa Lobo and has already been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press, as is, as a chapter in a book by Bäck, H., Debus, M., & Fernandes, JM (eds) intitled: "The Politics of Legislative Debate". My contribution to the piece was: a) Collecting the data from the original source, b) Data cleaning and pre-processing, c) Creation of Dataset and main variables for the analysis, d) Performing the analysis and e) Drafting the chapter's text.

In terms of its methodological approach, the thesis makes use of a large variety of automated text-analysis techniques, at different stages of the thesis. During the dataset creation stage, web-crawling and scraping techniques were implemented in order to access the official websites of the parliaments where the information was publicly available. The textual information collected was then treated with specific steps in order to correct errors, drop unnecessary information and produce ready-to-use machine-readable text data. Then, for the calculation of the measures of access to the floor but also constituency representation, and especially in the first chapter, where the novel discourse congruence measure is introduced, state-of-the-art methods of text analysis are utilized for the calculation and validation of the measure. Each of these methodological steps are explained in detail in the corresponding chapters.

Assuming this text-as-data methodological approach was not a random methodological decision for the thesis nor is it simply data-driven. Automated methods for the collection and the analysis of textual political data come with certain pros and cons. On the one hand, they allow for the analytical digestion of large amounts of data without the need to resort to costly and resource-intensive manual examinations. Additionally, more and more political text is becoming available online while the increasing quality and availability of automated translation tools (e.g. Lucas et al. 2015; Proksch et al. 2018) increases the feasibility of comparative analyses of political text corpora. They also present more impartial and objective takes on the data analysed, eliminating the (more often than not) biased manual input of coders.

On the other hand, it is important to understand the caveats that come with their use. Although the methods are becoming increasingly sophisticated, in comparison to qualitative manual approaches, they are still restricted in their ability to examine data in depth. A researcher can only reach a certain amount of analytical complexity before the automated methods start producing random indiscernible noise.<sup>4</sup>

Given the potential as well as the limitations of text analysis, and with the objective of examining parliamentary representative behavior in particular, the choice was made with the following reasoning in mind. First, text analysis is used primarily because of the amount of data at hand and the immense resources that any manual/qualitative approach (even partially computer-assisted) attempting to engage with such data would require. Just by reading the lines

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<sup>4</sup> For a further, more detailed, discussion of these issues, read among others: Grimmer & Stuart, 2013; Wilkerson & Casas, 2017; Gentzkow et. Al., 2019

in the previous section one can grasp the sheer size of the entire set of over 730,000 speeches from the four different parliaments examined in the thesis. This is not a trivial number. Even handling and loading the data (about 720 MBs in size) in most qualitative content analysis software packages like NVivo, MAXQDA or ATLAS.ti would cause them to crash. Handling it, and even more so analyzing it through the use of programming languages like python and R becomes almost a necessity. Although in most comparative perspectives findings from just four cases would not lend themselves to broader generalizations this number of cases was only possible because of the use of automated methods and any other qualitative methodological choice would limit the case selection even further.

Secondly, the thesis sits on the shoulders of “methodological giants”, meaning that the majority of the data collection (but also measurement) techniques and methods utilized have been previously extensively used and validated. Without re-inventing the wheel with any of the techniques used in terms of how they work (mathematically, programmatically or structurally), the thesis creatively implements them in these particular research questions. Even in the first chapter where a new conceptualization and method of comparing pre and post electoral party rhetoric is introduced, the methodological idea is drawn from the computational linguistics literature and the re-implementation of a relatively established document comparison method. Other scholars have previously used such methods to extract parliamentary speech data from plenary session documents, scrape relevant data from parliamentary websites, collect parliamentary questions and generally extract meaning from these texts.

Thirdly, due to the vast proliferation and validation of such approaches in the social sciences. Despite their potential problems or mostly because of their potential benefits, the use of political text for research purposes has already taken place across a diverse set of textual sources including: media data (Young & Soroka, 2012); parliamentary speeches (Proksch & Slapin, 2010; Quinn et al., 2010); presidential, MPs and party statements, proposed legislation and bills (Adler & Wilkerson, 2013; Grimmer, 2009) and it is now a common and very useful way to study representation with large corpora already available to the public (e.g. Rauh et al., 2017; Schumacher et al., 2016).

### *Case Selection*

In terms of the cases examined, the thesis mainly relies on data from the parliaments of four crisis-hit countries, namely: Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. As has been explained above, the aim is to understand the impact which the crisis had on parliamentary representative activities. The case selection seems apt for this purpose for the following reasons. Firstly, these cases share important democratic and political characteristics. Namely, they are all consolidated democracies, mostly of the third wave of democratization, EU members who participated in both the EMU and Eurozone and have been characterized by a strong support for EU membership up until the onset of the crisis (Gunther et. al., 2001, Morlino and Raniolo, 2017, Llamazares & Gramacho, 2007). Secondly, they practically constitute the universe of member states (except for Cyprus) that experienced conditionality in one form or another since the onset of the 2009 crisis. Thirdly, as will be explained in further detail when the main independent variable for the thesis is introduced, although these countries all suffered enormously during the crisis, they do offer important empirical differentiation in both the key variables that interest this thesis: i.e. Conditionality and macro-economic performance.

Furthermore, Greece is empirically particularly prominent in this thesis and is featured in all chapters either as a stand-alone case study or as part of a comparative study together with other similar countries (i.e. Chapter two). This methodological choice is justified based on the importance of the Greek case when studying the effects of the Eurozone Crisis overall and on representation in particular, for the following reasons. Firstly, the Greek legislature is a very informative case not least because the country suffered the biggest impact in macro and micro economic terms and had to implement the lengthiest and largest bailout packages. Greece experienced both the deepest and the longest economic recession out of all its European partners. It's GDP fell from €242 billion in 2008 to €179 billion in 2014; a 26% decline. It was the case where troika intervened most manifestly and where the biggest bailout package was implemented.<sup>5</sup> In a way, Greece is what methodologists have termed as “a most likely case” (e.g., Gerring 2007), one where the effects of the Crisis are expected to be present to the greatest extent. It is expected that if it matters for legislative speechmaking in general, it should matter in Greece in particular, given the intensity of the crisis' impact there. Acting as a minimum threshold, being unable to find evidence of a potential effect in this case would mean that the theoretical expectation can easily be dismissed. Secondly, Greece presents an empirically interesting institutional setting. As will be described more extensively throughout the thesis but

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<sup>5</sup> By the time of writing these lines and more than a decade after the onset of the crisis, Greece still operates under its 9<sup>th</sup> post-bailout Enhanced Surveillance System (ESF).

more prominently in the third chapter, the Greek legislature although dominated by party discipline, operates within an electoral system that offers clear incentives to individual MPs to cultivate a personal vote. Additionally, although its electoral system uses open lists<sup>6</sup> and candidates have important clientelistic ties to their constituencies, the role of parties, come election time, is crucial while the bonus seats system implemented gives parties leeway to reward or punish its members of parliament. This “ambiguous” political context offers important insight in the study of constituency representation. Lastly, although Greece has drawn a wealth of crisis-related research over the past decade (among others see: Bosco & Verney, 2012; 2016; Freire et. al., 2016; Lisi & Santana-Pereira, 2014; Tsirbas, 2016; Lamprianou & Ellinas, 2017; Tsatsanis et. al., 2014), its parliament remains a relatively understudied institution in the legislative studies literature. Thus, this thesis elaborates important original datasets that can substantially contribute corroborating or challenging previous findings on some of the topics addressed.

#### *The main Independent variable – Economic Performance Index*

The thesis broadly focuses on the ways in which the crisis conditions of economic constraint, (i.e. the immediate macro-economic impact but also the ensuing conditionality) have affected the parliamentary representative behaviour, measured in different ways. In this vein, what the thesis’ chapters have in common is the use of a common indicator - the Economic Performance Index (EPI)- as the main independent variable in regression analyses where the dependent variable captures different dimensions of speechmaking or scrutiny in bailed-out Europe. EPI is the variable that has been chosen in order to operationalize economic conditions of constraint and has been included in all of the respective empirical analyses as the main independent variable. It taps into the national macro-economic performance and attempts to gauge the economic impact of the crisis. It is a composite index that combines information on inflation, unemployment, the government deficit, and GDP growth (Khramov & Lee, 2013) and the data used to calculate it in all chapters and at the respective time intervals is drawn from the OECD database.

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<sup>6</sup> something that has been shown to have important implications for the individual legislators’ strategic behavior in parliaments e.g. Carey & Shugart 1995

Figure 1.2, shows the EPI index for each country included in the thesis by calendar quarter from 1995 to 2019. As is evident from the figure, all four countries experienced a sharp decrease in their macro-economic performance at the onset of the crisis in 2009. However, both the degree of economic decline as well as the rate at which they recovered is quite different between them. Portugal for example, did not face the same steep decline as the other three countries and Spain still has not reached the pre-crisis EPI levels.

**Figure 1.2** Economic Performance Index (EPI) by Country included in the Thesis



Beyond the EPI which measures trends in economic performance, the thesis also considers the impact of conditionality on parliamentary behaviour. Overall, there are two types of conditionality: explicit conditionality, based on formalized, explicit covenants through MoUs and implicit conditionality, based on threats from EU institutions (Sacchi 2015). While we acknowledge that explicit conditionality's impact may certainly be correlated with EPI they are worthy of inclusion, since EPI captures the whole period for which the data was collected whereas conditionality captures a specific time-period. In the second chapter, as well as the third chapter a variable measuring the explicit EU conditionality on the countries is included.

Therefore, the thesis empirically studies the impact of these predictors- EPI and conditionality- on three dependent variables -discourse congruence, access to the floor and current questions- that capture non-legislative parliamentary behaviour. In order to test the

economic factors' impact on discourse congruence a novel measure of text similarity between manifestos and speeches per party and calendar quarter is calculated in the first and second chapters. To test the economic factors' impact on access to the floor, in the third chapter, a measure of number of speeches delivered by each legislator in each legislative term is calculated. Lastly, to assess the impact of our key independent variable on the use of scrutiny tools, the last chapter turns the attention to the parliamentary question where a measure of constituency focus is calculated.

## **Findings Overview**

The empirical and statistical analyses unveiled important findings that held for an array of statistical tests.

In chapter one, we were able to operationalize and validate a novel measure for discourse congruence. This is important, because it can be used in different contexts, and this is indeed what Chapter 2 does, and is both a theoretical and methodological contribution to the field of parliamentary studies.

In chapter two, by tracking the evolution of representation before, during and after the Eurozone crisis in countries that underwent periods of severe and differentiating external economic conditionality, the analysis of discourse congruence brought interesting results. The chapter theorizes the possible effects of the country's economic performance but also the ensuing conditionality enforced by supranational actors. The findings show that both predictors reduce the performance of parties measured in different ways.

In chapter three, the evidence on access to the floor in Greece brings important evidence that during times of crisis, party leaders guard floor access and refrain from delegating speech time to backbenchers. Finally, in chapter four, the statistical analysis of constituency focus, provides evidence that better national economic performance conditions increase the likelihood that MPs will table current questions about their constituency, although other traditional factors like electoral vulnerability remain important.

Together, these findings suggest that parliamentary representation was in fact negatively affected by the Crisis. Discourse congruence between electoral and post-electoral rhetoric worsened, access to the floor was hampered, while constituency focus in parliamentary

questions was reduced. All else being equal, all these aspects are important for the quality of representation as will be explained later. The fact that they are impacted by negative macro-economic performance at the national level is indicative of the impact of the Crisis on parliamentary representation.

## **Importance and Contribution**

The present thesis' contribution to the literature is multifold, bringing important empirical/geographical evidence, extending past approaches both methodologically and conceptually but also theoretically enriching our understanding of the events that unfolded in the past decade.

### *Theoretical Contribution*

Firstly, from a theoretical standpoint, it introduces a novel predictor of parties and legislators' parliamentary behavior. Crisis conditions of constraint (macro-economic performance and explicit conditionality) are considered predictors of parliamentary behaviour, namely: discourse congruence, access to the floor, and constituency focus. The evidence is very scarce in this regard and especially on how individual legislators shift the focus of their representative efforts towards their constituents (to the best of my knowledge), this has not been done before.

Additionally, it advances the literature on the broader political consequences of the crisis. This literature has concentrated primarily on the electoral consequences (Bosco and Verney, 2012; Bellucci et al., 2012), satisfaction with democracy (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014; Ruiz-Rufino and Alonso 2018), political spaces in party competition (Hutter et al., 2018), voting behaviour in parliament (De Giorgi and Moury, 2015) and policy responsiveness (Fernandes & Magalhães, forthcoming). Parliamentary representative behavior has received scarce empirical attention and this thesis brings evidence that can provide a critical test for the quality of representation in contemporary European representative democracies.

Overall, in a context of already low levels of political trust, contested legitimacy and overall democratic deficit concerns (Naurin, 2011, Ruiz-Rufino & Alonso, 2017; Alonso & Ruiz-Rufino, 2020) answering the question of whether the crisis has on the one hand affected and

on the other deteriorated the representative capacity and efforts of parties and legislators becomes very important. In Europe, we are witnessing alarming long-term trends. Declining voter turnout (Mair, 2013) and trust in institutions and parliaments (Torcal, 2016) as well as the growth of general political discontent in the face of political life (Dahlberg et al., 2014).

Armingeon and co-authors found that in those cases where the EU and the IMF intervened during the crisis, there was a reduction in trust in national and European institutions and satisfaction with democracy (Armingeon & Ceka, 2014; Armingeon et al., 2016). Although a broad ‘crisis of democracy’ might have been exaggerated (Schraff & Schimmelfennig, 2019), these indicators do suggest increasing numbers of critical citizens possessing little confidence in some key democratic institutions (Dalton, 2000: 35). A share of 76% of EU citizens stated that they tended not to trust political parties while the same answer for national parliaments received 60% of the responses according to the November 2019 Eurobarometer.<sup>7</sup> It is important to know what the crisis might have done to the chain of representation and in particular whether the very important link of parliamentary deliberation, functioning and policy authorization has weakened.

### *Methodological Contributions*

From a methodological standpoint, this thesis adds to the literature on party mandate fulfilment by extending past research (both conceptually and methodologically) to examine the representative performance of parties. A lot of research has been devoted to the way in which parties deliver on their pre-election promises. Extant studies have delved into both incumbent performance (e.g. Thomson et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2017), as well as parliamentary behaviour in general, including opposition parties (Serra-Silva & Belchior 2020). Scholars of the party mandate model (APSA, 1950; Ranney, 1951; Thomassen, 1994) have tended to focus on the fulfilment of electoral pledges once the party is in government, whereas less attention has been dedicated to the comparison between election pledges and parliamentary discourse, i.e. the parliamentary mandate (see Louwerse, 2011; 2012). In the second and third chapters, this thesis makes an important contribution to this literature with the introduction of a novel measure of discourse congruence and its implementation in a comparative research scenario.

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<sup>7</sup> European Commission, Brussels (2019): Eurobarometer 92 (11/2019)

Additionally, most of these studies have used manual content analysis, and the rare, automated analyses have not been able to measure parties' congruence before and after the election. This thesis is important in that it leverages recent developments in computational linguistics and describes a new measure of parliamentary mandate fulfilment that extends past attempts. It applies text-analysis methodological tools to the field of legislative studies in a novel way and manages to successfully and with satisfactory performance measure the extent to which parties' manifestos and subsequent parliamentary speeches are similar.

The measure introduced has the capacity to provide empirical evidence as to whether legislators and parties carry their electoral rhetoric into parliaments without the need for costly manual coding while enabling cross-party longitudinal comparisons. It can easily be applied to a variety of specific research questions by simply adjusting the parts of the texts to capture the similarity on specific topics/issues. It is then only a matter of feeding the respective texts into the pipeline. Finally, it is easily scalable to multiple countries, since it is language-blind, and requires minimal manual input.

### *Empirical Contribution*

Lastly, from an empirical/geographical standpoint, the thesis contributes to the literatures of both legislative studies and the effects of the Eurozone crisis by bringing important original empirical data.

The case-studies involving Greece make use of original parliamentary datasets that were built specifically for the purposes of the thesis including access to the floor, speechmaking, individual legislators' characteristics and scrutiny tools that are found throughout the thesis' chapters. As explained earlier, the Greek legislature is a relatively understudied institution, and the creation of these datasets might be helpful for future research on these topics and beyond.

Furthermore, an important empirical lacuna in the literature is that the analysis of Southern European countries has been absent from studies on the parliamentary mandate fulfillment. Representation and issue congruence studies as well as those studies implementing the pledge approach have looked at some of those countries but not with parliamentary point of view assumed in this thesis. The thesis overall, and in the third comparative chapter in particular, attempts to fill this gap by providing a rich picture of mandate fulfilment (the discourse

congruence variation) with the use of original parliamentary speeches datasets from understudied cases.

## CHAPTER I

### **Parliamentary Mandate Fulfilment. An automated approach to measuring congruence between the pre and post-electoral discourse of parties using word embeddings.**

#### **Introduction**

The party mandate model's logic (an idea that dates back to the 1950s and the influential "responsible parties" report: APSA, 1950) lies in the premise that voters choose parties according to the policies they propose and in turn, once in power, parties must enact these policies. Indeed, a strong program-to-policy linkage is important for theories of representation. The empirical study of this linkage has relied extensively upon the 'responsible party model' and there is already a well-developed body of literature on this topic (among others: Esaiasson & Holmberg, 1996; Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Powell, 2000, 2004; Thomassen, 1994; Thomson et al., 2012).

Scholars of the party mandate model have tended to focus on the fulfilment of electoral pledges once the party is in government, whereas less attention has been dedicated to the comparison between election pledges and parliamentary discourse, ie the parliamentary mandate (see Louwerse, 2011; 2012). The present chapter aims to contribute to this literature. Recent developments in computational linguistics allow researchers to shed new methodological light on what is still an understudied aspect of the quality of representation. This chapter takes advantage of these developments and designs, tentatively validates, and implements a novel measure of the degree of similarity between the pre and post-electoral rhetoric of parties.

In the following sections the reader can find a detailed literature review on how the problem of measuring mandate fulfilment has been tackled until now, followed by the introduction of the new measures and its application to the Irish parliament. Next follows the presentation of the validation exercise. Finally, the possible applications of the measure for future research are discussed.

## Literature Review

The party mandate model has been conceived by scholars as providing a governing mandate to the winning party or parties (Ranney, 1951). The congruence is achieved if they fulfill their electoral commitments. Mandate fulfillment is the extent to which the electoral mandate is translated into government policy output.

One of the earliest systematic attempts looking at election pledges, focused on the United States (Pomper & Lederman, 1980) and employed the *saliency approach*. Scholars that use this approach compare how the electoral emphasis on a certain issue, translates into increases in government spending in the corresponding policy area (Hofferbert & Budge, 1992; Klingeman et al., 1994). In terms of methodology however, Royed (1996), locates the main point of criticism in the assumption that a promise to enact a policy necessarily means observable spending increases.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, policies can naturally include cuts which are not accounted for with this approach. Hence, he developed a more straightforward approach to assessing the fulfilment of party pledges by directly looking at specific promises/pledges and measuring whether they were realized or not. The so-called *pledge approach* was subsequently used by various scholars (e.g. Artés & Bustos, 2008; Mansergh & Thomson, 2007; Naurin, 2009; Thomson, 2001; Thomson et al., 2012).

Most researchers on mandate fulfilment have now implemented one of the two methodological approaches described above despite certain limitations identified. Those namely are the difficulty of distinguishing between ‘fully’ and ‘partially’ fulfilled pledges, and that election pledges are not weighted based on their electoral salience.

Meanwhile, the mandate model has also been conceived in an alternative way. Although winning parties have the mandate to govern, opposition parties have still received a mandate to represent their voters in parliament. Louwse (2011, 2012), calls this “the parliamentary

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<sup>8</sup> For further reviews of the saliency approach, also see Mansergh & Thomson, 2007; Naurin, 2014)

mandate”. This mandate gives parties the obligation to maintain their policy stances before and after the election. This approach extends the reach of the party mandate model to encapsulate opposition parties (Serra-Silva & Belchior, 2020). Working at the level of the party system, Louwrese’s approach is spatial, looking at the entire legislative arena, considering the party mandate linkage between parties in parliament and their voters. He considers the mandate fulfilled not only when there is congruence between voters’ opinions and policy output but also when the views and interests of the people have been taken into account during the process that produced said output. It is the comparison of the electoral party competition with the parliamentary party competition. Essentially pitting parties’ election manifestos against their speeches in parliament after being elected. He shifts the analysis from individual party mandate fulfilment to what he calls the “collective mandate fulfilment”, an idea that derives from Golder and Stramski’s concept of the “many to many” issue congruence (2010: 95).

Nevertheless, if one looks at the sheer amount of scholarly work implementing the pledge approach, it is obvious that the literature on mandate fulfilment has been mostly about it. Although attempting to tap empirically on the fulfilment of concrete pledges is very valuable for representation studies, we must not forget the role of parliamentary debates and of opposition parties in this process. Bearing in mind that not only are parliaments the principal political arena but also an indispensable link in the ‘chain of representation’ (Müller, 2000), the degree to which the parliamentary mandate fulfilment has been understudied is surprising.

One cannot overlook the important process of deliberation before a certain policy output, since quality of representation can also stem from whether voters’ opinions and interests are taken into account in the legislative instruments. At the same time, Louwrese’s spatial approach (which has not been re-implemented since) does not allow for an analysis at the party level which limits the ability of the approach to reach more conclusive results concerning individual party behaviour. In addition, most of the research on pledge fulfilment has used manual coding, whereas very few studies use automated methods.

Against this backdrop, the present chapter attempts to extend the parliamentary mandate approach both conceptually and methodologically. It does so, by bringing relatively new document-comparison methodological developments from the field of computational linguistics and presents a measure of discourse congruence. As will be described in the following section, the measure compares electoral (i.e. manifestos) with post-electoral (i.e.

speeches) textual sources and allows for between-party comparisons of representative performance while minimizing manual input and the costs that coding tasks entail.

## Methodology

### *Data*

The use of political text for research purposes has already taken place across a diverse set of textual sources including: media data (Young & Soroka, 2012); parliamentary speeches (Proksch & Slapin, 2010; Quinn et al., 2010); presidential, MPs and party statements, proposed legislation and bills (Adler & Wilkerson, 2013; Grimmer, 2009) and it is now a common and very useful way to study representation with large corpora already available to the public (e.g. Rauh et al., 2017; Schumacher et al., 2016).

This chapter in particular, illustrates the measure's applicability using original data collected from the electoral periods and subsequent legislatures in Ireland between the years 1997 and 2019. Ireland is chosen without specific theoretical criteria in mind but because a) it is a prominent case in the mandate fulfillment literature, b) found to have relatively low levels of pledge fulfilment overall (Thomson et al. 2017), c) manifesto use is quite uniform among parties (Däubler, 2012), and lastly d) the English language is probably the most well-covered language in text analysis applications.

For each election and for each party that won seats in the consecutive legislature the manifesto and subsequent parliamentary speeches in every plenary session are collected. For the manifestos, the use of the Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR) dataset<sup>9</sup> allows for the easy access to the necessary data for all parties in Ireland. For the parliamentary speeches, the data on all plenary sessions of the *Dáil Éireann*, the lower chamber of the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament) comes in a readily-accessible machine-readable .xml format directly from the Oireachtas website<sup>10</sup>. After accessing it, the data is treated<sup>11</sup> and split into the necessary time intervals as explained in the next section yielding a corpus of 140.000 speeches.

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<sup>9</sup> The chapter uses its 2018a version (Lehmann et al., 2019).

<sup>10</sup> At: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/open-data/>

<sup>11</sup> eliminating interventions given by the Speaker and that contain less than 50 words

## Measurement

The conceptual point of departure for the measurement is the assumption that in the absence of constraints, the priorities of a party in the parliamentary arena should simply mirror those expressed in its manifesto. Consequently, under the lens of this chapter, the parliamentary mandate fulfilment entails some level of congruence between electoral and parliamentary discourse. Henceforth, *discourse congruence* is the degree to which parties talk post-electorally like they talked pre-electorally.

In order to operationalize discourse congruence, manifestos and speeches are compared for their textual similarity. For the estimation of this similarity, the chapter implements a state-of-the-art document comparison method called Word Mover's Distance (Kusner et al., 2015). The Relaxed Word Mover's Distance (RWMD) variation in particular, which is developed in the same piece and reduces the computational cost without hindering its validity, is able to capture the semantic similarity between documents.

RWMD compares documents through the use of word embeddings. Word embeddings map words into a high-dimensional vector space to the effect that semantically similar words are close to each other. In other words, they produce numeric representations for words so that for instance, the distance between the words Greece and feta (i.e.,  $\text{Embedding}(\text{Greece}) - \text{Embedding}(\text{feta})$ ) will be similar to the distance between the words Italy and mozzarella (i.e.,  $\text{Embedding}(\text{Italy}) - \text{Embedding}(\text{mozzarella})$ ). These vectors can be trained on a specific corpus or come pre-trained with unsupervised neural network models like the Word2vec algorithm (Mikolov et al., 2013) on publicly available corpora. In this case, the FastText pre-trained language models taken from Grave et. al. (2018) are used. They are trained by the Facebook AI Research (FAIR) team, and by the time of writing almost 300 languages are covered, on billions of Common Crawl<sup>12</sup> and Wikipedia online texts.<sup>13</sup> This of course allows for the application of the embeddings for a variety of cases since the vast majority of the languages commonly used are covered. Word embeddings are by now almost a necessity for state-of-the-

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<sup>12</sup> <https://commoncrawl.org/>

<sup>13</sup> An important quality of the FastText model is the use of subword information to derive word embeddings, rendering it an excellent option for multilingual use cases. Especially for languages that contain large vocabularies, many compounds, and rare words, standard models would not have embeddings. A further quality of FastText embeddings is the possibility to easily continue the training using data/corpus from a specific use-case for which the vocabulary might not be covered or the accuracy of the embeddings is not great.

art text-analysis approaches and are steadily gaining traction in political science (Rheault & Cochrane, 2020; Rodman, 2020).

Using these embeddings, RWMD then computes the similarity between two documents as the transportation cost between the vectors of their words. In other words, it compares the distance that the words of one document need to “travel” to reach the words of another document. In this implementation the vectors are compared using the cosine distance as suggested by the author of the *text2vec()* package in R.<sup>14</sup> The similarity ranges from 0 to 1 (where 0 means no similarity at all and 1 means perfect semantic similarity).

**Table 2.1.** Example Sentences and their Matrix of RWMD Similarity Scores

1	Obama speaks to the media in Illinois.
2	The president greets the press in Chicago.
3	Chelsea won the Champions League.
4	The band gave a concert in Japan.
5	We must reject all illegal immigrants. We promise to protect our borders by reinstating tough controls.
6	Thank you Mr. Chairman, why is the Prime Minister still allowing the flows of illegal immigrants and leaving our borders unprotected?
7	We will oppose the further militarisation of the EU and attempts to create a standing EU army, and we will terminate Ireland’s involvement in EU Battle Groups.
8	I very much welcome the Taoiseach’s clear commitment to Ireland’s neutrality. We have no interest in the creation of a common army. Each single treaty that has been voted on in this country has gradually increased the militarisation of the European Union.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1.000							
2	0.593	1.000						
3	0.333	0.299	1.000					
4	0.367	0.304	0.282	1.000				
5	0.219	0.230	0.247	0.193	1.000			
6	0.299	0.393	0.295	0.275	0.546	1.000		
7	0.239	0.234	0.295	0.300	0.356	0.290	0.928	
8	0.324	0.301	0.368	0.375	0.354	0.275	0.431	0.941

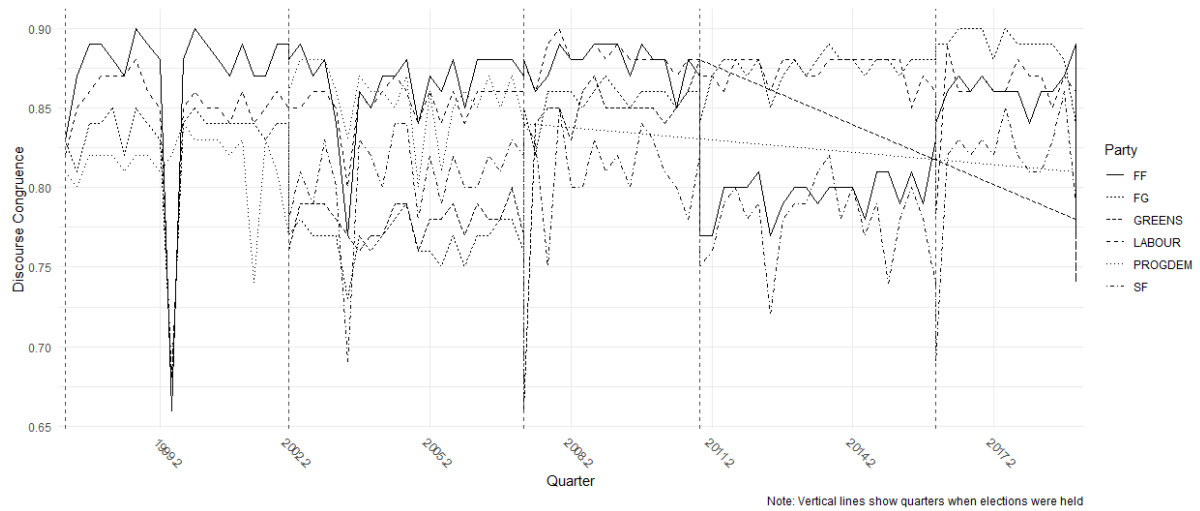
<sup>14</sup> <http://text2vec.org/>

The biggest advantage of this method in comparison to traditional document representations of bag of words (BOW) and term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF), and the subsequent one-hot vectors of documents is the ability to even compare documents that share no common words but speak about the same thing and in a similar way. The classic example, as presented in Kusner et. al. 's article, are the two sentences “*Obama speaks to the media in Illinois*” and “*The President greets the press in Chicago*”. While these sentences share no common words, they convey nearly the same meaning. This is a fact that a BOW approach cannot represent but RMWD can.

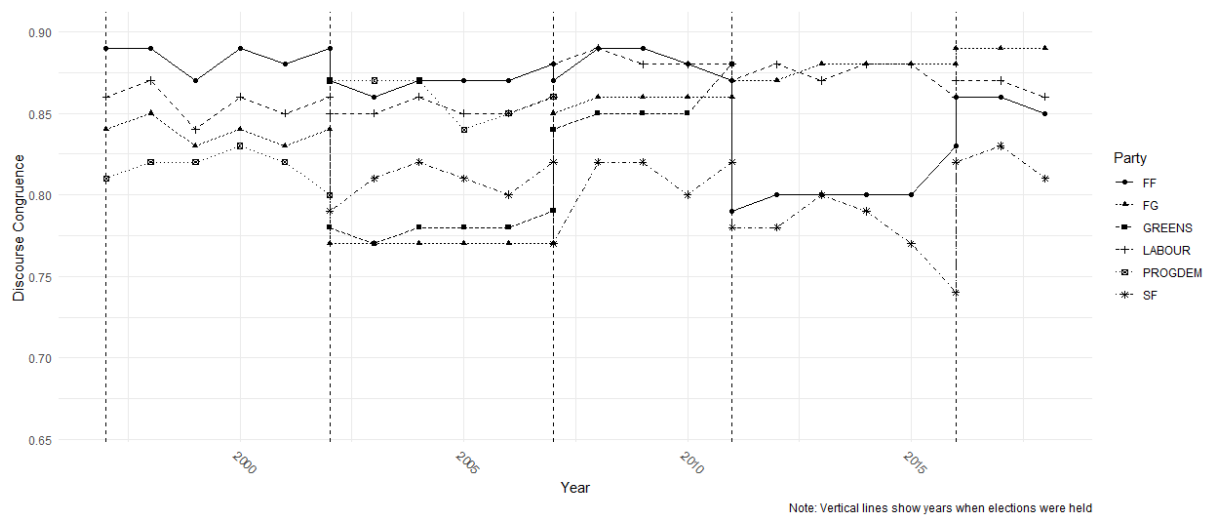
**Table 2.2.** Examples of Most Similar (RWMD) Pairs of EU Sentences Between Manifesto and Speeches for Fine Gael 2007

Manifesto Sentence	Speeches Sentence	Similarity
“BUDGETING FOR GROWTH AND STABILITY Fiscal Prudence and Economic Stability We will subject all spending and tax commitments to the over-riding commitment to adhere to the EU Growth and Stability Pact.”	“The EU indicated the current fiscal stance could be out of line with the Stability and Growth Pact in 2009.”	0,744
“Ensure that the European Union gives every possible support to the people of Iraq, for example through enhanced support for the training of police and through greater humanitarian aid.”	“We cannot force the European Union to go our way and it cannot force us to go its way against each other's will.”	0,660
“Security and Defence We believe that Ireland should be a full participant in European Security and Defence Policy according to five key principles which are: The commitment to adhere to the fundamental principles of the UN.”	“On the issue of neutrality, Ireland will retain its veto on all matters concerning European defence policy.”	0,650
“Regulation We will undertake a radical overhaul of the current regulatory framework for waste collection services, introducing competitive tendering for waste collection services at a local and regional level, as in done in other EU countries.”	“I would like to conclude by asking about compliance with EU regulations and possible contact from third countries.”	0,642
“Red Tape We will work to reform the European Union to reduce ‘red tape’ and bureaucracy, especially regarding the impact on small and medium enterprises.”	“Many groups and individuals have complained bitterly about the impact of regulation and red tape, which is a consequence of how the European Union does its business.”	0,642

**Figure 2.1.** Discourse Congruence per Party per Quarter in Ireland



**Figure 2.2.** Discourse Congruence per Party per Year in Ireland



To demonstrate the performance of the method and considering the example of the two sentences present in Kusner et. al.’s article, Table 2.1 shows the RWMD score of their similarity is 0.593. In comparison, when the sentence “*The President greets the press in Chicago*” is compared with “*The band gave a concert in Japan*” the score is 0.367. To give a further example from Table 2.1 and the specific use case of discourse congruence, consider sentences seven and eight (two Fianna Fáil sentences from its manifesto and consequent speeches of one of its MPs in 2016 respectively). The method returns the value of 0.431

similarity or in our case, discourse congruence. For further demonstration, Table 2.2, contains the five most similar pairs of sentences between EU-related parts of the manifesto and speeches of Fine Gael in the 2007 election.<sup>15</sup>

With that sentence-to-sentence comparison in mind, the attention shifts towards the greater example of longitudinal parliamentary discourse congruence for all Irish parties. The comparison of the manifestos of every party with its consequent parliamentary speeches can happen at different time intervals as the researcher sees fit. In this case, Figures 2.1 and 2.2 show the discourse congruence for all parties that gained seats in the Irish Dáil from 1997 to 2019 per calendar quarter and year respectively.

One thing that is prominent, is that the Labour party seems to be relatively very congruent to the manifesto in its speechmaking behaviour across the years. Additionally, Fianna Fáil appears to be very congruent up until the 2011 election when Fine Gael surges to the top of the figure together with the Labour party. This coincides with the fact that these parties were actually in government during the respective periods and would indicate that incumbent parties seem to demonstrate more congruent to the manifesto speechmaking behaviour. This is perhaps because of their ability to set the agenda but further studies attempting to explain discourse congruence would be necessary to back this claim.

#### *Validation - Synthetic and Natural (real-world) benchmarks*

Having shown how RWMD would work with a single case and in a longitudinal fashion, the measure's validity is addressed next. A double benchmarking test is performed, namely, validating against a synthetic (artificial) as well as a natural (real-world) benchmark. For the first, a pair of virtual/artificial parties is created. On the one hand, a very congruent party by comparing a random manifesto (Ireland, Fianna Fáil, 2002 Election) with an artificial text representing the average length of speeches per quarter<sup>16</sup> and comprised of only sentences of said manifesto. This is simply done by randomly selecting the manifesto's sentences in a loop until the desired length is reached. On the other hand, a very incongruent party is created by comparing the same manifesto with a text of equal length but comprised of random texts drawn from the English Wikipedia in Python, using the *wikipedia* library.

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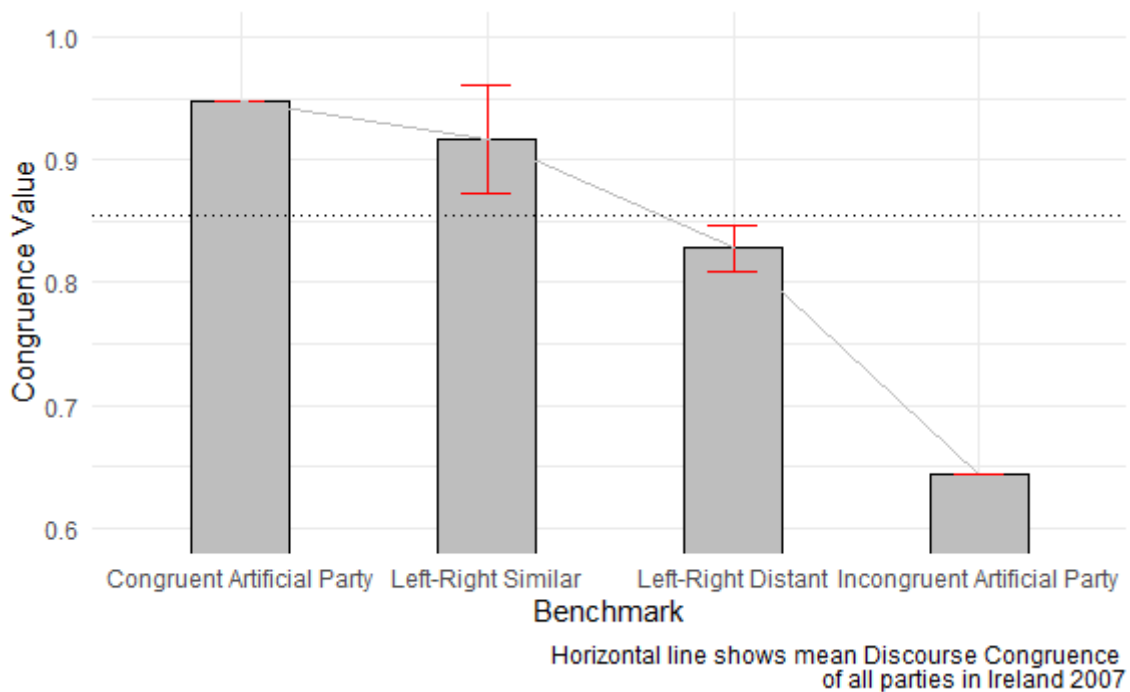
<sup>15</sup> After removing very short (<100 characters) and very large sentences (>400 characters) as well as duplicate sentence pairs to focus on unique pairs and demonstrate the usability of the measurement.

<sup>16</sup> (roughly 300000 words, calculated as 275 words per speech and 18000 Speeches per term)

For the second test, using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey’s (Bakker et al., 2020) general Left-Right position scores, two pairs of ideologically very similar (close in CHES scores) and very dissimilar (distant in CHES scores) parties are selected for a random election (Ireland 2007).<sup>17</sup> The manifestos of these parties are compared using the RMWD method with the speeches of the respective party pair.

Figure 2.3 shows that, as expected, the measure attributes the highest score to the artificial congruent party and the lowest to the artificial incongruent party with the random Wikipedia speeches. In between lie the natural benchmarks where, again as expected, the pair of ideologically similar parties shows more congruence than the pair of dissimilar parties.

**Figure 2.3.** Text Similarity (Congruence) by Benchmark for Ireland 2007



## Conclusions

A lot of research has been devoted to the way in which parties deliver on their pre-election promises. Extant studies have delved into both incumbent performance, as well as parliamentary behaviour. Yet, most of these studies have used manual content analysis, and

<sup>17</sup> *Fine Gael* (CHES LRgen: 7.25) vs *Sinn Féin* (1.25) as most LR dissimilar pair and *Fine Gael* (7.25) vs *Fianna Fáil* (7.25) as most LR similar pair

rarely have automated analyses been able to measure parties' congruence before and after the election. This chapter is innovative in that it describes a new measure of parliamentary mandate fulfilment that extends past attempts. It applies methodological tools from the field of computational linguistics to the field of legislative studies in a novel way and manages to measure the extent to which parties' manifestos and subsequent parliamentary speeches are similar.

It has the capacity to provide empirical evidence as to whether legislators and parties carry their electoral rhetoric into parliaments without the need for costly manual coding while enabling cross-party longitudinal comparisons. It can easily be applied to specific parts of the texts to capture the similarity on specific topics/issues since it is only a matter of feeding the respective texts into the pipeline. Additionally, it is easily scalable to multiple countries, since it is language-blind, and requires minimal manual input. However, multi-lingual (and cross-country) applications should be made with caution taking into consideration the lengths of the texts as well as control for differences in speechmaking rules.

## CHAPTER II

### **'Democracies Without Choice' in the Periphery of Europe: Determinants of manifesto-to-legislative speech congruence in times of crisis**

#### **Introduction**

How important are electoral programs for representation? According to democratic theories of representation, they should be decisive for how post-electoral representative behaviour unfolds. In line with a 'promissory' viewing of how representation works (Mansbridge, 2003), voters select their representatives based on their programmatic positions and parties in turn, receive a mandate to represent those positions. This premise is what holds the party mandate model together; the principal mechanism identified, that brings about a congruence between voters' opinions and representatives' actions (e.g. Thomassen, 1994). Given its importance in democratic theory, extensive research has been devoted to the successful match between parties' election programs and subsequent party actions or Mandate Fulfilment.

Although overall, important empirical contributions have painted an unexpectedly positive image of parties keeping their promises (Thomson et al., 2017), in the last two decades in particular, studies have shown that parties are constrained in a number of ways in their representative efforts (Bardi et. al., 2014). Both in government and in opposition, they are facing an ever-growing imbalance between people's demands for representation and the legislature's demands for governance.

In most European democracies, "globalisation in general and Europeanisation in particular" (Mair, 2013: 161), has produced circumstances where national governments and parliaments are accountable to many new external stakeholders (Dorussen & Nanou, 2006; Schäfer &

Streeck, 2013). Policy decision-making centres (mainly in the economic sector) have relocated far from the controlling abilities of domestic actors. Some have even argued that they are “democracies without choice” (Krastev, 2002; Ruiz-Rufino & Alonso, 2017) where the external actors can make demands while the power of national parties and representatives is constrained and the voice of voters goes unheard.

The 2009 Eurozone crisis, is an example of an external shock that accentuated this picture of parliamentary democracies in stress. Substantial deepening of European fiscal and financial integration took place. Member States, especially in the ‘periphery’ of Europe where the effects of the crisis were more apparent, had to enact bailout agreements that enforced even further external obligations. Notwithstanding, the effects of the crisis and the severe conditionality that ensued on representation remain an open question (Fernandes & Magalhães, 2020).

On the one hand a series of studies have treated the Eurozone Crisis as having a negative impact on representative democracy (Bosco & Verney, 2016). These scholars have demonstrated how the process of deciding and implementing austerity policies impeded the ability of parties to remain responsive to their electorates and true to their platforms. On the other hand, certain studies have demonstrated how the crisis functioned as a breeding ground for renovated representation. A situation where niches in the population managed to find a voice in parliaments through the success of smaller fringe parties and the process of implosion of long-standing robust party systems (Morlino and Raniolo, 2017); where hard-to-defend neo-liberal policies could now be represented due to the circumstances that the bailouts have created (Alonso, 2014; Moury & Freire, 2013).

This contradiction constitutes an interesting puzzle for which we lack the empirical evidence to shed light upon. In the European context, the underlying question with regards to mandate fulfilment is whether the crisis has actually impeded the ability of parties to represent their platforms. Research is limited on how the ability of representatives and parties to fulfil their representative mandates is affected when governments and legislatures have to respond to the claims of external audiences like the international markets or the EU. Against this background, the aim of this chapter is to answer the following question: *To what extent do supranational economic conditions of constraint affect the representative performance of parties in parliamentary democracies?*

To answer this question, the study attempts to assess the discourse congruence between manifestos and parliamentary speeches in four countries: Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain from 1996 to 2019 using state-of-the-art text comparison methods utilising word embeddings.

This contribution is relevant for at least two reasons. First, it advances the literature on the consequences of the crisis. This literature has concentrated primarily on the electoral consequences (e.g. Bosco and Verney, 2016), satisfaction with democracy (e.g. Armingeon and Guthmann 2014), political spaces in party competition (e.g. Hutter et al., 2018), voting behaviour in parliament (De Giorgi and Moury, 2015) and policy responsiveness (Fernandes & Magalhães, 2020). Second, it adds to the literature on party mandate fulfilment by extending past research (both conceptually and methodologically) by examining the representative performance of individual parties.

## Literature Review

### *Parliamentary Mandate Fulfilment and Discourse Congruence*

The majority of studies on mandate fulfillment have conceived it as providing a governing mandate to the winning party(ies). By employing either the *saliency approach* (e.g. Hofferbert & Budge, 1992) or the *pledge approach* (e.g. Thomson et al., 2012) scholars compared electoral promises with government policy output. Despite certain limitations identified<sup>18</sup>, most research on mandate fulfillment, has now implemented one of the two methodological approaches.

More recently, the mandate model has been expanded to include opposition parties (Louwse, 2011; 2012; Serra-Silva & Belchior, 2020). Although winning parties have the mandate to govern, opposition parties still receive a mandate to represent their voters in parliament. Louwse (2011, 2012), calls this “the parliamentary mandate”. He considers the mandate fulfilled not only when there is congruence between policy output and voter’s opinions but also when the views and interests of the people have been taken into account during the process.

Nevertheless, if one looks at the sheer amount of scholarly work implementing the pledge approach, it becomes apparent that the literature on mandate fulfillment has been mostly about it. Although attempting to tap empirically on the fulfillment of concrete pledges is empirically valuable, the role of parliamentary debates and of opposition parties in the ‘chain of delegation’ (Müller, 2000) should not be forgotten. At the same time, Louwse’s spatial approach (not re-implemented since) does not lend itself to party-level analyses, limiting its ability to reach more conclusive results concerning individual party behaviour.

Similarly, the point of departure of the present study is not about specific pledges or even policy output but rather whether parties’ representative efforts in parliament mirror their electoral manifestos. In the absence of constraints, the priorities of a party in the parliamentary arena should simply mirror those expressed in the manifestos. Consequently, the parliamentary mandate fulfillment entails some level of congruence between electoral and parliamentary discourse. Henceforth, discourse congruence is the degree to which parties talk post-electorally like they talked pre-electorally.

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<sup>18</sup> namely the difficulty of distinguishing between ‘fully’ and ‘partially fulfilled’ pledges, or the fact that election pledges are not weighted based on their importance and are treated equally

## *Representation in times of Crisis*

Against this background the goal is to examine the effects of supranational economic conditions of constraint on representation in general and discourse congruence in particular. The presence of international obligations has been identified as an important factor when the representative behaviour is under study. These international obligations have to do with the struggle of elected parties to be simultaneously responsive to internal and responsible to external audiences.

The idea of a gap between an elected party's efforts to effectively represent and legislate, has been prominent in the literature (Bardi et. al., 2014). More recently, Karremans & Lefkofridi (2020) brought its analysis within the context of the Eurozone Crisis. They argue that external conditions of constraint increase the gap between "responsiveness and responsibility" given that a set of new supranational institutions and functions were introduced.<sup>19</sup>

Especially for those Member States in the 'periphery' of Europe where the economic crisis hit the hardest, bailout agreements had to be enacted between national governments and lending institutions.<sup>20</sup> Conditionality in the form of structural reforms and deficit/debt reduction measures that accompanied the bailout agreements required parliamentary validation, but was introduced in swift 'non-majoritarian' or 'special' majority ways (Morlino & Raniolo, 2017: 111; Moury & De Giorgi, 2015) through the legislative functions of national parliaments. It became apparent that the main reforms on fiscal, budgetary or public administration policy sectors as part of the austerity policies were decided by external actors and enforced on domestic ones. By reading the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) signed between debtor countries and their creditors one can understand that they specify each country's economic policy in great detail, leaving governments with almost no room for manoeuvre (Alonso, 2014: 11; Moury & De Giorgi, 2015).

However, some scholars have found opposite trends occurring simultaneously. Studies have shown that the crisis proved an excellent opportunity for the implementation of neo-liberal

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<sup>19</sup> The Fiscal Compact, the European Financial Stability Facility [EFSF], the European Stability Mechanism [ESM], the Macro-Economic Imbalances Procedure [MIP] and the European Semester were all introduced during the crisis.

<sup>20</sup> The so called Troika comprised by the European Commission [EC], the European Central Bank [ECB] and the International Monetary Fund [IMF]

policies that governments and parties might have been previously reluctant to represent (Alonso, 2014). Indeed, Moury and Freire (2013) showed increased levels of congruence between the favourite policies of centre-right Ministers and Juniors and the conditions of the Portuguese MoU. Similarly, Kitschelt (2000) posited earlier that exactly when links between parties and particular constituencies decline, the electoral market competition grows. Morlino and Raniolo (2017) brought evidence to support Kitschelt's position and argued that, in those countries, the new parties that managed to enter the political arena could bring renewed quality of representation.

Interestingly and in spite of a great deal of comparative public policy research that demonstrates how important economic conditions are for explaining policy output (e.g. Huber & Stephens, 2001), there is little research relating it to mandate fulfilment. Only recently a contribution made by Thomson and Costello (2017), limited to the Irish case, analyses how economic conditions directly influence pledge fulfilment. They found that when economic conditions deteriorate after the election, election pledges are less likely to be fulfilled.

Additionally, recent research from the party issue competition literature, has shown that during times of crisis, the parties' electoral profiles might not be the only (or the best for that matter) predictors of the variety of representation (topics addressed) during a legislative term (Borghetto & Russo, 2018). Similarly, Conti et al., (2019) show that it is for governing and not opposition parties that the crisis had caused an increase in the levels of thematic congruence between manifestos and parliamentary questions. Finally, Louwse's (2012) analysis did not find evidence of the alleged deterioration of the representative links. However, he focused on two countries that were barely affected by the crisis (namely the UK and the Netherlands).

## **Explaining Differences in Discourse Congruence**

The study assumes that the country's macro-economic performance and the ensuing conditionality are two separate aspects of the same story. One is about the immediate disruptive impact of deteriorating macro-economic conditions which requires a national-level reaction whereas the other is about the management of this crisis at the supranational level. In most cases, national governments had to adopt austerity policies that had further dramatic consequences for the economy. In a way, conditionality is the second phase of a crisis that creates an even further policy dead-end.

With regards to the country's economic performance, the theoretical expectations for the effects of supranational constraints on discourse congruence are not clear. Since the theoretical motivation is this exact puzzle amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies, it might be easy to theorize on the existence of an effect but not its direction.

However, certain studies have identified the possible negative impact of the crisis on representative behavior overall. We have seen evidence that economic conditions can change party stances towards austerity (Maatsch, 2016), reduce the legislative agenda to only bills about the economy (Pedrazzani et al., 2018) and shift voting in parliament (Moury & De Giorgi, 2015; Blumenau & Lauderdale, 2018; Maatsch 2016). Whereas the limited evidence that we have so far concerning mandate fulfillment in particular, points to a negative effect as well (Thomson & Costello, 2017).

Discourse however, is a peculiar aspect of representative behavior. Many have argued that legislative speechmaking is a tool at the disposal of MPs and parties to signal their stances to their voters and differentiate themselves from other representatives (Proksch & Slapin, 2015). So far the indications in the literature about the impact of economic crisis point to a similar negative effect. Traber et al. (2018), show that prime ministers speak more extensively about economic issues when economic performance worsens while Savage (2019) using manifesto data, shows the same increased salience of economic issues. Similarly, government backbenchers and MPs from vulnerable constituencies are less likely to participate in economic debates, when the economy of their district or the country is performing poorly (Herzog & Benoit, 2015; Bäck & Debus, 2018). These findings tell us that the impact of an economic crisis is so disruptive that parties turn their attention to it and immediately sideline other issues that might have been important in their original electoral platform.

Tied with the issue representation literature (namely the findings regarding the declining importance of manifestos especially in the crisis context) leads to the first hypothesis, namely that bad economic conditions negatively impact the levels of discourse congruence. The study thus posits that:

*H1: Worse economic conditions decrease the levels of discourse congruence between manifestos and parliamentary speeches.*

Furthermore, the study focuses on conditionality. The EU has used conditionality to lever domestic reform as a core instrument in the past, especially in cases of accession of new member states (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). However, the crisis elevated this strategy to an unprecedented level (Featherstone, 2015).

Greece might have been the most infamous case, where troika intervened most manifestly but the other countries had to undergo a series of supranational interventions as well. Portugal and Ireland were bailed out by the IMF and the EFSF in 2011 and 2010 respectively. Spain agreed on a bailout (recapitalization) of its banking sector only by the ESM in 2012. While Italy, even if not formally bailed out, had to endure “implicit conditionality” committing to an array of structural reforms (Sacchi, 2015).

Overall, there are two types of conditionality: explicit conditionality, based on formalized, explicit covenants through MoUs and implicit conditionality, based on threats from EU institutions (Sacchi 2015). This study takes a look at the explicit conditionality exerted on elected parties. Studies have shown that conditionality in the form of presence of bailout loans does impact the voting behaviour of parties on anti-crisis measures (Bohle, 2014; Maatsch, 2014; 2016). In particular, what these studies have shown is that “parties from states that received a bailout were particularly prone to propose macroeconomic measures reflecting their interests as debtor states” (Maatsch, 2014: 112).

It is then expected that the explicit conditionality will negatively affect the levels of discourse congruence. Following the logic outlined above, the study posits that:

*H2: Explicit supranational conditionality decreases the levels of discourse congruence between manifestos and parliamentary speeches.*

## Research Design

To test the hypotheses formulated in the previous section, this study uses an original panel of data collected from the electoral periods and subsequent legislatures in four Eurozone countries: Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. These countries are selected because they were all profoundly hit by the 2009 Eurozone crisis. They had to enact deep spending cuts and broad structural reforms. They also provide enough variation in the levels of explicit external conditionality as will be discussed later.

The time frame analyzed covers every election from 1996 to 2019 (with some exceptions due to data availability), and every party that won at least 3 percent of the seats in a given legislature. The data includes at least one election after the alleged lift of conditionality (bailout program end date) for each country.

More precisely, for all parties included in the study, the level to which they remain true, in terms of discourse, to their manifesto in the ensuing parliamentary debates is assessed. Accessing the manifesto data is possible via the Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR) dataset<sup>21</sup>, a data source widely used in the comparative literature on party competition. The data on parliamentary speeches is collected from various sources<sup>22</sup> requiring a rigorous pre-processing treatment.<sup>23</sup> This process yields a total of around 730,000 unique speeches, spanning 24 years of parliamentary plenary debates and 24 elections. Additionally, the data is further disaggregated at the calendar quarter level. Each party's manifesto is then juxtaposed with the corresponding set of speeches for that quarter. The final dataset consists of 1,433 observations (party-election-quarter combinations) and 30 political parties.

The choice to analyze text by comparing the two sources is motivated by the volume of data at hand and the overall proliferation in social science of both textual resources, but most importantly high-performing automated content analysis methods. Other sources, such as (expert) surveys are not as suitable for short time-scale comparison like party stances before and after elections. Researchers have already compared manifestos with parliamentary speeches, using several text analysis techniques, to either scale party positions, identify topics

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<sup>21</sup> The chapter uses its 2018a version. Lehmann et. al. (2018)

<sup>22</sup> Parliamentary data for Greece and Ireland comes from transcripts of the debates which are readily available on each parliament's website. Data for Spain is covered from Rauh & Schwalbach (2020) while for Portugal is taken from a combination of De Giorgi & Dias (2019) and Almeida et. al. (2020).

<sup>23</sup> This treatment includes: cleaning them and extracting the necessary information using complicated regular expressions, limiting the interventions to those not given by the Speaker and contained more than 50 words

or tap into issue prioritization and salience (e.g. Lucas et al., 2015; Volkens et al., 2013). Moreover, although party manifestos might not be the only electoral message that parties deliver, they are seen as the ‘only authoritative party policy statement’ (Klingemann et al. 2006). Parliamentary speeches on the other hand, even though they might present differences, are comparable to manifestos since they are both political texts drafted by the same political entities.

### *Dependent Variable*

In order to operationalize the dependent variable, i.e. *Discourse Congruence*, manifestos and speeches for each party are compared for their similarity. The estimation of this similarity is based on a state-of-the-art document comparison method called the Relaxed Word Mover’s Distance (RWMD) (Kusner et al., 2015) as developed and validated in Kartalis (2021). It leverages the use of word embeddings which allow for the semantic representation of words. Word embeddings are an emerging tool for political science (e.g. Rheault & Cochrane, 2020; Rodman, 2020) and almost a necessity for approaches that aim at retrieving meaning from text.

After transforming the words of each text into vectors that carry some approximate semantic value using the provided embeddings<sup>24</sup>, the method calculates their similarity as the transportation cost between the vectors of their respective words. The higher the distance between the vector representations, the lower the similarity between the texts. The similarity ranges from 0 to 1 (where 0 means no similarity at all and 1 means perfect semantic similarity).

The advantage of the method over more traditional similarity measures, is the ability to calculate similarity scores even between documents that speak about the same thing but share no common words. In those scenarios, a traditional similarity measure, such as the simple cosine similarity (working with one-hot vectors) would fail to detect similarity, whereas RWMD would indeed detect it.

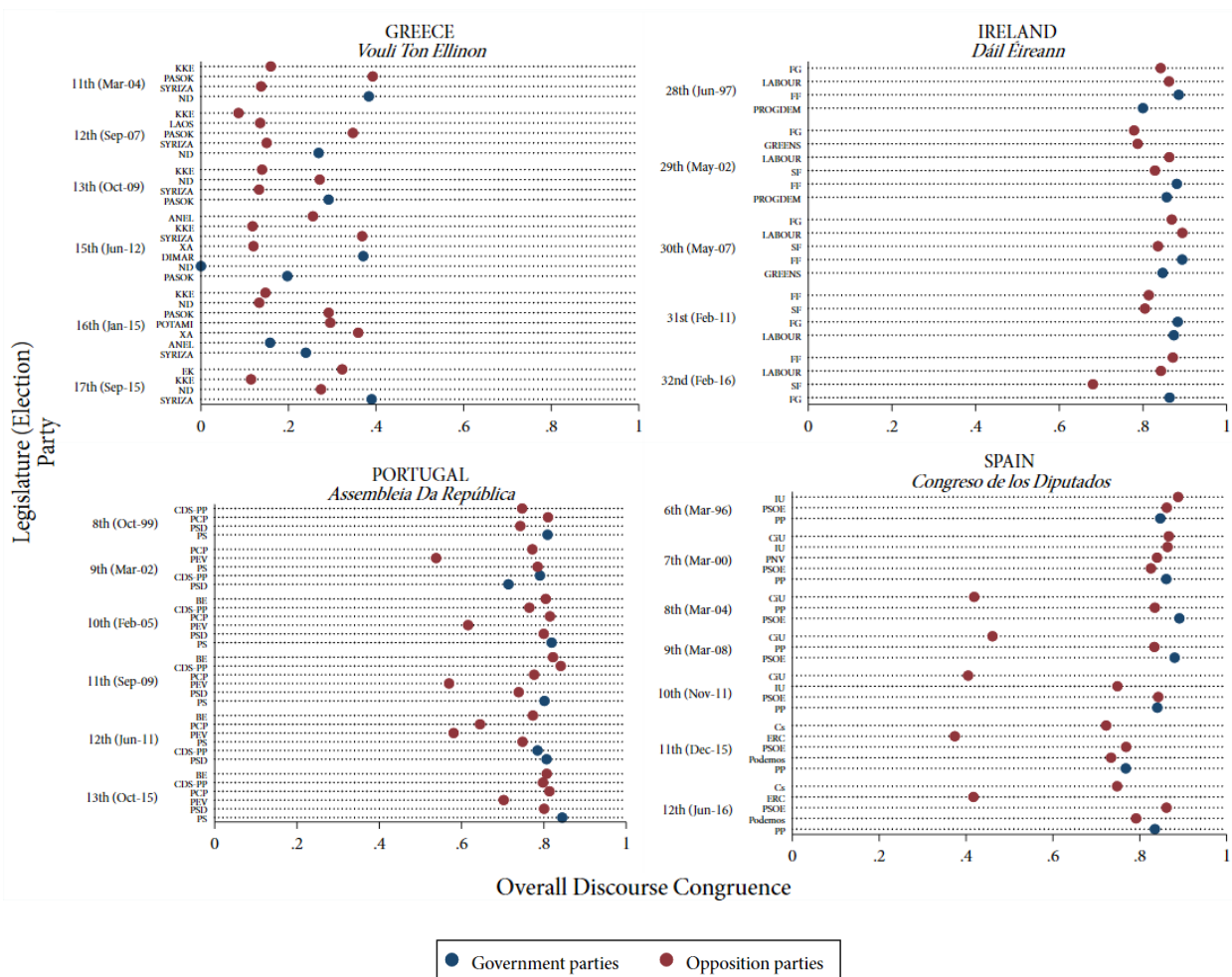
To avoid confounding this comparison with many topics at the same time, which are naturally present in the full manifesto and speeches texts, three separate dependent variables are measured using RWMD. First, an *Overall Discourse Congruence* measure comparing the

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<sup>24</sup> In this case, the FastText pre-trained language models taken from Grave et. al. (2018) are used. They are trained by the Facebook AI Research (FAIR) team, on billions of Common Crawl and Wikipedia online texts. By the time of writing, almost 300 languages are covered which of course allows for the application of the method in multilingual research problems like this one since all the languages included in the study are covered.

full texts. Second, an *EU Discourse Congruence* measure which compares only EU-related parts of manifestos and speeches. Third, an *Economy Discourse Congruence* measure which compares only Economy-related parts of manifestos and speeches. The selection of EU and Economy-related parts is done by the use of extensive keyword lists of topic-related terms whereby all sentences that contain at least one of the respective terms are included.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 3.1.** Mean Overall Discourse Congruence Per Legislature & Party



Each manifesto text is then directly compared with the corresponding parliamentary speeches using the RWMD method after a series of pre-processing steps are implemented

<sup>25</sup> For the EU topic a list is elaborated, adapting from and extending the codebook of Maier, et al. (2014) translated in the four different languages in the dataset. For the Economy topic, a manually inspected list of most frequent terms in all the sentences considered to be about the economy, as coded in all the manifestos by country in the Manifesto Project. Table A1 in the appendix contains the keywords for each topic and language.

which reduce the input texts to more comparable versions.<sup>26</sup> Figure 3.1 offers a descriptive plot of the overall measure for each country, party and election based on the mean of all the quarter values.<sup>27</sup> According to the data and with the exception of Greece, all countries return relatively high values of overall discourse congruence. Greece reports very low scores relative to the other countries and especially for smaller parties in opposition. The differences within countries are small given the scale but do exist. Smaller parties tend to fare worse in all countries given that they are not the ones setting the agenda. In Spain in particular, the Catalan parties who normally use Catalan in their manifestos but are forced to use Spanish in parliament are reporting very low discourse congruence scores.

### *Independent Variables*

To estimate the impact of macro-economic conditions, the quarterly Economic Performance Index (EPI) is used. It is a composite index that combines information on inflation, unemployment, the government deficit, and GDP growth (Khrarov & Lee, 2013).<sup>28</sup> The data is drawn from the OECD database and is lagged (previous quarter).

For *H2*, conditionality is operationalized by looking at whether an explicit bailout loan agreement and an ensuing MoU was in place. Conditionality had slightly different flavours and duration for each country. Greece had to sign three Economic Adjustment Programs, whereas Portugal, Spain and Ireland, only one. In Greece, Ireland and Portugal, governments committed to strictly defined policies through MoUs, negotiated with the Troika in exchange for financial support. In Spain, MoUs initially only had to do with the financial sector but in 2011 the Commission started a strict monitoring program of measures and reforms (Moury et. al., 2019). Additionally, all of the countries had to enter post-program surveillance. Greece however, had to agree on an Enhanced Surveillance Framework (ESF) after the end of its program. Greece,

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<sup>26</sup> Pre-processing steps here include: Concatenating the speeches into one single text, removing language-specific stopwords, removing parliamentary and manifesto-specific stopwords (identified by a tf-idf normalization of all manifesto and all parliamentary speeches texts of all parties), removing numbers, removing punctuation, converting to lower-case, including n-grams and l1 normalizing.

<sup>27</sup> Figures A1 and A2 in the appendix show the same measure for the EU and Economy parts of the texts respectively.

<sup>28</sup> More precisely, EPI is calculated by subtracting the inflation rate, the unemployment rate, the budget deficit as a percentage of GDP and then adding back the percentage change in real GDP from a total score of 100%. The four sub-components are computed as deviations from desired values as Khrarov and Lee state (0.0% for inflation, 4.75% for unemployment, 0.0% for deficit/GDP, and 4.75% for growth rate). Additionally, as suggested in the paper, the scores are normalised for comparability across countries and in order to mitigate potential inconsistencies due to high volatility. Each sub-component is weighted by the inverse of its standard deviation multiplied by the average standard deviation of all four sub-components.

until the time of writing, still operates under its 9<sup>th</sup> ESF. A dummy variable that takes the values of 0 for no-bailout and 1 for any of the above types of conditionality is created.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to these key explanatory variables, a set of control variables is included in the analyses. First, the institutional position of the party (i.e. government/opposition) is controlled for with the introduction of a dummy variable.

Second, the parties' ideological positions are controlled for by using two variables that look at the extremeness of their left-right placement in the economic axis. These positions are provided for by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset (Bakker et. al., 2015; Polk et. al., 2017). After looking at the distribution of all parties included in the dataset, two dummy variables which indicate whether a party is in the extreme Left or Right were created, identifying those parties that are located in the lowest and highest quartile respectively of the left-right distribution.

**Table 3.1.** Descriptive Statistics

VARIABLES	N	mean	sd	min	max
<b>Dependent Variables</b>					
Overall Discourse Congruence	1,433	0.675	0.254	0	0.923
EU Discourse Congruence	1,352	0.527	0.207	0	1
Economy Discourse Congruence	1,328	0.681	0.218	0	0.895
<b>Main Independent Variables</b>					
EPI lagged(-1 quarter)	1,433	76.93	9.602	52.58	115.8
Conditionality	1,433	0.422	0.494	0	1
<b>Control Variables</b>					
Government	1,433	0.303	0.460	0	1
Seat Share	1,433	20.42	18.02	2	55
Election Proximity	1,433	1.918	1.238	0	5
Left-Right Placement	1,433	4.426	2.619	0.0909	8.538
Manifesto Length	1,433	1,245	931.7	23	4,465
Speeches Length	1,433	5,945	7,124	6	45,887

Third, the party's parliamentary seat share is accounted for to measure the size of every party in the legislature. It can be argued that party size in parliament can control for various things such as the ability to access the floor depending on the country rules of legislative debate,

<sup>29</sup> Data was drawn from the website of the European Union at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-financial-assistance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-financial-assistance_en)

their resources to form teams that draft speeches for their members following the party line or the overall diversity of speeches delivered based on the numbers of MPs that are available to speak (Back et. al., Forthcoming)

Fourth, election proximity is included to capture any possible electoral cycle effects or shifts in the agenda measuring the active legislative term quarter starting from 0 and adding 0.25 for every additional quarter the legislature lasts.

Finally, a variable related to conditionality as well as two variables related to the length of the documents measured, are controlled for. Although no specific hypotheses are formed, controlling for them is deemed necessary. First the size of the MoU signed, in billions of Euros for each country is included.<sup>30</sup> Second, two variables that capture the length of the manifesto and speeches text measured at every unit of analysis are also included. This is done so that Discourse Congruence measurements are not affected by the length of the available text. It is possible that some parties produce larger manifestos or speeches or that a certain party is not talking a lot about one of the two issues accounted for in this chapter. Descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the analyses are reported in Table 3.1.

## Results

In the following analysis, the variation in the three measures of discourse congruence between manifestos and parliamentary speeches, as described in the previous section, is modelled with the use of panel data regression techniques. The unit of analysis is the party at every calendar quarter and the dependent variables are all continuous ranging from 0 to 1 (where 0 means no Discourse Congruence and 1 means perfect Discourse Congruence).

Three sets (one for each dependent variable) of two different fixed effects panel regression models are specified. Table 3.2 summarizes the regressions' output. More specifically, models 1, 3 and 5 include only the two main independent variables: Explicit External Conditionality and Economic Performance Index (EPI lagged one quarter). Models 2, 4 and 6 include all the

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<sup>30</sup> Both of these measures were drawn from the website of the European Union at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-financial-assistance\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-financial-assistance_en)

control variables as described in the previous section. Since the models have fixed effects for individual parties, the country dummies are implicit and consequently not included.<sup>31 32</sup>

The models show that the direct effect of the variable capturing the country's economic performance on discourse congruence, as per H1, is statistically significant across all models. The positive coefficient corroborates the idea that better economic performance allows all parties to increase the congruence between their speeches and their manifesto.

**Table 3.2.** Analyzing Discourse Congruence (Overall, EU and Economy). Fixed Effects Panel regression

VARIABLES	Overall		EU		Economy	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Conditionality	-0.0197*** (0.0046)	-0.0060 (0.0044)	-0.0125* (0.0067)	-0.0151** (0.0071)	-0.0138*** (0.0051)	0.0062 (0.0051)
EPI lagged(-1)	0.0008*** (0.0003)	0.0008*** (0.0003)	0.0014*** (0.0004)	0.0017*** (0.0004)	0.0005 (0.0003)	0.0007** (0.0003)
Government		-0.0046 (0.0067)		0.0319*** (0.0106)		0.0077 (0.0075)
Seat Share		0.0010*** (0.0004)		0.0001 (0.0006)		0.0005 (0.0004)
Left-Right Placement		0.0253*** (0.0040)		0.0288*** (0.0063)		0.0212*** (0.0044)
Manifesto Length		0.0000*** (0.0000)		0.0000 (0.0000)		0.0000*** (0.0000)
Speeches Length		0.0000*** (0.0000)		0.0000 (0.0000)		0.0000*** (0.0000)
Election Proximity		-0.0027* (0.0016)		-0.0018 (0.0025)		-0.0020 (0.0018)
Constant	0.6186*** (0.0231)	0.4350*** (0.0280)	0.4208*** (0.0331)	0.2595*** (0.0441)	0.6467*** (0.0251)	0.4544*** (0.0327)
Observations	1,433	1,433	1,352	1,352	1,328	1,328
R-squared	0.0221	0.2090	0.0135	0.0484	0.0089	0.1515
Number of Party	30	30	30	30	30	30

Standard errors in parentheses  
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

<sup>31</sup> The country dummies are implicit when adding fixed effects for individual parties. Adding country dummies should not change anything. A dummy for the interaction legislature\*country should also not change the estimates. What both dummies give is an estimate of those specific contributions, that is, they "weed out" what is country average from the N party dummies and thus they are not necessary.

<sup>32</sup> A possible correlation between having an MoU and bad economic performance is being tested by running all the models and removing one or the other variable. The impact of this change on the remaining variable in the model is non-existent for the direction of the effects and negligible for the size of the coefficients.

Furthermore, the models bring substantial support to the theoretical expectation as formulated earlier in H2. When looking at the ‘empty’ models across the three operationalizations of Discourse Congruence, the variable tapping on conditionality is negatively linked with discourse congruence. With regards to the EU parts of the text in particular, both specifications produce a statistically significant negative coefficient. This means that when a country is operating under explicit external conditionality, the levels of discourse congruence of its parties when speaking about the EU are lower.

Overall, it is interesting to note that the impact of these variables is much more important statistically for the dependent variable tapping on discourse congruence around the EU. The differences in the sizes of the coefficients are also important to note.

Finally, regarding the control variables, it is notable that the models provide some evidence to support that the ideological placement of parties seems to affect the dependent variable significantly with more Right-wing parties performing better. On the contrary, the size of a party as well as election proximity are not very significant predictors according to the data. Finally, regarding the party’s government status, the analysis suggests that being in government increases the levels of discourse congruence in the EU parts of the text, similarly to what Traber et. al. (2018) found.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This chapter sets out to answer the question of what the impact of supranational economic conditions of crisis and constraint on the representative capacity of parties in parliamentary democracies is. It attempts to do so by utilizing an original dataset of parliamentary speeches from 1996 to 2019, which comprises of four legislatures from countries in the periphery of Europe who were severely hit by the recent Eurozone Crisis. Additionally, it utilises a novel method of tapping into the discursive side of mandate fulfilment by measuring the levels of discourse congruence as the similarity between manifestos and parliamentary speeches.

The empirical analysis produces some interesting findings. First, with regards to Hypothesis 1, similarly to what previous researchers have found (mainly Borghetto & Russo, 2018; Conti et al., 2019; and Thomson & Costello, 2017), there is ample statistically significant evidence to support that parties stick more to their electoral rhetoric throughout the legislature

when the economic performance of the country is better. Similarly, there is some statistical support for Hypothesis 2. As expected, explicit conditionality negatively affects the levels of discourse congruence. This means that parties stick less to their electoral rhetoric, when the country operates under the demands of externally imposed policy requirements.

This contribution is relevant for at least two reasons. First, it advances the literature on the political consequences of the recent crisis. Second, it adds to the literature on the understudied parliamentary mandate fulfilment by extending past research (both conceptually and methodologically). As described earlier, it is different to the pledge fulfilment approach utilised by Thomson & Costello (2017) and Louwse's (2011, 2012) spatial approach, but it is also different than Conti et al (2019) and Borghetto & Russo (2018) issue attention approaches. Notwithstanding the different operationalisation approach, the analysis corroborates previous findings.

Additionally, it is crucial to understand that this is not a normative statement about how representatively righteous it is to remain true to the electoral platform. It is possible that parties might not talk about the same things in the same way post-electorally simply because of other reasons like adapting to shifts in public opinion. This is not innately a bad thing as it would actually signal more responsiveness. What the study suggests however, is that more caution is warranted with regards to the often-heard claim that party representation was in decline during the crisis. Further research might inquire into the underlying mechanism between supranational constraints and discourse congruence while controlling for fluctuations in public opinion.

Lastly, although the study did offer some insight to the differentiation of discourse congruence across topics, mainly showing the elevated importance of macro-economic factors for EU-related discourse, this was not its main research goal. Further analysis disentangling discourse per-topic is warranted. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that although party fixed effects are included for the models, this is only a workaround the potential variation due to the institutional differences (e.g. party discipline, electoral system, access to the floor) between the cases included in the study. This is a potential weakness of the study from both a theoretical and a methodological standpoint. Future studies should delve deeper into this issue and account for these differences more thoroughly.

## CHAPTER III

### Debates in the Greek Parliament Under Crisis. A Party-Dominated System with Clientelistic Underpinnings.<sup>33</sup>

#### Introduction

This chapter examines the politics of legislative debate in Greece. According to Proksch and Slapin (2015:1) MPs use floor speeches primarily to communicate policy positions to other members within their own party, to members of other parties, and, most importantly, to their voters. Their investigation shows that the electoral system, and especially the ballot structure explains the degree to which parties monitor and control MPs' speeches. In a parliamentary system with PR, party unity is prized, and MPs' freedom to access the floor will be minimised. On the contrary, in a presidential system with a majoritarian electoral system, the opposite is true. In this chapter, we will place the Hellenic Parliament<sup>34</sup> (*Βουλή των Ελλήνων – Vouli ton Elinon*) within this broad framework, and make use of an original dataset on parliamentary speechmaking to understand its patterns in the *Vouli*.

The Greek case is interesting for at least two reasons: first, although it is nominally PR, its electoral system functions in a majoritarian way, as will be explained. This is coupled with medium to large electoral cycles with open lists where intra-party competition is high. These characteristics, alongside the institutional rules for floor access in the *Vouli*, give both parliamentary party leaders control of the overall debates, and also some leeway for MPs to participate. Second, because Greece has undergone a severe restructuring of its party system during the previous decade as a result of the Eurozone crisis. This may have impacted the strength of the *Vouli* vis-à-vis other political institutions, but also the politics of speechmaking

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<sup>33</sup> This chapter was co-authored with Dr. Marina Costa Lobo and has already been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press, as is, as a chapter in a book by Bäck, H., Debus, M., & Fernandes, JM (eds) intitled: "The Politics of Legislative Debate".

<sup>34</sup> From the Greek "Ἑλλάς, *Hellas*" and the official name Hellenic Republic "*Helliniki Dimokratia*". The term Greece comes from the Latin *Graecia* (as used by the Romans).

in the Greek legislative arena. Greece has been dominated by majoritarian politics from 1974 to 2012, with the period since having been characterized by more fragmentation. The strength of the party duopoly has been accompanied by widespread clientelistic practices and strong patronage networks.

We start by describing the party and electoral system, as well as parliamentary rules that underpin MPs' behavior in Greece, as well as its recent changes. Once we have set the institutional framework where debates take place we introduce an original data set of parliamentary speechmaking spanning twenty years of plenary debates (2000 to 2019) in order to analyze the determinants of floor access. The analysis is divided in two parts: the first presents descriptive bivariate findings on MP characteristics and speechmaking. Then, several regression analyses are run to see which variables are more explicative of speechmaking in a multivariate setting. We find evidence that being a minister dramatically increases the probability of increased access to the floor of the Greek plenum while female MPs speak a lot less than their male colleagues. Concerning the MP's position in the party leadership, in accordance with the theoretical expectations brought forth by Slapin and Proksch in their chapter, we find some evidence that party leaders in Greece guard floor access and refrain from delegating speech time to backbenchers.

### **Institutional and party system background**

The transition of the *Vouli* from post-war autocratic to rational parliamentarism within a polarised political system has been researched extensively (Alivizatos, 1990). Greece's path to democracy went hand in hand with other Southern Europe regime transitions of the 1970s as part of the 'third wave' of democratization (Huntington, 1991). However, Greece differed from other Southern European countries too: it enjoyed a longer previous liberal democratic past but also its former parliamentary regime shaped important legacies that affected the post-1974 era (Featherstone, 2013). The seven years of military rule did not manage to eradicate the previous party system structure. As Mavrogordatos (1984) tells us, only seven years and three elections later in 1981, the result was once again a three-party system, with three major parties sharing 95 percent of the vote and 100 percent of the seats in the parliament. As a result, one of the most stable two-party systems in the continent emerged from the 1980s onwards, labeled by some as a "partitocrazia" (Anthopoulos, 2008).

These two parties were of course the right-wing New Democracy (*Νέα Δημοκρατία* - ND) and the socialist Panhellenic Socialist Movement (*Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα* - PASOK) which together defined political competition in Greece along the left–right axis. Not only the left-right cleavage was the defining one for most of twentieth century Greek politics (Nicolacopoulos, 2005, Andreadis & Stavrakakis, 2019) but it helped build a stable duopoly of parties that managed a steady alternation in government (Lyrintzis, 2005). In every national election from the 1970s to 2012, ND and PASOK would gather well over 75% of the vote. Indeed, before the double earthquake elections in 2012 that followed the dramatic events in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the Greek debt crisis, that put an end to this stable system, the only case in which one or the other party was not in government alone were two short-lived coalitions in 1989 (Teperoglou & Tsatsanis, 2014).

Besides the two major parties, a third party, the Communist Party of Greece (*Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας* – KKE), an orthodox traditionalist communist party has been resilient in the Greek party system, albeit with limited electoral success (Nicolacopoulos, 2005, Mavrogordatos, 1984). Notwithstanding, scholars claim that its stable presence in parliament might not be enough to classify it as ‘relevant’ for the Greek party system (Pappas, 2003).

This rigid party system had a further distinctive characteristic, namely its clientelistic nature. According to Pappas (2013: 33), the Greek party system ‘was built to ensure the distribution of political rents’. Indeed, this was the case from the outset, where the new parties that emerged in Greece after the fall of the colonels’ regime in 1974 relied heavily on electoral clienteles and networks which were already in existence (Lyrintzis 2011: 3; Pappas 2009: 322). Afonso et al. (2015), show that up to 2012, the dominant parties in Greece relied heavily on clientelistic networks for electoral success.

This ultra-stable party system ended with the two consecutive elections of May and June 2012, when no party was able to win the absolute majority of seats, and the stable two-partyism was replaced by a volatile and polarized multipartyism (Tsatsanis, 2016). In a time of severe economic crisis, Greek governments were forced to implement vastly unpopular austerity measures. Out of the stream of protest-to-austerity parties (Nezi, 2012; Nezi and Katsanidou, 2014), the Coalition of the Radical Left (*Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς* - SYRIZA) was the party which gained more support (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, Lefkofridi & Nezi, 2019). Its electoral success was dramatic: it went from being a political outsider with a mere 4.6% of the votes in 2009 to winning 36.4% of the votes in January 2015. SYRIZA

managed not only to challenge the incumbent government and the main opposition but to successfully break the historical duopoly by forming a government in 2015 (Aslanidis and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2016).

The degree of transformation of the Greek party system, can be summarized by referring to the effective number of parties (ENP), which almost doubled between 2009 and 2012, jumping from 2.6 to 4.8 in the May election of 2012. It then declined to 3.2 in September 2015, the election where SYRIZA won an absolute majority (Tsatsanis, 2016) and even further to 2.7 in July 2019, hinting towards a reconsolidation of the pre-crisis two-party system.

Between 1974 and 2012, the stability of the party system and its predictable alternation in government between the two major parties was heavily supported by the large disproportionality of the Greek electoral system. The Greek Constitution<sup>35</sup> contains no specific provisions for the electoral system that dictate how the parliamentary seats will be distributed. Instead, electoral laws drafted and voted by the *Vouli* carry that role.

Since 1974, the Greek Parliament has been composed of 300 deputies who are directly elected by universal suffrage for a four-year term. Out of those, 12 seats are allocated at a nation-wide district (*Επικράτεια*), while 238 seats are allocated in 60 single- and multi-member constituencies.<sup>36</sup> Political parties present open candidate lists. Electors then cast a vote for one of the lists with the option to select 1 to 5 candidates depending on the available constituency seats. Voting is compulsory, but in reality, sanctions are not imposed.

During the time of writing,<sup>37</sup> 250 seats are distributed proportionally among parties that obtain more than 3% of the votes at the national level, while the remaining 50 seats are automatically attributed to the most-voted party as a bonus. This gives the first party the opportunity to attain a single-party governing majority with around 40% of the votes (as did New Democracy in the latest election in July 2019). Therefore, it is a "reinforced" proportional representation system. Contrary to what this term may suggest, the electoral system does not reinforce proportionality, but rather the largest parties (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005). It does of course "reinforce" government stability, since it makes it more likely for one party to have an

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<sup>35</sup> Constitution of the Greek Republic, Published by the Hellenic Parliament, last retrieved on 1/4/2021 at: <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Syntagma/>

<sup>36</sup> More than half the districts elect less than 10 seats while there are a handful of districts that are located in and around Athens with more than 40 seats

<sup>37</sup> Law 3231/2004, Official Gazette, Vol. A, no. 45 as amended by Law 3636/2008, Official Gazette, Vol. A, no. 11 and first enforced in the 2012 May election. SYRIZA's government enacted a new law, 4406/2016, Official Gazette, Vol. A, no. 133 that was not yet enforced in the 2019 legislative elections.

absolute majority.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the effects of such a PR electoral system is to approximate it to a majoritarian system. Renwick (2010) claims that the effects of such mixed bonus systems could be even more extreme because a majority is largely granted.

As in most parliamentary regimes, members of government are recruited mostly from Parliament, and they retain their seat after taking up executive office, which favors the dominance of the party leadership over the parliamentary group. Yet, the fact that there are open lists does signal a role for the individual MP in trying to mobilize the vote for themselves. According to Gemenis and Nezi (2015: 19), parties in the *Vouli* could be understood as a “cartelized party system with weak ideological cohesion but strong discipline”. The weak ideological cohesion allowed each major party to attract candidates on the basis of the size of their political clientele. This way of recruiting candidates for Parliament meant that they were ideologically diverse, but united in their ability to exert patronage at the local level.

Freire et al. (2016) showed that various factors of the Greek electoral campaign could also account for the high levels of centralization. They argue that candidate recruitment largely depends on national party centers while the mass media tend to focus on the main party leaders, especially those who compete for government. Yet, although party funding is based on public subsidies, private donations to parties and even to candidates is allowed, within certain limits (OSCE, 2019).

From the analysis of the party and electoral system in Greece we emerge with conflicting expectations. On the one hand, the system can be considered largely party-centered, disciplined and offering little room for independent action by MPs. Sotiropoulos (2012:41) paints a picture of a very weak parliament, unable to control the executive: “...*there is a tradition of very strong party discipline, resulting in the expulsion of dissidents by fiat of the party leadership... All this amounts to the legislative branch of government being unable to hold the executive fully accountable, while bills of law are rarely ever rejected by the parliament*”.

On the other hand, it is important not to underestimate the power of political party local organizations, which play a role in candidate nomination, and in political mobilization. The fact that there are open lists, intra-party competition among candidates at the district level, as well as a few single-member districts, allowance for private donations to individual MPs and

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<sup>38</sup> The latest electoral law as enforced by the SYRIZA government, eliminated the provisions concerning the bonus from the previous text. This law will affect the next elections anticipated in 2023 but did not affect the period under observation and is also expected that the current New Democracy government will reinstate the provisions.

extensive clientelistic networks suggests that MPs need to create a name for themselves and might actually have some leeway to gain some control of the floor time, once in Parliament.

### **The institutional setting of legislative debate**

To understand the institutional setting of the legislative debates, it is necessary to consider the Parliament's Standing Orders (SO) -revised in December 2001- that constitute the legal framework for legislative debate in Greece.<sup>39</sup> Foundethakis (2003) describes how the 2001 revision was not able to resolve the tension between the individual representative mandate and the need for efficiency. As is the case in most Parliaments, the *Vouli* benefits the parliamentary group rather than the individual MP. Thus, the parliamentary majority strength comes at the expense of the minority while the rights of the parliamentary groups come before the rights of the MPs. The goal of effectiveness in parliamentary work means that parties enforce discipline which is justified by an appeal to party unity.

The Standing Orders provide clues as to the degree to which party leaders control the proceedings. According to the SO "*The Plenum of the Parliament convenes three times a week, ...for conducting legislative work and two times a week... for the exercise of parliamentary control. The Plenum may convene by exception on any other day of the week*" (Art. 53.1).<sup>40</sup> A list of the five most important types of debates are presented in Table 4.1. It is important to note that on any type of debate "*The Parliament may discuss only matters included in the order of the day*" (Art 62.1).<sup>41</sup> The contents of the Order of the day are decided by the Conference of Parliamentary Chairpersons (Art. 14), who have the competence to determine the procedure and the duration of the debates for bills and law proposals in the Plenary Sessions, as well as the total duration of the general debates within the framework of the order of the day sittings, taking into account the recommendations of the competent Parliamentary Committee.

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<sup>39</sup> Standing Orders of the Hellenic Parliament, Last retrieved on 1/4/2021 at: <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/Kanonismos-tis-Voulis/>

<sup>40</sup> Article 55 on the Distribution of Parliamentary work in the Plenum sittings allows for some overlap between the two.

<sup>41</sup> Except for "Debate not Subject to The Order of the Day" (*Συζήτηση προ Ημερησίας Διατάξεως*) (art 143), 7 times per term.

**Table 4.1.** Five most important types of debate in the Hellenic Parliament

Debate Name	Goals	Organization Rules	Access to the floor	Length	Standing Orders Articles
<b>Regular Legislative Procedure</b> ( <i>Νομοθετικό Έργο</i> )	Debating Bills and law proposals once on their principle, by article and as a whole	Starts with competent Ministers or MPs signing the proposal. Speakers on list follow. Group leaders can speak any time they request.	Free Access for all MPs	No limit	94-103
<b>Parliamentary Control</b> ( <i>Κοινοβουλευτικός Έλεγχος</i> )	Exercising control over government's activities. Control means discussed: (Current) Questions, (Current) Interpellations	Starts with Responsible MP	Only responsible MPs and relevant cabinet members	Max 47 mins	124-138
<b>Motion Of Confidence</b> ( <i>Πρόταση Εμπιστοσύνης</i> )	Government receives the confidence of the Parliament	Starts with government's programmatic statements. Speakers on list follow	Free Access for all MPs	Max 3 days	141
<b>Motion of Censure</b> ( <i>Πρόταση Δισπυστίας</i> )	Confidence Withdrawal towards the Government or one of its members.	Starts with speeches of 2 of the MPs signing the motion. Speakers on list follow	Free Access for all MPs	Max 3 days	142
<b>Discussion of the State Budget</b> ( <i>Συζήτηση επί του Προϋπολογισμού</i> )	Discussion and voting of the budget, the financial statement and the general balance sheet of the State	Starts with general and special rapporteurs. Speakers on list follow	Free Access for all MPs	Max 5 days/sittings	123

The Conference of Parliamentary Chairpersons itself is composed of the Speaker and former Speakers of the Parliament (provided they have been elected as Members of Parliament), the Deputy Speakers (these are seven, three elected from the largest government party, and four from the largest opposition parties), the Presidents of the standing committees (there are five standing committees, and each Committee President is elected by an absolute majority), as well as the President of the Committee on institutions and transparency, the Presidents of

Parliamentary Groups and one independent Member of Parliament acting as a representative for the independent Members of Parliament provided that they are at least five (Article 13). Therefore, the composition of this Conference ensures a disproportionate weight to the dominant party in Parliament, which in turn has great impact on the order of the day.

Formally and in principle, access to the floor of the Plenary of the Parliament is a legislator's core prerogative. MPs who want to take the floor need to request it either in person from the Chair or by means of an electronic list of speakers (Art. 65.1). The registration in the speakers' list takes place individually at the beginning of each debate (Art. 65.2) and the speeches are delivered in accordance to their entry into the list of speakers. (Art. 64.1). Nonetheless, Article 65 (par. 5), foresees some exceptions to this proceeding. During State budget debates as well as the debates prior to voting on Motions of Censure and Confidence, parliamentary group leaders have the right to submit pre-drafted lists of speakers which the chair follows.

With regards to the rules of engagement, once they register, there are specific times allotted to each type of speaker in the plenary- depending on whether they are MPs, Ministers, rapporteurs, or Parliamentary party leaders (Articles 97 and 103). In the debates of bills and law proposals competent Ministers take the floor should they pose such request. If not, priority is given to rapporteurs, special speakers and six MPs in the order they registered. Speakers alternate between party groups (art. 64.2). "*Speech is unhindered*" (Art 62.2) and "*the discussion is not terminated until all registered speakers deliver their speech*" (Art. 62.5). Yet, no one is able to speak on any subject without previous authorization from the Speaker, or on any subject that has not been set previously in the Order of the day (Art.62.3).<sup>42</sup> Additionally, "*Conversations are not allowed. Interruptions are allowed only by the speakers themselves and by the Speaker's consent.*" (Art. 66.7).

The information collected and presented above, concerning the party system, the constitutional setting as well as the Parliamentary standing orders, suggests the following: Party discipline is very high in Greece, and it shapes the working of the Parliament. A clear example was given in 2012: the voting instructions by party group leaders on the second memorandum in February 2012 when both PASOK and New Democracy instructed their MPs to vote in favour but 22 PASOK MPs and 21 New Democracy MPs voted against or abstained (Gemenis & Nezi, 2015). The leaders of the two parties that needed the votes immediately expelled all

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<sup>42</sup> It is important to note here, however, that there is no particular cost for MPs that deviate from these subjects or exceed the time limits. Consequently, it is common practice and quite acceptable to disregard these two restrictions, especially when more senior MPs and/or government members are concerned.

43 of the dissenting MPs. Disciplinary restrictions even on the reform debates (Foundethakis, 2003) and more broadly when public declarations about allowing the MPs to ‘vote on their conscience’ with no restrictions<sup>43</sup> paint a picture of how conditioned MPs are in their voting behavior which should be an underlying feature of debate as well.

Overall, Greece lies somewhere between the two extremes set by Slapin and Proksch and its classification is not straightforward. As we demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, not only formally (the Greek Parliament SO contain provisions for both individual and party list access to the floor in certain situations), but also informally (ambivalent incentives for MPs stemming from strong party discipline but also clientelism), Greece presents characteristics of both poles. In the following section, we will make use of our novel dataset to examine the political patterns of Greek legislative debate further.

### **What is the role of intra- and interparty politics in legislative debates?**

In this empirical section, we want to explore how intra and interparty, as well as individual features, play a role in determining the likelihood that MPs take the floor in Greece. The data for this chapter is collected from various sources. We collect text data from the parliamentary debates transcripts from every plenary session that took place in the period 2000 to 2019.<sup>44</sup> The automated data generation process includes various steps<sup>45</sup>, and yields a total of almost 200,000 unique speeches and interventions, spanning 20 years of parliamentary debates, 3330 plenary sessions and 7 legislative terms.<sup>46</sup> This data is aggregated into two dependent variables, measuring the amount of floor time each legislator received per legislative term in two distinct ways.

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<sup>43</sup><http://www.ekathimerini.com/236569/article/ekathimerini/news/centrist-party-spokesman-says-mps-can-vote-according-to-their-conscience-on-name-deal>

<sup>44</sup> The transcripts of the debates are available on the Greek Parliament’s website and are mostly in a machine-readable (.docx or .pdf) format for the period under observation. For the cases where there are no machine-readable texts we resort to Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to extract the textual information.

<sup>45</sup> Steps taken include cleaning the data, splitting it by speech using complicated regular expressions and limiting the interventions to those not given by the Speaker and contained more than 50 words.

<sup>46</sup> The legislative terms included in the dataset are the following:

10<sup>th</sup> (04/2000-02/2004), 11<sup>th</sup> (03/2004-08/2007), 12<sup>th</sup> (09/2007-09/2009), 13<sup>th</sup> (10/2009-04/2012), 15<sup>th</sup> (06/2012-12/2014), 16<sup>th</sup> (01/2015-08/2015), 17<sup>th</sup> (09/2015-06/2019)

The 14<sup>th</sup> legislative term has been excluded from the analysis for lack of substantial plenary sessions since following the May 2012 results and the incapacity to form a government the parliament convened only to declare new elections in June 2012. The debates for 17<sup>th</sup> were only collected up to March 2018.

First, the total number of unique times each legislator  $x$ , participated in every legislative term  $j$  (from now on *Speeches*). For this variable, we concatenate speeches given during the same debate in order to avoid inflating the variable when speakers make multiple interventions in the same debate. Second, we also aggregate the total number of words each legislator  $x$  delivered in every legislative term  $j$ , divided by the amount of time spent in parliament (see exposure variable below).<sup>47</sup> This ratio variable of words over exposure (from now on *Words*) is calculated with the aim of avoiding the downplay of the length of speeches in terms of salience and importance in a debate. This aggregation leads to a total of 2109 data points where each observation accounts for the total number of speeches and words delivered by each legislator in each legislative term.

To explain these variables, following the chapter by Slapin and Proksch, several others are compiled, at the MP, party and system level, which are collected from various sources and are summarized in Table 2.2. Concerning MPs, we include personal characteristics, namely age<sup>48</sup> and gender. In terms of parliamentary career: MP's parliamentary group affiliation; MP's parliamentary seniority, i.e. how many times they have been an MP, ranging from 1 to 15 legislative terms; MP's exposure during the term as the percentage of time in which the MP held to their seat in parliament during the term, ranging from 0,01 to 1; and MP's participation in the cabinet, i.e. whether they were ministers or vice-ministers in the incumbent government taking the values of 0 for No Cabinet Post and 1 for Vice-Minister or Minister<sup>49</sup>; whether they belonged to the leadership of a parliamentary party group; and whether they were the party leader.

Finally, at the system level, the following variables are coded: the Party Size in terms of share of seats that the MP's party achieved in the election, ranging from 2 to 55 percent of total seats; the party family that the MP's party belongs to<sup>50</sup>, and finally a dummy variable which codes whether the MP's party was incumbent during the legislative term.

The first dependent variable, the total number of speeches made by each MP in each legislative term, ranges from 1 to 3987, whereas the mean stands at 230 Speeches per term.

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<sup>47</sup> This means that in for both our dependent variables we did not account for legislators that made zero speeches in term  $j$  since they were not present in the debate transcripts.

<sup>48</sup> For the analyses including age, we had to drop 52 observations from our dataset since we could not find reliable information on their age

<sup>49</sup> We should note here however, that due to the nature of the dataset we are allocating a 1 in this variable to each MP that held office at least once even for a very small period of time during the entire term. This might inflate the number of MPs that participated in the cabinet during a term but it is a reality of the *Vouli*.

<sup>50</sup> The sources for party family are the Comparative Manifesto Project and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

The second dependent variable, the total number of words per term ranges from 57 to 591000 words with a mean of 50371 words per term. Table 4.3 shows a descriptive table of total speeches made per party and legislative period. Not surprisingly, the major parties, ND and PASOK have been dominating legislative debates in Greece. Overall, in our dataset and the twenty years of debates, one in every two speeches is made by an MP belonging to one of the two parties.

**Table 4.2.** Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
<b>Dependent Vars</b>					
Speeches	2109	39.616	40.972	1	316
Words	2109	53141.39	68399.61	57	1050113
<b>Independent Vars</b>					
Gender	2109	.171	.377	0	1
Government	2109	.536	.499	0	1
Party Size	2109	36.855	17.372	2	55
Seniority	2109	3.403	2.548	1	15
Exposure	2109	.969	.139	.001	1
Age	2057	52.249	9.458	27	90
Party	2109	7.844	2.09	1	12
Minister	2109	.169	.375	0	1
Party family	2109	2.324	1.279	1	4
Central District	2109	.274	.446	0	1
Constituency Size	2109	12.464	13.311	1	46
Party Leader	2109	.027	.162	0	1
Leadership PPG	2109	.625	.484	0	1
Committee Chair	2109	.165	.371	0	1
Period	2109	3.908	2.004	1	7
EPI	2109	73.07	9.5	58.883	84.688

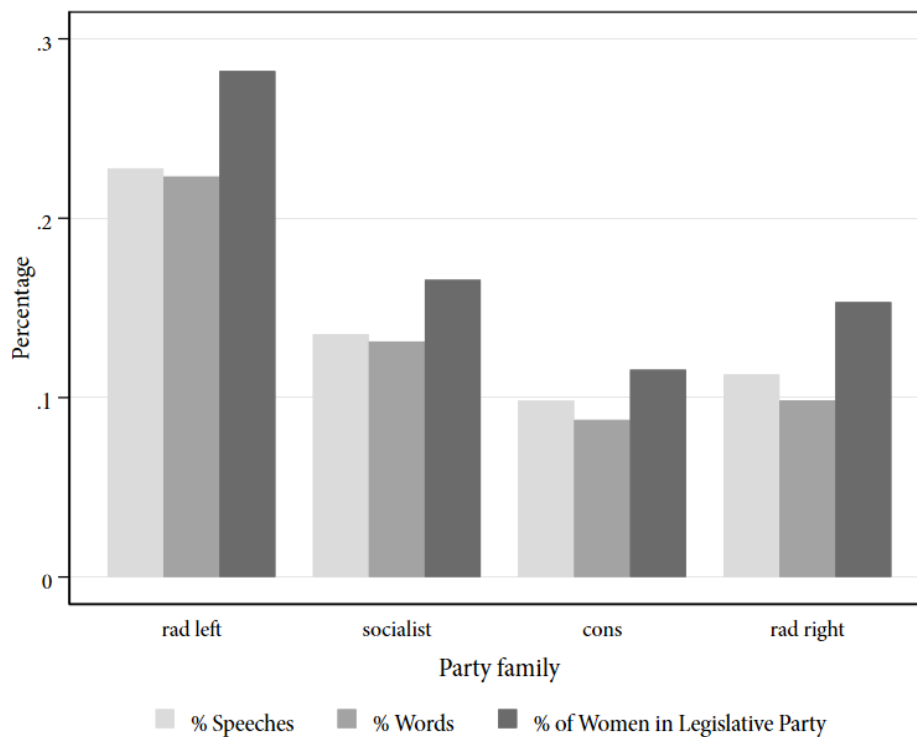
**Table 4.3.** Total Number of Speeches delivered by Party and Legislative Term in Greece (2000-2019)

Party	Legislative Term (Duration in days)							Total
	10	11	12	13	15	16	17	
	04/2000- 02/2004 (1403)	03/2004- 08/2007 (1259)	09/2007- 09/2009 (722)	10/2009- 04/2012 (920)	06/2012- 12/2014 (927)	01/2015- 08/2015 (215)	09/2015- 06/2019 (1360)	
Independent Greeks (ANEL)	0	0	0	0	1,383 (10.9%) (21)	131 (6.7%) (14)	825 (5.2%) (13)	2,339 (2.7%) (48)
Democratic Left (DIMAR)	0	0	0	0	1,258 (9.9%) (20)	0	0	1,258 (1.5%) (20)
Democratic Alignment (DIMSIM)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,768 (11.1%) (17)	1,768 (2.1%) (17)
Union of Centrists (EK)	0	0	0	0	0	0	956 (6.0%) (9)	956 (1.1%) (9)
Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	1,438 (9.9%) (12)	1,379 (9.1%) (13)	967 (9.3%) (25)	1,310 (8.7%) (22)	862 (6.8%) (12)	156 (8.0%) (15)	1,188 (7.4%) (15)	7,300 (8.5%) (114)
Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	0	0	1,248 (12.0%) (11)	1,921 (12.8%) (16)	0	0	0	3,169 (3.7%) (27)
New Democracy	5,525 (38.2%) (129)	6,345 (42.0%) (164)	3,493 (33.6%) (150)	3,588 (24.0%) (93)	3,915 (30.9%) (144)	320 (16.3%) (60)	3,152 (19.7%) (74)	26,339 (30.8%) (814)
Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	6,508 (45.0%) (176)	6,262 (41.4%) (120)	3,646 (35.1%) (106)	6,638 (44.3%) (177)	1,640 (12.9%) (36)	170 (8.7%) (13)	0	24,864 (29.1%) (628)
The River (POTAMI)	0	0	0	0	0	186 (9.4%) (17)	942 (5.9%) (13)	1,127 (1.3%) (30)
Coalition (SYNASPISMOS)	992 (6.9%) (9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	992 (1.2%) (9)
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	0	1,127 (7.5%) (6)	1,045 (10.0%) (15)	1,515 (10.1%) (13)	2,776 (21.9%) (74)	850 (43.3%) (147)	6,046 (37.8%) (167)	13,359 (15.6%) (422)
Golden Dawn	0	0	0	0	855 (6.7%) (18)	149 (7.6%) (17)	1,108 (6.93%) (18)	2,112 (2.5%) (53)
Total	14,463 (100%) (326)	15,113 (100%) (303)	10,400 (100%) (307)	14,972 (100%) (321)	12,689 (100%) (325)	1,961 (100%) (283)	15,985 (100%) (326)	85,583 (100%) (2,191)

\*First parenthesis is the percentage of speeches in the term. Second parenthesis is the number of MPs delivering the speeches

We begin our bivariate analysis by looking at how the legislator’s gender impacts their access to the floor depending on each party family. Figure 4.1 shows the share of speeches but also words<sup>51</sup> of female MPs in each party family. We can observe marked differences between the Left and the Right, when we consider speeches per party family as measured by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et. al., 2015; Polk et. al., 2017).<sup>52</sup> Namely, the radical left parties have the highest percentages of female MPs delivering speeches and also number of words followed by the socialist parties while on the other hand, conservative and radical right parties have the lowest percentages. This is obviously driven by the share of female MPs each of these party families have which tells us that women have access to the floor that is commensurate to their numerical presence in the party family.

**Figure 4.1.** Total Share of Speeches and Words given by Female MPs in Greece

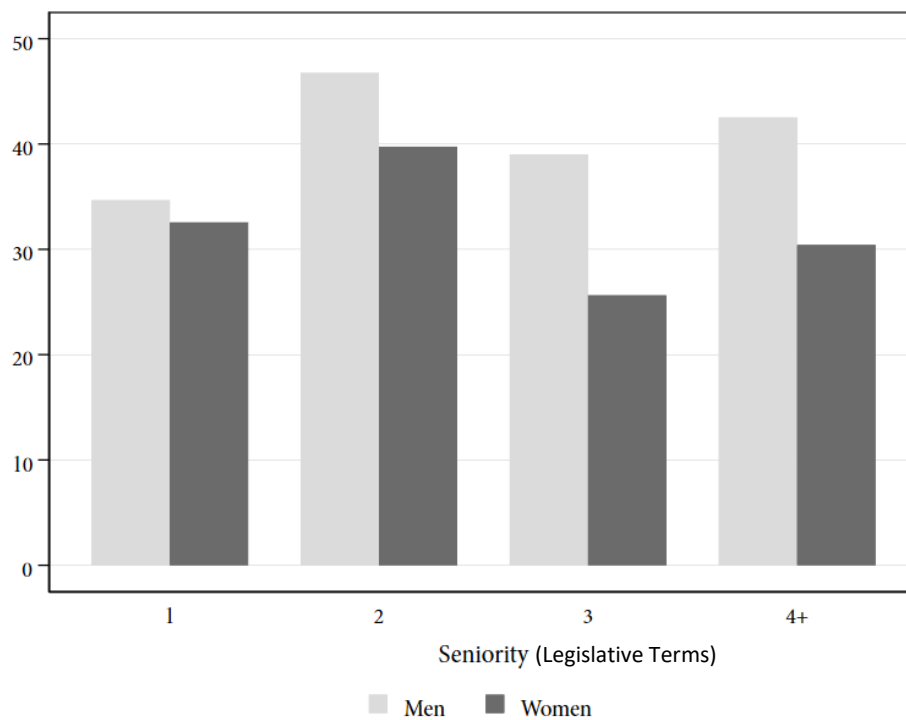


<sup>51</sup> Words are not divided by exposure for this figure

<sup>52</sup> According to the survey, the Communist Party of Greece and SYRIZA are placed in the Radical Left group, Democratic Left, Democratic Alignment, Union of Centrists, PASOK and The River are placed in the Socialist group, New Democracy is the only party in the conservative group while the Independent Greeks, the Popular Orthodox Rally and Golden Dawn are placed in the Radical Right group. The categorizations remain stable across years.

Figure 4.2 turns the attention to the effect of seniority on gender and on speech making. It shows the mean number of speeches per gender and by seniority. The broader image that it paints is one of higher participation from MPs in their second term in the parliament. What we can also observe from the data is that the difference in the mean number of speeches between less senior MPs (1 and 2 terms only) is a lot smaller in comparison to more senior MPs (3+ terms). It seems that women with greater parliamentary experience participate a lot less than their female colleagues who have spent less time as MPs.

**Figure 4.2.** Total Share of Speeches by MPs' Seniority and Gender in Greece



**Table 4.4.** Predicting Number of Speeches (Negative Binomial Regression) and Words (OLS) delivered by an MP

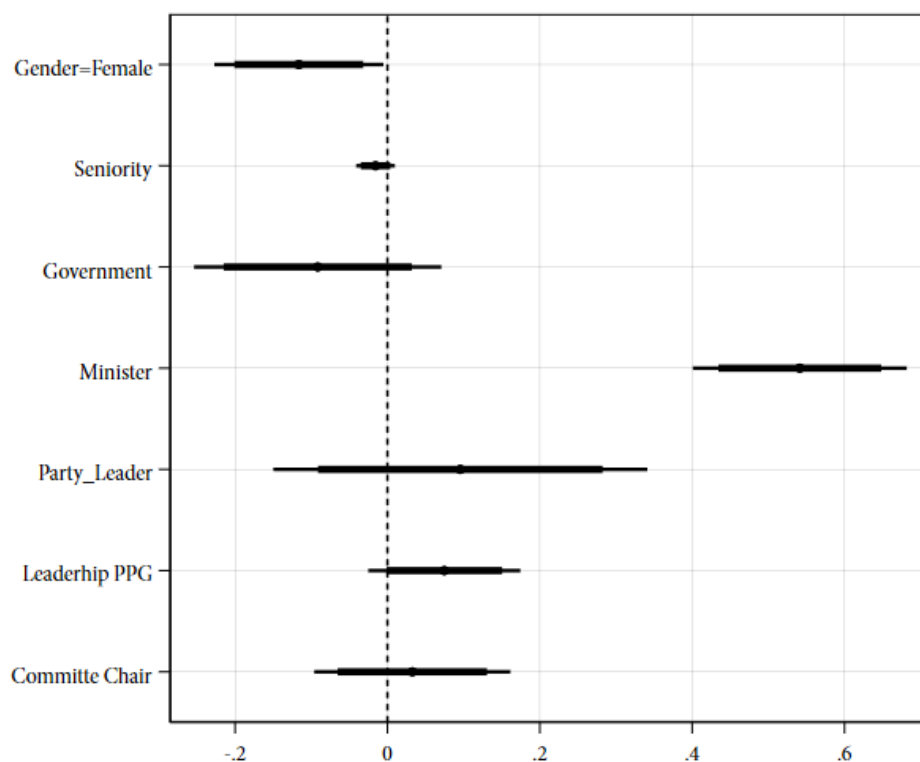
VARIABLES	(1) Speeches FULL	(2) Speeches STEPWISE	(3) Words FULL	(4) Words STEPWISE	(5) Speeches EXTENDED	(6) Words EXTENDED
Gender = female	-0.116*** (0.0431)	-0.0942** (0.0425)	-4,653 (4,623)		-0.107** (0.0430)	
Age	-0.00239 (0.0181)		561.3 (1,288)			
Age^2	2.53e-05 (0.000179)		-8.235 (12.16)			-3.780** (1.566)
Seniority	-0.0157 (0.00989)		-525.1 (627.2)			
Exposure log	0.702*** (0.145)	0.746*** (0.145)			0.757*** (0.149)	
Government	-0.0915 (0.0630)		4,439 (4,348)			
Minister	0.541*** (0.0545)	0.508*** (0.0481)	34,826*** (3,788)		0.484*** (0.0484)	34,388*** (3,864)
Party Leader	0.0957 (0.0953)		54,095*** (11,526)			50,154*** (11,678)
Leadership PPG	0.0746* (0.0388)		2,261 (2,766)			
Comm Chair	0.0327 (0.0500)		-1,620 (3,371)			
Party Size	-0.0194*** (0.00178)	-0.0217*** (0.00119)	-1,348*** (185.2)		-0.0208*** (0.00120)	-1,183*** (129.1)
Party Family						
radical left	0.232*** (0.0509)	0.223*** (0.0449)	17,376*** (4,312)	24,909*** (3,931)	0.220*** (0.0442)	17,387*** (3,603)
radical right	0.287*** (0.0896)	0.210** (0.0829)	13,561 (9,614)	51,136*** (7,452)	0.214*** (0.0825)	15,092* (8,756)
socialist	0.184*** (0.0472)	0.173*** (0.0461)	8,088** (3,410)	14,546*** (3,650)	0.171*** (0.0448)	8,251** (3,562)
EPI					0.0262*** (0.00741)	1,092 (796.3)
Dist. Magnitude					0.00535*** (0.00152)	408.7*** (108.0)
Constant	4.528*** (0.463)	4.544*** (0.0769)	97,826*** (36,027)	49,939*** (4,246)	2.233*** (0.589)	11,316 (66,482)
Observations	2,057	2,109	2,057	2,109	2,109	2,057
Period FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
R^2			0.216	0.112		0.221
Pseudo R^2	0.0651	0.0661			0.0671	
AIC	8.790	8.774	24.89	25	8.767	24.88

Standard errors clustered at the MP level

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

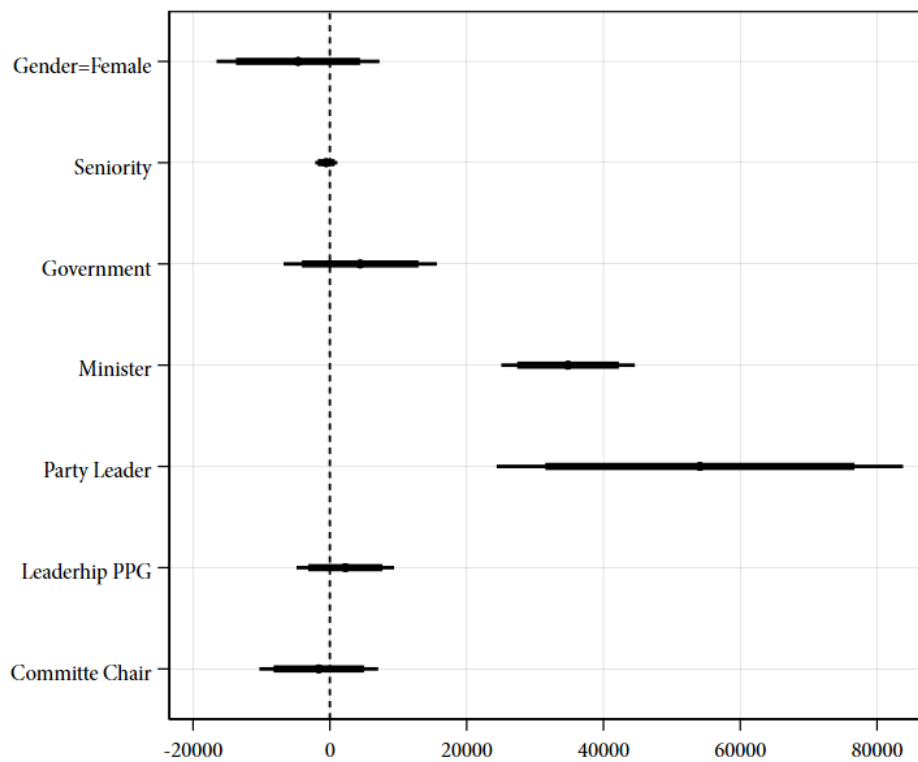
In our effort to identify potential patterns, we examine the data at the individual and party level aiming at statistically modelling the variation in access to the floor. Given the count nature of the first dependent variable (Speeches) as well as its heavily left-skewed distribution we opted for a negative binomial regression. For modelling the variation of the second dependent variable (Words), we opted for a simple OLS regression. We specify two models for each of the two variables, one fully specified in which all our independent variables are included and one where we implement a reverse step-wise approach to reaching a more parsimonious model. More specifically, full models 1 and 3 (Table 4.4) include the following covariates: Gender, Seniority, Committee Chair, Party in Government, Ministry Post, Party Leader and Leader of Parliamentary Group. As control variables we include the Party Size, a categorical Party Family, the MP's Age and Exposure (log transformed and only for the negative binomial model). In both models we include legislative term fixed effects while we cluster standard errors at the MP level.

**Figure 4.3.** Marginal Effects on Speeches, Fully Specified Negative Binomial Model



From the regression analysis output as summarized in Table 4.4 (for ease of interpretation, Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 show the marginal effects of the determinants on Speeches and on Words of the full models), we can see that being a minister or not, is by far the most crucial independent variable in this dataset. Corroborating the previous findings in this chapter, the regression output tells us that being a minister increases the probability to have a higher count of total speeches. Additionally, MPs that belong to the parliamentary group leadership are also more likely to deliver a higher number of speeches. However, the variable is not significant for the stepwise model and is dropped, or for any of the Words models. Regarding gender, what the descriptive data told us earlier seems to be corroborated statistically. Our models provide evidence that being a female MP decreases quite significantly the probability for increased access to the floor.

**Figure 4.4.** Marginal Effects on Words, Fully Specified OLS Model



Additionally, being a party leader only affects the number of words that the MP utters which possibly has to do with the fact that party leaders which are also PPG Leaders in Greece are

avored by the Standing Orders rules in terms of time allocated for their speeches. Finally, it seems that our data provides no evidence that in the Greek case the committee position, seniority or whether the party is in government affects the likelihood for increased access the floor of the plenum or increased speeches' length.

### **Institutional and Contextual Characteristics: District Magnitude and the Eurozone crisis**

In this section of the chapter we delve a bit deeper in the Greek Parliament case, making some modelling extensions that escape the confinements of the theoretical chapters in this volume but we think are critical and also interesting for speechmaking in Greece.

We consider two aspects that are relevant. First, district magnitude in terms of electable seats might be an important factor. It could be an indicator of the possible incentives legislators may have in pursuing a personal brand that might go against the party line. Additionally, given the nature of the variation in district magnitude in Greece, as described earlier, this could be a crucial factor. Consequently, we include a variable measuring the size of their constituency in terms of electable seats (continuous variable from 1 to 46 and a mean of 12 seats).

Second, as we saw from previous sections in this chapter, the ten-year long economic crisis has affected and shaped much of the country's politics in the period under observation. Scholars have often treated the Eurozone Crisis as having a negative impact on representative democracy (Bosco & Verney, 2012; Bardi, Bartolini, & Trechsel, 2014; Morlino & Raniolo, 2017; Conti, Hutter, & Nanou, 2018; Merkel, 2018), yet we know very little when it comes to its effects on parliamentary behavior. We expect that if it matters for legislative speechmaking in general, it should matter in Greece in particular, given the intensity of the crisis' impact there. The limited evidence available has shown that government backbenchers and MPs from vulnerable constituencies are less likely to participate in economic debates, when the economy of their district or the country is performing poorly (Herzog & Benoit, 2015; Bäck & Debus, 2018). It is probable that party cohesion and discipline leads party leaders to limit their MPs' floor access during hard times in an attempt to mask intraparty tensions. In this section we offer a tentative, exploratory test by introducing a measure of the overall impact of Greece's economic performance by legislative term as an independent variable that taps into the economic crisis. The measure chosen is the Economic Performance Index (EPI), as suggested by Khramov &

Lee (2013).<sup>53</sup> It is a composite index that combines information on inflation, unemployment, the government deficit, and GDP growth.

Models 5 and 6 in Table 2.4 contain the extended models for speeches and words respectively. We can see that the coefficients of constituency size seem to be statistically significant for both models while those of economic performance only for speeches. The fit of both models also increases.

As it turns out and based on our data, the district magnitude of the MP's constituency in terms of how many seats it elects seems to be an important factor for legislative speechmaking, increasing the likelihood to have a higher number of speeches. This could be the result of the increased competition between MPs (especially from the same party) and their struggle for an individual brand in constituencies with more seats.

Furthermore, the crisis variable is indeed important, suggesting that better economic performance increases the chances for debate participation in the Greek parliament. During the years of poor economic performance, MPs have tended to speak less in terms of speeches. The increased party fragmentation alone could be enough to explain the limited speechmaking due to the higher number of MPs competing for floor time, however, both the monthly mean number of speeches by MPs (1.18 to 1.23) and mean number of plenary sessions (3.58 to 3.66) have increased slightly in the post crisis era. Further analysis is needed on the importance of the crisis on parliamentary behavior in general and speechmaking in particular, and we believe it should focus on partisan mediation of the crisis effects and whether MPs engage in alternative representation tools as well as the content of the speeches.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter analyses the politics of legislative debate in Greece by using a novel dataset covering all parliamentary debates from 2000-2019. We find that floor time is not equally

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<sup>53</sup> Since the variable is essentially a re-coding of the period variable, it makes no sense to run the extended models with period fixed effects. The models do yield coefficients and z-scores very similar to the ones with the fixed effects for the rest of the variables. This is far from being the most statistically robust way to test any possible effects of the crisis. We should instead, disaggregate the data at the year level and keep the legislative term fixed effects in the model. However, given the time and length constraints, this was not possible in this version of the chapter.

distributed in the *Vouli*. It is dominated by MPs who belong to the larger parties: the MPs from ND and PASOK delivered more than half the speeches over the period under observation.

Moreover, although we are reluctant to clearly place Greece on the freedom to access the floor classification scheme suggested in the chapter by Proksch and Slapin, the country's legislature is clearly controlled by parties. Our analysis of formal and informal rules as well as our statistical modelling on the determinants of speechmaking, all strongly suggest that the theoretical freedom of access to the floor provided for by the *Vouli*'s Standing Orders does not materialize. In reality, the evidence suggests that MPs behavior is severely conditioned by party discipline and leaders guard floor access and refrain from delegating speech time to backbenchers. However, further research should enquire on the extent to which individual MPs are able to express dissenting views when given access, by analysing the contents of speechmaking.

Finally, the fact that according to our data, being a minister dramatically increases the probability of increased access to the floor of the plenum tells us a lot about the nature of these debates. A big part of the proceedings is dedicated to scrutiny, and particularly, the oral questions which are directed to cabinet members. Bearing in mind that since the 2001 constitutional revision committees play an increasingly important role in the parliament's legislative work, these findings hint to the possibility that this data collected at the plenary level might not be enough. An additional suggestion for future work is to incorporate data on committee work for a more inclusive story on the politics of legislative speechmaking in Greece.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Parliamentary questions' constituency focus under times of crisis. An Examination of the Greek Case**

#### **Introduction**

The 2009 Eurozone Crisis has led to considerable research investigating its impact on parliamentary representative democracy. The substantial deepening of European fiscal and financial integration that took place and the austerity (and bailout agreements) that Member States, especially in the 'periphery' of Europe, had to implement, could not have left representation untouched. Scholars have often treated it as having an overall negative impact on representative democracy (e.g. Bosco & Verney, 2012; Morlino & Raniolo, 2017). Nevertheless, a decade later, the academic jury is still out on its specific implications for the quality of representation (Fernandes & Magalhães, 2020).

Findings on roll-call voting and discourse behavior on crisis measures overall and during the debates with the most heightened inter and intra-party tensions showed that economic conditions can: change party stances towards austerity (Maatsch, 2016), reduce the legislative agenda to only bills about the economy (Pedrazzani et al., 2018), increase vote shifting in parliament (e.g. Blumenau & Lauderdale, 2018) and reduce mandate fulfillment (Thomson & Costello, 2017). However, most of these studies consider either the country or the en-bloc party behavior. With regards to individual legislators' behavior and how it was affected by the crisis, much less is known.

Our limited understanding and lack of empirical evidence of the effects of the crisis extends to the study of constituency focus in particular, for which we know legislators use strategically (Zittel et. al., 2019). This chapter attempts to analyse the impact of international economic

conditions of constraint on the individual MPs' representation towards geographic constituents. *Are legislators more or less likely to cater to the needs of their constituents during times of relative prosperity/austerity?*

The constituency focus during parliamentary control is analysed with the use of an original current questions dataset in the Greek parliament from 2006 to 2019, covering both the pre and post-crisis era. It focuses on how the recent crisis might have impacted the behavior of individual MPs with regards to constituency representation when tabling current questions in particular.

The Greek parliament is a very informative case not least because it arguably suffered the biggest macroeconomic impact and had to implement the lengthiest and largest bailout packages.<sup>54</sup> In a way, Greece is what methodologists have termed as “a most likely case” (e.g., Gerring 2007), one where the effects of the Crisis are expected to be present to the greatest extent. Furthermore, the Greek legislature although dominated by party discipline, as will be further elaborated later, operates within an electoral system that offers clear incentives to individual MPs to cultivate a personal vote. This ambiguous context offers important insight in the study of constituency representation.

The chapter is organised in the following manner: Its first section reviews the literature on constituency focus in parliamentary questions. The following section focuses on the impact of the economic crisis on constituency focus and parliamentary questions and moves on to build testable hypotheses. After a brief section on the context of legislative work in the Greek parliament, the next part of the chapter lays out the research design and method employed. Finally, the two sections following are dedicated to the analysis and conclusions drawn.

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<sup>54</sup> EU Commission's Financial assistance to EU countries page last accessed on 12 June 2021  
[https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/financial-assistance-eu\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/financial-assistance-eu_en)

## Literature Review – Constituency Focus in Parliamentary Questions

The literature has already explored the mechanisms behind legislators' representative choices. Most research departs from rational choice institutionalism and Strøm's (1997) main theoretical assumption for what drives representative behaviour. He considers the behaviour of parliamentarians as a set of strategic actions aimed at accomplishing goals/preferences (i.e. being re-selected, re-elected and acquiring party/legislative offices). In this line of thought, there are different ways for legislators to embody Hanna Pitkin's (1967) substantive view of representation (i.e. the actions taken on behalf of the representative's principal).

Legislators anticipate potential negative consequences for their goals and instrumentally utilize a repertoire of parliamentary actions/behaviors to deliver benefits to their principals (Mansbridge, 2003). This repertoire mainly includes parliamentary speeches, parliamentary scrutiny/control tools, committee work, legislative proposals and roll-call voting. In their seminal work, Wahlke and colleagues (1962), suggested that parliamentarians, when performing these actions, can have a local or a nationwide focus of representation and subsequent use of these parliamentary tools.<sup>55</sup> The term 'focus' refers to the interest defended by representatives. The representational foci then influence the nature of parliamentary actions and behavior.

Wahlke's distinction of representative foci stems from the two main principals that are competing for legislators' attention; their parties and their constituents (Carey, 2007). On the one hand, parties in European democracies control resources that can be pivotal for legislators' chances of re-election. Parties exert control over important processes in MPs' careers from parliamentary (and cabinet) post occupation (e.g., Martin 2014), access to the floor (Bäck, Debus & Fernandes, Forthcoming), campaign resources (e.g., Farrell and Webb 2000) and renomination (e.g., Hazan and Rahat 2010). This makes legislators dependent on their party, act according to internal rules (be it formal or informal) and pay attention to partisan constituents at the national level. Most importantly however, the proportional electoral rules under which the majority of European elections are held tremendously enhance the importance of the party vote share in deciding individual legislators' fates.

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<sup>55</sup> Kinski and Crum (2020) have recently introduced the notion of 'transnational representation', referring to claims by national parliamentarians on behalf of citizens of other national constituencies.

On the other hand, despite proportional representation being the rule in most European democracies, many systems also allow for a personal vote including ballot structures that allow for voters to cast candidate rather than party votes. The proliferation of such mechanisms provides strong incentives for geographic representation and the cultivation of personal votes. They offer a principal that competes with the party and that can hold legislators accountable at the constituency level (Carey and Shugart 1995; Karvonen 2010).

As it becomes apparent, legislators' attention to constituency matters is largely and chiefly contingent upon the institutional environment in which they operate (namely whether ballot structures grant voters the ability to cast personal votes). Following our well-founded understanding of the consequences of electoral systems for legislative behaviour in general (e.g. Carey & Shugart 1995), a voluminous body of scholarly work has shown how closed-list electoral systems provide less incentives for constituency focus in comparison to open-list systems.

Studies have focused on the oversight function of parliaments and parliamentary questions in particular (e.g., Saalfeld, 2000; Wiberg 1995 and also within the context of EU Integration e.g., Winzen, 2013). Although not intended to introduce or amend legislation, their use has grown in western European parliaments in the last decades (Green-Pedersen 2010). Questions are primarily thought to be an ex-post government scrutiny tool but are considered an important component of parliamentary activities. It is an instrument available in most West European democracies, that strikes a fine balance between institutionalized visibility and unconstrained participation opportunities, minimally affected by informal party rules (Martin 2011).

Country-specific studies have shown that, as expected, constituency-focused questions were more common in Ireland (STV electoral system - Martin 2011) than in Italy or Portugal (Closed-list PR electoral system - Russo 2011; Fernandes, et al., 2018; Borghetto, et al., 2020) while mixed-member systems provide equally important constraints from both sides fostering both party discipline and local representation (Baumann, et al., 2017).

Studies have also focused extensively on the legislators' electoral vulnerability as a key predictor of their focus. Overall, more vulnerable to electoral defeat legislators (i.e. those that expect to face a greater challenge in the next election, see: André et al., 2015) tend to pay more attention to the policy preferences of their constituents (Bowler & Farrell 1993; Immergut & Abou-Chadi 2014). Similarly, the same vulnerable legislators will also perform more constituency-focused work (Heitshusen et al., 2005; Russo, 2011; André et al., 2015).

Sufficient evidence from various countries in a series of case studies (Soroka, et al., 2009 in Canada; Fernandes et al., 2018 in Portugal; Fernandes et al., 2019 in Portugal and Germany; Zittel et al., 2019 in Germany), supports the notion that electoral vulnerability increases the likelihood that MPs will table constituency-focused parliamentary questions.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> However, it needs to be noted that there are some studies that, although did not reach contrary results, could not provide enough evidence to support this idea in the cases of the UK (Kellermann, 2016), Ireland (Martin, 2011; Fernandes et al., 2019) and Portugal (Borghetto et al., 2020)

## **Economic Crisis and Parliamentary Questions – Building Hypotheses**

The question is what happens to this incentive structure for individual legislators' behaviour during times of macro-economic austerity/prosperity. Recent studies have linked worsening economic performance at the country or district level with the observed variation in access to the floor and speechmaking overall.

In particular, Herzog and Benoit (2015), found evidence that during important budget debates legislators from more economically vulnerable constituencies tended to express more anti-austerity positions. In fact, their findings suggest that political and demographic variables specific to each legislator's constituency can explain the degree of expressed support for austerity measures. Similarly, Bäck and Debus (2018), by looking at access to the floor in terms of number of speeches delivered in debates related to economic policy, showed the importance of economic characteristics of the legislators' constituencies. More specifically, they show that legislators from districts facing severe economic conditions deliver fewer speeches.

Speechmaking was generally subject to disciplinary restrictions during the crisis. When group leaders attach more importance to a debate, they are more likely to speak themselves instead of the dissent-prone MPs (Bhattacharya, 2020; Proksch & Slapin, 2012, 2015). Additional evidence from Greece during the crisis (Kartalis & Lobo, Forthcoming), corroborated this finding by showing that party leaders tended to limit their MPs' floor access during those hard times.

Meanwhile, some further evidence demonstrated that the mechanism behind fiscal authority delegation is greatly affected during worsening macro-economic conditions (Herzog & Mikhaylov, 2020). Herzog and Mikhaylov brought evidence for the consolidation of fiscal delegation power to the head of the executive in austerity times. By looking at budget debates, they showed that closeness to the prime minister's position on fiscal governance becomes a better predictor for budget allocations.

With regards to parliamentary questions in particular, the limited evidence available has linked increases in unemployment in the legislator's district (with respect to the previous year) with an increase in the probability of questions being asked by them on the topic (Borghetto et al., 2020).

Overall, it is expected that better national macro-economic conditions should allow legislators to curb party discipline and better represent their constituents. During good

economic times, the party label is stronger and thus MPs find themselves in better conditions to dedicate to their constituents and the cost of not utilizing resources towards the party goals is smaller. The chapter thus posits that:

***H1:** The better the economic performance of the country, the more likely that representatives will cater to the needs of their electoral districts.*

Additionally, a theoretical proposition that is now relatively well-founded empirically is tested. As the previous section demonstrated, there is enough evidence in the literature to support the notion that electorally vulnerable MPs are more likely to perform constituency-focused work. However certain case studies were not able to empirically support this hypothesis and this chapter attempts to bring further evidence. The chapter thus posits that:

***H2:** The more electorally vulnerable the legislator, the more likely that they will cater to the needs of their electoral districts.*

The chapter's novelty in terms of theoretical contribution however, stems from the examination of the effect of vulnerability in light of the national economic performance effects. Legislators might be ready to curb the strategic need to cater to the needs of their geographic constituents when the economy is doing badly but that might not always be the best strategy. It is possible that legislators with elevated electoral vulnerability have no other strategy but to attempt to represent their constituents in spite of the possible incentives stemming from worse economic conditions. The argument is that vulnerability offers an individual-level incentive that legislators weigh in against the incentives and the conditions that the national economic situation offers as we saw earlier. Vulnerability moderates the potential effect of the national economic performance. Thus, the chapter finally posits that:

***H3:** The national economic performance's positive effect on constituency focus diminishes as legislators become more electorally vulnerable.*

## The Context of Legislative Work in Greece

The Greek parliament<sup>57</sup>, a relatively under-researched legislative institution, comprises of 300 deputies directly elected by universal suffrage for a four-year term. The Greek representative mandate is a national one as the Constitution specifically states that MPs “*represent the nation*” (Art. 51.2). Parties are recognised as important elements for the organisation of political and parliamentary affairs and MPs are not constitutionally expected to represent their constituents.

The country is divided into 60 single- and multi-member constituencies.<sup>58</sup> Electors cast their votes in accordance with an open-list "reinforced" proportional representation system, whereby 250 seats are distributed proportionally and the remaining 50 seats are attributed to the most-voted party as a bonus. Electors can cast a vote for one of the party lists with the additional option to select up to five candidates on the list depending on the available constituency seats. Such systems, contrary to what their name suggests, do not reinforce proportionality, but rather tend to approximate a majoritarian electoral system that promotes the formation of stable majority governments. In Greece, the first party is given the opportunity to attain a single-party governing majority with around 40% of the votes<sup>59</sup>.

Moreover, the Greek parliament is a traditionally party-dominated legislature (Kartalis & Lobo, Forthcoming). The party leadership dominance over parliamentary activities is favoured by the fact that, as in most parliamentary regimes, members of government are recruited mostly from parliament while they retain their seats after taking up office. MPs are previously vetted by parties before entering their lists and generally parties centrally control important resources during the electoral campaign (Freire et al., 2016). Similarly, although party funding is based on public subsidies, private donations to parties and even to candidates is generally allowed (OSCE, 2019). Gemenis and Nezi (2015) tell us that Greek parties have weak ideological cohesion given that they attract candidates on the basis of the size of their political clientele and their ability to exert patronage at the local level. The importance of local party organizations, intra-party competition at the constituency level, extensive clientelistic networks as well as sanctioning of private donations to individual MPs (Kartalis & Lobo, Forthcoming)

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<sup>57</sup> More accurately, the Hellenic parliament (Βουλή των Ελλήνων – Vouli ton Ellinon, or simply “Vouli”, literally meaning: will of the Greeks),

<sup>58</sup> More than half the districts elect less than 10 seats while there are a handful of districts that are located in and around Athens with more than 40 seats

<sup>59</sup> see Kartalis & Lobo, Forthcoming for a more detailed description

offer clear incentives for the individual MP to try to mobilize the vote for themselves and maintain constituency ties once in parliament.

Overall, Greece represents an important case-study of the crisis effects on constituency reinforce proportionality representation for all the contextual characteristics of its parliament. Furthermore, data on the Greek parliament is scarce and the analysis of its party-dominated nature along with the incentivising for personal vote-seeking institutional characteristics should bring important evidence to the existing literature.

## Research Design

### *Data*

In order to test the hypotheses introduced in the previous sections, this chapter makes use of an original dataset of parliamentary current questions in the Greek parliament. The Greek Parliament's Standing Orders (SO) constitute the legal framework for parliamentary scrutiny.<sup>60</sup> Out of the available scrutiny tools<sup>61</sup>, current questions are chosen for their important attributes. First, they are the only way for MPs to individually impact the agenda of the plenary sessions.<sup>62</sup> Second, they concern matters of immediate relevance, are submitted by individual MPs only and are addressed to the Prime Minister or Ministers, who in turn have to answer orally in the Plenum. Third, despite the heavily disciplined access to the floor in the Greek parliament all current questions submitted are recorded in the parliamentary proceedings and MPs cannot be prevented by the party leadership from exercising this prerogative.<sup>63</sup> They are a prime tool for MPs to attempt to turn the debate's attention to a specific topic or at the very least signal to their constituents that they tried.

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<sup>60</sup> SO, Art. 53.1

<sup>61</sup> SO, Art. 124.4

<sup>62</sup> Together with the Discussions in the Plenum Initiatives for which data is not available (SO, Art. 132A)

<sup>63</sup> It is important to understand however that MPs may never actually get to ask these questions on the parliamentary floor. Parties have important leeway in selecting those questions that will eventually make it to the floor. The Conference of Parliamentary Chairpersons, the body which decides the contents of each plenary session and which ensures a disproportionate weight to the dominant party in Parliament (Kartalis & Lobo, forthcoming) has to approve the suitability of each question (SO, Art. 129.4). Additionally, out of the ones approved, the leaders of each parliamentary group, by order of their group's size, select only two to be discussed in the floor (SO, Art. 130.3) while those not selected, are rescheduled for another session (SO, Art. 130.4) with the possibility to never be discussed at all.

**Table 5.1.** Total Number of Current Questions Tabled by Party and Legislative Term in Greece (2006-2019)

Party	Legislative Term*						Total
	(Duration in days)						
	11**	12	13	15	16	17	
03/2004- 08/2007	09/2007- 09/2009	10/2009- 04/2012	06/2012- 12/2014	01/2015- 08/2015	09/2015- 06/2019		
	(1259)	(722)	(920)	(927)	(215)	(1360)	
Independent Greeks (ANEL)	0	0	0	380 (13,5%) (18)	87 (18,47%) (6)	244 (4,51%) (8)	711 (4,96%) (32)
Democratic Left (DIMAR)	0	0	0	407 (14,46%) (16)	0	0	407 (2,84%) (16)
Democratic Alignment (DIMSIM)	0	0	0	0	0	867 (16,01%) (16)	867 (6,04%) (16)
Union of Centrists (EK)	0	0	0	0	0	189 (3,49%) (9)	189 (1,32%) (9)
Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	168 (22,83%) (12)	328 (16,84%) (27)	471 (15,89%) (21)	401 (14,25%) (11)	76 (16,14%) (12)	602 (11,12%) (13)	2046 (14,26%) (96)
Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	0	346 (17,76%) (11)	505 (17,03%) (19)	0	0	0	851 (5,93%) (30)
New Democracy	22 (2,99%) (15)	92 (4,72%) (24)	604 (20,37%) (73)	437 (15,52%) (66)	87 (18,47%) (36)	834 (15,4%) (57)	2076 (14,47%) (271)
Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	392 (53,26%) (55)	883 (45,33%) (76)	862 (29,07%) (91)	307 (10,91%) (21)	48 (10,19%) (9)	0	2492 (17,37%) (252)
The River (POTAMI)	0	0	0	0	64 (13,59%) (14)	127 (2,35%) (10)	191 (1,33%) (24)
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)	150 (20,38%) (6)	299 (15,35%) (13)	406 (13,69%) (12)	460 (16,34%) (63)	61 (12,95%) (29)	428 (7,91%) (68)	1804 (12,57%) (191)
Golden Dawn	0	0	0	286 (10,16%) (17)	48 (10,19%) (14)	290 (5,36%) (17)	624 (4,35%) (48)
INDEPENDENTS	4 (0,54%) (2)	0	117 (3,95%) (17)	137 (4,87%) (22)	0	1833 (33,86%) (16)	2091 (14,57%) (57)
Total	736 (100%) (90)	1948 (100%) (151)	2965 (100%) (233)	2815 (100%) (234)	471 (100%) (120)	5414 (100%) (214)	14349 (100%) (1042)

\* First parenthesis is the percentage of current questions in the term. Second parenthesis is the number of MPs tabling the current questions.

\*\* Data for the 11<sup>th</sup> Period were only available from 2006 onwards

Data on all parliamentary current questions submitted by individual MPs from 2010 to 2019 are readily and publicly available in the website of the Hellenic Parliament and contain information on party affiliation, date submitted, and ministry to which the question was directed to.<sup>64</sup> For the period before 2010, the parliament's library archives have to be contacted and are provided in a machine readable format. The dataset was further processed using R to drop questions asked by MPs elected at the nation-wide constituencies and also those asked by independent MPs, and to add further metadata on MPs' constituencies. The final dataset covers 15 years and six legislative terms<sup>65</sup> of parliamentary activities in Greece in a total of over 12,000 current questions tabled from 2006 to 2019. Table 1 provides descriptive information of total current questions asked per party and legislative period. PASOK is the party most active (in terms of asking current questions) in the Hellenic Parliament across all years. Given that it was one of the largest parties in the period under observation but also in opposition for most of the years, this is not an unexpected finding. KKE is the most active party relative to its size in seats while the independents have an important scrutiny presence especially in the last term covered by the dataset. Also noteworthy is the fact that there is a big portion of MPs that do not ask current questions at all. This portion is at least 22% of MPs (66 out of 300 seats) in all of the terms in the study.

### *Dependent Variable*

The unit of analysis is the parliamentary current question. The literature has approached the operationalization of constituency focus in parliamentary questions in two ways. Either as explicit geographic references to the district (e.g. Martin 2011) or as the level of focus on topics that are of particular interest for the district (Saalfeld, 2011; Soroka et al, 2009; Borghetto et al. 2020). This chapter employs the first approach because of data availability in the Greek case but also because it allows for a more objective and longitudinal analysis of constituency focus. It does not require relying on sporadic and difficult-to-find data on the importance of specific topics on specific districts or the relatively subjective and very resource-intensive manual coding of topics.

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<sup>64</sup> Accessible at: <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Koinovouleftikos-Elenchos/Mesa-Koinovouleutikou-Elegxou>

<sup>65</sup> Although data for the 11th Period were only available from 2006 onwards, the empirical design focusing on the current question as the unit of analysis, instead of the mean questions per MP or term, is not affected by its inclusion in the analysis while extending its time frame.

**Table 5.2.** Constituency Focus by Legislative Term

Legislative Term	N Total Current Qs	N Constituency Focus	Share (%) Constituency Focus
11 (04-07)	736	219	29.92
12 (07-09)	1948	466	23.92
13 (09-12)	2965	743	26.09
15 (12-14)	2815	530	19.79
16 (15-15)	471	117	24.84
17 (15-19)	5414	866	24.18

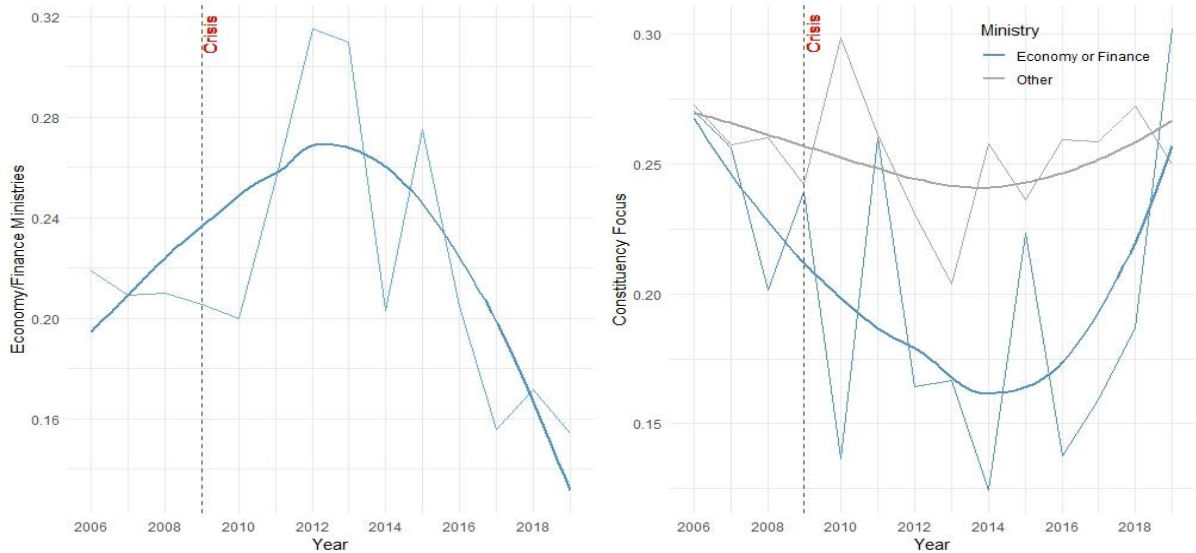
The dependent variable *Constituency Representation* is operationalized as a dichotomous variable that takes the value of (1) if the question's title contains any explicit reference to a geographic unit in the MP's district and the value of zero (0) if it does not.<sup>66</sup> The term geographic unit refers to either a direct mention of the district itself, an administrative subdivision of the district, or a city/town/village that falls into the district boundaries. The names of all geographic units are accessed through the Hellenic Statistical Authority (*Ελληνική Στατιστική Αρχή - ΕΛΣΤΑΤ*) and their grammatical declensions are then run by each question title for possible matches.<sup>67</sup> A single match of any geographical unit that belongs to the district of the MP is enough to give the current question the value of one.<sup>68</sup> Table 5.2 shows the share of constituency-focused questions of all MPs per legislative term. Around a fifth and a third of all current questions is normally constituency-focused.

**Figure 5.1.** Share of Current Questions in Economy or Finance Ministries per Year and Share of Constituency Focused Current Questions by Ministry and per Year in Greece

<sup>66</sup> Accessing the full body of the questions was impossible for the years prior to 2010 so the study had to rely on the titles only

<sup>67</sup> In the Greek language each noun belongs to one of three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. Within each of the three genders, there are several sub-groups (declension classes) with different sets of inflectional endings that would cause the automated search to return many false negatives.

<sup>68</sup> This geographic approach comes with limitations. For example, it cannot capture cases in which legislators work for their constituents by asking questions about a company operating in the district, an infrastructure project, a school etc.



For *H2* and *H3*, that bring the focus on the questioning MP’s electoral *Vulnerability*, a variable is included in the dataset implementing previous work developed by André et al. (2015). In particular, given the preferential nature of the Greek electoral system, the inter-party defeat measure (i.e. 1 - Vote Share Difference to Second Party) for single-member districts and the equivalent for multi-member districts (i.e. Rank among party elected / Party Seats) are used.<sup>69</sup> This variable captures how vulnerable legislators are, depending on their position in the list or rank preference in the previous election. It ranges from zero (0) to one (1) and the higher the value the more vulnerable the MP.

### *Independent Variables*

*H1* posits that worsening economic conditions lead to the decrease of constituency focus. To estimate the impact of economic conditions, the study calculates the quarterly Economic Performance Index (EPI), a composite index that combines inflation, unemployment, government deficit, and GDP growth (Khramov & Lee, 2013).<sup>70</sup> The data is drawn from the OECD database.

<sup>69</sup> Elections in June 2012 and September 2015 were both consecutive elections in the same year that were held less than 18 months before the previous election (May 2012 and January 2015 respectively). In accordance with Presidential Decree 26/2012 those elections took place with a closed-list system. In those cases, the equivalent formula (i.e. Rank in party list) for non-preferential systems was used.

<sup>70</sup> More precisely, EPI is calculated by subtracting the inflation rate, the unemployment rate, the budget deficit as a percentage of GDP and then adding back the percentage change in real GDP from a total score of 100%. The four sub-components are computed as deviations from desired values as Khramov and Lee state (0.0% for inflation, 4.75% for unemployment, 0.0% for deficit/GDP, and 4.75% for growth rate). Additionally, as suggested in the paper, the scores are normalised for comparability

**Table 5.3.** Variable Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Constituency Representation	12,250	0.240	0.427	0	0	0	1
Economic Performance	12,250	70.405	7.857	56.240	64.588	77.313	85.538
Vulnerability	12,250	0.474	0.384	0.021	0.125	1.000	1.000
Government	12,250	0.249	0.432	0	0	0	1
Left-Right Positioning	12,250	4.710	2.932	0.220	2.000	7.333	9.923
Gender	12,250	0.184	0.388	0	0	0	1
Seniority	12,250	3.344	2.546	1	2	4	15
Frontbencher	12,250	0.613	0.487	0	0	1	1
Economy/Finance Ministry	12,250	0.227	0.419	0	0	0	1
Attica	12,250	0.342	0.474	0	0	1	1

In terms of controls, a dummy variable called *Econ/Finance Ministry* is included that takes the values of one (1) if the current question is directed towards the ministry of economy or the ministry of finance, and zero (0) if it is directed towards any other ministry. Figure 1, shows the percentage of current questions in Greece that were directed towards the ministries of economy or finance across the years and also the percentage of current questions that have a constituency focus by ministry across the years. It is clear that not only Greek MPs directed more current questions towards the two ministries during the crisis but also asked less current questions about their constituents when the question was directed towards the two ministries compared to the others.

Additionally, included control variables on the questioning MP are: their party's ideological positioning with the variable *Left-Right Positioning*, as provided by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey dataset<sup>71</sup>, their parliamentary *Seniority* (i.e. how many times they have been an MP), *Gender*, and their position in the party leadership (i.e. if they are a back- or *Frontbencher*). Similarly, a dummy variable called *Government* is included, that distinguishes between government and opposition parliamentary groups is also included given that the functions of

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across countries and in order to mitigate potential inconsistencies due to high volatility. Each sub-component is weighted by the inverse of its standard deviation multiplied by the average standard deviation of all four sub-components.

<sup>71</sup> 1999 – 2019 Chapel Hill Expert Survey Trend File. Version 1.2. Available on chesdata.eu

control and oversight are inherent to opposition parties (Wiberg 1995) which in turn may lead to a disproportionately high number of questions asked by opposition MPs.

Finally, a dummy variable called *Attica* is also included, and takes the value of one (1) if the MP's constituency falls under the Attica region (NUTS2) to account for the very high number of seats that are elected in those constituencies. Table 3 offers basic descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the analyses.

### *Method*

Given the multilevel structure of the data used in this chapter (i.e. current questions nested within legislators in specific legislative terms) but also the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable, random intercepts multilevel logistic regression models are estimated. Such models are similar to those used in previous studies using parliamentary questions (e.g. Fernandes et al., 2018) and permit capturing unobserved heterogeneity due to features not explicitly modelled – notably: legislator's seniority, clientelistic ties, election proximity. No random coefficients/slopes are calculated. Before running the models, the covariates are also centered.<sup>72</sup> The formalized model is:

$$\text{Log} \left[ \frac{p_{ij}}{1-p_{ij}} \right] = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \chi_{ij} + \beta_2 u_j + \mu_{0j} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Where  $p_{ij}$  is the probability of the binary outcome dependent variable (i.e. the parliamentary current question  $i$  of legislator  $j$ ) to be one. In other words, the model tries to estimate the Log-odds that the parliamentary current question  $i$  of legislator  $j$  contains an explicit reference to a geographical unit from the legislator's district instead of not containing it. The term  $\chi_{ij}$  is the question-level variables, and  $u_j$  is the legislator/term-level explanatory variables. The  $\beta_1$  is the fixed slope parameter to be estimated. Finally,  $\varepsilon_{ij}$  is the question-level error while  $\mu_{0j}$  is the deviation of the legislator/term-specific slope from the fixed slope.

The empirical analysis of constituency representation in Greece fits models with three specifications (Table 5.4). Model 1 is an empty model that only includes the two main

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<sup>72</sup> To avoid estimation problems caused by the large differences in the scales of the predictors they are rescaled by centering following Sommet & Morselli (2017). An updated descriptives' table after centering is provided in Table A2 in the appendix.

independent variables. Model 2 includes all covariates while Model 3 includes the interaction term of the main independent variable with vulnerability.

## Results

Recall that the first hypothesis posited that better economic conditions at the national level increase the likelihood that legislators will cater to the needs of their constituents. Overall, the models bring substantial evidence in support of *H1*. As shown in Table 4, the coefficients of the economic performance index variable are positive and statistically significant across all model specifications. Their effect size however is not so large in comparison to the rest of the variables in the models.

With regards to the second hypothesis which posited that the legislator's electoral vulnerability increases constituency focus (*H2*), according to this data, electoral vulnerability is a very important predictor of constituency focus in current questions in the Greek parliament. Its effect size is statistically significant across all models while it is also the covariate with the third largest effect size. Being positive the coefficient tells us that, as expected, questions tabled by more vulnerable legislators are more likely to be focused on their constituency.

**Table 5.4.** Determinants of Parliamentary Current Questions' Constituency Focus in the Greek Legislature.

## Results

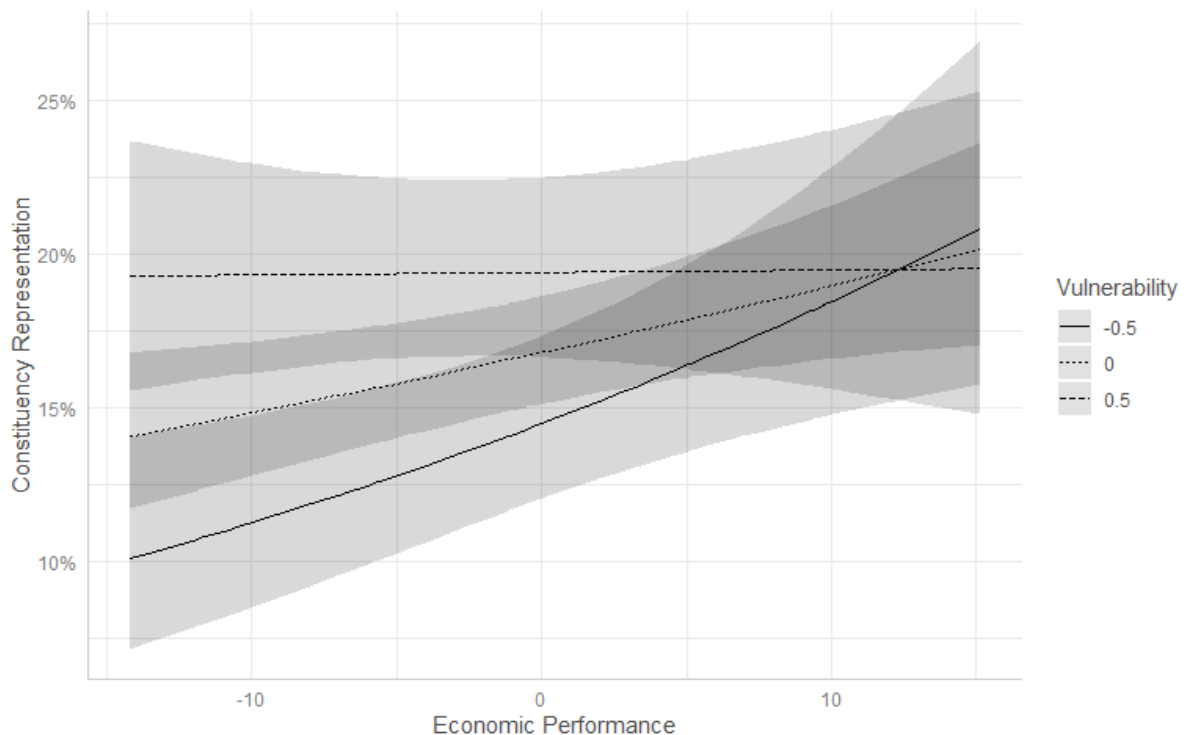
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Constituency Representation		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Economic Performance	0.011 <sup>*</sup> (0.006)	0.012 <sup>*</sup> (0.006)	0.015 <sup>**</sup> (0.006)
Vulnerability	0.613 <sup>***</sup> (0.173)	0.363 <sup>*</sup> (0.160)	0.352 <sup>*</sup> (0.160)
Government		0.182 <sup>+</sup> (0.094)	0.192 <sup>*</sup> (0.094)
Left-Right Positioning		-0.013 (0.022)	-0.016 (0.022)
Gender		0.097 (0.145)	0.104 (0.145)
Seniority		-0.003 (0.024)	-0.004 (0.024)
Frontbencher		-0.065 (0.119)	-0.068 (0.119)
Economy/Finance Ministry		-0.394 <sup>***</sup> (0.067)	-0.391 <sup>***</sup> (0.067)
Attica		-1.774 <sup>***</sup> (0.138)	-1.780 <sup>***</sup> (0.139)
Economic Performance * Vulnerability			-0.029 <sup>*</sup> (0.014)
Constant	-1.510 <sup>***</sup> (0.068)	-1.882 <sup>***</sup> (0.086)	-1.899 <sup>***</sup> (0.087)
Observations	12,250	12,250	12,250
Log Likelihood	-5,758.343	-5,650.518	-5,648.499
Akaike Inf. Crit.	11,524.690	11,323.030	11,321.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	11,554.340	11,404.580	11,409.960
<i>Note:</i>	<sup>+</sup> p<0.1; <sup>*</sup> p<0.05; <sup>**</sup> p<0.01; <sup>***</sup> p<0.001		

When it comes to the interaction hypothesis, recall that the expectation was that vulnerability moderates the economic performance's impact (*H3*), the chapter brings some limited evidence. The interaction term involving the two predictors is statistically significant (at a lower-than-conventional level). Its negative coefficient in Table 3 means that the positive economic performance's effect on constituency focus becomes less pronounced as vulnerability increases. Figure 2 helps us understand the results for the full range of values in

the economic performance covariate. It shows the likelihood of tabling district-focused parliamentary questions across all economic performance values at three different levels of vulnerability. It becomes apparent that, the economic performance's positive effect becomes non-existent when legislators are very vulnerable, thus supporting *H3*.

With regards to the second hypothesis which posited that the legislator's electoral vulnerability increases constituency focus (*H2*), according to this data, *H2* is confirmed, namely electoral vulnerability is a very important predictor of constituency focus in current questions in the Greek parliament. Its effect size is statistically significant across all models while it is also the covariate with the third largest effect size. Being positive, the coefficient tells us that, as expected, questions tabled by more vulnerable legislators are more likely to be focused on their constituency.

**Figure 5.2.** Predicted Probabilities of Constituency Representation with 95 Cis



With regards to the study's control variables, whether the question tabled is directed towards the Economy or Finance Ministries substantially reduces the likelihood that a question will have a constituency focus. Furthermore, and in line with previous research (Rasch 2011), questions tabled by legislators from parties that participate in government tend to be more

constituency-driven. This is probably due to the fact that legislators from governing parties, because they dedicate less parliamentary question time for oversight purposes in comparison to their opposition counterparts, have more leeway to devote time to their districts.

Additionally, and again as expected, questions tabled by legislators elected in Attica are exceptionally less likely to be constituency-focused. Being from a constituency that belongs to the Attica region, is by far the most important predictor of constituency focus of current questions in the Greek parliament. Not only its effect size is statistically significant across all models, it is also the covariate with the largest effect size by far. This is probably because all those constituencies have high district magnitudes which not only limits electoral vulnerability but also increases the number of potential legislators that could share the task of representing them. Lastly, the ideological positioning of the legislator's party, as well as the legislator's gender, seniority and position in the party leadership seem to be unimportant.

## Conclusions

This chapter set out to examine the impact of macro-economic conditions on the use of constituency focus during parliamentary control activities. It attempted to do so by looking at all the current questions asked in the relatively understudied Greek legislature from 2006 to 2019. The aim was to answer the question of whether economic conditions of constraint affect the legislators' representation focus. The empirical evidence from this combination of a severely-hit Eurozone country before and after the onset of the Eurozone crisis, helps us understand the capacity that legislators have to geographically represent their constituents in times of severe stress for representative democracy.

The chapter brings important corroborating evidence to previous studies in the literature. Electoral vulnerability has been shown to have a positive impact on the amount of constituency focused questions a legislator asks (Soroka, et al., 2009; Fernandes et al., 2018; Zittel et al., 2019) and the analysis corroborates this finding. The data showed that questions tabled by more vulnerable legislators are more likely to be geographically-focused. It also places the Greek parliament and its open-list "reinforced" proportional representation system within a constellation of cases previously shown to have relatively elevated levels of constituency focus (Ireland: Martin 2011; Fernandes et al. 2019 or Italy: Russo 2011).

More importantly, the chapter's main overall contribution to the literature is the introduction of a novel predictor for the foci of representation. First, it showed that representation focus is indeed impacted by national macro-economic conditions. The evidence supports the hypothesis that better economic conditions increase the likelihood legislators will cater to the needs of their constituents. However, considering previous findings that have linked worsening economic performance at the constituency level with higher constituency representation (e.g. Borghetto et al., 2020), the chapter is limited in that it does not account for regional or electoral district level variation. Future studies should aim at disentangling the impacts stemming from both national and local economic performance and their interaction.

Nonetheless, the chapter's findings are important for the relatively limited literature on the effects of the 2009 Eurozone Crisis on representation. Additionally, the chapter showed how economic performance interacts with and how its effect is moderated by electoral vulnerability. The data tells a story of an important difference in the relative size of the impact of the two variables. It showed that within the Greek context, a vulnerable legislator has no other option but to attempt to signal to their geographic constituents, irrespective of economic conditions.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Research Question and Approach

This thesis set out to investigate the potential impact of the 2009 Eurozone crisis on the parliamentary representative behaviour of parliamentarians (parties and individual legislators). Notwithstanding the voluminous body of research instigated by the Eurozone Crisis that attempted to tap both theoretically but also empirically on the crisis' implications for representation, the literature still lacks studies that investigate the all-important legislative arena and the behaviour observed within it. We still do not know as much as we could, on the extent and manner in which specific aspects of representative behaviour within parliaments have been affected.

Despite the importance of this question, we lack the empirical evidence to show the potential implications for how individual legislators but also their organisational structures within parliaments (i.e., parties) adjusted their behaviour (forcefully or not) to the new conditions brought upon the legislatures. Against this background, this thesis brings important empirical evidence from the parliaments of countries severely hit by the crisis and demonstrates the importance of the economic conditions of constraint that they experienced when studying the parliamentary representative behaviour.

The thesis broadly aimed at filling this lacuna by looking at the crisis' impact on specific parliamentary behaviour of parties and legislators and their strategic use of parliamentary tools. Those are speechmaking and scrutiny tools that (together with roll-call voting which has been extensively researched, even in the context of the crisis) form the majority of the representative work happening in parliaments.

The thesis' main research question, mirroring this conceptual choice and following the respective literature reviews in each chapter, was further disentangled into three distinct research questions. First, "*What is the impact of the economic conditions on constraint on the*

*politics of legislative debate?*”, second, *“To what extent do supranational economic conditions of constraint affect the representative performance of parties in parliamentary democracies?”* and third, *“Are legislators more or less likely to cater to the needs of their constituents during times of relative prosperity/austerity?”*.

These three questions and the respective chapters, when put together, present a rich analysis of the most important aspects of parliamentary representative behaviour, and form a complete body of work directed at the examination of the impact of macro-economic conditions of constraint on parliamentary behaviour.

In order to tap into the impact of macro-economic conditions of constraint, the thesis operationalises the economic conditions of constraint by looking at the macro-economic performance at the national level with the computation of a composite index called Economic Performance Index. Complementarily to this index, and with the aim of looking at the important aspect of externally imposed conditions of constraint during the crisis, the thesis also examines the notion of explicit external conditionality which was extensively used during the previous decade. Together, these two variables form the conceptual and methodological bond between the chapters. The composite index is included in the analysis of every chapter while the external conditionality is additionally added in the comparative second chapter. They are approached as potential predictors of the respective parliamentary behaviour analysed in each chapter and bind the thesis together.

The first chapter introduced a novel measure of discourse congruence at the party level that is based on the parliamentary mandate fulfillment conceptualization (Louwse 2011, 2012). The chapter conceptualized, developed, validated and implemented a measure of text similarity between party manifestos and post-electoral parliamentary discourse in plenary sessions using data from Ireland and a corpus of 140.000 speeches from 1994 to 2020.

Chapter two utilized the measure developed and validated in chapter one and implemented it in a comparative empirical analysis of four countries severely hit by the crisis: Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. The parliamentary data used included 730,000 unique speeches, spanning 24 years of parliamentary plenary debates. It theorized the possible effects of the country’s worsening economic performance but also the ensuing conditionality enforced by supranational actors. The effects on discourse congruence were statistically tested by means of a panel data multivariate regression analysis.

Chapter three turned the attention on a very important case when studying the impact of the crisis. This case is Greece, and the chapter examined the politics of legislative debate in the country's legislature in general and more importantly, looked at the impact of the crisis on access to the floor. It used parliamentary speechmaking data from all plenary sessions from 2000 to 2019 with a total of almost 200,000 unique speeches and interventions, spanning 20 years of parliamentary debates. Access to the floor was explained in a multivariate model using regression analysis where the unit of analysis was the legislator in each legislative term.

Finally, the fourth and last chapter analysed the use of scrutiny tools. It delved deeper into the Greek case once again and presented the impact that the crisis had on how Greek legislators use parliamentary questions. It covered an extended period of six Greek legislatures and over 12,000 parliamentary current questions asked pre-, during and post-crisis between 2006 and 2019. The constituency focus of each question was explained by means of a multivariate logistic regression that included the main economic performance independent variable as well as other relevant control variables.

## **Main Findings**

This section turns to the main findings of the thesis following the per-chapter organisation of the text. In chapter one, a novel measure for discourse congruence was operationalized and validated. Its application to the Irish case, showed its satisfying validity and also demonstrated its replicability. This is important, because it is a measure of parliamentary discourse congruence which can be used in different contexts and research cases, and this is indeed what the second chapter does. This first chapter's contribution is therefore both a theoretical and a methodological contribution to the field of parliamentary studies that extends past approaches to the parliamentary mandate fulfillment and speechmaking overall.

In the second chapter, a comparative examination of four Eurozone periphery countries takes place that juxtaposes the macro-economic performance at the country level, as well as the explicit external conditionality with the capacity of parties to stick to their electoral rhetoric once they take on their parliamentary seats following an election. The statistical analysis undertaken in the chapter, provides ample statistically significant evidence to support that parties stick more to their electoral rhetoric throughout the legislature when the economic performance of the country is better. Similarly, there is some statistical support for the

hypothesis that explicit conditionality negatively affects the levels of discourse congruence. Parties seem to stick less to their electoral rhetoric when the country operates under the demands of externally imposed policy requirements like memoranda of understanding.

In the third chapter, the initial examination of the Greek legislature case and the intricacies of its institutional context, is followed by an analysis of a measure of access to the floor. In essence this chapter analyses the factors which impact the likelihood that an MP will get floor time. The chapter uncovered that floor time is not equally distributed in the *Vouli*. The analysis of both formal and informal rules as well as the statistical modelling on the determinants of speechmaking, all strongly suggest that the theoretical freedom of access to the floor provided for by the *Vouli's* Standing Orders does not materialize. The evidence suggests that in reality, MPs who belong to the larger parties dominate the debate while their behavior is severely conditioned by party discipline. Leaders guard floor access and refrain from delegating speech time to backbenchers.

Additionally, the chapter shows how this restricted context of parliamentary speechmaking was further affected by the crisis. Returning to the thesis' main research goals as described earlier, the chapter also examined the potential impact of the crisis (via the composite index tapping into the national macro-economic performance) on access to the floor. What the data showed is that indeed, conditions of economic difficulties do impact the likelihood that an MP will deliver a greater number of speeches. The evidence shows that when the country is doing badly in macro-economic terms MPs have less chances of getting to the plenary floor. This happens potentially because party leadership attempt to guard floor time from undisciplined MPs that could hurt party unity and damage their image among the electorate.

Lastly, in the fourth chapter, the thesis delves deeper into the Greek legislature to examine the potential impact of the crisis on the important scrutiny tool of current parliamentary questions. The chapter statistically models the likelihood that a question will be about the MP's constituency. The analysis corroborates previous empirical findings regarding the effect of electoral vulnerability and its positive impact on the amount of constituency-focused questions a legislator asks. It also places the relatively under-studied Greek legislature and its open-list "reinforced" proportional representation system within a constellation of cases previously shown to have relatively elevated levels of constituency focus.

More importantly, and returning to the thesis' main research question, the chapter's overall contribution is the introduction of a novel predictor for the foci of representation. First, it

showed that the representation focus is indeed impacted by national macro-economic conditions. The evidence supports the hypothesis that better national economic conditions increase the likelihood that legislators will cater to the needs of their constituents. This finding is also important for the relatively limited literature on the effects of the 2009 Eurozone Crisis on representation. Given the empirical analysis, it seems plausible that legislators tend to signal less to their geographic constituents in times of bad economic conditions.

Together, these findings suggest that parliamentary representation was in fact negatively affected by the Crisis. The thesis departs from the assumption that in the absence of constraints, the priorities of a party in the parliamentary arena should simply mirror those expressed in its manifesto. With that in mind, the fact that the comparative chapter on discourse congruence uncovered a tendency that parties have, to semantically distance their MPs' speeches from their manifestos during worsening economic conditions or in the presence of explicit conditionality is consequence of the 2009 Eurozone Crisis. Although recognizing that a departure from the electoral/manifesto rhetoric does not necessarily mean worse representation (several factors could lead parties to change their post electoral rhetoric), it is an empirical finding we must keep under consideration.

Similarly, the fact that in the case of Greece, the most severely hit of the debtor countries, access to the floor was reduced, especially for backbenchers, also raises alarm concerning the effects of the crisis on representation. During worsening macro-economic conditions party leaderships refrained from delegating floor time possibly in an effort to maintain discipline and cohesion, by reducing the chances of dissenting rhetoric reaching the plenary session. This reduces the representative spectrum in the deliberative arena making it harder for MPs from low-stakes districts to politicize the issues which they deem important. Simultaneously, the use of parliamentary current questions, the alternative tool in MPs' possession to attempt to affect the agenda, was also hampered. The fact that the empirical analysis unveiled a reduced likelihood to ask constituency-focused questions during worsening macro-economic performance tells us that the MPs' representative capacity was further negatively impacted.

### **Thesis' Contributions**

This thesis contributed to the literature in multiple ways. Namely, it brings important new empirical/geographical evidence, it extends past similar approaches both methodologically and

conceptually, it introduces a novel predictor for parties and legislators' parliamentary behavior and also theoretically enriches our understanding of the events that unfolded in the past decade within the context of the Eurozone Crisis.

First, throughout the thesis' chapters, the cases used contribute to the literatures of both legislative studies and the effects of the Eurozone crisis by bringing important original empirical data. The thesis elaborates and analyses original datasets from the parliaments of three Southern European countries that were primarily hit by the crisis. Additionally, the two case-studies chapters involving Greece (third and fourth chapter) make use of original parliamentary datasets (speeches and parliamentary questions respectively) that were built specifically for the purposes of the thesis. As explained earlier, the Greek legislature is a relatively understudied institution, and the creation of these datasets will be helpful for future research on these topics and beyond.

Furthermore, an important empirical lacuna in the representation literature is that the analysis of Southern European countries has been absent from studies on the parliamentary mandate fulfillment. Representation and issue congruence studies as well as those studies implementing the pledge approach have looked at some of the countries included in this thesis but not from the parliamentary point of view. The thesis attempts to fill this gap by providing a rich picture of mandate fulfilment (its discourse congruence variation) using original parliamentary speeches datasets of these understudied Southern European cases.

From a methodological standpoint, it adds to the literature on party mandate fulfilment by extending past research (both conceptually and methodologically) to examine the representative performance of parties. The first and second chapters introduce and make use respectively, of a novel measure of discourse congruence comparing pre and post-electoral discursive behaviour of parties. This measure takes what previous studies that delved into the fulfilment of electoral promises have done (e.g. Thomson et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2017) a step forward, by not only being automated but also by looking at the important aspect of parliamentary deliberation in the process of policy-making (Louwerse, 2011; 2012).

Indeed, most of the existing studies on party discourse congruence have used manual content analysis, and the rare, automated analyses have not been able to measure parties' congruence before and after the election. This thesis' contribution is important in that it leverages recent developments in computational linguistics and extends past attempts to do so. The measure introduced has the capacity to provide empirical evidence as to whether legislators and parties

carry their electoral rhetoric into parliaments without the need for costly manual coding while enabling cross-party longitudinal comparisons.

From a theoretical standpoint, it introduces a novel predictor of parties and legislators' parliamentary behavior, namely crisis conditions of constraint (operationalized as macro-economic performance and explicit conditionality). This predictor's impact on representative behaviour, in terms of access to the floor, discourse congruence and constituency focus was analysed. Although not a normative statement about how post-electoral behavior should unfold, the findings do suggest the importance of variables capturing potential economic constraint for parliamentary behaviour. Naturally, legislators may have shifted their behaviour, (ie reduce speechmaking time, shift focus to different than electoral issues, reduce constituency focus), for different reasons than economic constraint. It may be that this change in behaviour originated from cues from their nation-wide or local constituents. Nonetheless, the thesis matters for the fact that it goes beyond speech-making, and focuses on altered behaviour in other types of parliamentary activity, and also because it identifies changes that occurred during the period of the crisis. It remains important that both the dependent and independent variables should be taken into consideration in future studies.

Lastly, the thesis makes an important contribution by advancing the literature on the broader political consequences of the crisis which has concentrated primarily on matters other than parliamentary representative behaviour as described in the previous sections (e.g. Bosco and Verney, 2012; De Giorgi and Moury, 2015; Ruiz-Rufino and Alonso 2018; Fernandes & Magalhães, 2020). Parliamentary representative behavior has received scarce empirical attention and this thesis brings evidence that can provide a critical test for the quality of representation in contemporary European representative democracies. The thesis showed that during times of economic struggle and austerity, access to the floor is restricted, congruence between pre and post-electoral discourse diminishes, while questions with a constituency focus are reduced.

### **Potential Shortcomings and future research**

Having described the thesis' main contributions, this section turns to its shortcomings which will also inform plans for future research in this area of study.

Firstly, concerning the novel measure of discourse congruence, developed in Chapter 1, although the measure was validated using data from the Irish parliament and also implemented within a comparative context with data from four different legislatures, the measure could still benefit from further validation. Expanding the range of parliaments included with other cases with rarer languages would provide further proof of the measure's robustness.

Secondly, the findings concerning "access to the floor" in Chapter 3 and "current parliamentary questions" in Chapter 4 used data from solely one country, namely Greece. Comparative studies with larger sample sizes are required to reach safer conclusions with regards to the thesis' findings in those Chapters. Findings concerning the impact of macro-economic conditions of constraint on parliamentary representative behaviour should be subject to further scrutiny and examined in more methodologically robust and rigorous ways such as different contexts of economic constraint.

Thirdly, the discourse congruence measure offers some very important potential for future research. It can easily be applied to a variety of specific research questions by simply adjusting the parts of the texts to capture the similarity on specific topics/issues. It is then only a matter of feeding the respective texts into the pipeline. It is also easily scalable to multiple countries, since it is language-blind, and requires minimal manual input. Notwithstanding this potential and relative ease of application in multi-lingual (and cross-country) applications like the one in chapter three, these should be made with caution. It is important to always take into consideration the lengths of the texts (i.e. lengths of speeches and manifestos) as well as control for differences in speechmaking rules. Future studies should incorporate the different parliamentary rules but also manifesto-producing procedures and how they come into play and could potentially affect the outcome.

Lastly, the comparison of pre and post-electoral representative behaviour is crucial. We need to know more about how parties and legislators strategically manoeuvre to keep their principals satisfied. In this regard, more research is required in the fields of party issue competition, mandate fulfilment and parliamentary representative behaviour. The speechmaking's potential for insightful research, although increasingly appearing in representation research has not been reached. Scholars should incorporate advances from other fields without hesitation and pre-disposed negativity. Of course, this should be done with caution, while maintaining high levels of constructive criticism and methodological standards. But the tools are there for representation scholars to implement.

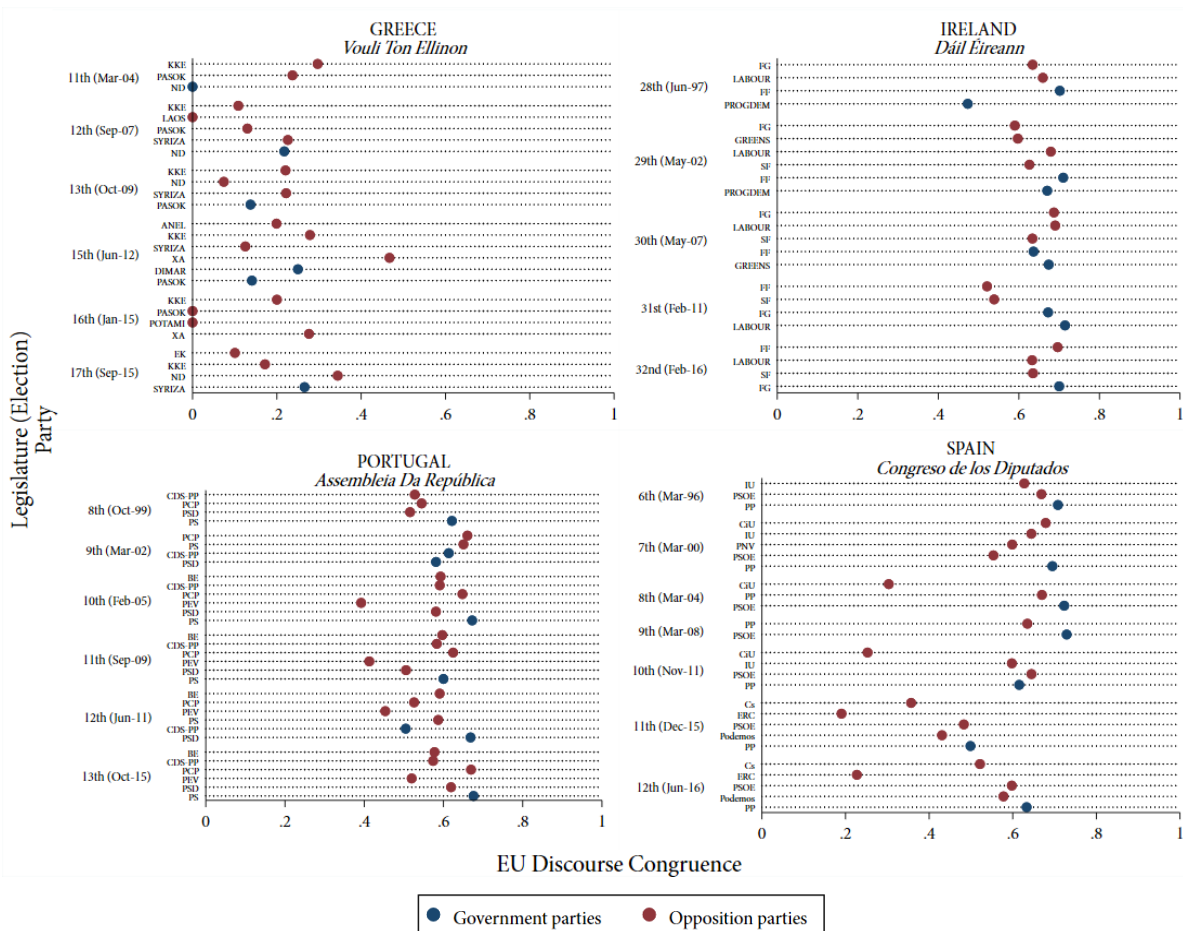


## APPENDIX

**Table A1. Topic-Related Search Keywords for EU and Economy Per Country**

EU Terms	
English (Ireland)	Eurozone, European Union, European Parliament, European Council, European Commission, Council of the European Union, European Central Bank, European Investment Bank, Stability Mechanism, Financial Stability Facility, Financial Stabilization Mechanism, European Constitution, Court of Justice of the European Union, European Court of Justice, European Court of Auditors, The European External Action Service, European Economic and Social Committee, The European Investment Fund, European Ombudsman, European Data Protection Supervisor, Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union, European common, European (Policy Policies), European Elections, EP elections, EU elections, European Integration, Troika, FRONTEX, Constitutional Treaty of Lisbon, Lisbon Treaty, Eurogroup, Common Market, European Economic Community, Single Market, Union, Brexit, Schengen, European summit), EU, EP, EC, ECB, EIB, ESM, EFSF, EFSM, ECJ, EEAS, EESC, EIF, EDPS, EMU
Greek (Greece)	Ευρωπαϊκή* Ένωση*, κράτη-μέλη της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, ευρωπαϊκά κράτη-μέλη, Ευρωπαϊκό* Κοινοβούλιο*, Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο*, Ευρωπαϊκή* Επιτροπή*, Συμβούλιο της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, Ευρωπαϊκή* Κεντρική* Τράπεζα*, Ευρωπαϊκή* Τράπεζα* Επενδύσεων, Ευρωπαϊκό* Μηχανισμό* Σταθερότητας, Ευρωπαϊκό* Ταμείο*, Ευρωπαϊκό* Σύνταγμα, Ευρωσύνταγμα*, Δικαστήριο* της Ευρωπαϊκής* Ένωσης, Ελεγκτικό* Συνέδριο*, Ευρωπαϊκή* Υπηρεσία* Εξωτερικής Δράσης, *Οικονομική* και Κοινωνική* Επιτροπή*, Ευρωπαϊκό Ταμείο Επενδύσεων, Ευρωπαϊκό Διαμεσολαβητή*, Ευρωπαϊκό Επόπτη* Προστασίας Δεδομένων, Οικονομική* και Νομισματική* Ένωση*, Ευρωπαϊκή Πολιτική, Κοινή Πολιτική της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, Πολιτική της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, Ευρωπαϊκές Εκλογές, Ευρωπαϊκές Εκλογές, Ευρωπαϊκή* Ολοκλήρωση*, Τρόικα, Τροϊκανοί, Δανειστές, ΦΡΟΝΤΕΞ, FRONTEX, Συνταγματική* Συνθήκη*, Συνθήκη* της Λισαβόνας, Ευρωζώνη*, ζώνη* του ευρώ, Ευρωμάδα*, Eurogroup, Brexit, Μπρέξιτ, κοινή* αγορά*, ενιαία* αγορά*, Τελωνειακή* Ένωση*, Σένγκεν, Schengen, Βρυξέλλες, Ευρωπαϊκή σύνοδο* κορυφής, Κομισιόν, Ευρωπαϊκή* Ολοκλήρωση*, ΕΕ, ΕΚ, ΕΚΤ, ΕΤΕπ, ΕΜΣ, ΕΤΧΣ, ΕΜΧΣ, ΔΕΕ, ΕΥΕΔ, ΕΟΚΕ, ΕΤΕ, ΕΕΠΔ, ΕΤΕπ, ΟΝΕ
Spanish (Spain)	Eurozona, Unión Europea, Parlamento Europeo, Consejo Europeo, Comisión Europea, Consejo de la Unión Europea, Banco Central Europeo, Banco Europeo de Inversiones, Mecanismo Europeo de Estabilidad, Fondo Europeo de Estabilidad Financiera, Mecanismo Europeo de Estabilidad Financiera, Constitución Europea, Tribunal de Justicia de la Unión Europea, Tribunal de Justicia Europeo, Tribunal de Cuentas de la Unión, Servicio Europeo de Acción Exterior, Comité Económico y Social Europeo, Fondo Europeo de Inversiones, Defensor del Pueblo Europeo, Supervisor Europeo de Protección de Datos, Unión Económica y Monetaria, Política* Europea*, Elecciones Europeas, Elecciones al Parlamento Europeo, Elecciones al Parlamento Europeo, Integración Europea, Troika, FRONTEX, Tratado fundacional, Tratado Constitucional, Tratado de Lisboa, Eurogrupo, Mercado Común, Mercado Único, Unión Aduanera, Brexit, Schengen, Cumbre Europea, Mecanismo de Estabilidad Europeo, Facilidad Europea de Estabilidad Financiera, Tribunal de Cuentas, Fondo de Inversión Europeo, común Europea, Política de la Unión Europea, UE, PE, CE, BCE, BEI, MEDE, FEEF, MEEF, TJUE, TCE, SEAE, CESE, FEI, SEPD, UEM
Portuguese (Portugal)	União Europeia, Comunidade Europeia, Parlamento Europeu, Conselho Europeu, Comissão Europeia, Conselho da União Europeia, Banco Central Europeu, Banco Europeu de Investimento, Mecanismo Europeu de Estabilidade, Fundo Europeu de Estabilização Financeira, Fundo Europeu de Estabilidade Financeira, fundo europeu de, Mecanismo Europeu de, Estabilização Financeira, Constituição europeia, Tribunal de Justiça da União Europeia, Tribunal de Contas Europeu, Serviço Europeu para a Ação Externa, Comité Económico e Social Europeu, Provedor de Justiça Europeu, Autoridade Europeia para a Protecção de Dados, União Económica e Monetária, política* europeia*, eleições europeias, europeias, integração europeia, Troika, Eurodeputado*, Frontex, Tratado constitucional Europeu, Tratado de Lisboa, Zona Euro, área do Euro, Eurozona, Eurozone, Eurogrupo, Brexit, Mercado Comum, Mercado único, União aduaneira, Schengen, Cimeira europeia, UE, PE, CE, BCE, BEI, FEEF, MEEF, TJUE, SEAE, CESE, FEI, AEPD, UEM
Economy Terms	
English (Ireland)	enterprise*, credit, industry*, develop, work, capital, compan*, market*, growth, business*, labour, economic*, job*, econom*, investment*, development, tax*
Greek (Greece)	επιχειρήσεων, ανάπτυξη, απασχόληση, ανεργία, επιχειρήσεις, επιχείρηση, υπηρεσιών, επενδύσεων, επενδύσεις, οικονομία, έργα, υπηρεσίες, παραγωγή, αγορά, εργασία, χρέος, χρέους, έλλειμμα, δημοσιονομικ, φόροι, φόρος
Spanish (Spain)	infraestructura*, fiscal, económico, inversión, gestión, recursos, Mercado*, crecimiento, servicio*, formación, economía, desarrollo, empresa*, impuesto*
Portuguese (Portugal)	mercado, produção, capital, fiscal, económica, dívida, económico, serviços, crescimento, emprego, investimento, economia", desenvolvimento*, empresa*, impostos

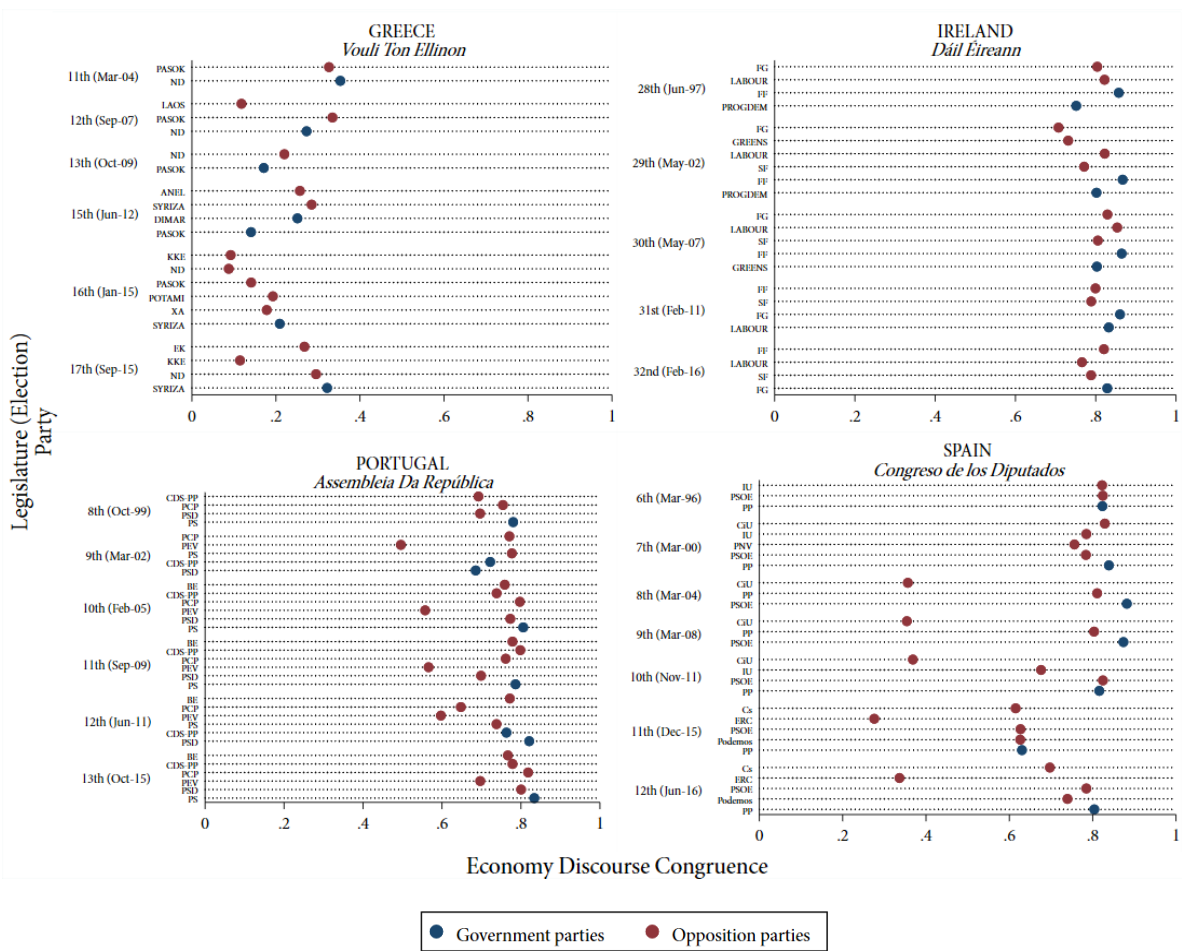
**Figure A1.** Mean EU Discourse Congruence Per Legislature & Party



**Table A2.** Variable Descriptive Statistics after Centering

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Constituency Representation	12,258	0.240	0.427	0	0	0	1
Economic Performance	12,258	-0.000	7.857	-14.162	-5.814	6.911	15.136
Vulnerability	12,258	0.000	0.384	-0.453	-0.349	0.526	0.526
Government	12,258	-0.251	0.432	-0.500	-0.500	-0.500	0.500
Left-Right Positioning	12,258	0.000	2.932	-4.490	-2.710	2.623	5.213
Economy/Finance Ministry	12,258	-0.273	0.419	-0.500	-0.500	-0.500	0.500
Attica	12,258	-0.158	0.474	-0.500	-0.500	0.500	0.500

**Figure A2. Mean Economy Discourse Congruence Per Legislature & Party**



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