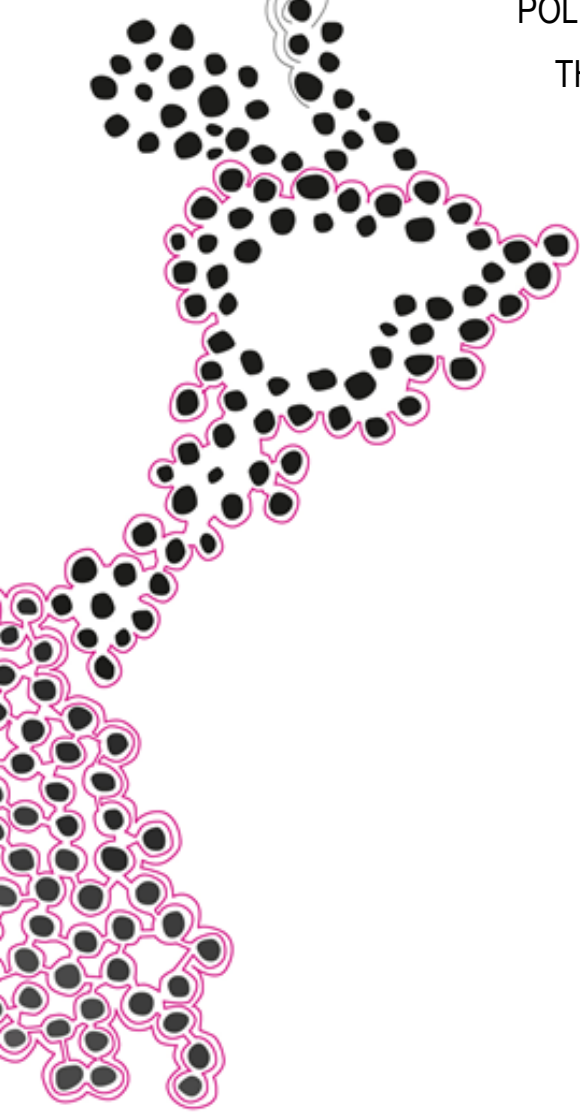


UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

# A TOSSING AND TURNING GIANT

POLITICISATION OF THE EU ISSUE IN  
THE NETHERLANDS, 2002 - 2012

R. IDEMA



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**Master thesis**

R. Idema

r.idema [at] utwente.nl

s0001732

European Studies

School of Management and Governance

University of Twente, Enschede

**Supervisors**

Prof.dr. C.W.A.M. Aarts

University of Twente

*Political Science and Research Methods*

Dr. C.T. van Ham

University of Twente

*Political Science and Research Methods*

## ABSTRACT

Since 2002, the European Union has become a more important issue in Dutch national politics than it had been ever before. Until then, European integration was predominantly presented as part of foreign policy and its consequences remained rather distant from citizens' daily worries. In January 2002, a change came in motion. The first Euro notes were withdrawn from ATMs, making European unification tangible for Dutch citizens. Later, in the 2002 national elections, a xenophobic and Eurosceptic party (LPF) entered parliament with an overwhelming election victory, winning 26 seats.

Although party positions started to diverge in 2002, Catherine de Vries (2007) shows that until the 2002 parliamentary elections voters' attitude towards EU issues did not translate into vote choice, a process she refers to as *EU issue voting*. Based on the sleeping giant theory on the politicisation of the EU issue and issue evolution theory, EU issue voting only occurs when both issue salience and perceived partisan conflict are high.

In this thesis I highlight three developments that have occurred since the 2002 Dutch parliamentary elections, and argue these have contributed to the increase of these conditions. Subsequently, I analyse whether a change in the presence of EU issue voting has taken place. Prior to the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, political parties took positions on European integration and campaigned either in favour or against the constitution. Taking dichotomous positions, party conflict was more visible in this campaign than in ordinary parliamentary debates when parties are used to take more nuanced positions. Next, the Eurocrisis and its consequences have resulted in emergency investments in Eurozone member states, to which the Netherlands contributed. These contributions and European regulations regarding budgetary requirements led to severe debates in Dutch politics and even to a government resignation. Third, the Eurosceptic Freedom Party (PVV) made a stop to further European integration and a Dutch exit from the EU its prime focus in the 2012 parliamentary elections, in order to put the European issue high on the political agenda.

I show, based on data obtained from national election surveys, that issue salience has increased significantly because much more respondents name EU related issues when asked about the most important problem facing their country in 2012 than in 2002. Additionally, I show perceived partisan conflict has increased by comparing the ratio of party division on the EU issue and within the left-right dimension between 2002 and 2012. Since both conditions are met, I assume EU issue voting should be present in the most recent years this study focuses on. This is tested by conducting a modified path analysis, using LISS data based on longitudinal panel studies. Using this data, changes in EU attitude and voting behaviour should be more accurate than if it were based on several independent populations. Contrary to my assumption, the hypothesis is rejected. No evidence of EU issue voting can be found until 2012.

The unexpected result from the modified path analysis is further analysed, focusing on partisan conflict among mainstream parties. In Dutch parliament, usually two of the three mainstream parties (PvdA, CDA and VVD) form a coalition, sometimes supplemented by a third smaller party. Based on Green-Pedersen (2012), I argue these parties do not primarily seek to maximize their number of votes, but mainly strive to obtain a position in the next government.

The dimension of party positions on European issues does not match the left-right dimension. Eurosceptic parties can be found on both sides of the left-right dimension and pro-European parties are predominant in the centre. Due to the mismatch of these dimensions, it becomes risky for a mainstream party to change its position towards an opinion contrary to the other mainstream parties. Coalitions that have to agree upon issues within multiple dimensions are considered rather vulnerable.

It is very likely mainstream parties are not willing to take strong positions on the EU issue since it could harm their chances on participation in coalitions. To test this assumption, I analysed partisan conflict among mainstream parties. Additionally, I analysed mainstream party election manifestos in order to determine whether these parties indeed pay little attention to European integration.

## SAMENVATTING (NEDERLANDS)

Sinds 2002 is de Europese Unie steeds belangrijker geworden in de Nederlandse nationale politiek. Voordien werd Europese integratie vooral gepresenteerd als een onderdeel van buitenlandbeleid en consequenties ervan werden door de bevolking niet direct gevoeld. In januari 2002 kwam een verandering op gang. De eerste Eurobiljetten konden worden gepind waardoor Europese eenwording opeens tastbaar werd voor de Nederlanders. Later, bij de parlementsverkiezingen van 2002 won een xenofobe, Eurosceptische partij met een overweldigende verkiezingsoverwinning maar liefst 26 zetels.

Hoewel het partijstandpunten over de EU in 2002 al verder uit elkaar begonnen te liggen, laat Catherine de Vries (2007) zien dat tot en met de parlementsverkiezingen van 2002 kiezers hun stem niet bepaalden op basis van hun mening ten opzichte van Europa-gerelateerde onderwerpen. Dit proces wordt door haar *EU issue voting* wordt genoemd. Gebaseerd op de *sleeping giant theorie* over de politisering van het EU issue en theorie over issue evolutie, komt EU issue voting alleen voor wanneer zowel het onderwerp voldoende belangrijk wordt geacht als wanneer politieke partijen, in de ogen van het electoraat, voldoende van positie verschillen over het EU-issue.

In deze thesis benoem ik een drietal ontwikkelingen die hebben geleid tot een verandering in deze voorwaarden van EU issue voting. Vervolgens bekijk ik of deze ook daadwerkelijk verandering hebben gebracht in de aanwezigheid van dit fenomeen. Voorafgaand aan het referendum over de Europese grondwet in 2005, werden door politieke partijen standpunten ingenomen over Europese integratie en voerden deze campagne voor dan wel tegen de grondwet. In deze campagne werd door partijen minder genuanceerdere posities ingenomen dan voorheen in reguliere debatten. Daarna hebben de Eurocrisis en de hiermee gepaard gaande consequenties geresulteerd in noodhulp aan Eurolanden, waar Nederland aan bij moest dragen. Zowel deze bijdragen als Europese regelgeving met betrekking tot begrotingsregels hebben in Nederland tot stevige debatten geleid en uiteindelijk zelfs in de val van de regering. Ten derde benoem ik dat de Eurosceptische PVV het stoppen van verdere Europese integratie en het opzeggen van het lidmaatschap van de EU door Nederland tot haar primaire aandachtspunt heeft gemaakt bij de parlementsverkiezingen van 2012, teneinde het debat over Europese integratie op de politieke agenda te krijgen.

Gebaseerd op data van het Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek blijkt dat burgers Europese onderwerpen tussen 2002 en 2012 steeds vaker zijn gaan noemen als antwoord op de vraag naar het meest belangrijkste probleem in Nederland. Ook laat ik zien dat het gepercipieerde verschil tussen partijen in deze periode is toegenomen, door de verhouding tussen het verschil op EU issues enerzijds en binnen de links-rechts schaal anderzijds, op verschillende momenten te vergelijken. Aangezien hiermee aan beide voorwaarden is voldaan, veronderstel ik dat er sprake zou moeten zijn van EU issue voting in de meest recente jaren van de onderzochte periode. Deze veronderstelling is getest door een gemodificeerde pad-analyse uit te voeren, gebruik makend van longitudinale panel studies van LISS.

Door deze studies te gebruiken, zouden veranderingen in attitude richting EU issues en stemgedrag meer accuraat moeten zijn dan wanneer onafhankelijke steekproeven worden gebruikt. In tegenstelling tot de veronderstelling moet de hypothese echter worden verworpen. Het blijkt dat tot 2012 aanwezigheid van EU issue voting niet kan worden aangetoond.

Het onverwachte resultaat dat uit de gemodificeerde pad-analyse naar voren komt, wordt verder onderzocht door te focussen op partijconflict tussen zogeheten mainstream partijen. In de Tweede Kamer vormen doorgaans twee van de drie mainstream partijen (PvdA, CDA en VVD) samen een coalitie, soms aangevuld met een derde kleinere partij. Gebaseerd op Green-Pedersen (2012) beargumenteer ik dat deze partijen niet enkel het aantal stemmen willen maximaliseren, maar vooral streven naar deelname aan de eerstvolgende regering.

De wijze waarop partijen zich tot elkaar verhouden op Europese onderwerpen komt niet overeen met de links-rechts dimensie. Eurosceptische partijen zijn te vinden aan zowel het linker- als rechter uiteinde, terwijl pro-Europese partijen vooral in het midden te vinden zijn. Door het verschil tussen deze dimensies wordt het op het gebied van Europese onderwerpen riskant voor een mainstream partij om zich te distantiëren van andere mainstream partijen. Coalities waarbij overeenstemming moet worden bereikt binnen meerdere dimensies zijn namelijk relatief kwetsbaar.

Het is zeer aannemelijk dat mainstream partijen niet bereid zijn om een stevig standpunt in te nemen over de EU, omdat dit kan leiden tot het verlagen van kansen op deelname in coalities. Om deze aanname te testen, heb ik gekeken naar partijconflict tussen mainstream partijen en heb ik hun verkiezingsprogramma's geanalyseerd. Op basis hiervan kan ik concluderen of partijen inderdaad weinig aandacht schenken aan Europese integratie.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ECB	European Central Bank
EFSF	European Financial Stability Facility
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MP	Member of Parliament
S&GP	Stability and Growth Pact

### Political parties

– CDA	Christen Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democratic Appeal)
– CU	ChristenUnie (Christian Union)
– D66	Democraten 66 (Democrats 66)
– GL	GroenLinks (Green Left)
– LN	Leefbaar Nederland (Liveable Netherlands)
– LPF	Lijst Pim Fortuyn (List Pim Fortuyn)
– PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party)
– PvdD	Partij voor de Dieren (Party for Animals)
– PVV	Partij Voor de Vrijheid (Freedom Party)
– SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (Christian Reformed Party)
– SP	Socialistische Partij (Socialist Party)
– VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (Peoples Party for Freedom and Democracy)
– 50Plus	50Plus (50 Plus)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	10
2.	EU Issue Voting .....	12
	Single issue voting .....	12
	Sleeping Giant .....	14
	Issue development.....	15
	EU Issue voting.....	16
3.	The Dutch case.....	17
	A broad support .....	17
	The 2005 referendum .....	18
	Eurocrisis .....	19
	A Eurosceptic party.....	21
	Hypotheses .....	22
4.	Data and operationalization .....	25
5.	Results .....	29
6.	Mainstream Parties.....	34
7.	Conclusion .....	40
	References.....	42
	Appendices .....	47
	I. Perceived partisan conflict .....	47
	II. Party position on EU integration .....	48
	III. Election manifestos .....	49

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The opinion of the Dutch electorate on issues regarding the European Union can be interpreted in numerous ways. When asked whether membership of the European community is a good thing, a solid majority responds positively (Euro barometer #60-75). In the past, various surveys have proven that the Dutch were the most pro-European amongst the citizens of the six founding member states. On the other hand, the low turnout at elections for European Parliament is not showing excessive interest or support, people are less satisfied with the way European democracy functions than with the national democracy and there have been some developments in the past fifteen years, such as the introduction of the Euro and the Eurocrisis, that have fuelled the Eurosceptic voice (Aarts, 2008).

Dutch political parties seemed to be even more pro-European than their voters. Every European treaty was accepted by a large majority of votes and until 2004 only a few Eurosceptic parties took part in elections for European Parliament (Aarts, 2008). In national politics, the European issue was presented as part of foreign policy and its consequences remained rather distant from voters' daily worries. Additionally, the EU and related issues like European integration are rather complex. Up to the 1990s there was no ground for partisan conflict on the European issue and lack of interest by the voter to deal with these issues at national elections (De Vries et.al., 2011). At least until 2002, the issue of European integration alone was no determinant factor in influencing vote choice in national elections (De Vries, 2007).

Since 2002, the EU issue in Dutch politics has become more prominent. Several developments can be distinguished that have led to more discussion amongst voters, more media attention and more intense political debate regarding EU related issues. First, the introduction of the Euro coins and notes in January 2002, being a tangible evidence of European integration (Aarts, 2008). Next, the effects of the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution boosting both public awareness and partisan conflict (De Vries, 2009). This effect is also caused by the founding and rise of the Freedom Party (PVV), a right wing party that distinguishes itself as severely Eurosceptic and has increased its Eurosceptic voice over the years. This resulted in making a Dutch exit from both the EU and the Euro primary issues for its 2012 parliamentary election campaign (Startin and Krouwel, 2013). Most recently the start of the Eurocrisis in the late 2000's and the subsequent adoption of emergency measures like the European Financial Stability Facility have led to further politicisation of the EU issue in the Netherlands. Along with these developments, an increase is shown in media coverage of the EU issue over the last years (Van den Berg and Van Eijk, 2012).

These issues raise the question whether the increased media coverage of EU related issues have influenced issue salience and affect voting behaviour of Dutch voters nowadays. In this study I will address the development of the extent to which the attitude of Dutch voters towards European integration translates into vote choice in national elections. A similar research has been conducted by

De Vries (2007), who conducted a comparative study over the period from 1994 to 2002 on this effect between four countries, of which the Netherlands is one. She concluded this effect could not be determined in Dutch national elections until 2002, calculated in a saturated model including proper control variables. The overall change of circumstances over the last twelve years might have led to a shift in these findings. After the developments in the past decade, it has become time to revisit the conclusions. Given that no systematic follow-up analysis has taken place on this issue on data from the 2003 parliamentary elections onwards, the potential change in explanations of voter behaviour since then is the prime motivation for this thesis.

The limited scope of this study, it being a master's thesis, restricts the possibility to fully elaborate on all details. The main focus will be to determine whether or not the mentioned effect is measurable around the most recent parliamentary elections in 2012. Whereas De Vries (2007) compared the effect within four EU member states, I will solely focus on the developments within the Netherlands from 2002 onwards. This allows me to address the factors that could lead to a change over time, making it easier to explain whether or not it comes about (Green-Pedersen, 2012). Measurements will be done based on data available from surveys amongst the Dutch electorate. Both Dutch Parliamentary Elections Surveys (Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek, NKO) and the LISS (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social sciences) panel survey provide data on vote choice and attitude toward European issues, sufficient to make a reasoned analysis.

The single focus on the effect of the development of the EU issue, limited by the scope of this research, rules out the possibility to analyse alternative explanations that might interfere with the effect examined. To reduce the effect of noise caused by interfering variables, I will endeavour to test my hypotheses in a way, such that side effects can be excluded as much as possible. The main research question in this thesis is to determine to what extent EU issue voting in Dutch parliamentary elections has increased between 2002 and 2012. Due to the focus on development of EU issue voting, the necessity to include control variables is limited, since it is assumed these will not interfere similarly through time.

To address the research question, I will first elaborate on the concept of EU issue voting, based on issue voting theory combined with general issue development theory and development of the EU issue in Dutch politics. Then, I will address three relevant developments in the Netherlands which I consider most influential for a change of EU issue voting conditions. When these developments lead to the assumption that conditions for EU issue voting have changed, assumptions will be translated into hypotheses. Next, further operationalization is done before hypotheses are tested. Subsequently, results are analysed and placed in proper context.

## 2. EU ISSUE VOTING

Elections for European Parliament (EP) are commonly referred to as second-order elections. These are elections that are not perceived to be as important as national (first-order) elections. Also, both campaigns and results of second-order elections are influenced by the political constellation of the dominant political arena within the system, the first-order political arena. Accordingly, voting behaviour in second-order elections is heavily influenced by considerations regarding first-order matters. The opposite effect of certain second-order considerations such as European or local issues influencing first-order elections is less known. Nevertheless, issues and politics in different arenas (local, national, European) interfere with each other (multi-level politics). Therefore, it is to be expected issues related to the second-order arena interfere with first-order elections as well (Reif and Schmidt, 1980; Tillman, 2004; Garry et al., 2005; De Vries, 2010).

De Vries (2010) distinguishes three different ways in which European integration can have impact on voting behaviour at national elections. First, EP elections can predict the outcome of subsequent national elections. Since they are mainly dominated by national issues, the result of EP elections have proven to be an indicator for subsequent national elections. When second-order elections like EP elections are held shortly before national elections, the outcome of the former could even alter the outcome of the latter, since voters might base their vote on the (lack of) success of a party in previous elections. A second way is through the impact of economic integration and the way this affects voting behaviour. The best example is the possible effect of the Euro. When a country adopts a joint currency, the variation in national economic performance could increase. This would lead to a more relevant discussion on macroeconomic issues between parties and thus a more relevant issue in elections and voting behaviour. The third and main way is EU Issue voting, a process defined as “*the process in which attitudes towards European integration translate into national voting choice*” (De Vries, 2007, p. 364). In other words, when vote choice in national elections is affected by a voters opinion on European integration-related issues such as the Euro or European unification, this is a case of EU issue voting.

### Single issue voting

In normative theories, elections are the key link between citizens and democratic representatives. In the democratic system, parties are expected to compete for the voters' interest on the basis of policy preferences. Citizens should be able to support the party that propagates policies that correspond most closely to their ideals, provided with proper information and meaningful choices. The process of deciding their vote on policy issues is referred to as issue voting (Street, 2004; Lachat, 2011). Citizens will grant their vote to the candidate or party that is closest to them in the broad range of political issues. This decision making strategy is called proximity voting. The bottleneck of this strategy is the amount of information voters have and the way they process this information. Due to lack of time, lack

of access to information resources or lack of political interest, voters are unable to create a complete overview of the political spectrum (Lachat, 2011).

Instead of engaging in a complete comparison of party positions and linking the outcome to their own preferences, many voters decide their vote using simpler decision strategies, such as party identification. For instance, voters could rely on images or stereotypes they associate with political parties and will vote for the party or candidate they prefer to identify with (Lachat, 2011). This strategy is commonly based on heuristics: cognitive shortcuts which support decision making without processing complex information. It opens the possibility to base vote choice on other reasons, that might hardly, or not at all be connected to policy preferences (Walgrave et al, 2008).

Proximity voting and party identification are each other's opposites regarding the informational requirements. Whereas proximity voting involves a systematic comparison of party preferences, party identification strategy is not based on any decisive policy issue at all. Nevertheless, a combination of these strategies has proven to be a better predictor of election outcomes than either one solely (Adams & Merrill, 2005; Lachat, 2011).

Several alternative voting strategies can be distinguished. For instance, voters base their vote choice on past government performance (retrospective voting). Also, voters can be distinguished in advocates and adversaries of certain issues (cleavage voting). The alternative strategy for proximity voting and party identification I will focus on is so called single issue voting, because it is described as the intermediate between these two strategies in terms of cognitive engagement and required information. Single issue voters base their vote choice on what they consider the single most important issue, supporting the party that has the most appealing solution, closest to the preferences of the voter. This strategy is a simple form of policy-based issue voting, but does not require a detailed analysis of party preferences and ideals (Kousser, 2004; Lachat, 2011).

It is not to be expected that voters will actually base their vote on a single issue only. Elections do not take place in an isolated area and voters will have received multiple incentives that influence their vote choice. Were it only the looks of a politician, a message on an election poster or a newspaper headline, in a world where incentives are everywhere, it is almost impossible a voter would miss all of these. Even when it is only subconsciously, these factors do play a role in the decision making process. Nevertheless, a single issue can be the decisive factor or at least play a key role in this process. This could vary from a single issue on which a voter rationally decides his vote on to an issue that is more important than all other issues. When a significant amount of voters consider to base their vote on the same single issue, this issue will become an important subject in the competition between political parties. Assuming political parties aim to maximize their votes and would be willing to compete over an issue when it would lead to an increase of votes. Thus, when matters concerning the EU start dominating the news headlines and political debates, it is conceivable that these could become politicized and pivotal in elections (Lachat, 2011).

The politicisation of the EU issue is understood as the inclusion of mass public attitudes in the politics of European integration. Parties' preferences should reflect the various views on the EU issue. If not, many voters would not find themselves close enough to any party on the EU issue and would not be triggered to base their vote on this single issue (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Green-Pedersen, 2012).

## Sleeping Giant

Traditionally, the sum of a broad range of attitudes towards political issues such as the role of government in society or the utilization of welfare provision, is measured within a single orientation towards government action, generally referred to as the left-right dimension (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). The position of both parties and voters on traditional issues within the left-right dimension does not change rapidly through time, but outside this dimension political actors do take position on a new line of conflict. A conflict regarding issues such as admittance of asylum seekers, integration of ethnic minorities and European integration (Aarts and Thomassen, 2008). This line is referred to as a line between winners and losers of globalization a cultural division between multicultural and monocultural society or the contrast between cosmopolitan and nationalist political views (Aarts, 2008).

Focussing on European integration, it is noticeable that the dimension of pro-con EU orientations does not coincide with the left-right dimension. Whereas for other issues a pro-con division can be made from left to right or vice versa, outspoken opponents of European integration in Dutch politics can be found only on the extreme left and extreme right side of the spectrum. Proponents are present in a wide middle part of the same spectrum. This leads to the problem for voters since it is now difficult to select a party based on its EU position, while at the same time maintaining their ability to choose a party based on its position in the left-right dimension. As long as voters do not consider EU issues more important to base their vote on than traditional issues and they are willing to discard their attitude towards European integration, no change will occur (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004).

Multiple studies (e.g. Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004; De Vries, 2007) do not question if but rather when the EU issue will be politicized and become a decisive factor in national elections. They argue that already a large part of the population in several EU member states holds 'real' attitudes, i.e. most people have an opinion and these opinions exhibit meaningful variation (De Vries, 2007). Because of its potential effect on future political developments, the EU issue in national politics is often referred to as a 'sleeping giant'. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) argue this giant is most likely to be awakened by political entrepreneurs, who differentiate themselves from other parties on the EU issue, resulting in a stronger partisan conflict on the issue and politicisation of the issue. Once politicized and when voters are offered an alternative close to their own attitude towards EU matters, it could lead voters to make vote choices they would not have made based on concerns solely within the left-right dimension.

## Issue development

Parties are expected to take a position on a broad range of subjects. Many of these subjects are never part of the public, partisan debate. They only count on the interest of a small group of specifically informed and a group of affected stakeholders. Sometimes, an issue rises from an ever unnoticed epiphenomenon to the centre of political attention and becomes relevant for voters. Carmines and Stimson (1986) describe this process by a model of issue evolution, showing how change initiated by the elite can result in electoral change.

Three conditions are crucial to achieve political relevance: partisan conflict, clarity hereof amongst the public and issue salience. The first two are often combined in the single condition *perceived partisan conflict*, being the interpretation of the electorate of the dispute about a certain issue between several parties. This is often measured by asking the public how they would place the various parties on a line of conflict (De Vries, 2007). Issue salience is described as the importance individual voters attach to a certain issue. In other words, when voters are not aware of the discrepancy in party opinions or they do not care enough about the issue, this issue cannot become political relevant.

According to the model of Carmines and Stimson (1986), an issue can become open to debate due to two causes. First, when parties, triggered by the possibility of vote maximization, adopt a non-salient issue and bring this into the public debate, anticipating that they lead to more votes. Second, a 'critical moment', an exogenous event, can provoke attention to a certain issue and triggers parties to respond to this by promoting its preferred policy proposals (Carmines and Stimson, 1986; De Vries, 2007). For instance, an economic crisis or a natural disaster might lead parties to present various, conflicting solutions.

When partisan conflict is present, parties should achieve clarity amongst the voters and make them care about the issue. The public is susceptible for a number of methods such as priming (making a consideration important), framing (connecting a particular consideration to a political object) and cueing (instilling a bias by framing an issue based on moral values) (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). This way, the voters will become aware of the differences between party positions on the issue and issue salience amongst voters will rise.

This model may create the impression that voters are surrendered to the parties when it comes to which issues reach the political agenda. It depicts the public as superficial followers, not capable of creating an own opinion of, in this case, EU related issues. It is to be expected this is most influential for individuals who do not have strong prior attitudes. The EU issue is a rather complex issue and the way it has been presented to the public over time in terms of economic and political integration might not have created issue salience or partisan conflict, but at least has created awareness of a dormant issue. Framing, priming and cueing are techniques that can help to influence, but not to control. Especially for a complex, multidimensional issue such as European integration, it is not easy to influence the electoral implication of politicisation (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Green-Pedersen, 2012).

## EU Issue voting

EU issue voting is present when attitudes towards European integration influence vote choice in national elections. Based on both theories of the sleeping giant and issue evolution, De Vries (2007) states EU Issue voting is likely to happen when both perceived partisan conflict and issue salience are high. The sleeping giant theory states a political party should adopt a deviant opinion which is already present amongst the citizens and the issue development model states division in public attitude is preceded by partisan conflict. De Vries (2007) argues these are crucial ingredients for EU issue voting, but specifically omits a causal effect amongst them.

De Vries (2007) argues that Eurosceptic parties on the far left or far right of the political spectrum can play a crucial role in politicizing the EU issue. Due to their position in the spectrum, their support base is limited. Therefore, these parties are more than other parties willing to adopt alternative issues that could win them votes. Adopting an Eurosceptic ideology is consistent with their common criticism of the political-economic status quo, and public opinion is on average more Eurosceptic than mainstream parties. This translates into an unexploited voter potential, that could be cashed when such an extreme party puts the EU issue central in its electoral campaign. If the party does not actively play up the EU issue, it is likely it will not raise perceived partisan conflict and issue salience (De Vries, 2007).

De Vries (2007) tested data of national election surveys in four EU member states, one of them being the Netherlands. She concluded both issue salience and perceived partisan conflict were rather low in the Netherlands. Only in 2002, due to the Eurosceptic position of the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) partisan conflict had increased, but issue salience remained absent. In the tested 1994, 1998 and 2002 Dutch parliamentary elections, no evidence of EU issue voting could be found. The increase of partisan conflict in 2002 however, could be an indication for an upcoming alteration. Nevertheless, it is very clear that as long the public does not care about the EU and issue salience remains low, the EU issue will not influence national elections.



### 3. THE DUTCH CASE

No evidence of EU issue voting in the Netherlands was found until the parliamentary elections of 2002, but a change in one of the two conditions for EU issue voting was discovered when the LPF was elected into parliament (De Vries, 2007). Since 2002, four parliamentary elections have taken place (2003, 2006, 2010, 2012). LPF disappeared from parliament after the 2006 elections, but three new parties have won seats and are present in parliament today: The Freedom Party (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV), founded by former conservative-liberal member of parliament Geert Wilders, won 9 seats in the 2006 elections, 24 in 2010 and 15 in 2012. The Party for Animals (Partij voor de Dieren, PvdD) entered parliament in 2006 with 2 seats and kept these until today. In 2012 50Plus, a party focussing on the interests of senior citizens, won 2 seats as well. Noteworthy is the rise of the Eurosceptic Socialist Party (Socialistische Partij, SP), which entered parliament in 1994 with 2 seats, but became a significant player in 2002 with 9 seats. They increased to 25 seats in 2006 and lost 10 of these in the subsequent 2010 elections, still occupying 15 seats in parliament.

The four elections have each resulted in a change of coalition composition, resulting in five different governments over the last twelve years. A more stable factor is the prime minister, traditionally a member of the largest party. From 2002 until 2010 the Christian democratic CDA (Christen-Democratisch Appèl) were the largest and their leader Jan Peter Balkenende served as prime minister. In 2010, the conservative-liberal VVD (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie) won the elections. VVD leader Mark Rutte was appointed prime minister, the position he still holds today.

Throughout these years, several EU related issues have come to the attention of the media, politicians and citizens. I argue these issues, by the way they were adopted by political parties and/or the way they changed attitudes of citizens towards the European Union, might have caused a significant shift in the two conditions for EU issue voting. In this chapter, I will address three prominent Europe-related issues: the referendum on the European Constitution in 2005, the economic crisis starting in the late 2000's and the rise of a Eurosceptic party. Although there might be multiple other EU-related issues that have been part of political debate or news headlines, I limit myself to highlight only these issues since these all have been subject to analytical studies and together they constitute sufficient basis to make further assumptions on EU issue voting.

#### A broad support

In the first decades of post-WWII European integration, a broad majority of parties in parliament, including the traditional governing parties endorsed European collaboration. Although now and then there was some hesitation, successive rounds of unification were widely supported. Many Dutch parties included in their election programs that they would be willing to give up sovereignty in favour of some kind of federal collaboration, arguing that this could stimulate post WWII reconstruction, create a safe pact in times of rising tension between the East and the West and improve the collaboration in

conflicting interests of Germany and France. Opponents were only found on the far left part of the political spectrum (communists and radical socialists) and with the orthodox Christian Reformed Party (Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij, SGP), later joined by two other, rather small orthodox parties, on the conservative right side of the spectrum. While the years passed support for federal collaboration declined, but all governing and major non-governing parties continued to support European integration. All European treaties passed parliament with a large majority of votes (Voerman, 2005).

Despite a handful of political leaders who made some critical remarks, and the entry of the Eurosceptic SP in 1994, still no major party was opposing the integration process until Fortuyn's LPF entered the political arena. Although it was not a major issue in the 2002 election campaign, Fortuyn had previously spoken out against this 'project of the political and economic elite'. The 2002 elections, preceded by the assassination of Fortuyn, caused a major shock in national politics. The huge success of the LPF exposed an anti-establishment sentiment among the electorate, causing other parties to focus on national dimensions. Although the LPF was marginalized in the 2003 elections, the discussion between cosmopolitan and nationalist political views had not become less intense. In the subsequent 2004 EP elections, support for Eurosceptic parties such as Europe Transparent and the Socialist Party increased significantly (Voerman, 2005).

### The 2005 referendum

In 2004, several EU related issues popped up. On 1 May 2004, ten new member states joined the EU. Its purpose was to create structures to secure sustainable political stability in Europe and to end the political separation of Europe after the breakdown of communism in 1998. Although political stability has been an incentive throughout the history of European integration, economic interests to enlarge the single (or internal) market and to create a monetary unification with a single currency were less essentially involved in this enlargement (Breuss, 2009).

During the summer of 2004, a couple of weeks after the Netherlands took up the rotating presidency of the European Union, some friction within the VVD arose after a pamphlet was published written by members of parliament Geert Wilders and Gert Jan Oplaat, that stated the party should focus more on right-wing issues. One of the statements was that Turkey should never be granted membership of the EU. After a few days of discussion, Oplaat revised his statements and stayed with the party. Wilders however, refused to change his position on Turkish EU membership and separated from the VVD, starting his own parliamentary group.

During the Dutch presidency of the EU, the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (commonly referred to as the European Constitution) was signed on 29 October 2004 by the then 25 member states of the EU. The treaty had been ratified in the Dutch parliament by a large majority of votes, with 128 out of 150 members voting in favour. A late 2004 survey (Euro barometer #62) showed a large support for a European Constitution by Dutch citizens. Nevertheless, when on 1 June 2005 the Dutch

electorate got the opportunity to vote for or against this treaty, 62% of the voters made clear they did not support the constitution by voting 'No' (Aarts and Van der Kolk, 2006).

Aarts and Van der Kolk (2006) analysed this striking result and name three underlying causes: the Euro, expansion of the EU and the gap between parties and voters. After the introduction of the Euro, many people thought this resulted in increased prices and could not be convinced by the government, who stated the contrary. Due to this sentiment, supplemented by a lot of media attention about concomitant negative financial effects for the Dutch, a majority of the voters at the time of the referendum were convinced that the introduction of the Euro had financially injured the Netherlands. This caused a lack of confidence in what has always been the main argument for European integration: economic growth. Aarts and Van der Kolk (2006) show a strong correlation between negative attitude towards the introduction of the Euro and the No-vote.

A second explanation is to be found in the expansion of the EU. On May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004, 10 new member states joined the EU, 8 of them located in Eastern Europe. At the same time, the discussion about Turkey joining the Union was no longer purely hypothetical. Geert Wilders, who left the conservative-liberal VVD because of this issue, managed to get extensive media coverage in the months preceding the referendum. Although Wilders did not attend every debate, in many media a Turkish membership and enlargement in general were hot issues. Arguments stating cheap labour would enter the Dutch market, Dutch culture would be threatened and the Dutch vote in Europe would be marginalized supported the No-campaign. Aarts and Van der Kolk (2006) show a correlation between negative attitude towards enlargement of the EU and the No-vote.

The third reason underlying the result of the referendum that Aarts and Van der Kolk mention is the gap between elite and electorate on the European issue. The huge difference between the overwhelming support in parliament and the clear 'No' by the electorate can be explained by the then low importance that was given by voters to this issue. As also concluded by De Vries (2007), lack of salience of the issue had not led to distinct party positions. Sentiments about the EU could not be measured to policy ideas from political parties, except for those who were distinct opponents of European Integration. Aarts and Van der Kolk (2006) show in their analysis that a large majority (varying per party between 75 to 100%) of Eurosceptic party voters, voted against the European constitution. About half the supporters of parties in favour of the treaty also voted 'No' (varying per party between 37 and 63%).

## Eurocrisis

After the referendum, the economic developments of the late 2000's might also have caused issue salience and partisan conflict in the Netherlands regarding the EU issue. The global financial crisis (2008) and specifically the subsequent Eurocrisis (2009), led to a bailout of several Eurozone member states, to which Dutch tax payers had to contribute. The alarming situation in several southern European states prompted Dutch government to argue for strict budget discipline for all EU member

states. Dutch government itself tried to stick to the requirement imposed by the Stability and Growth Pact (S&GP) to stay within the limits on annual national budget deficit (max. 3% of GDP) and public debt (max.60% of GDP), whereas more and more countries lacked to comply (Van den Berg and Van Eijk, 2012).

The effects of the economic crisis on the development of issue salience and partisan conflict regarding the EU focuses on two main issues: the maximum budget deficit and the severe financial problems of several members of the Eurozone. When the crisis spread over the world like wildfire, several European countries got affected. When the public debt in Greece increased tremendously, Eurozone leaders had to respond. The effects of the problems in Greece exposed the shortcomings of the Eurozone being a currency union without a fiscal union. In May 2010, the Troika (formed by the EU, the ECB and the IMF) agreed upon a first rescue package of 110 Billion euros for Greece. Anticipating to future bailouts, the 17 Eurozone countries formed the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), with the objective of preserving financial stability in Europe by providing financial assistance to Eurozone states in economic difficulty. The initial guarantee commitment for the Netherlands was 25 billion euros, later increased to 44 billion, which could be used as loans for Eurozone members deployed in financial distress. Government and pro-European parties in parliament approved to this Facility, whereas Eurosceptic parties argued the Netherlands was pouring these billions down the drain and loans would never be returned (Rijksoverheid, 2014).

Although several member states did not abide the S&GP requirement to keep budget deficit within 3% of GDP, Dutch government kept propagating the importance of reduced public debt and had to announce new cutbacks several times within a few years. During the first Rutte cabinet, a minority coalition of VVD and CDA supported by the Eurosceptic PVV, negotiations were conducted to address austerity measures worth 14 billion euros in the 2013 budget. This cutback should have resulted to keep the Netherlands within the 3% budget debt requirement. However, agreement could not be achieved on the need to comply with this European measurement. The failure of these negotiations lead to a resignation of the government.

Eurobarometers show the crisis lead to concerns amongst citizens. Whereas in the mid 2000's the people who name the economic situation as one of the most important issues facing the Netherlands decreases to under 20%, in October 2008 (Barometer #70) this number has increased to 64% and fluctuates around the level of 50% until today (Barometer #80), as shown in figure 1. Additionally, since spring 2009, unemployment is mentioned as one of the key issues more often than before.

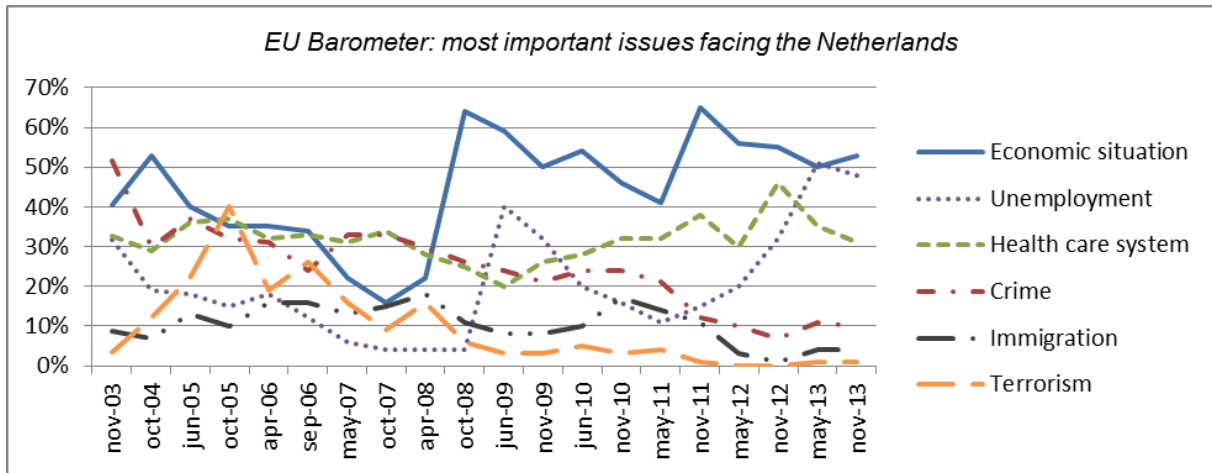


Figure 1. Results on the question 'What do you think are the most important issues facing the Netherlands at the moment?'  
Source: Eurobarometer #60-80

Torreblanca and Leonard (2013) analysed the rise of Euroscepticism around Europe. With regard to the Netherlands, they state that due to weak performance in dealing with the crisis of both the EU and the Eurozone countries, support amongst the Dutch for the EU decreased dramatically. According to their analysis, the trust balance in the EU fell from +44 to -8 between 2007 and 2012 (calculated by subtracting respondents who “tend to trust the EU” from those who “tend not to trust the EU” based on EU Barometer survey data). During the months newspapers reported about severe governmental mismanagement in countries such as Greece, the EU moreover became a part of the problem rather than a solution for the Dutch. A sentiment, very well to be exploited by Eurosceptic parties.

### A Eurosceptic party

After his separation from the VVD, Geert Wilders has become an important factor in Dutch national politics. He adopted the anti-Islamic agenda of the LPF and focussed on the disadvantages of the multicultural society and propagated the reverse of globalization. With these issues he tries to address the part of the electorate in the far right part of the left-right dimension, emphasized by openly naming left-wing and cosmopolitan party policy as a bad alternative (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2013).

From the start of his own parliamentary group, later called PVV, Wilders played noteworthy role in several EU related issues. First, the 2005 referendum. Wilders left the VVD due to a conflict about a possible Turkish EU membership. In the campaign preceding the referendum, Wilders clearly connected the perceived disadvantages of Turkey joining the EU to the Constitution. Additionally, together with other Eurosceptic parties such as the SP, he suggested the Constitution was ‘made up by the same bureaucrats that brought the Euro’. They argued the Euro caused a decrease of purchasing power for the Dutch citizens and a loss of sovereignty and therefore was a terrible mistake. Although Wilders might not have been the most influential factor in the ‘No’-campaign, he certainly contributed to the negative sentiment about the Constitution (Lucardie, 2005).

Wilders' newly formed populist party PVV won 9 seats in the 2006 elections and 24 in the 2010 elections, both after a campaign mainly focussed on anti-Islamic issues, referring to Islam as a 'violent ideology'. He appealed to the 'ordinary people' more explicitly and criticized political elite more harshly than Fortuyn had ever done. With 24 seats, the PVV became the third largest party in parliament and came to an agreement with VVD and CDA to support a minority coalition of these two parties (Van Kessel, 2011).

The position as supporting party of the minority cabinet was a convenient position for Wilders and his party, as he could influence policy but still maintain his popular support as an outsider and oppose the government practically when he wished to do so. The government dependent on Wilders' blessing, resulting in several hard line decisions in order to remain support for other government policies. A problem occurred when the coalition parties were required to discuss new budget cuts, in order to meet the EU guidelines and avert a budget crisis. Wilders refused to support the package as agreed upon by the coalition parties, for Wilders refused to submit to EU agreements. This resulted into a resignation of the government in April 2012 (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2013).

After the break-up, Wilders stated 'Europe' would be the central theme of the campaign towards new elections. Whereas the PVV previously focussed on stopping the 'Islamization' of the Netherlands, their election manifesto in 2012 was called 'Their Brussels, our Netherlands' and took a fierce Eurosceptic position. While Wilders had propagated a Eurosceptic message for a longer period, now he even proposed a Dutch exit from the EU. Although the overall campaign was also dominated by austerity measures and the future of the welfare state, EU related issues were never as prominent as in 2012. Some other parties adjusted their strong pro-European position to a more moderate support for the European Union, but the PVV remained the only party propagating an exit (Van Kessel and Hollander, 2012).

The Socialist Party, traditionally Eurosceptic as well, was placed in a precarious position. They acknowledged the benefits the EU had brought in terms of peace, security and welfare and mainly directed their Euroscepticism towards the neo-liberal course of the EU. It was fairly hard for the SP to take a clearer position, since a their electorate was divided on the issue. A more Eurosceptic stance could potentially push the more pro-European voters towards the Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA), while a more pro-European position could lead to a loss of voters to the PVV. Wilders was aiming to take advantage of this ambivalence, calling SP leader Roemer 'half a Europhile' (Van Kessel and Hollander, 2012).

## Hypotheses

Based on the EU related issues that have dominated the news and political debates, I argue European integration has become more part of citizens' daily concerns than it was in 2002. It is no longer an issue only perceived as part of foreign policy, but rather it has become a highly controversial issue in the electoral arena and the protest arena. European integration nowadays is directly linked to national

sovereignty and financial redistribution (Hutter & Grande, 2014). In a time where a large audience was susceptible to voices propagating anti-globalization and xenophobia could count on a large audience, the economic crisis affecting the Eurozone played right into the hands of all those who take pleasure in highlighting Europe's inability to cope with crucial situations.

The three issues mentioned earlier in this chapter all emphasize effects of European unification in a negative way. I assume these have caused a more negative attitude towards the EU issue amongst Dutch citizens. This not only results in the people considering developments regarding European integration a 'problem' (i.e. something that should be improved), but also considering the EU issue as more important than in 2002. This results in the first, the issue salience hypothesis:

*H1: Issue salience of the EU issue amongst Dutch voters has increased between 2002 and 2013.*

Several scholars argue that the EU issue has 'politicized' in several West European countries over the last decades (e.g. Hooghe & Marks, 2009; De Wilde & Zürn, 2012; Green-Pedersen, 2012). They argue that since the EU issue has transported into the political system by making it subject to public regulation and/or a subject of public discussion, the scope of conflict on the EU issue within the political system has expanded (De Wilde & Zürn 2012, Hutter & Grande, 2014).

I argue that the same effect has occurred in the Netherlands. Due to the referendum, the economic crisis and the rise of the Eurosceptic PVV, EU related issues have become relevant issues for political parties, forcing them to speak out either pro or con EU measures and further integration. In the campaign preceding the referendum on the European Constitution, parties had to speak out either in favour or against. During the Eurocrisis, parties took positions on the requirements of the Stability and Growth Pact and the European Financial Stability Facility. And when the PVV focused its campaign primarily on a Dutch exit from the EU, European integration became an important issue in the 2012 pre-election debates. These effects should presumably have resulted in an increase of partisan conflict between parties in Dutch parliament between 2002 and 2013 (Partisan conflict hypothesis).

*H2: Perceived partisan conflict regarding EU related issues has increased in the Netherlands between 2002 and 2012.*

When both the issue salience hypothesis and the partisan conflict hypothesis cannot be rejected, a renewing of De Vries' (2007) calculations is justified. Although De Vries does not state what levels of issue salience and partisan conflict should be sufficient for EU issue voting to take place, a significant increase of both conditions would be enough to argue that De Vries' conclusions on the Netherlands are not valid anymore.

If I observe both conditions for EU issue voting are fulfilled by at least showing a significant increase, I will next test the central hypothesis of this thesis, the EU issue voting hypothesis.

*H3: Between 2007 and 2012, Dutch voters' attitudes towards European integration translate into voting choice.*

In the following chapter, first I will explain the operationalization of these hypotheses. Next, the results of my calculations will be presented and subsequently interpreted.



## 4. DATA AND OPERATIONALIZATION

The developments in the last decade raise the question to what extent EU issue voting nowadays exists in Dutch parliamentary elections. Based on De Vries' theory on EU issue voting, first should be determined whether the two conditions of issue salience and perceived partisan conflict have indeed increased since 2002. Subsequently, an analysis is conducted to determine if voters attitudes towards European integration translate into voting choice.

To examine the development of issue salience and perceived partisan conflict, relevant data are extracted from the Dutch Parliamentary Electoral Studies surveys (Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek, NKO) 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2012. These studies contain data gathered around every national parliamentary election in order to enlarge insight into characteristics of the Dutch political changes that occur within the system, and degree of similarity/dissimilarity between the Dutch political system and others. Questions about the most important problems according to respondents, perceived party positions within the left-right spectrum and perceived party positions on European integration are included.

To test the issue salience hypothesis, I use the same methods De Vries (2007) used, examining the results of the question asking respondents to name the most important problems facing the Netherlands<sup>1</sup>. It is disputable that this question translates perfectly to issue salience, since salience primarily corresponds to perceived importance, not to whether an issue is considered a problem. For example, peace could be considered to be a very important issue, but when there is no perceived threat of war, this is probably not indicated as a problem (a problem being a discrepancy between the current and desired situation). Nevertheless, this question very commonly used to measure issue salience (Wlezien, 2005).

The answers of respondents were provided both verbalized and categorized within the available data. For 2002 and 2003, a combined dataset is used containing data from NKO surveys between 1971 and 2006. In this dataset, a category called 'European issues' is included in the data set. For this period, this category is composed from answers from respondents referring to either European integration and the Euro as most important problem facing the Netherlands. Verbal answers are not included in this combined data set (Todosijevic et. al., 2010). Therefore, recoding these data is not possible.

After 2003, EU issues were not classified to a designated category. Therefore, all individual answers from the 2006, 2010 and 2012 election are recoded as 'EU related' or 'not EU-related' to European issues. All answers referring to the EU, European integration, the Euro and/or the Eurocrisis were categorized as 'EU-related'. These include answers like 'everything is more expensive due to the

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents was asked "What do you think are the most important problems in our country?" Text in Dutch: "Wat vindt u de belangrijkste problemen in ons land"

Euro', 'spending money on Greece and Spain' and 'it would be a problem if we would exit the EU'. Answers referring to the economic crisis, but not mentioning the EU or Euro, were not included to the 'EU-related' category. Also answers mentioning 'integration', not specifically related to European integration, were categorized as 'not EU-related'. Since I cannot be sure that the 2002 and 2003 data were categorized the exact same way, this uncertainty should be taken into account analysing the results of the calculations.

Perceived partisan conflict on the EU issue is measured by the ratio of party dispersion on EU issues to dispersion on left-right issues. Respondents were asked to place (a limited number of) parties regarding to their positions on European unification and regarding to their position in the left-right dimension. Since the question about party positions on European unification was not asked about the same parties in each survey, for each year the dispersion on EU position and left-right dispersion are calculated whilst only taking parties into account of which both data were available. 2003 is not taken into account since in the 2003 survey the question about party positions on European unification was not included. Table 1 shows which parties were included.

<i>Division of seats in parliament, 1998-2012</i>												
	SP	Groen Links	PvdA	D66	Christen Unie	CDA	VVD	SGP	LPF	PVV	PvdD	Seats included
1998	5	11	45	14	5**	29	38	3	-	-	-	91 %
2002*	9	10	23	7	4	43	24	2	26	-	-	89 %
2003	9	8	42	6	3	44	28	2	8	-	-	-
2006	25	7	33	3	6	41	22	2	-	9	2	85 %
2010	15	10	30	10	5	21	31	2	-	24	2	87 %
2012*	15	4	38	12	5	13	41	3	-	15	2	89 %

Table 1. Parties included in survey question about perceived party position on European unification. Grey shaded blocks represent party and year they were included. The numbers represent the number of seats parties won in the national elections of that year.

\*In 2002 Leefbaar Nederland (Livable Netherlands) won two seats, in 2012 50Plus won two seats. Both are not included in this table.

\*\*ChristenUnie was founded in 2000 as a merger of GPV and RPF. The five seats of ChristenUnie in 1998 represent three RPF and two GPV seats.

Since only parties are included that were expected to win an adequate amount of seats, smaller Eurosceptic parties are not taken into account. Partisan conflict will only be measured when a considerable number of people start consider to vote for a Eurosceptic party. This might result in a self-fulfilling prophesy: partisan conflict can be determined when EU issue voting is existent. Although I determine partisan conflict amongst only the larger parties, it is not to be expected EU issue voting will be determined when only minor parties that barely attract votes express themselves Eurosceptically.

Perceived party position on European unification is measured on a 7-point scale, whereas perceived party position within the left-right dimension is measured on a 10-point scale. In order to compare these two variables, the data on the former is recoded to a 10-point scale as well. First, the mean of the perceived position of each party will be calculated for both dimensions. Subsequently, for each

year the standard deviation of the various party positions is calculated. Partisan conflict on the EU issue is calculated by dividing the dispersion on EU issues by the dispersion on left-right.

For testing the EU issue voting hypothesis, indicators of the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social sciences) are used. This web-based panel is, based on a probability sample of households, drawn from the population register by Statistics Netherlands. A longitudinal survey is fielded in the panel every year, covering a large variety of domains from which indicators for this study are derived.

For the data used in this thesis, interview waves were conducted in December 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. Non-respondents were re-invited to fill out the module several weeks later. These questionnaires contain measures of attitude towards European integration and vote intention in all waves. Table 2 presents the panel wave characteristics.

<i>Panel wave characteristics</i>						
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6
Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Gross n	6415	5033	6097	5143	5724	5561
Net n	4293	3512	3995	3700	3783	3564
Wave response	66,9%	69,8%	65,5%	71,9%	66,1%	64,1%
Panel	936	936	936	936	936	936

Table 2. Panel wave characteristics of the LISS panel, 2007-2012, regarding questions about vote intention and attitude towards European issues.

The dependent variable vote intention is measured by the question *“If parliamentary elections were held today, which party would you vote for?”*<sup>2</sup> Answers will be dichotomized to pro-European and Eurosceptic parties. Division of parties in either one of these groups is based primarily on the parties’ support in parliament for European treaties. In table 3 the division is shown. A complete explanation is given in appendix II.

For the explanatory variable of voters’ attitude towards European integration (‘EU attitude’), the question *“Where would you place your attitude towards European unification on a scale from 1 to 5, where ‘1’ means European unification should go further and ‘5’ that it has already gone too far”*<sup>3</sup> will be used.

<sup>2</sup> Text in Dutch: ‘Als er vandaag verkiezingen voor de Tweede Kamer zouden zijn, wat zou u dan stemmen?’

<sup>3</sup> Text in Dutch: ‘Waar zou u uzelf plaatsen op een schaal van 1 t/m 5, waarbij 1 betekent dat de Europese eenwording nog verder zou moeten gaan en 5 dat de eenwording al te ver is gegaan?’

<i>Division of parties regarding EU issues</i>											
	SP	Groen Links	PvdA	D66	Christen Unie	CDA	VVD	SGP	PVV	PvdD	50 Plus
<i>Pro-EU</i>		+	+	+		+	+				o
<i>Eurosceptic</i>	+				+			+	+	+	o

Table 3. Pro-EU/Eurosceptic division of parties in Dutch parliament regarding EU issues. A '+' indicates to which category a party is categorized. 50Plus did never vote for a European Treaty and is not categorized, indicated with an 'o'.

The EU issue voting hypothesis will be tested conducting a *modified path analysis*. This method, as described by Goodman (1973) is suitable for analysing the causal relationship among a set of categorical variables, whereas traditional path analysis is at most suitable for interval variables. The same model is used by Kölln and Aarts (2013) to test the effect of satisfaction about governing parties on voting behaviour. This model is chosen instead of the conditional logit model as used by De Vries (2007), because of the availability of the LISS panel data. Using this data instead of the NKO surveys means not only actual voting behaviour in elections years can be taken into account, but also respondents' vote intentions in years between elections. Additionally, since the LISS data is based on longitudinal panel studies, the changes in vote attitude and voting behaviour should show a more accurate result than an analysis based on several independent populations.

Interpretation of the results should take into account that vote attitude towards Europe is expected not to be the only variable explaining voting behaviour or voting attitude. Using the panel data provides insight on the development of the effect of EU attitude to vote intention on an individual level. Confirming the hypothesis based on the result of the path analysis does not rule out the possibility that the effect could be caused by different variables. Rejecting the hypothesis based on the path analysis would imply vote intention is by all means not significantly caused by EU attitude solely.

## 5. RESULTS

First I determine whether issue salience of the EU issue has increased amongst the Dutch voters since 2002. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who name issues related to Europe, such as European integration, the Euro, the Eurocrisis and issues concerning other European member states as the most important problem facing the Netherlands. Since the NKO surveys are related to national elections and the question can be answered referring to any other pressing issue, it is not to be expected many voters would name EU-related issues as the most important problem. As stated earlier, the data of 2002 and 2003 were retrieved from a cumulative data set in which all answers regarding European integration and the Euro were categorized as 'European issues'. Therefore, conclusions should mainly focus on the development of issue salience between 2006 and 2012.

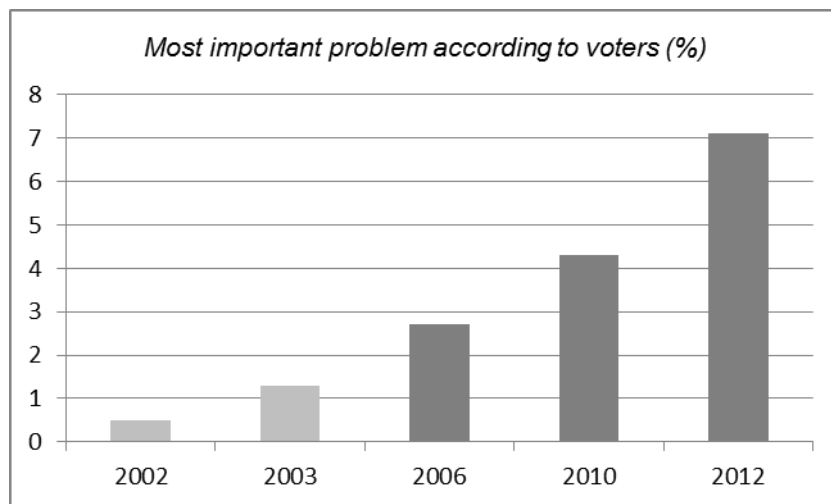


Figure 2. EU related issue indicated as most important problem (%). Source: NKO 2002-2012.

Nevertheless, an increase is shown from 0,5% in 2002 to 7,1% in 2012. Although 7,1% is still a relatively small percentage, it is comparable to EU issue salience in Denmark and the United Kingdom in the 1990's, where evidence of EU issue voting was found before<sup>4</sup> (De Vries, 2007). It seems voters have become more concerned about EU-related issues. The issue salience hypothesis is confirmed.

According to the partisan conflict hypothesis, also the perceived conflict between parties on the EU issue should have increased. This is measured by taking the ratio of left-right party dispersion and EU-issue party dispersion. Since respondents are only asked about the perceived party position on European unification for a limited number of parties each year (see table 1), not all parties are included in this analysis. Parties included merely represent the largest parties in government. Although this is

<sup>4</sup> De Vries (2007) concluded ca. 4,4% of Danish voters named an EU related issue as most important problem in the mid 1990's. In the UK, this number increased from around 3,0% in 1992 to 8,8% in 1997 and even 10,9% in 2001.

not a guarantee for a balanced representation of partisan conflict, at least it creates a picture of the political power balance and its associated agenda setting influence.

Table 4 shows the perceived dispersion of parties within the left-right dimension and on European unification, measured by the standard deviation of the means of perceived party positions. The ratio measure is the EU-unification dispersion divided by the left-right dispersion, showing the relative dispersion on EU unification as perceived by voters, compared to their perception of dispersion on the left to right dimension.<sup>5</sup> A value above “1” would mean that in the opinion of the voters, parties diverge more on the EU issue than on left to right. The results show a rather stable dispersion on the left-right range since 2002, and an increase of dispersion on the EU issue. The calculation of the ratio shows the perceived EU party dispersion has increased considerably, confirming the hypothesis. Nevertheless, it has not yet exceeded the left-right dispersion, so the dispersion is still lower than on the traditional issues. Testing the EU issue voting hypothesis should determine whether this degree of increase, combined with the increase of issue salience, is sufficient to find existence of EU issue voting.

<i>Party dispersion</i>			
Election year	Party dispersion on left-right	Party dispersion on pro-con EU	Ratio measure
1998	1,69	0,49	0,29
2002	2,11	1,01	0,48
2006	1,99	0,92	0,46
2010	2,16	1,54	0,71
2012	1,93	1,52	0,79

Table 4. Partisan conflict on left-right and pro-con EU. For a complete overview, see appendix I. Source: NKO 1998-2012.

Notable is that in 1998 not a single party marked as Eurosceptic was included. In 2002 only LPF was taken into consideration, followed by SP and ChristenUnie in 2006 and PVV from 2010 onwards. Focussing on the latter two election years, when in both years the same parties were included, no considerable shift is noticed on dispersion on the EU issue.

Although the partisan conflict on the EU issue is still smaller than partisan conflict within the left-right dimension, this analysis and the increase of EU issue salience provide sufficient reason to stick to the assumption EU issue voting is present nowadays. In table 5 the attitude of the electorate towards European unification is shown in relation to their voting behaviour. For each year depicted shares are divided over voting behaviour (pro or con EU) and attitude towards European unification. For example, 4,7% of all 2007 respondents answered European unification should go further and said to vote a pro-

<sup>5</sup> In this calculation, each party counts equally. When party size (measured number of seats in parliament) is taken into account for calculating standard deviation, no significant different change is found from the dispersion depicted in table 4.

European party, whereas 1,6% answered European unification should go further, but would vote for a Eurosceptic party. Also in 2007, 6,0% said European unification had already gone too far, but also said they would vote for a pro-European party, whereas 14,7% said European unification had already gone too far and said they would vote for a Eurosceptic party.

<i>Division over voters' attitude towards EU unification and voting behaviour</i>						
Voting behaviour	Attitude towards European unification					
	< <i>Should go further</i>		<i>Already gone too far</i> >			
2007 Pro EU	4,7%	10,4%	21,8%	10,6%	6,0%	
	1,6%	4,4%	14,4%	11,5%	14,7%	
2008 Pro EU	4,4%	13,0%	27,8%	14,6%	6,3%	
	1,2%	3,2%	11,3%	7,4%	10,8%	
2009 Pro EU	4,6%	12,2%	25,0%	10,6%	5,0%	
	1,8%	4,1%	13,7%	10,8%	12,2%	
2010 Pro EU	3,8%	9,4%	23,0%	16,9%	14,5%	
	1,1%	2,4%	8,1%	8,4%	12,5%	
2011 Pro EU	6,3%	11,9%	21,8%	15,1%	15,7%	
	1,0%	2,7%	6,6%	7,0%	11,8%	
2012 Pro EU	3,8%	11,3%	24,8%	15,3%	10,9%	
	1,1%	1,7%	6,7%	7,4%	16,8%	

Table 5. Division of voters' attitude towards EU unification and voting behaviour. Source: LISS panel data 2007/2008-2012/2013.

The results indicate that each year 35 to 50 percent of the respondents believe European unification has already gone too far (indicated in the final two columns to the right), but these Eurosceptic voters are divided over both pro-European and Eurosceptic parties. As shown in the first column, only a small share of the total respondents answer European unification should go further (5 to 7 percent each year). Also, the results show that most voters of Eurosceptic parties indicate themselves as Eurosceptic, whereas voters of pro-European parties can be found amongst both pro-Europeans and Eurosceptics. The largest share of voters who indicated to vote for a pro-European party, state European unification neither should go further nor has already gone too far.

The results show a larger share of the respondents indicate themselves as Eurosceptic rather than pro-European. Still, a majority would vote for a pro-European party, but voters of pro-European parties are less Eurosceptic than voters of Eurosceptic parties. Bases on these numbers, it is not yet possible to draw conclusions on the presence of EU issue voting. Further analysis is required to determine this phenomenon. To determine the presence of “*the process in which attitudes towards European integration translate into national voting choice*” a modified path analysis is conducted. In line with the model used by Kölln and Aarts (2013), combining a series of recursive path analyses using logit analysis, it can be established whether a shift in attitude towards the EU translates into a shift in vote intention, being the intention to vote for a pro-European or a Eurosceptic party (dichotomized, see

table 3). Figure 3 depicts both the underlying logit models, with corresponding goodness-of-fit statistics, and the complete model.

*Modified path analysis: EU issue voting*

1.  $Vint07 = Vint07 + Vint07 * EUatt07.$
2.  $EUatt08 = EUatt08 + EUatt08 * EUatt07$
3.  $Vint08 = Vint08 + Vint08 * Vint07 + Vint08 * EUatt07 + Vint08 * EUatt08$  (LR= 17,427; df=3; p=0,001)
4.  $EUatt09 = EUatt09 + EUatt09 * EUatt08$
5.  $Vint09 = Vint09 + Vint09 * Vint08 + Vint09 * EUatt08 + Vint09 * EUatt09.$  (LR=6,475; df=7; p=0,486)
6.  $EUatt10 = EUatt10 + EUatt10 * EUatt09$
7.  $Vint10 = Vint10 + Vint10 * Vint09 + Vint10 * EUatt09 + Vint10 * EUatt10.$  (LR=17,180; df=7; p=0,016)
8.  $EUatt11 = EUatt11 + EUatt11 * EUatt10$
9.  $Vint11 = Vint11 + Vint11 * Vint10 + Vint11 * EUatt10 + Vint11 * EUatt11.$  (LR=12,054; df=7; p=0,099)
10.  $EUatt12 = EUatt12 + EUatt12 * EUatt11$
11.  $Vint12 = Vint12 + Vint12 * Vint11 + Vint12 * EUatt11 + Vint12 * EUatt12.$  (LR=69,895; df=7; p=0,000)

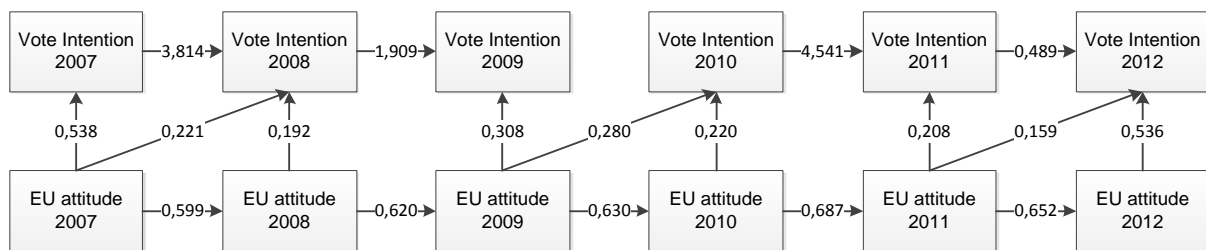


Figure 3. Modified path analysis showing the translation of EU attitude into vote intention. (n=936). Source: LISS panel data 2007/2008 - 2012/2013.

Based on the logit models, it appears vote intention cannot be explained very well from EU attitude, since all models that permit a goodness-of-fit test do not show a good fit (all  $p < 0,500$ ). The logic of path analysis states that the model as a whole, being a combination of individual models, does not fit as well. Additionally, the complete model shows weak a relation between attitude and vote intention in 2008, 2010 and 2012. In 2009 and 2011, a correlation is not even found.

The numbers shown in table 5 do not translate into a causal relation between attitude towards EU integration and vote choice. Although Euroscepticism is higher amongst voters of Eurosceptic parties than of pro-European parties, the modified path analysis demonstrates causality is absent. Vote intention should therefore be influenced by other variables than EU attitude. According to this analysis, EU issue voting cannot be determined and the EU voting hypothesis should be rejected.

Although I show both conditions for EU issue voting are met, since both issue salience and perceived partisan conflict have increased significantly between 2002 and 2012, this does not result in Dutch voters basing their vote choice on EU issues. As stated before, rejecting the hypothesis would affirm vote intention is caused by at least one variable other than EU attitude. It is self-evident that in national



elections voters take multiple issues into consideration. Apparently, the European integration is not one of these issues.

When between 2002 and 2012 issue salience has increased from 0,5% to 7,1%, partisan conflict nearly has doubled and Eurosceptic parties have relatively more Eurosceptic voters than pro-European parties, there should be a clear explanation for the lack of EU issue voting. In the following chapter, I will further analyse the Dutch political landscape in order to determine whether this explanation can be given.

## 6. MAINSTREAM PARTIES

When both partisan conflict and issue salience have increased, how come results still show no clear evidence of EU issue voting? The answer might be found in the remarkable characteristic of the EU issue that party position deviates considerably from the traditional left-right dimension, much more than any other major issue (Van der Burg and Van Spanje, 2009). Traditionally, the Dutch political spectrum is presented in a left-to right dimension, but the line of conflict along which parties can be divided regarding their views on European integration does not match this dimension (Aarts, 2008). Eurosceptic parties are found both on the extreme left (SP) and extreme right (SGP, PVV), whereas pro-European parties are found in the middle of the spectrum (CDA, D66) (Van der Burg and Van Spanje, 2009).

Taking a closer look at the spectrum and the history of coalitions in the Netherlands it shows that, ever since 1977, in every coalition two of the three parties PvdA, CDA and VVD took part.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the years other parties have taken part in coalitions as well, but they never became the largest. With a single exception in 2002, all governments in which other than two of these three parties took part, the additional party was the smallest partner. Over the past decades, the social-democratic PvdA, Christian-democratic CDA and conservative-liberal VVD were electorally dominant and constituted government alternatives. These parties located in the center-left, center and center-right part of the left-right dimension can be defined as the Dutch mainstream parties (Meguid, 2005).

Mainstream parties play a central role in party competition (Meguid, 2005). This competition is typically organised in blocs. A bloc of government parties defending the policies that were implemented during their reign, faces a bloc of opposition parties that want a government of another colour. Since all government alternatives are headed by a mainstream party, the issues these parties focus on are of more importance for setting the agenda than issues other parties prefer to put on the agenda. Therefore, 'niche parties' such as green parties or extreme nationalists, are dependent on the issue strategies of mainstream parties (Adams et.al., 2006; Green-Pedersen, 2012).

Parties deal with a variety of issues, forcing them to pay attention to certain issues and compete about future policies. It becomes advantageous for parties to prime certain issues on which they represent an electorally attractive position or issues opponents rather avoid. Two factors can be distinguished that determine the focus of mainstream parties on particular issues: the *coalition factor* and the *electoral factor*. The coalition factor implies that mainstream parties always pursue government power; they only win when they participate in the next coalition. Since the political spectrum is traditionally

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<sup>6</sup> In 1977, the Christian democratic CDA was founded as a merger of three Christian parties. The third Van-Agt cabinet, a coalition between CDA and D66, was a minority coalition operating as caretaker cabinet until the elections of 1983. It was formed after PvdA stepped out of the previous cabinet.

presented in a left-right dimension, party competition is presented as such as well (Green-Pedersen, 2012).

During the formation of a new coalition, agreements should be made on the issues on top of the agenda. It is a lot easier to find coalition partners when all these major issues fit in the left-right spectrum of party competition. Coalitions that need to overcome disagreement on multiple dimensions are considered unstable (Mueller, 2003). Due to disagreement on a major issue within another dimension, coalition formation would become unclear. Since competition on the EU issue does not fit the left-right dimension, it is not attractive for politicisation by mainstream parties. Until today the three mainstream parties in the Netherlands can be considered pro-European, as shown before in table 3. When one of these would move towards a Eurosceptical position, its coalition possibilities with the other mainstream parties becomes unclear, since it could also team up with a Eurosceptic party from the extreme left or right.

A mainstream party would only change its position in order to politicise an issue within another dimension, if it is sure it will attract a majority of the electorate: the electoral factor. Whereas it is attractive for niche parties to gain votes on such a single issue, mainstream parties need to be certain that politicisation of a certain issue will gain a desired position in the race for government power. As long as they are uncertain about gaining the electoral majority behind them, mainstream parties rather focus on traditional issues (Bale, 2003; Green-Pedersen, 2012). Other parties are not in the race for becoming the largest party and therefore depend on the division of seats amongst mainstream parties for possible participation in the next coalition. For instance, it is much more likely for a green party to become part of government when social democrats rather than the conservative-liberals have won the elections (Meguid, 2005).

<i>Division of preferences</i>			
Parties	Issues		
	I	II	III
A	pro	pro	con
B	pro	con	pro
C	con	pro	pro

Table 6. Party preferences that induce a cycle.

The lack of stability in multidimensional based coalitions can be explained by the voting paradox that can occur in group decision-making processes based on majority rule. When party preferences to issues I, II and III of parties A, B and C are divided as shown in table 5, a majority coalition could be formed with two parties. Based on agreement on issue I, a coalition of A and B would be formed. This coalition would be unstable if decisions have to be made when it comes to issue II, since it would be more likely for A to collaborate with C regarding this issue. The possibility of the formation of a new winning coalition containing a member from the previous coalition and a previous opposition party, is

in this case always feasible. It is constantly possible for parties to form new coalitions based on other issues. These cycles are an ever-present danger in multidimensional coalitions (Mueller, 2003).

Although the large amount of legislative proposals that are discussed in national parliament and the great variety of these issues would suggest the number of dimensions is huge, this is only apparent. It turns out that an individual's view on a broad range of issues are highly correlated. A large majority of issues is classified within a single dimension. This might suggest that it is very unlikely for other dimensions to ever play a prominent role, but the presence of more than one underlying issue dimension is found in virtually all studies that have investigated this (Mueller, 2003).

As shown in the previous chapters, both conditions for EU issue voting have increased significantly in the Netherlands. However, EU issue voting cannot be found. The absence of this affect could be caused by the lack of politicisation of the EU issue amongst mainstream parties. Since all mainstream parties are considered pro-European, every coalition alternative would have a predominant pro-European position. Just a niche party addressing the Eurosceptic vote is not enough to wake the sleeping giant. In order to politicize the EU issue amongst the entire political arena, there has to be a considerable difference in positions of mainstream parties on this issue and it should be high on the political agenda. This way, voters would have the ability to choose amongst government alternatives with different views on the EU (Green-Pedersen, 2012).

In table 7, perceived partisan conflict on the EU issue is calculated again, this time only taking the three mainstream parties into account. These numbers show party dispersion within the left-right dimension is similar to this number when other parties are included, whereas party dispersion on the EU issue is much lower when only mainstream parties are taken into account. I conclude perceived partisan conflict between these parties on the EU issue is very low.

<i>Party dispersion - mainstream parties</i>			
Election year	Party dispersion on left-right	Party dispersion on pro-con EU	Ratio measure
1998	1,49	0,43	0,29
2002	1,90	0,26	0,14
2006	1,96	0,56	0,28
2010	2,09	0,48	0,23
2012	2,00	0,25	0,12

Table 7. Perceived partisan conflict on left-right and pro-con-EU between mainstream parties (PvdA, CDA and VVD). Source: NKO 1998-2012.

According to the coalition factor, a shift of a mainstream party towards a more Eurosceptic position would cause uncertainty towards possible coalition negotiations. Since the EU issue is not compliant with the left-right dimension, coalition negotiations should in that case focus on agreement within multiple dimensions. Additionally, a majority of the Dutch citizens still supports EU membership (see

figure 4). A (more) Eurosceptic position of a party does not have imply that it would argue the Netherlands should leave the EU, but taking a position contrary to other mainstream parties could encourage these others to portray the party who revised its position on the EU as more Eurosceptic than it originally desired. This could lead to an unintended extreme perceived Eurosceptic position amongst the electorate. Perceived partisan position is rather complex to manage. It is therefore, according to the electoral factor, very uncertain if taking a Eurosceptic position would lead to winning the electoral majority.

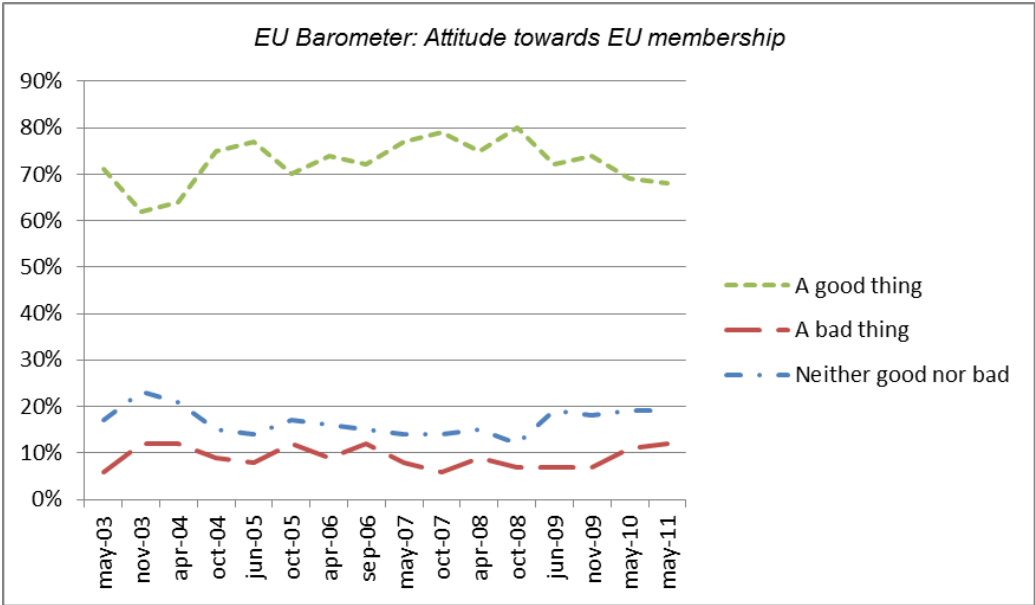


Figure 4. Results on the question 'Generally speaking, do you think Dutch membership of the European Community is ...?' Source: Eurobarometer #60-75.

To determine whether mainstream parties are indeed trying not to politicise the EU issue, election manifestos of these parties are analysed. The Manifesto Project Database contains quantitative content analyses of parties' election programs from more than 50 countries covering all free, democratic elections since 1945. For every single manifesto, all sentences are categorized to subject, including 'related to European Community/Union'. For the three mainstream parties, the percentage of total sentences about the EU in election manifestos between 2002 and 2010 are depicted in table 8, supplemented by the information on an additional pro-European party (D66) and two Eurosceptic parties (SP and PVV). The numbers show that up to 2010 no party had fully deployed on the EU issue. For mainstream parties, it has become a less rather than a more prominent issue over the last decade.

Unfortunately, the data on the 2012 election manifestos are not yet coded by the Manifesto Project Database at the time of writing this thesis. As mentioned before, the Eurosceptic PVV has called its 2012 election manifesto 'Their Brussels, our Netherlands' and took a fierce Eurosceptic position. EU related issues were never as prominent as in 2012, resulting in more parties to repositioning themselves on the EU issue (Van Kessel and Hollander, 2012).

<i>Election manifesto analysis (1)</i>						
	PvdA	CDA	VVD	D66	PVV	SP
2002	2,3	5,4	3,1	3,1		1,1
2003	2,0	5,4	3,0	2,4		1,3
2006	3,5	3,7	2,4	2,4	5,8	2,6
2010	1,7	3,1	2,7	2,7	5,3	1,6

Table 8. The percentage of total sentences about the EU in election manifestos between 2002 and 2010. A complete overview is presented in appendix III. Source: Manifesto Project Database

In order to determine a possible shift in 2012, the manifestos included in table 8, supplemented by the 2012 manifestos of these parties, are checked for a dedicated chapter or paragraph on European integration. When present, it is indicated how prominent this paragraph is included. This is measured by the position of the paragraph or chapter in the document. Table 9 shows the results.

<i>Election manifesto analysis (2)</i>						
	PvdA	CDA	VVD	D66	PVV	SP
2002	10 of 12	6 of 10	5 of 5	3 of 5	-	14 of 15
2003	8 of 10	6 of 10	7 of 7	3 of 7	-	19 of 20
2006	7 of 9	5 of 6	4 of 4	6 of 9	8 of 9	11 of 12
2010	9 of 13	11 of 12	24 of 26	6 of 10	9 of 13	14 of 14
2012	12 of 12	<b>2 of 8</b>	27 of 29	<b>2 of 9</b>	<b>1 of 10</b>	14 of 15

Table 9. Dominance of EU issue in election manifestos, measured by position of dedicated EU chapter/paragraph. Source: Election manifestos obtained from Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen.

These numbers confirm the EU issue has not been a prominent issue until 2010. Of the three mainstream parties, only the CDA did not write about EU integration only on the final pages of their manifestos. Also, both for outspoken Eurosceptic and pro-European parties, the EU issue was not very prominently included.

A remarkable shift is shown in 2012, when the PVV adopted the EU issue as its most prominent issue. Since I argue EU issue voting can only exist when the EU issue is adopted by mainstream parties, the sudden interest of the Christian-Democrats in the EU issue is noteworthy. A further analysis of their 2012 manifesto shows they underline their pro-European position, stating for instance that “*the economic crisis needs powerful coordination and integration on the European level, secured in European Treaties*”<sup>7</sup> (CDA, 2012, p. 26). However, this is somewhat refined by remarks like “*The EU should be limited to its core tasks. Therefore, the CDA wants to continue reduction of EU-regulations*

<sup>7</sup> Text in Dutch: “Aanpak van de economische crisis vergt sterkere coördinatie en integratie op Europees niveau, te verankeren in Europese verdragen”

by 25%”<sup>8</sup> (CDA, 2012, p. 26). This ambiguity does not demonstrate a strong position that conflicts other mainstream parties, but rather an answer to the strong anti-EU tone as propagated by the PVV.

The adoption of the issue as more prominent by the CDA did not increase perceived partisan conflict amongst mainstream parties. Therefore, voters still do not get to choose between government alternatives that differ on EU position and EU issue voting will not take place. However, now that a mainstream party is priming the EU issue, in the following years it might lead to a higher position on the agenda, forcing other mainstream parties to take their positions more accurately, resulting in an increase of perceived partisan conflict. Future developments would have to demonstrate this.

The only question remaining is why the CDA suddenly focussed on the EU issue. To answer this question, developments should be considered in perspective of the age this has taken place. Prior to the 2012 elections, the PVV terminated its support to the coalition of CDA and VVD, resulting in a government resignation. This unique construction with the PVV supporting the coalition was a collaboration which never worked out well for the CDA. Many CDA voters blamed CDA politicians for doing business with the nationalist PVV. In the preamble of the 2012 elections, there was a great need within the CDA to stand against the former partner. A fierce position against the PVV in the 2012 campaign was possible by focussing on the EU issue (Van Kessel and Hollander, 2012).

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<sup>8</sup> Text in Dutch: “De Europese Unie beperkt zich tot kern taken. Daarom wil het CDA doorgaan met vermindering van EU-regels met 25%.”

## 7. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I conduct a follow-up analysis based on De Vries' (2007) dissertation, which stated that in the Netherlands until 2002 no evidence could be found of voters' attitudes towards European integration translating into vote choice. Whereas De Vries analysed four countries, I focus solely on the development of this process, so called EU issue voting, in the Netherlands from 2002 until 2012. I state several developments have contributed to a politicisation of the EU issue and analyse whether presence of EU issue voting can be found in the final years of this decade.

Adopting both the sleeping giant theory on the EU issue and issue evolution theory, two conditions are crucial for presence of EU issue voting: issue salience and perceived partisan conflict regarding EU related subjects. I argue a significant increase of both these conditions should have led to existence of EU issue voting in the years around the most recent national elections in the Netherlands. Three developments are highlighted which could have influenced these two variables. The 2005 referendum on the European Constitution has contributed to a more outspoken position on European integration of Dutch political parties and has shown citizens that European issues are not only a matter of foreign policy, but could affect domestic issues as well. Next, the Eurocrisis and related economic policy implemented by Dutch government, supporting other members of the Eurozone and conducting budget cuts to live up to the European demands on annual national budget deficit, resulted in political debates on EU involvement and even in government resignation. Additionally, the rise of the Eurosceptic PVV and its prime focus on a stop to further European integration put the EU issue on the agenda in the pre-election period of 2012. This might not be a complete enumeration of events that could have influenced EU related issue salience and perceived partisan conflict, but these are three clear examples that have had extensive media and political attention.

Three hypotheses are tested using NKO and LISS panel data. First, the increase of issue salience is analysed, stating a significant increase should be shown. I show an increase from 0,5% in 2002 to 7,1% in 2012 of respondents who name EU related issues as most important problem. When due to a difference in data collection 2002 and 2003 are not taken into account, also significant increase of issue salience can be concluded based on data from 2006, 2010 and 2012 only. Second the partisan conflict hypotheses is tested, stating perceived partisan conflict has increased significantly. I show that between 2002 and 2012 the ratio of party dispersion on the left-right dimension and party dispersion on the EU issue has nearly doubled. Although party dispersion on the left-right dimension is still larger than dispersion on the EU issue, also this hypotheses cannot be rejected. I conclude both conditions for the presence of EU issue voting are met.

The third hypothesis, stating EU issue voting is present in the final part of the decade subject to study, is tested by conducting a modified path analysis. This method is chosen due to the availability of longitudinal panel data, providing data about vote choice in both election years and between election years. The longitudinal panel studies provide the possibility to analyse changes in vote attitude and



voting behaviour more accurately than if it were based on several independent populations. Based on the logit models underlying the modified path analysis, I have to conclude that none of the models that permit a goodness-of-fit test show a good fit. Clearly, according to this model vote intention cannot be explained from EU attitude. Therefore, the EU issue voting hypothesis should be rejected.

Both conditions for the presence of EU issue voting are met, but still no evidence of this process can be found. In further analysis, this lack of EU issue voting is explained focussing on mainstream parties. Based on Green-Pedersen (2012), I argue not only perceived partisan conflict in general, but specifically amongst mainstream parties is necessary for EU issue voting. Due to their urge to become the largest party and gain a position in the next coalition, they have other incentives than niche parties. Since coalitions that have to overcome conflicts in multiple dimensions are considered relatively vulnerable, it is not attractive for mainstream parties to seek conflict with each other on issues that do not match the main, left-right dimension. The division of partisan positions on the EU issue does not comply with the left-right dimension and therefore mainstream parties will be hesitant to highlight differences among each other regarding the European Union.

By analysing perceived partisan conflict on the EU issue amongst mainstream parties, I show this conflict is indeed rather small in the perception of Dutch citizens. Additionally, mainstream parties minimize attention on the EU issue. Only a small share (2 – 5 percent) of sentences in the party manifestos of mainstream parties is EU related. Also, until 2012, not a single mainstream party positioned a EU related paragraph in the first half of its manifesto.

Although conditions of EU issue voting are met when parties from all over the political spectrum, from extreme left to extreme right, are taken into account, this cannot be concluded when only mainstream parties are taken into account. Mainstream parties are crucial, since they are the main players in coalition formation and agenda setting. Unless perceived partisan conflict among mainstream parties will increase, EU issue voting will not be found in Dutch national elections.

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## Data files:

The analyses presented in this thesis are based on surveys processed in the following datafiles:

### Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies:

Aarts (Project leader), Prof.Dr. C.W.A.M. (University of Twente); Todosijevic, Dr. B. (University of Twente) (2009-12-01), Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek, NKO 1971-2006 cumulatieve file; Dutch Parliamentary Election Study DPES - cumulative dataset 1971-2006; Stichting Kiezersonderzoek Nederland – SKON; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek - CBS; Kolk, Dr. H. (Universiteit Twente); Aarts, Prof.dr. C.W.A.M. (Universiteit Twente); Tillie, Prof.dr. J.N. (Universiteit van Amsterdam) (2012-06-21), *Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek, 2010 - NKO 2010; Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2010 - DPES 2010*; Stichting Kiezersonderzoek Nederland – SKON; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek - CBS; Kolk, Dr. H. van der (Universiteit Twente); Tillie, Prof.dr. J.N. (Universiteit van Amsterdam); Erkel, P. van; Velden, M. van der (Universiteit van Amsterdam); Damstra, A. (Universiteit van Amsterdam) (2012), *Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2012 - DPES 2012; Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek 2012 - NKO 2012*

### Eurobarometers:

European Commission (2003) Eurobarometer 60, October-November 2003; European Commission, May 2004: Eurobarometer 61, February-March 2004; European Commission (2004) Eurobarometer 62, October-November 2004; European Commission (2005) Eurobarometer 63, May-June 2005; European Commission (2005) Eurobarometer 64, October-November 2005; European Commission (2006) Eurobarometer 65, May-June 2006; European Commission (2006) Eurobarometer 66, October-November 2006; European Commission (2007) Eurobarometer 67, April-May 2007; European Commission (2008) Eurobarometer 68, October-November 2007; European Commission (2008) Eurobarometer 69, April-May 2008; European Commission (2009) Eurobarometer 70, October-November 2008; European Commission (2009) Eurobarometer 71, June-July 2009; European Commission (2009) Eurobarometer 72, October-November 2009; European Commission (2010) Eurobarometer 73, May 2010; European Commission (2011) Eurobarometer 74, November 2010; European Commission (2011) Eurobarometer 75, May 2011.

All Eurobarometer data are obtained from the Eurobarometer interactive search system ([http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/cf/index.cfm?lang=en](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/cf/index.cfm?lang=en)).

### LISS panel:

CentERdata (2009) LISS panel Politics and Values, Wave 1, December 2007-January 2008; CentERdata (2009) LISS panel Politics and Values, Wave 2, December 2008; CentERdata (2009) LISS panel Politics and Values, Wave 3, December 2009; CentERdata (2011) LISS panel Politics and Values, Wave 4, December 2010; CentERdata (2012) LISS panel Politics and Values, Wave 5, December 2011; CentERdata (2013) LISS panel Politics and Values, Wave 6, December 2012;

### Manifesto Data Collection:

Volkens, A., P. Lehmann, N. Merz, S. Regel, A. Werner, Annika with O.P. Lacewell, H. Schultze (2013): The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2013b. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB)

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke partijen:

All manifestos were retrieved via [http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/themas/vp/tk/per\\_jaar](http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/themas/vp/tk/per_jaar).

[2002] PvdA: Samen voor de toekomst; CDA: Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid; VVD: Ruimte, respect en vooruitgang; D66: Toekomst in eigen handen; SP: Eerste weg links.

[2003] PvdA: PvdA manifest 2003-2007; CDA: Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid; VVD: De VVD maakt werk van Nederland; D66: Juist nu; SP: Eerste weg links.

[2006] PvdA: Het Nederland van morgen; CDA: Vertrouwen in Nederland. Vertrouwen in elkaar; VVD: Voor een samenleving met ambitie; D66: Het gaat om mensen; PVV: verkiezingspamflet; Een beter Nederland, voor hetzelfde geld.

[2010] PvdA: Iedereen telt mee; CDA: Slagvaardig en Samen; VVD: Orde op zaken; D66: We willen het anders; PVV: De agenda van hoop en optimisme; SP: Een beter Nederland voor minder geld;

[2012] PvdA: Nederland sterker & socialer; CDA: Iedereen; VVD: Niet doorschuiven maar aanpakken; D66: En nu vooruit; PVV: Hún Brussel, óns Nederland; SP: Nieuw vertrouwen.

## APPENDICES

### I. Perceived partisan conflict

Partisan conflict is calculated as the ratio of party dispersion on EU issues to dispersion on left-right issues, as measured by De Vries (2007) using the standard deviation of voters' EU and left-right party placement in the NKO's of 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2012. Since respondents are only asked to a selected number of parties each survey, it is not possible to present a complete overview. To calculate dispersion on left-right position the same parties are included as used to calculate dispersion on the EU position. Dispersion is determined by calculating the standard deviation of the means of every party position. Since EU position is measured on a 7 point scale and left-right position is measured on a 10 point scale, the results on EU position are recoded into a 10 point scale. Below all data are presented. On the left-right scale, 1 is considered extreme left, 10 is considered extreme right. On the pro/con European scale, 1 is considered most pro-European, 10 is considered most Eurosceptic.

<i>Means of perceived position regarding left-right and EU position</i>												
Year		SP	Groen Links	PvdA	D66	Christen Unie	CDA	VVD	LPF	PVV	Standard deviation	Ratio measure
1998	left-right	-	2,84	4,25	5,07	-	6,23	7,18	-	-	1,69	0,29
	EU	-	5,54	4,20	4,76	-	4,76	5,04	-	-	0,49	
2002	left-right	-	2,32	3,43	4,44	-	6,30	7,03	7,56	-	2,11	0,48
	EU	-	5,47	4,43	4,90	-	4,87	4,90	7,26	-	1,01	
2006	left-right	2,63	-	3,59	-	5,77	6,75	7,19	-	-	1,99	0,46
	EU	6,76	-	5,57	-	6,04	4,49	4,81	-	-	0,92	
2010	left-right	2,48	-	3,22	4,58	-	5,9	7,34	-	7,77	2,16	0,71
	EU	6,26	-	4,86	4,90	-	4,17	5,10	-	8,46	1,54	
2012	left-right	2,63	-	3,41	5,13	-	5,81	7,39	-	7,11	1,93	0,79
	EU	6,63	-	5,41	4,94	-	5,17	4,91	-	8,79	1,52	

Table 10. Partisan conflict on left-right and pro-/con-EU. Source: NKO 1998-2012.

Noteworthy is the remarkable result that the party of the prime minister is considered most pro-European in forthcoming elections.

## II. Party position on EU integration

Party positions on EU integration are dichotomized to Pro-European and Eurosceptic. Positions are primarily determined by voting behaviour of parties in parliament regarding European treaties, as depicted in table 11.

<i>Parties' voting behaviour on European treaties</i>									
	<i>1951 Paris</i>	<i>1957 Rome</i>	<i>1985 Luxem bourg</i>	<i>1992 Maas tricht</i>	<i>1997 Amster dam</i>	<i>2000 Nice</i>	<i>2004 Rome</i>	<i>2009 Lisbon</i>	<i>Indicated parties</i>
ARP	+	+							
CHU	+	+							
KVP	+	+							
CDA			+	+	+	+	+	+	Pro-European
PvdA	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Pro-European
VVD	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	Pro-European
D66			+	+	+	+	+	+	Pro-European
SGP	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	Eurosceptic
GPV			-	-	-				
RPF			-	-	-				
ChristenUnie						+	-	+	Eurosceptic
CPN	-	-							
PSP			-						
PPR			-						
GroenLinks				-	-	+	+	+	Pro-European
SP					-	-	-	-	Eurosceptic
LPF							-		
PvdD								-	Eurosceptic
PVV								-	Eurosceptic
Verdonk									
50Plus									n/a

Table 11. Voting behaviour of political parties in parliament regarding European treaties. Sources: Voerman (2005); Eerstekamer.nl.

Since this thesis only focusses on the period between 2002 and 2012, parties that did not have seats in parliament in this period, were not taken into account. Categorization of parties that did not vote consistently, being SGP, ChristenUnie and GroenLinks is based on Voerman (2005), who states the SGP and ChristenUnie are traditionally Eurosceptic and argues GroenLinks is a 'Europhile party'. 50Plus won seats in parliament in 2012, but did not yet vote for a treaty. This party is not taken into account in the analysis.



### III. Election manifestos

Table 12 shows the total number of sentences in the election manifestos of depicted parties between 2002 and 2010, as well as the share of the total number of sentences.

<i>Election manifesto analysis</i>													
		PvdA		CDA		VVD		D66		PVV		SP	
		sentences	share	sentences	share	sentences	share	sentences	share	sentences	share	sentences	share
2002	pos.	60	2,3	75	5,4	41	3,1	39	3,3	-	-	9	0,5
	neg.	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	-	-	11	0,6
	<i>total</i>		2,3%		5,4%		3,1%		3,3%		-		1,1%
2003	pos.	8	2,0	75	5,4	6	3,0	7	1,7	-	-	12	0,5
	neg.	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	3	0,7	-	-	17	0,8
	<i>total</i>		2,0%		5,4%		3,0%		2,4%		-		1,3%
2006	pos.	56	2,5	64	2,9	12	2,2	60	4,0	0	0,0	8	0,5
	neg.	22	1,0	17	0,8	1	0,2	5	0,3	8	5,8	36	2,1
	<i>total</i>		3,5%		3,7%		2,4%		4,3%		5,8%		2,6%
2010	pos.	29	1,7	56	2,9	21	1,4	104	3,6	0	0,0	8	0,8
	neg.	0	0,0	3	0,2	20	1,3	1	0,0	36	5,3	8	0,8
	<i>total</i>		1,7%		3,1%		2,7%		3,6%		5,3%		1,6%

Table 12. Sentences about the EU in election manifestos between 2002 and 2010. Source: Manifesto Project Database