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Examining the Rise of Right Wing Populism in Europe

Lara Sophie Jana Kleene - 1605747
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Supervisors:

1st: Dr. Kostas Gemenis
2nd: Dr. Harry F. de Boer

Abstract

This thesis aims at identifying the link between the economic performance in various European countries and people's voting behavior in regard to it. Therefore, a retrospective socio-tropic perception of the economy's performance is connected with the likelihood for voting for a populist right wing party in national parliament elections. Accordingly, the main research question is:
"In how far is the retrospective socio-tropic perception of the economic performance by citizens in European countries influencing their voting decision to support a right wing populist party in national elections?"
In order to be able to empirically answer this question, the analysis is cross-national focusing on elections in various European countries from 1996 until 2013. Data was obtained from the "Comparative Study of Electoral Systems" (CSES) which uses common survey questions in their post-election studies in countries around the world. The relationship is analyzed with simple and multivariate regressions and graphs. As we are facing a dramatic rise in support for populist parties in recent times, this study could determine a measurable reason to vote for right wing populist parties and contribute to the theory of economic voting. The results of this study are mostly in line with previous studies conducted. The effect of economic voting is rather little and varies a lot across time and country. Further research should focus on finding the right measures to better assess this phenomenon.

Key words: right wing populism, economic voting, voting behavior, political parties, Europe

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1. Introduction

Does a well-functioning economy prevent support for right wing populist parties? Experts say that increasing interest in these parties that challenge predominant political opinions is a response to major changes in external factors, when trust in the government generally decreases (Nardelli, 2014). Consequently, the voting behavior of the population can be seen as a reflection of the respective environment. This being the case, why is Germany, facing favorable economic conditions, seeing massive support for the Populist Party "Alternative für Deutschland" in recent years (Elmer, Hebel & Kalinowski, 2016)? Similar trends can be observed not only in Germany but also in many other European countries such as France or Austria. Which factors explain this development? Are there common causes that can be applied throughout Europe?

Taking into account recent events in Poland, Hungary and Venezuela, the idea suggests itself that powerful populist parties significantly undermine the most basic features of liberal democracies (Mudde, 2015). The main ideology of populists, emphasizing the power of the common people, possibly leads to a division of society since the "pure people" typically revolt against the "corrupt elite" (Kriesi & Pappas, 2015). Hence, it is of great importance to examine the ongoing shift to the right and to discover the reasons why people support these parties. The thesis at hand aims at identifying measurable reasons for this trend.

The recent rise of right wing populism in Europe receives a great deal of attention in the academic literature - especially motivated by the ongoing refugee crisis. The social side of voting behavior is analyzed very detailed by different authors. However, the psychological part of people's voting behavior rarely fully explains the actual voting decision. As a result, new perspectives should be considered (Gill, Crosby, & Taylor, 1986). My interest in economics and the recent events in the EU as well as Germany, motivates me to analyze this link. The so-called economic voting could be a factor that influences voting behavior. Several scholars have examined the connection between a country's economic performance and the resulting voting behavior. The results suggest a considerable link between these two factors (Lewis-Beck & Paldam, 2000). Less studied, however, is the connection between the economic performance and the voter's turnout of right wing populist parties, in particular.

There are hundreds of studies and articles dealing with economic voting and the link between perceived economic conditions and the actual voting decision (Nadeau, Lewis-Beck, & Bélanger, 2013). One of the first scholars dealing with the economic factor of voting behavior was Kramer. He outlined the main theory of economic voting, called the responsibility theory. The theorem holds that the incumbent government perceived as accountable for a country's economic situation. Therefore, voters reward or punish the government based on the economic performance (Kramer, 1971).

This study seeks to examine if there is a significant relationship between a countries' perceived economic condition and the support for right wing populist parties. It is the goal of this paper to fill the gap in the literature and to contribute to the theory of economic voting.

1.1. Research Question

As this thesis aims at examining the effect of economic voting in regard to right wing populist parties throughout Europe, the research question and as well the sub-questions are explanatory and seek to identify the depicted relationship in the most appropriate way. Therefore, the main research question is:

"In how far is the retrospective socio-tropic perception of the economic performance by citizens in European countries influencing their voting decision to support a right wing populist party in national parliament elections?"

The following sub-questions aim at simplifying answering the main research question and explore further important aspects in regard to economic voting:

a. "How strong is the effect of a retrospective, socio-tropic perception of the economy's performance by citizens on their voting behavior?"

b. "Is the effect of perceived economic conditions by citizens (retrospective, socio-tropic) on their voting decision to support a right wing populist party stronger than the effect of the individuals self-placement on the left-right scale?"

c. "Does the effect size of the perception of the economic conditions by citizens (retrospective, socio-tropic) correlate with objective economic indicators at the aggregate level?"

2. Theory / Concepts

2.1. Economic voting

In order to approach the research question most effectively, it is crucial to fully understand the underlying theories and concepts.

To explore whether there is a connection between economic voting and the recent rise of right wing populist parties in Europe, the theory of economic voting plays a key role as it serves as the background theory for the main independent variable of this study. As mentioned above, Kramer was one of the first to introduce the concept of economic voting and the connected responsibility theory. This phenomenon is also sometimes referred to as accountability theory. He studied short-term fluctuations in U.S. voting behavior and found out that economics factors had an impact on election outcomes. Rational citizens/voters tend to use their vote to punish a party or the government in face of an economic recession or crisis and reward if the economy is doing well, or at least if they think it does. This behavior occurs because people expect the incumbent party or president to be responsible for economic failures (Kramer, 1971).

Michael Lewis-Beck (1991), another leading author in this context, came to the conclusion that the perception of the state of the economy as unfavorable leads citizens to vote against the incumbent party. This behavior is an advantage for opposing parties, including populist right wing parties which are, in most countries, opponents of the ruling government (Norpoth, Lewis-Beck, & Lafay,

1991). However, the described reaction to economic conditions is not consistent across countries and time (Paldam, 1991). Indeed, in numerous countries, at some point in history, the perceived or actual economic conditions serve as an explanation for the support of a certain party but fail to do so at other points in time and under different circumstances. Anderson (1995) lists differing electoral systems or, more broadly, the general political context as possible reasons for these inconsistencies over time.

Another model of this theory is the rational selection or competency model, which is discussed less frequently in literature. The rational voter consults information of the economic situation and, based on this information he determines skilled candidates to address these conditions (Stevenson & Duch, 2013). If it is the voter's belief that the incumbent party is able to tackle problems in the future, they do not punish or reward it based on earlier performance. However, both models rely on the fact that the individual somehow evaluates the performance of politicians or parties and makes his/her voting decision on the basis of this perception.

In order to fully comprehend the theory of economic voting it is important to understand which factors the population actually addresses with the term "economy". People tend to only take into account final outcomes and ignore any efforts taken by politicians (Stevenson & Duch, 2013). Moreover, citizens usually fall short to observe the economic situation in all its particulars. The population mostly reacts on what it reads in newspapers or information consulted from other sources (e.g. word-of-mouth communication). In total, people tend to have a rather restricted knowledge of the decisive macroeconomic principles. The two factors that are most widely considered by voters are employment level and inflation (in terms of prices). The so-called "big-two" are addressed in numerous academic papers. Lewis-Beck and Paldam (2000) concluded that inflation (essentially diminished over the past decade) is rather difficult to assess for the "usual person". They also found that unemployment has become the main aspect of an individuals' perception of the economic situation. However, official unemployment data does not seem to explain the population's opinion on the economic state as good as "hidden unemployment" which was first measured by Feld and Kirchgässner (2000) in Germany. It is a careful attempt by the scholars to construct an unofficial measure of unemployment that is closer to real unemployment than is the official number. It excludes, inter alia, those who get special contributions due to illness as well as those unemployed of age 58 and older who no longer have the duty to (officially) look for a job due to the apparent impossibility to get one.

Furthermore, most humans tend to generalize from their social environment and fail to account for the society as a whole. To further understand the connection between people's perception and the actual economic situation, and to check whether people react stronger to extreme changes in the economy (e.g. an extreme decrease in GDP or much higher unemployment rates compared to the years before), this thesis compares aggregated data of various countries' economic conditions to the perceptions people have (sub-question c).

As there are different approaches that lead to differing results, it is still being discussed what kind of data should be used for analytical studies in this field of research. Firstly, disagreement prevails

between choosing either objective economic indicators or citizen's individual perceptions of the economic performance in order to analyze economic voting. Using individuals' perceptions about the economy may lead to biased results (Kramer, 1983). One reason is that people might consider their own economic situation rather than the general national economy when voting. Furthermore, varying perceptions of the economic conditions in a specific country are the result of differing opinions on an issue that should actually produce constant estimates. Also, different interpretations of survey questions or citizen's inaccurate impression of the economy are further potential sources of error (Stevenson & Duch, 2013).

Kramer (1983) proposes that aggregated data (at the macro-level) should be preferred for further research. Notwithstanding, changing perceptions can possibly change voting preferences and should therefore be considered in an analysis of economic voting. In order to minimize the threat of people only taking their individual situation into account, survey questions should hint at the general economic conditions. Consequently, when choosing this micro-level data (individual perceptions), researchers should carefully look at how the survey question is worded. There are four different approaches to do so. Table 1 illustrates the potential differences.

	Egocentric voting	*Socio-tropic voting*
Prospective voting	"Will my individual economic performance improve within the next twelve months?"	"Will the state of the economy get better within the next twelve months?"
Retrospective voting	"Did my individual economic performance improve over the past twelve months?"	"Did the state of the economy get better over the past twelve months?"

Table 1: Dimensions of Economic Voting

This table shows how survey questions could differ, measuring the same but rather broad aspect. Most researchers, focusing on economic voting, choose the retrospective socio-tropic approach because it seems closest to the macro-level (Erikson, 2004). Also, scholars found out that voters react stronger to past events than to expected ones (Lewis-Beck & Paldam, 2000). In the literature, there are several scholars who chose to compare the retrospective egocentric approach with the retrospective socio-tropic one because the retrospective dimension seems to have a greater influence then the prospective one, as mentioned before. However, the debate about either choosing the "pocketbook voter" (egocentric) or the collective voter (socio-tropic) is still ongoing. The results of various studies show that in some countries, voting behavior is better explained by the egocentric approach but in others the socio-tropic approach shows higher and significant values (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier, 2000). In Lewis-Beck and Paldam's volume "Economic voting: an introduction" (2000) they summarized and defined what is already studied in the literature and what is still being examined in regard to the economic voting theory. The findings also include a discussion of the two controversies (egocentric, socio-tropic and

prospective, retrospective). They have set up an overview of for the different volumes written, to outline which author chose to analyze economic voting with which of the four dimensions. In conclusion, most of the scholars chose the socio-tropic retrospective, as mentioned above. However, the difference of the prospective/ retrospective approach is very little and it seems that the variation between egocentric and socio-tropic could be dependent on the country the study is conducted in. In accordance with this discussion and due to the CSES dataset only containing a survey question asking for the retrospective socio-tropic perception about the national economy of the country in which the respondent lives, this approach is used for the study.

After this review on the economic voting theory, it is expected that the variable *economic perception* will explain some extent of the support for right wing populist parties. However, as factors about the political context, which were proposed by Anderson (2000) to be important, are not considered in the analyses, variation across country and time will most likely appear.

2.2. Criticism on Economic Voting

Based on the available literature, a relationship between the evaluated variables appears to be likely. However, as indicated above the relationship will probably be not particularly strong. Weaknesses of the economic voting theory might be a reason for a weaker than expected connection. As mentioned above, there are several studies in which scholars were not able to establish significant relationships between the voting outcome and the actual or perceived economic situation. A reason for these contradicting findings, could be that every individual perceives the state of the national economy differently, depending on his/her attitude and personality.

Evans and Andersen (2006) underlined in their study "The Political Conditioning of Economic Perceptions" that reverse causation cannot be ruled out because the respondent's political orientation could determine how he/she evaluates the performance of the economy. In addition, their findings demonstrate that socio-tropic perceptions of the economy are strongly influenced by previous opinions about the incumbent party. Taking those factors into account leaves a very minor effect on the current choice of economic voting.

It may also be conditioned by their egocentric perception, which is hard to distinguish from the socio-tropic perception, which is asked for, of individuals (Duch, Palmer & Anderson, 2000). The resulting biased perception could lead to weaker relationships because it could be argued that voters with biased attitudes are not trying to punish or reward parties for economic performance but as an attempt to justify choices the voters have already decided upon. Therefore, it is difficult to actually measure the effect the state of the economy has on voting behavior.

Additionally, the voter's choice highly depends on his/her willingness to search for information and the actual ability to do so, based on a person's educational background.

Existing literature measures if voters reward or punish the incumbent party. On the contrary, this study asks for party preferences and in how far the voter likes/dislikes a particular party, mostly in countries

that have a multi-party system. Hence, a voter's decision does not automatically imply a direct reward or punishment.

Another potential weakness of this model could be that the parties chosen for the analysis do not focus on the economy and economic policies in their manifesto but focus on other issues. Anti-immigration policies due to the ongoing refugee crisis and the recent terror attacks in Europe by the "Islamic State" serve as an example for other issues a political party might focus on.

2.3. Control Variables

Different control variables are added to the analysis in order to rule out or detect alternative explanations for the findings. In the context of economic voting, different factors that have an influence on voting behavior were identified and examined for their presence in the CSES election survey. Existing literature agrees on a relationship of demographic variables with voting behavior. Factors, such as *age*, *education* and *gender* matter to a certain extent. However, those variables do not fully explain why people participate in elections and for which party they vote. It is assumed, that women on average vote more liberal than men. Also, younger people are usually more liberal than the elderly (Carroll & Fox, 2013). Furthermore, studies suggest, that less educated people are more likely to vote for an extreme right wing party than highly educated people (Lubbers, Gijsberts & Scheepers, 2002). These factors play a relatively small role in explaining voting behavior but should nevertheless be considered.

Moreover, a *self-placement on the left-right scale* (11-point scale) is used as a control variable. It is assumed that a person that places him-/herself more on the right is more likely to vote for a right wing party than for another one (Deth & Geurts, 1989). This implies that ideology is represented by this variable to a certain degree, as suggested by Anderson (2000) in his study on how the political context influences the relationship between economic perceptions and voting behavior.

Even though, these variables are included in the analyses, the possibility remains that other, not tested variables, mediate the relationship. Anderson (2000), for example, measured the influence of the political context on economic voting in his paper. He found that voters tend to articulate their discontent with the economic performance of their country if mechanisms of accountability are relatively simple. Furthermore, the political system could also play a role in this relationship. The literature supports the assumption that economic voting is easier to detect and measure in a two party system, rather than in a multi-party system.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

So far, most of the studies already conducted in this field are cross-sectional. With this approach, the variables and units are measured at the same point in time and there is no differently treated or manipulated group. For this thesis, the cross-sectional design is the most suitable one as well, as the aim of

this paper is to proof a relationship on the basis of existing data sets consisting of results of a post-election survey.

However, using this type of research design involves different threats to internal validity that need to be minimized. The most important one is the possibility of reverse causation, as mentioned before. When measuring the variables and units at the same time, the time order (precondition of a causal relationship) is threatened. Logically seen, the cause has to appear before the effect. This threat can be minimized in this paper due to the wording of the survey question ("Would you say that over the last twelve months the state of the economy has gotten better or worse?").[1] It is asked for an evaluation of the performance in the past twelve months, so before the actual election, and how this affects the likelihood to support a populist right wing party. However, Anderson, Mendes and Tverdova (2004) argue on basis of their recent findings that the behavior (the actual vote) could lead to an alteration in people's attitude (towards the economic situation). Hence the threat remains and needs to be considered in the interpretation part.

Furthermore, checking for possible third variables influencing the causal relationship should be part of the research. Third variables could be of socio demographic nature (e.g. age, gender, income and education) or psychological ones (e.g. attitudes, emotions and feelings towards parties). This threat is impossible to fully rule out, so it has to be minimized as well. To do so, socio-demographic variables as well as the *self-placement on the left-right* scale are included as control variables in this thesis. However, to entirely rule out the threat to internal validity is not possible. Consequently, threats to internal validity will remain but are minimized and considered for interpretations.

3.2. Case Selection and Sampling

3.2.1. Populism

In order to approach the research question in a reasonable way, it is crucial to fully understand the underlying concepts in order to choose right wing populist parties appropriately. Relevant for the case selection of this thesis are populist parties, including the underlying concept of populism (as they serve as the unit of this study). Over time, the interpretations of populism have varied and still to date, there is no consensus on which factors specify this concept. A permanent problem is, and probably will always be, the negative connotation of the term populism. Marget Canovan states that "Populists" refuse to call themselves "Populists" (1981). Furthermore, the term has been used "to describe political movements, parties, ideologies, and leaders across geographical, historical, and ideological contexts "(Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013).

In literature, there are three prevailing definitions and conceptualizations for populism. The first considers populism as an ideology. This approach was suggested by Cas Mudde and Cristobal

[1] The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES MODULE 1 FULL RELEASE [dataset]. December 15, 2015 version. doi:10.7804/cses.module1.2015-12-15

Rovira Kaltwasser in various studies dealing with right wing populism in Europe. Mudde defines populism as

> *a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people. (Mudde, 2004. p.543)*

In this definition, Mudde (2004) describes populism as an ideology, which divides people into two groups. Hence, the underlying assumption of the ideology is the focus on people in a similar way we see in e.g. nationalism. However, populism is seen as a rather thin political ideology, as there is only limited potential in the core concepts to address all major socio-political questions (Stanley, 2008). Defining populism as an ideology implies the classification of parties or their respective leaders as populist non-populists is virtually impossible.

The second definition assumes that populism is a political discourse style, a way of making claims about politics (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). Carlos de la Torre (2000) defined populism as a "rhetoric that constructs politics as the moral and ethical struggle between el pueblo [the people] and the oligarchy." As this definition describes populism as rhetoric, political actors (what/who is considered to be populist) are able to change and re-change their rhetorical style (more easily than changing an ideology). As a result, this definition allows for a simpler differentiation between levels and types of populism within and between political actors. This classification or identification, however, is not as easy as the dichotomized populist or not-populist one in the ideology approach (Pauwels, 2011).

The third prevailing conceptualization considers populism to be a political strategy, a form of mobilization and organization. Kurt Weyland (2001) considers populism to be "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers". Different scholars who support this approach to populism often highlight the importance of a party leader and his/her charismatic personality.

It becomes obvious, that all three different definitions share some specific elements but imply different approaches to research in the field of populism. The unit of analysis changes with changing the definitions. If populism is considered an ideology, research focuses on the analyses of political parties or their leaders. Contrarily, if populism is defined as a style of political discourse, speeches of political actors could be researched, for instance. Populism seen as a strategy could be analyzed by looking at social movements or the strategic decisions of the persons leading the movement (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013).

When looking at the different definitions and their respective units of analysis, the ideology approach suits this study best, considering that political parties are analyzed. Cas Mudde (2004), as the defining scholar for this approach on populism, differentiates between two versions. The first one

"refers to the politics of the Stammtisch (the pub), i.e. a highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the 'gut feelings' of the people" (Mudde, 2004 p.542). Whereas "in the second meaning, populism is used to describe opportunistic policies with the aim of (quickly) pleasing the people/voters – and so 'buying' their support – rather than looking (rationally) for the 'best option'" (Mudde 2004, p.542). However, what both of the definitions have in common is the belief in the power of the general, "common" population (rather than believing in the elites) (Mudde, 2004). The second one refers to the image of populism being a form of opportunism. Populist parties tend to build their manifesto on fear or grievances etc. to establish power and to gain trust by their potential voters. However, those parties try to appeal to the "common people" as well. This implies that no clear distinction between these two conceptualizations possible.

Populist parties usually react and build on critical trends in the population, for instance the nationalist movement due to the ongoing refugee crisis. However, they do not only target political issues like anti-immigration policies, but hold a more general opposition against the political system and situation or the incumbent elite (Pasquino, 2008).

Hence, populist parties can be placed anywhere on the left right scale as they usually react to opposing tendencies of the population (Heinisch, 2003). Nonetheless, this paper focuses on right wing populist parties due to the fact that they are spread all over (Western) Europe nowadays. Furthermore, recent events (economic crisis and the refugee crisis) gave a fresh impetus to right wing populist parties.

Thus, the family of populist right wing parties has gained a lot of support over the past two decades in Western European democracies. The reasons that drive citizens to vote for or support these parties are still being discussed. E. Ivarsflaten and F. Gudrandsen provide several explanations for this trend. They differentiate between supply and demand side explanations to simplify further research.

> *Demand-side explanations are concerned with questions about which socio-economic and political developments contributed to the voters' grievances that the populist radical right parties appeal to and mobilize. Supply-side explanations examine the institutional, strategic and organizational contexts of these parties, and how these various contexts facilitate or hinder the growth of such parties (Ivarsflaten & Gudrandsen, 2014. p.2).*

It is argued that citizens support right wing populist parties because these parties successfully mobilize the people's grievances, mostly coming from the demand side. Those grievances emphasize different concerns of the population including immigration, political disillusionment and economic changes (Ivarsflaten, 2008). The latter of these factors involves dissatisfaction with economic conditions and protest voting which hints at the theory of economic voting and connects the two variables analyzed in this study.

3.2.2. Filters and Criteria for Inclusion

To select representative and appropriate cases (countries and parties), a number of filters have been applied. The first requirement is that the data has to be available in the CSES database, as the variables chosen for this thesis are included in this database. Furthermore, using only the data of the CSES ensures the comparability of the cases because the survey questions are equal over time and formulated in a similar fashion. Also, the use of the same database assures that similar scales are used, preventing interpretation biases. The second criterion for inclusion is the existence of the independent variable *perception of the state of economy*, which is was only included in the first module of the CSES studies (elections from 1996-2001) and the fourth one (2011-2016). Thirdly, only European countries are chosen, as this region is the geographic focus of this study. However, it is not necessary that the countries are part of the European Union. Switzerland or Norway are examples for European countries that are not part of the EU but feature strong right wing populist parties. The fourth filter crosses non-democratic countries out, as elections have a different character in totalitarian states. The focus for this requirement relies more on free and fair elections in that ensure that all the parties have a fair chance. Lastly, the remaining countries have to have a right wing populist party for each election considered which is assessed and measured by the CSES.

Applying the introduced filters and inclusion criteria, there are 16 countries, 17 elections and 21 parties considered for the analysis (see Table 2 below).

Countries, elections and parties chosen for the analysis:

Country	*Election Year (in the CSES)*	*Right Wing Populist Parties*
Austria	2013	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) (C) Alliance for the Future of Austria (E) Team Stronach (G)
Belgium	1999	Front National (Walloon E) Vlaams Blok (Flanders D) People's Union (Flanders F)
Czech Republic	1996	Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek (E)
Denmark	1998	Danish People's Party (E)
France	2012	Front National (C)
Germany	2013	Alternative for Germany (AfD) (G)
Greece	2013	Golden Dawn (E) Independent Greeks (D)
Hungary	1999	Justice Life Party (E)
Ireland	2013	Fianna Fáil (C)
Montenegro	2012	Democratic Front (B)
Norway	1997	Progress Party (B)
Poland	2011	Law and Justice (PiS) (B)
Romania	1996	Romanian National Unity (F)
Serbia	2012	Serbian Radical Party (G)
Slovenia	1996	Slovenian Democratic Party (C)
Switzerland	1999	Swiss People's Party (A)
	2011	Swiss People's Party (A)

Table 2: Case Selection

When interpreting the results, differences between right wing and far right populist parties should be considered. Varying results could be a result of the parties' individual ideologies and in how far they stress the economic conditions in their electoral campaigns. Consequently, a short evaluation of the parties' manifestoes might be important for interpreting results.

Furthermore, as Adams, Clark, Ezrow and Glasgow (2004) suggest in their study on "understanding change and stability in party ideologies", political parties might shift their ideological stands in response to changing opinions in the general population to maximize their voter turnout. As a result, a party might be classified as right wing populist in the first module of the CSES database, but not in the fourth one, due to a change in the issues the party targets.

3.3. Operationalization

In order to answer the research question, quantitative data will be used. The Comparative Study of Elections Systems (CSES) provides an appropriate data set for this study as it includes all the chosen variables and assesses them reasonably. The CSES is a cooperation among several election study teams from all around the world. Countries that participate add an equal part of survey questions in their post-election studies that allow researchers to do cross-national analyses.

The first chosen dependent variable in this paper is the *likelihood to vote for a right wing populist party* which is represented by the degree of how much the respondent likes the particular party. The survey question is "I'd like to know what you think about each of our political parties. After I read the name of a political party, please rate it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party. If I come to a party you haven't heard of or you feel you do not know enough about, just say so. The first party is [PARTY A]". Previous scholars predominantly chose to measure the actual voting decision. However, Van der Eijk, C., Van der Brug, W., Kroh, M., & Franklin, M. argued that this approach could lead to biases in multivariate regression analyses (2006). To reach better results, they propose to include a measurement which reflects which party has the highest utility to the individual. A part of this utility is described by sympathy towards a party, which is mostly measured on a semantic differential scale. In the case of the CSES survey, a thermometer scale is used with end-anchors (like, dislike) on 0 and 10. This approach is similar to a semantic differential scale (includes a 11-point scale instead of a 7-point scale). As Preston and Colman (2000) indicate, this scale is easier to interpret as it does not include negative numbers which increase from left to right. Furthermore, as most of the countries chosen for this analysis have a multi-party system, it is preferred to use the attitude towards political parties, as it tells more about voter's political preferences than the actual vote choice (Schoen & Schumann, 2007). Brody and Page (1973) as well as Van der Eijk et al. (2006) state, that working with evaluation scores rather than with a vote choice variable, leads to more precise findings. Consequently, this evaluation score of the dependent variable can be used as an appropriate measure for the likelihood to support a particular party.

The first independent variable *perceived economic conditions* is measured in the retrospective and socio-tropic dimension, as mentioned before. In the CSES survey, the question in regard to the variable is "Would you say that over the past twelve months, the state of the economy in [COUNTRY] has gotten better, stayed about the same, or gotten worse? " . Following this question, there are two more elements in the CSES survey that specify how much better or worse the economy has become. A 5-point scale with values from 1 to 5 was created using this information. The answer choices were: "much better", "somewhat better", "stayed the same", "somewhat worse" and "much worse".

Secondly, the control variables are categorized into two different types. Firstly, the demographic indicators: *age, gender* and *education* and secondly the *self-placement on the left-right scale*, assessing ideology to a certain extent. This information is also included in the datasets. The latter is assessed using the question "In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?", in the CSES survey.

Age is measured in years in the first module of the CSES studies and by the date of birth in the last module, which implies a recoding of the age variable in the fourth module from the date of birth to the number of years. *Gender* is a dichotomous variable and only has the values 1=Male and 2=Female. The last socio-demographic variable is the respondent's *level of education*. The answer choices range from early childhood to doctoral or equivalent, which are labeled with values from 1 to 9. The participant can choose between nine different levels of education. Consequently, even small differences in education matter in this study.

To include the actual economic conditions in this study and to detect whether the respondents evaluated the economy objectively, the effect sizes of the *perception of the economy* will be plotted against the objective change in the economy over the year of the specific election. Therefore, objective indicators have to be chosen and the respective data collected. The economy will be measured by *GDP per capita, unemployment rate, GDP growth* and *inflation rate*. This data exists for the fourth CSES module (2011-2016), but has to be collected for the first module. The World Bank database is a reliable source of information for this kind of data.[2] [3]

The *GDP per capita* data is collected for three points in time: the elections year (time T), one year before the election (T-1) and two years before the election (T-2). The CSES committee chose GDP measured per capita using purchasing power parity rates (PPP) and converted to constant 2005 international dollars. In this study, the change from T-1 to T will be used as an indicator describing in how far the economy changed over the past twelve months.

The *unemployment rate* is the share of the labor force without work and also measured at three points in time (T, T-1, T-2). Again, the difference between T and T-1 will be used as an estimation of the economic change for the past twelve months. For *GDP growth*, however, it is not necessary to use

[2] The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES MODULE 1 FULL RELEASE [dataset]. December 15, 2015 version. doi:10.7804/cses.module1.2015-12-15

[3] The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES MODULE 4 SECOND ADVANCE RELEASE [dataset]. March 20, 2015 version. doi:10.7804/cses.module4.2015-03-20

the change from T-1 to T, as it is measured as the annual percentage growth rate of the GDP at market prices, assessed in constant local currency. Lastly*, inflation* is measured by the annual growth rate of GDP implicit deflator, which shows the rate of price change in the economy (Worldbank, 2014).

Unit	*Populist Parties (in Europe)*
Dependent Variable	Like – dislike: right wing populist party (**individual level**)
Independent Variable	Perceived economic conditions, (**individual level**; Retrospective/socio-tropic)
Control Variables	Socio-demographic indicators: Age, Gender, Education (**individual level**) Self-placement on left-right scale (**individual level**)
Independent Variable	Objective economic indicators measured at the **aggregate level**: GDP per capita, unemployment rate, inflation rate and GDP growth

Table 3: Overview of the Units and Variables

Table 3 shows an overview of the units and variables and how they are connected with each other.

3.4. Data analysis

Considering, that this study focuses on quantitative data, analyses will be done using the software SPSS statistics. To test the assumed causal relationship and to draw conclusions, a linear regression analysis should be conducted for each of the right wing populist parties selected (per election, if applicable), assuming that the four assumptions for a regression (linearity, independence of errors, constant error variance and normally distributed errors) are met.

So, firstly, to test the relationship of the overarching research question, a linear regression analysis should be conducted for each right wing populist party (as the dependent variable) and the *perceived economic conditions* (retrospective, socio-tropic) as the independent variable. This regression should contain control variables for more reliable results. The estimated unstandardized coefficients will be compared cross-national and over time. This analysis will also serve to answer sub-question a. For testing sub-question b. it is necessary to compare the independent variables (*economic perception* and the *self-placement on the left-right scale*) in the regression analysis. Again, the estimated unstandardized coefficients will be compared and interpreted. In order to answer sub-question c., the effect sizes (calculated for the overarching research question) will be plotted against the objective economic indicators at the aggregate level for the election years. The scatterplots are analyzed.

4. Analysis

In this section, the actual analysis is done and results are evaluated. To begin with, it is important to check whether the variables and the assumed relationship meet the assumptions for conducting a linear regression analysis. For this, the distributions of the dependent variable are checked for the presence of normal distribution (graphs can be found in the Appendix, Section A). As the dependent variable shows the respondent's attitude towards the studied right wing populist parties, it becomes clear that no normal distribution exists (rather a left skewed one). Therefore, a transformation should be considered and tested. Furthermore, it becomes obvious that most of the parties chosen are right minority parties. However, due to the distributions, some of the parties need to be checked again in order to determine if they fit to the presented definition of a right wing populist party, as the distribution is quite unusual. These parties are: People's Union (Belgium-Flanders), Independent Greeks (Greece), Fianna Fáil (Ireland), Democratic Front (Montenegro), Romanian National Unity (Romania), Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenia) and the Swiss People's Party (Switzerland).

For the remaining assumptions, residual plots and the scatterplot of the DV against the IV are to be analyzed (graphs can be found in the Appendix, Section E.1.). The relationship between the dependent and independent variable should be linear, which can be seen when looking at the scatterplot which includes the DV and the main IV. In this case, most parties show a very small (nearly horizontal) relationship. Some actually tend to be negative, however, they are still considered to be linear. Hence this assumption is not fully met. To check for the independence of errors as well as constant error variance (homoscedasticity), residual plots are analyzed. Most of the plots show an indication towards heteroscedasticity, meaning that the residuals show a pattern. However, they seem to be independent from each other. The last assumption, the one that says that the errors should be normally distributed, can be tested with a P-P Plot. For most of the parties, the plot produced satisfactorily results. There are some where the distribution is skewed (Front National (Belgium), Alliance for the future of Austria, Team Stronach, Golden Dawn and the Swiss People's Party 2011), however, in total one can say that this assumption is met.

Transforming the dependent variable with the natural logarithm resolves some of the problems with the assumptions for a linear regression analysis (see graphs in the Appendix, Section E.2.). Linearity is given, again, in most cases. The tendencies stayed the same, compared to the previous graphs analyzed. In terms of independence of errors and constant error variance, one can observe that the residuals are more spread. However, they show a pattern, hence heteroscedasticity again cannot be ruled out. A clear improvement can be seen in the graphs which show the distribution of the errors (P-P Plots). Most parties show a nearly perfectly normal distribution. The impact of the transformation on the unstandardized coefficient B is explained below (see Figure 3).

4.1. Sub-question a

a. "How strong is the effect of retrospective, socio-tropic perception of the economy's performance by citizens on their voting behavior?"

To answer the first sub-question, linear regressions for each of the chosen parties were conducted. The regression model included four control variables, namely, *Age*, Gender, *Education* and *Ideology* (presented by left- right self-placement).

Party	*Coefficient B for Economic Perception (controlled for Age, Gender, Education and Self-Placement on the left-right scale)*
Freedom Party of Austria	0,37**
Alliance for the Future of Austria	-0,27**
Team Stronach	0,113**
Front National (France)	0,184*
Alternative for Germany	0,294*
Golden Dawn	0,051
Independent Greeks	0,284**
Fianna Fáil	0,15
Democratic Front	0,668**
Law and Justice	0,595**
Serbian Radical Party	-0,071
Swiss People's Party (2011)	0,04
Front National (Belgium)	0,11
Vlaams Blok	0,395**
People's Union	-0,15
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek	0,828**
Danish People's Party	0,205*
Justice Life Party	0,442**
Progress Party	0,136*
Romanian National Unity	-0,452**
Slovenian Democratic Party	-0,005
Swiss People's Party (1999)	0,082

* statistically significant at p<0,05 ** statistically significant at p<0,01

Table 4: Unstandardized Coefficient B Economic Perception (all control variables included in the regression model)

Table 4 shows the unstandardized coefficient B of the main independent variable, the *economic perception,* and its level of statistical significance. Detailed results can be found in the Appendix, Section B. The value of the coefficient B is interpreted exemplarily for the "Freedom Party of Austria": For each unit increase of the *economic perception* (tendency towards perceiving a poor economic condition), we expect a rise of 0,37 on the like-dislike scale (tendency towards like), keeping the other variables constant. Here, B, with a value of 0,37 is, in comparison to the rest of the parties, in the mid-range. The smallest value is -0,452 for the Romanian National Unity and the highest one is 0,668 for

the Democratic Front in Montenegro. The average value for B is 0,182. Interestingly, the average for the first wave of election studies (1995 – 1999) is only 0,159, whereas the average for the fourth wave (2011 – 2013) is 0,201. This pattern could be a product of the economic crisis in Europe. Remmer (1991) found in her study on the economic crisis in Latin America in the 1980s that crises have a critical political impact. Her findings show that in times of economic instability, the support for extremism rises and is reduced for established democratic forces.

Moreover, one can observe that a couple of parties show a negative coefficient that is statistically significant at $p<0,05$. These are the "Alliance for the Future of Austria" as well as the "Romanian National Unity Party" with a value for B of -0,27 and -0,452, respectively. This means, that for each unit increase in the *economic perception* the dependent variable decreases by 0,27 / 0,452, towards disliking the party. In the case of the "Alliance for the Future of Austria", this could be product of the party turning more and more to economic liberalism since Buchner became the leader in 2009 (BZÖ wird "rechtsliberal"., 15.10.2009). The Austrian population kept loosing trust in the party due to the repeatedly changing program. Instead of going for traditional right populist approaches, the BZÖ focused on new tactics. The "Romanian National Unity Party", however, focused only on targeting the Hungarians and anti-immigrant policies in their campaign for the elections in 1996 (Mammone, Godin & Jenkins, 2012). This could be explained due to the fact that the population might felt threatened economically by the Hungarians. Furthermore, when looking at the aggregate data, an extreme inflation rate of 45,2% was apparent in 1996. People might have evaluated the economy incorrectly and the value for B consequently product of a measurement error.

After showing what the unstandardized coefficients actually tell about the relationship of the presented model, a comparison is necessary to detect other patterns or a specific bahvior of the countries analyzed. Therefore, two models were created. One model does not include the control variables, and another one which includes them. This technicque was used, among others, by Freire and Santa-Pereira in their research on economic voting in Portugal (2012). However, for a more precise evaluation in terms of the number of cases (N), the confidence intervals are added (See Appendix, Section B).

Figure 1 (below) shows the unstandardized coefficients B (black line in the middle) of the parties analyzed with their accompanying 95% confidence interval (black lines at the edges). B is obtained from regressions done in SPSS without any control variables. A full table can be found in the Appendix Section B. Six out of 22 values are negative, meaning, that most of the parties show a rather weak but positive relationship. Additionally, we see that the confidence interval is, in most cases, about the same size, except for the following parties : "Alliance for the future of Austria" and "Team Stronach". In these cases, the intervals were strikingly little. The differences in size of the 95% confidence interval appear due to a changing number of cases included in the regression. In Austria, there were a lot of respondents, whereas in Montenegro (Democratic Front) there were less. No party could be marked as an outlier in this case. Nonetheless, the "Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek" party

has the highest B, whereas the "Romanian National Unity Party" shows the smallest B. I will refer to this model as Model 1, hereafter.

Model 2 (Figure 2, below) shows a very similar graph. However, as mentioned above, this model includes control variables in contrast to Figure 1 and will be called Model 2, hereafter. A full table can be found in the Appendix Section B. Compared to Model 1, only four of the parties show a negative value for the unstandardized coefficient B. So it is obvious, that the values tend to turn positive if control is included in the regression analysis. However, the size of the 95% confidence intervals did not change to a large extent for any party. Still, most of the confidence intervals got a little larger due to the reduction of cases included in the regression, which appears because adding more variables leads to more missing values. Moreover, it is important to note that the confidence intervals of the two models presented do overlap to some extent. They stayed at the same level and kept their size and position to the most part. Lastly, there is no difference in terms of deviation comparing the two election waves analyzed.

The pattern of turning positive might occur due to the not normally distribution of the dependent variable which implies that the precondition for a simple linear regression is not met. To check for this method error, a transformation of the dependent variable should be done and another graph created which then presents Model 3. However, the distribution of the unstandardized coefficients could also be a product of the differences in the parties' manifestoes and their attitude towards economic issues. Additionally, reverse causation should be considered, as mentioned before. It might be the case, that an individual perceives the economy in a way the party they prefer presents it. For example, if the preferred party does not attempt to tackle any economic problems, there is a chance that the individual thinks that there is just nothing what needs to be tackled (Evans & Andersen, 2006).

Model 3 (Figure 3, below) shows the, with a natural logarithm transformed dependent variable, unstandardized coefficients B and their respective 95% confidence interval. Mathematically expressed, the relationship is $\ln Yi = \alpha + \beta Xi + \varepsilon i$.

In order to keep the cases, where 0 was the answer on the like dislike scale, in the analysis (no logarithm is possible for 0), 1 was added beforehand so that the scale now ranges from 1-11 (instead of 0-10). To compare the unstandardized coefficients, they were transfromed as well in response to the transformation. B was computed by e^B to compensate for the natural logarithm transformation conducted, as suggested by Benoit (2011).

In comparison to Model 1 and 2, the size of the confidence intervals stayed about the same (an extensive table with all the numbers can be found in the Appendix, Section F). Furthermore, due to the application of the natural logarithm and its compensation with the formula e^B, the effect sizes got bigger. All parties which had a negative coefficient in the first two models turned out to be positive now. The average size of B is 1,055 in Model 3. However, as observed before, the average effect size is smaller in the first Module of the CSES (1996-1999) with a B of 1,049 than the one of

Module 4 (1,052). We can state that, for example, for the "Freedom Party of Austria", with a B of 1,084, each unit increase of the *economic perception* will produce an expected increase in the untransformed dependent variable of 8,4%. Changing four units of the *economic perception* is e^{4B}, so $1{,}033 \approx 3{,}3\%$.

Important to note after applying the logarithm transformation is, that the tendencies stayed similar for most of the time. This implies that Model 1 and 2 are somewhat meaningful and pass the sensitivity analysis, even though the assumptions are not fully met.

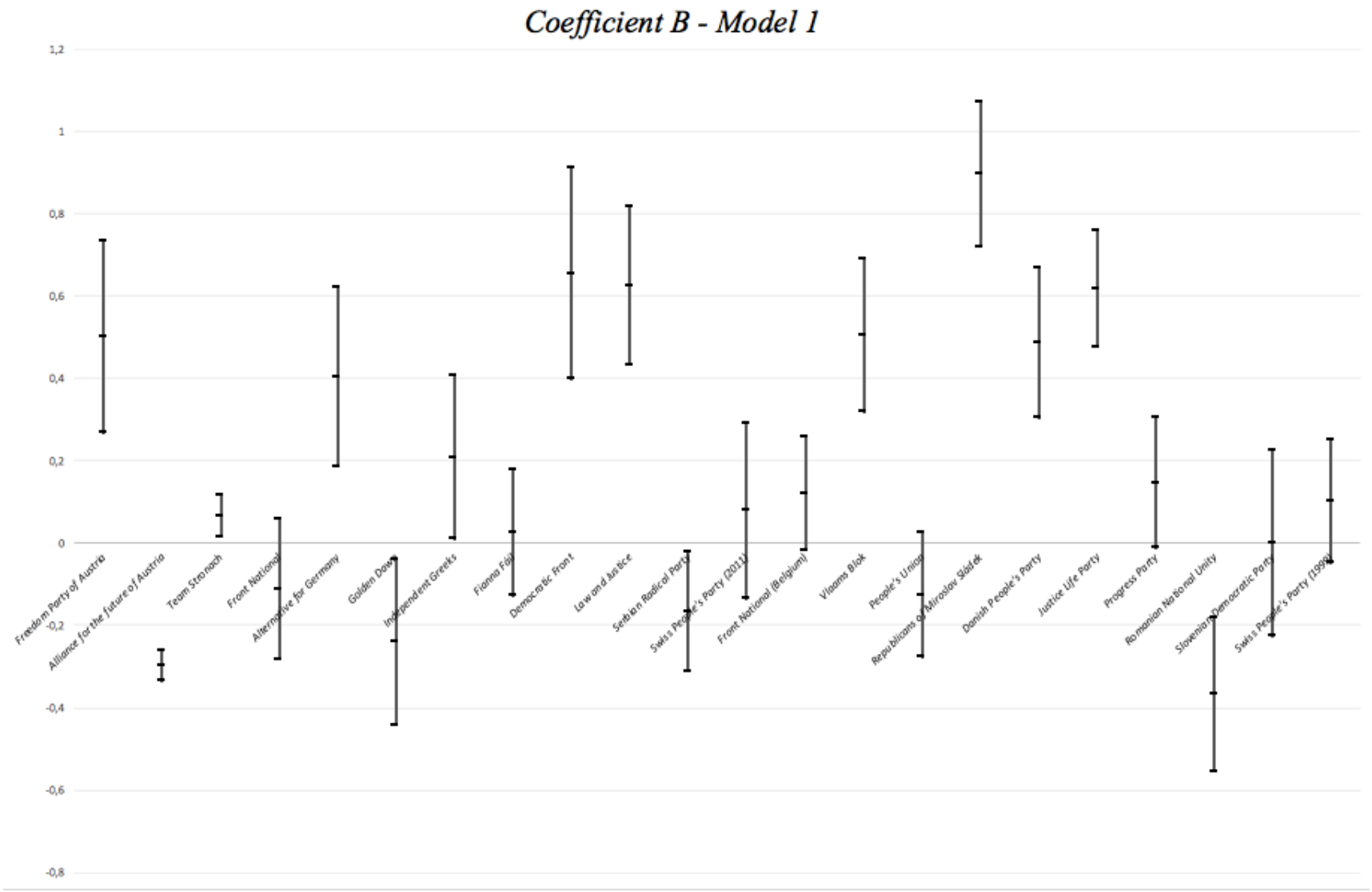

Figure 1: Unstandardized Coefficient B and the 95% Confidence Interval (without Control Variables)

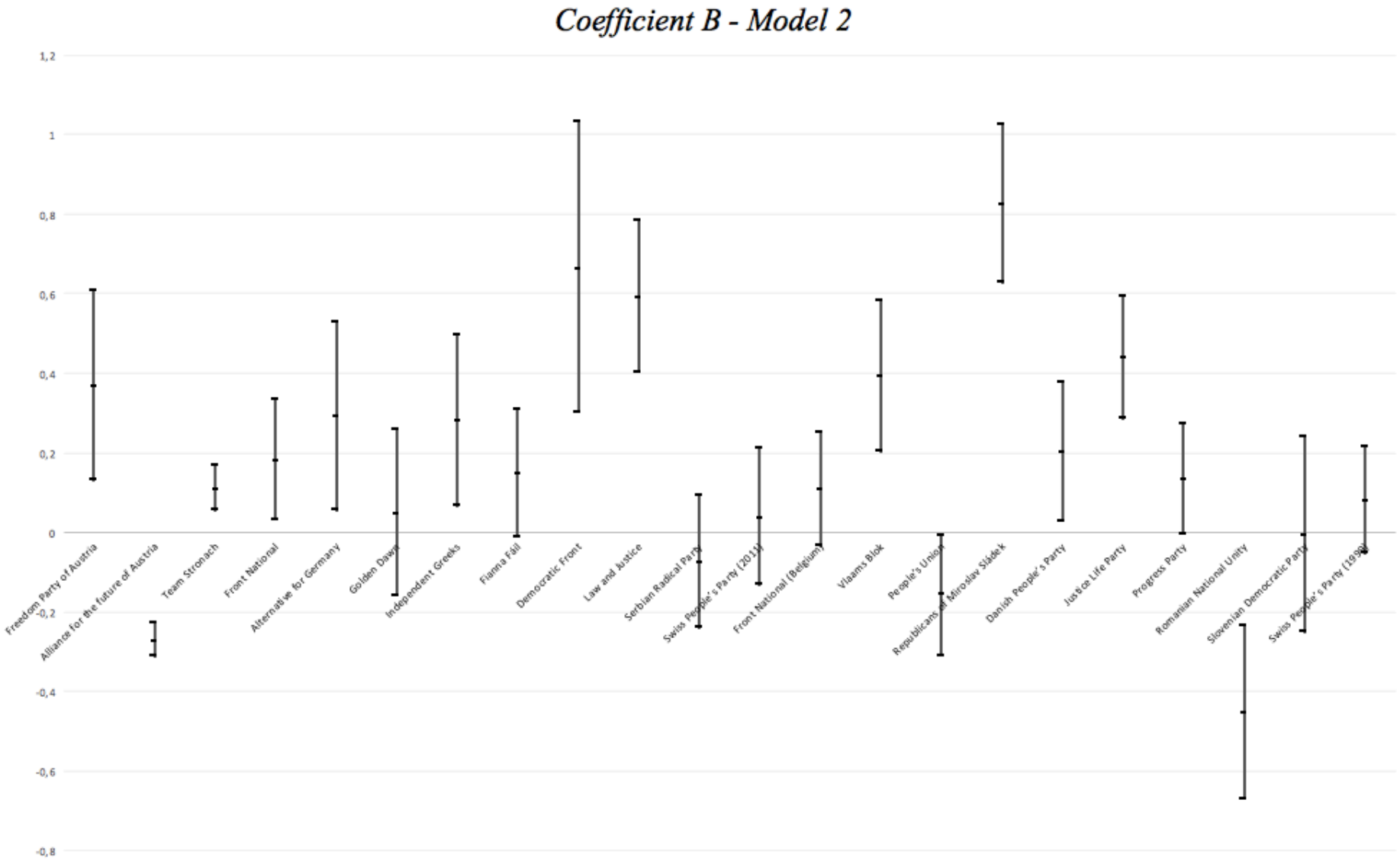

Figure 2: Unstandardized Coefficient B and the 95% Confidence Interval (with Control Variables)

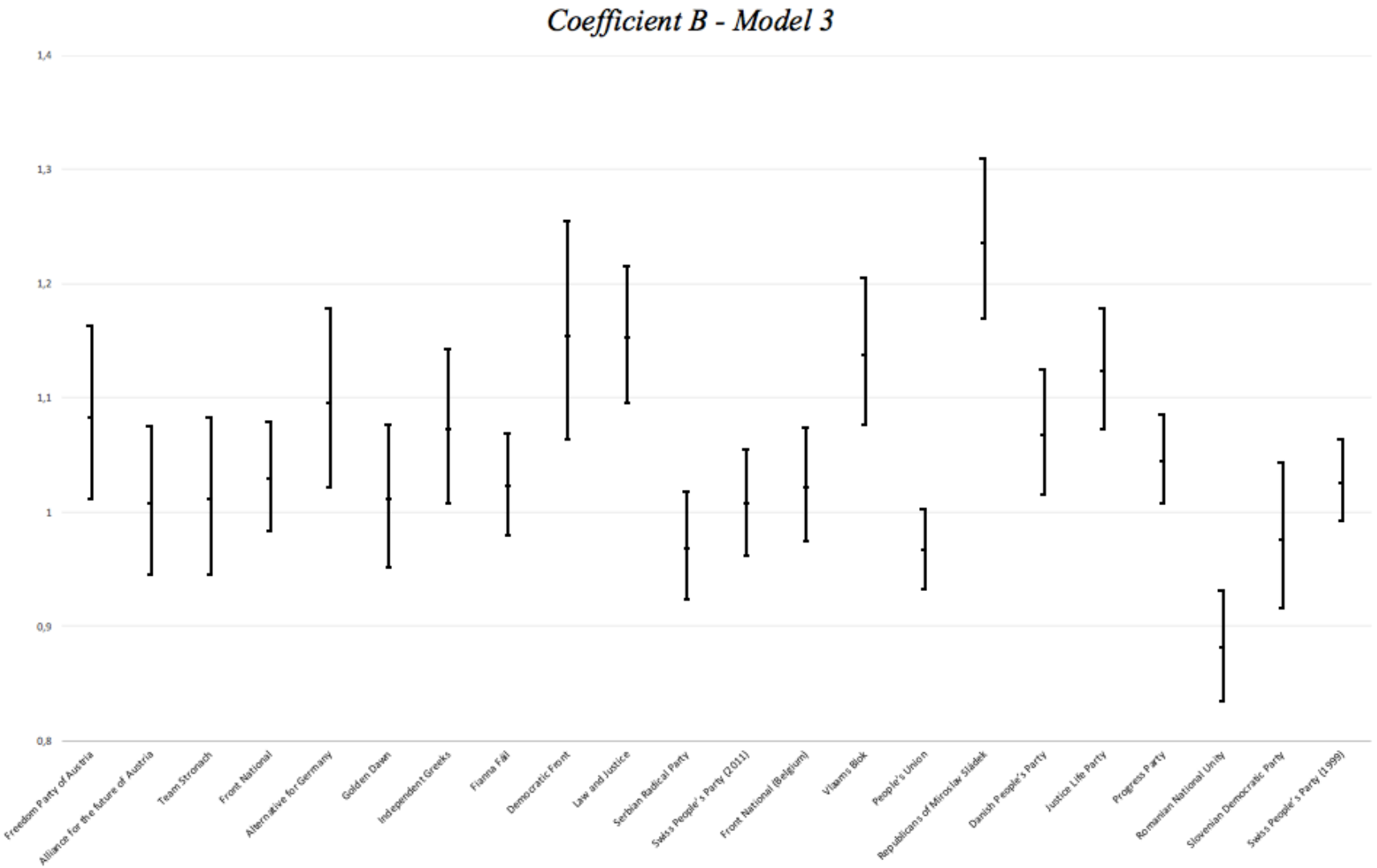

Figure 3: Transformed Coefficient B and the 95% Confidence Interval (with Control Variables)

In conclusion, one can tell that there is an effect of *economic voting* on voting behavior, but it is rather weak and varies a lot across time and country in all three different models presented above. This finding is in line with the summary of relevant articles done by Anderson and Paldam (2000) They call this issue the inconsistency problem, as there is evidence in some countries at some points in time. There are no striking changes when changing the circumstances of performing the regressions. Furthermore, as it was expected, in the second wave of election studies (2011 – 2013) the effect size is larger in comparison to the first wave (1996 – 1999), probably due to the financial crisis and the resulting consequences.

4.2. Sub-question b

b. "Is the effect of perceived economic conditions by citizens (retrospective, socio-tropic) on their voting decision to support a right wing populist party stronger than the effect of the individuals' self-placement on the left-right scale?"

In order to assess sub-question b, a comparison of the two independent variables is necessary. Therefore, a table was created to generate visualization for the B's of each of the two variables.

Table 5 shows the unstandardized coefficient B of the two independent variables *economic perception* and *self-placement on the left-right scale*, for all the parties studied. The values for B are generated from the regressions done for sub-question a. An extensive table with all the numbers and the respective significance level can be found in the Appendix (Section D). Those two variables were expected to have a significant influence on predicting the dependent variable. As explained above, *economic perception* has a rather small effect on voting behavior. Here one can see that also the independent variable *self-placement on the left-right scale* has an impact on predicting the dependent variable of this model. On average, for each unit increase on the *left-right scale* (moving towards the right), we expect a 0,278 increase on the dependent variable (moving further to liking the party asked for), the other variables held constant. In order to be able to compare the two variables, which are measured on different scales, an example will be made.

The "Freedom Party of Austria" has a B of 0,37 for *economic perception*. Hence, the maximum change from the individual perceiving the economy as much better to much worse is 1,48 (4 x 0,38). This maximum change in the dependent variable in rather little, having in mind that it is measured on a 11-point scale. This change is reached by the variable *self-placement on the left-right scale* already by moving four units (1,48 / 0,359) while there is still much more room left for further change as the maximum here for the "Freedom Party of Austria" is 3,59 (10 x 0,359). Thus, if a person considers him-/herself as totally left/right the change on the dependent variable is (rounded) 4 units. However, evaluating the economy differently (e.g. from perceiving it as much better to much worse) at a different point in time, is probably happening more often or rather "easier" than shifting core beliefs extremely more to the right or left, respectively. One should keep this in mind when looking at the unstandardized coefficient B.

Party	*Coefficient B Economic Perception*	*Coefficient B Self-Placement*
Freedom Party of Austria	0,37**	0,359**
Alliance for the future of Austria	-0,27**	-0,002
Team Stronach	0,113**	-0,070**
Front National (France)	0,184*	0,572**
Alternative for Germany	0,294*	0,051
Golden Dawn	0,051	0,316**
Independent Greeks	0,284**	0,082*
Fianna Fáil	0,15	0,267**
Democratic Front	0,668**	0,029
Law and Justice	0,595**	0,437**
Serbian Radical Party	-0,071	0,077**
Swiss People's Party (2011)	0,04	0,891**
Front National (Belgium)	0,11	0,055*
Vlaams Blok	0,395**	0,394**
People's Union	-0,15	0,22
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek	0,828**	-0,031
Danish People's Party	0,205*	0,495**
Justice Life Party	0,442**	0,366**
Progress Party	0,136*	0,668**
Romanian National Unity	-0,452**	-0,018
Slovenian Democratic Party	-0,005	0,455**
Swiss People's Party (1999)	0,082	0,701**
Average:	0,182	0,278

* statistically significant at p<0,05 ** statistically significant at p<0,01

Table 5: Unstandardized Coefficient B of the Independent Variables Economic Perception and Self-Placement on the Left-Right Scale

Finally, both variables had the expected direction of influence, but rather small. However, the independent variable *economic voting* has, compared to the second, a smaller effect size (on average). Both IV's have positive coefficients for nearly all the parties. Still, as they are rather weak in explaining the dependent variable, it is likely that there exist many others with better predicting power which are not measured in this study.

It is interesting that we find parties that show a very little effect of *economic perception* and a rather big one for the variable *self-placement on the left-right scale*, even taking the different scales into account. There is the "Swiss Peoples Party" (1999 and 2011), the "Slovenian Democratic Party", the "Progress Party" and "Golden Dawn". For those parties it takes less than one unit on the *left-right scale* to arrive at the maximum change of the variable *economic perception*. There are nine parties (Freedom Party of Austria, Front National (France), Fianna Fáil, Law and Justice, Serbian Radical

Party, Vlaams Blok, People's Union, Danish People's Party and the Justice Life Party) for which it takes 1-5 units on the *left-right scale* to get the maximum change of the *economic perception*. Only "Team Stronach" and the "Front National" in Belgium show a more or less equal effect of the two independent variables, when taking the different scales into account. However, for six parties the effect of *economic voting* is larger than the effect of the *self left-right placement*, being positive or negative. These parties are the "Alliance for the future of Austria", "Alternative for Germany", "Independent Greeks", "Democratic Front", "Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek" and the "Romanian National Unity".

The coefficients of *self left-right placement* vary across time and country, just as *economic voting* does. This result is in line with the study of Van der Eijk, Schmitt and Binder (2005) on Left-Right Orientations and Party Choice. Their evidence showed, as well as this study does, huge variations. Though they could partly explain them by differences in the party systems of the countries. This could be a possible explanation for this analysis, too.

In conclusion one can say that the influence of *economic voting* is not larger than the influence of the *self-placement on the left-right scale*.

4.3. Sub-question c

c. "Does the effect size of the perception of the economic conditions by citizens (retrospective, sociotropic) correlate with objective economic indicators at the aggregate level?"

The following figures (Figure 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) show the unstandardized coefficient B plotted against the aggregate data of the respective country taken from the Worldbank Datacenter (World Development Indicators) for the year of the election. An extensive table with all the numbers can be found in the Appendix, Section C. As mentioned above, it is expected that an extreme change in the aggregate data (from the year before the election to the election year), makes people to better evaluate the economic situation and therefore the differences in the individual's perception and the actual economic condition are smaller compared to years without a major decrease/ increase.

Coefficient B / GDP change

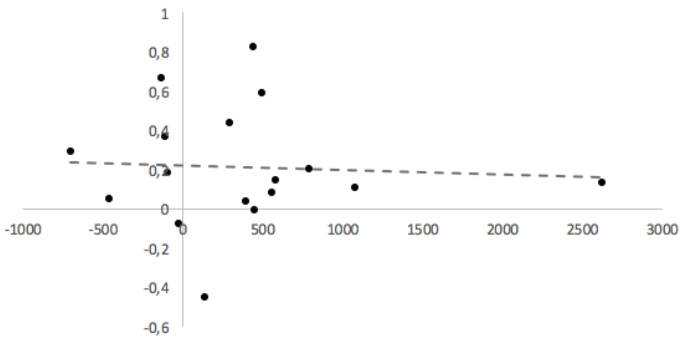

Figure 4: Scatterplot of Coefficient B and the GDP change

This scatterplot shows *the GDP per capita* in purchasing power parity rates (PPP) change from the year before the election to the election year (T – T-1) against the unstandardized coefficient B, taken from the regression analysis which includes the control variables. As the trend line in this graph is nearly horizontal, it indicates that there is no relationship observable. Even though one might think that the outlier

influences the relationship, taking it out does not make a big difference. Hence it is not an influential case.

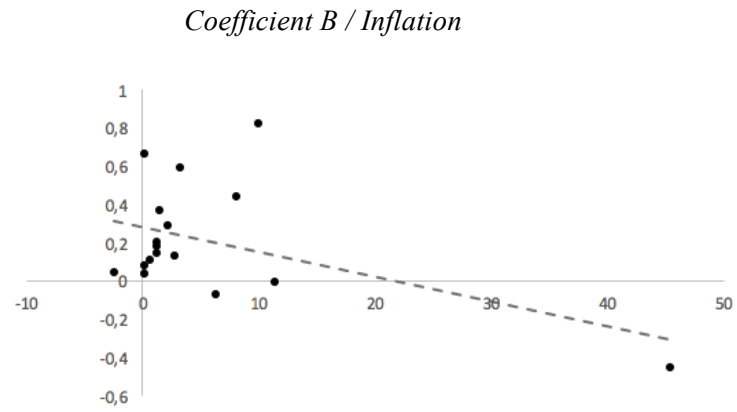

Figure 5: Scatterplot of Coefficient B and the Inflation Change

Figure 5 shows the same graph, but includes the annual *inflation* growth rate instead of the *GDP change*. Here it is obvious that the outlier needs to be taken out and checked whether it influences the relationship before making any further interpretations. Figure 6 is showing the same graph without the influential case "Romanian National Unity". However, as the trend line does not show a clear tendency again, it can be assumed that there is only very little correlation. Despite this it is interesting that the countries in which the *inflation rate* was relatively low, the effect size (unstandardized coefficient B) was low as well and vice versa.

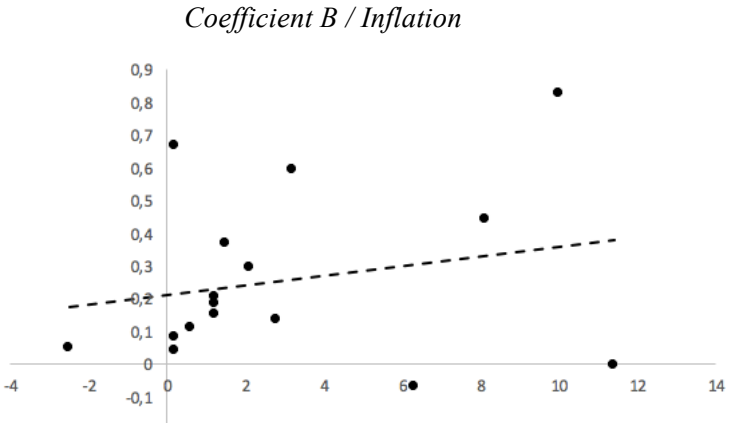

Figure 6: Scatterplot of Coefficient B and the Inflation Change (without influential case)

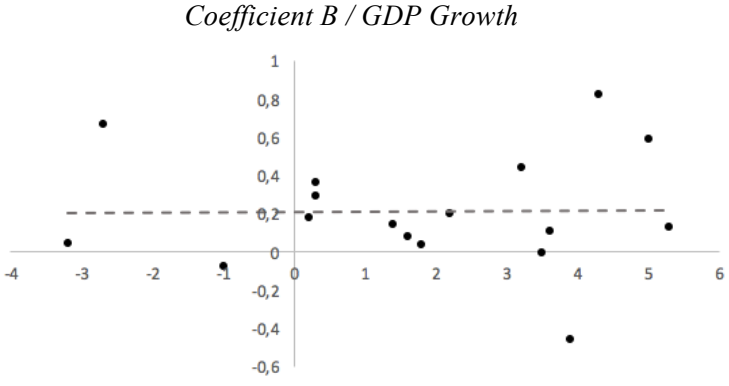

Figure 7: Scatterplot of Coefficient B and the annual GDP growth

Figure 7 displays another scatterplot which includes the unstandardized coefficient B and the annual *GDP growth*. Repeatedly, the trend line is horizontal which implicates that there is no conditional effect of the aggregate data, in this case, the *GDP growth*. The points are all spread over the graph and no pattern can be depicted.

Coefficient B / Unemployment Change

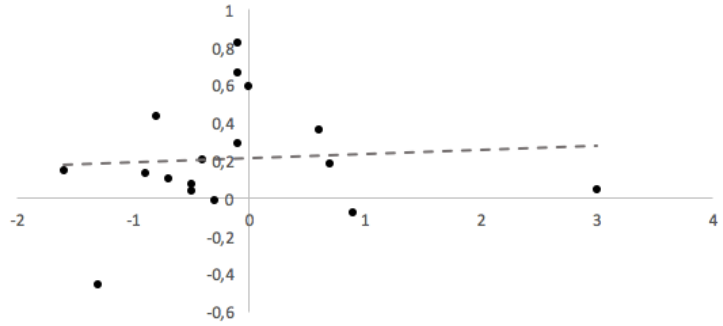

Figure 8: Scatterplot of Coefficient B and the Unemployment Change

The fifth scatterplot includes the *unemployment change* from the year before the election to the election year (T – T-1). Again, the points are spread over the graph and the trend line is approximately horizontal. Meaning that there is no significant correlation between the effect size and the aggregate data.

To sum this analysis up there is nearly no relationship observable between the indicators of the aggregate data and the effect sizes of the independent variable *economic perception*. However, when excluding the influential outlier out of the scatterplot of the *inflation rate,* a very little tendency is depicted in contrast to what Anderson and Paldam (2000) summarized in their paper on economic voting. They argued that it is too difficult for a "normal citizen" to assess the economic condition of their country on basis of inflation. An explanation for this could be that the people who do not know anything about the economic conditions in their country still recognize if and how much the price level changed over the last year. Therefore, everybody should be able to make at least a vague evaluation about the economy based on the inflation rate. Furthermore, it should be noted that the expected effect of people evaluating the economy more precise in presence of extreme changes between years, is not shown in this graph.

5. Limiations and implications for further research

In this section it will be outlined which factors could limit the meaningfulness of this study. Due to the restricted length of this paper there are aspects which cannot be considered. Firstly, the vague definition of what makes a party populist could diffuse the actual choice of analyzed parties. A more specified definition could have helped to group the parties into different categories (eg. far right and right wing) to be able to make better statements on the economic part of voting behavior. Another drawback of this study is the limited number of parties (countries) studied. A clearer picture of the rise in right wing populism could be drawn with a higher number of parties to compare. Furthermore, a proper analysis of the parties manifestoes was not done. Analyzing the manifestoes and rating in how far they stress economic policies and problems could explain why there are parties which even show a negative relationship with *economic perception*. This investigation could be done with qualitative measures first. After that an index could be constructed which evaluates in how far a party deals with ecnonmic issues.

Additionally, most of the studies done in this field were carried out in a two party system. Maybe *economic voting* is not that easy to assess in a multi-party system. Along with this argument, including institutional/structural variables could be a method to examine in how far that is true.

Methodologically seen, a limitation is the dependent variable and its scale on the one hand and the fact that the assumptions for a linear regression are not fully met, on the other. The dependent variable is measured on a 11-point thermometer scale and reflects how much a person likes the different parties in their country. This assessment does not fully reflect the voting intentions. Therefore the interpretations of this study are to be read careful while keeping the scale of the dependent variable in mind. As the four assumptions for a linear regression are not fully met, the interpretations of the outcomes could be misleading.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this study is still a good starting point in examining the rise of right wing populism in Europe. Further research should consider taking the restrictions into account and start to rule those out. Besides that, it may be interesting to compare the results of the studied countries within Europe, having a good and relatively stable economy, to countries with a worse performing economy, possibly even outside Europe. The leading question here might be "Is the population, living under good economic conditions, feeling threatened more easily by little fluctuations than the population in a country having economic problems more usual?" Another interesting starting point could be to test whether voters react stronger to negative changes (economically) and punish the ruling government than to positive ones and reward the government with their support. Further research should also focus on finding the right measures to better assess this phenomenon.

6. Conclusion

This thesis exmined if people tend to support right wing populist parties due to the individual perception of the economic conditions in their country. After doing the analysis and discussing the results from the different tests done, this section now concentrates on answering the overarching research question and the sub-questions. The analyses showed that the economic voting theory applies to the tested model. However, as previous scholars have already pointed out, the strength of it varies extensively across time and country. As Duch, Palmer and Anderson (2000) already assumed, the perception of the national economic situation by the individuals interviewed does not reflect the actual conditions very well, which could be a factor explaining the variations in the effect sizes. Furthermore the dependent variable was measured on a 11-point thermometer scale which is not very usual for this type of study and could therefore be another reason why the effect sizes vary. It is interesting that the control variable *self-placement on the left-right scale*, included in the regression model, is a better predictor of the dependent variable then *economic perception* is. However, the variable *economic perception* is, compared to the other control variables, more or less equally convincing.

7. References

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8. Data

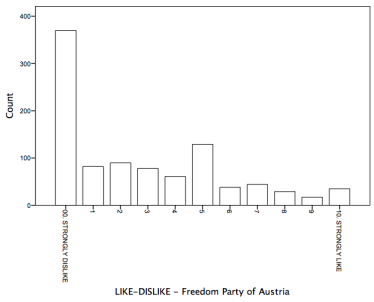
The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES MODULE 1 FULL RELEASE [dataset]. December 15, 2015 version. doi: 10.7804/cses.module1.2015-12-15.

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (www.cses.org). CSES MODULE 4 SECOND ADVANCE RELEASE [dataset]. March 20, 2015 version. doi: 10.7804/cses.module4.2015-03-2.

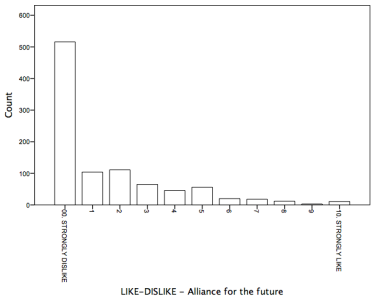
9. Appendix:

9.1. Section A: Distributions of the Dependent Variable:

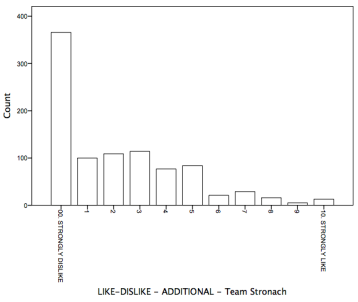
Austria: Freedom Party of Austria



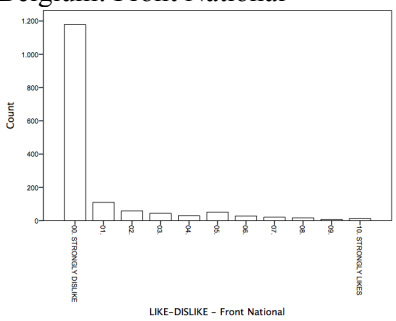
Austria: Alliance for the future



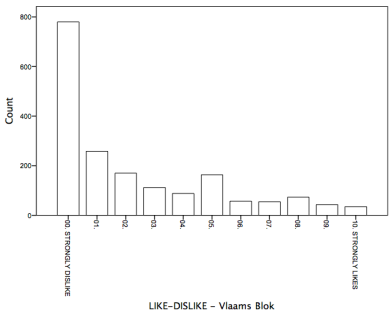
Austria: Team Stronach



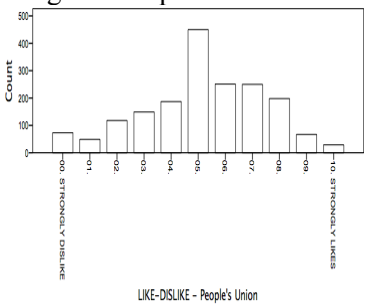
Belgium: Front National



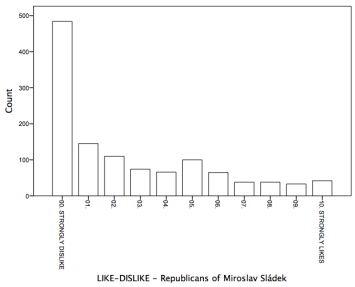
Belgium: Vlaams Blok



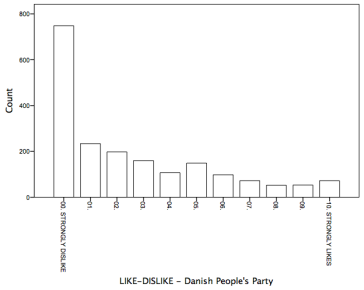
Belgium:People's Union



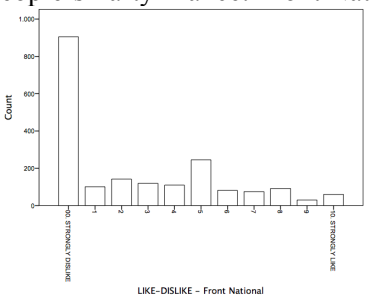
Czech Repub.: Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek



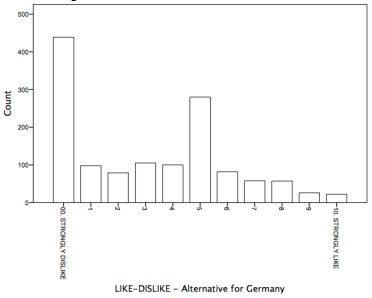
Denmark: Danish People's Party



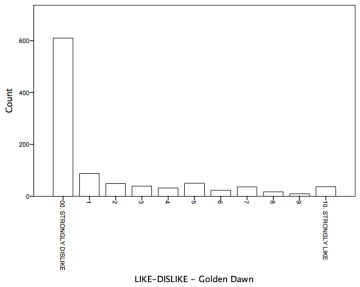
France: Front National



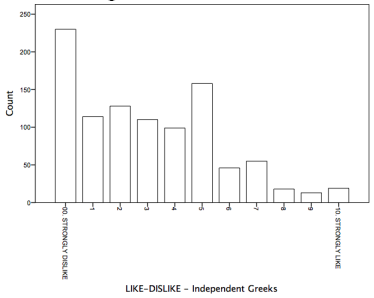
Germany: Alternative for Germany



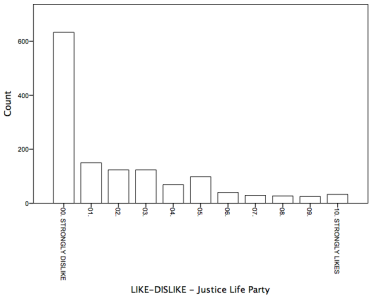
Greece: Golden Dawn



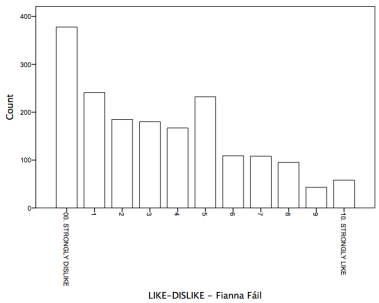
Greece: Independent Greeks



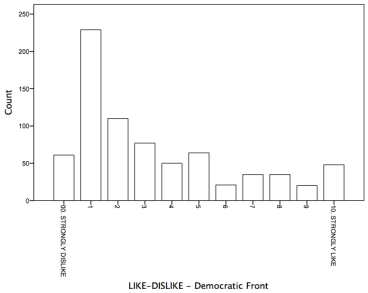
Hungary: Justice Life Party



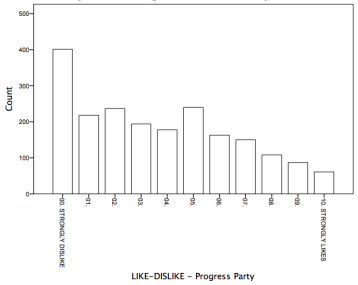
Ireland: Fianna Fáil



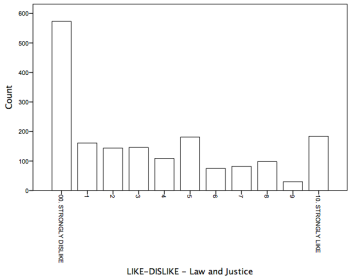
Montenegro: Democratic Front



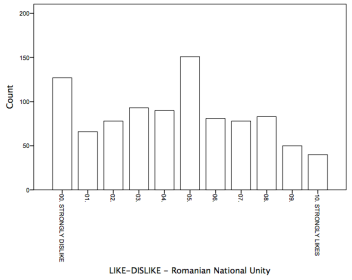
Norway: Progress Party



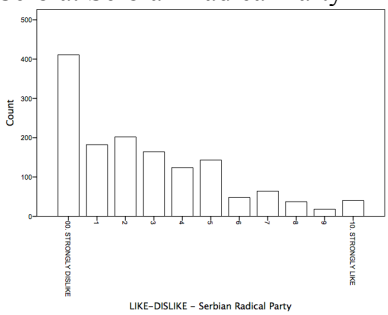
Poland: Law and Justice



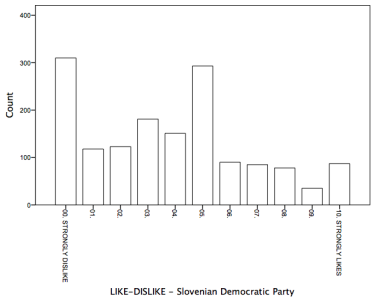
Romania: Romanian National Unity



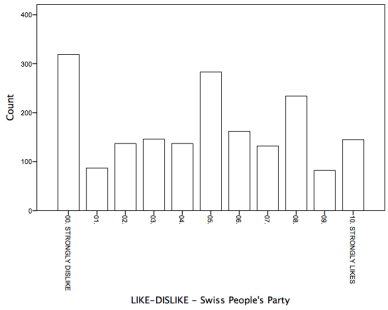
Serbia: Serbian Radical Party



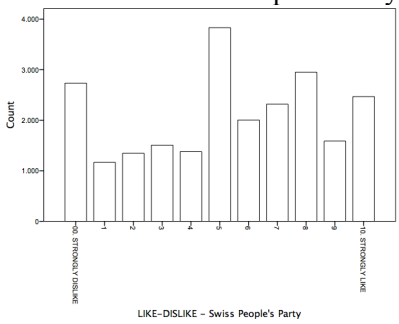
Slovenia: Slovenian Democratic Party



Switzerland: Swiss People's Party (1999)



Switzerland: Swiss People's Party (2011)



9.2. Section B: Table of Coefficients and their respective Confidence Interval

	Model 1 (without control)				*Model 2 (with control)*			
		95% Confidence Interval				*95% Confidence Interval*		
Party	*Coefficient B*	*Lower Bound*	*Upper Bound*	*N*	*Coefficient B*	*Lower Bound*	*Upper Bound*	*N*
Freedom Party for Austria	0,503**	0,270	0,735	947	0,370**	0,132	0,609	844
Alliance for the future of Austria	-0,297**	-0,334	-0,259	21350	-0,270**	-0,311	-0,228	17792
Team Stronach	0,066**	0,017	0,116	11708	0,113**	0,056	0,169	9235
Front National	-0,111	-0,280	0,058	1935	0,184*	0,034	0,335	1843
Alternative for Germany	0,405**	0,187	0,622	1313	0,294*	0,057	0,531	1177
Golden Dawn	-0,240*	-0,441	-0,040	838	0,051	-0,157	0,260	772
Independent Greeks	0,209*	0,011	0,407	835	0,284**	0,068	0,499	770
Fianna Fáil	0,027	-0,126	0,181	1627	0,150	-0,010	0,310	1430
Democratic Front	0,656**	0,399	0,913	456	0,668**	0,304	1,033	231
Law and Justice	0,626**	0,434	0,817	1716	0,595**	0,404	0,786	1539
Serbian Radical Party	-0,166*	-0,310	-0,021	1356	-0,071	-0,238	0,095	987
Swiss People's Party (2011)	0,080	-0,134	0,293	1633	0,040	-0,131	0,211	1609
Front National (Belgium)	0,121	-0,016	0,258	1364	0,110	-0,033	0,253	1227
Vlaams Blok	0,505**	0,320	0,690	1798	0,395**	0,205	0,584	1607
People's Union	-0,125	-0,275	0,026	1785	-0,15	-0,309	-0,008	1599
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek	0,897**	0,722	1,073	1133	0,828**	0,630	1,025	1110
Danish People's Party	0,488**	0,305	0,671	1815	0,205*	0,030	0,380	1764
Justice Life Party	0,620**	0,478	0,762	1327	0,442**	0,288	0,596	1115
Progress Party	0,148	-0,010	0,305	2018	0,136*	-0,002	0,273	1963
Romanian National Unity	-0,367**	-0,554	-0,180	896	-0,452**	-0,669	-0,235	666
Slovenian Democratic Party	0,0005	-0,225	0,226	1475	-0,005	-0,249	0,240	1148
Swiss People's Party (1999)	0,102	-0,047	0,252	1810	0,082	-0,051	0,215	1725
Average (Total)	0,189				0,182			
Average (Module 1)	0,239				0,159			
Average (Module 4)	0,1465				0,2			

* statistically significant at p<0,05 ** statistically significant at p<0,01

9.3. Section C: Aggregate Data (generated from the Worldbank, World Development Indicators)

Country	*GDP per capita (constant 2005 US $) at T*	*GDP per capita (constant 2005 US $) at T-1*	*Total Unem-ploy-ment T (% of total labor force)*	*Total Unem-ploy-ment T-1 (% of total labor force)*	*GDP growth (annual %)*	*Inflation, GDP De-flator (annual %)*	*GDP change (T– T-1)*	*Unemploy-ment change (T – T-1)*
Belgium	33409,1	32333,7	8,6	9,3	3,6	0,6	1075,4	-0,7
Czech Republic	10381,9	9944,0	3,9	4,0	4,3	10,0	437,9	-0,1
Denmark	43678,5	42886,2	5,0	5,4	2,2	1,2	792,3	-0,4
Hungary	8547,3	8255,3	7,0	7,8	3,2	8,1	292	-0,8
Norway	58175,9	55556,3	3,9	4,8	5,3	2,8	2619,6	-0,9
Romania	3505,3	3365,0	6,7	8,0	3,9	45,4	140,3	-1,3
Slovenia	12868,2	12423,3	6,9	7,2	3,5	11,4	444,9	-0,3
Switzerland (1999)	50925,8	50368,6	3,1	3,6	1,6	0,2	557,2	-0,5
Austria	41121,3	41229,7	4,9	4,3	0,3	1,5	-108,4	0,6
France	35676	35772,5	9,9	9,2	0,2	1,2	-96,5	0,7
Germany	38669,1	39372,5	5,3	5,4	0,3	2,1	-703,4	-0,1
Greece	18124,7	18588,3	27,2	24,2	-3,2	-2,5	-463,6	3
Ireland	49825,6	49243,2	13,1	14,7	1,4	1,2	582,4	-1,6
Montenegro	4535	4665,9	19,6	19,7	-2,7	0,2	-130,9	-0,1
Poland	10574	10075,1	9,6	9,6	5	3,2	498,9	0
Serbia	4174,7	4197,1	23,9	23	-1	6,3	-22,4	0,9
Switzerland (2011)	58533,3	58138,6	4	4,5	1,8	0,2	394,7	-0,5

http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&country=CZE&series=&period=

9.4. Section D: Control Variables in a multivariate Regression

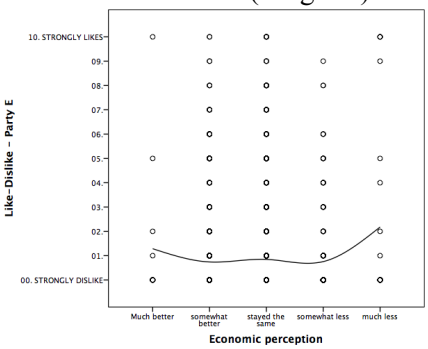
Party	*Coefficient B "Economic Perception"*	*Coefficient B "Age"*	*Coefficient B "Gender"*	*Coefficient B "Education"*	*Coefficient B "Self-Placement"*	*Coefficient B "Constant"*
Freedom Party of Austria	0,37**	0,005	-0,506	0,290**	0,359**	1,772**
Alliance for the future of Austria	-0,27**	0,011**	0,228**	0,129**	-0,002	3,166**
Team Stronach	0,113**	-0,007**	0,068	-0,052**	-0,070**	3,777**
Front National (France)	0,184*	-0,022**	-0,066	-0,376**	0,572**	2,127**
Alternative for Germany	0,294*	-0,019**	-0,104	-0,122*	0,051	3,843**
Golden Dawn	0,051	-0,008	-0,689**	-0,147**	0,316**	1,956
Independent Greeks	0,284**	-0,013	-0,292	-0,037	0,082*	2,694**
Fianna Fáil	0,15	0,007	-0,211	-0,133**	0,267**	1,8**
Democratic Front	0,668**	0,026	-0,255	-0,16	0,029	1,456
Law and Justice	0,595**	0,012*	0,369*	-0,227**	0,437**	-1,326*
Serbian Radical Party	-0,071	-0,011*	0,251	-0,354**	0,077**	3,988**
Swiss People's Party (2011)	0,04	-0,19**	-0,410**	0,399**	0,891**	2,606**
Front National (Belgium)	0,11	-0,009**	-0,168	-0,245**	0,055*	2,231
Vlaams Blok	0,395**	-0,018**	-0,341*	-0,253**	0,394**	1,795**
People's Union	-0,15	-0,022**	0,045	0,063	0,022	6,120**
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek	0,828**	-0,022**	-0,676**	-0,275**	-0,031	3,439**
Danish People's Party	0,205*	-0,009*	-0,092*	-0,047	0,495**	0,027
Justice Life Party	0,442**	-0,001	-0,269	-0,097*	0,366**	-0,251
Progress Party	0,136*	-0,017**	-0,462**	-0,302**	0,668**	2,84**
Romanian National Unity	-0,452**	-0,016*	-0,290	-0,132*	-0,018	7,873
Slovenian Democratic Party	-0,005	-0,008	-0,025	-0,163**	0,455**	2,883**
Swiss People's Party (1999)	0,082	-0,014**	-0,440**	-0,263**	0,701**	3,218**
Average:	0,182	-0,016	-0,197	-0,114	0,278	2,638

* statistically significant at p<0,05 ** statistically significant at p<0,01

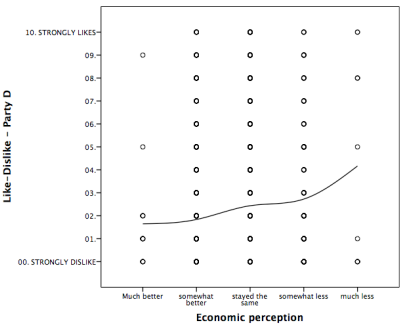
9.5. Section E.1.: Testing the Assumptions for a linear Regression (without control variables):

Linearity

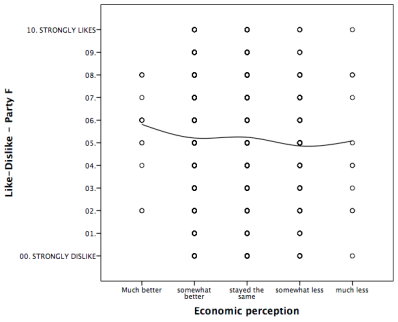
Front National (Belgium)



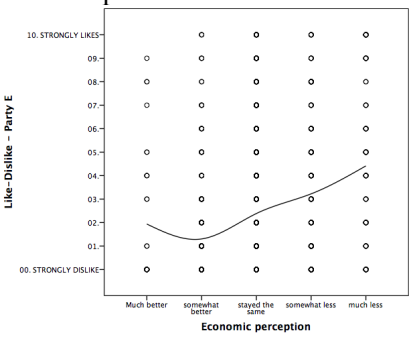
Vlaams Blok



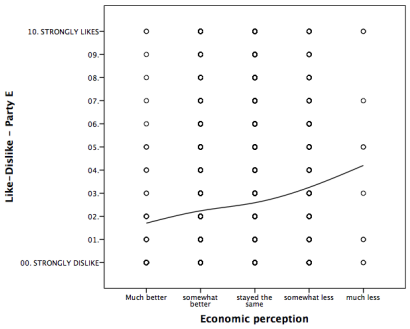
People's Union



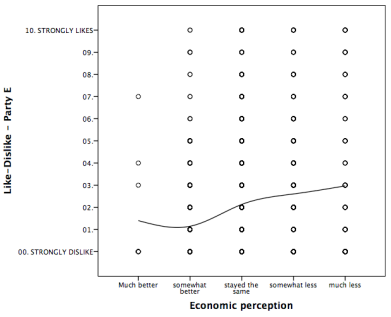
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek



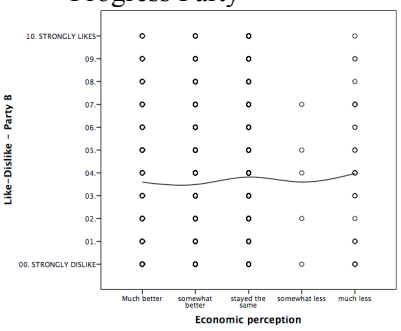
Danish People's Party



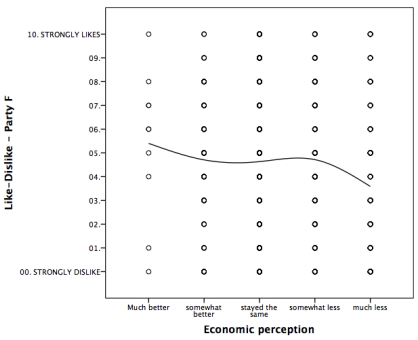
Justice Life Party



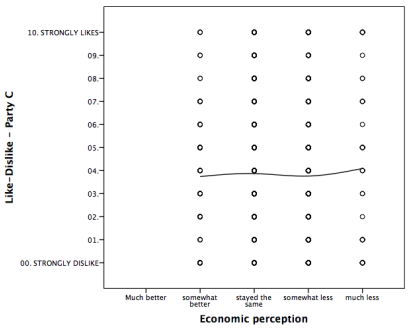
Progress Party



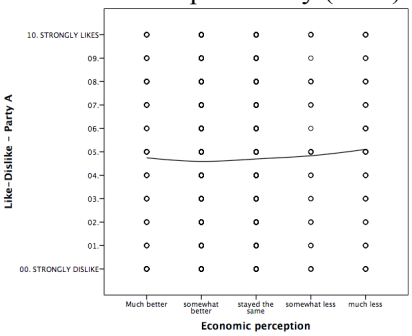
Romanian National Unity



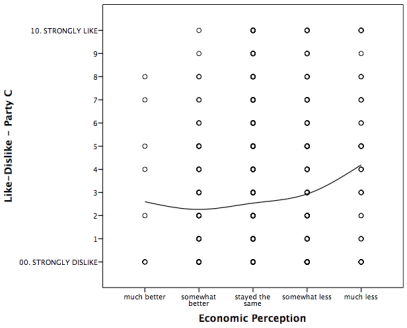
Slovenian Democratic Party



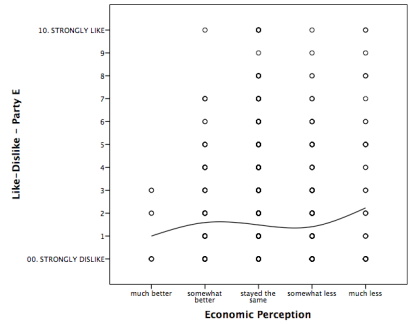
Swiss People's Party (1999)



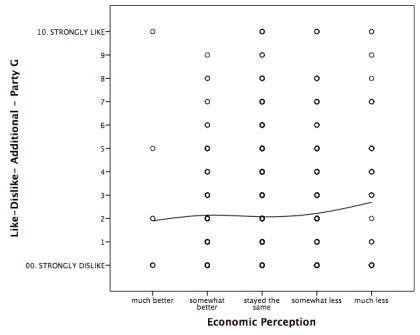
Freedom Party of Austria



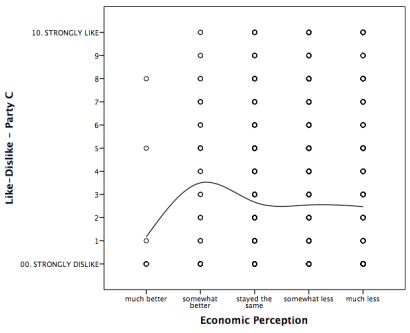
Alliance for the future of Austria



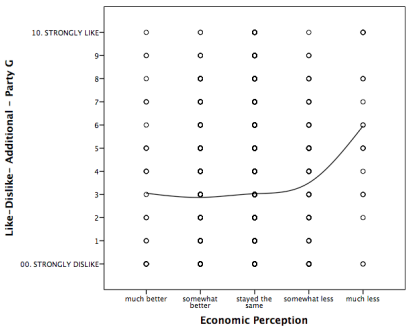
Team Stronach



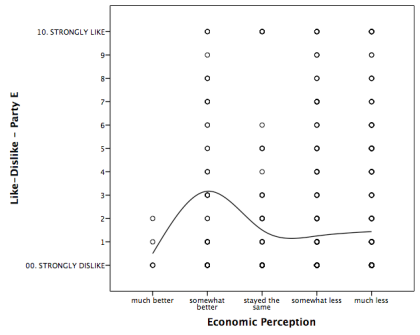
Front National (France)



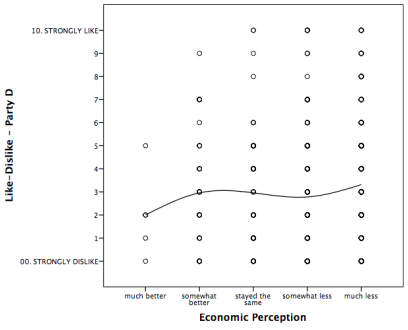
Alternative for Germany



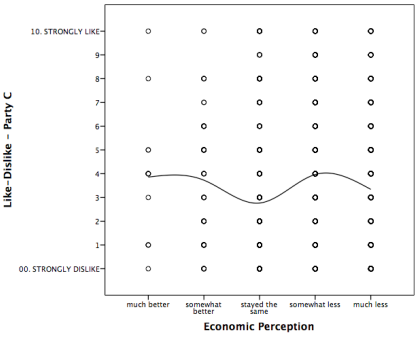
Golden Dawn



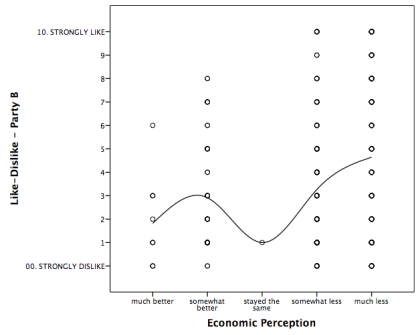
Independent Greeks



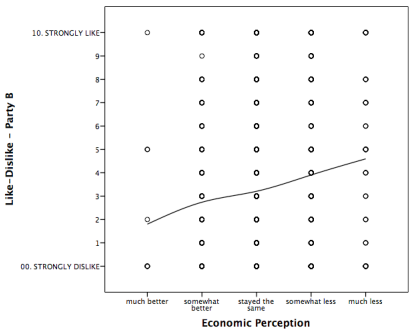
Fianna Fáil



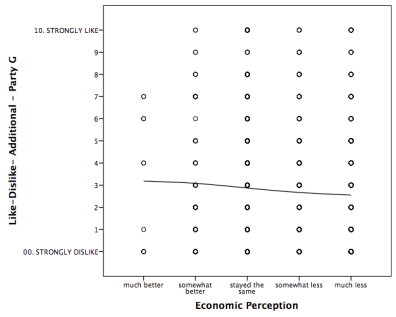
Democratic Front



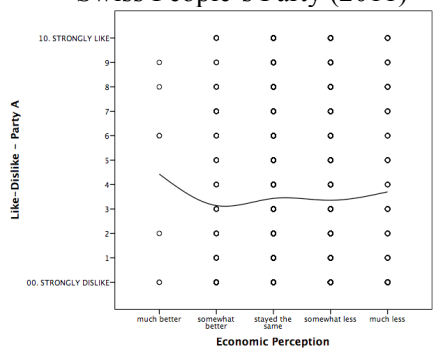
Law and Justice



Serbian Radical Party

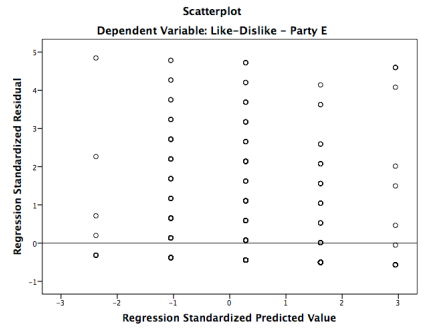


Swiss People's Party (2011)

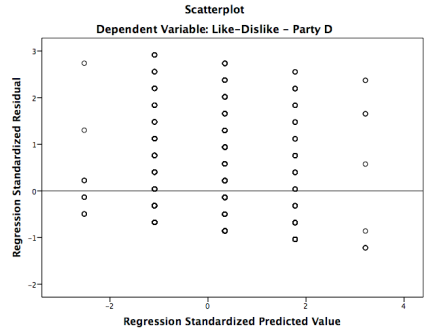


Independence of Errors / Constant Error Variance

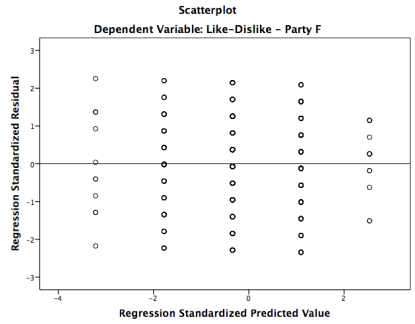
Front National (Belgium)



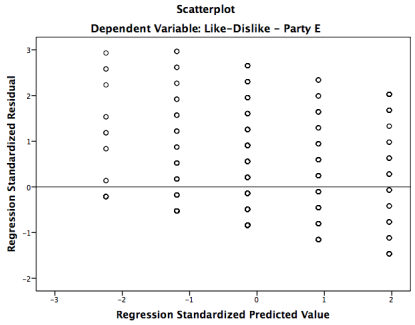
Vlaams Blok



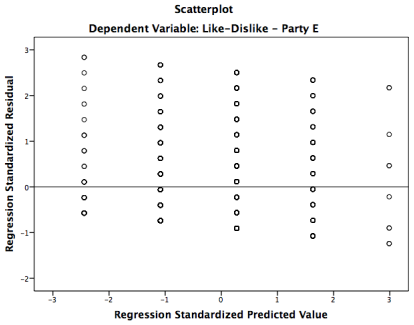
People's Union



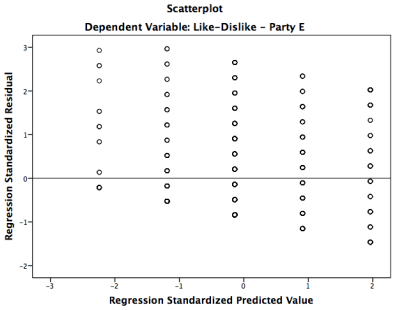
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek



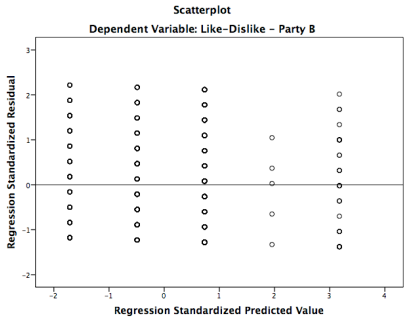
Danish People's Party



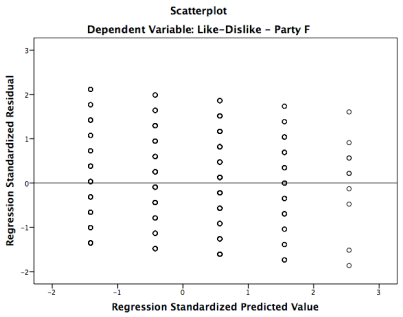
Justice Life Party



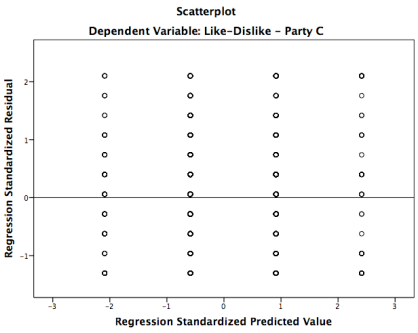
Progress Party



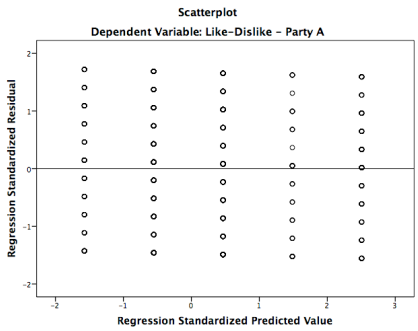
Romanian National Unity



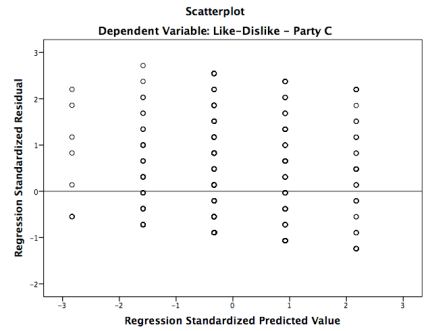
Slovenian Democratic Party



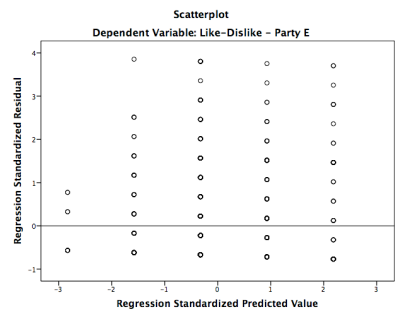
Swiss People's Party (1999)



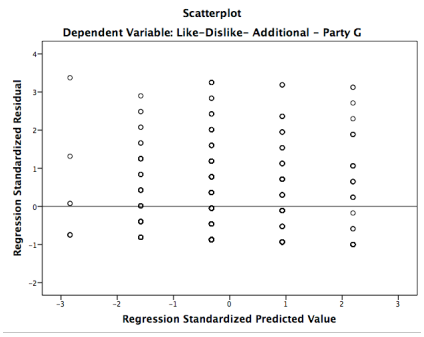
Freedom Party of Austria



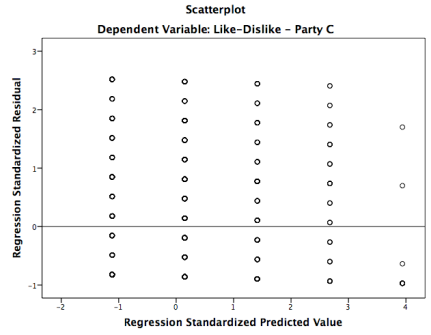
Alliance for the future of Austria



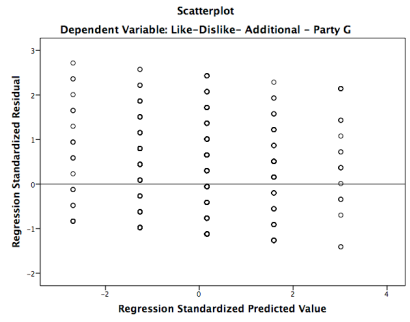
Team Stronach



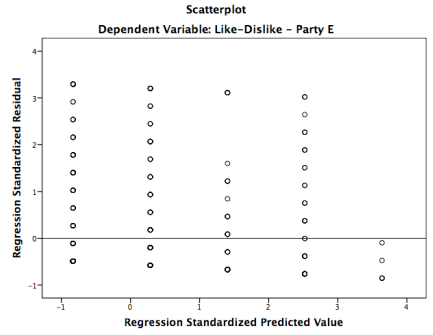
Front National (France)



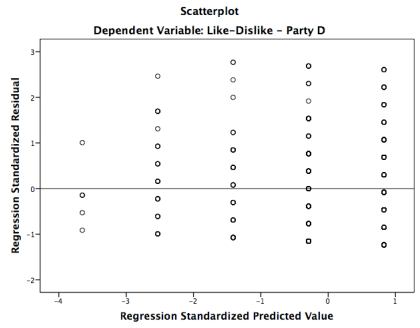
Alternative for Germany



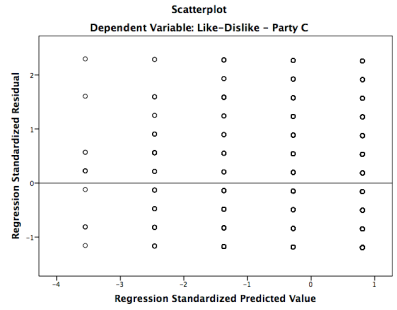
Golden Dawn



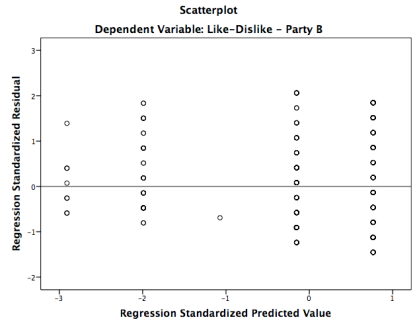
Independent Greeks



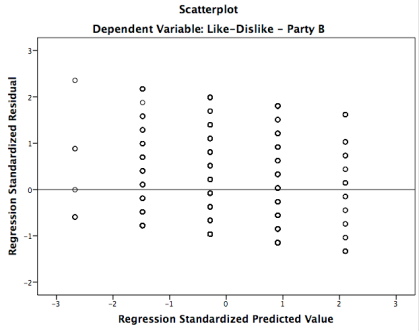
Fianna Fáil



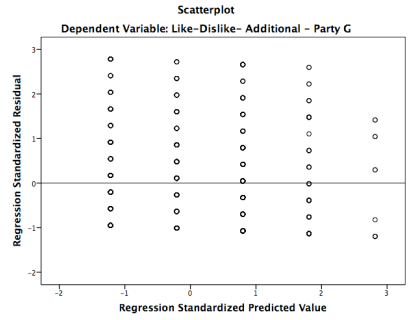
Democratic Front



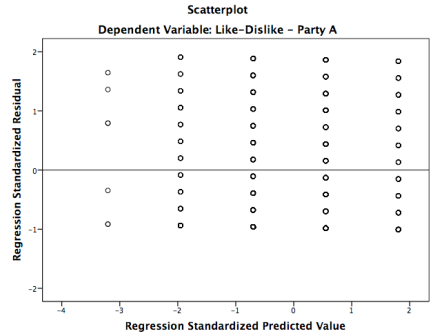
Law and Justice



Serbian Radical Party

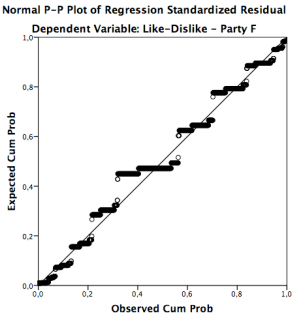


Swiss People's Party (2011)

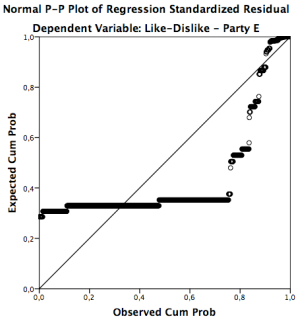


Normally distributed errors

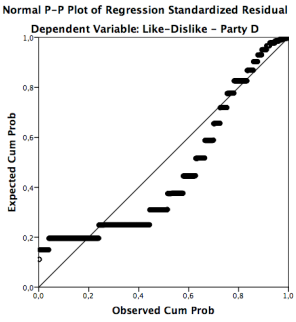
Front National (Belgium)



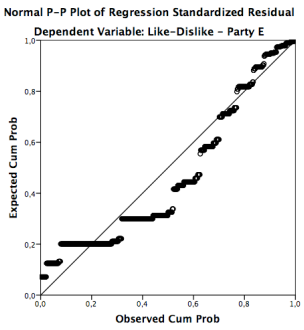
Vlaams Blok



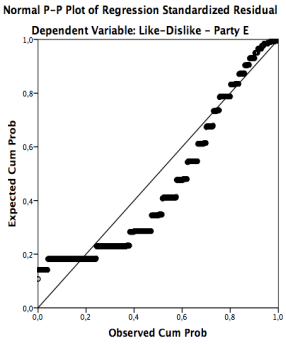
People's Union



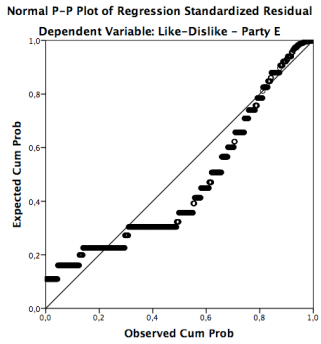
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek



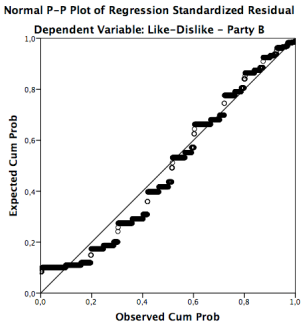
Danish People's Party



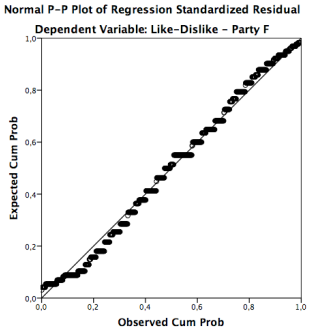
Justice Life Party



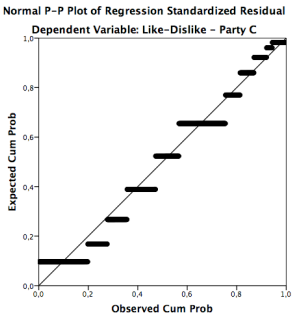
Progress Party



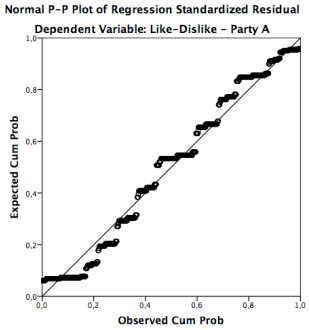
Romanian National Unity



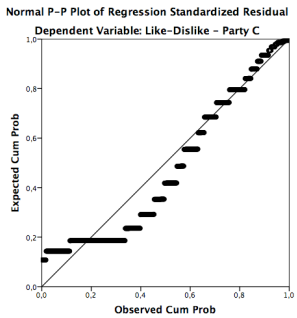
Slovenian Democratic Party



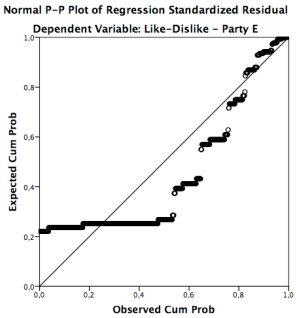
Swiss People's Party (1999)



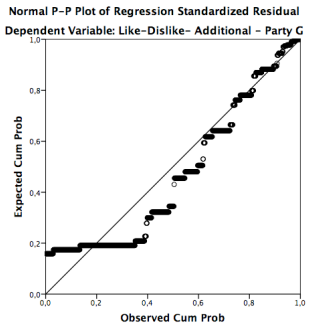
Freedom Party of Austria



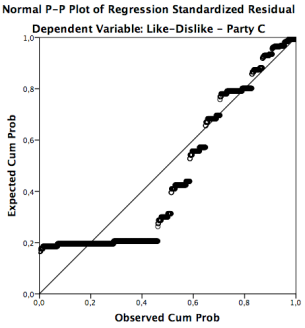
Alliance for the future of Austria



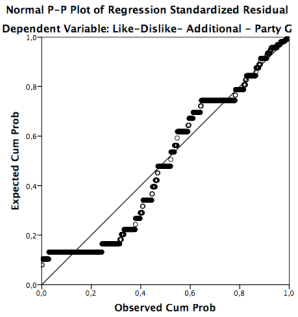
Team Stronach



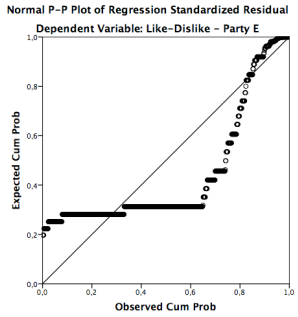
Front National (France)



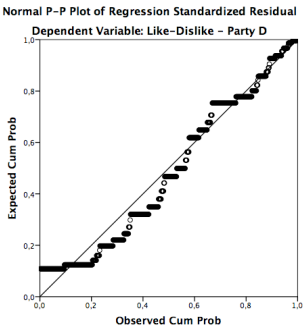
Alternative for Germany



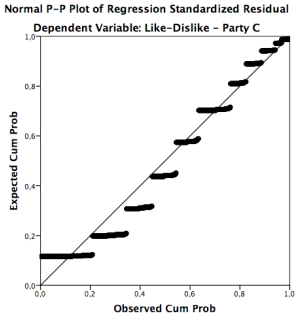
Golden Dawn



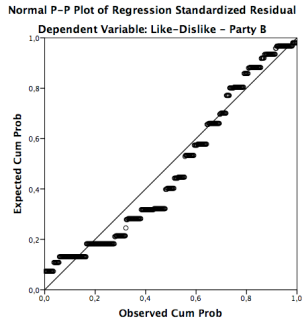
Independent Greeks



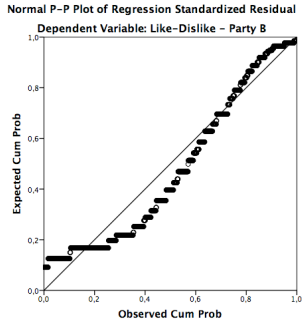
Fianna Fáil



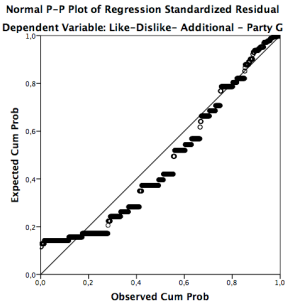
Democratic Front



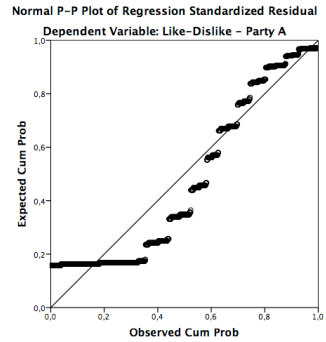
Law and Justice



Serbian Radical Party



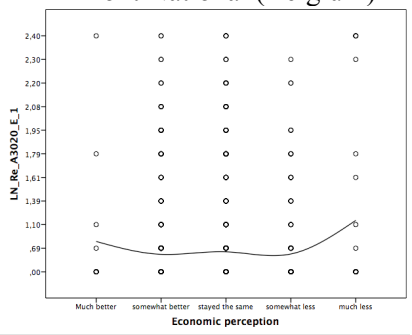
Swiss People's Party (2011)



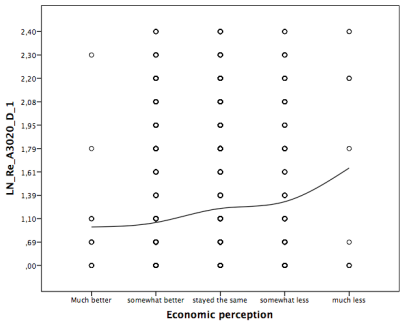
Section E.2.: Testing the Assumptions for a linear Regression (Natural Logarithm Transformation, with Control Variables):

Linearity

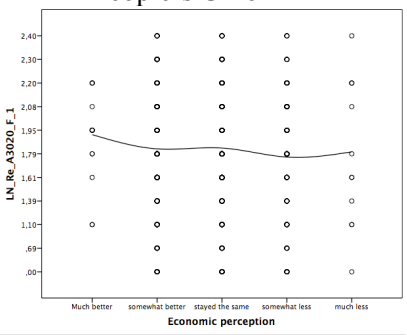
Front National (Belgium)



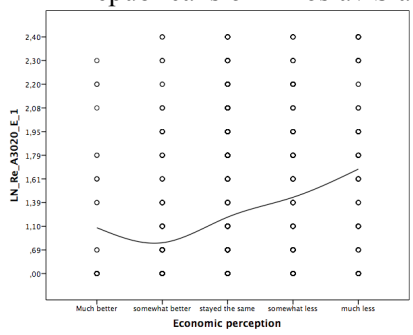
Vlaams Blok



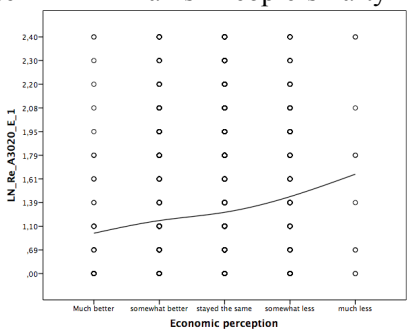
People's Union



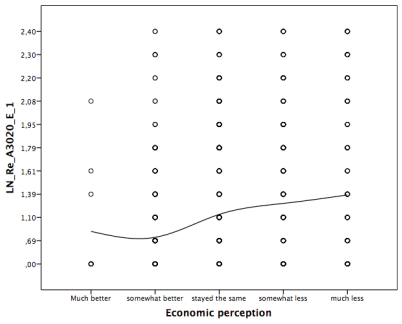
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek



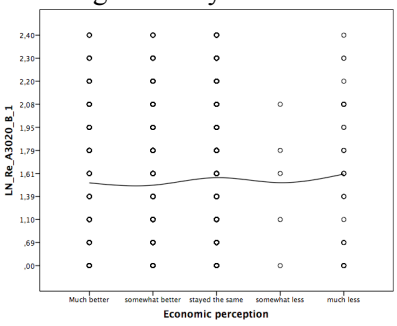
Danish People's Party



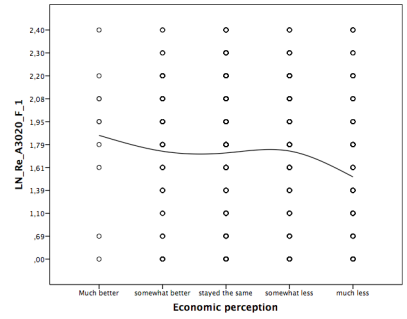
Justice Life Party



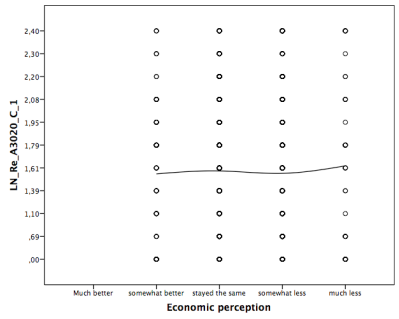
Progress Party



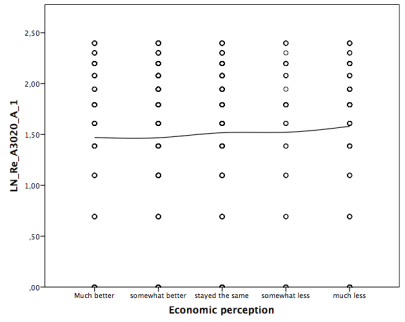
Romanian National Unity



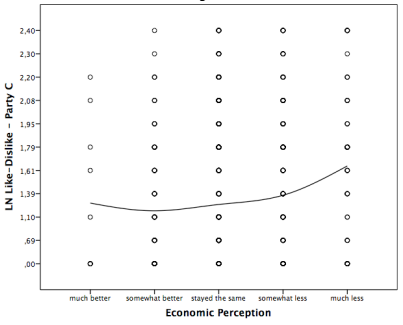
Slovenian Democratic Party



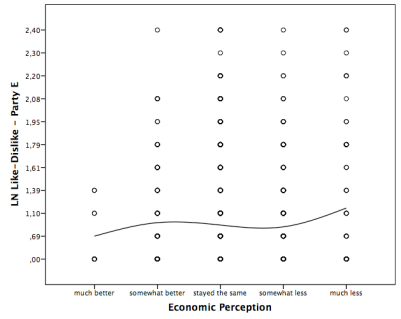
Swiss People's Party (1999)



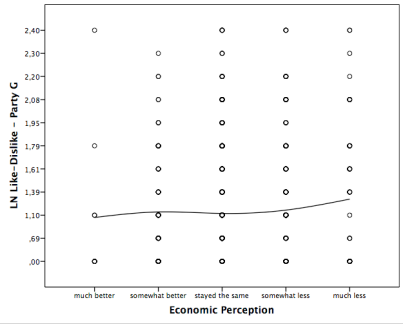
Freedom Party of Austria



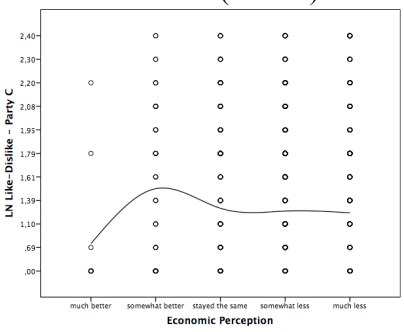
Alliance for the future of Austria



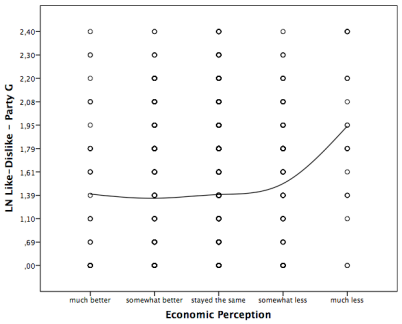
Team Stronach



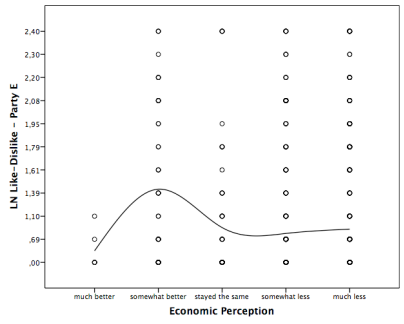
Front National (France)



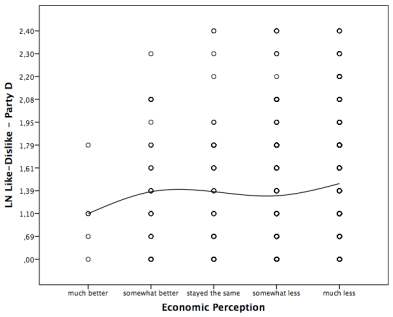
Alternative for Germany



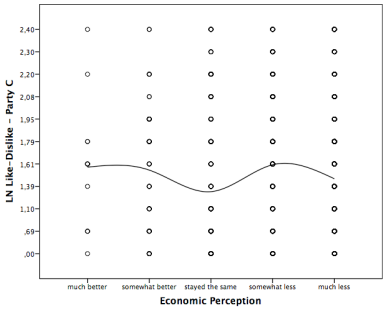
Golden Dawn



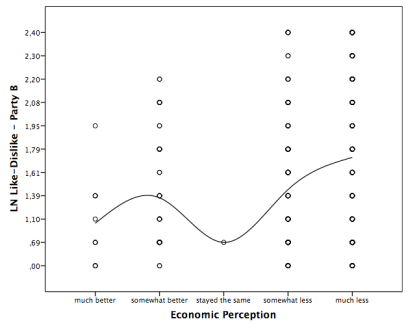
Independent Greeks



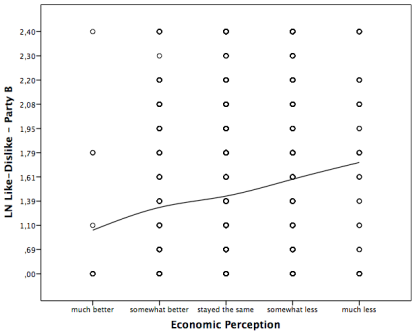
Fianna Fáil



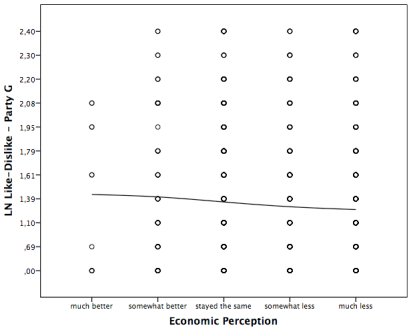
Democratic Front



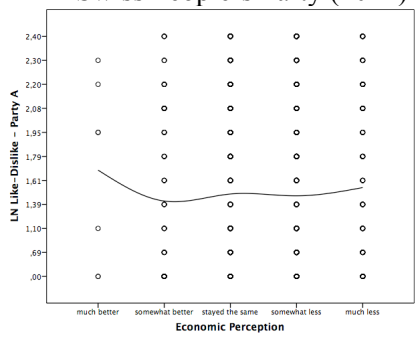
Law and Justice



Serbian Radical Party

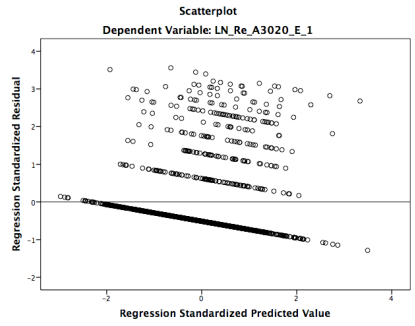


Swiss People's Party (2011)

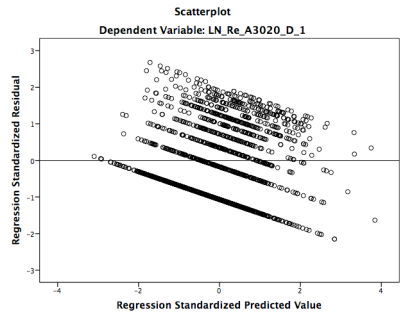


Independence of Error / Constant Error Variance

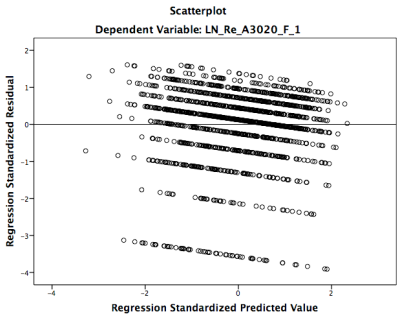
Front National (Belgium)



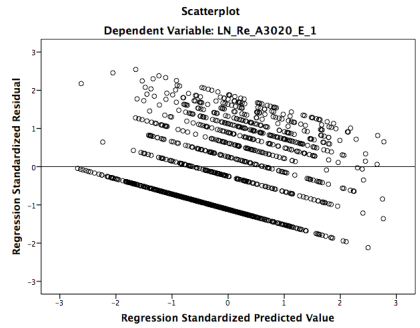
Vlaams Blok



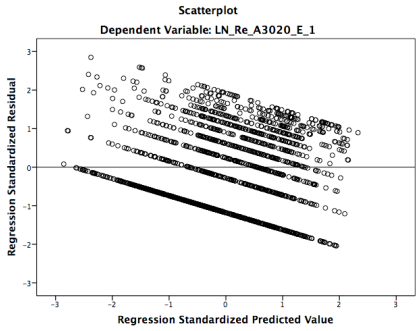
People's Union



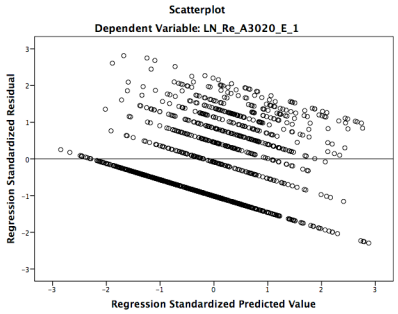
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek



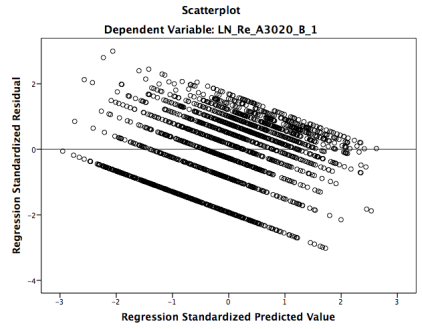
Danish People's Party



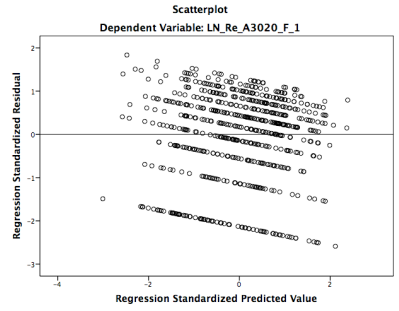
Justice Life Party



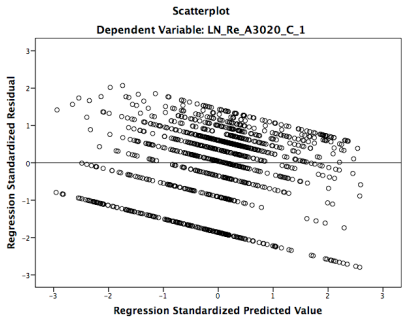
Progress Party



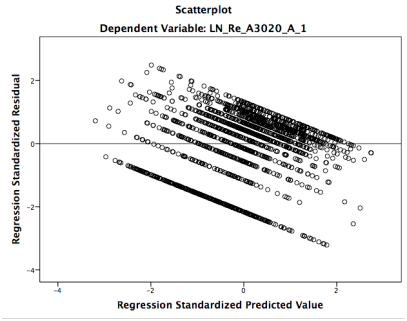
Romanian National Unity



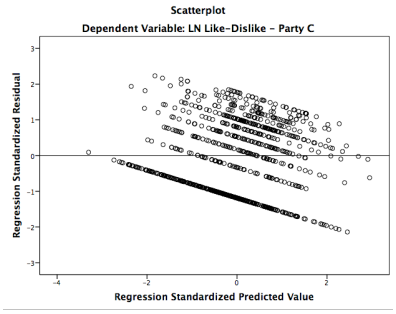
Slovenian Democratic Party



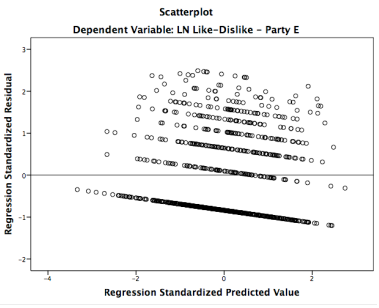
Swiss People's Party (1999)



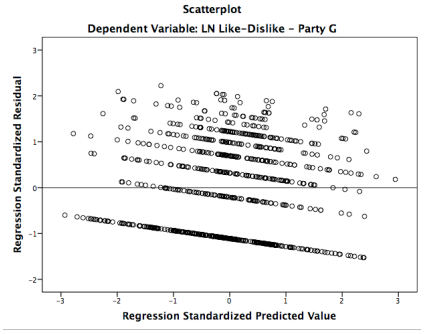
Freedom Party of Austria



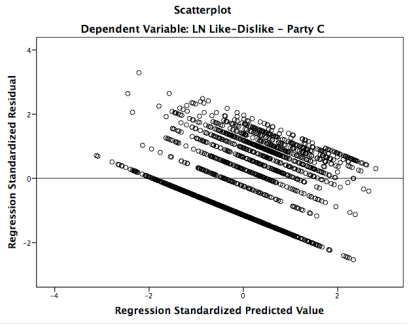
Alliance for the future of Austria



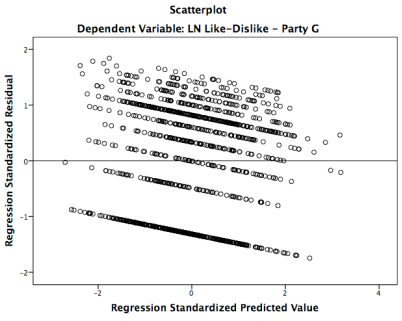
Team Stronach



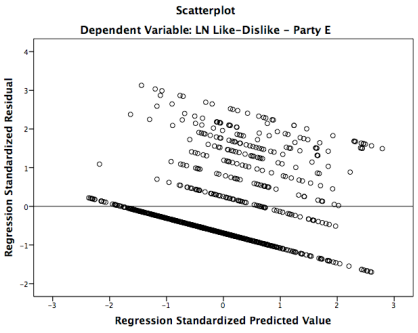
Front National (France)



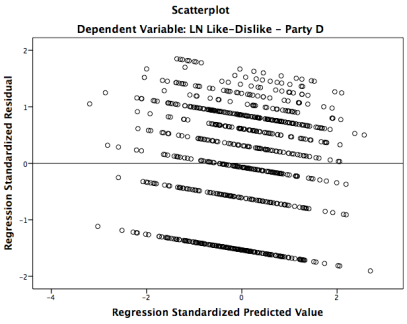
Alternative for Germany



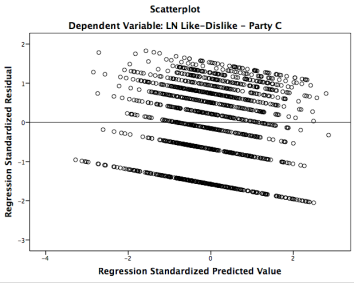
Golden Dawn



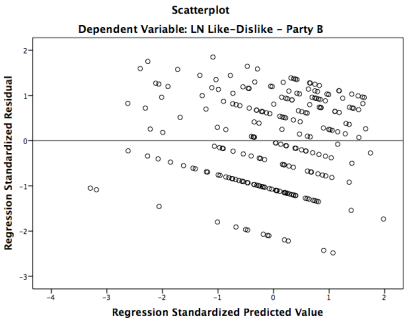
Independent Greeks



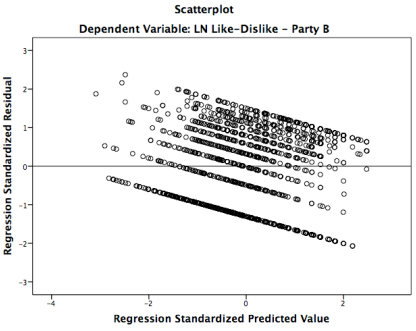
Fianna Fáil



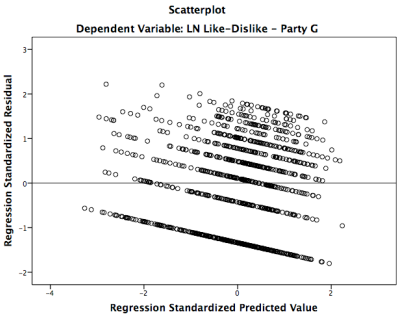
Democratic Front



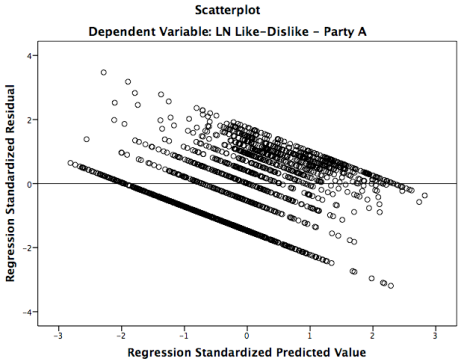
Law and Justice



Serbian Radical Party

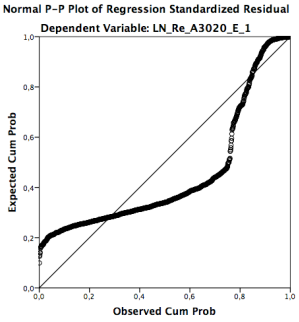


Swiss People's Party (2011)

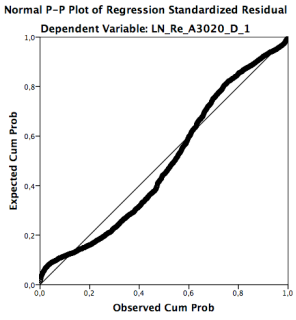


Normally distributed Errors

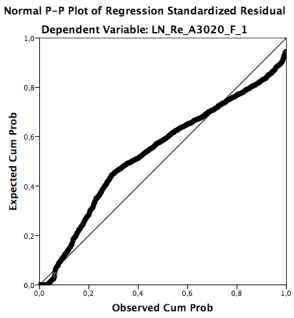
Front National (Belgium)



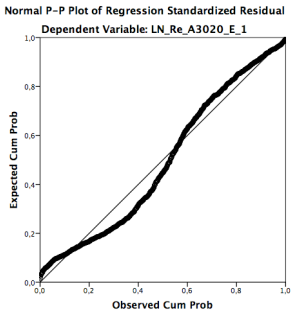
Vlaams Blok



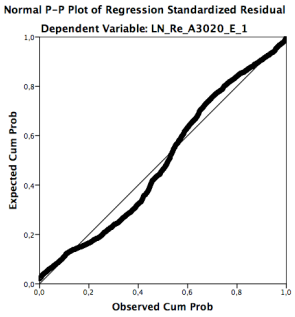
People's Union



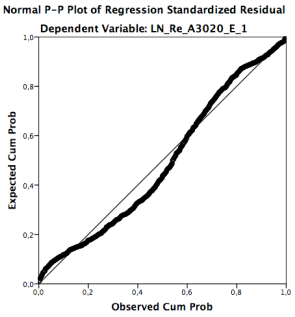
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek



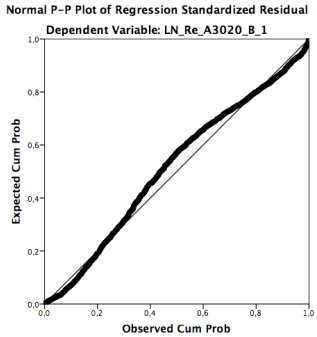
Danish People's Party



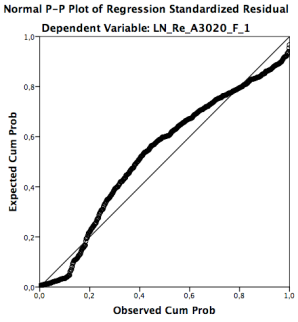
Justice Life Party



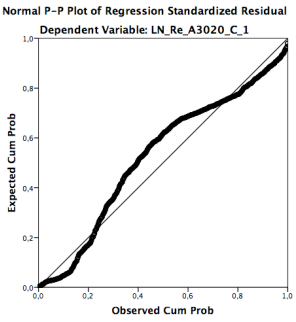
Progress Party



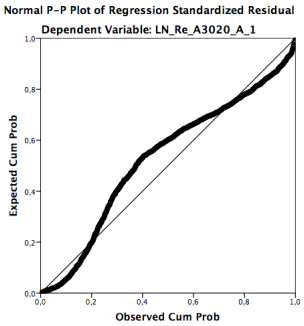
Romanian National Unity



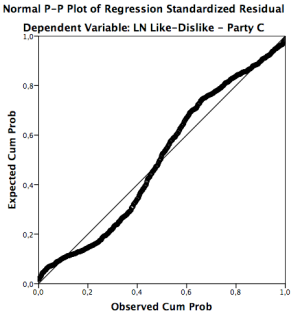
Slovenian Democratic Party



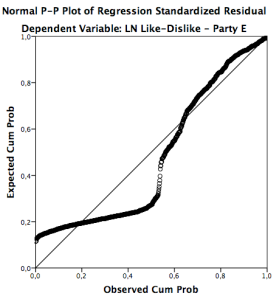
Swiss People's Party (1999)



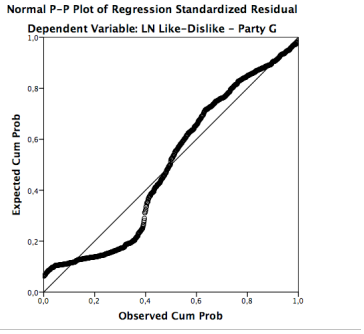
Freedom Party of Austria



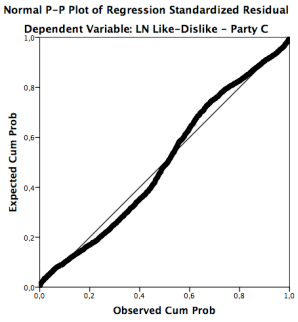
Alliance for the future of Austria



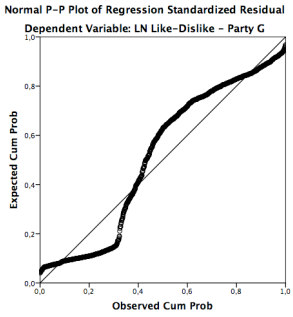
Team Stronach



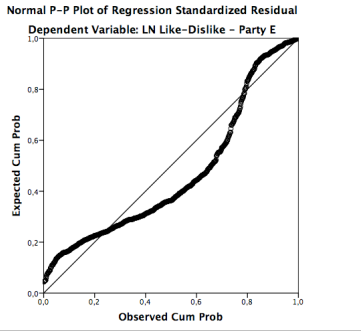
Front National (France)



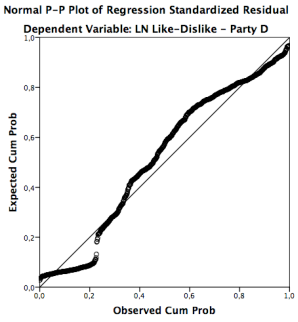
Alternative for Germany



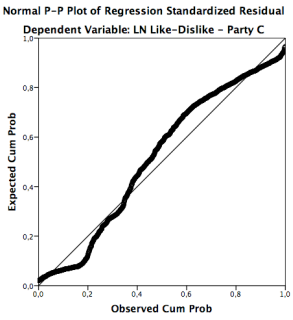
Golden Dawn



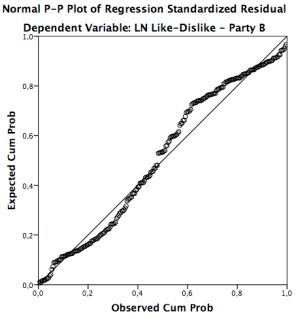
Independent Greeks



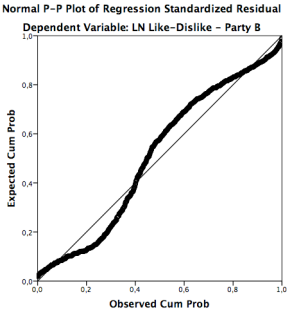
Fianna Fáil



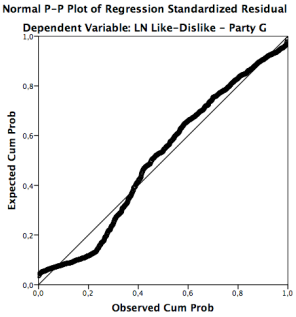
Democratic Front



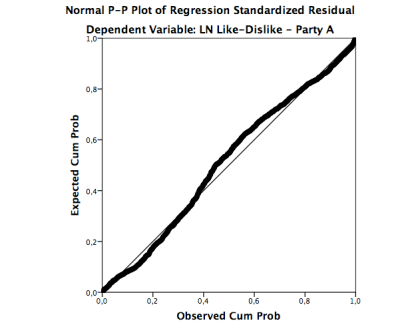
Law and Justice



Serbian Radical Party



Swiss People's Party (2011)



9.6. Section F: Table of the transformed Coefficients and their respective Confidence Interval

Model 3 (Natural Logarithm Transformation, with control)

		95% Confidence Interval					
Party	*Coefficient B*	*Lower Bound*	*Upper Bound*	*N*	*Coefficient B(e^B)*	*Lower Bound*	*Upper Bound*
Freedom Party for Austria	0,081*	0,012	0,151	844	1,084	1,012	1,163
Alliance for the future of Austria	0,008	-0,055	0,072	836	1,008	0,946	1,075
Team Stronach	0,012	-0,055	0,079	813	1,012	0,946	1,082
Front National (France)	0,03	-0,015	0,075	1843	1,03	0,985	1,078
Alternative for Germany	0,093**	0,022	0,164	1177	1,097	1,022	1,178
Golden Dawn	0,012	-0,049	0,073	772	1,012	0,952	1,076
Independent Greeks	0,071*	0,008	0,133	770	1,074	1,008	1,142
Fianna Fáil	0,024	-0,02	0,067	1430	1,024	0,98	1,069
Democratic Front	0,144**	0,062	0,226	231	1,155	1,064	1,254
Law and Justice	0,143**	0,092	0,195	1539	1,154	1,096	1,215
Serbian Radical Party	-0,031	-0,079	0,018	987	0,969	0,924	1,018
Swiss People's Party (2011)	0,008	-0,038	0,054	1609	1,008	0,963	1,055
Front National (Belgium)	0,023	-0,024	0,070	1227	1,023	0,976	1,073
Vlaams Blok	0,13**	0,074	0,186	1607	1,139	1,077	1,204
People's Union	-0,033	-0,068	0,002	1599	0,968	0,934	1,002
Republicans of Miroslav Slàdek	0,213**	0,157	0,269	1110	1,237	1,17	1,309
Danish People's Party	0,066**	0,016	0,116	1764	1,068	1,016	1,124
Justice Life Party	0,117**	0,071	0,164	1115	1,124	1,074	1,178
Progress Party	0,045*	0,009	0,082	1963	1,046	1,009	1,085
Romanian National Unity	-0,126**	-0,180	-0,072	666	0,882	0,835	0,931
Slovenian Democratic Party	-0,023	-0,087	0,042	1148	0,977	0,917	1,043
Swiss People's Party (1999)	0,027	-0,007	0,061	1724	1,027	0,993	1,063
Average (Total)	0,054				1,056		
Average (Module 1)	0,044				1,049		
Average (Module 4)	0,050				1,052		

* statistically significant at p<0,05 ** statistically significant at p<0,01

10. Declaration of Academic Integrity

I hereby confirm that the present thesis “Examining the Rise of Right Wing Populism in Europe” is solely my own work and that if any text passages or diagrams from books, papers, the internet or other sources or in any other way used, all references - including those found in electronic media - have been acknowledged and fully cited.

Place, Date: Signature:

Enschede, June 29th, 2016