

# PARTY POSITIONS ON THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE BALTIC STATES: DO THEY COMPETE? DO THEY MIRROR VOTERS' POSITIONS?<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to determine Lithuania's, Latvia's, and Estonia's parties' positions on the European Union (EU) and to ascertain whether these party positions mirror their voters' positions on the EU. Analysis suggests that parties in this region have rather varied positions on the EU, with the exception of hard-Eurosceptic views, which are absent in Baltic states' party systems. This paper also indicates that parties in the Baltic states tend to mirror, with some exceptions, their voters positions on the EU. This suggests that there may be additional factors determining parties' positions regarding the EU in the Baltics.*

**Key words:** party positions, European Union, Euroscepticism, euroenthusiasm.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2017, Europe celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. This document laid the foundation for a unique politico-economic union of sovereign countries that transformed the Old Continent. Today, this union—the European Union (EU)—is the largest, and arguably the most successful, trading bloc in the world, characterized by an unprecedented level of economic and even political integration among its member states. Indeed, the EU holds an exclusive competence to act and legislate in a number of policy areas, as its law (in a number of cases) has primacy over its member states' national laws. This means that the EU has a deep and profound impact not only on its member states' policies, but also on the way their political systems work.

This impact, though, is not homogenous. In fact, some aspects of EU members' political systems are affected by this organization more than others. Interestingly, political scientists argue that member states' political parties and party systems are affected by the EU to great extent. According to Mair (2008), the EU has at least two indirect and two direct effects on the political parties and party systems of EU member states. Indirectly, the EU (or more specifically,

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its policies) reduces the national-level policy space where parties can compete and promotes new non-partisan channels of representation. On the direct effects side, elections to the European Parliament establish a new channel to power for national parties, whereas the EU itself, some argue, has created a new dimension of party competition on a national level. Even though political scientists disagree as to whether this dimension is, in fact, a “real” dimension structuring European countries’ party systems, the EU (indirectly and perhaps unwillingly) has undeniably created a platform for parties to provide competing views on the EU itself. This is illustrated by the fact that a number of parties critical of the EU or its policies have recently emerged in some EU member states, whereas other parties continue to adopt more pro-European positions.

Why do some parties choose a pro-European stance, while others adopt strictly anti-European positions? Political scientists argue that the answer may lie in a party’s ideology, family, specific national circumstances, or various vote-maximization strategies. According to some studies, party family best explains where parties position themselves in regard to the EU (Marks, Wilson and Ray, 2002). These analyses, however, may not be applicable to the central eastern European (CEE) region, where parties are often characterized by ideological vagueness and are somewhat impossible to accurately associate with western European party families.

Does this mean that CEE parties’ positions towards the EU are completely random? Even if parties’ ideologies in this region are ambiguous, this should not mean that their positions on the EU are absolutely baseless. In fact, the previously mentioned study of Marks, Wilson and Ray (2002) has also found that parties’ desire to garner as many votes as possible may affect their positions on the EU as well. Therefore, one could expect that CEE parties may choose their positions on the EU not according to their ideological stance, but in order to maximize their vote share during elections by mirroring their voters’ positions. The question is: could the Baltic states’ political parties also be guided by the same rationale?

Unfortunately, there is no answer to this question yet. Even though the three Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—have been EU members for almost fifteen years, there is a lack of studies that analyse how the EU affects these countries’ party systems. In fact, most of the related studies analyse the phenomena of Euroscepticism in the Baltics (for example, Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, 2014; Mikkel and Kasekamp, 2008). Even though these studies determine which parties in this region are less supportive of the EU, they do not show a broader picture. More specifically, they do not indicate two important points. First, they do not investigate whether or not (major) parties in these countries compete with each other on EU issue dimension at a national level<sup>2</sup>. Second, they do not address the question raised above: Do the Baltic states’ political parties mirror their voters’ positions on the EU? This study fills the gap of knowledge in this area by answering these two questions.

In order to do so, the paper will, firstly, present some background information and, secondly, detail the methodology and data of the research. The third part of the paper will be devoted

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<sup>2</sup> The terms *EU issue dimension* and *EU dimension* are used interchangeably in this paper. Following the example of previous researchers on this topic, these terms are understood as describing a party competition dimension, in which some parties support the EU and further European integration, whereas others have opposing views.

to the principal analysis. The paper will conclude by stating that Baltic states *do* have differing positions on the EU and that these parties, in most cases, tend to *mirror* their voters' average positions on the EU.

## 1. BACKGROUND AND THEORY

After the fall of the communist regime in CEE, political scientists began to analyse the emerging party systems in this region. They were particularly interested in learning whether these party systems would develop according to the principles observed in western European countries, or whether they would evolve according to their own logic (Ramonaitė, 2007). According to Kitschelt (1995), the structure of CEE countries' (including Baltic states') party systems was (and still is) largely determined by the nature of the previous (communist) regime and the mode of transition from a communist to a democratic system. Later on, political scientists determined that party systems in this region have a number of additional differences compared to those in western European countries. CEE party systems are characterized by fragmentation, weak links between voters and parties, and party platforms that lack clear, well-defined ideological stances (Saarts, 2011). This list, however, is even longer when one looks at the Baltic states. Some scholars argue that electoral volatility (Birch, 2003) and party system fragmentation (Saarts, 2011, p. 84) is even higher in the Baltics than in other post-communist countries, which also explains one of the lowest levels of party-system institutionalization in the region, especially in Latvia and Lithuania.

There is one more aspect that clearly distinguishes both Baltic states' and other CEE countries' party systems. According to Vachudova and Hooghe (2009), there is no doubt that CEE countries' accession process to the EU had a profound effect on their party systems. These countries had to implement a number of economic and political reforms and maintain a positive image for the European Commission. The argument goes, that as joining the EU was a goal for most of the major political parties in CEE, even parties that were positioned on different sides of the ideological spectrum held similar positions on a number of policy areas related to the EU accession process. This in turn suggests, that party competition on issues related to the EU was virtually non-existent in both CEE and the Baltic states before 2004. According to Vachudova and Hooghe (2009), this changed, however, when these countries clinched their EU membership bids in the early 2000s. This change is evidenced even more profoundly after these states became EU members in 2004, as EU accession-related constraints were lifted and political parties could start to adopt not only more varied positions on previously "locked" areas (such as economic policy), but could also embrace more Eurosceptic rhetoric (Ladrech, 2011). This, however, leads to a more general question: Why did some parties decide to become euro-critical, whereas others chose to remain euroenthusiastic?

The reason some parties would choose to oppose the EU may lie in a particular party's ideology or family, specific national circumstances, or in its pursuit of various vote-maximization strategies. In fact, Marks, Wilson, and Ray (2002) conclude that the party family variable was the most powerful predictor of parties' positions towards the EU, followed by the strategies parties pursue to maximize their vote share in elections. These results, however, were based

on observations made only in western European countries. Since the publishing of the above-mentioned study, a number of CEE countries—with party systems that are very different from those in western Europe—joined the EU. For this reason, one may expect that Marks and his colleagues' conclusions about the factors that determine parties' positions towards the EU may not be applicable to this region. In fact, a number of political scientists point out that it is often very difficult to associate CEE parties' ideologies to the western European party ideologies and western party families because of the vagueness of CEE parties' ideological profiles (Saarts, 2011, p. 93). This means that the main factor, which determines party's positions on the EU in western Europe, may not only lack explanatory power in CEE, but it could also raise number of methodological issues for researchers.

According to Marks, Wilson, and Ray (2002), a party's positions towards the EU may be determined not only by ideology (or party family), but also by the party's desire to garner as many votes as possible. This goal is often described as "vote-maximization strategy". One such strategy is explained by the so-called median voter (supporter) theory. It is associated with Downs's spatial theory of elections that suggests that in two-party systems, each party can maximize its vote share when its position corresponds (mirrors) its median voter's position on the left-right political continuum (Iversen, 1994). Later, a median voter (supporter) theory was derived for multiparty systems, noting that each party, by mirroring its median supporter's position on any issue, garners maximum support from voters. Although this explanation appears convincing, Iversen suggests that this theory is not plausible. His analysis on parties' positions along the left-right continuum shows that "political parties do not behave in accordance with Downsian spatial theory" (Iversen, 1994, pp. 183-184). In other words, political parties do not *mirror* their supporters' positions along the left-right continuum. However, and very surprisingly, this is not the case with regards to parties' stances on EU-related issues. According to Marks, Wilson, and Ray (2002), western European political parties tend to mirror their supporters' positions on EU issue dimension. In fact, it is the second most powerful variable explaining party positioning regarding the EU in this region. Following this line of argumentation, one could expect that parties in the Baltic states would choose their positions on EU issue dimension by mirroring their voters' positions on the same issue. Quantitative analysis in subsequent sections of this paper will prove whether the findings of Marks, Wilson, and Ray hold true in the Baltic states.

## 2. DATA AND MEASUREMENT

In order to answer the questions posed in this paper, the following data must be collected: 1) The positions of parties in the Baltic states regarding the EU, and 2) Baltic states voters' positions on the EU. Sociologists, political scientists, and statisticians provide such data on a regular basis. However, in order to ensure validity, analyses in this paper require that the positions of both groups in all three countries be measured in the same way.<sup>3</sup> The only recently updated database that satisfies this condition was developed just before the 2014 European Parliament elections.

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<sup>3</sup> Measured parties' positions should reflect the same aspect regarding the EU. For example, the measurement should show the view towards further European integration of all parties in the three Baltic countries. The same is true when measuring voters' positions on the EU.

This database contains the answers of thousands of respondents to a EUvox survey designed to help citizens select the political party that best matched their own policy preferences for the 2014 European Parliament election (EUvox.eu, 2014).

The two main groups of variables for this paper are 1) Party position on the EU, and 2) voters' positions on the EU. In both cases, "position on the EU" is understood as a party's or voter's preference to support either a reversal of or a continuation of European integration. This preference (for both variables) is measured on an eleven-point scale (which will also be referred to here as the "EU support scale" or "EU scale"), on which a 0 indicates a party or voter's total support for a reversal of European integration and a 10 means that a party or voter totally supports further European integration. Data for both sets of variables is derived from respondents' answers to a specific question on the EUvox survey.<sup>4</sup> After reviewing the data, some outlying values were removed.<sup>5</sup>

The first group of variables contains information about the location of each political party on the eleven-point EU support scale, as perceived by each respondent. Each party's placement on the EU support scale is assigned as a separate variable. It should be noted though, that only the parliamentary parties of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were included in this study. A parliamentary party is defined here as a party that was represented by at least one member in the national parliament in 2014. Parliamentary parties, which were not included in the EUvox survey and consequently are absent from the EUvox database, were omitted. Additionally, parliamentary parties with less than fifteen respondents placing them on the EU support scale were also omitted (See Appendix for a full list of parties included in this analysis). One more clarification needs to be made: the EUvox survey asked respondents to place parties on the EU support scale, whether they support the parties or not. In order to ensure accuracy of the results (inaccuracy could have been introduced if a respondent intentionally assigned inaccurate values to parties that she or he does not like or support), these variables will include only the party placement data provided by respondents for the party the respondent supports. A specific question on the EUvox survey was used to isolate such respondents and the party placement values they provided.<sup>6</sup>

The second set of variables contains information about respondents' self-placement on the eleven-point EU support scale. In order to answer the second question of the paper, it is necessary, though, to isolate the self-placement values of each party's supporters.<sup>7</sup> The previously indicated EUvox question was used to do this. This allowed for comparisons between voters' self-reported position on the EU scale and the perceived placement of parties on the EU support scale.

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<sup>4</sup> The question states: *Please indicate where you would place yourself (first row) and the parties in the scale below. If you are unsure where to place a party, simply leave the space empty. "Less EU" means you would like to reverse European integration. More EU means you are in favour of further European integration.*

<sup>5</sup> Outliers were identified after transforming the values of both sets of variables into z-scores. All cases (respondents' party and self-placement values) with z-scores lower than -3,29 and higher than +3,29 were removed.

<sup>6</sup> The question states: *If there were a national election tomorrow, which party/bloc would you vote for?*

<sup>7</sup> The terms *voter* and *supporter* are used interchangeably in this paper.

The first question posed in this paper asks: Do parliamentary parties in the Baltic states compete on EU issue dimension at the national level? In order to answer, the average<sup>8</sup> positions regarding the EU of each party were calculated. These average values were then compared by employing one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). This method made it possible to determine whether the average positions of parties were statistically significantly different. Statistically significant differences in each Baltic country would indicate that the Baltic states' political parties do compete on the EU issue dimension.

The second question asks: Do Baltic states' political parties mirror their voters' positions regarding the EU. The answer to this question was sought by calculating the average positions regarding the EU of each party's supporters. Comparing these average values with their corresponding party's average position on the EU by employing independent samples t-tests and box-plot graphs detects whether differences between each party and its supporters' positions on the EU are statistically significant. If the Baltic states' political parties *do* mirror their voters' positions on the EU, no statistically significant differences will be detected. An alpha level ( $p$ ) of 0,05 was used for all subsequent analyses.

### 3. ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 Do parties in the Baltic states have differing positions on the EU?

First, the average positions on the EU of all parties included in the analysis were calculated. This was done by computing the mean of each variable, containing data values representing the location of the parliamentary parties of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia on the eleven-point EU support scale (variable set: [party] position on the EU). The results are presented in Figure 1.

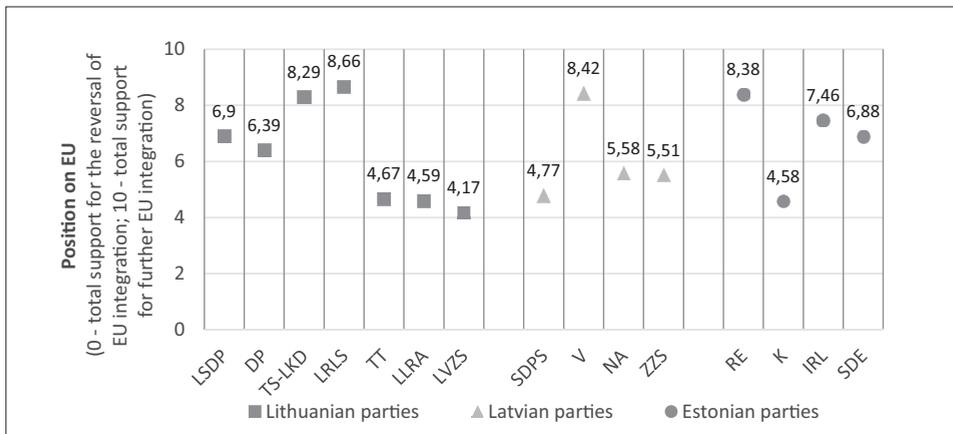


FIGURE 1. Average party positions on the EU in the Baltic states in 2014.

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

<sup>8</sup> Average values are calculated here by computing means. As the following analyses employ rather large datasets and as the data itself satisfies the conditions for the parametric tests, an average value in terms of a mean is preferred here.

It is evident that in the Baltic states, parliamentary parties are inclined to be more pro-European than Eurosceptic. If one takes into account that these scores are measured on a scale on which a 0 indicates total support for the reversal of EU integration and a 10 indicates total support for further EU integration, only five parties of the fifteen analysed occupy positions lower than 5. (On this scale, a 5 represents support for the status quo). Furthermore, each of these five parties fall between a 4 and a 5 and there is no party occupying an average position lower than 4. This indicates that the Baltic states' parliamentary parties critical of the EU are *soft* Eurosceptics at best and that there are no hard Eurosceptic parliamentary parties in these countries. This corresponds perfectly with the fact that there are only small fractions of citizens in all three countries who have fairly negative or even very negative views of the EU (European Commission, 2014).

The other ten parties, to varying degrees, support the EU. Particular attention should be paid to the four parliamentary parties with average position values higher than 8. This indicates that these parties have strong pro-European aspirations and would support most initiatives to further economic and political integration with the EU. The remaining six parties have average positions on the EU of between 5 and 8. These parties tend to be more supportive than critical of the EU. These parties, however, in contrast to the parties of the previous group, may vocalize concerns regarding some aspects of further EU integration, for example, in the areas of political or fiscal integration.

This brief overview indicates that Baltic states' parliamentary parties can be categorized into three separate groups: 1) strongly pro-EU parties, 2) soft pro-EU parties, and 3) soft Eurosceptics. This, in turn, suggests that in the Baltic states parliamentary parties *do* have varying positions on the EU. This information alone however does not indicate whether these differences are *significant* in each Baltic state.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to determine *whether* differences between the parties' average positions on the EU in each Baltic state were statistically significantly different. Multiple comparisons tests were also run to determine *which* parties (or groups of parties) have significantly different positions. As three separate datasets for each Baltic state were employed, three ANOVA analyses were carried out.

For all three datasets, the tests for normality, examining standardized skewness and kurtosis as well as Shapiro-Wilk tests, were carried out. The results indicated that the data is mostly statistically normal.<sup>9</sup> Levene's F test reveals, though, that the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met ( $p < 0,001$ ) in any of the three datasets. Thus, Welch's F test was used for further analysis. The one-way ANOVA results indicate that there are statistically significant differences among parties' average positions on EU in each Baltic state.<sup>10</sup> In order to determine

<sup>9</sup> For three Lithuanian parties, (the LSDP, TS-LKD and LRLS), three Latvian parties (the SDPS, V and NA) and all Estonian parties (the IRL, K, RE and SDE), the Shapiro-Wilk test was significant ( $p < 0,05$ ). However, analysis of standardized values of skewness and kurtosis indicated that violations of normality for all of these variables were not extreme as neither of them was in excess of the recommended value of  $-/+3,29$ .

<sup>10</sup> The one-way ANOVA results for Lithuania's dataset were: Welch's F (6, 112,4)=59,2,  $p < 0,001$ . The one-way ANOVA results for Latvia's dataset were: Welch's F (3, 167)=141,1,  $p < 0,001$ . The one-way ANOVA results for Estonia's dataset were: Welch's F (3, 1418,6)=403,3,  $p < 0,001$ .

which parties (or groups of parties) have statistically significantly different positions, post-hoc comparisons, using the Games-Howell post-hoc procedure, were conducted.

The results of Games-Howell post-hoc test for Lithuania's data reveal that there are four groups of Lithuanian parties that have significantly different positions on the EU: 1) LRLS, 2) TS-LKD, 3) LSDP and DP, and 4) TT, LLRA, and LVZS. These results show that the LRLS had the highest average position on the EU in 2014, followed by the TS-LKD. Interestingly, the Games-Howell post-hoc test indicated that the positions of these two parties are significantly different, meaning that the two most pro-EU parties in Lithuania support the EU to different extents. These results correspond with the findings of Bakker, et al. (2015a) showing that though the Liberals are the strongest supporters of further European integration in CEE countries, they are closely followed by Christian Democrats. The Games-Howell post-hoc test also indicates that the LSDP and DP's positions on the EU are not significantly different, and that they can be placed in the same group. Taking into account that both parties' average positions on the EU fall between 6 and 7, the label *soft pro-European* can be applied to them.<sup>11</sup> Lastly, a group of Eurosceptic parties, including the TT, LLRA, and LVZS was distinguished. This is a curious group as all three parties belong to different families and appear to have differing ideologies (the TT being populist, LLRA regionalist, and LVZS agrarian). Nevertheless, the research of Bakker, et al. explains this set as well. According to Chapel Hill expert survey data (Bakker, et al., 2015b), both the TT and LLRA have the highest scores on the sociocultural (GAL-TAN) scale in Lithuania; they value order, tradition, and stability as well as national sovereignty.<sup>12</sup> According to Bakker, et al. (2015), Eurosceptic parties are almost exclusively TAN parties, which explains the TT and LLRA positions. The LVZS in this case is an interesting outlier, with an even lower score on the GAL-TAN scale than the pro-EU TS-LKD; its rather low average position on the EU (in fact, it is the most anti-EU position among the parties analysed) and its inclusion in this group can be explained by its party family. Bakker, et al. (2015a) show that agrarian parties in CEE countries tend to be almost as critical of the EU as those on the radical left and radical right. Overall, given these results, Lithuanian parties do have significantly different positions on the EU and therefore they do compete on this issue dimension.

The same post-hoc procedure determined that only two groups of Latvia's parliamentary parties had statistically significantly different average positions on the EU: 1) V and 2) SDPS, NA, and ZZS. V is the only parliamentary party in Latvia, included in the analysis that has such a strong pro-EU position. This positioning is not surprising given that liberal and conservative parties tend to be very supportive of the EU. A more interesting finding is the fact that all of the other parliamentary parties fall into a soft-Eurosceptic, status-quo group. This suggests that

<sup>11</sup> The Games-Howell post-hoc test indicated that DP shared a similar average position on the EU not only with the LSDP but also with the TT and LLRA. The DP was placed into one basket with the LSDP after running Ryan-Einot-Gabriel-Welsch post-hoc test to determine homogeneous subsets, which indicated that the DP and LSDP belong to one subset. The same result was shown after running a non-parametric independent samples median test. For more on this procedure, see footnote 14.

<sup>12</sup> The position of the TT and LRLA on GAL-TAN scale was determined from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey question GALTAN, where 0 indicates libertarian/post-materialist values (GAL) and 10 indicates traditional/authoritarian values (TAN).

Latvia's party system tends to be more critical of the EU. This could be due to the prominent anti-EU sentiments among Latvians in general, when compared to Lithuanians and Estonians. In 2014, Latvia had highest rate of citizens with negative views of the EU (17% in Latvia, compared to Lithuania's 8% and 9% in Estonia), tended not to trust the EU (50%, Lithuania: 36%, Estonia: 33%) and agreed that their country could better face the future outside of the EU (32%, Lithuania: 22%, Estonia: 21%) (European Commission, 2014). Turning back to the three-party group, its composition is supported by the list of moderate Eurosceptics in Latvia provided by Austers. Two of these parties, the ZZS and the NA, support Latvia's membership in the EU but do not want further integration, whereas the SDPS's focus on the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, and its close links with Russia affects its position on this issue (Austers, 2016). These results indicate that Latvia's parties do have differing positions on the EU; however, Latvia's party competition pattern regarding positions on the EU is not as complex as Lithuania's.

The Games-Howell post-hoc procedure showed that each of Estonia's four parliamentary parties have statistically significantly different positions on the EU.<sup>13</sup> Even though this may be explained by a relatively large number of EUvox survey respondents that placed Estonia's parties on the EU scale, these results, confirm that Estonia's parliamentary parties diverge in their positions on the EU. Specifically, the results reveal that K, with a position below 5 on the EU scale is the only Eurosceptic parliamentary party in Estonia. This positioning is similar to Latvia's SDPS. K primarily represents Estonia's Russian-speaking minority and favours looser ties with the EU. Estonia's other parliamentary parties support the EU, but to varying degrees. RE stands out as the most pro-EU parliamentary party in the country with supporters placing it well above 8 on the EU scale. As is the case with Lithuania's LRLS and Latvia's V, this party's position is related to its liberal ideology. The two remaining parties, the SDE and the IRL, hold rather similar views of the EU. As the difference between them is statistically significant, the two parties compete for the same soft pro-EU electorate in Estonia. In general, these results also indicate that Estonia's party system is more pro-EU than Latvia's as three of four of Estonia's parliamentary parties tended to support further European integration in 2014. This may be closely related to rather scarce anti-EU sentiments among Estonians, thus explaining the greater prevalence of pro-EU views in Estonia's party system.

Overall, this brief analysis provided the answer to the first question posed in this paper: Parliamentary parties in all three Baltic states occupied differing positions on the EU in 2014 and thus competed in this dimension.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This result was also confirmed after running a non-parametric independent samples median test. See footnote 14.

<sup>14</sup> In order to ensure the accuracy of this conclusion, the same analysis was repeated by employing non-parametric independent samples median test to check whether two or more groups have equal medians. For Lithuania's dataset: test statistic = 87,3.  $df = 6$ ,  $p < 0,001$ , which indicates that medians of at least two parties or their groups are statistically significantly different. The test also calculated homogenous subsets, which are identical to the ones determined by post-hoc procedure after ANOVA: (1) LRLS, (2) TS-LKD, (3) DP and LSDP and (4) LVZS, TT and LLRA. For Latvia's dataset: test statistic = 149,8.  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0,001$ . The test revealed that there are three homogenous subsets: (1) V, (2) NA and ZZS and (3) SDPS. However, taking into account that the more powerful Games-Howell post-hoc procedure distinguished only two groups, the SDPS was attached to one group with the NA and ZZS during the analysis. For Estonia's dataset: test statistic = 510,2.  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0,001$ . The test

### 3.2 Do the parliamentary parties in the Baltic states mirror their voters' positions on the EU?

In order to answer the second question posed in this paper, the average positions on the EU of each party's supporters were calculated. This was done by isolating specific parliamentary party's supporters in each Baltic state and computing the mean of their self-placement values on the EU support scale (variable set: *[voter] position on the EU*). The results are presented in Figure 2.

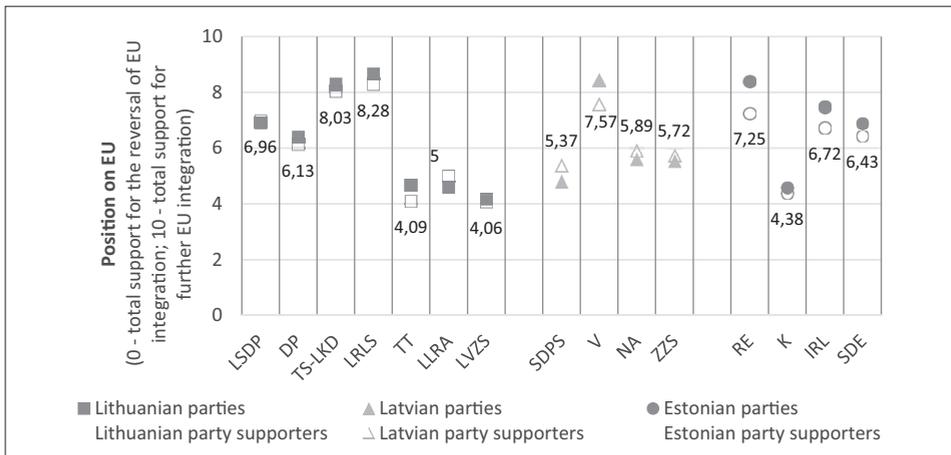


FIGURE 2. Average party and their supporters' positions on EU in the Baltic states in 2014.

Data labels indicate supporters' average positions on the EU.

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

The results indicate that the citizens of the three Baltic states are rather pro-EU. Lithuanians are the most pro-EU, with an average position on the scale of 7,29. Latvians and Estonians are less enthusiastic about European integration, as their citizens' average positions are 6,47 and 6,10 respectively. This finding is rather curious: one would have expected Latvians to be the most Eurosceptic (or least euroenthusiastic), but Estonians take that place, raising the question of whether Estonia's parties represent their voters on this issue. Nevertheless, these results seem to indicate that the Baltic states' parliamentary parties' positions on the EU are *close* to their supporters' average positions on the EU (See Table 1 for detailed results). This is illustrated by the fact that greatest difference between party (RE) and its supporters' average positions on the EU is just over one point on eleven-point EU support scale, whereas the smallest difference is close to zero. This indicates that Baltic states' parliamentary parties follow their voters' positions on the EU to differing extents. These results also reveal that some parties overestimate or underestimate their electorate's positions on the EU (as indicated with a + or – in Table 1). Interestingly, the data also shows that all four Baltic parties belonging to the strongly

also confirmed that all four parties have significantly different median positions on the EU, as was indicated by the Games-Howell post-hoc procedure.

pro-European group (TS-LKD, LRLS, V and RE) are more euroenthusiastic than their supporters. This can be explained, though, by the fact that parties driving European integration further tend to be more pro-EU than the public in general. Lastly, two additional points can be made about Latvia's and Estonia's party systems. In Latvia, each of the three least euroenthusiastic parties occupy lower positions on the EU scale than their supporters, yet Latvia's only pro-EU parliamentary party is more pro-EU than the party's supporters. This indicates that these parties, in either underestimating or overestimating their electorate, sharpen this issue in Latvia's party system. Contrarily, in Estonia, all four parties tend to overestimate their supporters' positions on the EU. In fact, this disparity was the greatest exhibited among all three Baltic states, indicating

TABLE 1. Average party position on the EU as perceived by its supporters, each parties' supporters' average position on the EU and difference between the two.

Lithuania				Latvia				Estonia			
Party	Party position on the EU	Party supporters' position on the EU	Difference	Party	Party position on the EU	Party supporters' position on the EU	Difference	Party	Party position on the EU	Party supporters' position on the EU	Difference
LSDP	6,9	6,96	-0,06	SDPS	4,77	5,37	-0,6	RE	8,38	7,25	+1,13
DP	6,39	6,13	+0,26	V	8,42	7,67	+0,75	K	4,58	4,38	+0,2
TS-LKD	8,29	8,03	+0,26	NA	5,58	5,89	-0,31	IRL	7,46	6,72	+0,74
LRLS	8,66	8,28	+0,38	ZZS	5,51	5,72	-0,21	SDE	6,88	6,43	+0,45
TT	4,67	4,09	+0,58								
LLRA	4,59	5	-0,41								
LVZS	4,17	4,06	+0,11								

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

a possible discrepancy between the supply and demand sides on this issue dimension. In order to confirm this, further analysis was carried out by running a series of independent samples t-tests<sup>15</sup> and constructing box-and-whisker plots for each country.

Seven separate summary independent samples t-test analyses were carried out for Lithuania's data set to compare each party's average position on the EU with that of their supporters'. The results indicated that there are no statistically significant differences between the LSDP, DP, TT, LLRA, and LVZS and their supporters' average positions on the EU. However, a statistically significant difference was detected between the TS-LKD and LRLS's positions and the positions of their voters regarding the EU.<sup>16</sup> This is an interesting finding, taking into

<sup>15</sup> As the standard independent samples t-test would reduce the number of observed cases and thus change the average positions of both the parties and their supporters, a summary independent samples t-test was employed here. This test did not require raw data, but employed summary data in its analysis.

<sup>16</sup> Results for all compared pairs: LSDP (M=6,9, SD=2,49) and LSDP voters (M=6,965, SD=2,902);  $t(-0,242)=442,937$ ,  $p = 0,809$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,358$ ;  $p = 0,0122$ ). DP (M=6,395,

account that there are parties in Lithuania with positions on the EU that differ from those of their supporters considerably more (TT and LLRA). This result could be explained by the rather large sample sizes of both the TS-LKD and the LRLS during the statistical analysis; this increased the chances of calculating accurate average positions on the EU for both of them. Thus, t-test determined a statistically significant difference between the two groups of the two sets. For this reason, complimentary analysis was run by constructing box-and-whisker plots to displays the distribution of scores of each party's perceived positioning on the EU support scale and each party's supporters' self-reported scores on the same scale (Figure 3). In all seven sets of comparisons, all of the boxes, representing half of each party's and their supporters' middle scores on the EU scale overlap with both medians, indicating that there are no significant differences between Lithuania's parties and their supporters' positions on the EU. Returning to the unexpected result of the t-test, both the TS-LKD and LRLS scores on the EU scale closely mirrored the scores of their supporters on the same scale, indicating that there is no difference between the groups. One additional observation can be made regarding the TT and its supporters. As can be seen visually, it is the only party in Lithuania whose supporters have visibly lower positions on the EU than the party itself (the box, representing 50 per cent of middle scores of TT's supporters on the EU scale, is lower by one point at both ends in relation to the TT's box). Even though both boxes overlap with both medians, indicating no significant difference between the groups, it is the only clearly noticeable disparity between party's and its supporters' views on EU in Lithuania. Finally, the graph also shows that the distribution of party supporters' self-placement scores on the EU scale is equal (TS-LKD, TT and LVZS) or broader (LSDP, DP, LRLS, LLRA) than those of the parties they support. This means that party supporters tend to have equivalent or more diverse views on the EU than the parties they support. Furthermore, the graph also shows that the boxes of all seven parliamentary parties are rather broad (from three to six points). This could indicate that parties are not presenting their views on the EU clearly and as a result voters are uncertain about where to place the party they support on the EU scale. Nevertheless, these results reveal that despite some uncertainties, most of Lithuania's parliamentary parties are able to summarize their supporters' views accurately; none of the parties have significantly different positions on the EU when compared with the positions on the EU of their voters. This is also emphasized by the fact that five of Lithuania's seven parliamentary parties share identical median positions on the EU with their supporters, whereas the differences of the medians of the other two parties are not significant. As there are no significant differences between Lithuania's parties and their voters' positions on the EU, it can be concluded that Lithuania's parliamentary parties

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SD=2,595) and DP voters (M=6,128, SD=3,23);  $t(0,399)=75$ ,  $p = 0,691$ ; equal variances assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,549$ ;  $p = 0,09$ ). TS-LKD (M=8,29, SD=1,573) and TS-LKD voters (M=8,03, SD=2,075);  $t(3,025)=1804,877$ ,  $p = 0,03$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,740$ ;  $p = 0,000$ ). LRLS (M=8,66, SD=1,457) and LRLS voters (M=8,28, SD=1,887);  $t(5,669)=2397,848$ ,  $p = 0,000$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,678$ ;  $p = 0,000$ ). TT (M=4,67, SD=3,001) and TT voters (M=4,086, SD=3,384);  $t(0,886)=98$ ,  $p = 0,378$ ; equal variances assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,278$ ;  $p = 0,203$ ). LRLA (M=4,59, SD=2,425) and LRLA voters (M=5, SD=3,644);  $t(-0,445)=40,968$ ,  $p = 0,659$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=2,258$ ;  $p = 0,0425$ ). LVZS (M=4,17, SD=2,419) and LVZS voters (M=4,061, SD=2,871);  $t(0,199)=106$ ,  $p = 0,843$ ; equal variances assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,409$ ;  $p = 0,1182$ ).

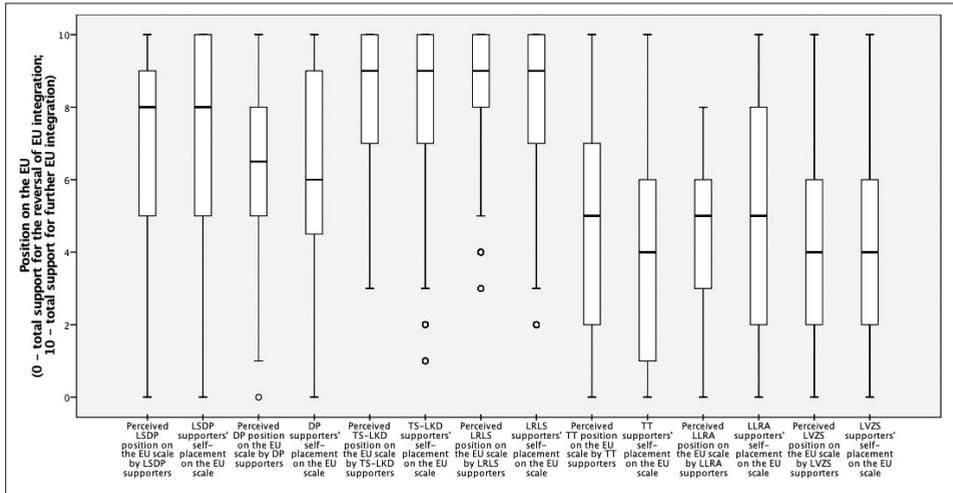


FIGURE 3. Distribution of Lithuania's parliamentary parties' placement scores and their supporters' self-placement scores on the EU support scale.

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

mirror their voters' positions on the EU, meaning that this may be the main factor determining Lithuania's parties' positions on this supranational organization.

The same analysis was conducted with Latvia's data. Four separate summary independent samples t-test analyses were carried out, the results of which show that there are no statistically significant differences between the SDSP, NA, and ZZS's position on the EU and that of their supporters' average positions on EU. A difference is detected, though, when comparing V's position on the EU to that of its supporters.<sup>17</sup> It was already evident from the data presented in Table 1 that this party, among all of Latvia's parliamentary parties, had the most divergent position on the EU from those of its voters. These results are confirmed by constructing a box-and-whisker plot (Figure 4) that revealed no significant differences between the SDPS, NA and ZZS's positions and their voters' positions on the EU. In all three sets of comparisons, boxes representing half of the parties and voters' scores on the EU scale overlap with both medians. This means that the positions of these three parties closely resemble those of their supporters. The case of V is a bit curious; the boxes do overlap but not with both medians. This indicates that a difference between the two groups is likely. As the same conclusion can be drawn from the previously conducted t-test, it can be inferred with a level of confidence that V and its voters' positions on the EU are significantly different. This in turn means that the party is either unable to correctly determine its voters' views on the EU, thus it positions

<sup>17</sup> Results for all compared pairs: SDPS (M=4,774, SD=2,796) and SDPS voters (M=5,365, SD=3,467);  $t(-1,401) = 215,254$ ,  $p = 0,163$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,539$ ;  $p = 0,0126$ ). V (M=8,415, SD=1,464) and V voters (M=7,667, SD=2,025);  $t(6,453)=890,461$ ,  $p = 0,000$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,914$ ;  $p = 0,000$ ). NA (M=5,581, SD=2,558) and NA voters (M=5,888, SD=2,803);  $t(-1,271)=493$ ,  $p = 0,204$ ; equal variances assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,201$ ;  $p = 0,0757$ ). ZZS (M=5,509, SD=2,493) and ZZS voters (M=5,719, SD=3,078);  $t(-0,399)=115$ ,  $p = 0,691$ ; equal variances assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,524$ ;  $p = 0,0568$ ).

itself on the EU scale inaccurately, or its position on the EU is determined by other factors. Another visible, though not significant, difference is related to the SDPS. The box-and-whisker plot shows that the SDPS underestimates its voters' position on the EU by one point (the SDPS's median position on the EU is 5, whereas its supporters' position is 6). Interestingly, though, it should be noted that median positions on the EU of all three of Latvia's soft Eurosceptic parties' supporters are equal—6 points. It can be assumed then that the SDPS tries to capture the votes of so-called committed Eurosceptics, while the NA and ZZS appeal to a soft Eurosceptic or status quo electorate or those for whom EU-related issues are of secondary importance. The breadth of the parties' boxes (which range from four to five points) reveals that Latvia's parliamentary parties may also have problems clearly presenting their views on the EU. The voters' boxes are also rather broad, but the SDPS box stands out as it reveals that SDPS voters have relatively diverse views on the EU; representing their supporters accurately on this issue could pose a potential problem for the party. Given these observations, there are no significant differences between the positions of Latvia's three soft-Eurosceptic parties and those of their supporters,

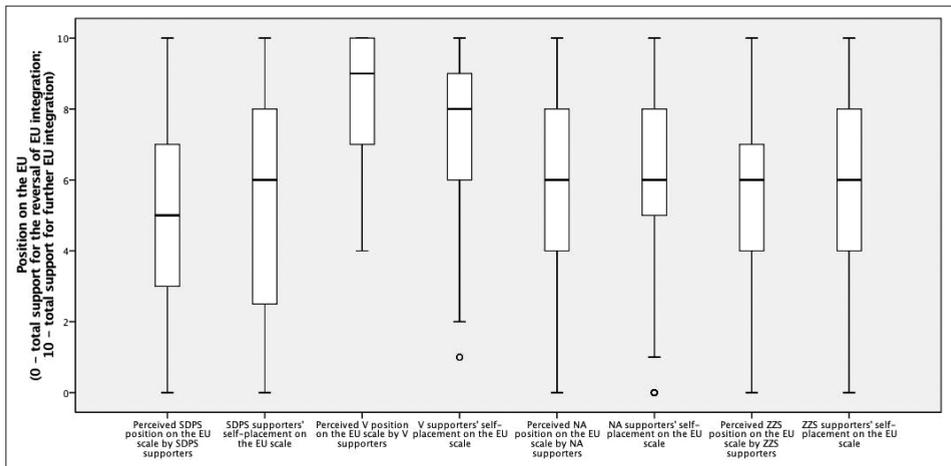


FIGURE 4. Distribution of Latvia's parliamentary parties' placement scores and their supporters' self-placement scores on the EU support scale.

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

though such a difference exists in case of V. This indicates that Latvia's parties tend to select their positions on the EU by mirroring their voters' average positions on the EU. However, in some cases, voters' views on the EU may be of secondary importance, meaning that some parties' positions on the EU are determined by other factors.

Lastly, separate summary independent samples t-test analyses were conducted with Estonia's data. The results reveal that the only party which does not have a significantly different position on the EU from that of its voters in Estonia is K.<sup>18</sup> This corresponds to previous

<sup>18</sup> Results for all compared pairs: RE (M=8,222, SD=1,762) and RE voters (M=7,25, SD=2,24);  $t(14,914)=3728,641$ , sig.=0,000; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,616$ ; sig.=0,000). K (M=4,578, SD=2,786) and K

findings (See Table 1), which indicated that K had the least divergent position on the EU from its voters among all of Estonia's parliamentary parties in 2014. In order to make sure that the differences detected between the other three parties' and their voters' positions on the EU are indeed significant, a box-and-whisker plot was constructed (Figure 5). It reveals that the boxes, representing 50 per cent of middle scores of K, SDE, and each of their supporters on the EU scale overlap with both medians, which are also equal in both cases. Even though the SDE's and, especially, K's supporters' views on the EU are rather diverse, as is indicated by the breadth of the boxes; there are no significant differences between these parties and their voters' positions on the EU.<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, the opposite is true for the IRL and RE. In both cases, the boxes overlap, but not with both medians. The medians themselves also differ by one point. However, the case of the RE needs some further discussion. It was already revealed that this party has the largest gap between its own and its supporters' average position on the EU among the parties included in this analysis. As this result corresponds with the finding of the t-test analysis, it can be concluded that the RE has a significantly different position on the EU from those of its voters. This in turn means that this position may have been pursued

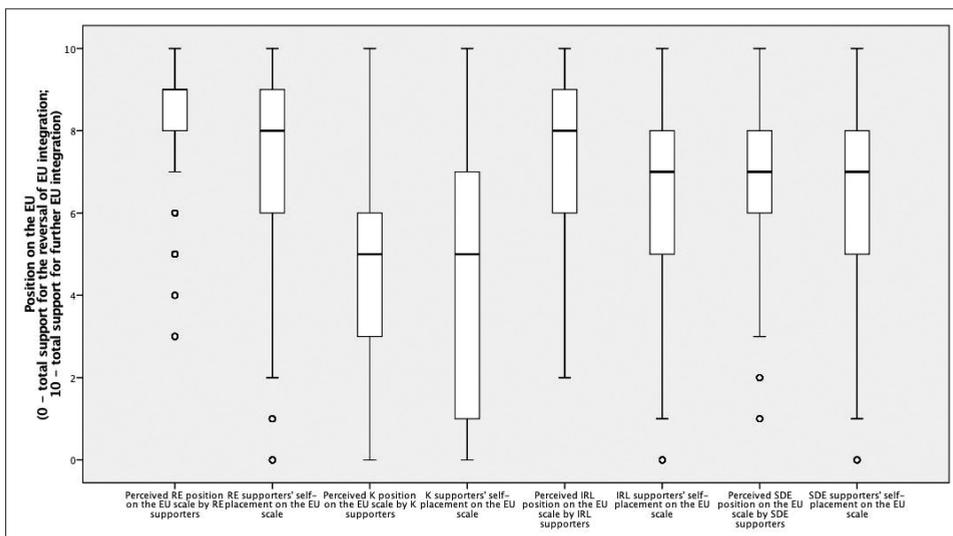


FIGURE 5. Distribution of Estonia's parliamentary parties' placement scores and their supporters' self-placement scores on the EU support scale.

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

voters ( $M=4,385$ ,  $SD=3,322$ );  $t(0,875)=764,047$ ,  $sig.=0,382$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,422$ ;  $sig.=0,0003$ ). IRL ( $M=7,401$ ,  $SD=1,895$ ) and IRL voters ( $M=6,722$ ,  $SD=2,338$ );  $t(9,115)=3220,158$ ,  $sig.=0,000$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,523$ ;  $sig.=0,000$ ). SDE ( $M=6,866$ ,  $SD=1,881$ ) and SDE voters ( $M=6,428$ ,  $SD=2,266$ );  $t(6,428)=3699,61$ ,  $sig.=0,000$ ; equal variances not assumed (Hartley's test  $F=1,450$ ;  $sig.=0,000$ ).

<sup>19</sup> The t-test showed that there is a difference between the SDE and the SDE's voters' positions on the EU, however, this may have been due to the SDE's rather large sample size. Moreover, the difference between the SDE and its supporters' average positions on the EU is the second smallest among all of Estonia's parliamentary parties.

due to another factor, not due to intent to mirror supporters' positions on the EU. Overall, it seems that the only explanation for these differences detected (RE and IRL) is related to the parties' positioning on the EU support scale: the more pro-European a party in Estonia is, the more divergent it is from its voters on their position on the EU. As this result is similar to the situation seen in Latvia, this finding, and why it did not appear in Lithuania, should be analysed further. Given the data analysis, there are no significant differences between the positions of the two least pro-EU parties in Estonia and the positions of their supporters, though such a difference exists between the supporters and platforms of Estonia's two most pro-EU parties. This indicates that there might be a tendency for Estonia's soft-Eurosceptic parties to choose their position on the EU by mirroring their supporters' average positions on the same issue. However, other factors may better explain this choice among Estonia's pro-EU parties.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper had two aims: 1) to analyse the positions the Baltic states' parliamentary parties hold regarding the EU and whether they provide competing views on this organization, and 2) to determine whether the Baltic states' parliamentary parties mirror their voters' positions on the EU.

Regarding the first aim of this paper, the analysis revealed that the Baltic states' parliamentary parties tend to be rather supportive of the EU, as two thirds of the parties analysed hold positions backing further European integration; the remaining parties are soft Eurosceptics at best. These parties (in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) do not question their state's membership in the EU or the EU itself, but they may be critical of certain aspects or obligations that membership entails. The analysis also indicated that there are no hard Eurosceptic parliamentary parties in the Baltics, meaning that no parliamentary party would support its country's withdrawal from the EU. This in turn revealed that the Baltic states' parties can be grouped into three separate categories in regard to their positions on the EU: 1) strong pro-EU, 2) soft pro-EU, and 3) soft Eurosceptics. Even though this suggests that the Baltic states' parties do have varying positions on the EU, a statistical analysis was employed in order to check whether this is the case in each Baltic country. This was confirmed after running one-way analysis of variance and post-hoc comparisons. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Baltic states' parliamentary parties have differing positions on the EU. Based on this finding, it can also be stated that the Baltic states' parliamentary parties compete on the EU issue dimension as they provide significantly different positions on this matter.

The paper also aimed to establish whether the Baltic states' parliamentary parties mirror their voters' positions on the EU. The results revealed a contrasting picture among the three Baltic states. In Lithuania, no statistically significant differences between parties and their voters' positions were detected, leading to the conclusion that Lithuania's parties do mirror their voters' average positions on the EU. In Latvia and Estonia, however, some significant differences were detected. Specifically, in Latvia, differences were seen between its main pro-EU party and that party's supporters. In Estonia, the two most pro-EU parties were found to have statistically different positions on the EU when compared to those of their voters' average

positions. This means that these parties approximate, but do not mirror, their voters' average positions on the EU. Based on this, the answer to the second question of this paper is: Even though most Baltic states' parties tend to mirror their voters positions regarding the EU, it is not true in all cases, as some parties' positions on the EU differed statistically significantly from their supporters' average positions on the same issue. Furthermore, this reveals that, in the Baltic states, mirroring voters' average positions on the EU may be the main—but not the only—factor determining parties' positions on this supranational organization.

This observation prompts a recommendation for further research on this matter. Particularly, further analyses are needed to determine other factors influencing parties' choices regarding their positions on the EU, and how these other factors do so. Moreover, more research is needed to explore why Lithuania's pro-European parties, unlike Estonia and Latvia's, do not have statistically differing positions on the EU when compared to those of their voters' average positions. Lastly, the tendencies detected in this paper will need to be checked again, when new data becomes available.

## APPENDIX

TABLE 2. List of parliamentary parties in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 2014 and indication which of these parties were included in the analysis.

Lithuania		Latvia		Estonia	
Parliamentary parties (at least one seat in 2014)	Is party included in the analysis?	Parliamentary parties (at least one seat in 2014)	Is party included in the analysis?	Parliamentary parties (at least one seat in 2014)	Is party included in the analysis?
<b>Labour Party (DP)</b> <i>Darbo partija</i>	Yes	<b>Harmony (SDPS)</b> <i>Sociāldemokrātiskā Partija "Saskaņa"</i>	Yes	<b>Estonian Reform Party (RE)</b> <i>Eesti Reformierakond</i>	Yes
<b>Social Democrats (LSDP)</b> <i>Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija</i>	Yes	<b>Unity (V)</b> <i>Vienotība</i>	Yes	<b>Estonian Centre Party (K)</b> <i>Eesti Keskerakond</i>	Yes
<b>Homeland Union (TS-LKD)</b> <i>Tėvynės sąjunga – Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai</i>	Yes	<b>Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS)</b> <i>Zaļo un Zemieņu savienība</i>	Yes	<b>Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (IRL)</b> <i>Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit</i>	Yes
<b>Liberal Movement (LRLS)</b> <i>Liberalų Sąjūdis</i>	Yes	<b>National Alliance (NA)</b> <i>Nacionālā apvienība</i>	Yes	<b>Social Democratic Party (SDE)</b> <i>Sotsiaaldemokrātisk Erakond</i>	Yes

Lithuania		Latvia		Estonia
<b>The Way of Courage</b> (DK) <i>Drąsos kelias</i>	No;  <i>Not included in EUvox survey</i>	<b>For Latvia from the Heart</b> (NSL) <i>No sirds Latvijai</i>	No;  <i>Not enough responses</i>	
<b>Order and Justice</b> (TT) <i>Tvarka ir teisingumas</i>	Yes	<b>Latvian Association of Regions</b> (LRA) <i>Latvijas Reģionu apvienība</i>	No;  <i>Not enough responses</i>	
<b>Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania</b> (LLRA) <i>Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija</i>	Yes			
<b>Peasant and Greens Union</b> (LVZS) <i>Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga</i>	Yes			

For Latvia, parties elected to the Parliament on elections held on 4 October 2014 are considered.  
SOURCE: Author's analysis.

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