

Singapore Management University

Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

Research Collection School of Social Sciences

School of Social Sciences

11-2009

Irish political parties and policy stances on European integration

Kenneth BENOIT

Singapore Management University, kbenoit@smu.edu.sg

Follow this and additional works at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sooss_research



Part of the [Eastern European Studies Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

Citation

BENOIT, Kenneth.(2009). Irish political parties and policy stances on European integration. *Irish Political Studies*, 24(4), 447-466.

Available at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sooss_research/4001

This Journal Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Sciences at Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Collection School of Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. For more information, please email cherylids@smu.edu.sg.

Irish Political Parties and Policy Stances on European Integration

KENNETH BENOIT

Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

ABSTRACT Support for the political and economic integration of Europe has formed an increasingly important policy issue for Irish political parties as the European Union has grown in importance at both the domestic and European level. This article examines the political positioning of Irish parties on the issue of European integration, comparing these positions across parties and across time. For data, it draws on expert surveys taken at each election since 1992, a time series of coded manifestos as well as a computerized content analysis of the 2007 party manifestos. The article also reports the results of a previously unpublished expert survey of Irish party positions on other political dimensions conducted by the author in 2007.

Introduction

The ongoing project of European integration has had a tremendous impact on Irish social, political and economic life. Since joining the EU in 1973, Ireland has received over €20 billion in funding under the Structural and Cohesion Funds scheme, leading not only to a figurative transformation of the economic landscape, but also a literal transformation of the physical Irish landscape as transport, roads, tunnels and bridges were built or improved using EU funds.¹ Immigration as a result of the open EU labour market has also soared since the expansion of the EU eastward in 2004 and again in 2007, transforming the Irish social fabric and labour markets through an unprecedented infusion of immigration, legalized and facilitated by Ireland's membership of the European Union. Furthermore, this effect has continued to change and grow as the EU itself has changed and grown.

As a political issue, the expansion of European-level political institutions moved to the fore of the Irish issue space during the debate and first referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008. All major Irish political parties supported ratification of the treaty, yet this support belied subtle differences in party positioning on various aspects of support for the scope and pace of continuing European integration. Furthermore, the Irish voters' first rejection of the Lisbon Treaty demonstrated the potential political force of anti-European issue positions. This potential can only be expected to grow as

Correspondence Address: Ken Benoit, Department of Political Science, Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland.
Email: kbenoit@tcd.ie

debate continues over ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Despite the pledge of the major parties to continue to support European integration, therefore, we should continue to expect differentiation in the political positions of Irish parties on the issue of Europe.

Party positions towards Europe have received extensive comparative study in the literature on European integration (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002; Marks *et al.*, 2002; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2007), yet with only a few exceptions (Holmes, 2005; Moxon-Browne, 2000), none has focused on the evolution of this issue among Irish parties. Party positions in Ireland have been presented before (Benoit & Laver, 2005, 2006; Laver, 1994, 1998), but have not focused specifically on policy towards Europe. This article explicitly targets the empirical record of Irish political party positioning on the issue of European integration by measuring and mapping these positions using empirical data on Irish party positions on European integration over time. Using estimates from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) (Budge *et al.*, 2001, Klingemann *et al.*, 2006), I trace the salience of the EU issue in policy platforms dating back to the Treaty of Rome in 1957 when the issue first appeared in party manifestos. Using data from expert surveys conducted at the last four Irish elections, I also examine the position of Irish political parties on EU integration, as well as the relative importance of this dimension for each party. Finally, I also report the full results on all aspects of policy from a new expert survey of Irish party positions conducted in 2007.²

The Relative Salience of the European Issue

The motivations for and means by which parties position themselves on different political issues has been extensively examined in political science, including positioning on European integration (Marks *et al.*, 2002; also see above). Apart from *positions* on an issue dimension, it is also possible to distinguish the relative *importance* of a given issue for a political party (Benoit & Laver, 2006). Issues that parties deem more important than others are likely to be those for which differences in positioning matter more, both to the party members and representatives as well as to their electorates. When viewed across parties, furthermore, some issues will emerge as more important than others in the overall political discourse. With the introduction of an unprecedented initiative for decentralizing government departments and agencies announced with the 2004 budget, for instance, decentralization policy grew in political importance relative to other issues in the Irish policy space. Similar events, typically coming from Europe in the form of treaties, agreements, and enlargement, have also resulted in changes over time in the relative salience of European integration as a political issue in Ireland. Using data on the salience of this issue over time, it is possible to measure and track these changes.

One way to look at this issue is through a comparative examination of Irish party manifestos over time. The Comparative Manifesto Project, a research effort that has been ongoing for several decades (Klingemann *et al.*, 2006), provides such a measure in the form of their dataset of coded manifestos. The CMP divides each manifesto into discrete text units and then assigns each text unit a code from one of

56 policy categories. The CMP scheme includes two codes for the European issue, known as ‘PER108: European integration: Positive’ and ‘PER110: European integration: Negative’.³ If we consider the total occurrences of text units coded as belonging to one of these two categories, then we can measure their relative occurrence within each overall manifesto to form a picture of how important this issue has been in Irish party platforms over time.⁴

Figure 1 plots the total mention of either EU category over time, for the six major parties, from 1957. The labelled, dotted lines also indicate the dates of major referendums occurring in Ireland concerning European integration. Interestingly, there was almost no mention of the EU before Ireland joined in 1973, probably due to the fact that although all parties had campaigned intensively before the 1972 referendum on EU accession, the EU was not an issue in the election campaign that took place two months following EU accession. The EU issue remained more or less absent from party platforms until 1989, when it jumped significantly to more than 30

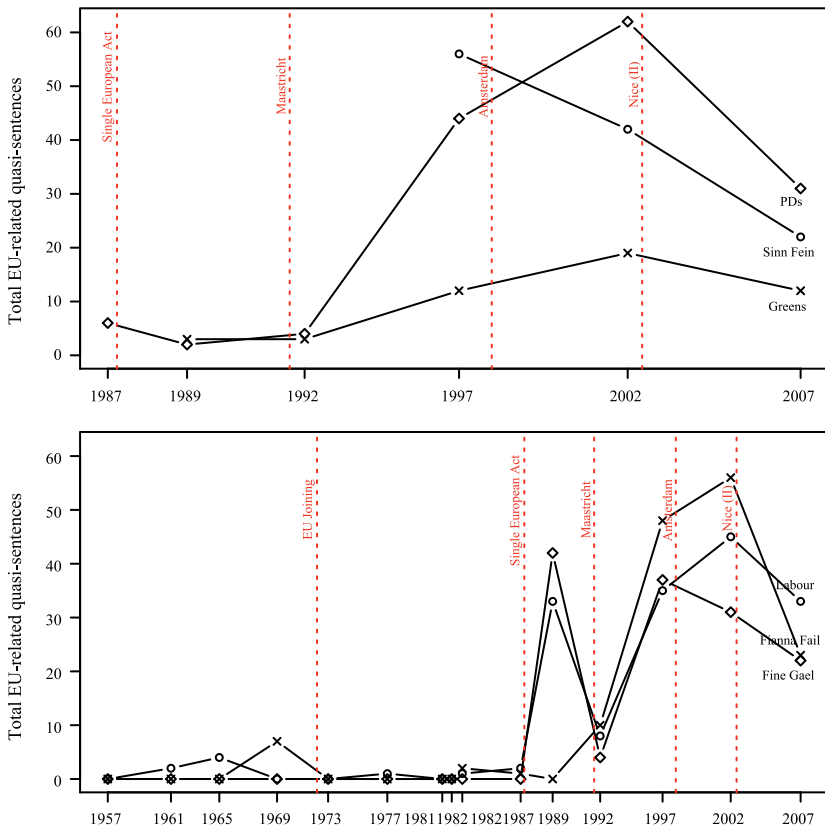


Figure 1. Total mentions of European integration (positive/108 or negative/110) in party manifestos, from CMP.

Note: Dotted lines indicate dates of referendums on European treaties.

mentions each in the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael manifestos. This jump occurred in the wake of the referendum on the Single European Act (SEA) which took place soon after the 1987 elections. This referendum followed the decision of the Supreme Court in the Crotty case to require constitutional revision for approving European treaties such as the Single European Act and the Amsterdam, Maastricht, Nice, and Lisbon Treaties that followed.⁵ The 1989 elections also occurred during negotiations on the shape of the Maastricht Treaty, the agreement that included the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and led to the creation of the Euro. By the time of the 1992 election, mentions of Europe had dropped again, possibly because this election came after the referendum on Maastricht had already passed to a Yes vote of 69.1 percent.

The last two elections in the top panel, as well as the bottom panel of Figure 1, show the expansion in debate over EU integration that took place in the 1997 and 2002 elections. To get a more nuanced picture of the relative importance of the EU as a political issue for these later elections, we can draw on four expert surveys of Irish party positions from studies conducted by Michael Laver (1994, 1998), Kenneth Benoit and Michael Laver (2006), and most recently, in 2007 by the author (see Appendix).⁶ The relative importance of the EU policy dimension is plotted in Figure 2 as a barplot. Each bar shows, for the last four Irish elections, the level of importance attached to the European integration issue by the political parties. The importance scale runs from 1 (not at all important) to 20 (very important). The thin, capped lines on each bar show the

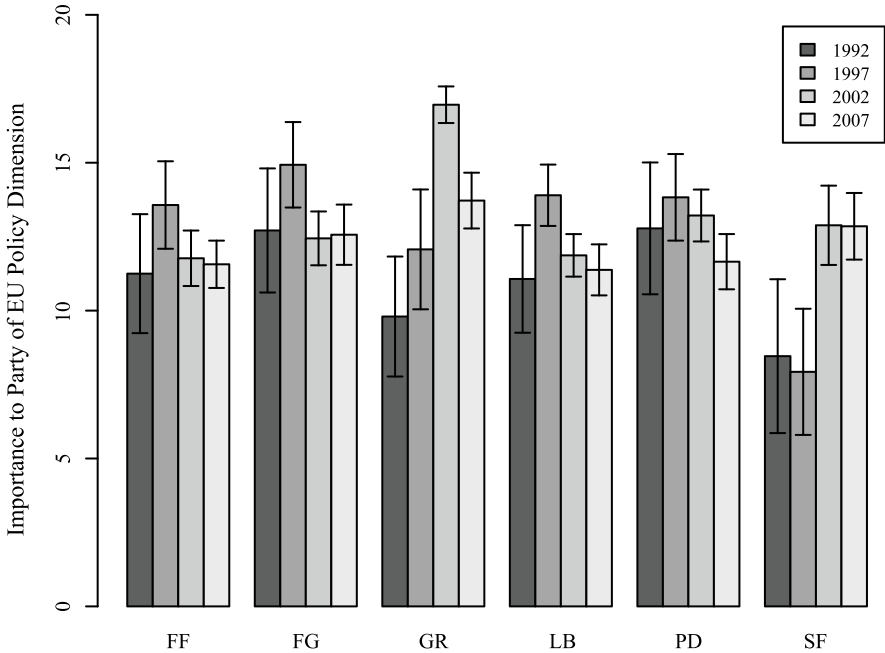


Figure 2. Importance of the EU policy dimension, 2002 and 2007, from Expert Surveys. Note: Capped bars show 95 percent confidence intervals.

95 percent confidence interval for each measure, which comes from the mean of expert judgements, taking into account the number and variances of the expert placements.

The biggest changes in the importance of European integration as a political issue occurred in 1997, when most parties shifted by at least two points upward in the importance they attached to the European integration issue. Exceptions were the Progressive Democrats (PDs), for which the change was not statistically significant, and Sinn Féin, for which the importance of the EU issue fell marginally in 1997. The importance Sinn Féin placed on the European issue did change massively in 2002, however, when the EU suddenly became an issue of major importance for this party (see Maillot, 2009). The Green Party also shifted on the importance it attached to this issue in 2002, from around 13 points to around 17. Indeed, the Europe issue was important for all parties in 2002, given that every party mentioned the rejected first Nice Treaty referendum in their manifestos. In the 2007 election, there were few changes in the importance of the European issue among Irish parties. The Green Party seems to have regarded this issue as considerably less important than in 2002, while the PDs regarded it as nearly two points less important, although the PDs' change in importance could not be regarded as statistically significant. All things considered, 1997 seems to have seen the largest spike in the importance of the EU as a policy issue for Irish parties, with the notable exception of Sinn Féin.

Evidence of Changing Policy Positions

Apart from the importance that parties attach to the EU issue, they also adopt specific political *positions* on EU integration as a political dimension, typically favouring less or more integration, a reduction or expansion in the scope of EU authority, or keeping the EU's power base concentrated in national governments, versus granting more power to the EU through institutions such as direct election by EU electorates. Positioning on these issues can be compared over time for the last four elections using data from the expert surveys. Figure 3 tracks the changes in these positions from 1992 to 2007, showing the expert means in addition to the 95 percent confidence intervals represented by the shaded regions. Examining the main Irish parties, it is clear that two – the Greens and Sinn Féin – remained basically 'Eurosceptic' throughout the last four elections. Prior to their unprecedented participation in government following the 2007 elections and their qualified support for the Lisbon Treaty in 2008, the Greens had never before supported the ratification of an EU treaty (see Bolleyer & Panke, 2009). The Greens' 2007 position in fact shows a significant shift towards the middle position, a movement of nearly five points in the direction of favouring an expansion in the scope of EU authority. Sinn Féin has also consistently opposed greater European integration, traditionally favouring decentralization and the retention of national sovereignty. For the other main parties, some change is indicated, with many parties becoming considerably cooler on the EU issue, especially in the period from 1997 to 2002. The Progressive Democrats in particular experienced a large shift away from a previously strong pro-integrationist stance, but Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour also moved in this direction. Between

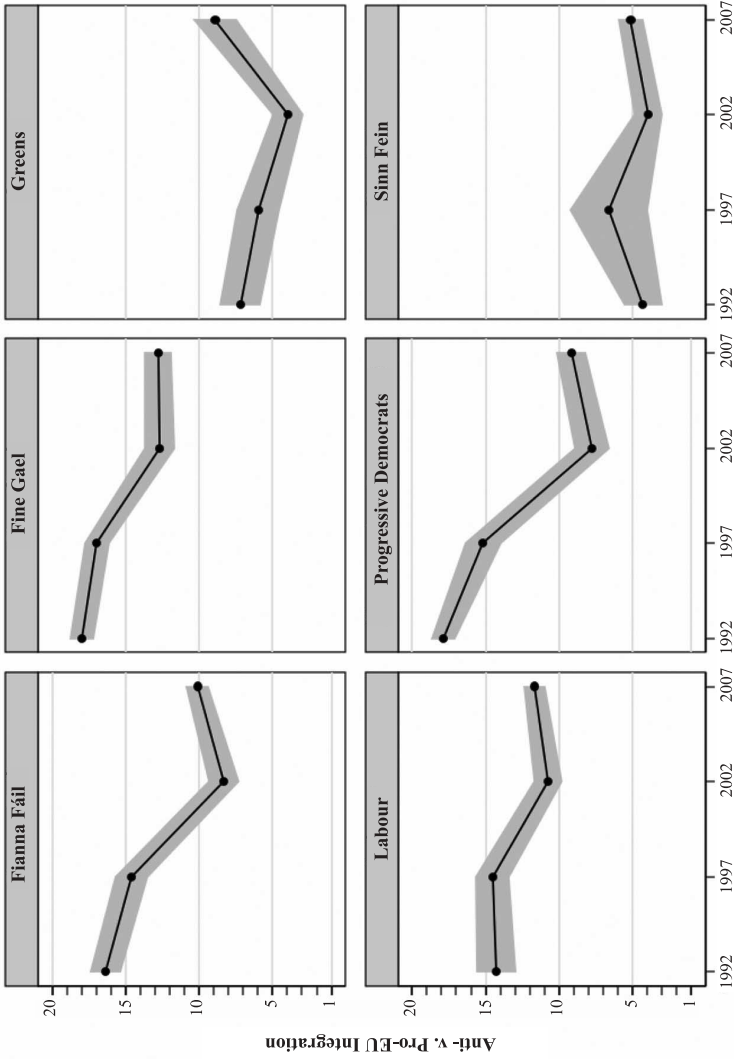


Figure 3. Irish party positioning on European integration, from Expert Surveys.
Note: Shaded regions show 95 percent confidence intervals.

Policy Stances on European Integration

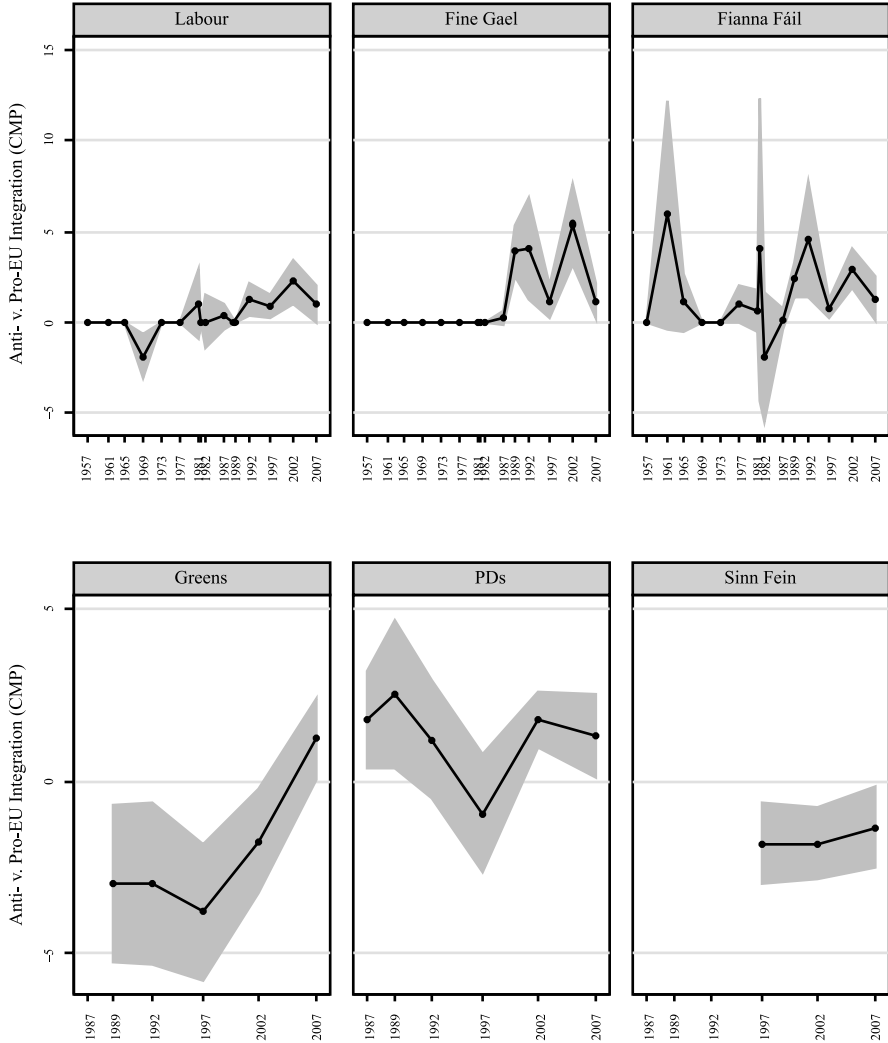


Figure 4. Positions on European integration, from CMP.
Note: Shaded CIs from Benoit *et al.* (2009).

2002 and 2007, only the Green Party exhibited a statistically significant change in its position on European integration, and then only from 2002 to 2007.

For a longer time series of positioning on European integration, we can turn to the CMP dataset. By subtracting the percentage of anti-EU mentions (PER110) from the percentage of pro-EU mentions (PER108), we can construct an anti- versus pro-EU policy measure spanning, at least theoretically, the [-100, 100] interval. Figure 4 plots the movement over time for the ‘old’ and ‘newer’ Irish parties, with the shaded

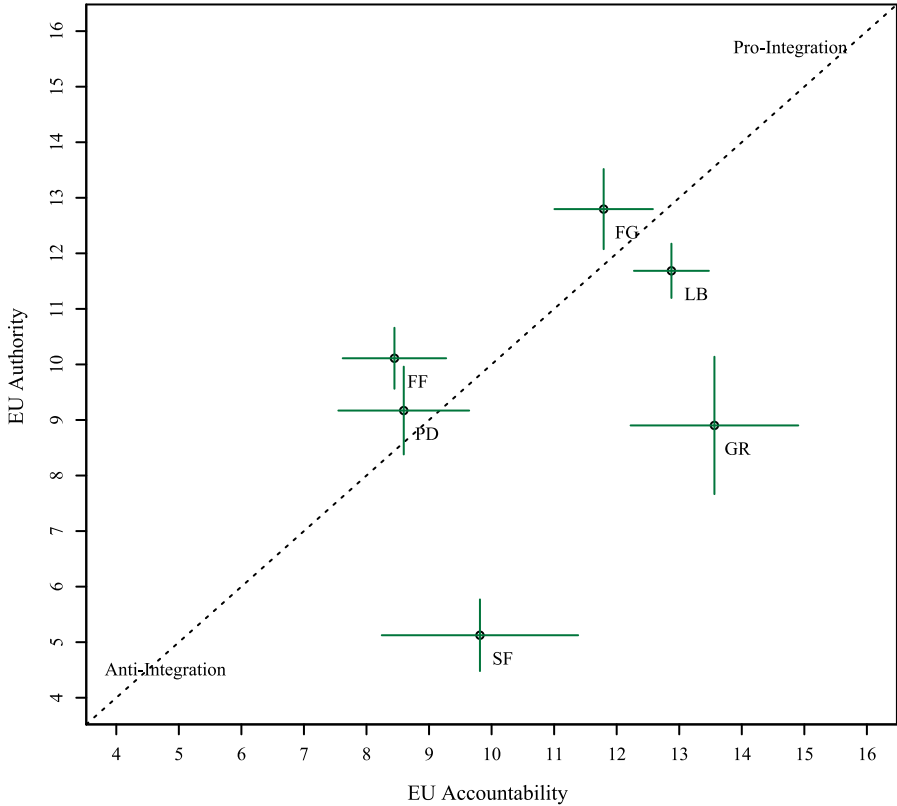


Figure 5. Comparing party positioning in 2007 on EU Accountability versus EU Authority. *Source:* 2007 Expert Survey.

regions indicating the 95 percent confidence bands (as computed by Benoit *et al.*, 2009).

A few patterns are evident from Figure 4, as well as from its comparison to the comparable expert survey data from Figure 3. First, the data separates the parties into two groups, according to whether they favoured or opposed greater European integration. The two most ‘Eurosceptic’ parties are clearly the Greens and Sinn Féin, although the Greens made a weak shift towards a more pro-EU position in 2002. On the more pro-integration side were the other parties, with the PDs and Labour lower than Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, at least in the 1990s. Second, given that the maximum value on the y-axis on European integration was about six (from 100), as a proportion of all manifesto statements European integration was relatively low on the agenda, and the only recent case being Fine Gael which reached six percent in 2002. Finally, in comparison with the expert survey results from Figure 5, the PDs appeared in 2002 to be more Eurosceptic according to the expert judgments than the manifesto scoring indicated. A similar difference is observable for Fianna

Fáil which was slightly Eurosceptic according to the experts in 2002 but was relatively pro-European in 2002 as judged by its manifesto score.

Dissecting the Dimensions of Support for Europe

The 2007 expert survey asked experts to judge parties on two separate dimensions of European policy, one relating to the scope over which the EU should have authority (restricted versus expanded), and the other relating to the degree of accountability (through national governments or direct) which should be granted to the institutions of the EU. The specific wording of these dimensions was:⁷

EU Authority:

‘Favours increasing the range of areas in which the EU can set policy’ (1), versus ‘Favours reducing the range of areas in which the EU can set policy.’ (20)

EU Accountability:

‘Promotes the direct accountability of the EU to citizens via institutions such as the European Parliament.’ (1), versus ‘Promotes the indirect accountability of the EU to citizens via their own national governments.’ (20)

By comparing the placements of parties on these two dimensions, we can attempt to determine whether these two dimensions in fact captured different positions among parties toward the EU, or whether by contrast they were measuring a single dimension of support or opposition to the European integration. Figure 5 plots the location of Irish parties according to their mean placements on the two EU dimensions from the 2007 expert survey, along with cross-hairs indicating the 95 percent confidence intervals of these positions. The two-dimensional placement reveals several interesting patterns.

First, it reveals that while Eurosceptic on the dimension of EU authority, both Sinn Féin and the Green Party are much more in favour of making the EU – whatever its scope of authority – much more directly accountable to EU citizens, even if this would ultimately increase at least the legitimacy (and hence authority) of the EU’s institutions. Sinn Féin is almost twice as pro-European on the accountability issue (score of 9.8) than on the question of EU authority (score of 5.1); the Green Party is almost five points more pro-EU on accountability (13.6) than on authority (8.9). All other parties’ positions were more or less the same on these two dimensions, as evidenced by their tight clustering around the dotted identity line.

Second, the two-dimensional configuration clearly reveals distinct clusters of parties, apart from the Greens and Sinn Féin. The incumbent coalition parties, Fianna Fáil and the PDs, were nearly in the middle of the range and indistinguishable on the (more politically salient) issue of EU authority. Fine Gael and Labour were also adjacent on both dimensions, and from their (just) overlapping confidence intervals we also see that their positions cannot be distinguished, at least statistically, on either dimension. Fine Gael and Labour were both considerably more pro-integration than Fianna Fáil and the PDs.

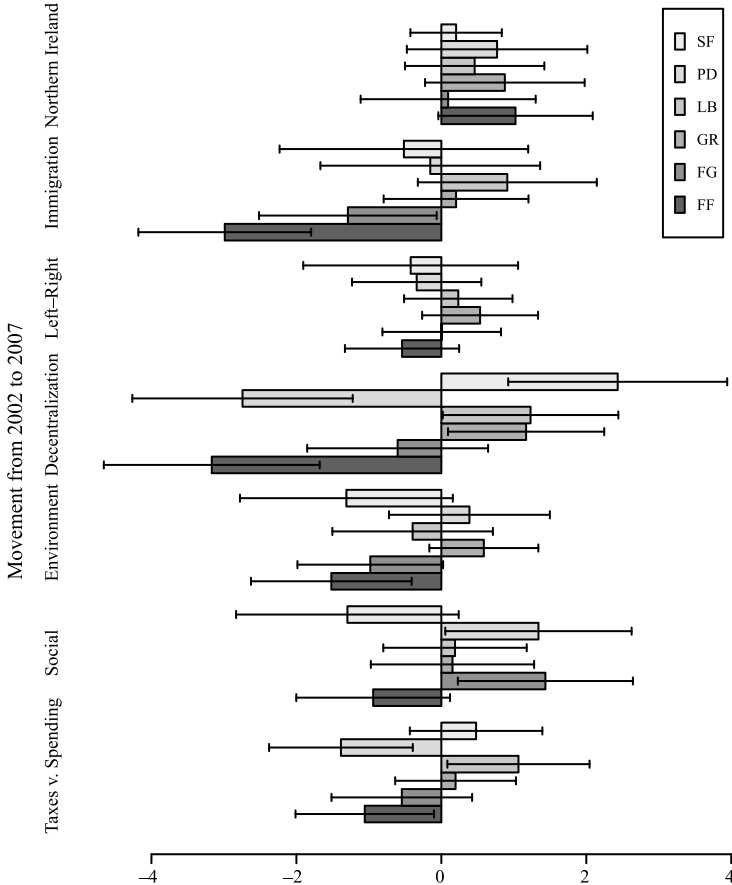


Figure 6. Changes in party positions, 2002 to 2007.

Other Policy Dimensions in the 2007 Elections

To provide some context for the changes we have observed in positioning on the issue of European integration, this section briefly discusses the positioning of Irish parties on non-European issues as well as the change in their positioning on these issues from 2002 to 2007.

The Appendix provides details of the 2007 survey, with numerical summaries presented in Tables 1 and 2. To compare these results to those from an expert survey taken at the 2002 election, Figure 6 plots the change in position from 2002 to 2007. The horizontal axis is the degree of (left-right) change as measured in 2007. On taxes versus spending, for instance, the Labour Party moved approximately one

point to the right, while Fianna Fáil moved approximately one point to the left. The thin, capped lines drawn on each bar indicates the 95 percent confidence interval on a *t*-test of difference between the 2007 and 2002 expert mean placements. For both Labour and Fianna Fáil on taxes versus spending, for instance, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis of no change and to conclude that these parties' measured move leftward was in fact a real movement to the left, since the confidence interval does not overlap zero. Interpreting the bars this way, only the PDs also changed their position on this dimension, moving about 1.5 points to the left. For Sinn Féin, the Green Party, and Labour, none of the observed changes can be statistically distinguished from no change.

To summarize the change on the other dimensions, we observed no statistically significant change on the Northern Ireland issue, although all parties did move slightly toward a more pro-Unionist position. On the immigration issue, both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael moved towards a more open position on immigration, with Fianna Fáil making a relatively large shift of three points in this direction. Fianna Fáil also moved significantly towards the more pro-environmental end of the environment dimension, by more than 1.5 points, with no statistically significant changes observed for any other parties on environmental policy. On social policy, both the PDs and Fine Gael moved slightly to the right, by nearly 1.5 points each; Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil both moved slightly leftward on this dimension but these changes were not statistically significant.

The biggest change was observed on the decentralization policy dimension, a policy dimension which gained in salience following the announcement in 2004 of decentralization as an important component of government policy. Positioning on decentralization in 2007 basically divided the government and opposition parties. On the government side, both the PDs and Fianna Fáil moved significantly towards the pro-decentralization pole, by around three points each. On the opposition side, both Labour and the Green Party shifted about one point each towards the anti-decentralization pole, with both shifts statistically significant. An even bigger shift away from favouring decentralization was observed for Sinn Féin, which moved about 2.5 points away from its 2002 position.

On the overall left–right scale, which asked respondents to place the parties taking all aspects of party policy into account, no changes of either substantive or statistical significance were observed for any party.

Conclusions

From the examination of Irish party positions on European policy over time, several key conclusions can be highlighted. First, the examination of the Comparative Manifesto Project data clearly shows a rise in the prominence of Europe as a topic in party platforms from 1989 onward, while the issue received scant attention before this period. Mentions of the EU rose sharply in 1989 for the largest three parties. Mentions dropped in 1992, but then rose in importance from 1997 onward. As measured in the 1990s by expert surveys, the importance attached to policy toward

European integration rose sharply in the 1997 election, and returned to pre-1997 levels again in 2002. The exceptions to this pattern were the Greens and Sinn Féin, for whom the policy importance of European integration rose sharply between the 1997 and 2002 elections.

Second, all major parties experienced a move from relatively pro-European positions to more moderate positions on European integration between 1997 and 2002. Exceptions were Sinn Féin, whose policy position toward European integration was essentially unchanged, and the Green Party, which moved to a more moderate position on Europe from a Eurosceptic position held in 2002 and previous elections.

Third, a two-dimensional breakdown of attitudes toward the restriction or expansion of the scope of EU authority on one hand, versus the accountability of the EU to national governments versus directly to EU citizens on the other, shows three distinct clusters of parties. The first consists of Fine Gael and Labour, which are relatively pro-European on both scales. The second consists of FF and the PDs, which were centrist on both scales. The last group is made up of the Greens and Sinn Féin, both pro-accountability yet Eurosceptic on the scope of EU authority: mildly so for the Greens, extremely so for Sinn Féin.

Finally, examining the changes in policy positions on all other issues by comparing the 2007 and 2002 expert surveys, we see relatively few changes in policy by any parties. Exceptions were:

- Fianna Fáil moved to a more open position on immigration between 2002 and 2007, a shift of almost three points to the left on the 1–20 point expert survey scale, and to a slightly more pro-environment stance (a nearly two point leftward shift).
- Fine Gael moved slightly towards the more conservative end of the policy spectrum on the social liberalism dimension, a shift of around 1.5 points.
- The PDs and Fianna Fáil moved slightly to the left, and Labour slightly to the right, on the economic dimension of taxes v. spending.
- On decentralization policy, a dimension cast in a new light by the government announcement in 2003 of major new initiatives in this area, numerous parties changed their positions between 2002 and 2007. Sinn Féin became more opposed to decentralization policies, a statistically significant shift of almost three points, while the Greens and Fine Gael moved in this direction about one point each. Fianna Fáil and the PDs – the proponents of the new plans to shift significant parts of the Dublin-based state administrative apparatus to regional areas – show strong shifts of around three points each towards the pro-decentralization pole.

Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 25th Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association of Ireland, Dublin City University, 19–21 October, 2007. Support for this project was provided by the Institute for International Integration

Studies, Trinity College. Thanks to Tímea Kacsokovics, Marina McGale and Nina Wiesenhomeier for assistance with data and various parts of the surveys, to Séin Ó Muineacháin for making available his coding of the 2007 Irish manifestos and for comments, and to Michael Gallagher for comments.

Notes

1. Data taken from the website of the National Development Plan, available at www.ndp.ie/view-doc.asp?fn=/documents/eu_structural_funds/overview/structural_funds.htm&mn=euso&nID=3 (accessed August 2009).
2. Unlike the discussion in other contributions to this edited issue, only political parties in the Republic of Ireland are considered here, regrettable but unavoidable limitation of the data used in this article.
3. The non-overlapping text units are known as 'quasi-sentences', the self-contained text units each expressing a distinct policy message that form the basic units of the CMP's coding scheme. The CMP coding scheme consists of 56 policy categories covering seven major policy areas. PER108 and PER110 fall under the broad category of 'internationalism'. For details see Klingemann *et al.* (2006) or Benoit *et al.* (2009).
4. The 2007 party positions come from a coding by Séin Ó Muineacháin.
5. More precisely, the Court determined that the provisions of Title III of the Single European Act required specific constitutional authorization, as it held that these provisions changed the substance of Irish membership in the European Community. Since this decision, Irish governments have chosen to pursue ratification through constitutional amendment, although parliamentary ratification technically remains an option. I thank an anonymous reviewer for clarifying this point.
6. The 1992 and 1997 expert surveys asked expert respondents to locate the main Irish parties on a single 1–20 point dimension of support for the European Union, worded as: 'Oppose more integration with the European Union (1) versus Promote more integration with the European Union (20).' The wording of the Benoit and Laver (2006) survey, conducted at the time of the 2002 election, was 'Favours a more powerful and centralised EU' (1) versus 'Opposes a more powerful and centralised EU' (20). The scale from the 2007 survey is detailed in the Appendix. For comparability the 2002 and 2007 dimensions were inverted to match the 1992 and 1997 scales, so that the 20 position represented the pro-integration pole.
7. As worded on the questionnaire, the EU Authority and EU Accountability dimensions were inverted, so that the (20) end of the scale represented the anti-EU integration position.

References

- Benoit, K. & Laver, M. (2005) Mapping the Irish policy space: voter and party spaces in preferential elections, *Economic and Social Review*, 36(2), pp. 83–108.
- Benoit, K. & Laver, M. (2006) *Party Policy in Modern Democracies* (London: Routledge).
- Benoit, K., Mikhaylov, S. & Laver, M. (2009) Treating words as data with error: uncertainty in text statements of policy positions, *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), pp. 495–513.
- Bolleyer, N. & Panke, D. (2009) The Irish Green Party: an unhappy marriage?, *Irish Political Studies*, 24(4), pp. 543–557.
- Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A. Bara, J. & Tanenbaum, E. (2001) *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments 1945–1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Holmes, M. (Ed.) (2005) *Ireland and the European Union: Nice, Enlargement and the Future of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G. & Wilson, C.J. (2002) Does left/right structure party positions on European integration?, *Comparative Political Studies*, 35(8), pp. 965–989.

- Klingemann, H-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J., Budge, I. & McDonald, M. (2006) *Mapping Policy Preferences II: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments in Eastern Europe, European Union and OECD 1990–2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Laver, M. (1994) Party positions and cabinet portfolios in Ireland, 1992, *Irish Political Studies*, 9, pp. 157–164.
- Laver, M. (1998) Party policy in Ireland 1997: results from an expert survey, *Irish Political Studies*, 13, pp. 159–171.
- Laver, M. & Hunt, B. (1992) *Party and Policy Competition* (New York: Routledge).
- Maillot, A. (2009) Sinn Féin: still more ‘critical’ than ‘engaged’? *Irish Political Studies*, 24(4), pp. 559–574.
- Marks, G., Wilson, C.J. & Leonard, R. (2002) National political parties and European integration, *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(3), pp. 585–594.
- Moxon-Browne, E. (2000) The Europeanisation of political parties: the case of the Irish Labour Party, in: J. Lorincz, (Ed.) *Studies on Common European Administration*, pp. 35–51 (Budapest: University of Economic Sciences).
- Rohrschneider, R. & Whitefield, S. (2007) Representation in new democracies: party stances on European integration in post-Communist Eastern Europe, *Journal of Politics*, 69(4), pp. 1133–1146.

Appendix: Details of the 2007 Expert Survey

The expert survey of Irish party positions on policy was conducted during the period of two weeks before and roughly one month after the 2007 Irish general election which took place 24 May 2007. The survey closely followed the expert placement methodology used in previous surveys (Benoit & Laver, 2006; Laver, 1994, 1998; Laver & Hunt, 1992). Each policy dimension consisted of two endpoints anchored at 1 and 20, generally corresponding to the 'left' and 'right' positions respectively. Respondents were asked, for each policy dimension, to locate the main list of political parties on two scales, one indicating a party's *position*, and another indicating the *importance* that the party attached to this policy dimension.

A total of 237 experts were identified, based on the mailing list of the Political Studies Association of Ireland. These experts were invited to participate in the survey by email. The sample was randomly divided into two groups: 128 experts were contacted two weeks before the election, and 127 experts were contacted one week after the election. By clicking on a URL in the email containing a unique respondent identifier, each expert was directed to an online survey. A total of 54 valid surveys were received, for a response rate of 22.7 percent. The precise wording used in the scales is provided below.

Scale definitions:

Taxes versus spending:

Promotes raising taxes to increase public services. (1)

Promotes cutting public services to cut taxes. (20)

Social values:

Favours liberal policies on matters such as abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia. (1)

Opposes liberal policies on matters such as abortion, homosexuality, and euthanasia. (20)

Deregulation:

Favours high levels of state regulation and control of the market. (1)

Favours deregulation of markets at every opportunity. (20)

Environment:

Supports protection of the environment, even at the cost of economic growth. (1)

Supports economic growth, even at the cost of damage to the environment. (20)

Decentralization:

Promotes decentralization of all administration and decision-making. (1)

Opposes any decentralization of administration and decision-making. (20)

Northern Ireland:

Opposes permanent British presence in Northern Ireland. (1)

Defends permanent British presence in Northern Ireland. (20)

Immigration:

Favours policies designed to help asylum seekers and immigrants integrate into Irish society. (1)

Favours policies designed to help asylum seekers and immigrants return to their country of origin. (20)

Left–Right:

Please locate each party on a general left-right dimension, taking all aspects of party policy into account.

Left. (1)

Right. (20)

Sympathy:

Taking all aspects of party policy into account, please score each party in terms of how close it is to your own personal views.

Same as respondent. (1)

Farthest from respondent. (20)

Table A1. Mean party positions, 95 percent parametric confidence intervals (based on t distributions) and sample sizes from 2007 expert survey

Policy Dimension	Party							PDs
	Sinn Féin	Greens	Labour	Fine Gael	Fianna Fáil			
Left-Right	5.9 [4.9, 6.8] 52	6.2 [5.8, 6.7] 54	7.6 [7.1, 8.1] 54	12.7 [12.1, 13.4] 54	12.7 [12.2, 13.3] 54			16.0 [15.3, 16.8] 54
Taxes v. Spending	5.3 [4.6, 6.1] 53	6.0 [5.3, 6.6] 52	7.7 [6.9, 8.4] 53	11.9 [11.3, 12.5] 54	12.7 [12.1, 13.3] 53			16.0 [15.2, 16.9] 53
Deregulation	4.9 [4.2, 5.6] 54	7.1 [6.3, 7.9] 51	6.9 [6.2, 7.6] 53	13.1 [12.4, 13.8] 54	13.0 [12.3, 13.7] 53			17.6 [16.9, 18.2] 54
Northern Ireland	1.7 [1.2, 2.2] 54	9.5 [8.8, 10.3] 43	9.6 [8.9, 10.2] 52	11.1 [10.3, 11.8] 54	7.4 [6.6, 8.2] 54			11.8 [10.9, 12.7] 52
EU: Authority	5.1 [4.3, 5.9] 48	8.9 [7.5, 10.3] 51	11.7 [11.0, 12.4] 54	12.8 [11.9, 13.7] 54	10.1 [9.4, 10.8] 54			9.2 [8.2, 10.1] 53
Immigration	8.1 [6.9, 9.3] 48	6.0 [5.3, 6.8] 51	7.6 [6.6, 8.5] 52	11.6 [10.7, 12.5] 54	11.7 [10.8, 12.6] 54			13.9 [12.8, 15.1] 53
Environment	8.8 [8.0, 9.5] 48	2.9 [2.3, 3.5] 54	9.1 [8.4, 9.8] 53	12.8 [12.1, 13.5] 52	14.4 [13.6, 15.3] 54			15.8 [15.1, 16.6] 53

(Continued)

Table A1. (Continued)

Policy Dimension	Party						PDs
	Sinn Féin	Greens	Labour	Fine Gael	Fianna Fáil		
Social	8.3 [7.3, 9.2] 51	5.8 [5.1, 6.4] 53	6.2 [5.5, 6.9] 53	12.9 [12.2, 13.6] 54	13.9 [13.0, 14.7] 54	8.3 [7.4, 9.2] 53	
EU: Accountability	9.8 [8.1, 11.5] 43	13.6 [12.1, 15.1] 48	12.9 [12.1, 13.6] 48	11.8 [10.8, 12.7] 48	8.4 [7.5, 9.4] 47	8.6 [7.4, 9.8] 47	
Decentralization	9.0 [7.8, 10.3] 41	5.7 [4.8, 6.5] 50	9.8 [9.0, 10.7] 51	11.2 [10.4, 12.0] 53	9.9 [8.7, 11.0] 54	9.2 [8.1, 10.3] 51	
Sympathy	14.2 [12.8, 15.6] 52	7.9 [6.9, 8.9] 53	7.4 [6.4, 8.5] 53	10.9 [9.8, 12.0] 53	12.3 [11.2, 13.5] 53	13.7 [12.1, 15.2] 52	
Vote Share 2007	6.9%	4.7%	10.1%	27.3%	41.6%	2.7%	

Table A2. Mean party importance scores, 95 percent parametric confidence intervals (based on t distributions), and sample sizes from 2007 expert survey

Policy Dimension	Overall Importance [s.e.]	Party					PDS
		Sinn Féin	Greens	Labour	Fine Gael	Fianna Fáil	
Taxes v. Spending	13.7 [0.3]	13.4 [12.2, 14.6] 51	12.9 [11.7, 14.0] 50	13.4 [12.2, 14.7] 51	13.6 [12.8, 14.5] 52	13.8 [12.9, 14.7] 51	17.1 [16.3, 17.9] 52
Deregulation	13.5 [0.4]	12.9 [11.7, 14.2] 54	12.5 [11.3, 13.6] 51	15.0 [14.2, 15.7] 52	13.0 [12.2, 13.7] 53	13.4 [12.5, 14.2] 52	17.4 [16.6, 18.1] 54
Northern Ireland	12.4 [1.3]	19.3 [18.6, 20.0] 54	7.5 [6.1, 8.9] 43	9.4 [8.4, 10.4] 51	11.1 [10.0, 12.1] 53	13.5 [12.5, 14.5] 54	9.5 [8.4, 10.7] 50
EU: Authority	12.0 [0.3]	12.9 [11.7, 14.0] 47	13.7 [12.8, 14.7] 50	11.4 [10.5, 12.2] 53	12.6 [11.5, 13.6] 53	11.6 [10.8, 12.4] 53	11.7 [10.7, 12.6] 52
Immigration	11.8 [0.3]	11.4 [10.2, 12.5] 48	11.2 [10.1, 12.3] 50	13.1 [12.4, 13.8] 51	11.8 [10.9, 12.8] 53	11.5 [10.7, 12.4] 53	13.5 [12.3, 14.6] 52
Environment	11.5 [0.9]	9.9 [8.7, 11.1] 46	19.2 [18.8, 19.6] 53	11.4 [10.7, 12.1] 51	10.9 [10.0, 11.7] 51	11.4 [10.2, 12.6] 53	11.5 [10.1, 12.9] 52
Social	11.4 [0.4]	9.2 [8.2, 10.2] 49	11.7 [10.6, 12.8] 53	12.9 [11.9, 13.9] 51	11.4 [10.4, 12.4] 53	11.4 [10.4, 12.5] 54	11.2 [10.2, 12.3] 53

(Continued)

Table A2. (Continued)

Policy Dimension	Overall Importance [s.e.]	Party						PDs
		Sinn Féin	Greens	Labour	Fine Gael	Fianna Fáil		
EU: Accountability	10.8 [0.3]	11.0	13.2	10.6	11.0	10.4	10.3	
		[9.6, 12.5] 42	[11.9, 14.6] 44	[9.6, 11.6] 45	[9.7, 12.3] 46	[9.2, 11.6] 45	[9.1, 11.4] 45	
Decentralization	10.4 [0.5]	10.1	12.5	10.1	9.2	11.1	10.2	
		[8.4, 11.7] 40	[11.3, 13.8] 51	[9.0, 11.1] 48	[8.2, 10.2] 50	[10.0, 12.3] 52	[8.9, 11.5] 51	