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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EuroPolis explored the forms of democratic deficit that are directly affecting EU citizens. It tests the hypothesis that citizen involvement in inclusive, informed, and thoughtful deliberation about the EU increases access to politically relevant information, citizens’ political engagement in EU public affairs, perceptions of the legitimacy of EU institutions, a sense of belonging to the EU, and voter turnout in EU parliamentary elections. We draw our hypothesis from the theory of deliberative democracy that suggests that democratic legitimacy rests on open deliberation, and prescribes that citizens should become involved in politics. EuroPolis assess the political outcomes of deliberative democratic practices by experimenting what would happen if EU citizens became substantially more informed about EU institutional arrangements, decision-making processes, and policy issues, as well as more aware of the policy preferences of other EU citizens. The project showed that substantive and informed pan European deliberation is possible among ordinary citizens. Second it showed coherent connections between policy attitudes and electoral choices. When Europeans deliberate together they become a bit more like ideal citizens. They become more informed, more open to the views of others, more willing to subscribe to policy alternatives that may require substantial short term sacrifices (as in the climate change discussion) and more greatly identified as Europeans rather than just citizens of their own countries. Euro Polis shows what the European project could evolve into, if the barriers of language and nationality are overcome. More specifically, it shows that EU citizens are capable of dealing with complex issues on a pan European scale. The results of the EuroPolis deliberative experiment demonstrate, therefore, that there are no principled hurdles to the application of deliberative democracy to the EU. As such, the engaging of ordinary citizens through deliberative experiments can be one way to deal with the conundrum of public discontent with EU policies and institutions. By giving citizens the opportunity to discuss and voice opinion in respectful dialogue, deliberative polling raises awareness of the complexities of political decision-making and democratic legitimacy in a polity like the EU.

A SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

There is a lively academic and political debate over the evolution of the European Union (EU) as a political system. The White Paper on Governance, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and more recently the constitutional debate surrounding the revised EU Treaty have rekindled the discussion on governance and the meaning of democracy at the European level. At a time when the EU’s legitimacy and democratic capacities are questioned, it is important to address the issue of whether and how truly democratic participation is possible at the European level and what effects such participation might have on democratic politics in Europe. This is of particular importance given how European citizens in recent years have become increasingly skeptical towards further integration. This is partly the result of what some refer to as an alleged “democratic deficit” in the European Union and the lack of a public sphere for citizens to have a voice in present and future policies of their Union. Despite the EU’s endeavours to present itself as a liberal democratic entity, critics point to a "democratic deficit", citing a comparatively weak EU Parliament, EU executive decision-making processes that bypass EU parliamentarian scrutiny and direct electoral accountability, first-and-second-order elections dominated by parties campaigning on domestic platforms rather than on EU issues, citizens’ preferences on EU policy issues that often go unheard and unrepresented, and a lack of forums for EU citizens to get informed and openly debate on policies governing their Union. These deficiencies feed public scepticism over integration and further the gap between citizens and EU institutions, representatives, and policymakers. This, in turn, nurtures further political
disengagement, as low turnouts in EU Parliamentary elections show, and inhibits a sense of community amongst the EU polity. These perils force us to ask: to what extent is citizen democratic participation in EU politics possible and what effects might it have on democratic politics in Europe?

Our project, EuroPolis, takes on these criticisms and explores the forms of democratic deficit that directly affecting EU citizens. We test the hypothesis that citizen involvement in inclusive, informed, and thoughtful deliberation about the EU increases access to politically relevant information, citizens’ political engagement in EU public affairs, perceptions of the legitimacy of EU institutions, a sense of belonging to the EU, and voter turnout in EU parliamentary elections. We draw our hypothesis from the theory of deliberative democracy that suggests that democratic legitimacy rests on open deliberation, and prescribes that citizens should become involved in politics.

EuroPolis assess the political outcomes of deliberative democratic practices by experimenting what would happen if EU citizens became substantially more informed about EU institutional arrangements, decision-making processes, and policy issues, as well as more aware of the policy preferences of other European citizens. Would this make them evaluate EU policy alternatives differently from the way they would with limited information? Would their individual policy evaluations be more consistent with their basic values and beliefs? Would their policy preferences change? Would their electoral choices be more aligned with their policy preferences? Would they be more or less likely to vote in second-order elections? Would their electoral choices change? Would the criteria they use to identify a preferred policy and to make electoral choices include greater weight for EU rather than domestic considerations? And if, apart from being more versed on EU public affairs, EU citizens had equal opportunity to engage in a thoughtful dialogue with citizens of other EU nationalities to discuss what they expect from their Union, would they identify the interests and problems they share with other EU citizens? Would their policy preferences become sensitive to others’ interests? Would they develop stronger bonds with fellow EU citizens and feel part of the Union they formally belong to? Would they feel motivated to take a more active part in political acts intended to influence EU policy-making processes? In short, if there were more of a Europe-wide public sphere, would there be an increase in civic engagement?

EuroPolis seeks to answer these questions through a carefully designed experiment that assess how political and social attitudes toward EU issues change as a result of exposure to politically relevant information, and what difference this makes for political participation and voter turnout.

EuroPolis stems from crucial philosophical and normative questions, but it is an empirical and comparative project. It is primarily informed by accounts of deliberative democracy. To test the political outcomes of deliberative democracy practices, EuroPolis adopted an experimental design, whose core methodology is centred on Deliberative Polling.

Deliberative Polling incorporates the principles of deliberative democracy and allows assessment of opinion transformation that is likely to occur as a result of political awareness and thoughtful argumentation. EuroPolis conducted such a cross-national EU citizen dialogue approximately one month ahead of the 2009 European Parliamentary election (On May 29-31 2009). It brought randomly selected sample of EU citizens to Brussels for a two-day Deliberative Polling experiment to discuss two policy issues with other EU citizens, policy experts, and candidates for the 2009 EU Parliamentary election. This deliberative poll event produced the data for the experimental test group.

The core requirement of any experimental design is to ensure that a randomly selected group of test participants can be compared systematically with members of an equivalent control group who are
not subjected to the experimental test. This condition was satisfied in the present study by conducting two parallel panel surveys, one aimed at recruiting participants in the DP event (initial N=3000) and the other aimed at recruiting members of the control group (initial N=1300). Members of both groups were recruited by telephone, using random digit dialing, in April 2009. The initial test and control group samples were based on national quotas in all EU member states and were both designed to be representative of the EU population as a whole. A random subset of the initial test group (N=600) was invited to participate in the DP event. Some 348 of these respondents attended the event. They constitute the Europolis test group. Their views on a range of topics were ascertained on four occasions: at the time of the recruitment interview (panel wave 1 = t1); when they arrived for the DP event (t2); at the end of the DP event (t3); and two months after the European Parliament elections (t4). The views of members of the control group were gathered on two occasions: at the time of the recruitment interview (t1); and two months after the European elections (t4). Of the original 1300 respondents to the first wave control group survey, some 729 responded at t4. These 729 respondents constitute the control group. The analysis consists in making comparisons (a) across panel waves within the test group panel, and (b) between the changes in attitude that are observed in the test and control groups over time. Research design of EuroPolis is illustrated in Figure 1. The core expectation is that, if deliberation makes a difference, then the test group’s views – in contrast to those of the control group – should change systematically across the four panel waves.

The test group was interviewed both before and after the Deliberative Polling event, and once more a few days after the 2009 EU Parliamentary elections. A control group was interviewed at the time of recruitment of the test group and again after the EP election. This design allowed us to see whether any attitudinal and behavioural changes observed in the experimental test group are due to their involvement in thoughtful deliberation and not to other factors. EuroPolis thus provided the unique opportunity to observe and evaluate rigorously how exposure to thorough and balanced policy information and thoughtful deliberation during electoral periods affect citizens’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in the following areas:

- awareness of politically relevant information;
- sense of legitimacy of EU decision-making processes;
- attitudes towards citizens from other European nationalities;
- sense of belonging to the EU;
- EU policy preferences and criteria for their selection;
- interest in EU politics;
- voting intentions and behaviour in the 2009 EU Parliamentary election.

The scientific added value of the EuroPolis project derives from the testing of Deliberative Polling methods at the transnational level in an electoral context and across linguistic and national divisions. One major contribution of EuroPolis will be to shed additional light on the conditions under which we might move from second-order to first-order elections at the European level. If participation rates increase and the issues engage people, who by implication consider the European level as the appropriate level not only for discussing issues but also for handling them, then we could argue that there is a change from second-order to first-order. Further scientific value may come from the comparison of EuroPolis polling data with that of other deliberative forums.

EuroPolis is also important to the ongoing process of European integration, as this project intends to aid the EU’s attempts to consolidate itself as a liberal democratic establishment based on the values
of individual freedom, equality, representation, and inclusiveness. These values are in tension with current institutional arrangements that prevent EU citizens from influencing policy agendas. The 2005 referendums show that a significant proportion of EU citizens are skeptical about the entire EU integration process. These problems need to be addressed to prevent the consequential delegitimation of EU institutions and decision-making processes, citizen disengagement from EU politics, distrust of public institutions, and a low sense of EU identification amongst its population. EuroPolis considers it vital to recreate a public arena that allows people to become informed and participate in a free dialogue about EU policies in the future. EuroPolis models a deliberative, explicitly transnational alternative for public consultation that stands in contrast to plebiscitary methods (such as the referendum) that lack deliberation and other methods (such as many other deliberative forums) that lack representativeness. By crossing national and linguistic boundaries, EuroPolis provides a living embodiment of the European-wide public sphere. EuroPolis test if the creating this sphere is feasible and propose the model how it could inform electoral calculations of EU voters.

EuroPolis also provides value added from a policy perspective, as it tests ways of reducing the perceived democratic deficit by simulating a public realm of informed citizen debates that could bridge the gap between the public and EU representatives and decision-makers. This public realm would enable citizens to explain their policy preferences to policymakers. In doing so, EuroPolis utilized an innovative, technology – deliberative polling – that encourages inclusive citizen debate, scrutiny and criticism of public policies as a way to attain policy outcomes that secure broader support and effectively respond to citizens’ interests.

A unique feature of the EuroPolis project is that the proposed deliberative experiment is carried out in proximity of the 2009 European parliamentary elections. This allowed the EuroPolis to contribute to clarify the role of deliberation and information not only in the formation of individual and collective policy preferences but also in affecting electoral behaviour and voting turnout.

EuroPolis benefited greatly from the scientific, infrastructural, and organisational experience of its research team. The team is composed of a European and American scholars with expertise in political philosophy, democratic theory, survey methodology, and comparative voting and political behaviour. Amongst the participants are the two proponents of the Deliberative Polling method, Professor James Fishkin of Stanford University and Professor Robert Luskin of University of Texas at Austin. The EuroPolis’s team has a unique first-hand experience in conducting deliberative polls at the local, national and European level. These experiences include five national Deliberative Polls in Britain, a national Danish Deliberative Poll on the Euro, two national Bulgarian Deliberative Polls, and a recent local one in Roma and another in Turin, Italy, coordinated by the INTUNE Integrated Project financed under the EU Sixth Framework Programme. Other experiences on which Europolis builds are other Deliberative Polls in the US, Europe, Asia and Australia. Very importantly, EuroPolis’s research team includes some of the main contributors to the first wave of deliberative experiments conducted in 2006-2007 under the Plan D initiative, namely the European Citizen’s Consultation led by the King Baudouin Foundation, in addition to Tomorrow’s Europe led by Notre Europe.

The experience of the EuroPolis research team shows that Deliberative Polls at the local, national, and international level can set the conditions for democratic debate. They enhance the substance of discussions, motivate citizens to take an active part in local politics, and motivate authorities to continue them. We believe that, as leaders move to revive the EU constitution, the time is right to test rigorously whether a deliberative design incorporating the principles of deliberative democracy is capable of producing similar results at the supranational EU level, in the context of EU elections.
A DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN S&T RESULTS/FOREGROUNDS

In this section we will present the results of an analysis of the net overall aggregate change produced by deliberation during the EuroPolis experiment. Before all, given the research design and the fact that big effort has been made in order to select a representative sample of population to participate in EuroPolis, in the next section we will assess and discuss the representativeness of the EuroPolis sample. Secondly, we will compare the before-after changes for the participants, thirdly, we will compare the before after changes of the participants with those of the control group and fourthly, we will try to explain those changes. Eventually, we will discuss our results in a view of feasibility of cross-national deliberation and question of democratic legitimacy.

Who Participated in Europolis

Given the fact that the EuroPolis sample is selected in order to be representative at the European level, the socio demographic characteristics of the European population could be compared with those of the selected participants. We used two sorts of comparison to gauge the overall representativeness of our sample. The first is comparing the participants with the European population of comparable age (18 or more) on the available socio-demographic characteristics, at the European level, based on census data as provided by Eurostat. We used three set of indicators: gender, age and education. In terms of age and gender, the differences are not important. The EuroPolis participants are slightly more middle-age (46-55 years), as compared to the census population. In terms of education our sample appears better educated than the general population. While 31% of the European population has no more than a lower education (ISCED 2), in our sample this number is less than a tenth (9.3%). The second comparison is with the Eurobarometer data, the most noticeable survey source for the EU-27 countries. A variable on which this comparison is possible is the Left-Right continuum. The comparison is not exact, due to the different scales used by EuroPolis and Eurobarometer. But recoding the respondents in three groups (Left, Center and Right), shows that in both cases, roughly one third of the population belongs to each of the three categories. The major source of differences is the higher number of DKs in the Eurobarometer data that however spreads out evenly among Left, Right and Center. In conclusion, there is no dramatic over-representation of people of any particular leaning among the participants to our experiment.

If in terms of general population demographics and left-right our participants look fine, when we compare those who accepted to participate in the event with those who did not, and those who accepted to participate with the control group, some more systematic differences do emerge (Table 1A and 1B). On several variables there are differences between participants and non participants. The participants in the EuroPolis experiment are slightly more educated and upper class than the non participants (simply accentuating a difference that is present in standard survey samples, especially if over the phone), but they are also somewhat more pro-immigration, pro-European and more likely to vote in the European parliamentary election than the non participants. Despite these differences, participants and non participants start from the same knowledge base when it comes to these issues. On most of the knowledge questions, differences between the two groups are minimal and non significant. The two exceptions are about the “Blue Card” for immigration and the Greenhouse effect for climate change.

These differences between participants and non participants on immigration, while no such differences materialize for climate change which might suggest that some process of self-selection
against too negative views on immigration might be at work during the recruitment process. Those who entertain more negative views of immigration and immigrants might be reluctant to engage in frank and open discussion with others about their own ideas. However, this does not mean that all had rosier views on immigrants either. Although somehow truncated in its variance, still 12% of the participants sample sits at the extreme position on whether to send all illegal immigrants back to their countries of origin (among non participants this proportion is 18%). Similarly, 12% of the participants strongly disagree with the statement that illegal immigrants should be eligible for national health care (among non participants they are 17%), and 8% strongly disagree that the “children of illegal immigrants should be eligible to attend public school” (11% among the non participants).

As we saw, some differences exist between the participants and non participants and between participants and control group. Still, the differences are neither numerous nor intensive, therefore, the sample of participants should be considered highly representative of European population.

**Aggregate Changes in Participants’ Attitudes and Opinions**

The general conclusion one can gather from a preliminary analysis of the data, is that participation in Europolis do indeed change both policy attitudes and voting behaviour and in a direction conducive to a greater understanding of the complexity of issues and greater involvement in Europe. EuroPolis shows that citizens can modify their views also on controversial topics such as immigration, if they have the chance to discuss them, and the first data shows that participants’ views became more European, tolerant and “greener”. Table 2 compares the mean value for participants at time 1, the time of recruitment, and time 3, when they left the event, on almost all available questions using a paired-comparison test of significance of the difference. We report T1 and T3, unless data are available only for different time waves, because this is the standard way of reporting those data and the ones that allow a easier comparison with previous analysis, based on other deliberative polls (see Fishkin, Luskin and Jowell, 2002; Isernia et al, 2008). Altogether more than 100 questions were asked in at least one of the four waves of the experiment, with questionnaire at T2 and T3 longer than those at T1 and T4, for reasons related to the difficulty of sustaining a long interview over the phone as opposed to a self-administered questionnaire. Overall 30 questions were asked about immigration issues (20 of them were asked in all four waves and 10 in only two of the four, at T2 and T3), 26 questions were asked about climate change (2 asked in all four times and all the others at T2 and T3), 18 questions about the EU, 13 about political issues and voting behaviour (6 asked in each of the four waves), and 9 questions to measure knowledge on climate change, immigration and EU decision-making. These questions were then followed by the standard set of socio-demographics questions in Time T1 and, at time T3, by a battery of questions gauging the evaluation of the deliberative polling experience.

Below, we discuss some of the main findings from the Deliberative Polling experiment in terms of a) knowledge gains of the participants, b) change of political attitudes, c) Sense of belonging to Europe and Voting intentions and behaviour

**Knowledge gains**

As it is often the case in a Deliberative Poll, the greatest changes occur in the level of knowledge participant have about the issues, as a consequence of attending the event, reading the briefing document, preparing for the event and participating in it, exchanging ideas and discussing with
fellow participants, experts and politicians. Out of 9 questions measuring level of knowledge about immigration, climate change and EU decision-making, we register significant changes in 7 of them\(^1\). The two with no change are one about what institutions represent the EU on the international stage and the other about wind power in the EU. On all other questions, the changes clearly show that the participants learned a great deal about both immigration and climate change, and also about the EU as a whole. There was a noticeable difference though in how much the participants learned by topic. They learned most about immigration (a 20% before-after knowledge gain), next most about the EU (10%), and least—though still very significantly—about climate change (10%). The percentages giving the right answer for the “blue card” question\(^2\) went from 7% at Time T1 to 37% at the end of the event (T3). The percentage of those indicating the correct role of EU in immigration policies among those who participated in the event went up from 44% to 56%. Climate change shows similar patterns. 23% of the participants indicate the right percentage of the EU’s total energy consumption that comes from fossil fuels while 33% of participants after the event give the right answer. The people who indicate the right country with the highest production of greenhouse gases are 46% at T1 and 63% at T3, the greatest increase in knowledge among the climate change questions.

Change of political attitudes and preferences

Our findings points to quite a strong impact of the DP experiment on attitudes. As a result of informed debates among the participants, with politicians and with policy experts, attitudes towards climate change and towards immigration changed significantly. Overall, significant changes were more likely on climate change than on immigration. On immigration, attitude change was significant before-after in 17 out of 30 questions (57%), while on climate change it was significant in 17 out of 26 questions (65%). Not surprisingly, as mentioned before, knowledge gains are the most systematic changes, with 7 out 9 questions that show significant increase in knowledge. On the contrary, only 4 of the 18 questions about the EU show significant changes, while on general political attitudes 5 out of 13 show a significant change.

Salience, knowledge and enthusiasm for measures to combat climate change all increased as a consequence of the two-days of deliberations. The average score for how serious a problem climate change was rose from an already high 7.53 up to 8.27, closer to 10 , on the question whether climate change is “the most serious problem we face.” The median value went up from 8 to 9, getting even closer to the logical ceiling. At T1, 77% of the people gave a score higher than 5 (with 34% assigning the maximum value of 10 to climate change) and at T3 89% had a score higher than 5, with 39% assigning the maximum priority to this issue. Climate change was clearly a priority for the overwhelming majority of respondents well before the Deliberative Poll and the experience contributed to make it even more salient, if at all possible.

The discussion also made participants “greener” in their policy preferences, even when invited to consider possible trade-offs and the costs of their policy preference. They were asked to choose between the view that “we should do everything possible to combat climate change even if that hurts the economy” and “we should do everything possible to maximize economic growth, even if that hurts efforts to combat climate change”. Before deliberation 44% wanted to maximize combating climate change; after deliberation this rose to 62%. Similarly, respondents were asked to choose between the view that the EU “should reduce greenhouse gas emissions as rapidly and as much as possible even if that means we have to make radical changes in the way we live” and the contrasting view that “the EU should make no effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions even if that means that

\(^1\) And both questions with no significant change in knowledge (Q45 and Q51) were asked only at T2 and T3. Presumably, participants already gained knowledge from T1 from reading the briefing document in preparation for the event.

\(^2\) The correct answer was “they must have a university education.”
climate change will get much worse”. Before deliberation, 74% wanted the EU to do as much as possible. After deliberation this increased to 86%. As a consequence of deliberation, people were more willing to spend more “on new technologies to capture and store carbon emissions” and “on improving energy efficiency;” to invest more “in renewable energy sources, like wind, hydro, wave and solar power,” “reducing the quantity of goods and services we consume.” By contrast, they were, less willing to invest more in biofuels and nuclear energy. Similarly, the percentage of those who think the EU should increase the “existing climate change targets” “greatly” went up from 35% to 51%.

With regard to attitudes on immigration, citizens from all member states attached greater importance to immigration as an issue and they became more supportive overall to rights for immigrants and had a more positive image of them, although, as might be expected from such a politicized issue, overall aggregate change was less frequent and less dramatic than for climate change. Out of 30 questions about immigration, only 12 showed significant changes. Deliberation also affected the salience of the issue. Immigration was perceived to be less of a problem than climate change, but the perception of immigration as an important problem increased from 45% before deliberation to 65% afterwards. Deliberation made participants more willing to accommodate immigrants, including illegal immigrants. Before deliberation, 63% of participants agreed that “illegal immigrants should be eligible for national health care”; afterwards, this figure increased to 71%. Participants after deliberation also became readier to agree that “decisions about what immigrants to admit should take no account of what country they are from.” The percentage in favour of reinforcing border controls fell from 66% before deliberation to 59% afterwards, while the number of those ready to impose “penalties on employers who hire illegal immigrants” increased. The participants also became more tolerant in relation to the criteria for admitting non-EU immigrants. Before deliberation, 69% considered it important that immigrants be committed to the hosting country’s way of life; after deliberation only 52% did so. There were comparable, though smaller, falls in the importance of “coming from a similar culture” (from 25% to 17%); and in “being Christian” (13% to 9%). On the contrary, the importance of speaking the country’s language and personal financial autonomy, as criteria for admittance, remained important throughout the deliberation.

Prior to deliberation, when invited to describe immigrants on a set of five characteristics, 26% of the participants consistently viewed them negatively on all five; 32% consistently viewed them positively. After deliberation, those taking a consistently positive view rose to 39%. For example, the percentage of respondents who considered immigrants “honest” increased from 25% to 34%, while those agreeing that “immigrants have a lot to offer our cultural life” rose from 37% to 43%. In a similar vein, those who thought that “immigration increases crime in our society” fell from 48% to 40%. Interestingly enough, the perception of “how many” immigrants there are was also affected by deliberation. The number of those who thought there are too many did not change, while the number of those who thought there is about the right number decreased from 41% to 35% and those who thought there are too few went slightly up.

On other immigration issues, however, deliberation did not produce any statistically significant effect, but still when there were changes, they were in the direction of greater acceptance and tolerance toward immigrants. Before deliberation, participants were divided between those who want to send illegal immigrants back to their country (23%), and a larger group (40%) that wanted to legalize them. Deliberation left this division virtually unchanged, with equivalent figures of 22% and 40%. However, the percentage of those who agree (strongly or somewhat) that “immigration increases crime in our society” was 48% before deliberation and went down to 40% after deliberation, a change in the direction of most of other questions, but still not statistically significant. While deliberation made people slightly (but significantly) more likely to say that “immigrants have
a lot to offer to the country’s national culture,” (38% before and 44% after deliberation) when Muslims were mentioned in the question, apparently it did not produce any change. 3 34% thought that Muslim had a lot to offer to our culture before deliberation and 33% took this view after deliberation. Deliberation had no effect also on two important issues related to attitudes toward immigrants: the perception that immigrants do not take jobs away from nationals, but rather take jobs nationals do not want to take and the perception that immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from welfare services. In both cases, however respondents were already well on the liberal side of the continuum.

**Sense of belonging to Europe and Voting intentions and behaviour**

Participants were asked both before and after the deliberation if they intended to vote in the upcoming European elections. Those who intended to vote were asked which party they preferred. As there were over 260 parties standing in the European election across the 27 member states, party preferences were grouped to match the European Parliament’s eight major party groupings. The deliberative weekend dramatically increased support for the Greens, whose vote share increased from 8% before deliberation to 18% after. Before the weekend (wave 2), support was strongest for the EPP (40%), PES (22%), Liberal Democrats (9%) and Greens (8%). Afterward (Wave 3), the vote shares changed to 30% for the EPP, 21% for the PES, 8% for the Liberal Democrats, 2% for Independence/Democracy, 4% for the Radical Left, 4% for the Radical Right, 3% for the Euro-Conservatives, and 18% Greens. Serious deliberation on climate change significantly increased the electoral popularity of the Greens. The electoral impact of deliberation on immigration is less clear at the present stage and it needs more complex analyses.

Finally, and most importantly, activating citizens through deliberation has a clear impact on positive identification with the EU and recognition of rights and duties as European citizens. Identification with Europe rose to 37% among participants right at the beginning of the event and to 53% after deliberation. Positive identification with the EU further increases the likelihood to become politically active as a European citizen. Among participants, the percentage of those who think it is their duty to vote in the European elections goes up from 48% before to 56% after the event. While 72% of the participants thought of themselves “as just being from” their own country before the event, this percentage fell sharply to 56% after the event. Nothing similar happens to the non-participants. Among the participants only between 8% (wave 2) and 6% (wave 3) think of themselves as only nationals.

We can thus assume that exposure to open political discussion among people from different national backgrounds fosters a sense of European identity. This additional stratum of identity does not replace traditional local, regional and national belonging but rather adds to it. In this sense, citizens learn through deliberation to locate themselves in the European sphere and to discover new allegiances.

**Changes in Participants and Control Groups Opinion Across Interview Waves**

As noted above, the Europolis Deliberative Poll experiment focused on two core issues: extra-communitarian immigration and climate change. Each of these issues was measured in terms of both salience and position. Salience was assessed by asking respondents to rate the importance of each issue on a 0-10 scale. Position on immigration was measured by combining the responses to a range of questions that sought to establish the respondent’s degree of tolerance (on a 0-10 scale) towards immigrants. Position on climate change was assessed by asking respondents to place themselves on

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3 The question about immigrants in general was asked in wave 2 and 3, while the question about Muslim immigrants was asked in all four waves.
a 0-10 scale where high values denoted support for strong measures to combat climate change even if this damages economic growth, and low values denoted support for economic growth even if it hurts efforts to combat climate change. Table 3 reports mean values on these four sets of measures for both the test panel and the control panel. For the test group, means are reported for waves 1 through 4. For the control group, they are reported for waves 1 and 4 only, as the control group was not interviewed in waves 2 and 3. The table also reports the probability values for difference of means t-tests. For each attitude measure, these t-tests make three sets of comparisons: between test and control groups means at wave 1; between test group means at waves 1 and 4; and between control group means at waves 1 and 4.

Several important patterns are revealed by table 3. First, the test group scores on all four measures increase significantly between waves 1 and 4. For example, the mean score on the pro-immigration index increases from 5.47 to 5.79 (p=.002); the mean on the climate importance score increases from 7.53 to 8.26 (p=.000). Second, the test group scores all increase progressively during the actual test exposure – from wave 1 to wave 2, and from wave 2 to wave 3. Three of the scores then decline slightly from wave 3 to wave 4 (the exception is the pro-immigration index, which continues to rise slightly through to wave 4), suggesting that the test effect tends to decay only moderately after the DP event. A third feature of the table is that while the changes in the test group mean scores between waves 1 and 4 are all significant, with one exception the changes in the control group mean scores are not. Although the control group ‘Combat Climate Change’ index changes significantly between waves 1 and 4 (p=.027), the changes in the three remaining measures all fail to achieve significance at conventional levels. The crucial point here is that this pattern of significant change in the test group and (generally) non-significant change in the control group strongly confirms the idea that the Deliberative Poll experience had a powerful effect on participants’ opinions. Test group subjects on average became more liberal on immigration (mean increase: 5.47 to 5.79); increased their average rating of the importance of both immigration and climate change (which respectively increased from 5.35 to 5.97 and from 7.53 to 8.26); and became more convinced of the need to combat climate change even at the expense of economic growth (mean change: 7.53 to 8.26). The final feature of Table 3 that merits attention is the comparison between the average test group and control group scores at wave 1. The difference of means tests here indicate that in relation to three of the measures (the two importance measures and the combat climate change index) the test and control group means are statistically indistinguishable. This said, the test group is more liberal on immigration at wave 1 than the control group (5.47 in comparison with 5.08; p=.000), implying that the test and control group panels may differ from each other in important ways.

It is clear from Table 3 that exposure to deliberation affected the immigration and climate-change attitudes of the test group panel respondents. Given that test respondents spent three days explicitly discussing these two ‘core’ issues, these ‘manifest’ effects of deliberation are perhaps unsurprising. We believe, however, that a deliberative poll which brings together participants from all over the EU should also have important effects on people’s attitudes towards Europe. By exposing people to other European citizens from other parts of the Union in an “artificial” public arena should change people’s perceptions of the EU and their relationship to it. Table 4 reports on the equivalent changes for effects on EU-related attitudes. The table distinguishes among four different sets of EU-related attitudes: people’s sense of European identity; their preferences for EU policy competence or ‘policy scope’; their degree of satisfaction with EU-level democracy; and their overall evaluations of the EU as a whole. The results are very similar to those observed in Table 3. First, on three out of four of the measures (the exception is EU evaluations), the wave 1 test group mean is indistinguishable from the wave 1 control group mean. Second, for the test group the average change between wave 1 and
wave 4 is generally significant (the only exception is in relation to EU Policy Scope). In contrast, for the control group there is no significant change between waves 1 and 4. This again supports the idea of a ‘Deliberative Poll’ effect: opinion in the test panel, exposed to deliberation, changes; opinion in the control panel, unexposed, does not.

Overall, two general conclusions are suggested by the results presented in Tables 3 and 4. First, across both tables, there is evidence of deliberation exposure effect. In both tables, the test group mean scores tend to increase significantly, whereas the control group scores tend either to fall or not to change at all. This is clear evidence of a Deliberative Poll or DP effect. Second, with a relatively small number of exceptions, at wave 1 the test and control panels were indistinguishable from each other on most of the measures reported. This suggests that the test and control panels were fundamentally similar, with the implication that any observed test effect is due to the operation of the test stimulus (the DP event) rather than the result of sampling bias.

**Possible Explanations For DP Effects**

As noted above, the empirical analysis reported here – like many previous studies – confirms that ‘deliberation’ makes a difference to people’s views. One obvious difficulty associated with trying to assess the ‘mechanisms’ of attitude change in Europolis is that a DP event itself is not a laboratory-based experiment. In order to explain the changes that occurred as an effect of participation in Europolis we adopted two strategies. First, we will try to use the data collected through questionnaires (already available) and secondly, we will use more qualitative data obtained by coding the small group discussions applying the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) developed in investigating parliamentary debates in plenary sessions and committees in Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States (Steiner et al., 2004).

In fact, one of the innovative features of EuroPolis is the attempt to actually measure the level of deliberation in the various small group discussions by DQI. To be sure, all the measures that we used in organizing the EuroPolis experiment that aimed to assure the high quality deliberation have certainly contributed to an overall deliberative climate for the participants in EuroPolis. But the level of deliberation still varies from participant to participant and also from group to group. The purpose of using the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) is precisely to get at such variation. This allows us to answer in particular the following broad questions: What are the antecedents for a high level of deliberation in Europolis? Does a high level of deliberation contribute to greater attitude changes from pre-discussion questionnaires to post-discussion questionnaires, and if there are indeed greater such attitude changes what is the direction of these changes? We do the analysis at the individual level of the 348 persons participating in Europolis.

The codes used with this index turned out to have a high reliability (Steiner et al, 2004: 67-70). The application of the Discourse Quality Index to Deliberative Polling enriches the expected results of Europolis. As can be easily imagined, this coding and these analyses are very time consuming. To be sure, we make good progress with coding, and we have already done preliminary analyses at the University of Bern (Gerber, 2010) and University of Oslo (Fiket, Olsen, 2010). It is premature, however, to report broader data at this point.

Thus, in the following section we will try to explain EuroPolis effect using available data collected trough questionnaires.

Bearing in mind this need to measure the underlying sources of any DP exposure effects on attitude change indirectly, we consider five possible mechanisms or explanations. The first relates to the
possible ‘selection bias’ of the individuals who constitute the test group – the people who actually attended the DP event (Heckman, 1979). We already checked whether members of the test group differed significantly in their wave 1 attitudes and characteristics from members of the control group. What we cannot know is whether or not the sort of people who are prepared to give up a weekend (albeit in a luxury hotel) deliberating about immigration and climate change are intrinsically more susceptible to changing their minds about political matters than are people who prefer to stay at home. The best we can do in these circumstances is, first, to weight the data as necessary so that the profile of the test sample, on any relevant characteristics, resembles the control sample as closely as possible; and second, to control statistically for as many possible extraneous influences on attitude change as we can. In short, although we cannot test for selection bias effects directly, we can do so indirectly by testing to see if weighting the data to the key characteristics of the control sample makes any difference to any observed DP test effect. We can further mitigate any possible selection bias effects by incorporating potentially confounding exogenous variables into any models that seek to estimate the size and significance of the ‘deliberation effect’. Tests of this sort are undertaken explicitly in sections 1 and 2.

The four other possible explanations for any observed DP test effect can be investigated rather more directly. A second mechanism that could conceivably account for DP attitude change is the acquisition of greater political knowledge, which could in principle change either an individual’s assessment of the importance of a given issue or the position on that issue that s/he adopts (Althaus, 1998; Barabas, 2004). The same battery of political knowledge questions was presented to DP participants in all four interview waves, and to the control group in the wave 1 and wave 4 interviews. The items covered both specific knowledge about each of the two deliberative issues discussed – immigration and climate change – and, given that the Poll was conducted at the time of European Parliament elections, more general knowledge about the institutions of the EU. It is a relatively straightforward task to ascertain whether or not increases in either domain-specific or more generalized political knowledge were associated with attitude change. The relevant findings are reported in section 2 below.

A third mechanism that could underpin any DP-induced attitude change relates to the quality of the organised small-group discussions that took place among respondents. Deliberation is intrinsically a process that requires full consideration of the relevant ideas and issues that constitute and surround a given policy arena (Fishkin and Luskin, 2005; Mutz, 2006). All of the discussion groups at the DP event were chaired by experienced moderators who had been trained to maximise the fullest possible deliberation in each group. This said, it was inevitable that there would be some variation across discussion groups in terms of the quality of the discussion or deliberation. Respondents were asked to rate the quality of the small group deliberation on a number of criteria. By calculating the average scores on these rating scales for each discussion group, we can estimate the intersubjective quality of the deliberation in each group. If the quality of deliberation affects the extent of attitude change, then we would expect to find that attitude change is greater (less) in those groups where, on average, the participants thought that the discussion quality was higher (lower). This hypothesis is also tested in section 2.

A fourth possible mechanism of attitude change under deliberation relates to social desirability. Social desirability pressures are known to produce a range of responses in face-to-face survey interviews and in small group situations (Fisher, 1993). In interviews, respondents will sometimes give responses that they think they ‘ought’ to give or that the interviewer ‘expects’ of them. In small groups, some participants may adjust their views on a particular topic in order to bring them into line with what they perceive to be majority opinion within the group. In extremis, this kind of thinking produces the well-known ‘groupthink’ phenomenon, in which members of a group converge on a
single view of a key problem and fail to articulate plausible critiques of it (Janis, 1972). It is clearly possible that social desirability pressures, notwithstanding the core intentions of the deliberative process, could have similar effects in DP small groups. This would imply a sort of regression to the mean over time: individuals who score more highly than the relevant small group mean on a given attitude scale at wave 1 would be expected to shift their positions on the scale downwards by wave 4; those below the small group mean would be expected to shift their positions upwards. This in turn implies that, for a given attitude dimension, a variable that measures each respondent’s position as a deviation from the small group mean at wave 1 should have a positive effect on the change in the attitude between waves 1 and 4. Again, this idea is tested explicitly in section 2.

A final mechanism that could induce attitude change under deliberation is the simple power of argumentation to which participants are subjected. In normative terms, this should be the core mechanism through which opinion change occurs (Elster, 1998). Deliberation should engender changes of mind in particular individuals because they are now convinced by arguments either that they had not heard before or that, having been subjected to a new, more lucid exposition, they now find compelling. The immediate difficulty here, of course, is that of specifying criteria which might enable a ‘compelling’ argument to be distinguished from a ‘non-compelling’ one. Nonetheless, although we cannot measure ‘argument strength’ objectively, it is possible to use participants’ perceptions of the usefulness of different aspects of the DP process for clarifying their own thinking on key issues. In this respect, participants in the event were asked to rate four different aspects of the DP process on 0-10 scales, where zero denoted ‘a complete waste of time’ and 10 denoted ‘extremely useful’. These aspects were: reading the briefing documentation provided; listening to ‘experts’; listening to ‘politicians’; and ‘talking to other participants outside the formal discussions’. By considering participants’ own estimates of the utility of each aspect for ‘clarifying their thinking’ an assessment can be made of the extent to which participants felt that the arguments articulated in these different vehicles were compelling for them. The empirical implication is that the more (less) an individual found a particular vehicle useful for clarifying her/his thinking, the more (less) likely s/he is to change her/his views on any given attitude dimension. Once again, this claim is tested explicitly in section 2.

Testing the Robustness of the DP Effect: Specifying and Estimating Multivariate Models

It is clear from the results reported above that the views of the participants in the Europolis Deliberative Poll changed much more than those of the non-participant control group. In short, the simple experimental control of exposure to deliberation did change the way people thought across a range of different issues. In addition to this experimental control, however, it is also possible to apply non-experimental controls – to use multivariate statistical controls to test the robustness of the bivariate relationships that have thus far been described. The general form of the model employed to test the robustness of the bivariate DP effect is:

\[ Y_t = a + b_0 Y_{t-1} + \sum(b_k X_{kt}) + b_{Test} + u_{it} \]

where \( Y_t \) is the dependent variable attitude measured at wave 4; \( Y_{t-1} \) is the lagged dependent variable measured at wave 1; \( X_{kt} \) is a set of independent control variables measured at wave 1; Test is a dummy variable, where 1 indicates membership of the DP test group and zero membership of the control group; and \( u_{it} \) is a random error term.

Table 5 provides an illustration of this model specification and the general set of control variables that were employed. The dependent variable in the table is the respondent’s score at wave 4 on the pro-immigration index described earlier. The inclusion of a lagged dependent variable on the right-hand side of the equation effectively means that the (weighted) change in pro-immigration attitudes
between waves 1 and 4 is being modeled. The larger (smaller) this coefficient is, the more (less) stable the measured dependent variable attitude is between waves 1 and 4. There are no general expectations about the signs or significance levels of the coefficients on the independent control variables. They are included because any or all of them could in principle have effects on the change in the dependent variable. They thus include controls for gender, age, education, class, religion, religiosity, feelings of national identity, left-right ideology (including a term for left-right ideology squared to incorporate the possibility that the effects of ideology might be non-linear), and party preference (to take account of the possibility that, over and above any effects of ideology, the cues provided by either left-leaning or right-leaning parties might affect attitude change). The key theoretical expectation for the model reported in Table 5 is that the coefficient for the Test variable will be positive and significant. If this expectation is fulfilled, it suggests that the DP Test effect is sufficiently robust withstand these various non-experimental controls – that the test effect endures even when these other possible influences on attitude change are controlled for.

The results reported in Table 5 are reassuring. First, the coefficient on the lagged dependent variable is relatively high (b=.69), suggesting that although there is some change in pro-immigration attitudes across waves, these attitudes are also fairly stable. Second, only two of the control variables are significant at conventional levels. The positive coefficient on the education term (b=.09) indicates that more educated respondents were slightly more likely to become more pro-immigration across waves. The negative coefficient on the left-right scale term (b=−.13) implies that more right-wing respondents were less likely to become more pro-immigration than their more left-wing counterparts. The remaining control variables all yield non-significant coefficients, suggesting that these other variables had no effects on the change in pro-immigration attitudes between waves 1 and 4. Third, the model is reasonably well-determined, with an adjusted $r^2=.52$ – though this is to be expected given the inclusion of the lagged endogenous variable. The key finding of the table, however, relates to the coefficient for the Test term. This is, as expected, both positive and highly significant. Controlling for all the other variables in the model, exposure to deliberation still exerts a large, significant effect on people’s attitudes towards immigration. Indeed, the coefficient of b=.38 (p=.000) indicates that, in comparison with the control group, those exposed to deliberation on average increased their scores on the 0-10 pro-immigration index by 0.38 of a point between waves 1 and 4.

Table 6 reports the consequences of estimating a series of models, based on the specification described in equation [1] and Table 5, for each of the dependent variables identified in Tables 3 and 4. The results confirm that the inferences about the DP Test effect on pro-immigration attitudes drawn from Table 6 can be generalized both to the remaining ‘core’ attitudes towards immigration and climate change and to three of the four ‘collateral’ EU attitude sets. With the exception of attitudes towards EU Policy Scope (which in any case, as seen in Table 4, produced no *bivariate* test effect), all of the Test coefficients retain their significance in the face of extensive multivariate controls. These findings strongly support the idea that Deliberative Polls do change people’s attitudes – both in relation to the ‘core’ issues that are explicitly being deliberated but also, in this case, in relation to attitudes relating to the EU as a whole.

Why do Deliberative Polls change people’s attitudes?

The results presented in the two previous sections show that there is a clear Deliberative Poll effect. A series of possible mechanisms were advanced that might help to explain why this effect occurs.
This section develops and tests models that seek to assess the possible role played by these various mechanisms in generating the DP effect.

The first possible mechanism investigated here can be summarised under the general heading of the ‘the effects of (self) selection bias’. The idea here is that any observed DP effect is not ‘really’ the result of ‘actual deliberation’. Rather, it reflects the fact that the type of person who allows her/himself to be exposed to a DP is a priori more likely to change her/his views on any given issue compared to someone who is not interested in participating in a DP. Thus, if the test group changes its views during deliberation more than the control group does during its non-deliberation, this is not because of the deliberation itself. If the non-deliberators had somehow been induced to deliberate, they would not necessarily have changed their views under deliberation in the same way as the deliberators did. By definition, this claim cannot be tested directly. However, it is possible to use information about the test and control group samples to weight the test group cases so that, as far as possible, the profile of the test group – in terms of both demographics and key attitudes that are not being used as dependent variables – matches that of the control group. Using this weighted version of the test group data, we can simulate how the test group would have behaved if, counterfactually, they had possessed the same demographic and attitudinal profile as the control group. This is obviously not the same as subjecting the non-deliberators to deliberation, but it is the nearest that we can get to the counterfactual position.

Is such a weighting justified? And if so, how should it be effected? It will be recalled from Tables 3 and 4 that there were certain respects in which the test and control group samples were significantly different from one another at wave 1: in Table 3, in terms of pro-immigration attitudes; and in Table 4, in terms of EU Evaluations. In addition, t-test results (not reported) comparing the demographic profiles of the test and control groups showed that they were significantly different from one another in terms of interest in politics, political knowledge, gender and education (the test group was disproportionately interest, knowledgeable, female and well-educated). Making decisions about how to weight data is always a difficult process. If too many weighting variables are used, then the analytic results can become unstable because of the excessive overweighting assigned to particular individuals. If too few are used, then the profile of the weighted sample fails to correspond sufficiently to the target sample. It is also standard practice to avoid applying weights determined by the dependent variable. Here, we report the consequences of weighting the test group data by the three (non-dependent) variables that displayed the greatest differences between the test and control groups: interest in politics, gender and education.

Tables 7 and 8 report the equivalent findings to those outlined in Tables 5 and 6, but with the data weighted by interest, gender and education. The estimated models also take account of the clustering of the data that is implied by the separate collection of the test and control group samples. Table 7 indicates the consequences of weighting and clustering the model shown in Table 5. The results show that the two independent variables that were significant in the Table 5 model (left-right ideology and education) are no longer significant at conventional levels. The core results, however, are very similar to those reported in Table 5. The coefficients on the lagged dependent variable and on the Test variable are both positive and significant. This again suggests that, in spite of weighting and clustering, participation in the DP event was crucial in changing opinions on the pro-immigration index between waves 1 and 4. A similar set of general conclusions is in order in relation to Table 8. As in Table 5, the results in Table 8 show that the Test coefficient is significant and positive in all the attitude models except for EU Policy Scope. The clear implication of all this is that weighting and clustering the data make no difference to the quasi-ubiquity of the DP Test effect. This is in turn suggests that the DP effect cannot be plausibly explained by the distinctive character of the test group. In sum, (self) selection bias appears to be an unconvincing explanation of the DP Test effect – or at a minimum, an explanation that is ‘not proven’.

[table 7 and 8 about here]
The analysis conducted so far has involved making either explicit or implicit comparisons between test group and control group respondents. It has been established that there is a clear DP effect and that effect is not explained by the composition of the test group sample. In examining other possible explanations for the DP effect, the analysis now focuses solely on the test group. It will be recalled four putative mechanisms underlying deliberators’ changing views mechanisms were hypothesised to operate in this context, as follows.

- **Increased political knowledge.** This was measured as the change in an individual's knowledge quiz score (minimum score=0; maximum=6) between waves 1 and 4. As noted in Table 3, it is clear that while political knowledge increased significantly among test group respondents, among the control group it changed barely at all. The hypothesis here is that, if greater political knowledge represents a mechanism through which the DP effect operates, increased knowledge should make people more tolerant on immigration, more inclined to support measures to combat climate change, more likely to regard immigration and climate change important, and more sympathetic towards the EU. In short, changes in knowledge should exert significant, positive effects on each of our 'core' and 'EU' dependent variables.

- **Small group discussion quality.** The twin assumptions here are that average perceptions of the quality of discussion can be used as a surrogate for the actual quality of the small group discussions at the DP event, and that the quality of discussion can be used to measure the quality of deliberation. It is hypothesised that, if discussion quality is one of the mechanisms through which the DP effect operates, it should exert significant, positive effects on each of our 'core' and 'collateral' dependent variables.

- **Social desirability pressures.** This is the tendency for individuals to adjust their own preferences to the social environment in which they find themselves. In the context of the Deliberative Poll, we use average opinion in each of the small discussion groups to represent these 'environments' and the extent to which the individual respondent’s views deviate from her/his small group mean as a measure of the extent of social desirability pressures. The general hypothesis here is that, for any given attitude, individuals who score above the small group mean at wave 1 should reduce their scores on the attitude by wave 4; individuals below the small group mean at wave 1 should increase their scores by wave 4. This in turn implies that a variable that measures above average scores on a given attitude at wave 1 as deviations from the small group mean, but which is zero otherwise, should have a negative effect on attitude change between waves 1 and 4. Concomitantly, a variable that measures below average scores as deviations from the small group mean, but which is zero otherwise, should have a positive effect on attitude change between waves 1 and 4. These symmetrical social pressure effects are accordingly operationalised below as a pair of predictor variables – one that measures positive deviations from the group mean, and one that measures negative deviations.

- **Articulation of arguments that clarify an individual participant’s thinking.** As noted above, participants were asked to rate the importance of four factors in clarifying their thinking: the DP documentation provided, and the arguments expressed, respectively, by experts and politicians in the plenary sessions and by fellow participants in informal discussions. The hypothesis here is that, for each of these possible factors, attitude change between waves 1 and 4 should be positively and significantly affected by the strength of the perceived clarifying effect.

The possible effects of these various measures on the views of deliberators were estimated as:
\[ Y_t = a + b_0 Y_{t-1} + b_1 \delta \text{Knowledge} + b_2 \text{Discussion Quality} + b_3 \text{Social Desirability Pressure (Above Group Mean)} + b_4 \text{Social Desirability Pressure (Below Group Mean)} + b_5 \text{Documentation} + b_6 \text{Experts} + b_7 \text{Politicians} + b_8 \text{Informal Conversations} + \sum (b_k X_{kt}) + u_{it} \]
where $Y_t$ is the dependent variable attitude measured at wave 4; $Y_{t-1}$ is the lagged dependent variable measured at wave 1; $\Delta$Knowledge is the change in the respondent’s political knowledge score between waves 1 and 4; Discussion Quality is the average perceived discussion quality of each small discussion group; Social Desirability Pressure$_t$ is the extent to which the respondent deviates from the small discussion group mean score on the issue under consideration, at wave 1; Documentation, Experts, Politicians and Informal Conversations respectively measure the respondents’s perceptions of the ‘clarifying effects’ of each of these factors; $X_{kt}$ is a set of independent control variables measured at wave 1; and $u_{it}$ is a random error term. Note that there is now no Test variable, as in [1], because this specification relates to deliberators only; the control group is excluded.

Tables 9 and 10 report the results of estimating equation [2] for each of our ‘core’ and ‘EU’ dependent variables. To avoid overburdening the reader with detail, the tables do not report coefficients for the independent control variables, even though they were included in the estimation. The estimations cluster the respondents by small discussion group, to ensure the correct estimation of (robust) standard errors. Table 9 presents the results for attitudes towards immigration and climate change. In the immigration position equation (column 1), the only significant ‘mechanism’ variable is ‘talking informally to other participants’. The coefficient (b=.08) is significant and correctly signed. The remaining coefficients, however, all fail to achieve accepted levels of significance. In the immigration importance equation (column 2), only the Social Desirability (Above Group Mean) coefficient (b=-.57) is significant and correctly signed. In the climate change position equation (column 3), none of the putative explanatory mechanism variables achieves significance at conventional levels. In the climate change importance model (column 4) the Experts term is correctly signed and almost significant (p=.06). The Social Desirability (Above Group Mean) term is significant, but is incorrectly signed. Contrary to theoretical expectations, the positive coefficient of b=.12 implies that a climate change position score above the small group mean at wave 1 produced an increase in the respondent’s wave 4 score. This clearly contradicts the idea that social desirability pressures led respondents to adjust their own climate change attitudes to the group mean. These results are obviously disappointing in terms of the extent to which they shed light on the reasons why Deliberative Polling affects participants’ attitudes. A similar conclusion is in order in relation to the findings shown in Table 10, where models for EU-related attitudes are presented. In the EU Representation equation (column 3) the Experts term is positive and significant and the same is true of the Knowledge coefficient in the EU Evaluations equation (column 4). However, in the European Identity and EU Policy Scope equations (columns 1 and 2 respectively), none of the mechanisms produces a statistically significant effect.

What do these findings tell us about the possible mechanisms that underpin the effects of deliberative polling? The brutal conclusion has to be ‘nothing very much’. The pattern of significant effects across Tables 9 and 10 is far from consistent. The Experts term features significantly in two of the seven equations (for climate change importance and for EU Representation), while Social Desirability and ‘talking to others’ each appear correctly signed in only one (respectively, the immigration importance and position models). It would probably be unreasonable to demand that a given predictor variable should figure significantly in all seven equations in order to conclude that the mechanism it represents really does help to produce the ‘Deliberative Poll effect’. At the same time, the feeble pattern of effects that is actually observed in Tables 9 and 10 clearly offers very little systematic explanation of why the DP effect occurs. Indeed, there are three compelling reasons for concluding that the models presented in Tables 9 and 10 simply fail to identify the mechanisms responsible for the DP effect. First, there is no obvious theoretical reason (or set or reasons) why Social Desirability should affect ‘immigration importance’ while the clarifying effects of talking to
others should affect ‘immigration position’ – rather than, say, *vice versa* – or why these variables should leave all other measured attitudes unaffected. Second, the amount of variation in the respective dependent variables that is explained by the significant mechanisms identified in Tables 9 and 10 is extremely limited. The tables report the reductions in $r^2$ values that occur if each significant putative mechanism variable is dropped from the specification. In all four cases where a significant effect is thus dropped, the fall in $r^2$ is extremely modest – by .03 (from .25 to .22) in the immigration importance equation and by .01 in the other three equations. The third reason is perhaps the most damning of all. The models in Tables 9 and 10 estimate the effects of nine ‘mechanism coefficients’ across each of eight equations – a total of 72 possible effects. At the $p=.05$ significance level, even if there were no real relationships in the data, we would expect to observe one significant effect for every 20 effects estimated. With 72 estimated effects, we would therefore expect to observe between three and four significant effects even if there were no ‘real’ effects operating in the data. Viewed in this light, the four significant mechanism effects observed in Tables 9 and 10 look singularly unimpressive. In short, notwithstanding the efforts made here to identify the mechanisms that underpin the effects of Deliberative Polling, the broad conclusion suggested by the empirical evidence is that, whatever it is that produces the DP effect, it is not (any combination of) increased knowledge, discussion quality, social desirability pressure or the ‘clarifying’ effects of exposure to documentation, experts, politicians or other DP participants.

The key finding in this context is that none of these ‘mechanisms’ successfully explained why deliberators changed their views during deliberation. A small number of mechanisms appeared to have significant statistical effects in very limited contexts, but these were fragmented and so infrequent as to be consistent with random variations in the data rather than descriptive of any real causal effects.

This leaves the ‘mechanisms of deliberation’ almost entirely unexplained by use of questionnaires data. The analysis shows what seems not to matter – knowledge, discussion quality, group conformity or the role of other actors in ‘clarifying thinking’ – but it does not show what does. The analogy here is that if individual-level and group-level explanations fail comprehensively to identify the underlying mechanisms of the DP effect, then perhaps we need to look elsewhere. One important possibility is represented by use of DQI index described above.

**Feasibility of Cross-National European Deliberation and Question of Democratic Legitimacy**

Results reported previously showed the preference change and opinion transformation in its participating citizens. Deliberative poll increased the number of participants that intended to vote in the elections. Secondly, there were significant changes in party preferences, most notably a dramatic increase in those intending to vote the Greens after their participation in EuroPolis and a decrease of voting intentions for conservative parties (most likely to defend an exclusive concept of national sovereignty). In probing the linkage between deliberation in a transnational setting and the issue of democratic legitimacy, we must however also focus on the deliberative design and quality of discussions at the event. Overall, the results of EuroPolis show that contrary to the communitarian assumptions, cultural cleavages have no significant impact on deliberative quality and the possibility for citizens from different member states to debate and find agreement on issues of common concern. Still, in light of the previously exposed empirical evidences, we do not claim that polity uncertainty and group heterogeneity have no impact on deliberative quality. Further qualitative analysis of group discussions by means of DQI is needed to establish how citizens interact across languages. We can however safely assume that providing the technical tools of translation and the stimulating environment for transactions, citizens across member states can be strongly motivated and empowered as constituents of a European polity.
The evaluation of the event by the participants in the post-polling questionnaire can be used for a preliminary analysis of the feasibility of cross-national deliberation and its conduciveness towards mutual understanding. The large majority of the participants experienced the group discussions in EuroPolis as highly respectful and oriented towards understanding across linguistic and cultural divides. On average, the participants thought the event extremely balanced and considered the quality of the group discussions they took part in to be high. Almost 90% thought that they were given ample opportunity to express their views. 84% felt that their fellow participants respected what they had to say, even if they did not necessarily agree. Participants also had no problems in ‘understanding’ their fellow European citizens. Language was seen by only 12% as a barrier to follow the debate while 87% of the participants recognized the truthfulness of the argumentation of the other. Most importantly, participants from other member states were not seen as hostile players who defended diverging interests but as equals who expressed strong views and provided accessible justifications. The experience of meeting and talking with other people from all across the continent and with different cultural background also had an impact: 81% of the participants thought that they had learnt a lot about people different from themselves, ‘about who they are and how they live’.

How can we account for this positive evaluation of the event as an experience of learning and enhanced understanding? One possible explanation can be that pluri-lingual settings are especially conducive towards certain ‘habits of listening’ (Doerr 2009). Transnational groups might turn out to be more attentive listeners and overcome habits of hearing in familiar national settings. In EuroPolis this was amplified by the technical equipment (simultaneous translations, headphones and microphones) which helped to focus the attention of the participants. The higher listening requirements of the pluri-lingual setting might thus have worked positively for the deliberative quality. Moreover, the translators and moderators became facilitators of listening in this specific setting. The moderator addressed all language groups, made sure that comments from each participant were taken into consideration and made efforts that the same attention was paid to each language group. Participants, in turn, had to await translation, and were seemingly motivated to pay respect and attention to participants from other language groups. They were also aware that there was a normative expectation of entering into dialogue with citizens from other member states and act accordingly. We also observed that most participants sought to make their interventions intelligible for other nationalities, for instance by explaining and ‘translating’ the local experiences they employed in backing up substantive arguments.

This project called into being a European wide public sphere in microcosm at the level of mass politics. It showed the potential for dialogue among EU citizens from all 27 countries despite the barriers of language and nationality. While this was the second pan European deliberative experiment, it was the first to occur in the context of European elections and thus the first to probe the connection between pan European deliberation and electoral choice. The project showed that substantive and informed pan European deliberation is possible among ordinary citizens. Second it showed coherent connections between policy attitudes and electoral choices. We demonstrate that when Europeans deliberate together they become a bit more like ideal citizens. They become more informed, more open to the views of others, more willing to subscribe to policy alternatives that may require substantial short term sacrifices (as in the climate change discussion) and more greatly identified as Europeans rather than just citizens of their own countries.

Euro Polis shows what the European project could evolve into, if the barriers of language and nationality are overcome. More specifically, it shows that EU citizens are capable of dealing with complex issues on a pan European scale. The results of the EuroPolis deliberative experiment demonstrate, therefore, that there are no principled hurdles to the application of deliberative democracy to the EU. As such, the engaging of ordinary citizens through deliberative experiments can be one way to deal with the conundrum of public discontent with EU policies and institutions.
By giving citizens the opportunity to discuss and voice opinion in respectful dialogue, deliberative polling raises awareness of the complexities of political decision-making and democratic legitimacy in a polity like the EU.

This report has highlighted that communicative barriers to deliberation in a transnational and plurilingual setting are, for the most part, practical and not substantial. They can be overcome by careful design of the deliberative setting which facilitates encounters among the participants and generates habits of respect and careful listening. The results of the EuroPolis deliberative experiment demonstrate, therefore, that there are no principled hurdles to the application of deliberative democracy to the EU. As such, the engaging of ordinary citizens through deliberative experiments can be one way to deal with the conundrum of public discontent with EU policies and institutions. By giving citizens the opportunity to discuss and voice opinion in respectful dialogue, deliberative polling raises awareness of the complexities of political decision-making and democratic legitimacy in a polity like the EU. This does, however, not necessarily mean that the ‘constraining dissensus’ of recent years will be reverted back to another era of ‘permissive consensus’ in European integration as a result of deliberative experiments. Rather, EuroPolis has provided a microcosmic European ‘public’, where citizens from highly diverse backgrounds and despite language pluralism have debated and contested each other on issues of principle and policy related to European integration (Fishkin 2010). In this light, deliberative polling serves a purpose as it highlights that legitimacy does not necessarily have to rest on substantive consensus on institutional issues or policy, but rather is ultimately dependent on the public ‘saturation’ of political will-formation through open and unfiltered debate. EU politics are increasingly politicized and EuroPolis brings with it evidence that the opportunity to engage in real debate is a more effective means to mobilize political participation than endless media campaigns and public relations exercises courtesy of EU institutions that address the passive, and, for the most part, non-attentive citizens.

We argue that as much as EuroPolis has provided important insights in the possibilities of cross-cultural deliberation in a plurilingual setting, it has also highlighted the limits of deliberative ‘mini-publics’ as instruments of democratic reform of the EU. In particular, the European setting requires us to rethink the conditions for fostering general public debate and claiming democratic legitimacy in response to multiple sectoral and territorial constituencies. With increasing dissensus and higher degree of political conflict in contemporary Europe, not the least as a consequence of a more diverse Union after Eastern enlargement, there is little evidence that this state of affairs might change in the immediate future. Public scrutiny and debate on political decision-making – be it on the national, European, or global level – are still national phenomena. For facilitated deliberation in settings like EuroPolis to have political significance for others than participants themselves, then, would require a transformation of political culture and media in Europe. Deliberative mini-publics have a limited potential to trigger off such a transformation of political culture, as long as there is now supporting infrastructure for political communication through which European issues would have to be understood and debated as having a European impact as well as empowering a European representative body with full legislative authority. The upshot of this is that carefully crafted experiments such as Deliberative Polling cannot in and of themselves provide sufficient ‘cures’ for the democratic deficit of the EU as long as citizens’ deliberations are not supported and amplified by a broader communicative infrastructure of the public and media sphere.

The potential impact

EuroPolis Project was an important event in the history of deliberative democracy. A representative cross-section of the European polity was convened in Brussels to discuss and deliberate about crucial issues a few weeks before the European Parliamentary Elections of 2009.
The Deliberative experiment produced several results. First, given the robust scientific design of EuroPolis, this experiment added empirical evidence on the possibility to create a Europe wide sphere, and allowed observing the process of public opinion formation. For the first time on such a large scale it was explored not only what the European demos would think about the European Union and about specific issues concerning two policy areas developed by its institutions, if it knew more and was more involved in the public debate, but also what effect all this can have on voting turnout and political participation at the European level.

Some evidences regarding the experiments conducted to date are expected are confirmed by the EuroPolis Project. For instance, changes in policy preferences due to more informed and considered opinions are observed. A second major result observed is an increase in levels of deliberation about the present and the future of the European Union. This project brought information on how much and under which conditions improving the communication strategies and the quality of information available for the European citizens would account for a better consideration and greater support by the public.

Linked to this, a third value-added result of EuroPolis is the opportunity of studying what problems and possibilities related to the creation of a EU public sphere.

This project raised the standards of current political research. Due to both, the high quality of the scholars involved and the scope of the project, it represents a substantive advancement in terms of data collection and the methods used in its analysis.

The geographical and disciplinary integrating capacity of the project, with 11 institutions from both Eastern and Western Europe, North and Southern Europe and with a joint effort of people coming from political science, democratic theory, sociology and law, it represents a clear step forward in the strengthening of the European Research Area in the social sciences and humanities.

The Europolis Project was an extraordinary opportunity for the citizens of different nationalities to confront one another, policy experts, and political leaders at the European level. Too often, concrete issues concerning the functioning and the future steps of the European Union are perceived through the lenses of national perspectives. A Deliberative Poll conducted at the European level is an innovative instrument for bridging the perception of national interests toward an European dimension, permitting a more pertinent and freer debate on the future of Europe and its role in the world.

A strengthening of the relatively weak links existing between practitioners and academics was also provided through the network planned activities. In this regard, a very important issue is that the project involved a stakeholders’ committee.

The scope of the foreseen benefits of this project goes beyond the pure academic aspects, that still it is its main purpose. Through the DP experiment we intend to understand and forecast the real possibilities for creating a European public space and for overcoming the “second-order election” problem of the EP elections. The dissemination activities will contribute to triggering the relationships between the EU citizens, and also between those citizens and the EU institutions.

The dissemination activities that the project will produce for policy makers and stakeholders, and more broad audiences in general, will help in communicating the main results and findings and could be a supporting tool during the decision-making process. The latter is a particularly important feature
given that it will quickly integrate research into the policy-making as an interplay between different actors involved. The relevance of the project is based on the topicality of the issues it is tackling. For that reason it will certainly contribute and respond quickly to issues arising in policy agendas. All the former are good reasons to believe that this project will significantly contribute to the emergence of a knowledge-based society.

EuroPolis demonstrates that public deliberation has the capacity to reduce the EU’s democratic deficit. It addressed problems such as the level of political disengagement among citizens, the gap between EU citizens and their representatives, the low information levels about EU policy issues, the lack of public spaces for citizens to express and shape their policy preferences, public scepticism about the EU integration process, distrust in others, and a low sense of belonging to the Union. If deliberation has some of the possible effects just mentioned on the democratic deficit then there would be a strong basis for initiatives experimenting with the spread of deliberative democratic practices. Deliberative Polling® provides us with a research methodology linked to an experimental design to explore precisely these questions about the potential impact of empowering citizens through dialogue vis-à-vis EU government.

Thus, EuroPolis research projects also lend to proposing a clear course of policy-related action:

- Support and spread the deliberative democratic practices in order to develop both, European public sphere and “better” citizens.
- Draw the lessons from those practices in order to increase legitimacy of political decision.
- Develop joint deliberative projects at various levels (local, regional, national and European) in order to foster the development of deliberative political culture.

THE ADDRESS OF PROJECT PUBLIC WEBSITES:
Project official website:  
http://europolis-project.eu/
The official address of the photograph online storage  
http://www.flickr.com/groups/europolis
The address of the photograph online storage created by private citizen-participant of EuroPolis  
http://picasaweb.google.com/susannevt/EuroPolis293031Maj2009?feat=email#
The facebook group  
http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=94191996244

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\(^{i}\) Other weighting combinations in fact produced similar results to those reported here.

\(^{ii}\) Dropping these controls from the various specifications makes no difference to the magnitudes, signs or significance levels of the key explanatory variables.