

## Keeping promises: VAAs and political representation

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## 1. Introduction

This paper deals with a quite simple but still crucial question:

***To what extent does the post-electoral legislative behaviour of Members of Parliament (MPs) correspond to their pre-electoral policy positions captured by Voting Advice Applications (VAAs)?***

With regard to the service quality provided by VAAs the paper addresses the important aspect of reliability and trustworthiness of VAAs. VAAs encourage voters to base their electoral decisions on a matching of candidates' (or parties') policy preferences with their own political values – not necessarily as the sole but as a main criterion. Such a comparison makes only sense as long as voters can rely on the fact that candidates or parties, if they are elected, will act and vote in parliament according to their pre-electoral policy positions. Otherwise VAAs would not offer any meaningful assistance; to some extent they would lose their *raison d'être*.

Most VAAs conduct surveys among candidates or parties in order to capture their political profiles. It is very likely that candidates and parties apply a strategic behaviour by answering such a questionnaire in order to position themselves in the most favourable manner. This should be especially true for countries with an extensive use of VAAs by voters and where VAAs are correspondingly considered as important elements of electoral campaigns. And as a matter of fact for both the Netherlands and Switzerland being among those with the most extensive use of VAAs there is evidence for strategic behaviour of this kind. In the Netherlands, parties have openly admitted this practice and it has subsequently been broadly discussed in the media (Ladner and Fivaz 2012). In Switzerland as well, it is no secret that some parties provide their candidates with guidelines for answering the VAA questionnaire (Ladner et al. 2010). However, receiving guidelines and following those are two different stories. Based on a comprehensive survey among candidates Ladner et al. (2008: 108-109) could show that only 10% of the candidates followed the instructions to a considerable extent, a further 45% did so at least partially regarding a few specific questions. And we should also keep in mind that strategic answers in a VAA questionnaire only mount a problem if the post-electoral behaviour deviates from the pre-electoral policy positions.

The behaviour described above goes along with the widespread notion among a broader public that politicians quickly take liberties with the truth, that they often tell lies to get elected and that they are not especially eager to keep their pre-electoral pledges once they are elected. Such a behavioural pattern would raise severe challenges for a well-functioning democracy. It would foster an increasing alienation and abstention of citizens from parties and politics in general, but first and foremost undermine a cornerstone of modern democracies: political trust and effective control mechanisms of voters over politicians (Andeweg and Thomassen 2005).

Control mechanisms also represent a cornerstone of VAAs which are based on the concept of promissory representation (Mansbridge 2003). According to this concept voters are mainly forward-looking and use elections to steer future policy outcomes. This process of prospective voting (Powell 2000) includes the expectation that MPs should act according to their pre-electoral statements. VAAs try to strengthen this kind of electoral behaviour by providing voters with reliable information about the positions of candidates running for office. It would be a crushing stroke for VAAs if they failed.

Thus it is somewhat puzzling that, to our knowledge, there are only three studies which evaluate whether VAAs meet the standards in this regard.

Using elections in Lithuania as an example Ramonaite (2010) criticises that VAAs may lead to a support of populist parties and put these at an advantage compared to other parties, because populist parties adapt their responses to the current public mood and do not scruple to change them again after the elections. However, this argumentation neglects that VAAs possibly do not cause but simply reveal pre-existing practices. Information provided by VAAs combined with post-electoral data on legislative behaviour thus rather allows unearthing the truth about populist parties than foster them.

A second study based on an evaluation of a Czech VAA found evidence for a rather poor matching between the parties' VAA answers and their actual voting in parliament: a procedure based on a random vote would have delivered better predictions of the legislative behaviour than the parties' pre-electoral VAA answers (Skop 2010). The question arises – also with regard to the Lithuanian example in Ramonaite (2010) – whether the problem of insufficient congruence between pre-election promises and post-election actions is a problem of VAAs or a particular problem of “young” democracies in Eastern Europe where party structures and positions are rather volatile and the complex democratic processes and institutions have yet to be consolidated, as Skop (2010: 216) himself argues.

The third and methodologically most sophisticated study operates with data from Switzerland. Schwarz et al. (2010) compared pre-electoral VAA statements with MPs' roll-calls and found that in 85% of the cases the MPs votes corresponded to their pre-electoral statements, what can be seen as a rather high matching value.

In the present paper we use the study of Schwarz et al. (2010) as a starting point. We evaluate the congruence between VAA positions and parliamentary voting behaviour by analysing data from Switzerland and the Netherlands. The Swiss case is an adapted and improved version of Schwarz et al., whereas the Dutch case represents a completely new analysis. In both countries VAAs are used extensively, because of the multi-party systems and in the Swiss case also because of preferential voting. But the two cases also differ in important respects: Switzerland, for instance, applies an electoral system with strong candidate-centred characteristics and Swiss MPs correspondingly enjoy larger freedoms to deviate from the party line in parliament, compared to other countries.

The following section provides an insight into the relevant theoretical literature. In section 3 we describe very briefly the relevant characteristics of the two countries' political systems., followed by a detailed description of the available data and the different variables used in the statistical models. Section 5 offers the empirical results followed by a discussion and some recommendations for future research in section 6.

## 2. Theory

The policy linkage between citizens, politicians and government has received a lot of scholarly attention (see Powell 2004). The dominant view takes congruence between the opinions and attitudes of voters and what actually happens in parliament and in government as an important measure for the quality of democratic representation (Schattschneider 1942; Powell 2000). According to the (party) mandate model, the presentation of pre-electoral programmes from which voters can choose presents an important condition for the proper functioning of a promissory system of representation (Mansbridge 2003; Thomassen 1994). The degree to which parties and individual MPs fulfil their election mandates then is an important criterion for judging the quality of the system of representation.

The existing work on the (party) mandate can be divided into three approaches: the pledge approach, the saliency approach and the spatial approach (Royed 1996; Louwse 2011b). The pledge approach is probably the most intuitive of the three; studies using the approach usually compare specific pre-electoral pledges in party manifestos or public speeches with governmental policy actions after the election. Most of the work focuses on pledge fulfilment in a single country, although there is also some comparative work that focuses on the impact of institutions on pledge fulfilment (for an overview, see Petry and Collette 2009). Contrary to the oft-heard complaint that 'parties do not do what they promise' most of the studies in the field find a decent level of pledge fulfilment. The level of pledge fulfilment by government parties ranges from about 80% for single-party governments in Britain (Rallings 1987; Rose 1980; Royed 1996), to about 50% in the Irish coalition governments, with other coalition, minority cabinet or presidential systems somewhere in between (Mansergh and Thomson 2007).

The current analysis of the pledge approach has met a number of criticisms (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Costello and Thomson 2008; Louwse 2011b). First, specific pledges are a non-random subset of all policies that a party stands for. Parties may try to avoid taking an explicit stance on issues they know are unpopular, while stressing their strong points. Moreover, there are large differences between manifestos: some are short pamphlets with only a few specific pledges, while others read like an encyclopaedia of a party's policy positions. Second, the pledges that are made are sometimes very vague and therefore do not provide a strong basis for determining whether they are actually fulfilled. Valence issues, which refer to principles or policies that are generally supported, such as economic growth, without specifying how to achieve these are an example of the former. Third, as the political agenda often changes rapidly, the specific pledges made in one election campaign sometimes quickly become irrelevant. At the same time, related policies that were not specifically mentioned in party manifestos will be on the parliamentary and governmental agenda. The limitation of the pledge approach is thus that it only looks whether pledges are implemented, but not to what degree policies relate to election manifestos (Louwse 2011b).

The saliency approach to the party mandate tries to overcome the problems stated above by comparing the saliency of political issues in manifesto with government spending (Hofferbert and Budge 1990; Klingemann et al. 1994). This is based on the idea that political competition over policy is best characterized with reference to the selective emphasis of certain issues over others (Klingemann et al. 1994). Parties will talk and write a lot about issues that they agree with and simply keep quiet on issues that they do not agree with, rather than confronting other parties on those

issues. The question for researchers using the saliency approach is whether 'rhetorical' saliency translates into higher degrees of spending on salient issues. While this approach mitigates the problems of the pledge approach, its limitation is that it only looks at issue priorities and not at policy positions. Furthermore, the fulfilment of the mandate on non-monetary issues cannot be adequately studied in terms of the saliency approach.

The spatial approach looks at mandate fulfilment in terms of the congruence of the pre-electoral policy space and the parliamentary policy space (Louwerse 2011b). Rather than congruence of specific proposals, it expects political parties to take similar positions on more broadly defined policy scales before and after elections. This approach is in fact quite similar to how policy linkage between citizens and politicians is usually conceptualized in studies of popular-elite congruence (Blais and Bodet 2006; McDonald and Budge 2005; Golder and Stramski 2010; Powell 2000). The advantage of the approach is that it is able to compare party positions before and after elections even when the specific issues on the political agenda change while still paying attention to policy positions rather than only saliency. The problem of the approach is to find adequate and comparable measures of party policy positions in manifestos and in parliament or government (Louwerse 2012).

Most studies of party mandate fulfilment have traditionally focused on the party mandate for government. That is, how pre-electoral commitments relate to government policy. The studies seem to ignore the parliamentary or representative mandate of political parties. This limits these studies effectively to the mandate of government parties. We should not expect that opposition parties are able to translate their election pledge into government policies. On the contrary, if there is real choice between competing 'mandates' at election time, opposition parties should be unable to fulfil their pledges after the elections (Mansergh and Thomson 2007). This leaves the question, however, how opposition parties act in parliament: to what degree does their (voting) behaviour relate to their pre-electoral commitments? This question is especially relevant to the functioning of representative democracy in more consensual political systems, in which the distinction between electoral winners and losers is vaguer.

Another limitation of the focus on the government mandate is that it ignores how different mechanisms of law making in legislative-executive relations impact on mandate fulfilment: how does what happens in parliament affect pledge fulfilment? Especially in political systems where individual politicians have a relatively strong position vis-à-vis their party and a personal electoral mandate, individual-level factors (incumbency, disagreement with party, district magnitude) as well as characteristics of the parliamentary vote (published or secret voting) have been shown to be relevant in explaining pledge fulfilment (Schwarz et al. 2010).

Our study of mandate fulfilment combines elements of the pledge and spatial approaches. By using candidate or party positions as recorded in Voting Advice Applications, we avoid the problem of selective pledge-making: parties and candidate must take a position on all of the statements in the VAA (Schwarz et al. 2010). We compare these positions by estimating congruence on specific issues: do parties in parliament vote in line with the positions they took in the VAA?

### 3. Comparing the Netherlands and Switzerland

Both MPs/parties and VAAs do not act in a political vacuum but within a framework of formal and informal rules and procedures defined by political institutions (e.g. the electoral system or the party system) and the prevailing political culture (e.g. process of government formation or the importance of the party whip for individual MPs in their legislative behaviour). Before we draw our attention to the empirical model and the results of our analysis we provide some key facts about the specific frameworks applied in Switzerland and the Netherlands.

#### 3.1 Switzerland

Although the exceptionality of the Swiss political system often tends to be somewhat overstated, Switzerland features a number of peculiarities compared to conventional parliamentary democracies. As to the questions analysed in this paper this mainly concerns the voting system and the wider executive-legislative relations.

**Electoral system:** The Swiss electoral system is complex and mixes elements from candidate-centred as well as from party-oriented electoral systems. In geographical terms Switzerland is divided into 26 cantons<sup>1</sup> which also represent the electoral districts in national elections. The cantons differ substantially in various aspects as size, language, religion and economic structure.

The Swiss parliament consists of two symmetric, but non-congruent chambers (see Lijphart 1999: 200 ff.): the National Council (“Nationalrat”) and the Council of States (“Ständerat”). Compared with the well-known US parliament the first would be the House of Representatives and the latter the Senate. The National Council, which we will solely focus on in this paper, consists of 200 members (one guaranteed per canton and additional seats proportional to the cantonal population) and is elected in a proportional system. Thus the number of seats per district ranges from one to 34.

In National Council elections Swiss voters have the possibility to express their specific preferences for parties as well as for single candidates. Every voter has as many votes as his constituency has seats (e.g. in the canton of Zurich with 34 seats voters have 34 votes). Voters can split their votes among candidates from different parties (e.g. in the canton of Zurich a voter can give four votes to candidates of party A, ten to candidates of party B and 20 to those of party C). Additionally, voters can support their favourite candidates by giving them two votes instead of one (so-called cumulative voting, e.g. in the canton of Zurich a voter could vote for 17 candidates with two votes each).

To sum up, the Swiss electoral system is considerably fragmented and consists of party- as well as candidate-centred elements. Its rules grant voters the possibility to compose a customized ballot according to one’s personal political preferences (e.g. voting only for specific candidates).

**Party system:** A further aspect of the social and political heterogeneity of Switzerland is the fragmentation of the political parties (Ladner 2002) which has its origins in the fragmented structure of the country, reinforced by the above-mentioned properties of the electoral system.

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<sup>1</sup> To be precise, there are 20 cantons and six half-cantons which, however, only matters for elections to the country’s second chamber (*Ständerat*, or Council of States). The analysis in this paper is constrained to Switzerland’s lower chamber (*Nationalrat*, or National Council).

Typically, a large number of parties participate in elections (e.g. in 2011 voters in the canton of Zurich could choose among 802 candidates from no less than 30 party lists). Like the country also the party system is decentralised and the cantonal and local parties enjoy considerable autonomy. Furthermore, it is not unusual to find different political positions on the same issue within the same party. Even individual candidates may deviate from the positions of their party leaders.

Subsequently, cantonal party systems differ widely for example with regard to the number of parties and the degree of party competition (see Ladner 2004 and 2004b). A further characteristic is the relatively large number of parties with seats in parliament (and government) (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Political Parties in the Swiss parliament and government*

Party	Political position	Seats in the National Council	Seats in the Council of States	Seats in the Government
<i>SPS (Social Democrats)</i>	<i>Left</i>	46	11	2
GPS (Greens)	Left	15	2	-
<i>FDP (Liberals)</i>	<i>Center-right</i>	30	11	2
glp (Green-Liberals)	Centrist	12	2	-
<i>CVP (Christian Democrats)</i>	<i>Centrist</i>	29	13	1
<i>BDP (Conservative Democrats)</i>	<i>Center-right</i>	9	1	1
EVP (Evangelic)	Centrist / religious			
<i>SVP (Conservative)</i>	<i>Conservative right</i>	54	5	1
Lega (Conservative; Italian-speaking minority)	Conservative right / regional	2	-	-
MCG (Conservative; French-speaking Minority)	Conservative right / regional	1	-	-
Independent	(Center-right)	-	1	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>7</b>

**Parliament, legislative behaviour and government formation:** As a direct consequence of the electoral system with the possibility of personal votes for specific candidates, and decentralised and fragmented party structures, which grants candidates the possibility to take positions different from their party, it is not surprising that also MPs enjoy considerable leeway to express party-independent views in legislative voting. Compared to parliamentary systems like the UK or Germany party discipline is weaker.

Beside the reasons already mentioned above there is a further reason for this weak party discipline: the government formation. From 1959 to 2007 the four largest parties (CVP, FDP, SP and SVP) formed the government according to the so-called “magic formula” (consociationalism). Since 2007 a fifth party is included. This government coalition combined more than 80% of all MPs. Government members are elected by parliament for a fixed four-year term. There is neither a no-confidence vote by parliament nor the possibility for dissolution of parliament and the call for early elections by government. Government members (who is not members of parliament) and parliament thus act

quite independently, similar to a separation-of-powers (presidential) system. One can observe constantly changing majorities both within the government and parliament depending on the specific issues at stake. The shared responsibility for governmental actions leads to no responsibility in specific issues (there is no coalition agreement) which means that there is no permanent opposition; government parties can play a double role as governmental and oppositional party across different issues. All this lowers the pressure on and the capacity of the parties to enforce strong party discipline in parliament.

**VAA “smartvote”:** The Swiss VAA smartvote reflects both the complexity of the electoral system and the fragmentation of the party system in its design and features:

- It offers specific voting advice per electoral district.
- It offers both a voting advice for political parties as well as for specific candidates.
- It is based on a survey conducted among the candidates (in 2011 there were 3'500 candidates, of which 85% completely answered the smartvote questionnaire).

### **3.2 The Netherlands**

The Netherlands is often characterized as a typical example of a consensus democracy (Lijphart 1999). The first chamber ('Tweede Kamer') in its bicameral legislature is directly elected, while the second chamber ('Eerste Kamer') is elected by the members of the regional parliaments. While the powers of both chambers are almost equal (the second chamber only lacks the right to initiative and amendment), the first chamber is generally regarded as the most important chamber.

The electoral system for the first chamber uses the proportional d'Hondt largest average method in (effectively) a single national district of 150 members. As the electoral threshold equals just one seat (0.67%), the result is a highly proportional electoral system. The Gallagher Index for the 2006 national election was just.9, which is very low in comparative terms (ParlGov, 2012).

It should come as no surprise that the highly proportional electoral system is accompanied by a relatively high number of political parties. Since the implementation of proportional representation in 1917 no party has achieved a majority in parliament. The effective number of parties in terms of seats was 5.5 in the 2006 election, which is a typical value for the last two decades (ParlGov, 2012). The three traditional main parties, the Christian-democrat CDA, the social-democrat PvdA and the conservative-liberal VVD, have witnessed a large decline in electoral support. New parties on the left and right, including populists, have managed to gain a substantial foothold.

The fragmentation of parliament has made coalition government the norm in Dutch politics. In recent years, it was necessary to include at least three parties to secure a parliamentary majority. In every election since 2002 there has been a (partial) change in the government composition. In 2006 the outgoing government of CDA, VVD and D66 was replaced by a coalition of CDA, PvdA and Christian Union.

Probably as a result of the large number of parties as well as the system of coalition government, parliamentary parties act in a very unitary way. Most of the time, MPs do not even bother to vote individually. Very few votes are individual roll calls, resulting in a very high degree of party unity



(Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011). Moreover, voting behaviour is substantially affected by voting along government-opposition lines (Otjes, 2011).

Due to its extremely proportional electoral system, system of coalition government and fragmented party system, voting advice applications have been adopted relatively early in the Netherlands. The first paper version appeared in 1989 and usage numbers have increased to about one third of the electorate in 2010 (Louwerse and Rosema, 2011). StemWijzer was the first VAA to be developed and it is still the most popular tool. Kieskompas was launched in 2006, partly because its creators felt that StemWijzer did not provide voters with enough insight into the 'political landscape'. Whereas StemWijzer calculates a percentage match between a user and a political party, Kieskompas positions both the parties and user in a two-dimensional 'political landscape'. Contrary to their Swiss counterpart, both Dutch VAAs provide a national advice (not regional) for parties (not candidates).

#### **4. Data and research design**

The paper's main focus is to explain incongruence between the pledges made during election campaigns and the later voting behaviour in parliament. The large differences between the two countries under scrutiny in terms of their voting systems and the way the relations between the executive and the legislative are shaped entail that incongruence in the case of Switzerland is measured at the level of individual MPs while in the Dutch case it is at party level. This is also why we conduct two separate case studies instead of one combined model. The research designs of the case studies, however, are as closely related as possible. They share the research question, the operationalization of the dependent variable, as well as many of the derived hypotheses and a common core of explanatory variables, while the research design leaves room for taking into account country-specific factors.

The section proceeds as follows: We will first briefly describe the analysed data from both cases as well as the operationalization of the dependent variable. We will then move on to the set of explanatory variables. The section's last part introduces the research methods.

##### **4.1 Data**

Both case studies use VAA data to determine the election pledges. In Switzerland, this is the 2003 and 2007 versions of 'smartvote' ([www.smartvote.ch](http://www.smartvote.ch)) while for the Netherlands, the data base is formed by the two VAAs 'Stemwijzer' ([www.stemwijzer.nl](http://www.stemwijzer.nl)) and 'Kieskompas' ([www.kieskompas.nl](http://www.kieskompas.nl)) in 2006.

The paper compares the answers given in the VAA surveys with (virtually) identical parliamentary votes. For the Swiss case we found 34 such votes for the period 2003-2009, which match smartvote survey items. In the Dutch case, the number of VAA statements with matching parliamentary votes is 49 for the period 2006-2010 (see full list in the Annex). The selection of votes upheld a close temporal relationship between the surveys and the votes, i.e., any selected vote should have taken place either very shortly before the survey was answered or in the legislative period following the

survey. We did not select votes that either dated back more than six months before the survey was published, or which took place in the legislative period after the imminent one.

For the Dutch case, there were multiple cases in which we found multiple matching votes to a single VAA statement. In these cases, we took the modal voting behaviour into account and we calculated average values for the explanatory variables on the level of the parliamentary vote.

#### 4.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable is a binary congruence measure for every matching pair of VAA item and parliamentary vote: It is 1 if the voting behaviour matches the VAA answer (positional congruence), otherwise it is 0 (positional incongruence).

Since answer options in the VAA surveys and in parliamentary votes are not the same, we employ the proximity matrix shown in Table 2 in order to make the different sets of options comparable. Non-participation in the VAA as well as abstention or absenteeism in votes were treated as missing values. According to Table 2 positional congruence (1) is assumed if (fully or weakly) agree/disagree answer matches with the corresponding yes/no vote in parliament, otherwise positional incongruence (0) is assumed. Neutral positions in the VAA or abstentions/absenteeism in parliament are treated as missing data.<sup>2</sup>

*Table 2: Matrix (congruence) between VAA answer and legislative behaviour (dependent variable)*

	Legislative behaviour	
	Yes	No
<b>a) smartvote</b>		
Fully agree	1	0
Weakly agree	1	0
Weakly disagree	0	1
Fully disagree	0	1
<b>b) StemWijzer</b>		
Agree	1	0
Neither	-	-
Disagree	0	1
<b>c) Kieskompas</b>		
Fully agree	1	0
Agree	1	0
Neutral	-	-
Disagree	0	1
Fully disagree	0	1

2 Alternative definitions with a higher number of ordinal categories are conceivable. The underlying rationale for the binary option is that more categories run the risk of creating too many “artificial” subdivisions which increase statistical noise without having substantial meaning in reality. Statistical tests for the Swiss case with such alternative specifications with up to five ordinal categories (ordered logit models) have largely confirmed the results of our binary response model.

Note: Non-participation in the VAA (or a neutral or neither answer) as well as abstention votes or absenteeism are treated as missing values.

Tables 3 to 5 show the distribution of the dependent variables, as well as the number of votes per party included in the dataset.

Table 3: Distribution in the dependent variable (percentages in brackets)

	Legislative behaviour		Total
	Yes	No	
<b>a) smartvote</b>			
Fully agree	1701 (35.9)	163 (3.4)	1864 (39.3)
Weakly agree	394 (8.3)	226 (4.8)	620 (13.1)
Weakly disagree	146 (3.1)	337 (7.1)	483 (10.2)
Fully disagree	116 (2.4)	1655 (34.9)	1771 (37.4)
Total	2357 (49.7)	2381 (50.3)	4738 (100)
<b>b) StemWijzer</b>			
Agree	67 (33.5)	34 (17.0)	101 (50.5)
Neither	3 (1.5)	0 (0.0)	3 (1.5)
Disagree	24 (12.0)	72 (36.0)	96 (48.0)
Total	106 (47.0)	94 (53.0)	200 (100)
<b>c) Kieskompas</b>			
Fully agree	41 (15.7)	8 (3.1)	49 (18.8)
Agree	40 (15.3)	33 (12.6)	73 (27.9)
Neutral	7 (2.7)	18 (6.9)	25 (9.6)
Disagree	14 (5.4)	64 (24.5)	78 (29.9)
Fully disagree	3 (1.1)	33 (12.6)	36 (13.7)
Total	105 (40.2)	156 (59.8)	261 (100)

Table 4: Number of MPs and MP votes (per party) in the dataset (Swiss case)

	Number of MPs included	Number of MP votes included	Average number of votes per MP
CVP	38	736	19.4
FDP	44	704	16.0
GPS	27	474	17.6
SP	62	1'301	21.0
SVP	61	1'243	20.3
Other parties	22	342	15.5
Total	254	4'800	18.9

Table 5: Number of VAA statements and number of votes per party in the dataset (Dutch case)

	Number of VAA statements included	Number of votes included
CDA	45	116
ChristenUnie	44	112
D66	42	106
GroenLinks	48	123
PvdA	45	115
PvdD*	19	50
PVV	48	128
SGP	48	126
SP	45	123
VVD	49	129
Total	-	1'128

Note: This excludes statements for which parties provided neutral or neither answers, for which congruence cannot be measured. \* = PvdD was not included in *Kieskompas*.

### 4.3 Hypotheses and explanatory variables

This section develops the hypotheses and lists the independent variables of the regression models. We first list the set of variables, which will appear in both case studies, before turning to the country-specific factors.

#### 4.3.1 Common explanatory variables

**Strength of political preference:** MPs or parties that reveal strong preferences in the VAA survey are less likely to change their mind during parliamentary debates. In the Swiss context, strong preference means that a straight yes/no answer (strongly agree/disagree) was given to an item, while the weakly agree/disagree option is taken as an indicator for weak preference structure. A similar approach has been used for the Dutch *Kieskompas*. As the *Stemwijzer* uses a three-point answer scale, we cannot measure the strength of the preferences from that VAA.

**Positional centrality (or policy extremism) of a party:** Parties at both ends on the common left-right scale are more extreme in their standpoints (which is basically why they are located there), more ideology-driven and less willing to compromise with others. In contrast, parties in the (broadly defined) centre of the political system usually hold less stubborn views and thus are welcome partners in centre-left or centre-right coalitions, be it conventional parliamentary government coalitions like in the Netherlands or legislative alliances on a case-by-case basis like in Switzerland (for the Swiss case see Hug and Sciarini 2009; Jegher 1999; Kriesi 2001; Schwarz 2009). We hypothesise that the more extreme (the less central) the party position is, the higher its positional congruence. For the Dutch case, we use the distance of individual parties' positions from the centre on the left-right scale, as measured by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2010). In the Swiss case, we use the average party success rates in parliamentary votes to measure the positional centrality of a party.

**Government participation:** On the one hand, in conventional parliamentary systems (like the Netherlands) it is mainly up to the government coalition to fulfil their pledges. They are under tougher observation by the media whether they really do than the opposition parties whose hands are tied and often struggle to get their core issues on the legislative agenda. On the other hand, one can also argue that the responsibility of government entails higher political flexibility both with regard to initial coalition negotiations, which almost inevitably leads to the abandoning of election pledges, and with regard to changing political conditions after the government has been formed (Mansergh and Thomson 2007: 320). Opposition parties, in contrast, do not have to (and cannot) prove that their policies are better for the country; they can just claim that they would. It thus seems easier for non-governmental parties than for the government to stick adamantly to their pre-election positions. All in all, the precise effect of participation in government on positional consistency is theoretically ambiguous and likely depends on the importance of the formulation of coalition agreements. If government parties are tied strictly to the coalition agreement, we would expect a lower degree of congruent voters for these parties compared to the opposition (cf. Hix and Noury 2011). Although Switzerland's political system with its broad-based four to five-party consociational government does not quite follow parliamentary conventions, we still incorporate this variable in order to capture possible effects.

**Party core issues/Issue saliency:** The salience approach postulates that party manifestos mainly highlight issues that are relevant and important to the party in question (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Klingemann et al. 1994), whereas VAA questionnaires are composed of the full range of political areas. We assume that election pledges concerning issues, which are particularly important to an MP, are more often respected than presumably irrelevant issues. We are using expert survey estimates of party issue saliency from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2010<sup>3</sup>. Experts indicated to what extent an issue area was salient for a party on a scale ranging from 0 to 10. For the Dutch case, the relevant Chapel Hill scales have been matched to the issue categories used in the two VAAs. We were able to find acceptable matches for all but three of the VAA categories (education, democratic reform and culture and media). In the Swiss case study we first matched the issue areas from the Chapel Hill survey directly to the 34 selected items (see list of items in Appendix). In a second step, issues were defined salient if the average expert score in the Chapel Hill survey (both mean and median) was above 7.0, while scores between 6 and 7 were defined as weakly salient; all other issues were defined as non-salient.

**Time span between VAA survey and legislative vote:** Political contexts can and do change over time. Pre-election positions are sometimes overtaken by events, which *should* lead responsible MPs to change their mind, be it for the benefit of their voters or for the common good. While our models are unavoidably 'static', i.e. they do not take into account contextual changes to the selected policy issues, the time-span variable (measured in months) tries to capture some variation by assuming that the longer the period between the VAA statement and legislative vote, the higher the propensity that conditions change, and with them the positions taken up by MPs.

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<sup>3</sup> We are using the 2010 edition, because this includes more relevant policy dimensions.

#### 4.3.2 Swiss-specific variables

As an alternative to the positional centrality/policy extremism variable, we employ simple **party dummies** in order to estimate the effect of individual parties on the dependent variable. In the Swiss case the dummy variables include the FDP (Liberals), GPS (Greens), SP (Social-democrats), the SVP (National-conservatives), and the bunch of small parties. Our reference category is the CVP (Christian-democrats). The inclusion of party dummies implies the abandonment of the party random effects level in the model specifications.

**Relevance of the vote:** Not every vote is equally significant within the legislative process. Some votes may have a direct law-making effect (e.g. votes on amendments to government bills), while other votes merely charge the administration to consider the introduction of a law-making proposal (parliamentary motions). Research on the Swiss parliament has shown that the importance of a vote affects legislative behaviour of Swiss MPs (Hug and Sciarini 2009; Schwarz 2009). The effect on the positional congruence of MPs or parties is theoretically ambiguous: On the one hand, it can be argued that congruence is higher the less relevant the votes are because they are safe for position-taking and of little consequence, no matter what the result of the roll call is. On the other hand, media coverage of more relevant votes may be higher and MPs or parties could feel more obliged to stick to their pre-election statements. In the Swiss case, out of the 34 selected items in this paper 20 are government bills (high law-making relevance) and 3 are parliamentary motions (low relevance); 11 items concern parliamentary initiatives whose relevance status depends on whether the vote is related to the initial phase (low relevance in five cases) or to a bill drawn-up and introduced by a legislative committee (high relevance in six cases). As a large majority of the votes in the Dutch case concern motions, we only include this variable for the Swiss case.

**Positional incongruence with party group majority:** Positional congruence by an MP is more likely if the majority of the party group takes up the same stance on the issue. If an MP finds out after the election that the majority of her fellow party members take another position there should be an increased propensity that she will eventually conform to the majority position. This change is most likely due to peer-group pressure, as Swiss party group leaders do not have strong formal instruments at hand to discipline their group members (Damgaard 1995; Hertig 1978; Lanfranchi and Lüthi 1999). This variable is binary, analogically defined to the dependent variable.<sup>4</sup>

**District magnitude:** The electoral districts are the 26 Swiss cantons whose size varies between one and 34 seats, according to population figures. The voting system is first-past-the-post in 6 single-member districts, and proportional representation in the 20 multi-member districts. Voting theory suggests that the electoral connection is closer in small districts because the lower the number of MPs the easier to keep track of their legislative behaviour (Bowler and Farrel 1993; Carey and Shugart 1995; Cox 1997). We therefore expect that pre-election positions are more likely to be disregarded in larger districts. Because district magnitude is not expected to show a linear effect, we use two dummy variables which capture, on the one hand, the smallest districts with up to 4 seats

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4 If no majority in the party group could be detected (e.g. if a tie occurred) or if the majority of the party group abstained, any smartvote answer was rated as being in line with the party group majority. MPs that are not members of a group are treated as missing values.

and, on the other hand, the biggest districts with 15 or more seats (the reference category thus are medium-sized districts).

**Incumbency:** The effect of incumbency on pledge fulfilment is theoretically ambiguous: On the one hand, incumbents know how the land lies. Unlike freshmen, they are more consolidated in their political positions and thus less prone to changing their pre-election positions. On the other hand, incumbents might be more detached, both from their party and their voters. They have gained self-confidence from the fact that they have been constantly re-elected, which could weaken the chain of delegation and broaden political leeway (Shugart et al. 2005; Tavits 2009).

**Year of vote:** The period of examination (2003-2009) had been a period of on-going change. Swiss politics had become increasingly polarised and less consensual in style (the then most unusual non-re-election of a Christian-democratic government member in 2003, followed by the non-re-election of a government member of the national-conservative Swiss People's Party in 2007 with the election of an intra-party rival instead which triggered a party split in 2008 is a case in point). In the same period, the legislative behaviour of MPs had gained extended media attention, also driven by the fact that the number of published votes steadily increased by the year. Which effect is to be expected is less clear, however. On the one hand increased visibility of legislative behaviour means more pressure from voters to stick to election pledges. On the other hand, increased visibility prompts party leaders to step up disciplinary measures to preserve the party label.

Moreover, we use the following socio-demographic control variables: Language (French- and Italian-speaking minorities), the MPs' age, and sex.

In sum, the most important refinements in the current paper compared to Schwarz et al. (2010) relate to the variable definitions of the party core issues (based on the Chapel Hill 2010 expert survey instead of party unity in smartvote answers) and party centrality (which now captures the pivot position in parliamentary votes in a more accurate way than the dummy variable in the previous study). In addition, new variables like the strength of the expressed preference in the VAA questionnaire are introduced.

#### 4.3.3 Dutch-specific variables

**Party size:** we include party size for the Dutch analysis, because it might be easier for smaller, more cohesive parties to stick to their pre-electoral commitments than for larger, more diverse parties.

**VAA source:** As the analysis for the Dutch case includes statements from two different VAAs, we control for the possibility that pledge fulfilment might be higher for statements from one or the other VAA. Kieskompas and StemWijzer use ways to position parties (Kieskompas mainly relies on content analysis, while StemWijzer simply asks parties to indicate their positions), different ways to select statements and different scales to record the party answers.

**Certainty of the match between the VAA statement and the parliamentary proposals:** it is nearly impossible to find a perfect match between a VAA statement and a parliamentary proposal. Sometimes the language is stronger in the one or the other, or the parliamentary proposal only concerns a sub-issue of the broader VAA statement. In order to capture possible effects of the quality

of the match, each match was assigned a certainty estimate ranging from 0 = not a good match at all to 100 = (near) perfect match. In practice, we only matched statements and proposals with a value of 50 (adequate match, but a somewhat different issue), 60 (adequate match), 70 (appropriate match, but issue is slightly different or a sub-issue), 80 (good match, although wording might be stronger/weaker), 90 (very good match) or 100 (near perfect match).

#### **4.4 Research method**

Given the clustered structure of the data, we will run a number of mixed-effects (multilevel) regression models to explain positional (in-)congruence in Switzerland and the Netherlands. While all models come with the same binary structure of the dependent variable, the statistical details of the models will vary according to the country under consideration (different definition of model levels and different composition of covariates).<sup>5</sup>

In the Swiss case the hierarchical data structure features four levels: individual MP, electoral district (canton), national party, and the single vote/issue. These levels are not perfectly nested, the model specification thus has to deal with cross-classification (e.g. national parties appear in different cantons and every MP gives his or her opinion on a number of different votes). The cross-classification structure is simplified by the fact that 'empty model' estimations containing only random effects indicated that the contribution to the explained variance by the level of cantons is extremely small (results not reported here). We therefore decided to drop cross-classifications involving parties and cantons, but leaving those between votes/issues and MPs/parties.

In the Dutch case all data was recorded on the party level, therefore the individual and district level do not come into play. We took into account the party level as well as the issue category level.

### **5. Explaining positional (in-)congruence**

#### **5.1 Empirical analysis of the Dutch case**

We expected government participation to be of paramount importance in the voting behaviour of Dutch parliamentary parties. Table 6 shows the percentage of VAA statements that parties voted on in a congruent way. The difference between government and opposition parties is marked: on average, opposition parties voted in a congruent way in about 82% of cases, while government parties did so in only 51% of the cases. This effect is in line with our expectations and indeed with earlier analyses of Dutch parliamentary behaviour (Louwerse 2011a, 2012).

The main driver of the government parties' behaviour seems to be the fact that they reject opposition parties' proposals even if they agree with the general message. For example, government party CDA positioned itself in favour of extending nuclear energy before the elections. In parliament, however, it rejected motions from the right-wing opposition, which asked for more nuclear power.

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<sup>5</sup> All model estimations were run using the 'lme4' package in R ('glmer' function for generalized linear mixed-effects regression).



At the same time, it also rejected motions from the left-wing opposition demanding a moratorium on new nuclear power plants. Instead it seemed to prefer to leave the matter up to the government entirely.

*Table 6: Government participation and congruent behaviour*

	<b>Congruent behaviour (%)</b>	<b>N</b>
Government party	51.0 %	134
Opposition party	81.6 %	299
Total	72.2 %	433

Note: Difference of means test:  $t(207.26) = 6.1703$ ,  $p < .01$ .

A multivariate analysis of the Dutch data confirms the importance of government participation. In Model 2, which includes all explanatory variables, there is a strong effect for the variable Government party. The odds ratio is 0.14 signalling that the odds of government parties to vote in line with their VAA position is 6 to 7 times lower than the odds of opposition parties. This strong effect remains, also if we control for party size and policy extremism. These factors do not have an effect on congruence, once we control for government participation.

Issue saliency is the second explanation for which we find strong support. The odds ratio is 1.32, which means that for an increase of one point on the saliency scale (ranging from 0 to 10), the odds of voting congruently increase moderately. Although we do not have saliency measures for each of the 12 policy areas, this is still a clear outcome. Parties vote more in line with their pre-electoral position on issues that they find more important. This finding stands in contrast from findings from Thomson (2001), who observed that issue saliency, as measured by the Comparative Manifestos Project, did not affect the degree to which manifesto pledges were implemented by the government. Note, however, that we do not only use a different operationalization of issue saliency (expert survey vs. document analysis), but also that our measurement of pledge fulfilment is different. Whereas Thomson studied pledge fulfilment by governments, we are looking at congruent parliamentary voting behaviour.

Because issue saliency is not observed for all cases, we also estimated models without saliency (model 3) and without saliency, but with the same cases as in model 2 (model 4). This does not affect our findings in substantively important ways, although the significance of some effect changes somewhat between specifications. Model 5 includes the effect of preference strength, which can only be observed for the Kieskompas statements. Preference effect does not seem to have an effect on the probability of congruent voting behaviour, nor does its inclusion change any of the other coefficients significantly.

In all models, the certainty of the match between VAA statement and parliamentary proposal, as estimated by the coder, did seem to have a small effect of congruence levels. If the match was more exact, the probability of congruent voting behaviour was higher. On the one hand this implies that

we must be careful in matching votes with VAA proposals, because depending on the exact wording of a proposal, parties might take different positions. On the other hand, it also tells us something about changes in the political agenda: parties' voting behaviour is likely to become less predictable if the exact proposals that are voted on are very different from the proposals that were central during the election campaign.

All in all, the Dutch case provides strong evidence for both the influence of policy and office on pledge fulfilment. Government parties are less likely to vote in a congruent way, while parties are more likely to vote congruently on issues that they find important.

*Table 7: Logit Predictions for Positional Congruence between Pre- and Post-election Sphere. Two-level cross-classification models (Parties, Issue categories).*

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>
(Intercept)	1.06 <sup>***</sup> (0.28)	-1.75 (1.26)	0.60 (0.91)	-0.29 (1.10)	-3.95 <sup>†</sup> (2.28)
Government party		-1.90 <sup>***</sup> (0.51)	-1.88 <sup>***</sup> (0.44)	-2.20 <sup>***</sup> (0.54)	-2.32 <sup>**</sup> (0.89)
Party Size		0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)
Policy Extremism		-0.01 (0.18)	-0.08 (0.15)	-0.05 (0.18)	-0.02 (0.32)
Saliency		0.24 <sup>*</sup> (0.10)			0.36 <sup>†</sup> (0.21)
VAA source = StemWijzer (Ref: Kieskompas)		-0.37 (0.28)	-0.46 <sup>†</sup> (0.24)	-0.42 (0.27)	
Time span to vote		-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)
Match Certainty		0.03 <sup>*</sup> (0.01)	0.02 <sup>†</sup> (0.01)	0.03 <sup>*</sup> (0.01)	0.05 <sup>*</sup> (0.02)
Preference strength					0.61 (0.49)
AIC	489.04	396.24	480.95	400.55	189.30
BIC	501.25	439.38	521.65	439.76	222.08
Log Likelihood	-241.52	-187.12	-230.47	-190.27	-84.65
Deviance	483.04	374.24	460.95	380.55	169.30
Num. obs.	433	373	433	373	196
Num. groups: Issue category	12	9	12	9	9
Num. groups: Party	10	10	10	10	9
Variance: Category (Intercept)	0.07	0.30	0.15	0.23	0.61
Variance: Party (Intercept)	0.58	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00

\*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05, †p < 0.1

## 5.2 Empirical analysis of the Swiss case

Table 8 presents four statistical models to predict positional congruence between VAA positions and voting behaviour in parliament. The first model is an 'empty' model with only random effects included. In the second model additionally a number of socio-demographic control variables are

included. Models 3 and 4 carry all fixed effects; they only differ in the way they capture the party effects (random level vs. dummy fixed effects).

The estimations in the ‘full’ models 3 and 4 largely confirm the results in Schwarz et al. (2010): By far the most important factor to explain positional incongruence between VAA answers and parliamentary voting is incongruence between an MP’s VAA answer and the later majority position in his or her legislative party group. The huge logit coefficient close to -4 means that the odds to a positional change are about 500 times higher if the VAA positions does not match the majority position in the party group.

Other highly significant factors in our models include party centrality (MPs from pivotal parties in the political centre are more likely to change their mind) and the newly introduced preference strength measure (stronger preferences produce higher positional congruence). Weakly significant are participation in government (MP positions from government parties are less likely to change) and small electoral districts (MPs from small cantons with no more than four parliamentary seats show higher positional congruence). The interpretation of the government participation effect is difficult because of the particularities of government formation in Switzerland (no government-opposition structure, and consociationalism which means that all major parties occupy government seats). Thus government participation – at least in the time period covered in our analysis – is virtually identical to a party size dummy.

*Table 8: Logit Predictions for Positional Congruence between Pre- and Post-election Sphere. Three-level cross-classification models (MPs, Parties, Issues).*

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
(Intercept)	1.86*** (0.22)	1.76*** (0.35)	2.76*** (0.58)	1.42* (0.68)
Minority language (F/I)		-0.05 (0.10)	0.01 (0.15)	-0.03 (0.15)
Age		0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Sex: male		-0.01 (0.11)	0.00 (0.15)	0.03 (0.16)
Year of vote			0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)
Time span to vote			-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Incumbent			0.18 (0.15)	0.21 (0.15)
Relevance of vote			0.03 (0.24)	0.03 (0.23)
District ≥ 4			0.51† (0.26)	0.51† (0.26)
District ≥ 15			-0.13 (0.14)	-0.11 (0.14)
Government party			0.32* (0.14)	0.70† (0.14)

			(0.15)	(0.38)
Preference strength			1.26***	1.25***
			(0.13)	(0.13)
Disagreement with party group			-3.96***	-3.94***
			(0.13)	(0.13)
Core issue			0.10	0.10
			(0.10)	(0.10)
Party centrality			-0.23***	
			(0.06)	
Party FDP				0.05
				(0.21)
Party GPS				1.41**
				(0.49)
Party SP				0.65**
				(0.23)
Party SVP				0.73 <sup>†</sup>
				(0.38)
Party small				0.64
				(0.47)
AIC	3572	3577	1964	1966
BIC	3598	3623	2080	2102
Log Likelihood	-1782	-1782	-963.8	-962
Deviance	3564	3563	1928	1924
Num. obs.	4800	4800	4744	4744
Num. groups: MP	254	254	250	250
Num. groups: Party	14	14	12	
Num. groups: Issue	34	34	34	34
Variance: MP (Intercept)	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.06
Variance: Party (Intercept)	0.37	0.37	0.00	
Variance: Issue (Intercept)	0.34	0.34	0.17	0.17

\*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05, †p < 0.1 (Standard errors in brackets)

## 6. Conclusions

While the Swiss and Dutch political systems are both characterized as consensual (Lijphart 1999), the way in which the party mandate works in both countries differs to a great extent. In the Swiss candidate-centred electoral system the congruence between pre-electoral policy positions of candidates and their parliamentary voting behaviour is best explained by looking at the disagreement with the party group, preference strength, government participation and party centrality. Those who disagree with the majority of the party before the election are much more likely to change their position, as are those with weaker preferences. At the party level, smaller effects can be found: members of centre parties and government parties are more likely to display congruence between their pre-electoral and post-electoral positions. These effects are, however, considerably smaller than explanations that relate to an individual candidate's position on a specific statement.

In the Dutch case, we could not observe the individual-level factors that affect congruence in behaviour in the Swiss case. Parties rather than candidates are positioned on VAA statements and

parliamentary voting usually is (de facto) performed and recorded by party. Government participation is the most important explanation of positional congruence: government parties are much more likely to take a different position in a vote than opposition parties. While government parties need to abandon some of their pre-electoral commitments during the coalition negotiations, opposition parties are free to stick to their pledges (Holzhacker 2002). Although one might expect opposition parties to oppose basically everything the government does, the relatively strong powers of the Dutch opposition parties provide them with the opportunity to forward their own agenda in parliament (Döring 1995, Louwerse 2012). A lot of what is voted on in parliament concerns motions from the opposition. Most of these are rejected, but at least it allows opposition parties to signal to their voters that they acted upon their electoral pledges. Other factors that affect congruence are the saliency of the political issue as well as the 'quality' of the match between the pre-electoral statement and the parliamentary votes.

It seems that MPs are in both cases deeply affected by the specific characteristics of the specific political and electoral systems: in the Netherlands the role as a government respectively opposition party is the most important aspect, whereas in Switzerland government participation can be neglected (since this factor is rather weakly founded in theory). The finding that the most important factor is the average (majority) position of the own party is in line with our institutional expectations: During electoral campaigns the relatively weak position of parties and the candidate-centred voting system set clear incentives for candidates to stress their individual profile and to seek simultaneously for personal and party votes. But after the elections, MPs belonging to the same party have to work together and find as far as possible common positions in order to play an effective role in parliament and send coherent signals to the electorate. Thus, MPs have an incentive to give up at least some of their outlier positions and take over the positions of their fellows – particularly if issues are concerned to which they indicated weaker preferences in the VAA.

The two countries yet have some aspects in common. First of all the results confirm the observation from the previous study of Schwarz et al. (2010) that despite the often heard public belief of dishonest politicians, MPs are rather reliable with regard to sticking to their pre-electoral policy positions. Previous studies using different sources of data and different approaches have drawn similar conclusions (Mansergh and Thomson 2007; Louwerse 2012). Moreover, in both systems congruence is most affected by the demands of effective implementation of the party mandate. The Swiss system provides incentives for MPs to act in unity in parliament to be able to implement the party policy agenda. In the Dutch system party unity almost seems taken for granted (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011). Here, the need to form government coalitions based on an elaborate coalition agreement requires government parties to abandon some of their pre-electoral commitments. Moreover, in both systems the degree of 'importance' of a statement also impacts upon the probability of congruent voting behaviour. In Switzerland, MPs are less likely to vote congruently if their preferences are weaker, while the analysis for the Netherlands demonstrated the impact of issue saliency on congruence. While these are arguably somewhat different indicators, they both refer to how central an issue seems to be to an individual candidate (Switzerland) or a party (Netherlands). This constitutes a new finding since earlier studies, which used a different operationalization of issue saliency (Thomson 2001; Louwerse 2011a) did not find such an effect. Essentially, our findings are 'good news' for mandate theory: Swiss and Dutch parties and MPs stick to their pre-electoral positions and even more so on the issues that matter most to them.

The question remains what our analysis says concerning the informational reliability contained in VAAs. Are VAAs a good source for voters to get an indication of how parties behave after the election? Both in Switzerland and the Netherlands the ratio of kept promises is relatively high, which suggests that the information in VAAs is generally a good indication of how parties will act upon those issues after elections. Two points of caution are, however, appropriate here. First, we have looked at how parliaments vote on bills, amendments and motions. Of course, congruent voting is in many cases a long way from actually implementing a specific policy. If parties or MPs are on the losing side of a parliamentary vote, they might keep their parliamentary mandate by voting in a manner that is congruent with their VAA position, but actual policy is unaffected. Second, our analysis shows that there is a high degree of congruence *for those VAA statements on which parliament actually votes*. Quite a few VAA statements are, however, not voted on in parliament, either because the political agenda changes, parties change their position on the issue and no longer wish to bring it up in parliament or because the policy statement in the VAA was stated in a very broad manner. What we thus do not know from our analysis is whether the selection of VAA statements provides an accurate prediction of the totality of voting behaviour in parliament after the elections. This would be a very relevant topic for further study.

While our analysis of two quite different systems leads us to expect that positional congruence is not limited to just these two countries, an earlier study by Skop (2010) found that the ratio of promises kept in the Czech republic is significantly lower than the ratios we found. It would be interesting to analyse Skop's hypothesis that the lower ration in eastern European countries can be explained by the fact that they are young democracies in more detail. Future work that includes a larger number of countries with even more diverse democratic backgrounds would thus be very welcome.

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## Appendix

### List of the 34 smartvote items / legislative votes

No.	Issue	Issue area (Chapel Hill 2010 survey)	smartvote version	Date of legislative vote
1	Simplified naturalization of 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation of immigrants	Integration of immigrant and asylum seekers	2003	03.10.2003
2	Adoption of children by homosexual couples	Social lifestyle	2003	03.12.2003
3	Higher spending for the armed forces	International security	2003	09.12.2003
4	EU membership	European integration	2003	16.12.2003
5	Splitting TV/radio licence fees between public and private TV/radio stations	--	2003	03.03.2004
6	Keeping a nationwide network of post office branches	Improving public services vs. reducing taxes	2003	19.03.2004
7	Higher remuneration for MPs	--	2003	08.10.2004
8	Higher spending for agriculture	Urban vs. rural interests	2003	01.12.2004
9	Disclosure of the salaries of board members and CEOs in companies listed on the stock exchange	--	2003	02.03.2005
10	Standstill agreement on genetically modified organisms in agriculture and food	Environment	2003	17.06.2005
11	Keeping reduced VAT rate for tourism services	Improving public services vs. reducing taxes	2003	14.12.2005
12	Freedom of choice between military service and alternative civilian service	Civil liberties vs. law and order	2003	14.12.2005
13	Privatisation of the national telecommunication supplier "Swisscom"	Deregulation	2003	10.05.2006
14	Higher spending for day care and crèches	Redistribution	2003	07.06.2006
15	Introduction of English as the first foreign language in schools	--	2003	21.06.2007
16	Basic health insurance coverage of complementary medicine (alternative medicine)	Redistribution	2007	19.09.2007
17	Storing soldiers' service weapons in the armoury	--	2007	22.03./ 27.09.2007
18	Deployment of the army to support civilian units	Civil liberties vs. law and order	2007	27.09.2007
19	Ban on smoking in public buildings, restaurants and bars	Civil liberties vs. law and order	2007	04.10.2007
20	Legalising the possession and consumption of cannabis	Social lifestyle	2007	10.12.2007

21	Granting nationality at communal level by using the ballot box or a communal assembly	Integration of immigrant and asylum seekers	2007	17.12.2007
22	Toughening the criminal law for juveniles	Civil liberties vs. law and order	2007	19.12.2007
23	Limitations on the environmental associations' right of appeal	Deregulation / environment	2007	20.03.2008
24	Introduction of a finance referendum at federal level	Improving public services vs. reducing taxes	2007	20.03.2008
25	Extending the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU to Bulgaria and Romania	European integration / immigration	2007	28.05.2008
26	Introduction of road pricing	Environment	2007	03.06.2008
27	Higher spending in the field of development aid	International security / redistribution	2007	10.06.2008
28	Giving young people the right to vote from the age of 16	--	2007	24.09.2008
29	Permission of parallel imports of items protected by patent	--	2007	15.12.2008
30	Extending the powers of the security authorities to include the preventative monitoring of postal, telephone and email traffic	Civil liberties vs. law and order	2007	17.12.2008
31	Ban on the construction of minarets	Integration of immigrant and asylum seekers	2007	04.03.2009
32	Introduction of a minimum wage	Redistribution	2007	11.03.2009
33	Direct election of the Federal Council (executive)	--	2007	30.03.2009
34	Retail price maintenance on books	Deregulation	2007	27.05.2009