

Did Europe Matter?
Framing Europe in the 2009 European
Election Campaigns in Ireland

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the notion of a Europeanisation of political communication and the possible development of a European Public Sphere with reference to the 2009 European Parliament elections in Ireland. The growth of a European Public Sphere – a shared discursive space – has been offered as a potential means through which confidence in the EU might expand by enhancing the processes of identification amongst citizens throughout EU Member States. Key European events, such as European Parliament elections, are essential opportunities through which communicative interaction can take place in order to enable the construction of a shared discursive space. In Ireland, the PR-STV electoral system leads to candidates playing a greater role in election campaigns. Therefore, this paper investigates the existence of a Europeanisation of political communication in both the campaign communications of the political parties *and* individual candidates. The research employs three interpretive frames, derived from framing theory, to conduct the investigation: *interests*, *identity* and *values*. This paper finds that the majority of political parties and candidates do not use European frames of reference in their campaign communications. The research indicates that those strongly in favour of European integration are most likely to communicate in terms of European interests, identity or values. Overall, the findings indicate that few parties or candidates communicate from a 'Europeanised' perspective and that there has been little development of a European Public Sphere in Ireland.

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CONTENTS

Introduction and Context Review	7
Literature Review	10
European Parliament Elections – Does Europe Matter?	10
The Europeanisation of political communication: moving towards a 'European Public Sphere'	12
How framing is used as a theoretical paradigm	15
Methodology	19
The European Manifestos	23
Interests Frame	23
Identity Frame	26
Values Frame	29
Party Political Broadcasts	31
Interests Frame	31
Identity Frame	33
Values Frame	34
European Election Candidates	35
Dublin	35
East	36
North-West	37
South	38
Interest Frame	38
Identity Frame	39
Values Frame	41
Conclusions and Discussion	43
Where is Ireland's European Public Space?	44

Educating Europe's citizens	45
Where did Lisbon go?	46
Another second-order election	46
Implications for future research	47
Bibliography	49

Annexes:

- A Interview with Deirdre de Burca - 6 July 2009
- B Interview with Mairead McGuinness - 8 July 2009
- C Interview with Prionsios de Rossa - 23 July 2009
- D Fianna Fáil: European Party Political Broadcast (1st version)
- E Fianna Fáil: European Party Political Broadcast (2nd version)
- F Fine Gael: European Party Political Broadcast
- G Green Party: European Party Political Broadcast
- H Labour Party: European Party Political Broadcast
- I Libertas: European Party Political Broadcast
- J Sinn Féin: European Party Political Broadcast

ABBREVIATIONS

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

CFP – Common Fisheries Policy

EP – European Parliament

EPP – European People's Party

EU – European Union

MEP – Member of the European Parliament

PES – Party of European Socialists

PR – Proportional Representation

STV – Single Transferable Vote

TD – Teachta Dála (Member of the Irish Parliament)

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT REVIEW

The dominant theory emerging from the research on European Parliament (EP) elections has established that they remain 'second order' in nature and are largely conducted in the absence of any significant European content (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Consequently, we can assume that voters care little about the positions that the various national parties take with respect to issues such as the future of European integration, the Lisbon Treaty, EU enlargement, the EU budget, who should lead the next European Commission, immigration and climate change. If voters are solely interested in national issues and national party politics then it might be logical to expect the candidates in EP elections to give them what they want. This leads us to question whether the European Union (EU) matters at all when campaigning for election to the EP.

The EU stands accused of a 'democratic deficit', with consistently low public support for EU institutions and policy in a majority of EU Member States according to the Eurobarometer surveys. Many scholars have argued that this 'democratic deficit' originates out of an EU 'communication deficit' (Meyer, 1999). While there is no guarantee that increased knowledge of the EU institutions will lead to increased support for it, failure to address the 'communication deficit' will certainly not improve the situation. Therefore, if EU institutions, national governments and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) communicate in a more effective manner then the potential for a subsequent rise in support for both EU institutions and policy does exist. The growth of a European Public Sphere – a shared discursive space – has been offered as a potential means through which confidence in the EU might expand by enhancing the processes of identification amongst citizens throughout the EU Member States (Koopmans & Pfesch, 2003). Key European events, such as EP elections, are essential opportunities through which communicative interaction can take place in order to enable the construction of a shared discursive space (Riise, 2003; Van de Steeg, 2002).

Ireland provides an interesting case for research given the proximity of the Lisbon Treaty Referendum in June 2008 to the June 2009 EP elections. Despite a sizeable majority of Irish citizens being strongly supportive of EU membership, the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty resulted in the Irish electorate's second rejection of a European Treaty in seven years. The result of the Irish referendum has caused visible irritation amongst many other EU Member States and anecdotal evidence suggests that Irish influence within the EU has diminished somewhat in the aftermath of the referendum. The 2009 EP elections took place within twelve months of the Lisbon referendum

and, with promises of another referendum on the Treaty to be held only months after the EP elections, Lisbon was expected to play a significant role in the EP campaign. In fact, Libertas, the Irish think-tank-turned-(pan-European)-political-party, insisted that it would act to turn the EP elections into a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty throughout Europe. If debate on the Lisbon Treaty had featured strongly in the campaign then the potential for Europe to matter would have been significantly higher than in other elections. Ultimately, Libertas failed to achieve its aim or to win any seats in Ireland and a discussion of the Lisbon (non-)effect will be dealt with in this paper.

The global economic crisis had a significant negative impact on the Irish economy, with GDP forecast to contract by 8.3% in 2009 (Central Bank, 2009). The Irish economy went from boom to bust and the economic crisis resulted in strong levels of dissatisfaction with the Government parties – with Fianna Fáil, the major coalition partner, in particular (Irish Political Studies, 2009). The 2009 European and Local elections in Ireland relegated Fianna Fáil to the position of second largest party in terms of vote share for the first time since the 1930s. The link between the high level of dissatisfaction with the government and the economic crisis is apparent. Any investigation of the 2009 EP elections in Ireland would naturally expect the economy to play a significant role in the election campaign. However, what is interesting for this study is how the solutions to the economic crisis were presented to the public in terms of any role the EU might play, if at all.

Ireland is also an interesting case to study given the particular electoral system that it employs – the Single Transferable Vote (STV) in multi-member constituencies. Only Malta and Northern Ireland use STV for EP elections in addition to Ireland. This electoral system tends to somewhat dilute the degree that the political party matters by providing benefits to candidates who have established a strong personal following as a consequence of a demonstrated local presence (Marsh, 2000). There is, of course, strong consistency amongst candidates within parties in terms of the issues that they campaign on and the policy positions that they adopt. This paper will take account of both the strong party sentiment that guides voting intentions and the existence of the 'personal' vote.

Building on previous research by van Os (2005), Riise (2003), Van de Steeg (2002) and Eder et al (2002), this research paper analyses the 2009 EP election campaigns of parties *and* candidates in Ireland by exploring the framing of Europe within campaign communications, with specific reference to three interpretive frames: *interests*, *identity* and *values*. In doing so, the following questions will be answered:

Are European issues addressed by political parties in the context of the EP election? If so, are national or European interests stressed? Is an identity present in the text, be it European, or other group identities such as national, regional, or ethnic? Can expressions be found that refer to universal values when European issues are addressed?

(van Os, 2005: 205)

Through analysis of these questions, this paper will present findings on the development of a European Public Sphere in Ireland and gain an understanding of the role that EP candidates play in educating citizens about the EU, its institutions and policies.

This research paper begins with a review of the prominent literature on EP elections; the European Public Sphere and the Europeanisation of political communication; and the theoretical concept of framing and its application. The methodology will then be explained before turning to a detailed reporting of the research findings. As discussed above, the STV electoral system leads to a duality of campaign orientation as both political party and individual candidate play a role in winning votes. This paper ensures that both levels of political communication are addressed by first presenting findings on the framing of the political parties European manifestos and the party political broadcasts before turning to findings from selected candidates in each of the four EP election constituencies. This paper will close with a discussion of the findings and an explanation of the potential reasons for the absence of a European frame of reference within the 2009 EP election campaign in Ireland.

LITERATURE REVIEW

European Parliament Elections – Does Europe Matter?

The importance and influence of the European Parliament has grown over time in relation to the power held by the two other main bodies of the EU – European Commission and the Council of the European Union (Bogdanor, 1989; Kreppel, 2002). Through the co-decision procedure, decisions on new European laws in many areas are now made jointly by the Parliament and the Council of Ministers (Earnshaw and Judge, 1996). The work of the Parliament impacts on the daily lives of citizens across the EU as it plays an active role in the drafting of legislation in areas such as environmental protection, consumer rights, equal opportunities, transport, and the free movement of workers, capital, services and goods (European Parliament, 2009). Given its growing importance as a decision making body within the EU – powers which would be enhanced under the Lisbon Treaty (2007) – the opportunity for citizens to directly influence the direction of EU integration and EU policy, outside of national elections, is considerably expanded.

The European Parliament has been directly elected for five-year terms since 1979, while direct democracy has played an increasing role in progressing European integration since the first referendum on integration was held in France in 1972. However, two decades of academic literature has concluded, with few exceptions, that European issues tend not to matter in determining voting behaviour in European Parliament elections and referendums. Therefore, one has to wonder if increasing the power of the European Parliament is really worth fighting for given the electorate's lack of interest in the work that is carried out by MEPs.

Three dominant schools have emerged in the scholarly debate on voting behaviour in these elections (Hobolt, 2005). The most prominent of these, the 'second-order' theory, argues that European issues do not matter as national issues tend to dominate the agenda and voting acts as a means of signalling the electorate's level of satisfaction with their national government (Franklin et al, 1994; Franklin et al., 1995; Marsh, 1998; Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Consequently, voters do not make decisions based on their perception of either a party or candidate's ability to run the EU (Kuechler, 1991). According to Reif and Schmitt (1980), 'first-order' elections are those concerned with elections to national public office given that the electorate is more interested in the national political arena. Interestingly, Marsh (1998: 592) reminds us that 'these second-order elections are

characterized by the same party system and are fought by the same parties as first-order elections'. Reif and Schmitt (1980) further contend that issues and concerns appropriate to the first-order arena will affect behaviour in second-order elections, despite these elections being about something else. They highlight the particular importance held by 'the political situation of the first-order arena at the moment when the second-order election is being held (Reif and Schmitt, 1980: 8). Based on the argument that less is at stake in second-order elections, Reif and Schmitt (1980) offer three broad propositions for European Elections:

1. There will be lower levels of participation in European Parliament elections compared to turnout in national elections.
2. National government parties will suffer losses in European Parliament elections as these elections usually happen mid-term, when research has shown their popularity to have declined (Goodhart and Bhansali, 1970; Marsh, 1998; Stray and Silver, 1983).
3. Larger parties will do worse and smaller parties will do better in European Parliament elections – this results from strategic voting giving way to voter's true preference.

In terms of political parties, therefore, the second-order school argues that European Parliament elections are only important as indicators of the political party's national strength. This leads parties to run their European election campaigns with almost identical strategies that they would employ in national elections. Advocates of this theory highlight that elections for the European Parliament are contested on national political issues with no real debate over differing approaches to European integration – something that they argue voters care little about. In fact, political parties tend to downplay differences they hold on European integration (Hix, 1999).

In contrast, the 'attitude' school contends that voters cast their ballots according to their attitude towards European integration, which is constructed out of their personal values and beliefs (Siune et al., 1994; Svensson, 2002). Research supporting this theory has been carried out in member states such as Denmark, where voters have been found to develop beliefs and attitudes on political matters such as EU integration, which are then used in the decision of how to cast their ballot (Svensson, 2002). The 'attitude' school dismisses generalisations about popular ignorance in favour of a belief in voters' ability to make competent judgements on election candidates. The third school explains voting behaviour in terms of "utilitarian expectations" (Gabel, 1998) and expects ballots to be cast for candidates who will seek to enact policy that will positively impact on the voter's welfare. Kousser (2004) finds evidence that voters who change their voting behaviour between first- and

second-order elections do so in a retrospective, strategic and rational manner in order to increase their own benefit.

As has been explained above, the dominant second-order theory and significant evidence suggests that European Parliament campaigns are fought on 'national' rather than 'European' issues and by national rather than European parties. However, a key question – one that lies at the heart of this research – is concerned with the definition of a 'European' issue. The underlying assumption in much of the research thus far has been that the lack of a reference to issues concerned with the development of the EU itself means that the European Parliament elections are failing to achieve their true objective. Thomassen and Schmitt (1997: 169) propose an alternative viewpoint: 'The more the European Union develops, the more we would expect political debate to be dominated by 'normal' policy issues, like the problems of unemployment, or of organised crime, rather than by more constitutional issues'. They take their argument one step further by building an intelligent argument relating to the composition of the European political groups within the Parliament. They contend that while parties may campaign as national parties, they 'might still represent a European electorate on the assumption that the parties belonging to the same political group adopt similar stands on important political issues' (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997: 169). In fact, voting patterns in the European parliament can be explained to a large extent by the left-right dimension with fairly strong party discipline, especially within the EPP and PES groups.

This research paper takes the view that the distinction between what can be considered explicitly 'national' or 'European' has become blurred given the pervasive role that the EU has come to play in terms of the freedom that member states hold in decision-making. Therefore, an understanding that European involvement and its effects on national issues is more subtle must be taken when addressing how best to convey information about the EU to voters. If, as the second-order school argues, Europe is absent and does not matter for European Parliament elections then we should expect to find that campaign communications were bereft of a European frame.

The Europeanisation of political communication: moving towards a 'European Public Sphere'

The EU has failed to engage citizens fully in the EU project and stands accused of both a 'legitimacy deficit' (Carter & Scott, 1998; Everts & Sinnott, 1995) and a 'democratic deficit' (Chrysochoou, 2007; Niedermayer & Sinnott, 1995). Further compounding this perception is the

existence of a 'communication deficit' within the EU (Meyer, 1999). This lack of communication from EU institutions directly impacts on perceptions of democracy and transparency in a negative way. A knowledge gap between the EU and its citizens concerning what the EU does has left public opinion suspicious of its activities and intentions (Sinnott, 1997). A recent Eurobarometer study shows overall trust in the EU at 50%, with 36% tending not to trust it (Eurobarometer 69).

Public opinion has become increasingly important as the EU seeks to accept new member states and further the integration process (Semetko et al, 2000). A significant problem is that popular attitudes towards the EU are characterised by “ignorance, indifference, and wildly varying assessments” (Menon, 2008: 2). In recent years EU referendums have failed in Ireland (2001 and 2008), France (2005), The Netherlands (2005), Sweden (2003) and Denmark (2000). An extensive literature exists on public perceptions concerning European integration (Anderson, 1998; Dalton & Eichenberg, 1998; Gabel & Anderson 2002; Handley, 1981; Hewstone; 1986; Inglehart & Rabier, 1991; Kennedy & Sinnott, 2007; Vaubel, 1994; Wessels, 1995).

There is now momentum within the EU to construct a ‘European Public Sphere’ that will act to increase discourse and interaction between the EU’s citizens and its institutions, with the aim of solving the ‘communication deficit’ (Bruggemann, 2005; Schlesinger, 1999). In fact, research has already begun to indicate that a European Public Sphere has come into existence across certain countries and within particular societal groups (Trenz, 2004).

According to Habermas (1989), the public sphere exists outside of the institutions of the state providing an arena for views and opinions to be developed in relation to matters of public concern. Habermas contends that the public sphere evolves out of the free discourse of citizens but its evolution is also structured through incentives and constraints imposed from above (Bruggemann, 2005).

While Eley (1994) explains that the evolution of the public sphere and the formation of the nation-state have been closely connected, 'it is crucially important to acknowledge the contingency of that relationship' (Schlesinger, 1999: 264). Furthermore, it is misleading to think that the public sphere possesses a sole authoritative centre. Fraser (1994) suggests that we might better conceptualise the public sphere and public debate in terms of a plurality of competing publics. Calhoun (1995: 242) advocates the notion of a 'sphere of publics', where we discover 'multiple intersections among heterogeneous publics, not only as the privileging of a single overarching public'. Therefore, we

can address political discourse in the communicative space of the EU – a body politic that is neither nation-state nor easily characterised polity (Menon, 2008) – where both national and European discourses are present.

“Europe” is inside the nation state as part of the domestic political agenda and as part of the broader politic-economic framework; at the same time, it is also still another place, a different political level and locus of decision making that may be represented as outside.

(Schlesinger: 1999: 265-266)

While much research has investigated movement towards the formation of a European Public Sphere, the existence of a common European public agenda will most likely remain diversely 'domesticated' with respect to the various national and language contexts (Gurevitch, Levy & Roeh, 1991). Nevertheless, this assumption does not preclude the possibility that both national audiences and communicators may be oriented towards a common 'European' frame of reference. Schlesinger (1999: 269) argues that 'communication about the EU is most obviously shaped by national political and cultural frameworks during European Parliament election campaigns and when referenda are held'. The assumption about the importance of timing for communication about the EU is what guided the researcher to undertake a study of the framing of Europe during a EP election campaign.

This research paper follows Bruggemann (2005) in adopting the widely accepted suggestion of Gerhards (1993) that the European Public Sphere, if it exists, can only take the shape of a Europeanisation of the national public spheres. This understanding of Europeanisation implies that through the process of European integration there has been a re-orientation of relevant actors in the public sphere.

This research sets out to explain how the public is being informed about the EU, if at all, by incumbent Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and other European Parliament election candidates during European Parliament campaign cycles. In addressing whether or not the formation of a European Public Sphere is indeed being guided from above, an understanding of political communications through the media must be formed and will be guided by previous research into this area for European elections (Blumler, 1983; Kevin, 2003; Leroy & Siune, 1994; Peter et al, 2003). The issue of a European Public Sphere has emerged as an increasingly pertinent theoretical discussion in recent times given the difficulty of reconciling conventional thinking about political organisation and communicative space in relation to the EU (Schlesinger, 1999). This

study will add to the existing literature on the development of a European Public Sphere by analysing its prospects for growth during EP election cycles.

How framing is used as a theoretical paradigm

An impressive literature has developed over the years to contribute to our understanding of frames and framing effects (Edelman, 1993; Entman 1991, 1993; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Gamson, 1992; Goffman 1974; Graber, 1988, 1993; Iyengar, 1991; Iyengar & Simon, 1993, McLeod, Kosicki & McLeod, 1994; Neumann, Just & Crigler, 1992; Price, Tewsbury & Powers, 1997; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Tuchman, 1978; Zaller, 1992). A review of the literature on framing reveals that the term is often described quite casually. The lack of emphasis on a solid definition may be attributed to the common usage of the words *frame*, *framing*, and *framework* outside of academic study, where their meaning is roughly similar. Framing can be considered a natural extension of agenda-setting theory (Weaver, McCombs & Shaw, 1998), where agenda-setting is concerned with salience of issues (Carruthers, 2000), while frame-setting, or second-level agenda-setting is concerned with the salience of issue attributes (McCombs, Llamas, Lopez-Escobar & Rey, 1997). To explain this in simpler terms, framing analysis 'expands beyond agenda-setting research into *what* people talk or think about by examining *how* they think and talk about issues' (Pan & Kosicki, 1993: 70, emphasis in the original). However, Scheufele has challenged the proposition that framing is an extension of agenda-setting, arguing that

Framing influences how audiences think about issues, not by making aspects of the issue more salient, but by invoking interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation of incoming information....framing is based on subtle nuances in wording and syntax that have most likely unintentional effects or at least effects that are hard to predict or control.

(Scheufele, 2000: 309)

While Scheufele's argument provides an interesting reassessment of the underlying assumption of agenda-setting and framing theory, this paper follows the explanation of framing proposed by McCombs and his followers, who comprise the dominant framing school.

According to McCombs (2004: 287), a frame acts as the central organising idea of a communication

transmission by supplying a context and suggesting 'what the issue is through the use of *selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration*' (emphasis in the original). Entman (1993: 52) goes on to explain that frames work 'to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation....Typically frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe'. By increasing the salience of a certain element within an issue, the frame makes that particular information more meaningful or memorable to its audience. Frames are useful for an audience as they act to 'simplify, prioritize, and structure the narrative flow of events' (Norris et al, 2003: 10). They are constructed through the use of certain words or phrases and selection of particular images, contextual references or analogies. In addition to allowing the public to rapidly interpret, categorise and evaluate complex (perhaps unfamiliar) events, frames act as a useful tool for political actors to react and communicate policies simply, quickly and effectively (Norris et al, 2003; Gitlin, 2003).

Frames act to promote one particular interpretation of events. Zaller (1992), Kahneman and Tversky (1984), and Iyengar (1991), among others, suggest that on most matters of social or political interest, people are not generally so well-informed and cognitively active, and that framing therefore heavily influences their response to communications. This research takes the concept of framing, which has been used primarily in mass-mediated environments, to investigate the political communication of candidates in an election cycle. A political party's formulation of preferences and priorities through their manifesto (or other campaign communications) aims at promoting their proprietary issues and downgrading other issues, which clearly acts to turn the electorate's attention to specific topics (Konstantinidis, 2008).

At this point it is important to note that given the fact that salience is a product of the interaction of texts and receivers, the presence of frames in a text, as detected by researchers, does not guarantee their influence in audience thinking (Entman, 1989; Graber, 1988). However, this research is interested in whether or not these frames are being constructed at the elite-level – those candidates campaigning for election – and, therefore, contributing to the evolution of a European Public Sphere.

This paper draws upon research undertaken by van Os (2005), Riise (2003), Van de Steeg (2002) and Eder et al (2002) in order to assess development of the European Public Sphere through investigation of the framing of issues within the 2009 European Parliament elections in one national public sphere – Ireland. The research is structured around assessment based on three frames:

1. *Interests frame* – a European issue may be raised in the context of particular interests: the producer of the text suggests that the issue is relevant for us because it touches our particular sphere of interests.
2. *Identity frame* – a European issue may be raised in the context of particular identities: the text suggests that the issue is relevant for us because it touches our collective identity.
3. *Values frame* – a European issue may be raised in the context of particular moral values: the issue is considered relevant because it touches our sphere of values.

As has been set out above, the proposed research will be firmly grounded in the disciplines of political science and communication studies, specifically developing the literature on European Parliament elections and EU ‘communication policy’.

The proposed research will examine the framing of European issues in the campaigns of European Parliament candidates in Ireland for the 2009 European elections. The conclusion to be drawn from the ‘second-order’ school is that candidates need not pay attention towards European issues as this takes time away from campaigning on national issues that will gain the candidate more votes. However, research exists to indicate that ‘EU-related issues have exerted a significant impact on the performance of at least some political parties in EP elections’ (Ferrara & Weishaupt, 2004: 284). Consequently, it has been suggested that European Parliament elections are in fact about Europe in at least some member states (Ferrara & Weishaupt, 2004). This research will undertake to examine whether this was the case in Ireland during the 2009 European Parliament elections and to what extent political actors in Ireland are contributing to the development of the European Public Sphere.

The existing literature on European Parliament elections has suffered as a result of the lack of attention given to candidates. The proposed research will alter the focus from the behaviour of voters to that of candidates during European Parliament elections. This approach will serve to build upon the existing literature by creating a more comprehensive picture of the nature of European Parliament elections. In addition to the comparison between different candidates and parties, the research will also assess the level of coherence concerning campaign strategies within parties and analyse and explain any intra-party variation that may occur. Importantly, it will analyse the degree to which candidates for European Parliament elections act as both communicators of EU policy and educators about the EU. In doing so, it will establish the potential to further develop their role in solving both the EU ‘communication deficit’ and ‘knowledge gap’ discussed above and to what

extent they contribute to the development of the European Public Sphere. Finally, the validity of the 'second order' thesis will come under scrutiny in the context of the 2009 European Parliament elections in Ireland.

METHODOLOGY

This research paper takes the form of a qualitative study and includes a plurality of research methods, which act to increase the reliability and validity of the results. A qualitative approach has been chosen to reflect the requirements of the study. Creswell explains that

[Quantitative] theories provide a general picture of trends, associations, and relationships, but they do not tell us about why people responded as they did, the context in which they responded, and their deeper thoughts and behaviour that governed their responses.

(Creswell, 2007: 40)

The proposed qualitative approach allows the researcher to expand on the quantitative studies that have been conducted and will contribute to an understanding of the mechanisms of the causal theories and models that have been used to explain European Parliament elections. It is important to remember that the researcher is a key instrument in qualitative studies. They collect data themselves by examining documents, observing behaviour and interviewing participants and the final conclusions will necessarily bear some bias as a result of the way that the researcher reviews and organises the data.

This research seeks to examine the framing of European issues in the campaigns for the 2009 European Parliament elections in Ireland. For this purpose, an extensive content analysis will be conducted of both the verbal and written communications that emerge from the different campaigns. This will take the form of an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the content of a variety of campaign communications (Fleisher, 2005). These communications include the European election manifestos of the political parties, party political broadcasts and the campaign literature of selected individual candidates. The content analysis of party manifestos, party broadcasts and candidate literature identify the issues most strongly emphasised by the parties and allow the researcher to conduct assessment of these communications based on the three frames outlined in the literature review: *interests*, *identity* and *values*.

This paper also includes depth interviews with selected candidates in order to form a greater understanding of candidate motivations in their framing decisions. These open-ended interviews addressed issues that included the candidate's position on the EU and Ireland's role within it, their perception of their role as MEPs and why they prioritised certain issues in their campaign, among

others. The interviews serve to cross check and verify any assumptions that have been drawn from the content analysis.

44 candidates stood for election to the European Parliament in roughly equal number in four electoral districts – Dublin (10), East (11), North West (13), South (10). In 2009, Ireland's representation in the European Parliament was reduced by one seat from 13 to 12, with Dublin losing its fourth seat. This meant that each district elected three MEPs to the European Parliament. Included in this study are all political parties with Dail (Irish Parliament) representation, incumbent MEPs, winning candidates and Libertas. In terms of the analysis of individual candidate literature involved in this research paper, where a party had two candidates running in a district, the second candidate is not included in this study if that candidate was not deemed to be in the running for a seat. Similarly, if a party's candidate was deemed not to have played a significant role in the debate during the campaign in a particular district, based on the researcher's monitoring of news media in the month leading up to the election date, then they are not included in the section dealing with candidates. Table 1 outlines which political parties and candidates will be examined in this research paper.

Irish Political Parties and Candidates Examined During 2009 European Parliament Election

Party	Candidate	District	Incumbent	Elected
Fianna Fáil	Eoin Ryan	Dublin	Yes	No
	Liam Aylward	East	Yes	Yes
	Brian Crowley	South	Yes	Yes
	Pat Gallagher	North West	No	Yes
Fine Gael	Gay Mitchell	Dublin	Yes	Yes
	Mairead McGuinness	East	Yes	Yes
	Jim Higgins	North West	Yes	Yes
	Sean Kelly	South	No	Yes
	Colm Burke	South	Yes	No
Labour	Prionsios de Rossa	Dublin	Yes	Yes
	Nessa Childers	East	No	Yes
	Alan Kelly	South	No	Yes
Green Party	Deirdre de Burca	Dublin	No	No
	Dan Boyle	South	No	No
Sinn Féin	Mary Lou McDonald	Dublin	Yes	No
	Toireasa Ferris	South	No	No
Libertas	Caroline Simons	Dublin	No	No
	Raymond O'Malley	East	No	No
	Declan Ganley	North West	No	No
Socialist Party	Joe Higgins	Dublin	No	Yes
Independent	Marian Harkin	North West	Yes	Yes
	Kathy Sinnott	South	Yes	No

While the political party manifestos and party political broadcasts were easily available, this was not necessarily the case for the campaign literature of all candidates. Some candidates produced more literature than others and made it easily accessible through their website. The researcher has attempted to collect as much information from candidates as possible but, during the course of the research process, the researcher was unable to collect all candidate literature. However, the majority of literature was collected for those candidates who form part of this study. The researcher attempted to interview at least one candidate from each party. It was not possible to interview all candidates and in these cases the research relies on the content analysis of their campaign literature and media debates to draw conclusions about their framing choices. However, a significant issue during the research process was the difficulty of securing interviews with candidates. The election campaign period itself was a hectic time for all candidates and no interviews occurred during this stage. Following the election on 5 June, the researcher was more successful in gaining interviews with candidates but there was still a very low response rate. As a member of the election campaign team for incumbent MEP Eoin Ryan, the researcher enjoyed privileged access to the Fianna Fáil European campaign team, which allowed the researcher to develop a very strong understanding of the motivation behind particular framing decisions for this political party.

The study had originally planned to undertake a content analysis of campaign literature from the 2004 European Parliament election to evaluate the level of consistency between the two elections in terms of the prevalence of European issues and act as a control mechanism on the study. However, during the research process the researcher found that most candidates and political parties had destroyed their literature from the 2004 election as it was considered no longer necessary. Therefore, the research paper is now without the original control mechanism, although this does not negatively impact on the utility of the framing analysis undertaken in this research.

This paper seeks to answer the question: *In what manner did Irish political parties frame Europe in their campaign communications during the 2009 European Parliament election?* Building on previous research by van Os (2005), Riise (2003), Van de Steeg (2002) and Eder et al (2002), the research does so in terms of assessment of three particular interpretive frames: *interests, identity and values*.

Are European issues addressed by political parties in the context of the EP election? If so, are national or European interests stressed? Is an identity present in the text, be it European, or other group identities such as national, regional, or

ethnic? Can expressions be found that refer to universal values when European issues are addressed?

(van Os, 2005: 205)

Through analysis of these questions, this paper will present findings on the development of a European Public Sphere in Ireland and gain an understanding of the role that EP candidates play in educating citizens about the EU, its institutions and policies.

THE EUROPEAN MANIFESTOS

This section analyses the European election manifestos of the main political parties contesting the EP elections in Ireland – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour Party, Green Party and Sinn Féin. Despite the fact that it did not produce an election manifesto as such, the literature produced by Libertas will also be included in the analysis. The presentation of the findings in this section is structured according to the three frames outlined above – *interests*, *identity* and *values*.

Interests Frame

The results of the content analysis indicate that the emphasis placed on expressions of shared European interests or positive aspects of the EU tends to correlate with the political party's opinion in relation to European integration. When a political party is more supportive of further integration then that party tended, in general, to place a greater emphasis on a common European interest. Of course, the direction and form that any future integration takes is something that is debatable – some argue for greater moves towards federalisation while others are pleased to expand the number of states within the EU but to continue with the current operating rules. The only political party with Dail representation that stated within its manifesto that it was opposed to further integration was Sinn Féin. The Labour Party placed the greatest emphasis on European interests within its manifesto, while Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael stressed either European or national interests depending on the particular issue that was at stake. Interestingly, the Green Party manifesto focused almost exclusively on Irish interests.

Sinn Féin presented the choice as one between European or national interests. On the whole, their manifesto emphasised the negative aspects resulting from EU action, which created the impression that when something is in Europe's interest then it is often not in Ireland's interest. Some examples of how these sentiments were framed include:

The gap between ordinary people and the European Commission, Council and Parliament is growing. As a result decisions taken in the EU do not reflect peoples' real concerns or needs.

(Sinn Féin, 2009a: Section 3)

The power that the EU has to negotiate international trade deals on behalf of all Member States has been damaging to certain economic sectors that the EU feels

are better and more cheaply undertaken outside the EU EU competition regulations (or state aid rules) severely restrict the investments a Member State or regional or local government can make in its own economy. These rules are simply too inflexible to allow for state involvement when it is necessary. Sinn Féin is opposed to this approach, which is based on the EU's flawed economic strategy.

(Sinn Féin, 2009a: Section 4)

All other parties engaged in this emphasis on national interests over European interests but only in relation to particular policy areas – agriculture and fisheries being the most common. Political parties were most likely to refer to a European interest or dimension when discussing the economy and climate change.

All political parties accepted the important role that the EU plays in terms of economic recovery. However, the way that this role was understood and framed differed across the parties. The Labour Party placed the greatest emphasis on the common European interest involved: 'Europe is facing its worst economic crisis since the 1930s. The scale of the challenge is so great, that Europe must act together to overcome it' (Labour Party, 2009a: 6). In the introduction to the Fianna Fáil manifesto, Brian Cowen, the party leader, argued that 'over the next five years the Parliament will deal with a range of issues which are vital to our national and *collective European interests*' (Fianna Fáil, 2009a: 4, emphasis added). In the context of the economic crisis, this framing of interests clearly indicated a very strong belief in working together to achieve common European interests. Fine Gael referred to a 'European economy' but their emphasis was almost exclusively on the Irish economy and what Europe can do for us. Hence, a European economy existed but their framing focused on Irish and not European interests. The Green Party followed in the mainstream view that Ireland could not resolve the financial crisis alone given its 'international dimension'. This framing of the economic crisis ensured that the audience understood there to be a European interest in the economic recovery.

Economic matters are often the most contested when it comes to European integration. This is clear from analysis of the manner in which the political parties refer to Irish sovereignty over their taxation rates. However, one area that is particularly uncontested is that of global warming and climate change. This is widely accepted as a problem that crosses borders, cannot be dealt with by national governments alone and is an issue in which there is a shared interest. While all parties agreed that a European interest exists in terms of climate change, the Labour Party's framing of this context was the strongest in terms of European interests.

Global warming is the kind of problem the European Union exists to solve: it transcends borders, threatens **our common future**, and it can only be solved by collective action.

(Labour Party, 2009a: 15, emphasis added)

The European Union, by being to the forefront in arresting climate change must use every opportunity to ensure that the global international community support policies to arrest climate change.

(Fianna Fáil, 200a: 16)

Pollution does not respect national boundaries, making it a natural area for coordinated EU action. Environmental damage in one state directly or indirectly affects other states. That is why Fine Gael believes the Union must take an active role in legislating for a cleaner environment.

(Fine Gael, 2009a: 24)

As mentioned above, there were two areas in which the manifestos focused exclusively on framing interests as national – agriculture and fisheries. The party that placed the greatest emphasis on these areas was Fine Gael, which acted to frame the issue as a conflict between European and national interests. Their manifesto stated that Irish interests must be protected and that 'we must defend our share of the [EU] agricultural budget in the post 2013 era' (Fine Gael, 2009a: 3), which Fine Gael would do by being 'a strong campaigner and voice for Irish agriculture in Brussels and Strasbourg' (Fine Gael, 2009a: 23). Fianna Fáil echoed Fine Gael's sentiments stating that they will 'fight to ensure that the interests of Irish farmers, rural communities and the Irish food sector are fully protected' (Fianna Fáil, 2009a: 20). The Green Party also contributed to the framing of national interests in terms of the Irish agricultural sector and added an emphasis on Ireland's environment.

A secure farming future for Ireland is vital for our economy and society. Irish MEPs will be at the forefront of reforms that will both strengthen the economic future of farming and minimise its impact on Ireland's environment.

(Green Party, 2009a: 13)

All parties referred to the role that the European Union plays on the international stage but the Labour Party took the lead in framing a strong European interest in terms of foreign policy and represented a very strong stance in favour of further integration.

Europe is already an active global player, but we must increase our influence and impact by coordinating our positions and speaking as much as possible with a single voice. Strengthening the role of the EU High Representative for Common

Foreign and Security Policy will be an important step forward.

(Labour Party, 2009a: 19)

The only manifesto that did not mention the Lisbon Treaty was that of the Green Party. The other parties divided into two camps, depending on their support for the Treaty. Those in favour – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour – presented the Treaty as being in the interests of both Ireland and Europe.

The Lisbon Treaty reflects our values and supports our interests. It will result in a more efficient union, a more democratic union, a union that supports workers' rights and pro-competitiveness agenda. It will strengthen the role of national parliaments in the decision-making process in Europe.

(Fianna Fáil, 2009a: 10)

Those against – Sinn Féin and Libertas – argued that the Lisbon Treaty did not reflect Irish interests. Libertas made repeated references to the existence of 'elites in Brussels', which created the impression that European interests were not Irish interests. There was an entity in Brussels that was in fact taking advantage of both the Irish people and citizens of other EU member states. Sinn Féin argued for greater control by sovereign states, claiming that the EU had taken power away from the people and that it was, by inference, not acting in the interests of its citizens.

We need a new treaty that brings greater democracy to the EU, returning power to people and Member States....We need a treaty that protects Irish neutrality and that sets its face against the creeping militarisation of the EU and foreign and defence policies decided by NATO.

(Sinn Féin, 2009a: Section 3)

Identity Frame

All political parties frame the EU as a single entity in their manifestos. However, there is often a difference made between who the EU or Europe is and distinct references to Irish citizens. While all parties recognise that the EU comprises a single entity, some parties place greater emphasis on Ireland's separateness from this body. This is most obvious through investigation of the use of the pronouns 'we', 'us' and 'our' in reference to the EU. It is important to note that the manifestos of those parties that emphasised a common European identity also referred to the national identity. Importantly, it can be argued that the acceptance of a common European polity is a pre-requisite for the existence of a shared discursive space.

There is a definite and strong link between the identity and interests frame. Consequently, the content analysis reveals that the Labour Party referred most frequently and strongly to a common European identity, which they did through reference to European citizens and the Labour Party's alliances within the European Parliament.

Labour wants a progressive Europe, working in the interests of the people of Europe ... Labour, together with our sister parties in the Party of European Socialists (PES), is campaigning on a platform that is about jobs and fairness....The number one priority of the European Labour movement in these elections is to ...

(Labour Party, 2009a: 3)

Mobility should be the rule not the exception. Every young European should have the chance to enjoy it.

(Labour Party, 2009a: 7)

We believe that Europe needs a stronger common voice in the world to shape a better future for our citizens and the planet. We must work together for peace and partnership, and to eradicate poverty, in solidarity with people across the world.

(Labour Party, 2009a: 19)

Fine Gael leader, Enda Kenny, refers to 'our Union of nearly 500 million people' (Fine Gael, 2009a: 5). Their manifesto goes on to state that 'the project of European enlargement has benefited us all. When we joined the then European Economic Community (EEC) our community consisted of just nine members' (Fine Gael, 2009a: 20). However, as discussed above, when it came to certain interests Fine Gael's tone with respect to identity changed and it became more of an 'us' and 'them' explanation. This is particularly true in relation to the manifesto section dealing with fisheries, which argued that 'the policing of the CFP [Common Fisheries Policy] has been unbalanced, with Ireland's fishermen often facing more extreme regulation than those in fishing fleets from other jurisdictions' (Fine Gael, 2009a: 26).

Fianna Fáil followed the same approach as Fine Gael with respect to agriculture and fisheries, maintaining that they would fight to protect the rights of Irish farmers and fishermen. Their manifesto frequently referred to 'our European partners', which highlighted a sense of a European identity but nowhere near as strong as the framing that Labour engaged in.

One of the interesting findings was that the Green Party did not attempt to build a common

European identity in their manifesto. There was an unusual emphasis placed on references to 'Irish Greens' throughout their document. This is in contrast to the political rhetoric of the international Green movement, which emphasises the problems that climate change poses for a common humanity. The researcher expected to find greater reference to the Green Party's partners in the European Parliament and the European Green movement. When the Green Party referred to Europe they spoke about it as if it was a separate entity: 'The Greens have delivered in Europe' (Green Party, 2009a: 15).

The two anti-Lisbon political organisations represented the weakest proponents of a common European identity frame. Sinn Féin opted to highlight the negative aspects of EU membership in their document, arguing that the EU has taken both money and power from us (the Irish).

Since Ireland joined the EEC in 1973 over €100 billion worth of fish has been mined from our seas, principally by non-Irish fleets Recent years have seen the EU gain more power to set the parameters within which national and regional governments can operate their economies, and in particular exercise control over taxation.

(Sinn Féin, 2009a: Section 4)

The newly formed Libertas political party claimed to be a pan-European party. In this respect, it is assumed that it should be talking about a common European identity. In some sense it does this but only at the expense of excluding the EU institutions and bodies from this identity. For Libertas, the EU is controlled by elites in Brussels and across European capitals.

We, the people, need to hold Brussels to account...It is unacceptable to be ruled by an unaccountable, over-paid elite that feathers their own nests at our expense'.

(Libertas, 2009a)

'In an appalling rejection of the democratic choice of the people, the EU has refused to accept that the Lisbon Treaty is dead. Instead, the Irish government, encouraged by elites in Brussels and throughout European capitals, want to ask the people to vote again. And this time, they want the people to accept what will be bad for them and bad for the future of the European Union'

(Libertas, 2009b)

Values Frame

The third frame deals with the existence of a universal values frame and analyses the extent that Europe is framed as having a shared set of values in each of the political party manifestos. Significant differences exist in terms of how the EU is perceived and portrayed by both Libertas and Sinn Féin compared to how the other political parties frame Europe and its values. For Libertas, the EU – framed as a distinct and separate body – 'does not respect democracy' (Libertas, 2009b). Sinn Féin recognises the potential that the EU has in terms of spreading values both within and beyond its borders but criticise the values that the EU currently holds:

The EU is a major economic force but has been using this strength to impose a free trade agenda which benefits corporations instead of using it to promote sustainable development.

(Sinn Féin, 2009a: Section 4)

Freedom, justice and human rights should be the cornerstone of EU policy on Justice and Home Affairs. However much of the EU's current policy is fixated on increasing surveillance and restrictions on people's rights – creating instead a Fortress Europe security state.

(Sinn Féin, 2009a: Section 6)

In stark contrast to these views are those held by the other parties who praise the values that they believe support the entire structure of the European Union. The Labour Party expresses these values as being shared by all European citizens.

No matter who we are, or where we were born, people in Europe share the same basic values about the kind of society we want to live in: a safer Europe, with high living standards, decent and stable work, and a safe and clean environment.

(Labour Party: 2009a: 10)

The European Union is far more than an economic union: it is a community of values. The EU is a powerful engine of progressive social change, and the reason why Europeans' rights to equality, democracy, and freedom are protected from Galway Bay to the Black Sea.

(Labour Party, 2009a: 17)

For Fianna Fáil, both Ireland and the EU – as a socio-political and cultural body – hold certain shared values and ideals, which their party is deeply committed to.

The European Union has always been based on shared values – human dignity, freedom, solidarity, equal opportunities and responsibility. As globalisation quickens the pace of change, it is essential that the European Union acts to preserve these values at all times.

(Fianna Fáil, 2009a: 11)

The advancement of the principles of social and economic justice must influence all EU internal and external policies.

(Fianna Fáil, 2009a: 32)

The positive role that the European Union can play in world affairs and in resolving global conflicts through promotion of its value system was stressed by some parties.

The European Union must play a more active role in civil and non-violent conflict resolution, peacekeeping operations and disarmament beyond its borders. The EU must champion peace in other regions of the continent, such as the Western Balkans and the Caucasus, and throughout the world.

(Green Party, 2009a: 14)

The European Union is one of the leading political forces in promoting human rights throughout the world. The EU's position as a leading global trading bloc has resulted in strong international links and considerable political influence.

(Fianna Fáil, 2009a: 32)

Most parties indicate the importance of these shared values in contributing to the establishment of a Europe at peace with itself. Consequently, these common values are considered a vital part of the European Union's foundations. In its dealings with the world outside of the European Union, these shared European values – democracy, freedom, human rights and so on – are viewed as essential for the promotion of peace. Van Os (2005: 215) argues that the existence of these shared European values can be considered as 'qualitative measurements of a Europeanisation of political communication, and the presence of a public sphere across national boundaries within the EU'. Of course, not all parties place the same emphasis on these shared values, as some argue that the EU values – something other than its citizens – actually bring negative consequences.

PARTY POLITICAL BROADCASTS

This section continues the analysis in terms of the *interests*, *identity* and *values* frames in relation to the party political broadcasts for the European Parliament elections. Analysis was conducted on the broadcasts of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour Party, Green Party, Sinn Féin and Libertas. Also included in this section are two videos released online by the successful Socialist Party candidate, Joe Higgins. The emphasis and focus that each party had in the videos varied greatly, with some choosing to highlight candidates and others pushing the role of the party leader. The results presented below highlighted a significant contrast between the European party manifestos and party political broadcasts in terms of their framing decisions with respect to European issues. In fact, on the whole, there is a real lack of a European context in these broadcasts, with some almost unrecognisable as European Parliament specific broadcasts.

Interests Frame

Every broadcast made reference to the crisis in the economy and almost all stated the necessary role that the European Union will play in stabilising the economic situation and ensuring job creation. In the context of the economic recession, Fine Gael leader, Enda Kenny, explained that 'Europe has become even more important to all of us', while Brian Cowen, Fianna Fáil leader, argued that the European Union 'will play an important role in the work of building a lasting recovery'. The Green Party was more explicit than any other party in outlining Ireland's dependence on the European Union to rescue the country from economic crisis: 'We need European money in Ireland to create new jobs. Because we do not have the money ourselves'.

Where the broadcasts differed to the manifestos was in the complete lack of reference to a 'European economy'. The focus was solely on what the EU could do for the Irish economy and job creation in Ireland. The emphasis on Irish interests over European interests was characterised best by Ireland South MEP Brian Crowley's contribution to the Fianna Fáil broadcast:

My approach is to build alliances. There is only 12 Irish MEPs of over 700. We must ensure that we can build alliances with other people from other countries who have shared and common interests. But we do that, not because we have a great European ideal, which we do have, but because first and foremost we are there to represent and protect Ireland's interest, promote what is good for Ireland and ensure that we can deliver what is best for Ireland.

(Fianna Fáil, 2009b: Brian Crowley)

The lack of a European interests frame was further compounded by the fact that interests were framed not only nationally but regionally.

As a peripheral region of the EU I will fight for increased financial support and special recognition for this region under the new EU budget. The fight to protect the common agricultural policy will be a tough one but I'm up for it

(Fianna Fáil, 2009b: Pascal Mooney).

[Jim Higgins is] a vocal defender of his region in Europe.

(Fine Gael, 2009b)

At the lowest level, interests were also framed according to particular policy areas or certain professional groups. These included references to agricultural and fishing communities as well as an emphasis on securing Ireland's low corporation tax regime. This type of interest framing was present in the broadcasts of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

The only tenuous references to European interests came from two incumbent MEPs. Fianna Fáil MEP, Liam Aylward argued that 'everything about Europe is in our interest and we need to be at the heart of that great project'. The assumption is that if Europe prospers, then Ireland prospers as both interests are interconnected. The Fine Gael broadcast highlighted the 'deep understanding of the links between local, national and European policy-making' that Ireland East MEP Mairead McGuinness holds. Indeed, the complexity of Europe's role in national and local issues is something that Mairead McGuinness MEP actively works to explain to voters.

I do not think that you can divide issues as clinically as 'that's Europe and that's national and that's local'. They all usually have some link together. For example, the agriculture issue is very local and very national and very European so you couldn't say that it is an either or situation.

(McGuinness, 2009)

The framing of interests within the context of these party political broadcasts tended to be defined along the lines of whether Europe is working *for* Ireland or if both Ireland and Europe are working *together*. The research discovered that parties cannot be divided separately on this viewpoint as either favouring one perspective or the other. The parties who were in favour of the Lisbon Treaty made reference to both frames within their broadcasts. The Labour Party stressed that 'it is absolutely essential that Ireland remains at the heart of Europe', while Fianna Fáil's election slogan

was 'Europe, we are better working together'. In contrast, the anti-Lisbon parties focused solely on what Ireland could get from Europe. Libertas was geared towards making 'Europe deliver for you'. Sinn Féin's broadcast mentioned the word 'Europe' only once and this was in the context of what they could deliver for Ireland from Europe.

Identity Frame

The emphasis on Irish interests is continued in terms of the identity frame. While the European Union is referred to as Europe and generally considered as one entity, there is a strong division about what is considered Irish and European. The regional focus that was referred to above is continued in this section. When political parties referred to the candidates standing in particular areas, they (logically) ensured that they explained the regional focus that the candidate would take to the European Parliament.

When the broadcasts refer to 'we', 'us' and 'our' they are only talking about Irish people. Fighting to retain his seat in the Dublin constituency, Eoin Ryan (Fianna Fáil) pushed the argument that sending pro-EU candidates to the European Parliament was important given the fact that 'Europe is a vital cog in our economic recovery'. Fine Gael stressed that 'now more than ever, we need people with ability and influence to represent us in Brussels'. Libertas promised to send 'people with the courage to represent your interests and make Europe deliver for you' to the European Parliament.

The Green Party's election broadcast was particularly strong in terms of an Irish identity when it referring to the European Union.

We need European money in Ireland to create new jobs. Because we do not have the money ourselves. And it makes better economic sense for both Ireland and Europe if those new jobs are green jobs....We should get more than our fair share of these new Green jobs. But only if the European Union invests the money needed to create them. That's why we need strong Green voices in Europe.

(Green Party, 2009b)

The one party that attempts to give some sense of a European identity is Fine Gael, who refer to the political group that they are part of in the European Parliament: 'Fine Gael is a member of the European People's Party – the largest political grouping in the European Parliament'. By referring to their European Parliament political group they are explaining to voters that there are common

allies in Europe who they are naturally allied with. While this does not represent a very strong European identity, it does at least try to build some sense of a European identity.

Values Frame

Besides the Labour Party's reference to their belief in a 'social Europe, where citizens have rights' and Fianna Fáil's view that 'Ireland could only prosper by working with others', there is a complete absence of a shared European values frame in the party political broadcasts. This represents another difference with many of the manifestos, which framed values such as democracy and human rights as common European values. Those values emphasised – not many values are – in these broadcasts are done so through a wholly national prism with no regard to any greater European ideal or value system.

I represent people who come from all walks of life – who work in businesses, who run businesses, people who work in hospitals, and people who are patients in hospitals. This is one Ireland. Unfortunately, in recent times it has become a very unequal and a very unfair Ireland in many respects. And our job as a Labour Party is to make it one Ireland again.

(Labour Party, 2009b: Eamonn Gilmore)

The Green Party make more effective use of images than the other parties in their broadcasts. They use images of children in the second half of their broadcast to represent their values in terms of creating a cleaner, sustainable world that future generations rely on. The Green Party does not make explicit reference to this being a common European value but by asking you to 'Vote Green' the audience automatically thinks of climate change, which they have been primed to think of as an issue that cuts across boundaries. Our world is shared. In this sense, they can be considered the only political party that addresses a common European value.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CANDIDATES

This section provides a brief description of the major issues that shaped the electoral race in each district before turning to the presentation of findings in relation to the campaign literature and campaign messages of selected individual candidates (as outlined in the methodology) in terms of the *interest*, *identity* and *values* frames. The key difference between political parties and candidates is the latter's ability to focus on local or regional aspects – in fact this difference may be a necessary condition for success in EP elections that use multi-district electoral systems such as Ireland¹. Candidates seek votes within particular districts and, consequently, there is little motivation to campaign on policy issues that do not focus on the local or regional benefits. This does not preclude candidates from addressing these local or regional issues in the light of a European frame of reference given the role that the EU plays in legislation in a wide spectrum of policy areas. However, the results presented below highlight that candidates tended not to address campaign issues in terms of a European dimension or European frames of reference. In fact, the results indicate that personalities often outranked policy issues for many candidates and voters. The notion of the 'personal vote', whereby candidates gain support based primarily on the relationships they have built with constituents, is something that arguably played a significant role in the election of several candidates. 'On the campaign trail when you met individuals a lot of it was “how are you. hello”. It was a very personal campaign...we persuade people to vote for us as opposed to our party' (McGuinness, 2009). The principal issue in all districts was the state of the economy and how the economic crisis would be resolved.

Dublin

- Elected
1. Gay Mitchell (Fine Gael)
 2. Prionsios de Rossa (Labour Party)
 3. Joe Higgins (Socialist Party)

The Dublin constituency was reduced from four to three seats in the 2009 EP election. This meant that one of the sitting MEPs was guaranteed to lose their seat. As the campaign in Dublin

¹ One nation-wide district is used for elections in most of the Euro-election systems. The exceptions are Belgium (4 districts), France (12 districts), Ireland (4 districts), Italy (5 districts), Poland (13 districts) and the United Kingdom (12 districts). Besides EP elections, the use of nation-wide districts is rare and can be found in national elections in Israel and The Netherlands (Lijphart, 2002; Snyder & Samuels, 2006).

developed, it became clear that the fight for the third seat was going to be between incumbent MEPs Eoin Ryan (Fianna Fáil) and Mary Lou McDonald (Sinn Féin). The other two incumbents, Gay Mitchell (Fine Gael) and Prionsios de Rossa (Labour) seemed certain to hold on to their seats. Dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the economic crisis had resulted in low levels of support for Fianna Fáil in successive opinion polls since early 2009 (Whelan, 2009). Mary Lou McDonald attempted to seize on the popular anti-Fianna Fáil mood and turn it into positive support for her campaign. Eoin Ryan's campaign attempted to cast the election race as one between pro-European and anti-European candidates, painting Mary Lou McDonald as anti-European due to her position against the Lisbon Treaty. McDonald's campaign was overshadowed in the later stages of the campaign by her poor attendance record at the European Parliament. While the Dublin campaign coverage focused largely on the contest between these two candidates, ultimately neither candidate was successful. The eventual winner was Joe Higgins (Socialist Party), whose campaign focusing on 'punishing' Fianna Fáil and fighting against the Lisbon Treaty gained strong momentum in the campaign's final week. The personality factor played a significant role in the election of Joe Higgins, who provided a more favourable transfer option than Sinn Féin for voters who wanted to punish the government. Dublin was a stronghold for anti-Lisbon sentiment, and his stance on Lisbon was a likely reason for the large number of transfers he received from Mary Lou McDonald when she was eliminated.

East

- Elected
1. Mairead McGuinness (Fine Gael)
 2. Liam Aylward (Fianna Fáil)
 3. Nessa Childers (Labour Party)

The campaign in Ireland East was particularly muted, with the race for the constituency's three seats confined to four potential winners – Mairead McGuinness (Fine Gael), Liam Aylward (Fianna Fáil), Nessa Childers (Labour) and John Paul Phelan (Fine Gael). In the 2004 EP election, Mairead McGuinness and Avril Doyle managed to secure two seats in the constituency for Fine Gael. Avril Doyle did not run for re-election in 2009 and John Paul Phelan failed to replicate the party's 2004 success. Fianna Fáil's combined first preference percentage of 25% from its two candidates in the constituency ensured that Liam Aylward was re-elected for the government party. Labour's Nessa Childers relied heavily on being the daughter of the late Irish President Erskine Childers and was notably lacking in policy experience, significantly in terms of agriculture, which was a strong

campaign issue for the other candidates. Despite strong attacks from Fine Gael, particularly from Mairead McGuinness, Nessa Childers was elected as the third candidate in Ireland East. This constituency was the least competitive and the campaign debate reflected that, with emphasis turned toward candidate personality and little focus on particular policies.

North-West

Elected

1. Marian Harkin (Independent)
2. Pat Gallagher (Fianna Fáil)
3. Jim Higgins (Fine Gael)

Given that the North-West constituency was playing host to the Libertas leader, Declan Ganley, there was more life to the campaign than in the East constituency. Declan Ganley attempted to smear both Marian Harkin (Independent) and Fianna Fáil's candidates as being in favour of abortion – a sensitive issue for voters in the constituency – which he pointed out was the policy of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group that they were aligned with in the European Parliament. These allegations were strongly denied but occupied a significant portion of the candidate debates. The main issue that concerned most candidates in the North-West was that of agriculture and Ireland's share of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments, which were set to be renegotiated under the new European Parliament. To Declan Ganley's disappointment, the Lisbon Treaty never really took hold as a defining campaign issue in the North-West and no anti-Lisbon candidate was elected. However, it is important to note that opinion polls had shown that a trend of increasing support for the Lisbon Treaty had been developing since the beginning of 2009. The last Irish Times/TNS mrbi poll indicated that if the Treaty was held again it would pass by a 66 per cent to 34 per cent (Collins, 2009). This would suggest that even if Lisbon had become an important campaign issue it had more potential to hurt than to favour anti-Lisbon candidates. The lack of salience of Lisbon to the EP election campaign and the growing support for the Lisbon Treaty may have been a contributing factor to the failure of anti-Lisbon candidates across the constituencies.

South

Elected

1. Brian Crowley (Fianna Fáil)
2. Sean Kelly (Fine Gael)

3. Alan Kelly (Labour Party)

The election in the South constituency followed in the pattern of the North-West and East constituency in raising agriculture to centre-stage. Fianna Fáil's vote remained strong in the South due largely to the significant 'personal vote' that Brian Crowley was able to attract. The anti-Lisbon incumbent MEP Kathy Sinnott lost her seat to the Alan Kelly of the Labour Party in a close election and she hinted that her opposition to the Lisbon Treaty may have contributed to her defeat (Roche, 2009). One interesting aspect in the South constituency was the level of rivalry that existed between the counties within the constituency. While area rivalries played a part in all constituencies, it was most noticeable in the South, especially in terms of the Cork-Kerry rivalry. Given that most candidates focused on similar issues (agriculture, fishing, economy) and that the majority parties tended to agree on how these issues should be dealt with in the European Parliament, the salience of this type of rivalry was particularly high. For example, Fine Gael's Cork TDs and Senators publicly backed their fellow county-man, incumbent MEP Colm Burke ahead of the party's other candidate (and eventual winner) Sean Kelly (Counties renew old rivalries ahead of vote, 2009). The South constituency returned two high-profile candidates who relied strongly on personality – Brian Crowley and Sean Kelly, former GAA President.

Interests Frame

The focus in terms of interests was clearly on national and regional interests. Candidates openly expressed their desire to secure the success of Irish interests in the EU. These interests were clearly presented as being something that needed to be fought for. This was common practice across all parties and among all candidates. The strength of the convictions differed in relation to how supportive candidates were in terms of further European integration. Sinn Féin's candidates were the most openly critical of the EU and strongly expressed their promise to fight for Ireland's interests in the European Parliament. Mary Lou McDonald stated that Sinn Féin was 'the only party to stand up for Irish interests in the EU and oppose the Lisbon Treaty' (McDonald, 2009b). Expressions of Irish interests as being in competition with European interests were more tempered by other candidates though the primacy of Irish interests was clearly and regularly highlighted.

Irish and regional interests were most visible in references to agriculture. One example of this practice is Liam Aylward's promise 'to influence the key decision makers to ensure that the interests of Irish farmers, their families, rural Ireland and the Irish food sector are fully protected (Aylward, 2009a).

Expressions of European interests are difficult to locate in any of the candidate communications. The exception to this is Prionsios de Rossa who made some efforts to provide frame interests in a European dimension.

Europe's role is to do what Europe does best – ensuring that the recovery programme of each member state is coordinated to maximise impact in reviving demand, and retaining and creating decent jobs.

(De Rossa, 2009b)

In an interview with the researcher, Prionsios de Rossa made clear that his campaign sought to deal 'almost exclusively with the European dimension of issues' (De Rossa, 2009a). The evidence indicates that this was clearly not common practice and, given that candidates want to get elected, they focused on the issues that they thought (or did) matter to voters most. This resulted in candidates largely ignoring a discussion of the European interests, even in cases where there was a common Irish and European interest.

Identity Frame

When candidates addressed the electorate they tended to speak in terms of either Irish, regional or local identities. As explained above, it makes sense for candidates to appeal to their particular electorates. The existence of explicit references to a common European identity are difficult to find in campaign communications from almost all candidates. Where candidates did express some feelings towards a common identity it was often merely in terms of talking about 'European partners' or 'allies' in the European Parliament, which tends to refer to the members of their political group in the parliament.

[Gay Mitchell promised that] with your vote, I can continue to represent your issues as part of the powerful, and largest group in Parliament the European People's Party (Christian Democrats).

(Mitchell, 2009).

Labour's Socialist Group is the most effective political group in the European Parliament. We work for you where it counts, for jobs and justice, the issues that matter most to you.

(De Rossa, 2009b)

A European identity was also referred to when discussing ways in which the economic crisis might be resolved. This included references to a common European economy and the need of working together to ensure that the people of Europe emerge successfully from the economic recession.

When our economy turns around, which it will with the help of Europe, I have no doubt that we have a market of 500 million people where we can sell into.

(Aylward, 2009b)

Europe will help us to resolve many of the issues we have during these very difficult recessionary times.

(Gallagher, 2009)

There were also references to the rights of 'working people' across Europe made by Deirdre de Burca (Green Party) and Joe Higgins (Socialist Party) – candidates who would be considered left-wing. The Green Party's two candidates also highlighted that Europeans needed to work together to tackle the issue of climate change. The Green Party's European election manifesto and party political broadcast did not address any sense of a European identity but Deirdre de Burca's campaign literature created a much stronger feeling of a European identity.

The actions required to tackle climate change must be taken globally to be effective - only by cooperating as a global block can the EU obtain agreement on the difficult changes required. I will contribute to and support this vital cooperation at EU level.

(De Burca, 2009b)

One candidate stood far above all others in terms of framing a common European identity – incumbent MEP Prionsios de Rossa. In his campaign literature he drew attention to the role of the EU in bringing about peace and stability in Europe, in assisting Europeans to achieve greater progress and building a better future for all Europeans.

That crisis, followed by a world war, convinced millions of Europeans that we must work together in pursuit of peaceful co-existence and social equality to prevent these man-made disasters....Europe has to adopt, coordinate and enforce European legislation on banking and on tax exiles so they can never again undermine our entire economy, destroying jobs and creating injustice, leaving ordinary taxpayers to pick up the pieces.

(De Rossa, 2009b)

However, in general, candidates tended to frame identity at either an Irish or regional level, while for some candidates this framing was accomplished at a very local. Candidates were seeking votes from an electorate that was confined geographically and this ensured there was a specific geographic focus on identity. Dublin candidates spoke about the needs of Dublin, those in the North-West and East tended to emphasise their region, while candidates in the South brought it right down to the County-level. The emphasis on the Irish identity often was coupled with a promise to fight on behalf of Irish interests. Following on from the previous two sections, this emphasis continued to present itself particularly in terms of the agriculture and fishing industries.

If I am elected I will continue to fight for Leinster farmers in Europe.

(Aylward, 2009a)

Ireland is an island nation and as such should have an indigenous and dependable fishing industry. We are the biggest coastal area in the European Community and our fishermen have been fishing Irish waters for as long as Ireland has been inhabited.

(Sinnott, 2009)

Overall, the sense of a common European identity that came through the candidates campaign communications was very weak. Some parties openly claimed that they would act to defend Irish identity, with Sinn Féin candidates in particular making this point very strongly with respect to the Irish language. Mary Lou McDonald stated: 'As for Ireland's place in Europe, there is no question of Ireland being outside of Europe' (McDonald, 2009a). While the majority of candidates did not actively engage in speaking about any common European identity, many implicitly indicated that there was some shared identity. However, this tended to be confined to issues that were commonly accepted as having a cross-border dimension – climate change, the economy, crime and so on. Where issues were highly politically and emotionally charged such as with agriculture and fishing, candidates tended to speak with a strong national identity.

Values Frame

While a European frame of reference was difficult to find in terms of the interests and identity frames, it was practically absent in terms of the values frame. References to shared European values or a common purpose were absent from both candidate literature and the candidate debates in general. While it was clear that there was some discussion of values, these were not considered

to be shared. In the North-West and South constituencies discussions about abortion figured as part of the campaign but this discussion tended to accentuate the differences in values held by Irish citizens and the EU. Candidates stressed their opposition to abortion in the face of attacks on their pro-life credentials in order to ensure that they did not become toxic to significant voter segments. In this light, European values are seen as a negative and something that are not shared by Irish citizens.

This can be contrasted with the focus of some of the other candidates who do not believe that European values are negative. In his election leaflet, Prionsios de Rossa highlighted that 'now more than ever we need Europe – the progressive Europe that puts people first' (De Rossa, 2009b).

Perhaps it was a consequence of the types of issues that the candidates focused their campaigns on – economy, agriculture, candidate's personality – that made it difficult to include notions of a shared European identity. If the debate had revolved around foreign policy issues or further EU integration then we might have witnessed more of an emphasis on EU values such as freedom, democracy and human rights. Of course, this is only speculation but these are exactly the areas that allowed the political parties to bring in a values frame in their European manifestos. However, despite these references in some of the manifestos, candidates were uninterested or unable to deliver a shared European values frame as part of their campaigns.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The research on the 2009 EP elections in Ireland revealed that Europe was largely ignored during the campaigns by both the national political parties and by almost all political candidates. Candidates argued that this was because the electorate's interest was local and they had low levels of knowledge on European issues, which meant they were unable to engage on European matters. Reinforcing the electorate's low level of knowledge on Europe was the media's tendency to ignore European issues in their reporting.

The analysis in terms of the three interpretive frames used in this research paper found that a European frame of reference was notably absent in the majority of campaign communicative interactions. Most parties and candidates framed interests as national, regional or local, with European interests referred to either implicitly or as something that were in competition with these other interests. The idea that European interests and Irish interests are in competition can largely be explained as a consequence of the arguments of those in certain industries, particularly the fishing industry. By arguing that the Irish fishing community was being disadvantaged compared to their European counterparts, the debate was framed in terms of protecting Irish interests against European interests. This one issue gained traction and provided a concrete example for those arguing against further EU integration and the growing power of EU institutions. Agriculture was another issue in which candidates framed interests as Irish rather than European. Given agriculture's central importance to the Irish electorate, it made electoral sense for candidates to highlight their commitment to fight for Irish interests in this industry and to secure as much funding as possible from Europe.

Examination of the identity frame found that references to a common European identity were rare and that when affective terms ('we', 'us' and 'our') were used it was almost always in reference to Irish citizens. A possible reason for this lack of a common identity may be our geographic location, which contributed to our lack of involvement in the Second World War. The current EU project emerged out of a desire to bring peace to the European continent. Ireland can largely be considered isolated from this shared European history of violence and, therefore, compared to citizens from the founding member states, its citizens tend not to hold as strong an appreciation for the lack of conflict in Europe today. Ireland has benefited a great deal from its EU membership and the debate

in Ireland revolves around what Ireland can get from Europe in terms of things like agricultural payments rather than what Ireland can contribute to Europe. Perhaps with Ireland's role in the EU about to transform from that of net benefactor to net contributor, Irish citizens will start to feel a stronger sense of ownership of the EU and develop a stronger European identity. Of course, this is only speculation but the changed nature of the relationship over the next decade is sure to have an impact on the identity frame.

While some of the political parties referred to universal values in their manifestos, references to shared European values were practically non-existent in all other forms of campaign communicative interactions. The EP election was in essence treated as a national election and, as such, notions of common European values were seen as unnecessary given the focus on specific national issues. When EU values were mentioned they were either praised or criticised depending on the perspective held in relation to European integration. While democracy and human rights were considered by almost all parties as universal values, Sinn Féin and the Socialist Party framed the EU's foreign policy as militaristic and imperialistic. In contrast, other parties praised the EU's role in promoting democracy, freedom and human rights abroad and wanted to see the EU increase its role in this area.

Where is Ireland's European Public Space?

The research indicates that the contribution of the Irish political class to the emergence of a European Public Sphere is negligible. Political communication in the Irish national sphere remains nationally-oriented and the research does not suggest that any Europeanisation is likely in the near future. While Irish citizens remain among the strongest supporters of the EU, Eurobarometer surveys have consistently shown Irish citizens to be among the least well-informed about the European Union. The researcher believes that a significant contributing factor is the lack of a serious debate between the national political parties on European issues. The main political parties in Ireland – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour – hold largely similar and positive views in terms of European integration and, consequently, Ireland lacks a real debate between Eurosceptics and Europhiles compared to countries such as Denmark and the United Kingdom. This reality was reflected during the 2008 Lisbon Treaty, where 160 of the 166 TDs were in support of passing the treaty. Opposition to further European integration has come from fringe parties like Sinn Féin and Libertas and from those even smaller on both left and right wings of the political spectrum. Furthermore, issues such as European integration do not rank highly on the electorate's priorities,

especially when compared with issues such as the economy. Simply put, the voters did not care about European issues so the candidates and parties did not care. The PR-STV electoral system in Ireland forces EP candidates to think nationally in order to win election as a result of the focus on candidates rather than parties. While the European Public Sphere can emerge as a consequence of elite-level action, there does not seem to be much appetite in an Irish setting, at least, to bring about a Europeanisation of political communication.

Educating Europe's citizens

The literature review pointed to the fact that a knowledge gap between the EU and its citizens concerning what the EU does has left public opinion suspicious of its activities and intentions (Sinnott, 1997). This knowledge gap can largely be attributed to what Meyer (1999) labels as the EU's 'Communication deficit'. Arguably, one way of resolving citizens' suspicions regarding the EU is to better communicate and educate citizens about EU policies and institutions. The EP elections provide a significant opportunity for political parties and candidates to engage voters in relation to European issues. However, this research found that the vast majority of candidates did nothing to educate citizens about the EU and focused almost exclusively on national and local issues. The motivations for this are clear – focus on the issues that matter to voters to win the election.

If you were running for election your main focus would be on getting elected, not on educating citizens or noble public goods. It's a raw thing, you want to get elected, so you will talk about the issues that you believe at that time people want you to talk about. During a campaign is not that time in my view to have that noble aspiration of educating people. I do that in the five year interim and I believe that is one of the reasons why I was successful.

(McGuinness, 2009)

Another reason for the campaign's focus on national and local issues was due to the national media who, it is argued, care little for stories about the European Parliament unless they are scandal-ridden.

The national media are not interested in Europe. They don't see it as relevant and they steer campaign coverage away from it and seem only interested in what is going on at a national level. The European elections are only of relevance to the extent that national parties are running candidates and I found it extremely disappointing.

(De Burca, 2009a)

Prionsios de Rossa pointed to the fact that candidates themselves need to become better informed on European issues and this leads many to campaign on issues that are primarily local or national (2009a). Perhaps it is Ireland's electoral system that causes candidates to place so much emphasis on local issues. The electorate are divided into districts and this makes way for debates geared towards local and regional issues. This research discovered that almost all candidates are followers and not leaders in terms of issue focus. This presents a significant difficulty for Bruggemann's (2005) contention that a European Public Sphere can evolve as a consequence of structured incentives and constraints imposed from above. If a significant majority of EP candidates in Ireland are unwilling to lead the debate in terms of European frames of reference then the evolution of a European Public Sphere in Ireland will be slow to emerge, if at all.

Where did Lisbon go?

Libertas singularly failed in its objective to turn the EP elections into a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. Not only did they not turn the debate in this direction, they also failed to secure the election of any of their candidates in Ireland. The Lisbon Treaty was certainly a European issue given its purpose of further developing EU integration, reforming the institutions and, through the Charter of Fundamental Rights, shaping the values of the EU. However, while the Lisbon Treaty was not one of the key issues in the campaign, it did play some role in the election. Fianna Fáil realised that it was fighting a tough battle and it needed to ensure that opposition transfers did not all go to the non-government party candidates. Fianna Fáil's choice to frame the election as between pro-European (pro-Lisbon) and anti-European (anti-Lisbon) candidates was clearly adopted as a means of fragmenting support for Sinn Féin and Libertas candidates by drawing lower preference votes and, therefore, transfers from supporters of the other pro-Lisbon parties – Fine Gael, Labour and the Green Party. However, while the Lisbon Treaty did feature in most of the manifestos, the campaign debate tended to centre around the economic crisis and Lisbon was by no means a decisive issue in the 2009 EP election in Ireland.

Another second-order election

The research findings indicate that the 2009 EP elections in Ireland were in fact second-order in nature. European issues failed to register with voters, who were focused on national issues, particularly the government's handling of the economic crisis. In fact, the economy seemed to be

the only issue that really mattered for many candidates, who were merely reflecting popular sentiment. The election results were largely an indication of the electorate's judgement on the performance of the various political parties at national level. Campaign communications did not reflect a European frame of reference but mirrored the national political debate. As indicated above, the parties ran their European election campaigns with almost identical strategies that they would employ in national elections and the electorate voted accordingly.

Candidates were elected because of the parties they were representing and how those parties stood with the electorate at the time based on their national performances.

(De Burca, 2009a)

Implications for future research

The institutions of the EU – Commission, Council and Parliament – have a vested interest in ensuring that citizens are being properly educated about the EU and their rights as EU citizens. The Commission's White Paper 'On A European Communication Policy' (EC, 2006) establishes that the responsibility to consult and inform citizens about European policies lies with the member states' government at national, regional and local level. It is interesting to discover whether political parties and candidates across EU member states are also contributing to the development of the Commission's communication policy by using EP elections as a vehicle to communicate and educate citizens about EU policies and institutions. This study has found that those in favour of EU integration in Ireland tended to be more likely to talk about specific aspects of the EU and their relationships within the EP, therefore, contributing somewhat to closing the EU 'knowledge gap'. Future research should investigate whether this finding is consistent across EU member states.

Incumbent MEPs, political candidates and political parties tend to be interested in understanding which strategies will give them the greatest chance of winning election. Therefore, they will be interested in assessments of whether candidates with a stronger European focus are more successful in terms of winning votes. The 2009 EP elections results in Ireland indicate that those candidates who are in favour of European integration and are considered pro-European were more likely to be electorally successful. Labour Party MEP, Prionsios de Rossa, argued that he was rewarded for campaigning through a European narrative and Sinn Féin were punished 'because they were perceived to be strongly anti-European in their European rhetoric at a time when virtually everyone in Ireland recognises the need to be fully part of Europe' (Interview with researcher). Future

research into EP elections should consider investigating whether this relationship holds across EU member states and is consistent from one EP election to the next.

As the number and frequency of European elections and referendums increases there is a growing importance to study how they are conducted. Academic study to date has focused on the motivations of voters, with the majority explaining voting behaviour as a consequence of 'second-order' factors. This research paper changes the focus to an examination of the behaviour of candidates during EP election campaigns. Candidates are often motivated to act according to public opinion but they also have a role in shaping that opinion. This study lends itself favourably to replication in other EU member states and their inclusion will allow for cross-national comparisons to determine whether there is consistency in terms of European framing across national public spheres in the context of the 2009 EP elections. Van Os (2005: 216) explains that 'the simultaneous appearance of particular frames in the mass media across nations may be considered an indicator of the Europeanisation of political communication and possibly of the existence of a European public sphere'. Future research should seek to investigate whether European Parliament candidates across EU member states are contributing to the development of a European Public Sphere and the Europeanisation of political communication.

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APPENDIX

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Annex A Interview with Deirdre de Burca - 6 July 2009

What do you see as the primary role of an MEP?

The primary role of an MEP is as a legislator. Unlike other parliaments the European Parliament can't initiate legislation. It adopts and approves legislation. The expanded co-decision powers of the European Parliament mean that it has the capacity to adopt and amend legislation in much wider range of policy areas than 10 or 15 years ago. So primarily as legislators.

What was the primary focus of your campaign and why did you choose to focus on those issues?

The primary focus of my campaign was the capacity of Europe to assist Ireland in creating new Green jobs. The reason why I chose this issue was because I felt the biggest challenge and most important issue for Irish voters at the moment is the issue of the economy and the crisis that we are facing into. We seem to be a lot worse than other EU member states. I felt it was important to stress because of the economic and fiscal situation that the Irish government is facing it is going to have a limited capacity to be able to spend either on its structural projects or other job creation initiatives in order to create the volume of jobs that will be necessary to tackle the growing unemployment levels in the country. I was really pushing a policy that is promoted by the European Green Party in the Parliament which is a Green New Deal – an EU wide economic stimulus programme that would see 5 million new jobs being created across the European Union by making 500 billion Euro available for public and private sources. That was really the key message – that Europe can help Ireland in terms of addressing the challenge of unemployment.

Why do you think voters cast their ballots as they did in the Dublin election?

I think they were passing judgement on the performance of the various parties at a national level. The European elections were used as an opportunity to pass judgement on what political parties were doing and saying at a national level primarily, about the economic situation in the country and all the related issues that go with that. I think that is why they voted the way they did. I think also the vote was coloured somewhat by memories of the Lisbon campaign and people's general feeling about the European Union, whether they were for or against the Lisbon treaty and positive or critical about the whole European project. I think that was there in a very generalised way and I think it was an influencing factor as well.

In your mind, what distinguishes a European issue from a domestic one?

It's hard to say because the European Union is a multi-level system of governance so it is hard to say that something is strictly European because very often there are directives and regulations introduced that have to be implemented at a national level. So they do require a national level response and member states can differ in the way that they choose to implement directives. It's hard to say that something is strictly European. European issues are possibly issues that have more of an international dimension, more to do with what the European Union is pursuing or promoting or trying to achieve at an international level perhaps because then the EU is acting in the European interest. Something that represents the EU as a whole. Because even when European legislation is being introduced in Ireland there is sort of an Irish dimension to that.

To what extent do you feel that European issues played in your own campaign?

I think national factors played much more of an impact. The fact that my party was in government, that we were seen to be party to unpopular recent budgets, the fact that we were supporting Fianna Fail in government. When I was out canvassing a lot of my time was spent addressing those issues raised by voters – 'Why is your party supporting Fianna Fail?' 'Why did you introduce the pension levy for public sector workers?' 'Why did you take the Christmas bonus from the old age pensioners?' Those people that did vote for me probably voted for me as a Green party candidate because they are aware of issues such as global warming or the important role that the EU plays in promoting environmental legislation in this country. The European Union has a strong track record on environmental legislation and those who voted for me probably were green voters or sympathetic to the green agenda and saw the Greens as being effective at a European level.

Have you decided on your position with regard to the second Lisbon treaty?

No. Our party will decide that on the 18th July at the party convention.

Do you feel that the European Union suffers from a democratic deficit?

I do in a way. I think the democratic deficit is a catch-all term that is used to describe a lot of things. One of the most important things it describes is the lack of information that ordinary people have about what the institutions of the European Union do, about the decisions they make. It's an information deficit above all. I would be critical of MEPs. They are a direct link between the voters with the European Parliament and I think that a lot of MEPs disappear off to Brussels and don't disseminate much information to the voters about what the Parliament is doing or what they are doing in the Parliament on the voters behalf. The democratic deficit also emerges because the media don't cover what is going on in the European Parliament to any great extent. Where they do it is very late at night on programmes that would not be watched by the vast majority of people, it's seen as a kind of subject that most people wouldn't be

interested in and there is very little attempt made to try and make what is happening in the European Parliament more accessible, more interesting and therefore that contributes to the democratic deficit because people are unable to keep up with what is happening in the European Parliament even if they wanted to.

Is there anything you feel that MEPs should be doing to narrow this communication deficit?

I think they should be communicating a lot more regularly. MEPs have a big budget for communicating with their electorate about what the institutions are doing and particularly what the Parliament is doing. I think they should be sending out a lot more literature, be organising a lot more events, information seminars about different aspects of European policy making. They need to make the public more aware of what is happening. Online media is very important now and all MEPs should be using those to their maximum potential as one of the biggest problems for MEPs is that their constituencies tend to be very large so unlike a TD who can get out and around their constituency it is unreasonable for MEPs to have face to face contact with a lot of their electorate. This is where online communication can really compensate.

Do you feel that candidates for the European Parliament can play any role in educating citizens about the EU?

Having been through a European campaign I'm not so sure it's possible given the fact that the media are just not interested. The only European issue that the media were interested in was abuse of expenses and the idea of the gravy train. Other than that the media shut down as any genuine European debate started to happen. I was emailed by a blogger a couple of weeks before the election with questions to do with corporate taxation, turkey's accession to the European Union and it was the first and only serious questions that I was asked about my attitude to various key European questions in the whole campaign.

The national media are not interested in Europe. They don't see it as relevant and they steer campaign coverage away from it and seem only interested in what is going on at a national level. The European elections are only of relevance to the extent that national parties are running candidates and I found it extremely disappointing.

Why do you feel that the media is going this way?

The European Union has developed a very complex institutional architecture. Most of the media of the EU don't understand it and find it overly complex to try to describe or report on and so they just don't do it. I think that the media feel that it's not that it's not relevant but that it is too difficult to make it accessible and interesting to the public. I think some of the British newspapers that have come into the Irish market are openly hostile to the European Union so, where there is coverage of EU issues, there is a lot of negative coverage.

If you had been elected to the European Parliament was it your intention to serve out your full term regardless of whether the opportunity to run for the Dail presented itself?

Absolutely. I have always been interested in getting elected to the European Parliament. I don't really have a strong interest in national interest politics. I would rather focus on the major global challenges that are facing us right now and I think the really key decisions that are going to be made over the next decade or two will be made at a European and a national level and that is the level of governance that I am interested in. I saw getting elected to the European Parliament as bringing me much closer to where the real decision making is going to be happening.

Do you feel that candidates who ran in this election were rewarded or punished for campaigning with a focus on European issues or European politics?

I don't think Europe played a big part at all. I think candidates were elected because of the parties they were representing and how those parties stood with the electorate at the time based on their national performances. I think the second reason that they were elected was because they were well-known, they had a track record, partly a track record at a European level but it was more to do with familiarity and having built up a trust between themselves and the electorate. To a slightly lesser extent I think that a European dimension did enter into why they were elected I think it was more to do with that basic question of whether you were for or against Europe. Certain candidates were elected because they were seen to be pro-Europe and positive about Europe and my own feeling was that Joe Higgins was that elected because he was seen to be representing the no constituency in the Dublin, which is sizeable enough, eurocritical constituencies who are less and less happy with the process of European integration. It was a lesser consideration than how he stood on national level issues. I think he was seen as having integrity and a critique of the financial crisis in Ireland that resonated with the public.

Do you feel it is important to address European matters when campaigning for the European Parliament?

Yes I do. I don't think we will have genuinely European elections until that is the norm – until European elections are about European issues, national elections are about national issues and local elections are about local issues. In this country very often they all get confused. Sometimes it is hard to be running locals as it is often used to pass judgement on what is happening at a national level. We will not overcome that democratic deficit until the media start covering European issues much more regularly and in a more interesting way. It won't happen until you have genuine European-wide parties and until the public understand who the different political groupings in the European Parliament are and what they stand for. We are a long way away from having genuinely European elections that focus on European issues.

Annex B Interview with Mairead McGuinness - 8 July 2009

What do you see as the primary role of an MEP?

The role of a Member of the European Parliament is to scrutinise legislation at a European level. Apart from that we are elected politicians so we deal with everything that is as local as it can be to as international as it will be, whether that is hostage situations or planning permissions in Ireland. The role is a very broad one. If you ask specifically of the work in the parliament, for example, I was on the agriculture committee and also on the budgets committee. Obviously my work on agriculture related to reform of the common agricultural policy, on the budgets committee it was about allocating funding. It's a very specific job but you are a politician and you are elected by a constituency, in my case Ireland East, so all of the issues that affect people locally and nationally are dealt with by my office and by me.

What in your mind distinguishes a European issue from a domestic issue?

I don't think there is a distinction. I don't have the same view as others that there was nothing about Europe in the election. People elect and vote for candidates for many different reasons. They might like you, they might think you are tough, they might like a piece of work you have done, they might like the sound of your name. I do not think that you can divide issues as clinically as 'that's Europe and that's national and that's local'. They all usually have some link together. For example, the agriculture issue is very local and very national and very European so you couldn't say that it is an either or situation. I don't quite go with that the idea that people are not interested in Europe because they didn't talk about directives but they might have wanted to talk to you about dirty water or problems with something that could be related to a directive that has been passed in the European Parliament. I think the media are very driven by the notion that 'they didn't talk about Europe so they are not interested in Europe'.

What was the primary focus of your campaign and why did you choose to focus on these issues?

I didn't focus on particular issues. I stood on my track record. This time I had been in the Parliament for five years and I had done a great deal of work around the areas that we have discussed such as agriculture, budgets, food policy, global food security. I also did work on the petitions committee, which were very local petitions raised at the Parliament whether it was about landfills that were badly managed and needed to be improved. So I focused on the five years work I had done and the fact that people would have known that I was an MEP, that I had a track record and that is what I stood on. This time around people knew me and knew me as a member of the Parliament. They were aware of the work that I had done and they put their faith in me that I would continue to do that work. My slogan, which I think was perhaps very important, was 'hard working – straight talking', and I think that worked. I had it on my billboard, literature and my email. People did remark on it and say that is exactly what you are.

In terms of Ireland East, what do you feel was the most important issue to voters?

The state of the economy. It was the biggest talking point without a shadow of a doubt and that encompassed everything from how we raise taxes to how we spend the money, to Ireland's economic woes, how Europe might be part of a solution to that. But it was very much the Economy.

Would it be safe to assume that you be calling for a yes vote in the second Lisbon referendum?

Yes, you would be safe to assume that, as I did the first time.

Do you think that the European Parliament suffers from a democratic deficit?

I think it is a term that is bandied around rather loosely and casually. Sometimes because people don't like the outcomes of political discourse and they say 'it isn't democracy'. But if people are elected by a constituency and we reach decisions on various things I think what they are really pointing to is not a deficit of democracy. I think it is a sense in which people say there is a deficit as they are not as focused on what we are doing or not as tuned in and not as aware and that leads them to say there is a democratic deficit. But I dare say that in the county councils in Ireland many things happen that the public are completely unaware of even though there are reports on some of it and nobody says there is a democratic deficit because people don't even look in that direction. You could say the same of how Dail committees work. How many of us really understand and are fully in tune with it? I think it's more about the physical sense because people say to me 'And you're going away to Europe now and do you get home at the weekend?' I think this idea that you are over there away from us physically leads to the idea that there is a democratic deficit. In addition to that, I suppose in Ireland there is less of that because we are directly elected and we go out and we persuade people to vote for us as opposed to our party. I think in some of the member states where it is a list system the public have less connection with their MEPs. I spoke to a group of German students in Ireland during the campaign who had never met an MEP and could not name one of their German MEPs. I suppose the next point then is if you feel there is some sort of gap there how do you correct it? Is it possible? The biggest problem I see with Europe is that decisions are taken by the Parliament and the Council. They are written about and then four or five years later they are implemented in member states and nobody has been watching the process of interpretation of legislation because the civil service do all that and lobby groups and all sorts of things happen in between and there is no real connection sometimes between those of us who signed off on a piece of legislation and those who are implementing it and that is why Lisbon should make the Oireachtas and Dail Eireann more connected and better tuned in to what Europe is doing, if the TDs decide to get

interested. I think there is too much information coming from Europe but very little knowledge or awareness. For example, the recent bill that went through the Dail on guns, a lot of public would have been totally unaware of that until it hits the headlines in Ireland and then it is voted through the Dail and it is all over. I think it is more complex at a European level and I think part of the confusion is too much information. For example when the commission make a proposal they announce it; when the Council are debating it they do something on it; when the Parliament is debating it at the first reading we all say something about it. And then it goes to the second reading. There could be ten different bits of information in the public domain and that is still not the final decision.

Which European institution do you feel would be most responsible for educating citizens about what the EU is doing?
I think citizens have a responsibility themselves. The notion of the nanny state spoon-feeding people with information when they are well-educated and can read and write and twittering and googling and facebooking. The public themselves need to take responsibility for finding out what is happening. For instance, on the Lisbon Treaty many people said they voted no because they didn't know. In fact, they voted no because they were too lazy to find out. And they made a decision for others based on their ignorance. I know that is a harsh message in the sense that we always treat the public as having to be minded. It's true to some extent but there is a responsibility on people to vote. I think that sometimes we need to say that a lot louder instead of saying it's all our fault and we didn't tell you enough. Because those of us who did try to persuade them on Lisbon were ignored completely. It was a boring story and nobody was interested.

Do you feel that candidates who focused on talking about the European Union or what is going on in Europe were rewarded or punished by voters?

It's very difficult to say in my own constituency. There were two of us that were re-elected. National debate was about the economy but a lot of people did want to know what I was doing and how I did it. I don't think it is an either-or situation. I certainly was not punished by the electorate. I don't think I was rewarded specifically because of what I said about the European Union. On the campaign trail when you met individuals a lot of it was 'how are you, hello'. It was a very personal campaign. It was also about the state we are in. It's very hard for me to be able to answer that directly to be honest.

Do you feel that it is important to address European matters during election campaigns or that elections can be used as a time to educate citizens about the European Union?

If you were running for election your main focus would be on getting elected, not on educating citizens or noble public goods. It's a raw thing, you want to get elected, so you will talk about the issues that you believe at that time people want you to talk about. During a campaign is not that time in my view to have that noble aspiration of educating people. I do that in the five year interim and I believe that is one of the reasons why I was successful. From the moment I got elected, and I am doing it at this current moment, I do groups, schools, shows, meeting, anything that I am asked to do. On Monday I was in Meath with the youth county council doing a dvd about the parliament and the youngsters were asking me questions. So the time to educate is not at an election.

Annex C Interview with Prionsios de Rossa - 23 July 2009

What do you see as the primary role of an MEP?

As a legislator and policy maker.

What was the primary focus of your campaign and why did you choose to focus on these issues?

Jobs and Justice, with an emphasis on the role of the EU in helping the European economy including Ireland's to recover. I wished to concentrate on European issues in the campaign, and the need for reform of Europe (Lisbon Treaty) and new direction for Europe, (socialist and labour manifestos).

What in your opinion was the most important issue to voters in Dublin in the recent EP elections?

The economy, jobs, fairness in tackling the crisis

In your mind, what distinguishes a European issue from a domestic issue?

It is a question of where a decision is best made on a given issue. All issues have both domestic and European dimensions. For example, financial regulation, climate change – domestic action is needed on both, but most effective when joint European action is taken. An example of a primarily domestic issue is the organisation and funding of the health services, where Europe has only a coordinating role.

To what extent do you feel that European issues played in your campaign?

My campaign dealt almost exclusively with the European dimension of issues as can be seen from my literature, advertising and media debates.

Do you think that the European Union mattered at all during the recent campaign?

Yes. Uniquely people were concentrating on national issues but were open to arguments about us not being able to solve our problems alone, we needed Europe.

What position will you be taking with regard to the second Lisbon Referendum?

As I stated repeatedly during the election campaign I will be campaigning for a yes vote along with my party. I refused to allow any ambiguity to emerge about my position on this issue.

Do you feel that the European Parliament suffers from a democratic deficit?

All parliament have democratic deficits. For example, they do not operate to optimum levels of accountability. The Lisbon Treaty addresses most of the institutional gaps in the EP role with regard to full engagement with legislation and the budget.

We probably agree that the more voters know the better. Which European Institution do you feel is most responsible for educating citizens about the actions of the EU?

All have equal responsibility but I believe the EP is best placed to do so because it is where all debates take place in public. With the Lisbon Treaty the Council of Ministers will also debate in public on legislation. Part of the difficulty lies in the (complicated/consensual) way in which decisions are made which is unlike anything citizens are used to in their own state.

What do you feel that MEPs should be doing to narrow the EU's communication deficit?

Try to make news from the EP deliberations on issues other than MEPs allowances.

What role do you feel European Parliament candidates can play in educating citizens about the EU?

By becoming better informed themselves and running on European rather than on issues that are primarily local or national.

The European Parliament has often been derided as a gravy train and an insignificant body. In your opinion, is this image a result of inaction on the part of voters to educate themselves or on the part of politicians to ensure information is readily available or is it in fact an insignificant body?

Citizens do have responsibilities as well as rights. However the shift of emphasis from citizenship towards treating citizens as political 'consumers' has blurred this responsibility. That is the fault of opinion formers including politicians, academics and media who treat everything as a commodity, which of course is driven by a particular ideology of the right. The European Parliament is now an extremely significant body, especially since the advent of QMV. Nowadays 80% of the amendments approved by the EP are incorporated into European legislation. Opposition parties in most national parliaments rarely get more than 1% of their amendments adopted into legislation.

Do you feel that candidates are rewarded or punished by voters for campaigning through a European narrative?

In my case rewarded. In Sinn Fein's case punished, because they were perceived to be STRONGLY anti-European in their 'European' rhetoric at a time when virtually everyone in Ireland recognises the need to be fully part of Europe. Joe Higgins eventually won a seat as the least damaging choice in a situation where people did not want to vote FF.

Do you feel it is important to address European matters when campaigning for the European Parliament?

Yes, very much so, even for those who are sceptical. But we still have a long way to go to have European debates about current European issues. It is one thing for people to know we need Europe to tackle issues such as climate change and banking regulation. But the choices at European level still have to be differentiated, as to what policy choices should be pursued on those issues, centre right or centre left? This was hardly touched upon in debate, even though a reading of the manifestos would identify the differences.

Annex D Fianna Fail: European Party Political Broadcast (1st version)

Cowen: The generation of leaders who brought us into what is now the European Union passionately believed that Ireland could only prosper by working with others. They wanted to build a brighter future for our country and they knew we could only do that by being constructive members of the European Union. Ireland and Europe are faced with an economic crisis of a type not seen for 70 years. European Parliament will play an important role in the work of building a lasting recovery. That's why on 5th June next, we need to elect members of the European Parliament who are committed to working with our European partners on a positive agenda.

Martin: In each of the regions Fianna Fail is putting forward candidates ready to have an impact on behalf of the people. Brian Crowley is Ireland's most experienced and effective member of the European Parliament. Brian is widely respected for his ability as a senior leader in the European Parliament. He is a candidate in the South constituency with Ned O' Keefe.

Crowley: My approach is to build alliances. There is only 12 Irish MEPs of over 700. We must ensure that we can build alliances with other people from other countries who have shared and common interests. But we do that, not because we have a great European ideal, which we do have, but because first and foremost we are there to represent and protect Ireland's interest, promote what is good for Ireland and ensure that we can deliver what is best for Ireland.

Martin: Pascal Mooney is standing in the North-West constituency with Pat 'The Cope' Gallagher. As a councillor, senator and community activist, supporting local development has always been a priority for Pascal.

Pascal: As a peripheral region of the EU I will fight for increased financial support and special recognition for this region under the new EU budget. The fight to protect the common agricultural policy will be a tough one. I'm up for it.

Martin: Eibhlin Byrne is a candidate in Dublin with Eoin Ryan. Eibhlin is a leader in the field of services for the elderly, people with disabilities and city communities.

Byrne: At the moment my biggest issue is to fight for the economic recovery of Dublin and to ensure that we provide safety nets for our vulnerable people as we are doing that. We need to develop Dublin as a city region. It is the economic engine of this country and our businesses need to build up strategic alliances right across Europe so that we can now compete in what is increasingly a global market.

Martin: Thomas Byrne is a candidate in the East constituency, where he is standing with Liam Aylward. He is known for his expertise on European law and policy.

T. Byrne: My biggest issue certainly is the economy. Getting our people back to work. And it seems to me absolutely crucial that Ireland 's place is a place in the world, a place in the European Union, a place where we can attract foreign investment, a place where our exports can be sold. A ready market there that will create the jobs that we so badly need in this country.

Cowen: These are candidates of real ability and commitment who can have a positive impact on behalf of all of us. We are better working together. On Friday the 5th of June, vote Fianna Fail for the European Parliament.

Europe, we are better working together

Annex E Fianna Fail: European Party Political Broadcast (2nd version)

Cowen: The generation of leaders who brought us into what is now the European Union passionately believed that Ireland could only prosper by working with others. They wanted to build a brighter future for our country and they knew we could only do that by being constructive members of the European Union. Ireland and Europe are faced with an economic crisis of a type not seen for 70 years. European Parliament will play an important role in the work of building a lasting recovery. That's why on 5th June next, we need to elect members of the European Parliament who are committed to working with our European partners on a positive agenda.

Martin: In each of the regions Fianna Fail is putting forward candidates ready to have an impact on behalf of the people. Liam Aylward is standing in the East constituency with Thomas Byrne. After only a few years, he has established a reputation as one of the most hard-working and effective MEPs, receiving a prestigious international award in recognition of this work.

Aylward: When our economy turns around, which it will with the help of Europe, I have no doubt that we have a market of 500 million people where we can sell into. Everything about Europe is in our interest and we need to be at the heart of that great project.

Martin: Ned O' Keefe has a long established record for his commitment to rural communities through his work in the IFA and as a Councillor, TD and minister. He is standing in the South constituency with Brian Crowley.

O'Keefe: A farming with a strong voice, I'm the strongest voice that farming can get, and farmers understand me because I have been well associated with the Irish Farmers Association, the IFA, and I was a leading light here in Cork before I went into national politics.

Martin: Eoin Ryan has served the people of Dublin in different roles, always working to support job creation and tackle social problems like crime and drugs. As a member of the European Parliament he has been a strong and active voice for Dublin and Ireland.

Ryan: There are many ways that Europe is helping us. But I think that it is very important that we realise that Europe is vital cog in our economic recovery and we need to send people to Europe who are pro-Europe and believe in Europe and know that Europe can deliver.

Martin: Pat The Cope Gallagher is standing in the North-West constituency with Pascal Mooney. Throughout his career in local national and European politics his priority has always been investment in communities. As a committed Gaelgoir he has also worked to promote Irish as a living language.

PTCG: I want to be part of a strong team that will represent the North-West in the European Parliament. Europe will help us to resolve many of the issues we have during these very difficult recessionary times.

Cowen: These are candidates of real ability and commitment who can have a positive impact on behalf of all of us. We are better working together. On Friday the 5th of June, vote Fianna Fail for the European Parliament.

Europe, we are better working together

Annex F Fine Gael: European Party Political Broadcast

Kenny: The European elections on the 5th of June are the most important for a generation. As our economy suffers and thousands lose their jobs, Europe has become even more important to all of us. Now more than ever, we need people with ability and influence to represent us in Brussels. That's why Fine Gael is running the strongest possible team to represent Ireland in Europe for the next 5 years.

VO: In tough times, the people of Dublin need an MEP who commands real parliamentary clout. By re-electing former rainbow government minister, Gay Mitchell, Dubliners can be sure of real influence when the critical decisions are taken. In Ireland East, Mairead McGuinness MEP is a nationally recognised consumer champion with an incisive intellect and deep understanding of the links between local, national and European policy-making and an extraordinary work ethic. She has earned huge respect at home and in Europe. Senator John Paul Phelan represents a new generation of Irish voters and is hoping to retain Ireland's second seat in Ireland East. He is Seanad spokesperson on Enterprise, Trade and Employment. His priorities include defending our low corporation tax regime, helping cut red tape for small businesses and protecting existing jobs. Jim Higgins is Fine Gael MEP in the North-West. A former Senator, TD and Minister in the rainbow government, as an MEP he has been a vocal defender of his region in Europe. If re-elected he will continue to campaign for inward investment to the North-West region. Senator Joe O'Reilly is the second Fine Gael candidate in the North-West. He will use his background as a businessman and barrister, as well as his experience as a member of the Council of Europe, to campaign for balanced regional development and a strengthening of the CAP. Finally, in the South, Colm Burke is a former Lord Mayor of Cork and a qualified solicitor. With our economy still losing thousands of jobs, Colm will continue working hard to deliver the benefits Europe can offer in the areas of jobs, agriculture and healthcare. Joining Colm in the South-West, former president of the GAA, Sean Kelly knows how to keep our communities working. A new style of politician with a strong pedigree and a proven track record, Sean will work for communities, fisheries, agriculture and small business.

Kenny: With all our candidates, you are guaranteed a strong voice at the heart of Europe. You see, Fine Gael is a member of the European People's Party – the largest political grouping in the European Parliament. That means Fine Gael MEPs have access and influence to decision making that no other MEPs can hope for. Now is the time for people with ability and influence to represent Ireland in Europe. Now is the time for strong voices to make the case for Ireland in an enlarged European Union. Now is the time to vote Fine Gael in the European elections. You can change Irish politics. You can be part of this new beginning. Change starts here (image of LEE). On the 5th of June vote Fine Gael number 1.

Annex G Green Party: European Party Political Broadcast

We've just got two minutes to explain why you should vote Green in the European Parliamentary elections. So we are going to give you just two really good reasons. Even if you have never voted green before. And the first really good reason is jobs. We need European money in Ireland to create new jobs. Because we do not have the money ourselves. And it makes better economic sense for both Ireland and Europe if those new jobs are green jobs. So what are Green jobs? They are things like building and maintaining wind turbines. And wave generators. Which allow us to create clean, cheap energy right here. Or insulating homes and workplaces so they are cheap to heat. Which saves us all money and makes Irish companies more competitive. Or constructing new public transport systems. Which makes our country and easier place to live and work in. And a nicer place to visit. The brilliant thing is, unlike other European

countries, here in Ireland we have loads of wind. And bucket of waves. And thousands of people with the precise skills needed for the kind of work we are talking about. So we should get more than our fair share of these new Green jobs. But only if the European Union invests the money needed to create them. That's why we need strong Green voices in Europe.

I'm Deirdre de Burca and I'm standing for the Dublin constituency. I'm Dan Boyle and I'm standing in the South constituency.

We've just a few moments left to give you the second really good reason for voting Green on June 5th. (Random pictures of kids)

Please vote Green.

[All kids start saying thank you]

Annex H Labour Party: European Party Political Broadcast

Gilmore: They used to talk about Ireland having a two and half party system. I don't want the Labour party to be a half party. I want the Labour party to be a full part and I want the contest for political leadership in Ireland to be a three-way contest – and Labour being one of those three parties competing for the leadership of our country. We've always had the view at home that everybody should have the same opportunity. That's the basic view that has shaped me, shaped my thinking all my life and that we leave to the next generation a better Ireland, a better Europe, a better world than the way we found it. My late mother had a very strong belief in education that it enabled you to progress and it is something that I believe in very strongly. I think that education is the great liberator. I think people are beginning now to become very worried about where they are going to work again and how long the downturn is going to take place for. But I mean the idea that we would have a large pool of people who are just unemployed, nowhere to go, nothing to do, I mean that is just staring disaster in the face. In many respects the Labour Party is a voice for people in the worries and concerns that they have about present times. I grew up in rural Ireland. I represent an urban constituency. I represent people who come from all walks of life – who work in businesses, who run businesses, people who work in hospitals, and people who are patients in hospitals. This is one Ireland. Unfortunately, in recent times it has become a very unequal and a very unfair Ireland in many respects. And our job as a Labour Party is to make it one Ireland again.

We believe in a social Europe, where citizens have rights.

It is absolutely essential that Ireland remains at the heart of Europe and that Labour is at the heart of Ireland's representation in Europe.

Annex I Libertas: European Party Political Broadcast

Random Woman: Definitely, I will be all in favour of giving you our support

Ganley: You're very good and I will work very very hard for you. Thank you.

Random Man: Definitely, it's time for a change.

Ganley: We'll be delivering one of those

Random Man: Please God, I hope so.

Ganley: I'm applying to you for a job on the 5th June

Random Man: He's a nice, honest gentleman and I know well he's going to help us out.

Ganley: I'm applying to you for a job. Dave, how are you? Declan Ganley, nice to meet you. I'm running for the European elections.

Random Man: (mumbling) you are getting my vote.

Ganley: It shows that you want real solutions. You want a remedy. You want to see people back in work (JOBS). You want to see economic security and more than that you want to know that the people you employ as your public

representatives will put your interest first, deliver for you, and that as nation we are determined to succeed. On the 5th of June vote for Libertas, for a change, but above all for competence and people with the courage to represent your interests and make Europe deliver for you.

Annex J Sinn Fein: European Party Political Broadcast

MLD: Is mise Mary Lou McDonald MEP, leas uachtaran Sinn Fein. I grew up in Dublin in the 1980s when bad government devastated this country. Now raising my own children I see history repeating itself and it makes me very angry. I know you're angry too. Over the last ten years, the government has squandered your money, even when it had the resources it didn't invest in first-class health, it didn't build schools to take our children out of prefabs and over-crowded classrooms. It never invested in the future and over the last 12 months it has stood idly by while over 200,000 of you suffered the devastation of losing your jobs.

Adams: During the boom years, Sinn Fein warned time and time again that this government was mismanaging the economy.

MLD: Fianna Fail and the Greens are refusing to take responsibility for their action. They are oblivious to what people are going through. Sinn Fein knows exactly what you are going through. We're on your side. Our elected representatives take home the average industrial wage. We're not in politics for personal gain. This is a defining moment in Irish politics. People are crying out for new decisive leadership.

RM: This means measure to encourage economic growth, economic strategies which invest in jobs, in people and in public services.

MLD: Sinn Fein will provide this leadership. We've proven time and again that we can deliver in local communities, in the peace process, in government in the North and in Europe. We were the only party to campaign against the Lisbon Treaty. We said that a better deal for Ireland was possible and you agreed.

Adams: We all agree that change is needed. But change will only come if you play your part. Ireland needs you. We need to stand up for ourselves. We need to stand up for others. Don't stay at home on June 5th. Come out and vote for change. Send the government a strong message. Vote Sinn Fein.