

## **The determinants of party issue attention in times of crisis: from agenda setters to agenda takers?**

### Abstract:

Question time represents one of the most relevant institutional arenas where parties compete to get their favourite issues on the parliamentary agenda. Parties select which issue to address by weighing up two commitments simultaneously: fulfilling the party mandate received by their voters at election time; responding to the current priorities of voters. This article assesses the extent to which the recent sovereign debt crisis impacted the way parties balance these two imperatives of democratic representation. Through the issue coding of around 10,000 parliamentary oral questions tabled in Italy, Portugal and Spain between 2003 and 2014, the analysis shows that the worsening of economic conditions intensified the impact of citizens' priorities. However, there is no clear evidence of a decline in the importance of the party mandate for either the majority or opposition parties. These findings offer insights on the topic of party political representation in Southern Europe and whether it was affected by the Eurozone crisis.

### Keywords:

Southern Europe; euro crisis; issue attention; parliamentary questions; representation

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## Introduction

According to the issue-competition literature, political parties compete by emphasising issues on which they enjoy an advantage over their political opponents. (Budge and Farlie, 1983; Petrocik, 1996). While issue competition was originally studied by analysing party manifestos, recent works have also started shedding light on how and why parties distribute issue attention between elections (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Louwerse, 2012) and, more specifically, while fulfilling their representative role in parliament (Vliegenthart et al., 2013; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011).

These latter works concentrated on MPs' questions to the cabinet, an aspect of parliamentary life which has been gaining increasing importance over the last decades (Green-Pedersen, 2010, Martin and Rozenberg 2012). They argue that parliamentary questioning should be fundamentally understood as an instrument of party competition. Drafting a question is not a cost-free exercise and, depending on the procedure in use, the number of questions available to each party may be institutionally limited. Thus, parties must make a strategic choice of the content of questions with the aim of increasing their political pay-off.

The literature emphasises that two main rationales are expected to drive party actors' attention. On the one hand, they are supposed to act in accordance with the mandate received by their voters at election time. Mandate fulfilment entails some level of congruence between the emphasis parties give to topics during electoral campaigns and in parliamentary questioning.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, parties may decide to dynamically adapt their parliamentary agenda to incorporate fluctuations in voters' priorities between elections (Stimson et al., 1995). The focus of voters is constantly changing in response to new signals about the state of the world, which are more or less unexpected by parties at the time of presenting electoral pledges.<sup>2</sup> While nothing precludes parties from pursuing both strategies at the same time, little

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1 Comparative Manifesto scholars (CMP) are among the most productive and well-known contributors to this tradition (Budge et al., 2001). Their studies have analysed the link between manifesto agenda and legislative agenda (Klingemann et al., 1994), budget outlays (Budge and Hofferbert, 1990) and government policy intentions (McDonald and Budge, 2005). They have not yet explored the relationship between electoral agenda and non-legislative agenda, probably due to lack of comparable data.

2 This argument has been advanced, among others, by scholars working under the umbrella of the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). They argue that parties try constantly to adjust to signals coming from society about the most salient issues of the day, although reactions can be disproportionate due to cognitive limitations and institutional frictions.

research has been devoted to analysing how parties balance the two imperatives in reaction to disruptive external events. In this article, we test the extent to which the sovereign debt crisis that severely hit Southern European Countries (SECs) has impacted these two mechanisms of selective issue emphasis by analysing party agenda formation during parliamentary questioning.

The entire Eurozone area was severely affected by the financial and economic crisis from 2009, but, by all accounts, Southern Europe was particularly hard-hit (Matthijs 2014). The cost of job losses, cuts to welfare state benefits, rising taxes touched citizens on a personal level. Evidence shows that it is precisely in those countries that experience a bigger economic downturn that voters focus more on economic and social issues (Singer 2013). Our main hypothesis is that, as a general pattern, parties have reacted to this constrained agenda by increasing their responsiveness to public opinion, and that this has been at the cost of temporarily decreasing the attention given to signature issues typically promoted in their electoral platforms. The logic of our argument is that, in ordinary times, when public opinion is concerned about a quite heterogeneous list of priorities, parties are relatively free to focus on their preferred topics. Small fluctuations in the priorities of citizens are likely to be ignored. But in the heat of the crisis, when the menu of priorities offered by public opinion narrows dramatically, parties can no longer choose *à la carte*. On the contrary, they need to show voters that their concerns are taken seriously. In other words, we expect that the contraction of the public agenda in times of crisis has made parties increasingly “agenda takers”. Secondly, we study whether this effect holds equally for cabinet and opposition parties. As parliamentary questioning is “the main institutional arena where government and opposition clash” (Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011: 1033), such an analysis can provide valuable insights into how parties belonging to these two political fronts interact in the issue competition game. We expect opposition parties to be in a better position to respond swiftly to changes in public opinion, because they do not have to concretely follow up on the issues they raise (Green-Pedersen 2010).

This article makes three major contributions to the literature. First, while both logics of agenda-formation have received much scholarly attention, only a small number of studies have analysed them under a common framework (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Vliegenthart et al., 2013) and, to the best of our knowledge, none have examined them in interaction with “real-world” problem indicators. On the one hand, including changes in external circumstances “circumvents problems with omitted variable bias” (Vliegenthart and Mena Montes, 2014: 319). On the other, it provides insights into the relationship between real-world developments and the public/policy agendas, a central theme in agenda-setting studies which has not been comprehensively addressed in the literature (e.g. Soroka 2002, Vliegenthart and Mena Montes, 2014). Secondly, the article advances the literature on the political consequences of

the crisis in SECs, which has concentrated mainly on its electoral consequences (Bellucci et al., 2012; Bosco and Verney, 2012) or on voting behaviour in parliament (De Giorgi and Moury, 2015). Third, we contribute to previous research on non-legislative activities by analysing a comparative dataset of oral parliamentary questions directed on the floor to the Prime Minister and the cabinet, which covers almost 10 years (from the beginning of 2003 to the end of 2014) and three countries: Italy, Portugal and Spain.<sup>3</sup>

The political and institutional dimensions of the three parliamentary systems differ. However, they followed remarkably parallel paths after the outbreak of the crisis. All of them had to implement unpopular austerity policies, much to the discontent of their voters and citizens in general. While in Portugal these domestic reforms were officially agreed on with international lenders in exchange for bailout loans, Spain received financial help to support its ailing bank system and, finally, Italian cabinets embarked on austerity programmes without formal external supervision. The political price of these decisions was high in all three countries. A bad economic record played into the hands of opposition parties, which presented themselves as channels of citizens' dissatisfaction. As foreseen by the economic voting literature, post-crisis elections held in the three countries saw incumbent parties losing votes (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau, 2012).

The article is organised as follows. In the next section we outline our theoretical framework combining the two accounts on the determinants of issue competition dynamics and we derive hypotheses on the impact of the crisis on party strategies. Next, we present our object of analysis, parliamentary questions, complemented by some descriptive statistics using the data from the three cases under study. Finally, we outline our research design, the results of our empirical analysis and discuss their implications for the theoretical debate on party issue competition.

## **Literature review and hypotheses**

The idea that parties compete for votes through selective issue emphasis is now well established in the political party literature. The salience-based theory of party competition expects political parties to rationally compete by emphasising different topics to those of their opponents (Budge, 2015; Budge and Farlie, 1983). A number of studies have confirmed the importance of selective issue emphasis considerations in political parties' strategic behaviours. However, until recently, these analyses have focused mainly on the dynamics of issue competition taking place in the electoral arena and failed to

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<sup>3</sup> For the sake of brevity, we will refer herein to oral questions put to the government on the floor with the name of its British version, "question time", although procedures may differ substantially.

explore its occurrence throughout the whole electoral cycle. This bias ends up offering a partial picture of party competition. Recent works showed that parties also build their electoral fortunes between elections by attempting to drag the party system agenda towards issues that are advantageous to them (e.g. Vliegenthart et al., 2013; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010). Moreover, in doing so, parties have to strategically respond to media cues (e.g. Thesen, 2013; Vliegenthart et al. 2016).

There are two competing hypotheses on the reasons accounting for issue selection strategies. The first expects a connection between the policy stands of political representatives before and after elections. According to the party mandate model, democratic accountability is underpinned by the institutional mechanism of retrospective voting: the winning party/coalition receives a mandate and, to avoid electoral punishment by discontented voters at the following election, it will do its best to fulfil its electoral commitments.<sup>4</sup> Empirical tests of a party mandate effect have mainly investigated the link between the thematic profile of electoral programmes and some form of policy outputs, for instance the allocation of government spending (Budge and Hofferbert, 1990; Hofferbert and Budge, 1992). Recently, Louwerse proposed focusing on “a smaller section of the representative chain, namely the link between voters and their party representatives in parliament” (Louwerse, 2012: 1251). This approach has the advantage of also considering the party mandate linkage between opposition parties and their voters. Working at the level of the party system agenda, Louwerse found that electoral manifestos are good predictors of issue attention during parliamentary debates.

According to a second strand of the literature, the parties' electoral profile is not the best predictor of the kind of topics addressed in the course of the legislative term. Rather, parties are constantly listening to signals about public problems coming from society and there is a dynamic shift in their emphasis in response to the major issues of the day (Stimson et al., 1995). The importance of "information" for policy change has been at the centre of an extensive research agenda (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 2015; Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). Ideology and issue-ownership are still factored in when filtering the multitude of problems calling for attention, but they are not the main determinants. In general, parties expect to be rewarded for "riding the wave" (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994), that is, for prioritising the issues that are most salient in the public agenda. There are at least three

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4 The association between a party and an issue is so historically rooted in either the party's origin, ideology or reputation, that it is difficult for a party to sever this linkage or another party to challenge its dominance (Walgrave et al., 2012). For instance, green parties will go on championing environmental issues no matter whether these rank high among the priorities of the public at large.

good reasons for parties to continuously adapt their priorities. First, regardless of whether their activities respond to the priorities of their traditional supporters (thus consolidating their vote bank) or of the public at large (in the hope of reaching new voters), they anticipate some sort of pay-off for showing responsiveness to the dominant issue of the day. Secondly, neglecting relevant issues altogether might be costly because it relinquishes the control of issue framing to the hands of opponents (Green-Pedersen, 2010). Finally, a flexible response to voters' policy priorities sometimes means talking about the scandals and crises which intersperse political life. Parties will address these issues if they expect this to damage their opponents but also when they have to defend themselves from accusations. The impact of incoming information (media or public opinion) on partisan prioritisation strategies is confirmed by several recent studies (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Vliegenthart et al., 2013; Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011; Vliegenthart et al. 2016). However, these studies, which employed different methodologies and case selections, do not agree on the importance of issue ownership.

All in all, these two strands of literature talk about the same phenomenon, issue competition, but they weight the party and voter components differently. to the party mandate perspective, parties act as the main agenda-setters. On the other hand, the agenda-setting perspective gives primacy to voters' priorities and expects parties to constantly adjust to them. It must be noted that these two approaches do not contradict each other. Parties are expected to consider both logics when deciding on which issues will be the focus of their parliamentary activities:

*H1: Both electoral manifestos and public opinion priorities are predictors of how parties distribute attention during question time.*

The second expectation of this article is that external shocks can impact these two mechanisms of agenda formation. In particular, the direction of these effects is that of increasing parties' responsiveness to public opinion and reducing the importance of electoral pledges. In other words, when society comes up against overwhelming problems, parties have to restrain their role of agenda-setters and, to some extent, become agenda-takers. The current economic crisis provides us with a good setting to study these dynamics. In ordinary times, the public is often concerned about several issues simultaneously. The signals from the public are weak and contradictory, leaving much space for parties to decide their agenda. By contrast, during an economic crisis voters have direct experience of economic insecurity and their attention is concentrated on a narrow set of issues. Economic and social concerns become prominent and oust other issues in the voters' agendas (Singer, 2013). We posit that in these cases the signals coming from public opinion cannot be overlooked because ignoring them could be too costly from a political point of view. On the contrary, politicians become over-reactive to the changes in public opinion, which they would

have downplayed in ordinary times. As a result, the economic crisis (but the same argument would also apply to comparable crises) can be conceived as a mediator variable between public opinion and party behaviour, increasing the responsiveness to voters' priorities in parliamentary questioning:

*H2: The crisis increases the impact of public opinion on how parties distribute attention during question time.*

On the other hand, we should expect a greater mismatch between priorities in manifestos and priorities during question time. As shown in previous works (Klüver and Spoon, 2016; Spoon and Klüver, 2014; Wagner and Meyer, 2014), manifestos can be updated to mirror alterations in the public agenda. Nevertheless, as many as five years may pass between elections. During these intervals, electoral agendas remain fixed even though things may have changed dramatically in the public agenda. Additionally, as shown by Walgrave and Nuytemans (2009), parties generally resist adapting their platforms to changing signals, at least in the short term. All in all, this leads to the expectation that the issue congruence between parliamentary questions and party mandates, as expressed in party manifestos, should decrease as the economy situation deteriorates:

*H3: The crisis reduces the impact of electoral manifestos on how parties distribute attention during question time*

These expectations can be refined by considering the institutional position of the party in the government/opposition cleavage. As foreseen in the economic theory of voting, the climate of social discontent created by economic crises is expected to play to the advantage of opposition parties (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau, 2012). Since they are not required to deliver policy solutions on the issues they emphasise during question time, they have greater freedom to be responsive to the electorate's priorities and are able to maintain the emphasis on crisis-related issues for longer (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010). Another reason for politicising these issues is specific to Southern European countries. Although austerity was implemented differently across countries, all executives had their hands tied (to some extent) in the core area of public spending or they were committed to making painful reforms in their welfare systems. This made them more vulnerable to the opposition's accusations since they could not rely on counter-cyclical measures and, as a result, were less successful in depoliticising the crisis issue. In contrast, the use of question time by incumbent parties should be less affected by the concentration of public opinion on crisis-related issues. As a rule, majority MPs' questions are mostly pre-arranged with the cabinet and they represent an opportunity to claim credit for policy accomplishments. Following Greene (2015), but with a focus on parliamentary questions, we expect that "governing parties seek to



divert attention to other [i.e. non-economic] issues on which they enacted policy when the economy performs poorly” (p.4). Although they cannot avoid talking about the state of the economy altogether for fear of being perceived unresponsive, majority parties will be inclined to address all issues where the cabinet reached positive results. Our final expectation, which is a specification of H2, is that:

*H4: In times of economic crisis, only opposition parties pay more attention than before to voters' priorities during question time.*

## **Question time in the three countries**

To measure parliamentary attention, the present analysis relied on the most politically relevant form of oral questioning that is available in each country, which is usually referred to by the name of its British version: “question time”. An MP may ask a specific question for many reasons, ranging “from highly focused issues – for instance obtaining an official commitment about the funding of a school – to very large issues – for instance sympathising after a natural catastrophe in a foreign country” (Rozenberg and Martin, 2011: 394). It is only in extremely rare cases that asking a question is in itself enough to promote the adoption of a legislative act or the dismissal of a cabinet. In a theoretical agenda-setting cycle, non-legislative activities would be located at the very first steps of a process (which culminates with the public decision being taken). Nevertheless, under certain circumstances questions may generate cascading effects over the whole policy-making process, for instance when they are televised or there are provision for follow-up discussions on the floor. At the very least all questions focus on a topic and it can therefore be said that they all contribute in a more or less effective way to shaping the overall “party system agenda” (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010), the list of “hot topics” under debate in parliament at any given time. Engaging in question time is arguably a more effective way of shaping the party-system agenda than tabling written questions. First, these debates envisage the participation of the prime minister or ministers; they are mostly about general issues; they are scheduled at regular intervals and they are shown on television. These characteristics generally make question time a repeated inter-party game, a fundamentally strategic tool to table new topics or to draw attention to issues (Bevan and John, 2016). What is more, TV coverage ensures that questions and the unfolding debates engage actors outside of the parliamentary arena (Salmond, 2014). Second, since the time available is limited, questions are selected under the supervision of the party whip, if not entirely pre-arranged at the party group level (Rozenberg and Martin, 2011). This should reduce, though not entirely rule out, the use of oral questions for reasons of self-promotion or constituency service (which are more typical of written questions).



As the literature on parliamentary questioning has amply documented (Martin and Rozenberg, 2012; Russo and Wiberg, 2010), each country institutionalised question time differently, which means that part of the observed cross-country variation is expected to originate from institutional design. Annex A presents an outline of the main procedural properties of question time in the three countries under study. The summary of rules reveals that the three cases differ in the way question time is conducted, especially in terms of their frequency and institutionalization; however, the political relevance of the instrument in all the countries is substantially comparable.<sup>5</sup>

The stacked bar plot in figure 1 shows that the average number of questions per month varies substantially across countries and legislatures. In general, question time is scheduled with greater regularity in Italy and Spain. An alteration in the standing orders regulating the instruments of parliamentary control explains the overall decrease in oral questions in Spain (Chaqués-Bonafont et al., 2015) and, vice versa, the increase in Portugal. Differently from its Westminster version, questions put to ministers by members of the governing coalition are not rare. A quite remarkable proportion of questions is asked by majority MPs in Italy, and it is also not negligible, though highly variable, in Spain and Portugal.<sup>6</sup> Understanding whether these were “friendly” pre-arranged questions for credit-claiming on the part of the minister or were used by coalition partners to keep tabs on ministers belonging to different parties is beyond the scope of this work.

[Insert figure 1 here]

## Data and methods

In the theoretical section, we posited that parties used two distinct mechanisms to make the strategic selection of the issues to focus on during question time. On the one hand, the “party mandate model” foresees congruence between the share of issue attention in the party electoral platform and in parliament during the mandate. On the other hand, the “agenda-setting” model gives prominence to voters' priorities,

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5 As regards the former aspect, Portugal is clearly the country where question time underwent most changes over the studied time period. The current format was introduced only in 2007. It largely originated from the willingness to empower the opposition after criticism mounted against rules allowing the cabinet to choose the topic of debate and which questions to answer (Filipe, 2009). These procedures had more time to set in and become ingrained in the working practice of the assembly in both Spain and Italy.

6 Almost 2/3 of the 30 average monthly questions in the 15th Italian legislature were asked by members of the highly fragmented governing coalition (recall that in Italy each parliamentary group is entitled to one question per session, no matter the size).

which may change between elections. Measures of parties' parliamentary priorities in question time, party agenda at election time and voters' priorities were extracted from three different data sources.

Party issue attention in parliament, our dependent variable, relies on the policy coding of each oral parliamentary question tabled on the floor over our study period using the coding scheme developed by the Comparative Agendas Project [CAP] (<http://www.comparativeagendas.net>). The final dataset contains 10030 oral questions to the government tabled on the floor between 2003 and 2014. Details on the title, date and sponsor were collected from the official websites of the three parliaments ([dati.camera.it](http://dati.camera.it), [www.parlamento.pt](http://www.parlamento.pt), [www.congreso.es](http://www.congreso.es)). Each question was then assigned to one of the 213 topic codes (aggregated into 21 major topics) by human coders. The data analysed in this article were collected by the relevant national teams of the Comparative Agenda Project.<sup>7</sup>

Party issue attention at electoral time relies on the content analysis of electoral platforms conducted by the Comparative Manifesto Project [CMP] (Volkens et al., 2015). Their unit of analysis is each part of a manifesto sentence with a discernible policy content (the so-called quasi sentence). This was attributed to a policy area by human coders using a predefined codebook. Both CAP and CMP share an “emphasis-based approach” (Budge, 2015), namely they study variations in the distribution of attention by comparing the share of mentions that topics receive across manifestos (CMP) and agendas (CAP). On the other hand, their coding schemes differ both in terms of range of policy topics considered and because of the CMP distinction between positive and negative references to a topic. Since our main interest lies in measuring the saliency of a topic for a party and not its policy position, we summed the percentages of pros and cons mentions when this distinction was made for a policy topic.

Finally, voters' priorities were estimated using Eurobarometer data (EB). Since 2003, EB surveys have included closed-ended questions about the two most important issues [MIP] facing the respondent's country at that moment. Although there have been marginal changes in the wording of specific questions (e.g. environment and energy), and some have been recently removed (e.g. defence and foreign affairs) or added (e.g. government debt), this remains the most valuable and consistent source of comparative

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<sup>7</sup> Spanish and Italian data are available at <http://www.comparativeagendas.net/>. Spanish and Italian data were presented respectively in Chaques-Bonafont et al (2015) and Russo and Cavalieri (2016). Portuguese data have not yet been published.

data on voters' preferences available in the three countries under exam.<sup>8</sup> The first EB included in our dataset dates back to November 2003, and the last was published in June 2014.

In order to match the issue categories used in our three data sources, we aggregated them into 8 broad categories: crime, economy, education, environment, foreign affairs, immigration, unemployment and welfare (see Annex B). As encompassing as they are, these categories could not include all data-source-specific categories. As regards the MII, only one category was left out, transport, but in fact this item was only included in the first five EB surveys available (issued from November 2003 to April 2006) and never receives more than 1% of the total attention. The matching with the CMP codebook led to the exclusion of quasi-sentences related to 15 categories (out of a total of 56 categories, namely 27%). Finally, 44 out of 213 CAP codes (21%) could not be associated with one of the 8 common categories, which meant that on average 19.8% parliamentary questions per country had to be dropped (see Annex B for a detailed list of both included and excluded topic). Our temporal aggregation criterion is the EB semester.<sup>9</sup> For our dependent variable, we computed the share of questions asked by a party on one of our 8 categories in a semester. To test the “party mandate” model, we analyse the effect of issue attention share in the latest relevant party manifesto on our dependent variable for each EB interval.<sup>10</sup>

We shed light on how the crisis affects the two relationships under study by using a continuous measure inspired by the most recent versions of the Economic Discomfort Index, popularly known as the Misery Index (Barro, 1999; Welsch, 2007); this combines data about unemployment, economic growth and economic stability in a single index to capture the subjective well-being of citizens. To build our version of the index, we collected data on the unemployment rate (Eurostat), GDP growth (OECD) and 10-year government bond yields (Eurostat) for the three countries under analysis for each semester between 2003 and 2014. Before combining these indicators, they were each standardised to avoid giving a disproportionate weight to the indicator with the largest standard deviation. The Misery Index for country *i* in semester *j* is thus given by the following formula:

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8 Aggregated data were retrieved from the webpage of the Eurobarometer Interactive Search System: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/index> (last access 01/01/2016)

9 We deem it a reasonable criterion because it averages out contingent peaks of attention which are typical of parliamentary questioning.

10 In two cases, parliamentary elections occurred between the publication of EB surveys (Spain 2004 and Portugal 2005). To account for these cases, when the party maintained representatives in the new parliament but changed the manifesto profile, the same party appears as two distinct observations within the interval, but with alteration of the time-varying attributes (issue attention in manifestos, in parliamentary questions, government status and party size).

$$MiseryIndex_{ij} = Z_{Unemployment_{ij}} + Z_{BOND10Yields_{ij}} - Z_{GDPGrowth_{ij}}$$

The basic idea behind this index is that citizens become more perceptive of the crisis when these indicators worsen.

Other variables besides “party cabinet”, which distinguishes between parties in government and in opposition, are: “party size”, the share of seats of the parliamentary group (data were retrieved from the ParlGov dataset (Döring and Manow, 2015)); “left-right”, the party overall ideological position for each legislative term on a scale from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right) (data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015)).

## Models and discussion

In the following analyses, we model the proportion of parliamentary questions devoted to each issue by any party in a given semester. The unit of analysis is therefore the triple party-semester-issue. Our dependent variable is a proportion, varying between zero and one. In this case the applicability of the classical linear model is limited by two factors: first, its assumptions are likely to be violated; second, the models would yield biased predictions when the values of the predictors are particularly low or high. As an alternative, we estimated a fractional logit model (Papke and Wooldridge, 1996): this strategy makes use of logit transformation of the response variable, for which a binomial distribution is assumed. There is a considerable advantage of using this estimation strategy over a linear regression on the (logit) transformed dependent variables, as it correctly handles both zeros and ones.<sup>11</sup> The non-independence of the observations is an additional issue of our models that can lead to over-optimistically small standard errors. To avoid this problem, we considered the clustered nature of our dataset by computing clustered standard errors. We clustered our observations on the dyad party-issue, a choice that has already been implemented in a similar context (Klüver and Sagarzazu, 2016; Klüver and Spoon, 2016).

The “base model” in table 1 shows that both electoral manifestos and citizens’ priorities are generally taken into account by parties. As expected by H1, both CMP and MIP have a positive and statistically significant impact on issue attention during question time. When it comes to substantive interpretation of the model, the marginal effects presented in table 2 suggest that, on average, a 1% increase in manifesto attention leads to a 0.39% increase in question time attention. Similarly, a 1% increase in

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<sup>11</sup> The analysis was implemented through the Stata command (glm, family=binomial, link=logit) (Baum, 2008).

citizens' priorities is associated with a 0.14% increase in the dependent variable.<sup>12</sup> Several studies have found a relationship between external sources of information (generally media attention) and parliamentary attention (e.g. Soroka, 2002; Walgrave et al., 2008, Vliegenthart and Mena Montes, 2014, Vliegenthart et al. 2017), and a few have acknowledged a simultaneous role for party preferences (Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2011; Vliegenthart et al., 2011, 2013). Our model confirms that both citizens' priorities and party manifestos are important predictors of parliamentary attention, and generalises this finding to the context of three Southern European Countries.

[Insert tables 1 and 2 here]

The “main model” in table 1 tests H2 and H3. It includes two interactive terms with a view to determining whether the impact of manifestos and citizens' priorities is mediated by the crisis. As already shown in model 1, in average economic conditions both manifestos and citizens' priorities are valid predictors of issue attention during question time. However, the interactive terms show that the crisis has a different effect on these two sources of attention. Both coefficients have the predicted sign, but only the interaction between economic conditions and citizens' priorities is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), as expected in H2. The average marginal effect of both variables on issue attention, at different values of the crisis index, is shown graphically in figure 2. When the index measuring the economic crisis is at 0, a 1% increase in citizens' priorities is associated with a 0.14% increase in parliamentary attention. However, when the economic crisis index reaches 6, a 1% increase in citizens' priorities produces a 0.34% increase in parliamentary attention.

On the other hand, the evidence in favour of H3 is not decisive: the average marginal effect of manifestos does decrease with the economic crisis, but it does not achieve statistical significance. This finding lends itself to a dual interpretation. On the one hand, parties can incorporate new issues within their manifestos provided that they emerged before the beginning of the electoral campaign. On the other, parties could still devote some attention to their distinctive issues even when new prominent problems enter the public agenda. Estimating the relative weight of these two factors constitutes an interesting research question which is however beyond the scope of this article.

The “full model” in table 1 tests whether the effect of the crisis on dynamic responsiveness to public opinion priorities is conditional on being in opposition (H4). This hypothesis is a specification of H2, positing that some of the results found in the second model (namely that the impact of popular priorities

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<sup>12</sup> The two marginal effects cannot be directly compared because respondents in the Eurobarometer surveys could choose up to two most important problems if they wished to do so.

on issue attention at question time increases with the crisis) are driven only by opposition parties. This hypothesis found no support in the data. In fact, the effect of the crisis on both party mandate and dynamic responsiveness is felt equally by both opposition and majority parties, as shown by the insignificant coefficients of the three-way interaction terms. Figure 2 presents the marginal effect of MIP at different levels of misery index for both opposition and majority. The slope of the marginal effect is remarkably similar: when the economic situation deteriorates, parties are expected to give more importance to public opinion priorities, regardless of their institutional position. However, the analysis reveals an interesting finding that was not object of a specific hypothesis: we found that opposition parties are always more responsive to public opinion than majority parties.<sup>13</sup> This difference between opposition and majority parties, which is not affected by the crisis, has already been found in the literature (Klüver and Spoon, 2016) applying a different methodology and with reference to other countries. One possible explanation for why the crisis has similar effects on both opposition and majority parties is that question time is an interactive activity, where each party reacts to the choices of its competitors. Several studies found that opposition parties can expand political controversy over some issues forcing the government to reply (e.g. Bevan and John 2016, Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010).

To check the robustness of our findings we ran different specifications of our main model (Table 3). Firstly, we estimated a linear regression model with the same clustered standard errors in order to prove that the results are not dependent on the estimation technique. The results are comparable to those presented here. Secondly, we incorporated a lagged dependent variable in our main model to take into account the time dimension of the data. Though the lagged variable proves to be significant, H1 and H2 are still confirmed. Next, we ran our base model and included an interaction between manifestos and the number of months since the latest election to test whether the congruence between the thematic composition of manifestos and questions diminishes as the electoral term goes by: the interaction is not significant.<sup>14</sup>

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13 A specific model devoted to test the interaction between MIP and Cabinet party would offer a more direct confirmation of this finding. We do not show it here because it does not test a specific hypothesis developed in this article.

14 We also performed some additional robustness checks that are available in the replication material. To check that our results were not determined by a single country case, we ran our main model excluding each country in turn. The three models leave the support for H1 and H2 unaltered. Thirdly, to test whether the congruence between the thematic composition of manifestos and questions diminishes as the electoral term goes by, we ran our base model including an interaction between manifestos and the number of months since the latest election. The interaction is not significant. Finally, we confirmed that the statistical significance of the results is robust to the adoption of different standard errors.

[Insert table 3 here]

## Discussion and conclusion

Due to its visibility and its regular occurrence, question time constitutes a central arena for party competition. As a result, political parties select the type of issues to address with particular attention. This article started from the premise that party questioning is driven by both public opinion (agenda-setting model) and by the party electoral profile (party mandate model). It questions the extent to which an exceptional external shock, namely the Eurozone crisis starting in 2009, simultaneously affected these two mechanisms of issue selection in three SECs by analysing a pre-crisis and crisis period. Combining data on party manifestos, Eurobarometer surveys and parliamentary questions, we found considerable support for the claim that both manifestos and citizens' priorities are relevant predictors of how parties distribute attention across issues between elections. Moreover, we showed that when public opinion priorities become more concentrated on the economy as a result of the economic downturn, parties become more responsive to ~~their~~citizens' priorities. This finding holds, regardless of whether parties belong to the majority or opposition camp, although the latter are generally more responsive to public opinion than the former. By contrast, there is no clear evidence that the crisis alters the importance of the party mandate model.

While our results corroborate previous studies on the simultaneous impact of public opinion and party preferences on the political agenda, we innovate in different ways. First, we test to what extent the findings achieved above all in national case studies (with the notable exception of Vliegenthart and Walgrave, 2011) and focusing on Western and Northern European countries, hold when applied to SECs. With the exception of studies on Spain (Chaques et al., 2015, Chaques and Baumgartner, 2013), relatively little is known about agenda formation in Southern countries. Our findings support those of previous research challenging the idea of "Southern European exceptionalism" (e.g. Gunther et al. 2006). As far as the dynamics of issue competition during question time are concerned, it seems that there has been a convergence between the Southern periphery and other more institutionalised European democracies.

Secondly, this article draws attention to the fact that a theory of party behaviour should go beyond asking whether both electoral promises and public opinion play a role. In fact, it is understanding how they interact (Vliegenthart et al. 2013) and under which conditions one becomes more or less important that is crucial. This is addressed herein. To this end, we argue that it is important to include "real-world"



controls in agenda-setting studies.<sup>15</sup> Here we have showed that, in times of economic crisis, parties increase the weight given to public opinion in their calculus to determine which issues to prioritise in parliament. In other words, they become more responsive to public opinion. In line with our argument, this happens because a crisis causes public opinion to focus on a limited set of issues, resulting in strong pressure for action that neither government nor opposition parties can ignore.

In general, finding evidence of such sensitivity to public opinion in political parties should not be taken for granted.<sup>16</sup> This is especially the case in SECs where the traditionally weak trust for political institutions has been further undermined during the Eurozone crisis (Muro and Vidal, 2016). Our findings corroborate the conclusions reached by Klüver and Sagarzazu (2016: 395) in the German case, but looking at the sphere of question time. Parties do respond to the cues of citizens and internalise their worries, and this also occurs while asking parliamentary questions in parliament. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the recognition of these patterns of behaviour can substantially contribute to reinvigorating political trust. For the most part, question time sessions are the occasion to launch ferocious political attacks and blame political opponents, with little space left for a moderated and informed discussion of complex problems. While citizens can feel more engaged by a more “open and spontaneous question time” (Salmond, 2014: 337), there is also a risk for these debates to turn into stages for populist rhetoric, where the opponent is systematically delegitimised. This work focused exclusively on the topics brought to the floor but had little to say on the general tone of the debate.

Several routes can be taken to expand our analysis. First, it would be useful to study different types of crises (e.g. an international crisis) to check whether the phenomenon we observe is independent of the type of issues. Conversely, it would be useful to expand the list of countries studied to those in Northern Europe as they would offer more variation in terms of economic performance during the crisis. This could also allow the impact of different levels of economic recession and austerity-based reforms (always very severe in the countries under study) to be singled out. Secondly, our framework could be refined by considering the characteristics of the party, such as the distinction between niche and mainstream parties. According to Meguid (2005), unlike mainstream parties, niche parties reject the traditional class-based dimension of party competition, raise issues which often do not coincide with existing lines of political

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15 Our analysis did not control for the impact of media attention. On the other hand, we do not expect our results to be invalidated by this variable omission. Soroka (2002) defines economic crises as prominent issues because their consequences are very concrete and directly perceived by citizens and, as such, they are less susceptible to media influence.

16 For instance, focusing on party and citizens' policy positions and using different data Clements et al (2017) arrive at different conclusions about the impact of the crisis on party responsiveness.

division and limit their issue appeals. Furthermore, it has been shown that they value policy over office. As a rule, this should make them less prone to "riding the wave" on public priorities, while making them more faithful to their programmatic platforms (Adams et al., 2006). It is a matter of contention whether they will be drawn to sacrifice their restricted issue focus in times of severe economic downturn to show responsiveness to public opinion.

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## Tables and Figures

*Table 1. Predictors of issue attention at Question Time*

	Base model (H1)	Main model (H2 & H3)	Full model (H4)
Manifestos (CMP)	4.766*** (0.467)	4.580*** (0.505)	4.200*** (0.596)
Most Important Problem (MIP)	1.661*** (0.254)	1.816*** (0.275)	2.223*** (0.304)
Misery Index (CRISIS)	-0.039* (0.019)	-0.099*** (0.028)	-0.107** (0.034)
Cabinet party (CAB)	0.091 (0.082)	0.092 (0.080)	0.156 (0.120)
Party size	0.105 (0.266)	0.107 (0.262)	0.106 (0.257)
Left Right	-0.005 (0.018)	-0.004 (0.018)	-0.006 (0.018)
Months since last election	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
CMP*CRISIS		-0.279 (0.240)	-0.347 (0.314)
MIP*CRISIS		0.545*** (0.143)	0.607*** (0.180)
CAB*CMP			1.852 (1.055)
CAB*MIP			-1.521** (0.555)
CAB*CRISIS			0.033 (0.055)
CAB*CMP*CRISIS			-0.019 (0.450)
CAB*MIP*CRISIS			-0.143 (0.308)
Country dummies		Not shown	
Constant	-2.994*** (0.123)	-3.012*** (0.121)	-3.033*** (0.128)
Log pseudolikelihood	-748.256	-746.561	-745.509
N	3240	3240	3240

Clustered standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

*Table 2. Average effects of Electoral Manifestos and Most Important Problems on the predicted level of issue attention (model 1)*

	<b>Marginal effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Electoral Manifestos (EM)	0.397	0.038	10.26	0.000
Most Important Problem (MIP)	0.138	0.021	6.39	0.000

*Table 3. Robustness checks for the main model: predictors of issue attention at Question Time*

	OLS ESTIMATION	LAGGED	ELECTORAL CYCLE
Question Time (t-1)		2.079*** (0.215)	
Manifestos (CMP)	0.568*** (0.054)	3.359*** (0.444)	4.615*** (0.605)
Most Important Problem (MIP)	0.186*** (0.030)	1.459*** (0.218)	1.662*** (0.254)
Misery Index (CRISIS)	-0.810*** (0.212)	-0.075** (0.025)	-0.039* (0.019)
Cabinet party (CAB)	0.812 (0.671)	0.057 (0.067)	0.091 (0.082)
Party size	0.345 (2.198)	0.081 (0.221)	0.104 (0.266)
Left Right	0.011 (0.154)	-0.004 (0.015)	-0.004 (0.018)
Months since last election (MONTH)	0.006 (0.013)	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.002)
CMP*CRISIS	-0.006 (3.047)	-0.218 (0.199)	
MIP*CRISIS	5.334** (1.651)	0.373** (0.131)	
CMP*MONTH			0.007 (0.020)
Country dummies		Not shown	
Constant	2.468* (1.063)	-3.057*** (0.104)	-2.978*** (0.133)
R-squared	0.23		
Log pseudolikelihood		-667.887	-748.242
N	3240	2944	3240

Standard errors in parentheses

\* p &lt; 0.05, \*\* p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\* p &lt; 0.001

Figure 1. Mean number of questions per month asked by majority and opposition parties

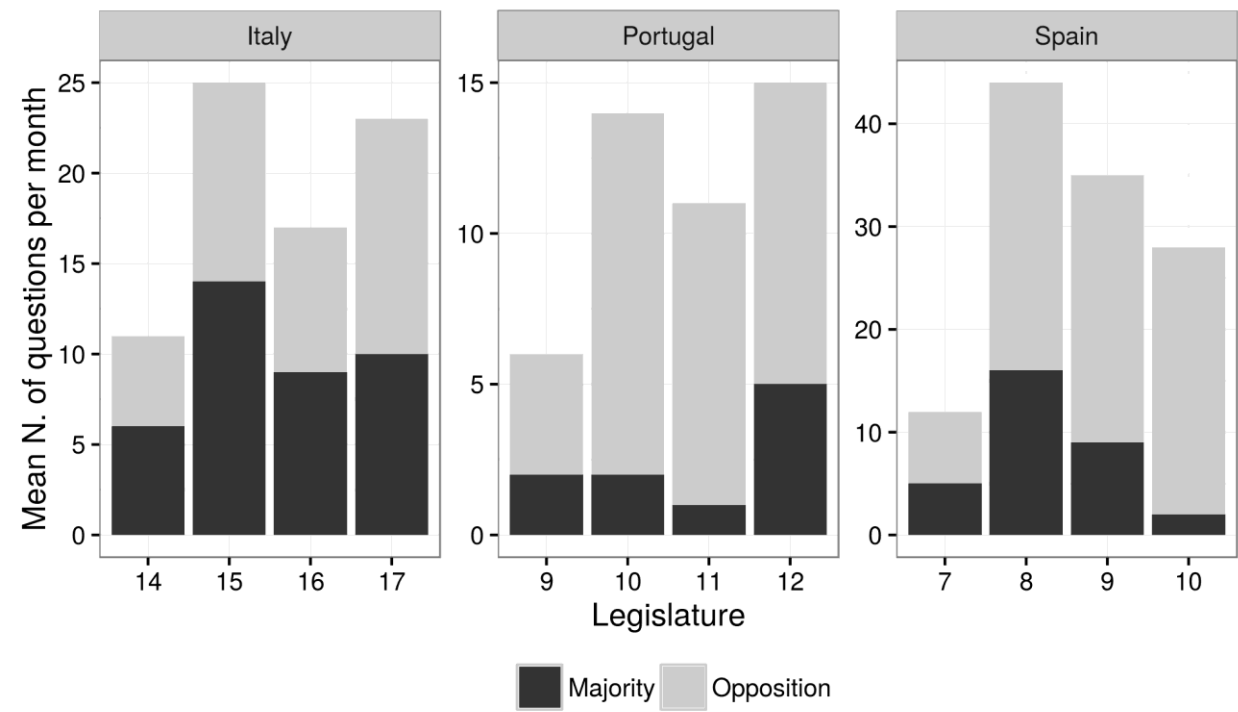


Figure 2. Marginal effect on Most Important Problems (MIP) and Electoral Manifestos(CMP) on Parliamentary attention at different levels of the misery index.

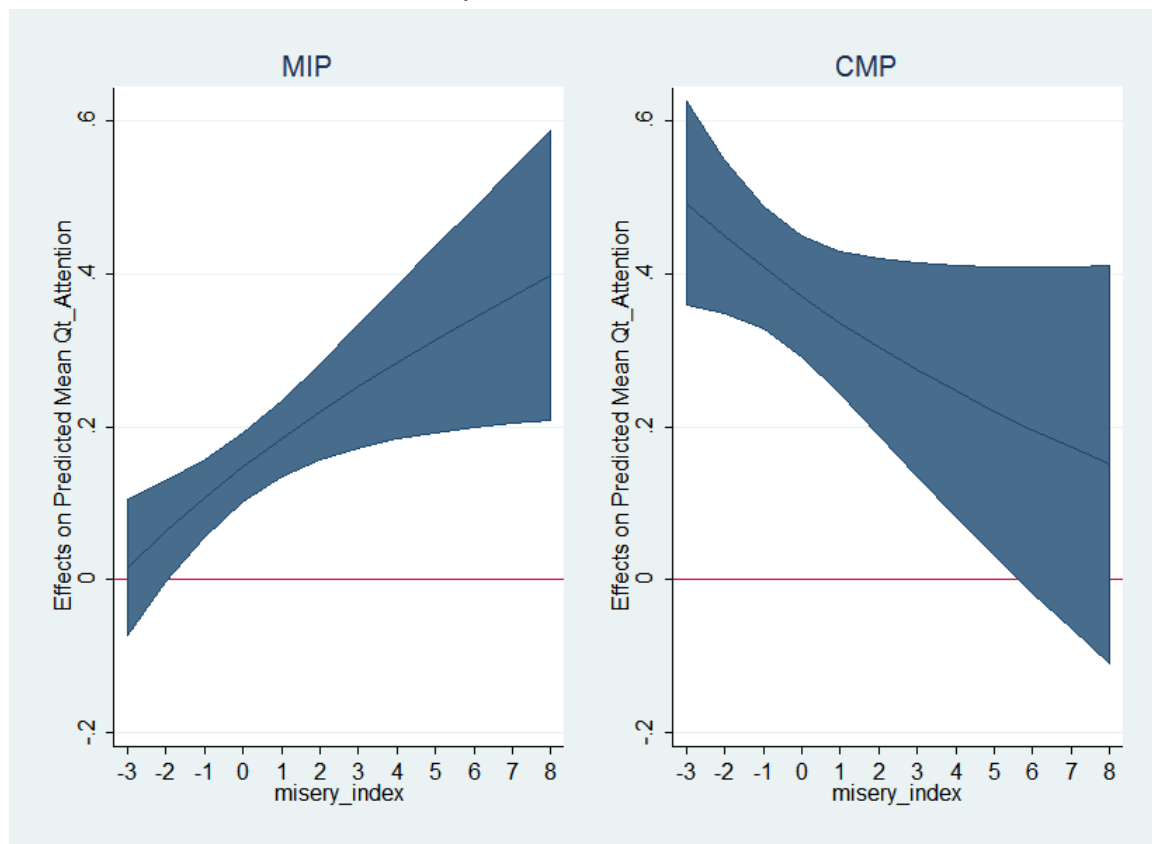
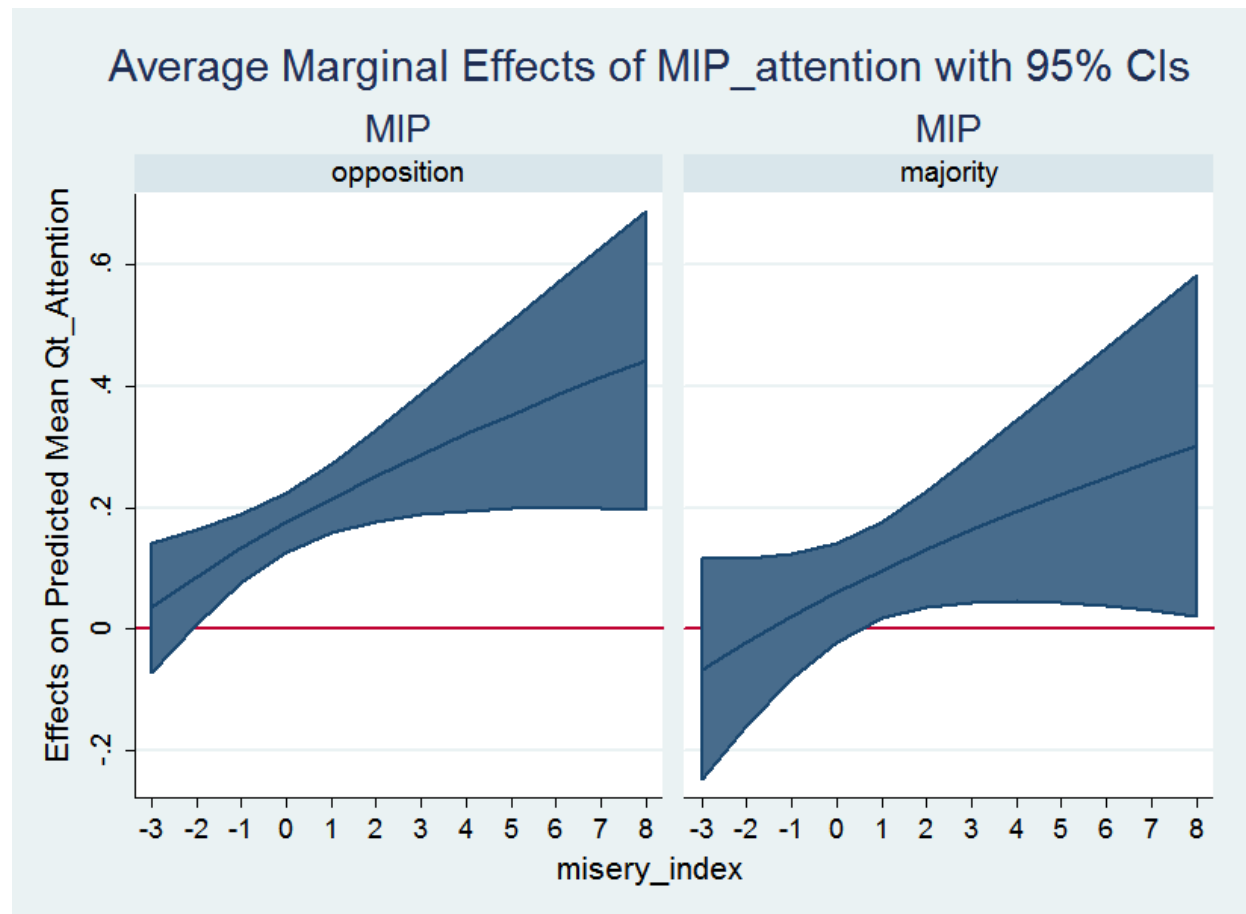


Figure 3. Marginal effect on Most Important Problems (MIP) on Parliamentary attention at different levels of the misery index for opposition and majority parties



## **Annex A – Procedural rules**

### **Italy**

The Italian question time is officially referred to as “parliamentary questions with immediate answer” (*interrogazioni a risposta immediata*). For the sake of the present work, only question time in the lower house (Chamber of Deputies) will be examined<sup>17</sup>. It has been established since 1993 and it was last reformed in 1997. It is generally held once a week, normally on Wednesdays and, depending on the topic of the tabled questions, it envisages the intervention of either the President/Vice-President of the Council or the minister/s in charge of the portfolio under debate. Each parliamentary group is allowed one question per session. The latter is put by an MP, who has the obligation to submit it one day in advance through the president of his/her parliamentary group. Questions are expected to be concise (less than a minute) and address a topic of general interest. The cabinet representative is conceded a three-minute answer, followed by a two-minute reply by the questioner.

### **Portugal**

In Portugal, some form of question time (*Debate com o Primeiro-Ministro*) has been in place since the onset of the democracy. Yet, at least until 2000s, it remained one of the “most criticised scrutiny device” because of “its occasional occurrence, its lack of flexibility, and the government’s right to choose the questions it wishes to answer” (Leston-Bandeira, 2004, p. 80). A major upgrade of the rules occurred in 2003, with the introduction of a specific prime ministerial debate to be held in the first week of the month on a date agreed by the Speaker, the cabinet and the Conference of Leaders. The 2007 reform (and its partial revision in 2010) made the debate more frequent (twice a month) and it envisaged the possibility to choose among two debate formats: the first (type A) allowed the PM to speak first and then receive one round of questions on matters related to his/her intervention; the second (type B) left MPs free rein to ask one round of questions. Both the PM (type A) and MPs (type B) have to communicate the general topic of their speeches with at least a 24-hour advance. Time is allocated among parliamentary groups proportionally to their size and can be used all in one round or partitioned.

### **Spain**

The Spanish Cortes have their version of “question time” taking place every two weeks on Wednesday mornings (*Preguntas orales em pleno*). The definition of debatable topics is left rather open and should be communicated in writing to the Bureau of Congress no later than 48 hours before the debate. It lasts generally a maximum of 4 hours, which constrains the number of questions to be asked (a ceiling of 25 was set after 2011). The distribution of questions across parliamentary groups has undergone alterations over the years, although the general rule is for each of them to be allocated a number of slots somewhat proportional to its strength.

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<sup>17</sup> The Rules of procedure of the Senate introduced a procedure named in the same way, but the content of the questions is predetermined by the conference of party group-leaders.



## Annex B

### Matching between the three data sources used in the article (categories included)

Policy area	Most important problems (Eurobarometer)	Comparative Agendas Project subtopics	Comparative Manifesto Project topics
Economy	Economic situation / Rising prices/ inflation /Taxation / Government debt	100 - General Domestic Macroeconomic Issues / 101 - Inflation, Prices, and Interest Rates / 104 - Monetary Supply, Central Bank, and the Treasury / 105 - National Budget and Debt / 107 - Taxation, Tax policy, VAT, and Tax Reform / 108 - Industrial Policy / 110 - Price Control and Stabilization / 199 - Other - Domestic Macroeconomic Issues / 400 - General Agriculture / 401 - Agricultural Trade / 402 - Government Subsidies to Farmers and Ranchers (includes Agricultural Disaster Insurance) / 403 - Food Inspection and Safety (includes Seafood Inspection and Safety) / 404 - Agricultural Marketing and Promotion / 405 - Animal and Crop Disease, Animal Welfare, and Pest Control / 408 - Fisheries and Fishing / 498 - Agricultural Research and Development / 499 - Other - Agriculture / 1500 - General Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce / 1501 - Banking System and Financial Institution Regulation / 1502 - Securities and Commodities Regulation / 1504 - Consumer Finance, Mortgages, and Credit Cards / 1505 - Insurance Regulation / 1507 - Bankruptcy / 1520 - Corporate Mergers, Antitrust Regulation, and Corporate Management Issues / 1521 - Small Business Issues / 1522 - Copyrights and Patents / 1523 - Domestic Disaster Relief / 1524 - Tourism / 1525 - Consumer Safety and Consumer Fraud / 1526 - Sports and Gambling Regulation / 1598 - Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce Research and Development / 1599 - Other - Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce (includes Measurement Standards, Accreditation, and Licensing) / 1800 - General Foreign Trade / 1802 - Trade Negotiations, Disputes, and Agreements / 1803 - Export Promotion, Regulation, and Export Credit Agencies / 1804 - International Private Business Investment and Corporate Development / 1806 - Productivity and Competitiveness of domestic business (includes Balance of Payments) / 1807 - Tariff and Import Restrictions (includes Import Regulation) / 1808 - Exchange Rates and Related Issues / 1899 - Other - Foreign Trade / 2009 - Tax Administration	401 - Free Market Economy / 402 - Incentives: Positive / 403 - Market Regulation / 404 - Economic Planning / 406 - Protectionism: Positive / 407 - Protectionism: Negative / 408 - Economic Goals / 409 - Keynesian Demand Management / 410 - Economic Growth: Positive / 412 - Controlled Economy / 413 - Nationalisation / 414 - Economic Orthodoxy / 703 - Agriculture and Farmers / 704 - Middle Class and Professional Groups
Unemployment	Unemployment	103 - Unemployment Rate / 500 - General Labor and Employment / 501 - Worker Safety and Protection / 502 - Employment Training and Workforce Development / 504 - Employee Relations and Labor Unions / 505 - Fair Labor Standards and Labour Law / 506 - Youth Employment and Child Labor / 529 - Migrant and Seasonal Workers / 599 - Other - Labor and Employment	405 - Corporatism/ Mixed Economy / 415 - Marxist Analysis: Positive / 701 - Labour Groups: Positive / 702 - Labour Groups: Negative

Welfare	Housing / Pensions / Health care system	300 - General Health / 301 - Comprehensive Health Care Reform / 302 - Insurance Reform, Availability, and Costs / 321 - Regulation of the Drug Industry, Medical Devices, and Clinical Labs / 322 - Facilities Construction, Regulation, and Payments (includes Waiting Lists and Ambulance Services) / 323 - Provider and Insurer Payments and Regulation (includes Other or Multiple Benefits) / 324 - Medical Liability, Fraud, and Abuse / 325 - Health Manpower and Training / 331 - Disease Prevention, Treatment, and Health Promotion (includes Specific Diseases Not Mentioned Elsewhere) / 332 - Infants and Children / 333 - Mental Health and Mental Retardation / 334 - Long-Term Care, Home Health, Terminally Ill, and Rehabilitation Services / 335 - Prescription Drug Coverage and Costs / 341 - Tobacco Abuse, Treatment, and Education / 342 - Drug and/or Alcohol Abuse and Treatment / 398 - Health Research and development / 399 - Other - Health / 503 - Employee Benefits (includes Employee Pension Contributions) / 1300 - General Social Welfare / 1302 - Poverty Assistance for Low-Income Families (includes Food Assistance Programs) / 1303 - Elderly Issues and Elderly Assistance Programs (includes Government Pensions) / 1304 - Assistance to the Disabled and Handicapped / 1305 - Social Services and Volunteer Associations (includes Youth Programs) / 1308 - Parental Leave and Child Care / 1399 - Other - Social Welfare / 1400 - General Community Development and Housing Issues / 1401 - Housing and Community Development (includes Private Home Ownership) / 1403 - Urban Economic Development and General Urban Issues / 1404 - Rural Housing and Farm Housing Assistance Programs / 1405 - Rural Economic Development / 1406 - Low and Middle Income Housing Programs and Needs / 1407 - Veterans Housing Assistance and Military Housing Programs / 1408 - Elderly and Handicapped Housing / 1409 - Housing Assistance for Homeless and Homeless Issues / 1498 - Community Development and Housing Research and Development / 1499 - Other - Community Development and Housing Issues (including Rental Market Regulations) / 2004 - Government Employee Benefits and Civil Service Issues	503 - Equality: Positive / 504 - Welfare State Expansion / 505 - Welfare State Limitation / 606 - Civic Mindedness: Positive
		600 - General Education / 601 - Higher Education / 602 - Elementary and Secondary Education / 603 - Education of Underprivileged Students / 604 - Vocational Education / 606 - Special Education / 607 - Educational Excellence / 698 - Education Research and Development / 699 - Other - Education / 1705 - Science Technology Transfer and International Scientific Cooperation / 1798 - Space, Science, Technology, and Communications Research and Development	506 - Education Expansion / 507 - Education Limitation
		700 - General Environment / 701 - Drinking Water Safety, Water Supply, Water Pollution, and Water Conservation / 703 - Waste Disposal / 704 - Hazardous Waste and Toxic Chemical Regulation, Treatment, and Disposal / 705 - Air pollution, Global Warming, and Noise Pollution / 707 - Recycling / 708 - Indoor Environmental Hazards / 709 - Species and Forest Protection / 711 - Land and Water Conservation (includes Environmental Issues Related to Agriculture) / 798 - Environmental Research and Development / 799 - Other - Environment / 800 - General Energy / 801 - Nuclear Energy / 802 - Electricity and Hydroelectricity / 803 - Natural Gas and Oil	416 - Anti-Growth Economy and Sustainability / 501 - Environmental Protection
Education	The educational system		
Environment	Protecting the environment (or the environment) / energy related issues (or energy supply)		

		(includes Offshore Oil and Gas) / 805 - Coal / 806 - Alternative and Renewable Energy / 807 - Energy Conservation / 898 - Energy Research and Development / 899 - Other - Energy / 2100 - General Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues / 2101 - National Parks, Memorials, Historic Sites, and Recreation (includes the Management and Staffing of Cultural Sites) / 2103 - Natural Resources, Public Lands, and Forest Management / 2104 - Water Resources Development and Research	
Immigration	Immigration	900 - General Immigration and Refugee Issues	601 - National Way of Life: Positive / 602 - National Way of Life: Negative / 607 - Multiculturalism: Positive / 608 - Multiculturalism: Negative
Crime	Crime	1200 - General Law, Crime, and Family Issues / 1201 - Agencies Dealing With Law and Crime (includes Executive Agencies, Police, Fire and Weapons Control) / 1202 - White Collar Crime and Organized Crime / 1203 - Illegal Drug Production, Trafficking, and Control / 1204 - Court Administration / 1205 - Prisons / 1206 - Juvenile Crime and the Juvenile Justice System / 1207 - Child Abuse and Child Pornography / 1208 - Family Issues (includes Family Law and Domestic Abuse) / 1210 - Criminal and Civil Code (Includes Specific Crimes Not Mentioned Elsewhere) / 1211 - Riots and Crime Prevention / 1227 - Police and Other General Domestic Security Responses to Terrorism (e.g. Special Police) / 1299 - Other - Law, Crime, and Family Issues / 2010 - Impeachment and Scandals / 2015 - Relief of Claims Against the National Government	605 - Law and Order
Foreign affairs	Defence, Foreign affairs / Terrorism	1600 - General Defense / 1602 - Defense Alliances and Security Assistance / 1603 - Military Intelligence and Espionage / 1604 - Military Readiness, Coordination of Armed Services Air Support and Sealift Capabilities, and National Stockpiles of Strategic Materials / 1605 - Arms Control and Nuclear Nonproliferation / 1606 - Military Aid and Weapons Sales to Other Countries / 1608 - Manpower, Military Personnel, and Dependents, (includes Military Courts and Veteran's Issues) / 1610 - Military Procurement and Weapons System Acquisitions and Evaluation / 1611 - Military Installations, Construction, and Land Transfers / 1612 - Reserve Forces and Reserve Affairs / 1614 - Military Nuclear and Hazardous Waste Disposal and Military Environmental Compliance / 1615 - Civil Defense (includes General Military and Other National Security Responses to Terrorism (e.g. Homeland Security)) / 1616 - Civilian Personnel and Civilian Employment by the Defense Industry / 1617 - Oversight of Defense Contracts and Contractors / 1619 - Direct War Related Issues / 1620 - Relief of Claims Against National Military / 1698 - Defense Research and Development / 1699 - Other - Defense / 1900 - General International Affairs and Foreign Aid / 1901 - Foreign Aid / 1902 - International Resources Exploitation and Resources Agreement / 1905 - Developing Countries Issues (for Financial Issues see 1906) / 1906 - International Finance and Economic Development / 1910 - Western Europe and Common Market Issues / 1921 - Specific Country / Region (Note: Only Includes Cases Not Codable Elsewhere) / 1925 - Human Rights / 1926 - International Organizations Other than Finance (includes NGOs) / 1927 -	101 - Foreign Special Relationships: Positive / 102 - Foreign Special Relationships: Negative / 103 - Anti-Imperialism / 104 - Military: Positive / 105 - Military: Negative / 106 - Peace / 107 - Internationalism: Positive / 108 - European Community/Union or Latin America Integration: Positive / 109 - Internationalism: Negative / 110 - European Community/Union or Latin America Integration: Negative

International Terrorism and Hijacking (e.g. Acts of Piracy and Terrorist Incidents in Foreign Countries) / 1929 - Diplomats, Embassies, Citizens Abroad, Foreign Diplomats in Country, and Passports / 1999 - Other - General International Affairs and Foreign Aid / 2105 - Dependencies and Territorial Issues (includes Devolution)

## Categories not included in the empirical analysis by data source

Most important problems (Eurobarometer)	Public transport, Other, Don't know, None
Comparative Agendas Project subtopics	200 - General Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties / 201 - Ethnic Minority and Racial Group Discrimination / 202 - Gender and Sexual Orientation Discrimination / 204 - Age Discrimination / 205 - Handicap and Disease Discrimination / 206 - Voting Rights and Issues / 207 - Freedom of Speech and Religion (includes Specific Religions) / 208 - Right to Privacy and Access to Government Information / 209 - Government Restrictions on Anti-Government Activities (Does not include Terrorism) / 299 - Other - Civil Rights, Minority Issues, and Civil Liberties / 1000 - General Transportation / 1001 - Mass Transportation and Safety / 1002 - Highway Construction, Transportation, Maintenance, and Safety / 1003 - Airports, Airlines, Air Traffic Control, and Safety / 1005 - Railroad Transportation and Safety / 1007 - Maritime Issues / 1010 - Public Works (Infrastructure Development) / 1098 - Transportation Research and Development / 1099 - Other - Transportation / 1700 - General Space, Science, Technology, and Communications / 1701 - Government Use of Space and Space Exploration Agreements / 1704 - Commercial Use of Space (e.g. Commercial Satellites) / 1706 - Telephone and Telecommunication Regulation (includes the Infrastructure for High Speed Internet and Other Forms of Telecommunications) / 1707 - Newspaper, Publishing, and Broadcast Industry Regulation / 1708 - Weather Forecasting, Related Issues, and Oceanography / 1709 - Computer Industry and Computer Security / 1799 - Other - Space, Science, Technology, and Communications / 2000 - General Government Operations / 2001 - Intergovernmental Relations (includes Local Government Issues) / 2002 - Government Efficiency and Bureaucratic Oversight / 2003 - Postal Service Issues (includes Mail Fraud) / 2005 - Nominations and Appointments Not Codable Elsewhere / 2006 - Currency, Commemorative Coins, Medals, and National Mints / 2007 - Government Procurement, Procurement Fraud, and Contractor Management / 2008 - Government Property Management / 2011 - Government Branch Relations, Administrative Issues, and Constitutional Reforms / 2012 - Regulation of Political Campaigns, Political Advertising, and Voter Registration / 2013 - Census and Statistics / 2014 - Capital City Affairs / 2030 - National Holidays / 2099 - Other - Government Operations (includes Monarchies, Transition to Democracy, and German Reunification) / 2102 - Indigenous Affairs / 2199 - Other - Public Lands, Water Management, and Territorial Issues / 2300 - General Cultural Policy Issues
Comparative Manifesto Project topics	201 Freedom and Human Rights - / 202 Democracy - / 203 Constitutionalism: Positive - / 204 Constitutionalism: Negative - / 301 Federalism - / 302 Centralisation - / 303 Governmental and Administrative Efficiency - / 304 Political Corruption - / 305 Political Authority - / 411 Technology and Infrastructure - / 502 Culture: Positive - / 603 Traditional Morality: Positive - / 604 Traditional Morality: Negative - / 705 Underprivileged Minority Groups - / 706 Non-economic Demographic Groups

