

Institution: London School of Economics and Political Science
Unit of Assessment: 21: Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: Strengthening democratic accountability in the European Union
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research by Simon Hix on the democratic reform of the European Union has helped to transform the way politicians, policymakers, journalists and interest groups understand how EU politics works, and as a result has changed the way the EU institutions work. Hix's research has achieved the following key impacts: 1) www.VoteWatch.eu is the leading website for tracking the voting behaviour of MEPs and governments in the EU Council; 2) recorded ("roll-call votes") are now taken in the European Parliament (EP) on all final votes on EU legislative proposals; 3) the Duff Report on the reform of the EP electoral system proposed to introduce preferential-voting in all EU member states; and 4) there is growing support amongst think tanks, NGOs and political parties for a competitive election of the Commission President, which Hix has advocated for several years. In November 2012, on the 40th anniversary of British membership of the EU, the media group EurActiv named Simon Hix amongst "the 40 most influential Britons on EU policy". He was the only academic on the list (see http://www.euractiv.com/UK40).</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>1) <u>Transparency of Voting in the European Parliament</u>: In a series of academic articles (in <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, <i>British Journal of Political Science</i>, and <i>World Politics</i> [2]), which culminated in the book <i>Democratic Politics in the European Parliament</i> [3], Simon Hix, Abdul Noury (NYU) and Gerard Roland (Berkeley) pioneered a method for collecting, processing, and analysing voting in the EP. This method involved the development of a new index for measuring the cohesion of groups in a parliament and the application of advanced scaling techniques (e.g. NOMINATE and IDEAL) to estimate the positions of MEPs, parties and groups. Building on the methods developed in this research, Hix, Sara Hagemann and Doru Frantescu set up www.VoteWatch.eu in 2009. The VoteWatch website collects, analyses and publishes all recorded votes in the EP in real-time. In 2011, VoteWatch was expanded to include votes in the EU Council.</p> <p>2) <u>Reform of the EP Electoral System</u>: In an article in <i>World Politics</i> in 2004 [2], Hix showed that MEPs elected on "preferential" electoral systems (Open-List PR or STV) are less responsive to their party leaders than MEPs elected on Closed-List PR systems. Then, in an article in <i>Journal of Politics</i> in 2007 [4], Hix and Michael Marsh analysed the performance of parties in European elections to understand the conditions under which these elections are contested on national or European issues. Building on these papers, in an article in <i>Politique Europeene</i> [6], Hix and Sara Hagemann (LSE) found that citizens are better informed about EP elections and are more likely to be contacted by MEPs in member states that use candidate-centred electoral systems (e.g. Open-List PR) than in states that use party-centred systems (Closed-List PR).</p> <p>3) <u>Election of the Commission President</u>: The EU Constitutional Convention (which led to the Lisbon Treaty) launched a debate about how the Commission President should be elected. At that time, Hix proposed – in a paper for the UK Cabinet Office, an Op-Ed in FT, and a pamphlet for the Foreign Policy Centre [1] – a "college" to elect the Commission President composed of national parliamentarians. The pamphlet set out the case for an election for the Commission President and explained how an electoral college could work. Following the Lisbon Treaty, in the book <i>What's Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix It</i> [5], Hix proposed the nomination of rival candidates for the President prior to EP elections. The book, inter alia, justified the politicisation of the highest EU office, and set out a scenario of how this post might work.</p> <p><i>Key Researcher</i>. Simon Hix, FBA, has been at LSE since 1997.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>1. S. Hix (2002) <i>Linking National Politics to Europe</i>, London: Foreign Policy Centre. LSE Research Online ID: 12994</p>

2. S. Hix (2004) 'Electoral Institutions and Legislative Behaviour: Explaining Voting Defection in the European Parliament', *World Politics* 56(1) 194-223. LSE Research Online ID: 637
3. S. Hix, A. Noury and G. Roland (2007) *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. LSE Research Online ID: 20514
4. S. Hix and M. Marsh (2007) 'Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections', *Journal of Politics* 69 (2) 495-510. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00546.x
5. S. Hix (2008) *What's Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix It*, London: Polity. LSE Research Online ID: 30627
6. S. Hix and S. Hagemann (2009) 'Could Changing the Electoral Rules Fix European Parliament Elections?' *Politique Européenne* 28, pp. 27-41. LSE Research Online ID: 30716

Evidence of quality: Hix received grants from the ESRC (1998), Leverhulme Trust (2001) and Nuffield Foundation (2001) for research which led *inter alia* to publications 1, 2 and 3. He also received grants from the ESRC (2005 and 2009) to conduct a survey of the MEPs, which contributed data for publications 2, 3 and 5. In 2005, publication 2 won the Longley Prize from the American Political Science Association (APSA), for the best article on Representation and Electoral Systems in 2004. In 2008, publication 3 won the Richard Fenno prize of APSA, for the best book in the field of "legislative politics" published in 2007.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

1) Transparency of Voting in the European Parliament: The main impacts of the research on voting in the European Parliament (EP), backed up by the VoteWatch website, have been: (a) to change the way recorded (roll-call) votes work in the EP, and (b) to increase the understanding of voting in the EP amongst policymakers, the media, interest groups, and private citizens. Under pressure from VoteWatch and other actors, in 2009 the EP changed its Rules of Procedure to make all final votes on legislative proposals by 'roll-call'. Prior to this decision, roll-call votes were only held if requested by a certain number of MEPs. This decision, and VoteWatch's continued tracking of voting in the EP, has increased public and policymakers' understanding of voting in the EP.

VoteWatch is a good example of how cutting-edge academic research can be combined with modern information dissemination techniques to increase the transparency of political decision-making and public understanding of the actions and behaviour of elected politicians. VoteWatch is a not-for-profit organisation co-funded by the Open Society Institute and The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, with pro bono support from Burson-Marsteller and White & Case. VoteWatch.eu receives on average 12,000 visitors per month and has been mentioned over 15,000 times in print and web-based media each year since its launch. The BBC, EurActiv, EUObserver, and EP websites link directly to VoteWatch [Source H].

To promote VoteWatch and its findings, Hix presented his research on numerous occasions between 2007 and 2012 to MEPs and their assistants, interest groups and policymakers in Brussels and several national capitals. He also gave evidence to the EU Committee of the House of Lords. After the launch of VoteWatch in 2009, Hix was invited to a day-long seminar with the EU Ombudsman to discuss ways in which decision-making in the EP could be made more transparent [J]. The EP also invited the VoteWatch team to participate in hearings on the transparency of EP voting and our proposals were discussed by the EP's ruling body, the Bureau. Some of VoteWatch's proposals were included in the EP's communication policy for 2011, such as publishing votes from EP committees.

VoteWatch is now known and quoted in all member states by NGOs, journalists and citizens when it comes to assessing the performance of their elected representatives in Brussels and Strasbourg [A]. The significance of VoteWatch's activities can also be seen by the fact that, following our criticism of the Council and the European Parliament's transparency practices, both institutions have invited our team to participate in public hearings and internal meetings on the subject. In the Council, the secretariat has discussed and acted on VoteWatch's proposals for a more transparent

reporting of EU legislative decisions by making more information on Member State positions public ahead of ministerial meetings [A]. In the EP, our proposals have been discussed in its ruling body, the Bureau, and in the full plenary [B]. As a result, some of our proposals have been included in the Council's and EP's respective communication policy and tools in 2011 and 2012.

In 2010 VoteWatch was named as an example of best practice for using e-democracy tools to hold politicians accountable at two prestigious international conferences: the Personal Democracy Forum (in Barcelona in October 2010) and the World E-Democracy Forum (in Paris in October 2010).

We have evidence that VoteWatch has had a direct impact on MEPs' behaviour [C]. First, three cases are known to the VoteWatch team where MEPs were challenged during the EP elections in 2009 regarding their records reported on VoteWatch.eu, and where the MEPs ultimately lost their seats following unsuccessful justifications of their records (1 MEP from Ireland, 1 MEP from Sweden and 1 MEP from Latvia). National media made extensive use of the VoteWatch website and analyses in the run-up to the elections [D]. Second, MEPs are known to pay greater attention to their attendance records in voting situations and debates in the EP Plenary due to the VoteWatch reporting. Third, other recorded activities on the VoteWatch website – such as tabling of questions and involvement in writing of reports – have increased dramatically, particularly from MEPs outside the three dominant centre parties.

2) Reform of the EP Electoral System: The main impact of Hix's research on the operation of EP elections has been the inclusion of his proposal for the use of preferential-voting systems in the most recent EP reform proposal. Hix was invited in 2008 to present and submit evidence to EP hearings on the reform of its electoral system. The research undertaken for the submission led to the article in *Politique Europeenne*. Hix and Marsh also set up a website to predict the 2009 EP elections (www.Predict09.eu), which was widely covered by the media [D]. Hix also wrote for the BBC website during the elections on how to reform the elections [E].

Hix's submission to the EP hearings was cited in the reform proposal (the Duff Report) [F]. In addition, Hix's proposal that all member states should use a form of preferential-voting (Open-List PR or STV), was a main recommendation in the reform. The proposal is now in the process of being adopted by the European Parliament and the EU Council. Even if the proposal is not adopted before the 2014 European Parliament elections, there is now an on-going debate about how 'preferential voting' in these elections could force candidates to campaign directly to voters, rather than leaving the electoral campaigns to parties. Such a change would significantly strengthen the relationship between citizens and their elected representatives in the European Parliament.

3) Election of the Commission President: The main impact of Hix's research on "democratic reform" in the EU has been the growing acceptance of his proposal for a competitive election for the Commission President [C, G, H].

Hix was invited in 2002 to chair a working group to advise the Cabinet Office during the drafting of the Constitutional Treaty. The group fed ideas into UK government strategy, and Hix personally briefed Sir Stephen Wall, Director of the Cabinet Office's European Secretariat. Hix was invited by the British government to speak on the election of the Commission President at a UK-Dutch government conference in The Hague in 2005, and at a meeting of the chairs of the EU affairs committees of the national parliaments, in Florence in 2007. In 2008 President Barroso invited Hix to a private dinner with Barroso and his advisors to discuss Commission President election [I]. And, in 2012, Hix was invited to present his ideas for democratising a 'fiscal union' to the European Central Bank.

During the Convention on the Future of Europe, Hix's proposal for an "electoral college" for choosing the Commission President was adopted by several think-tanks [K]. This idea was also taken up by the Swedish and Irish governments. But, following the Lisbon Treaty the debate shifted to how to reform the election of the Commission President within the treaty rules. Hix's

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proposal for rival candidates before EP elections was adopted by several think-tanks, such as Notre Europe in Paris [L]. Following an on-going debate, which was in part provoked by Hix's book, in 2010 the Party of European Socialists set up a working group to come up with a candidate before the 2014 elections.

If rival candidates for the Commission President are proposed before the 2014 European Parliament elections, this is likely to transform the nature of these elections, and will also have an impact on the relationship between the next Commission President and the EP, the EU Governments, and the EU citizens.

The reach of Hix's impact in these three areas is perhaps best summed up in a statement by Klaus Welle, the Secretary-General of the European Parliament [C]: "Overall, Professor Hix's on-going attention to EP activities and advocacy for reform are important contributions to the EP's broader efforts to more transparently and effectively relate with its 500 million constituents within an increasingly democratic EU."

WIDER IMPLICATIONS:

The 'democratic deficit' is an on-going concern in EU politics. By enabling more effective public scrutiny of EU decision-making, and by analysing alternative ways of selecting MEPs and the Commission President, Simon Hix's research is helping to address the EU's legitimacy problems.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

All Sources listed below can also be seen at: https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/case_study/view/52

A. Media clippings from national media can be found on the VoteWatch website.

<http://www.votewatch.eu/en/media-pages.html>

B. Correspondence from Votewatch. Source files: <https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1332>

C. Statement from Secretary-General of the European Parliament. Confidential: available on request.

D. Print and online media coverage of Predict09.eu and VoteWatch.eu ahead of the 2009 European Parliament election campaign. <http://euobserver.com/news/28105>

<http://www.euractiv.com/eu-elections/website-exposes-meeps-voting-reco-news-221793> BBC coverage of January 2012 VoteWatch report: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21258486>

E. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8025749.stm> Source file:

<https://apps.lse.ac.uk/impact/download/file/1301>

F. Citation to Hix and Hagemann research in European Parliament (2011) the Report on a Proposal for a Modification of the Act concerning the Election of the Members of the European Parliament by Direct Universal Suffrage of 20 September 1976 (2009/2134(INI)), 28 April 2011.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A7-2011-0176+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

G. Statement by Andrew Duff MEP, author of the European Parliament Report on reform of the EP electoral system (correspondence, 26 Feb. 2013 **Confidential**: available on request

H. Statement by former Head of the European Parliament office in London. **Confidential**: available on request

I. Invitation to discuss the election of the Commission President. **Confidential**: available on request

J. Correspondence with EU Ombudsman. **Confidential**: available on request

K. Berglöf et al. (2003) Built to Last: A Political Architecture for Europe, CEPR. Extensive discussion of Hix proposal for an electoral college for electing the Commission President.

<http://www4.unicatt.it/master/mi/MEP/Allegati/Tabellini.pdf>

L. Notre Europe (2006) Politics: The Right or the Wrong Sort of Medicine for the EU? Policy paper N°19, Paris: Notre Europe.

<http://www.unizar.es/euroconstitucion/library/working%20papers/Hix,%20Bartolini%202006.pdf>