



PUBLIC LECTURE

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Europe in Question: How Voters Decide in Referendums on European Integration

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IHS, Stumpergasse 56,
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Direct democracy has become an increasingly common feature of European politics with important implications for policy making in the European Union. The no-votes in referendums in France and the Netherlands in 2005 put an end to the Constitutional Treaty, and the Irish electorate has caused another political crisis in Europe by rejecting the Lisbon Treaty. This paper examines how voters decide in referendums on European integration. It presents a theoretical framework for understanding voting behaviour in referendums and a thorough comparative analysis of EU referendums from 1972 to 2008. The paper illustrates the importance of campaign dynamics and elite endorsements in shaping public opinion, electoral mobilization and vote choices. Referendums are often criticized for presenting citizens with choices that are too complex and thereby generating outcomes that have little or no connection with the ballot proposal. Importantly this paper shows that while voters are not be fully informed about European politics, they do consider the issues at stake before they go to the ballot box and they make use of the information provided by parties and the campaign environment.

Dr Sara Hobolt is a University Lecturer in Comparative European Politics, and a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford University. Her research interests are in comparative politics, political behaviour, European integration and quantitative methods in the social sciences. As Deputy Director of the EU-funded PIREDEU project on Electoral Democracy in the European Union, she is coordinating a study of voters, candidates, parties and the media in 27 EU member states at the 2009 European Parliament elections. Her book on direct democracy in Europe - *Europe in Question: Referendums on European Integration* - is forthcoming with Oxford University Press in 2009. She has also published widely on voting behaviour, referendums, legislative politics, and European integration in journals such as *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Electoral Studies*.