

HOW DO EUROSCEPTICS VOTE? ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION AND PARTY CHOICE IN EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationship between attitudes towards the European Union and voting choice in European elections. Based on post-election survey data from the 2014 European elections, the analysis builds on multivariate logistic regression models to estimate the effects of individual EU attitudes and left-right ideology on voting for Eurosceptic parties. Using rational choice institutionalism as theoretical framework, the thesis explores country-level differences in the effect of individual level Euroscepticism on voting for Eurosceptic parties. By analyzing the variance of weighted country-level estimates, the thesis also discusses the overall similarities and differences in models with alternative explanatory variables of the Eurosceptic vote (attitudes on immigration and redistribution). The findings are clear: in most of older member states, positive EU attitudes have a significant and substantial negative effect on voting for Eurosceptic parties. In Central and Eastern Europe, EU attitudes do not have a significant effect, but left-right ideology is a prominent determinant of the Eurosceptic vote. The analysis also shows that voters of left-wing Eurosceptic parties are voting based on their left-wing affiliations, while the reasons for the right-wing Eurosceptic vote are very different across countries.

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INTRODUCTION

Euroscepticism is one of the biggest political challenges the European Union faces. Eurosceptic movements and parties are having a momentum across the continent. In June 2016, the United Kingdom decided to leave the EU in a national referendum initiated by the Tory government. Polling firms just before the day of the referendum called the race very close, but the results still shocked analysts, pundits and many scholars of political science all over the world. The stunning victory of British Eurosceptic movements turned the attention of scholars towards the root of the phenomenon on the ground: the Eurosceptic voter. However, two years before Brexit, Eurosceptics already celebrated a great victory in Great Britain and in many other EU countries. The latest elections to the European Parliament were a breaking point for many of the Eurosceptic parties on the continent. In this research, I am going to analyze the Eurosceptic vote in the 2014 European elections. The research question is the following: what was the main factor driving the support of Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 EU elections?

Based on hypotheses derived from theories from the literature about European elections, I am going to examine why people voted for Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament. To find answers to this question, I am going to carry out a comparative study of micro-level post-election survey data in the 28 member states of the EU. To give a meaningful answer to my research question, I am going to approach the topic based on two conflicting theories about the relationship of euroscepticism and European elections. Both theories can be approached from the concept of rational choice. Rational choice in the context of European elections can mean different things. The first concept of rationality this research uses refers to the proper connection of ends and means in European elections¹. To put it more

¹ Max Weber distinguishes between two types of rationality in his classical work, value rationality and instrumental rationality (Weber 1978). This thesis, as most empirical works out there uses the concept of instrumental rationality

simply: are voters' votes based on issues they can influence by participating in European elections? I argue that from this perspective, a vote in European elections is efficient and rational if it is cast based on issues that the elected bodies of the European Union (the European Parliament, and indirectly the European Commission²) have an influence on.

Although European elections were long regarded as second-order elections for being mostly based on national issues, their outcome effects politics and policies on the European level. Moreover, the *modus operandi* of the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission has a huge influence on the direction of the European integration. Despite the competences of the EU are clearly stated in the Lisbon Treaty, and primary law in the EU can only be changed through consensus, directly or indirectly elected institutions of the EU are still very important actors in guiding the integration towards or away from an ever closer union.³ The legislation proposal powers of the European Commission and the legislative powers of the European Parliament allow these institutions to keep the issue of closer cooperation on the agenda in many policy areas. Their role in the spillover process and agenda-setting is even more important in an era, when the possibility of a treaty change is completely out of the table (Haas 1958).

In my analysis, I am going to examine the bases of the Eurosceptic vote. My main hypothesis is that the relationship between EU attitudes and Eurosceptic party choice is stronger in Western Europe, than in Central Eastern Europe because small state interest is over-represented in EU

when referring to a social act (in this case: a vote cast in European Elections) as rational. If the means chosen are the most efficient to achieve the ends a person or voter is pursuing, a social act can be considered instrumentally rational. The preferences of a person or voter are taken as they are, they are treated exogenously.

² In 2014 for the first time in the history of European elections the European Parliament had the power to choose the leader of the next European Commission (European Parliament 2014). The candidates of the major European political parties were not just featured in the campaigns, but they traveled and campaigned throughout the member states themselves.

³ Neo-functional theory about the European integration claims that the development of the integration ought to happen competence by competence through a *spillover* effect (Haas 1958).

decision making compared to population size. I also hypothesize that attitudes on immigration and attitudes on redistribution are conditionally important factors to explain the vote for left-wing and right-wing Eurosceptic parties. If the main hypothesis turns out to be, I can conclude that parties who take Eurosceptic positions in the West are indeed mostly successful because of their euroscepticism, and less because their position on the traditional left-right dimension.

The second model of rationality I am using in the research assumes that the second-order election theory is the one that describes European elections accurately (Reif and Schmitt 1980). Rational choice institutionalists argue that attitudes towards the European Union are formed on the national level and they are based on national issues. The most important issues in this context are the position on the left-right dimension and partisanship on the national level (Hix 2007). According to this theory, euroscepticism is a function of the preferences of voters on national dimensions, filtered through the position of different institutions on the same relevant dimensions.

Another question of my analysis concerns the relevance of the second-order theory. Is the European dimension still a sleeping giant in European elections? If it is, what are the reasons for voters across the European Union to cast their vote for Eurosceptic parties? To find out the answers, I am going to test the effect of the traditional left-right dimension and the EU dimension on Eurosceptic party choice in all countries where Eurosceptic parties contested the 2014 European elections.

It is essential to note, that this research only makes a claim about voters of Eurosceptic parties. The causal claim of the thesis has two parts. Firstly, I claim that among the voters of Eurosceptic parties, voting choice was mostly determined by attitudes towards the European Union. I expect that in most EU countries, EU attitudes have a stronger effect on Eurosceptic party choice when

compared to the left-right dimension or other dimensions such as immigration or redistribution attitudes.

It is important to note, that the cross-sectional survey data this research is using does not allow for any strong causal claim about European elections in general. This analysis cannot rule out reverse causality or some alternative explanations of Eurosceptic party choice. More powerful claims about the general nature of European elections would require a longitudinal analysis of voting behavior data about European elections. However, by looking for associations between anti-EU attitudes and left-right attitudes on the party level and on the individual level in survey data about the 2014 EP elections, this research will be able to establish a meaningful framework about the type of Euroscepticism that exists in each individual member state.

Chapter 1 is going to lay out the theoretical framework of the research. First, the chapter is going to discuss the relevance of European elections and present the state-of-the-art literature about attitudes towards the European Union in European elections. After this, the thesis is going to lay down the assumptions and implications of rational choice institutionalism on Eurosceptic voting choice in the European Union. The last part of the theory chapter, focuses on the supply side of euroscepticism, and its role in shaping voting behavior in EU elections. Chapter 2 classifies Eurosceptic parties based on their position of the left-right dimension. This analysis and classification of party-level euroscepticism across the EU gives a framework for the multi-level analysis of voting behavior data in Chapter 3.

Chapter 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Attitudes towards the European Union and European elections

Through what mechanism attitudes about the EU influence politics in the European Union? One possible answer would be general elections. Elections in representative democracies are the primary means to channel citizens' preferences into lawmaking and governmental decisions. While voters' preferences and the dimensions they base their decisions on are very diverse, all these preferences boil down to one single decision in the end: party choice. This dimensionality is best illustrated by the spatial model of voting worked out by Anthony Downs and Harold Hotelling (Downs 1957; Hotelling 1990). The political dimensions in the Downsian model are axes in an n dimensional space. Parties, voters, and other actors are placed at certain fixed points of this space.

Treating attitudes towards the European Union as a separate axis in the n dimensional space is not a new idea. Van der Brug and van der Eijk argue, that the European Union is a "sleeping giant" in a sense that attitudes towards the EU form a new dimension crosscutting the traditional left-right divisions (2007). According to the authors, mainstream parties have not politicized the EU issue over the course of several years, while the European Union have become more prominent in European people's lives over the same period. The study argues, that the ignorance of the issue by mainstream parties created a political vacuum, a dimension to be politicized by potential political entrepreneurs, which they call a "sleeping giant".

However, since their study was published the political vacuum evaporated. In the past ten years, Eurosceptic movements have been keeping the EU issue on the agenda and in today's Europe there are parties on both the left and the right side of the political spectrum building their strategy primarily on their stance towards the EU. Although research has shown that voters

often think along the EU dimension, van der Brug and van der Eijk did not answer the question of the electoral significance of this dimension.

Another strand of research focuses on the impact of the EU dimension in general elections across Europe. Catherine de Vries argues that the “sleeping giant” indeed exists, and it might be awakened by extremist and Eurosceptic parties (2007). Her research hypothesizes that the EU dimension influences elections only under certain conditions. Based on individual level survey data, the author shows that attitudes towards the European integration only influence vote choice in national elections if the salience of the issue in the given country is high and the extent of partisan conflict over the European Union is sufficient. Although the empirical evidence suggests that the effect of the EU dimension is significantly smaller than the effect of the left-right dimension, de Vries demonstrates that the European question can indeed influence elections under certain conditions.

Elections to the European parliament are often seen as second order elections, serving as a secondary battleground to the national elections across Europe (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). Other researchers argue that Europe still matters in these elections (Blondel, Sinnott, and Svensson 1997; Mattila 2003). Simon Hix and Michael Marsh tested these two theories against each other in their article *Punishment or Protest? Understanding European Parliament Elections* (2007). The authors use aggregated election data to see how different issues, ideologies and policy stances affect parties’ vote share in European elections. The article finds some evidence, that policy positions change the performance of some parties in European elections: green parties, newly emerging parties and anti-EU parties tend to perform significantly better. These findings confirm that a European effect is still present in European elections. However, these effects are small compared to the consistent and big loss of the

incumbent governing parties, which indicates that despite the presence of the European effect, the predictive power of the second order election theory is stronger.

As the authors also note, this model works reasonably well in the old 15 member states of the EU, but they struggle to find statistically significant results for the newly admitted 10 member states. The article indicates that anti-EU parties perform significantly better in European elections, at least in the old 15 member states. Despite the better performance of Eurosceptic parties in European elections is clear, the aggregate data does not allow the authors to make any conclusions about the source of this additional boost. However, the aggregate findings suggest that Eurosceptic parties perform significantly worse in countries where the public support for the EU is high (Hix and Marsh 2007).

Multi-level analysis of micro-level data also suggests, that support for the European Union has an effect on voting for Eurosceptic parties (Hernández and Kriesi 2016). The study of Hernández and Kriesi finds a significant and negative relationship between left-wing attitudes and Eurosceptic voting choice on the individual level, when EU attitudes are also controlled for. However, this study does not discuss the country-specific effects of anti-EU attitudes on Eurosceptic party choice in detail, and the ground of comparison are party positions on the European integration.

In my research, I want to map the differences in the relationship of anti-EU attitudes and Eurosceptic voting choice across member states of the European Union. Instead of using the specificities of party systems to explain country-level differences, I will turn the focus of my research towards the differences between the West and the East. Instead of the party-based approach of Hernández and Kriesi, I am going to categorize countries based on the ideological leaning of their Eurosceptic public opinion and use this typology to compare country-specific effects of Euroscepticism on voting choice. To better understand the relationship between the

context of European elections and the explanatory power of Euroscepticism, I am going to use rational choice institutionalism as a theoretical framework for my research.

1.2. Rational choice institutionalism and the European Union

Rational choice institutionalism links institutional framework to action. According to this theory, institutional frameworks and the interaction of institutions shape political behavior of actors in a given institution (Hall and Taylor 1996). Rational choice institutionalism in the context of the European Union was first used to explain institutional reform and decision-making in the EU (Tsebelis 1994, 2002). However, the theory can also be applied to explain vote choice. Voting behavior and preferences are not independent from the institutional settings surrounding the voter. In the following paragraphs, I am going to present the logic behind explaining voting choice from a rational choice institutionalist perspective.

Simon Hix argues that euroscepticism consists of a set of preferences (2007). In his article, *Euroscepticism as Anti-Centralization* he lays down a basic model of Eurosceptic preference formation from a rational choice perspective. He argues that voters', parties' and other actors' stance towards the EU can be derived from certain institutional factors, such as the actors' domestic political system, their countries' stance on certain policy issues and the current policy directions of the European Union. This also means that when deciding on how to position themselves in relation with the European integration, voters weigh up the distance of EU policies from their own preferences, the likely direction of policy change at domestic level and the European level (Hix 2007).

To give a meaningful framework to the hypotheses derived from the theory, Hix uses the left-right dimension as a basic net measure of policy stances. Although left-right ideology has a multi-dimensional character, all party-systems in Europe are polarized on left-right issues to

some extent (Freire 2015). This thesis, just as many other articles written in the field of EU public opinion research, relies on this aggregate approach to ideological polarization heavily. However, some scholars suggest that the explanatory power and the reliability of the left-right scale is fading all over the world (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). On one hand, it is precisely the holistic and ever-changing nature of the left-right dimension that makes it a great measurement to grasp the essentials of political conflict in the European Union. On the other hand, the imprecise and multi-dimensional nature of the scale might cause problems in its interpretation. Since the focus of this research is Euroscepticism, the multi-dimensionality and reliability of the left-right scale is not going to be discussed in detail. However, in the methodology section the thesis is tackling this problem by testing the proposed models with variables alternative to the left-right scale, such as anti-immigration or redistribution attitudes.

Based on the theoretical premises discussed above, the article of Hix derives six inferences about anti-EU attitudes. One of these argues that “voters and parties on the extreme left and extreme right are more likely to be Eurosceptic than are centrist voters and parties” (Hix 2007, p. 136). Because European policies are closest to the European median voter, extremists are more likely to oppose those policies, and therefore pick up Eurosceptic attitudes. Hix also argues, that citizens who support governing parties are less likely to be Eurosceptic. Governments play a crucial role in European decision making. Supporting the governing party indicates that a voter has bigger influence on European policies than those who support other parties. A voter’s influence on European politics does not end with voting choice in the elections to the European Parliament. The European voter has indirect influence on decision-making in the European Council through the head of government she supported in national elections.

Hix also states that a member states’ domestic policy regime and the policy regime on the European level also interact with the position of voters on the left-right scale. For instance, if a

country's domestic policy regime consistently leans to the right from the European average, voters on the right are more likely to have Eurosceptic attitudes than voters on the left. The reasons are simple: voters supporting the policy regime on a certain dimension do not want the European Union to influence the same dimension in another direction. The article also hypothesizes that among voters and parties of large member states, Euroscepticism is more prominent than among voters and parties of small member states. As Hix argues, large member states like Germany, France or the United Kingdom gradually lost their power to dominate decision-making processes in the European Union. The most recent treaty changes all took steps towards the better representation of small state interest in the EU. For example, smaller states are over-represented in the European Parliament and they delegate one Commissioner to the European Commission, just as large member states.

The paper discussed above uses the vote on the Constitutional treaty to test some of his propositions. The findings are in line with a previous study of the author: there is no clear pattern of euroscepticism in the “new 10” member states. However, since 2007 the political landscape in Europe massively changed. The financial crisis had a large impact on the European politics. Parties building their campaigns on intense Eurosceptic rhetoric won elections (like Syriza in Greece), others turned against EU institutions after getting in office (like Fidesz in Hungary). The question of this research is whether support for Eurosceptic parties in European elections can be explained by the rational choice institutionalist theory, or this theory fails to explain the Eurosceptic vote. One or the other, the propositions of Hix provide an excellent theoretical ground to analyze the behavior of Eurosceptic voters in European elections.

1.3. The role of Eurosceptic parties: politicization and socialization

In the previous section, I discussed how voters' attitudes towards the European union are supposedly influenced by their institutional surroundings. However, the domestic political

system and EU institutions are not the only forces that effect voting behavior. The party system and the characteristics of parties existing in a political system also have an influence on voting behavior. It is not just voters who influence party policies, the interaction also works the other way around: parties influence voters in their behavior in many ways. Although partisanship is historically weaker in Europe than in the United States, parties in Europe also reduce the dimensionality of the political space by politicizing certain issues and ignoring others. In this section, I am going to show how Eurosceptic party supply affects the dimensionality of the political space in a political system. Based on recent empirical studies, I am going to argue that the politicization of the European dimension in the recent years has been driven by Eurosceptic parties.

Eurosceptic parties have been pioneers in politicizing the European Union. As Cécile Leconte argues, “euroscepticism actually re-injects politics into a largely de-politicized polity” (2015, p. 256). The ignorance and non-politicization of the European dimension by mainstream parties in the past created a political vacuum. This vacuum gave a potential for political entrepreneurs to gain votes quickly by engaging in protest-based, anti-EU discourse (van der Brug and van der Eijk 2007; Leconte 2015). This is the reason why Eurosceptic parties have an interest in the politicization of the European dimension: by framing voting choice as a referendum about national sovereignty and the power of distant European elites, they can mobilize voters throughout the whole spectrum of the left-right dimension. This is how the “sleeping giant” is awakening in Europe.

Hernández and Kriesi analyzed how the politicization of the European Union is enhanced by Eurosceptic party supply (2016). In their paper, the authors analyze how Eurosceptic party supply effects voting turnout and the likelihood to vote for a Eurosceptic party among citizens disaffected with the EU. Based on the 2014 European Election Study, the authors find strong

association between attitudes towards the EU and the likelihood to turn out to vote in European elections. The results are clear: disaffection with the EU decreases the likelihood of voting in European elections. However, the authors also find striking differences between countries with different Eurosceptic supply scenarios. In the case of “comprehensive Eurosceptic” party supply the effect of EU disaffection on voting turnout is weaker: in general, Eurosceptics are more likely to vote, than in countries without any Eurosceptic alternatives. In left-biased Eurosceptic party supply setting, the relationship between EU disaffection and likelihood to turnout disappears among leftist voters, and vice versa.

Hernández and Kriesi also examine the effect of Eurosceptic party supply on the likelihood to vote for a Eurosceptic party. As expected, in countries where there are virtually no Eurosceptic parties, EU disaffection does not have much effect on the vote for the existing Eurosceptic forces. The effect is strong under comprehensive Eurosceptic party supply. However, the most surprising results are about the same effect in countries with right-biased Eurosceptic party supply. In countries where Eurosceptic parties mostly embrace right-wing ideologies, both left-wing and right-wing voters are more likely to be mobilized and vote for Eurosceptics as they are more disaffected with the EU. These results suggest that Eurosceptic parties in certain settings are not just powerful mobilizing forces of the Eurosceptic electorate, but they are also able to mobilize Eurosceptics across the left-right dimension. The portrayal of right-wing Eurosceptic parties as the leaders of politicization of EU issues might be an important factor in interpreting these findings (Hernández and Kriesi 2016). In the following section, I am going to discuss how politicization of EU attitudes contributes to a better and more developed European public sphere.

1.4. Creating a European public sphere by politicizing the EU dimension

The European Union suffers from a public sphere deficit. Policy-making in most policy areas is increasingly taking place on the EU level, but public debates and citizens' involvement in policy making still happen in the national arena (Koopmans and Erbe 2004). The lack of a European public sphere is closely connected to the debate on democratic deficit in the European Union, and European elections are in the center of this question. Without citizens debating issues and policies that are influenced by the EU on the European level, the probability of casting an informed vote in EU elections is less likely. The campaign and the public discourse surrounding European elections is of essential importance to create a European public sphere. In this section I am going to argue, that the politicization of attitudes towards the EU is an important step towards creating a European public sphere.

The Europeanization literature differentiates between horizontal and vertical Europeanization (Koopmans 2007). Horizontal Europeanization refers to the references and presence of other EU countries in the national media of a member state. Vertical Europeanization in the media is defined as European institutions and transnational bodies featured more often in the news (de la Porte and Van Dalen 2016). However, it is not just presence that matters. Discussing national politics and policy in an EU-frame can also contribute to citizens' perspective on the importance of the EU in policy making in many areas.

The current disproportional underrepresentation of EU politics in the national media makes the accountability of politicians more difficult. On one hand, the actions and decisions of political actors and institutions on the EU level is less visible. The lack of visibility in the national media results in citizens underestimating both the achievements and mistakes of supranational and intergovernmental actors in the EU. The lack of information about the actions of European politicians and institutions has severe consequences on the quality of democracy in the EU. The

core of the problem is the impossibility of responsiveness and retrospective voting in European elections. For example, without proper information on the activity of the European Commission or the European Parliament, voters in EU elections cannot vote based on their political evaluations on the actions of these actors.

If citizens are not informed about EU politics by the national media, they are going to rely on cues and shortcuts when they face a voting decision. Political parties are happy to present voters with their views on EU politics and the European Union. However, because of the nature of multi-level governance, governing parties (and those who have been governing or likely to govern anytime soon) are often incentivized to underemphasize the achievements of the European integration and claim them as their own. This process contributes to the bad public image of many European agencies and institutions. The European Commission in this frame is often described as an oversized and bureaucratic body incapable of addressing the most pressing issues of European citizens. On the other side, the regulatory activity of the Commission in public health and consumer protection issues is often less visible for citizens. Parties and the media do not have the incentives to frame these activities as serious achievements.

More interestingly, even parties who participated in the process of electing the President of the European Commission and consist the majority in the European Parliament are also reluctant to claim any responsibility for the achievements of the Commission and the EP. In the media and the public discourse, the Commission is often pictured as a depoliticized entity. However, the leadership of the Commission has political goals and a political agenda, just as national governments. The fact is that the media, the European electorate or political parties do not hold the Commission accountable based on these political standards. When critiques of EU democracy suggest that the power of the Commission stretches too far in the legislative process and otherwise, they should also look at other factors than the institutional design. Without real

political opposition against the European Commission in the European Parliament, and without media holding EU institutions accountable politically, there is no healthy European public sphere.

For some researchers, Eurosceptic criticism seems to contribute to the politicization of the European Union. Cécile Leconte (2015) argues that Eurosceptic parties are important to the process of creating a European public sphere. As an example, the author reminds her readers of the transnational success of Nigel Farage's speeches in the European Parliament on YouTube (Leconte 2015). Leconte approaches Euroscepticism rather as a discourse than an ideology. According to her arguments, Eurosceptic parties are reacting to the democratic deficit in the European Union, and with their discourse they make EU issues relevant in the national public sphere (Leconte 2015, p. 256). However, Leconte does not mention the fact that the process of politicization is only complete if Eurosceptic political parties can also influence discourse and considerations on voters' ends. Influencing the media and opinion leaders is not enough to foster collective action or grassroots organization on the European level.

The effect of EU attitudes on voting for Eurosceptic parties shows where these parties stand in the process of fighting their way into the European political space, and at the same time politicizing the European dimension. European elections are the ideal-typical environment for Eurosceptic parties to promote their agenda. Despite the high importance of national issues in the campaign, European issues and questions about the future of the integration are more likely to be discussed before the elections to the European Parliament. Since the setting is ideal to promote their agenda, it is no wonder that Eurosceptics consistently perform better in EU elections than national settings.

But how does exactly politicizing anti- and pro-EU sentiments contribute to a European public sphere? Does the anti-elitist demagogue discourse of some anti-EU parties help us to build a

better European public sphere? One could argue that the opposition towards the EU on anti-elitist and populist grounds rather harms the European public discourse. Some argue that instead of the constant debate on the future of the integration and the institutions and democracy in the European Union, politicians, parties and voters should focus on actual policy issues on the European level. The future of the common market, trade policy, and monetary policy are all areas where EU primary law allows supranational decision-making. Shall the European public sphere be the forum to debate these questions instead of the constant debates on sovereignty of nation states?

I argue that this reasoning is not valid. Eurosceptic parties, consciously or not, help to bring politics back into the under-politicized realms of the European Union. The European Union is not a finished project, primary law changes take place every few years. Although there has been no major change since the treaty of Lisbon was signed ten years ago, there is still no European constitution. Since the 2008 Euro crisis it is clear, that the monetary union was also built on very weak pillars. The lack of any fiscal cooperation in times of uncertainty questioned the trust in the Eurozone even in the most dedicated member states. In the EU's current state, its future should be deservedly the most important question on the European level. Although their answers and messages are often radical and demagogue, Eurosceptic parties acknowledge this. Moreover, perhaps not intentionally, but they help EU institutions and the European public sphere to constantly turn back to these issues and keep them on their agenda.

In this chapter I discussed the relevance of the EU dimension in European elections, the rational choice institutionalist approach to European elections, and the role of Eurosceptic parties in politicizing the European Union. I also discussed the importance of politicizing the European Union in creating a strong European public sphere. In the following section, I am going to give a typology of Eurosceptic parties competing in the 2014 EP elections based on criteria used in

the literature. After that, I am going to analyze, to what extent the European dimension effects voting choice in European elections. Building on the existing research discussed above, I am going to test the basic premises of the rational choice institutionalist model. In the second part of the analysis, I am examining the relationship between Eurosceptic party choice and the reason for voting.

Chapter 2: AGAINST BRUSSELS, AGAINST EACH OTHER: A COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT OF EUROSCEPTIC PARTIES IN THE EU

2.1. Eurosceptics in the European Parliament

Based on existing literature, in the last section I showed how Eurosceptic parties contribute to the politicization of European issue across Europe. In this chapter, I am going to give a descriptive account of the Eurosceptic parties who competed in the 2014 European elections. The exercise of classifying Eurosceptic parties is particularly challenging due to the wide range of reasons for opposing the integration. As Conti and Memoli argue, “the contents of Euroscepticism vary considerably across parties and member states to the point that a joint anti-European party front is hardly discernible, and what really exists is a plethora of dispersed Eurosceptical party stances” (Conti and Memoli 2012, p. 92). If we accept this, one could argue that it makes no sense to talk about these parties in a single framework. Developments of party politics in the European Parliament suggest that despite the differences, some parts of the Eurosceptic block can co-exist and cooperate with each other when it comes to fighting federalist ideas in the EP. On the other hand, the forms of cooperation are very factionalized, and the reasons behind cooperation are rather the pragmatic and financial perks that come with forming a party group in the EP.

The European Parliament currently has three major party groups, which can be labeled as Eurosceptic. European Conservatives and Reformists stand on anti-federalist principles. The group was founded by the initiative of David Cameron and UK Conservatives after the 2009 EP elections. The views of the group are best described as soft Eurosceptic: the parties in the group are not against the EU membership of their respective countries in principle, but they oppose any steps toward a more federal EU (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008). To find the reasons

for the formation of this group, it is essential to understand the situation after the 2009 elections to the European Parliament in Great Britain. In 2009, UK Conservatives lost many of their seats to UKIP in the EP. One of the explanations for the initiative for a new party group is that the loss of these seats would have resulted in a significant loss of positions of power in the Conservatives' former party group, the European People's Party. Interviews with Conservative politicians suggest that these practical reasons and the internal division of Conservatives on the future of the EU likely explain the formation of the new group (Whitaker and Lynch 2014).

Other Eurosceptic MEPs founded the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group after the 2014 EP elections. With most of their MEPs delegated by the United Kingdom Independence Party and the 5 Star Movement from Italy, this group mainly consists of MEPs who had belonged to other Eurosceptic groups before or got seats in the European Parliament for the first time. According to interviews with UKIP politicians, the incentives to create the group were even less based on a common ideological basis, than in the case of ECR. In their group, UKIP MEPs surrounded themselves with parliamentarians way less Eurosceptic than themselves: an analysis of roll-call votes between July 2009 and December 2010 in the EP shows very little consistency in cooperation between deputies of the EFDD (Whitaker and Lynch 2014). A recent scandal of the Italian M5S trying to join the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and leave EFDD also highlights the huge ideological differences inside the party group (Rankin 2017).

The most recently formed Eurosceptic group in the European Parliament is Europe of Nations and Freedom. This group was formed after the sweeping success of extreme right Eurosceptic parties in the 2014 European elections. The group was formed by the initiative of Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French far-right party, Front National. Apart from the MEPs delegated by the National Front, the group accommodates deputies from the Italian Lega Nord (Northern

League), the Austrian FPÖ (Freedom Party) and the Dutch PVV (Party for Freedom). The leaders of these parties, Matteo Salvini, Heinz-Christian Strache and Geert Wilders are all known for their hard anti-immigration views and their complete control over their parties. The conflicts over the tone and rhetoric on immigration between the different Eurosceptic groups in the EP is best illustrated by the case of the German AfD (Alternative for Germany) in the European Parliament.

Shortly after the 2014 elections to the EP, the seven newly elected MEPs of AfD joined the European Conservatives and Reformists in the European Parliament. The ECR warmly welcomed the deputies of the young Eurosceptic party in their lines, although some publications suggested that the troubled relationship of David Cameron and Angela Merkel was lurking behind the gesture (*Euractiv* 2014). After five MEPs split from their own party shortly after being elected under the AfD flag, tensions between remaining AfD MEPs and the more consolidated Conservatives of the ECR group started to escalate in early 2016⁴. In March 2016, after AfD members made comments “about the use of firearms to prevent migrants crossing the German border”, the two remaining AfD deputies were asked to leave the group by the leadership of ECR (*EUobserver* 2016a). Another reason for ECR to cut ties with the German Eurosceptics was the alleged talks between the Austrian far-right FPÖ and AfD. The two MEPs of AfD left the ECR group in two steps (*EUobserver* 2016b).

⁴ The five MEPs started their own party, ALFA (later known as the Liberal Conservative Reformers) because they found the AfD platform drifting too much towards the extremes (*EUobserver* 2015). These MEPs are still members of the ECR group.

Table 1
Party group positions in the European Parliament⁵

	Average EU attitude (SD)	Average left-right attitude (SD)
ECR	3.50 (1.16)	6.93 (1.07)
EFDD	1.67 (0.77)	7.64 (1.73)
ENF	1.52 (0.57)	9.16 (0.35)
All EU parties	4.82 (1.78)	5.32 (2.3)

Left-right attitudes: 0 – Extreme Left, 5 – Center, 10 – Extreme right
EU attitudes: 1 – Strongly opposed, 4 – Neutral, 7 – Strongly in favor

Table 1 shows the average positions on the European Union and on the left-right axis of parties belonging to each corresponding political group in the European Parliament. While coding of parties in this table reflect current (April 2017) party memberships in EP groups, party positions were coded by experts in late 2014 (Bakker et al. 2015). However, this data still reflects the state of cooperation between Eurosceptic parties on a EU level. What we can note at first sight when looking at the table is that party groups in the EP vary both in terms of their average position on the EU and the left-right scale. With average scores higher than 5, all three groups are right-leaning, but there is more than 2 points distance between the ECR and ENF in terms of left-right ideologies on an 11-point scale, which is a substantively big difference.

The differences in standard deviations between the different groups are perhaps even more interesting. As we can see, although the EFDD group is very much right-leaning with a score of 7.64 on the left-right scale, there are big ideological differences between different parties in this group on this dimension. The substantial difference might be due to the presence of the slightly leftist or centrist, but Eurosceptic Italian M5S in the group. In the ECR group

⁵ The scores in the table have been calculated based on data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2015). The scores are not weighted based on the size or power of a party in a certain party group. The data on party positions was collected from late 2014 until early 2015. In cases where a party's MEPs sit in multiple groups, the score of the party was included in the calculation of means for each corresponding group. EP group membership of MEPs reflect the state of April 2017

ideological differences are smaller, but still substantial. The Europe of Nations and Freedom group is the most cohesive and the most extreme both on EU dimension and left-right issues. They are very close to the most extreme anti-EU and extreme right positions on both dimensions.

In case of EU attitudes, standard deviations are quite like those of the left-right dimension. The only exception is the EFDD group, which seems to be way more divided on left-right dimension than on the European one. While in the case of ECR and ENF position on the left-right dimension emerges as an important cohesive integrating force, the EFDD is more permissive of left-leaning or centrist parties. However, the attempt of M5S to leave EFDD and join the liberal ALDE in 2017 shows that we likely witness a weird “marriage of convenience” in this case. This data shows that the emergence of a real cross-ideological Eurosceptic platform is yet to be made in the European Parliament.

As I demonstrated above, Eurosceptic parties in the European Parliament are highly factionalized. Most of the existing Eurosceptic party groups are volatile, organizationally weak and lack any discipline in roll-call voting compared to other, non-Eurosceptic groups in the European Parliament⁶. Moreover, these political groups are also organized around their position on the left-right scale, just as much as around their position towards the European Union or the future of the European integration. This short description of the cooperation of Eurosceptic parties in the European Parliament has excluded MEPs of Eurosceptic parties, who do not belong to a party group or sit in one of the other groups in the EP. There are numerous parties (e.g. the Hungarian Fidesz or some far-left and green parties) in the groups excluded from this part of the analysis. However, the story of party groups in the EP shows that even in cases when

⁶ Analysis of the behavior of the three major party groups in the European Parliament found that the number of the „hurrah” votes, where ALDE, EPP, and Socialist MEPs vote together is exceptionally high (Bowler and McElroy 2015).

Euroscepticism or Euro-criticism is named as a binding principle to rally behind, Eurosceptic parties are often reluctant to stick together.

Reluctance to cooperate in the EP comes with loss of positions, exposure, speaking time and money. Why do many Eurosceptic MEPs choose to be independent or sit in party groups that are far from being Eurosceptic based on their positions? The reason is simple: there are other, more important issues in play. In the next section, I am going to demonstrate the most divisive issues and classify Eurosceptic parties based on their position on them. I am going to examine how the anti-EU attitudes and left-right attitudes of Eurosceptic parties are aligned. Based on aggregate evaluations of experts of the topic, I am going to suggest a typology of Eurosceptic parties in the European Union. After this, I will propose a voting behavior model to explore the different reasons behind the Eurosceptic vote in the EU.

2.2. The supply side of Euroscepticism: the roots of anti-EU attitudes on the party level

To classify Eurosceptic parties in a meaningful way, we first need to identify what positions Eurosceptic parties seem to have a similar stance on. In other words: what are the ideological or policy issues which can explain the extent of a party's opposition towards the European integration? These issues which are not divisive among Eurosceptic parties but rather explain their Euroscepticism or co-vary with the level of their anti-EU attitudes do not serve as meaningful grounds for classification. In this section, I am going to argue that the position of a party is the best dimension to meaningfully classify Eurosceptic parties. I am going to demonstrate that despite the common belief, anti-EU attitudes are not only associated with far-right positions.

What do Eurosceptic parties have in common? What explains the Euroscepticism of a party in the European Union? The three regression models in Table 2 based on data from the Chapel

Hill Expert Survey try to give an answer to these questions (Bakker et al. 2015). There are many assumptions behind this table, one of them is that EU positions are mainly derivatives of other positions of parties which are more important in the national arena of political competition. In this assumption, this thesis accepts the hypothesis of Simon Hix and the theory of rational choice institutionalism (Hix 2007). Therefore, I assume that the directionality of the relationship resembles the one that is implied in Table 2: national ideological and policy issues determine parties' positions on the European Union.

The table shows the effect of five policy dimensions on Euroscepticism in the pool of the 242 parties in the 28 member states of the EU. To control for country-level historical differences, I added a dichotomous variable for parties in “new member states” to the model⁷. In Model 1, four independent variables have a statistically significant effect on parties' positions on the European Union. Anti-immigration views, right-wing position and anti-elitism effect generalized support towards the EU negatively among parties. Economically more liberal parties and those who operate in new member states have more sympathetic attitudes towards the EU. Decentralization is on the edge of statistical significance, but with $\alpha=0.05$ it does not have a significant effect. Model 1 explains more than 60% of the variance in the EU position of European parties ($R^2=0.64$).

⁷ Under „new Member States”, I mean the 13 countries that joined the European Union in the 2004 enlargement rounds and after.

Table 2
A model of support for the European integration among EU parties

	Dependent variable: EU position		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Anti-immigration	-0.125*** (0.047)	-0,024 (0.035)	-0,023 (0.035)
Left-right ideology	-0.220*** (0.073)	-0.192*** (0.054)	-0.177*** (0.053)
Economic liberalism	0.290*** (0.063)	0.241*** (0.047)	0.275*** (0.048)
Anti-elitism	-0.386*** (0.032)	-0.231*** (0.026)	-0.224*** (0.026)
Decentralization	-0.075* (0.043)	-0,015 (0.032)	-0,022 (0.032)
New member state	0.789*** (0.141)	0.397*** (0.108)	0.386*** (0.106)
Eurosceptic (Dichotomous)		-2.363*** (0.168)	-1.780*** (0.271)
Eurosceptic x Economic liberalism			-0.135*** (0.050)
Constant	7.233*** (0.318)	6.356*** (0.243)	6.114*** (0.255)
R ²	0,639	0,804	0,81
Adjusted R ²	0,63	0,798	0,804
Residual Std. Error	1.063	0.784	0.774
DF	235	234	233
F Statistic	69.267***	137.233***	124.296***

Note: OLS estimates with standard errors in parentheses. N=242

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Model 2 illustrates what happens when Eurosceptic and mainstream parties are differentiated in the model with a dichotomous variable⁸. In this model, anti-immigration views do not have a significant effect on anti-EU attitudes. It is very likely that the dichotomous variable for

⁸ Parties with average expert evaluation scores lower than 3 on a 1-to-7 scale have been coded Eurosceptic (1 – Strongly opposed to the integration, 4 – Neutral, 7 – Strongly in favor of the integration)

Euroscepticism explains away the effect of anti-immigration positions observed in Model 2. Model 3 uses the same independent variables, but an interaction effect between Euroscepticism and economic liberalism is also included in the model⁹. The same coefficients are significant in Model 3 and Model 2, although controlling for the interaction effect slightly increases the effect size of economic liberalism. This is due to the significant interaction of Euroscepticism and economic liberalism. Among Eurosceptic parties, economic liberalism has a significantly negative effect on EU attitudes. The relationship among mainstream parties is reverse: economic liberalism enhances support for the European Union. The effect of anti-elitism is significant and consistent across all three models. This suggests that despite Eurosceptic parties do not differ much on any other hypothesized issues from each other, the extent of the despise of the elites can explain even slighter differences in despise towards the EU.

Considering these results, it is no wonder why populism is one of the most often used attributes to describe the most successful Eurosceptic parties in the EU. According to Paul Taggart, populist parties are often use anti-elitist messages and reference “the people” or “ordinary citizens” as the target group of their politics. Treating democratic institutions as the enemies of real democracy by the people is also an important rhetorical tool of populist parties (Taggart 2000). As the OLS models above show, anti-elitism is one of the most powerful explanatory variables of Euroscepticism among parties. On the other hand, Eurosceptic parties often share another trait of populist parties: they often engage in harsh institutional criticism against democratic institutions. Eurosceptic parties often take this institutional criticism directed towards the European Commission and the European Parliament and turn it into a generic opposition towards the integration.

⁹ Interaction effects with Euroscepticism and other independent variables have been tested in separate models, and they have been found non-significant or their inclusion in the models resulted in co-linearity issues

These results are mostly in line with the ones Hooghe et al. found in their similar analysis on data from 1999 (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002). As the analysis above shows, left-right attitudes are divisive enough to serve as meaningful grounds for comparison among Eurosceptic parties. The fact that left-right attitudes do not correlate with Euroscepticism does not mean that the position of a party on this scale has nothing to do with its opposition towards the EU. When left-right attitudes are recoded to show the absolute distance of a party from the ideological center, the resulting extremism variable is highly correlated with the EU position of parties ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.01$). This means Euroscepticism is much more likely in case of parties who embrace more extreme ideologies on the left-right dimension, resulting in an inverted U-shaped curve on the left-right axis (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002). In the next section, I am going to classify Eurosceptic parties based on their positions on the left-right scale.

2.3. Left-right position and Euroscepticism on the party level: the grounds of opposition

In the previous section, I argued that the left-right axis is the best classificatory dimension for Eurosceptic parties. Table 3 shows the Eurosceptic parties of EU countries classified by their position on the 0-10 left-right scale. The classification clearly reveals the bigger presence of Eurosceptic parties on the extremes: on either side of the left-right scale, there are more Eurosceptic parties than in the center. There are less leftist Eurosceptic parties than right-wing ones, and they can be found mostly in Western and Southern European Countries (except the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia in the Czech Republic). On the other hand, right-wing Eurosceptic parties are scattered around the European Union in a seemingly random way.

The sources of left-wing, centrist and right-wing party-level Euroscepticism are very different. In the public opinion, the relationship between left-right ideology and Euroscepticism has been changing a lot since the first European elections. An empirical study of Eurobarometer data

shows that right-wing Euroscepticism has not always been as prominent as today: in the 1970s and 80s (before the introduction of the Maastricht treaty) right-wing parties were considered the drivers of the European integration, while social democrats and left-wing voters were the ones in the opposition of the European Union (Elsas, Hakhverdian, and Brug 2016). At this point the legacy of Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman was still very much alive on the Christian democratic right.

While anti-elitist niche parties were gaining more space from election to election on the extreme right, the social-democratic left moved to less critical attitudes toward the EU. The European left in the pre-Maastricht era had reasons both to support and to oppose the European integration. International solidarity was always an important issue for the social democratic and communist left, and the EU in the 1980s was eager to help Greece, Spain and Portugal by accepting them to the integration (Elsas, Hakhverdian, and Brug 2016). However, the idea of a common market is understandably less appealing to the European left. The free movement of goods and capital prevent member states from enacting tariffs or quotas and protect any part of their economy from competition inside the EU. Although the goal of setting up agricultural subsidies and structural funds was to ease the tensions between more developed economies and less affluent member states, these measures were not considered sufficient from the perspective of the socialist left.

In their monography about the political conflict over the European Union, Marks et al. conclude that after the Maastricht treaty, the idea of regulated capitalism turned the attitudes of the center left towards the European project (Marks and Steenbergen 2004). However, many social democrats are still suspicious towards the EU because its alleged bias towards *negative*

*integration against positive integration*¹⁰ (Marks and Steenbergen 2004). According to the social democratic critique, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission have more power and leverage to proceed with negative integration, because primary law in the EU gives them the ability to legislate in these matters (Scharpf 1998). These institutions operate on a supranational basis, therefore negative integration is more likely to move forward without the consent of member states. In case of positive integration, primary law is less restrictive and intergovernmental negotiation in the Council is required to advance in that direction.

The euro crisis of 2008 changed the public opinion on the European integration fundamentally. The crisis brought back economic considerations to the evaluation of the EU, and had a negative effect on the public perception of the integration in general (Braun and Tausendpfund 2014). Despite this backlash, the incentive structures of mainstream parties still prevented them to take more Eurosceptic positions or to criticize the EU for the handling of the crisis (Miklin 2014). One of the consequences for the lack of politicization was the relative success of parties against the common currency in the 2014 EP elections. Niche parties across the left-right dimension made promises that they would abolish the common currency in their countries.

¹⁰ Negative and positive integration are concepts developed by Fritz W. Scharpf. (Scharpf 1998). The author defines negative integration as enacting deregulatory measures and abolishing state control over markets on the European level. Positive integration is defined as the enactment of new rules to regulate the single market and protect consumers from the potential harmful effects of capitalism.

Table 3
Eurosceptic parties in the European Union (2014)¹¹

Left-wing		Centrist		Right-wing			
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	CZE	Ataka	BUL	Freedom Party of Austria	AUS	Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union	HUN
Red-Green Alliance	DEN	Danish People's Party	DEN	Alliance for the Future of Austria	AUS	Jobbik – Movement for a Better Hungary	HUN
People's Movement Against the EU	DEN	True Finns	FIN	Team Stronach for Austria	AUS	Lega Nord	IT
French Communist Party	FRA	Five Star Movement	IT	Flemish Interest	BEL	Brothers of Italy	IT
Left Party	FRA	Latvian Russian Union	LAT	People's Party	BEL	Political Reformed Party	NET
Communist Party of Greece	GRE			Croatian Party of Rights	CRO	Party for Freedom	NET
Sinn Féin	IRE			Civic Democratic Party	CZE	Congress of the New Right	POL
Socialist Party	IRE			Dawn of Direct Democracy	CZE	Slovak National Party	SLO
People Before Profit Alliance	IRE			Party for Free Citizens	CZE	Freedom and Solidarity	SLO
Communist Refoundation Party	IT			Front National	FRA	Sweden Democrats	SWE
Socialist Party	NET			Movement for France	FRA	United Kingdom Independence Party	UK
Democratic Unitarian Coalition	POR			National Democratic Party of Germany	GER		
Left Party	SWE			Alternative for Germany	GER		
				Independent Greeks	GRE		
				Golden Dawn	GRE		

CEU eTD Collection

¹¹Parties have been coded based on their average expert evaluation scores: 0-3: left-wing, 3-7: centrist, 7-10: right-wing. The source of the data is the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2015).

In Table 3, the left column mainly consists of communist parties or electoral alliances which communist parties are part of. There are some parties in the column who criticize the EU from a social democratic perspective, like the Left Party in France, the Socialist Party in Netherlands and Ireland, or the People Before Profits Alliance. The case of the Irish Sinn Féin is somewhat unique: it is the largest nationalist party with catholic roots in the Dáil Éireann (the lower house of the Irish parliament). One of the goals of the party is to free Northern Ireland from British rule. The party opposes the advancement of European integration both on nationalist and socialist grounds. On one hand, the party was firmly against the austerity measures introduced in Ireland after the collapse of its economy in 2008. On the other hand, the party criticizes the EU on an institutional ground. The party is not advocating for Ireland to leave the European Union, but they stand for institutional reform. A quote from Matt Carthy, one of the MEPs of Sinn Féin illustrates the multi-faceted Euroscepticism of the Irish party.

“Our position has been very clear. We critically engage in the EU. The EU, as it stands now, is not a model we would have great affinity for. We are attempting all the time to try and bridge the democratic deficit that is there and try to underscore the unequal in terms of how European institutions work in many instances. [...] The fact that, more and more, the European Union is moving away from a social Europe basis to a very much right-wing agenda – that is something we are challenging. And the concept of member states working together on issues of mutual concern has been eroded by some of the larger countries, particularly France and Germany, forcing, and in some cases bullying, smaller countries.”

Matt Carthy (Bardon 2015)

In the quote, Carthy names two or three issues of concern about Europe. Democratic deficit, the Union moving away from a social Europe and bigger countries bullying the small ones are all reasons to criticize but not to reject the EU in the Sinn Féin agenda. Some Eurosceptic parties on the center of the left-right scale take a similar approach to criticize the European Union. For the Italian Five Star Movement, direct democracy is one of the most critical issues. The leader of the party, Beppe Grillo repeatedly called for a referendum on the euro, and he reportedly is in favor of Italy leaving the Eurozone (Franzosi, Marone, and Salvati 2015). Similar to the position

of Matt Carthy, Grillo claims that the common currency mainly fits the interest of “Germany and the financial oligarchies” (Grillo 2014). Green parties can also be found on the Eurosceptic left, although in Table 3 they appear in electoral alliances on the side of communist parties, like in the case of the Portuguese Democratic Unitarian Coalition or the Danish Red-Green Alliance.

The classification of parties in the center of Table 3 might be controversial, but according to their average scores in the Chapel Hill survey, these parties lie between average scores of 3 and 7 on the 11-point left-right scale. On one hand, these parties are against immigration and they embrace strong nationalist values. On the other hand, they have social democratic or pro-redistribution values. This controversy puts these parties in the middle of the general left-right scale, and makes their classification harder both in academic circles and in the international media. The case of the three Eurosceptic parties in Northern Europe (the Danish People’s Party, True Finns and Sweden Democrats) is particularly interesting at this point. Some articles classify these parties simply as far-right in their analysis (Zhirkov 2014). These parties usually use an extremely bigot and hateful rhetoric against immigrants and refugees, but they frame their stance on immigration as a defense of the traditional Northern welfare state against the pressure of immigration (Hellström and Hervik 2014).

The attitude of the Bulgarian Ataka towards the EU can be compared to the Northern nativist Euroscepticism in the party’s desire for a closed economy with high redistribution. An expert of the region argues that “ATAKA espoused an ethnic nationalism informed of nativism, economic nationalism, cultural racism, monoculturalism and ethnocracy, welfare chauvinism, religious fundamentalism, autochthonism, anti-imperialism, reclaiming-the-country arguments, and defensive motives against putative regional and global enemies.” (Sygkelos 2015, p. 179) The number of attributes in the description shows the difficulties of classifying these parties in the classical left-right dimension.

Among centrist Eurosceptic parties, the case of the Latvian Russian Union is unique. The LRU (LKS in Latvian) is a political party representing the Russian minority in Latvia. Although the research on the activity of LRU is scarce, the party reportedly has close ties to the Russian government. An example of these ties is the cooperation with pro-Russia political parties in Crimea. By cooperating with the party of the de-facto prime minister of Crimea, the LRU legitimized the annexation of the region by Russia (*Baltic Times* 2014). The source of the party's Euroscepticism in this case appears to be the political tension between Russia and the European Union rooted in geopolitical reasons and the annexation of Crimea.

The biggest group in Table 3 – not surprisingly – constitutes of right-wing Eurosceptic parties. This group consists of parties with average scores higher the 7 on the 11-point left-right scale. Apart from their attitudes towards the EU, a common point for these parties is their anti-immigration stance. Except for the Slovakian Freedom and Solidarity, all the parties rather favored a restrictive immigration policy than a more permissive one in 2014. Some parties in the right-wing column are marginal because of their outrageous racist or fascist views (like the German NDP or the Greek Golden Dawn), some gained more support in the 2014 European Elections than ever before (like Front National) and some are the most popular political forces in their countries (like Fidesz in Hungary).

But what is behind the Eurosceptic vote? Why do people choose to vote for the different kind of Eurosceptic parties? Are there any common patterns that we might recognize in the attitudes of Eurosceptic voters? In the next session, I am going to address these questions with the tools of statistical analysis.

Chapter 3: MODELLING THE SUPPORT BEHIND THE EUROSCEPTIC VOTE: WHY DO EUROPEANS VOTE FOR EUROSCEPTIC PARTIES?

In the previous chapter, I classified Eurosceptic parties based on their positions on the left-right scale, and I discussed the roots of Euroscepticism on the party level. In this chapter I am going to search for reasons behind the vote for Eurosceptic parties. In the upcoming models, there are two units of analysis. First and foremost, I am going to analyze the behavior of voters based on micro-level survey data. Secondly, I am going to compare the patterns that emerge from individual level data on the cross-country level. At the end of this chapter, I am going to discuss the implications of the patterns and results that emerge from the analysis.

3.1. The data

To establish a causal link between individual-level attitudes and voting choice, it is essential to use individual micro-level data in the analysis. Although the differences in the effective sample sizes in each country make the results less robust, the usage of aggregate data without much knowledge about the population might lead to ecological fallacy. In the analysis, I am going to use the European Election Study database from 2014 (Schmitt et al. 2016). The EES project was started in 1979 to produce data on electoral participation and voting behavior in European Parliament elections. The EES team carries out postelection surveys on representative samples of the voters in each member state. The 2014 EES includes a wide range of items measuring attitudes towards the European Union and other attitudes (such self-positioning on the left-right scale, attitudes on immigration and redistribution policy preferences). More importantly, the questionnaire includes an item about party choice in the 2014 European election.

The mode of data collection was computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) in every country. The data collection was carried out by TNS Opinion between the 30th of May 2014

and the 27th of June 2014. Samples were obtained by multi-staged random sampling. The population of inference are all citizens of the 28 member states of the European Union aged 18 years and over (16 in Austria). The Voter Study was carried out in cooperation with the European Parliament, and it was funded by a consortium of private foundations.

For the classification of parties and coding the main dependent variable (party choice) in the research, I used expert evaluations from the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2015). This survey includes the positioning of 268 political parties in the European Union on several policy and ideological issues. Opinions were collected between December 2014 and February 2015 from 337 experts on the respective political parties and the European integration.

3.2. Methodology

The analysis of my research consists of two main parts. Both sections of the analysis are exploring the associations between EU attitudes and the Eurosceptic vote. The first part of the analysis presents a descriptive approach to analyzing the difference in attitudes of Eurosceptic voters and voters of other parties. The theoretical section of the thesis established that the relationship between EU issue voting and Eurosceptic party choice is bidirectional. On one hand, voters who vote based on the EU dimension *ceteris paribus* are more likely to cast their vote for a Eurosceptic party. On the other hand, Eurosceptic socialize the voters who identify with them for other reasons to think along the EU dimension. Hence, the first part of analysis is rather discovering associations between party choice and attitudes towards the European Union without making any claim about the directionality of the relationships. The main control variable (left-right scale) and the independent variable (Eurosceptic party choice) are going to be coded as categorical. Individual-level euroscepticism is going to serve as the dependent variable in this analysis.

In the second and more important part of this chapter, I am going to focus on the effects of left-right and anti-EU attitudes on voting for Eurosceptic parties. To examine the difference between the effects of the two main independent variables, this research applies logistic regression models. Rational choice institutionalism suggests that the larger the distance from the EU status quo in terms of left-right preferences, the more disaffected a voter is towards the EU (Hix 2007). However, other research suggests that other, newly emerging dimensions are becoming more prominent, and attitudes towards the European Union are important factors in this change (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). In the voting behavior models, the analysis treats both the left-right scale and EU attitudes as continuous independent variables. The dependent variable in the models in this section is voting for a Eurosceptic party (dichotomous). Based on findings of the theoretical chapter and implications of the rational choice institutionalist theory, the next paragraphs discuss four hypotheses to be tested in the analysis on the cross-country level.

*H1) In member states who joined the European Union after 2004, the effect of anti-EU attitudes on Eurosceptic voting choice are **weaker** than in Western European member states.*

Western European states with more established democracies are further down in the process of politicizing the European dimension. According to the rational choice institutionalist approach to Euroscepticism, anti-EU attitudes have become more prominent in large member states because of the protection of small state interest on the European level (Hix 2007). These rules were mostly enacted in the Treaty of Nice to favor smaller member states joining the EU in 2004. Therefore, I expect that in these member states, the association between EU attitudes and party choice is weaker.

According to recent research, traditional left-right attitudes are increasingly taken over by the globalism-nativism dichotomy (Häusermann and Kriesi 2015). This effect also can contribute to the politicization of the EU dimension, and it is happening faster in the West than the East.

Other studies on European elections also find that the relationship of Euroscepticism and Eurosceptic party choice is fundamentally different in the East and the West (Hobolt 2015). To test Hypothesis 1, the analysis is modelling the vote for Eurosceptic parties in the European Union using logistic regressions. In case the research finds that effects of left-right attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe are statistically and substantively significant while in Western European countries there is virtually no effect, H1 is confirmed. In the European Election Study, left-right position is measured on an 11-point scale.¹² In the logistic regression models, this scale is going to be treated as a continuous variable.

*H2) In member states who joined the European Union after 2004, the effect of left-right attitudes on Eurosceptic voting choice are **stronger** than in Western European member states.*

According to this hypothesis, instead of significant EU issue voting, left-right ideology is going to explain the vote for Eurosceptic parties in Central and Eastern European member states. H2 is going to be tested using the same logistic regression models as H1. To get meaningful results, it makes sense to include the two variables (left-right and EU attitudes) in one model. Socio-demographic variables are going to be used in all models to control for the effects of age, gender and education. The idea is the same as behind *H1*: even parties with Eurosceptic attitudes do not place a large emphasis on these issues in European elections campaigns, because of the largely pro-EU public opinion in their countries. Hence, the left-right dimension prevails over EU issues as the most fundamental division in the national political conflict.

¹² The exact wording of the question is the following: "In political matters people talk of "the left" and "the right". What is your position? Please use a scale from 0 to 10, where '0' means "left" and '10' means "right". Which number best describes your position?"

*H3.1) The effects of **attitudes towards immigration** on voting for **right-wing Eurosceptic parties** vary less than the effects of the left-right dimension or the effects of attitudes on redistribution across countries.*

*H3.2) The effects of **attitudes towards immigration** on voting for **right-wing Eurosceptic parties** are consistently **stronger** than the effects on voting for left-wing or other Eurosceptics.*

These hypotheses examine the EU-level similarities and differences in the behavior of Eurosceptic voters. Although left-right ideology is the standard way to measure national political conflict in Europe, it is a catch-all dimension with somewhat different meanings across member states and political systems. In Chapter 2, I elaborated how much parties labeled left-wing or right-wing can differ in terms of policy dimensions. To understand more about the voters of Eurosceptic parties, the analysis is going to unpack the general left-right scale and propose two policy attitude scales as alternative independent variables to explain the Eurosceptic vote.

Hence, I propose two hypotheses about specific policy attitudes that are often associated with the left-right scale. The first of these is attitudes towards immigration policy. Immigration is an increasingly dividing issue in Europe, and it also played an important role in the 2014 European election campaign in many countries. In case of right-wing Eurosceptic parties, I suggest that if attitudes towards immigrants are used as independent variable instead of the left-right dimension, less variance will be observed in the regression estimates in the logistic regression models. I also expect that the effect sizes of immigration attitudes are going to be larger and positive when explaining the vote for right-wing Eurosceptics.

*H4.1) The effects of **attitudes on redistribution** on voting for **left-wing Eurosceptic parties** vary less than the effects of the left-right dimension or the effects of attitudes towards immigrants across countries.*

*H4.2) The effects of **attitudes on redistribution** on voting for **left-wing Eurosceptic parties** are consistently **stronger** than the effects of the left-right dimension or the effects of attitudes towards immigrants.*

The question of redistribution in economic domains is the one that sharply distinguishes social democrats, communists, and other left-wing parties from others. Since this dimension is a more precise measure of the economic agenda of the left, I expect these coefficients to show less variance in models where the dependent variable is the vote for a left-wing Eurosceptic party. To estimate the aggregate differences between countries in H3 and H4, I am going to calculate and report the variance of the regression coefficients weighted with the inverse of the standard errors¹³ (Lewis and Linzer 2005).

To operationalize Eurosceptic party choice, I am going to use the classification of parties detailed in Chapter 2. Based on this classification, I am going to use left-wing, right-wing and centrist Eurosceptic parties as separate entities in my analyses. As discussed above, the item used to identify Eurosceptic parties measures the overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration¹⁴. This item uses a seven-point scale, 1 indicating a strong opposition to the European integration, while 7 indicating that a party is “strongly in favor of the integration”. In Chapter 2, I classified a party as Eurosceptic if its score on the scale was lower than 3 (somewhat opposed). The operationalization of individual level Euroscepticism is

¹³ For details on the weighting method, see the footnote below Table 7

¹⁴ The exact wording of the question in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2015) is the following: „How would you describe the general position on European integration that the party leadership took over the course of 2014?“ 1- Strongly opposed 7- Strongly in favor

somewhat more complex. In the next section, we take a closer look at Euroscepticism as a concept and the ways to measure it. The thesis proposes an index built on three items to measure individual level Euroscepticism more precisely.

3.3. Operationalizing Euroscepticism on the individual level

Euroscepticism is a buzzword. In non-academic language, it is often mixed up with populism, anti-elitism and other attributes. As Cécile Leconte argues, Euroscepticism as a concept became a victim of conceptual stretching and it has been used as a vague umbrella term both in the mainstream and the academic discourse. Leconte also says there is a normative, pro-integration edge to this term, which hinders objective understanding of the phenomenon (Leconte 2015). The first definition of the term Euroscepticism was given by Paul Taggart (1998, p. 363). In his words, “Euroscepticism expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration”. This definition is rather vague and does not contain many cues that might help to operationalize Euroscepticism. However, the distinction between the crystalized qualified opposition towards the European integration process and a less direct way of opposition might help the operationalization.

Eurobarometer, the European Election Survey and other public opinion polls include several items which measure attitudes towards the EU. These survey items range from those asking respondents about their trust in different institutions of the EU to those asking if their country’s membership in the EU is a good thing. (Fuchs, Magni-Berton, and Roger 2009) offer a comprehensive guideline to the ways of operationalizing Euroscepticism in political science research. The theoretical part of the monography is based on David Easton’s theory of political support (Easton 1975). The authors identify three main elements of attitudes towards the EU: principled support, generalized support and reasoned support.

Principled support refers to the attitudes connected to the basic ideas and principles of the European Union. These ideas are primarily defined by elite discourse and party competition. Fuchs et al. argue that principled support consists of two dimensions. The economic dimension reflects the conflict between high and low regulation, and the polity dimension emerges from the conflict of European integration and national sovereignty. *Generalized support* refers to the aggregate of the attitudes towards the contemporary state of the EU. This concept includes support non-specifically for the EU as a single entity, and the attitudes towards the specific institutions of the EU. *Reasoned support* means attitudes towards the European Union based on specific standards. Fuchs et al. points to three common standards that the EU may be measured upon: effectiveness (instrumental reasons), legitimacy (normative reasons) and identity (European versus national, expressive reasons) (Fuchs, Magni-Berton, and Roger 2009).

The datasets this research is built on include many possible variables to measure attitudes towards the European Union. In my analysis, I am going to use a complex aggregate approach of the three dimensions discussed above to operationalize individual level Euroscepticism. An index of more than one survey items is a good way to capture the multi-faceted nature of Euroscepticism as a concept.

The first item used to build the index measures the attitude towards the respondents' home countries' membership in the EU¹⁵. There are three values the variable can take in the survey: the EU membership of the country is either evaluated as a "Good thing", a "Bad thing" or "Neither a good thing nor a bad thing". The variable has been recoded to have the same weight in the index as the other two items¹⁶. This question is generic, and it boils down the complex

¹⁵ QP7: "Generally speaking, do you think that the UK's membership of the EU is...?"

¹⁶ The other two dimensions are measured on an 11-point scale. The codes for the different answers are the following: "Good thing" = 10, "Neither a good thing nor a bad thin" = 5, "Bad thing" = 0

question of the integration to a simple decision about its utility for the respondents' home country. Hence, the item reflects the *generalized support* towards the EU and its institutions.

The second item used in the index measures attitudes towards the future of the European integration¹⁷. This question is more forward-looking: it asks respondents about a possible future change, a new direction for the integration, and measures its desirability. It reflects the *principled support* towards the EU, or more specifically, towards a future supranational governance. The third item used in the analysis measures the *reasoned support* towards the European integration. It asks respondents whether the EU should have more authority over economic and budgetary policies or the member states¹⁸.

3.4. Results

3.4.1. *The effect of left-right attitudes on dissatisfaction with the EU: a categorical perspective*

Before engaging in the testing of hypotheses put forward in the methodology section, I present a categorical approach to the relationship of Euroscepticism and voting choice in the EU. Table 4 shows the table of means of EU attitudes calculated for a pooled sample of persons who participated and voted in the European elections in 2014. The table shows scores on the EU attitude index described in the previous section (0-10 scale). The higher the number is the more favorable view a respondent has of the EU. The results of an ANOVA analysis show that left-right attitudes alone do not have a statistically significant effect on Euroscepticism, if they are

¹⁷ QPP18: "Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a scale from 0 to 10, where '0' means unification "has already gone too far" and '10' means it "should be pushed further. What number on this scale best describes your position?"

¹⁸ The item requires respondents to place themselves on an 11-point scale. 0 – "The EU should have more authority over the EU Member States' economic and budgetary policies" 10 – "The UK should retain full control over its economic and budgetary policies" The variable has been recoded so 10 points would show the most supportive answer, such as in case of the other two items.

coded in three groups ($F = 1.696$, $p = 0.19284$). However, the interaction of left-right position and party choice has a statistically significant and substantively large effect on Euroscepticism ($F = 9.067$, $p = 0.00261$). The significance of the interaction effect suggests a fundamental difference between the effect of left-right ideology on EU attitudes among Eurosceptic voters and others.

Table 4
Average Euroscepticism score in the EU

		Party choice	
		Eurosceptic	Other
Left-right position	Left-wing radical	3.39	5.45
	Centrist	3.78	5.53
	Right-wing radical	4.17	5.62

As we can see, among voters of Eurosceptic parties, left-right attitudes have a substantial effect on Euroscepticism. However, when interpreting Table 4, it is important to note that the analysis of the pooled sample makes country-level differences disappear. Nevertheless, the pooled analysis gives an interesting preliminary insight in the EU-level patterns in the relationship between EU issue voting and left-right radicalism. Among those who vote for Eurosceptic parties, left-wing radicals tend to hold more radical views about the EU. According to the ANOVA analysis, a 1.5 points difference from the grand mean (5.31) in Euroscepticism scores can be attributed to the effect of Eurosceptic party choice ($F=949.2$, $p<0.01$). On top of this effect, the interaction of left-wing radicalism and Eurosceptic party choice further lowers the Euroscepticism score of voters by 0.27 points ($F=9.1$, $p<0.01$).

Another interesting result is the mitigating effect of right-wing radicalism on individual-level Euroscepticism among Eurosceptic voters. Eurosceptic voters who are also right-wing radicals tend to hold more favorable views towards the EU by 0.4 points in general than non-radicals.

Compared to left-wing radicals, the difference is almost 0.8 points. Being a right-wing radical and a Eurosceptic voter together at the same time has a 0.22-point positive effect on individual level Euroscepticism.

These preliminary results suggest that on the European level there is no significant relationship between extremism on the left-right scale and individual-level Euroscepticism. It is rather belonging to the left or the right side of the scale that matters, but we find significant and substantial effects only among the voters of Eurosceptic parties. Therefore, Table 4 suggests that preference formation does not necessarily happen through the lines rational choice institutionalists suggest. It is clear radicalism on the left-right scale itself does not have a consistent effect on Euroscepticism among the voters of Eurosceptic parties. There is an important difference between left-wing and right-wing extremist Eurosceptic voters, which makes them think very differently about the European Union. Among Eurosceptic voters, the inverse U-shaped relationship between left-right ideology and Euroscepticism is not present.

To put it differently: among right-wing radicals, there might be other driving forces of Eurosceptic party choice than views towards the European Union. I hypothesize that this additional driving force is their negative attitudes towards immigration (see *H3.2* in the methodology section). However, on the European level national effects might cancel out each other. This short demonstration is just to see how the Euroscepticism and party choice looks from a federal, European perspective. In the following paragraphs, I am going to work with separate national samples and run cross-country analyses of the effects examined above.

Table 5
The effect of party choice and left-right extremism on Euroscepticism scores

Country	Effect of left-right ideology	Effect of Eurosceptic party choice
Poland	Right-wing extremism	No Eurosceptic party
France		Significant
UK		
Austria		
Italy		Not significant
Croatia		
Hungary		
Malta	Left-wing extremism	No Eurosceptic party
Estonia		Significant
Lithuania		
Cyprus		
Bulgaria		
Greece		Not significant
Sweden		
Portugal		
Latvia		Not significant
Czech Republic		
Luxembourg	No effect	No Eurosceptic party
Romania		Significant
Slovenia		
Spain		
Belgium		
Germany		
Netherlands		Not significant
Denmark		
Ireland		
Finland		
Slovakia		

Dependent variable: individual level Euroscepticism. $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 5 shows the results of multiple ANOVA analyses ran on the data in the 28 member states of the European Union. The first column in the table shows whether the effect of left- or right-wing radicalism has a significant effect EU attitude scores. The second column shows whether Eurosceptic party choice has a significant effect on individual-level Euroscepticism or not. The

analysis explicitly shows that extremism itself does not have a significant effect on individual level Euroscepticism. In almost all the examined countries, voters on the extreme left and right have totally different opinions on the European Union. In most cases, the non-significant interaction effects between the two independent variables (not shown in the table) show that Eurosceptic party choice does not act as an intervening variable between left-right extremism and individual level Euroscepticism.

However, in some special cases Eurosceptic party choice is an important explanatory variable to explain the relationship between left-right and anti-EU attitudes. Because left-wing and right-wing extremism were treated as different categories when building the ANOVA models, the analysis allows for inferences about the different effects of extreme left and right on anti-EU attitudes. In Table 5, the “right-wing euroscepticism” label refers to countries, where extreme right-wing citizens had significantly more negative attitudes about the EU, than those in the middle or the extreme left. Left-wing radicalism means the opposite, while the cells for countries where left-right extremism did not have a significant effect show “No significant effect”. The analysis shows that in most EU countries, left-right positions are somehow associated with anti-EU attitudes. Although this categorical analysis does not allow for examining the continuity and strength of these relationships, some important observations also can be derived from this type of data.

In the first group of countries, voters with extreme right-wing attitudes are associated with lower scores on the EU attitude scale. In these countries, Eurosceptic party choice does not intervene in this relationship: right-wing voters of Eurosceptic and mainstream parties are both more Eurosceptic than others who voted for the same party group. These countries are very diverse: the group features Central and Southern European countries (Hungary, Austria, Poland, Croatia and Italy) but France and the United Kingdom also belong here.

At this point, we must note that the type of euroscepticism on the extreme right is very different from anti-EU attitudes on the left. The different types of Euroscepticism are further elaborated on in Chapter 2. As researchers of left- and right-wing euroscepticism put it, “radical right-wing Eurosceptic parties [...] mainly take issue with the threat that European integration poses to national sovereignty and cultural homogeneity, and though some have become increasingly concerned with protecting the welfare state, these concerns are generally intertwined with exclusivist, anti-immigrant sentiments.” (Elsas, Hakhverdian, and Brug 2016, p. 1182).

The same study also suggests that the relationship between left-right attitudes and opposition to the current state of the EU is curvilinear (those on the extremes are more opposed to the EU). Although the study is focusing exclusively on Western European countries, the authors’ remarks about the different nature of Euroscepticism on the right and the left might help us to understand the relationship between left-right attitudes and euroscepticism in all member states. Except Poland, all the countries associated with right-wing individual level Euroscepticism have at least one party coded as Eurosceptic based on the Chapel Hill data. The Chapel Hill data also shows, that the majority Eurosceptic parties in countries with right-wing individual level euroscepticism are attributed with extreme right or right-wing attitudes by the experts.

The only exceptions are the Five Star Movement in Italy, with a centrist, moderate left position in general and hard Eurosceptic attitudes and two parties on the French extreme left (the French Communist Party and the Left Party). However, the electoral results of these small parties on the French left cannot be compared to Front National’s success in the 2014 elections to the European Parliament. From this perspective, the case of M5S is truly remarkable: in a country where anti-EU positions are associated with right-wing attitudes, they managed to grow their voting base substantially by positioning themselves across these two dimensions.

We can also note that countries with right-wing individual level euroscepticism are home to the most successful Eurosceptic parties in Europe. This conclusion was already clear from the 2014 EP election results, however after three years it is even more apparent. In Austria, Norbert Hofer, the candidate of FPÖ for president only lost the election after the annulation of the second-round run-off due to procedural reasons. In the United Kingdom, UKIP clearly had a key role in pressuring David Cameron, the Tory prime minister into calling a referendum about the country's membership in the EU. Afterwards, UKIP with the leadership of Nigel Farage contributed to the victory of the Leave campaign in the Brexit referendum in June 2016. Despite she lost the election by a large margin in the second round, Marine Le Pen, the leader of Front National in France was the frontrunner in all opinion polls in the French presidential election campaign in April 2017. In Hungary, the Fidesz-led Eurosceptic government is openly questioning the authority of the European Commission on certain competences delegated to the EU under the Lisbon Treaty.

There are countries in the right-wing Eurosceptic group where the association between party choice and individual level euroscepticism is not significant. In Croatia and Hungary, attitudes towards the European Union are in general more positive among voters. Parties that are regarded as Eurosceptic by the Chapel Hill survey in these countries also have voters who have positive attitudes on the EU. Based on these results, it is likely that the success or failure of these parties in European elections cannot be attributed to their stance on the European integration.

The situation of countries where Euroscepticism is present on the extreme left rather than in the middle or the right somewhat differs from the previous group. Firstly, the negative effect of extreme leftist attitudes on EU-attitudes is also present in countries without virtually any Eurosceptic party on the supply side. The mean Euroscepticism scores of Malta, Estonia or

Lithuania and Cyprus show that people in these countries are generally very supportive of the EU. However, those on the extreme left are somewhat less enthusiastic, while the extreme right is even more supportive than the middle. In the Baltic states, the relationship between the left and Euroscepticism might be explained by the relationships with Russia. The only Eurosceptic party in the Baltic region is the Latvian Russian Union (LKS), an ethnic left-wing political party. In the Baltics, extreme-right attitudes are usually associated with anti-Russian sentiments (Efraim Zuroff 2010). In the geopolitical context of the region, support for the EU can be interpreted as a proxy of anti-Russian sentiments in general, but especially on the far right.

In the last group of countries, left-right attitudes do not have a significant effect on Euroscepticism when the effect of Eurosceptic party choice is accounted for. We can find many Western European member states in this group. In Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland and Finland, Eurosceptic party choice is the only significant determinant of higher individual-level Euroscepticism scores. In these Western and Northern European countries, the European dimension is politicized to an extent that left-right ideologies are not the most important determinants of anti-EU attitudes anymore. It seems that Eurosceptic parties are truly capable of convince their voters on both the left and the right to rally behind them against a closer integration. Other countries in the group like Luxembourg, Romania, Spain or Slovenia do not have any substantial Eurosceptic party supply.

3.4.2. The effect of left-right attitudes on Eurosceptic party choice

After discussing some implications of a preliminary categorical analysis, I am going to analyze the results of the main voting behavior models. Table 6 shows the logistic regression coefficients from 18 countries explaining the Eurosceptic vote in each respective country. Countries without Eurosceptic party supply were excluded from this part of the analysis. Although they are not shown in the table, sociodemographic variables were included in each

model as controls (age, gender and education). The first section of Table 6 shows the older member states of the European Union where there is at least one Eurosceptic party present. Except for Portugal, positive EU attitudes have a negative and significant effect on the likelihood of voting for a Eurosceptic party. The effect is especially strong in the case of Denmark and the United Kingdom, where each point difference towards the positive end of the EU attitude scale means more than 40% lower likelihood to vote Eurosceptic.

Table 6
Country-specific models of Eurosceptic party choice

	Country	EU attitudes		Left-Right ideology		N	AIC
		B	Odds ratios	B	Odds ratios		
EU15	Austria	-0.360***	0.698	0.494***	1.639	504	321.659
	Denmark	-0.611***	0.543	0.095**	1.100	699	646.296
	Finland	-0.475***	0.622	0.043	1.044	546	281.064
	France	-0.334***	0.716	-0.037	0.964	391	347.235
	Germany	-0.431***	0.650	0.137*	1.147	877	317.253
	Greece	-0.349***	0.705	0.077*	1.080	689	532.147
	Ireland	-0.212***	0.809	-0.475***	0.622	536	376.143
	Italy	-0.264***	0.768	0.166***	1.181	507	508.003
	Netherlands	-0.481***	0.618	-0.383***	0.682	662	516.024
	Portugal	-0.112	0.894	-0.572***	0.564	351	230.177
	Sweden	-0.389***	0.678	-0.186***	0.830	865	581.577
	United Kingdom	-0.638***	0.528	0.113*	1.120	502	372.999
CEE	Bulgaria	-0.438**	0.645	-0.121	0.886	416	65.689
	Croatia	0.099	1.104	0.495***	1.640	312	293.417
	Czech Republic	-0.101	0.904	-0.089*	0.915	315	325.069
	Hungary	-0.07	0.932	0.759***	2.136	446	350.734
	Latvia	-0.098	0.907	-0.359***	0.698	313	80.408
	Slovakia	-0.213	0.808	0.079	1.082	257	119.738

Logistic regression estimates. Dependent variable: Vote for a Eurosceptic party (dummy)

Control variables: age, gender, education

p<0.1 **p<0.05 *p<0.01*

In most Central and Eastern European countries, EU attitudes do not affect the likelihood of voting for Eurosceptic parties. The only exception is Bulgaria, where the effect size is comparable to many Western European countries. However, the Bulgarian model is

considerably weaker than any others in the table with an AIC score of 65.7. In Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Latvia left-right self-positioning has a significant effect on the likelihood to vote Eurosceptic. In the light of the results in Table 6, *H1* is clearly confirmed. The results suggest that the sleeping giant has not awakened in newer member states of the EU yet. The only exception is Bulgaria, where the nativist Ataka inspired Eurosceptics across the ideological scale to go and vote for them in 2014. Eurosceptic parties in the East did not mobilize their voters based the EU dimension. For smaller niche, Eurosceptic parties in the region, this is an opportunity missed to attract Eurosceptic voters throughout the ideological space. European elections are not isolated from the political arenas parties compete in during national elections campaigns. However, with more tailored messages and the further politicization of the EU dimension, smaller Eurosceptic parties in the newly joined member states could attract voters from a larger pool of citizens.

Patterns in the effect of left-right attitudes on the Eurosceptic vote are less clear-cut than in the case of EU issues. In most countries, left-right attitudes have a significant effect. However, there are a few countries both in the East and the West, where left-right ideology is not a significant explanatory variable of the Eurosceptic vote. In the case of Finland, France or Bulgaria this might be due to the strong and significant effect of EU attitudes, which essentially make the effect of left-right attitudes disappear in the settings of a European election. The case of Slovakia, where neither EU attitudes nor left-right attitudes are significant is more interesting. It is possible that the voters of the two Slovakian Eurosceptic parties, SNS and SaS behave so differently from each other their differences hide any patterns that might appear in the data.

Since there are Central and Eastern European countries where the left-right dimension does not make any difference, I conclude that *H2* is rejected. Both Western European and CEE data are

quite alternate both in terms of effect sizes and significance. However, in most CEE countries where the effect of left-right is significant, the effect sizes are much bigger than in most of the Western cases. Based on the Croatian model, one point movement towards the right side of the scale means a 64% higher likelihood to vote Eurosceptic. In Hungary, the likelihood is more than double with a one point towards the right side of the scale.

In countries where the left-right coefficient takes a negative value, left-wing voters are more likely to vote Eurosceptic. In the case of Ireland and Portugal this is not surprising, since the only Eurosceptic parties in these countries have been coded as left-wing in the analysis of Eurosceptic parties in Chapter 2 (see Table 3). The left-based vote of the Latvian Russian Union is also not surprising: although it has been coded as a centrist party based on the evaluation of the Chapel Hill survey, the party stands on strong left-wing economic policy grounds.

However, the clear effect of left-right ideology on Eurosceptic voting in the Dutch data is somewhat surprising. Although voters of the Socialist Party consist the largest group of Eurosceptic voters in the Dutch sample (92 voters), voters of the Freedom Party are also heavily represented (40 voters). Despite the ideological polarization of the two parties, left-right attitudes still have a significant effect. On one hand, this is due to the ideological centrism of Freedom Party voters on the left right scale: with a mean of six on the 0-10 scale, they cannot be considered right-wing extremists. On the other hand, the voters of the Socialist party are more to the left on the average (2.68) and they are represented in higher numbers in the sample.

3.4.3. Comparing effects on the EU level: differences and similarities across member states

Table 7 shows the EU-level means and the variances of country-level logistic regression estimates weighted by the inverse of their standard errors. The means and variances in Table 7

are based on estimates from logistic regression models like the one described in Table 6. Due to spatial boundaries, the 12 models are not all described in detail. An example of a full model with all included variables can be found in Appendix 1. The differences between models are only the main dependent and control variable included. In Table 7, each column points to a specific of the dependent variable (for example, vote for all Eurosceptic parties in Appendix 1). The three horizontal sections of the table show three alternate versions of the independent variables included in the models (immigration attitudes and EU attitudes in Appendix 1).

When looking at the table, differences between the weighted variances are apparent from the first sight. In models where the dependent variable is the vote for left-wing Eurosceptic parties, left-right explanations seem to resemble each other most in a cross-country comparison (var = 1.27). If we take a closer look at the mean of the weighted coefficients of left-right attitudes, we see the results are negative and strong: people who have right-wing attitudes are less likely to vote for leftist parties across the EU.

Table 7 clearly falsifies *H3.1*. When explaining the vote for right-wing Eurosceptic parties, coefficients of immigration attitudes as the main control variable are further from each other and show bigger variance than those with redistribution attitudes. However, it seems like the effect of left-right attitudes is even less consistent in explaining the vote for right-wing Eurosceptic parties. The effects of left-right ideology are consistently very small and have big standard errors, except a few slight exceptions.

Table 7
EU-level means and variances of country-specific GLM estimates for selected coefficients¹⁹

		Dependent variable: Eurosceptic vote			
		Left-wing	Right-wing	Centrist	All
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Immigration	Mean	-2.28	1.95	2.71	1.22
	Variance	7.81	6.14	8.32	3.19
EU attitudes	Mean	-4.45	-3.56	-3.92	-4.73
	Variance	3.71	7.06	5.34	8.66
Redistribution	Mean	3.44	-1.45	-0.65	0.32
	Variance	4.68	2.50	2.34	4.08
EU attitudes	Mean	-3.67	-4.23	-4.56	-4.97
	Variance	3.64	10.71	9.65	10.41
Left-right	Mean	-6.67	4.92	0.54	0.49
	Variance	1.27	9.72	12.33	23.44
EU attitudes	Mean	-3.21	-3.76	-4.30	-4.54
	Variance	4.42	10.50	10.65	11.96

Since immigration coefficients in all models vary largely, we cannot meaningfully compare the means in the first column of Table 7. Even ignoring the huge variances, the weighted mean effect size of immigration attitudes on the right wing Eurosceptic vote (1.95) is not substantially larger than the effect of immigration on other types of Eurosceptic parties. Therefore, we can conclude that *H3.2* is also falsified by the country-level analysis.

Attitudes on redistribution have no or very small effect on the likelihood of voting for right-wing Eurosceptic parties, and the smallness and non-significance of effects is quite consistent across countries. *H4.1* is also clearly falsified, if one only looks at the size of the variances in the first column of the table. Instead of redistribution attitudes, left-right ideology is the

¹⁹ For every country and independent variable logistic regression coefficient b , I am going to calculate $b \cdot 1/se(b)$. I am going to report the means and variances of these weighted coefficients for all estimated models. This method treats less accurate estimates with smaller emphasis, so the calculated means and variances also treat less fitting models with smaller weights. An example of regression models referred to in Table 7 can be found in Appendix 1

strongest explanatory variable of the vote for left-wing Eurosceptic parties. The cross-country variance of the coefficients is very small, the mean of coefficients shows a substantially large effect of left-wing attitudes on left-wing Eurosceptic party choice. Moreover, this is the only mean value effect in Table 7 that is significantly different from zero ($z=5.91$, $p<0.05$). Redistribution models have big differences in the case of left-wing Eurosceptic parties, but they are somewhat more consistent than immigration attitudes. *H4.2* is also rejected by the analysis. The average effect size of redistribution attitudes is way smaller than the average effect size of left-right attitudes on voting for left-wing Eurosceptic parties.

EU attitudes were included in all models as the main independent variable in this study. As it is reported in Table 7, average EU-level effects of EU support are negative in every single model. In the case of the effect of EU attitudes variable, models explaining left-wing Eurosceptic vote show the smallest variance, no matter which of the three control variables is included with them in the model. Just as in the case of left-right attitudes, it seems that EU attitudes also effect left-wing Eurosceptic vote similarly across the examined country-specific models.

After all, the results of the logistic regression analysis clearly confirm *H1*. The effect of EU attitudes on Eurosceptic party choice is indeed weaker in Central and Eastern Europe than in the West. There are other apparent differences in the explanatory power of left-right attitudes and EU attitudes between the older member states and the new ones. However, the analysis did not provide enough evidence supporting *H2* to accept the hypothesis with enough confidence. The effect of left-right ideology on Eurosceptic party choice is inconsistently scattered among Western European countries and newly joined member states. The only consistence in left-right effects can be found when explaining the vote for left-wing Eurosceptic parties.

3.5. Discussion

The main goal of this research was to explore the underlying reasons behind the votes cast for Eurosceptic parties in these elections. The findings of the analysis have some important implications and lessons about the forces behind the Eurosceptic vote in the 2014 elections. Firstly, the results suggest that there is a fundamental difference between CEE and Western European member states in the reasons behind the Eurosceptic vote. In line with the findings of the literature on European elections, this analysis concluded that anti-EU attitudes mostly effect voting choice in Western European countries (Hobolt 2015).

In CEE countries, attitudes towards the European Union are not important in explaining the vote for Eurosceptic parties. Although the “sleeping giant” of van der Brug and van der Eijk (2007) seems to be awakening in European elections, member states who joined the Union after 2004 are not part of this process. Eurosceptic parties in the East are largely gain their support based on their position on the left-right dimension. These EU-level differences between the West and the East might be explained by the assumption of the rational institutionalist theory about state size. As it is reported in Table 6, the countries where EU attitudes do not explain voting for Eurosceptic parties all have populations below or around 10 million.

However, among countries where EU attitudes have a significant relationship on Eurosceptic party choice, we also find several small member states (Austria, Finland, Denmark, Greece, Bulgaria). An alternative explanation of the lack of significance of EU attitudes might be that the countries with no significance of EU attitudes are all among the largest beneficiaries of the cohesion policies of the EU. Hungary, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Latvia and Slovakia were all among the 10 countries who received the most cohesion funds as a percent of their government capital investment in the 2007-2013 period (for the exact amounts, see the figure in Appendix 2). It is also possible that the openness or vulnerability of Eastern European

economies somehow causes the electorates of these countries from voting based on EU issues European elections. However, in the light of the data presented in this research, these possible explanations remain sheer speculations. Neither of these theories can be proved based on the data used in this analysis. Finding out the real reasons behind the phenomenon would require further research.

Despite neither *H3* nor *H4* were supported by the analysis of the variances of weighted regression estimates across countries, the cross-country analysis of the models still reveal some important implications about the three explanatory variables used in the models. Firstly, Table 7 shows that left-wing Eurosceptic parties are fundamentally different from others in their source of support in European elections. The analysis shows that their voting base mostly consists of left-wing voters, who primarily vote for them because they embrace left-wing ideologies, and perhaps because they share pro-redistribution views. We can also state that the source of their support is similar across member states: they mostly built on the traditional left-right dimension to attract voters in the 2014 European elections.

On the other hand, right-wing Eurosceptics show much bigger intra-group variance. Some of these parties, such as French, German or Italian right-wing Eurosceptics built their platform on anti-immigration sentiments and attracted voters based on these resentments in 2014 (see Appendix 1). Others in Central and Eastern Europe did not attract voters based on anti-immigration sentiments. The only common trait of these parties is that their voters strongly oppose redistribution in most countries. However, it is clear from the data that these parties are the leaders of the politicization of the European integration, especially in the West. In all comparisons, EU attitudes are the single and most important independent variable to explain vote for right-wing Eurosceptic vote in the West.

Centrist Eurosceptic parties are very few in number. EU attitude is also the most important variable to explain the vote for them in European elections. During the time when a new cleavage is emerging in the European Union, they have the potential to attract anti-elitist voters from both the left and the right. However, as the data shows, without aggressively attracting voters by pushing the question of the European integration and anti-immigration together as they do it in Bulgaria, Finland and Denmark, they are doomed to fail.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2014 European elections were an important stepping stone for Eurosceptic movements across the European Union. Chapter 1 presented the rational choice institutionalist framework and showed how it can be used to approach voting behavior patterns in European elections. The second half of the chapter discussed the importance of politicizing attitudes towards the European Union to create a stronger European public sphere, and the role of Eurosceptic parties in this process. After developing a model explaining Euroscepticism on the party level using several policy attitudes, Chapter 2 introduced a typology of Eurosceptic parties based on their position on the left-right scale. Chapter 3 introduced a voting behavior model to explain the Eurosceptic vote in the European Union, and analyzed the effects from a comparative cross-country perspective.

The results of the research suggest, that despite the large turmoil of the 2008 financial crisis, the political landscape of Euroscepticism has not changed much since 2007. In line with the findings of van der Brug and van der Eijk (2007), the relationship between left-right attitudes and Euroscepticism is still fundamentally different in the East and the West. Although the sleeping giant is awakening in Western Europe, member states who joined the integration during and after the 2004 enlargement round have not gone under this process. I argued that the reason for the non-politicization of the EU dimension in these countries is either their small size or their beneficiary status of EU-level redistribution policies.

This research also attempted to map EU-level differences and similarities in the reasons to vote Eurosceptic in the European Union. As the results of the analysis have shown, there are very few substantial cross-country similarities. Eurosceptic voters in Finland and Hungary in the 2014 EP elections went to the voting booth for very different reasons. However, if we narrow down the focus to the vote for left-wing Eurosceptic parties, we observe more cross-country

similarities. Voters of left-wing Eurosceptics vote mostly based on their general left-wing affiliations, not because their opinions about the EU, immigration or redistribution.

The contributions of this study to the literature on voting behavior in European elections are twofold. Firstly, unlike many other studies, this research examines both country-level models and their EU-level variance in the same framework. This comprehensive approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the forces behind the Eurosceptic vote across the EU. Secondly, by using rational choice institutionalism to explain the different salience of EU issues in European elections, this study tried to reconcile the literature about the role of EU issues in national elections and the literature on European elections. Moreover, to examine the question from another perspective, the research also reviewed the role of Eurosceptic parties and their leadership in the politicization of the EU integration.

The research also has some limitations that constrain the robustness of its results. Since the main body of the analysis is built on cross-sectional data from a single election, the results can only be discussed in the frame of the 2014 European elections. Although literature on previous elections allow us to discover and discuss trends in the data, panel surveys would be more suitable to explore changes in the effects of EU attitudes on Eurosceptic party choice. In the statistical analyses, in countries where the number of Eurosceptic voters is marginal, small variance in the dependent variable might hinder the robustness of the models. However, all these problematic cases are reported in the analysis.

The 2019 elections to the European Parliament are less than two years away. These results imply that the creation of a federal European public sphere through the politicization of Europe is still behind in new member states. Although the results show that Eurosceptic movements in new member states face boundaries in politicizing EU attitudes, it is possible that pronouncedly pro-EU movements could perform well in 2019 attracting voters from the pro-EU left and right

likewise. Further research could examine the possibility for pro-EU politicization of the EU dimension throughout Europe, especially in the East. Until the next face-off between Eurosceptics and mainstream parties in 2019, exploring patterns in the latest French national elections and the upcoming elections in Great Britain and Germany will keep scholars of European public opinion and voting behavior busy.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The effect of anti-immigration attitudes on Eurosceptic party choice (EU15)

Dependent variable: Eurosceptic party choice (dichotomous)							
	Austria	Belgium	Denmark	Finland	France	Germany	Greece
EU attitudes	-0.416*** (0.056)	-0.675*** (0.210)	-0.575*** (0.051)	-0.349*** (0.087)	-0.346*** (0.058)	-0.469*** (0.070)	-0.319*** (0.046)
Anti-immigration	-0.042 (0.040)	0.474* (0.254)	0.147*** (0.034)	0.377*** (0.077)	-0.036 (0.045)	0.175*** (0.055)	0.011 (0.040)
Age	-0.391*** (0.086)	-1.285*** (0.439)	-0.026 (0.077)	-0.406*** (0.141)	-0.376*** (0.104)	-0.17 (0.108)	-0.055 (0.076)
Education	-0.138 (0.184)	0.36 (0.798)	0.036 (0.123)	0.185 (0.288)	-0.370* (0.204)	0.378* (0.221)	-0.101 (0.144)
Gender (Female)	-0.711*** (0.255)	0.345 (0.842)	-0.437** (0.200)	-1.344*** (0.375)	-0.562** (0.273)	-1.057*** (0.359)	-0.765*** (0.216)
Constant	2.570*** (0.674)	-3.028 (3.128)	0.737 (0.607)	-1.387 (1.365)	3.152*** (0.886)	-1.232 (0.875)	0.252 (0.626)
N	554	873	716	566	427	917	780
Log Likelihood	-207.01	-24.738	-319.904	-121.157	-178.817	-154.314	-296.522
AIC	426.019	61.476	651.807	254.314	369.635	320.628	605.043

CEU eTD Collection

(Continued)

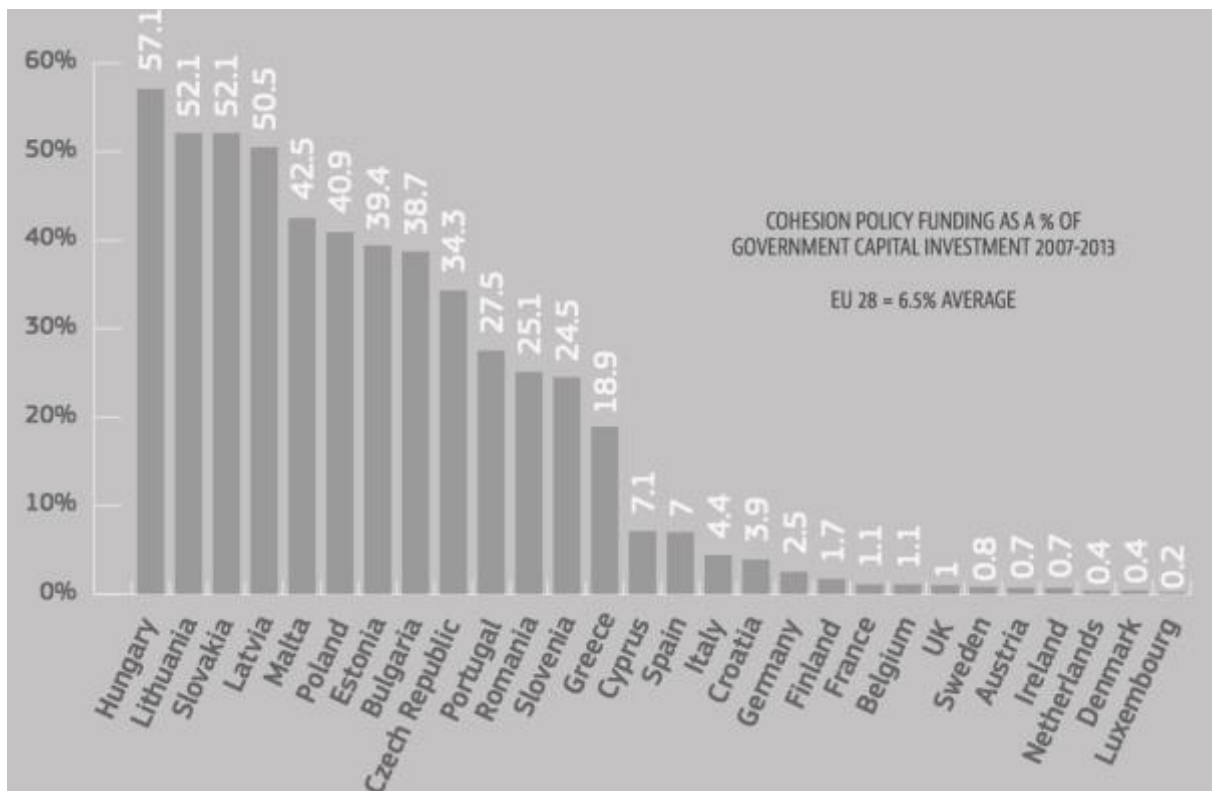
	Ireland	Italy	Netherlands	Portugal	Sweden
EU attitudes	-0.212*** (0.057)	-0.280*** (0.053)	-0.347*** (0.051)	-0.258*** (0.069)	-0.404*** (0.050)
Anti-immigration	0.055 (0.041)	0.007 (0.039)	0.056 (0.045)	-0.029 (0.054)	0.035 (0.036)
Age	-0.413*** (0.090)	-0.220*** (0.079)	-0.034 (0.083)	-0.086 (0.129)	-0.055 (0.073)
Education	-0.252 (0.197)	-0.032 (0.137)	0.028 (0.170)	-0.438* (0.262)	0.044 (0.177)
Gender (Female)	-0.411* (0.240)	-0.265 (0.205)	-0.18 (0.215)	-0.550* (0.309)	-0.635*** (0.233)
Constant	1.342* (0.755)	1.156* (0.608)	0.164 (0.762)	0.712 (0.962)	0.046 (0.658)
N	592	589	675	410	864
Log Likelihood	-233.705	-296.428	-286.689	-147.335	-295.423
AIC	479.411	604.856	585.378	306.671	602.847
Note: Logistic regression. Standard errors in parentheses				*p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01	

The effect of anti-immigration attitudes on Eurosceptic party choice (Central and Eastern Europe)

<i>Dependent variable: Eurosceptic party choice</i>						
	Bulgaria	Croatia	Czech Republic	Hungary	Latvia	Slovakia
EU attitudes	-0.520** (0.203)	0.011 (0.055)	-0.122** (0.061)	-0.088* (0.046)	-0.299* (0.175)	-0.15 (0.136)
Anti-immigration	0.268* (0.148)	-0.028 (0.040)	-0.016 (0.045)	0.024 (0.032)	0.122 (0.109)	0.062 (0.107)
Age	-0.003 (0.280)	0.009 (0.086)	0.023 (0.096)	-0.102 (0.069)	0.246 (0.251)	-0.550*** (0.191)
Education	0.221 (0.709)	-0.447** (0.201)	0.510* (0.277)	-0.147 (0.140)	0.752 (0.679)	0.299 (0.520)
Gender (Female)	-17.694 (2013.3)	-0.213 (0.244)	0.17 (0.285)	-0.073 (0.193)	0.287 (0.713)	-0.141 (0.548)
Constant	-2.698 (2.484)	0.31 (0.761)	-1.976** (0.976)	1.465** (0.612)	-6.323*** (2.442)	-0.763 (1.594)
N	370	329	316	469	354	264
Log Likelihood	-23.556	-201.2	-160.9	-314.8	-41.5	-54.8
AIC	59.1	414.4	333.8	641.6	95.1	121.5
<i>Note: Logistic regression with standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.1 **p<0.05 ***p<0.01</i>						

Appendix 2

Cohesion policy funding as a percent of government capital investment (2007-2013)



(Source: European Commission 2016)

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