"Welcome" to Europe: How media and immigration affect increasing Euroscepticism
van Klingeran, M.

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“The biggest danger to the European Union comes not from those who advocate change, but from those who renounce new thinking as heresy.”

David Cameron
General Introduction

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CHAPTER 1

The European Union was founded soon after the Second World War, with a mission to end the frequent wars between neighbors and put a stop to extreme nationalism within European countries. In 1951 and in 1957 three communities were formed, designating the main policy areas of the Union. These communities played a crucial role in uniting Europe politically and economically. Since the 1950s the European Union grew tremendously from six original member states\(^1\) to 28 today. Seven major European treaties were signed, three communities were formed and abolished again; and many new economic, security and social policies were implemented. These developments demonstrate the fast political growth of the EU. But EU’s involvement became exceedingly noticeable during the last two decades. In those years, policies were created on foreigners and security, and justice (CFSP) and home affairs (JHA). This meant that, as an addition to Europe’s predominantly economic focus (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Gabel & Whitten, 1997), the EU got involved with more social and cultural-political policies (Dinan, 1999).

As of the early 1990s, European policies increasingly affected the lives of Europe’s citizens in more tangible ways, and the EU steadily became part of national political and public agenda. The EU’s new focus did not receive full support from EU citizenry; instead, a growing number of people expressed their concerns about further European integration (see Hobolt, 2009). This marked the end of an era of permissive consensus among European citizens (Hooghe & Marks, 2008; Moravcsik, 1991), a period during which the authority of European elites was largely undisputed (Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993). In an attempt to get the public more involved and create a more open and accountable decision-making progress, a slightly bigger role for the only elected body of the EU was created: the European parliament (Luedtke, 2005). But public discontent with Europe’s political developments remained pressingly visible (and Figure 1.1 for an overview of people’s attitudes regarding the EU). This was clearly visible, for example in 2005, when during the referenda in France and the Netherlands the majority of people voted against the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe.

This trend of growing skepticism is important to understand in terms of scope and antecedents. Euroscepticism can lead to a standstill or even implosion of European integration, as successful European integration largely depends on the support from its citizens (Boomgaarden, Schuck, Elenbaas, & De Vreese, 2011). For example, the more people oppose to Europe the more difficult it will be to pass referenda that contribute to European integration. These notions have sparked a large number of studies on Euroscepticism in the past. Today, much is known about the factors that affect Euroscepticism. But some fundamental questions remain unanswered. Answering these lies at the root of this dissertation. In which I take the approach of focusing on the role of news.

\(^1\) Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.
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media, real-world developments (RWDs), and individual characteristics in relation to Euroscepticism. In the 1990s the European Union gained political authority with regard to immigration and border control. Within each of these three areas my focus is on this policy area, immigration, identity and related social-cultural elements.

The Soft Approach

Because of EU’s initial mainly economic purpose, much of the early literature discusses the influence of economic characteristics on the individual- and county level on EU-related attitudes. Although I acknowledge the importance of this literature, the emphasis in this dissertation is on the influences of social-cultural, and identity characteristics. This side of the story has increasing gained importance during the last decade (see for example Hooghe & Marks, 2005; and McLaren, 2002). Although there is already quite some evidence that an important role of socio-cultural factors exists (e.g., De Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2008), there is still much to be explored with concern to these softer factors.

Extant literature in the field argues that feelings of threat to national identity and cultural integrity are augmented by the redistribution of political power from the national to the European level (McLaren, 2002; 2007). The weakening of a nation’s political sovereignty poses a threat to the European member-states and people’s related values, such as national identity, culture and customs. As a consequence people become skeptical towards the actor that is taking over the power; in this case the European Union. Non-national developments remind people of the transfer of power which can trigger feelings of threat to people’s nation-state related identity and Euroscepticism. One of the most tangible non-national developments is immigration (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005).

Although we know that immigration rates and immigration attitudes affect Euroscepticism, we know less about the role of media regarding these immigration attitudes. Previous studies have found that negative immigration attitudes significantly increase Euroscepticism (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005). Therefore, if media coverage of immigration has an effect on immigration attitudes, which in turn affect Euroscepticism, trends in media coverage have the potential to explain the increase in Euroscepticism across time in an indirect manner. It is important to understand what causes people to feel negatively towards immigration and immigrant related policies, as these indirect pathways can help to understanding the increase in Euroscepticism across time.
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Euroscepticism

The term Euroscepticism is often used in academic literature, and beyond, to convey the standpoint of political parties (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002; Sitter, 2001) as well as public aversion towards European integration (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; 2010). It should be clear at this point that my interest is to explain public rather than party standpoints; yet, the above-mentioned description of Euroscepticism is quite generic. European aversion can be utilitarian (i.e., evaluations based on the costs and benefits) or affective (i.e., based on emotional responses as a results of ideals related to the notion of European unity) in nature (Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970); and diffuse (i.e., general evaluation of the object) or specific (i.e., evaluations related to the performance, or a specific policy outcome). Boomgaarden et al. (2011) remarked that Euroscepticism is often used for different types of EU attitudes and tap into the multi-dimensionality of the concept. They find empirical support for the existence of five dimensions: affection, performance, identity, utilitarianism and strengthening. Where the first four relate closely to the four types of support mentioned earlier, the latter dimension is new and relates to the further development of European integration.

Figure 1.1 Average Percentage of EU Citizens\(^2\) who Indicated that their Country has Benefited or not Benefited from Being a Member of the European Community (Common Market)

![Figure 1.1](image)

Note: Source Eurobarometer 1983-2011.

This dissertation addresses two of these EU attitudes dimensions, which both relate to diffuse and specific support. First, it explores the utilitarian dimension (diffuse support), by

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\(^2\) In the twelve long-term EU member states. Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK.
investigating people’s attitudes regarding the benefits of EU membership (see Figure 1.1). Second, as emphasis is on the social-cultural developments of the EU, it addresses attitudes regarding EU immigration and border control management. This relates to specific support and the performance dimension of Boomgaarden et al. (2011).

Euroscepticism will be studied in three areas. First, there are news media, which are the main source of information regarding European matters for European citizens (Eurobarometer 59, 2003; Vliegenthart et al., 2008). Therefore media are often considered to have an important influence on EU attitudes (Vliegenthart et al., 2008). Second, there are real-world developments (RWDs), which are continuous changes that occur in the context in which people live. People may notice these developments through personal experiences, interpersonal communication, or media. Utilitarian (e.g., unemployment rates, GDP) as well as social-cultural RWDs (e.g., immigration rates) were found to affect the way people think about the European Union (Eichenberg & Dalton 1993; Van Klinger, Boomgaarden, & De Vreese, 2013). This third area are individual characteristics. These are different types of objective and subjective individual traits that affect people’s perceptions towards the EU (Gabel, 1998a; Goerres, 2008; Nelsen & Guth, 2000; Rhodebeck, 1993; Wilkoszewski, 2009).

In succinct summary, the role of each of these three areas—over time and across countries—will be explored in the four empirical chapters of this dissertation. With one main purpose: to explain Euroscepticism.

Maastricht Treaty, Immigration and Border Control

A number of developments in the European Union during the 1990s legitimize this dissertation’s social-cultural focus. The Maastricht treaty (1992) is often referred to as the turning point for the EU. Five important goals were specified to further unify Europe: to improve the nations’ efficiency; to strengthen the democratic governing of the member states; to establish a security policy for the nations involved; to establish economic unification; and to establish the “community social dimension” (Europe.eu, 2013). Hence, many new competencies were conferred upon the European Community. In the years after the treaty was signed, several social policies were implemented, which directly affected European citizenry; these related to employment, the environment, culture and education, social cohesion and immigration (Van Gerven, 2005).

Of these policies, immigration comprised one of the greatest challenges for the EU. One of the first and most important steps in the process of the creation of a common immigration policy was the Schengen agreement. In June 1985 the basic principle of the Schengen agreement was signed by five of the then ten original member states. A further convention was signed at the Maastricht treaty in 1992, which took effect in March 1995. The Schengen
area represents a territory where the free movement of goods and people is guaranteed (Europe.eu, 2009). The agreement meant the opening of Europe’s inner borders. People and goods could circulate freely, as controls at internal borders of signatory countries were abandoned. However, the implementation of these regulations got off to a rocky start.

Schengen allowed for an easier trade of goods, which boosted the economy; but the abolishment of inner border security also meant free movement of people. From the moment the treaty was implemented, the responsibility regarding immigrant inflows rested largely on the shoulders of Europe’s outer borders. This was not necessarily to the contentment of the border countries. Schengen also facilitated easier cross-European employment, which triggered a stream of cheap laborers from poorer EU regions to richer EU countries. Free movement of people also made it easier for immigrants, once they had crossed the outer European border, to get in and out of other European countries, even without the legitimate paperwork.

Because a new supranational entity took over some of the nation-states responsibilities and power, this had serious consequence for European citizens. A greater number and variety of people moved and settled throughout Europe; therefore, natives were confronted with different cultures, languages and customs. These developments allegedly caused feelings of threat and triggered Euroscepticism.

Today, nearly 70 years since the establishment of the European Commission, and almost 30 years since the first basic principle of the Schengen agreement was signed, the supranational power of the EU is still under scrutiny. There is no consensus amongst European countries on how to handle immigrant inflows (Cerami, 2011; Commission of European communities, 2004), and some of the inner borders have been re-established. Meanwhile, Euroscepticism is gradually increasing among EU’s citizens. The European disconnect of EU citizens is potentially detrimental to the existence of the EU and European integration, therefore it is pivotal to understand what causes it.

Established Theories in Euroscepticism Research

Euroscepticism is on the rise, and by engaging in the quest to explain this upward trend, this dissertation accompanies a great number of scholars aiming understand the causes of Euroscepticism. As stated above, early research on Euroscepticism focused on utilitarian explanations. These are often based on rational choice theory, stating that people are more prone to take risks when they know this can lead to gain while on the other hand, they tend to avoid risk when they expect this to lead to losses (Coleman, 1973; Heath, 1978; Scott, 2000). Hence, scholars have argued that European integration causes people to divide along socio-economic lines. Because the EU is more likely to bring opportunities or economic
wealth to the higher social layers, while bringing economic threat to those in the lower social layers, European integration is economically riskier for those in the latter category. Therefore, Euroscepticism is more likely to exist among people with lower incomes. Although people’s *objective* financial situation matters, it matters even more whether people *perceive* themselves as financially fragile (Gabel & Palmer, 1997). Furthermore, not only personal wealth, but also the economic situation of the member states reflects upon the European Union, as the EU has a major impact on the economy. This is recognized by European citizens (Shepherd, 1975; Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993) and therefore mirrors in their attitudes. Thus, people in countries that go through economic instability are more likely to perceive the EU as a threat to their economy, which triggers Euroscepticism.

Later research on Euroscepticism (after the Maastricht treaty) focused more on the role of social- and identity-based explanations (e.g., McLaren, 2002). At the basis of these softer explanatory factors are two theories: the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the realistic group conflict theory (Austin & Worchel 1979; LeVine & Campbell 1972). The former states that attitudes and behavior stem from a desire to belong to a group or institution. Belonging to one or more of these groups contributes to a person’s individual identity, and has a major influence on people’s attitudes and perceptions towards other groups (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). Maintaining a positive and significant sense of this identity can be obtained by applying positive labeling strategies to one’s in-group and negative labels to the out-group (Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Coenders, 2002). Though this seems quite harmless, these labeling strategies can initiate real between-group conflicts. When two groups compete for the same resources (e.g., possessions, housing, jobs, or even values, or political power), this can result in an even more negative outgroup image (see immigration attitudes in chapter 4). Euroscepticism research expresses European citizenry as a competing social classification that challenges existing class boundaries and national identities (McLaren, 2002). Hence, those who feel a strong and exclusive connection to their nationality are more prone to perceive European integration as a threat (Hooghe & Marks, 2005). Previous research found that both economic- and identity-based theoretical notions substantially contribute to the explanation of Euroscepticism.

That only leaves to explain how immigration, immigration attitudes and national identity relate to EU attitudes. With regard to immigration attitudes and EU attitudes, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005) argue that those who are more likely to make ingroup and outgroup distinctions with regard to immigrants, are more likely to categorize people in general and show hostility towards outgroups. European integration unites people with different ethnic backgrounds, customs, norms and religions. Therefore, these are the ideal circumstances for Europeans, to categorize people into these readily available groups and distinct themselves from these groups (see minimal group experiment by Tajfel, 1981).
CHAPTER 1

Thus, those who make the distinction between ingroups and outgroup with regards to immigrants hold more negative attitudes towards immigration and are more likely to show reluctance towards further European integration (see De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005).

Furthermore, according to McLaren (2002), and as I briefly described above, perceived nation-state threat is triggered by non-national developments that confront Europeans with globalization, which translates into increased Euroscepticism. The 1990s are known as a decade of increased immigration in many European countries (Boswell, 2005); and as more immigrants enter a country, feelings of ethnic threat are triggered (Schneider, 2008a). Because of the non-national character of this development this is likely to cause negative attitudes towards the EU to emerge.

In this dissertation both the utilitarian and social-cultural theoretical views are investigated, but the focal point is on the latter. Building on previous work in the field, I investigate the role of national identity (Chapter 2), the impact of and on immigrant attitudes (Chapter 2 and 4) and immigration inflows (Chapter 2 and 3) on Euroscepticism in general, as well as attitudes regarding European immigration and border control policies (Chapter 5).

The Three Areas: Media, RWDs and Individual Characteristics

Figure 1.2 shows the conceptual model of the relationship between the three central areas. I will elaborate on these connections and their relationship with regard to the four empirical chapters of this dissertation. A first element is the relationship between media and Euroscepticism. Because European citizens receive most EU-related information through the media, media are expected to play a vital role in shaping EU attitudes. Therefore, scholarly work has focused on elite communication through news media, and their effects on EU public opinion (see for example De Vries & Edwards, 2009; Layman & Carsey, 2000; Schlesinger, 1985). This line of research often engages in understanding the discrepancy between elite and public discourse regarding the EU, and expresses the idea that: “A key to understanding why ideas about and trajectories of the future development of the EU differ between the elites and the public is the role of the media […]” Press, radio, television and the Internet serve as a link between ‘cue-givers’ at the macro level and ‘cue-recipients’ at the micro-level” (Maier & Rittberger, 2008, p. 262). Therefore, media can bring the EU issue to people’s attention and by presenting the issue in different ways (frames); they affect the public discourse regarding this issue.
In chapter 3 and 4 of this dissertation I describe a media landscape in which people are provided with and are, to varying extents, made aware of information regarding the EU (see also Jerit, Barabas, & Bolsen, 2006). As the salience of an issue or the frames within this landscape change, general public perceptions are expected to change as well. Hence, I expect that EU-related media coverage matters in the way people perceive the EU. In chapter 3, I explore the potential reciprocal relationship between media frames and Euroscepticism (see top arrow). In chapter 5, media is no longer observed as a contextual characteristic. In this chapter I explore whether small alterations in framing the EU issue can change attitudes regarding the EU.

Real-World Developments are country characteristics that develop over the course of time. These can be economic (such as GDP or unemployment rates), social-cultural (such as immigration rates), but these can also represent key events that affected the public discourse (such as the European elections, 9/11, or the London bombing). By looking at these characteristics over the course of time, I test whether variations in these characteristics affect people’s attitudes. RWDs are a part of the context in which people receive information that contributes to the formation of their attitudes regarding the EU (e.g., the economic crisis). In chapter 2, the relative impact of economic and social-cultural RWDs on Euroscepticism is compared over time. And in chapter 4 the impact of RWDs is placed alongside that of media context, while I investigate their combined influence on immigrant attitudes. Chapter 4 also briefly discusses the relationship between RWDs and media, and the consequences of the potentially limited relationship between the two areas. Yet, media often do pick up on key-events. The relationship between RWDs and media, with concern to the main issues in this dissertation, is discussed in more detail in chapter 4 and chapter 6.

Effects of media and RWDs on immigration attitudes are investigated in chapter 4, in order to explore their potential indirect influence on Euroscepticism. Other individual
characteristics are social-demographic background characteristics (e.g., gender, age, education), or ideological positions (e.g., left-right position), identification (e.g., national identity) and attitudes (i.e., immigration attitudes). These either play a vital role in explaining Euroscepticism or act as control variables.

**A Longitudinal & A Most Similar Systems Design**

A large part of the empirical contribution of this dissertation lies in its longitudinal and country comparative approach. Taken together, there are four empirical studies in this dissertation that cover a time span of eighteen years (1994 – 2011). Combining media, and real-world data with survey-data over such a time span enables me to present a unique overview of important influential factors of Euroscepticism across time. These data also allow me to test causal claims with more certainty than cross-sectional data did in the past.

In three of the four empirical studies, the influences of RWDs and media are operationalized as contextual variables that have an effect on whether an individual becomes more Eurosceptic (i.e., a macro-micro approach; see chapter 2 and 4) or on dynamics in aggregate levels of Euroscepticism (i.e., a macro-macro approach; see chapter 3). To ascertain the robustness of the proposed causal mechanism—that media affect how people perceive the European Union—the final empirical study utilizes a panel-experiment in which people are exposed to different media contents and the impact such exposure on their attitudes regarding the EU is investigated (i.e., micro-micro approach). The combination of these three approaches cross-validates the findings and reduces the chances of drawing inaccurate conclusions from correlations that were studied only on the macro level (i.e., ecological fallacy).

Another strength of this thesis is the fact that the majority of the studies are set in four similar systems: Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands, or a selection of the four. The use of a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) is “based on the premise that systems as identical as possible with regard to as many constitutive features as possible represent the optimal samples for comparative research” (Przeworski & Teune, 1970, p. 32). The idea behind this comparative method is that by selecting similar cases, most of the contextual characteristics that might be of influence otherwise are held constant. This means that only those characteristics on which the selected cases differ may generate an effect. This considerably reduces the number of operative variables, which is ideal when one has to deal with a “small N”, which is often the case in country comparative research (Lijphart, 1971).

For this dissertation I considered countries that are similar with regard to the length of their EU membership, with regard to their political system (mature democracies, multi-party systems) and to the media systems, and media news outlets. Each of the selected
countries has a public as well as private television broadcasters, they all produce quality and tabloid newspapers, which fit the democratic corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Additionally, since immigration is a very important component in this study too, the countries are compatible with regard to descent, religion and culture of the immigrant population. Because of the economy-focused utilitarian literature in the field I selected countries that are similar with regard to their economic situation (i.e., welfare status and high GDP).

Despite the clear similarities, there is one imperative difference between these countries. This regards their immigration history. Although all countries have dealt with immigration for several decades, the immigrant population grew fastest and largest in the Netherlands (Berkhout & Sudulich, 2011; Jensen, Nielsen, Brænder, Mouritsen, & Olsen, 2010). The implications of these differences are discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

**Data collection**

The study was a part of a grant from the NWO Conflict and Security program\(^3\) from which two datasets were collected. The first is a media content analysis dataset, which contains a total of 7,625 (3,528 on the EU and 4,026 on immigration) randomly selected, manually coded media newspaper articles from Flanders, Wallonia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, from January 1995 up to December 2010. The dataset consist of newspaper articles from eight newspapers: *Le Soir* for Wallonia, *de Standaard* for Flanders, *De Telegraaf* and *De Volkskrant* for the Netherlands, *Jyllands Posten* and *Politiken* for Denmark, and *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* for Sweden. The data from which the coded articles were sampled were collected with the use of four search strings that were translated from Dutch into French, Danish and Swedish with the help of native speakers (see appendix 1a for the search strings of each country). The coding was done by 15 native speakers and bi-lingual coders (see codebook in appendix 1b). These data were used in chapter 3 and 4 of this dissertation. The second dataset that was used for the final empirical chapter of this dissertation (chapter 5) is a panel-survey experiment (see appendix 1c for the questionnaire and descriptive statistics). Furthermore, I have used several waves of the Eurobarometer survey dataset for chapters 2, 4 and 5. The Eurostat and OECD website provided country-level data across time.

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CHAPTER 1

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation comprises four empirical studies, presented in the next four chapters. The chapters are composed and written as individual articles and can be read as such. Each of these chapters addresses a research question that contributes to the explanation of increasing Euroscepticism.

Chapter 2, “Going Soft or Staying Soft” combines the most important predictors in Euroscepticism research and compares their impact in the mid-1990s to that of the mid-2000s. The study answers the question: “Has the strength of soft and hard factors in explaining Euroscepticism changed over time?” Arguably, the change of scope of the EU during the 1990s slowly changed the perception of people regarding the EU, and created a different mental linkage in their minds. Over the course of time this has allegedly caused European citizens to judge the EU on the basis of social and identity performances (i.e., soft factors) more so than on economic, utilitarian performance (i.e., hard factors). Therefore, I pose the expectation that the explanatory power of Euroscepticism has moved from hard to soft factors between the two moments of observation. With the use of a multi-level model among 12 long-term EU members I scrutinize the over time impact of soft as well as hard, country- and individual-level characteristics on individual EU attitudes.

Chapter 3, “Spiral of Negativity” investigates the reciprocal influences between the valence of media messages and Euroscepticism. In this study, media are expected to have a prominent impact on how the public perceives the EU, as media are the primary source of information regarding the European Union. Meanwhile, media are increasingly competing for an audience and are therefore likely to select, and frame their content while taking the public tendency into consideration. Since media are more likely to report on negative trends (e.g., increased Euroscepticism) and people are more responsive to negative information, the reciprocal influences between the two domains are expected to form a ‘spiral of negativity’. This chapter answers the questions: Does the general valence of EU media coverage affect public attitudes towards the EU, while these public attitudes affect the general valence of EU media coverage? And does this trigger a spiral of skepticism towards the European Union? With the use of a pooled time-series model this study presents the interdependence between media and public discourse regarding the EU issue.

Chapter 4, “Real World is Not Enough” investigates whether individual attitudes regarding immigration are affected by Real-World Developments (such as immigrant population and immigration inflows), as well as media cues (such as issue salience and the valence of news messages). It is often argued that the size of the immigrant population has a direct effect on people’s immigration attitudes. Yet, when people are asked to give an estimation of the immigrant population in their country they are rarely correct. Media are the alleged cause of this discrepancy, as media coverage was found to barely represent...
immigration-related Real-World Developments (RWDs). Hence, I argue that media have an important additional influence on immigration attitudes, on top of RWDs. This study therefore answers the question “to what extent does a country’s immigrant population, media salience, and the tone of news reports about immigration affect immigration attitudes?” Meanwhile it discusses why the difference in immigration history and general salience of the issue may affect the differences in effects in each of the two countries. The effects are studied longitudinally and with the use of media, real-world and survey data in a multi-level model this study (re-)establishes the role of RWDs and media factors and their combined influence on anti-immigrant perceptions.

Chapter 5, “Two Voices, One Song” combines Euroscepticism and immigration attitudes within a single study, as it investigates perceptions towards EU’s policies on immigration and border control management. The two-wave panel-survey experiment was used here to answer the question “how do multi-frame messages affect people’s attitudes with regard to EU’s policy on immigration and border control management?” Although media often apply more than one frame to depict political issues, prior research commonly limits itself to the effects of single-frame messages. It is, however, fairly likely that people are exposed to more than one frame at the time. Hence, in this study I capture this complexity of framing effects by investigating the impact of multi-frame messages (MFMs). The focus in this study is on conflict- (when disagreement between individuals, institutions or groups is emphasized) and valence- frames (depicting or mentioning the issue in either negative or positive terms) and their effects on evaluations of EU’s performance regarding immigration and border control. While conflict framing is expected to reinforce attitudes, valence framing is likely to alter people’s attitudes. Therefore, I investigate whether the two frames cancel each other out or whether they still have these presumed effects when both frames are present in the same message.

Chapter 6, The General Conclusion provides an overview of the findings of the four empirical studies related to increasing Euroscepticism and discusses the implications thereof for society and future research.