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DOI

[10.1177/1465116514562918](https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116514562918)

Publication date

2015

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

European Union Politics

License

Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Elsas, E., & van der Brug, W. (2015). The changing relationship between left-right ideology and euroscepticism, 1973-2010. *European Union Politics*, 16(2), 194-215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116514562918>

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European Union Politics

2015, Vol. 16(2) 194–215

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DOI: 10.1177/1465116514562918

eup.sagepub.com



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Abstract

How is euroscepticism related to left–right ideology in Western European public opinion? We argue that inconsistent findings on this relationship result from the changing nature of European integration over time. Initially, EU market integration mainly sparked left-wing opposition; after Maastricht the intensification of political integration additionally produced nationalist euroscepticism among the political right. Hence, we hypothesize that the relationship between citizens' left–right ideology and euroscepticism evolved from linear to U-shaped. We test this hypothesis by means of multilevel logistic regression on 74 waves of the Eurobarometer (1973–2010) in 12 EU member states. The results demonstrate an increase of right-wing euroscepticism across countries, whereas the developments on the left are mixed. In the concluding section, we discuss the theoretical and political implications of these findings.

Keywords

Euroscepticism, European integration, leftright ideology, public opinion

Introduction

The increase in euroscepticism in Western Europe from the Maastricht Treaty onwards (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007) left its citizens strongly divided into supporters and opponents of European integration (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). In most Western European countries, the behaviour of parties and voters is

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structured to a large extent by their positions on the left–right dimension. Since the issue of European integration is increasingly politicized, it is important to know whether and how euroscepticism is connected to the political left, to the political right, or whether it is unrelated to left–right ideology among citizens. Previous studies have provided contradictory results. Some studies find left-wing citizens to be least supportive of European integration (Deflem and Pampel, 1996; Llamazares and Gramacho, 2007), while others instead find right-wing citizens to be more eurosceptical (McLaren, 2007). As a synthesis between the two, some find a curvilinear relationship between left–right and euroscepticism (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010), whereas still others find that euroscepticism is not linked to left–right positions (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004), but to a socio-cultural dimension (Kriesi et al., 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). This article provides an explanation for these contradictory findings by demonstrating that the relationship has changed over time due to changes in two factors that determine how left–right ideology is linked to euroscepticism. The first is the substantive meaning of the terms left and right, which in many European Union (EU) countries are increasingly interpreted in socio-cultural terms. The second is the changing nature of the EU itself.

The theoretical idea that the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism has changed over time has been proposed before by Marks (2004) in the context of a study of party positions. However, it has never been tested at the level of individual voters. Marks (2004: 239) referred to the object of euroscepticism as a ‘moving target’, and argued that ‘the relationship between left/right orientations and the degree of support for European integration depends on *when* one is asking the question’. In the decades following its initiation, European integration was primarily focused on trade liberalization and the creation of a single market. Consequently, opposition to the European project came mainly from political parties that perceived European integration as a threat to welfare state provisions. From the 1990s onwards, particularly after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (1992), Europe dramatically increased its supranational powers, in economic as well as non-economic policy areas. A new form of opposition to European integration arose in defence of national interests, sovereignty, and identity. Where the first form of economically protectionist, anti-liberal euroscepticism fits with a left-wing discourse, the latter, nationalist euroscepticism is more likely to appear on the right. Thus, as the nature of the EU changes, the relationship between EU attitudes and left–right should change too. This transformation is reinforced by a second process, which is the changing meaning of left–right. In addition to its original socio-economic meaning, left–right in the past decades has gained a socio-cultural interpretation (De Vries et al., 2013; Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990; Knutsen, 1995). On a socio-economic left–right dimension, those on the left have most reason for euroscepticism; to the extent that left–right assumes a socio-cultural meaning, euroscepticism is more likely to become attached to the right. Although left–right as well as EU attitudes have increasingly become linked to socio-cultural issues such as immigration, socio-economic issues continue to be relevant. Equal income distribution and welfare state protection are still likely to be associated with the left, while economic liberalism is

associated with the right. Likewise, the EU remains an economic union, which aims at market integration. Therefore, we hypothesize that the relationship between citizens' left–right ideology and euroscepticism has evolved from linear (with left-wing citizens being more eurosceptical) to U-shaped (with most euroscepticism residing on both ends of the left–right spectrum).

At the level of political parties, there is evidence for such a development. In the 1980s, expert surveys point to social-democratic and radical left-wing parties as the strongest opponents to European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Ray, 1999). From the late 1990s onwards, there is overwhelming evidence of a U-shaped relationship, with most euroscepticism found on the left and right extremes (Aspinwall, 2002; Halikiopoulou et al., 2012; Hix, 1999; Hooghe et al., 2002; Taggart, 1998). To our knowledge, no research has yet investigated whether the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism has developed in a similar way in *public opinion*. The evidence provided by the aforementioned studies on the relationship in public opinion is rather patchy. Most studies assess the relationship at one point in time or over short time periods and most studies do not allow for the possibility that the relationship is curvilinear.¹ In order to assess whether the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism changed from linear to curvilinear, we need to study it over a sufficiently large time span and we need to look beyond linear relationships. Our paper does exactly that, by analysing 74 Eurobarometer (EB) waves that consistently measure euroscepticism and left–right position among the citizens of 12 EU member states from 1973 to 2010.

The analyses provide support for the expected development. Testing for linear and curvilinear effects over the whole period, we find a tendency of euroscepticism to shift from a primarily left-wing attitude to an attitude found on both left–right extremes. Despite important country differences, there is a general increase in right-wing euroscepticism. The Treaty of Maastricht constitutes a turning point in this development.

The changing nature of European integration

The process of European integration was initiated by political elites in the 1950s to guarantee peace and promote economic prosperity. In the intergovernmental negotiations in the decades to follow, the latter objective figured most prominently. The focus on market integration and economic growth in the pre-Maastricht era was 'music to the ears of those on the right' (Marks, 2004: 239). On the other hand, social-democratic and radical left-wing parties were sceptical towards European integration, because its allegedly neoliberal objectives constituted a threat to national welfare provisions (Budge et al., 1987; Ray, 1999). Such *anti-liberal* euroscepticism, however, did not put a hold on the European project. Despite left-wing parties' opposition, the public mood on European integration in this period is generally described as a *permissive consensus* that gave political elites leeway to pursue further European integration (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970).

With the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, the character of European integration changed fundamentally (Fuchs, 2011).² First, the Maastricht Treaty

strongly intensified economic integration by establishing the Economic and Monetary Union of the EU (EMU), which instituted the European Central Bank and formalized steps towards a common currency. Second, 'Maastricht' took political integration a great step further, shifting attention 'from creating a market to regulating it' (Marks, 2004: 258). EU competencies were extended to non-economic policy areas (including foreign and defence policy), qualified majority voting in the European Council was extended beyond single-market policies, and the European Commission and Parliament were empowered. The European Community was renamed into the EU, and citizens of the Union were granted official EU citizenship supplementary to their national citizenship. As such, Maastricht marked a transformation of the EU from an intergovernmental project to a multi-level polity.

The transformation did not go unnoticed among the publics of the member states. The Maastricht Treaty spurred ratification debates in several countries and greatly increased media attention for European integration (Koopmans and Statham, 2010). More than ever before in the history of European integration, the public voiced serious resistance. Danish citizens opposed the treaty by referendum, only accepting it in adapted format, while the French electorate accepted it by the smallest majority. From Maastricht onwards, public euroscepticism was on the rise (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007).

Where did this 'post-Maastricht blues' (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007) come from? Of course, the intensification of economic integration through EMU reinforced left-wing opposition to the EU. More fundamentally, however, Maastricht changed the nature of the EU from an economic project to a political union, particularly in public perception. Citizens came to perceive a tension between the developing supranational community and their persistent identification with the nation-state (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). The EU was seen as a threat to national sovereignty and increasingly also to national identity (McLaren, 2006). The Euro came to symbolize the impact of Europe on daily life in the member states, reifying Europe as a political community (Risse, 2003). In reaction to these developments, a *nationalist* euroscepticism arose, not pitted against the neoliberal character of the EU, but against its perceived threat to national interests, sovereignty, and identity. Important developments in the new millennium, such as the introduction of the Euro on 1 January 2002 in 12 member states, the Eastern enlargement of 2004 (followed by increased immigration from new to old member states), and the attempted introduction of the EU Constitution (voted down in the 2005 Dutch and French referendums) clearly tie into concerns with national sovereignty and identity. At the same time, the EU continues to promote policies aimed at market integration (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007).

As the nature of the European project is becoming more diverse, so are the reasons to oppose it. Studies that analyse EU attitudes in a more detailed way distinguish multiple dimensions of euroscepticism, as voters and parties can evaluate different aspects of the EU independently (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010; Sørensen, 2008). In this article, the main focus is on general

EU support and opposition as an overarching attitude based on any of these different concerns. The fact that different citizens can have different (e.g. anti-liberal and nationalist) concerns regarding European integration is a crucial step in our theoretical framework. Before explaining this in more detail, we first turn to the changing meaning of left–right, which provides additional basis for the hypotheses.

The changing meaning of left–right

Left–right is the core dimension structuring political conflict in West European countries (Hix, 1999; Van der Eijk et al., 2005). As a short cut in political communication, it is used by political actors, voters, scholars, and the media alike to reduce political complexity to simple, intuitive terms. The meaning of left–right is not fixed, but is ‘politically constructed [...] through the everyday processes of political cooperation and conflict’ (Van der Eijk et al., 2005: 182). Political parties approach new political issues from the perspective of the ideological principles on which they are based. As parties wish to preserve ideological consistency, new issues tend to become integrated in the existent left–right dimension. As a result, left–right functions as a ‘super-issue’ that summarizes the various issue positions taken by opposite political sides (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976: 244).

Though conceptualized by Downs (1957) as a socio-economic dimension, left–right semantics have absorbed diverse issues, such as environmentalism and gender equality in the 1970s and 1980s (Evans, 1993; Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990). More recently, with the increased salience of the socio-cultural dimension, left–right identification grew related to issues such as immigration, multiculturalism, and crime (De Vries et al., 2013). Rather than replacing the original socio-economic meaning, this process led to a pluralization of the meaning of left–right (Knutson, 1995). In most Western European countries, left–right has both a socio-economic and a socio-cultural component (Kitschelt, 2004). As party competition remains predominantly structured by a single dimension, left-wing parties are generally pro-state and multiculturalist, whereas right-wing parties tend to combine pro-market and monoculturalist positions (Lefkofridi et al., 2014; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). At the voter level, attitudes are less constrained. Still, both economic and socio-cultural issues are correlated with left–right, so that support for redistribution and multiculturalism are left-wing attitudes, while economic liberalism and monoculturalism are associated with the right. In case a citizen holds conflicting issue positions in terms of left–right, it is likely that left–right identification is adapted based on the dimension that is most salient to the citizen (Weber and Saris, 2014). Left–right thus remains meaningful, even if there is a pluralization of issues it is associated with.

Left–right ideology and euroscepticism

The issue of European integration, multidimensional in itself, does not fit into a one-dimensional left–right scheme. Instead, at the party level a U-shaped

relationship has been found, with parties on the left and right extremes taking the most eurosceptical positions (Aspinwall, 2002; Halikiopoulou et al., 2012; Hix, 1999; Hooghe et al., 2002; Taggart, 1998). In part, this is due to a strategic dynamic. European integration as a political issue gives radical parties an opportunity to distinguish themselves from the established parties, which often attached their names to the European project (Taggart, 1998). Ideological reasons, however, also explain why euroscepticism is apt to take root on both the left and right extremes. Precisely because both EU attitudes and left–right can be related to socio-economic as well as socio-cultural issues, their relationship is ambivalent (Deflem and Pampel, 1996; Marks and Wilson, 2000). Right-wing parties generally support the EU's ambitions in the economic realm, such as liberalizing international trade and creating a single market. At the same time, on the basis of socio-cultural attitudes, the right opposes EU integration in two respects: where it collides with the national interests and where it leads to a loss of national identity or traditions. A third facet, the loss of national sovereignty, can be linked to both interest- and identity-based critiques. The common denominator of euroscepticism on the right is that it puts the national above the international. Therefore, we refer to this domain of attitudes as *nationalist euroscepticism*.

For left-wing parties, there are similar reasons for ambivalence towards Europe. On the one hand, the political left has always promoted international solidarity. The rapid economic growth and democratization of Greece, Portugal, and Spain after decades of dictatorship are clearly a major success of the EU and are obviously supported by the left. Other positive implications of integration include the possibility for EU-wide environmental policies, which appeals mostly to moderate (green) new left currents (Hooghe et al., 2002). On the other hand, market integration threatens national welfare states by increasing international competition and decreasing the regulatory powers of national governments, and thus conflicts with one of the core achievements of the left. Any 'positive integration' in the form of market regulation and social policy at the European level still lags behind compared to the vast 'negative integration' that has characterized European integration for decades (Scharpf, 1996). At best, such EU-level regulated capitalism appeals to the moderate, social-democratic left, while in the eyes of the radical left, 'the EU is biased beyond repair' (Hooghe et al., 2002: 974). We refer to such economically protectionist EU opposition as *anti-liberal euroscepticism*, distinguishing it from the *nationalist euroscepticism* that we expect to find on the right. To be sure, such anti-liberal euroscepticism can be seen as a form of nationalism as well. As Halikiopoulou et al. (2012) have argued, nationalism is an intrinsic part of the ideologies of radical left-wing parties as much as for radical right-wing parties. However, nationalism can be based on different premises. On the left, a 'civic nationalism' is more common, which aims to protect the citizens of the nation-state from economic harm due to foreign interference, and sees the EU as 'a vehicle for elite and great power domination at the expense of the popular classes' (Halikiopoulou et al., 2012: 512). Nationalism on the right is predominantly rooted in ethno-nationalist concerns, such as protecting the homogeneous national

community from increased international mobility and cultural diversity. Hence, even if the left and the right are both nationalistic, we would still expect the left to oppose different aspects of the EU than the right.³

This is why we expect the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism to have changed over time. Initially European integration manifested itself in the economic domain, and opposition came mainly from left-wing parties (Ray, 2003). Only later, and particularly after the Treaty of Maastricht, the increasingly supranational character of the EU gave right-wing populist parties a reason to mobilize euroscepticism on a socio-cultural platform (Mudde, 2007). This changed euroscepticism from being a position found mainly on the left to a position shared by radical left-wing and radical right-wing parties, resulting in the well-known U-curve. The two processes described earlier – the changing meaning of left–right and changes in the character of the EU – lead us to expect that attitudes of voters have undergone similar processes of change as party positions. In the following section, we explicate in more detail our expectations with regard to the changing relationship between left–right and euroscepticism at the voter level.

Hypotheses

This article tests the expectation that among voters, euroscepticism has turned from a left-wing attitude to an attitude found at both ends of the left–right spectrum. This hypothesis builds on an important assumption: that left-wing and right-wing citizens object to different aspects of European integration. At the party level, we know that anti-liberal euroscepticism has been voiced by (radical) left-wing parties, whereas nationalist euroscepticism has been taken up by (radical) right-wing parties particularly since Maastricht (Hooghe et al., 2002; Mudde, 2007). Studies in public opinion since Converse (1964) show that attitudes of voters are not as tightly structured as positions of parties or elites. Thus, while for left- and right-wing parties opposition to European integration falls apart into anti-liberal and nationalist objections, these attitudes have been found to correlate among voters (Bornschieer, 2011). However, while voters may not distinguish their objections to Europe as clearly as parties, we think that left–right positions of voters are related to deep-rooted ideas about society. Therefore, we expect that voters' left–right identification will be related to the weight they attach to anti-liberal and nationalist objections to the EU, albeit not as clearly as among parties. The somewhat scattered empirical evidence that already exists supports this: left-wing citizens are more 'instrumentally' eurosceptical than right-wing citizens, whereas the relationship is inverted for identity-based euroscepticism (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010). In France, the euroscepticism of radical left (PCF) and radical right (FN) voters is explained by distinct – respectively, economic and ethnocentric – attitudes (Evans, 2000). Since this proposition is fundamental to our further theoretical expectations, we start the empirical analysis by directly testing it for the countries under study.

H1a: Euroscepticism among left-wing citizens is driven more by socio-economic considerations than euroscepticism among right-wing citizens.

H1b: Euroscepticism among right-wing citizens is driven more by concerns about national interests, identity, and sovereignty than euroscepticism among left-wing citizens.

With regard to the relation between the overarching left–right dimension and euroscepticism at the voter level, findings are diverse. Studies based on data from the 1980s and early 1990s find citizens with a left-wing orientation to be more eurosceptical (Alvarez, 2002; Deflem and Pampel, 1996). Inglehart et al. (1987), who look at partisanship in three categories (left, right, and centre), also find more scepticism on the left in most countries in the period 1973–1986, while finding no indications for a curvilinear relationship. Results from the late 1990s onwards are less unequivocal. Some studies find only small correlations (Gabel, 2000) or no relationship at all (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004), whereas other studies identify a (growing) right-wing euroscepticism. In 2002, euroscepticism was higher among right-wing citizens in the EU-15 (McLaren, 2007). A UK study (Evans, 1998) also indicates that euroscepticism has increased on the right. While before 1992 supporters of EC membership were more likely to vote Conservative than Labour, after 1997 this effect was fully inverted, as EU supporters were instead *less likely* to vote Conservative than Labour. With the exception of Inglehart et al. (1987) and Van der Eijk and Franklin (2004), none of these studies pay attention to curvilinear relationships, which might lead to invalid conclusions. Indeed, a longitudinal study from 1994 to 2004 that does include a curvilinear term finds that euroscepticism exists on both the left and right extremes, creating a U-shaped relationship (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010: 802).

The findings of these studies may vary because they employ different operationalizations and modelling strategies, and include different sets of countries. We expect, however, that the principal cause of the variation in the results lies in the timing of the different studies. Given that different concerns lead to euroscepticism on the left and the right, we expect that euroscepticism was initially (in the 1970s and 1980s) stronger among left-wing citizens fearing the economic consequences of European integration, only to become connected to the right when the political and cultural implications of integration became apparent. This expectation is reinforced by the fact that left–right over the past decades has gained a more cultural interpretation, which makes it even more likely that nationalist euroscepticism over time has become linked to left–right (De Vries et al., 2013; Knutsen, 1995). To be sure, the economic meaning of left–right continues to be relevant as well, and European integration has not become less economically consequential. Therefore, we do not expect that right-wing euroscepticism has come to replace left-wing euroscepticism, but rather that the two have come to coexist.

As the signing of the Maastricht Treaty transformed the EU into a multi-level polity, we expect it to be a turning point in the relationship between left–right and

euroscepticism. Maastricht made citizens aware of the implications of the EU for national interests, sovereignty, and identity, thereby giving right-wing citizens a reason to become eurosceptical. The relationship between left–right and euroscepticism should thus crucially differ between the period before and after Maastricht.

H2: In the period before the Maastricht Treaty (1973–1991), the relationship between left–right ideology and euroscepticism is linear, with left-wing citizens being more eurosceptical.

H3: In the period after the Maastricht Treaty (1992–2010), the relationship between left–right ideology and euroscepticism is curvilinear, with citizens from the far-right and far-left being most eurosceptical.

The hypotheses apply to citizens of all member states whose membership in the EU dates back to before Maastricht, as we expect the changing nature of European integration and the changing meaning of left–right to touch upon these member states in a similar way. To be sure, this does not mean that we expect perfectly identical dynamics in all countries. Contextual factors such as the welfare state type (Brinegar et al., 2004), the EU budget balance (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010), the party system, and in particular the presence of radical eurosceptical parties (Bornschieer, 2011; De Vries and Edwards, 2009) have all been shown to influence the way euroscepticism is ideologically mobilized. While the main analysis focuses on the common trend expected in all countries, we will also pay attention to country-specific deviations.

We formulate the hypotheses in terms of a relationship rather than an effect, since this paper principally addresses changes in how left–right and euroscepticism are related, and does not aim to disentangle the complex causality connecting the two. Theoretically, we expect a reciprocal causal relationship between left–right and euroscepticism, with political parties in an intermediate role. On the one hand, citizens respond to new issues by taking cues from the political elites to which they feel ideologically close (Zaller, 1992), and thus adopt a position on the new issue consistent with their left–right position. Indeed, voters have been found to become more eurosceptical in the presence of eurosceptical party cues from their ideological side (De Vries and Edwards, 2009). On the other hand, voters may adapt their left–right identification on the basis of their position on a new issue, when this position is articulated by parties standing elsewhere on the left–right continuum than themselves (De Vries et al., 2013; Stimson et al., 2012).

Data and methods

H1a and *H1b* are tested on data from the European Values Study 2008, selecting the 12 countries that joined the EU before Maastricht.⁴ This survey contains questions on the different fears respondents might have in relation to the EU. These ‘EU-fears’ are measured by asking respondents to indicate to what extent they fear different

implications of the building of the EU on a 10-point-scale ranging from 'Not afraid at all' (1) to 'Very much afraid' (10). The implications for which this is asked are 'The loss of social security', 'The loss of national identity', 'Our country paying more and more to the European Union', 'A loss of power in the world for [country]', and 'The loss of jobs in [country]'. We expect that left-wing citizens will be relatively more concerned with the economic implications – social security and the loss of jobs – whereas the fears with a nationalist implication – the loss of national identity, the fact that the own country has to pay, and the loss of power of their country – will be higher among right-wing citizens. These expectations are tested by OLS regressions of each of the EU fears on left–right self-placement. As the dependent variable we use relative fears, taking the distance of each fear to the respondent's mean on all fears. We thus analyse whether the *relative* importance attached to each fear differs between left- and right-wing citizens, accounting for differences in the overall degree to which right-wing and left-wing citizens fear the EU. The independent variables are dummies for left-wing (1–3) and right-wing (8–10) citizens, with the centre as the reference category. As such, we assess to what extent citizens from the left and right emphasize different fears, in line with their ideological background. To account for cross-national variation, we include country fixed effects.

In order to test *H2* and *H3*, which predict a change in the relationship between left–right ideology and euroscepticism around the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, we require a longitudinal dataset starting well before this point, which includes consistent measures of the key variables over time. The cumulative Mannheim Eurobarometer trend file 1970–2002 (Schmitt and Scholz, 2005), which we merged with the more recent EB waves until 2010, fulfils these requirements. Identical questions on euroscepticism and left–right ideology are included in 74 (biannual) waves from 1973 to 2010, covering a time span far longer than any of the existent studies.⁵ Again, we include only the 12 oldest member states. Table 1 gives an overview of the sample size and the time span of the 12 countries.

We measure euroscepticism by respondents' opinion on their country's membership in the EU: 'Generally speaking, do you think your country's membership in the European Union is (1) a good thing, (2) a bad thing, (3) neither good nor bad?'. This question taps a general euroscepticism, not a priori defined by specific motivations. Though a crude measure, it is the only item that has been consistently measured over such a long time span (since the 1970s), and thus enables an analysis of change over decades. Following Taggart and Szczesniak's (2004) distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' euroscepticism, responding that EU membership is a 'bad thing' clearly represents hard euroscepticism, that is, an outright rejection of the European project. Soft eurosceptics hold more nuanced objections to the EU, which may translate into a neutral response to this specific question. Since we are interested in euroscepticism in general, and not just its most radical form, we combine the neutral and negative response categories. On the resulting dichotomous variable, a score of 0 represents a positive attitude towards EU membership, whereas a score of 1 represents negative and neutral attitudes. This has the additional advantage of creating a more equally distributed dependent variable, with

Table 1. Overview of sample size and time frame per country.

Country	N	Years
France	63,244	1973, 1976–2010
Belgium	57,287	1973, 1976–2010
Netherlands	68,491	1973, 1976–2010
Germany ^a	93,852	1973, 1976–2010
Italy	55,407	1973, 1976–2010
Luxembourg	24,631	1973, 1976–2010
Denmark	67,311	1973, 1976–2010
Ireland	56,759	1973, 1976–2010
Great Britain	64,334	1973, 1976–2010
Greece	48,944	1980–2010
Spain	38,726	1985–2010
Portugal	37,518	1985–2010
Total	676,504	

^aIncluding East Germany from 1990 onwards.

the proportion of eurosceptics over the full period ranging from .10 in the Netherlands in 1991 to .73 in Great Britain in 1980.⁶

Left–right ideology is measured by left–right self-placement on a 10-point scale through the following question: ‘In political matters people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right’. How would you place your views on this scale?’ The advantage of self-placement is that it does not impose a specific meaning of left–right, which fits the conceptualization of left–right as a ‘super-issue’. The left–right scale is centred around 0, so that it ranges from –4.5 (left) to 4.5 (right). The left–right squared term then ranges from 0.25 to 20.25, with a higher score representing self-placement towards either of the extremes of the scale.

As EB data are collected twice a year, time is measured in semesters, ranging from 0 (first semester of 1973) to 74 (first semester of 2010). To assess how the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism changes over time, we distinguish four time periods of roughly the same length. These periods are 1973–1982, 1983–1991, 1992–2000, and 2001–2010. Dummy variables are included for the latter three periods. This facilitates interpretation and allows us to test whether the relationship significantly changes around Maastricht. An alternative way to test our expectations is to model over-time changes continuously and include one dummy that assesses the effect of Maastricht (with a score of 1 from 1992 onwards). This modelling strategy yields similar results, which are included in the online appendix. Finally, control variables are included on the individual level for age (measured in years) and gender (measured by a dummy scoring males as 1).

Although we are only interested in the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism and not in the effect of one onto the other, we decided to model the

relationship as an effect of left–right ideology on euroscepticism. Such a model enables us to test for the curvilinear relationship that we expect to find after Maastricht, by including a squared left–right dimension. This would not be possible when modelling the relationship either through correlations or in the opposite causal direction.

The cumulative EB dataset has a cross-nested structure, with individuals nested in countries and time points. To account for the clustering in time ($N=74$), we estimate a logistic random intercept model nesting individuals in time points. We cannot apply this strategy to deal with between-country variation due to the low number of countries ($N=12$), but instead include country fixed effects.⁷ Since we expect the effect of left–right to vary over time points, we include random slopes for left–right and left–right squared. Cross-level interactions of the time period dummies with left–right and left–right squared then show whether and when the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism significantly changes. To facilitate interpretation, we calculate predicted probabilities of being eurosceptical for all possible positions on the left–right scale and present these graphically for each time period. These graphs additionally allow us to inspect the substantive effect sizes.

To test for country-specific deviations from the general trend, the modelling strategy is repeated for each country separately. The results of these analyses are discussed in the next section and included in the online appendix.

Results

We first assess to what extent left-wing and right-wing citizens hold distinct objections to the EU. The mean score of left-wing citizens on all fears is 6 (on a 1–10 scale), while for right-wing citizens this is 6.5.⁸ It therefore makes sense to assess the relative strength of each of the fears compared to their mean fear. Figure 1 shows the distances of each fear to the mean fear for citizens from the left, right, and centre. These results show that, first, all citizens worry more about job loss and the payments made by their own country to the EU than about the loss of sovereignty and national identity. However, there are differences between left-wing and right-wing citizens, which follow a clear pattern. Table 2 shows the effects of left–right self-placement on how different EU-related fears compare to the mean fear. Fear of the loss of social security is relatively a very strong fear for left-wing citizens ($b = .33$), whereas this fear is low among right-wing citizens ($b = -.29$), both compared to citizens in the centre. Fears of the loss of power, the own country paying too much, and (particularly) the loss of national identity are all stronger on the right. The fear of job loss is equally high (in relative terms) for all citizens. A possible explanation is that the fear of unemployment is as much a matter of concern for left-wing as for right-wing parties, whereas the other fears are more clearly related to different ideological complexions. All in all, the pattern demonstrated by these results supports *H1a* and *H1b*: left-wing and right-wing eurosceptics emphasize different (respectively, economic and political–cultural) aspects of the EU.

We now turn to the analysis of the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism over time. The regression results are presented in Table 3 and visualized

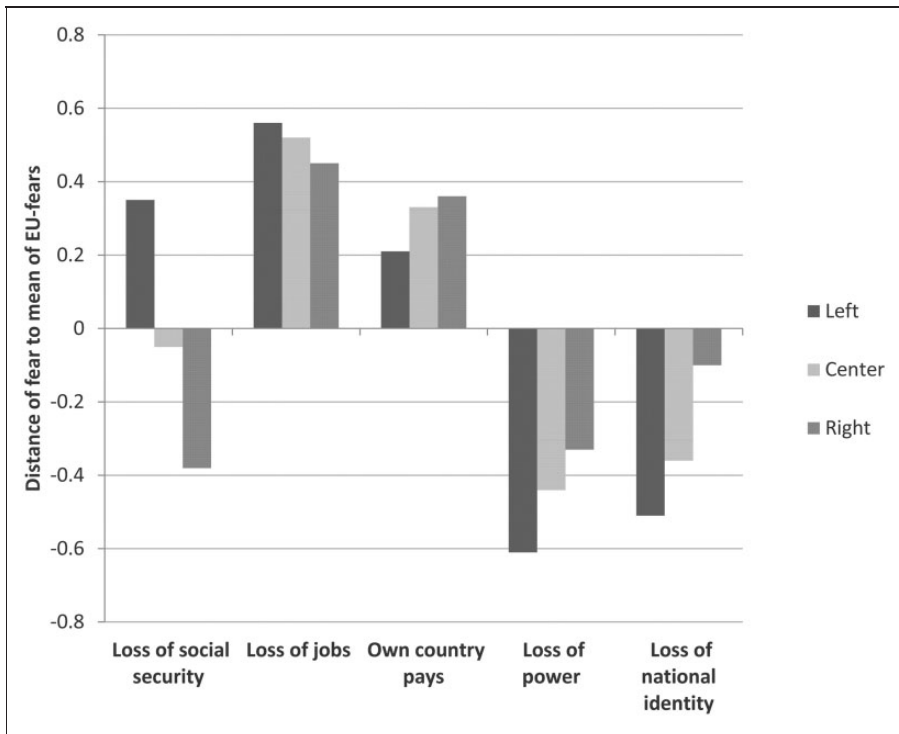


Figure 1. Relative fears with regard to EU by left right self-placement.
Source: European Values Study 2008.

Table 2. Effect of left–right placement on relative fears related to EU.

	Loss of social security	Loss of jobs	Own country pays	Loss of power	Loss of national identity
<i>Left–right ideology (ref: centre)</i>					
Left	.33 (.04)	.04 (.04)	–.08 (.03)	–.15 (.03)	–.14 (.04)
Right	–.29 (.04)	–.03 (.03)	.08 (.04)	.06 (.04)	.19 (.04)
N	14,454				

Note: Relative fear is distance of specific fear to the mean fear.
Country fixed effects not displayed. Bold entries are significant at $p < .05$.

by Figure 2. The main effects of left–right and left–right squared show that in the first period (1973–1982, the reference category), the left is significantly more euro-sceptical than the right ($b = -.111$). As Figure 2 shows, euro-scepticism continuously decreases from left to right: the far-left (1) has a likelihood of .55 of being euro-sceptical, against .31 for the far-right (10). The curvilinear effect is also

Table 3. Left–right and euroscepticism in 12 EU member states (1973–2010).

	Log odds (SE)
Constant	–.396 (.059)
Age	.005 (.000)
Male	–.271 (.005)
Left–right	–.111 (.005)
Left–right ²	.009 (.001)
Time period (ref = 1973–1982)	
1983–1991	–.368 (.076)
1992–2000	–.107 (.076)
2001–2010	–.117 (.076)
Left–right*1983–1991	.004 (.006)
Left–right*1992–2000	.077 (.006)
Left–right*2001–2010	.103 (.006)
Left–right ² *1983–1991	–.000 (.002)
Left–right ² *1992–2000	.004 (.002)
Left–right ² *2001–2010	.007 (.002)
Variance (level 2: time)	.049 (.008)
Variance (slope: left–right)	.000 (.000)
Variance (slope: left–right ²)	.000 (.000)
N	676,504

Note: Dependent variable: EU membership good (0) or bad/indifferent (1). Country fixed effects not displayed. Bold entries are significant at $p < .05$.

significant ($b = .009$), but substantively too small to make the relationship U-shaped. It does however tone down the effect on the right side of the scale. From the centre-right (6) to the far-right, the predicted probability decreases with .06. In comparison, from the centre-left (5) to the far-left, the likelihood of euroscepticism increases with .15.

In the subsequent period, from 1983 to 1991, the insignificant cross-level interactions indicate that the effect of left–right on euroscepticism has not changed compared to the first period. Indeed, the shape of the relationship looks largely identical. The overall level of euroscepticism has declined compared to the first period, but this decline is similar for all left–right positions. The chance of being eurosceptical now ranges from .45 on the left to .24 on the right extreme.

A change in the shape of the relationship becomes visible in the period 1992–2000. The cross-level interactions of this period are significant and positive for both left–right ($b = .077$) and left–right squared ($b = .004$). Compared to the preceding period, for the far-right these effects translate into a substantive increase from

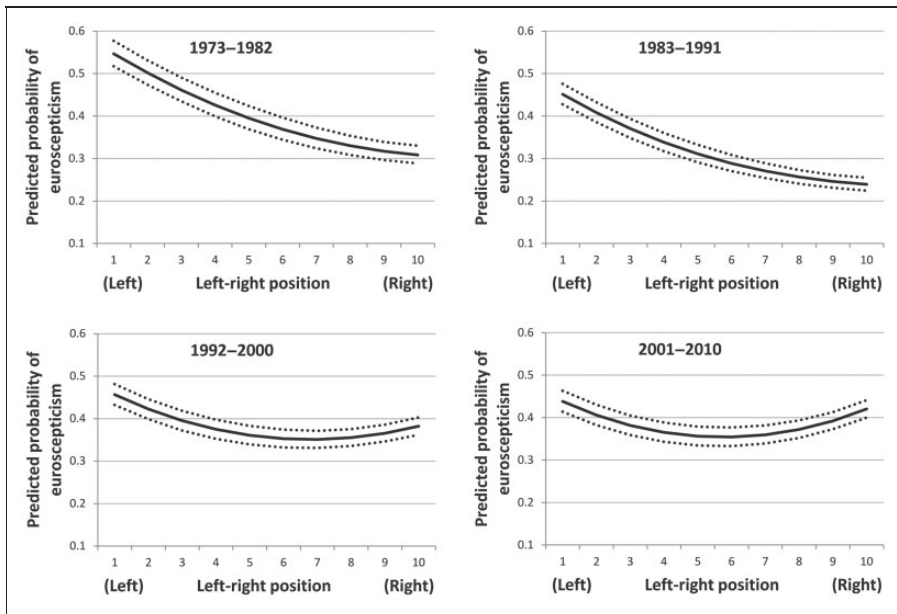


Figure 2. Predicted probability of euroscepticism by left–right position in 12 EU member states (1973–2010).

Source: Eurobarometer 1973–2010.

.24 to .38 in the predicted probability of being eurosceptical, while the likelihood for the far-left remains stable with .46. As a result, euroscepticism no longer continuously decreases from left to right, but remains similar (or even increases somewhat) from the centre to the right. The developments around Maastricht thus seem to dissipate the relative euro-enthusiasm of the right.

In the period from 2001 to 2010, the relationship is U-shaped. Right-wing euroscepticism continues to increase ($b = .103$), also compared to the preceding period. Thus, the left and the right have become almost equally eurosceptical, with a respective likelihood of .44 and .42. The relationship approaches symmetry, as the lowest likelihood of .35 is found for the centre-right (6 on the left–right scale).

Both *H2* and *H3* are supported. In line with *H2*, in the two periods before Maastricht the far-left and the far-right are each other's opposites in their amount of euroscepticism. The relationship is not perfectly linear, but euroscepticism does continuously decline from left to right. In line with *H3*, the sharp increase of right-wing euroscepticism after Maastricht creates a U-shaped relationship. Though the U only takes full shape in the final period, the increase of right-wing euroscepticism sets in directly after Maastricht, which appears to constitute a crucial turning point.

We repeated the analyses for each country separately (see the online appendix). The results corroborate *H2*, as in almost all countries left-wing voters are most

euro-sceptical in the 1970s and early 1980s. In most countries the curvilinear term is in this period relatively weak, but statistically significant. This is generally in line with the aggregate finding that the differences in euro-scepticism are smaller on the right than on the left. Only in Italy is the relationship U-shaped in the first period (with both left–right extremes more euro-sceptical than the centre), but euro-scepticism is still highest on the left. The two real exceptions in the first period are Germany, where left–right has no effect on euro-scepticism, and Spain, where, inversely, the right starts out as more euro-sceptical. In Germany, the legacy of World War II created a political culture in which opposition to European integration was almost out of the question (Diez Medrano, 2003). In Spain, early euro-enthusiasm was motivated by the desire to break with the isolated past under Franco's (right-wing) dictatorship (Diez Medrano, 2003), which might explain why euro-scepticism was low on the left. Indeed, the left-wing González government led the accession to the EC in 1986, while the only opposition came from the neo-fascist right (Benedetto and Quaglia, 2007: 492–493). Outside of these two countries with rather idiosyncratic ideological contexts, euro-scepticism is evidently a left-wing attitude in the first period.

Over time, the countries show a common trend of increasing euro-scepticism on the right relative to the left. Spain, again, is the exception, as euro-scepticism instead increases on the left, which indicates a normalization of the left's position after its initial enthusiasm created by accession itself. In line with our expectations, the most pronounced increase in right-wing euro-scepticism comes with Maastricht: as Tables B1 and B2 in the online appendix show, the interaction between left–right and the post-Maastricht period (1992–2000) is positive and significant compared to the previous periods in most countries. In France, Italy, and Great Britain, where right-wing euro-scepticism already starts to increase in 1983–1991, Maastricht significantly reinforces this development. In the period 2001–2010, right-wing euro-scepticism remains significantly higher than before Maastricht, and in most countries it increases compared to the previous period.

Despite the common increase in right-wing euro-scepticism, the U-shape predicted by *H3* does not arise in all countries. The U only takes shape in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and to some extent Denmark (though in Belgium euro-scepticism eventually tilts to the right). In Luxembourg, Ireland, Greece, and Portugal, the long-term trend hints at the development towards a U, which is not yet significant. In Spain a U-shape also arises, despite the different dynamics. However, Great Britain and Italy, and to some extent Germany, follow a different pattern: in these countries, euro-scepticism has recently become more associated with the right than with the left.

Thus, the increase of public euro-scepticism on the right is a common tendency, but a U-curve does not arise in all countries. This has to do with variations in the developments not only at the right but also at the left side of the spectrum. In some countries, the left remains by far the most sceptical (Denmark, Greece, Ireland), whereas in other countries, left-wing euro-scepticism decreases (Great Britain and Italy) or has never been mobilized (Germany). Some deviations have

obvious explanations. In Denmark, the motivations for left-wing euroscepticism are magnified by the comprehensive welfare state. Moreover, given the centrality of the welfare state for national identity in the Nordic countries (Bornschieer, 2011), left-wing euroscepticism might also be fuelled by nationalist concerns after Maastricht. In Great Britain, the relationship inverts rather than turns U-shaped, which can be explained by the position switching of Labour and the Conservatives in the (bi)polarising majoritarian electoral system (Spiering, 2004), and the absence of any eurosceptical party cue on the left. More generally, the mixed developments indicate a growing ambivalence towards European integration on the left: As political integration increases the EU's regulatory activities, the left is increasingly torn between positive and negative attitudes towards the EU. Which of these predominates depends on the specific political context.

The country-specific results qualify the evidence for *H3*: The extent to which the relationship develops into a U-shape varies over countries. Despite this heterogeneity, we do find the expected trend towards increasing right-wing euroscepticism (or decreasing right-wing euro-enthusiasm), which is set in or reinforced by the Treaty of Maastricht. Though the exact shape of the relationship depends on national context, the political and cultural implications of European integration that become apparent from Maastricht onwards have an effect on the relationship in most EU member states.

Conclusion

The central argument guiding this study is that as the nature of European integration and the meaning of left–right change over time, the way in which attitudes towards European integration are related to the dominant left–right dimension changes as well. Research so far has not taken into account the possibility that the relationship between left–right and euroscepticism could change over time, as a result of which the literature provides contradictory findings (Deflem and Pampel, 1996; Kriesi et al., 2008; Llamazares and Gramacho, 2007; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010; McLaren, 2007; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004). Our main contribution to the field is to explain why the findings are so contradictory, by showing how the relationship changes over time. By means of a longitudinal analysis spanning almost four decades (1973–2010), this study shows that while the relationship was linear during the 1970s and 1980s, with more euroscepticism on the left, a right-wing euroscepticism starts to develop from Maastricht onwards. This creates a tendency towards a U-shaped relationship in most countries and an inversion of the relationship in others.

Our findings imply that European integration over time has become a more difficult issue for established parties to deal with. Before the Maastricht Treaty, we find that left-wing citizens take a eurosceptical position, while right-wing citizens are positive towards Europe, and euroscepticism can thus be assimilated into the general left–right dimension like many other new issues are. After Maastricht, the sources of euroscepticism become more diverse and in several countries

euro-sceptical electoral potential arises on both the left and the right. This does not happen in all countries to the same extent and is likely to be related to the presence of euro-sceptic party cues on the left and right. This is exemplified by the development we find in Great Britain, where we know that party-based euro-scepticism shifted from left (Labour) to right (Conservative), and the relationship in public opinion indeed similarly inverts (see also Evans, 1998). Yet, even where euro-sceptic potential only exists on one side of the left–right spectrum, the pluralizing meaning of both European integration and left–right poses difficulties to mainstream parties. While radical parties have more leeway to focus only on the aspects of the EU of which they are critical, their mainstream competitors are expected to formulate a broad, coherent program on the different dimensions of European integration, and are consequently torn between more moderate and more sceptical positions (Bornschier, 2011).

A second implication of this study's findings is that there is no 'natural' or intrinsic relationship between left–right and euro-scepticism. In part, this is due to the fact that the EU itself is a 'moving target' (Marks, 2004). Yet, the left–right dimension is a 'moving target' as well, as it integrates positions on new issues like environmentalism and migration and thus changes in meaning (e.g. Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990; Kriesi et al., 2008; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). In the 1990s and 2000s, left–right positions of citizens have become increasingly correlated with socio-cultural issues and decreasingly with socio-economic issues (De Vries et al., 2013). The recent U-shaped relationship can exist because of this pluralized meaning of left and right. Of course, the extent to which left–right is related to socio-economic and socio-cultural issues not only varies with time, but might also vary between countries, and this in turn might explain why the U-shape is more pronounced in some countries than in others. With the cross-national, longitudinal data used in this study, it is not possible to assess the meaning of left–right directly. Further research is needed to assess how specific economic and cultural issue attitudes relate to euro-scepticism, and whether these relationships differ over time and between countries.

As long as left–right has a meaning in the socio-economic as well as in the socio-cultural domain, the U-shape is likely to consolidate in the near future. If the structure of public opinion indeed responds to the developments in European integration, the debt crisis that emerged in Europe from 2009 onwards could make the left and right extremes even more euro-sceptical. For left-wing citizens, the EU's pressure on national governments to take austerity measures and decrease budget deficits contributes to euro-scepticism, as they fear a dismantling of the welfare state. On the right, the debt crisis creates a sense of public disaffection *between* the citizens of richer Northern and less affluent Southern member states. Where the first feel they have to pay for the latter's economic mismanagement, the latter feel they are disproportionately made to suffer by the first. In both the Northern and Southern countries this is likely to aggravate right-wing euro-scepticism, which denounces any European involvement that goes beyond the national interest.

Notes

1. A notable exception in both respects is a study by Lubbers and Scheepers (2010), who model the linear and curvilinear effect of left–right in interaction with time from 1994 to 2004, but find no significant trends. On the basis of our theory, however, we expect change to occur *over* decades rather than *within* one decade.
2. First steps in the same direction were already made in the 1985 Single European Act.
3. Though nationalism on the left will mostly take the form of civic nationalism, in specific contexts the left can take on a more cultural, identity-based nationalism. Cases in point are the Nordic countries, where the welfare state is part of national identity. In these countries nationalist and anti-liberal euroscepticism can be more difficult to disentangle (Bornschieer, 2011).
4. These are France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, Great Britain, Greece, Spain, and Portugal.
5. In an earlier study (Hakhverdian et al., 2013), we benefited from the same longitudinal dataset to answer a different research question. That study analysed educational differences in euroscepticism over time and found an increasing education gap from the Maastricht Treaty onwards. The study did not look into the ideological correlates of euroscepticism, which is the aim of the present study.
6. We tested whether this dichotomization influences the results by replicating the analyses with an alternative dichotomization of positive and neutral versus negative responses. These analyses lead to the same substantive conclusions (available upon request).
7. A three-level model specification, with individuals nested in country-time points nested in time points and including country dummies yields very similar results.
8. Citizens in the centre of the left–right scale have a mean score of 6.3. Left-wing citizens are thus least afraid, which is probably due to the fact that more fears tap into right-wing concerns.

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