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The nature and origins of Euroscepticism among left-wing and right-wing citizens in Western Europe

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A pro-EU mainstream versus anti-EU extremes?

Exploring the diverse nature of EU issue voting across the left-right spectrum

Introduction

There are fundamental differences in the way Euroscepticism manifests itself at the political left and the political right. Studies on Euroscepticism at the party level have shown that left-wing and right-wing parties criticise different aspects of the EU and ground this criticism in different arguments (Conti and Memoli, 2012; Hooghe et al., 2002). The previous chapters have demonstrated that similar differences exist at the level of voters. Depending on ideology, citizens' Eurosceptic attitudes are based on different motivations and directed at different objects (Chapter 3). Among left-wing citizens, the principal objections to the EU are of an economic, anti-liberal character – and these objections lead to a criticism directed at how the EU currently functions rather than an opposition to the furthering of European integration as such. Among their right-wing counterparts, cultural, nationalist objections are the main reasons for Euroscepticism. Consequently, their Euroscepticism is much more principled and directs itself primarily at the strengthening of European integration. These ideological differences also play out when explaining electoral support for left-wing and right-wing Eurosceptic parties (Chapter 4): Support for Eurosceptic parties of the radical left is driven by dissatisfaction with the EU, but not so much by opposition to EU strengthening, whereas Eurosceptic parties of the radical right draw support on the basis of both dimensions of Euroscepticism.

We do not know, however, to what extent electoral support for parties of the political mainstream is also driven by different EU dimensions. Studies on the effect of EU attitudes on voting behaviour – or 'EU issue voting' – have shown that EU support can indeed have a positive effect on support for mainstream parties over and above other political attitudes (De Vries, 2007a; 2010). Yet, most studies on EU issue voting do not explore differences between party families, nor do they distinguish between different dimensions of EU support (e.g. Gabel, 2000; Hobolt et al., 2009; Tillman, 2004). This is surprising given the

evidently heterogeneous nature of mainstream parties' EU positions. This is illustrated, for instance, by the approaches of the two government parties to the 2016 referendum about the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement in the Netherlands. Whilst the social democrats framed the 'Yes'-vote rather idealistically as a vote for democracy and human rights, the liberal conservative VVD downplayed the Treaty as being mostly concerned with free trade. Thus, similar to what I found with regard to support for left-wing and right-wing Eurosceptic parties, it is likely that support for *pro*-EU parties is also driven by different kinds of EU attitudes, in line with their distinct ideological predispositions.

The EU issue voting literature has greatly advanced our knowledge of the extent to which – as well as the conditions under which – EU issue voting exists, by studying how EU support *in general* affects voting behaviour *in general*. The present research aim, however, requires a more specific approach that simultaneously distinguishes between party families and between different EU dimensions. This chapter provides such an approach. Specifically, I assess how the two dimensions of EU attitudes identified in the previous chapters – opposition to EU strengthening and dissatisfaction with the current EU – affect electoral support for pro- and anti-EU across the left-right spectrum. Where Chapter 4 compared electoral support for radical left and radical right anti-EU parties, I now include all main party families (radical left, green, social democratic, Christian democratic, liberal, conservative and radical right) in order to make two kinds of comparisons.¹ First, I compare mainstream left to mainstream right support, to assess whether variation exists in the EU dimensions driving electoral support for different mainstream party families. Second, I look at the dynamics within the left-wing and right-wing political blocks, exploring whether supporters for left-wing pro- and anti-EU parties are divided over different aspects of the EU than are supporters for right-wing pro- and anti-EU parties.

For two reasons, the EU positions of mainstream parties are more ambivalent than those of most radical parties. First, in their role as government parties, Christian democratic, liberal, social democratic, conservative and (more recently) green parties have carried further the project of European integration, and are responsible for it in the eyes of voters. They do however generally not enthusiastically propagate their commitment to Europe. In reaction to rising public Euroscepticism, mainstream parties' preferred strategy is often one of depoliticisation rather than firm position-taking (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Second, mainstream parties' ideologies give reason for ambivalence with regard to Europe as well. Generally speaking, left-wing parties are critical of the neo-liberal tendencies of the market-oriented EU, but at the same time see merits in EU-level regulation and supranational policy-making. Among right-wing parties, the internal market is a treasured achievement while EU threats to national sovereignty are the main source of disapproval. Thus, all mainstream parties have reasons to both favour and oppose European integration, which

¹ I restrict the radical left and radical right party families to those parties taking distinctively left or right as well as Eurosceptic positions (as will be explained in the Data section).

fuels their ambivalence and internal dissent. This raises the question to what extent voters' EU attitudes actually motivate mainstream party support to a similar extent as anti-EU party support. Due to mainstream parties' more ambivalent positions compared to anti-EU parties, less clear-cut expectations can be formulated on how EU attitudes of voters should drive support for different mainstream party families. Furthermore, it is well possible that the effects we find are weaker than the effects found for anti-EU parties.

Therefore, this chapter takes a more explorative empirical approach than the previous chapters. The theory section discusses how ideological motivations lead each mainstream party family to take different and often ambivalent positions on Europe, relating this to the dimensions of opposition to EU strengthening and current EU dissatisfaction. Then, I use the European Election Studies of 2009 and 2014, as well as the 1994 wave for a longitudinal perspective, to analyse the relationships between electoral support and the two dimensions of Euroscepticism. The empirical analyses consist of two parts. The central part of the analyses is formed by a direct test of EU issue voting, using pooled regression models over fifteen Western European EU member states to assess how the two dimensions of Euroscepticism influence electoral support while controlling for relevant demographic and attitudinal variables. However, if we would only look at the actual *effect* of Euroscepticism on electoral support, we might overlook important heterogeneity in Eurosceptic attitudes between voter groups which exists without these attitudes (yet) being salient enough to directly influence the vote. Therefore, I start with a descriptive overview of the average positions on the two EU dimensions among voters of the seven party families.

The findings show that there is good reason to study EU issue voting in a multidimensional framework, as the two dimensions yield different results. For dissatisfaction with the current EU, the horseshoe model of a pro-EU mainstream pitted against anti-EU radicals remains intact. In contrast, the effect of attitudes towards EU strengthening is more positive for parties of the mainstream left than for the mainstream right. Also, such principled EU attitudes are a more divisive factor between mainstream and radical right parties than between the mainstream and radical left. These findings reveal heterogeneity in the kind of EU support held by voters in the centre of the horseshoe, and thereby nuance the idea that mainstream parties draw on an undifferentiated pro-EU support base. In the conclusion I will reflect on the implications of these findings and place them in the broader debate on the politicisation of European integration.

Theory

EU issue voting, like voting behaviour in general, is a matter of political supply and demand, where voters decide to support a party because it shares their positions towards European integration. In Chapter 4 we have seen that the connection between supply and demand goes beyond general Euroscepticism: The ideologically different EU positions

of left-wing and right-wing anti-EU parties are reflected in the fact that different kinds of Euroscepticism motivate voters to support these respective party families. This theory section discusses the supply and demand side in turn. I start by describing the positions of each mainstream party family towards Europe, and then discuss how this chapter expands on the literature on EU issue voting.

Mainstream party positions: Ambivalence and differentiation

Perhaps the most important insight on mainstream party positions towards Europe is that unlike the often unambiguous EU critiques voiced by anti-EU parties, mainstream parties tend to send ambivalent signals when it comes to their EU preferences (Edwards, 2008; Gabel and Scheve, 2007). On the one hand, mainstream parties have a fundamental commitment to the EU, as their participation in national governments has involved responsibility for initiating and pursuing the European project from the 1950s onwards. Parties of the centre right (above all the Christian democrats) but later also the centre left have thus linked their fate to the EU, and are held accountable for its functioning by voters (Hooghe et al., 2002). At the same time, growing politicisation and increasing Euroscepticism withholds these parties from taking a firm pro-EU stance. Instead, mainstream parties tend to depoliticise the issue of European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

However, the EU positions of mainstream parties are not produced merely by the strategic tension between carrying government responsibility and adjusting to a Eurosceptic public, but are probably even more a consequence of the deeper ideological constellations that define the different party families of the political mainstream (Marks and Wilson, 2000). Ideological considerations produce *ambivalence within parties*, with which I mean that contradictory arguments with regard to Europe exist within the same party. Also, the different ideological roots of party families lead to *differentiation between parties*, in the sense that different mainstream party families take different kinds of EU positions. There is broad agreement in the literature that two ideological conflict dimensions are relevant for party positions on European integration: A state-market dimension, structuring conflict between those who favour more interventionism and regulation versus those who wish to minimise the role of the state, and a nationalism-cosmopolitanism dimension, dividing those who defend national sovereignty from those holding supranational ideals (Hooghe et al., 2002; Kriesi et al., 2012). In the previous chapters, we have seen that these dimensions explain the different nature of Euroscepticism among left-wing and right-wing Eurosceptic parties. As the following discussion will show, they are equally helpful to understand the variation between mainstream party families in where they stand on the different dimensions of EU support. Also, ideological positions help understand mainstream parties' ambivalence towards the EU. Other than radical left and radical right parties, which focus on the issues on which they have most to gain, mainstream parties appeal to broader electorates and therefore are expected to formulate positions on both the economic and cultural dimension, which makes them prone to ambivalence (Bornschieer, 2011).

The social democratic party family exemplifies such ambivalence. Social democratic ideology traditionally combines a strong preference for economic interventionism with an internationalist outlook. Due to Europe's initial focus on market integration, social democrats were not among the greatest Euro-enthusiasts in the early years of integration. Yet, with the EC's course shifting to more EU-level regulation from the 1980s onwards, they came to see possibilities for a Social Europe that curbs the negative consequences of market liberalisation. This shift went hand in hand with the introduction of the Third Way in social democracy, which entailed the growing belief in the ability of market processes rather than traditional state-led socialism to provide social justice. Social democrats thus developed an 'acquired taste for Europe' (Almeida, 2012). Even though the division between Third Way and traditional socialists still internally divides social democrats in the extent to which they are reconciled with the EU's current economic set-up, broad consensus exists on the conviction that solutions can be found in the strengthening and improving of the EU, reinforced by the internationalist principles inherent to left-wing ideology. This is illustrated by the Party of European Socialists' pledge to 'build a European Union with lasting common political, social and economic realities, not only provisional cooperation between governments' (PES Declaration of Principles, 2011).²

For similar reasons as social democrats, green parties have also turned more supportive of European integration over time – they experienced the greatest positional change of all party families (Bakker et al., 2015) – realising that their core (environmental and social) policy objectives are most effectively advanced at the supranational level. The distinctly cosmopolitan worldview that characterizes green parties reinforces their pro-integrationist stance, supporting the EU's ideal of open borders and a 'uniting of the peoples' (Edwards, 2008). Although their strong egalitarianism leads them to remain critical of the current EU and its negative social consequences, they propose solutions at the European level. In the words of the Flemish green party (Groen!), 'the current European Union is both the problem and the cure' (Groen!, European Manifesto, 2014).³

For liberal parties, the diachronic development has been somewhat the opposite to that of the left. Though the liberals form a rather diverse party family, their common denominator is market liberalism. There is a high level of agreement on the economic advantages of integrating the European internal market, which implicates strong liberal support for the current EU as well as for the furthering of the European integration process. Yet, breaches in the liberal party family have appeared over sovereignty versus supranationalism in reaction to the increasingly regulatory path of the EU. Some conservative liberal parties with a more national orientation shied away from their initial Euro-enthusiasm (e.g. the Dutch vvd and the Danish Venstre),

² Party of European Socialists (PES) (2011). Declaration of Principles. http://www.pes.eu/about_pes_document#middle, accessed on July 4, 2016.

³ Original quote in Dutch: 'De huidige Europese Unie is zowel een probleem als de oplossing', Groen! Party manifesto European Elections 2014. <https://www.groen.be/sites/www.groen.be/files/uploads/Bestandsbijlages/programma/2014>, accessed on July 4, 2016.

while more social liberal parties, which see social regulation as necessary corrective to market processes, only became more supportive of European integration (e.g. the Dutch D66 and the Danish Radikale Venstre; see Almeida, 2012). In the Netherlands, for instance, the social liberal D66 recognizes that ‘Europe is increasingly our inland’, and wants this Europe to be ‘powerful and federal’ (D66 election manifesto, 2012),⁴ whereas the conservative liberal VVD states that it ‘doesn’t need vague visions on Europe’, as it is ‘against the European Union as a superstate’ (VVD election manifesto, 2012).⁵ Thus, although liberal ideology is fundamentally supportive of the principle of European integration, more recently sovereignty concerns have led some liberal parties to moderate their support for EU strengthening.

Christian democrats and conservatives are often studied as a single party family, which their cooperation in the European People’s Party would support. However, while they agree on the benefits of international economic integration, they are rather different with regard to supranationalism. For one, Christian democrats support a *social* market economy, or ‘a mixed economy based on capitalist dynamics tempered by socio-economic interventionism’ (Almeida, 2012: 115). They do not eschew shifting policies to the EU level, inspired by the subsidiarity principle. The individual is part of various communities of which the nation is but one, and policies should be installed on the most appropriate level (Almeida, 2012). Most Christian democratic parties are thus rather supranationalist (with the exception of the German CSU; Marks and Wilson, 2000). This combination of economic liberalism and supranationalism explains why the Christian democratic party family has been the most consistent advocate of European integration since its initiation, supporting the EU in both its current set-up and in its future deepening. However, Christian democrats’ pro-integrationist line has diluted somewhat due to its alliances with conservative parties in the European People’s Party (Hanley, 2002). The Dutch CDA in its most recent (2012) manifesto stated that ‘European integration is not a goal in itself’, emphasizing the EU’s primary importance as an internal market for a trade country as the Netherlands.⁶ The German CDU, on the other hand, formulated as its main objective to ‘continue the road to peaceful and democratic unification of Europe’ (CDU election manifesto 2013-2017).⁷ Most ambivalence among Christian democratic parties thus seems to lie on the level of EU strengthening, while most parties are supportive of the current EU.

⁴ Original quote in Dutch: ‘D66 wil een krachtig federaal Europa’ (...) ‘Wij onderkennen dat Europa steeds meer ons binnenland wordt.’ D66 Party Manifesto 2012. <https://d66.nl/publicaties/verkiezingsprogramma-2012/>, accessed on July 4, 2016.

⁵ Original quote in Dutch: ‘De VVD heeft geen behoefte aan vage vergezichten over Europa. Wij zijn (...) tegen de Europese Unie als superstaat.’ VVD Party Manifesto 2012. <http://files.vvd.nl/verkiezingsprogramma-2012-2017.pdf>, accessed on July 4, 2016.

⁶ Original quote in Dutch: ‘Het Europese integratieproces is geen doel op zichzelf.’ CDA Party Manifesto 2012. https://d2vry01uvf8h31.cloudfront.net/CDA/Documenten/CDA_Verkiezingsprogram_2012-2017.pdf, accessed on July 4, 2016.

⁷ Original quote in German: ‘den Weg fortzusetzen, der für eine friedliche und demokratische Einigung Europas steht’. CDU Party Manifesto 2013. <https://www.cdu.de/sites/default/files/media/dokumente/regierungsprogramm-2013-2017-langfassung-20130911.pdf>, accessed on July 4, 2016.

Conservative parties share with Christian democrats and liberals their support for the EU as an internal market, but deviate in their nationalist orientation (Marks and Wilson, 2000: 455). Conservative parties prefer a sovereign state with as little EU interference as possible. Links to the EU should be held merely for economic purposes, similar to trade commitments with other states. The Portuguese Partido Popular (CDS-PP), for instance, prefers to see Portugal as a 'pivot point between geo-economic and culturally different spaces, like the European Economic Community, Brazil, and the African states with Lusitadic [Portuguese] roots' (CDS-PP Declaration of Principles).⁸ The conservatives are thus in principle opposed to any further integration that goes beyond economic interest. Their support for the current EU is rather ambiguous, as they approve of the economic set-up whilst at the same time criticising the already too large influence of 'Brussels'.

Table 5.1 summarises party positions along an economic and a political dimension, and their expected implications for the two dimensions of EU support distinguished in this dissertation. The positions of radical left and radical right Eurosceptic parties are also included, based on the discussion in the previous chapters.

Table 5.1 Summary of party positions on European integration

	Economic dimension	Political dimension	Current EU	Strengthening
Greens	Pro-state/regulation	Supranationalism	-	+
Social democrats	Pro-state/regulation (but: Third way)	Supranationalism	+/-	+
Christian democrats	Pro-market/liberalisation	Supranationalism	+	+
Liberals	Pro-market/liberalisation	Mixed	+	+/-
Conservatives	Pro-market/liberalisation	Sovereignty	+/-	-
Radical Left	Pro-state	Mixed	-	+/-
Radical Right	Mixed	Sovereignty	-	-

EU issue voting

Given the above discussion, I expect that there are differences between mainstream party families in the extent to which they attract voters on the basis of their EU support, and particularly in the *kind* of EU support this involves. The diverse EU positions of mainstream party families are likely to be reflected in the EU dimensions that drive electoral support for each of the mainstream party families. However, given their higher internal ambivalence, the positive effect of EU support for mainstream parties is likely to be weaker than the negative effects for radical parties.

⁸ Original quote in Portuguese: 'defendemos que Portugal funcione como placa giratória entre espaços geo-económicos e culturais diferenciados, como a Comunidade Económica Europeia, o Brasil, e os Estados africanos de raiz lusitana'. Partido Popular (CDS-PP). Declaration of Principles. <http://www.cds.pt/principios.html>, accessed on July 4, 2016.

To date we know little about the potential variation in EU issue voting between party families and between different EU dimensions. Most of the EU issue voting literature to date has conceptualised EU support as a single dimension, and has revolved around the question whether EU issue voting exists, and under which conditions (De Vries, 2007a). Evidence has been found across Europe. Evans (1999; 2002) finds that EU support affected vote choice in several national elections in the UK in the 1990s. Tillman (2004) shows clear effects of EU attitudes on voting in three new member states – Austria, Finland and Sweden – around the time of their accession in 1995. De Vries (2007a) nuances these findings by demonstrating in a study of four West European countries that EU issue voting in national elections occurs in contexts where party polarisation on the issue is combined with high salience among voters. However, evidence of a more general existence of the phenomenon is provided by Gabel (2000), who studies 1996 Eurobarometer data across the EU-15 and finds evidence for EU issue voting in 13 out of 15 member states. While most studies are based on 1990s data, EU issues have remained salient (Hoeglinger, 2016) and public Euroscepticism has anything but decreased in the new millennium (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Hakhverdian et al., 2013). There is thus a firm basis to expect effects of EU attitudes on electoral support across Western Europe in the period under study here.

Yet, to what extent is EU issue voting for different parties based on different types of EU attitudes? To answer this question, we have to fill two gaps that remain in the empirical literature to date. First, the above cited studies are confined to demonstrating the effect of general EU support – or distance scores to parties – on vote choice as a whole. It thus remains unclear to what extent some party families succeed better in mobilising support on the basis of EU issues than others. Second, almost all studies use a single measure of *general* EU support as the main explanatory variable. Consequently, we do not know *what kind of* EU attitudes lead to supporting ideologically different party families. Conceptualising EU support as a single dimension does not do justice to the diverse attitudes that parties and voters can hold in relation to the EU, which follow patterns explainable by their ideology. To my knowledge only a single study considers the effect on party preference exerted by different dimensions of EU support (Van Spanje and De Vreese, 2011), yet this study does not distinguish between party families. Only by combining the distinction of party families with the distinction of dimensions of EU support it is possible to gain insight in the specific kind of EU attitudes that motivate supporters of different mainstream parties, and the degree to which and way in which they differ from supporters for radical parties.

Data and method

To investigate the effects of different dimensions of Euroscepticism on electoral support, I take an approach similar to Chapter 4. The main analysis is based on the European Election Study waves of 2009 and 2014, which contain items on support for political parties, several

attitudes regarding European integration, and a range of important demographic and attitudinal control variables. For a longitudinal view, I include the 1994 wave, by necessity using fewer indicators for Euroscepticism as well as fewer attitudinal controls.⁹ This is the earliest EES wave where indicators for both EU dimensions are available.

My analysis covers the fifteen Western European EU member states. In each member state, I categorised the parties into seven commonly distinguished party families: Social democrats, Christian democrats, liberals, conservatives, green parties, radical left parties and radical right parties. The latter two categories consist only of those radical parties that hold Eurosceptic positions (in line with the classification in Chapter 4). This means that a few radical left parties were left out of the analysis in some of the years (the Finnish *VAS*, Spanish *IU* in 2009/2014, and the Danish *SF* in 2014). Also, the British Conservatives were classified in the radical right category, due to their highly Eurosceptic stance and distinctly right-wing position. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey categorisation of parties was used as a reference for determining both party family and EU position (Bakker et al., 2015). Appendix M displays the categorisation of the parties included in this study. These are all parties that were both classifiable into one of the seven party families and included in the voting behaviour questions of the European Election Study in 1994, 2009 or 2014.

Method

To keep the analyses in line with the previous chapters, EU attitudes are coded in the negative direction, indicating *dissatisfaction with the current EU* and *opposition to EU strengthening*. For supporters for mainstream parties I thus expect these attitudes to be lower, and their effects on party support to be negative. To facilitate interpretation of the results, I present all findings in graphs demonstrating the overall pattern across party families.

The analysis consists of two parts. I start with a descriptive overview of the average positions on dissatisfaction with the current EU and opposition to EU strengthening among the voters of the seven party families. Voting behaviour in the last general elections in one's country is used to categorise voters. This first descriptive step is included for two reasons. First, my theoretical argument relies on the assumption that different voter groups hold different kinds of EU attitudes in the first place. Second, even in the absence of EU issue voting it is possible that large differences exist between supporters of different parties in how they think about the EU, and this is important to know in itself in the light of the potential for future mobilisation.

After discussing the descriptive results, I turn to regression models explaining electoral support for each of the party families across the fifteen countries. The regression models have the *propensity to vote* (PTV) as the dependent variable, which asks respondents

⁹ In chapter three the longitudinal analyses were conducted over all six EES waves from 1989 to 2014. I chose to refrain from presenting the results over the full time span because interpretation for seven party families becomes rather complex.

to indicate on a 0 to 10 scale how likely it is that they will ever vote for a party (this operationalisation is explained in Chapter 4). On the right-hand side, the models include the two EU dimensions as well as controls for the demographic and attitudinal variables deemed most important for explaining electoral support.

The models are based on a stacked data set (combining the PTVs for each party family into one dependent variable) with respondent-party combinations as the unit of analysis. The dependent variable is thus the abstracted propensity to vote, and the effects per party family are estimated by interacting each of the independent variables (including the controls) with party family dummies. To control for the clustered structure of the data (with respondents nested in parties) I include party fixed effects.¹⁰ The results of the models are presented as marginal effects plots, which demonstrate to what extent the two EU dimensions directly contribute to electoral support for each of the party families. In Appendix N, a stepwise build-up of models is presented per party family.

Variables

As most operationalisations are identical to those used in Chapter 4, I give only a limited explanation here (see the Data section of Chapter 4 for details). In the regression models, the two EU dimensions are measured by constructing multiple-item indices, with the number of items differing between the 2009 and 2014 waves. Dissatisfaction with the current EU is measured by four (in 2009) or two (in 2014) items respectively, while opposition to EU strengthening is measured by two items or a single item. As attitudinal control variables, I include left-right distance to the party in question, support for redistribution, anti-immigrant sentiments, and political trust – all measured by single-item operationalisations. In the 1994 analyses, both EU dimensions are measured by a single item,¹¹ and the attitudinal controls are limited to left-right distance and satisfaction with national democracy. All attitudinal variables are standardised in order to facilitate the comparison of effect sizes. Demographic controls are included for age, gender, educational level and subjective social class.

In the descriptive analyses unstandardised scales are used, and the EU indices include only those items that are present in both 2009 and 2014 (two for current EU dissatisfaction, one for opposition to EU strengthening). The items in the current EU dissatisfaction scale were measured by five-point scales in 2009 and four-point scales in 2014. To enable a comparison, all items were rescaled to a 0 to 5 scale, and subsequently summed up to a 0 to 10 scale. This makes these scales comparable to the EU strengthening item, which is originally measured on a 0 to 10 scale. Both scales are presented as ranging from -5 to +5, in order to distinguish supportive (-5) from opposing (+5) attitudes.

¹⁰ Alternatively, I estimated the models with country fixed effects. The results are highly similar.

¹¹ Dissatisfaction with the current EU is measured by the item 'How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the EU? (1-4)'; Support for EU strengthening is measured by the item 'In general, are you for/against efforts being made to unify Western Europe? (1-4)'. Both items are rescaled from -5 to +5 in the descriptive analyses and standardised in the multivariate analyses.

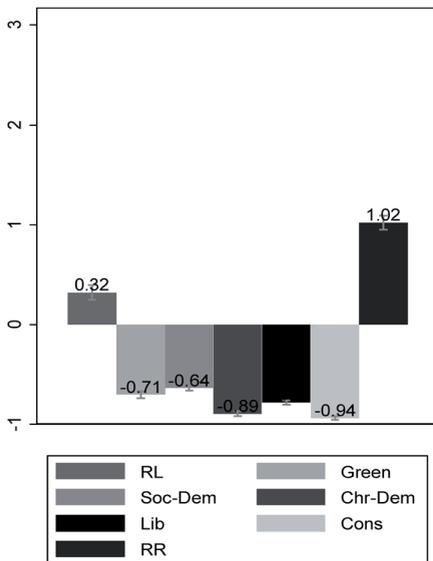
Results

Descriptive results

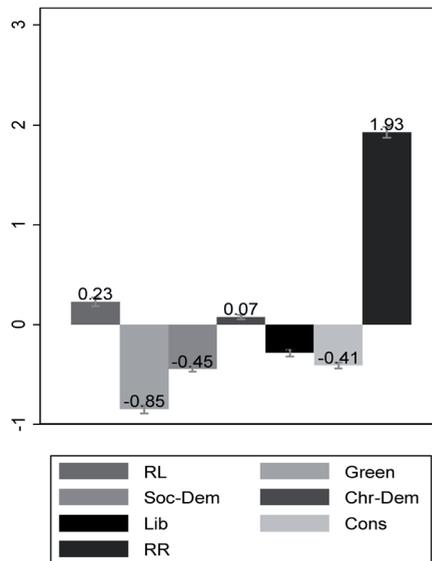
Figure 5.1 displays the distribution of the two dimensions of Euroscepticism for voters of the seven party families in 2009. The graphs are presented by year to be able to directly compare the two dimensions, which show distinct patterns. For dissatisfaction with the current EU a clear divide appears between voters for mainstream parties – which show similar levels of EU satisfaction – and voters for radical anti-EU parties – which show marked dissatisfaction. This creates a pattern in line with the familiar horseshoe. Yet, it is remarkable that dissatisfaction is a less important divisive factor among (radical and mainstream) left-wing parties than among right-wing parties, which is particularly caused by the lower dissatisfaction among radical left voters than among radical right voters. This contrasts with the finding in chapter three that EU dissatisfaction is equally important for radical left and radical right electoral support, and underlines that some attitudes that exist among voter groups are more strongly mobilised by some parties than others. Even if radical left voters are not as dissatisfied as their right-wing counterparts, their dissatisfaction can still form an equally important motivation for their electoral support.

Figure 5.1 Average position on two EU dimensions by party voted for in last general election, 2009

5.1a. Dissatisfaction with current EU



5.1b. Opposition to EU strengthening

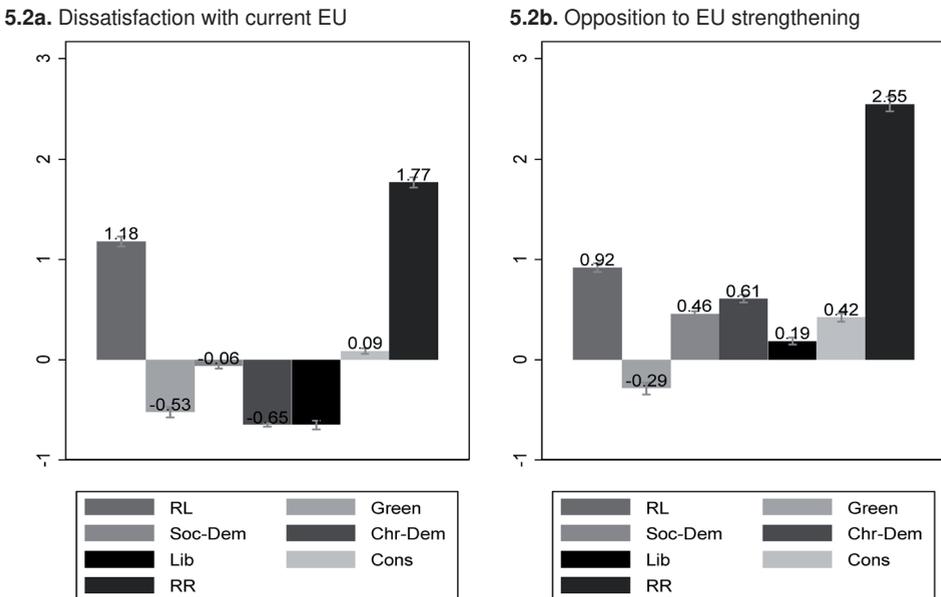


Source: European Election Study 2009

There is less uniformity among mainstream voters when it comes to opposition to EU strengthening. Particularly green but also social democratic voters are supportive of this dimension, while the average support among mainstream right voter groups is lower: Christian democratic voters specifically stand out as less supportive of EU strengthening. At the same time, this type of EU opposition is a more contentious dimension at the right side of the spectrum: The difference between mainstream and radical right-wing voters is much larger than this same difference on the left. Opposition to EU strengthening is thus a far more important divisive factor within the right-wing political block.

In 2014, Euroscepticism increased across the board on both dimensions (Figure 5.2), which is in line with other studies and has been explained as a Eurozone crisis effect (Armingeon and Ceka, 2014; Braun and Tausendpfund, 2014). Yet, the patterns of difference remain similar. Although dissatisfaction with the current EU increased particularly among social democratic and conservative voters, the overall pattern is still resembles a horseshoe, with dissatisfaction concentrating at the extremes. For opposition to EU strengthening, a strong increase in opposition is again found among the social democrats and conservatives, while only the green voters remain supportive. Possibly due to the crisis, mainstream voters have moved closer to radical voters in their EU attitudes, and the differences thus evened out somewhat. Yet, we still see differences between the left and the right: There is much less variation between mainstream and radical voters on the political left than there is on the right, where the divide is still by far largest.

Figure 5.2 Average position on two EU dimensions by party voted for in last general election, 2014



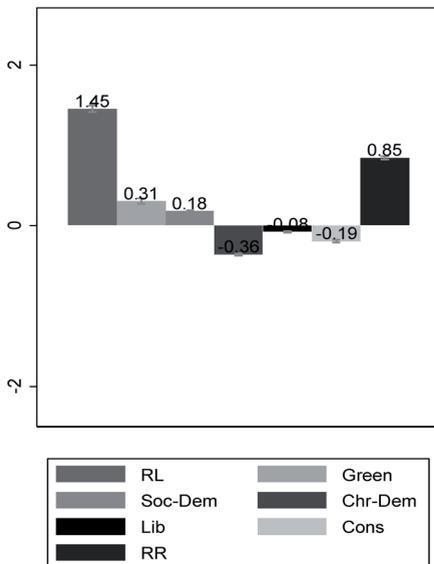
Source: European Election Study 2014

Figure 5.3 presents similar figures for the 1994 EES wave. Particularly the level of opposition to EU strengthening is much lower than in later years; all voter groups score on average below the midpoint of the scale.¹² Thus, the increase in Euroscepticism which has been documented more generally (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Hakhverdian et al., 2013) appears to be most marked for more principled opposition to the European project as such. In terms of the patterns of differences between voter groups, the 1994 wave shows a clear horseshoe shape in both EU dimensions. This is particularly due to radical left voters, who have the highest average score on both dissatisfaction with the current EU and opposition to its future strengthening. This is in line with the idea of the EU as a ‘moving target’: In the early 1990s, European integration was still predominantly framed as an economic project, and this explains why it spurred much opposition on the left. Also, this explains why mainstream right-wing voters – and the conservative voters in case of the strengthening dimension – are particularly positive towards the EU at this time point.

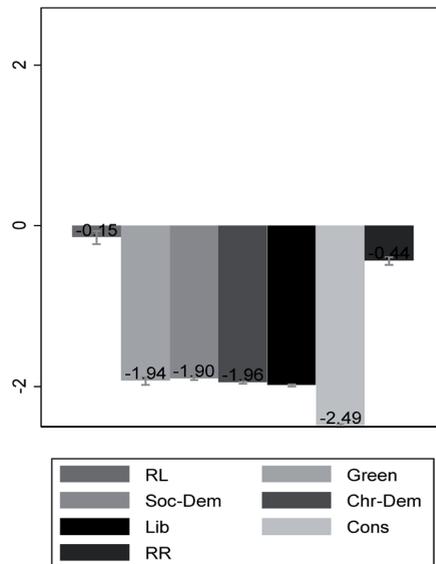
All in all, these descriptive analyses support the intuition that competition for voters revolves around partially different EU dimensions at the left and the right. To assess whether these differences actually translates into the motivations of electoral support for different parties, I now turn to multivariate regression models.

Figure 5.3 Average position on two EU dimensions by party voted for in last general election, 1994

5.3a. Dissatisfaction with current EU



5.3b. Opposition to EU strengthening



Source: European Election Study 1994

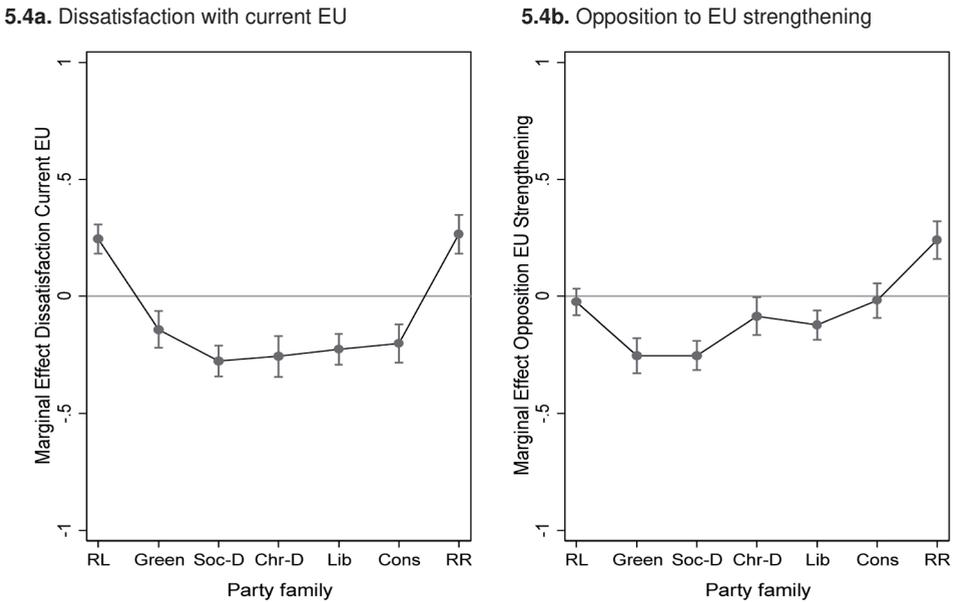
¹² Note that strengthening opposition is based on a 1-4 scale item in 1994 (as opposed to the 0-10 item in 2009-2014). Additional analyses show that the high support is not an artefact of this measurement difference: Opposition is also much lower in the 1999 wave, which includes the same 0-10 item as the 2009 and 2014 waves (see Appendix O).

Regression results

Figure 5.4 and 5.5 present the marginal effects of the two dimensions of EU opposition on support for each of the seven party families in 2009 and 2014. These marginal effects are based on regression models controlling for demographic characteristics, political attitudes (towards immigration, redistribution, and political trust), and the left-right distance of a voter to each of the parties. Thus, the marginal effect reflects what the specific EU dimension adds to explaining electoral support for each of the party families.

The results are quite similar across the two waves. Dissatisfaction with the current EU has a similar negative effect for all of the mainstream parties, indicating that their supporters are motivated by EU satisfaction (Figure 5.4a and 5.5a). This is the case in both 2009 and 2014, and the only noteworthy difference is that the effect is somewhat weaker among the greens. Thus, even if the descriptive analyses showed in 2014 an increase in dissatisfaction among social democratic and conservative voter groups, all mainstream parties still draw supporters on the basis of EU satisfaction. Possibly, this is because the dissatisfied voters have turned to the Eurosceptic alternatives at the extremes: The effect of dissatisfaction on radical left and radical right support is positive in both 2009 and 2014. Thus, controlling for other political attitudes, dissatisfaction with the current EU is a divisive factor on both the left and the right, distinguishing radical from mainstream supporters.

Figure 5.4 Marginal effect of two EU dimensions on electoral support, 2009

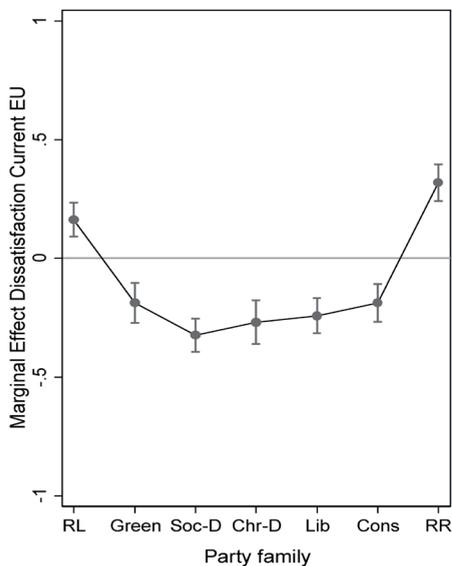


Source: European Election Study 2009

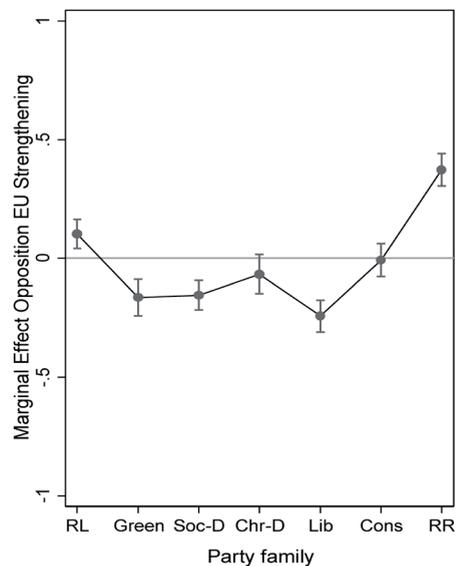
For opposition to EU strengthening more heterogeneity exists between the left and the right (Figure 5.4b and 5.5b). The differences between mainstream parties appear to be structured by ideology: For the conservatives and the Christian democratic parties, the effect of opposition to EU strengthening is not significant (or barely so in 2009), while it has a clear negative effect for green and social democratic parties. Thus, only mainstream left-wing support is driven strongly by positive attitudes about further EU integration in both waves. An exception to this are the liberal supporters, who are also motivated by their support for EU strengthening, especially in 2014. Apparently, the tendency of some conservative liberal parties towards a more sovereigntist orientation does by no means overpower the pro-integrationism that drives liberal party supporters. The EU strengthening dimension is a more important divisive factor in the right block than on the left, and this divide is driven mainly by the contrast between liberal and radical right support.

Figure 5.5 Marginal effect of two EU dimensions on electoral support, 2014

5.5a. Dissatisfaction with current EU



5.5b. Opposition to EU strengthening



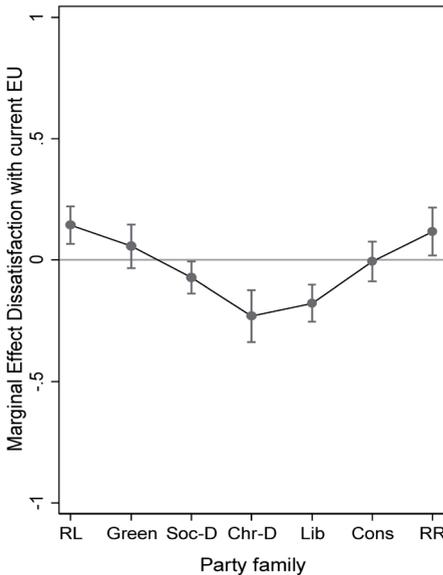
Source: European Election Study 2014

Notwithstanding the higher ambivalence in mainstream parties' EU positions, the effects of EU attitudes on electoral support are not evidently larger for radical Eurosceptic parties than for mainstream parties. Particularly on current EU dissatisfaction, mainstream parties are equally successful in mobilising EU supporters as radical parties are in attracting its opponents. On the EU strengthening dimension, only the mainstream left and the liberals successfully mobilise EU supporters. On this dimension, Christian democratic and conservative parties might be in a more difficult position to attract voters due to their higher level of intra-party dissent.

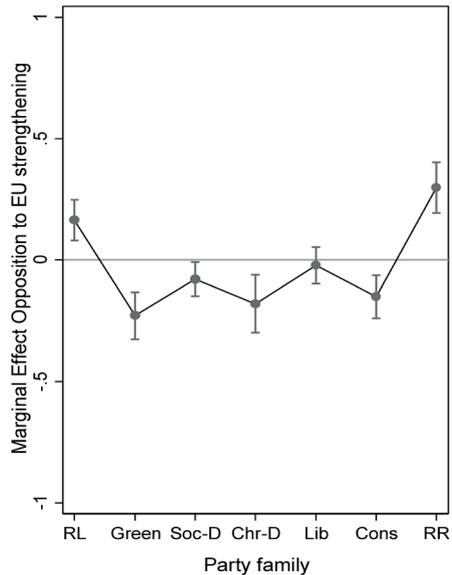
Going back in time, Figure 5.6 shows the regression results for the 1994 wave. It is immediately clear that EU attitudes had less impact on electoral support at this time point. Current EU dissatisfaction contributes only weakly to support for radical left and radical right parties. Among the mainstream parties, only the Christian democrats, liberals, and the social democrats (marginally) draw supporters that are relatively satisfied with the EU's functioning. A flattened horseshoe thus appears. The EU strengthening dimension shows a more diffuse image. Opposition to EU strengthening leads to supporting both radical left and radical right Eurosceptic parties. Among the mainstream parties, support for this same dimension positively affects support for green, Christian democratic and conservative parties only. In sum, compared to 2009 and 2014, opposition is in 1994 stronger on the radical left, whereas support is stronger among the voters for the mainstream right. Again, this could be explained by the fact that the nature of the EU has changed over time. In 1994 voters primarily saw the EU as an economic union, and EU support was thus more of a right-wing affair. Yet, an exception in this respect is the opposition to EU strengthening that drives radical right support as well as the pro-integrationism among green voters – this pattern is more in line with the later left-liberal versus right-conservative axis that structures opposition to EU strengthening.

Figure 5.6 Marginal effect of two EU dimensions on electoral support, 1994

5.6a. Dissatisfaction with current EU



5.6b. Opposition to EU strengthening



Source: European Election Study 1994

Conclusion

The ideologically grounded differences between the EU attitudes that motivate support for radical left and radical right Eurosceptic parties raise the question to what extent such ideological differences also motivate support for parties of the political mainstream. The horseshoe model suggests that mainstream parties form a pro-EU block without much internal differentiation. Yet, the ideological bases of the different mainstream party families lead to distinct considerations with regard to Europe, similar to (though possibly less pronounced than) the differences between the radical left and the radical right. These ideological considerations however also make mainstream parties more prone to holding ambivalent EU positions. More than radical parties they need to position themselves on both the state-market and cosmopolitanism-nationalism dimensions, which have conflicting implications with regard to European integration (Marks et al., 2006). For these reasons, I expected to find differences in the kind of EU motivations that lead to support for different mainstream parties, as well as weaker effects of EU attitudes on mainstream as compared to radical party support, due to their more ambivalent positions towards European integration.

The findings show that over and above other political attitudes and controlling for demographic characteristics, EU support positively contributes to electoral support for mainstream parties. Yet, the findings show that it is important to distinguish between different EU attitude dimensions. For current EU dissatisfaction the horseshoe model of a pro-EU mainstream pitted against anti-EU radicals remains intact, as it negatively affects support for each of the mainstream parties, left and right, to an equal degree – thus indicating relative EU satisfaction among mainstream party supporters. Also, this EU dimension plays a similar role in structuring preferences within the left and the right political blocks, distinguishing radical from mainstream parties on both sides. In contrast, for the EU strengthening dimension the pattern is more diverse. In both 2009 and 2014, support for EU strengthening has a positive effect on supporting green and social democratic parties, while its effect on supporting Christian democratic, conservative, and liberal parties is smaller and mostly insignificant (with the exception of the liberals in 2014, when its effect is clearly positive). This suggests that mainstream parties vary along ideological lines in the kind of EU support they mobilise. In addition, attitudes towards EU strengthening are a more important distinctive factor on the right – where they juxtapose particularly the supporters of liberal and radical right parties – than on the left, where the contrast between radical and mainstream parties' supporters is much smaller. This is in line with the EU positions taken by these parties. Liberal parties are rather supportive of further EU strengthening, while radical right parties are outright opposed to it; left-wing radical and mainstream parties do not diverge as much in their positions towards European integration in principle. As a result, the effect of citizens' attitudes towards EU strengthening on their support for different parties does not follow the familiar horseshoe pattern.

Overall, there is little evidence that the effects of EU attitudes on electoral support are

smaller (in absolute size) in the case of mainstream parties than for radical parties. Only in one instance was the effect weaker for mainstream party support than for Eurosceptic party support (the effect of EU strengthening on conservative and Christian democratic support). More generally, however, the negative effects of EU opposition on support for mainstream parties are of a similar size as the positive effects on radical anti-EU support. So, does this mean that we can expect mainstream parties to profit from the awakening of the 'sleeping giant' (Van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004) if they would emphasise their pro-EU positions more clearly? In any case, this depends on how pro- and anti-EU attitudes are distributed at the demand side. We know from the literature that Euroscepticism in general has increased in the 1990s and 2000s (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). The findings of this chapter suggest that this increase is largest on the EU strengthening dimension, as average opposition on this dimension is much higher across voter groups in 2009/2014 as opposed to 1994. For green, social democratic and liberal parties, which appeal to EU supporters on the basis of their support for EU strengthening, this means that more explicitly emphasising their pro-integrationist positions could be a risky strategy, as the pool of voters sharing this support might be limited and already exhausted. Support for EU strengthening currently does not contribute to conservative and Christian democratic party support. For these parties, the best strategy might be to stick to an ambiguous, depoliticised position, as they are internally divided on this dimension, and find themselves caught between the pro-integrationist liberals and the fundamentally Eurosceptic radical right. Assuming such a more neutral position might make them a suitable alternative for Eurosceptic right-wing voters who consider the radical right a bridge too far. However, the more salient fundamental opposition to European integration becomes, the more the radical right will profit – as they are the only outspoken defenders of such principled opposition.

The advantageous position of radical right anti-EU parties is reinforced by two developments. First, as the diachronic findings in this chapter underline, the EU is a moving target (Marks, 2004). From the 1990s onwards, the main focus of European integration has moved from creating an internal market to building a supranational community. The shift from economic to political and cultural implications has gone hand in hand with an increase in Euroscepticism, particularly at the right-wing of the political spectrum (as demonstrated in Chapter 2). The arguments to oppose Europe have changed, and so have the parties that mobilise these arguments. In this chapter, this development is reflected in the differences between the 1994 and 2009/2014 waves. As the descriptive graphs show most clearly, in 1994 opposition to the EU was relatively high among radical left voters, while it was relatively low among supporters of the mainstream right. In 2009 and 2014, opposition is most marked among the radical right, while – particularly principled – opposition decreased among the left-wing voter groups. Thus, similar to Chapter 2, we again see that Euroscepticism is becoming a more right-wing attitude over time.

Second, the changing arguments for Euroscepticism tie into the broader development of increasing salience of values and cultural attitudes for political competition in Western

Europe (Kriesi et al., 2008; 2012). In Chapter 4 I suggested that this development places radical right parties in a better position to mobilise voters on EU issues than radical left parties, for which cultural attitudes lead to ambivalence towards Europe. This development could influence not only the fortunes of parties at the flanks, but have its consequences for the structure of the political space as a whole. If the political debate turns more and more to values, and – relatedly – to the fundamental question of whether one aims to continue with the integration process or to step out of it altogether, this could shift the main axis of party competition over EU issues. The main divide may not lie between radical anti-EU parties and mainstream pro-EU parties, but rather between a left-liberal and a right-conservative block – or between those who perceive EU integration as an opportunity and those who see it as a threat (Azmanova, 2011). As a consequence, conservative and Christian democratic parties could shift towards more sceptical positions with regard to furthering integration, in order to compete with their radical right competitors on this dimension – but it is questionable how far they can credibly stretch this (and are willing to do so) in view of their ideological and historical attachments. Meanwhile, green, liberal and social democratic parties could become the obvious defenders of the European project – yet, they run the risk of exhausting the reservoir of fundamentally pro-EU voters.

All mainstream parties, thus, remain caught in-between their ideological attachment to the European project on the one hand, and strategies to cope with growing Euroscepticism on the other. Given that the Eurosceptic side of the conflict currently has fair wind, depoliticising the EU dimension is likely to remain the smartest strategy for both the mainstream left and mainstream right.