

A TAXONOMY OF EUROSCEPTICISM

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Abstract

This paper aims to visualise a contemporary phenomenon with dire consequences: Euroscepticism. First of all, I draw the picture of a world in which cleavages dominate social relations. Borders sometimes become bridges between states, paradoxically, as is the case with the European Union (EU). The question is this: How can this cross-border friendship be maintained? I cannot provide an answer, but develop a taxonomy of negative sentiments toward the EU and its policies. By understanding the reasons that lead citizens to criticise the EU, we can prevent these negative thoughts from rising, so as to avoid the negative consequences of conflict. The different types presented cover in a comprehensive manner the forms in which criticism toward the EU manifests itself. The ultimate purpose of this paper is to describe each type and to provide recent examples to illustrate them. Last but not least, I briefly formulate a few statements regarding the evolution of Euroscepticism between 2004 and 2020.

Keywords

Euroscepticism • social cleavages • Brexit • democratic deficit • financial crisis of 2008–2010 • democratic backsliding • social conflict

1. Introduction

Modern societies are of a special complexity, bringing together social actors with diverse benchmarks, ways of thinking, and ways of acting. Each community, and implicitly any society, will perpetuate a different set of norms through the process of socialisation, thus building its own culture. The concept of culture can be defined as “the values, ceremonies and ways of life characteristic of a given group” (Giddens 2010, 951).

Although each community has its own peculiarities, cultural cores develop over time in specific geographical areas, gathering individuals with similar (but not identical) aspirations, values, interests, beliefs, and ways of thinking and acting. Thus, barriers arise between societies, not eminently political, but especially cultural, so that, even today, within the same country we find people with various cultural backgrounds. For example, there is a high probability that an average French citizen has a different cultural background from that of an average English citizen (although in an age of globalisation, this statement is becoming less plausible), and moreover, a French citizen from Brittany might be culturally different from a French citizen in Lyon.

Consequently, insofar as human communities promote different norms of cohabitation, the following complex questions arise: To what extent is close cooperation between these groups possible, and to what extent can these

differences be levelled? What tools are to be used to reduce historically accumulated cleavages between heterogeneous communities coexisting in a common geographical or political area? How is a common identity developed between communities with preexisting identities?

To summarise these dilemmas, we might ask this question: How can we turn walls into bridges so that, paradoxically, cultural differences become linkages between nations, rather than obstacles?

2. Social Cleavages in the European Union

2.1. The EU case: The path to a unique identity

The issue of normative discrepancies between communities is all the more visible in the European Union (EU). From the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, there is a large number of nations with histories, religions, customs, values, ways of life, economies, political systems, and so on, that vary from one place to another. Under the aegis of a supranational entity, close cooperation between communities involves, first and foremost, finding a common denominator to reconcile cross-border cultural differences. In the framework of the EU

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project, the crucial moment was the Schuman Declaration, which set out the following guidance for the future of European integration: "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity" (European Union 2020). This phrase taken from the Schuman Declaration captures several aspects closely linked to the theme of this essay, Euroscepticism.

1. *De facto* solidarity implies the occurrence of "natural" cooperation between heterogeneous communities. Therefore, such communities act in a coordinated manner instinctively (as they perceive such acts as the rightful ones), and not as a consequence of legal norms. To the extent that solidarity remains an objective or a principle enshrined in the treaties (*de jure* solidarity), its enforcement through legal mechanisms in times of crisis (e.g., to help the peoples in distress after an economic collapse) will increase the Eurosceptic feelings of those who do not benefit from this redistribution.
2. The course of the EU project was phased and involved qualitative and quantitative leaps. It is considered that the Treaty of Rome aimed to establish a customs union, with the objective of subsequently translating it into an economic union, then a monetary one, and finally, a political one. This evolution was to be generated over several decades by spillover effects (Bovis 1998, 220). Because these developments took place in a relatively short time, resistance to them on the part of citizens who have not internalised a newly European culture would have produced Eurosceptic sentiments.
3. Last but not least, the evolution of the EU must be inextricably linked to its solid achievements in terms of economic, social, and cultural developments. In fact, as I show hereafter, there might be support from the very people who do not identify with a European culture, but embrace the EU as a political construct for pragmatic reasons (e.g., higher developments of national economies). In contrast, in the absence of satisfactory accomplishments, pragmatic supporters of the EU would reject further integration, unless sufficient benefits are to be provided.

Following World War II, the founding fathers of the EU embarked on an ambitious project that envisaged the removal of cultural, political, and economic barriers that hindered the cooperation of European nations for centuries. Regional integration, incipiently, had an economic and social dimension at the forefront, aiming to restore the economies affected by the past global conflict and reinstate a sense of security among its citizens. In this respect, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was originally created in 1951, followed by the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) in 1957, expanding the fields of economic cooperation between member states

(MS; Dumitraşcu 2021, 60), pursuing the principle of gradual developments stated in the Schuman Declaration. Between 1951 and 1957, the European project had experienced its first failure: the repudiation of the European Defence Community in 1954, a far too ambitious development at that time, as MS did not have enough confidence to cooperate in such a vital area (Warleigh-Lack 2009, 22). Throughout the European integration process, the Maastricht Treaty (1993) represented the leap from economic to political cooperation, establishing a pillar-based system, with the Community coexisting along two intergovernmental pillars: Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). At the same time, economic cooperation has deepened by laying the foundation of a single EU currency, the Euro (Bărbulescu 2008, 56–59). The logical question that would arise now is this: Is this qualitative leap premature, insofar as it would produce a negative sentiment toward the EU? As I detail later, Euroscepticism became a common concept with the Maastricht Treaty. This is linked to harsh criticism coming from persons that perceived the rules contained in the Treaty as producing a too wide qualitative leap in integration.

2.2. Are some cultures more inclined toward integration?

Regional integration, whether regarded as economic, political, social, or a mixture of those, has been assimilated differently depending on the cultural background of each community. Some of them, through state-level decision makers, promote close supranational cooperation, whereas others perceive intergovernmental cooperation as the best alternative; some consider economic cooperation essential, and others might emphasise military cooperation. There are several factors that might affect the paths that decision makers choose when promoting one type of cooperation over another. For example, the structure of state (the political system) might affect its citizens' perception of the optimal model of cooperation; it is believed that citizens in a federal state, such as Germany, are more prone to partially cede the exercise of their own national sovereignty to exercise it jointly with other states, whereas the long-standing tradition of the unitary state, observed in the United Kingdom, induces a reluctant attitude toward the partial cession of its exercise of sovereignty (Risse 2006, 300). From the perspective of a German citizen, public administration is originally carried out at different levels (national and local-regional), and as a consequence, the emergence of a supranational entity will not cause anything more than the addition of a new level of administration, linked to the others. The perspective of a British citizen is that public administration is originally and mainly organised at a single level (national level), with certain nuances of decentralisation; the emergence of a supranational level of administration is a novelty, a social institution that citizens have not previously internalised through their own historical background.

Formerly comprising 28 European states, it is no wonder that differences between nations in the EU form an impediment to wider supranational cooperation. The previously mentioned differences, particularly cultural ones, could be mitigated in various ways, mainly by drawing a common European identity, that is to be subsidiary to the local identities existent in the MS. The reception of such an identity is difficult to achieve for citizens who bear unique identities that are encapsulated between the borders of a political state (e.g., a person who only identifies as Romanian), but it is easier to achieve for citizens who already regard themselves as belonging to several cultural identities (De Vries 2018, 15; e.g., a person who strongly identifies as Eastern European, Romanian, Transylvanian, a citizen of Bucharest city, etc.). De Vries (2018, 15) noted that the internalisation of an identity distinct from the national one is easier to achieve for individuals who have had transnational experience or have lived for longer periods of time in other states than their native ones. However, strong identification with a nation-state is not considered an obstacle to the acceptance and even internalisation of a common European identity, only insofar as identification with the nation-states does not imply the disapproval of other cultures and identities (Serrichio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia 2013, 53).

3. Theoretical Framework

If so far the paper has focused on introductory aspects of the European political construction and the issues arising from cultural-normative differences between communities, the rest of the paper addresses one of the consequences of dissension between the expectations of EU citizens (expectations ultimately sketched by their heterogeneous cultural backgrounds) and the state of regional integration, and that is Euroscepticism.

The next section deals with Euroscepticism from a theoretical point of view, emphasising its definition, content, and different typologies that can be attributed to this concept, while indicating a specific typology that I consider fundamental for the explanation of this phenomenon.

I then address types of Euroscepticism—economic Euroscepticism, sovereign Euroscepticism, democratic Euroscepticism, and social Euroscepticism—referring to examples from former and current EU MS, such as Finland, France, Hungary, and the United Kingdom.

I believe that it is indispensable to present various examples to better visualize the diversity of Eurosceptic ideas, as they differ depending on the political culture, the economic system and performance, and the geographical position (or other similar factors) of each nation.

Finally, I briefly focus on the evolution of Euroscepticism, and then present my conclusions.

4. Euroscepticism

4.1. Definition, characteristics, and typologies

Euroscepticism became a mainstream concept concomitantly with the Maastricht Treaty, but it has been addressed several times in the 1980s, acquiring various connotations (Bijsmans 2021, 332). For example, the term Eurosceptic was frequently used in the 1980s by journalists and politicians in the United Kingdom when referring to Conservative MPs who opposed (or had reservations about) the European integration that was suggested through the Single European Act (Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood 2018, 4). This concept was originally designed to analyse the position of political parties in EU MS toward European integration (thus, its initial aim was to study and explain the specific attitudes of some groups, including in particular the “elites”), but later became a form of conceptualisation of the negative attitudes toward the EU or the European integration, targeting the attitudes of both individuals and groups with at least a minimal connection to the EU (Serrichio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia 2013, 52). Serrichio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia (2013) distinguished between several types of negative attitudes toward the EU or the European integration, as follows:

- Opposition to the public authorities targets negative attitudes directed against the EU institutional actors (e.g., European Parliament) and its officials or civil servants.
- Opposition to the regime targets negative attitudes directed against the values, norms, and general principles of the EU.
- Opposition to the community targets the negative attitudes of citizens from a particular EU MS directed against citizens of other MS (or other MS as a whole).

Serrichio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia (2013, 52) also mentioned the *diffuse opposition* as a resistance to European integration, and the *specific opposition*, that is resistance to the idea of a European Union.

To better understand Euroscepticism, however, its definition should be assigned. Euroscepticism can be succinctly defined as “a sentiment of disapproval, reaching a certain degree and durability, directed towards the EU in its entirety or towards particular policy areas or developments” (Sørensen 2008, 6). Based on this definition and from previous clarifications, it can be argued that the types of negative sentiments toward the EU or the European integration vary from one case to another. To capture this variation, it is affirmed that Eurosceptic attitudes are part of a closed interval with the following two extremities: *hard* Euroscepticism (complete repudiation of the EU) and *soft* Euroscepticism (criticism toward particular EU policies or institutions; Alibert 2016, 1–7).

The distinction between hard and soft Euroscepticism is sometimes criticised in terms of generating confusion, given that soft Euroscepticism ends up including a too-wide and diverse range of attitudes. Another problem is that assigning a similar label to criticism toward a particular policy (e.g., a group criticises the Common Agricultural Policy [CAP] in light of the high financial burden of this policy, consequently advocating for budget cuts on CAP) and criticism that aims to completely eliminate the EU is not an advantage for researchers and puts soft Eurosceptics in a negative light (Bijmans 2021, 332). Although we can emphasise the soft–hard distinction, assigning the Eurosceptic label to both these situations can create problematic situations, in which otherwise completely democratic, rational, well-intentioned attitudes about how some EU policies can be improved are considered similar to radical, extremist, undemocratic ideas and perspectives.

I believe that the distinction between soft and hard Euroscepticism might be useful because it captures a quasi-complete set of reluctant attitudes toward aspects of the EU from a particular moment. At the same time, the perpetuation of soft Euroscepticism might lead to its transformation into hard Euroscepticism to the extent that for long periods of time criticised EU policies do not change to the liking of EU citizens. Even so, a middle ground might exist, and such negative attitudes do not know any limitations. In short, we cannot view Euroscepticism as a soft–hard or white–black dichotomy, but as an infinity of shades of grey. A shade similar to this soft–hard dichotomy is presented in different terms in another paper (Bakare and Sherazi 2019, 7). Bakare and Sherazi (2019, 7) discussed an *antagonistic* school of thought related to the EU (the ideas perpetuated by the antagonistic school would fit into the definition of both soft and hard Euroscepticism). Even so, the general image of this school is that of an incubator for harsh negative attitudes against the EU in its entirety, and thus it would make it seem similar to hard Euroscepticism. In addition to the antagonistic school, they argued about the existence of a *protagonist-transitionist* school that carries out a constructive critique of the European edifice or of particular EU policies, rather pursuing a transition to more viable solutions, which would fit into the logic of a soft Euroscepticism (Bakare and Sherazi did not consider this school of thought to be representative of Euroscepticism).

4.2. Basic taxonomy

Sørensen (2008, 8) captured another classification of the different types of Euroscepticism as follows:

- *Economic Euroscepticism*: The negative attitudes toward the EU or its policies stem from the consideration of cooperation as costly, whereas the benefits of integration are seen as less attractive; the cost–benefit operation, specific

to microeconomics, has similarities with the utilitarian perspective, which is why I propose the alternative name for economic Euroscepticism to be utilitarian Euroscepticism.

- *Sovereign Euroscepticism*: The negative attitudes toward the EU or its policies lie in the feeling of fear, of revulsion toward the cession of the exercise of national sovereignty.
- *Democratic Euroscepticism*: The negative attitudes toward the EU or its policies are generated by the democratic deficit; that is, the belief that the EU institutional structure is not representative enough for its citizens.
- *Social Euroscepticism*: The negative attitudes toward the EU or its policies reside in ideological differences between individuals (it is part of the conflict of ideas specific to a democracy, in which the “left” and the “right” compete for ideational supremacy in terms of public policies).

These four types can coexist in any possible form, merging with one another, but also with other typologies. We might find situations in which economic Euroscepticism merges with the sovereign one and is hard Euroscepticism, taking the form of harsh negative attitudes directed against the European community, its public authorities, the regime, and so on. This situation could be at the same time associated with the specific opposition type discussed earlier.

I believe that the delimitation between utilitarian, sovereign, democratic, and social Euroscepticism represents a *taxonomy of Euroscepticism* because it highlights the factors, conditions, and causes of the emergence and development of this social phenomenon.

5. The taxonomy

5.1. Utilitarian Euroscepticism

From a certain point of view, support for the European political construction can be operationalised in the light of utilitarian ideas, based on a cost–benefit calculation. Consequently, Euroscepticism arises when public perception is to quantify costs as superior to the benefits (De Vries 2018, 14). For example, the “Leave” campaign in the United Kingdom was conducted against the backdrop of arguments of this kind (Vote Leave 2016), such as the following:

- The United Kingdom spends more than £350 million weekly in funds granted directly to the EU.
- Expenditure or “European Union cost” could be modified to fund the National Health System (NHS).
- EU Law incurs additional costs for small businesses, consumers, and other persons.

Through this work, I do not intend to discuss the validity of the aforementioned arguments (or the validity of other economic arguments regarding the benefit–cost of the EU membership), but rather to emphasise that such rhetoric is representative of utilitarian Euroscepticism, and it has been internalised by a

large segment of the British society (in the United Kingdom, the internalisation of these messages was as profound as to lead to Brexit). Moreover, in this area of economic and financial criticisms addressed to the EU, there are other critiques, with reference to the management of finances in the Monetary Union area. In this respect, the criticism toward the EU is not hard Euroscepticism, but it is neither soft; rather, it is an intermediate variant in which certain policies or actions of the EU having a negative economic impact are criticised or repudiated (Bijmans 2021, 332).

At this point, however, I address more specifically how financial and economic problems reveal certain shortcomings of the EU construction and how they lead to Eurosceptic sentiments. Following the financial crisis of 2008 to 2010, within the Eurozone (Economic and Monetary Union [EMU]), there was a threatening accumulation of debts of some states, capable of affecting the stability and integrity of the Euro, which led to the creation of the European Stability Mechanism, creating the possibility for EMU to pay some debts of states that are in danger of bankruptcy to protect the European currency, under conditions imposed on states aided by this mechanism (Scheinert 2021, 4). There is a discrepancy between the *creditor states* (which refund the “financial failure of some Eurozone states”) and the *debtor states* (those whose debts are being paid by other states, an event called *bailout*), and this situation reveals the lack of solidarity between some MS that are also part of the Eurozone (Pirro, Taggart, and van Kessel 2018, 3).

Overall, Euroscepticism has experienced an increase throughout the financial crisis, as revealed by Euro-barometer studies (the increase of Euroscepticism felt at the end of the crisis is similar to that seen after the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty; Serrichio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia 2013, 57). The negative financial-economic consequences are inversely proportional to the citizens’ trust in the EU. Paradoxically, there are cases where the trust given to national states does not diminish drastically in these times of crisis, and the economic and financial recovery leads to increased trust in national states rather than in the EU, as was the case of the German Federal Republic (Ioannou, Jamet, and Kleibl 2015, 3).

The same report mentioned earlier reveals the following changes in the citizens’ trust in the EU during the financial crisis: Before the recession (2007), trust was at a level of approximately 52 percent (EU-wide), it dropped to approximately 48 percent (2008), 47 percent (2009), and 42 percent (2010), respectively, following a sharp decline, so that in 2013 it was at a level below 35 percent. The situation differs from state to state, but there are particular cases that reinforce the idea that the economic failures of some EU MS might lead to widespread resentment of the EU in its entirety. In the case of Greece, if trust toward the EU was at a relatively high level (approximately 65 percent in 2007, compared to 52 percent,

the European average), as a result of the financial crisis, the trust level in 2012 reached approximately 18 percent, twice lower than the European average.

To provide another example, utilitarian Euroscepticism was also present in Finnish politics and politically promoted by the *Perussuomalaiset* or the Finns Party (FP). Even more, the FP achieved a historical electoral result through a campaign based on such Euroscepticism, managing to achieve a leap from 4.05 percent in the 2007 elections to 19 percent of the votes in 2011, as a consequence of the problems generated by the financial crisis. Arter (2011, 1921) noted the following two key points from the FP’s election campaign that led to great success in 2011:

- Criticism related to Finland’s adoption of the Euro in 2002. At the time, the leader of the FP called the 2011 legislative election a “referendum on the Euro,” calling for a return to the former national currency.
- Criticism related to Portugal’s *bailout*. The FP considered that aiding Portugal’s recovery from the financial crisis posed an unfair burden on Finnish citizens.

Herkman (2017, 1) pointed out that, although in the early years of the twenty-first century parties with a Eurosceptic agenda had little popularity, with no visibility on the European political spectrum, amid crises such as the European migrant crisis, financial crisis, and others, Eurosceptic messages gained momentum and popularity, generating unexpected electoral victories that would not have been possible a few decades earlier (this was the case of the FP in 2011).

Returning to some aspects mentioned earlier, not only has the situation of the Stability Mechanism generated hopelessness (or even despair) among citizens, but also other negative aspects related to the economic development of the MS at that time, such as rising unemployment, deepening public deficits, increasing debt, and the risk of inability to pay debts by citizens or even states. All combined were so strong that they led to the resignation of some national governments (Serrichio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia 2013, 51).

The evolution of Euroscepticism in France is also linked to the financial crisis and the lack of trust in the EU. The year 2008 was the turning point when optimism related to the EU was drastically diminished. This reduction was made on account of the sentiments that the economic recession was due to membership to the EU and the increasing phenomenon of globalisation. Concomitantly, the negative financial events that occurred in the Iberian Peninsula and in Greece further decreased the trust of French citizens in the EU institutions (Alibert 2016, 5-6). Recently, there has been an increase in economic Euroscepticism throughout France, with additional criticism regarding the EU CAP (Sørensen 2008, 10–11).

In Eastern Europe, the shape and magnitude of economic Euroscepticism is different, as the absorption of cohesion funds and other types of European funds are extremely

important budgetary resources for these states. Although the rhetoric of Fidesz (Hungary) conflicts with the EU's principles (it is a rather sovereign Euroscepticism), it does not exercise a hard Eurosceptic sentiment (although debatable) because it would involve the loss of the financial benefits granted by its EU membership (Vegh 2021, 4).

Bakare and Sherazi (2019, 8–10) argued that the response of the EU institutions to the 2008–2010 financial crisis was both insufficient and, ultimately, useless, which is why several populist politicians used the incompetence of the EU institutions to solve such severe problems as a campaign theme. A negative factor was the intervention of China, suggesting that it could provide financial aid to relieve Europe, a humiliating situation from the perspective of a large segment of the population in the EU. Nevertheless, economic disparities between MS have worsened, causing the resentment of less developed states toward the more highly developed ones.

The question that finally arises is this: How can utilitarian Euroscepticism be diminished? A study by De Vries (2018, 202) revealed that the public perceives integration in the monetary area as necessary to improve the economic performance of MS and the EU in its entirety, agreeing with the proposal of creating a separate budget for the Eurozone and appointing a European minister of finance to manage EU finances. In fact, any developments resulting in improved living standards and economic performance for each MS will lead to a decline in utilitarian Euroscepticism.

5.2. Sovereign Euroscepticism

This form of Euroscepticism lies in the fear of citizens that the institutions of the EU tend to “usurp the authority of the Member States” (Bakare and Sherazi 2019, 8), thus eroding national sovereignty. Bakare and Sherazi (2019, 12) believed that the core of the sovereign Eurosceptic message lies in the populist discourses of far-right parties, political groups that advocate for dismantling the EU and restoring complete national sovereignty (sovereign Euroscepticism can be simply exemplified by the Brexit case). For example, sentiments related to sovereign Euroscepticism were present in the speeches of Nigel Farage, a staunch opponent of UK's membership in the EU. One of his statements reads as follows: Brexit is a statement of national sovereignty. Don't misunderstand me: I like nations. I like borders. I like the people that live within those borders making their own laws. But I don't like it when faceless bureaucrats make laws for nations they don't even live in. (Farage 2016)

Similar statements that can be framed in the wide picture of sovereign Euroscepticism can be found in the case of Romania. For example, former Prime Minister V. Dăncilă made this statement in the plenary of the European Parliament: “I did not

come here to give an account,” regarding the issue of changing the laws of justice and, correlated, the criticism brought by the Venice Commission to the Romanian government. Similarly, a former leader of the Social Democratic Party, L. Dragnea, engaged in an aggressive rhetoric against the EU specific to sovereign Euroscepticism, declaring during the European Parliament election campaign in 2019 that the EU is similar to imperialist colonial powers that conquer other territories and steal their resources, calling Romania an EU colony (Kaeding, Pollak, and Schmidt 2021, 124).

In other Eastern European countries, sovereign Euroscepticism is perpetuated by right-wing and far-right parties, with specific nuances. However, some parties criticise their countries' membership in the EU, NATO, or both, because it requires a transfer of the exercise of national sovereignty (Vegh 2021, 5). Vegh (2021, 5) provided a list of political parties that operate with this rhetoric that crowns national sovereignty, advocating for an exit from the EU: Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) in the Czech Republic, People's Party Our Slovakia (L'SNS – Koltebists) in Slovakia, and National Movement (RN) in Poland.

In Central and Eastern Europe, however, one can observe a tendency for parties operating with a soft Eurosceptic rhetoric to support the following measures: promoting the accession of the Western Balkan states to the EU and supporting wider defensive cooperation through the establishment of a European Defensive Union, Fidesz being given as an example (Vegh 2021, 16). On the one hand, the accession of states such as Serbia is desirable because their policies are generally labelled as “illiberal,” similar to the policies promoted by Fidesz, and on the other hand, because achieving cross-border security is a main campaign theme for Fidesz. Consequently, although military cooperation would imply partially ceding the exercise of sovereignty, this is regarded as having a lower cost compared to the benefit of safeguarding national security.

Even so, it is argued by some authors (Bakare and Sherazi 2019, 24) that sovereign Euroscepticism is useful. Although a minority seeks the destruction of the EU, paradoxically, populist parties exploiting sovereign rhetoric indirectly support the existence of the EU, because they generate greater solidarity among those who support the EU. At the same time, it is easy to understand that politicians who create a career through Eurosceptic messages will lose the catalyst of their political popularity if they cause their own state to leave the EU (I believe that the case of Farage leaving politics after Brexit is representative of this idea).

I stress that the existence of sovereign Euroscepticism lies in the dissension between national identity and European identity. Nationalists cannot identify with a new identity—the European one—therefore, they will not allow the shared exercise of state sovereignty in some policy areas. Nationalism can be defined

as “the set of beliefs and symbols that express identification with a given national community” (Giddens 2010, 964). I believe that to the extent that a person identifies exclusively with a particular nation, Euroscepticism will arise as a result of this person’s inability to internalise a new subsidiary identity. There will be a latent tension between the two identities, with the person constantly trying to repudiate the second identity, materialising in criticism toward the EU and the spread of the sentiments that the EU usurps the exercise of national sovereignty.

5.3. Democratic Euroscepticism

The democratic deficit in the EU or “democratic legitimacy” is a central point of debate in Eurosceptic rhetoric that underlines the lack of endurance of the European political structure in the face of economic crises (e.g., the lack of results when dealing with the financial crisis of 2008–2010), social crises, or political crises (including the health crisis generated by the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus), sequential events that will lead countries, pressured by public opinion, to the option of intergovernmental cooperation rather than integration (Bakare and Sherazi 2019, 5–25).

Jens-Peter Bonde (2011, 147–62), former member of the European Parliament and Danish national, highlighted some of the key points of the argument that the EU suffers from a democratic deficit (in fact, given its political affiliation, the arguments are rather conveyed under a partisan, persuasive formula), which I consider representative of democratic Euroscepticism. Here is a summary of these points.

- Initially, the pooling of decision-making power by several states on particular economic and political sectors is considered useful because it allows smaller states to have an influence in extremely important policy areas (e.g., the rules on trade).
- The criticism is that the areas covered by EU law are too varied (an additional critique here concerns the Treaty of Lisbon, which, although it succeeded the “Constitutional Treaty,” generally had a similar content, managing to vastly extend the competences of the EU), so that rules that are more related to national specificities are imposed on citizens by EU bureaucrats who are not democratically elected. The following nuance is stated, however: The European Parliament’s involvement in decision-making processes is welcome and demonstrates an openness to democratic instruments, but at the time of the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, there was not enough empowerment of the European Parliament.
- The European Commission has a monopoly on legislative initiative, and the decision-making process includes too little influence coming from the European Parliament. It is

believed that the Parliament’s strong influence stems from its lobbying actions, managing rather indirectly to change EU law. In the equation of the decision-making process, the influence of the Commission and the Council, including COREPER, is too great compared to the power that the European Parliament holds. At the same time, it should be noted here that although the Council is composed of representatives from each MS, a majority of decisions in the Council are already made at the level of COREPER, without a genuine debate at the level of ministers from each MS.

- There is an inflation of rules targeting all citizens of the EU. In addition to Regulations, Directives, and Decisions, and case law from the European Court of Justice, there are technical rules imposed by institutions such as the European Committee for Standardization, the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization, and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute. These institutions impose technical standards and specifications on products, which hinders the activity of MS manufacturers. These standards are not created as a result of a democratic process, but as a result of a technocratic process. Regarding the last aspect, it is argued that through the growth of rules established at the supranational level, information becomes insufficient and the national press are unable to keep up with the decision making at the EU level.

Crombez (2003, 101–20) tried to operationalise the concept of democratic legitimacy in an attempt to transpose this issue within the EU. Although prior to Bonde’s writing, the article by Crombez provides some general answers to the so-called democratic deficit in the EU. First, he distinguished between two ways of viewing the democratic deficit:

- Viewing the “output,” that is, the result of the political process (enacted legal norms), and its comparison with the preferences of citizens with voting rights. To the extent that output is along similar lines to the preferences of a majority, Euroscepticism remains low; if the rules imposed by the EU do not match the preferences of the majority, Euroscepticism increases.
- Viewing the “input,” or the decision-making process itself. Do the EU decision-making processes fit contemporary democratic standards and principles, especially principles of representativeness? If the answer is affirmative, Euroscepticism remains low; if the answer is negative, Euroscepticism rises to a higher level.

Crombez (2003, 101–20) raised the following question concerning the output: How can minorities be protected if EU policies are only to favour the majority? In fact, it is argued that in any democracy, a balance must be perpetuated between the satisfaction of the majority and the simultaneous protection of minorities’ rights. Consequently, the policies that have the

least effects on the rise of Euroscepticism are the median ones (median choices are seen as democratic, and they also provide a balance between the majority's preferences and minorities' rights). In exceptional circumstances, the interests of the majority are partially sacrificed to protect minorities (as was the case with the European migrant crisis) on humanitarian grounds, leading to a deviation from the median policies—these disruptive policies increase Euroscepticism on the basis of a representative deficit.

Regarding input, Crombez (2003, 101–20) was of the opinion that to look at the democratic deficit through this perspective, it is necessary to have a space for public opinion at the European level, even if, as he later specifies, such a European public space is not exactly structured (or even existing; there is no European demos or European electorate, but rather a complex electorate consisting of the cumulation of the electorate in each MS). Without such a public space, it is difficult to draw a correlation between the mechanisms of decision making at EU level and the representativeness, because citizens relate more to the members of the EU institutions that belong to their own country (e.g., members of European Parliament from each country, national representatives in the Council), but not the European decision-making process in its entirety.

Regarding the output, Crombez (2003, 113–14) tried to provide an answer related to the existence of a democratic deficit in the EU and concluded that, although it exists, the democratic deficit is relatively small compared to another state that is considered a landmark for democracies: the United States. Comparing U.S. and EU institutional systems, it is argued that the manner in which power is structured between EU institutions is no less democratic than in the case of the United States (however, the Commission's role in legislative initiative is a hint of the democratic deficit). At the same time, if a legislative initiative is not to the liking of the public, for U.S. citizens and EU citizens it is an equally difficult step to prevent the enactment of such initiatives. Additionally, specific aspects are criticised. First, the legislative process at the EU level, due to its complexity, seems to be rather secretive (especially carrying out decisions at the COREPER level), as the meetings of the Council and the Commission are secret, which leads to the lack of information. Another critique is the existence of too many steps of delegation. If the European Parliament has only one step, as members are directly elected by citizens, the Council has a double step: First, citizens vote for members of national parliaments, and then those parliaments form governments, and, consequently, their members are part of the Council. Further, the European Commission has a triple step, as citizens elect national parliaments, then national parliaments form national governments, and consequently these governments nominate commissioners, and then

the European Parliament validates them. These difficulties increase the picture of a democratic deficit.

As an example of democratic Euroscepticism, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) is a promoter of this type of Euroscepticism (although it is not a political party in an EU MS). Since 1992, the SVP has campaigned along the message that direct democracy specific to the Swiss state is the most viable form of government, and that EU intrusions would have a negative impact on the Swiss political system; consequently, SVP advocated for an exit from the European Economic Area (EEA; Kaeding, Pollak, and Schmidt 2021, 150).

Kaeding, Pollak, and Schmidt (2021, 150–51) considered that the influence of the SVP led to the removal from the political agenda of the Swiss state of any further rapprochement with the EU, although they failed to realize the exit from the EEA. The most popular message perpetuated was the dichotomy between free democracy (Switzerland) and lack of democracy or democratic deficit (specific to the EU). The Euroscepticism promoted by SVP was not limited to the democratic type, but included sovereign and utilitarian Euroscepticism. De Vries (2018, 25) stressed that in politically developed countries, democratic Euroscepticism is popular, as the *modus operandi* of national democracies is seen as an example for how democracy should work in the EU (the supranational level). In other words, less politically developed states, which do not have a long tradition of democracy, are less inclined to have citizens who develop democratic Euroscepticism, whereas utilitarian and sovereign Euroscepticism are rather the focus of negative sentiments toward the EU.

In conclusion, I believe that reducing the democratic deficit is a double-edged sword because it could lead to increased sovereign Euroscepticism. Creating new institutions or giving the European Parliament wider competencies (to the detriment of the Council) might lead to the phenomenon that citizens see the role of national governments diminish, and, therefore, the exercise of national sovereignty is jeopardised. De Vries (2018, 217) proposed that the introduction of a political system through which a pan-European government or a president of the EU is elected would arouse more conflict among citizens, because the various political and cultural cleavages between nations would cause the anguish in countries that do not have representatives in the pan-European government or do not hold the European presidency. Given this perspective, the current institutional structure, whereby the presidency of the Council is rotative, giving each MS the chance to organise and chair the meetings of the Council, and the Commission having members from each MS, is a more appropriate alternative than filling all high offices in the EU through elections.

5.4. Social Euroscepticism

The issue of social Euroscepticism is as complex as the other types presented so far. Even so, it is easier to understand in light of the fact that social Euroscepticism seems to be an emanation of how modern democracies generally work: an inherent conflict of ideas. Some might consider some policies too liberal, whereas others might consider them too social; it is a matter of personal choice. From this perspective, social Euroscepticism will always exist insofar as the EU guarantees the freedom of thought, because as long as such freedom is preserved, people will develop different preferences for particular policies, or, in other words, will acquiesce to a political ideology.

It is argued that social Euroscepticism was the basis for the refusal of French citizens to ratify the Constitutional Treaty of the EU, offering this argument: Following an opinion poll conducted in 2004, 36 percent of French citizens considered the EU to pursue policies that were too liberal, and a year later, close to the referendum for ratification of the Constitutional Treaty, almost 48 percent of French citizens thought that the EU was far too liberal and not social enough, and that the Constitutional Treaty promoted even more liberal policies. The French refusal at the time, however, was categorised as a negative vote based on the economic situation in France, as well as a negative vote on an unpopular president and loathed prime minister (Sørensen 2008, 14–15).

Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood (2018, 307–08) noted the existence of sharp criticism toward the EU (similar to soft Euroscepticism) to change policies so that they become more social, sentiments found in groups of left-wing activists. This type of Euroscepticism is called *critical Europeanism*. In addition to criticising the democratic deficit, these activists criticise the neoliberal policies of the EU and advocate for a different Europe that focuses on protecting the social rights of citizens and serving an eminently social role.

Social Euroscepticism is also spread by members of European Parliament, which partake in small parliamentary groups, such as the Greens or the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). Regarding the Euroscepticism promoted by GUE/NGL, Tahmiscioğlu (2018, 3–5) argued that the far-left parties are critical of capitalism, free markets, and liberal economies and are trying to change the paradigm and the principles of the EU through the democratic instruments provided by the European Parliament. At the same time, these parties advocate for European integration to be based on solidarity, workers' rights, gender equality, civil liberties, and responsibility for climate change. Another aspect criticised by this group is the regional policy, which does not promote

solidarity or cohesion among MS, but determines unjust capitalist competition between regions.

In view of these facts, social Euroscepticism can take various forms and is inherent in the democratic societies that make up the EU today.

6. The Evolution of Euroscepticism

As mentioned earlier, the operationalisation of Euroscepticism is difficult to achieve and first of all involves establishing what Euroscepticism really means. Is it a critique against specific EU policies or a strong sentiment of hatred against the EU that could lead to its collapse? As this paper does not aim to provide a complete picture as vast as that of Euroscepticism, to visualise the evolution of this phenomenon I will refer strictly to two statistical sources. First of all, I will look at the evolution of the trust given to the EU institutions altogether compared to the trust given to national institutions (e.g., national governments and parliaments), for the period from 2004 to 2020. With reference to these developments, statistics are presented by the European Commission (2021), and to capture them here, I include Figure 1, which is taken from that document.

As Figure 1 shows, trust in the EU is generally higher than trust in national institutions. If the average trust in the EU varies between 31 percent and 57 percent (the average is 41.1 percent and the median is 42 percent), the trust in national parliaments varies between 25 percent and 43 percent (the average is 32.4 percent and the median is 33 percent). There was an increase in trust in the EU prior to the 2008–2010 financial crisis which has eroded in subsequent years, gradually declining by 2014. After this moment, a short-term increase in trust was followed by another decrease (probably generated by the European migrant crisis), followed by an increase. In the period from 2017 to 2021 there has been a constant trust level. Current trust in national governments (approximately 40 percent), however, is almost equal to that of the EU in 2020. Visualising these developments, I stress that the current times are marked by a constant, yet moderate Euroscepticism, with developments that are difficult to assess, provided that the pandemic crisis might generate intriguing and challenging evolutions.

Another interesting aspect is the differentiated citizens' trust in the EU institutions, highlighted by data from Eurostat (2021). This shows the affinity of EU citizens toward the European Parliament (Figure 2), whereas the European Central Bank (Figure 3) and the Commission (Figure 4) have lower trust levels. This conclusion was to be expected, given that the European Parliament is the only institution with a representative role among the others.

QA6a I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.
(% - EU - TEND TO TRUST)

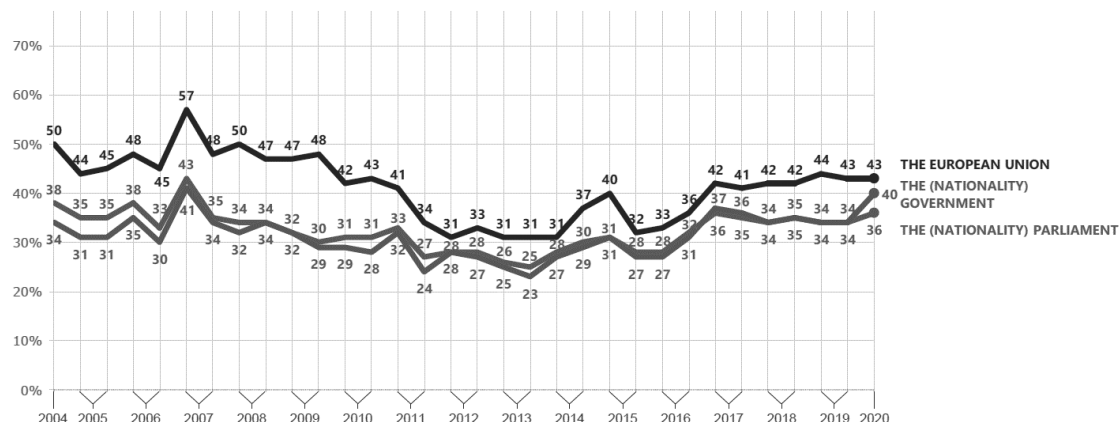


Figure 1. EU-wide trust levels regarding the EU, the national governments, and the national parliament.
Source: European Commission (2021).

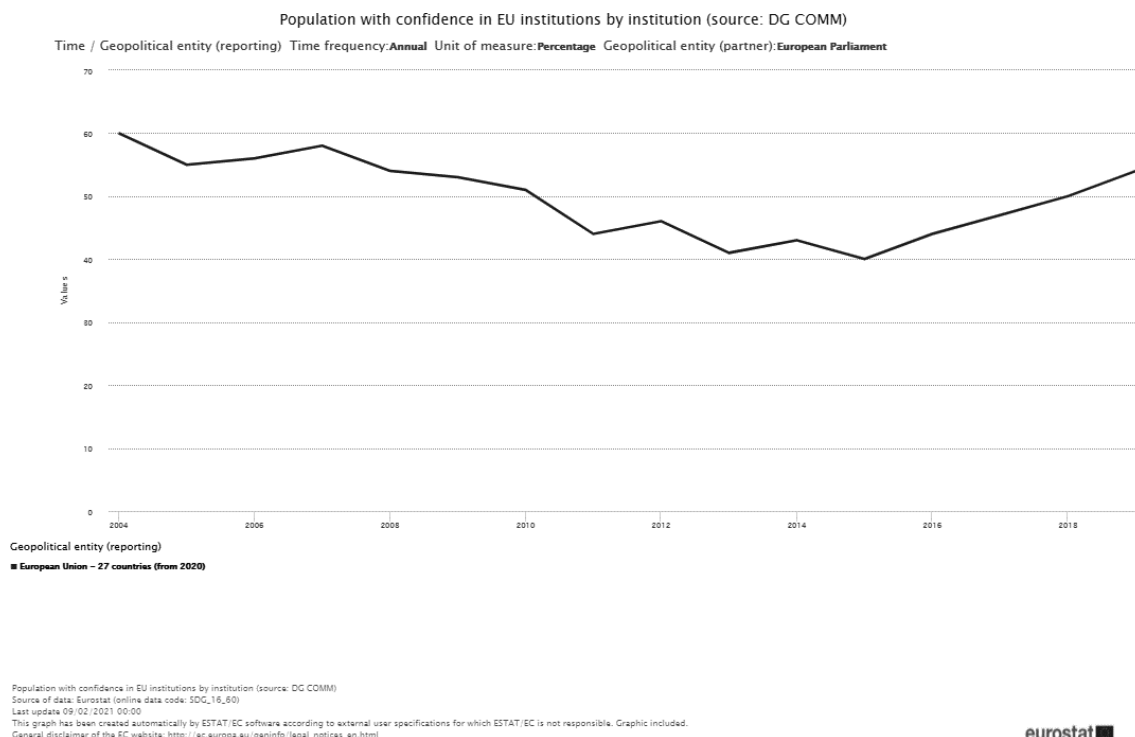


Figure 2. Trust in the European Parliament.
Source: Eurostat (2021).

7. Conclusion

Euroscepticism is a social phenomenon with various causes and factors, and it already has a relatively long existence. Whether it appears in its soft or hard form or in the four types

extensively discussed throughout this paper, Euroscepticism has serious consequences for the way the EU evolves. Although these effects are among the most serious, we must not view them entirely as negative, as Euroscepticism can lead to constructive criticism. It can lead to a European integration

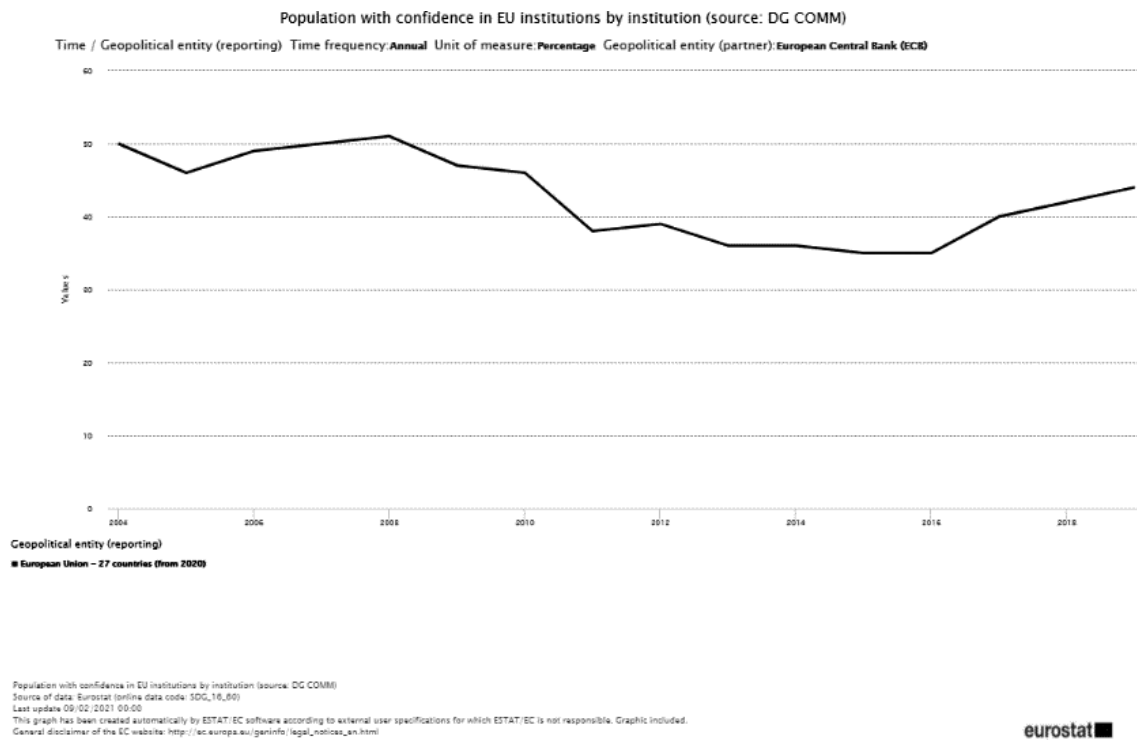


Figure 3. Trust in the European Central Bank.
Source: Eurostat (2021).

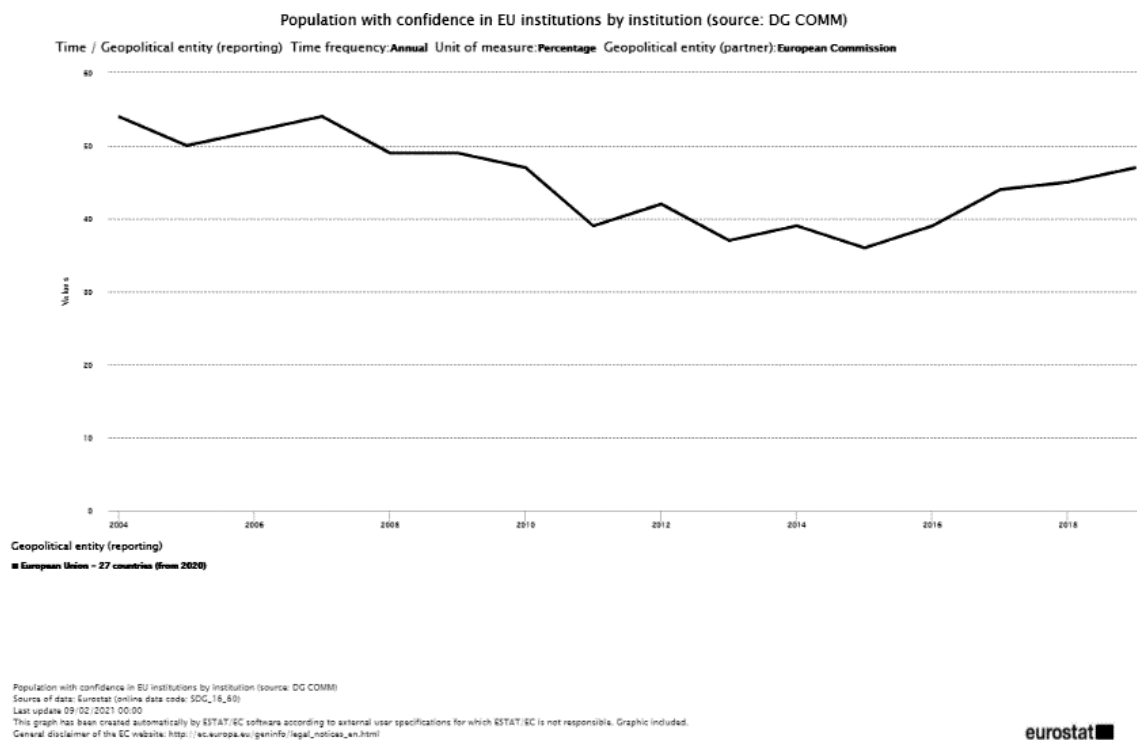


Figure 4. Trust in the European Commission.
Source: Eurostat (2021).

closer to the wishes and interests of European citizens, but, at the same time, it could lead to the dismantling of the EU. Finally, I ask this: Will Euroscepticism have a greater impact in the future? If so, what will the EU look like in decades to come?

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