EUROSCEPTICISM
IN THE FACE OF BREXIT

WITH A GLIMPSE AT EUROSCEPTIC FORCES IN AUSTRIA AND POLAND

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Abstract

After the successful Brexit referendum on June 23, 2016, many politicians and political analysts predicted a snowball effect for other eurosceptic member states of the European Union, that just was about to recover from the eurozone crisis and the migration crisis. However, public opinion towards the EU did not only not decrease but increase within the following years. The political attitude of the United Kingdom during the Brexit negotiations created a new form of unity in continental Europe. This was not necessarily due to a good performance of the EU since the referendum, but because for the first time in the history of the bloc, EU citizens were able to observe the difficulties of extracting a member state from EU framework. In Austria, the eurosceptic Freedom Party tried to use the momentum of Brexit to its favour until the public opinion shifted and, more importantly, it became a junior partner in the government, where it had to adjust to its coalition partner. In Poland, the Law and Justice Party had to balance its eurosceptic rhetoric during the rule of law crisis with the citizens' favourable public opinion towards the EU. However, this favourable public opinion can very well fall sooner than later, as Euroscepticism has always been delivered to fluctuation.

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1 Introduction

June 24, 2016, the day the results of the narrow but successful public referendum in favour of the United Kingdom (UK) leaving the European Union (EU) were published, left Europe in both shock and ecstasy. On the one side, there were the supporters of a so-called Brexit, cheering for new-found freedom. These critics of the EU argue that the greater benefit of their country lies outside of the Union's frameworks due to factors such as more independent policy-making in terms of trade or migration control. On the other side, Brexit-opponents not only in the UK but everywhere in Europe felt consternation, as for the first time in the history of European integration a country will take action in order to leave the union of states. Although eurosceptic powers all over the continent, especially from populist parties, tried to mobilize the public opinion against the EU for many years, a scenario like this did not seem possible and was faced with enormous challenges for both sides. Many politicians and political analysts were in agreement, that the United Kingdom's decision was only the beginning and will cause a chain of reactions affecting other member states, where Euro- and especially Exit-Scepticism was particularly strong due to historical reasons or the political situation within the country.

However, more than two years after the Brexit-referendum, thus far we can observe the opposite. As a special Eurobarometer survey conducted by the European Parliament in March 2019 revealed, 61% of respondents regarded EU membership as a good thing. This approval rate is back at its peak level and was last recorded in the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the introduction of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. In addition to that, 68% in the EU27 share the opinion that their country benefited from being part of the EU, which is the highest level since 1983. Even more importantly, about seven out of ten EU citizens said they would vote to remain in the EU, if a referendum would be held in their country (Special Eurobarometer 91.1, 2019). Briefly worded, at first glance it seems that the Brexit vote brought the European Union closer together, as in all parts of the continent we observe that the public is paying attention to the EU and its decisions more than ever, apparently leading to a more positive mindset towards it. To gain a better understanding of this mindset, this thesis will examine

the developments around the process of Brexit in the European Union over the last couple of years in detail. However, other influential events in recent EU history such as the euro crisis and the migration crisis have to be included too, in order to give a complete picture of the reasons for the unexpected shit in public opinion.

In the history of European integration, Euro- and Exit-Scepticism evolved into different types in each region of the EU. The peculiarity of criticism towards Brussels, regardless of EU policies or the integration process as a whole, always depended on the political and economic situation in the EU and in the respective nation state. Therefore, it is impossible to generalize eurosceptic dynamics without diluting them. As a result, scholars published theories about Euroscepticism that shaped the research on the topic over the last decades. The most influential or most relevant of these theories will be introduced in this paper. In addition to that, the eurosceptic attitude of the United Kingdom did not only seem to influence the citizens, but also the institutions in Brussels itself as well as other eurosceptic forces in the EU. We can observe a change in the political discussion when it comes to leaving the bloc, that ought to be further investigated. This can be further examined by taking a closer look at the cases of Austria and Poland.

Austria became a member of the EU in 1995, after an overwhelming majority of 66% voted in favour of accession to the bloc (Karner, 2013, p.252). However, since then Austria gained the reputation of being some kind of special case within the EU. On the one hand, it is an important member of the single market and a net contributor to the budget of the EU. On the other hand, public opinion in the country had been fluctuating consistently. In most years, the negative image of the EU outweighed the positive image. However, in autumn 2018, opinion polls revealed that 40% of Austrians see the EU in a positive light, which is an all-time high, compared to only 22% who do not share this view (Standard Eurobarometer 90.3, 2018). In 2019, a vast majority of the country's citizens (57%) also stressed that they would not vote in favour of leaving the EU (Special Eurobarometer 91.1, 2019). These results correlate not only with Brexit but also with the government participation of the Freedom Party Austria (FPÖ), a right-wing party that is known for its openly xenophobic and eurosceptic rhetoric. Since Austria's accession, the FPÖ heavily criticized the EU whenever possible and even occasionally demanded the referendum for an "Öxit", a term describing the country's exit of membership.

However, as a junior partner in the government, it notably toned town criticism of the EU. The case of Austria and particularly the case of the FPÖ is interesting for further examination as it symbolizes the dynamics of Euroscepticism in the population as well as in political parties.

In Poland, on the other hand, public opinion towards the EU is traditionally high since it joined the bloc in 2004. It was one of the few nations, where support for the EU did not decline but rise over the crisis years since 2011. However, 71% of Polish citizens stated that they were unhappy with the way the EU handled the migrations crisis (Stokes, 2016). This resulted in the rise of the conservative Law and Justice party (PiS), who won the presidential and the parliamentary elections in 2015 mainly due to using xenophobic rhetoric and conveying the issues of migration as the main problem of the EU. The PiS became the first party in the post-communist era to secure an absolute majority of seats in the parliament, which provided the power with significant legislative powers. Soon after the assumption of office, amendments by the Polish government initiated the rule of law crisis in Poland and the EU. Several authoritarian attempts by the PiS to remove judges from both ordinary and constitutional court caused a strong reaction from the European Union. For the first time in history, the European Commission triggered Article 7, which comes into effect when a country violates fundamental rules and values of the EU and can ultimately lead to the suspension of its voting rights. The case of Poland is particularly interesting for further examination, because the widely supported PiS has to manoeuvre between its open confrontation with Brussels and a population that is significantly EU-friendly.

Therefore, this paper aims to answer the following question:

- What impact did Brexit have on eurosceptic dynamics in the European Union?
- What impact did Brexit have on eurosceptic dynamic in Austria?
- What impact did Brexit have on eurosceptic dynamics in Poland?

2   Methodology

In order to answer the above-mentioned research question, this paper follows the approach of applying qualitative research by conducted expert interviews as well as a case study by analysing the political landscape in Austria and Poland. The interviews were conducted via Skype with Prof. Dr. Ireneusz Karolewski, Mag. Paul Schmidt and Paul Culley, whom I want to thank cordially for their expertise and approval to be cited in this paper. They qualify for a selection as they are scholars on Euroscepticism, experts for their respective country and in the case of Culley have multiple years of professional experience in institutions of the European Union. The results of the interviews have been applied to the respective chapters in the text. Eventual grammar mistakes have been corrected during the adaption of quotes in order to guarantee better readability of the paper. In addition to that, to get a complete picture of Euroscepticism, three methods by scholars studying on the case are introduced; the schemes of Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001; 2017), Kopecky and Mudde (2002) and Catherine de Vries (2018). These methods qualify for a selection because they were fundamental for the evolution of the study field in political science, because they can be applied on introduced findings from the interviews or the case study, or because they are state-of-the-art. In addition, scientific publications from books, political journals, magazines or online sources known for qualitative journalism to complement the paper. The main opinion polls in order to analyse the public opinion of EU citizens in this thesis are Eurobarometer surveys. Eurobarometer surveys are conducted by the European Commission, or in some cases by the European Parliament, since 1973 and therefore are the benchmark for the evaluation over a long period. In some cases, polls from sources outside of the EU were added as a point of reference to give a complete picture on the public opinion.

3   List of abbreviations

AfD	Alternative für Deutschland
Brexit	Abbreviation for Great Britain leaving the European Union
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
EEC	European Economic Community
EP	European Parliament
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
EU27	European Union excluding the United Kingdom
EU28	European Union including the United Kingdom
FPÖ	Freedom Party Austria
Grexit	Abbreviation for Greece leaving the European Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ÖVP	Austrian People's Party
Öxit	Abbreviation for Austria leaving the European Union
PiS	Law and Justice party
PO	Civil Platform
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party

4   Influential events in recent EU history

4.1   Euro crisis

The eurozone debt crisis, in the media and this thesis referred to as euro crisis or debt crisis, started to break out in early 2010, when it became clear that Greece was unable to finance government debt or to bail out indebted banks. In the aftermaths of the global financial crisis of 2008, this embodied a substantial catastrophe for the eurozone and soon affected other EU member states. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it represented the world's greatest threat in 2011 (Amadeo, 2019). The crisis had several causes and some country-specific factors. Reasons for the outbreak of the crisis in Greece, similar to Portugal, were a high public debt, chronic tax evasion and weak competitiveness that led to loans totalling €240bn. In Ireland, where loans totalled €78bn, it was primarily caused by a bank-funded property bubble that went bust (Harari, 2014, p.2). Due to the nature of the single currency, devaluing the euro, usually a simple short-term option to regain competitiveness, was not possible. As a reaction to the development, the European Commission proposed a set of legislative acts in order to strengthen fiscal frameworks in 2011, which the European Parliament and the Council of Europe adopted. The EU member states also committed themselves, with the exception of the United Kingdom, to introduce fiscal rules that the general government deficit must not exceed 0.5% of GDP in structural terms and agreed on a new sanction procedure (Pisany-Ferry, 2012, pp.2-3).

Despite those measures, the crisis escalated into the potential for sovereign debt defaults from Portugal, Italy, Ireland, and Spain within less than years. The situation forced to a number of eurozone members into taking emergency loans from other eurozone governments, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Governments of Greece in May 2010 and February 2012, Ireland in November 2010, Portugal in May 2011, Spain in July 2012 and Cyprus in May 2013 asked for loans when they became unable to fund their budget deficits when they faced the prospect of defaulting on their debt. In return, they agreed to implement economic reforms in order to reduce their budget deficits and make their

economies more competitive (Harari, 2014, pp.1-2). However, all these efforts didn't keep many from questioning the viability of the euro itself. As a matter of fact, the crisis in the eurozone was already waiting to happen, when in the early years of the euro, enthusiasm for the new currency outshined valid objections. Soon, criticism arose, that there never has been a mechanism implemented in order to deal with debt crises and so all emergency rescue plans had to be created as soon as possible. Indeed, many pundits stated clearly, that Europe soon would see the euro fail, and with it one of the most ambitious, uniting projects on the European continent since the creation of the EU: *"A lot of people expected Europe to implode. Even while the currency itself stayed strong, the news was filled with the imminent meltdown on the so called 'single currency'"* (Chambers, 2014). Nevertheless, in the long term, the European Union managed to fight its way through these difficult years. Financial and political analysts see a significant turning point of the crisis in the speech of Mario Draghi, Director of the European Central Bank (ECB), on July 26 in 2012, when he made a pledge for the single currency:

> *There is another message I want to tell you. Within our mandate, the ECB is ready to do **whatever it takes** to preserve the euro. And believe me, it will be enough.* (Draghi, 2012)

In his speech of six minutes, Draghi did not propose concrete measures or announced significant news. However, his tone, appearance and the unambiguous assurance from the EU's highest financial organ, that the euro will survive, led to a new belief in the currency. On the next day, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French president François Hollande issued a joint statement, in which they announced that they are determined to do everything to protect the euro area (Randow & Speciale, 2018).

In any case, while politicians on national and international level were trying to figure out, what caused the crisis, how to deal with it and how to prevent it in the future, citizens in the affected countries were suffering from its consequences. The Eurocrisis caused a recession in Greece and also led to a drastic fall for support of the country for the European Union, where until 2012 it symbolized economic progress, modernity and prosperity. The same was the case for other countries as well. Even though the European Union, in the end, managed to deal with the crisis

and still tries to learn from its mistakes by taking measurements such as implementing the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to avoid future financial disasters, this period of insecurity wavered the trust of citizens towards Brussels and led to the spread of Euroscepticism all over the continent (Torreblanca & Leonard, 2019, pp.4-5).

4.2   Migration crisis

The migration crisis, or the refugee crisis, is a result of multiple factors, most of all the ongoing war in Syria, that started in 2011. Other factors were the political instability in North Africa following the Arab Spring and the political situation in Libya after the unrest in the country due to the post-Qaddafi era. It represented the greatest challenge for European leaders and policymakers since the debt crisis. In Syria, after years of destabilization and destruction in the civil war, the country was shattered. In June 2014, according to the United Nations (UN), 90,000 people had been killed in the war between the Syrian government, local militia groups, the uprising forces of the Islamic State (IS) in the country and later the involvement of foreign powers such as the Russian Federation, the United States of America or Turkey. By August 2015, this number increased to 250,000 with more than 12 million Syrians being displaced. As a result, the displaced Syrians started to migrate to the close borders of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. However, many aimed at reaching wealthier countries in the European Union such as Germany, Austria and Scandinavian countries with the hopes of a better future. In 2015, altogether 1,046,599 people arrived in the EU at the height of the crisis. Main spots of arrival were Greek islands and in further consequence the route through countries of the Balkan, and later Italy (Mercy Corps, 2019; Valenzuela, 2016, pp.2-3; World Vision, 2019).

Soon, member states of the EU were divided into those supporting open borders and helping refugees, led by Germany, and those strongly opposing it, most importantly the Visegrád group; the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Especially the approach of German Chancellor Angela Merkel of keeping the borders open and prompting other countries to do likewise was regarded by other states as hegemonic advancement due to the country's strong position within

the European Union. Karolewski (2019) found *"Germany has become associated with pushing through certain solutions that are in the German interest […] It is a different debate if Germany did so."* In addition to that, in July and September 2015, the EU member states decided to set up two resettlement mechanisms. In total 35,000 refugees were about to be relocated from Greece and Italy within two years in order to help to ease pressure from these countries. However, this was implemented through Qualified Majority Voting in the Council of Ministers with the Visegrád group being strongly against it, which caused alienation of these Eastern European countries in the EU within the next years. Another initiative by the EU in order to deal with the refugee wave was the EU-Turkey deal in March 2016. Labelled by the European Commission as a *"game-changer",* the EU concluded an agreement, securing that irregular migrants would be sent back to Turkey. In return, Turkey would receive €6 billion to support the 3.5 million refugees in the country. As a result, arrivals to Greece quickly dropped by 97% and have remained low since then (European Commission, 2017; European Commission, 2019a; Gotev, 2019).

Nevertheless, Italy and Greece, countries who already suffered immensely from the euro crisis, are still dealing with the crisis and feel being left alone from the EU. As a reaction, in a publication from March 2019, the European Commission (2019b) argued that over the course of the crisis, it mobilised financial support to member states facing pressure from migration waves such as Greece (€2bn), Italy (€885 million) or Spain (€708 million) (European Commission, 2019b).In addition to that, the EC proposed to triple funding for migration management and border security to €34.9 billion under the EU budget 2021-27. The EC outlined, that it currently supports member states with four naval operations, asylum officers from the European Asylum Support, border guards from the European Border and Coast Guard and security officers from Europol. Furthermore, in March 2019 the European Commission announced that Europe is no longer in crisis mode as the number of arrivals had been the lowest in five years with only 150,000 people entering the borders in 2018 (Culley, 2019; European Commission, 2019b).

4.3 The rise of right-wing parties and populism as a consequence of the crises

There have been a number of major events, that brought EU policy into the daily life of people. Two particular main events were the euro crisis, the financial crisis, and the other one was the migration crisis. And I think, that people saw a direct connection between these and EU policies. (Culley, 2019)

The financial crisis and the following migrant crisis have led to increasing support for the extreme right and populist parties within Europe. Parties like Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National in France, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), the Italian Lega Nord (LN) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) have emerged as significant political actors in the European Union. In Germany, where mainstream extremism was not much more than a side issue over the last decades, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) emerged in 2013. The AfD is a far-right populist party that campaigned to end all efforts to save the euro and insists on closed borders. As far-right parties in the EU are diverse and wide-ranging in their political views and demands, it is challenging to find a definition for them. However, they share a common ground in openly promoting extreme nationalism, Islamophobia and xenophobia, particularly against immigrants. In addition to that, they often regard the European Union as a foreign institution that tries to influence national politics against the citizens will and therefore criticize it offensively. In extreme cases, they even promote the option of their country leaving the EU which will be described in more detail in later chapters (Arzheimer, 2015, p.535; Ratkovic, 2017, p.48).

However, eurosceptic populism is not exclusively a far-right phaenomenon, as passing on responsibility to the EU became a common populist habit for politicians on a national level, regardless the party: *"If the EU does something, it is claimed as a national achievement, and if anything goes wrong, the EU is blamed, whether the EU is really to blame or not"* (Culley, 2019). In further consequence, criticism emerged from both leftists, who felt that the EU does not act in order with its fundamental values of protecting minority and refugee rights, and from the right wing, who feared that a migrant wave would lead to an increase in terrorist attacks

or Islamification of the European continent. This trend was confirmed in the European Parliament Election in 2014, where eurosceptic and anti-migrant parties altogether won 28% of the seats (Treib, 2014, p.1543).

> *On the left, austerity measures imposed in the context of the eurozone crisis were a major source of discontent. On the right, concerns over the financial risks of credit guarantees for crisis countries and economic anxieties resulting from Eastern European immigrants boosted support for Eurosceptic parties.* (Treib, 2014, p.1552)
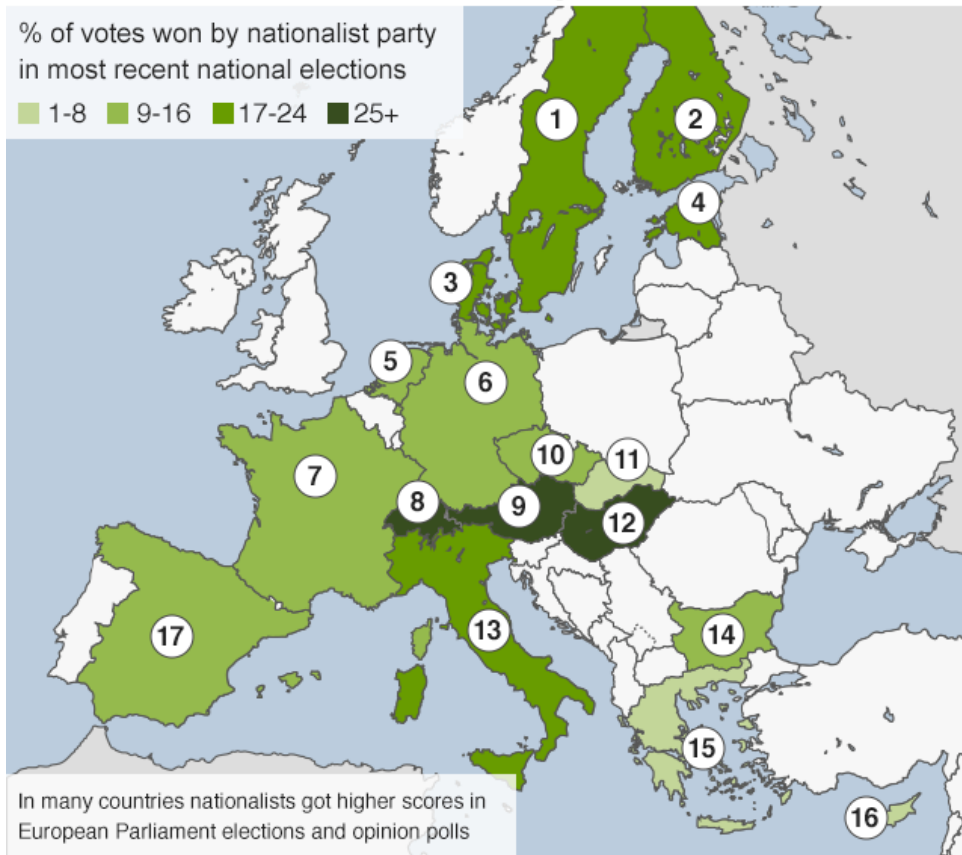
As a matter of fact, for parties such as Hungary's ruling Fidesz party, the refugee crisis came as a *"heavenly gift"* (Hill, 2018). With Prime Minister Viktor Orban's popularity declining dramatically in 2014, he was able to politically use the wave of migrants trying to enter Center Europe via Hungary in spring 2015 by building a border fence and staging himself as leader of the opposition against what he regards as authoritarian EU rule. A similar exploitation of the situation could be observed in Austria by the FPÖ and in Poland by the ruling Law and Justice Party (PiS), which later will be described in more detail, and in Italy, where the eurosceptic Lega Nord of Matteo Salvini used the aftermath of the financial crisis and the influx of sub-Saharan migrants from North Africa to form a government-coalition with the anti-establishment Five Star Movement in June 2018. As a result of far-right parties gaining influence on the citizens and in parts of the government, a report by Human Rights Watch in 2016 observed that the *"fear of terrorist attacks and mass refugee flows are driving many Western governments to roll back human rights protection"* (BBC, 2019a; World Report, 2016).

Furthermore, the influence of the migration wave on public opinion seems far from over. According to an international survey of the Pew Research Center in 2018, majorities in Greece (82%), Hungary (72%), Italy (71%) and Germany (58%) state that fewer immigrants or no immigrants at all should be allowed to move to their countries. All of the mentioned countries were among the most popular destinations or transit countries during the refugee crisis and are states where extremist parties were able to gain votes in the recent national elections (Connor & Krogstad, 2018). In another survey by the Pew Research Center, the majority of

people in Greece, Sweden, Hungary, Italy or Poland stated, that they disapprove of the way, the EU has handled the refugee issue (Connor, 2018).

Rise of nationalism in Europe

% of votes won by nationalist party in most recent national elections

- 1-8
- 9-16
- 17-24
- 25+

In many countries nationalists got higher scores in European Parliament elections and opinion polls

① **Sweden**
Sweden Democrats **17.6%**

② **Finland**
The Finns **17.7%**

③ **Denmark**
Danish People's Party **21%**

④ **Estonia**
Conservative People's Party **17.8%**

⑤ **Netherlands**
Freedom Party **13%**

⑥ **Germany**
Alternative for Germany **12.6%**

⑦ **France**
National Rally **13%**

⑧ **Switzerland**
Swiss People's Party **29%**

⑨ **Austria**
Freedom Party **26%**

⑩ **Czech Republic**
Freedom and Direct Democracy **11%**

⑪ **Slovakia**
Our Slovakia **8%**

⑫ **Hungary**
Fidesz **49%**, Jobbik **19%**

⑬ **Italy**
The League **17.4%**

⑭ **Bulgaria**
United Patriots **9%**

⑮ **Greece**
Golden Dawn **7%**

⑯ **Cyprus**
ELAM **3.7%**

⑰ **Spain**
Vox **10.3%**

Last updated: April 2019

BBC

Figure 1. Rise of nationalism in Europe. Adapted from "Europe and right-wing nationalism: A country-by-country guide", by British Broadcasting Corporation, 2019. Retrieved June 14, 2013, from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36130006

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5 Euroscepticism

In Euroscepticism there are geographical, reasons, there are historical reasons, there are socio-political reasons, that all play a part in the peculiarity of scepticism. It all depends on the respective national social situation, in which form, intensity and peculiarity this scepticism exists. There are very different shapes. (Schmidt, 2019)

Euroscepticism has long been subject to scholars, enhanced since 1992, when the Maastricht Treaty represented a key point in the history and the development of the European Union. Over the following decades, political scientists have tried to put definitions on the upcoming phaenomenon of the shifting public opinion towards the European Union and the European integration process. The number of studies and scholars who focus on the topic are numerous. Therefore, selected theories are presented on the following pages that qualify for this thesis, as they were fundamental for the evolution of the study field, they can be adapted to introduced findings or they represent the newest publications that take into account recent developments within the EU (Leruth, Startin, & Usherwood, 2018, p.4). Studying Euroscepticism is important, because it has become a permanent part of the public space of the EU: *"Whatever type of Euroscepticism we talk about, Euroscepticism is something that is going to stay here"* (Karolewski, 2019).

5.1 Euroscepticism according to Taggart and Szczerbiak

In 1998, Paul Taggart defined Euroscepticism as *expressing "the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration"* (p.366). This distinction was originally used to describe a country's attitude towards EU membership. A couple of years later, in 2001, Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak built on his work and attended to break down the term into hard and soft Euroscepticism.

Hard Euroscepticism describes rejecting the entire project of political and economic integration within the European Union as a whole, while also opposing that their country attends to join the EU or remains a member of it. In theory, someone can be described as a hard Eurosceptic, if she or he opposes any idea

of political and economic integration. Soft Euroscepticism, similar to Taggart's original work, describes contingent or qualified opposition to European integration. Soft Euroscepticism is then divided into two sub-categories; policy Euroscepticism and national-interest Euroscepticism. Policy sceptics reject measures that deepen political and economic integration or oppose policies related to EU competencies, for example, opposition to the euro or agricultural laws. National-interest Euroscepticism describes using rhetoric to defend national interests in debates about the EU. Sometimes, policy and national-interest Euroscepticism can overlap (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2001, p.13).

As a response to controversial reactions, Taggart and Szczerbiak adapted their original formulation of hard and soft Euroscepticism by working on their proposed parameters in 2008. Hard Euroscepticism was still described as principled opposition to the EU integration project, while soft Euroscepticism was re-defined as not a principled objection to the idea of transferring national powers to supranational institutions, but to current or future plans to further extend these competencies (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2017, p.13). Nevertheless, scholars such as Karolewski (2019) criticize the theory of Taggart and Szczerbiak as crude and simplistic: *"Just to talk about soft and hard Euroscepticism is, kind of, not enough. And, I think a more differentiated typology is needed."*

However, even though Taggart and Szczerbiak's publications led to criticism and a widespread discussion among political scientists, they are considered to be two of the most important scholars on the case of Euroscepticism, as they continually publish work on European integration and, more importantly, take into account academic reactions and respond accordingly.

5.2   Euroscepticism according to Kopecky and Mudde

Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde (2002, p.299) were among the first scholars criticizing that there has been a simplification in describing the opposition towards European integration in political science most frequently summarized with the term Euroscepticism. Therefore, they made an effort to diversify the influential definition of hard and soft Euroscepticism by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001, p.13), in which they thought to have found major mistakes. Most importantly, they observed the

problem, that according to Taggart and Szczerbiak's broad definition, soft Euroscepticism can be applied to any form of disagreement with EU policies or the European integration process.

> *The term 'Euroscepticism' is, in our view wrongly, ascribed to parties and ideologies that are in essence pro-European as well as to those that are outright anti-European. In practice, this may result in the over- and underestimation of the strength of the phenomenon in any (party) political system and lead us to see either more or less Euroscepticism than there actually is.* (Kopecky & Mudde, 2002, p.300)

As a solution, Kopecky and Mudde presented a scheme based on party positions, in which Euroscepticism is defined more precisely. First of all, they introduced two dimensions, through which support for European integration in general, and scepticism about European integration, in particular, can be studied. In the first dimension called "support for the ideas of European integration" they separate *Europhile* and *Europhobes*. *Europhiles* support the key ideas of integration such as institutionalized cooperation and an integrated liberal market economy regardless of how those ideas are realized in detail. *Europhobes* oppose, or at least not support, the general ideas of European integration, whether they are isolationist, nationalists or because they do not believe in functioning integration of the existing diversity among states. The second dimension is "support for the European Union", in which they differ between *EU-optimists* and *EU-pessimists*. *EU-optimists* have faith in the EU and in its developing, however, it is pointed out, that a critical attitude towards a certain EU policy does not disqualify someone from being an *EU optimist*. The *EU-pessimists*, on the other side, do not believe in the EU as it is in this particular moment and are also not in agreement with the direction of its development. However, they do not always object to EU-membership in general, sometimes they simply want to change the direction in which it is moving (Kopecky and Mudde, p. 302).

Based on these two dimensions, four ideal-type categories of party positions are introduced; *Euroenthusiasts* represent parties or groups who are both *Europhile* and *EU-optimist*. They believe in the ideas of EU integration and believe the EU is or will become the institutionalization of these ideas. *Eurosceptics* are compound

of *Europhile* and *EU-pessimist* positions, meaning that they support EU integration but are pessimistic about the reflection of these ideas currently or in the future. *Eurorejects* combine Europhobe and *EU-pessimist* positions, which makes them both critics of the EU integrations process and the EU as a whole. Last but not least, *Europragmatists* represent *Europhobe* and *EU-optimist* standpoints. They do not necessarily support or oppose ideas of EU integration, however, they support the EU. This group follows a pragmatic approach, as they see the EU in a positive light, whenever its profitable for their country or personal advantage. The suggested scheme is practical, as it can be applied to most of the group and party positions within the European Union. However, the scholars stress that these suggestions are only ideal types, as Euroscepticism can take different forms and shapes (Kopecky and Mudde, pp.302-303).

Support for European integration

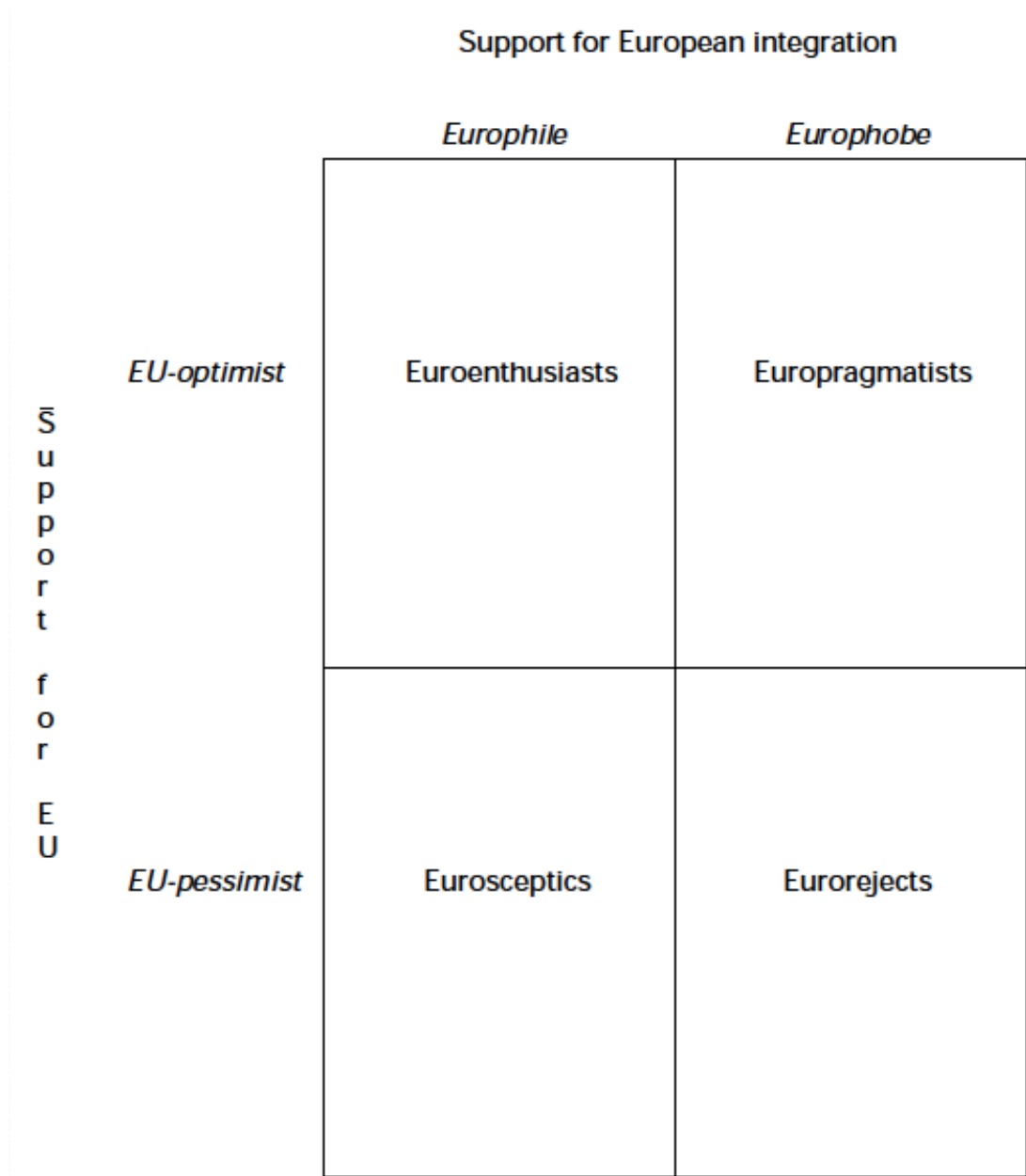|	Europhile	Europhobe
EU-optimist	Euroenthusiasts	Europragmatists
EU-pessimist	Eurosceptics	Eurorejects

Support for EU (left vertical axis label)

Figure 2. Typology of party positions in Europe by Kopecky P., and Mudde C., 2002, The Two Sides of Euroscepticism. European Union Politics, p.303

5.3 Euroscepticism according to de Vries

Catherine de Vries (2018) emphasized the importance of national conditions and their impact on Euroscepticism and the future of European integration. De Vries (2018) argues that *"people's evaluations of and experiences with the European project are fundamentally framed by the national circumstances in which they find themselves"* (p.8). Therefore, the citizens' public opinion towards the EU is heavily influenced by the conditions in their home country. She analyses the current situation within the EU, including the effects of the Eurozone crisis on the European project. The crisis, on the one hand, accelerated European integration through the introduction of new fiscal rules such as the Fiscal Compact or the implementation of the European Stability Mechanism. However, it also caused a new form of a divide that allegedly origins from Germany and France taking the undisputed leadership position in the European Union (Karolewski, 2019).

> *The recent political, social, and economic turmoil has also pitted member states against each other. In the Greek and German newspapers, for example, the Greek bailout was surrounded by a heated debate about the possibility of German war reparations to Greece. In Italy, a newspaper owned by Silvio Berlusconi's media group ran the headline 'Fourth Reich' to express discontent about German leadership in the Eurozone crisis.* (de Vries, 2018, p. 204)

Furthermore, the current division in the EU primarily comes from economic and austerity issues, and migration and human rights issues. In order to conceptualize the multilevel and multidimensional nature of attitudes towards the EU, de Vries (2018, p.206) differentiates between four types of support and scepticism; *Loyal Support*, *Policy Scepticism*, *Regime Scepticism* and *Exit Sceptics*. The demography of these types is based on empirical findings from numerous European Social Surveys (de Vries, 2018, pp.77, 231).

Loyal supporters are content with the status quo of their country in the European Union. They are described as usually female with average education, who are financially anxious and from countries with relatively low quality of government and high unemployment. The highest share of loyal supporters is found in Poland,

Slovenia and Spain. Issues of high importance for this group are unemployment and finances, however they seem indifferent about migration. Loyal supporters want an EU that focuses on economic growth and decisions taken via a citizen referendum. *"Loyal supporters perceive the regime and policy benefits of EU membership to be greater than those associated with the alternative state"* (de Vries, 2018, pp.79, 206).

Exactly the opposite of loyal supporters is Exit sceptics, who are the most sceptical of all four types. They prefer their country to be out of the EU and perceive the nation-state as the only political system that functions well. The typical Exit sceptic is an older male with slightly lower education who is not financially anxious and lives in a country with a relatively high quality of government and low unemployment. The highest share of Exit sceptics is in the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The issue of highest priority is immigration, as they are sceptical of the redistribution politics of the EU. They are both holding a unified attitude towards the EU with loyal supporters (de Vries 2018, pp.78, 206-207).

Regime sceptics characterize a more complex stance towards the EU. On the one hand, they feel that EU membership includes compelling policy benefits. On the other hand, they regard the rules and procedures at EU level as less positive compared to the national level. Regime sceptics are particularly found in Germany, Finland and France; countries with relatively high quality of government and low unemployment. Most often, Regime sceptics are older males who are higher educated and not very financially anxious. Besides their priority issues being unemployment, they have an anti-migration stance, even though they support resettlement policies of the EU (de Vries, 2018, pp.79-80, 206).

The opposite is the case for who Policy sceptics, feel that the way rule and procedures are exercised at EU level are preferable to the national level. However, they are sceptical towards current and past policy decisions taken on the EU level. Together with Regime sceptics, their opinion towards the EU is ambivalent. In particular, Policy sceptics are men with slightly lower education who are not very financially anxious coming from countries with relatively low quality of government and high unemployment. They are found in the Czech Republic, Ireland and

Hungary, where unemployment and migration, of which they are sceptical of, are the issue priority (de Vries, 2018, pp.79-80, 206).

De Vries' (2018) structure demonstrates that *"people do not only update their attitudes in line with EU related events, but also in response to national ones which are arguably largely outside the control of EU public officials"* (p.207). Her scheme can be applied to the population of a country rather than on party positions. Furthermore, we can observe that the two most important issues for EU citizens in the last couple of years were migration and unemployment policies.

5.4 Exit-scepticism

(Exit-scepticism is) support for leaving, that is a strong form of scepticism, in which you are against everything and you say, 'nation states are the only option, we have to leave' (Schmidt 2019)

Exit-scepticism is a term that categorizes the most extreme form of Euroscepticism, describing the desire of a group, party or country to leave as a member of the European Union. According to Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001), Exit-sceptics are hard Eurosceptics, while Kopecky and Mudde (2002) call them *Eurorejects*, as they combine both *Europhobe* and *EU-pessimist* positions, making them critics of the EU as a whole and the EU integration process. In the scheme of de Vries (2018), they actually are described as *Exit sceptic*, perceiving the nation state as the only political system that is functioning. According to de Vries' research, the typical Exit sceptic is an older male with slightly lower education and no financial anxiety living in a country with relatively high quality of government and low unemployment. Exit-scepticism is particularly high in the United Kingdom, where the procedure of the UK actually leaving the EU will be described in detail in the following chapters. However, the first time a country seriously discussed the possibility of leaving the European Union was in Greece in 2009, and later in 2014, due to the consequences of the Eurozone crisis:

In fact, the current prime minister and party were elected basically on promises to reject the bailout and, if necessary, to leave the Euro and to leave the EU. And I think, that when the Greeks and Tsipras came

face-to-face with the reality to this, with the details and what this meant

as a reality, he did an elegant U-turn. (Culley, 2019)

Exit-scepticism is often connected to populism and the rise of far-right parties within the last decades, as the premise of a country being better off outside the framework of the European Union is often included in their rhetoric.

6 Brexit

6.1 History of Great Britain in the European community

In the history of the European integration project, Great Britain's role has always been special. The country already applied for membership in the European Economic Community on July 31, 1961, when Prime Minister Harold Macmillan announced that the UK wants to open negotiations for British membership. Negotiations then went on until January 14, 1963, when French President Charles de Gaulle vetoed on the UK's application. De Gaulle, who always has been an opponent to the British membership, argued that the UK does not seem committed to Europe and regarded it as a trojan horse for the United States of America (USA). He vetoed another British application by Macmillan's successor Harold Wilson in 1968. Finally, after de Gaulle and Wilson were succeeded by Georges Pompidou and Edward Heath, the involved parties came to an agreement in 1971. After the House of Commons in the UK voted in favour of an entry in 1972, Great Britain officially joined the European community together with Denmark and Ireland on January 1, 1973 (Ronek, 2013, pp.226-229).

However, as political scientists pointed out, the UK could not have had a worse timing to join the EEC, as the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s was replaced by harsh times due to the energy crisis. Furthermore, the European community early on had to deal as a scapegoat for the UK. After Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, she became famous for calling out dominance from Brussels and insisting on getting money back from the UK's European partners due to differences from Value Added Tax contributions. Nevertheless, she signed the Single European Act in 1986, which shaped the way for the creation of the European Union in 1993. Even though her successor John Major proved to be pro-European, the opinion in the UK towards the EU stayed moderate. This seemed to change with Labour Party's European politics under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown between 1997-2010, when the UK engaged itself more active in the EU, tried to take a lead role and left a heavy footprint on the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 (Ronek, 2013, pp.229-35).

However, the chairing of David Cameron as Prime Minister in 2010 marks a turning point in the European integration history of the UK, as he was the leader of the most eurosceptic Conservative Party since its existence. In his first years in office, he openly confronted the EU by refusing to sign the budgetary stability in December 2011 and promoting a strategy of voluntary isolationism rather than trying to influence EU decision-making. More importantly, Cameron put pressure on the EU on January 23, 2013, by announcing to offer British citizens a public vote on EU membership, if Brussels will not give the United Kingdom a more flexible arrangement within its framework (Ronek 2013, pp.236-238). According to Grant (2013), the context of his message can be described as: *"Give us what we want, by the deadline that we specify, or we may well leave the EU"* (p.10).

6.2   The referendum

Political scientists describe David Cameron's decision to hold a referendum on EU membership as a big gamble in order to maintain control of his party, as he actually had no intentions to leave the EU. It was Cameron's way to respond to hardcore eurosceptic movements within the Conservatives, who, as well as to the increasing support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), posed a threat for his re-election in May 2015. After Cameron's successful re-election, with his promises to hold a referendum playing a huge part in securing his intra-party position, he initiated all necessary steps. On December 17, 2015, the European Union Referendum Act receives Royal Assent, which provides for the holding of a referendum in the UK and Gibraltar. While simultaneously negotiating a special status for Great Britain in the EU with the European Council and its President Donald Tusk, Cameron announces a referendum date in the House of Commons on February 22, 2016; the referendum was set to take place on June 23, 2016 (House of Commons, 2019, pp.4-6; Ronek 2013, p.238).

The following campaign for the referendum was defined by the division of the public as well as the British Conservative Party in the government on the issues of European integration. Cameron not only failed to win over voters with his new settlement for the UK in the EU, the settlement also was regarded as amounting to very little by the British press and even led to a rise of support for promoters of

a Brexit, so-called Brexiteers. The two official campaign organizations were "Britain Stronger in Europe" and "Vote leave". The campaign of Brexiteers was dominated by two persons in particular; Boris Johnson, the former mayor of London, and Nigel Farage, leader and founder of the UKIP party and Member of the European Parliament (MEP). Nevertheless, Cameron's government felt confident to ultimately achieve their goal. Furthermore, they got support by economic pundits, who feared the consequences of leaving the EU:

> *The Remain side was hopeful that the economic uncertainties associated with Brexit would ultimately persuade voters to choose the status quo option, since there was an overwhelming consensus among experts that a Brexit outcome would have negative economic consequences for Britain. In contrast, the Leave camp presented the referendum as a unique opportunity to regain control of British law-making, borders and restrict immigration.* (Hobolt, 2016, p.1262)

Unsurprisingly, the two main issues of the campaign were finances and migration. One successful approach of the Leave side was to frame the referendum as a battle between the working class and the political establishment. Hobolt (2016) argues, that the outcome of the vote was at least partly driven by populism and a *"general disaffection with the political class"* (p.1266). Schmidt (2019) observes a campaign of misinformation on voters in favour of the UK leaving the EU: *"I think, by lacking political knowledge or political calculus, they do not understand at all, what the European Union actually is."*

After a turbulent campaigning time, the UK held the referendum on its membership in the EU with the question in the voting booth posed: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?". The outcome was announced on the very next day, June 24, 2016. As a result, 16,141,241 (48.1%) voted "Remain", while the majority of 17,410,742 (51.9%) choose to leave the EU (Hobolt, 2016, pp.1261-1264; House of Commons, 2019, p.7).

6.3   Negotiations and preparations for Brexit

As the events and turns taking place during the negotiations on Brexit between the United Kingdom and the European Union are highly complex, and as for June 15, 2019 are still ongoing, these processes shall be described only briefly.

The outcome of the referendum left parts of both Great Britain and the European Union in shock. David Cameron announced his intention to resign on the same day, June 24, 2016, but stayed in office until a new Prime Minister is found. The European Union also responded immediately by expressing regret, but in addition to that with a statement by Donald Tusk outlining that it did not catch the European Council by surprise: *"We are prepared for this negative scenario. There will be no legal vacuum"* (European Council, 2019). A few days later, the EU27 countries publicly declared the intention to stay united and urged Great Britain to formally notify the EU of its intention to leave. In the meantime, they agreed to nominate the Commission as EU negotiator and Michel Barnier as chief negotiator. Barnier would act on a mandate provided by the leaders of the EU27 member states and would frequently report back to them and the council (European Council, 2019).

Meanwhile, on March 29, 2017, Theresa May triggered Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union, which is the necessary formal procedure that begins a two-year countdown for leaving the EU. The public opinion was in favour of May, and therefore she planned to even strengthen her position by setting up elections to be held on June 8, 2017. However, by amongst other things lacking a domestic policy plan, she surprisingly failed to get a majority in the House of Commons. The Conservative Party ended up getting 318 MP's, which is a loss of 13 MP's compared to the 2015 General Elections, and missed the needed majority of 325. As a result, she was forced to enter a "confidence and supply" agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland, that agreed to support her in key votes, in order to stay leader of the country (Hunt, 2017). It is notable, that Nigel Farage, one of the key Brexit promoters in the UK, already stepped back in 2016 after the referendum, claiming to now have achieved his goal of leading the UK out of the EU. Karolewski (2019) observes that politicians such as Farage are rather political entrepreneurs, as Brexit actually taking place rips them off their party's reason for political existence:

They are interested in gathering votes of protest voters, of people that are for some reason not satisfied and think that the reason for dissatisfaction is the European Union. But they are not really interested in Brexit itself. So, Brexit is a kind of a problem both for the Brexiteers and the people that say no to Brexit. (Karolewski, 2019)

The political turmoil in the United Kingdom was followed by intense and arduous negotiations. One of the main topics discussed and until today not fully solved was the issue with the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, a member of the EU27. Nevertheless, a deal was negotiated, that seemed to meet the minimum demands of both parties. Brexit was scheduled for March 29, 2019. However, after a vote of the House of Commons on March 14, 2019, partly due to British disappointment with the result of the Northern Irish border negotiations, the British government asked to further extend Article 50 to a later date. Following a back and forth between the European Council, the House of Commons and Theresa May, the parties ultimately decided to reschedule Brexit until October 31, 2019 (House of Commons, 2019, p.57-58). On May 24, 2019, Theresa May announced that she would resign after three years of serving as Prime Minister, because she was unable to deliver the Brexit the UK was hoping for. May finally bowed to enormous pressure coming from the British public, the opposition as well as from inside her own Conservative Party. On June 7, 2019, May stepped back as leader of the Conservative Party. As for today, June 12, 2019, May remains Prime Minister until a successor was elected by the Tory party; the frontrunners for succession are Boris Johnson and Foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt (BBC, 2019b; Blitz, 2019)

6.4   Predicted consequences of Brexit

The actual short-term and long-term impacts of Brexit have been subject to numerous studies, that sometimes differentiate significantly. The possible effects on the public opinion in the European Union shall be explained in detail in the following chapters. However, the consensus in terms of economic consequences seems to be, that there is no positive outlook. As the European Union is the United Kingdom's largest trade partner and therefore approximately half of the UK's trade is within other EU countries, trade costs will increase rapidly after the UK leaves

the Single Market (Ward, 2019). Naturally, the UK will also miss out on future trade deals that the EU plans to sign. Brexiteers argue, that the United Kingdom will be able to get a special deal from the EU, similar to Norway's agreement with Brussels on the long term. However, as for today that seems uncertain, as the EU27 try their best to not make it look profitable to leave the Union (Dhingra, Ottaviano, Sampson, & Van Reenen, 2016, pp.2-7). Therefore, Schmidt (2019) points out, that Brexiteers will face a harsh reality:

> *There is a difference, if I have a market with 500 million people behind me or 60 million people, and I mean, that the economic expenses will be high. The question is, if the people will ever understand, that those expenses are related to leaving the EU. And I think, many Brexit fans live with a very twisted view on the world, that simply does not represent the reality.* (Schmidt, 2019)

The future relationship of the European Union and the United Kingdom will depend on the kind of Brexit, that will ultimately happen; a hard or a soft Brexit. A hard Brexit is favoured by those, who voted to leave the EU. It means, Great Britain withdraws from the single market and the customs union and is able to immediately make new trade agreements. However, in case of a hard Brexit, there will be a border between Ireland and Northern Ireland; with unforeseeable consequences on the relationship of the countries. A soft Brexit is preferred by pro-European Britain's and obliges the UK to maintain some economic and political ties with the EU (Poli, 2016, p.2). In any case, political analysts observe that the toughest negotiations are yet to come after the UK finally leaves the EU (Schmidt, 2019).

7   The impact of Brexit on Euroscepticism

7.1   Public opinion in the face of Brexit

The last Eurobarometer survey before the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom was conducted between May 21 and 31, 2016. One year after the height of the refugee crisis, it showed that migration and terrorism were the dominant concerns for EU citizens. Back in 2011, 59% of EU citizens named the economic situation as the most important issue. With only 19% of citizens naming the economic situation in 2016, the euro crisis ultimately seemed to have been replaced by the refugee wave. A majority of citizens had a neutral image of the EU. Even though faith in the European Union remained stable after decreasing during the crisis years, only 33% of EU citizens stated that they have trust in Brussels. Furthermore, the positive image of the EU has lost ground in 20 member states (Standard Eurobarometer 85.2, 2016). Besides the issues of migration and economic fluctuation, Karolewski (2019) traces the moderate public opinion back to the lack of political education: *"The European Union has become victim to its own intransparency, I think, because many citizens and also part of the political elites did not understand what the EU was really about."* Nevertheless, around two thirds of interviewees stated, they feel they are citizens of the EU, which is a notable result in terms of European identity. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in June 2016 painted an even more threatful picture; just 51% of those polled in the EU27 (without the UK) had a favourable view on the EU, 47% of those surveyed had an unfavourable view. A median of 42% stated that some powers should be returned from Brussels to the national governments (Stokes, 2016). Therefore, immediately after the vote in favour of Brexit, on July 22, 2016, political analysts warned of a snowball effect for the rest of the European Union. Even Wolfgang Schäuble, in 2017 German Minister for financial affairs, did not want to rule out the possibility of a Brexit domino effect for the EU (Henley, 2016). The public response to the Brexit vote had been different in each member state. In Germany, 45% of citizens declared that they could not understand the reasons behind the decision, standing against 15% percent who could understand it. Italian (26% against 18%) and French (23% against 22%) citizens seemed to be more sympathetic with the Briton's decision. In Portugal, Greece, Austria, Sweden and

Finland, citizens mainly were distressed by the possible negative consequences for their countries (Poli, 2016, pp.4-5).

To the surprise of many, the first Eurobarometer survey in 2017 did not necessarily echo the predicted snowball effect in terms of public opinion. On the contrary; for the first time since 2015, in total more EU citizens had a positive image of the EU (40%) than a neutral image (37%). Furthermore, the percentage of citizens who have a negative image of the EU declined by four percentage points to 21% (Standard Eurobarometer 90.3, 2018). Over the next couple of years, correlating with the Brexit negotiations of the United Kingdom with the European Union, the favourable public opinion increased steadily. Finally, in April 2019, a special Eurobarometer survey conducted by the European Parliament delivered outstanding results. Sixty-one per cent of respondents in the EU27 stated that their country's membership in the EU is a good thing. This approval rate is back at its peak level and was last recorded in the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the introduction of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. In addition to that, 68% in the EU27 share the opinion that their country benefited from being part of the EU, which is the highest level since 1983. Furthermore, about seven out of ten EU citizens said they would vote to remain in the EU, if a referendum was held in their country. In accord with previous studies, support for the EU is the highest amongst younger and better educated respondents (Special Eurobarometer 91.1, 2019). One reason for the shift in the public opinion could be found in the attitude of Great Britain during the negotiations, which is termed *"irrational"* and *"egoistic"* by Schmidt (2019). Even though EU citizens tend to criticize the European Union on a frequent basis for different reasons, they still feel united as continental Europeans. Therefore, the threat of getting disadvantaged due to economic or social consequences of Brexit became imminent. Furthermore, the public opinion started to shift approximately at the time, when negotiations for Brexit started between the European Union and the United Kingdom. Karolewski (2019) emphasizes the change in the perception of separation movements. Not many citizens took eurosceptic parties and politicians too serious before the referendum: *"I mean, they were serious in the context that they were mobilizing based on those ideas, but nobody believed that they would be efficient enough to organize such a referendum and actually win it"* (Karolewski, 2019). After years of people getting

used to populist parties promoting benefits outside the EU as part of their daily political agenda, many citizens still did not realize, that an event like Brexit could actually happen. Therefore, EU citizens started to see the consequences of being outside of the European Union could bring with it. According to Leruth et al. (2018, p.474), the seeming chaos of the British political system and the strong economic reaction in the weeks after the vote, including the fall in the value of the pound sterling, provided a threatening message. Especially given the possibility that the UK leaves the European Union without a deal:

> *People follow, I think, the entire debate on the Brexit […] There might be shortages of pharmaceuticals for instance. That is the kind of rational expectation. If there is hard Brexit, it might be that the hospitals will not be delivered with all the medicine they need, and so on. I think, there is a certain […] understanding that Brexit or exit from the European Union is highly problematic.* (Karolewski, 2019)

However, as Euroscepticism follows certain waves of popularity that are connected with each other for different reasons. Therefore, the favourable opinion towards the EU might as well drop again in the next year years. This particularly means that the future of the public opinion towards the European Union and European integration will also depend on the question, if there ultimately will be hard Brexit or not. The shift in public opinion does not automatically stand for an increase in the performance of the European Union. Nevertheless, Brexit, especially the way it is handled right now, represents a deterring example: *"The continental Europeans are quite pragmatic, if it comes to that. They do not necessarily love the European Union. However, they prefer to be together rather than being alone"* (Schmidt, 2019). In regard to announcement such as the one from Boris Johnson on June 8, 2019, it is also entirely possible that the feeling of unity in the EU27 further increases in the near future. In order to get a better Brexit deal should he become Prime Minister, Johnson openly threatened to withhold €44 billion, that the United Kingdom had already agreed to pay back to the European Union. This form of blackmail could very well amplify this feeling between EU citizens. Apparently, by now, the population of the EU27 regard the United Kingdom as threatening their way of life, rather than a forerunner in terms of political self-determination (Milliken, 2019).

7.2   Party positions on Euroscepticism in the face of Brexit

As stated by Karolewski (2019), Brexiteers themselves did not seem to believe in the very idea of Brexit, as the reality of the event actually happening goes against their interest. He lists intra-party considerations rather than proper belief, that the UK really needs to leave the EU, as reasons for the political campaigns of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) or the divided Conservative Party. On the one hand, this could be detected by the lies and manipulation of information, that was part of their Brexit campaign. On the other hand, by the quick resignation of UKIP party leader Nigel Farage after the referendum: "*They just thought, based on that they can become part of the political landscape. And that goes for the UKIP. And Boris Johnson believes that he can replace David Cameron at the head of the Tory party"* (Karolewski, 2019). In addition to that, the Tory party lacked the political courage to put the whole procedure to a hold. This *"political suicide squad"* (Karolewski, 2019) that led to a division within Great Britain and a political crisis that is still ongoing, could very well be observed in continental Europe: *"I think, that many eurosceptic parties became aware of the exit, which could be damaging to the political rationality"* (Karolewski 2019). Furthermore, the little knowledge that some Brexiteers seemed to have of European integration in combination with wishful thinking was regarded as a cautionary tale (Schmidt 2019).

Therefore, the argument exists that Brexit fulfils a specific constructive role regarding party politics within the European Union. It exemplified that many eurosceptic politicians, who promote Exit-scepticism simply to gain votes, play a dangerous game. EU citizens are now able to observe the political reality of how pragmatic the next steps needed in order to actually leave the European Union would look like. Therefore, populist parties across Europe are facing new challenges:

> *If you criticize the EU in a very heavy-handed way as it happens in Poland and Hungary, the questions are, if you do so, then what would be your next step? Would you, as a government, like to leave the European Union? And then, the population needs to know that and needs to deal with the notion of your country leaving the EU.* (Karolewski 2019)

As a result, eurosceptic parties in the EU with more political experience are adjusting their approach by, for example, becoming more moderate in their political rhetoric in order to be suitable for the mainstream. Depending on if the party is in a government position or in opposition, they try to adapt their tone of political communication in order to suit their priorities and subordinate them under their domestic political and power strategic calculations. This process differs from country to country. However, that process does not necessarily represent an actual change of their political goals: *"That does not mean, that they gave up on these ideas, they are still in their drawer, but rhetorically they are delivered differently, softer"* (Schmidt 2019). That development gets re-evaluated depending on the polling data. And as for now, this polling data shows support for the process of European integration, as described in the previous chapter. Furthermore, it is important for eurosceptic continental European politicians not to get compared to Brexiteers, as their lack of plan seems to deter citizens of the EU27: *"You try to move around it. That means, they want to strengthen the nation state and fight against centralisation, but they do not want to get tied up with the Britons"* (Schmidt, 2019).

7.3   Raised awareness within the EU

Another noteworthy consequence, that can be directly related to Brexit, is the increased public awareness towards the European Union. This can, amongst other things, be traced back to the recent crises and the rising attention of the media (Schmidt, 2019). In fact, 54% of EU citizens stated in spring 2018, that they feel informed about their rights as citizens of the European Union. Compared to 2010, when only 42% of citizens shared that opinion, this is an increase of 12% (Standard Eurobarometer 89.1, 2018). For one reason, because not only eurosceptic parties but also citizens reacted in a pragmatic way to the processes in the United Kingdom before the referendum and during the negotiations between the UK and the European Union. For the first time, people were able to observe how difficult and sophisticated it is, to extract a country from Brussels. As a matter of fact, EU regulations are omnipresent in every aspect of economic, political and social life within the European Union, from product standards to food regulation or social and human rights:

In every aspect of public life, EU law is present. And people now realize, that to unwind that, is a colossal work. [...] And then, people are beginning to see the harsh reality of what life would be like outside the single market, outside the customs union. (Culley, 2019)

In addition to that, it becomes apparent to EU citizens, that even a large country with a population of 66 million people like the UK is about to have less leverage in world affairs compared to the bloc of 444 million people living in the EU27 states (Office for National Statistics, 2019). According to Culley (2019), the experience of Brexit has been a *"cold shower"* for people, who found these ideas of uncoupling from Brussels attractive in 2016. To Karolewski (2019), the increasing visibility of the European Union is not mainly a product of Brexit. In fact, it can be traced back to different crises within the EU, starting with the financial crisis in the eurozone and particularly in Greece, the rule of law crisis in Poland or the migration crisis:

Many political problems that were invisible in the EU context became visible in the EU context. And they were not even invisible, but they were regulated, or solved, or managed, or dealt with by the European Union or member states within the EU. (Karolewski, 2019)

Furthermore, paying attention to the EU is pivotal to the understanding of the bureaucracy in Brussels. Essential for many eurosceptic positions is, that the EU is depicted as an external actor without democratic legitimization. Through increased awareness it is entirely possible, that people start to understand that member states are the core of the decision-making process. However, it is important to point out that increased awareness does not necessarily go together with a favourable public opinion towards the European Union. In many cases, citizens thought that the EU had not been doing a good job in dealing with these issues or even uses these crises to accumulate more power. This can be observed on the criticism of the German role during the refugee crisis or the ongoing criticism of the centralization process of the European Union (Karolewski, 2019; Schmidt, 2019).

7.4   Impact on the European Parliament elections

As a detailed analysis of the political landscape in Europe in the face of the European Parliament elections could be subject for a paper on its own, this chapter will focus on the voter turnout. Over the last decades, Parliament elections have been a problem child for the European Union. For the only institution in the EU that is directly elected by the citizens, voter participation traditionally has been low. Since the first direct election in 1979, turnout had fallen steadily from 61.99% in 1979 to 42.61% in 2014 (European Commission, 2014, p.11). However, the 2014 elections still seemed to represent a turning point in EU history. In member states, Parliament elections had always been regarded as second-order national elections, being concerned mainly with domestic politics. However, with the EU confronting both the aftermaths of the debt crisis as well as the migration crisis in 2014, European issues had a significant impact on voting choices. Therefore, as a favourable public opinion towards the EU had been critically low at that time, we could observe a rise of eurosceptic parties at the EP elections 2014 (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, pp.504-505). According to Culley (2019), the little voter participation partly is due to the fact, that governments are escaping responsibility, as soon as it comes to the election on EU level:

> *National governments to have to recognize, that you cannot criticize and blame the EU for everything 51 weeks in the year. And then on the 52nd week of the year, encourage people to go and vote in the European elections.* (Culley, 2019)

The key to overcoming the status quo therefore would be giving the EU credit for where it is due. This can not only be achieved through the national governments, but also through communication by the European Union. In addition that, people who are not political scientist or economists have to be educated about the fundamental reasons for the existence of the EU; "*Peace, stability, fundamentally it is the single market, it is Schengen, it is the Euro, and people need to be reminded what the EU achievements are*" (Culley, 2019). Nevertheless, voter turnout at the European Parliament elections on May 26, 2019 increased historically. As 50.95% of EU citizens cast their vote, it was the first increase in participation in 40 years and the best result since the elections in 1994. European

Union officials regarded the results as a boost for the legitimacy for Brussels within the borders of EU (Erlanger, 2019; European Parliament, 2019).

7.5 The effects of Brexit on the EU institutions

The United Kingdom's attitude during the process of Brexit was negatively registered in the institutions of the European Union. Within the political elite, dissatisfaction with the way how Great Britain has dealt with the issue was growing. Simultaneously, the feeling in the EU was established, that you have to respond to the British actions accordingly.

> *There is the feeling that you cannot be too flexible with Great Britain,*
> *because it is not just a club you can join and re-join, leave and re-join,*
> *it is also a community of values. So, if you decide to leave the EU, then*
> *leave it and then stop playing games.* (Karolewski, 2019)

As a result, politicians started to believe that you need to be tougher on the United Kingdom. Through being united by this opinion, the political behaviour of Great Britain very well could have helped to bring the EU closer together. Schmidt (2019) points out, that the United Kingdom actively tried to negatively influence the cohesion of the EU27. However, this seems to have backfired, as the opposite could be observed. One institution, that particularly was able to profit from the process, was the European Council. Culley (2019) emphasizes its rising importance during the last couple of years due to the euro crisis, the migration crisis and Brexit. This is not least due to the fact, that attendance at the European Council is always high. Indeed, country leaders only miss European Council meetings in cases of emergency. As a result, the social attachment in the meetings is remarkable, even though country leaders do not always agree with each other: *"They had had to solve so many difficult questions by speaking frankly to each other. I mean, after the European Council is nowhere to go"* (Culley, 2019). Even though there are frequent changes due to national elections, there is continuity through its president Donald Tusk. Furthermore, stability and cohesion are preserved by long-time prime ministers or chancellors such as Germany's Angela Merkel.

Karolewski (2019) observes a new-found identification with European values across the European Union. On the one hand, the EU has always been a functional organisation, that gives benefits to all members through the single market, redistribution of goods, investments or common research projects. However, in the light of Brexit, country leaders seem to have adapted to an effective new way of collaboration.

> *Beyond this functionality, there is also something like identity. Some form of European identity, which means that if you decide to leave it, then that is your choice, that is fine, but it has to be done. […] The political elites of the EU understood, that this is not just a functional issue.* (Karolewski, 2019)

However, this cohesion can quickly turn around, as the European Union has to be careful with the way it deals with the power vacuum after Great Britain leaves. Especially Germany and France, who already are accused by smaller member states of having too much influence, would be wise to choose their words and actions with caution. Therefore, the demand of French president Emmanuel Macron, that the French language has to become more important the moment Great Britain leaves, was a step in the wrong direction and not well received by other member states. Karolewski (2019) calls Macron's remarks *"quite damaging, I think, because it sounds very like a post-imperial impulse of France trying to regain its position after Great Britain has left."* The European Union much rather has to take actions in order to increase its legitimacy and bring the remaining states together, while keep staying tough on countries that are problematic. One possible solution approach would be to introduce projects that make the EU more attractive and prove, that membership is not more profitable for some countries, than to others (Pennetier, 2018).

8 Austria

8.1 Political situation

The Republic of Austria was among the countries in the European Union that were heavily affected by the migration crisis. In 2015, 88.500 first time applicants for asylum were registered in Austria, which is an increase of 233% compared to the previous year. Compared with the population of Austria, this made the country ranked third in the European Union in terms of refugee influx behind Hungary (177.400) and Sweden (156.000) (Eurostat, 2016). The situation led to a division in the country between those willing to help asylum seekers, and those supporting a policy of closed borders.

Thus, in 2016, the first major election in the country after the flow of refugees, the Austrian presidential election, was regarded as trendsetting. Even more so, as two candidates ended up in the second round, whose political stance could not have differed more; Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen, former leader of the liberal Green Party with a refugee-friendly approach, and Dr. Norbert Hofer from the far-right Freedom Party Austria (FPÖ), a eurosceptic party known for its highly xenophobic rhetoric. As the Austrian president, whose functions are mainly representative, is supposed to act nonpartisan and therefore has to vacate her or his party membership, party politics normally do not play a significant role in presidential elections. However, this election campaign quickly turned into a fight between the political left and the political right, including personal attacks and misinformation on the actual powers and functions of the president. On June 1, 2016, the final results showed that Van der Bellen received 50.35% of votes, while Hofer received 49.65% with a difference of 30,863 votes (OSCE, 2017, p.1). However, Hofer challenged the election results at the Constitutional Court, claiming provisions regarding postal voting have been unconstitutional. The Court was not able to find any evidence of fraud. However, as indeed 77,926 voting cards were affected by irregularities, the Court annulled the election results and ordered the government to repeat the second round. After the repetition of the second round ultimately took place in December 2016, final results published on December 15 revealed a victory of Van der Bellen with 53.8% over Hofer with 46.2% (OSCE, 2017, p.10). The

majority of EU leaders welcomed the outcome of the elections as an essential win over populism (Bodlos & Plescia, 2018, p.4; Dewan & Smith-Spark, 2016; Tisdall, 2016).

However, at the next major election, the Austrian legislative election on October 15, 2017, the winners were parties on the right of the ideological spectrum. The big election winner was the conservative Christian-democratic Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), that managed to get 31.5% of the votes, increasing its share since 2013 by 7.5%. The far-right Freedom Party of Austria increased its vote share by 5.5 points to 26% (OSCE, 2018, p.21). Both parties were able to profit from the public opinion in Austria after the European migration crisis. For the ÖVP, its success also came in large parts due to their young new leader, 31-year-old Sebastian Kurz, who was able to present himself during the election campaign as a symbol for a fresh approach to politics. Kurz, who was Minister for foreign affairs in the previous government, showed a tough stance towards refugees and immigration and managed to run a successful campaign on that basis. Already in 2015, Kurz had gained credibility regarding the issue of migration, claiming that he led a cross-country alliance, which allowed the closure of the Balkan route, one of the major European refugee income routes (Shuster, 2018). After the election, it was clear, that due to all their differences in the past, the ÖVP and the Socialist's Party (SPÖ), that reached 26.9% of the votes in the election, would not be able to form another government together (OSCE, 2018, p.21). Therefore, after holding coalition talks with all Austrian parties, Kurz did not have many other options than to form a coalition with the FPÖ. This opportunistic decision was heavily criticized, as the previous government participation of the FPÖ, a party founded by former National Socialists in 1956, made Austria an outsider in the European Union and ultimately led to early re-elections in 2002. In addition to that, Kurz was a known pro-European with good relations to the European People's Party on EU level, even though he angered some EU leaders such as Angela Merkel with his solo-run during the migration crisis. Nevertheless, that did not seem to match with the openly eurosceptic rhetoric of the FPÖ, whose closest allies in the EU at that time were Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National and Gert Wilders from the nationalist Dutch Party of Freedom, who were both openly sympathizing with returning to a nation state outside of the EU membership. However, it is notable

for this paper, that Heinz-Christian (HC) Strache, the long-term leader of the FPÖ and known for populist rhetoric, already moderated his political behaviour during the election campaign in the prospect of possible government participation. This goes in accord with findings in chapter 6.2, that eurosceptic parties with more political experience are adjusting their approach by becoming more moderate in their political rhetoric in order to be suitable for the mainstream (Bodlos & Plescia, 2018, pp.3-6, Hall, 2019; Schmidt, 2019; Shuster, 2018).

On December 18, 2017, Kurz became Austria's youngest Chancellor and the youngest democratic leader on the planet. In coalition talks with the Freedom Party, Kurz agreed to Strache as Vice-Chancellor and to leave the ministry of internal affairs to the FPÖ, which was chaired by Herbert Kickl. In return, political observers reported that the FPÖ had to agree to not mention the possibility of being Austria outside the EU in the future. While some political analysts regarded the government coalition as a brilliant move and a model to neuter far-right parties by collaborating with them, voices were being raised, that considered the government involvement of a right-wing party as a dangerous game. In the first months, the coalition was anxious to act united and show harmony. However, as the period of office was characterized by increasing cases of far-right extremism, that stood in direct relationship to the party's connection with Neo-Nazism and drew attention internationally, tensions started to grow. In May 2019, political analyst Thomas Hofer predicted a change in Kurz's approach to his coalition partner: *"Although it is certainly still the priority for Kurz to continue with his coalition and push the agenda of the current government, he is now also preparing an exit strategy"* (Bodlos & Plescia, 2018, pp.3-6; Gady, 2019; Hall, 2019; Shuster, 2018).

Only a few weeks later, on May 17, 2019, Austria's political landscape was shattered by what is considered as the biggest political scandal in the history of the republic. In a secretly taped video from July 2017, that was delivered to the German newspapers *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Der Spiegel*, back then opposition politician Strache could be seen under the influence of alcohol at a mansion in Ibiza, Spain, where he talked to an actress, whom he thought being the niece of a Russian oligarch, about possible investments in order to secure Russian influence in Austria by, amongst other thing, controlling the media. The very next day, on May 18, Strache resigned as Vice-Chancellor of Austria. After Kurz unsuccessfully

insisted on the resignation of Kickl as minister of internal affairs, the whole Freedom Party stepped out of the government, leaving the ÖVP in a minority government. On May 27, Kurz became the first Chancellor in the Republic of Austria who was sacked by the parliament due to a vote of no-confidence, supported by his former coalition partner FPÖ. According to the Austrian constitution, an expert government was installed by President Van der Bellen that will stay in office until early legislative elections in September 2019. On June 3, Brigitte Bierlein, until then President of the Constitutional Court, became Austria's first female Chancellor (Bloomberg, 2019; Heath & Karnitschnig, 2019; Tirone, 2019; Witte, 2019).

8.2   Euroscepticism in Austria

Austria became a member of the European Union in 1995, after a referendum took place in 1994, in which an overwhelming majority of 66% of Austrians voted in favour of EU accession (Karner, 2013, p.252). However, since then EU approval ratings have fluctuated significantly and in terms of public opinion Austria gained the reputation of being some kind of special case in the EU. Generally, events that threaten the Austrian way of life, seem to bring the population closer to Brussels. This was the case in 2008, when the world economic crisis had the effect of an increase in approval rates in Austria, a net contributor to the EU. The tendency to follow an opportunistic approach towards the European Union could also be observed in the early stages of the Greek debt crisis, when opinion polls showed that 50% of Austrians wanted Greek to leave the eurozone. Therefore, it appears that Austrian citizens generally tend to hold a critical stance against Brussels. However, they feel closer to the EU in times of crisis. These developments led political analysts to the assumption, that Austria never fully arrived in the European Union (Karner, 2013, pp.252-253; Schmidt, 2019).

Since EU accession in 1995, the Freedom Party of Austria is the only noteworthy party that repeatedly promoted leaving the bloc. The far-right party is quick in using the political opinion of citizens on the topic of EU membership to its advantage. This could be monitored on many occasions over the last years, when the FPÖ changed its political strategy accordingly. In February 2016, FPÖ General

Secretary and Member of the European Parliament Harald Vilimsky issued a press release, in which he clearly states that Austria should hold a referendum on EU membership rather sooner than later. Three years later, on February 25, 2019, Vilimsky denied live on Austrian television while campaigning for EP elections that he had ever demanded "Öxit" (Austria leaving the EU), stating that it is not possible for him to read over all his press releases (Kurier, 2019). On the day of the Brexit referendum, June 24, 2016, Vilimsky was among the first to congratulate the United Kingdom to its *"recovered sovereignty […] if the EU continues to languish on its reform-reluctancy and keeps allowing countries like Turkey to join, then it is the political goal for Austria to vote too"* (Oswald, 2017). Udo Landbauer, FPÖ speaker for European affairs, went one step further: *"Brexit is far from being the end of the line, it is the beginning"* (Oswald, 2017). Meanwhile, politicians from all other parties in the parliament vehemently criticized the decision of the United Kingdom and demanded a reform of the framework of the European Union as a consequence (Salzburger Nachrichten, 2016). The FPÖ publicly maintained their position until presidential candidate Norbert Hofer on October 22, 2016 described the circumstances under which he would be supporting a referendum in an interview. As these comments from a potential next president of Austria drew international attention, Hofer softened his rhetoric towards the EU by the end of the week, stating that he would have no intentions to leave the EU (Weber, 2016). After losing the presidential election, the FPÖ was quick to criticize Nigel Farage, who had claimed in a televised interview, that Hofer would hold an "Öxit"-referendum if he wins. *"That didn't help us, it hindered us,"* (Oltermann, 2016). Hofer said while calling Farage's remarks a misjudgement as the majority of Austrians would support the EU. However, after just coming out of two European crises, Austria actually was among only five member states of the EU where the negative image that citizens had of the EU (35%) outweighed the positive image (28%) in autumn 2016 (Standard Eurobarometer 86.2, 2016).

> *The Eurozone crisis and the migration crisis both had the effect of crystallizing the Freedom Party's Euroscepticism but also, because of the direct impacts of both crises on Austria with a relatively large intake of migrants, also appeared to move the centrist Social Democrats and*

Christian Democrats to adopt a more critical tone towards the EU (Taggart & Szczerbiak 2018, p.1208).

The political shift of normally centrist parties, especially the ÖVP, did not necessarily come as a surprise and was already described in chapter 6.2. Similar to other countries in the EU, Austrian politicians tend to depict benefits that the country has from certain EU decision as personal achievement on domestic purposes. At the same time, they are fast to represent unpopular EU decisions as something, Brussels enforces on the country, whenever they think it is helpful for their political agenda (Karolewski 2019). Political scientist Peter Filzmaier names as an example the abolishment of the roaming costs thanks to the European Parliament, that was hardly mentioned by any local, regional or federal politician (WKO, 2019).

Nevertheless, public support for the European Union in Austria increased within the next years. As a matter of fact, the image of Brussels has never been higher, since the first Eurobarometer results on the country were published in 2000. In November 2018, 40% of Austrians stated that they have a positive image of the EU, compared to only 22% with a negative image. In addition to that, while support for EU membership in Austria increased since 2015, the percentage of the group that supported leaving the EU decreased by double-digits (Standard Eurobarometer 90.3, 2019). Hereby, Austria follows the trend of the rest of the EU in the way of reacting to Brexit. "*That, of course, has something to do with the uniqueness of Brexit, with the chaotic, political situation, the prognosed economic costs and the way, how the media reports about it*" (Schmidt 2019). Therefore, the Freedom Party had found itself in a dilemma, since it became a junior partner in the government on December 18,2017. On the one hand, it had to appear more moderate, on the other hand, it was facing a public opinion that was increasingly favourable towards the EU. *"You cannot maintain anti-government positions, anti-establishment positions, because now you are the elite, now you are the government"* (Schmidt, 2019). Furthermore, the FPÖ was threatened to lose at least some of its conservative positions to its increasingly right-wing coalition partner ÖVP. On the long term, the FPÖ still aimed for a Europe of nation states, which was a contradiction to its government positions. The crucial question for the party was, if the passion and interest on government participation weighs more

than the favour of voters on the new party position and if it still would be able to mobilize its traditional clients for the next election (Schmidt, 2019). Thus, as the Freedom Party changes its eurosceptic EU approach, at least publicly, every once in a while, it is hard to give it an exact definition. If we start from the assumption, that it combines *Europhobe* and *anti-EU-positions*, it makes the party *Eurorejects*, critics of both the EU and the EU integration process according to Kopecky and Mudde (2002). Based on Taggart and Szczerbiak's (2001; 2017) scheme, the FPÖ represents hard Euroscepticism.

Another noteworthy observation in Austria is the increased attention and public awareness of the European Union. In spring 2018, 57% of interviewees stated that they feel well informed about European affairs, which was 15 percentage points higher than the average of the EU28. In addition to that, 52% of interviewees stated that Austrians in general seem well informed about the EU, which was even 22 percentage points higher than the EU average (Standard Eurobarometer 89.1, 2018). This development was due to several factors such as the various crises and, maybe more importantly, increased media attention during the EU Council Presidency of Austria between June and December 2018. This increased attention raised hopes for a high voter turnout at the elections for the European Parliament. Similar to other EU nations, Austria always had a difficult relationship with the European Parliament. To Austrians, the EP has always seemed complicated and abstract. Thus, only a small percentage of people actually believe that 18 Austrian MEP's are making a difference in a parliament with 751 members. However, as Schmidt (2019) points out, it is a long way from public interest to actually engage with the European Union and the European Parliament. In addition to that, elections for the European Parliament had always been a reason for voters punishing parties for their behaviour and actions in domestic politics.

As the government collapsed in Austria only a week before the European elections, it is difficult to analyse how the results would have looked like without it. In any case, increasingly eurosceptic rhetoric could be observed by both former government parties during campaigning. Even former Chancellor Kurz, known as pro-European, surprised many with his populist call for less EU-regulations, particularly for the preparation of Wiener Schnitzel (Karnitschnig, 2019). At the EP elections, the ÖVP was able to secure the best result in its history by getting 35%

of votes, gaining 8.5 percentage points since 2014. After the collapse of the government on the same weekend, this was seen a personal mandate for the Chancellor, who lost the vote of no-confidence in the Parliament the next day. To the surprise of many, 17.2% of Austrians voted for the Freedom Party, which is a loss of only 2.5% right after causing one of the biggest scandals in Austrian political history (Jones, 2019). In the end, voter participation in 2019 turned out to be 59.80%, compared to 45.39% in 2014. This is the highest result since 1996, shortly after Austria joined the EU, when the turnout was 67.73% (European Parliament, 2019). Nevertheless, even though the image of the EU and the public awareness towards the EU rose significantly, there are negative prospects too. In 2018, only 32% of Austrians thought that the EU is developing into the right direction, compared to 43% who thought it is developing into the wrong direction (Standard Eurobarometer 90.3, 2018). Last but not least, it should be noted that as for March 2019, 57% of Austrian state that they would vote to remain in case of an "Öxit"-referendum, compared to 22% who want to leave and 22% being unsure. This is a lower result than the EU average, which is 68% in favour of voting to stay. Furthermore, support for the EU, and against leaving the EU, is significantly higher from younger, more educated citizens (Special Eurobarometer 91.1, 2019).

9   Poland

9.1   Political situation

By registering only 10,255 first time asylum applicants in 2015, and 5,610 applicants in 2014, Poland was not among the countries that were heavily affected by the refugee crisis (Eurostat, 2016). Nevertheless, the issue of migration had a major impact on the political scene. The success of the right-wing Law and Justice Party at the Polish parliamentary election in October 2015 was already foreshadowed by the results of the presidential election. In May 2015, PiS candidate Andrzej Duda, a relatively unknown Member of the European Parliament, prevailed with 51.5% of the votes over the favoured candidate of the Civic Platform, Bronislaw Komorowski (48.5%) (Marcinkiewicz & Stegmaier 2016, p.2). The campaign for the parliamentary election started immediately afterwards. In a strategic move, the PiS decided to not let their most controversial politicians, party Leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Antoni Macierewicz, take an official position in the campaign. While Beata Szydlo was announced as a candidate for Prime Minister, it was clear that Kaczynski would remain a decisive figure in the background. Thus, at the height of the refugee crisis in September 2015, Kaczynski openly spoke out against immigration from Muslim countries. Not even a month later, on October 25, 2015, the Polish parliamentary election revealed new dynamics in the Polish party system. After eight years in opposition, the PiS became the first party in the post-communist era to secure an absolute majority of seats, winning 235 of the 460 seats with 37.58% of popular vote (Marcinkiewicz & Stegmaier, 2016, p.3) This result was possible through the relatively high percentage of votes cast for parties that did not pass the required five per cent hurdle. While the PO came in second with 24.09% votes, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and Your Movement (TR), two left-of-center parties had to leave the parliament, making the political swing to the right even more significant. In further consequence, the Law and Justice party formed the first majoritarian single party cabinet: "*The President designated Szydlo as PM, but her joint appearance with Kaczynski when they announced the new government signalled her weak position within the PiS*" (Marcinkiewicz & Stegmaier 2016, p.4). By selecting the far-right

hardliner Antoni Macierewicz as Minister of Defense, Szydlo broke a campaign pledge. (Marcinkiewicz & Stegmaier, 2016, pp.3-4).

The main reason for the success of the PiS was the way how it was dealing with the refugee crisis. The party was able to convey the problem of migration as the main problem of the European Union. Together with the other Visegrád nations, it was highly critical with the refugee relocation scheme of the EU and it particularly blamed Germany for trying to solve the problem on the shoulder of other EU member states. Even though the decision was taken by Qualified Majority Voting, although against the will of the Visegrád states, the PiS was able to label the relocation decision as German solo action (Gotev ,2017; Karolewski, 2019).

> *Because refugees and migrants from the Middle East are seen in Poland as problematic refugees, mainly in terms of cultural identity, [...] the populist political elites have been able somehow to capitalize on that. It has become the main point of critique of many citizens* (Karolewski, 2019).

During the campaign, Kaczynski took the populist rhetoric one step further than for what he was already known for. In September 2015, the PiS party leader related the refugee influx to an expected spreading of diseases such as cholera, dysentery and "even more severe diseases" in Europe, where these maladies do not exist anymore (Goclowski, Barteczko & Koper, 2015). His statements even led to astonishment in the less conservative circuits of the party. By using this rhetoric, the PiS was able to mobilize voters that tended to vote for other right-wing parties. As a result, at the beginning of the PiS government, the majority of Polish citizens regarded migration as the main issue of the European Union. People had the image of the EU as an organization, that does not only not solve problems, that need to be solved, but rather produces problems, as it forces member states to accept a certain number of refugees. Furthermore, only nine days after assumption of office, Prime Minister Beata Szydlo removed all flags of the European Union before holding a press conference. She justified this openly anti-European move by pointing out that topics concerning only the nation of Poland will be discussed (Cienski, 2017; Karolewski, 2019; Schalit, 2015).

In December 2015, actions by the Polish government initiated the rule of law crisis in Poland and the European Union. Through a legislative amendment, the PiS-dominated parliament was given the right to choose five replacements for constitutional court judges. As the head of the court refused to acknowledge the five nominees, the PiS unsuccessfully tried to remove him from office, which resulted in President Duda signing legislation that forced the head of the Constitutional Court to include the judges in decision-making. As a result of this authoritarian attempt to secure the PiS judicial power, the European Commission opened a dialogue with the Polish government under the Rule of Law Framework in January 2016, as Poland violated Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. Meanwhile, the PiS advanced its judicial reform by lowering a judge's retirement age from 70 to 65 for men, and to 50 for women. This measure would have forced 40% of the judges into an early retirement (Cienski, 2019). After several debates and three hearings amongst member states, the Commission triggered the Article 7 procedure for the first time in EU history due to the lack of progress. Article 7 is a mechanism being used when a member state breaches the fundamental values of the EU and could ultimately lead to suspension of the country's voting rights in the EU. In addition to that, the Commission launched infringement procedures on Polish law on the Supreme Court and ordinary court. On September 24, 2018, the Commission referred the case to the Court of Justice of the EU, that issued a final order imposing interim measures to stop the implementation of Polish law on the Supreme Court on December 18, 2018. On April 3, 2019, the Commission launched another infringement procedure to protect judges in Poland from political control (European Commission, 2017b; European Commission, 2019c; Martin, 2018; Wlodarczak-Semczuk, 2018).

One of the PiS strategies during the rule of law crisis is to blame the reaction of the European Union as being politically biased due to Poland's refusal to agree to Brussel's refugee relocation scheme: *"The government is trying to depict the EU, specifically the European Commission, as intervening into something they should not intervene too"* (Karolewski 2019). At the moment, the attitude of the Polish government during the rule of law crisis and towards the European Union does not seem to diminish its chances to maintain its position in the government. As a matter of fact, opinion polls show that the PiS very well have the potential to even increase

their vote share at the upcoming parliament election. However, as it is the case in every country, a lot will depend on party alliances and the flow of undecided voters right before the election. On December 7, 2019, the PiS surprisingly replaced Beata Szydlo as Prime Minister with Finance Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who at that time had the reputation of being more popular and moderate in his rhetoric. In addition to that, he is close to party leader Kaczynski (Easton, 2017; Karolewski, 2019).

9.2   Euroscepticism in Poland

At the moment, the Polish government is walking down a dangerous path. The Law and Justice Party remains in open conflict with the European Union due to the rule of law crisis. However, as the Polish population is significantly pro-European, the party needs to balance its attitude according to the public opinion: *"The party needs some kind of manoeuvre between critic of the EU and the willingness of the population to stay in the EU"* (Karolewski 2019). Therefore, the PiS cannot become too eurosceptic. Usually, parties that go one step further and argue that Poland should leave the European Union, are most probable to lack the required votes to be elected into the national parliament. As a matter of fact, EU support in Poland is stronger than in most other member states. According to a multi-nation survey by the Pew Research Center in 2016, 72% of Polish citizens shared a favourable view of the European Union. Poland was one of the few member states, where support for the EU did not decline but rise since 2011. In addition to that, only 38% stated that some powers of the EU should be returned to national governments; a smaller percentage compared to Greece (68%) or Germany (42%). However, 71% stated that they were unhappy with the way the EU handled the migration crisis (Stokes, 2016).

Kopecky and Mudde (2002, p.312) analysed the political stance of the PiS already in 2002, when Poland, that joined the EU in 2004, was yet to become a member state. The party founded in 2001 was critical to accelerating European integration, but still presented itself as *Europhile* in its election programme by mentioning that the second most important foreign policy direction of the party after NATO membership is the accession of Poland to the EU. However, membership should

be based on strong nation states rather than centralization. The scholars concluded that the *EU-pessimist* PiS opposed EU membership in the short term. In relation to this shift in dynamics since then, Karolewski (2019) emphasizes the highly opportunistic, populist rhetoric of the conservative party. PiS politicians frequently point out, that the European Union is not democratically legitimized. However, it was in fact the former president and leader of the PiS party Lech Kaczynski, who signed and ratified the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union in 2009 (Day, 2009). The beforementioned problem with the definition of eurosceptic theories by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) can be illustrated by the Polish government. According to their definition, the PiS party would be described as only soft eurosceptic, as they are criticizing the European Union mainly on migration and rule of law aspects. However, in reality, they are openly confronting Brussels and for the first time in the history of the EU, Article 7 was triggered by the Commission. Therefore, Karolewski (2019) labels the political attitude of the PiS towards the European Union as *"middle-ground Euroscepticism".* That means, the government sometimes shows harsh rhetoric towards Brussels, but they are also aware that they cannot run a campaign that is highly EU critical, as many Polish citizens would be alienated by that. Applying the scheme of Kopecky and Mudde (2002) in 2019, the PiS can rather be described as *Europragmatists*, combining *Europhobe* and *EU-optimist* positions. The PiS does not support or oppose ideas of EU integration, but they follow a pragmatic approach, as it uses the positive aspects of the EU when it is profitable for Poland or their personal advantage. Regarding the Polish citizens, the population can be categorized as loyal Supporters of the European Union according to de Vries (2018). In fact, due to agriculture being a big factor in the country, there is a high EU awareness in Poland. Many Polish people are connected to agriculture from both conservative and liberal backgrounds and benefit significantly from the EU as they receive direct payments from Brussels (European Commission, 2018a, pp.3-13). A couple of months before the European Parliament Election, the PiS seemed to adapt their strategy, because they were careful not push voters to more eurosceptic parties by using anti-EU rhetoric: *"Sometimes they try to be more pro-European, or show that they are very important in the context of the EU"* (Karolewski 2019). While toning down EU criticism, they focused on other conservative points on their agenda, such as criticism of the LGBT community. However, as mentioned in

chapter 6.2, this can change after the national elections in October 2019, as party Euroscepticism is not stable (Karolewski, 2019). As for 2019, for an overwhelming majority of 86% of Polish citizens EU membership is regarded as beneficial (Special Eurobarometer, 2019).

At the European level, Brexit caused the Polish government to change its strategy, as it had to seek new allies within the European Union. Until 2014, the Civil Platform (PO) endeavoured a close collaboration with the German government of Angela Merkel. That political attachment shifted significantly since the PiS came to power. After the assumption of office by the PiS in 2015, Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski published a statement, in which he made it very clear that Great Britain is supposed to be the main partner of Poland within the European Union. Not least due to the estimated one million Polish citizens living in the United Kingdom.

> *Of course, Brexit causes certain problems because of that, because a country, which is leaving the European Union cannot be a partner in the EU. So, I think, the Polish government was left clueless a little bit* (Karolewski, 2019).

Therefore, after the Brexit referendum the PiS was looking for a new form of collaboration within the EU. These ideas for collaboration included a new focus on the Visegrád group as well as on the Balkan. Furthermore, the Three Seas Initiative was established in 2016. The initiative is a political platform with 12 member states including the Baltics, the Balkan, Austria, and Slovakia that aims to stimulate economic development by increasing connectivity between the regions. However, the efficiency of this initiative was doubted, as it combines countries with national interests that differ significantly (European Commission, 2018b, p.3).

Furthermore, it is important to point out, that the PiS does not promote Poland leaving the European Union. There are many PiS voters, who support the party for socioeconomic reasons rather than for their eurosceptic attitude. By going one step further and even only mentioning the rejection of EU membership, without the actual intention of initiating it, the PiS would deter those voters.

You do not need to use exit as an attraction strategy or mobilising strategy, but you can lose a lot from the middle ground, from the center. So, it is a very dangerous and not very sensible strategy in electoral terms, so it is not a topic. (Karolewski, 2019)

It is questionable, if the PiS will adopt this strategy in the foreseeable future. Partly, because the negative example of exit-sceptic parties in Poland exists, who are not very successful. These far-right parties, that never managed to pass the five per cent hurdle in the parliament yet, are openly anti-democratic and named after their libertarian leaders; KORWin, Braun and Liroy. These parties formed an alliance called Confederation before the European Parliament elections but failed to pass the threshold by reaching 4.6% (Szczerbiak, 2019). Nevertheless, Karolewski (2019) predicts, that the next government will consist of more parties. A lot depends on the performance of the opposition parties and especially the question, if Kukiz'15, a protest nationalist party, will reach more than the required five per cent and enter the parliament again in order to be able to form a coalition with the PiS if needed. If this is not the case, the opposition parties could very well have the majority and form a government. Because of this political situation, the PiS is trying to change the electoral system in order to strengthen larger parties. However, as these plans are not showing any progress, it is still an open game and smaller populist parties could become a significant actor at the EP election in October 2019. In case the PiS party decides to form a government coalition with the extremely right-wing Confederation, this could be a gamechanger and exit-scepticism in Poland might become a topic (Karolewski, 2019). In any case, if the European Parliament elections are an indicator for a good performance at national elections, the PiS is set for outstanding results. On May 26, 2019, the Law and Justice party secured 45% of the votes, ahead of the European Coalition's (KE) 38%, a pro-European electoral alliance led by the Civic Platform that was particularly formed to contest the PiS. The turnout of 46% was significantly higher than in 2014, when it was 23.83% (Szczerbiak, 2019).

10 Conclusion

The aim of this paper, to identify the impact that Brexit had on the public opinion in the European Union, can be assessed as in large parts successful. Only in large parts, because it became apparent that it is challenging to fully extract the events around the Brexit referendum from the preceding crises of the European Union; the euro crisis and the migration crisis. In addition to that, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish if the EU is simply recovering from the decreasing populist rhetoric in its member states in the aftermath of the migration crisis, or if the Brexit referendum led to the veer in the public opinion. That being said, we certainly can observe a decrease in Euroscepticism on the EU population and a new form of unity and identification with the EU on continental Europe that descends from the British attitude during the negotiations. We can identify this united approach at institutions of the EU, particularly the European Council, and their reaction towards the UK during the process of Brexit. Furthermore, many debates about the meaning of the EU and its political framework erupted in the member states as a result of Brexit. As a consequence, EU citizens reacted with increasing awareness towards the EU and its institutions, which is one reason for the more favourable public opinion towards the EU. However, that does not necessarily mean that the performance of the EU, as it works today, is satisfying for citizens. Even though the population seems more united than ever before, the main reason for that simply seems to be pragmatism, as for the first time in history, people observe what consequences it would bring for their country if it tries to extract itself from the framework of the EU. Thus, it is important to remember that the majority of EU citizens still do not think that the EU is moving in the wrong direction. That means, Euroscepticism could very well increase again over the next couple of years. However, beforementioned unity indeed had an effect on the European Parliament, where voter participation exceeded expectations, which very well can be identified as legitimization for Brussels.

Generally, Brexit serves as a deterring example for eurosceptic forces in Austria and Poland. On the more experienced anti-EU parties we can observe that the peculiarity of their eurosceptic attitude strongly depends on their role in their respective parliamentary position. Parties such as the Austrian FPÖ undoubtedly

prefer a Europe of nation states rather than being a member of the EU. However, they are willing to at least publicly give up on that attitude, as soon as they have the prospect of national power in the form of government participation. At that time, that did not come as a big challenge for the party, as the public opinion in Austria was in favour of the EU. Moreover, as the FPÖ finds itself in opposition again after the collapse of the Austrian government, it would come as no surprise if it increases its anti-EU-rhetoric again before the early re-elections in September 2019. The major difference between the party behaviour of the FPÖ in Austria and the Law and Justice party in Poland is their political attitude as soon as the parties took office. The PiS increasingly attacked Brussels verbally in order to justify their actions during the rule of law crisis, which is regarded as a balancing act between the pro-European population and its eurosceptic rhetoric. In conclusion, both parties follow an opportunistic approach towards Euroscepticism and the EU. However, it is important to point out, that the Polish government did not deliberately choose to upset the European Union with the rule of law crisis. Simply put, the EU got into the party's way while it was, and still is, trying to transform the country to a more authoritarian state. The PiS never was a party that promoted leaving the EU and it even helped to construct the EU as it is today by, for example, signing the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, the future uprising of Exit-Scepticism in Poland is unlikely. However, it cannot be ruled out, as government participation of a hardcore eurosceptic party after the next parliamentary election is possible. As both Austria and Poland are facing elections in autumn 2019, the attitude of the FPÖ and the PiS regarding Euroscepticism during campaigning could present an interesting case for further research.

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12 Table of figures

13 Appendix

13.1 Interview with Prof. Dr. Ireneusz Karolewski

Ireneusz Pawel Karolweski received his PhD in political science from the University of Potsdam (Germany). He was Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Potsdam from 1999 to 2008. He has held guest professorships and fellowships at the Harvard University, the Université de Montréal, Institut D'Etudes Politiques in Lille, the University of California in Santa Barbara and the New York University. He is co-convenor of the ECPR Standing Group on Identity and managing editor of the Annual of European and Global Studies (Edinburgh University Press). Karolewski published several books on the subject of European integration (ResearchGate, 2019).

Author's note: As there have been technical problems with the recording device during the interview with Karolewski, the first answer has been cut off. However, the problem was identified and solved and therefore the question was caught up on at the end of the conversation.

"… like that you select Egypt, for example. So, you have this kind of oppressive, almost biblical entirely symbolic understanding of the European Union that is almost kind of mystical organisation the represses people. And we have a similar attitude in some of the countries in Eastern Europe, still marginal, but you will find attitudes in Poland and some other countries that the European Union is very similar to the Soviet Union, which is of course not true. And there are different reasons for that. You can be critical of the European Union that is one of the reasons, because the European Union has become more important in the recent 20 years because there are more and more policy fields that the European Union is important for. So, there is a huge difference between the EU, say, in the end of the 1980's and the end of the 1990's when you compare it. And then of course there is another movement towards more collaboration, more powers to the

European institutions, for instance the European Parliament after the Lisbon treaty. And then of course there is also a rise in the hardcore Euroscepticism, where parties, politicians or, if you like, political entrepreneurs, that's an interesting difference, because people like Farage are political entrepreneurs rather than politicians in the traditional sense, because they are not even interested in the Brexit itself, they are interested in gathering votes of protest voters, of people that are for some reason not satisfied and think that the reason for dissatisfaction is the European Union. But they are not really interested in Brexit itself. So, Brexit is a kind of a problem both for the Brexiteers and the people that say no to Brexit.

NR: Thank you very much. So, regarding soft and hard Euroscepticism, party strategies. Do you see different types of those Scepticism that are like characteristic for some parts of the EU? North, South, West?

IK: I think there is something typical for countries that have been struggling with the European Union for some time and that is for one group if you like belongs to the countries, that have been struggling with the European Union mainly because of financial and economic terms. And I would list here Greece, Italy, Ireland but not anymore, many in the context of the banking crisis and the Southern debt crises of this to group to which Ireland doesn't belong anymore because Ireland is not eurosceptical, quite the opposite, then there is still Greece and there is still Italy that are main representatives of this type of criticism, which describes the European Union as specifically economic policies such as austerity policies that are problematic and are defined by eurosceptic politicians as repressive if you like. And there is another group, mostly connected to the countries of the Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe. Poland, Hungary, to some extend Slovakia, but also Romania and Bulgaria. Countries, that have been struggling recently with the European Union mainly in the context of the rule of law critics. Those countries, those governments have shown problems with the rule of law, but actually governments have violated rule of law and it is quite clear that the European Union specifically and the European Commission have been trying to do something against it. I think, recently or yesterday Poland was against criticized for its reforms of the court system and specifically the pressure that the government has been putting on the judges, that are supposed to be independent. So, the European Union has been active in criticizing those countries and this is another group of

countries mostly from central and eastern Europe that have seen these problems in this context. But this a kind of governmental political critique where not the entire society would subscribe to this critique, so it is kind of political conflict if you like, by governments that violate standards in the European Union. And then of course you have other types of Euroscepticism and this groups are interesting because they are represented by governments. You will find eurosceptic parties and eurosceptic governments in this regard, in regard to finance and economic affairs in Italy and Greece and in Poland, Hungary, Romania now you find governments or parts of the political class that are eurosceptic because they think that the European Union is too invasive concerning rule of law. And then you have Euroscepticism in the western countries, the old member states but also newer member states, where you have nationalism or far-right nationalism that is critical of the European Union. And this is a different category I think, because those parties or those politicians did not or have not belonged to the mainstream politics until now and I mean the Front National or Rassemblement National in France there are eurosceptic parties, far-right nationalist parties in Sweden, in Denmark. So, this is a different type of Euroscepticism coming from nationalist positions I would say. And populist, nationalist positions, so those parties that are actually politicians that have been criticizing the political establishment and would like to replace this establishment mainly with regard to ideas about sovereignty, national sovereignty and populist approach to politics. So, there are different types of Euroscepticism I think, and it makes sense to differentiate those.

NR: To deal with those different types in the different regions of the EU, what do you think the EU could do, what measures could be taken? Right now, the trend goes more to centralization of the European Union, but does it have to become more flexible?

IK: The question is, what that means, to be flexible. I think that the main problem of the European Union has been for years that the EU was misunderstood or poly-understood, mostly by the citizens. Because, not everybody of course, but the critical part of the political elites were eager to disassociate themselves from the EU and were able somehow to make the impression that the member states are not part of the EU. So, the image of many eurosceptic positions is, that, well, the EU is something else, something different, something outside of the nation state,

but that is not true. The member states are the core of the decision-making. Of course, with the participation of some other institutions, but the European Commission is not the European Union. Member states are crucial for the very functioning of the European Union, so the EU is indirectly legitimized by the member states and their participation in the decision-making process, but also by the European Commission and the European Parliament, but the image of the European Union is that it is something external to the member states. So the European Union has become victim to its own intransparency I think, because many citizens and also part of the political elites did not understand what the EU was really about and if they understood, and many of them did, they used it actually for their domestic purposes. So in literature, this type of multi-level decision making of the EU, make decisions at the European level at the same time you make national decisions and you play both sides against each other in a sense, vis a vis the public, the domestic public space is quite important but also troubling. Because, and it has been actually from the beginning of the 1990's around, that national politicians argues in Brussels because they need to do something because there is a national pressure and towards the domestic audiences they had to say that they need to do it, because it is bad European Union and European pressure. And we know about these blaming and scapegoating strategies have been part of the legitimacy of the European Union are actually of the politicians, individual politicians, that are used vis a vis the domestic audiences. And the problem is of course, that you cannot really check it, because the European Union and specifically decision-making process is highly intransparent. And this is one of the problems, I think, where the European Union needs to work on. That you need to have more public debates, you need to have more public access to the decision-making. You need to have not necessarily a parliamentary system that we now from the national context, but you need some form of public access as we had the opportunity to watch public parliamentary debates for instance. Who is talking what, and we need to check it, we need to test it, we need to see, what the public debate in the European Union is. That is one thing, and the other thing is, you mentioned the flexibility that there is a certain rigidity of the institutions of the EU. And this rigidity means that the EU institutions are quite conservative with regards to the power. They don't like to share the power among themselves and for instance the European Commission is not only the guardian of the treaties but also

the guardian of the rule of law in the EU. When in 2017, Hungary for the first time the Tavares report of the European Parliament that was highly critical of the rule of law by elections of the Hungarian Parliament. And there were recommendations by the European Parliament to introduce additional institutions dealing with the rule of law, for instance regular monitoring of the rule of law in the EU, a so-called Copenhagen Commission. A Copenhagen Commission that would monitor the Copenhagen criteria. Not only with new members but with all members of the European Union. It was basically rejected by the European Commission because the European Commission said "No, no, no, we don't want intervention, this is our job and we want to keep it like it is.". And that's a problem, but there is a certain rigidity of the institutions of the EU because they tend to cling to power that they have, so institution logic. And so, I think they need to become more flexible and also, because it has consequences for the Euroscepticism and for how citizens see the EU. For instance, there is the European citizen initiative that is provided by the Lisbon treaty, we need one million signatures, we need seven countries to sign this, but there have been a couple of very interesting citizen initiative, all of them have been blocked by the European Commission, because the status of the initiative is very weak, it is only consultative but the European Commission can basically reject it or can ignore it or can refuse to register it for instance, because the number of signature. So, the EC is also very conservative in regard to such initiatives and that is a problem I think of the EU that it needs to become more flexible or more open towards external citizen-orientated influences to deal with Euroscepticism. Because for the moment I think, the image of the EU still is that of a kind of incapsuled institution. Citizens don't have any impact on what is going on and they are right. I mean, the only impact is actually through the European election. But the European elections are not, for some reason, are not very popular, if you take a look at the turnout at the European elections in 2014. We will see in May, how it will look like, but it was disastrous in some countries, less than 20% in some eastern European countries. In Slovakia, I think it was 13 or 14%, so it was a catastrophe if you like. So, if citizens think, for whatever reason, that the European Parliament is not a sufficient or legitimized institution for representation, then you need other institutions, you need to be more open towards the influence of citizen.

NR: You were also talking about the European elections. In the last couple years, we could observe an increased awareness of citizens towards the European Union. Do you think that could affect the European election and do you have an explanation for this increased awareness?

IK: The increase of what, could you repeat please?

NR: The increased awareness of citizens, people pay more attention to the European Union in the last couple years, which was surprising for many.

IK: It was surprising and not surprising that much, because the European Union has become more visible in recent years and this is, I think, mainly due to different crises of the EU. Many political problems that were invisible in the EU context became visible in the EU context. And they were not even invisible, but they were regulated, or solved, or managed, or dealt with by the European Union or member states within the EU, starting with the financial crisis of course, going to the so-called Greek crisis or Greek tragedy, than moving on to the rule of law and the refugee, migration crisis. So, there was a series of crises, where many European citizens thought, that the EU had not dealt with the issue properly or used different crises to accumulate more power, so the criticism of centralization for instance, or worsened the problem of the refugee crisis for instance. So, the EU has become with many people, that might be eurosceptic, the problem rather the solution. I mean, I am not saying that it is necessarily defect from the ground, but I am just arguing that many people started to see the EU as a problem rather than the solution. And it has to do with visibility, it has to do with specific solution, because solutions of the EU that have been pushed through by some countries rather than other countries, and I mean mostly Germany. Germany has become associated with pushing through certain solutions that are in the German interest if you like. And again, I am just arguing, that this is a perception. It is a different debate if Germany did so, really, because the debate is really interesting. I don't think that Germany was, kind of, from the very beginning aware of what was going on and was kind of flip-flopping and changed the positions and so on. But the perception had been, I think for some time, that Germany used, maybe not used those crises, but behaved in those crises in a selfish manner as opposed to say a more pro-European manner. And that goes for the Greek crisis, it goes for the migration

crisis as well. Those are main reasons, why many people have become aware of what was going on. In a critical way.

NR: Many people also became aware of what Exit-scepticism in particular can cause. How do you see the development of Exit-scepticism within the EU in the last couple years?

IK: I think that specifically Brexit has shown something that many people not believe means, specifically that it can leave the EU, that it is something that can happen. Because I think, until 2016 nobody believed in that, because there were eurosceptic parties and politicians, but nobody really thought, they were serious. I mean, they were serious in the context that they were mobilizing based on those ideas, but nobody believed that they would be efficient enough to organize such a referendum and actually win it. I think not even the Brexiteers did even believe in that, because the very idea of Brexit, not the idea but the reality of Brexit goes against their interest. If you take the UKIP party, Brexit was actually the reason why the party seized to exist. And it is not in your interest actually to destroy your own party. Specifically, a protest party, if you want to attract protest voters, you want to attract them because you believe that the problem is going to stay rather than dissolve with one referendum. So, actually Farage and the UKIP, for them the very Brexit what has been going on is a huge blow. So nobody believed in that, not even the Brexiteers believed in that, they just thought based in that they can become part of the political landscape and that goes for the UKIP, and Boris Johnson believes that he can replace David Cameron at the head of the Tory party. So, kind of intra-party considerations than proper belief that the UK needs really to leave the EU, if you take a look at those lies and manipulation of information, they did not of course believe in that. Now, but because it happened, because the Brexit referendum happened and because the Tory party has been trying to follow through with this, which is another problem of course, because they not need to actually, so you could have dealt with the problem in a different way, but they decided to go through with this. I think that many eurosceptic parties became aware of the exit, which could be damaging to the political rationality. Let's take Poland for instance. The current Polish government, PIS government, Law and Justice government, is kind of eurosceptical, you could argue, because there is the issue of rule ow law, right, so there is a conflict. And the government is trying to

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depict the EU, specifically the European Commission, as intervening into something they should not intervene too. Now at the same time you have a very pro-European population, right, around 70% support for the membership of the country in the European Union. So, the party needs some kind of manoeuvre between critic of the EU and the willingness of the population to stay in the EU. So, they cannot push too much, they cannot become too much eurosceptical, because it is a fringe position. Of course, there are people arguing that we need to leave the EU because it is like the Soviet Union, but with this fringe position you would not get enough votes to be elected into the national parliament I suppose. I mean, it could be, it depends on your strategy of course. I think, that Brexit exemplified that many eurosceptic politicians that it is a kind of dangerous game and to people that are critical of the European Union it actually can lead to an exit. So, in this sense, Brexit fulfils a specific constructive role, because it is not something that is unhappenable. It is not something, that people cannot imagine now. It is part of political reality and you need to deal with that. So, if you criticize the EU in a very heavy-handed way as it happens in Poland and Hungary, the questions are, if you do so, then what would be your next step? Would you, as a government, like to leave the European Union? And then, the population needs to know that and needs to deal with the notion of your country leaving the EU. And it can change the score entirely.

NR: In the face of this political reality you just mentioned, do you observe a different social interaction between EU leaders, who are not eurosceptic, since the Brexit vote?

IK: The relationship among them?

NR: Yes, yes.

IK: Yes, to some extent. I think, there is this, among the political elite of the EU, there is the growing dissatisfaction specifically with Great Britain. How Great Britain has dealt with the political deed, how they dealt with Brexit. I think there is the feeling that you cannot be too flexible with Great Britain, because it is not just a club you can join and re-join, leave and re-join, it is also a community of values. So, if you decide to leave the EU, then leave it and then stop playing games. So, I

think maybe political, many politicians in the EU started to believe that you need to be tougher on Britain in the same sense they are. And would have to be the next step after Brexit. But you need to think about getting closer somehow. You need to think about finding new, not solutions, but finding new projects for the EU to increase its legitimacy, to make it more attractive, to show that it is not just for some countries. France is very active in this, but sometimes in a very problematic way. After Macron said, the French language has to become more important the moment Great Britain leaves. And you can see that such things are quite damaging I think, because it sounds very like a post-imperial impulse of France trying to regain its position after Great Britain has left. But another impulse are projects. The EU would really need projects that bring the remaining states together, but also to stay tough on countries that are problematic. So, I think that the decision to suspend the Fidesz party within the European people's party was the right decision, because it has been tolerated for too many years, actually for almost ten years. There has been a lot of criticism vis a vis the party, that you cannot protect one of yours, if the one of yours is violating the rules of the EU. So, I think that both positions, you need to be tough vis a vis problematic member states, because there are values and norms than cannot be questioned. There are certain things that are beyond political calculation. And the other thing is that we need some new ideas how we deal with the EU after the Brexit, because there are not that many ideas around. And Germany and France cannot really be the engine of the European integration anymore, because it is not the 1970's anymore.

NR: Have you been surprised after the Brexit vote, that Michel Barnier and the other EU leaders have come to a contract quite quick. Like others said, it might take even more time than even the deadline of Brexit?

IK: Yes, is was a bit surprised, because I saw that both sides like to prolong the problem or to solve the problem by prolonging the deadline. And somehow to water down as much as possible. So, my calculation was, nobody is interested in the Brexit actually, because it causes too much damage to vote the European Union and the UK. And the reasonable thing to do would be actually to somehow water down, maybe wait for two or three years, find a preliminary solution and have another referendum. But I was mistaken. I think, what kicked in was a kind of identity question, which is equally important. So, it is not just political calculation

that there might be economic damage but identity questions play a more important or more and more important role nowadays, because Brexit is above identify actually, right. How do you define yourself as a country in the EU? And what does it mean? So, if you want to leave it and if it is a part of your political calculation, so be it. But there are consequences for that. So, you better think twice. A mistake, or not a mistake, but an underestimation. And I think the right thing to do actually, to go with the identify argument. To say, 'well, we understand that is was a coincidence and it was due to party calculations, but next time you should think twice' because the EU might be a functional organisation that gives benefits to all members through access to the single market, to certain redistribution of good, through investments, through common research projects. But beyond that, beyond this functionality there is also something like identity. Some form of European identity, which means that if you decide to leave it, then that is your choice, that is fine, but it has to be done. So, for me it is an identity question, I think. It shows to some extent, that the political elites of the EU understood that this is not just a functional issue.

NR: It is very hard to give an outlook, especially as we all know, Brexit is not here yet, if it ever comes. But in ten years of time, what do you think the EU and Great Britain will think about these last couple of years? How will they look back?

IK: I think, which is just an educated guess, more or less an educated guess. I think that there will be Brexit in some form, and I think that in ten years there will be a Norway plus solution, I think. Which will basically mean that Great Britain will remain member of the European Economic Area. They will have access to the single market, they will have access to Schengen, because they are very interested in the information exchange concerning security and criminality, which is guaranteed by Schengen. Eventually there are restrictions to mobility. And they will partially, like Norway, be part of Schengen also concerning mobility. So, I think they will become second Norway plus because of the North Irish border, because it needs to be solved somehow. So, I see it in this way, it will be Norway plus, which would be the opposite of Brexit intended by the Brexiteers, proclaimed by the Brexiteers. What they claimed, what they want. Great Britain will need to subscribe to the European regulations, many of them, but will not have much impact on this, which is actually the opposite of what the Brexiteers proclaimed will be the case.

So, I think it will be this. I don't think it will be easy to join the European Union in ten years. Maybe in twenty years, maybe in thirty years. Because once you leave it, it is extremely dangerous to let you re-join it. Because it is not the same situation, it is not just tossing a coin, where you say, one day I am in, the other day I am out. Because again you need to legitimize the European Union as a part of the political elites that it is something precious. You need to understand and convey this to the citizens, that the EU is not just a football court. It is not just something where you change your support and go, you know, one day you support Bayern München or whatever and the other day you support, whatever you support, Dortmund or whatever there is, right. And that is quite important, so it is not just a technical question of, you know, re-joining the EU in ten years, because it has consequences. And I think, I mean, Great Britain will remain, will have, there will be this Norway plus model.

NR: How you can explain, that despite being in one of its biggest crises in the face of Brexit, the approval ratings are higher than, in some countries, ever. Are EU citizens having separation anxiety or what is your explanation for that?

IK: I think, that Brexit was quite constructive in this regard. Because, I mean, Brexit is one part of, one reason for that. But also, the approval rates with regard to the European Union, they followed different waves. Because a couple of years ago, three or four years, the ratings were very low. Now they skyrocketed for the last two years, one and a half years, the EU has become very popular, but it doesn't mean they won't drop in two years. So you have certain waves of popularity and this is connected to different reasons I would say. One of those reasons is really Brexit, because many people didn't think that something like that could happen and it is really dangerous. It is not just political talk. It is not just talk of Front National, it is not just talk of the Danish People's Party, it is not just the talk of True Finns. It can become reality, the separation. And the reality is a diarrhea, because it would mean that without the EU there is recession, proper economic recession. It would mean, because people follow, I think, the entire debate on the Brexit, many of them, that there might be shortages of pharmaceuticals for instance. That is the kind of rational expectation. If there is hard Brexit, it might be that the hospitals will not be delivered with all the medicine they need, and so on. I think there is a certain, not just separation anxiety, but the understanding that Brexit, or exit from the

European Union is highly problematic. It is not just criticizing, it is not just cheap talk. We use this notion of cheap talk sometimes in political science. That politicians talk and sometimes it has a relevance and sometimes it is just cheap talk, because you talk to an audience. It does not really matter, what you say, it is just emotions and the way you speak. And you might say something but you change your position in, say, the next year. So, it is just cheap talk, but it is not just cheap talk if you realize, because it has consequences, and it can have consequences for your everyday life. Such as, for instance, if you separate it from the European Union and you, say, you are a researcher at the university, then all the research funds from the EU go away. If you are a professor, maybe not in Oxford or London or Cambridge, but Sussex, your access to potential research funds is necessary for your career. Or if you are a lecturer, a senior lecturer, it is quite important. And then, because of one stupid political decision, your everyday life gets affected by this. So, I think people realized it is not just cheap talk.

NR: Thank you very much, so far, for your interesting and very, very detailed answers and explanations. I would come now to the third section, which I am very, very interested in, because it is specifically about your home country. Some questions are, of course, a little basic, for you especially, but you have to start somewhere. I want to start with: How would you describe the political attitude of the Polish government?

IK: The government is kind of, some people would say soft eurosceptical. Soft eurosceptical in the sense, that it is criticizing the European Union mainly concerning the migration aspects and the rule of law aspects. But at the same time, the government does not want to leave the European Union. So I would describe it as a kind of soft or middle ground Euroscepticism, it is probably more than soft Euroscepticism, because some of the politicians are really very critical and use this highly populist, nationalist rhetoric to argue that European conviction is not democratically legitimized, and we are democratically legitimized, like they forgot that this, not the government, but the party and politicians of this party, signed the Lisbon treaty, by the way, in 2007. It was the president, who was candidate of PIS, of the law and justice party, and actually the government that was negotiating the Lisbon treaty. They signed it, they ratified it. Some of the people, they argue of course and try to criticize the European Union, because it is of their opportunistic

regard, because they come from this nationalist, populist and conservative background. But I would argue it is more than just soft Euroscepticism, it is middle ground Euroscepticism. Because the majority of the party is not hardcore eurosceptical, because they understand that the very notion of Poland leaving the European Union would damage the chances of, you know, re-elections. And Poland is facing re-elections, elections actually, now in May, of course European elections that will be quite important to see, how popular the current government is. And then there will be parliamentary elections in October, that are more important of course. So, I would say it is a middle ground type of Euroscepticism with sometimes very hard arguments against the EU, but also with awareness that you cannot run a campaign that is entirely EU critical because many people would be alienated by that. Because, you know, conservatives, farmers, many people in Poland benefit from the EU. It is not just young people, not just students, because of the mobility, but many people, even old and conservative people, specifically when they are somehow connected to agriculture. They benefit tangibly, because they get the direct payments from the European Union. So, I think the current government is opportunistic and they know that it is a dangerous game. Actually, they were not very critical in the last two months, I say. They try to tone down the criticism of the EU and they try to use other opportunistic points on the agenda. For instance, the criticism of the LGBT community. They are trying to run this campaign against this liberal understanding of the Polish society. And they try to attract more conservative vote. They are not really silent, but they try to tone down the criticism of the European Union, which brings me to the argument of the kind of middle ground Euroscepticism now. Which can change in case they win elections; they can go back to this more radical version of Euroscepticism. Because Euroscepticism is not something that is stable, Euroscepticism with parties. Unless you kind of belong to a French party, nationalist party, that is kind of hardcore nationalist party. But with the majority of such parties like the PiS or even Fidesz it is more about the opportunistic agenda. So sometimes they try to be more pro-European or showing that they are very important in context of the EU. They show some activity. There was even the quotation of the current Polish prime minister a couple of months ago, that Poland is the beating heart of Europe. The beating heart of Europe because of Christianity, because of belonging to Europe, because of the culture and so on, so on.

NR: To get a complete picture, how would you describe the political attitude of the Polish government in national affairs and their popularity in Poland right now?

IK: So, it is not entirely known, because we have opinion polls carried out every week. There are different agencies that are running opinion polls and it is fluctuating. There is a certain fluctuation between 36 and 40 per cent, I would say. So, I would say that the current government, or the party actually, has a more or less fixed popularity around 35 per cent. And that is secure and quite realistic to be expected, that they will get this 35 per cent. They won elections with 37.6 per cent four years ago, but they can be more popular. So, they could have 39, they could even have 40 per cent, it depends. Because opinion polls are opinion polls, there is always a certain error. And the error, statistical error if it exit polls, if it is telephone opinion polls, it could be three to four per cent, right. So, if you get, say, 37 per cent or 38 per cent, it could mean that the party has 34 per cent of popularity. And then the very question is, not how the supporters of the PIS will behave, because they will vote for the party of course, but how the undecided voters will vote, which is actually the same question in every country. In Germany it is the middle ground voters, you know, voters that are swing voters. They can vote for the SPD, they can vote for the CDU basically. So, the same thing in Poland, you have the middle ground voters, that can vote for the PIS, not hardcore voters that you can explain with demographics because they are less educated, they are inhabitants of smaller towns, they are older. So, you have those demographics of people that would vote for the PIS and they have been stable voters for the last ten years. But decisive parts of the entire population are of course the undecided ones and the young people. Because it was the young people, that were around 18, 20, that voted for the first time in their lives in 2015 that were imperative for the victory PIS. And now the question is, how they would behave. And I am kind of arguing, it is a guess of course, that the PIS will not get 40 per cent, that would be surprise. I think, they will get around 35 per cent and probably even less. And the question will be, of course, they might be the strongest party in the parliament, the question is, if they are able to form a coalition government. Because, we have a single party parliament in Poland, which is an exception, actually, because it doesn't fit the very logic of the proportional electoral system. Poland does not have the majoritarian or one constituency majority voting system like in the U.S. or in

Great Britain, but it does have a proportional electoral system. So normally you would have many parties in the parliament and there would be a need to form a coalition government. But for the first time, for different reasons, a couple of parties did not make it, they did not pass the voting hurdle of five per cent, because they made mistakes for instance. Now you think there would be more parties in the next government, and because of the sheer number of the parties, the number of seats will be distributed differently. So, I think, I would be very surprised if the PiS would be able to form another single party government. They would need to find a coalition party. The question is, if the potential coalition partner, which is the Kukiz'15 party, a protest nationalist party, which osculates around five per cent. They could be beneath five per cent, they could be above five per cent. If they do not make it, it could be, that the opposition parties are the majority and they could form the government. So, it is kind of an open game, which is not the case in Hungary. In Poland it is still an open game despite institutional changes in the political system concerning the course, concerning the supreme court, concerning the constitutional court. They are trying to change the electoral system to strengthen bigger parties, large parties, but those changes have not advanced that far, that it would not be still an open game, or an open-ended game.

NR: Other than the PiS, is exit-scepticism during the election a topic, are there parties in Poland?

IK: I mean, the PiS is kind of middle of a ground eurosceptical party, but it is not mentioning exit of Poland, because it is so unpopular, because we have about 70 per cent for this. And many PiS voters support PiS for different reasons, for socioeconomic reasons, for instance, rather than for rejecting the membership of the European Union, that the party would not go this good. I think, it would be highly dangerous, and they know that. So, exit is not an option for the party right now and I do not think it will be, right, because it is very dangerous ground and they understand that. Because it will cost them many votes rather than attract votes, because those people, that vote for the PIS from the radical far-right, for instance, from the nationalist, populist parts of the political spectrum, they will vote for the PiS anyway. So, you do not need to use exit as an attraction strategy or mobilising strategy, but you can lose a lot from the middle ground, from the center. So, it is a very dangerous and not very sensible strategy in electoral terms, so it is not a topic.

But still you have far-right politicians that actually never manage to pass the five per cent hurdle, because they were around one per cent, half a per cent, and now, and this is an interesting part, they are trying to integrate. They are trying to organize themselves together, because you have different politicians from splinter groups from the far-right. And there is this initiative, it is called by the names of the leaders, you have leaders from the nationalist right, you have leaders that are always proper fascist, anti-democratic, you have libertarian leaders, you have protest party leaders that left Kukiz'15, for instance. And they call themselves by the name of their leaders; KORWiN, Braun and Liroy. The three names of the leaders, and they are actually, because every and each of those parties is able to attract one, one and a half per cent of voters. And together it is quite probable that they will pass the five per cent hurdle now during the European elections. And if it is the case, they will of course repeat this experiment during the national elections in October. And then it is kind of interesting, because they can potentially become coalition partner for the PIS, and with such a coalition partner, which is far-right, it is even further to the right than the Austrian FPÖ I would say. But if PIS decided to form a coalition government with the far-right, which is possible, because it is about power, about political power, then it can become very interesting and the exit might become a topic again.

NR: In the face of Brexit, can you observe that eurosceptic parties in Poland change their strategy. Like you said, the government for example after Article 7, not because of Brexit? Do you see it that way?

IK: Yeah, I mean, there are of course some changes, because the government, the party that came to power from the government in 2015 changed its preferences concerning partners within the European Union. So, the previous government was mainly, if you like, collaborating with Germany as their main country of reference concerning foreign policy but also other policy. There was a very close collaboration between the Merkel government and the PO, which is the Civic Platform government of Poland until 2014. Then the PiS came about and they formulated, actually it was very clear, in the statement of foreign policy by the foreign minister, PiS foreign minister, who said that Great Britain is supposed to be the main partner of Poland within the European Union. And of course, Brexit causes certain problems because of that, because a country, which is leaving the

European Union cannot be a partner in the EU. So, I think, the Polish government was left clueless a little bit. And then, because of Brexit, because there is a certain conflict with France, there is a certain conflict with Germany within the European Union, that the government has been trying to form some coalition or some form of collaboration in central and eastern Europe, also with Austria in some extent, but also including Balkan countries. So, there is this idea, the polish idea of the three-seas-initiative, somehow to have the Baltic states under one hand, to have the countries with access to the Adriatic and to the Black Sea somehow collaborating, but I am sceptical about the efficiency of this collaboration, because we have so many countries with so many preferences with so many interests. The Balkans are very interesting, also the Russian influence there, so I am kind of sceptical if this collaboration can be any form of alternative to what the core countries of the EU can offer, such as France and Germany and Italy, if you like. So, Brexit has had impact on how Poland actually behaves or has been behaving in the European Union, because it was kind of looking for alternative forms of collaboration outside of the French and German Axis, if you like.

NR: Coming to my last one, two questions and back to the people. What is your prospect of the Polish people regarding their opinion towards the EU, and where to you see the actual biggest dissatisfaction of the Polish people with the EU?

IK: Well, if you take a look at the opinion polls, the current government was quite successful in conveying the problem of migration as the main problem of the European Union. And to show, that, not only in Poland but also in Hungary, but because we talk about Poland, that migration and the refugee crisis was a crisis under one hand, of course, but also that the EU, specifically Germany, has been trying to solve the problem on the shoulders of the others in a sense. So, Poland was highly critical, as Hungary was, with the re-location scheme, refugee re-location scheme, and I think, that the government was quite successful in conveying the image of the European Union, that organized and forced re-location of refugees. And because refugees and migrants from the Middle East are seen in Poland as problematic refugees mainly in terms of cultural identity, and not just in Poland, also in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and so on, that the populist political elites have been able somehow to capitalize on that, it has become the main point of critique of many citizens. Not only citizens that vote for the PIS, but

also citizens, that tend to think, that the refugee crisis was, because Germany propelled the crisis and then tried to solve the crisis by forcing others via the European Union to accept a certain number of refugees, that are potentially dangerous, because they might be terrorists. And this image was very successful in the Polish society. I think, many people would see migration as the main problem of the European Union and the main source of criticism. That the EU does not solve problems, that it needs to solve, but rather produces problems. And you need to resist it, that the European Union, despite the support for the membership in the European Union, is not a perfect organization that solves all problems of the nation states, of the member states, but can also generate problems and you need, as a member state, to resist those problems.

NR: What is your outlook for the public opinion towards the EU in Poland?

IK: I think, that the public opinion will remain friendly vis a vis the European Union, because many people see benefits that are associated with that on the one hand. On the other hand, many people see the problem of Brexit, because for many Polish citizens that left the country and immigrated to Great Britain, it is a problem, because they are afraid what would happen to them. And many people, their family stays, see this as a problem. Brexit is a problem, not only the political level, but also the social and economic level for many people, that they feel that the European Union is a huge benefit to many people, and it is kind of dangerous, if one country decides to leave it. So, I think, it is kind of a level of acceptance and support for the European Union for different reasons. Sometimes purely instrumental, right, because you think, you can go and work in Germany or Ireland or Great Britain, because of mobility, because you can go and study at foreign or European universities or because you can find a better paid job, because you are better qualified than what the Polish labour market can offer. So, I think, the majority of the society will remain friendly vis a vis the EU and the membership of the EU, unless something happens like the refugee crisis. But I would not see any problems such as that, because it was an external crisis that was mismanaged by the EU. And I hope, at least, that the EU has learned from certain mistakes. Not all mistakes, but certain mistakes, how to deal with the issues of legitimacy, how to deal with issues of majority decision-making. And this was, I think, one of the main problems, that the issue of re-location, which was a sensible issue, has been

pushed through by Germany and some other countries by disregarding positions of smaller countries such as Czech Republic, Hungary or Austria and Romania, that were against it. And then the EU applied the majority decision-making, which is legal, but not always legitimate. So, I think the European colleagues need to learn, and I think, they will learn that, not every legal step in the context of the European treaties can be seen as legitimate.

NR: Thank you. Thank you very much. I just have one last question, because I have to admit, I had a problem with the voice record in the first two minutes. That's why I would kindly ask you to maybe repeat your opinion about the two different types of Euroscepticism, you said party strategies and also your opinion about soft and hard Euroscepticism.

IK: So, my argument was, that there are different types of Euroscepticism. We could argue, there is a soft and hard Euroscepticism. Soft Euroscepticism being scepticism or criticism of European processes, mechanisms and European institutions without rejecting the idea of European integration as such. So, it is kind of more like a concern of how the European institutions work. And hard, or hardcore Euroscepticism, would be Euroscepticism that is critical of the European Union but also critical of the very notion of European integration between soft and hard Euroscepticism, so I think, we need to also underpin this differentiation with different regional types or political types of Euroscepticism. There is, if you like, southern Euroscepticism in countries like Greece and Italy in connection with specific crises of the EU. So, I think, it makes sense to talk about Euroscepticism in those countries of populist Euroscepticism with regard to different aspects, that are not present, for instance, in eastern European Euroscepticism, because in those countries, Euroscepticism is surrounded by issues of rule of law, critic of the EU and refugee crisis. These are two points, that are more important for eurosceptical positions in the region. And then there is a third type of Euroscepticism in older member states of the EU, which comes from, kind of, populist nationalism of French parties, which is connected to populism, nationalist populism of criticizing the political establishment. So, the Euroscepticism of Front National, or what they call themselves now Rassemblement National, the Euroscepticism of the Danish People's Party, the Euroscepticism of the True Finns. It is Euroscepticism from populist, national positions. And it is a critique of the

political elites, of the political mainstream of a populist position. And Euroscepticism is basically part of it, because those parties use it as a strategy to mobilize people against the elites. So, I would, kind of, argue, that it is a third type of Euroscepticism against the older member states and all types of Euroscepticism are there. And I would also argue, that whatever type of Euroscepticism we talk about, the Euroscepticism is something, that is going to stay here. It is going to remain something, that is, because it has become part of the public space of the EU, and there are in the literature, there is interesting research by Kacey, by the Swiss sociologist, political sociologist, who argues, that Euroscepticism is, or has become, actually a new cleavage in the party systems of the member states of the European Union and the public space, So Euroscepticism is not something, that will vanish, but is something that will remain. And it will be important enough for the formation of the party systems of the EU, so there will be eurosceptical, nationalist, populist parties, that will remain part of the party systems of the members of the European Union, regardless the region or the type of Euroscepticism. And I think, that is something important, that we need to realize, that it is not something that is a trivial or banal issue, that will vanish, because in the 1990's it was still argued, that people are some form of protest voting, because we have the economic crisis. So, the modernization theory will tell us, we need economic growth, we need to keep people happy, we need to reduce unemployment and there will be no Euroscepticism. But it is not true. So, the visibility of the EU, because it has become important in the eyes of the European citizens, some of the citizens will remain eurosceptical for this or other reasons. And eurosceptic positions will remain part of the party system and public debates in the EU.

NR: You also called the concept by Taggart, I think, controversial. Why do you think, is that?

IK: The concept is controversial, because it is crude, it is simplistic. Just to talk about soft and hard Euroscepticism is kind of not enough. And I think a more differentiated typology is needed, and there is such a typology. You have such a typology by Kopecky, for instance, which is a Czech colleague, that is professor at the Leiden university in the Netherlands and Cas Mudde, another one. Mudde and Kopecky actually published many years ago an article based on the research on

Euroscepticism, and they argued, that soft and hard Euroscepticism is too crude as typology and controversial, because it cannot explain the entire spectrum and variety of eurosceptic positions, and they argue, we need to use this criteria of supporting European integration as an idea and supporting European institutions. You can support European integration as an idea, but you can reject the working of some European institution. You can say, the European Union is a faulty institution for some reason, because it is not democratic enough, or because it is not effective enough, or because it is suppressive or for something else, but still you can support the very notion of European integration. And then, they argued, Eurosceptics are people, who reject both the idea and the institutions of the European Union. But you can have other people, you can have Euro-pragmatics, people that reject the idea of European integration, but support the workings of the European Union, because the countries and the parties get money from it. So, you could say, you could be a nationalist party like the PiS in Poland for instance, and argue, 'well, we do not like the European integration as such, but we like the money for instance'. And then you could be, they call it Euro-enthusiastic, for instance, if you support both the idea and the workings of the European Union, and you could be Euro-realist, if you say, we support the notion of the European integration, but we do not really fancy the European institutions, because they differentiate. And so, and this typology is more interesting and more finely grained as opposed to the Taggart and Szczerbiak conception of this, kind of, duality between soft and hard. And for that reason, I argue, that the Polish PiS is not really hard, is not really soft eurosceptical party, it is kind of middle ground. It represents a middle ground Euroscepticism, because it is more than soft Euroscepticism, but it is not hardcore Euroscepticism of the Brexit brand. They would want, for whatever reason, to leave the European Union."

13.2 Interview with Paul Culley

From 1984 to 2016, Culley was working for institutions of the European Union in Brussels, Belgium. For six years, he served as Director in the Private Office of the EU Council's Secretary General, dealing with the big political issues of the day at the highest level. For five years, Culley was EU Council's Director for Trade and International Development, responsible for WTO, EEA, UN and all policy issues in

these fields. Furthermore, he spent several years in management, policy-making and negotiations in EU Council Secretariat & European Commission on agriculture, food, internal market and environment. (LinkedIn 2019)

Nikolaus Riss (NR): "In your opinion, what do you think are main reasons for the dissatisfaction of citizens with the EU?

Paul Culley (PC): Okay, I think, geographically there are a few reasons. One is, I think, that there have been a number of major events, that brought EU policy into the daily life of people. Two particular main events were the Eurocrisis, the financial crisis, and the other one was the migration crisis. And I think, that people saw a direct connection between these and EU policies. I think, secondly, I think, that it is by all the efforts that have been made, the EU's institutions are all very far away. I mean, they are physically far away from citizens. Brussels and Strasbourg and Luxembourg are a long way from Athens and Lisbon and Helsinki. And, I think, this physical difference, distance, this physical distance has not been bridged by communication. So, my second point is, that the people feel very remote from EU decision-making. And then, thirdly, I think, the political class at national level and the media at national level communicates negatively, either badly or negatively with citizens about the work of the EU. If the EU does something, it is claimed as a national achievement, and if anything goes wrong, the EU is blamed, whether the EU is really to blame or not. So, I think, that are the three points.

NR: Would you also say, there are differences in different regions of the EU, due to the migration crisis, the Eurocrisis, that some parts were more affected by that?

PC: Yeah, I think, that is one of the characteristics of the EU, that it means different things in different places. In some countries, like the UK or the Netherlands, the EU is the single market and, I think, in other countries, the EU is kind of a symbol of liberty, freedom, democracy. In other areas, maybe, it is seen as an umbrella connected to NATO, as a defence against Putin and Russia. So, the EU means different things in different regions and different countries. And, I think, that the Euroscepticism then is related to that. Like, for example, if there is Euroscepticism in Germany, maybe it is because of the anxiety about the Euro. Euroscepticism in

Italy and Greece is probably related to migration. Euroscepticism in the EU has a lot of roots, but you know, they would say, it is undemocratic. They are completely wrong, but, I think, every region has its own particular kind of Euroscepticism.

NR: What, do you think, can be done in order to deal with those differences? You also talked about the physical distance, does the EU have to become more flexible or what measure could be taken?

PC: I do not know, if there is a simple answer, or an easy answer. But, I think, that for national governments to have to recognize, that you cannot criticize and blame the EU for everything 51 weeks in the year. And then on the 52nd week of the year, encourage people to go and vote in the European elections. So, encourage people to go vote possibly in a referendum. So, I think, that member states, national governments and national parliaments must be a little bit more fair and open in giving the EU credit for where it is due. I think, a lot of has to be done in terms of communication and education, because it is so far away. I think, it is important, to keep reminding people in streets, ordinary people in the streets, who are not experts, political scientist or economists or anything else, what the fundamental reasons for the EU is. Peace, stability, fundamentally it is the single market, it is Schengen, it is the Euro, and people need to be reminded what the EU achievements are. But there is no simple, I do not think there are any simple answers to that.

NR: We can observe, in Europe, a lot of nations with eurosceptical governments. And one would think, that would influence the public opinion towards the EU in a negative way. However, we can observe sometimes the opposite. How do you see that? Do you have an explanation for that maybe?

PC: Well, I think, eurosceptic governments usually lead to a eurosceptic public. We have seen that in many cases, especially in the case of Hungary. If the government is eurosceptic, and especially where the government controls the media and the flow of information, they can easily filter all the good news and exaggerate all the bad news. So, I think, eurosceptic governments are a big problem. There is no doubt about that.

NR: Do you have an explanation for increased awareness of citizens towards the EU? People pay more attention in the last couple years than it was, for example, ten years ago.

PC: Yeah, I think, they do. And, to go back to your first question, Niki. I think, it has to do with the fact, there have been big issues like the Eurocrisis and like migration in the news. So, people maybe in earlier decades, so much of the EU money, so much of the EU budget was spent on agriculture. I mean, the farmers always were very aware of the importance of the EU and what the EU budget did. In other walks of life, it was maybe less noticeable. Even the single market, it meant something maybe for business managers, but for people working in the factories the single market did not really mean that much. So, I think, that when the EU had the migration crisis and the financial crisis and the Eurocrisis, I think, that people saw a direct link between these crises and the EU and EU policies and EU institutions. I think, Schengen is important in getting the concrete idea of the EU across the people. And, in its own way, I think, Erasmus has been important. Erasmus has reached an awful lot of people, an awful lot of young people. And, I think, this has been a policy, that has made Europe a reality for a lot of people.

NR: Euroscepticism does not always mean, that countries or parties want to actually leave the EU. However, of course, in the last couple years, that was a big issue. How do you see the development of Exit-scepticism in the last couple years?

PC: I am just looking at your question there. What exactly do you mean by that, I did not entirely understand?

NR: In the face of Brexit, a lot of parties were promoting leaving the European Union, not only in England, but also, for example, in Austria or Hungary. This is not the case as much anymore. How do you observe this? How did Brexit change parties promoting that?

PC: Yeah, I think, that maybe in 2016, but in fact you can go back before Brexit, you can go to the thing that they used to call "Grexit", when there was talk, that Greece would leave the Euro and Greece would leave the EU, and in fact the current prime minister and party were elected basically on promises to reject the bailout and if necessary to leave the Euro and to leave the EU. And I think, that

when the Greeks and Tsipras came face-to-face with the reality to this, with the details and what this meant as a reality, he did an elegant U-turn. And then, the next phase, the false promises made in the UK-Brexit referendum were appealing not only to UK voters, but they were appealing to people in other countries as well. And I think, that, now that people in other countries have seen what a mess Brexit is and how difficult it is, to extract yourself. I mean, they say, that EU law occupies every nook and cranny of economic and political and social life. If EU law regulates so many things from product standards to food safety to social rights. I mean, in every aspect of public life, EU law is present. And people now realize, that to unwind that, is a colossal work. Number one. And then, people are beginning to see the harsh reality of what life would be like outside the single market, outside the customs union. Also, people see the loss of influence, that even a country the size of the EU with 60 or 65 million people, on its own they have so much less leverage in world affairs. So, think that scepticism about, exit-scepticism as you call it, I think the experience of Brexit has been a cold shower for people who found the ideas in 2016 to be very effective and very sexy.

NR: Do you also feel like EU leaders from other countries, maybe the Commission, do you observe a different social interaction? Do you think it might have brought the European Union closer together?

PC: I think, that the European Council, the summit, I think, they work better and better. And the European Council is the institution where you get a 100% attendance record 100% of the time. So, every meeting of the European Council everybody shows up. I think, to my knowledge, I can only think of two meetings out of, I do not know how many meetings have been taken place since Van Rompuy chaired the first one in, whenever it was, 2010. I can only think of two meetings, where somebody was missing. One in the case, where the prime minister of Cyprus had a heart attack the day before the meeting, and in the other case it was the Dutch prime minister whose government was about to fall the next day. So, he did not come the Brussels for the afternoon, for the summit. So, everybody attends the European Council and there is only the 28 of them in the room and they are used to working together. And I think, that they have socialized, they have nipped together as a group in a way that the Council (of ministers) never has, because ministers for transport, ministers for agriculture, there is very little bonding really

takes place in the Council, it only takes place in the European Council. And I think, the fact that they had had to solve so many difficult questions by speaking frankly to each other. I mean, after the European Council is nowhere to go. If they cancel the Eurocrisis or the migration crisis or if they cannot decided, what to do about Libya, if they cannot decide what to do about Brexit like last night, if they cannot decided whether to grant an extension or not, I mean, there is no other place with a problem to go. So, I think, that the European Council has become much more socialized, has grown, as a very bonded group of leaders, even though there are frequent changes. I mean, at almost every meeting there is somebody new, but there is also continuity though its president. There is continuity through people like Angela Merkel who has been there for a very long time. So, I had one other idea on that, but it had escaped me now, I come back.

NR: Thank you very much for that detailed answer. We had a couple months ago, in Nice, we had a colleague from the Commission, also from Great Britain, who described the atmosphere in the Commission sometimes as similar to a divorce from a life-long partner. You go through different phases, disbelieve, grief, acceptance. Do you observe a similar process maybe?

PC: Yes, yes, I think this has been very traumatic at every level. I think, the UK was, I mean, is a very big member state, a very influential member state. It was a known issue, that UK ever sits quietly in the corner and say nothing. So, the EU (UK) was a large and influential and active member of the Union. And the idea that they would leave is traumatic at every level. First of all, the very principle that somebody leaves the first time is a turning point in the history of the EU. The political consequences are enormous, the legal consequences, because we never done that before, we never had an Article 50 negotiation before, the economic consequences, the loss of 60 million people in a market of 500. And the loss of, I think, France and the UK account for about 70 per cent of the EU military capacity. They are both members of the Security Council, so in terms of defence and security it is a colossal loss. And also in terms of the balance of power, if you like, in the EU, you know you have north, south, east and west, you have the integrationists, you have those who are less convinced of integration, you have those who like decisions to be based on evidence and on facts, you have those who, so, the balance, for example free trade, those who are in favour of free trade, those who

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are more cautious of free trade. So, the departure of the UK has been crucially disruptive and traumatic in so many categories. And this sense of loss is very profound.

NR: I know, it is also hard to foresee right now, especially as Brexit is still in the making. But how do you think in ten years time, the EU and Great Britain will look at this period, maybe?

PC: I do not know. I think, that it has got to take a long for Brexit to happen. As Ivan Rogers, the former British ambassador, has said in many of his writings and many of his speeches: Brexit is not an event, Brexit is a process. And the first part of the process is the exit, and the second part of the process is the negotiation of the new arrangement. And, I mean frankly, I think, the negotiation of the new arrangement will take years and years. I mean, it will take years and years. So, ten years is not very far into the future, I think. Even if Brexit takes place, let us say in the middle or towards the end of the 2019, we will then start to negotiate the free trade agreement and that will not be done in one or two years, it will take longer than that. Free trade agreements with countries like Canada or Korea or Japan, these have taken eight, nine years. So, I think, it is hard to imagine how a free trade agreement could be negotiated in less than five years. So, ten years is actually quite soon. But if you push the horizon a little bit further, to 15 years or 20 years, I think, that with a change of generation, the UK will see, that its interest, its political interest and economical interests lie in re-joining the EU. I think, it is a question of time, but I think we could be talking 15 years or 20 years and you do not know what is going to happen those 15 or 20 years. But I basically think, for all its fault, for all its problems, the Treaty of Rome, the EU arrangement, it is, I think, the blue print for Europe, for the 21st century. The membership might go down to 27, it might go down to 26, it might go down to 28, 29, 30 again. You know, the UK might come and go, the UK might go and Scotland might come in. You know, there is Serbia, there is Montenegro, some variation of the European Union, I think, is the blue print for this space, this European space, for as far as we can see into the 21st century.

NR: Coming to my last question, thank you very much again for that helpful answer. Despite the EU experiencing one of its biggest crises right now. As you said, for

the first time ever a country tries to leave the European Union, however approval ratings of the EU are very high. In some countries even higher than ever. How can you explain that?

PC: Yeah, I do not know. I think, that maybe the fact, that the EU has stayed united in the face of Brexit. You can often see clips on YouTube and on social media with people saying, people in the UK saying in 2016, Brexit was the beginning of the end. Marine Le Pen said it, Nigel Farage said it, a lot of journalists said it, that Brexit was the beginning of the end for the EU. And that has not happened. People said, that the EU will become divided. The north would have a different view than the south, the east would have a different view from the west. That has not happened either. So, I think, that maybe ironically around the EU, when people see the disastrous Brexit debate in the UK, and maybe this has also brought them in contact with some of the positive reasons, why the EU exists. That is the only explanation I could put on it.

NR: Do you think that could also be on the long term, are the EU citizens just having, as you said, separation anxiety. Like, could that hold on, or do you think it will fluctuate again.

PC: Oh, it is very hard to know. I do not know, to what extent the EU, to what extent people will feel, that the EU is at the moment it is an oasis, or a zone of liberty and freedom in a world, where freedoms and liberty are moving in reverse, when you look at what is happening in the US, when you look at Russia, when you look at Turkey, when you look at Africa and North Africa. I do not know, if people in the street feel this, but maybe they will feel this, as time goes on. I mean, the EU is, Europe is a prosperous area, it is a peaceful area, it is an area which is liberal, which recognizes equal rights, which recognizes gender rights, which recognizes religious rights, it is open, it is tolerant, and a lot of areas around the world are in chaos, or in war like most of North Africa, the Middle East. Or you have regimes like the US, where a lot of the progress that was made in the second half of the 20st century, on equality for example, on social mobility, a lot of these things have been reversed. So, maybe people are being in defeat, maybe Europeans, especially younger Europeans are beginning to feel this already."

13.3 Interview with Mag. Paul Schmidt

Mag. Schmidt has been Secretary General of the Austrian Society for European Politics since 2009. The Austrian Society for European Politics (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Europapolitik) aims to promote and support information activities on European affairs in Austria. Based in Vienna, the Society is a non-governmental and non-partisan platform mainly constituted by the Austrian Social Partners. Previously, Schmidt has worked at the Austrian National Bank, both in Vienna and at their Representative Office in Brussels. His current work mainly focuses on the analysis and discussion of topical issues regarding European integration (ÖGfE, 2019).

13.3.1 Translated version in English

Nikolaus Riss (NR): "How would you define Euroscepticism and Exit-scepticism?

Paul Schmidt (PS): Well, Euroscepticism is criticism on European integration, where you have the impression and perception, that it goes into the wrong direction, that you have the tendency to decentralization, that make decisions over your head and that you can achieve more in smaller units because European Integration is heterogenous. So, basically a rejection depending on how strong the grade of Euroscepticism, that we are talking about, is. So, that you really go that far to reject until the exit, the preference of exit… how did you call it?

NR: Exit-scepticism.

PS: And Exit-scepticism, that is an extreme version of scepticism for me, where you go as far as saying… it can also mean, scepticism as an exit-option. So, if you mean, support for leaving, that is a strong form of scepticism, in which you are against everything and you say, 'nation states are the only option, we have to leave'.

NR: Do you see differences in the different regions of the European Union, differences in Euroscepticism?

PS: In Euroscepticism there are, of course, many differences, it depends. There are geographical, reasons, there are historical reasons, there are socio-political reasons, that all play a part into the peculiarity of scepticism. It all depends on the respective national social situation, in which form, intensity and peculiarity this scepticism exists. There are very different shapes.

NR: Would you point out a region in Europe because of the last 1-2 years?

PS: Well, sure is, that Great Britain is a special case of scepticism and the love for exit. Hm, other than that, I don't see another case like in Great Britain. But of course, there is also scepticism in countries, where approval of membership is extremely high. That also exists. But these British experiences, they probably are unique.

NR: Many experts argue for example, that in order to handle demographic differences in a better way, the European Union has to become more flexible. What do you think about that? What could be done?

PS: Well, there a different views and opinions on that topic. The topic is a challenge of intra-European mobility, free movement of people within the European Union, where we have some countries that do not have a migration problem but an emigration problem, from Hungary to Romania. And then there are countries, that have special migration strategies, as an element in order to deal with this demographic challenge. But that always can only be one element of many. So, there are different approaches. Some say, we need more migration, others say, that is not a solution for countries with a weak structure, on the opposite. For countries that are weak in development, it is extremely traumatic, if the well-educated people move away. And the question comes up, how much free movement of people actually if a good thing for those regions, or maybe it is negative, if you look at the Balkan countries. Romania lost nearly four million people since the membership. Not lost, but they emigrated, of course they play a role in the Diaspora. And, then there probably also is movement back into the countries, we have seen that over and over. Portugal and Southern Europe suffered of course immensely from that, on the other hand you also profit from that. If this can be a model, a pan-European one, well, that is questionable. And, then

okay, some try to get control over the demographic challenge of migration. Some try to do it with other financial support or benefits in order to support families. So, there are different approaches, but I have the feeling that there is no real solution or sure formula for this problem. Because, I mean, Europe ages. Of course, it is a question of social progress, we age. But we do not really retire later, we lack young people, so it is not easy.

NR: That is very interesting.

PS: I do not have a patent remedy for this. I think, mobility is important, but mobility also causes problems.

NR: It is interesting, that yet, particularly in poorer EU countries, the is little to no desire at all to leave the EU. That is more of a problem in other countries. How do you generally see the development in countries over the last couple years, that had the strong desire to leave the EU?

PS: Well, I agree with you, that the economic element is very important. But if we take a look at Italy for example, Italy was confronted with a double crisis. On the one side economically, on the other side the topic of migration. And there, the approval towards the European integration did not rise but fall. That means, okay, the economic argument is important, as we have seen with Brexit, but it is not conclusive. Generally, I think, you know the data. There were many analysts, who said after July 22, 2016, okay, there could be a snowball effect. But exactly the opposite was the case. In Austria, we could see support for EU-membership going up 12 per cent points, and the group, that supported leaving the EU feel 12 per cent points. That means, we have very high ratings right now and it also shows at the Eurobarometer numbers, that this goes for all of Europe. That, of course, has something to do with the uniqueness of Brexit, with the chaotic, political situation, the prognosed economic costs and the way, how the media reports about it. If this is a sustainable effect, would be a good question, you cannot really judge this yet. I would say yes and no. Yes, because the chaos will cumulate. No, because everything will mitigate and normalise, I guess. And then there is the question, what kind of Brexit we will become. The way it seems to happen right now, it is not recommended for imitators, to take this way. And the continental Europeans are

quite pragmatic if it comes to that; they do not necessarily love the European Union, however, they prefer to be together rather than being alone. That does not mean, that the performance of the European Union increased, but it is just a deterring example right now.

NR: You just talked about it: It is a deterring example. What strategy do you observe coming from EU critical parties in Europe, that openly promoted leaving a couple years ago, and now do not do that anymore?

PS: Well, the strategy at those forces, who have more experience, more political experience, is quite clear. It is becoming more moderate in their rhetoric and with their political strategy. That does not mean, that they gave up on these ideas, they are still in their drawer, but rhetorically they are delivered differently, softer. Or they try to say goodbye to their own past or from your own rhetoric. Everything, which is perceived as more extreme, as radical rhetoric, is not suitable for mainstream. And therefore, depending if you are in a government position or in opposition, you adapt your way of political communication so that it suits your priorities and subordinate it under your domestic political, power strategic calculus. This is different from country to country, depending on how much room you have for that and how the polling data reflect. So, there is polling data that influences how you speak and position yourself in public. But that can change, of course. Right now, there is a movement towards more moderation, because you rather deter people. And you, of course, get into the situation, where you get compared to Brexiteers. And then the message is, that you, that they basically, the lack of plan of Brexit fans is something, that you do not want to have on you as continental European politician. That's why right now is it like you try to move around it. That means, they want to strengthen the nation state and fight against centralisation, but they not want to get tied up with the Britons. Let's put it this way.

NR: To specifically talk about Austria and the Freedom's Party, what can you observe here since they are a partner in the government?

PS: Well, it is the dilemma, that you want and have to be more moderate as junior partner in the government. On the other side, you have to see, that you still have room politically and that room is not taken away from you by your coalition partner.

You cannot maintain anti-government positions, anti-establishment positions, because now you are the elite, now you are the government. But you want a Europe of nation states á la Orban and you try to dock here and that is a contradiction of course, also considering the European elections. And there is the question, how trustworthy you are and how you can mobilize your traditional clients. The question, does the passion and interest on government participation weigh more, than the favour of voters the new position within Austria? Earlier, elections for the European Parliament were elections if exemplary punishment, the positions were clear. That is not the case anymore.

NR: You mentioned the EU election. Generally, we can observe increased attention in Europe towards the EU since Brexit. Do you have an explanation for that, maybe anxiety? And what effect could this attention have for the EU parliament election?

PS: Yes, that is the question. Of course, I cannot know that, but I can try to come close to an answer. The increased attention, we see that too. So, especially because of various crises, the increased media reports, because of the EU council presidency. So, there is an increased public attention, more public awareness. The question is, does that mean more participation in the election? So, based on the data that we have, probably no. But in Austria we have the case, that the whole government constellation is different, that could make it more exciting. But then there is the question, how good can the FPÖ mobilize, how good can the others mobilize? The increased attention, we see that too. So, especially because of various crises, the increased media reports, because of the EU council presidency. So, there is an increased public attention, more public awareness. The one thing is, that topics are interesting to me, the other thing is, that we elect 18-19 EU parliamentarians in Austria, but the European Parliament is far, far away. It is a working parliament, complicated, everything is abstract. 'What can the European Parliament move, what can a couple Austrians in the parliament possibly move?' And it is a long way from public interest to actually engage with the European Parliament. But that probably is too much to ask for. It is simply important, no to know all facts, but you must have a feeling to say, that is important now, I have to give my vote. How much can I really criticize, when I do not take the opportunity and use my right to vote? So, in conclusion: I think, that it actually is possible, that

voter participation in Austria rises. That does not only depend on the situation in Europe, but that also plays a role. But there are basically two elements: One is the European and international development. The other one is what is at the moment succeeding in the national public. And there is a situation, where I believe, that voter participation will rise. It will not rise infinitely, but I mean, the chance is there. There could also be a Brexit effect, I just wrote a comment about that, that goes in that direction.

NR: I read that.

PS: No, it is not published yet. So, a Brexit effect, where we try to evaluate the different scenarios affecting voter participation. But the common conclusion is, if there is an unregulated Brexit, that this will stretch over March, and then you could mobilize the migration friendly forces.

NR: I mean the one in the Wiener Zeitung about the upcoming parliamentary election, I read that that one. If we look at Great Britain again, beforementioned EU critics such as Nigel Farage or Boris Johnson did not necessarily prove to have leadership skills after the vote. Is this deterring other EU sceptics in Europe, basically like: 'If we are coming in that position, it actually is not that easy to go through with it'.

PS: I think, that everything we are seeing right, what is delivered home to us right now, is deterring, because in the end a chaotic picture is submitted. And you do not know, where the journey is going. You only know, that there are many, many question marks and a big insecurity, and the people do not want that. Yes, if there would be more leadership with a clear plan, what is about to happen, where the journey is going with a clear majority, then that maybe would have had different effect. But all that does not exist in this critical standoff anymore.

NR: Could you tell me aspects, that the British government handled well after the vote? Where you say, that was not as bad as portrayed in the media, because it got twisted in the media?

PS: Well, I think, the deal, that did not get a majority in the parliament, would have been the best compromise that was possible in order to avoid damage. So,

everything is more expensive and damaging than the EU membership, definitely. There are definitely economic expenses. So, the deal probably is better than what you could observe in the media. Other than that, I think the stamina of the British Prime Minister is quite remarkable. Like for how long she hangs up and fights in order to achieve her goal. That is remarkable. Other than that, not a lot comes to my mind, mostly negative things.

NR: Great, so you can just continue talking. What would you say, surprised you the most in a negative way? Oder at least what you did not expect?

PS: Well, this little knowledge of European integration. This irrational, strong focus on domestic politics, this historical Empire way of wishful thinking, that has nothing to do with reality. The way how Scotland and Northern Ireland were treated and how little it got noticed, that Ireland got so little attention. And how they believed that they can negatively influence the cohesion of the EU27. Well, I mean, there are many, many points, it is quite irrational, everything, and I did not expect that from the British. And it is very egoistic. The big expenses will not be handled by those, who decided to have a Brexit in the first place, because they already did their job.

NR: There basically was the opposite feeling. Actually, you get the feeling of more solidarity between the EU country leaders in terms of Brexit. How do you see this, how do you judge this?

PS: Well, I think that is very reasonable, because that is something, that especially, but not only, is expected by the public before EU elections and it would be quite a chaos if everyone would hold its own negotiations. And it is a results-oriented, efficient approach to this premier of an EU withdrawal negotiation, that is already complicated enough. And the negotiations about the future relationship of the EU27 and Great Britain, they will be even more complicated. So, all that will not be a cakewalk.

NR: The negative economic consequences from all kinds of areas of life for EU citizens in Great Britain and so on cannot be denied. However, could you see anything that is positive about Brexit on the long term? For example, a deterring effect?

PS: Positive? Well, what could be positive? Well, I mean, depending on how Brexit will look like, Article 50 probably will die. And depending on how Brexit is going to happen, Article 50 probably has to be modified. The question is, if anybody dares to touch that, probably not, probably only at the next treaty revision. But it shows how connected everything is, how complex it is in a world that is more and more coming together. Maybe, on the long term, there will be the possibility for Great Britain to get a separate agreement in order to set British trading priorities. The question is, it is right, I mean, the European Union with its 27-28 members is a complex thing. The question is, a reduced complexity, if Great Britain makes deals on its own, if it can compensate the small weight of Great Britain. Because there is a difference, if I have a market with 500 million people behind me, or 60 million people, and I mean, that the economic expenses will be high. The question is, if the people will ever understand, that those expenses are related to leaving the EU. And I think, many Brexit fans live in a very twisted view on the world, that simply does not represent the reality. And I think, by lacking political knowledge or political calculus, they do not understand at all, what the European Union actually is.

NR: Last week I was able to talk to an employee at the European Commission, who described the perception of Brexit together with his colleagues as kind of a separation from a life partner, where you go through different phases such as disbelieve, grief and acceptance. What do you say about that?

PS: Well, it is a funny example, if you want to review it in the media, but all that is a pretty dramatic divorce.

NR: Everyone looks at a divorce back differently after ten years of time. How do you think, Great Britain and the EU will face each other then?

PS: So, from today's perspective I would, I can see that Great Britain would like to become member of the European Union once again. If there is a Brexit, where not advantages but disadvantages will prevail, and that is what we assume. It will be a different generation, a poorer Great Britain. We do not know, if it will be Great Britain or "Small Britain". It will be a Great Britain or a former Great Britain, that would want to become member under completely different conditions. Every time, the European Union manages to reform, to get better, to get more efficient. If the

European Union does not manage to do that, it has to ask itself existential questions. And then it could be, that if the EU implodes, that Great Britain would have had a forerunner role. That could also be possible.

NR: Very interesting, we are almost done. I still have one, two questions, because you mentioned a reform and Article 50. What do you think specifically, would have to get changed?

PS: Well, first of all the timing that you negotiate the timing and afterwards the future relationship. You would have to look at the two-year timespan, how you could formulate that in a better way. The way how you negotiate, the structures of the negotiations. You would have to think about all that, make it more concrete or you leave it open on purpose. But you were able to make a lot of experiences on the topic, that you have to reflect on now and then put it into a new law text. Let alone the decision of the supreme court, that Great Britain can withdraw unilaterally again, effects the position in negotiation and the way, how the European Union can negotiate. So, all these areas, you would have to legally adapt an put into a more concrete Article 50. Depending on what will be the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. So, I think that there are some things, you can learn from. By the way, we have a policy brief about Article 50, you can find it online, about the lessons you learn from Article 50. Of course, pragmatically it is clear, that no one wants to open that up right now. It is not a topic. But it will be a topic someday, probably.

NR: Coming to an end, I have a last question, because I found your study about the public opinion towards the European Union in different countries. And the Czech Republic had a special position due to their public opinion, also because of their national government. How can you explain that, is that because of the domestic dissatisfaction with politics or what can you say about that?

PS: So, the parallels are quite obvious, that dissatisfaction with domestic politics is quite high and therefore there is a spillover-effect towards dissatisfaction with the European Union, there is a general dissatisfaction. Well, then there is the component of domestic politics, how does the structure of Czech politics look like, who communicates how. But why does the Czech Republic have such a different public opinion than for example Hungary or Slovakia? The Czech Republic looks

better economic-political grounds, History is part of the reason. In the Czech Republic there is the feeling of being second grade EU citizens even stronger. I think that identity and national pride is stronger developed than for example in Slovakia. I am not an expert of the Czech Republic, but there are some elements, that play a role and probably also the history of the country. I cannot get much more concrete, but there a couple of studies and I can name some people, if you really are interested, that can go into detail."

13.3.2 Original version in German

Nikolaus Riss (NR): "Wie würden Sie Euroskeptizismus und Exit-Skeptizismus definieren?

Paul Schmidt (PS): Also Euroskeptizismus ist eine Kritik an der Europäischen Integration, wo man den Eindruck und die Wahrnehmung hat, dass es hier in die falsche Richtung läuft, dass es zu Dezentralisierungstendenzen kommt, dass über einen drübergefahren wird, und dass man in kleineren Einheiten eigentlich mehr erreichen kann, weil die Europäische Integration zu heterogen ist. Also eine Ablehnung quasi kann je nachdem von welchen Grad des Euroskeptizismus wir reden. Also dass man wirklich bis zur Ablehnung, bis zu dem Exit, bis zur Vorliebe für den Exit-, wie haben sie es genannt?

NR: Exit-Skeptizismus.

PS: Und der Exit-Skeptizismus ist für mich, das ist schon eine übertriebenere Version der Skepsis, wo man schon soweit ist, dass man sagt… Es kann natürlich auch heißen, Skeptizismus einer Exit-Variante. Aber wenn Sie damit meinen, Austrittsbefürworter, dann ist das natürlich schon eine starke Ausprägung des Skeptizismus, wo man wirklich alles ablehnt und, wo man sagt, die Nationalstaaten sind das einzig Wahre, und man muss austreten.

NR: Sehen Sie da Unterschiede in den verschiedenen Regionen der Europäischen Union, Unterschiede im Euroskeptizismus?

PS: Im Euroskeptizismus gibt es natürlich einige Unterschiede, je nachdem. Da gibt es geografische Gründe, da gibt es historische Gründe, da gibt es

gesellschaftspolitische Gründe, die hier alle hineinspielen in die Ausprägung des Skeptizismus. Das hängt ganz von der jeweiligen nationalen gesellschaftlichen Situation ab, wie sich dieser Skeptizismus, in welcher Form, in welcher Ausprägung, in welcher Stärke sich dieser Skeptizismus wiederfindet. Da gibt es natürlich ganz unterschiedliche Ausprägungen.

NR: Würden Sie da vielleicht eine Region in Europa besonders herausheben aufgrund der letzten 1-2 Jahre?

PS: Naja, klar ist, dass Großbritannien ein ganz besonderer Fall des Skeptizismus und der Liebe zum Austritt ist. Ähm, darüber hinaus, also einen Fall wie in Großbritannien gibt es nicht noch einmal, den sehe ich nicht. Aber es gibt natürlich auch einen Skeptizismus in Ländern, wo die Zustimmung zur Mitgliedschaft extrem hoch ist. Das gibt es ja auch. Aber diese britischen Erfahrungen, die sind wahrscheinlich einzigartig.

NR: Viele Experten argumentieren zum Beispiel, dass, um demografische Unterschiede in den Griff zu bekommen, die Europäische Union flexibler werden muss. Wie denken Sie darüber? Was könnte man da machen?

PS: Naja, da gibt es natürlich ganz unterschiedliche Meinungen und Ansichten dazu. Die eine Thematik ist die Herausforderung der intraeuropäischen Mobilität, Personenfreizügigkeit innerhalb der Europäischen Union, wo wir ja einige Länder haben, die kein Einwanderungs-, sondern vor allem Auswanderungsproblem haben, von Ungarn bis Rumänien. Und dann gibt es natürlich auch Länder, die ganz gezielte Einwanderungsstrategien haben, als ein Element, um dieser demografischen Herausforderung gerecht zu werden. Aber das kann immer nur ein Element von mehreren Elementen sein. Also es gibt unterschiedliche Herangehensweisen. Die einen sagen, wir brauchen mehr Zuwanderung, die anderen sagen, es ist keine Lösung für strukturschwache Länder, ganz im Gegenteil. Für entwicklungsschwache Länder ist es natürlich extrem traumatisch, wenn die gut ausgebildeten Leute weggehen. Und die Frage stellt sich, inwieweit tut die Personenfreizügigkeit für diese Regionen auch etwas Gutes, oder vielleicht ist sie negativ, wenn Sie sich die Länder am Balkan anschauen. Rumänien hat seit der Mitgliedschaft knapp vier Millionen Leute, nicht verloren, aber sie sind

ausgewandert, und natürlich spielen die eine Rolle in der Diaspora. Und es gibt auch dann wahrscheinlich wieder einen Zug zurück in die Länder, das haben wir immer wieder gesehen. Portugal und Südeuropa hat natürlich auch stark darunter gelitten, andererseits profitiert man auch davon. Aber es gibt natürlich Regionen, die vollkommen wegsterben. Und ob das ein Modell sein kann, ein gesamteuropäisches Modell, naja, das ist fraglich. Und dann sozusagen, ok, die einen versuchen, die demografische Herausforderung der Zuwanderung unter Kontrolle zu bekommen. Die anderen über sonstige finanzielle Unterstützung oder Sachleistungen, um Familien zu fördern. Also da gibt es unterschiedliche Herangehensweisen, aber irgendwie habe ich das Gefühl, dass die richtige Lösung oder das große Patentrezept hat man noch nicht gefunden für diese Problematik. Weil ich meine, Europa wird älter. Es ist natürlich auch eine Frage des gesellschaftlichen Fortschritts, wir werden älter. Aber wir gehen nicht wirklich später in Pension, es fehlen uns die jungen, also es ist nicht leicht.

NR: Das ist sehr interessant.

PS: Ich habe da auch kein Patentrezept. Ich glaube halt, Mobilität ist wichtig, aber Mobilität bringt auch Probleme.

NR: Interessanterweise ist ja aber trotzdem gerade in etwas ärmeren EU-Ländern der Wunsch, die EU zu verlassen, ja wenig bis gar nicht da. Das ist eher ein Problem der anderen Länder. Wie sehen Sie da grundsätzlich die Entwicklung in den letzten Jahren bei Ländern, die doch stärker den Wunsch hatten, die Europäische Union zu verlassen?

PS: Also, ich gebe Ihnen Recht, dass das wirtschaftliche Element sehr wichtig. Aber wenn wir zum Beispiel nach Italien schauen, Italien war konfrontiert mit einer doppelten Krise. Auf der einen Seite wirtschaftlich, auf der anderen Seite die Migrationsthematik. Und da ist die Zustimmung zur europäischen Integration nicht gestiegen, sondern gesunken. Das heißt, ok, das wirtschaftliche Argument ist wichtig, aber wie wir beim Brexit gesehen haben, ist es nicht entscheidend. Allgemein glaube ich, kennen Sie die Daten. Also es hat viele Analysten gegeben, die gesagt haben, nach dem 22. Juli 2016, ok, es könnte zu einem Schneeballeffekt kommen. Aber genau das Gegenteil ist passiert. Wir haben das

in Österreich stark gesehen, wo die Zustimmung zur EU-Mitgliedschaft 12 Prozentpunkte gestiegen ist und jene Prozentgruppe, die für einen Austritt ist, ist um 13 Prozentpunkte weniger geworden. Das heißt, wir sind auf sehr hohen Werten derzeit und das zeigt sich auch an den Eurobarometerzahlen, dass das europaweit da ist. Das hat natürlich zu tun mit der Einzigartigkeit des Brexit, mit der chaotischen, politischen Zuständen, den prognostizierten wirtschaftlichen Kosten und mit der Art und Weise, wie medial darüber berichtet wird. Ob das natürlich ein nachhaltiger Effekt wird, wäre auch eine gute Frage, das kann man natürlich jetzt noch nicht wirklich beurteilen. Ich würde sagen ja und nein. Ja, weil sich das Chaos kumulieren wird. Nein, weil sich irgendwann mal das ganze abschwächen und normalisieren wird, nehme ich an. Und dann ist es auch eine Frage, welchen Brexit wir letztlich bekommen werden. So wie es sich jetzt darstellt, ist es irgendwie für Nachahmer nicht wirklich empfehlenswert, diesen Weg zu gehen. Und da sind die Kontinentaleuropäer durchaus pragmatisch: Sie lieben zwar die Europäische Union nicht unbedingt heiß, aber Sie sind doch lieber gemeinsam unterwegs, als alleine auf weiter Flur. Das heißt jetzt nicht, dass sich die Performance der Europäischen Union so verbessert hat, aber es ist einfach ein abschreckendes Beispiel derzeit.

NR: Sie haben es gerade angesprochen: Es ist ein abschreckendes Beispiel. Welche Strategie beobachten Sie deshalb bei EU-kritischen Parteien in Europa, die vor wenigen Jahren noch vehement einen Austritt gefordert haben, und das jetzt nicht mehr tun?

PS: Naja, die Strategie ist, bei jenen Kräften, die mehr Erfahrung, mehr politische Erfahrung haben, durchaus klar, nämlich, dass sie moderater werden in ihrer Rhetorik und in ihrer politischen Strategie. Das heißt nicht, dass Sie diese Ideen jetzt vollkommen aufgegeben haben, sondern die sind nach wie vor in der Schublade, aber sie werden rhetorisch ganz anders gebracht, abgeschwächt gebracht. Oder man versucht sich da jetzt, von seiner eigenen Vergangenheit, oder seiner eigenen Rhetorik zu verabschieden. Alles, was jetzt als extremere, als radikalere Rhetorik wahrgenommen wird, ist nicht massentauglich. Und daher, je nachdem, ob man in Regierungsfunktion ist, oder ob man in Opposition ist, passt man seine politische Art zu kommunizieren, an seine Prioritäten an und ordnet das Ganze dem innenpolitischen, machtstrategischem Kalkül unter. Auch das ist

natürlich von Land zu Land unterschiedlich, je nachdem wieviel Spielraum man hat, je nachdem wie die Umfragedaten sich darstellen, also das es durchaus Umfragedaten gibt, wie man darüber öffentlich spricht und wie man sich da positioniert. Das kann sich aber natürlich auch wieder ändern. Derzeit ist eher wieder eine Bewegung zu mehr Moderation, weil man damit eher abschreckt. Und man gerät natürlich in die Situation, dass man schnell in ein Fahrwasser kommt, wo man mit den Brexiteers verglichen wird. Und dann ist die Message, dass man selber, was sie sozusagen, die Planlosigkeit der Brexit-Fans ist etwas, dass man nicht in Kontinentaleuropa als Politiker an sich picken haben möchte. Daher ist es derzeit so, dass man sich eher versucht, da herumzuwinden. Das heißt, man möchte aber trotzdem die Nationalstaaten stärken und gegen einen Zentralismus antreten und kritisieren, anstatt Lösungen anzubieten, aber man möchte nicht unbedingt in das britische Fahrwasser kommen, sagen wir so.

NR: Welche, um jetzt konkret auf Österreich einzugehen und die FPÖ, was beobachten Sie da nach der Regierungsbeteiligung?

PS: Naja, es ist das Dilemma, das man auf der einen Seite natürlich als Regierung Juniorpartner moderater sein muss und möchte. Auf der anderen Seite schauen muss, dass man noch politischen Spielraum hat, dass einem der politische Spielraum von seinem Koalitionspartner nicht genommen wird. Man kann nicht mehr Anti-Regierungspositionen, Anti-Establishment, vertreten, weil jetzt ist man Elite, jetzt ist man Regierung. Aber man möchte ein Europa der Nationalstaaten á la Orban und versucht, hier anzudocken, und das ist natürlich ein Widerspruch, auch in Hinblick auf die EU-Wahl. Und da ist die Frage, wieviel Glaubwürdigkeit hat man und inwieweit kann man seine eigene traditionelle Klientel trotzdem mobilisieren. Die Frage, wiegt sozusagen die Lust und das Interesse an der Regierungsbeteiligung und der politischen Macht mehr, als in der Wählergunst die neue Position und die neue Stellung innerhalb Österreichs? Früher waren die Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament Denkzettel-Wahlen, also da war die Rollenverteilung ziemlich klar. Das ist jetzt nicht mehr der Fall.

NR: Sie haben die EU-Wahl jetzt schon angesprochen. Grundsätzlich beobachtet man in Europa eine erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit hinsichtlich der EU seit dem Brexit.

Haben Sie dafür eine Erklärung, vielleicht Ängste? Und welche Auswirkungen könnte diese Aufmerksamkeit auf die EU-Parlamentswahl haben?

PS: Ja, das ist die Frage. Das weiß ich natürlich auch nicht, sondern ich kann sozusagen nur versuchen, mich einer Antwort anzunähern. Die erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit, die sehen wir auch. Also gerade durch die diversen Krisen, durch die verstärkte Berichterstattung, durch den Ratsvorsitz in Österreich. Also da ist mehr öffentliches Interesse, mehr öffentliches Bewusstsein da. Die Frage ist jetzt, bedeutet das auch mehr Wahlbeteiligung? Also von den Daten, die wir haben, wahrscheinlich Nein. Wobei in Österreich kommt ja noch dazu, dass wie gesagt die Regierungskonstellation eine andere ist, die könnte das Ganze spannender machen. Aber dann ist die Frage, inwieweit kann die FPÖ mobilisiere, inwieweit können die anderen mobilisieren. Brexit kann, meiner Meinung nach, durchaus ein Gamechanger sein, je nachdem welchen Brexit wir haben. Also wir wissen ja, dass die Zustimmung gestiegen ist seit es das Brexit-Voting gegeben hat. Und wenn es jetzt wirklich zu einem ungeregelten Austritt kommt, könnte das natürlich als These zumindest, als Hypothese, könnte das natürlich durchaus konstruktiv integrationsfreundliche Kräfte für die Wahl mobilisieren. Sie brauchen immer diesen emotionalen Kick, um die Leute tatsächlich zur Wahl zu bringen. Das eine ist ja sozusagen, dass mich die Themen interessieren, das andere ist, dass ich 18-19 EU-Abgeordnete in Österreich wählen, aber das Europäische Parlament weit weg ist, ein Arbeitsparlament ist, kompliziert ist, das Ganze abstrakt ist. ‚Was kann das Europäische Parlament schon bewegen, was können die paar Österreicher im Parlament schon bewegen?' Und dass es ein weiter Weg vom öffentlichen Interesse hin zu einer tatsächlichen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Europäischen Parlament. Aber das ist wahrscheinlich eh zu viel des Guten. Es ist einfach wichtig, man muss nicht alle Fakten kennen, man muss ein Gefühl dafür haben, zu sagen, das wäre jetzt wichtig, ich muss meine Stimme abgeben. Wieviel, inwieweit, kann ich eigentlich noch Kritik üben, wenn ich nichts von dieser Möglichkeit nutze und wählen gehe. Also Fazit: Ich glaube, dass die Chancen durchaus da sind, dass die Wahlbeteiligung in Österreich zumindest etwas steigt. Das hängt nicht nur von den europäischen Umständen ab, aber auch. Aber es gibt sozusagen zwei Elemente: Das eine ist die europäische Entwicklung und internationale Entwicklung. Das andere ist, dass was in der nationalen Öffentlichkeit gerade zieht und reüssiert.

Und da ist eine Gemengelage, dass ich schon glaube, dass es eine Chance gibt, dass die Wahlbeteiligung etwas steigt. Sie wird nicht ins Unendliche steigen, aber ich meine, die Chance ist zumindest da. Einen Brexit-Effekt könnte es eigentlich auch geben, da habe ich gerade einen Kommentar geschrieben, der geht eh in die Richtung.

NR: Den habe ich gelesen.

PS: Nein, der ist noch nicht veröffentlich. Also ein Brexit-Effekt, wo wir versuchen, die unterschiedlichen Szenarien auf die Wahlbeteiligung auszuwerten. Aber da ist eh der Succus der, also wenn es einen ungeregelten Brexit gibt, dann zieht sich das natürlich über den März hinaus, und dann könnte man gerade die produktiveren, migrationsfreundlichen Kräfte mobilisieren.

NR: Ich habe den in der Wiener Zeitung gemeint über die kommende Parlamentswahl, den habe ich gelesen. Wenn wir auf Großbritannien jetzt wieder schauen, da haben eben diese angesprochenen langen EU-Kritiker wie Nigel Farage oder Boris Johnson nicht zwingend Führungsstärke bewiesen nach dem Votum. Schreckt das andere EU-Skeptiker in Europa auch ab quasi, ‚Wenn wir dann in diese Position kommen, um das durchzuziehen, so einfach ist das ja nicht.“

PS: Ich glaube, dass alles was wir gerade sehen und was und nachhause geliefert wird derzeit, ist abschreckend, denn letztlich wird das Bild, wird ein chaotisches Bild übermittelt, vermittelt. Und man weiß nicht, wohin diese Reise geht. Man weiß nur, dass da viele, viele Fragezeichen sind und es eine große Unsicherheit gibt, und das wollen die Leute nicht. Ja, wenn es mehr Führungsstärke geben würde mit einem klaren Plan, was passiert, wohin die Reise geht mit einer klaren Mehrheit, dann hätte das möglicherweise andere Auswirkungen gehabt. Aber all das ist ja in diesem kritischen Patt nicht gegeben.

NR: Können Sie mir Aspekte sagen, die die britische Regierung nach dem Votum auch gut gemacht hat. Wo Sie sagen, das war nicht so schlecht, wie es medial dargestellt wurde, weil medial alles oft ein bisschen verzerrt wird?

PS: Naja, ich glaube, die ganze Vereinbarung, die letztlich im britischen Parlament keine Mehrheit gefunden hat, war der bestmögliche Kompromiss, um soweit wie

möglich Schaden zu bekämpfen. So, alles kostet mehr und ist schädlicher als die EU-Mitgliedschaft auf jeden Fall. Es gibt auf jeden Fall ökonomische Kosten. Also der Deal ist wahrscheinlich besser, als das, was man medial vernommen hat. Sonst, ich glaube, die Kondition der britischen Premierministerin ist durchaus bewundernswert. Also, wie lange Sie da durchhält und wie Sie da kämpft, um ihr Ziel zu erreichen. Das ist schon bemerkenswert. Sonst fällt mir jetzt nicht wahnsinnig viel ein, mir fällt vor allem Negatives ein.

NR: Schön, dann können Sie gleich weitersprechen. Was würden Sie denn sagen, was Sie am Negativsten vielleicht überrascht hat? Oder was Sie zumindest nicht erwartet haben?

PS: Naja, diese geringe Kenntnis der Europäischen Integration. Dieser irrationale, stark innenpolitische Fokus, dieses historische Empire-Wunschdenken, das mit der Realität ja nichts zu tun hat. Die Art und Weise, wie mit Schottland und Nordirland umgegangen wird und wie wenig eigentlich erkannt wurde, wie wenig Aufmerksamkeit Irland bekommen hat. Und inwieweit man geglaubt hat, dass man eigentlich den Zusammenhalt der EU27 beeinträchtigen und beeinflussen kann. Naja, ich meine, da gibt es ganz, ganz viele Punkte, es ist halt ziemlich irrational das Ganze, das hätte ich mir vor allem von den Briten so nicht erwartet, und ziemlich egoistisch. Die großen Kosten werden nicht diejenigen tragen, die im Endeffekt entscheiden, dass es zu einem Brexit kommt, weil die haben es sich schon lange gerichtet.

NR: Gefühlt ist ja eher das Gegenteil passiert. Eigentlich spürt man medial und auch im Umgang mit den EU-Regierungschefs mehr Zusammenhalt in Bezug auf den Brexit. Wie sehen Sie das, wie urteilen Sie darüber?

PS: Naja, also ich halte das für sehr vernünftig, weil das ist auch etwas, das gerade vor den EU-Wahlen, aber nicht nur vor den EU-Wahlen, von der Öffentlichkeit erwartet wird und es wäre ein ziemliches Chaos, wenn da jeder seine eigenen Verhandlungen führen würde. Und das ist eine ergebnisorientierte, effiziente Herangehensweise an solche, an diese Premiere, einer EU-Austrittsverhandlung, die schon kompliziert genug ist. Und die Verhandlung über die zukünftige

Beziehung der EU27 und Großbritanniens, die werden auch noch wesentlich komplizierter werden. Also das ist alles kein Spaziergang.

NR: Die negativen wirtschaftlichen Konsequenzen aus allen möglichen Lebensbereichen auf EU-Bürger in Großbritannien und so weiter, die sind ja nicht von der Hand zu weisen. Können Sie dennoch auf lange Sicht etwas Positives sehen in einer EU ohne Großbritannien? Zum Beispiel einen abschreckenden Effekt?

PS: Positiv, was kann positiv sein? Also ja, ich meine, je nachdem, wie der Brexit ausgeht, ist dieser Artikel 50 wahrscheinlich gestorben. Und je nachdem, wie dieser Brexit ausgeht, muss dieser Artikel 50 wahrscheinlich modifiziert werden. Die Frage ist, ob sich irgendjemand traut, das anzugreifen. Wahrscheinlich nicht, wahrscheinlich erst bei der nächsten Vertragsrevision. Aber es zeigt, wie vernetzt alles ist, und wie komplex das Ganze ist, und wie unsinnig das Ganze ist, in einer immer enger zusammenrückenden Welt. Möglicherweise wird es langfristig, zumindest für Großbritannien, die Möglichkeit geben, ein eigenes Abkommen zu schließen und eigene handelsbritische Prioritäten zu setzen. Die Frage ist nur, es ist schon richtig, ich meine, die Europäische Union mit ihren 27-28 Mitgliedern ist schon eine komplexe Angelegenheit. Die Frage ist nur, eine reduzierte Komplexität, wenn Großbritannien ja alleine Handelsverträge verhandelt, ob es das geringere Gewicht Großbritanniens aufwiegt. Es ist nämlich ein Unterschied, ob ich einen Markt mit 500 Millionen Leuten im Rücken habe oder mit 60 Millionen Leuten und ich meine, die wirtschaftlichen Kosten werden hoch sein. Die Frage ist nur, ob die Leute je verstehen werden, dass diese Kosten mit dem EU-Austritt in Verbindung stehen. Und ich glaube, viele Brexit-Fans leben einfach in einem sehr verzerrten Weltbild, das nicht der Realität entspricht. Und ich glaube, Sie haben einfach durch fehlende Kenntnis oder durch politisches Kalkül überhaupt nicht verstanden, was die Europäische Union eigentlich ist.

NR: Ich habe letzte Woche mit einem Mitarbeiter der EU-Kommission sprechen können. Der hat den Brexit von der Wahrnehmung gemeinsam mit Kollegen als eine Art Trennung von einem Lebensabschnittspartner beschrieben, bei der man durch verschiedene Phasen wie Unglaube, Trauer und Akzeptanz geht. Können Sie damit etwas anfangen?

PS: Naja, es ist ein lustiges Beispiel, wenn man das medial aufarbeiten möchte, aber schon eine ziemlich dramatische Scheidung das Ganze.

NR: Man blickt ja auf jede Trennung nach zehn Jahren Abstand etwas anders zurück. Wie denken Sie, werden Großbritannien und die EU werden sich dann gegenüberstehen?

PS: Also aus heutiger Sicht würde ich sagen, ich kann mir gut vorstellen, dass Großbritannien wieder einmal Mitglied der Europäischen Union werden möchte. Wenn es einen Brexit gibt, wo Vorteile natürlich nicht überwiegen, sondern die Nachteile, und davon gehen wir aus. Es wird eine andere Generation sein, es wird ein ärmeres Großbritannien sein. Wir wissen nicht, ob es Großbritannien oder Klein-Britannien sein wird. Es wird ein Großbritannien sein oder ein ehemals Großbritannien sein, das unter ganz anderen Konditionen EU-Mitglied werden möchte. Immer dann, wenn es die Europäische Union auch schafft, sich zu reformieren, um besser zu werden, um effizienter zu werden. Schafft es die Europäische Union nicht, dann steht sie selber vor existentiellen Fragen. Und dann kann sein, wenn die EU dann implodiert, kann es natürlich auch sein, dass sich Großbritannien in eine Vorreiterrolle gespielt hat. Auch das ist möglich.

NR: Sehr interessant. Wir sind schon auf der Zielgerade, ein-zwei Fragen hätte ich noch, weil Sie eben die Reform auch angesprochen haben und Artikel 50. Was glauben Sie denn, würde da konkret verändert werden sollen?

PS: Naja, alleine die Tatsache, das Timing, dass man eben zuerst den Austritt verhandelt und dann die zukünftige Beziehung, die Zwei-Jahres-Frist müsste man sich anschauen müssen, wie man das besser formuliert. Die Art und Weise, wie verhandelt wird, wie die Verhandlungen strukturiert werden. All das müsste man sich überlegen und konkretisieren oder man lässt es absichtlich ganz offen. Aber man hat hier schon sehr viel Erfahrungen jetzt gesammelt, die man eigentlich auf sich wirken lassen muss und dann wahrscheinlich in einem neuen Rechtstext fließen lassen muss. Alleine die OGH-Entscheidung, dass Großbritannien unilateral wieder aussteigen kann, wirkt sich natürlich irgendwo auch auf die Verhandlungsposition und die Art und Weise aus, wie die Europäische Union die Verhandlung verlängern kann. Also all diese Bereiche, die müsste man rechtlich

erfassen und in einen konkreteren Artikel 50 gießen oder je nachdem, was dann am Schluss bei diesen Brexit-Verhandlungen rauskommt. Also ich glaube schon, dass es einige Lehren gibt, die man ziehen kann. Also wir haben dazu einen Policy Brief übrigens, den finden Sie bei uns über den Artikel 50. Über die Lehren, die ein Artikel 50 schreibt. Natürlich, realpolitisch ist es klar, das möchte überhaupt niemand jetzt aufmachen, das ist jetzt kein Thema. Aber irgendwann wird es womöglich ein Thema sein.

NR: Zum Abschluss noch. Ich bin da letzte Woche über eine Studie von Ihnen gestolpert, über eben die Meinung hinsichtlich der Europäischen Union in verschiedenen Ländern. Da hatte Tschechien ein bisschen eine Sonderstellung von der Meinung her, auch aufgrund der nationalen Regierung. Wie können Sie sich das erklären, liegt das nur an der nationalen Unzufriedenheit mit der Politik oder können Sie mir da vielleicht etwas dazu sagen?

PS: Also die Parallele ist schon offensichtlich, dass die Unzufriedenheit mit der nationalen Politik ziemlich hoch ist und sich da ein spillover-Effekt ergibt in Richtung Unzufriedenheit mit der Europäischen Union, das ist eine allgemeine Unzufriedenheit. Naja, dann die innenpolitische Komponente, wie sieht die Struktur der tschechischen Politik aus, wer kommuniziert wie. Aber warum hat Tschechien so ein ganz anderes Stimmungsbild als etwa Ungarn oder die Slowakei? Tschechien steht wirtschaftspolitisch besser da, die Historie hat wahrscheinlich einen Grund. In Tschechien ist das Gefühl, dass man EU-Bürger zweiter Klasse ist noch stärker ausgeprägt. Ich glaube, dass die Identität und der Nationalstolz noch ein anderer ist, als etwa in der Slowakei. Ich bin kein Tschechien-Experte, aber es gibt da einige Elemente, die hier hineinspielen und wahrscheinlich auch die Geschichte des Landes. Viel konkreter kann ich da jetzt nicht werden, es gibt aber einiges an Studien dazu und ich kann Ihnen auch ein paar Leute nennen, falls es sie wirklich interessiert, die das genauer machen können."