

What are the trends and dominant drivers of Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union over the last decade?

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1. Abstract

For many years, the European Unification process was mainly elite-driven and considered to be of low salience to the European citizens and the national politics. Yet, from the 1990s onwards, the scope of the European integration project significantly changed from an intergovernmental process to a supranational one, which resulted in a growing politicization of the emerging European agenda. At the same time, sceptical public attitudes towards the European Union began to crystallize in a meaningful way and the term 'Euroscepticism' started to be deployed in media and political circles. The European Union moved from a "permissive consensus" to a "constraining dissensus". Consequently, over the last years, the degree of public support for European integration considerably has gained in importance in shaping the future of the European integration project.

The main objective of this Master's Thesis is to analyse whether, over the last decade, the characteristics of Euroscepticism observed in the UK, Germany and the European Union have differed considerably by identifying, for each of these respective geographical areas, the dominant Euroscepticism drivers and their development over time.

Both the UK and Germany have experienced considerable increases in Euroscepticism over the last years. Moreover, they are large and influential players within Europe and on the global political scene. Hence, the both countries are very interesting to study and compare with regards to the Euroscepticism issue. Also, the period 2005-2015 is a particularly interesting time span to study as it encompasses several events of major importance to the European Union and its member states.

The empirical results of this Master's Thesis research clearly show that the observed levels of Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union over the last decade are indeed characterized by different dominant drivers and, therefore, multifaceted in their nature.

More specifically, over the last decade, Euroscepticism in the UK has mainly been driven by the UK citizens' national identity and attachment feelings as well as their dissatisfaction with the working of the democracy at the European Union's decision making level. In contrast, Euroscepticism in Germany has, in the first place, originated in increased national threat perceptions of the German citizens, triggered by immigration and future

enlargement plans of the European Union, as well as a rise in the German citizens' pessimism regarding the future state of the German economy.

2. Introduction

Post-WWII Europe has been characterized by co-operation and integration between European nation-states, a process that formally took off in 1952 with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community. For many years, this European Unification process was mainly elite-driven and considered to be of low salience to the European citizens and the national politics (see amongst others Gifford, 2014; Usherwood and Startin, 2013; Waechter, 2011). Consequently, a permissive consensus on the part of the citizens was seen to exist that enabled elites to pursue their policy goals without public pressure (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970).

Yet, from the 1990s onwards, the scope of the European integration project significantly changed from an intergovernmental process to a supranational one, increasingly transferring national sovereignty to the European level. This resulted in a growing politicization of the emerging European agenda: the public and national politicians got increasingly mobilised on European policy issues and wanted to have their say. At the same time, sceptical public attitudes towards the European Union began to crystallize in a meaningful way and the term 'Euroscepticism' started to be deployed in media and political circles (Flood, 2002). The European Union moved from a "permissive consensus", typical for European Union policy making in the 1970s and 1980s, to a "constraining dissensus", characterizing the European political environment since then (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Consequently, over the last two decades, the degree of public support for European integration considerably has gained in importance in shaping the future of the European integration project. This trend is, for example, clearly reflected in the increased use of referenda on European policy issues, such as the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s, the European Constitution in 2005 or, more recently, the UK's membership of the European Union.

In order to gain more insights in the impact of public opinion on the European Unification process, a growing academic literature on "Euroscepticism" has emerged in the last few years. More specifically, this previous academic work has extensively dealt with the research on statistical significant drivers of Euroscepticism in order to analyse the extent

and the causes of citizen attitudes towards the European Union and European integration (cf. Section 4). This way, over the years, an extensive list of significant indicators of Euroscepticism has been established.

Clearly, this previous research's academic contribution to the contemporary debate on Euroscepticism cannot be overstated. Nevertheless, two gaps in the existing academic literature on Euroscepticism can be identified, which are unaddressed up until today.

Firstly, up to now, the existing academic literature hardly has focused on the question whether Euroscepticism is multifaceted in its nature. Indeed, although the by previous research identified drivers have a proven significance for Euroscepticism in general, their explanatory power may widely differ across countries or regions. Yet, so far, this geographical dimension barely has been taken into consideration by academics. Indeed, up to now, almost no insights into the country- or region-specific importance of the identified Euroscepticism indicators have been provided. However, acquiring knowledge on the specific kinds of Euroscepticism that prevail in a particular country or region is of major importance as it enables policy makers to considerably increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of the policies designed to tackle Euroscepticism.

Moreover, not only the geographical dimension but also the time dimension might have a decisive impact on the relevance of a particular driver. Yet, so far, the trends and dynamics of the identified significant Euroscepticism drivers over time barely have been covered by the existing academic literature. Indeed, up until now, the major part of the regression analyses that have been executed to examine the relationship between the drivers and the observed degrees of Euroscepticism are based on aggregate time period measures. Hence, given this cross-sectional nature of the conducted regression analyses, no information on individual time series can be extracted from their outcome.

The main objective of this Master's Thesis is to analyse whether, over the last decade, the characteristics of Euroscepticism observed in the UK, Germany and the European Union have differed considerably by identifying, for each of these respective geographical areas, the dominant Euroscepticism drivers and their development over time.

More specifically, the following **research questions** will be studied in the remainder of this paper:

Is Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union characterized by different dominant drivers over the period 2005-2015 and, therefore, multifaceted in its nature? What are the trends and developments over time in those most relevant indicators of Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union? How can these trends be explained and which policy recommendations can be formulated to address Euroscepticism in the future?

The outcome of this empirical research aims to make an important contribution to both the academic field of research and the political and public debates on Euroscepticism in three main ways:

Firstly, within the group of the 28 European Union member states, the UK and Germany are very interesting countries to study and compare. Indeed, both are large and influential players, not only within Europe but also on the global political scene. Nevertheless, at the same time, substantial differences can be observed with regards to their track records as a European Union member states and their attitudes towards the future of the European Unification process (cf. Section 3). However, despite their different backgrounds and the different nature of their relationship with the European Union, both the UK and Germany have experienced considerable increases in Euroscepticism over the last years. Given the large impact public opinion has on shaping the future of the European integration project (see amongst others Hooghe and Marks, 2009), it has become particularly relevant and increasingly important to gain more insights in the observed growth in Euroscepticism in the UK and Germany.

Also the period 2005-2015 is a particularly interesting time span to study as it encompasses several events of major importance to the European Union and its member states such as the fifth European Union enlargement in 2007, the global financial crisis in 2008, the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and the European elections in 2009 and, more recently, the European migration crisis.

Consequently, both the geographical and time scope of this research are particularly relevant to the current Euroscepticism debate.

Secondly, this Master's Thesis addresses for both the UK and Germany the above explained gaps in the existing academic literature by analysing whether the level of explanatory power of a particular driver varies not only over time but also geographically.

More specifically, the empirical is structured as follows (cf. Section 5): from the extensive list of significant Euroscepticism drivers, established by previous academic work (cf. Section 4), the six following indicators are selected: national identity, attachment to the European Union, subjective economic evaluations, immigration, future enlargement of the European Union and the working of the democracy in the European Union. Next, for each of these six indicators, the trends and dynamics over the last decade will be analysed separately for the UK, Germany and the European Union. Practically, this analysis will be conducted by means of ordered categorical responses to those Eurobarometer poll questions which specifically gauge for the level of Euroscepticism as well as for the selected indicators (see amongst others Feliciatas (2011), Risse (2003) and Sørensen C. (2008)) (cf. Section 5). Like this, insights will be gained both in the dominant drivers and in the development of Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union over the period 2005-2015.

Finally, the outcome of the empirical research in this paper will prove to be extremely useful to those policy makers appointed to address the Euroscepticism issue. Indeed, in times of harsh public budget cuts and restrictions on both the European and the national member state levels, it is vital that public resources are deployed in the most efficient and effective way. By having knowledge on the specific kinds of Euroscepticism that prevail in each country, policies can carefully be differentiated between the different countries according to their specific needs. Consequently, thanks to this more wisely and prudential deployment of both financial and human resources, the effectiveness and the efficiency of the policies designed to tackle Euroscepticism will considerably increase.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: the following Section provides a general literature overview of the emergence of Euroscepticism since the end of WWII as well as a detailed analysis of the post-WWII relationship between the European Union, on the one hand, and, respectively the UK and Germany, on the other hand. Next, in Section 4, a closer look is taken at the relevance of the six selected indicators (national identity, attachment to the European Union, subjective economic evaluations, future enlargement of the European Union and the working of the democracy in the European Union) to the research question of this Master's Thesis by means of an overview of the existing academic literature for each indicator (see Subsections 4.1 to 4.6). Section 5 digs deeper into the applied methodology and the empirical research design. Subsequently,

the empirical results together with a discussion and policy recommendations are presented in Section 6. Finally, Section 7 provides a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

3. General overview Euroscepticism

Post-WWII Europe has been characterized by co-operation and integration between European nation-states, a process that formally took off in 1952 with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community. In the beginning, this European unification process was strongly focused on the benefits of economic integration and the need to engage previous hostile states in a common project to preserve and ensure a peaceful Europe. Moreover, for many years, the negotiations and decision-making at the European Union level were mainly elite-driven and considered to be of low salience to the European citizens and the national politics (see amongst others Gifford, 2014; Usherwood and Startin, 2013; Waechter, 2011). Consequently, a permissive consensus on the part of the citizens was seen to exist that enabled elites to pursue their policy goals without public pressure. Indeed, the majority of the citizens disengaged from the transnational politics and let the integration process happen which in turn was perceived by the elites as tacit citizen support (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970).

Yet, from the 1990s onwards, the scope of the European integration project significantly changed (Waechter, 2011). More specifically, since the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Union had become a full-blown political project, not only involved in economic matters anymore but strongly influencing political matters as well. The project advanced from an intergovernmental to a supranational one. This resulted in a growing politicization of European Union issues: the public and national politicians got increasingly mobilised on European policy issues and wanted to have their say on the emerging European agenda. At the same time, sceptical public attitudes towards the European Union began to crystallize in a meaningful way and the term 'Euroscepticism' started to be deployed in media and political circles (Flood, 2002). The European Union moved from a "permissive consensus", typical for European Union policy making in the 1970s and 1980s, to a "constraining dissensus" which characterized the European political environment since then (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Consequently, over the last two decades, the degree of public support for European integration substantially has gained in importance in shaping policy makers' incentives to oppose or promote the transfer of

national sovereignty to the European decision making level (see amongst others Hooghe and Marks, 2009). It can even be argued that the future of the European integration project will heavily rely on the public attitudes towards it. In order to gain more insights in the crucial influence public opinion has on the political discourses on European unification, a growing academic literature on “Euroscepticism” has emerged over the last years.

The research in this Master’s Thesis focuses on Euroscepticism in the UK and Germany. An overview of these countries relationship to the European Union in the post-WWII period is provided in the next two Subsections.

3.1 Euroscepticism in the UK

Britain’s relationship to the European Union has been intensively politically debated for more than 50 years already. Indeed, since the first proposed European Union membership of the UK by the Macmillan government in 1961, the issue touches upon the innermost heart of the British political organisation and identity (Gifford, 2014). Furthermore, Gifford (2014) points out that, since the re-organisation of Britain from imperial state to European Union member state in 1973, Euroscepticism has become a systemic feature of British politics, a fundamental pillar in constituting the British political order. Yet, this structural logic is neither static nor straightforwardly deterministic. Rather, it originates in the continuous dynamic of government and opposition by which British politics are characterized. Moreover, besides the political level, also the British civil society and the media strongly have been impacted by Euroscepticism throughout the years. In a similar vein, Risse (2003) shows that the fundamental attitudes of British political elites toward the European Union basically have remained stable since the end of World war II. Despite some key policy changes of the UK regarding the European Union in the past decades, the UK still often is considered as the “awkward partner” being “semi-detached” from “the continent Europe”. This, in turn, has resulted in dominant political discourses which have their roots in imperialism. These discourses claim that British democracy does not need Europe for its own legitimation and, moreover, create a feeling of “them” versus “us” between the UK and Europe (Bailey 1983; George 1994). However, as pointed out by amongst others Mudde (2012), Taggart and Szczerbak (2013) and Usherwood and Startin (2013), one has to be careful not to overstate the exceptionalness of the British politics. Rather than being an outlier case, Euroscepticism in the UK has to be framed within a

European-wide Eurosceptic dynamic which has become strongly embedded at both the national and European levels over the past decades, as explained above.

To gain more insights into the evolution of Euroscepticism in the UK since the post-WWII period, a chronological summary of some key events in the relationship between the UK and the European Union is provided in the next paragraphs.

In the post-WWII period, Fordism has made its appearance in Europe. This wave of organised modernity stimulated the reconstruction and the recovery of the damaged and destroyed nation states after WWII. For a large number of countries, a strong interdependence has been shown between the European integration process and the national projects of modernisation, reconstruction and renewal (Milward, 1992). Nevertheless, despite this strong relationship, the process of European integration cannot be reduced to national projects of modernisation only. Above all, it still has to be considered as an independent process of post-war modernisation.

In the early 1960s, the Conservative government under Macmillan decided to apply for European Union membership in an attempt to legitimate a European trajectory for the UK. Yet, this decision to apply for European Union membership has to be framed mainly as a Conservative strategy of contained modernisation designed to secure core elements of the British state. Indeed, at that time, the UK experienced a failure of Fordism caused by a chronic shortage of coherent modernisation projects. This, in turn, resulted in a post-imperial crisis characterized by a re-articulation of imperial policies and institutions. Hence, the UK government considered Europe as an external alternative at the point at which domestic modernization reforms had proved to fail. However, this “turn to Europe” was highly contested and British governments failed to constructively engage with the process of European integration in the early 1960s. Moreover, this structural tension between the British state, on the one hand, and the political modernisation trends, on the other hand, opened-up the British political order to Euroscepticism (Gifford, 2014).

It is important to recognize that the UK’s accommodation to Europe has occurred in line with the well-established governing code of the UK. The crucial feature of this governing code is the pursuit to autonomously exercise executive power which originates in the historical complexity of ruling the British territory, strongly characterized by multi-territorial political and economic interests and pressures. Given this context of historical complexity, autonomy has been considered as the only way forward towards political

authority (Buller, 2000). However, these ideas of British governing autonomy are not limited to the territories of the UK only. On the contrary, it also implies that influence is exercised against other nation states and the European institutions in order to secure and realize the British national interests to the fullest (Buller, 2006). Thus, to enable the UK to autonomously pursue its distinctive national interests, the established governing code aims for a state-centric Europe. Clearly, this position inherently lends itself to a form of soft Euroscepticism.

In the following years, this tendency of the failure British of governments to constructively engage with the process of European integration, as first observed in the early 1960s, continued due to a lack of commitment across the wider political class. Moreover, also the dominant political discourse of “otherness” and differentiation from “the European continent” became more and more widespread. By the early 1970s, the British parliament was highly divided on the issue of European membership. To challenge the UK’s membership to the European Union, the British national discourse promoted anti-Europeanism and tried to establish a populist “defence” against elite betrayal over Europe. This resulted in the Wilson government to organize a referendum on the membership issue in 1975, which clearly could be considered as a concession to the increasing public opposition at that time. Moreover, it reinforced the image of Europe as an issue that could not be dealt with by the normal electoral system of the UK only but also needed populist instruments for its legitimization.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the European context thoroughly changed. Indeed, at that time, Europe experienced a shift from Fordism to flexible accumulation. The latter is also known as globalization, post-Fordism or disorganized capitalism and refers to a highly dynamic and decoupled form of organization with a fluid network of alliances (Martin, 1994). In response to this challenging shift to globalization European elites re-asserted the European integration project, the so-called second wave of European integration launched under the European Commission presidency of Jacques Delors, as a means of post-national modernisation.

Yet, the UK did not jump on the second European integration wave. On the contrary, under the leadership of Thatcher, the distortions in the relationship between the UK and the European Union deepened even further. The Thatcher governments not only re-asserted British exceptionalism contra European integration they also subordinated a

European policy to the goal of establishing an aggressive form of neo-liberalism, which was characterized by extensive economic liberalization policies. These trends clearly have been reflected in the Thatcherite settlement's sceptical and hostile stances on a variety of issues such as the Single market, the European budget and the monetary Union.

The anti-European attitudes of the Thatcherite governments resulted in a crisis of the relationship between the UK and the European Union that rose to crescendo in the early 1990s, during the Major premiership. More specifically, Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) membership and the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty turned out to be highly contentious issues to the UK which resulted in Eurosceptic rebellion. Nevertheless, the Major governments attempted to revise the Thatcherite settlement and to accommodate to the developments of the second European integration wave. Yet, these attempts to a renewed Europeanism were fundamentally flawed and heavily backfired by a populist Eurosceptic movement. Consequently, the UK excluded itself from the core aspects of the European integration process which lead again to the re-assertion of British exceptionalism and a further entrenchment of Thatcherite Euroscepticism within the British political order.

A similar trend has been observed in the years thereafter. For example, in the period between 2010-2013, a constellation of forces such as the Eurozone crisis and the respective pro-integrationist response of the European Union, confirmed to British Eurosceptics that the European Union was a proven economic and political failure. This, in turn, paved the way for a renewed hard right-wing Eurosceptic opposition to the government's European strategy (Risse, 2003).

The most recent crisis in the relationship in between the UK and the European Union has emerged in the last couple of years under the relatively pro-European premiership of David Cameron. The growing hard right wing Eurosceptic calls from both political parties and a large part of the British public opinion have forced Cameron, at the time he won the elections in 2015, to agree on holding a referendum in June 2016 on the UK membership of the European Union, the so-called "Brexit". Cameron said "It is time for the British people to have their say, it is time to settle this European question in British politics." In the run-up to this referendum, Cameron has renegotiated the terms of the UK's European Union membership in order to give the UK a "special status" within the 28 nations club. This way, he clearly re-asserted the British exceptionalism again. Cameron

argues that this deal with Europe, which will take effect immediately if the UK votes to remain in the European Union, addresses the main arguments put forward by those campaigning for the UK to leave. Like this, he hopes to convince as much British citizens as possible to vote in favour of European Union membership.

Clearly, the outcome of the referendum is of major importance with regards to the future of both the UK and the European Union. Yet, according to the latest opinion polls, the British public are fairly evenly split between remaining and leaving the European Union. Consequently, regardless of the final decision of the British citizens, the UK will end up with a political and civil society which is highly divided on this issue. This, in turn, will without any doubt pave the way for a new wave of heated political and public debates.

Pertinent in this overview of the post WWII relationship between the UK and the European Union is, on the one hand, the continued celebration of Britain's distinctiveness in contrast to Europeaness and, on the other hand, the dominant British ideal of an intergovernmental European order where sovereignty remains in the nation-state (Risse, 2003).

Another persistent feature of the post WWII British political landscape, is the established response of populist Eurosceptic mobilizations to weaknesses in the British governing position on Europe (cf. previous paragraphs) and (Giffon, 2014). Consequently, over the years, the UK has witnessed an emergence of Eurosceptic think tanks and policy groups. The main Eurosceptic party in the British party system is UKIP, founded in 1993, but gaining power and visibility since the 2004 elections. The party positions itself as a purer Eurosceptic alternative to Conservative party, which is in their view too much tainted by the compromises of government.

The central threat running through the British Eurosceptic voices is the perception of the European Union as a political institution which endangers the national sovereignty and barriers the UK's global potential due to its over-regulated and crisis-ridden nature.

3.2 Euroscepticism in Germany

The roots and history of the German relationship with the European Union stand in stark contrast to the British one. Indeed, since the end of WWII, the German nation state's identity construction has been closely intertwined with the European integration project,

whereas, throughout the years, the British attitudes towards the European Union mainly have been characterized by “distinctiveness” and “otherness”.

The reconstruction of Germany after WWII has been a slow and difficult process. During the war, the country had suffered heavy losses, not only in human casualties but also in industrial and political power. This, in turn, forced Germany to confront its Nazi past. Moreover, Germany needed to redefine its collective identity in order to re-establish its position and acceptance in the international political landscape.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Allied forces launched a process of “denazification” in order to remove Nazi influence as soon as possible from the German territory (Taylor, 2011). Shortly thereafter, the start of the Cold war in 1947 and the set up the Iron Curtain divided Germany in two blocs, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) occupied by the Western powers and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) controlled by the Soviet Union. This split of the Germany into two spheres of influences had serious repercussions on the German post-war identity construction. More specifically, for the Eastern part of Germany, taking part in Western integration was beyond consideration because of the Soviet rule. In contrast, at that time, West-Germany had the choice between either surrendering to the Soviet rule or forming an alliance with the Western powers. For Konrad Adenauer, chancellor of the FRG at that time, surrendering to the Soviet Union was out of question. Consequently, the only way forward for the FRG was integrating with the Western by participating in the European Coal and Steel Community established in 1952 (Felicitas, 2011). Risse (2002) even argues that the reconstruction of collective identities in the FRG was inherently bound to be European which led to a deep incorporation of Europe into the West-German’s redefined self-descriptions. Indeed, the German policy makers framed the issue as follows: being a “good German” implied being a “good European” who fully supported the European integration project. Moreover, Europe functioned as an antithesis to Germany’s nationalist and militarist history. Being a “good German European” was perceived by the international political landscape as a strong signal that the country finally had overcome its Nazi past.

The idea of Europe as a value orientation to confront the Nazi past is a convincing and valid explanation of the post-war relations between Germany and the European Union. Indeed, Europe successfully solved the West-German identity crisis. However, one also has to take into account that Europe not only functioned as an antithesis to Germany’s

WWII history but also as a means to reduce disadvantages (Felicitas, 2011). More specifically, the FRG leadership considered European integration as a useful tool to regain full sovereignty as its sovereignty was highly constrained through the presence of the Western powers. Indeed, the FRG often was considered as a “semi-sovereign state”.

Nevertheless, given West Germany’s particular past, its collective identity crisis and its division, it is beyond doubt that the relationship between West-Germany and the European Union was very unique and substantial different compared to other member states.

Clearly, throughout the post-WWII history, European integration has been heavily supported by the German elites. Yet, over the years, a large gap has emerged between this elite consensus, on the one hand, and the public consensus, on the other hand. This in turn paved the way for increasing scepticism in Germany toward the European integration project (Niedermayer 2003; Spence 1998).

For example, in the run-up to the introduction of the Euro, a considerable rise in German Euroscepticism emerged, which was mainly driven by a contestation between German Europeanness and “Deutsche Mark patriotism” (Haselbach, 1994). More specifically, the pre-WWII German history shows that the Nazi rise to power had strongly been driven by high inflation rates and the world economic crisis. Consequently, overcoming Germany’s nationalist and military past not only implied showing support for the European integration project but also implied the implementation of sound economic policies of low inflation and controlled budget deficits. Those economic policies were symbolic embodied by a powerful Deutsche Mark. Consequently, the Deutsche Mark became an important symbol of Germany’s economic recovery after WWII.

This Deutsche Mark patriotism explains the reluctance of the Germans to replace their strong national currency by the Euro. Indeed, the Germans heavily feared that the introduction of the Euro would give rise to increasing inflation and economic instability which in turn would result in a reproduction of the pre-WWII economic situation, Germany’s collective trauma. Moreover, there also was a general fear amongst the German public that Germany would become the biggest net contributor to the European Monetary Union to support weaker member states with European Union funds.

Compared to the UK, the number of Eurosceptic think tanks and policy groups in Germany is considerable lower. Nevertheless, the German political party system has witnessed the rising power of AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), founded in April 2013 and promoting a right-wing populist and Eurosceptic discourse. Also the far-right political movement Pegida (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes) has been on the rise since its foundation in October 2014.

4. Previous academic research on indicators Euroscepticism

Previous academic research has established an extensive list of significant Euroscepticism drivers, from which the six following will be studied by the empirical research (cf. Section 6) of this Master's Thesis: national identity, attachment to the European Union, subjective economic evaluations, immigration, future enlargement of the European Union and the working of the democracy in the European Union.

In the next subsections, a closer look is taken at the relevance of each of these six indicators to the research question of this Master's Thesis. More specifically, a summary of the existing academic literature is provided for each indicator starting with national identity (Section 5.1), followed by attachment to the European Union (Section 5.2), subjective economic evaluations (Section 5.3), immigration (Section 5.4), future enlargement of the European Union (Section 5.5) and finally, the working of the democracy in the European union (Section 5.6).

4.1 National Identity

The study of citizens' identities is a major area of research across the social sciences. In the past years, a wide variety of academic debates have evolved ranging from how to conceptualize and measure this abstract identity concept to closer investigations of its varieties, characteristics, particularities, benefits and so on (see for example Dowley and Silver, 2000; Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989; Kriesi et al., 1999; Lilli and Diehl, 1999)

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) put that identities point to 'something allegedly deep, basic, abiding, or foundational' and are often invoked to describe and explain the more non-instrumental modes of human interaction. Yet, Caporaso and Kim (2009) recognize that, although identities rest on a more stable core than for example preferences, this does not deny the mutable character of identities.

The literature on the relationship between citizens' perceived identity and their respective support for European integration (or the flip side; their respective level of Euroscepticism) is of major importance regarding the research topic of this Master's Thesis.

Firstly, before further elaborating on this particular strand of literature, it is worth noting that a distinction can be made between the concept of national identity on the one hand and European identity on the other hand. Yet, as argued by Risse (2003), it is wrong to conceptualize European and national identity in zero-sum terms. Indeed, it is not unusual for citizens to hold multiple identities at one and the same time. Both Europe and the nation states are imagined communities and citizens do not necessarily have to choose between them. (See amongst others Anderson (1991), Duchesne and Frognier (1995), Marks (1999) and Marks and Hooghe (2003)). The relationship between the different identities which people might hold can be conceptualized in several ways. For example, Medrano and Gutierrez (2001) have defined the so-called "marble cake model" accordingly to which the various components of an individual's identity cannot be neatly separated but rather they are blend into each other. One corollary is that European identity might mean different things to different people. Consequently, following the reasoning of this "marble cake model", there is not one homogenous generalized European identity (Risse,2005). However, Waechter (2011) argues that this coexistence of European and national identity might be a somewhat too simplistic presentation of the reality for two reasons. Firstly, the focus of this approach remains too narrowed on the cultural elements of identity only. Secondly, an incomplete picture of the process of nation-building is painted by only taking into account the top-down process of constructing collective identities. Indeed, also a pervasive socio-economic bottom-up process, fundamentally built on the acquisition of sovereignty through a community of individuals claiming to be a nation, is of major importance regarding the explanation of the nation-building process.

Several academic contributions have been made regarding the relation between citizens' perceived identity and their respective attitudes towards the European Union.

Carey (2002) argues in his academic work that citizens' perceived identity is one of the most important elements in explaining attitudes towards the European Union. Moreover, he states that the most important cleavage in mass public opinion exists between those

who exclusively identify with their nation-state, on the one hand, and those perceiving themselves as attached to both their nation-state and to Europe, on the other hand. Citizens who conceive of their identity as exclusively national are likely to be considerably more Eurosceptic compared to those feeling a second attachment to Europe. Furthermore, it is shown that this positive correlation between higher feelings of exclusively national identity and lower individual willingness to support European integration can be explained by a rise in conflicts of sovereignty in this era (Carey, 2002). More specifically, the expansion of the European integration project over the past years such as for example the creation of a single European currency, the European Central Bank and the increased primacy of European law has implied transfers of national sovereignty to the supranational European level. For citizens with strong national identity feelings, this perceived threat to national sovereignty has paved the way for increased Eurosceptic attitudes from their side.

Consequently, following the above explained reasoning, the creation of a European identity will result in increased public support for European integration. Laffan (1996) even suggests that the prospects for a deep and successful European integration project strongly rest on the European's Union ability to create a European identity. In a similar vein, the reinforcement of 'European identity and the importance of shared values within the Union' was stressed by the white paper on European governance issued by the European commission in 2001, also in line with the earlier established framework of European citizenship by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Yet, despite these institutional actions, very little evidence of any European identity or European citizenship can be found (Carey, 2002).

These findings are supported by the results of subsequent academic research conducted by amongst others Risse (2003 and 2005)), Hooghe and Marks (2004), Weßels (2007).

Indeed, Risse (2003) finds evidence as well for a positive correlation between exclusive national identity feelings and the respective increases in Euroscepticism. Moreover, he shows that European identity does not necessarily have to prioritize over nation-state identities to have diffuse support for European integration. Even some identification with the European Union already results in increased willingness to support the European integration project.

Also the outcome of the research of Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005, 2009) emphasizes the crucial importance of identity in shaping attitudes towards the European Union. More specifically, they investigated the relative importance of economic versus identity bases of citizen support for the European integration project. Their results do not provide evidence for a positive correlation between exclusive national identity and decreasing support or European integration but they also show that exclusive identification with the nation-state is more powerful in explaining Eurosceptic attitudes than calculations of economic costs and benefits. Moreover, Hooghe and Marks (2004) argue that that exclusive national identity is more likely to be mobilized against European integration the more political parties are divided, the sharper the divisions among national elites on the issue of European integration and the larger the power of radical right wing political parties. Indeed, if national elites are supportive towards the European project, exclusive national identity is expected to lay dormant and therefore not resulting in higher levels of Euroscepticism.

Finally, also Weßels (2007) has studied citizens' attitudes towards European integration and finds that those citizens with a strong European identity develop less discontent regarding European Union integration than those with a weaker or no European identity. Moreover, he posits that the difference in discontent between those with and without European identity is the greatest at the regarding generalized support for the regime and the lowest regarding the specific evaluation of the authorities.

4.2 Attachment to the European Union

As posited by Carey (2002), individuals can be attached to a wide variety of territorial entities ranging from more local entities such as their neighbourhood, their town, their region to their country and perhaps even global entities such as the world community. In addition, Deutsch (1966) and Peters and Hunold (1999) have defined the concept of a terminal community, to which they refer as the highest political or territorial entity to which a certain individual feels attached.

Carey (2002) argues that a relationship can be observed between the citizens' perceived terminal community and their respective attitudes towards the actions of various political actors such as governments. More specifically, given that it is the duty of the several political actors to represent the citizens, citizens' attitudes towards those different

political are dependent upon their understanding of which political actor should represent them, that is, which political actor represents their terminal community.

Following the reasoning of this terminal community conceptualization, the link between citizens' perceived feelings of attachment and their respective support for European integration easily can be made. Indeed, citizens who feel strongly attached to the European Union consider the European Union as their terminal community and are more willing to recognize the European Union as the main political authority to oversee their rights. Consequently, they are more likely to have a supportive attitude towards the European integration project. In contrast, individuals who don't feel attached to the European Union at all will consider their nation state or perhaps even a local territorial entity as their terminal community. Therefore, they tend more to take a sceptical stance towards the European Union. Indeed, they perceive the European Union as a threat as the very idea of the European integration project implies an increased transfer of authority to the supranational European level and therefore taking power away from the national or regional level which are the true representatives of their terminal community.

Related to the terminal community concept is the research of Van Kersbergen (2000) who makes a distinction between primary attachment to the nation-state or local entities and secondary or derived attachment to the European Union. It is argued then that the citizens' primary level of attachment is not directly related to their secondary or derived attachment to the European Union. More specifically, Van Kersbergen (2000) shows that attachment to the European Union exists only in as much as the citizens perceive the nation states or local entities to benefit from the European integration project for example by provision of economic and security resources upon which primary attachment depends. Consequently, attachment to the European Union originates in primary attachment to the nation states and local entities.

Worth mentioning as well is the research of Weßels (2007) in which it is observed that there exist people who identify themselves as exclusively European but who are nevertheless sceptical towards the European Union. This is a type of Euroscepticism which certainly differs from the Euroscepticism caused by a lack of citizens' attachment to the European Union. Consequently, Weßels (2007) distinguishes between two different types of Eurosceptic citizens, the "critical Europeans" on the one hand and the "adamant Eurosceptics" on the other hand.

Firstly, the notion of “critical Europeans” is closely related to the “critical citizen” concept developed by Norris (1999), who defined critical citizens as convinced democrats showing discontent with how their democracy works. In a similar vein, Weßels (2007) has referred to critical Europeans as those who feel a very strong attachment to the European Union but are nevertheless Eurosceptic at the same time. They feel discounted with the European integration project but are not against the European community. Secondly, adamant Eurosceptics are referred to by Weßels (2007) as those citizens who do not have any notion of a European identity at all. Whereas the criticism of “critical Europeans” is oriented toward improvement regarding the functioning of the European Union, adamant Eurosceptics may even consider a stop or abolishment of the European community.

4.3 Subjective economic evaluations

At its very origin, following WWII, European economic integration has been promoted for two main goals. Firstly, to gain collective benefits to rebuild the destroyed post-war European economies and secondly, for reasons of international security. However, the importance of the international security motivation has been declining over the years as war between West-European nation states has become increasingly unlikely. Consequently, economic concerns have emerged as a central motivation for European integration and the European Union has exerted substantial influence over economic policies in the past years.

Given this economic focus, it seems reasonable to expect that economic criteria will have a major stake in citizens’ evaluations of European integration. The importance of economic conditions and citizens’ judgements about the economy in explaining their respective attitudes toward political institutions has been extensively documented in the academic literature over the past years.

Shepard (1975) argues in his study on “utilitarian” models of support for the European Union that the citizens’ attitudes towards European integration is strongly linked with their perceptions of economic welfare such as economic growth, greater trade, modernization of the industry... Consequently, utilitarian bases have a major stake in explaining the public opinion on the European integration project (Shepard, 1975).

Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) use “sociotropic” economic voting models to study the link between a country’s economic performance and citizens’ support for European

integration. Economic voting models posit that political judgements of citizens are varied according to economic conditions of their countries. These national economic conditions are assessed by Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) using Gross Domestic Product, unemployment rates and inflation rates since these three measures represent the most essential elements of the economy that are the basis for public evaluations as shown by Lewis-Beck (1990). Their results demonstrate that domestic economic conditions and developments critically influence citizens' attitude towards the European Union. More specifically, out of the three indicators, the national economies' inflation rate has the strongest economic influence on support for the European Union with increasing inflation rates resulting in decreasing levels of citizens' support.

Anderson (1998) states that citizens are unable to form well-informed opinions on the European Union due to the complexity of the European integration process. As a result, citizens "compensate for a gap in knowledge about the EU by construing a reality about it that fits their understanding of the political world." More specifically, in shaping their attitudes towards the European Union, citizens use proxies or cues which are based on perceptions of the national governments instead of the performance of the European Union which also known in the academic literature as the so-called "second-order thesis."

In a similar vein, Gabel and Whitten (1997) argue that economic conditions indeed influence the attitudes of citizens towards the European Union. However, contrary to the findings of Eichenberg and Dalton (1993), their findings show that citizens take their perceptions of both the national and their personal economic conditions into account when evaluating the European Union. The more optimistic their subjective economic evaluations, the higher their support for the European integration project. Thus, subjective instead of objective measures of economic conditions prove to be the best proxies for the utilitarian based driver of citizens' support for European integration. Indeed, to the extent that citizens experience the same economic conditions but nevertheless perceive the state of their national economy differently, objective economic measures such as GDP, unemployment rates and inflation rates clearly are noisy measures of citizens' economic perceptions. Furthermore, the results show that citizens' subjective evaluations of the national economic situation are more powerful predictors of support of European integration than the subjective evaluations of their personal economic situations which is in line with the findings on the economic voting literature.

Finally, also worth mentioning is the strand in academic literature which focuses on the relation between citizens' support for European integration and negative economic spill over effects from other member states on the domestic economy. Ioannou et al (2015) show that negative spill over effects from economic and fiscal developments in other member states may result in increases in domestic Euroscepticism because the European Union is seen as the reason for the domestic economy being affected adversely by economic developments in other European countries. More specifically, domestic publics may perceive the spill over effects to impact the efficiency, stability and equity of their domestic economy (Padoa-Schioppa 1987). In terms of efficiency, deteriorating economic developments in other countries can have a direct impact on the prosperity of the domestic economy through for example lower trade volumes or increased competition in the domestic labour market. In a similar vein, also instabilities in other countries may be perceived to destabilize and contaminate the domestic economy. Finally, in terms of equity, domestic citizens may be feared amongst others of decreases in their welfare due to domestic transfers to support poorly performing member states or because of increased labour mobility from these countries.

4.4 Immigration

Societal phenomena such as immigration might result in antipathy or hostility towards other cultures or minorities caused by increased citizens' threat perceptions. More specifically, McLaren (2002) states that hostility towards other cultures or minorities might originate in two alternative types of threat that the citizens might perceive, either realistic threat or the symbolic threat. Realistic threat is driven by a general worry that people from the "other" group take resources from one's "own" group. Symbolic threat in contrast is not driven by concerns about resource distribution but about the threat that other groups pose to one's national culture and way of life. These increased threat perceptions and hostility feelings in turn negatively affect support for European integration as explained in the following two paragraphs.

As earlier explained in the previous section, the theory of economic voting behaviour posits that individuals, when evaluating public policy proposals, primarily take the needs of the society and the nation into account rather than their own, personal needs (Lewis-Beck, 1990; Funk 2000). Similar evidence is found by Taggart (1998) who shows that a majority of people consider the nation-state as their point of reference. Those individuals

are particularly concerned about national degradation and therefore sceptical towards any institution or practise that might affect the integrity of their nation state. Immigration, for example, might be perceived as a major threat towards the integrity of the nation-state. The protection of the in-group (the nation) and the group identity is at stake. Indeed, Citrin et al.'s (1997) research on citizens' attitudes toward immigration indicates that antipathy or hostility towards other cultures or minorities is mainly driven by concerns on the degradation of the nation state rather than of one's own personal resources. Moreover, McLaren (2002) argues that European Union as an institution is likely to be considered as the main contributor in the creation of the immigration phenomenon and often held responsible for it. Consequently, citizens' instinctual reactions of general antipathy or even hostility towards other cultures or minorities on immigration are an important factor in explaining attitudes towards the European Union. More specifically, it is shown that antipathy or hostility towards other cultures or minorities, although less sophisticated, produce equally strong, negative effects on support for the European Union compared to economic or identity drivers (McLaren 2002).

Furthermore, several authors amongst others Bobo (1983) and Kinder and Sears (1981), have pointed out that citizens' attitudes regarding certain policy proposals often are closely linked with their perceptions regarding certain symbols which is summarized by the so-called "symbolic politics" approach. In a similar vein, Hix (1999) argues that "political preferences often derive from deep historical or cultural identities such as nationality, religion or language". Finally, McLaren (2006) shows that any perceived threat to national symbols posed by for example immigration for which the European Union is held responsible, will decrease support for European integration.

Moreover, regarding the effect of immigration on support for the European Union, worth mentioning as well is the work of McLaren (2001) in which she has a closer look on individual-level opinions regarding European and non-European immigrants. The results show that European Union citizens, when it comes to migration to their home country, perceive the treat of European Union and non-European Union migrants identically.

4.5 Future enlargement of the European Union

Applying the same line of reasoning as developed for the immigration phenomenon in the previous subsection, also future enlargement of the European Union can be considered

to have a major stake in the explanation of citizens' support for the European Union. More specifically, future enlargement plans of the European Union to include other countries, might be perceived by the citizens either as a realistic threat or a symbolic threat to the integrity of their nation state and their group identity. Moreover, after Europe recently grew to 28 members, further enlargement implies a higher chance of the inclusion of countries with radically different cultural and religious traditions. Like this, increased citizens' threat perceptions following European Union enlargement plans have even become more likely.

4.6 Working democracy in the European Union

Finally, also citizens' dissatisfaction with the working of the democracy in the European Union, the so-called "democratic deficit", can be considered as an important driver for citizens' attitudes towards the European Union. Indeed, previous research by amongst others Carey (2002) and Sørensen (2008) shows that citizens who perceive the political set-up of the European Union to be inadequate tend to be more sceptical regarding the European integration process which has been labelled by Sørensen (2008) as "democratic Euroscepticism".

The term democracy deficit is credited to David Marquand (1979) who defines democratic deficit as "the lack of accountability of European institutions toward the European public and the subsequent promulgation of sometimes unpopular policies against the wishes of the electorate and/or national governments legally bound to implement these decisions". However, Marquand's definition of a democratic deficit is only one of the many established in the past years. The point to be made, though, is that the considered democracy ideal for the European Union is crucial as this is the main driver behind the defined democratic deficit concept (Jensen, 2009). Over the years, as the writ of the European institutions has evolved and domestic politics were growingly affected by European Union measures, the debate about the European Union project has become more and more concerned with the "democratic deficit" issue.

The citizens' perceptions of the existence of a democratic deficit in the European Union might originate in a wide variety of factors, such as for example the feelings that one's voice is not being heard, or that the European Parliament does not have sufficient weight. This perceived need to increase political representation within the community in

order to assure the responsiveness and legitimacy of the European Union institutions has been extensively studied in academic literature.

For example, Follesdal and Hix (2006) shed their light on the European Parliament elections which are often considered as 'second-order national elections', contested by national parties on the performance of national governments and characterized by a substantially lower turnout rate than the national elections. They argue that this low salience of European Parliament elections amongst citizens is caused by several institutional features that insulate the European Union from political competition. More specifically, voters don't have the opportunity to choose either between rival candidates for European Union executive functions or between rival policy agendas for European Union action. Neither they can throw out elected representatives for their policy positions or actions at the European Union level which clearly shows a lack of democratic arenas for contestation at the European level.

The enforcement of the Lisbon Treaty aimed to make the European Union more democratic. Since then, several measures to enhance the legitimacy of the European Union have been adopted. For example, the strengthening of the role of the European parliament as a co-legislator and in the European Union budget creation process, the facilitation of the national parliaments' access to European Union documents, the retention of the national parliaments' subsidiarity and the strengthening of the citizens' powers by means of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Citizen Initiative.

Yet, the Lisbon Treaty has its limitations. Up until today, several stumbling-blocks for enhancements in democracy and more inclusion of citizens remain in place up until such as the lack of power of the European Parliament to initiate European Union legislation, the lack of transparency and information access regarding the Council working groups and COREPER, the absence of democratic elections to choose the members of the Commission... These stumbling blocks might pave the way for increased citizens' dissatisfaction with the working of democracy in the European Union. This, in turn, results in more sceptical attitudes towards the European Union, as argued by amongst others Carey (2002) and Sørensen (2008) (cf. first paragraph of this Section).

5. Methodology and research design

As already elaborated on in introduction Section, the main objective of this Master's Thesis is to analyse whether, over the last decade, the characteristics of Euroscepticism observed in the UK, Germany and the European Union have differed considerably by identifying, for each of these respective geographical areas, the dominant Euroscepticism drivers and their development over time.

The literature review in the previous Section has shown that existing academic literature already extensively has dealt with the research on statistical significant drivers of Euroscepticism. More specifically, by conducting regression analyses, the significance of the relationship between the level of Euroscepticism and the driver variables has been assessed (cf. amongst others Anderson (2011), Carey (2002), Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005, 2007, 2009)) This way, over the years, academics have established an extensive list of significant Euroscepticism drivers. From this list, the six following drivers are studied in the remainder of this Master's Thesis (cf. Section 7): national identity, attachment to the European Union, subjective economic evaluations, immigration, future enlargement of the European Union and the working of the democracy in the European Union.

Practically, the backbone of the empirical research I have carried out is the Eurobarometer, a series of public opinion surveys conducted regularly on behalf of the European Commission since 1973. More specifically, I have analysed ordered categorical responses to those Eurobarometer poll questions which specifically gauge for the level of Euroscepticism as well as for the selected drivers (cf. next paragraphs). This methodology has common grounds with the earlier applied research methods by amongst others Feliciatas (2011), Risse (2003) and Sørensen C. (2008).

Yet, so far, the reputation of the Eurobarometer surveys has not always been blameless. Several authors have argued that there might be problems with some of the questions in the Eurobarometer survey. Bruter (2003 and 2005), for example criticizes the 'forced choice' nature of some of the questions and their respective response categories as individuals are forced to choose among a restricted set of answer possibilities. Moreover, the time frame imposed by questions such as 'In the near future,' may pose problems as questions like this assume that individuals can correctly predict their future attitudes.

I share these concerns about the Eurobarometer Survey data. Nevertheless, I have based my empirical research on the Eurobarometer Survey datasets, grounded on the following argumentation. Firstly, despite the problems that might arise regarding the design of the questionnaires, the Eurobarometer Survey databases are considered to be among the most reliable and comprehensive databases on public opinion that are available at the moment. Moreover, the repetition of some questions at least twice a year allows to execute time-series analyses. Furthermore, a large number of scholars with a leading academic track record (to name only several, Carey (2002); Citrin and Sides (2004); Hooghe and Marks (2004); Green (2007)) have relied on Eurobarometer Surveys datasets to execute their research as they consider the benefits of using them to clearly outweigh the potential disadvantages.

Four different categories of Eurobarometer Survey data are published by the European Commission's Directorate-General Communication: *Standard Eurobarometer Surveys*¹, with each survey published twice a year consisting of approximately 1000 face-to-face interviews per country; *Special Eurobarometer reports*², integrated in the Standard Eurobarometer polling waves but with an in-depth focus on specific thematic issues; *Flash Eurobarometer Surveys*³, ad hoc thematic telephone interviews in order to obtain results relatively quickly and to focus on specific target groups and *Qualitative studies*⁴ to investigate by means of non-directive interviews the motivations and reactions of a certain selected social group.

To conduct the empirical research in this Master's Thesis, I have used the following datasets: Eurobarometer Surveys (63 to 84), Flash Eurobarometer Surveys (158,167, 203, 231, 251, 257, 263,274,318, 356) and Special Eurobarometer Surveys (251, 255, 303, 363, 379, 394, 413). Moreover, I have gathered additional data sources through the

¹European Commission DG Communication. 2016. *Public Opinion Standard Eurobarometer*. [ONLINE] Available at:<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD>. [Accessed 31 May 2016].

²European Commission DG Communication. 2016. *Public Opinion Special Eurobarometer*. [ONLINE] Available at:<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=SPECIAL>. [Accessed 31 May 2016].

³European Commission DG Communication. 2016. *Public Opinion Flash Eurobarometer*. [ONLINE] Available at:<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=FLASH>. [Accessed 31 May 2016]

⁴European Commission DG Communication. 2016. *Public Opinion Qualitative Studies*. [ONLINE] Available at:<http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=SPECIAL>. [Accessed 31 May 2016].

“Eurobarometer Interactive” web application⁵. To replace missing values, I have imputed data using best-subset regression techniques. Like this, biased or inefficient results have been avoided (see also Carey, 2002; King et al., 2000).

Eurobarometer primary data and related documentation (questionnaires, codebooks, etc.) are available through different databases such as GESIS (provided by the German GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences), ICPSR (Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research) and through the Social Science Data Archive networks.

I have chosen to extract the required data from the GESIS database and to execute the subsequent data analysis by means of the statistical software packages Stata and Excel.

More specifically, as already mentioned above, I have gathered data on ordered categorical responses to those Eurobarometer poll questions which specifically gauge for the level of Euroscepticism as well as for the selected drivers over the period 2005-2015. Next, I have processed and analysed these data on an individual basis for the UK and Germany. Moreover, besides these country-specific analyses, I also have provided an average measure aggregated over all European Union member states included in the survey under consideration. This enables me to paint a complete picture of the situation.

To assess the general level of Euroscepticism, the following Eurobarometer poll question is studied:

Please tell me whether you tend to trust or not to trust the European Union?

This is in line with recent academic research by amongst others Hartevelt et al. (2013), Roth et al. (2013) and Armingeon and Ceka (2014).

Trust in the European Union can be considered as a key indicator of Euroscepticism as it encompasses the continuum of varieties of Euroscepticism from ‘hard to ‘soft’ (Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008), Bertoncini and Chopin (2010) and Vasilopoulou (2009)). Indeed, both ‘hard’ public opposition towards the European unification process, which is characterised by a wish for withdrawal from the EU, and ‘soft’ opposition, which is characterised by the

⁵ European Commission DG Communication. 2016. *Eurobarometer Interactive*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Chart/index>. [Accessed 31 May 2016].

objection to specific EU policies, can be considered as public opinions' expressions of a lack of trust in the EU.

For the remainder of this paper, the general level of Euroscepticism over the period 2005-2015 is assessed by means of the proportion of Eurobarometer Survey respondents who tend not to trust the European Union.

Regarding the six selected indicators, the following Eurobarometer poll questions are considered:

National identity

In the Near future; do you see yourself as "National only", "European and National" or "European only"?

Attachment to the Europe and the European Union

How attached do you feel to Europe/ the European Union?

Subjective economic evaluations

What are your expectations for the year to come when it comes to the economic situation of your country?

Would you say that the situation of your national economy is better or less good than the average of the European Union?

Immigration

*What are the most important issues the European Union is facing at the moment?
"Immigration"*

Future enlargement of the European Union

Are you for or against future enlargement of the European union to include other countries?

Working democracy in the European Union

How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in the European Union?

More decisions should be taken at the European Union level?

6. Empirical results and discussion

The discussion of the empirical results starts with a closer look at the Euroscepticism trends over the last decade. Next, in Subsections 6.2.1 to 6.2.6, I dig deeper into the empirical findings on each of the six selected indicators to gain more insights in the observed trends in Euroscepticism. Furthermore, a short conclusion as well as policy recommendations are provided at the end of each Section.

6.1 The level of Euroscepticism over the period 2005-2015

As already mentioned in the previous Section, the general level of Euroscepticism over the period 2005-2015 is assessed by means of the proportion of Eurobarometer Survey respondents who tend **not to trust** the European.

The proportion of respondents indicating not to trust the European Union, is presented in *figure 1a*. Overall, over the last decade, an increasing level of distrust in the European Union is observed for the UK, Germany and the European Union average. More specifically, considering the start date and the end date of our observation period, on average 43% of the Eurobarometer respondents indicates not to trust the European Union at the beginning of 2005, which has augmented to 56% by the end of 2015. Regarding the UK, the proportion of respondents who tend to distrust the European Union has risen from 53% at the beginning of the last decade to 63% by the end of 2015, which is similar to the proportion of German respondents with an observed rise from 51% to 63%.

However, in order to see the whole picture of the Euroscepticism trends over the last decade, not only the beginning and the end of the observation period should be taken into account, but also average measures as well as intermediate variations in distrust levels are particularly relevant.

The average level of Euroscepticism in the UK amounts to 63.5% which is considerable higher than both Germany and the European Union with observed average Euroscepticism levels of respectively 54.35% and 49.2%. Hence, on average, over the past decade, the level of Euroscepticism in the UK clearly heads the ranking compared to Germany and the European Union.

Considering the intermediate increases and declines in Euroscepticism levels over the observation period, in the UK, Germany and the European Union, an overall low has been reached in 2007 followed by clear peak levels in 2009-2010 and at the end of 2011. After

the 2011 peak a decline trend is observed. However, a new sharp increase can be detected from 2015 onwards.

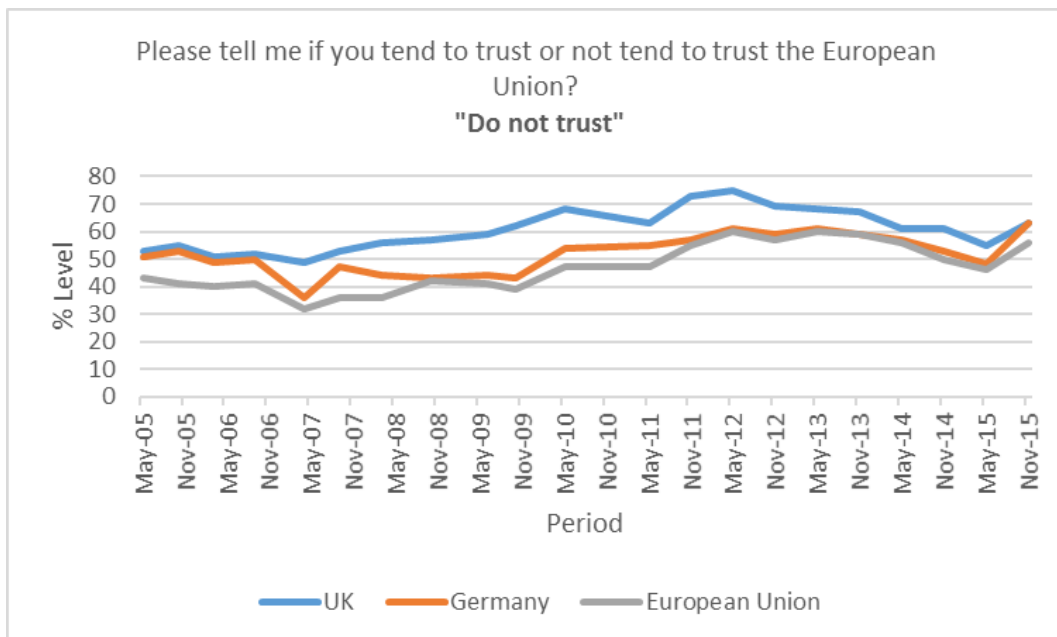


Figure 1a: Level of distrust in the European Union (TEND NOT TO TRUST)

The counterpart of the results presented in *figure 1a*, the proportion of respondents who tend to trust the European Union, is shown in *figure 1b*.

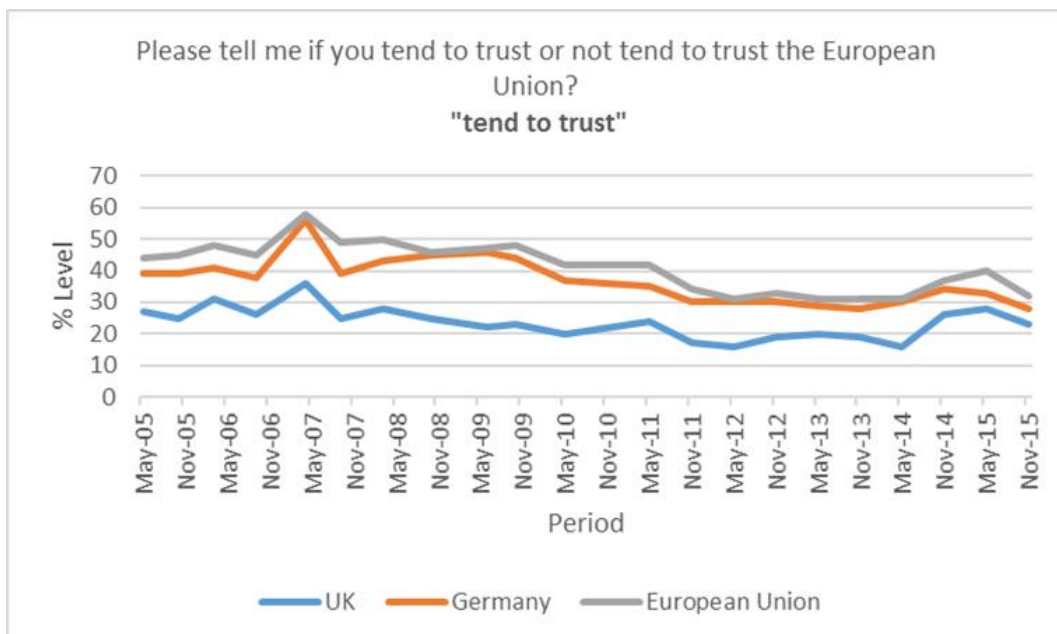


Figure 1b: Level of trust in the European Union (TEND TO TRUST)

Finally, it is worth mentioning that a considerable proportion of respondents (ranging from approximately 10% to 20%) indicates to be indecisive whether they trust or do not trust the European Union as presented in *figure 1c*. From 2005 to 2009, the proportion of respondents that are indecisive regarding their trust attitudes towards the European Union was clearly higher for the UK compared to Germany and the European Union average. Yet, since 2009, the three trend lines tend to converge except from observed peak levels for the UK in 2014 and for Germany in 2015.

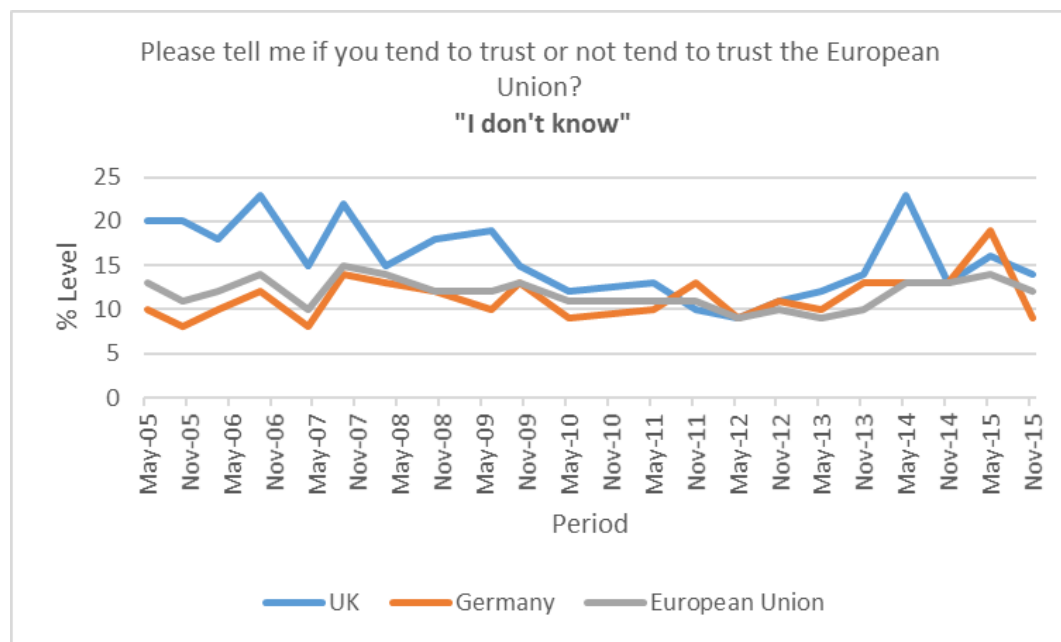


Figure 1c: Level of trust in the European Union (I DON NOT KNOW)

So far, the existing academic literature and the public discourse on Euroscepticism haven't reached a consensus yet on a single clear-cut explanation for this "I don't know" phenomenon amongst respondents. Rather, common grounds are found on a wide variety of explanations. Factors inherent to the respondents such as cognitive mobilization (Inglehart,1971; Inglehart and Rabier,1978) as well external factors such as crises, major changes in the international political or economic scene... are considered to have an impact on the proportion of respondents who tends to be indecisive whether to trust or not to trust the European Union.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

The empirical results show that, over the last decade, an increasing level of distrust in the European Union is observed in the UK, Germany and the European Union. Considering

average measures over the period 2005-2015, the level of Euroscepticism in the UK clearly heads the ranking followed by Germany and the European Union.

Moreover, peak levels in Euroscepticism for the UK, Germany and the European Union are observed in 2009-2010, 2011 and at the end of 2015.

Clearly, in order to address the Euroscepticism issue, policy priorities should be set on reducing the level of respondents who tend to mistrust the European union. However, also the respondents who indicate to balance between trust and mistrust in the European Union should be targeted by the policy makers in order to avoid their balance to tilt towards Euroscepticism.

6.2 Indicators of Euroscepticism

6.2.1 National Identity

As already elaborated on in the literature review, several scholars amongst others Carey (2002), Risse (2003, 2005), Hooghe and Marks (2004) and Weßels (2007) have shown that exclusive national identity is a significant driver for Euroscepticism. In general, they state that citizens with exclusive national identities tend to be more Eurosceptic compared to citizens who partly or fully identify themselves with the European Union.

Figure 2a shows the proportion of respondents who consider their identity to be exclusively national, *figure 2b* “National and European”, *figure 2c* “European and National” and *figure 2d* “exclusively European” over the last five years.

In general, over the last five years, a decrease in respondents with an exclusive national identity can be noticed for the UK, Germany and the European Union, as presented in *figure 2a*. The level of UK respondents who identify themselves as exclusively national ranges from 60% to 70%. With an average of 63%, they clearly head the ranking exceeding with more than 20% the European Union average of 40% and doubling the German average level of 31%.

Regarding the proportion of citizens who identify themselves both with their national country and the European Union we see for the UK, Germany and the European Union an increasing trend over the past five years as presented in *figure 2b*. The reverse pattern of the findings in *figure 2a* can be detected: the German respondents now top the list with

an average of 56% relatively closely followed by the European Union average (49%). The UK respondents remain on average almost 30% below the German leaders.

A similar pattern to *figure 2b* is shown in *figure 2c*. Concerning the respondents who identify themselves in the first place as European and in the second place with their national identity, the highest proportion again can be found in Germany followed by respectively the European Union and the UK which reports the lowest level of respondents. Yet, for the three trend lines, the proportions of respondents range from 2% to 10% which is substantially lower compared to the ones observed for the exclusive national identities and the mixed National-European identities in the previous *figures 2a and 2b*.

Similarly, the average the levels of respondents characterizing themselves as exclusively European and as such transcending their own national identities is negligible with ranges from 2% to 3% as presented in *figure 2d*.

In the following paragraphs, these findings on the identity indicator are combined with the observed trends in Euroscepticism (*cf. figure 1a*) over the last decade. This way, more insights can be gained in the explanatory power of the identity indicator regarding the Euroscepticism levels in the UK, Germany and the European Union.

Starting with the UK and the findings on exclusive national identities, one can see that both the proportion of respondents with an exclusive national identity (*cf figure 2b*) and the levels of UK Euroscepticism substantially exceed the European Union average over the last five years. Moreover, exclusive national identity and Euroscepticism levels follow a similar trend; decreasing from 2011 to 2014 and increasing again from 2015 onwards.

Also for the findings on mixed identities presented in *figures 2b and 2c*, a link with the Euroscepticism trends in the UK can be observed. Between 2011 and 2014 the number of UK respondents indicating that they feel “National and European” or “European and National” is clearly lower than the European Union average which in turn results in higher UK levels of Euroscepticism compared to the European Union Euroscepticism level. Moreover, a negative correlation is suggested between 2011 and 2014 as slightly increasing proportions of mixed identities in the UK are observed which in turn are corresponding to decreasing levels of UK Euroscepticism for that period.

Concerning the observed peak levels in UK Euroscepticism in 2012 and 2015 (*cf. figure 1a*) the results in *figure 2a* indicate that only the 2015 peak can be explained by the identity indicator. Indeed, an increase in the proportion of respondents with exclusive national identities as well as a decrease in the proportion of UK respondents with mixed identities is observed in 2015, whereas no such a relationship can be detected regarding the 2012 peak.

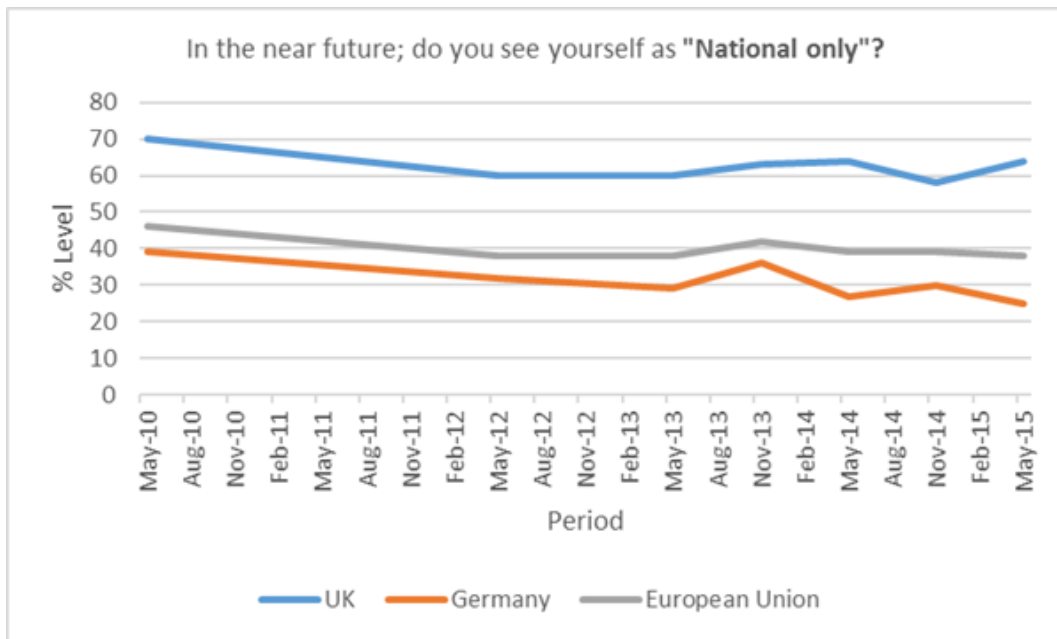


Figure 2a: Identity indicator (NATIONAL ONLY)

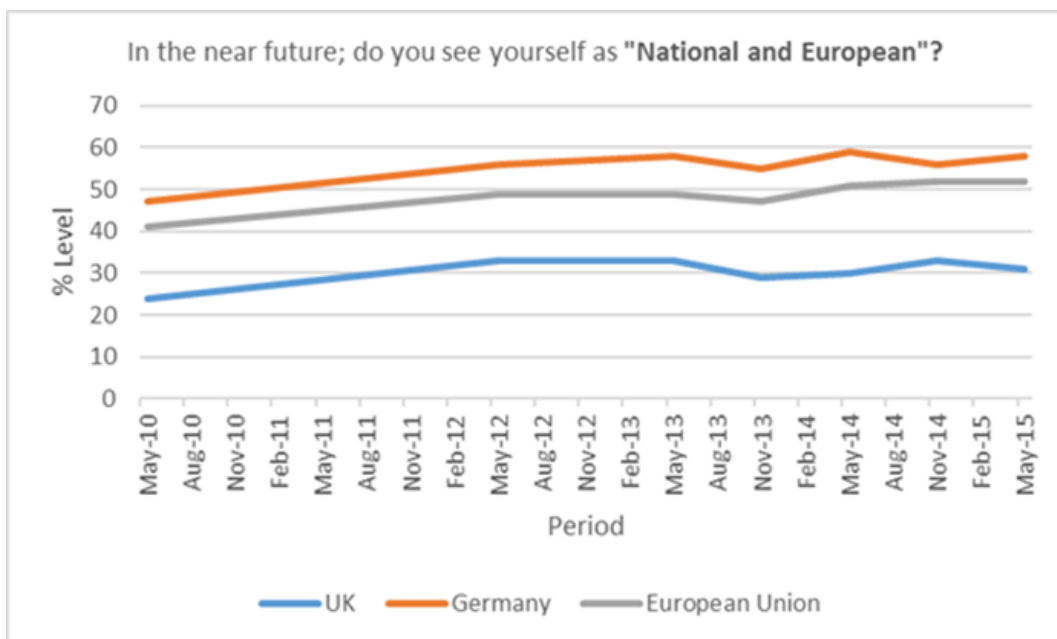


Figure 2b: Identity (NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN)

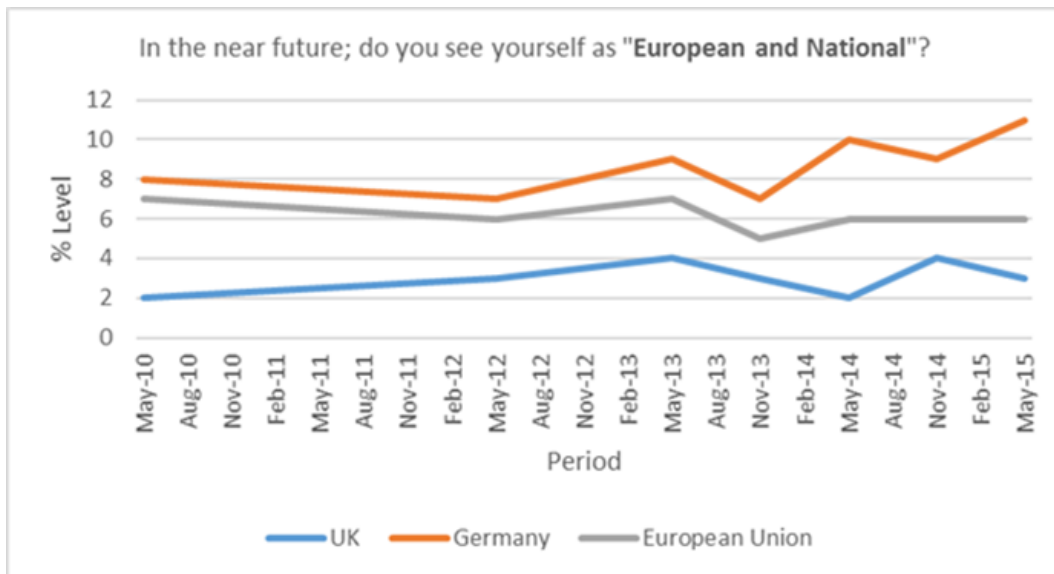


Figure 2c: Identity (EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL)

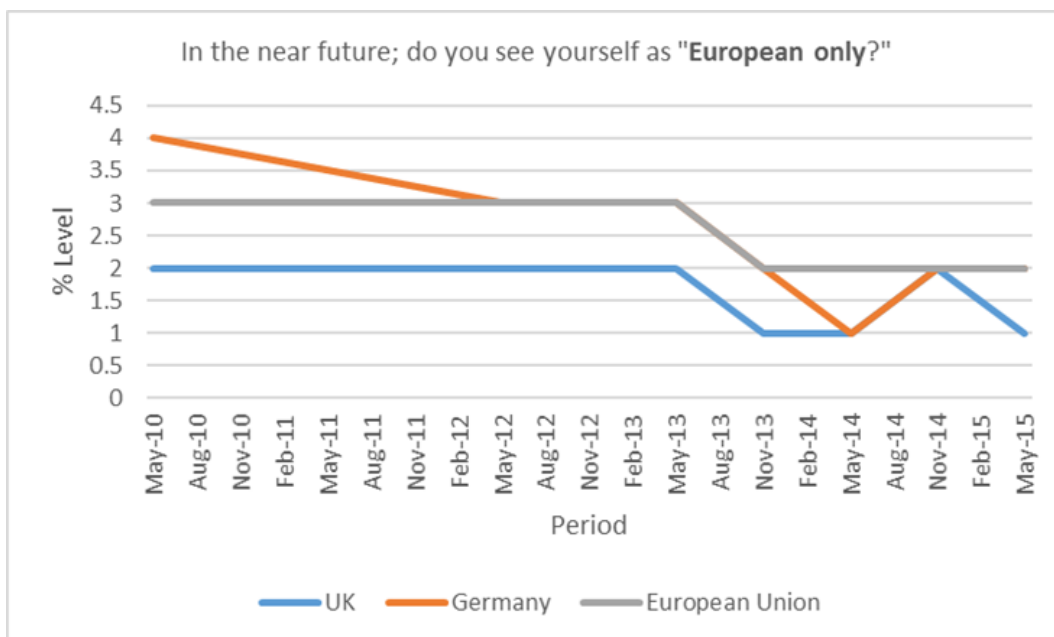


Figure 2d: Identity (EUROPEAN ONLY)

Consequently, regarding the UK, my findings suggest that Euroscepticism is strongly driven by the identity perceptions of UK citizens.

In Germany, on the contrary, our empirical results in *figures 2a, 2b and 2c* show that the identity indicator plays a less important role in explaining Euroscepticism compared to the UK.

More specifically, the proportion of German respondents with an exclusive national identity is situated below the European Union average and the proportion of German respondents combining national and European identities is situated above the European average. If the identity indicator were a strong driver of German Euroscepticism, these empirical findings would result in a lower German Euroscepticism level compared to the European Union average. Yet, as shown in *figure 1a*, empirically no lower German Euroscepticism levels are observed. On the contrary, the German and the European Union average levels have coincided over the last five years.

Conclusions and policy recommendations

Two main conclusions can be drawn regarding the empirical results on the identity indicator of Euroscepticism.

Firstly, citizens' identity perceptions clearly have a large part in explaining UK Euroscepticism, whereas this is not the case for Germany. However, this does not imply that the identity indicator does not influence German Euroscepticism at all. Yet, German Euroscepticism might be more strongly driven by other indicators, setting aside the effects of the identity indicator.

Consequently, the implications of this empirical evidence for policy making are clear-cut. To reduce the proportion of respondents who perceive their identity as an exclusively national one, human capital as well as public financial resources should be invested to create a stronger, more comprehensive, open and attractive European identity. Yet, whereas such efforts by policy makers will prove to be an effective and efficient tool to reduce Euroscepticism in the UK, only a minor impact is expected in Germany.

Secondly, the evidence shows that, in general, there still has a very long way to go to reach the ideal of one common European identity that transcends the different national identities. This can be partly explained by the fact that the nation state and the European Union are ultimately competitors for sovereignty and identity as argued by Waechter (2011). The creation of a stronger common European Union identity heavily depends on the willingness of the individual member states to transfer part of their sovereignty to the supranational level. The proportion of respondents identifying themselves in the first place as European and thereafter with their nationality or as exclusively European is extremely low. On the contrary, already a much larger proportion of the citizens

characterizes their identity as “National and European”. This suggests that further increasing the proportion of citizens identifying as “National and European” will be a more workable goal on which policy priorities should be set. Furthermore, preserving the national identities besides the European one is also in line with the view of several scholars such as Risse (2003, 2005) considering the European Union ultimately as a federal state characterized by “unity in diversity”.

6.2.2 Attachment to the European Union

Closely related to the identity indicator is the attachment indicator which represents a person’s strength of attachment to particular institutions, areas...As elaborated on in the literature review, previous research has shown relatively lower levels of citizens’ attachment to the European Union correspond to relatively higher levels of Euroscepticism.

I have gathered empirical evidence on respondents’ attachment both to Europe and the European Union. The Eurobarometer answer possibilities on the question “How attached do you feel to...” are as follows: “not at all”, “not very”, “fairly” and “very”.

The results are presented in *figures 3a-3h* (see also **appendix 1**).

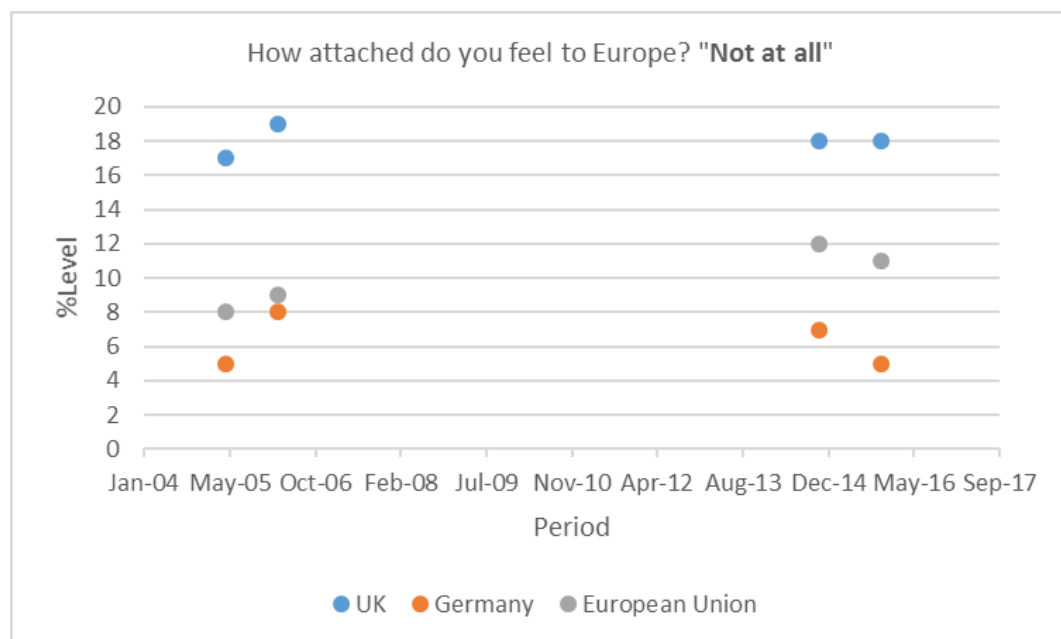


Figure 3a: Attachment to Europe (NOT AT ALL)

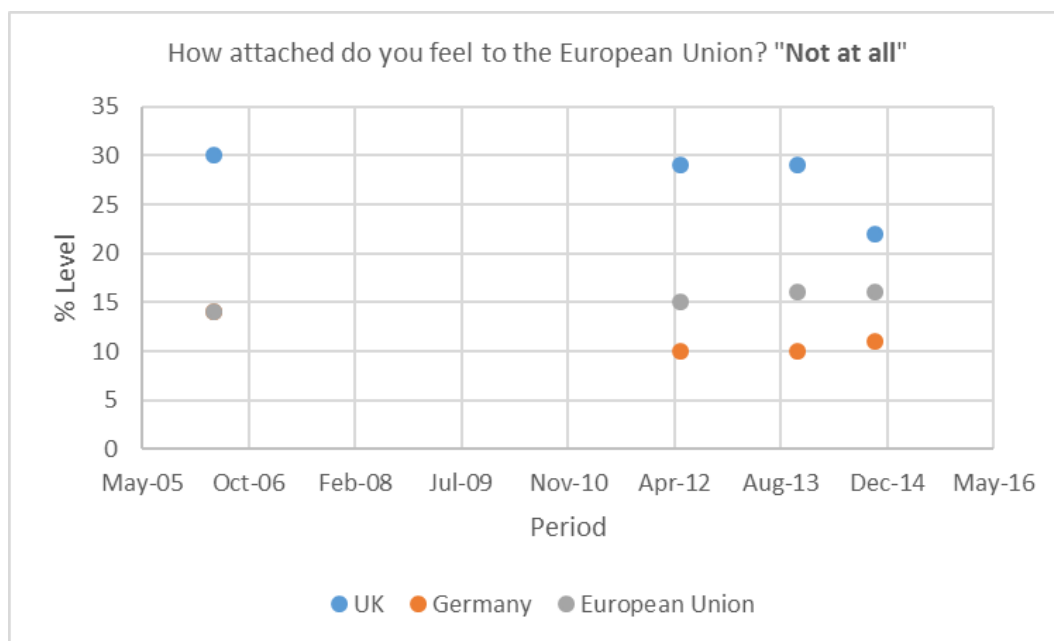


Figure 3b: Attachment to the European Union (NOT AT ALL)

In general, the empirical evidence shows that the trends on attachment are indeed closely related to the trends observed on the identity indicator. The proportion of respondents who does not tend to feel attached to Europe or the European Union is the highest for the UK, followed by the EU average and Germany. A reverse pattern is observed for the proportion of respondents who tend to feel attached (*cf. figure 3e, 3f, 3g, 3h*), with Germany heading the ranking closely followed by the European Union and the UK.

Yet, my findings reveal clear differences between the level of attachment to Europe and the level of attachment to the European Union, with substantial lower observed levels of attachment to the European Union compared to Europe (or equivalently, higher levels of attachment to Europe compared to the European Union). For example, considering the *figures 3a and 3b*. Over the last decade, for the UK, on average 18% of the respondents indicate to feel not attached at all to Europe, compared to an average of 27,5% not feeling attached to the European Union. Similar trends are observed for the European Union and Germany with averages of respectively 10% compared to 15.25% and 6.25% compared to 11.25%.

These findings can be explained by the fact that the European Union, as a political entity, demands from its citizens loyalty and a basic consensus with its policies whereas this is not the case for Europe, considered as a continent or a cultural sphere. Consequently, in

comparison with attachment to Europe, attachment to the European Union is highly demanding concept to the citizens (Waechter, 2011)

Next, the empirical evidence on attachment to the European Union and the observed levels of Euroscepticism are compared to gain more insights in the explanatory power of the attachment driver for the UK, Germany and the European Union. Yet, as shown in *figures 3a-3h* only four data observations for the attachment indicator are available which puts constraints on the depth and width of our analysis. Indeed, due to this data limitation it is not possible to conduct an in-depth time series analysis over the last decade. Nevertheless, some learning can be acquired.

The findings on the respondents who feel not at all or not very attached to the European Union (*cf. figures 3b, 3d*) suggest that citizens' attachment feelings have explanatory power with regards to Euroscepticism in the UK. Indeed, in the UK, a clear link is detected between the findings on the attachment indicator, on the one hand, and the observed Euroscepticism levels, on the other hand. More specifically, compared to Germany and the European Union average, substantially higher proportions of UK respondents are presented in the categories of citizens who feel not at all or not very attached to the European Union which, in turn, is translated into the higher UK levels of Euroscepticism over the same period as observed in *figure 1a*. In Germany, no empirical support can be found for any explanatory power of the attachment indicator regarding the German Euroscepticism levels.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

The empirical findings for the UK, Germany and the European Union on the attachment indicator are very similar to the ones on the identity indicator which is in line with the findings of previous research. Given these closely related two the trends, the policy implications are in a similar vein as well. Policies to encourage citizens' attachment should primarily be focused on the UK, given the clear explanatory power of the attachment indicator with regards to Euroscepticism in the UK. Nevertheless, once again, one has to bear in mind that this does not imply that the attachment indicator does not influence German Euroscepticism at all. Yet, German Euroscepticism might be more strongly driven by other indicators, setting aside the effects of the attachment indicator. Furthermore, the proportion of respondents who indicate to feel very attached to the European Union is extremely low, ranging from 2% to 12%. These proportions are highly similar to the

proportions of citizens who feel exclusively European. Thus, both on the identity and the attachments indicators, the European Union still has a long way to go to transcend the citizens' exclusive national feelings.

6.2.3 Subjective economic evaluations

Next, also citizens' subjective economic evaluations may impact the public opinion on European integration as extensively elaborated on in the literature review Section 4.3. Citizens who feel confident about their economic future- personally and for their country- are likely to regard European integration in a positive light (see amongst others Gabel and Whitten 1997, Anderson 1998 and Ioannou et al 2015).

In *figures 4a, and 4b* I have taken a closer look at the respondents' expectations for the year to come when it comes to the economic situation of their country.



Figure 4a: Expectations for the year to come regarding the economic situation of your country: "Worse"

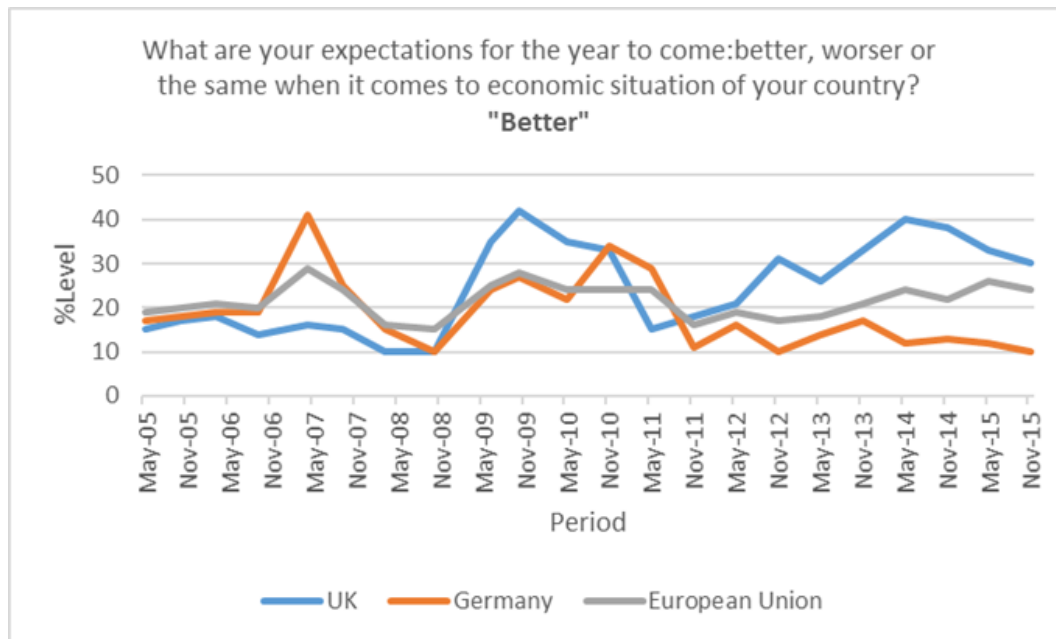


Figure 4b: Expectations for the year to come regarding the economic situation of your country: "Better"

Regarding the proportion of respondents who are pessimistic about the next year's state of their economy, three peaks are observed over the last decade. As presented in *figure 4a*, the first peak level is reached in 2008. Most likely, this sharp increase in pessimism about the state of the national economies is driven by the outbreak of the financial crisis at the beginning of 2008. The same reasoning holds for the second peak level at the end of 2011 which is most probably caused by general worries in the UK, Germany and the European Union about a deepening of the financial crisis. At the end of 2015, the last peak in pessimism about the next year's state of the economy is observed. However, this peak level is observed in Germany only contrary to the peaks in 2008 and 2011 which affected the UK, Germany and the European Union in a very similar way.

Considering the findings on the respondents who tend to be optimistic about the next year's state of their national economy, *figure 4b* shows a relatively higher optimism in the UK from 2009 except from a fall in 2011-2012. The higher optimism in the UK might partly be attributed to the fact that the country has an opt-out of the Eurozone. Like this, although being hit by the global financial crisis, the UK is less involved in the Eurozone crisis.

When I combine this empirical evidence on the citizens' subjective economic evaluations (cf. *figure 4a*) with the observed trends in Euroscepticism (cf. *figure 1a*), my findings tend to support the research of amongst others Gabel and Whitten (1997), which posits that

citizens who feel insecure about the future economic situation of their country are likely to be more Eurosceptic. Indeed, for the UK, Germany and the European Union a positive correlation between the citizens' subjective economic evaluations and the Euroscepticism levels is suggested given that both variables simultaneously peak in 2009 and 2011 as well as share a declining trend from 2012 to 2014. Yet, regarding the observed 2015 peak in Euroscepticism, this positive correlation does not hold anymore but for Germany for which a sharp rise in Germans' pessimism about the future state of their national economy is detected from the end of 2014 onwards. This finding is also supported by the results in *figure 4b* which indicate that from 2014 onwards the proportion of German respondents who are optimistic about the future state of their national economy is considerable lower compared to the UK and the EU.

Finally, by also incorporating the empirical evidence provided in *figure 5*, my findings suggest that the Eurozone crisis gave Euroscepticism an opening. Indeed, *Figure 5* shows that, since the end of 2013, Germans are not only increasingly pessimistic about the future of their own economy they are even more so about the average level of the EU economy as a whole. More specifically, about 30% of the Germans perceive the current state of the German economy to be superior compared to the European average (*see figure 5*) although at the same time Germany has experienced a renewed rise in respondents' pessimism about the future of its national economy from the end 2014 on (*cf. figure 4a*). This, in turn, may reinforce the effect of the "subjective economic evaluation" indicator on German Euroscepticism. Indeed, as argued by Ioannou et al (2015) negative spill over effects from economic and fiscal developments in other member states may result in increases in domestic Euroscepticism (*cf. Section 4.3*). For example, the Germans may fear that their relatively well performing economy will be negatively affected by the less performing economies in the other European Union member states. Furthermore, the Germans might also perceive the European Union to become a transfer union, in which Germany will have to contribute disproportional large financial amounts in order to prop up the weaker member states.

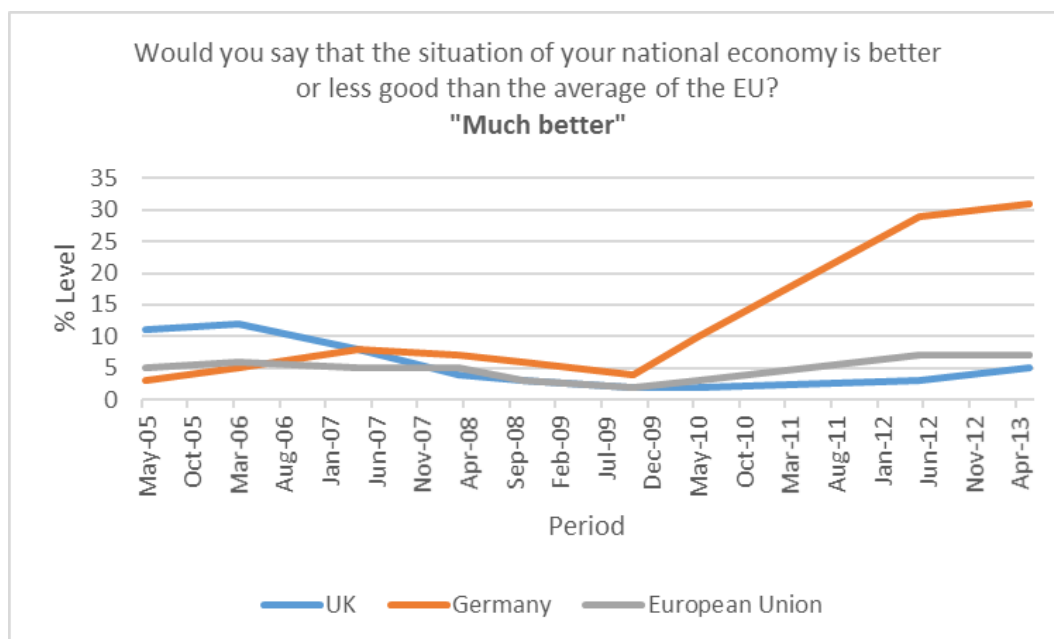


Figure 5: Assessment current situation national economy compared to the average of the EU (MUCH BETTER)

Conclusion and policy recommendations

My findings confirm previous academic research by showing that an increase in respondents' pessimism regarding the future state of their national economy is a driver for Euroscepticism. Indeed, a positive correlation between the two variables is observed. Considering the peaks in Euroscepticism in 2009 and 2011, this positive correlation is valid for the UK, Germany and the European Union average. Yet, from the end of 2014 on, the explanatory power of the "subjective economic evaluations" indicator has diminished with respect to UK and European Union Euroscepticism. According to my findings, since 2015, only for Germany a substantial part in Euroscepticism can be explained by increased respondents' pessimism about the national economy.

Consequently, the policy implications are clear. German Euroscepticism can effectively be reduced by investing resources in policy programs to improve the Germans' subjective evaluations on the state of their national economy. Regarding UK Euroscepticism, policy priorities should be set on other indicators since subjective economic evaluations by the UK citizens on the future of the UK economy has not proven to be a strong driver for UK Euroscepticism since 2015. The explanatory power of increased pessimism about the UK economy has decreased over the years.

For completeness, the findings regarding the level of respondents who expect the economic situation of their country to remain the same in the coming year are included in **Appendix 2**.

6.2.4 Immigration

Besides exclusive national identities, lack of attachment to the European Union and pessimism about the future of the national economy, also hostility towards other cultures, may impact public opinion on the European Unification process. Indeed, several authors such as Lewis-Beck (1990), Citrin et al. (1997), Taggart (1998) and McLaren (2002) argue that a high national threat perception produces negative effects on support for the European Union integration process.

Figure 6 shows the trends in the proportion of respondents who perceive immigration as one of the most important issues the European Union is facing at the time the Eurobarometer Survey is carried out. However, it would be premature to conclude that perceiving migration as an important issue to the European Union directly leads to an increase in Euroscepticism. Nevertheless, a migration influx usually goes hand in hand with the emergence of several actors who indeed may bear responsibility in an increase in Eurosceptic attitudes. Consider, for example, in the wake of a migration influx, an emergence of right-wing parties at the national level. The corresponding increase in right-wing discourses produces higher national threat perceptions which, in turn, results in lower citizens' support for the EU (as argued by amongst others McLaren (2002)).

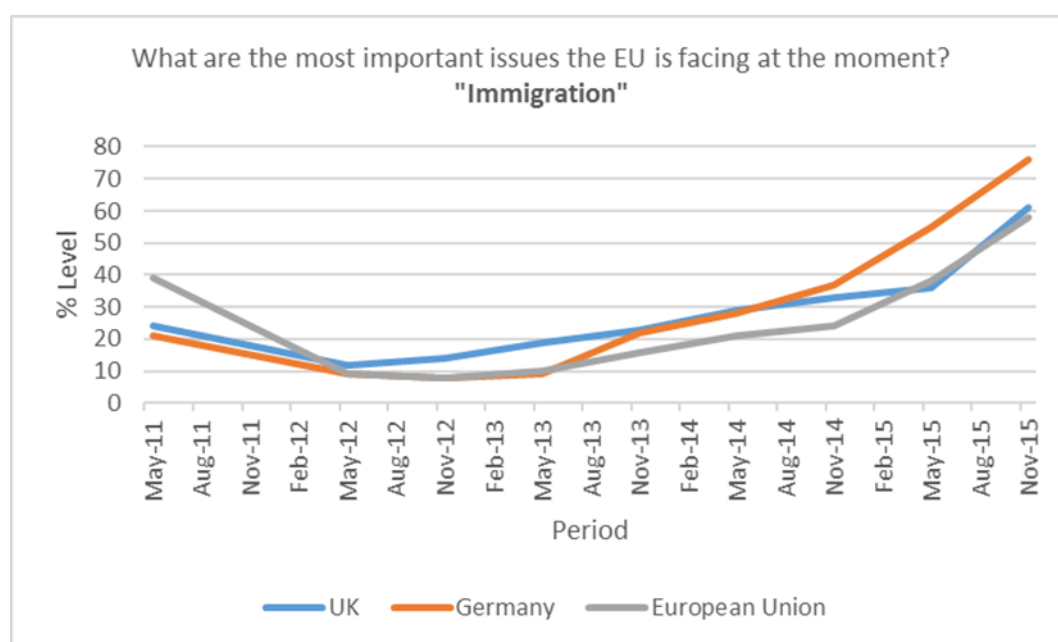


Figure 6: Most important issue the EU is facing at the moment (IMMIGRATION)

The results in *figure 6* clearly indicate that the proportion of respondents who perceive immigration as an important issue to the European Union has been on the rise since 2013. Most probably, this upward trend originates in the emergence of right-wing populist discourses following the outburst of the European migrant at the end of 2013 and peaking in 2015.

In Germany, the right-wing populist party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland), founded in 2013, has been gaining representation over the last years. It spreads a German nationalistic, anti-immigration and Eurosceptic discourse and strongly campaigns for much tighter controls on immigration and the removal of illegal migrants. Consequently, the party paves the way for securitization of migration which considerably increases national threat perceptions. These increased national threat perceptions, in turn, have negatively affected German support for the European integration process, as clearly shown by the 2015 peak level in German Euroscepticism observed in *figure 1a*.

Also the British national party system has experienced the emergence of a strong right-wing populist party, UKIP, founded in 1993. Similar to the discourse of AfD in Germany, a great emphasis is placed on the issue of immigration. More specifically, the UKIP leadership utilises anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim populism and, like this, often flirts with the spread of xenophobia. Also for the UK, these increased national threat perceptions go hand in hand with a rise in Euroscepticism at the end of 2015 as observed in *figure 1a*.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that, although both the UK and Germany have experienced an augmentation in right-wing nationalist discourses as explained in the previous paragraphs, from 2015 onwards, the proportion of German respondents perceiving immigration in the European Union as a major issue (80%) is almost 20% higher than the observed proportions in the UK or the European Union which seem to coincide from 2015 on.

A single clear-cut explanation for this observation cannot be provided, rather it seems to be driven by a combination of different factors. For example, in 2015, Germany received the largest number of new asylum applications in comparison with the other European

Union member states⁶, often criticized as being a direct result of Merkel's "Welcoming Refugee Policy". Within Germany, this welcome culture has faced a lot of criticism and often has been accused of going too far and too fast with refugees. Moreover, German politicians wrangled over how to deal with the migration issue which resulted, on the one hand, in intense political debates and, on the other hand, in a rise in anti-immigration protests by organisations such as PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes). Other plausible explanations might be differences in refugee integration policies between the UK and Germany, the higher leeway for the UK as it has an exception on the EU-wide immigration rules which enables it choose, on a case-by-case basis, whether or not to adopt EU rules on immigration, visa and asylum policies, ...

Conclusion and policy recommendations

From the analysis in the previous paragraphs, we can conclude that the emergence of the European migrant crisis in 2015 has been an important trigger for the observed peak in Euroscepticism at that time (cf. *figure 1a*). This holds true for the UK, Germany and the European Union in general, yet the effect is the most pronounced in Germany as shown by the empirical evidence in *figure 6*.

There is no doubt that, at the time of the outburst of the European Union migrant crisis, the European Union and its member states were not only surprised by the huge migrant wave entering Europe but they were also highly unprepared to tackle the issue properly. Steadily the European Union and the member states took measures to deal with the migration crisis. However, so far, major bottlenecks have remained such as non-consensus between head of member states on how to address the issue, a lack of a coherent and strong European Union migration policy, breaches of human rights, ... and, in turn, fuel right-wing populist anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic discourses.

Regarding future policy making, the European Union and its member states should continue to work hard on the development of a strong, coherent and human EU-wide migration policy. Only by means of such a policy, the European Union will be able to counterbalance Eurosceptic right wing discourses and this way encourage the citizens to maintain their confidence in the European integration project.

⁶ BBC news. 2016. Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>. [Accessed 27 May 2016]

6.2.5 Future enlargement of the European Union

In a similar vein, also future enlargement plans of the European Union to include other countries can impose a perceived threat to the European Union's citizens which in turn might pave again the way to increased Euroscepticism as argued by amongst others (McLaren (2002)).

Indeed, citizens might be strongly concerned about potential problems that could come along with the admission of new countries to the European Union although, overall, the principal ideas and political benefits of European Union enlargement are widely recognised. As elaborated on by McLaren (2002), a distinction can be made between two kinds of threats that might be perceived by the respondents (*cf. Section 4.5*). Either a realistic threat such as increased criminality, worsening of the national economic situation, illegal immigration, increases in labour transfers to countries where labour is cheaper... or a symbolic threat concerning the conservation of cultural traditions and values.

The empirical evidence I have provided in *figures 7a and 7b* clearly shows that the German respondents are the most sceptical towards future enlargement compared to the UK or the European Union. Indeed, over the last decade, an increasing number of German respondents has indicated not to be in favour of future expansion of the European Union with proportions ranging from 60% to 70%. In the UK, on average 50% of the respondents indicates to be opposed against future European Union enlargement. Although the UK respondents are clearly more supportive towards future enlargement than the German ones, the UK level of support for future enlargement is still lower than the European Union average proportions. However, over the last years, the UK trend line has become more closely related to the European Union average.

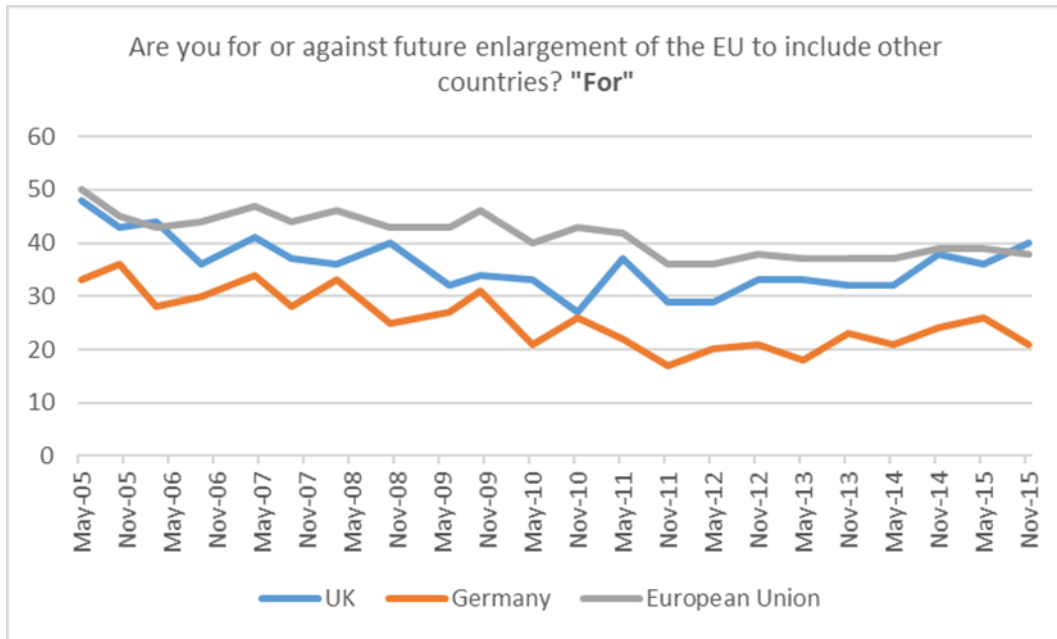


Figure 7a: For or against future enlargement EU (FOR)

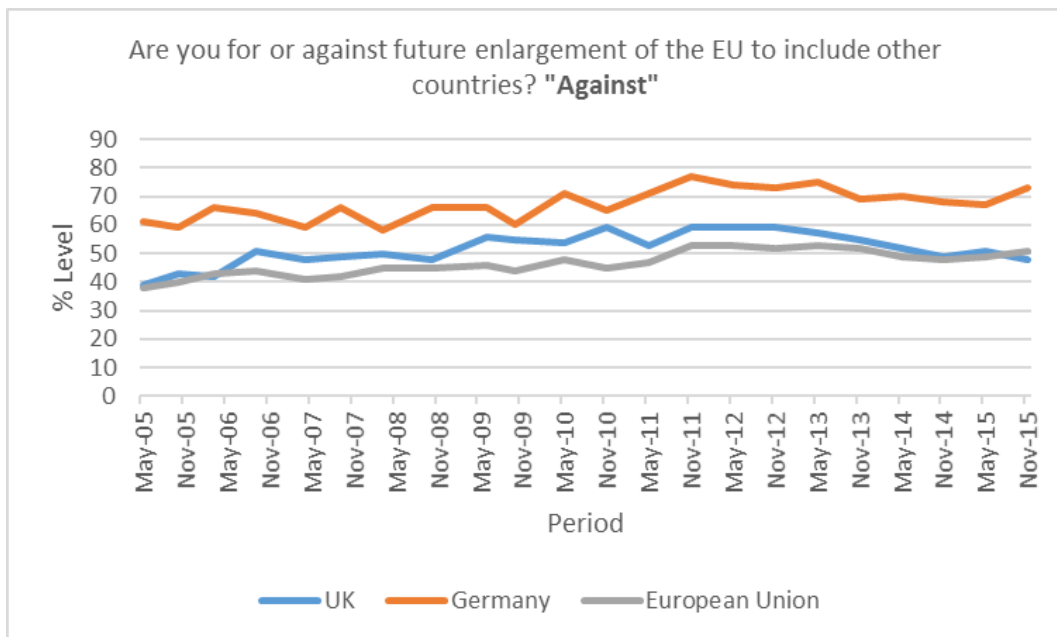


Figure 7b: For or against future enlargement EU (AGAINST)

Furthermore, considering again the proportion of respondents who indicate not to be in favour of future EU enlargement (*cf. figure 7b*), in 2008-2009 and at the end of 2011, peak levels are observed for the UK, Germany and the European Union. These increases in protectionist sentiments most likely follow from the outburst and the subsequent deepening of the global economic and financial crisis. Yet, from 2013 onwards, a slight

decrease has been detected for the three trend lines. However, in Germany, the opposition against future enlargement has been on the rise again since 2015. Most probably, the European Union migrant crisis, at its full expansion in 2015 (*cf. Subsection 6.2.4*), bears an important responsibility in this observed German trend.

Furthermore, it can be argued that, after Europe grew to 28 members, further enlargement will most likely imply the inclusion of countries with radically different cultural and religious traditions. Obviously, this will even more encourage an increase in perceived national cultural threat with regards to future enlargement plans of the European Union.

When relating the findings on the “future enlargement indicator” to the empirical results on the trends in Euroscepticism (*cf. figure 1a*), a positive correlation between opposition against future enlargement and Euroscepticism is detected, which is in line with the expectations based on previous academic research (*cf. Section 4*). Indeed, both for Germany and the UK, the proportions of respondents not in favour of future enlargement exceed the European Union average which in turn is translated into higher Euroscepticism levels compared to the European Union for both countries. Yet, in the UK, only a weak positive relationship can be observed. Indeed, the substantial higher level of UK Euroscepticism compared to the European Union average does not correspond with a considerable higher level of UK opposition against enlargement compared to the European Union average. Moreover, whereas regarding the 2008-2009 and 2011 peak levels in Euroscepticism (*cf. figure 1a*), this positive correlation is observed for the UK, Germany and the European Union, it only holds for Germany regarding the observed 2015 peak in Euroscepticism.

Conclusion and policy recommendations

My empirical findings show that perceived threat regarding future enlargement of the European Union clearly is a driver for Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union. However, the most pronounced effect can be observed regarding German Euroscepticism whereas, for the UK, the explanatory power of scepticism against further expansion of the European Union turns out to be much lower.

To increase citizens’ support for European Union enlargement and, like this, reduce Euroscepticism, a clear political project for Europe is needed. Furthermore, policymakers should ensure that citizens are provided with accurate information and knowledge of the

European Union expansion. For enlargement to be perceived as a win-win situation instead of a risk, policy makers should not only stress the benefits of enlargement for the potential future member states but also the potential gains for the old member states and the collective good.

Moreover, according to above explained empirical findings, to ensure the most effective and efficient deployment of resources, policy priorities should be given to Germany where a reduction in perceived threat towards future European Union enlargement is expected to have the biggest impact on the level of Euroscepticism.

6.2.6 Working democracy in the European Union

The final indicator of Euroscepticism to be empirically studied in this work is the respondents' satisfaction with the working of the democracy in the European Union as shown by amongst others Carey (2002), Sørensen (2008) and Jensen (2009). It is argued that lower levels of citizens' satisfaction with the working of the EU democracy are associated with increasing levels of Euroscepticism.

The answer possibilities on the Eurobarometer question which gauges for the respondents' level of satisfaction regarding the working of democracy in the European Union are in decreasing order "very satisfied", "fairly satisfied", "not very satisfied" and "not at all satisfied".

The empirical results on "not very satisfied" and "not at all satisfied" are presented in *figures 8a and 8b*. For completeness, the empirical data on "very satisfied" and "fairly satisfied" are included in **Appendix 4**.

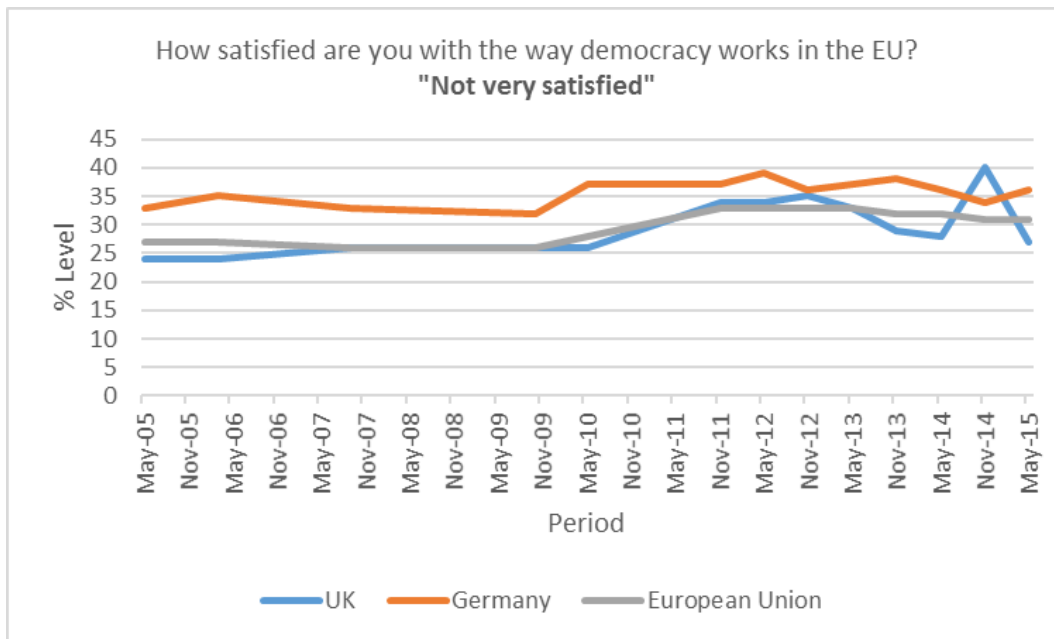


Figure 8a: satisfaction with working EU democracy (NOT VERY SATISFIED)

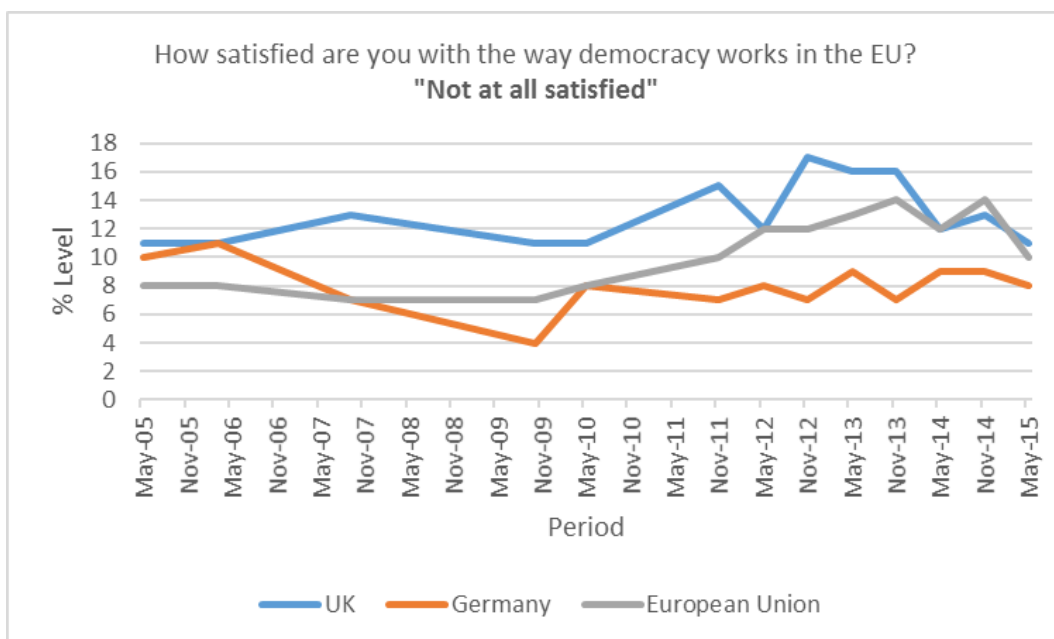


Figure 8b: satisfaction with working EU democracy (NOT AT ALL SATISFIED)

Regarding the proportions of respondents who are not at all satisfied with the level of democracy in the European Union over the last decade (cf. *figure 8b*), the UK clearly comes at the top of the list with an average proportion of 13% of the respondents compared to 10% for the European Union average and 8% for Germany.

However, a reverse pattern can be observed when considering the respondents who ticked the less extreme answer possibility "not very satisfied". In *figure 8a*, the results

show that the UK and the European Union trend lines almost coincide over the whole last decade, averaging around 30%. Germany however now tops the list with on average a 6% higher proportion of respondents compared to the UK and the European Union.

Yet, noteworthy, these observed differences between the UK and Germany regarding the proportion of respondents who are “not at all satisfied” and the “not very satisfied” respondents are lifted when combining the findings presented in *figure 8a* and *figure 8b*. Indeed, the UK proportion of respondents who tends to be dissatisfied with the working of the democracy in the European Union amounts to 43% which is nearly the same as the German level of respondents which amounts to 44%.

When relating the results on the democratic deficit indicator to the observed levels of Euroscepticism over the last decade (see *figure 1a*), for the UK and Germany, a positive relationship between the two parameters is shown with regards to those respondents who are the most sceptical (“Not at all satisfied”) towards the level of democracy in the European Union (cf. *figure 8b*).

Indeed, in the UK, both the level of Euroscepticism and the proportion of dissatisfied respondents with the European Union democracy increases from 2005 to 2013 after which they decline till the end of 2014. Moreover, both variables exceed the European average. Hence, these observations suggest a high explanatory power of the “democratic deficit” indicator regarding Euroscepticism in the UK.

In Germany, both variables decline until mid-2009 after which they increase again until the end of 2014. Yet, the proportion of German respondents who are the most sceptical towards the working of the European Union democracy is lower than the European Union average, whereas the German level of Euroscepticism is slightly higher than the European average. Consequently, a weaker explanatory power of the “democratic deficit” indicator is observed compared to the UK.

Concerning the European Union average measure itself, both the level of Euroscepticism and the proportion of dissatisfied respondents with the European Union democracy rise from 2007 till 2013 after which they decrease until the end of 2014.

For the respondents who indicate to be “not very satisfied” with the way the European Union democracy works, my empirical results show only weak relationships (cf. *figure 1a* and *figure 8a*).

In a similar vein, on May 2014, the Eurobarometer survey has assessed the level of respondents' support for an increased transfer of decision making authority to the European Union level as presented in *figures 9a and 9b*. Clearly, the UK respondents have expressed the largest opposition against more transfers of decision making authority to the European Union level. Thus, the relatively more sceptical stance of the UK respondents regarding the working of the European Union democracy has resulted in a higher resistance from their part to take more decisions at the common central level compared to Germany and the European Union average.

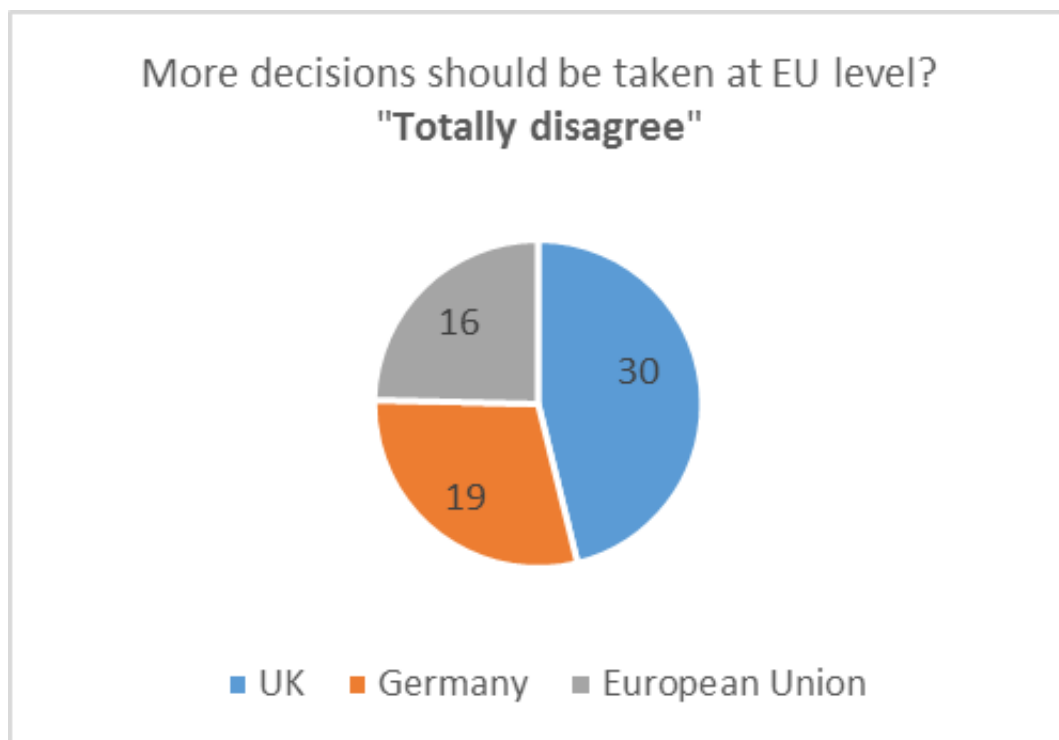


Figure 9a: More decisions should be taken at EU level (TOTALLY DISAGREE)

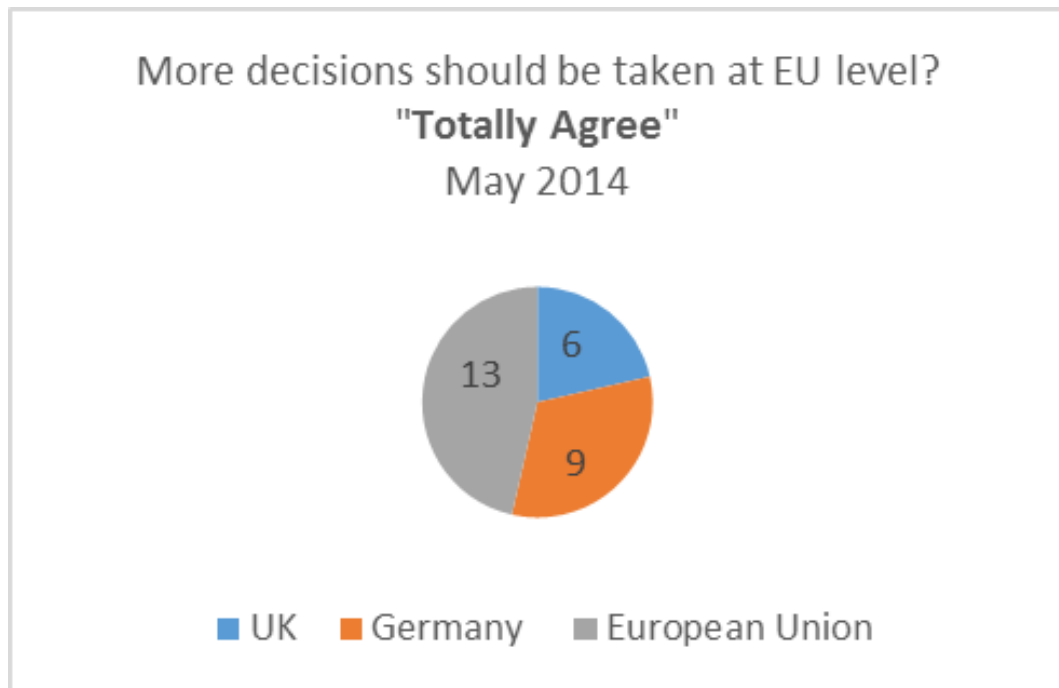


Figure 9b: More decisions should be taken at EU level (TOTALLY AGREE)

Conclusion and policy recommendations

My results show that a perceived democratic deficit in the EU is an important driver for Euroscepticism which is in line with the findings of previous academic works (cf. Section 4.6). However, the positive relationship between the democratic deficit indicator and the observed Euroscepticism level can be identified only with regards to those respondents who have the most sceptical stance towards the working of the EU democracy (cf. *figure 8b*). Furthermore, my empirical evidence suggests that the effect of the “democratic deficit” indicator is the strongest for the UK compared to Germany or the European average.

The democratic deficit problem is already extensively dealt with by several scholars, politicians, lawyers, media... However, so far, this has not resulted yet in one clear-cut policy recommendation to address the democratic deficit issue. Nevertheless, common ground has been found on a wide variety of policy recommendations such as making the European Parliament more accessible and connected to citizens, better integration of national and regional institutions in the EU framework, increasing citizen participation at the EU-level, working on a more “social” Europe that benefits the parts of society who are excluded from big business or political elites... (Grabbe and Lehne, 2015).

Moreover, to ensure an effective and efficient deployment of resources, these policies priorities should primarily be focused on the UK where the largest scepticism regarding the working of the European Union's democracy is observed.

7. Conclusion

The main objective of this Master's Thesis is to analyse whether, over the last decade, the characteristics of Euroscepticism observed in the UK, Germany and the European Union have differed considerably by identifying, for each of these respective geographical areas, the dominant Euroscepticism drivers and their development over time.

Over the period 2005-2015, the empirical results show an overall increase in Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union with peak levels in 2009-2010, 2011 and at the end of 2015. Furthermore, on average, over the past decade, the level of Euroscepticism in the UK clearly heads the ranking compared to Germany and the European Union.

Moreover, the observed levels of Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union are indeed characterized by different dominant drivers and, therefore, multifaceted in their nature.

More specifically, over the last decade, Euroscepticism in the UK has mainly been driven by the UK citizens' national identity and attachment feelings as well as their dissatisfaction with the working of the democracy at the European Union's decision making level. In contrast, Euroscepticism in Germany has, in the first place, originated in increased national threat perceptions of the German citizens, triggered by immigration and future enlargement plans of the European Union, as well as a rise in the German citizens' pessimism regarding the future state of the German economy.

The empirical research in this Master's Thesis has contributed to both the academic field of research and the political and public debates on Euroscepticism.

More specifically, for the UK, Germany and the European Union a gap in the existing academic literature has been closed by taking into account both a geographical dimension as well as a time dimension in the empirical analysis of the Euroscepticism drivers.

Moreover, the acquired knowledge of the development and the main drivers of Euroscepticism in the UK, Germany and the European Union over the last decade, will

considerably increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of the policies designed to tackle Euroscepticism as it enables policy makers to carefully differentiate their policies between the different countries according to these countries' specific needs.

Considering the major influence public opinion has on the future of the European integration project, it is of major importance that also future academic research remains strongly focused on the Euroscepticism phenomenon. A particular interesting suggestion for future research is to widen both the geographical as well as the time scope of the empirical research I have conducted in this Master's Thesis.

Appendix

Appendix 1

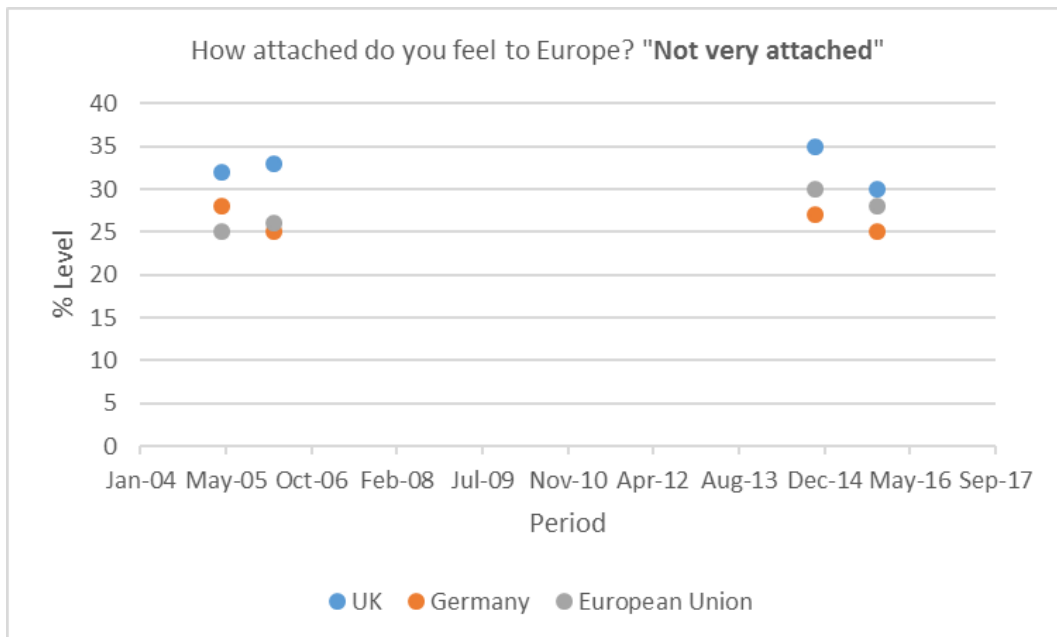


Figure 3c: Attachment to Europe (NOT VERY)

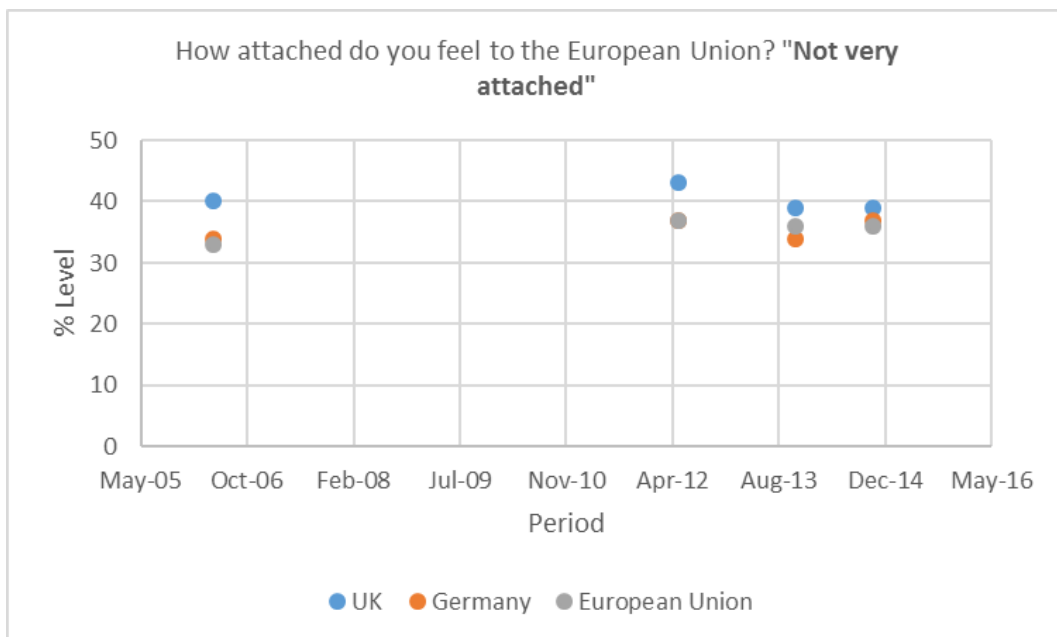


Figure 3d: Attachment to the European Union (NOT VERY)

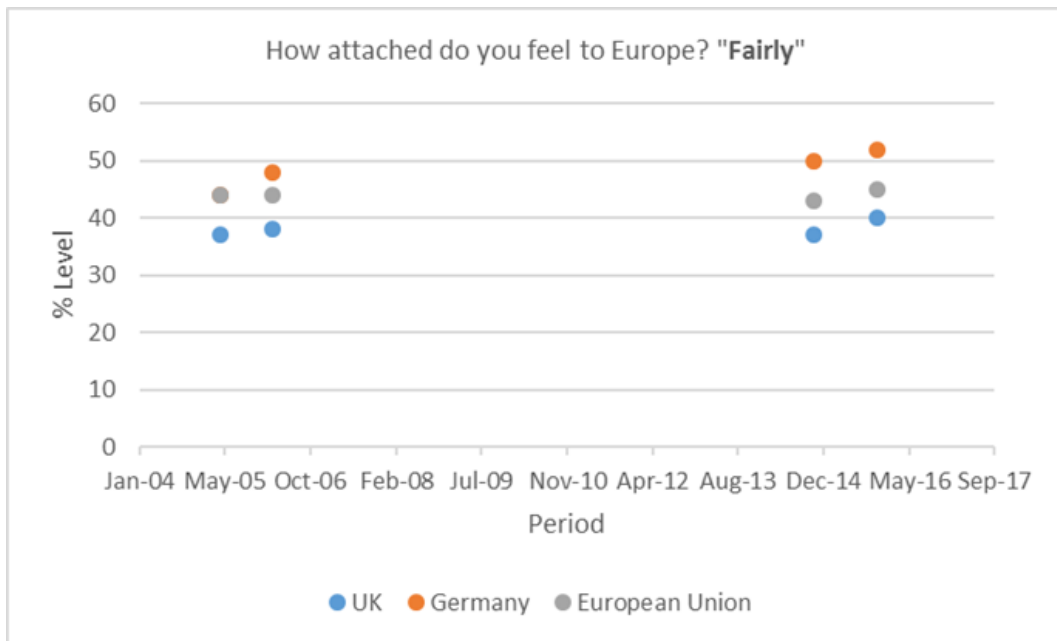


Figure 3e: Attachment to Europe (FAIRLY)

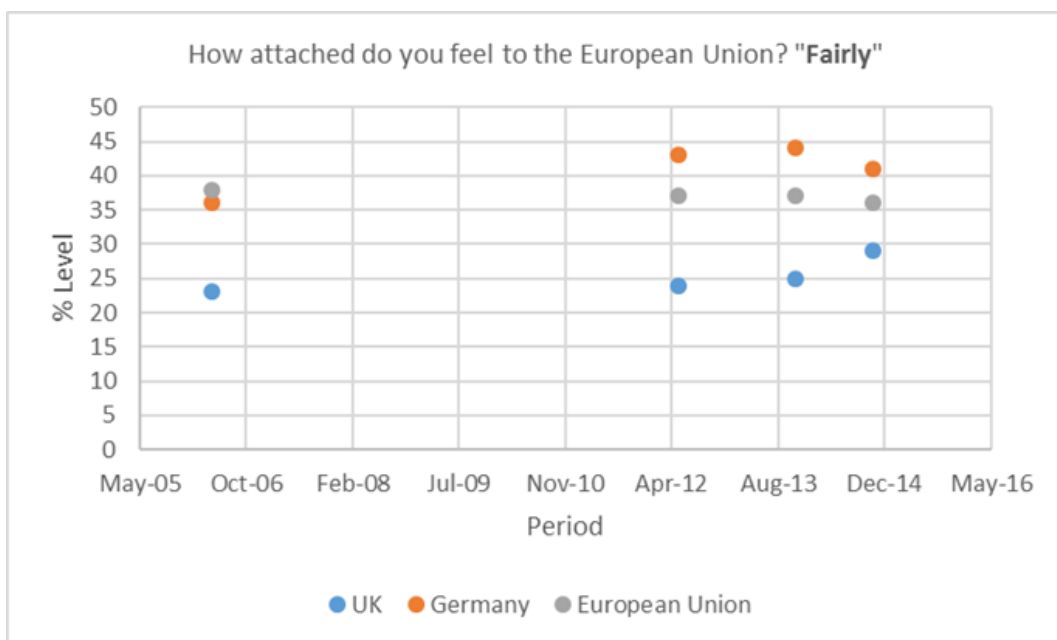


Figure 3f: Attachment to the European Union (FAIRLY)

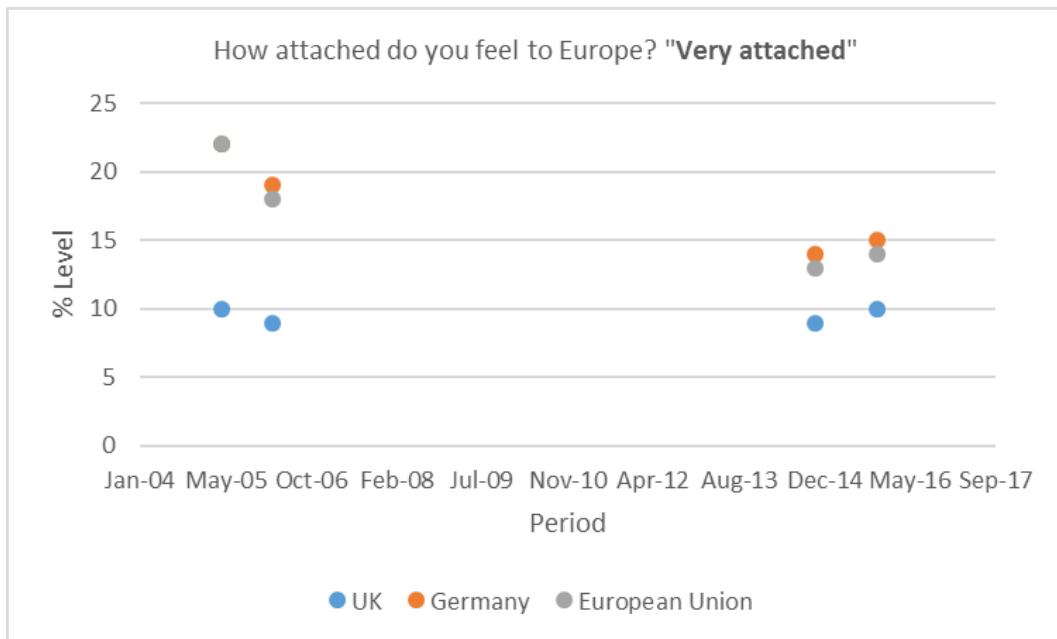


Figure 3g: Attachment to Europe (VERY)

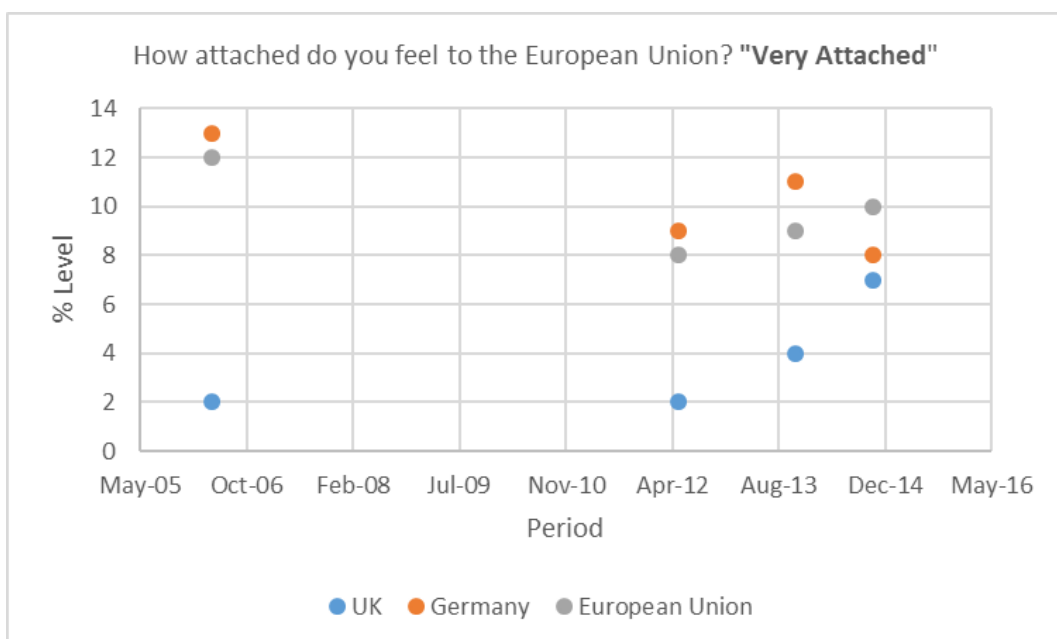


Figure 3h: Attachment to European Union (VERY)

Appendix 2

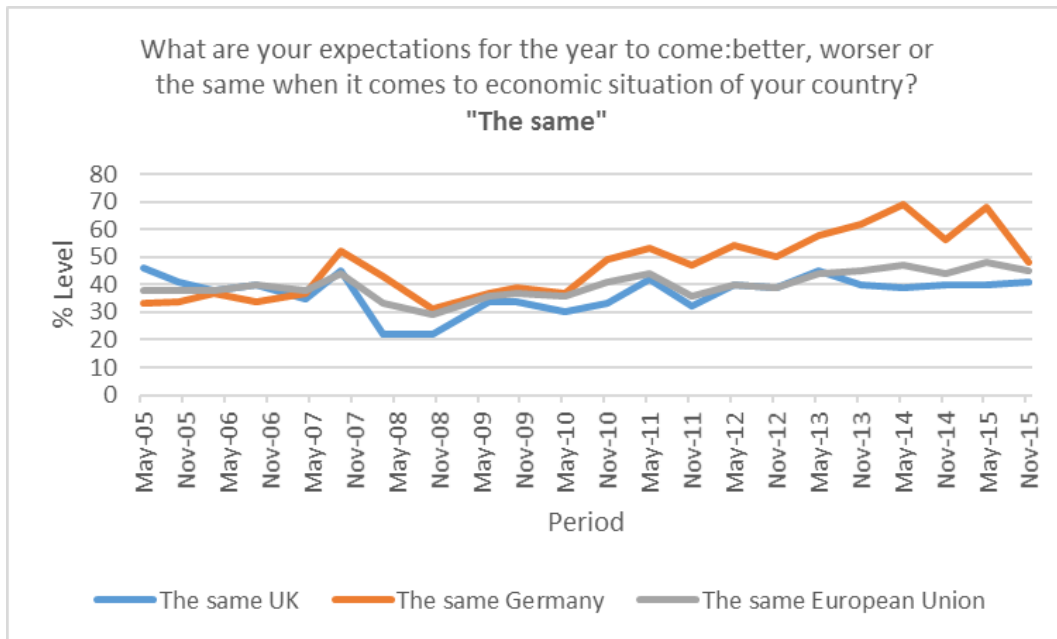


Figure 4c: Expectations for the year to come regarding the economic situation of your country: "the same"

Appendix 3

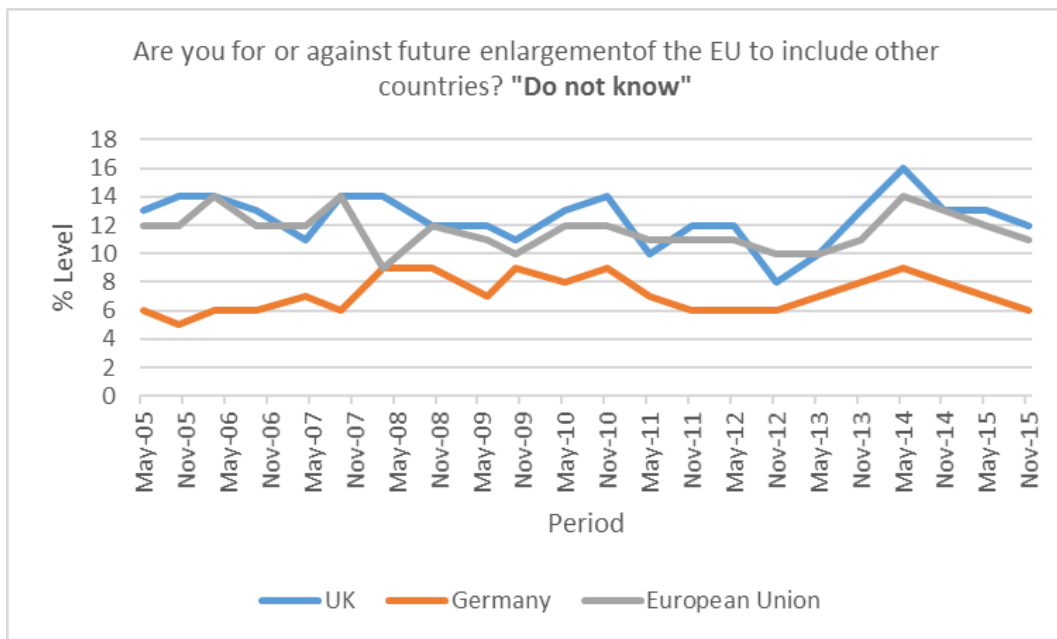


Figure 7c: For or against future enlargement EU (DON'T KNOW)

Appendix 4

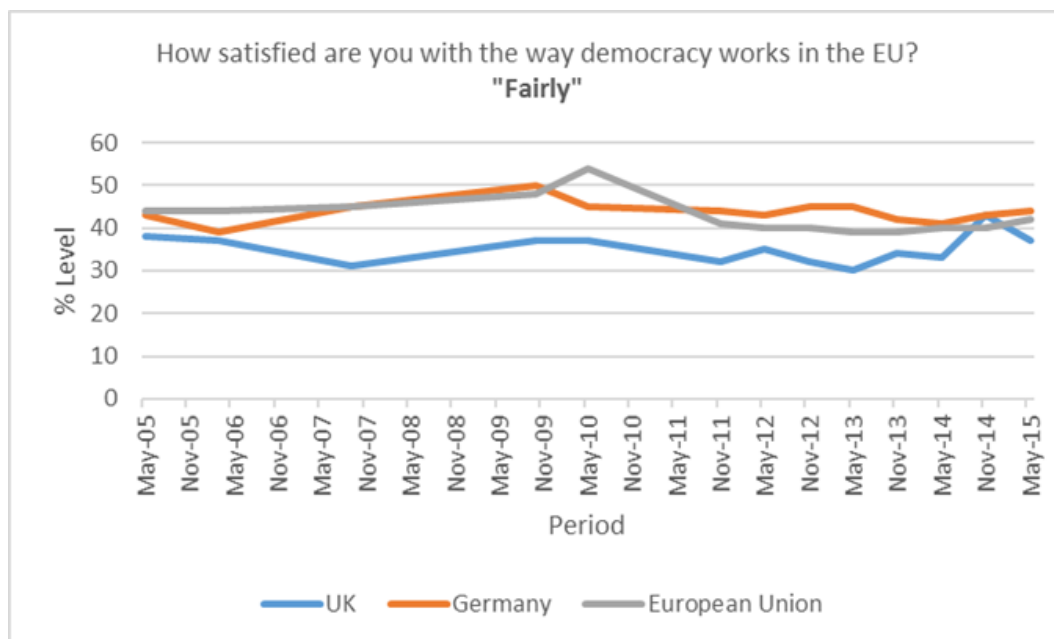


Figure 8a: satisfaction with working EU democracy (FAIRLY SATISFIED)

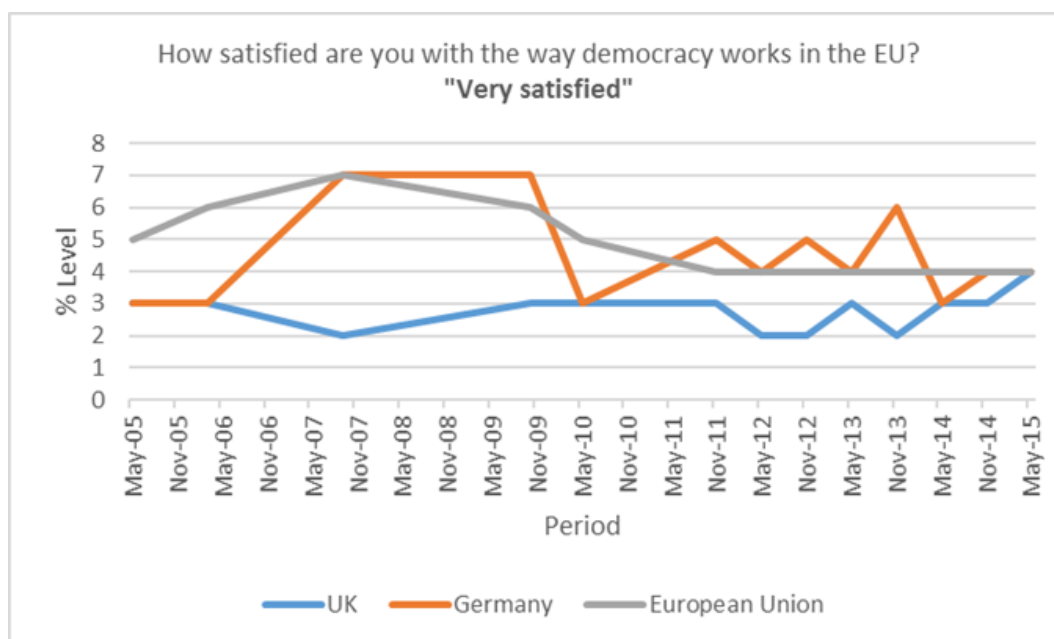


Figure 8b: satisfaction with working EU democracy (VERY SATISFIED)

Appendix 5

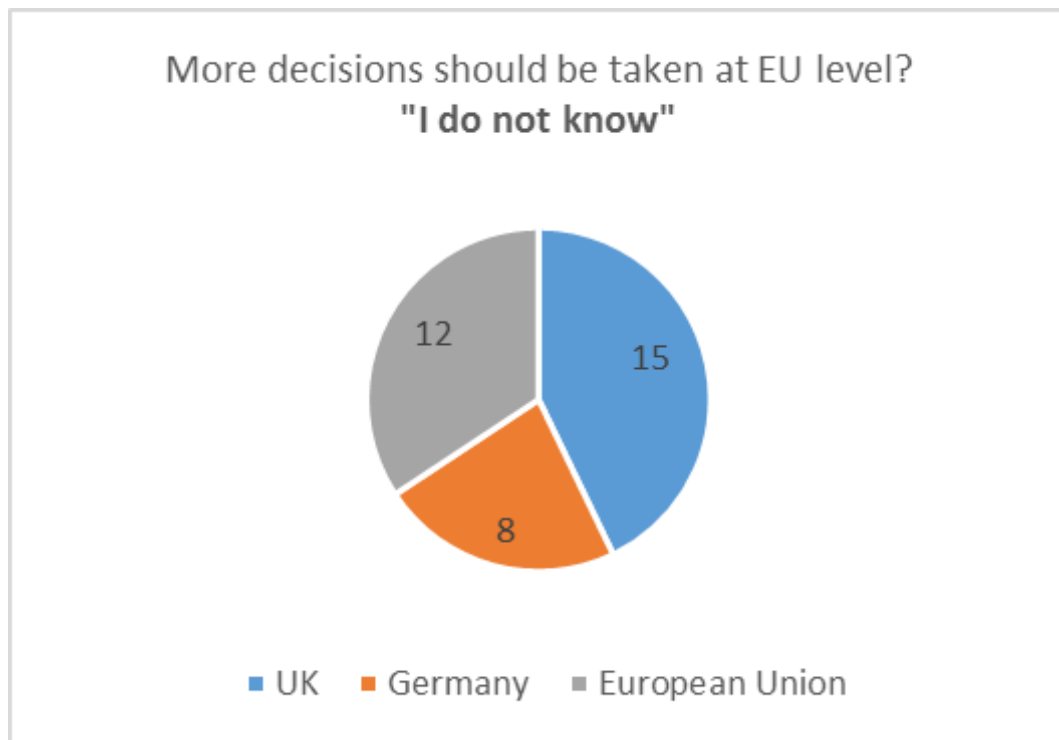


Figure 9c: More decisions should be taken at EU level "I DO NOT KNOW"

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