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Public opinion in transformation and the causes behind Euroscepticism in Germany

Master's thesis in European Studies

Supervisor: Tobias Etzold

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Abstract

The topic of this thesis is public opinion towards European integration in Germany. Aim of the thesis is to examine how public opinion towards the EU has changed and why, in the context of the Eurozone crisis and the European migration crisis. The applied method of the thesis is a qualitative case study, which applies academic articles and data from the Eurobarometer survey to analyse support and opposition towards the EU among Germans, and the causes behind Euroscepticism in Germany. The thesis argues that events or features at domestic level have been most decisive for the increase in Euroscepticism in Germany.

Table of content

List of abbreviations	3
List of tables and figures.....	4
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	5
Topic relevance	6
Theoretical approach	8
Thesis outline	8
Literature review	9
Common discoveries	9
Contradictions	10
Gaps in the field of study.....	11
Relation to this study and summary.....	12
Chapter 2 - Theory and Method.....	14
Justification for the choice of theories.....	14
Conceptualizing Euroscepticism.....	15
Utilitarian theory	17
Benchmark theory	19
Social identity theory.....	21
Methodology	23
Qualitative case study	23
Data and Sources.....	24
Strengths and weaknesses	25
Main part – introduction and outline.....	26
Historical retrospective – Public opinion towards European integration in Germany in the past ...	26
Post war-situation	26
Public opinion emerges in the 1990s	28
Eurosceptic parties in the 1990s	29
Support for EU membership according to the Eurobarometer	31
Chapter 3 – Public opinion towards the EU in the context of economy and the Eurozone crisis	32
The introduction of the Euro.....	32
The purpose of introducing a single currency.....	32
Public opinion towards the Euro	32
The Eurozone crisis – a short description.....	33
Economic conditions in Germany.....	35
Public opinion towards European integration in Germany the context of the Eurozone crisis.....	39
Contested issues in Germany in the context of the crisis	40

Levels of support and opposition	41
Eurobarometer data	43
Opinion of current economic situation and towards EU membership	43
Expectations about the future	44
Trust in EU	46
Crisis management	46
Most important issues.....	48
The AfD – establishment and influence on public opinion	48
Summary	50
Chapter 4 – Public opinion towards the EU in the context of immigration and the 2015 migration crisis:.....	52
EU migration policy	52
The European migration crisis.....	53
Distribution of immigrants and examples of lack of unity	53
The refugee crisis in German media and politics	54
The AfD in the time of the refugee crisis.....	57
Eurobarometer data.....	58
Summary	60
Conclusion	62
Bibliography.....	64

List of abbreviations

AfD = *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternatives for Germany)

EC = European Commission

ECB = European Central Bank

EMU = The Economic and Monetary Union

EP = European Parliament

ESM = European Stability Mechanism

EU = European Union

DM = Deutsche Mark

GCC = The German Constitutional Court

List of tables and figures

- Euroscepticism categories
- Impact on support for integration
- Social identity theory
- Support for EU membership according to the Eurobarometer, 1981-1999
- Gross domestic product (GDP) in Germany and EU-average
- Trust in government in 27 EU member states
- Unemployment rate in the EU
- Income inequality in Europe
- Poverty rate across the EU
- Trust in the EU among Germans in the period from 2002 until 2013
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: How would you judge the current situation of the national economy?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: Generally speaking, do you think that Germany's membership of the EU is...?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same when it comes to the economic situation in Germany?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same when it comes to the economic situation in the EU?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: How much trust do you have in the EU?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: In your opinion, is the EU or the national government best able to take effective actions against the effects of the financial and economic crisis?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: EU member states should work together more in order to take measurements to combat the financial and economic crisis.
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: What do you think are the two most important issues facing Germany at the moment?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: What do you think are the two most important issues facing Germany at the moment?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: How much trust do you have in the EU?
- Standard Eurobarometer Question: Do you feel you are a citizen of the EU?

Chapter 1 - Introduction

“European citizens today – in ever-larger numbers – are resisting what political and economic masters deem to be best for them. While the EU today relies on public support perhaps more than ever before, the European project itself is increasingly contested.” (De Vries, 2018, p. 14)

According to Matthijs, the second decade of the 21st century has been the most challenging one in the history of the European Union (EU) (2020, p. 1127). Crises prior to this have occurred but they have been solved and the union has continued to grow. As a result of this, when looking back, peace, economic growth and enlargements stand out as central features in the history of the EU. New in the European context is, as the quote claims, the increasing importance of public opinion for the European project. Public opinion in relation to European integration first became relevant in the early 1990s (Vasilopoulou, 2017, p. 31; Hooghe and Marks, 2009, p. 5). Major recent events and developments like the Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis and the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU (Brexit) confirm this increasing importance and may explain it. According to Hooghe and Marks, “The European Union was utterly unprepared for an existential threat to the Eurozone.” (2019, p. 1118). Further, “The current surge in migration to the European Union (EU) is rapidly becoming the largest and most complex facing Europe since the Second World War” (Metcalf-Hough, 2015, p. 1). Brexit, the first time a member state left the EU, made other member states also contemplate about Euroscepticism in their own country (Kyzym, 2019, p. 1). Thus, the challenges of the past decade have tested the EU in new and more extreme ways. It remains to see how EU citizens feel about European integration after the crises Europe has been put through, and the way the EU has handled the crises. Public opinion, or political attitude, towards European integration is therefore the topic of this thesis.

Of the EU member states, Germany is a country which traditionally has had low levels of scepticism towards European integration (Yordanova et al., 2020, p.431), but this has changed in the recent years. Therefore, public scepticism towards European integration in Germany and the causes related to this, is going to be studied closer. The main aim of this thesis will be to find out how opposition towards the EU has developed and detect the reasons behind the shifting trend. Because the state of the EU has changed during the last decade, an immediate suspicion is that the challenges the EU has faced, has affected public opinion towards European integration. Another aim of this thesis is to discover, which kind of Euroscepticism

is most prominent in Germany. A detailed justification for this country choice will be presented later in the introduction.

On this basis, the following research question has been formulated: *How has public opinion on European integration changed in the time period 2010 until 2017 in Germany, and what are the causes for the increase in Euroscepticism here?*

As presented above, the following sub-question will also be included in the discussion section of the thesis: What kind of Euroscepticism is on the rise here?

Topic relevance

The topic Euroscepticism was chosen for this thesis, because of the changing development in the EU. Since 2008, when the Eurozone debt crisis hit, the EU has had to face several crises, both internal and external ones, in the time frame of a decade. These crises have affected all, or at least most, of the member states to some degree. Keeping track of these alterations can help us handle the challenges that the EU is facing, because it is not just important to deal with the events and crises that takes place, but to include the ramifications that follow due to these occurrences.

Next to the many crises, a noteworthy feature of the past decade is the fact that in the election in 2014, the amount of Eurosceptics that were elected into the European Parliament increased (EU, 2020). This is a sign that a major shift in public opinion has occurred, and that the EU has entered an uncertain state. The reasons behind the transition in public opinion is relevant to study in order to figure out what threatens support for the European project and how we can turn the state of the EU into a stable one again. Eventually, what people think about the EU and the way the crises in Europe are handled will shape the future of the EU. Handling present issues and working for a steady and better future is important for the whole EU, therefore it is important to track support and opposition the EU. At least opposition and the causes for it is vital to study. And after the last decade the EU has experienced, it is maybe more relevant than ever to examine Euroscepticism.

The choice to study Euroscepticism in one EU member state might not seem as obvious as studying scepticism across the EU after the challenging decade Europe has had. Doing a case study was decided on the basis that most studies on Euroscepticism since this topic became apparent in the field of European studies, have been comparative quantitative studies (Vasilopoulou, 2017, p. 30), and groups of countries, rather than case studies with single countries, have constituted the scope of the country focused studies in this field (ibid, p. 28).

With the aim of increasing the originality of this thesis, the choice has been made to study a country case instead of comparing several member states, like the majority of studies on Euroscepticism have done already.

Furthermore, Vasilopoulou states that studies on Euroscepticism in national politics frameworks will be relevant in further research on Euroscepticism, because the EU issue has increased its salience in the member states due to the state of crisis in Europe (ibid, p. 31). Therefore, a single country focus is of high relevance. It is not just relevant because the opposite has been done mostly before, but also due to the new circumstances in the EU. The EU is not one country, but consists of several countries with different political systems, culture, language etc. In other words, the national politics frameworks differ across the EU, which makes it reasonable to conduct country cases focusing only on one member state at the time. Additionally, we can assume, that the challenges of the past decade have had diverse consequences in the different member states. Before we compare which impacts the past decade has had across the EU, it makes sense to do in-depth studies of single country cases first.

The choice to pick Germany for a country case study on public opinion may also seem less relevant at the first glance. Germany was not hit hardest by any of the crises, nor is this a nation which has had a tradition for high Euroscepticism (de Vries, 2018, p. 6). Still, there are a number of good reasons to have a closer look at Euroscepticism in Germany.

Firstly, Germany is the biggest country in the EU by population, and therefore also one of the nations with high influence in the EU. About 13,6 % of the European Parliament (EP) members are German (European Union, 2020), which when considering that the EP members are shared between 27 nations is a lot. What goes on in Germany and what the Germans vote in European elections is eventually very crucial for the whole union. This makes Germany an interesting member state to investigate in general. According to a study from 2009, where 'influence potential' of the 27 EU member countries in the EP was measured, Germany was ranked at the top as over-represented (Euractiv, 2009, para. 1). POLITICO has published a ranking of the 28 most powerful people in Europe in 2020 (Busquets Guardia, 2019), and Germany also tops this ranking. With eight out of 28 people on the list, Germany is the nation with the biggest amount of powerful people in the ranking (ibid).

In addition to political strength, Germany has a high level of economic power. It is the wealthiest and economically most powerful nation in Europe (Beck, 2015, p. 48). The fact that

Germany is such a central actor in the EU, makes it a particularly interesting country to investigate in relation in public opinion. Further, Germany is one of the founding members of the predecessor of the EU. Since Germany contributed to the formation of and influenced the rationale of the EU, it would seem illogical that Germans would want to leave a union they took part in creating. A member state who joined the EU at a later stage would, based on logic and without taking conditional or other circumstances into account, have a greater likelihood of leaving. Off course, an assumption based on logic can also turn out to be inexact and does not necessarily count as the strongest argument. Yet, there might be some truth in logic, and this makes it worth investigating.

More importantly, evidence shows that Euroscepticism has in fact increased in Germany in the recent years (Scicluna, 2014, p. 287). Traditionally, this nation has had rather low levels of Euroscepticism, but this seems to be changing. This signalizes that crises might be influential factors for increasing Euroscepticism. Since the degree of Euroscepticism has increased during the last decade, and since several major crises have posed great challenges to the EU, the temporal frame of this thesis shall cover the years from 2010 until 2017, including the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis and the refugee crisis. (Also: the impact from Brexit in Germany, the national election in 2017, and if applicable more recent events?).

Theoretical approach

As Euroscepticism mostly has been studied in comparative studies, a qualitative case study and in-depth examination of one country was chosen for this thesis. Secondary literature linked to the Eurozone crisis and the migration crisis will be used to study how these events influenced public opinion towards European integration in Germany. This material will mainly be used to shed light on the possible causes for increased Euroscepticism. Data from the Eurobarometer will be included in the analysis as well. This data will mainly be applied to detect the change in public opinion towards the EU. By change in public opinion, the extent of support for European integration and Euroscepticism is meant. Relevant theories will first be presented. Based on them; hypotheses are going to be established. The hypotheses will be employed in the examination section of the thesis to discuss the extent of Euroscepticism in Germany.

Thesis outline

After the introduction, a literature review will follow. The literature review will focus on common findings, contradictions, and gaps in the study field of Euroscepticism. After the literature review, the term Euroscepticism will be conceptualized and explained. Then,

existing theories on European integration, economic theory and social identity theory will be described. In the theory section, the hypotheses that later will be employed in the analysis section, will be presented. Thereafter, the chosen method and approach of this project will be outlined. After the theory and method-chapter, two empirical chapters will follow. One focuses on public opinion in relation to economic issues, specifically the Eurozone crisis, the other focuses on public opinion in relation to migration matters, specifically the refugee crisis of 2015. In the analysis, results will be linked to theory and the established hypotheses. Both the analysis-chapters will end with a summary. Finally, a conclusion including an answer to the research question will be presented.

Literature review

The literature review will evaluate secondary literature related to Euroscepticism. The focus will be on common discoveries, contradictions and gaps in the study field of Euroscepticism.

Common discoveries

The EU's development from market union to political union in the mid-1980s brought challenge upon the EU, because the definition of the EU's polity has been unclear the first two decades of the 21st century (De Wilde & Trezn, 2012, p. 539). This uncertainty is one of the most central aspects of understanding and theorizing the term Euroscepticism (ibid). This is further one of the aspects that is often mentioned by scholars in their research on public opinion on European integration and Euroscepticism. Mair, describes the EU as having been in a state of permissive consensus, but clearly states that this no longer the case is and that support for Europe has declined (2007, p. 2). The transition from permissive consensus to constraining dissensus in the 1990s is also mentioned by Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 5). The implementation of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 was the reason for this transition, which changed decision making in the EU through party competition, elections and referendums (ibid, p. 7; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 415).

In other words, the EU has not just developed into a political union, but the citizens of the EU have been involved more in the political debate and they contribute to the EU policy making. When the union became political, both support and opposition had to be expected, and when the citizens were given a voice, a wider spectrum of political opinions, or at least a larger amount of opinions directed at the EU, had to be expected. van der Eijk and Franklin refer to Europe as a 'sleeping giant' which may trigger voters to more political behaviour if this giant is awoken (2004, p. 2). They further argue that the giant has not woken up yet and that EU

citizens do not mainly vote on behalf of preferences regarding the union (ibid, p. 16). More recent research claim that the giant has indeed awoken (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 425).

Other discoveries that have been done by several scholars and where agreement rules are the finding that support for Europe has decreased (Mair, 2007, p. 2; Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 21; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 414). A further finding is that “mainstream political elites on average remain considerably more supportive of the European integration than citizens” (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 422; Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 21). In addition, several scholars have found that Euroscepticism tends to be most popular in small parties on the far left and right (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 422; van der Eijk & Franklin, 2004, p. 16). Moreover, it is also mentioned more than once, that influence on EU policy is mainly possible through European institutions and a national route (Mair, 2007, p. 12; Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 22). Lastly, scholars argue that discourse on European integration will continue, since the EU is in motion through referenda, treaty reforms and bigger changes like enlargements (de Wilde & Trenz, 2012, p. 549; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 427).

Contradictions

There are multiple approaches regarding the explanation of causes for opposition towards the EU. Identity and the question whether citizens feel European is claimed by several scholars to be crucial to their opinion on European integration (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 414; Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 12). According to Kuhn, “border residents are less prone than the overall population to be Eurosceptic, at least in Germany (Kuhn, 2011, p. 111). Hooghe & Marks further argue that political parties are crucial in this context, since they select which issues get attention (2009, p. 18). Moreover, they add, that tan and left parties can be linked to Euroscepticism but which of these party directions are Eurosceptic differs in the different member state (ibid). A case study of a country, like my planned project, is therefore of high relevance to understand the varieties of and causes for Euroscepticism.

A few scholars agree on events, e.g. crises, as a cause for politization in Europe, and a possible cause for increased opposition (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 414; van der Eijk & Franklin, 2004, p. 18). Van der Eijk and Franklin claim that “The potential sources of issues to politicize the pro/anti EU dimension are limitless”, (ibid). Hobolt and de Vries also adds a utilitarian approach to explain support and opposition, and they refer to the issue “that citizens rely on proxies or cues to overcome their information shortfalls.”, (2016, p. 421-422).

Kiess et al. introduces winners and losers of globalization as an explanatory approach to opinion on European integration (2016, p. 235). They further state that “how individuals identify with Europe as a whole is not only determined by whether they are ‘winning’ or ‘losing’, but also by their connection with the process, if or how they experience cultural disadvantages, and how they are able to participate as a citizen.» (ibid, p. 236). In addition, they claim to have found correlation between right-wing ideologies and Euroscepticism (ibid, p. 239). This finding is conflicting with other findings that show Euroscepticism in both left-wing as well as right-wing parties.

Gaps in the field of study

De Wilde and Trenz have found existing surveys on Euroscepticism to focus only on party politics and public opinion but not on mass media (2012, p. 538-539). They claim that Euroscepticism is primarily salient within this exact framework (ibid, p. 539). Mass media thereby amounts to a framework where opinion on European integration should be studied more. This framework is where all kinds of opinions are shared, it is a medium which is accessible for everyone, and it is a platform where we can study salience of different issues (ibid, p. 543).

Not only other frameworks, but alternative approach aspects are suggested as to fill the gaps in Euroscepticism-studies. Hobolt and de Vries highlight the lack of attention that has been devoted to definition and measurement of public opinion (2016, p. 415). Additionally, they refer to de Wilde & Trenz and Mair, and emphasize “the lack of elite and public consensus about the nature of the EU polity presents an existential challenge to the European project” and suggests that EU public opinion should be analysed as a whole instead of a one isolated phenomenon (ibid, p. 416). In addition to new approaches terms of conceptualization, an alternative approach related to the causes is proposed. In her examination of 54 studies on Euroscepticism, Vasilopoulou detected a dominant focus on causes for Euroscepticism and that limited attention was drawn to the effect of Euroscepticism (2017, p. 32). She suggests that the latter should be approached to advance this field of study (ibid, p. 32).

Several scholars have identified gaps in relation to country-based studies on Euroscepticism. Hobolt and de Vries refer to recent studies which have found that national context is relevant for attitudes towards the EU (2016, p. 424). Vasilopoulou also highlights this kind of thematic approach, e.g. to focus on Euroscepticism’s influence on domestic politics, how EU issues are illustrated in national politics before and after crises, or other domestic approaches, instead of applying identity, utilitarian and cue-taking approaches, which have been employed in

numerous existing studies (2017, p. 31-32). As for this reason, it can be interesting to do a case study on Euroscepticism in a specific country, to examine how much information citizens get about EU matters, to which extent EU issues are debated in national politics, and how the national government influences EU attitudes. Furthermore, conducting a country-based case study can contribute to answering whether citizens “support or oppose European integration based on their countries’ economic or political performance” (Hobolt & de Vries, 2016, p. 426-427).

Other gaps in the literature are “on how contestation of the European Union is linked to other issues” (ibid, p. 425), and “on whether public opinion on European integration shapes policy making in the European Union.”, (ibid, p. 425). Finally, it is stated that contestation on EU issues and European integration is crucial to attain more democratic decision making but this contestation may challenge the policy making if common solutions are hard to find (ibid, p. 427). In other words, more contestation may threaten the functioning and the existence of the EU. In order to avoid this, research on public opinion on European integration will remain relevant.

A further relevant gap, according to Vasilopoulou, is the aspect of EU crises and the question whether and how these matters have affected the extent of Euroscepticism (2017, p. 31). This finding relates to Matthijs’ aforementioned assumption that the last decade has been the most challenging one in the history of the EU (Matthijs, 2020, p. 1127). Vasilopoulou’s finding results from an examination of articles from the 1990s until 2014 but, we can argue, that it has become even more fitting, because the EU has encountered several great challenges since 2014.

Relation to this study and summary

A shared finding among most scholars is that the EU, due to its transition into a political union and due to the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty, which included more citizen involvement in policy making, has politicized European integration. Conceptualizing and defining support and opposition towards European integration has not been as easy. There are multiple ways of understanding the terms among different scholars. Although many of them are similar, there is no common definition of opinion to European integration.

Regarding causes for support or opposition towards the EU, there are many different explanations and approaches in the existing research. Some causes are mentioned by several scholars, like identity, events, and issues that the EU is faced with. Some have claimed that

causes can differ in different countries, and therefore a case study of an EU member state appears relevant to me.

The most central gaps in the literature linked to opinion on European integration are examination of support and opposition in mass media, a common conceptualization of the term, a more comprehensive study of relation between Euroscepticism on EU level and national level, as well as how contestation is related to other matters, and finally regarding the extent to which public opinion have actual impact on policy making.

Chapter 2 - Theory and Method

The aim of the research question is to detect how the political attitude in Germany towards integration with the EU has changed in light of two major crises, and to identify explanations for this transformation. In order to do this, it is crucial that support and opposition is explained, and that reasons why people become sceptic towards European integration is described. The context of which public opinion is going to be studied is the Eurozone crisis and the migration crisis. In relation to the Eurozone crisis, economic theory is relevant. Regarding migration crisis, theories explaining cooperation across cultures is important. Theories related accordingly will be presented now, but first a justification for the choice of theories will be outlined. Thereafter, Euroscepticism will be defined. Then, the theories will be described in detail. And lastly, hypotheses, that later will be employed to test data in the examination section of this thesis, will be formulated based on the theories, which will be presented now.

Justification for the choice of theories

Looking back on the initial European project, the founding ideas of EU's predecessor focused on preventing a new military rearmament (Rittberger & Glockner, 2010, p. 1). But many years have passed since the European Community was founded. The EU and the world have changed since then. Motivations for European integration, we can expect, have changed somewhat as decades have passed.

Several theories try to explain European integration. Neo-functionalism, intergovernmentalism, liberal intergovernmentalism, new institutionalism, and multi-level governance are among the most leading theories on integration in Europe (Hatton and Sonny, 2015, p. 1-2). Hooghe and Marks, "share with neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism the view that regional integration is triggered by a mismatch between efficiency and the existing structure of authority" (2008, p. 2), but highlights that neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists, for decades have discussed where the impetus for European integration comes from without settling this debate (ibid, p. 4). They further claim, "that one must probe beyond the economic preferences of interest groups to understand the course of European integration", (ibid, p. 5) and suggest that identity is a feature that is decisive for European integration (ibid, p. 2). Other scholars have claimed the same, that European identity is crucial in relation to explain support for the EU (Bourne, 2015, p. 57). With their focus on the importance of identity in relation to European integration, Hooghe and Marks favour postfunctionalism over neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism (2008, p. 13).

This idea although dates from the time prior to the Eurozone crisis and the refugee crisis. Both neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism and postfunctionalism were developed much prior to the Eurozone crisis (Hooghe and Marks, 2019, p. 1113). Hence, theories on European integration may not be as applicable as they once were, and they will therefore not be described further in this thesis. And since economic and a humanitarian crisis constitute the context of this thesis, economic and social theory stand out as more applicable than integration theory. De Vries has studied Euroscepticism in EU member states in relation to the crises of the past decade. In her study, she developed a new theory, the benchmark theory, because the trends in public opinion since the respective crises cannot be fully addressed by utilitarian and identity theories (De Vries, 2018, p. 15). Her theory will therefore be applied in this thesis as well and will be explained later. But first, Euroscepticism is going to be defined.

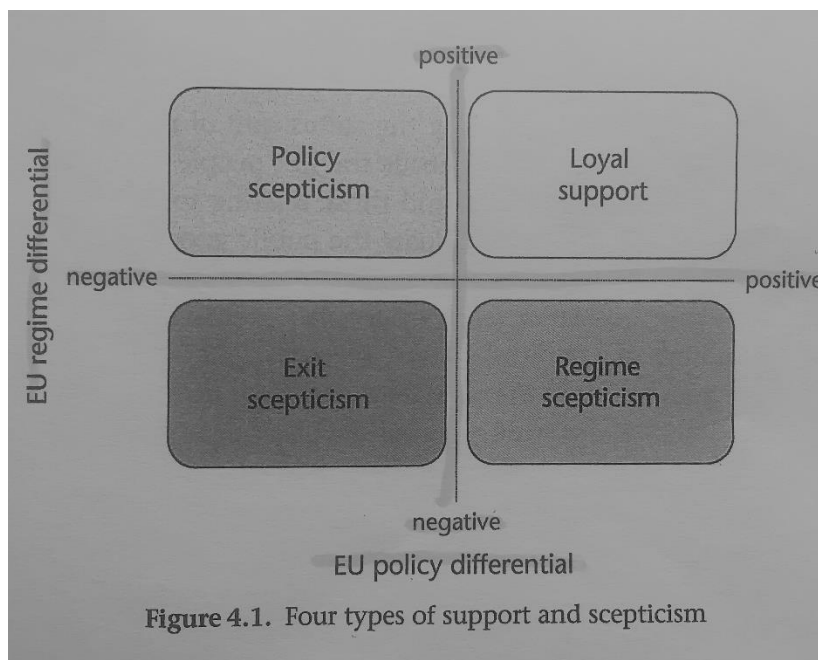
Conceptualizing Euroscepticism

A central finding of the literature review is the fact that there does not yet exist a definition of the term Euroscepticism which is widely accepted among scholars. Some of the most recognized explanations of Euroscepticism are the ones developed by Taggart and Szczerbiak, hard and soft Euroscepticism, or by Kopecky and Mudde, diffuse and specific support. De Vries's study on Euroscepticism, since it is newer and have several common features with the mentioned definitions, is going to be used in this thesis.

De Vries claims that public opinion in relation to European integration is not simply about being Eurosceptic or pro-European, but consists of several categories, which are important to include to better understand the diversities of the phenomenon, the impact the varieties of scepticism may have, and to understand how to deal with them (de Vries, 2018, p. 5-6). The Eurozone crisis may count as an explaining factor for the existence of diverse kinds of Euroscepticism, because "economic and political conditions within the member states started to diverge further", (ibid, p. 6). Hence, Euroscepticism is a term that has evolved with time, like many phenomena does, and therefore adjustments to the definition of terms are important.

Based on the benchmark theory, four varieties of Euroscepticism have been formulated: exit scepticism, loyal support, policy scepticism and regime scepticism. Exit scepticism are the most sceptical citizens, their EU differential is negative both in terms of regime and policy evaluations, and they prefer the alternative state over the status quo (de Vries, 2018, p. 78). Hence, exit sceptics prefer to reject membership and be outside the EU. Loyal supporters have positive EU differentials both regarding regime and policy evaluations, and they perceive membership as a greater gain than to leave the EU (ibid, p. 79). Hence, loyal supporters want

to remain EU members. Policy sceptics are not satisfied with current and past policies and actions at EU level, but they prefer the EU system over the system at national level (ibid). Although their policy evaluations of the EU are negative, the national system is so negatively evaluated that their EU differential is still positive. Regime sceptics review the national system better than EU system, they see clear benefits to EU policy making, because a supranational establishment have the power to achieve outcomes one could not achieve as a single nation outside the EU (ibid). In other words, regime sceptics are not satisfied with the EU system, but the gains of international cooperation and the possibilities connected to this surpass the dissatisfaction with the system. According to de Vries, Germany falls into the category of regime sceptics (ibid, p. 81).



(de Vries, 2018, p. 78)

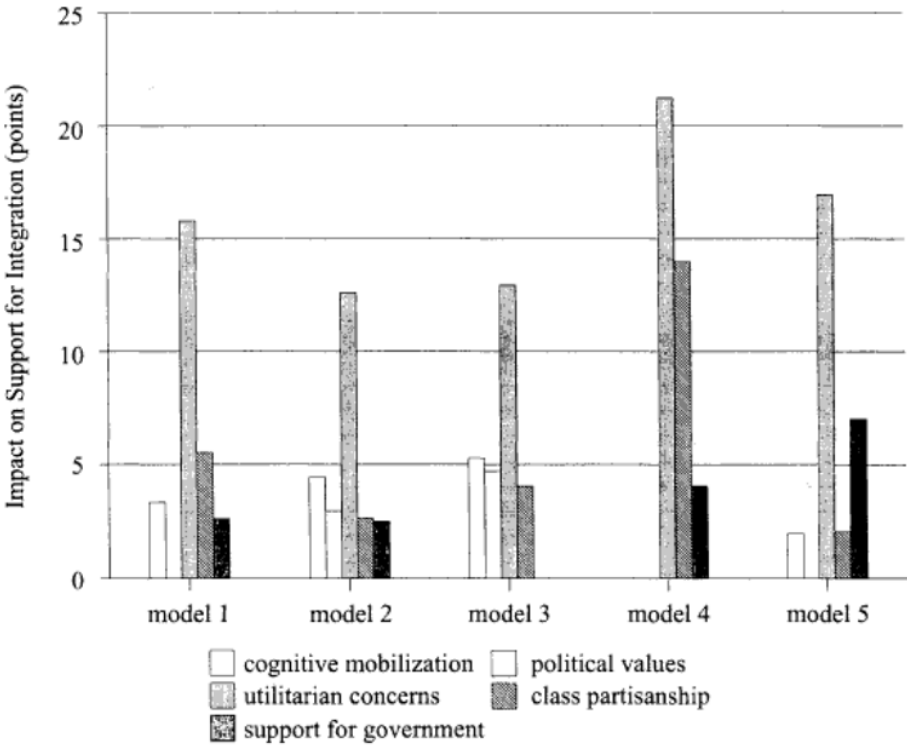
Exit sceptics and loyal supporters have unified opinions (de Vries, 2018, p. 79). This means that they are clearer on whether they oppose or support European integration. Policy and regime sceptics on the other hand, are more ambivalent in their opinions towards European integration (ibid). Hence, these variations of scepticism can be supportive and sceptic towards the EU at the same time. By knowing that policy and regime sceptics are ambivalent in their political attitude, we know that “these attitudes are often held with higher uncertainty, prove less coherent, and will have less clear behavioural consequences” (ibid, p. 80). These are therefore important groups for politicians as ambivalent sceptics may suddenly change their political attitude. Loyal supporters are very likely to remain the same, but policy and regime

sceptics find themselves in an uncertain state where they potentially can develop into becoming both more and less sceptic. Hence, we can expect that policy and regime sceptics are more likely to change their public opinion towards European integration when major changes occur at national or EU level. Yet, predicting which direction their scepticism develops in is difficult due to their ambivalence.

Utilitarian theory

Utilitarian theory in relation to European integration was first introduced by Gabel and Palmer (1995). They claim that citizens in dissimilar socioeconomic situations experience different benefits and expenses as a result of the integrative policy, and that these welfare differences affect people's opinion towards European integration (Gabel, 1998, p. 336). Hence, the idea is that economic benefits from European integration result in support for EU integration. De Vries refers to Gabel and other scholars in her recent study and highlights that "support should be higher in countries with improved trade and favourable economic conditions due to the Single Market or in countries that receive structural funds" (2018, p. 14). Thereby, according to utilitarian theory, countries who benefit economically from EU membership are expected to show higher numbers of EU support.

Gabel and Palmer claimed that liberalization of the EU's labour markets has had diverse consequences for EU citizens and followingly, that high education level and occupational skills would influence support for integration in a positive way (ibid, p. 337). Additionally, wealthy EU citizens have economic benefits, whereas citizens with lower incomes have disadvantages rather than benefits as a result of policies of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Lastly, the policies of free movement of people and goods have resulted in economic differences for EU citizens. Those who live near borders of another EU member have higher advantages due to increased economic interaction across the border, a phenomenon that non-border citizens do not experience (ibid). Followingly, border citizens are more likely to show support for European integration. In their examinations, Gabel and Palmer found solid evidence for variation in support for European integration based on the theory of utilitarianism (ibid, 351). In the figure below, it is illustrated that utilitarian concerns have much higher impact on public opinion towards European integration.



(Gabel, 1998, p. 350)

But, like the aforementioned European integration theories, the utilitarian theory was developed in the last century and may not be as applicable anymore. De Vries does mention utilitarian theory and identity perspectives as central ideas to understand public opinion in relation to European integration. But she also points out the Brexit result and the rise of Euroscepticism in the 2014 EP election as puzzles where the mentioned theories lack ability to explain fully (de Vries, 2018, p. 15). According to utilitarian theory, the countries who were not seriously affected by the Eurozone crisis, would be expected to remain supportive of European integration, whereas one would expect the opposite, namely less support, in countries that were negatively affected by the Eurozone crisis. However, de Vries detected the opposite pattern in her study. The member states that have coped well economically during the crisis have the highest numbers of Eurosceptic support (ibid, p. 16). Secondly, the patterns in leave-votes for Brexit fit the utilitarian model in some regions, like Sunderland, but not in Bournemouth, a city with a great number of skilled workers and a strong economy (ibid, p. 17-18). Hence, utilitarian theory may explain public opinion in some regions or some cases, but not in all. The Eurozone crisis shows that additional theories are required to explain recent trends in public opinion towards European integration. Therefore, this thesis will include the benchmark theory developed by de Vries for her study on public opinion towards European integration, which includes the time period when the Eurozone crisis occurred.

Benchmark theory

The idea behind the benchmark theory is that EU citizens' base their opinions towards European integration on a comparison of benefits of the status quo of membership with the alternative state, which is to not be a member of the EU (de Vries, 2018, p. 23). This theory thereby claim that people take national conditions into account when they establish opinions towards the EU. Whether people support or oppose European integration “depends on how they *benchmark* the perceived benefits of the current status quo – their country's EU membership – against the perceived benefits associated with an alternative state, their country being outside the EU.” (ibid). Hence, the question whether membership or non-membership is more advantageous decides if citizens are supportive or sceptic towards the EU. Thereby, the benchmark theory can explain why higher levels of Euroscepticism has been found in countries which do well economically and did not suffer greatly during the Eurozone crisis (ibid, p. 22).

The alternative state is largely uncertain and that is why people are likely to depend on own evaluations of national conditions to establish thoughts about benefits of the alternative state (de Vries, 2018, p. 23). One could imagine that reviewing Norwegian or Swiss conditions, since both countries rejected EU membership, could help creating an idea of the alternative state. Great Britain, since they have left the EU, could also be reviewed in this context. As transaction costs related to leaving the EU are very differing from joining the EU, Brexit forms a better case to get information from when creating a realistic idea of the alternative state (ibid, p. 37).

The benchmark theory has similarities with prospect theory, which explains how people pick alternatives involving risks, and claims “that people make decisions based on the potential value of losses or gains rather than the final outcome.” (de Vries, 2018, p. 36). In the context of European integration, we can expect that citizens who perceive the alternative state of being outside the EU as a greater gain than the current state of membership, will take the risk of leaving and become sceptic towards the EU. Leaving the EU is of course a major step, but as we can imagine, if citizens find themselves in an unfavourable situation, they might feel like they have less to lose by taking a risk. If the benefits of the two states are equal, we can expect that people are supportive because people favour existing benefits over uncertain ones (ibid, p. 38). Based on the benchmark theory, the following definitions of EU support and EU scepticism can be formulated (ibid):

EU support: Evaluation of status quo \geq Evaluations of the alternative state

EU scepticism: Evaluation of status quo < Evaluations of the alternative state

The benchmark theory is in other words not reduced to the question whether citizens support or oppose the EU, but it takes the whole political attitude of citizens into account by including people's view on national conditions. Opinion towards the EU and opinion of the national condition thereby constitute two independent variables which in the affect opinion towards European integration. The comparison is labelled as the EU differential (de Vries, 2018, p. 36)

Opinion towards the EU has been measured long in the Eurobarometer, but how can we measure opinion towards both European and national conditions? Several variables can be considered here, but usual examples of national benchmarks are economic performance and quality of government (de Vries, 2018, p. 37). Yet, the benchmark theory focuses on regime and policy evaluations. Regime evaluations are evaluations of the political system, how rules and laws work in practice, and good regime evaluations means that citizens are optimistic about the functioning of the political system, also in the future (ibid, p. 44). Policy evaluations are evaluations of specific decisions that are made by politicians, whether the system provides preferred policies and public goods, and these evaluations are directed at the past and the present (ibid). These two evaluations at European level are equivalent to the evaluation of the status quo, whereas the evaluations at national level are equivalent to the evaluation of the alternative state. The comparison of European and national evaluation will reveal the extent of support or opposition towards the EU. Data from the European Social Survey (ESS) can be used to find information on national and European evaluations of regimes and policies (p. 45).

Moreover, de Vries tested whether unexpected exogenous events influence public opinion towards European integration. Based on the benchmark study, one should expect that events which reflect positively on the EU lead to higher EU differential whereas the opposite lead to lower EU differential (de Vries, 2018, p. 57). Events at national level are expected to result in the opposite pattern, positive reflected events here will lead to a decrease in the EU differential while negative reflected events will lead to a rising EU differential (ibid). These expectations were confirmed and thereby suggests that EU opinion is depending on both European and national events (ibid, p. 66).

The hypothesis of this thesis, based on the earlier presented Benchmark theory, would expect member states with good economic conditions to show greater opposition towards the EU,

whereas member states with bad economic conditions would show support for European integration.

Social identity theory

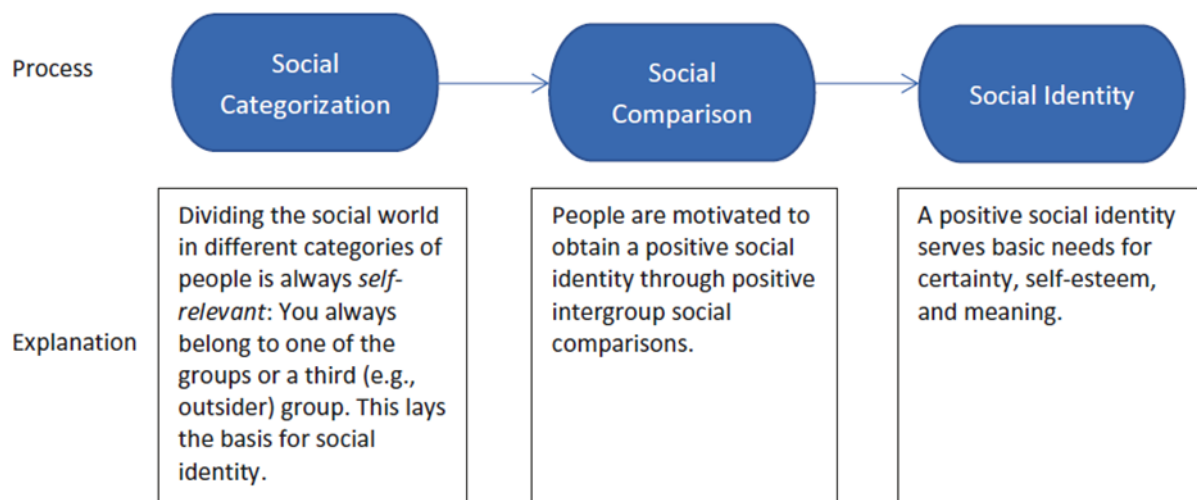
Social identity theory explains why social groups emerge and how they function. This theory will now be presented and later applied in the chapter about public opinion towards European integration in the context of the refugee crisis. Over 1 million migrants arrived in Europe, both in 2015 and in 2016, the years in which the crisis peaked (Eurostat, 2021). The arrival of so many people from other countries and cultures is expected to have had an effect on the social groups in Europe. Social identity theory will be explained here and later used in the analysis of the thesis, to discuss the effect the great amount of immigration has had on EU citizens' degree of feeling European and on public opinion towards European integration.

According to Tajfel, a natural task which every individual is faced with is “to find, create and define” his or her place in society, and society is usually a network of groupings (1974, p. 67). Thereby, our task as human beings in a complex society is to figure out which group or groupings we relate to, it is an important part of defining ourselves. There are several reasons for these groupings. One reason is that humans seek a systematization of the surrounding environment, based on common features like actions, beliefs and behaviour, another reason is the security these groupings offer (ibid, p. 69 & 67). The social categorization through groupings and the knowledge around this behaviour has led to the development of the term social identity. Social identity is understood as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership.” (ibid, p. 69). Tajfel is known as the founding father of social identity theory (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2019, p. 129), and his definition of social identity is often referred to by scholars in recent publications.

A well-known experiment by Tajfel is the one where groups were established to test which participants the different individuals favoured. The characteristics of participants of this project were reduced to the minimal, they only had a preference for one of two painters. The findings of this experiment contradicted the existing view on intergroup relations at that point in time, the realistic conflict theory, which claimed that “real conflict over scarce material resources (money, housing, food) was necessary for intergroup conflict to arise.” (, p. 131). The participants in Tajfel’s experiment had allocated money to their ingroup members without profiting from their actions (ibid). Hence, resource-related conflicts did not affect who the participant’s favoured, but the common preference for a painter did. The explanation

for this is “that people strive for a positive social identity”, hence something which make them unique (ibid). A common feature makes a group’s relationship unique or special and is therefore understood as something positive, and consequently this will be favoured when an individual chooses between groups.

Another important aspect of the social identity theory is the fact that individuals belong to one of two groups, or more, and that the comparison of the different categories is crucial for the group one chooses to identify with (Scheepers & Ellemers. 2019, p. 131). The concept of the social identity theory is illustrated in the figure below.



(Scheepers & Ellemers. 2019, p. 132)

Individuals can identify with several groups simultaneously, but context is crucial for which part of the individual’s identity is salient (Scheepers & Ellemers. 2019, p. 133). A further central aspect of social identity theory is the cases of negative social identity. Fact is that some groups have a lower status than others, e.g. physicians vs. the unemployed (ibid). We already know that individuals strove for a positive identity, so what do they do in the case of a negative social identity? The social identity theory includes three alternatives: seeking entrance to a group with a higher status, by collectively improving the status of the group one belongs to, or by changing the way one compares the own group to others (ibid). As we can imagine, all options are not always possible, so the type of group and the context is decisive for which option one chooses. If feeling European would have a negative status, EU citizens could always choose to leave this group by stating that they feel exclusively national, but to leave one’s nationality or ethnicity is more complicated.

A last important feature of the social identity theory, which is particularly relevant for this thesis, is its explanations for how individuals “behave, feel, and cooperate in organizational contexts” (Scheepers & Ellemers. 2019, p. 141). In organizational contexts, like in the EU, it is important to connect people and motivate them into establishing a shared identity (ibid, p. 138). This can be challenging when the group environment changes, e.g. through new members with different cultural backgrounds or life experiences joins the group (ibid, 139). When refugees arrived in Europe in 2015 and the following years, people brought different cultures with them which were different to those of EU citizens and thereby the European environment changed. In such situations, establishing a common group identity like feeling European, becomes very important. Otherwise, differences across groups may evolve into misunderstandings and conflicts (ibid).

Based on the social identity theory, we can formulate the hypothesis that if Europeans felt less European in the years of the migration crisis, it would signalize a decrease in positive association with the EU identity. This could further be understood as a decrease in support for European integration. To which extent German citizens felt European during the time of the refugee crisis will be examined later in the thesis.

Methodology

The following section includes a presentation of the selected method for answering the research question of this thesis. A justification explaining why this exact approach was chosen, as well as a discussion of weaknesses connected to this method will be included. Subsequently, the data and sources for the analysis will be presented. Here to, an explanation will follow to defend the selection of data, and to discuss the limitations related to these materials.

Qualitative case study

For this thesis a case study has been chosen, since a detailed examination the public opinion conditions in one EU country will be conducted. A country represents a case of most similar system, but different outcome. According to Gerring, a case study can in fact be defined as “an in-depth study of a single unit where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena.” (2004, p. 341). He further describes a unit as “a spatially bounded phenomenon, e.g. a nation-state” (ibid, p. 341). Aim of the thesis is to detect and elucidate change in and reasons for opposition towards the EU in Germany. By conducting a case study, one can go in-depth and try to discover if there are specific reasons behind Euroscepticism in Germany which have not been found yet. As Euroscepticism has mostly

been studied in comparative studies including many countries, looking for alternative and perhaps unique domestic behind Euroscepticism has not been possible often before.

Data and Sources

The already presented theories, the benchmark theory and the social identity theory, have resulted in formulation of two hypothesis. These will be discussed in the empirical part of the thesis. The empirical will consist of two main parts: an economic related part connected to the Eurozone crisis, and an immigration related part connected to the European migration crisis. The part will begin with relevant background information about public opinion in Germany, to create a picture about what has caused Euroscepticism here in the past. Then, the thesis continues with the economic chapter. Information about the introduction of the Euro and a retrospective of the Eurozone crisis will be outlined. The section about the introduction of the Euro will provide information about Germany's experience with some Euroscepticism. The part about the Eurozone crisis shall give an idea of what the crisis did to the EU. Then, by examining scholarly articles about how the Eurozone crisis was reviewed in Germany, the thesis will go more into depth in the German case to detect what was problematic, what happened to public opinion and why. Eurobarometer data will also be included here to shed light on how Germans reviewed their national condition, the crisis situation, and how their opinion was towards the EU. After the analysis and discussion, the chapter will be summarized, and the main findings of the economy section will be presented.

The chapter about the migration crisis will begin with a policy review of the EU migration policy. This review will help detect weaknesses to the policy and establish possible reasons to why Germans got sceptic towards the EU as a result of the migration crisis. Thereafter, scholarly articles will be examined to detect how the migration crisis was covered in the German press, and which issues got most attention here. Eurobarometer data will also be included in order to detect which issues were most salient in Germany at the time, how German citizens' relationship to the EU was, and discuss test the social identity theory. After the analysis and discussion, a summary of the chapter on migration will be presented. Finally, a conclusion with an answer to the research question will be given.

The approach of the case study is qualitative, as secondary literature constitute the main material applied in the empirical part. Public opinion is "an aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular topic, expressed by a significant proportion of a community.", (Davidson, 2020). Examining people's opinions can be done in several ways.

According to Berinsky, surveys have dominated research on public opinion for decades, but political scientist do not agree on exactly how to apply this method (2017, p. 309). Berinsky concludes that polls are powerful measurements for studying public opinion but that the choice of respondents and type of questions can shape the results of a study, and developments in communication technologies should be taken into account when altering the methods in survey research (ibid, p. 325). Accordingly, surveys are fitted for public opinion research, but they are not the perfect study tool and needs to be conducted with caution. Since surveys are suitable for examining public opinion, this tool will be applied in this thesis, to measure support for European integration in Germany. But because surveys have some shortcomings, it was decided early on in this project, that additional data was going to be included to supplement the surveys. This additional data will consist of scholarly articles where the focus is on Germany in relation to the two relevant crises. qualitative data, with the purpose of going more in-depth, and with the aim of strengthening the validity of the findings.

Strengths and weaknesses

The benefits of doing a case study is that on can conduct a comprehensive examination and spend much time on few sources. By doing this, each source is examined very thoroughly. Case studies are therefore applicable when one wants to explain or examined complex phenomena, as is often the case in social sciences. A downside to this method is related to its strength, that few sources are applied. When one includes few sources, they can result in helpful explanations, but the validity will be limited. In order to draw larger conclusions which are generally valid for a phenomenon, a case study is not enough. One would need additional studies. Case studies are therefore most suited to studying smaller and more isolated phenomena. Or they can be a good way of starting a series of studies.

Main part – introduction and outline

As an introduction to the main part of the thesis a historical retrospective on public opinion towards European integration in Germany will be provided. Thereafter, the main part of the thesis will be structured into two main sections: the first about the Eurozone crisis and the second about the migration crisis. Before examining the scientific articles and surveys related to these events, background information on the two respective topics will be presented. Finally, a conclusion and answer to the research question is going to be presented.

Historical retrospective – Public opinion towards European integration in Germany in the past

The 1990s stand out as an important decade regarding public opinion towards the EU, is due to the transformation of the EU as a result of the Maastricht Treaty and the inauguration of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Furthermore, Germany itself went through major fundamental changes as a result of the unification in 1990. We can expect that this affected both public opinion towards the EU and the understanding of national identity. Major political changes in the EU are accounted as important for EU citizens because they affect their daily lives. Consequently, we can expect that people care more about what goes on in the EU in the case of major policy shifts, and followingly, that more people establish an opinion about the EU in such situations. Moreover, an increased amount of these opinions may be stronger and more avid. As Kiess et al. stated, “transformation processes almost never play out without a conflict: they are always a process of redistribution.” (2017, p. 236). Hence, the thesis expects that major political changes in the EU’s past may have expanded the public opinion activity, and even made it more ardent. Now, the attention is turned to Germany’s past and which matters were most prominent with regard to support for or opposition against the EU.

Post war-situation

After the experience of two defeats in the world wars involvement in international and European cooperation rather than German hegemony seemed a more applicable aim in post war-Germany. According to Teschner, Germany has had a near understanding to European integration due to the consciousness related to National Socialism (2000, p. 59). In addition, the similarities of the German political system, their federal system, and the system of the EU, creates a foundation for affinity with the EU in Germany, which one would not necessarily observe in member states with dissimilar political systems (ibid, p. 59). Hence, the post war-state of Germany and their political system may explain why the support for European integration was high as European cooperation started to emerge in the mid-20th century.

Theoretically, Germany had two choices in the post-war period, integration with Western Europe or with the USSR. Western integration was the obvious choice, partly explained by the focus on Europe after the nationalist focus during Hitler's reign (Teschner, 2000, p. 62). Prior to the establishment of the EC, Western Germany in fact had the highest level of support, with 76 %, for European integration (ibid), and the Federal Republic and France can be counted as the main drivers for integration (ibid, p. 63). This turned out to be a good choice, as the political and economic success West Germany had experienced, in fact was a result of integration with Western Europe (ibid, p. 62). This success, directly linked to Germany's involvement with the European community, we can expect, was crucial for the high support towards the European cooperation and has strengthened the positive association with European integration for Germans.

German support for the European integration remained strong until the unification in 1990 (Teschner, 2000, p. 62), and all political parties represented in the *Bundestag* in the same period were pro-European (ibid, p. 63). German chancellor at the time of the unification, Helmut Kohl, saw the unification as a natural next step and direct result of the pro-European policy of the Federal Republic (Teschner, 2000, p. 63-64). But not all politicians were as optimistic as they had been prior to the unification. The social-democratic politician, Renate Schmidt, stated:

“German euroscepticism arose quite grotesquely at the moment in which the communist dictatorship... collapsed. The historical gift of the recreation of German unity which resulted from this has given rise to thoughts in not few German minds that the concept of European integration as a protective shield against communism had fulfilled its function and that we now longer need others.” (Teschner, 2000, p. 64).

It is at least safe to say that the unification was a major upheaval, which brought on substantial changes. It is further natural to expect that these changes could result in a change in the motivation for European integration. Still, it is possible that new motivations for European integration could become apparent. Yet, fact is that the unification resulted in a major financial burden, which further had an impact on willingness and ability for Germany to make financial contributions to the EU (Teschner, 2000, p. 64). Thus, the previous success-phase of Germany entered a challenging phase. This challenge, however, can rather be linked to the unification and not to European integration. Teschner in fact states, that the problems related to the unification did not exacerbate the German view on further European integration (ibid, p. 65). Nevertheless, there was a lack of support for austerity to meet the Maastricht

criteria for the Monetary Union because several electoral pledges were broken (ibid). This low support towards an EU matter can also be explained by circumstances in politics at domestic level. The thesis thereby argues that early Euroscepticism in Germany was a result of bad management by own government and not by EU management.

Public opinion emerges in the 1990s

In the 1990s, a phase begins where public opinion, and not just elite opinion, becomes important. This is earlier in the thesis referred to as a transition from permissive consensus to constraining dissensus. Consequently, we can expect that support towards the EU would change from this point on, as more people are included in the discourse about the EU. There were high levels of support for the EU in the early 1990s but shifts in public opinion occurred later in this decade (Teschner, 2000, p. 60). However, the German government remained pro-European and did not take the critical opinions of the public much into account (ibid, p. 65). This could either signalize that the scepticism towards European integration was relatively low or be explained by the fact that the elites were not used to respond to public opinion in the early 1990s.

The signing of the Maastricht Treaty was a central cause for emerging opposition towards European integration in the 1990s. There was not held a referendum on this treaty in Germany, but the representatives of the federal states were concerned that they would lose legislative competencies to the EU and threatened to block the ratification of Maastricht (Teschner, 2000, p. 67). The Maastricht Treaty can further be linked to the decreasing public support for further integration with the EU (ibid). Hence, both national politicians and the public were sceptical towards Maastricht. In fact, several polls, like the Eurobarometer and the German Politbarometer, show that Germans were more sceptical towards the Maastricht Treaty than the EU average (ibid, p. 69). Specifically, it was in relation to economic matters that German citizens were more critical than others (ibid). Additionally, affinity for the national currency due to the role it played in the successful period known as the “Wirtschaftswunder”, explains the scepticism towards the Euro (ibid, p. 70-71).

Other sources confirm that stronger political involvement and the Euro stand out as central causes for Euroscepticism in the 1990s. According to a survey commissioned by *Financial Times* and *Der Spiegel* in 1994, Germans were more opposed to more political cooperation (24 %) and particularly to a single currency (53 %), and less opposed to EU membership in general (9 %), (Teschner, 2000, p. 61). Thereby we see the complexity of Euroscepticism. It is possible to be opposed of certain policies or single matters related to European integration

without opposing European integration as a whole. As several of the sources mentioned above signalize, this kind of opposition towards European integration applies to the variety of Euroscepticism that existed in Germany in the 1990s.

Eurosceptic parties in the 1990s

While all political parties represented in the German parliament prior to the unification were pro-European, Eurosceptic parties did exist and new ones even emerged in the following years. A new Eurosceptic party was established prior to the EP election in 1994, the 'Bund Freier Bürger' (Alliance of Free Citizens), a party mainly concerned with the Maastricht Treaty and the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Teschner, 2000, p. 73). Other Eurosceptic parties at the time was the 'Republikaner' (Republicans) and the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism). The Republicans largely gained support due to agricultural matters and their fear of high unemployment because of European integration (ibid, p. 74). The scepticism of the PDS is directed at non-EU nationals who live in EU member states and benefit from EU rights, as well as at economic matters related to EMU (ibid, p. 74). The former detected causes for opposition towards the EU, the Maastricht Treaty and economic concerns, are thereby again confirmed. Furthermore, agricultural matters and unemployment rate concerns can be categorized as additional causes for early Euroscepticism in Germany. Beyond the parties mentioned above, the only other signs of Euroscepticism among other political parties in Germany were concerns regarding Maastricht and EMU (ibid, p. 75). Hence, the causes for Euroscepticism is restricted to two main matters and was otherwise not a prevalent phenomenon in German politics.

None of the Eurosceptic parties mentioned above gained a large amount of votes in the EP election in 1994, which may be explained by the fact that a great majority voted on behalf of domestic instead of supranational issues (Teschner, 2000, p. 74). Another explanation is that "there has always been more diffuse support for the general ideal of European integration than for tangible developments which threaten the status quo." (ibid, p. 78). In other words, Euroscepticism in Germany in the 1990s was not substantial and public opinion towards European integration was not particularly contested.

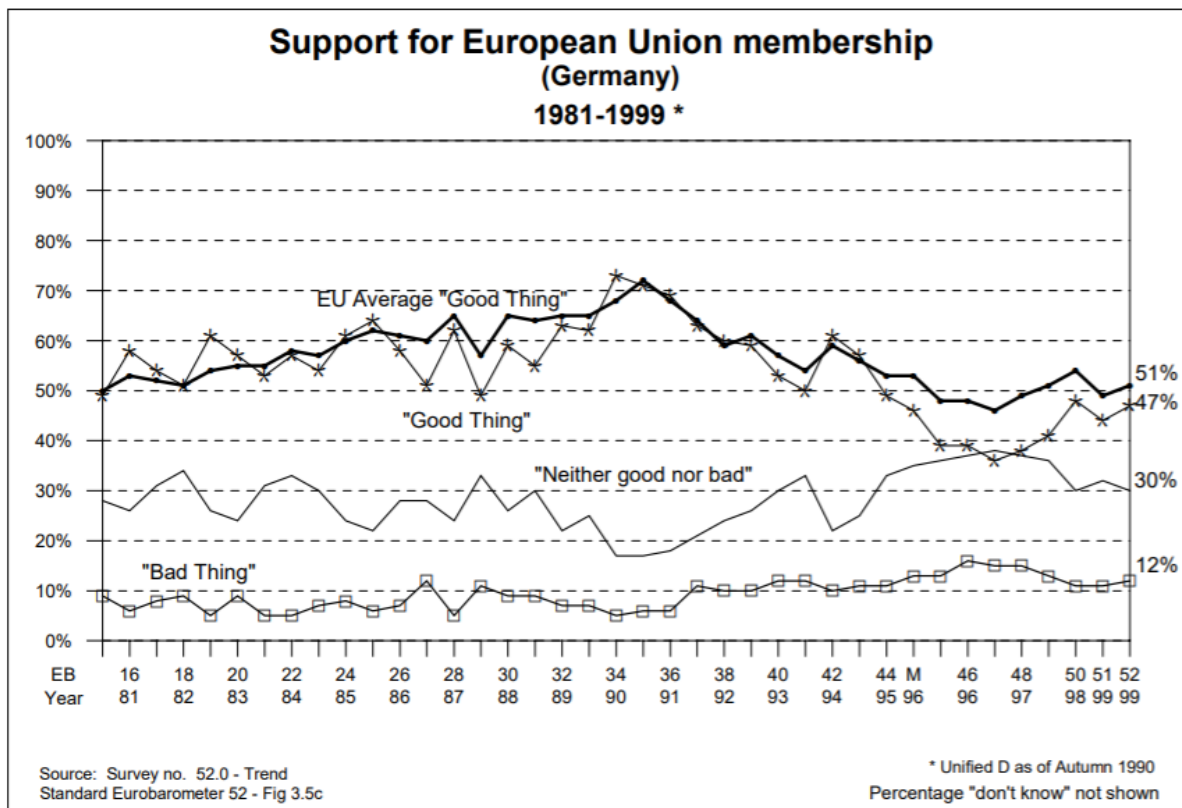
As for explanations to the increase in Euroscepticism in Germany in the 1990s, one aspect is the generation shift. Those who lived in the post-war period had a different connection to Western Europe than those who experienced the unification (Teschner, 2000, p. 79-80). As mentioned earlier, the political and economic success in the post war-period was strongly associated with European integration. This positive association may have weakened as time

went by and new generations emerged. Another aspect is the regaining of national confidence in international context through the unification, which has made it more acceptable with differentiated opinions towards European integration (ibid, p. 80). The unification of West- and East Germany, which despite their common features, had developed in two contrasting directions, politically and culturally, may also explain the new diversity within public opinion towards the EU.

Further, the new and strengthened role of public opinion, which evolved in this decade may explain the increase in Euroscepticism. “In autumn 1996, 73 % of Germans said that they felt that they were either ‘not very well informed’ or ‘not at all informed’ about the European currency.”, and as a reaction to the elites failure in informing the public about EU issues, more open debates were called for (ibid, p. 81). More open debates may consequently have opened for more diversity in opinions, and Euroscepticism may have been among the new views of the public. In addition, we can argue that the lack of information about EU issues may have led to uncertainty and followingly to scepticism towards EU involvement. The lack of information linked to the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, especially led to public discussion on European matters (ibid). Lastly, greater access to information technology has increased the public’s interest in European integration (ibid). As we can imagine, greater access to information for more people gives them more material to engage with, which further is likely to result in increased activity. With more variety in material and more activity, increased interest is often not far away.

Support for EU membership according to the Eurobarometer

GERMANY



(European Commission, 2000, p. 31)

The table above illustrates the level of support for membership in the EU in Germany, compared with the EU average in the 1980s and 1990s. As we can see, the support was higher in Germany than the EU average several times prior to the unification, but only a couple of times in the early 1990s. Further, the support trend is decreasing in the 1990s, with the exception of two peaks in 1994 and 1998. The difference between the EU average and the German support is not major. The relative high support for the EU can be explained from the fact that German Euroscepticism is directed at specific features of the EU rather than European integration as a whole. Early German Euroscepticism is mainly characterized by opposition towards the Maastricht Treaty and the EMU.

Chapter 3 – Public opinion towards the EU in the context of economy and the Eurozone crisis

The introduction of the Euro

The economic-based section will start off with a retrospective on the introduction of the Euro in Germany. Then, a description of the Eurozone crisis will be presented, followed by an examination of topic-related articles and surveys. Further, a section on the political party, *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)* (Alternatives for Germany), as they started by advocating for abolition of the Euro (Rosenfelder, 2017, p. 125), will follow.

The purpose of introducing a single currency

The introduction of the Euro was planned and prepared over decades before the currency was launched in 1999. The aim of introducing a single currency in Europe, was to upgrade the common market since “it is easier to trade in a common market if you use a common currency.”, (European Union, n. d., para. 1). Three economic arguments are central in relation to the introduction of the Euro. The first one is related to better efficiency in pricing policies of European enterprises and less uncertainty for labour and wages because exchange rates, and followingly competitiveness, would be more stable (Thygesen, 2016, p. 12). Organised labour in Germany wished a stable rise in real wages (ibid), and the first argument was thereby relevant for the Germans. The second important argument for implementing a single currency, was to stabilize the economic conditions for member states across the whole EU, something which the European Monetary System had not succeeded in (ibid). The Deutsche Mark (DM) relied on the dollar, and strong DM values resulted in need for realignments which were unjustified by European developments (ibid). Thirdly, an important argument was to expand the EMS in terms of creating a more unified financial market for Europe (ibid).

Public opinion towards the Euro

The physical introduction of the Euro, in banknotes and coins, happened on January 1, 2002. Also in usually pro-European Germany, like in several other parts of Europe, the public had differing opinions about the new currency, and in Germany the number of opponents was almost as big as the number of supporters of the Euro (Brettschneider, Maier & Maier, 2010, p. 46). Furthermore, in contrast to many other members of the Eurozone, the public’s sceptic attitude was conflicting with the positive position that the political leaders had taken towards the Euro (ibid). The public opposition against the Euro in Germany was unusual in terms of the nation’s pro-European tradition.

Scholars have found different reasons for the scepticism towards the Euro. Some explain the opposition as reflection of the bad exchange rate of the Euro compared to the US dollar, at least until 2001 (Brettschneider, Maier & Maier, 2010, p. 61). After that point, the media played an important role in influencing public opinion towards the Euro, as this was one of the most central sources of information on the Euro in Germany (ibid), and thereafter people's general opinions towards the EU got more impact on attitudes towards the Euro (ibid, p. 62). Several scholars also link German opposition towards the Euro to the success of the Deutsche Mark (DM) and the stability and growth it represented to many Germans (ibid; Binzer, Hobolt & Leblond, 2009, p. 207). Further, "Germans were not convinced that the euro would be as stable and strong as the DM it was meant to replace, even if the former was modelled on the latter." (ibid, p. 208). The scepticism towards the Euro was in other words rooted in scepticism towards something that is unknown, or to taking a risk, which we can consider to be normal. Therefore, one should be careful about interpreting too much from scepticism in advance of regulations and new policies. It is important to take public opinion after policy changes into account. After the physical introduction of the Euro, many Germans still wanted the DM back, but there was an increase in support for the new currency as well (Brettschneider, Maier & Maier, 2010, p. 49). Hence, some scepticism can be linked to hesitation towards change or the unknown.

The Eurozone crisis – a short description

The financial crisis which spread to Europe and caused the Eurozone crisis started in 2007 and is normally described in two phases, the first phase being the global financial crisis and the second crisis, which was concentrated in the Eurozone (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2020, p. 476).

If banks become insolvent, they have to be bailed out, and therefore the risks taken by banks can have major consequences for national governments, and consequently for taxpayers (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2020, p. 476). This kind of risk taking caused the global financial crisis in 2007, which later had a major impact on the Eurozone. In America, banks took major risk by lending money to people who earlier, and after European regulations, would not have been given loans (ibid, p. 477 and 479). The reason why this later had serious consequences for other continents, is due to the high degree of international affiliation in the financial world. Banks around the world were linked through mutual loans "so that the chain is as strong as its weakest link." (ibid, p. 479). As a consequence, one bank collapse quickly led to the next one, or at least created serious problems for financial institutions in Europe as well. Lessons

learned from experiencing the Great Depression in the 20th century played an important role in handling the finance crisis. Systemic institutions were saved, central banks provided liquidity to the financial system through expansionary policies, and to avert a vicious cycle of depression, governments applied fiscal policy (ibid, p. 480). However, one of these actions caused problems in the Eurozone. Ireland, Spain and the UK particularly suffered in the first phase of the financial crisis, and the bailouts here and increase in public debt triggered the second phase, namely the Eurozone debt crisis (ibid).

In order to bail out banks, governments had major budget deficits, and since the worries about the sustainability of public finances became so big, the recession continued (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2020, p. 481-482). Hence, the Eurozone countries did not manage to avoid the vicious cycle. Of the Eurozone members, Greece was the country with the highest debt during the time of the crisis, and their bad state resulted in a bailout by the European Central Bank (ECB), despite the no-bailout clause of the European Treaty (ibid, p. 482-483). Hence, the economic integration in the Eurozone had negative consequences, even for those without serious financial problems at domestic level. The German Constitutional Court got the task of making a decision regarding the bailouts and stated that it was not conflicting with Germany's constitution, but they asked for more parliamentary control and they did not address the European Treaty-issue (ibid, p. 484). The European Court of Justice later got the case and concluded that the bailouts were not incompatible with the Lisbon Treaty (ibid). The issue of the bailouts led to major discussion, and the German opinions related to this issue will be analysed later.

The Eurozone crisis is complex, due to the linkage between several countries, and each country was influenced in different ways. The countries affected hardest by the crisis were those where the competitive indicators of unit labour costs and consumer price index deteriorated the most (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2020, p. 487). Decreasing competitiveness across the Eurozone worried the financial markets, and the bailout of Greece was meant to settle these worries, but it did not (ibid, p. 488). Two aspects are central to explaining the Eurozone crisis, namely that "a number of governments did not fully understand the need to abide by strict fiscal discipline, while the competitiveness view suggests that wage-setters [...] did not recognize the constraints imposed by monetary union membership." (ibid, p. 489). Hence, the members of the Eurozone were not fully educated in terms of managing a monetary union. The establishment of a common currency area was a complex step to further integration in the EU, and this had never been done before the creation of the Eurozone, therefore it was

expected that the monetary union was imperfect and would need adjustments at some point (p. 501).

Challenges were expected, but which challenges and the consequences of them was probably unknown to most people. By being integrated in a monetary union one could expect that the union as a whole would be affected to the same degree, but this was not the case in the Eurozone crisis. Some were hit harder, which resulted in fear and frustration for all. A central issue with the asymmetry of the crisis, was the fact that all Eurozone members share the ECB advantages and downsides, and therefore some countries “feared that they would have to pay for the mistake of others.” (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2020, p. 495). At the same time, one can imagine that the suffering countries expected help in order to recover, something one is probable to want when cooperating with others. International integration is after all a kind of insurance that one can rely on other countries. A further problem due to the asymmetry, was the absent of homogeneity of preferences, which is an important criterion of an optimum currency area (p. 496). To agree on a solution is difficult among many members. The more difficult it is to find a solution and the longer it last, the more uncertain the whole situation gets, which is perilous in times of crises. In fact, the biggest fear of financial markets is uncertainty (p. 490). What eventually solved, or at least stabilized, the Eurozone crisis was the announcement the ECB made in 2012, ‘to do whatever it takes to preserve the Euro’ (p. 496). Because many numerous countries still have large debts, the economic crisis is not officially over (p. 502).

The Eurozone crisis has had negative consequences both economically, but also in terms of the support for European integration among the public. Although many EU citizens do not wholly understand the crisis and its consequences, most people have recognised that the crisis was not well managed, and this has resulted in decreasing trust in the EU among the public (p. 502). How the public in Germany stand to European integration after the Eurozone crisis will be examined later in this chapter.

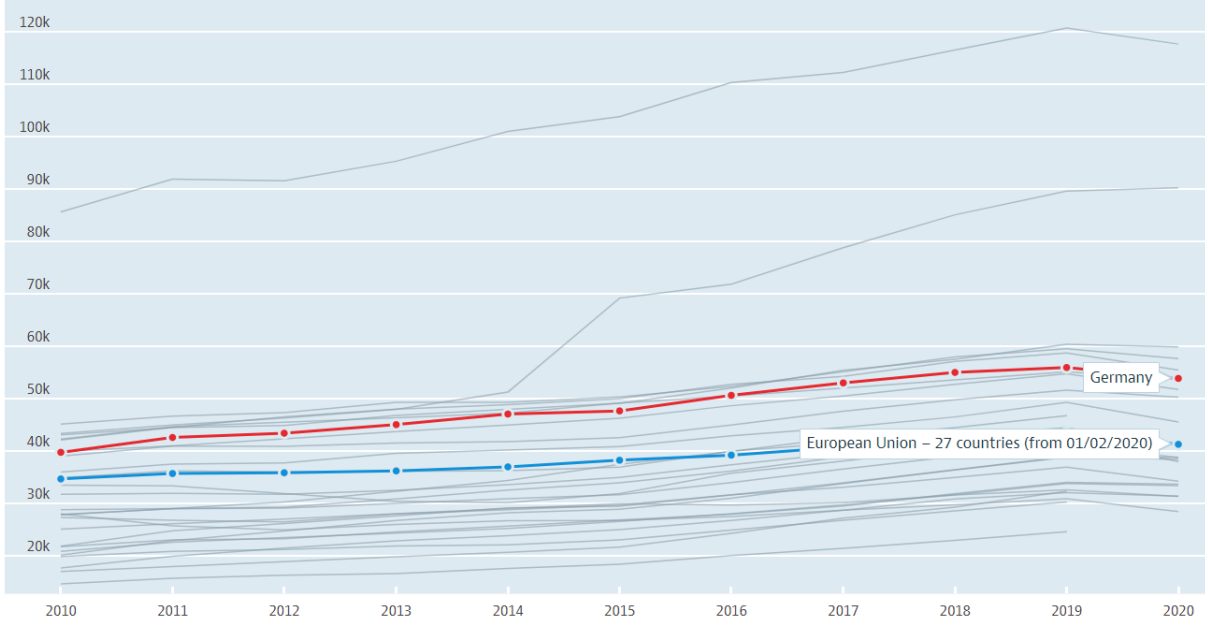
[Economic conditions in Germany](#)

Although this thesis focuses on the impact of the Eurozone crisis in Germany, it is worth to look at the German Eurobarometer results in comparison with an EU average. According to Scicluna, the German survey results are close to the EU averages (2014, p. 289). Hence, the scepticism caused by the financial crisis was not extremely high in Germany compared to other members of the Eurozone. There was an increase in opposition towards the EU in Germany, but as an economic crisis in the Eurozone accounts for a challenging situation,

some lack of support for European integration can be viewed as reasonable for every Eurozone member. The question is how much lack of support there was in the different member states. And in the case of this thesis, the question is how public opinion towards European integration changed in Germany. The hypothesis of this thesis, based on the earlier presented Benchmark theory, would expect member states with good economic conditions to show greater opposition towards the EU, whereas member states with bad economic conditions would show support for European integration. In order to apply the benchmark theory, we first need to know how the economic conditions were in Germany at the time of the Eurozone crisis.

In order to analyse public opinion in Germany with regard to regime and policy evaluations a short description of Germany's condition in terms GDP, trust in government, unemployment rate, income inequality and poverty rate will be illustrated and commented. These indicators were chosen to give an idea of whether Germany has a strong economy, how Germans view their government, and how working and income conditions are in this country.

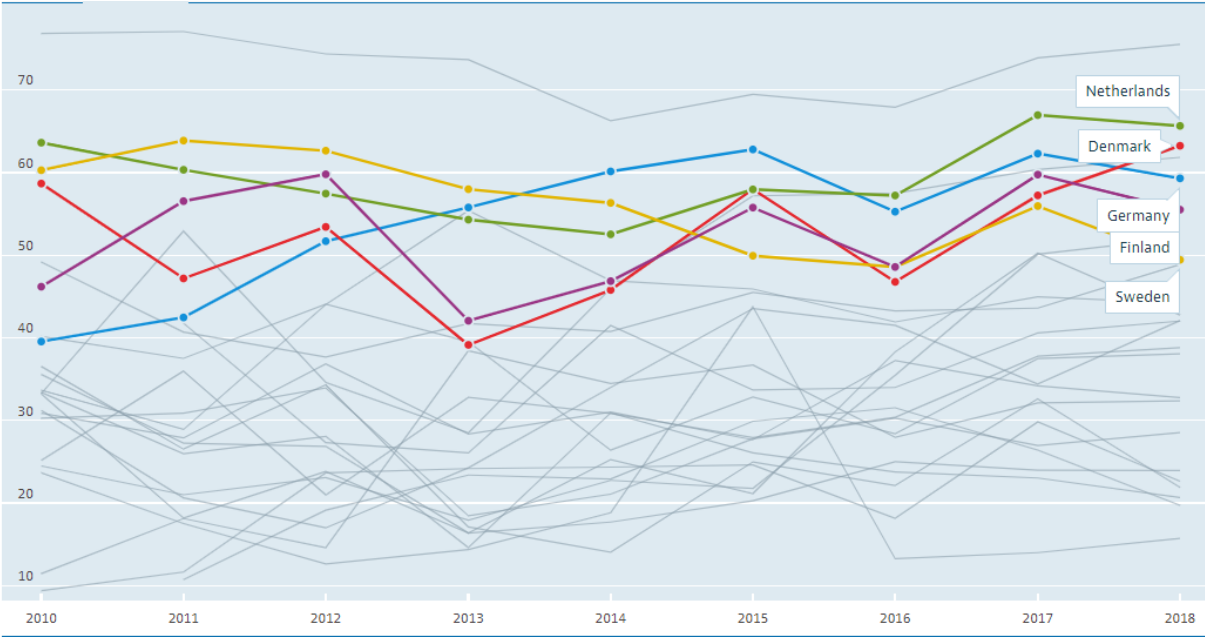
Gross domestic product (GDP) in Germany and EU-average from 2010 until 2020. As we can see, the German economic performance was higher than the EU average throughout the whole decade.



(OECD, 2021)

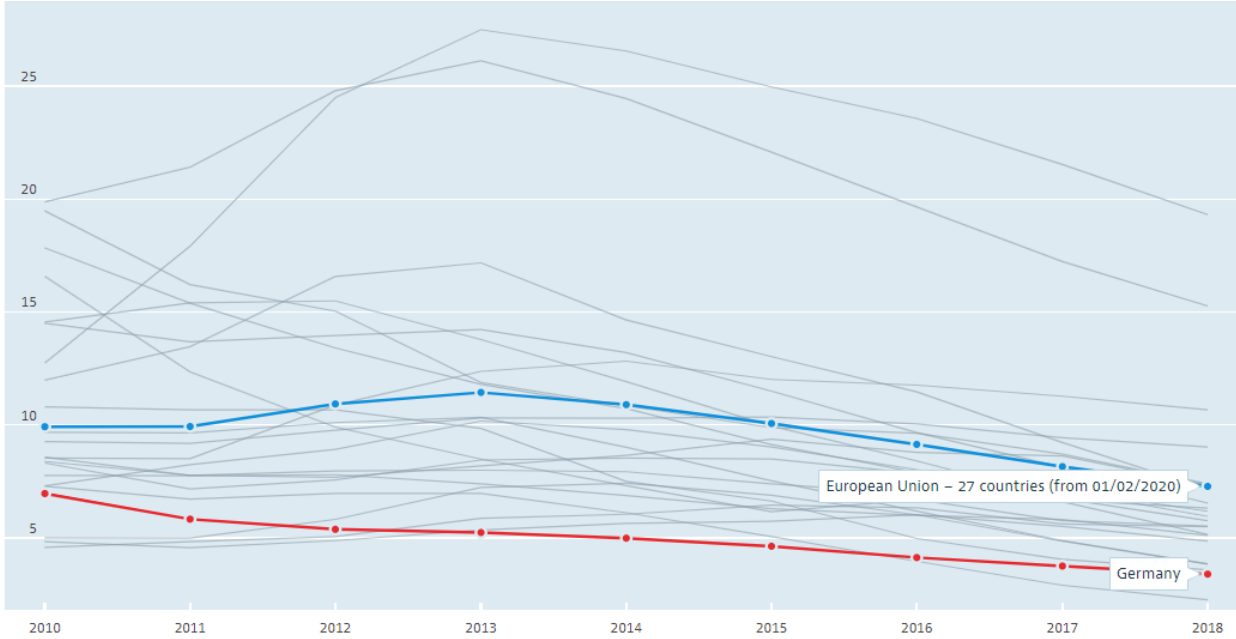
The figure below illustrates trust in government in 27 EU member states. The Eurozone crisis peaked between 2010 and 2012 (Kenton, 2020, para. 2). Germany's (blue) level of trust

increased during this peak. Moreover, Germany had the second-best levels of trust in 2014 and 2015, which was at a stage after the Eurozone crisis had peaked and at the beginning of the refugee crisis of 2015. After 2015 Germany experiences a decline before the trust in government increases again after 2016. Overall, it can be claimed that Germany’s trust in government has been higher than the EU average throughout the last decade, since of all 27 nations, Germany is always located among the top seven countries.



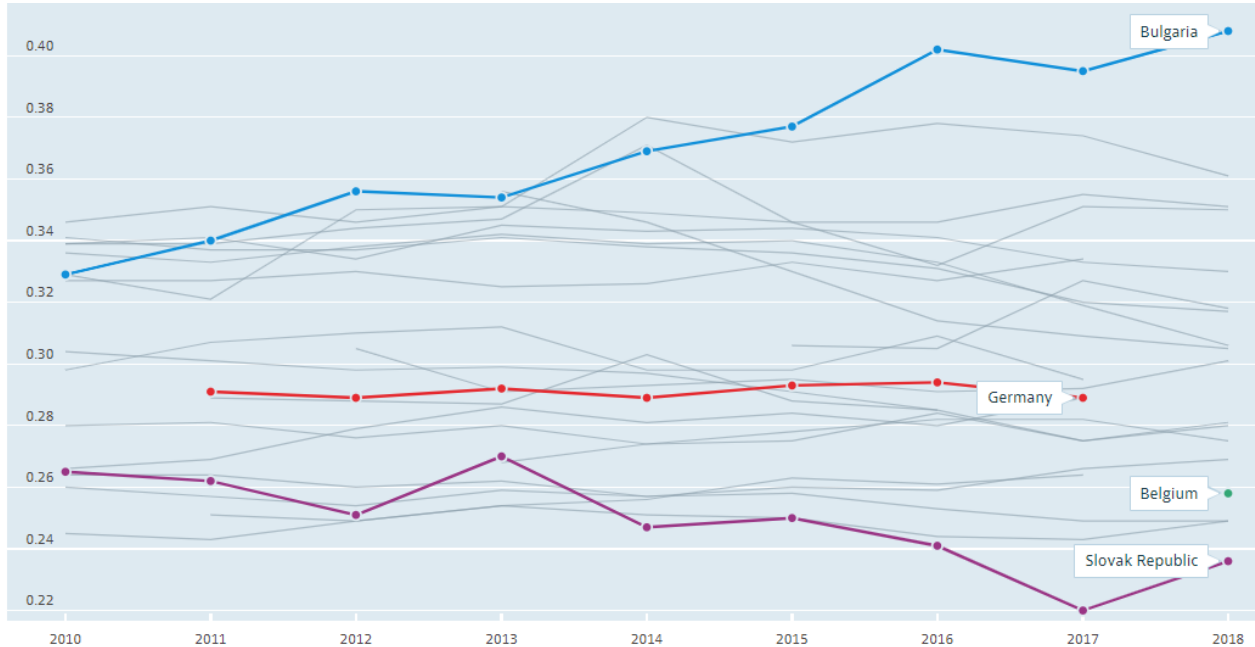
(OECD, 2021)

Unemployment rate in the EU is illustrated in the figure above and the levels for Germany as well as the EU average are highlighted. As we can see, Germany does not only have a lower unemployment rate than the EU average, but additionally has among the lowest unemployment rates across the whole union.



(OECD, 2021)

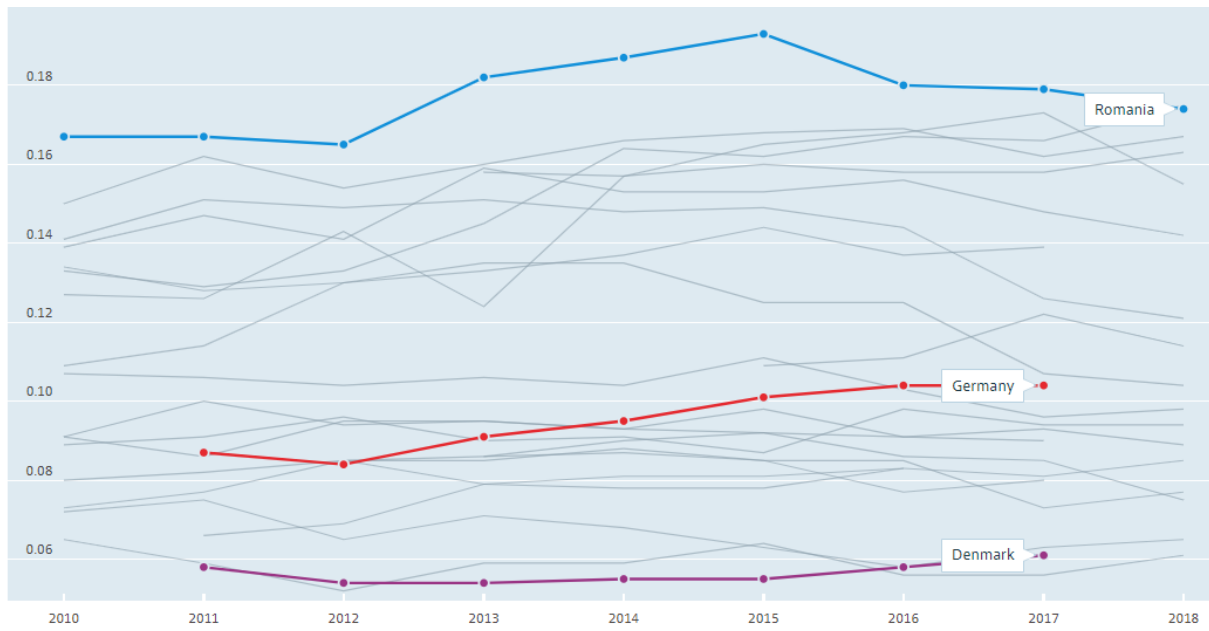
The figure below illustrates income inequality in Europe in the last decade. Germany as well as the countries with the highest and lowest income inequality rates are highlighted. As we can see, Germany’s levels (0.29) are mid-range in European context, but closer to the lowest levels (0.22) than the highest levels (0.41). Further, the income inequality rate in Germany is stable and does not increase over time.



(OECD, 2021)

Poverty rate across the EU in the last decade is shown in the figure below. Germany as well as the countries with the highest and lowest poverty rate are highlighted. Here we see that

Germany's levels (from slightly underneath 0.09 until slightly above 0.10) are low to mid-range in European context, but again they are closer to the lowest levels (0.05) than the highest levels (0.19). The poverty rate increased to some extent in the time period from 2012 until 2017.



(OECD, 2021)

Based on the figures above it can be concluded that Germany has a strong economy and high levels of trust in government. In terms of labour and wage the picture is a bit mixed, but overall good, due to very low unemployment rates, mid-range income inequality rates and mid-range to low poverty rates. Since the economic situation in Germany at the time of the Eurozone crisis was above the EU average and therefore can be categorized as good, an increase in opposition towards the EU in Germany is expected. This expectation is based on the earlier presented benchmark theory.

Public opinion towards European integration in Germany the context of the Eurozone crisis

Germany had a dominant position in the decision-making during the Eurozone crisis, and questions have been raised regarding the consequences of this on public opinion towards European integration at national level (Scicluna, 2014, p. 287). This is directly related to the research question of this thesis, about the change in public opinion towards the EU in the last decade, particularly in the context of the crises which occurred in this period.

Contested issues in Germany in the context of the crisis

The dominant role the German's got in the context of the crisis, was not something that was quickly or enthusiastically accepted (Scicuna, 2014, p. 288). As was pointed out earlier, this uncertainty related to debtors was a major problem in the economic crisis, as it worsened the worries of financial markets. The vagueness in German crisis management also affected German citizens' opinion towards EMU and the EU (ibid). Two issues stand out as problematic in this regard, the 'no alternative-attitude' of the German government and the media-painted victim role of Germany. Regarding the first issue, too much focus was on the despairing justification that "if the euro collapses, so does the EU" rather on the positive sides of EMU (ibid). This unsatisfaction is primarily linked to the national government, although the issue is EU-related. Consequently, this matter might have reflected bad on the German government and not the EU. However, since the issue related to the EU, people might blame the EU over something which was more in the control of the German government. This gives us an idea of how complex it is to categorize Euroscepticism.

The second issue, the asymmetry of the crisis, was highlighted by the media. The mistakes of Southern member states put Germany in a victim position, according to the media, and no attempt was made to contradict these views by emphasising the advantages of EU membership (ibid). The influential role of the media on public opinion was also detected when German views towards the introduction of Euro was studied earlier in this thesis. Thereby, we can argue that the media is a central source of information on European issues for Germans and that media coverage is crucial for public opinion towards the EU.

In addition to the issues above, other aspects of the Eurozone crisis have been problematic for Germans' support for the European project. One matter is the fact that some of EU's own rules were broken as a result of the crisis management (Scicuna, 2014, p. 288), in particular the no-bailout clause of the Lisbon Treaty and the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2020, p. 482-483). However, this matter was viewed as non-conflicting with European law by the European Court of Justice (ibid, p. 484). The uncertainty related to this measure, since taxpayers in creditor states of the EU could get disadvantages, was a salient issue among German Eurosceptics (Scicuna, 2014, p. 292). The scepticism towards rule-breaking can be categorized both as opposition regime and policy opposition. Policy scepticism, because rule-breaking is linked to a specific measure or policy, and regime scepticism because the act of breaking rules is also linked to the behaviour of the system.

Dissatisfaction was expressed, not only because the ESM could lead to risks for the creditor nations, but because the ESM possibly was against the EU's own rules.

The worries constituted by the media, about having to pay for the problems of others, also represented a major concern among German citizens (Scicluna, 2014, p. 292). The bailout of Greece is an example where one Eurozone member was saved by the system instead of taking responsibility for own actions. This issue can be categorized as an expression of policy scepticism, as the bailouts were part of the ESM, which was a specific crisis-management strategy. Data from the Allensbach Institute show that in Germany the level of trust in the EU was lowest at the point of the Greek bailout in 2011 (ibid, p. 289). This asymmetry issue thereby constitutes one of the most crucial matters for opposition towards the EU in Germany. This is illustrated in a figure below.

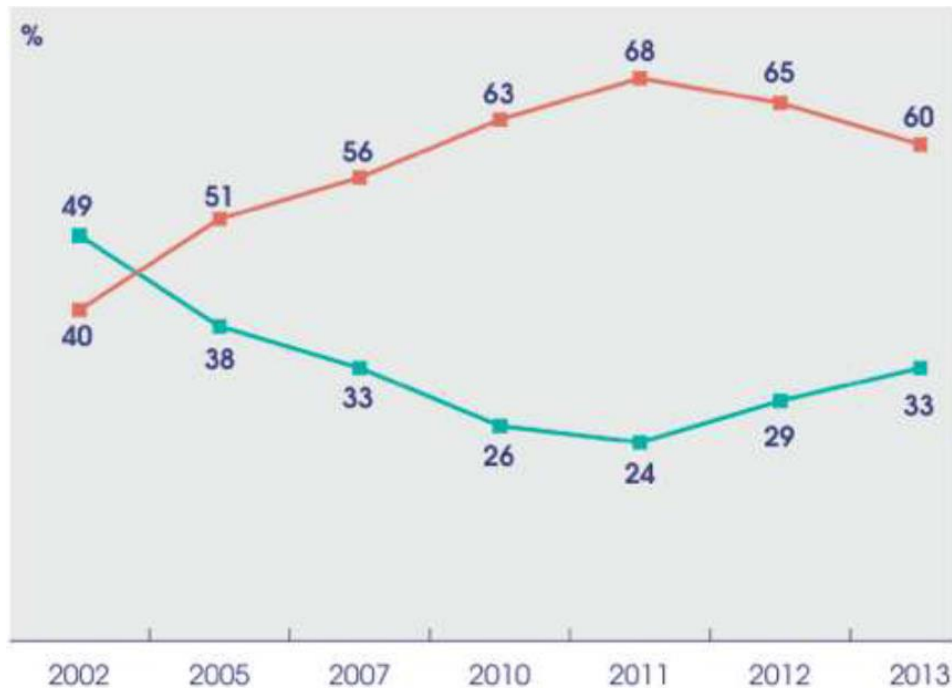
Further, worries existed that valued political and economic principles, like price stability and central bank independence, would be threatened by crisis-managing attempts implemented by EU institutions (Scicluna, 2014, p. 292). Hence, some fears were that benefits related to economic integration would change to the worse as a result of the crisis. The valued economic approaches are largely preferred in Germany due to the experiences with hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic (ibid). These worries, as they are related to specific principles, can be categorized as policy scepticism.

According to Scicluna, the three issues described above are central contested issues which have led to contradictions between the European and the German national level (2014, p. 289). Several crisis-managing measures implemented by the EU were established with respect to German preferences, some were even insisted upon by the German government, but these actions were not majorly supported by the German public (ibid). The Eurozone crisis did in other words create a contradiction between the political elite and the public in Germany. The ESM is an example of a stabilization measure which was insisted upon by the government, but where the public was sceptic (ibid). Thereby, we can argue that the Euroscepticism caused by the Eurozone crisis, mainly was in the policy sceptic category. One issue above, about the bailouts and possible rule-breaking, can also be linked to regime scepticism. But overall, the crisis-management measures led to increased opposition towards the EU in Germany.

Levels of support and opposition

The scepticism towards the Euro at the point when it was introduced, was categorized as scepticism towards something unknown in this thesis, which can be view as a reasonable kind

of scepticism. Apart from the Euro, European integration has not been salient in German politics, but the Eurozone crisis changed this. A study found that before the 2013 federal election, almost 20 % of Germans viewed the Eurozone crisis as the most important issue in Germany, and over 30 % named it the second biggest challenge (Scicluna, 2014, p. 289). Additionally, bailouts as crisis measure was strongly opposed by a significant amount of Germans, but these were in minority compared to those who supported the government position on this issue (ibid).



Basis: Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bevölkerung ab 16 Jahre
Quelle: Allensbacher Archiv, IfD-Umfragen, zuletzt 11010

(Scicluna, 2014, p. 290)

According to Scicluna, public support for the EU has increased and decreased in Germany over the years, as data from the Allensbach Institute illustrate shifts in trust in the EU among Germans in the period from 2002 until 2013 (2014, p. 289). The figure above illustrates the findings by the Allensbach Institute, where the orange line is low level of trust and the green line is high level of trust. Further, it is claimed that the Eurozone crisis has not resulted in any extreme changes in this trend, except from the issue with the Greek bailout in 2011, which is visible in the figure (ibid). Thereby we can argue that the asymmetry-issue of the crisis had most impact on the increasing Euroscepticism in the context of the Eurozone crisis. Yet, since the level of opposition declined already in the following years, and the level of trust increased the same years, the change in public opinion towards European integration due to the

economic crisis does not seem that immense. However, this assumption is based on one indicator, namely level of trust. There are several other indicators which can be reviewed in order to study the level of support or opposition towards the EU.

Eurobarometer data

In the following section, eight questions from the standard Eurobarometer from 2010-2014 will be examined in relation to evaluations of the EU and of the German national government.

The aim is to examine the level of support and opposition towards the two institutions and how this has developed over the years. The chosen questions are therefore questions related to the current economic situation in Germany, expectations for the future, trust in the EU, thoughts regarding how to handle the economic crisis, and opinions about current challenges.

Finally, the examination of these questions will be included in the discussion about how and why public opinion towards the EU has changed in the relevant time period. The

Eurobarometer survey from 2011 was not available online at the time when this thesis was written and therefore, both the spring and the autumn survey from 2010 was included in the analysis below. Some surveys did not include data on all the questions included below. The surveys where this is the case are marked with 'no data'. These questions were, despite lack of some data, included to get a more comprehensive analysis.

Opinion of current economic situation and towards EU membership

	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
How would you judge the current situation of the national economy?	Total 'good' 36 % Total 'bad' 62 % Don't know 2 %	Total 'good' 68 % Total 'bad' 28 % Don't know 4 %	Total 'good' 77 % Total 'bad' 21 % Don't know 2 %	Total 'good' 82 % Total 'bad' 16 % Don't know 2 %	Total 'good' 78 % Total 'bad' 18 % Don't know 4 %

	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
Generally speaking, do you think that	A good thing 50 % A bad thing 20 %	No data	No data	No data	No data

Germany's membership of the EU is...?	Neither 27 %				
	Don't know 3 %				

As we can see in the table above, the evaluation of the economic situation in Germany has a positive trend, particularly early in the time period. Already in the autumn 2010, the impression that the economic situation is good has increased by 32 %. This trend continues to rise in the following years, except from the last year, where it declines slightly. The bad judgment is opposite, it decreases strongly within the first year and continues to decrease until 2013, before increasing slightly again. We know that the Eurozone crisis peaked between 2010 and 2012. Because the economic situation in Germany was judged as total good already in the autumn of 2010, we can argue that the crisis did not hit Germany that hard. Based on the benchmark theory, it is therefore likely that opposition towards the EU in Germany increased in the years after 2010. Further, and also in line with the benchmark theory is the fact that EU membership was viewed as a good thing by 50 % in 2010, when the economic situation at domestic level was viewed as total bad by 62 %.

Expectations about the future

	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
What are your expectations for the next twelve months:	Better 22 %	Better 34 %	Better 16 %	Better 17 %	Better 13 %
will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same when it comes to the economic situation in Germany?	Same 37 %	Same 48 %	Same 54 %	Same 62 %	Same 56 %
	Worse 37 %	Worse 14 %	Worse 28 %	Worse 18 %	Worse 28 %
	Don't know 4 %	Don't know 4 %	Don't know 2 %	Don't know 3 %	Don't know 3 %

	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same when it comes to the economic situation in the EU?	Better 13 %	Better 20 %	Better 11 %	Better 19 %	Better 13 %
	Same 34 %	Same 38 %	Same 33 %	Same 40 %	Same 43 %
	Worse 46 %	Worse 30 %	Worse 49 %	Worse 33 %	Worse 35 %
	Don't know 7 %	Don't know 12 %	Don't know 7 %	Don't know 8 %	Don't know 9 %

Although the economic situation in Germany improved during the Eurozone crisis, as was presented above, people were rather pessimistic about the future. Expectations of improvement declined after the autumn of 2010. The thought that the domestic situation would remain the same rose until 2013 and then declined slightly. Expectations of a worsening of the situation was lower than the expectation that things would remain the same, but mostly higher than the expectation of improvement. Only in the autumn of 2010, a significant larger amount of people expected improvement over worsening. Since we know that the economic situation improved over the years, and the expectation mainly was that things would remain the same, we can argue that the situation was good, despite the pessimistic picture this data might illustrate. Since the situation was in fact improving, people must have been careful about being too optimistic about continuing improvement. These years were years characterized by crisis, and to have rather low expectations about improvement would be reasonable under those conditions.

The expectations about the economic future of the EU was more negative than the expectations about Germany's future. Expectations of a better or unchanged situation is lower in all cases, except from the expectations of a better future in 2013, where the EU scores a bit

higher. The expectation that the future will develop in a negative direction is much higher in the case of the EU than the domestic case. Hence, the Germans viewed their economic future as more hopeful than they viewed the future of the EU to be. With the benchmark theory taken into account, we would therefore expect the support for the EU to decline in Germany, or at least become lower as a result of the economic crisis, since the national economic situation was evaluated as to having a more optimistic future.

Trust in EU

	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
How much trust do you have in the EU?	Tend to trust 37 %	Tend to trust 36 %	Tend to trust 30 %	Tend to trust 29 %	Tend to trust 34 %
	Tend not to trust 54 %	Tend not to trust 51 %	Tend not to trust 61 %	Tend not to trust 59 %	Tend not to trust 53 %
	Don't know 9 %	Don't know 13 %	Don't know 9 %	Don't know 12 %	Don't know 13 %

The table above shows a significantly higher distrust than trust in the EU. Further, the trust declines over the years and only rises slightly the last year. The distrust in the EU rises strongly between 2010 and 2012. This time frame constituted the peak of the crisis, so this finding is not very striking, but indicates that the public to a large extent reviewed the EU as responsible for the crisis management. The distrust declined slowly and then more significantly after the peak of the crisis was over. The high degree of distrust in the EU indicates that the German's opposition towards the EU increased as a result of the Eurozone crisis, particularly since the level of distrust rose strongly at the point when the crisis peaked.

Crisis management

	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
In your opinion, is the EU or the national government best able to take	EU 27 %	EU 22 %	EU 23 %	EU 24 %	No data
	National government 12 %	National government 17 %	National government 18 %	National government 21 %	

effective actions against the effects of the financial and economic crisis?					
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	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
EU member states should work together more in order to take measurements to combat the financial and economic crisis.	Total 'agree' 91 % Total 'disagree' 6 % Don't know 3 %	No data	No data	No data	No data

The Germans clearly viewed the EU more fitted to implement effective actions against the Eurozone crisis than their national government. This finding supports the thought above, that Germans held the EU responsible for the Eurozone crisis. We can imagine that it is easier to blame the institution that you hold responsible. Consequently, as long as the situation in Europe was in a bad state, we can expect declining trust in the EU. At the same time, the opinion that the EU is more fitted to deal with the crisis, could also indicate that the Germans had faith in the EU, and would not want to handle the crisis on their own. Hence, decreasing Euroscepticism could appear, but not the exit scepticism kind of Euroscepticism, as the Germans review the EU more fit to handle the crisis than the German national government. The question whether EU member states should cooperate on handling the crisis confirms this idea, as a great majority was in favour of this. Based on the benchmark theory, we can therefore argue that Germany is policy sceptic, as they clearly are supportive of the idea of cooperation with other EU nations.

Most important issues

	STANDARD EB 73 Spring 2010	STANDARD EB 74 Autumn 2010	STANDARD EB 77 Spring 2012	STANDARD EB 80 Autumn 2013	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014
What do you think are the two most important issues facing Germany at the moment?	Unemployment 41 % Economic situation 41 %	Government debt 32 % Unemployment 24 % (Economic situation 16 %)	Government debt 37 % Rising prices/inflation 30 % (Economic situation 16 %) (Unemployment 17 %)	Rising prices/inflation 25 % Government debt 23 % (Economic situation 13 %) (Unemployment 20 %)	Immigration 37 % Government debt 17 % / The education system 17 % (Economic situation 11 %) (Unemployment 16 %) (Rising prices/inflation 12 %)

To the question about Germany's most important issues at the moment, unemployment, the economic situation, government debt, inflation, and immigration scored highest between 2010 and 2014. Almost all these matters are related to economy. We can thereby argue that economic matters were salient among the public in Germany. As these matters were salient at the same time as Euroscepticism in Germany increased, we can further argue that there is a link between these two features.

As a consequence to the increasing scepticism in Germany as a result of the refugee crisis, a new political party was founded. The thesis argues that this new party, partly can explain the increase in the Euroscepticism in Germany. This will be discussed next.

The AfD – establishment and influence on public opinion

The AfD was founded in 2013 as a reaction to the dissatisfaction over the managing of the Eurozone crisis (Scicuna, 2014, p. 288). According to Scicuna, the establishment of the AfD potentially signalizes a turn in the political discourse in Germany in the direction of more apparent opposition towards the EU (ibid, p. 287). Since this thesis focuses on public opinion

and not party-based Euroscepticism, the focus will lie on AfD's turnout in the national election in 2013 and 2017, to discuss their role in influencing public opinion towards the EU.

As was explained in the retrospective section about public opinion in Germany, the political elites have almost exclusively been pro-European. Some Eurosceptic parties have existed in the past, but these have been rather small. In more recent time, one can find traces of scepticism towards European integration in two major political parties in Germany: the Bavarian *Christlich-Soziale Union* (Christian Social Union) and in *Die Linke* (The Left), but no big party included European issues in their election campaigns before the 2013 national election (Scicuna, 2014, p. 294). However, it would have been applicable, as the European issues were salient among the public, and also because several political actors were provoked by criticism from Americans regarding the big trade surplus in Germany as well as by the EC's idea that Germany should take responsibility regarding structural adjustments (ibid). Hence, both the public and some politicians expressed disagreement towards the EU, but since EU issues were not included in the election campaign, Germany lacked a voice or channel where this scepticism could be uttered. In this context, the AfD was established.

The name of the party is a reaction to the German government's "alternativlos"-strategy towards the Eurozone crisis (Scicuna, 2014, p. 294). The most important matters which the AfD advocated for was to leave the currency union and to abolish the common currency (Rosenfelder, 2017, p. 125). The link between the Eurozone crisis and the foundation of the party is thereby clear. As described above, the lack of a Eurosceptic voice in a nation which clearly had developed Eurosceptic opinions, both among the public and politicians, triggered the creation of a new party. Germany's long tradition for a pro-European position might have suppressed Eurosceptic opinions, if there were any, as there was a lack of possibilities to express such views. Since a new party was founded as a reaction to the Eurozone crisis, we can argue that the crisis led to a solid increase in Eurosceptic opinions. Eurosceptic opinions may have existed to some extent before the crisis as well, but an essential change did occur, as a new Eurosceptic voice was created. The formation of this new voice can consequently have led to a further increase in Euroscepticism because those with Eurosceptic opinions had gotten an opportunity to become actual Eurosceptic voters. The AfD changed the political scenery in Germany, and it can be argued that the Eurozone crisis was the cause behind this scenery transformation.

Regarding the classification of the AfD, several suggestions have been made. In the beginning, the party was mainly categorized as partly Eurosceptic, or soft Eurosceptic

(Rosenfelder, 2017, p. 124). This fits the description by Scicluna, that the AfD's opposition towards the EU is not as extreme as Eurosceptic parties in other EU member states, since they mainly oppose the currency union and not all levels of European integration (2014, p. 295). Based on de Vries's categories of Euroscepticism, presented in the theory section of the thesis, the AfD would fall under the term policy sceptic, as they specifically are against economic integration, but not necessarily against other forms of European integration. But as mentioned, the classification of AfD was a debated topic. According to Rosenfelder, some scholars found right-wing or populist features already in the beginning, while others claimed that this was not the case (2017, p. 126). But, with the time, more and more are of the opinion that the AfD is in fact a right-wing extremist party (ibid). Rosenfelder claims the elements of right-wing populism in the AfD have become more distinctive due to the increased criticism of the EU-elites and the national conservative views towards immigration, and that the AfD therefore has developed into a right-wing populist party as well as into a hard Eurosceptic party (ibid, p. 139-140).

The AfD's turnout in the 2013 election was at 4.7 %, which was not enough to get them into the *Bundestag due to the 5 % threshold*, but still was a great result for a new party (Scicluna, 2014, p. 294-295). With 7 % of the votes in the EP election in 2014, they got seven members into the EP (ibid, p. 295). The turnouts of AfD can despite the relative low numbers be understood as a success for the party, at least when taking the age of the party into account. Since the party was founded as a reaction to the handling of the Eurozone crisis and have been rather successful, it can be argued that the Eurozone crisis resulted in an increase in Eurosceptic views, and that the AfD made these opinions more visible. Hence, the economic crisis made the political scenery more diverse, and public opinion more sceptic, at least visibly sceptic.

Summary

The hypothesis of the thesis regarding public opinion in relation to the Eurozone crisis, described in chapter three, was that Germany, since it has a good economic condition, would show increased opposition towards the EU. The vagueness in German crisis management was detected as an issue which had impact on Germans' opinion towards the EU. However, this issue may also have reflected badly in the German government instead of the EU. The media in Germany focused majorly on the asymmetry of the crisis, a worry which also was found to be present among German citizens. In fact, the asymmetry issue constitutes one of the most crucial matters for opposition towards the EU in Germany in the context of the Eurozone

crisis. Additionally, EU's claimed rule-breaking and the possible threat of valued political and economic principles, like price stability and central bank independence, were central contested issues which have led to contradictions between the European and the German national level. Further, and quite important, the Eurozone crisis created a contradiction between the political elite and the public in Germany, where the public was more sceptic towards the EU than the national elite was. Essentially, the crisis-management measures led to most opposition towards the EU among the public in Germany. Thereby, we can argue that the Euroscepticism caused by the Eurozone crisis, mainly was in the policy sceptic category.

Eurobarometer data found that was likely that opposition towards the EU in Germany increased in the years after 2010, since the economic situation in Germany was judged to be good, also at the time when the crisis peaked. Further, the Germans viewed their economic future as more hopeful than they viewed the future of the EU to be. With the benchmark theory taken into account, we would therefore expect the support for the EU to decline in Germany, as a result of the economic crisis. The distrust in the EU rose strongly between 2010 and 2012. This time frame constituted the peak of the crisis, so this finding is not very striking, but indicates that the public to a large extent reviewed the EU as responsible for the crisis management. The high degree of distrust in the EU indicates that the German's opposition towards the EU increased as a result of the Eurozone crisis.

The Germans clearly viewed the EU more fitted to implement effective actions against the Eurozone crisis than their national government. This could either indicate that the Germans hold the EU is responsible for the crisis, that they have faith in the EU, or that they do not want to deal with the crisis on their own. Further, a great majority was for cooperating on handling the crisis, which indicate that Germany is policy sceptic, as they clearly are supportive of the idea of cooperation with other EU nations. Economic matters were most salient among the public in Germany. As these matters were salient at the same time as Euroscepticism in Germany increased, we can further argue that there is a link between these two features. Since the party of AfD was founded as a reaction to the handling of the Eurozone crisis and have been rather successful, it can be argued that the Eurozone crisis resulted in an increase in Eurosceptic views, and that the AfD made these opinions more visible.

Chapter 4 – Public opinion towards the EU in the context of immigration and the 2015 migration crisis

This chapter, about the migration crisis, will start off with a review of the EU migration policy. A focus will lie on whether problems related to this policy had the potential to influence public opinion towards the EU. Subsequently, a description of the 2015 migration crisis will follow. Thereafter, scholarly articles and Eurobarometer data will be analysed to discuss if Euroscepticism increased as a result of the migration crisis and why. What may have led to increased immigration waves and asylum policies and the influence of these features on national identity.

EU migration policy

In order to examine the refugee crisis and the influence it has had on public opinion; it is vital to have knowledge about how the strategies and procedures are in relation to immigration in the EU. EU member states only had a loose form of collaboration in border-related issues in the first decades of its existence, but cooperation in this matter was improved significantly after the implementation of the Schengen zone in 1995 (Delreux & Keukeleire, 2014, p. 232). Since the 1990s, competences on justice and home affairs has been included in EU policy through the Maastricht Treaty, and the Amsterdam Treaty introduced more cooperation on immigration, asylum and visa matters (Migration News, 1998). A central aspect of the Amsterdam treaty is that it is a third and not a first pillar treaty, which means that national governments were in charge of migration matters, with some management between member states, and that the EU Commission could not take full responsibility of issues in this field (ibid).

The most recent developments on migration matters was implemented in the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, which introduced the Common European Asylum System. Aims of this policy framework were to develop common procedures for international protection of refugees, to secure fair treatment of asylum applicants, to tie asylum systems in the EU and decrease differences in the way member states handle matters in this field, and to advance practical collaboration between national asylum administrations and external asylum managements (European Commission, n.d.). The competences of this policy include regular immigration, irregular immigration, integration and readmission agreements (European Parliament, 2017). The institutional developments which the Lisbon Treaty added to the EU's migration policy were "codecision and qualified majority voting on regular immigration and a new legal basis for integration measures.", (ibid). In addition, the European Parliament was made a co-

legislator next to the European Council, on irregular and regular immigration matters (ibid). Furthermore, the treaty states “that the EU shares competence in this field with the member states, in particular as regards the number of migrants allowed to enter a member state to seek work” (ibid). The Lisbon Treaty thereby established a more unified procedure for handling migration issues, as more responsibility for these matters is delegated to EU institutions instead of to the member states. But as we understand from reviewing the migration policies which existed before the Lisbon Treaty was implemented, the EU has not had a long tradition for handling migration matters in community or similarly in every member state.

However, shortly after the Lisbon Treaty was implemented, the EU has faced one of the biggest migration crises since the Second World War (European Parliament, 2020). This crisis has shown “the need for fairer and more effective European asylum and migration policies.”, (ibid). The thesis argues that there is still lack of unity in the EU migration policy. Some of the problems of the EU migration policy which have become more salient through the refugee crisis will be presented next. But first, a short description of the migration crisis will be given.

The European migration crisis

By the migration crisis in Europe, the flow of migrants from top refugee-producing countries in the Middle East is meant (Triandafyllidou, 2018, p. 200). The crisis started in 2013 and peaked in 2015, with over 2.4 million migrants arriving in Europe (Stockemer et al., 2020, p. 884). Some scholars have also named it a multifaceted crisis, because in addition to major immigrant flows, the EU experienced a crisis with regard to its migration governance and asylum policies (ibid). Central in this regard is the distribution of refugees. Italy and Greece were the two nations where most refugees arrived, and according to the Dublin system of the EU “countries where asylum-seekers first enter the EU [...] are responsible for administering asylum claims” (ibid, p. 886). However, the Dublin system collapsed at some point and Germany ended up being one of the main end-destinations for refugees (Triandafyllidou, 2018, p. 199). As the crisis developed, some countries of the EU even decided to close their borders (ibid, p. 205). We know that a border-free Europe is a central part of the EU’s policies. Because some member states decided to close their borders despite this rule, we understand how major a challenge this crisis was, and how major the lack of common governance in the EU was.

Distribution of immigrants and examples of lack of unity

The distribution of immigrants in the EU constitutes on central issue of EU migration policy. In 2015, the following countries received over 80 % of all asylum applications in the EU:

“Germany (35.2%), Hungary (13.9%), Sweden (12.4%), Austria (6.8%), Italy (6.6%) and France (5.6%).”, (Altemeyer-Bartscher et al., 2016). Six of the 27 member states received almost all immigrants who arrived in the EU in 2015, and the refugees were unequally distributed between the six nations, as Germany received almost 1/3 of the immigrants. These numbers illustrate how uneven the responsibility for migration matters in the EU was shared. However, the choice to take on so many immigrants was in control of Germany, as the decision to disregard the Dublin regulations was made by themselves (Stockemer et al., 2020, p.886). Because this decision was made at domestic level and not at EU level, one would expect opposition against own government rather than against the EU. On the other hand, because the migration crisis was a problem across the EU, it is more likely viewed as an EU issue, and consequently, disagreement linked to migration related matters would lead to opposition towards the EU.

Among the actions the EU implemented after the refugee crisis struck, Operation Sophia stand out as one of the major operations in this context. 24 member states were listed as contributors to the operation, which suggests a high level of unity, but the distribution of migrants was in fact a main challenge in this operation, and the solution was that Italy signed a bilateral agreement where they took on responsibility (Johansen, 2017, p. 518). In the end however, the Italians were unsatisfied with carrying the responsibility alone, and minister Matteo Salvini stated, “What we need is a redistribution system for asylum seekers.”, (Taylor, 2019). Further, according to Pricopi, only six of the 24 contributor states were able to contribute with military competences, Germany being one of the six contributors (2016, p. 123).

Again, we see an example of uneven distribution of immigrants, like in the case where Germany received almost 1/3 of all migrants who arrived in the EU. In the case of Operation Sophia, Germany was again one of few contributors who actually took upon big responsibility. This highlights the lack of unity in the EU’s handling of migration. We can imagine that the lack of unity has led to an increase in opposition towards the EU. This will be examined further later.

[The refugee crisis in German media and politics](#)

As outlined above, the refugee crisis was both a humanitarian crisis and a governing crisis for the EU. We can imagine that the challenges related to these crises could have the potential to change Germans’ opinion towards European integration, especially due to the lack of unity in the EU migration policy. By studying secondary literature on how the refugee crisis was

covered in the German media, the aim is to find out how the migration crisis was viewed in Germany.

The picture of the crisis in German media is two folded, there is a sympathetic side and a suspicious side. The sympathetic side, however, seem to have gotten more cover space in the media. Among the tragic stories and incidents which have gotten much attention, we find the story of the truck in Austria in the summer of 2015, which contained 71 dead bodies, and the story of the Syrian family who drowned on their crossing from Turkey to Greece, where a photo of the boy on the shore was spread in the media throughout Europe (Triandafyllidou, 2018, p. 202). The building of a fence on the Hungarian-Serbian border in 2015, and the closing of many borders along the Balkan route also received a lot of attention in the media (ibid, p. 208-209). As a reaction to this, Germans welcomed the refugees with clothes, food and toys in the train station in Munich, something which also received a lot of media attention (ibid, p. 209). In general, Germany media was largely characterized by sympathy covers in the media (ibid, p. 211).

In addition to covers of the mentioned events, there was also a focus on the inhuman living condition in refugee camps, and stories of drugs, prostitution, violence, and unaccompanied children (Fotopoulos & Kaimaklioti, 2016, p. 272). Fotopoulos and Kaimaklioti studied over 1340 German, British and Greek articles related to the refugee crisis, and also found that there was a large focus on the numbers of immigrants arriving in Europe (ibid, p. 270) as well as on the tragic events (ibid, p. 272) in the German media. By focusing on the size and the seriousness of the migration crisis, the media awoke much empathy and hostility in Germany. According to Triandafyllidou, by touching upon values, the media pictured a Europe facing a common challenge (2018, p. 211). Further, the attention to deservingness was used to highlight that the refugees had fled from a war and deserved help. (ibid, p. 212). Hence, there was a large focus on the humanitarian side of the crisis in the media.

Not just the way the immigrants were framed, but the way they were referred to was impartial. Fotopoulos and Kaimaklioti found that the second most term in migration-related media covers in Germany was 'Syrians' (2016, p. 270). Additionally, they found that in German media, immigrants were rarely referred to as 'irregular' or 'illegal', only in 1.2 % of the articles they studied (ibid, p. 272). Another central finding of the same study showed that the terms 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' was not included in the German media in a percentage worth citing (ibid, p. 276). Thereby, we can state that the press mainly conveyed a positive view of immigrants. As the media is an important source of information for the public, this

was also found in the case of the introduction of the Euro, we can argue that the press did not trigger much opposition against immigrants among the public.

Although, the picture of the migration crisis in German media was two folded. Therefore, we cannot rule out that the media provoked dissatisfaction among the public. In Britain, the terms 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' were mentioned in 17 % of the articles analysed by Fotopoulos and Kaimaklioti (2016, p. 276). And, "The issue of migration bridges the divide between short-term and long-term explanations of Brexit.", (Outhwaite, 2018). Since dissatisfaction with migration policy in fact can be linked to Britain's withdrawal from the EU, and because there was a negative focus on immigration in the British media, we see how influential the media can be. After the Brexit referendum in 2016, at least 15 political parties across Europe advocated for a referendum on leaving the EU, or they advocated leaving the EU (The Economist, 2019). It remains to see whether dissatisfaction with the EU migration policy or the refugee crisis led to increased opposition for European integration in Germany.

An aspect which was covered in the media across Europe was the debate about fairness of distribution of refugees and the system to manage this, otherwise the media coverage was diverse within the EU (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 14). As has been laid out, the German media was more focused on the humanitarian aspect of the crisis, not on the struggle of EU governance. According to Holmes and Castañeda, German played a central role in the way they reacted to the crisis by taking on a political and rhetorical position in the media (ibid). The famous quote by Angela Merkel, "*Wir schaffen das*" ("We can do this"), describes Germany's hostility in context of the crisis, and also represents a part of European solidarity (Triandafyllidou, 2018, p. 202). In Berlin, one could hear people deliberating whether Germany's contribution in relation to the crisis was enough (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 14). However, Germany's hospitality was not the only feature which was covered in the media. Besides the welcoming facet, there were inclinations of xenophobia in Germany too (ibid, p. 13).

One negative event which received much attention in the German press, was the one on New Year's Eve in 2015 in Cologne, where numerous women were assaulted by foreign-looking men (Triandafyllidou, 2018, p. 209). Without confirmation that these men were asylum seekers, the German press signaled that some of them were (ibid). This incident could have the potential to erase many peoples' sympathy for immigrants. Further, as the picture of the Syrian boy who had drowned was evident in the media, some debate whether his family was

deserving refugees (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 17). Otherwise, there are not many negative media covers related to the migration crisis. But besides the media, there are other features of negativity towards immigration in German society.

Some examples of negativity towards refugees is found among anti-Muslim movements, but also among politicians (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 15). Even members of Merkel's party have criticized her welcoming response to migrants, and some German officials claimed that the Dublin system was a good way to handle immigration (ibid, p. 14). Politician Markus Söder stated "Paris changes everything", as a reaction to the terrorist attack in Paris in 2015 (ibid, p. 18). Hence, the political sphere in Germany was not unanimous. The divergence in the political space could have the potential to influence parts of the public in a sceptic direction, which further could lead to opposition against Germany's handling of the refugee crisis or against the EU, due to its governing issue and struggles of handling the crisis.

A central fear of the sceptic actors has been the fear for other cultures, ethnicities and religions, and that the European mainstream would drown in the flood of immigrants (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016, p. 18). The challenge of new members with different cultural backgrounds joining a social group, like in the case of the migration crisis, was thematized in relation to social identity theory. Whether it was achieved to establish and contain a feeling of Europeanness after the refugee crisis will be examined later by studying Eurobarometer data. First, some attention will be drawn to the AfD and their views towards immigration.

[The AfD in the time of the refugee crisis](#)

In the previous chapter of this thesis, it found that a central aim of the AfD was to leave the currency union and to abolish the common currency (Rosenfelder, 2017, p. 125). Here, the AfD's development since its foundation in 2013 and their opinion about immigration will be described. Some main events that took place was, the division of the party where some central politicians left the party, and the creation of a new party program in 2016 (ibid, p. 124). A central change of the party was also their engagement in the debate about refugees and migration policy, which pushed the topic of the Euro a bit aside (ibid). But their scepticism towards EU issues did not disappear. In addition to their strict view on migration policy, they are against a deepening of European integration (ibid, p. 133). Their strict opinion regarding immigration is justified by their fear that immigrants only come to Germany to take advantage of the welfare and social system (ibid), and further, the AfD is of the opinion that the national identity needs to be protected (ibid, p. 136).

With regard to social identity theory, the AfD does exactly the opposite of what the theory suggests one should do, when the environment in a social group change. Establishing a common group identity is crucial to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts in multicultural environments. The AfD views Germany as a leading culture (Rosenfelder, 2017, p. 136) and fears that this social group will change. If many people support the AfD and their view about migration, the amount of Germans who feel European probably has decreased, and consequently this might threaten the concept of European integration. If this is the case, will be examined next with the help of the Eurobarometer. Based on the new party program, Rosenfelder concluded that the AfD has developed into a right-wing radical party, and that the party's degree of Euroscepticism has been sharpened (ibid, p. 140). Hence, we can state that the party went through a big transition from time of the Eurozone crisis to the time of the migration crisis, only a few years later.

AfD's turnout in the national federal election in 2017 was 12.6 %, a significant increase as their turnout in the 2013 national federal election was 4.7 % (The Federal Returning Officer, 2017). As we know that the AfD can be categorized as more Eurosceptic in 2016 than at the point of their establishment, it can be argued that their influence on opposition towards the EU strengthened after the Eurozone and during the migration crisis., The party's success in the 2017 national federal election indicates an increase in Euroscepticism in Germany. Because immigration was central in their new party program, this increase can be linked to the migration crisis. Further, it can be argued that AfD's success indicate strengthened opposition towards the EU. The existence of this party may be the cause behind increasing Euroscepticism in Germany. When a Eurosceptic party exists, it might be easier for people to express Eurosceptic views. Additionally, the party also spreads their opinions, which the public receives, and this has the possibility to change some public opinions.

[Eurobarometer data](#)

Three questions from the standard Eurobarometer from 2014-2017 will be examined. The aim is to figure out which issues were salient in this time period, how much trust Germans had in the EU, and to which extent Germans felt European during the time of the migration crisis. The Eurobarometer survey from 2015 was not available online at the time when this thesis was written and therefore, both the spring and the autumn survey from 2014 was included in the analysis below.

	STANDARD EB	STANDARD EB	STANDARD EB	STANDARD EB
	81	82	86	87

	Spring 2014	Autumn 2014	Spring 2016	Spring 2017
What do you think are the two most important issues facing Germany at the moment?	Government debt 24 %	Immigration 37 %	Immigration 45 %	Immigration 37 %
	Immigration 22 %	Government debt 17 %	Terrorism 28 %	Terrorism 27 %
	/	/		
	The education system 22 %	The education system 17 %		

Clearly, immigration rose as central issue in this time period, but decreased majorly in 2017. The migration crisis peaked in 2015 and 2016, so a decrease in attention for this issue was natural in the following year. The fact that immigration was a salient issue, increases the chance of this issue to affect the trend in public opinion. That immigration was an important issue could both mean that Germans felt that this needed to be solved with their contribution, or that this problem was a threat to Germany. The fact that terrorism was such a salient issue among the public is striking considering the little coverage of this topic in the German press. This can be explained by the fact that not all newspapers and media channels were included in the studies on media coverage. Other information channels may have been important for the public in relation to the topic terrorism. The party program of AfD, as it included opinions towards immigration, or political statements, as politicians like Söder made statements about terror, are example of alternative sources to the usual media and information channels.

	STANDARD EB 81 Spring 2014	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014	STANDARD EB 86 Spring 2016	STANDARD EB 87 Spring 2017
How much trust do you have in the EU?	Tend to trust 30 %	Tend to trust 34 %	Tend to trust 37 %	Tend to trust 47 %
	Tend not to trust 58 %	Tend not to trust 53 %	Tend not to trust 53 %	Tend not to trust 45 %
	Don't know 12 %	Don't know 13 %	Don't know 10 %	Don't know 8 %

The trust in the EU during the migration crisis was relatively low. The majority tended not to trust the EU, however, the level of distrust decreased over the time period. The high degree of distrust could be explained be the lack of unity in the EU, or by the governing crisis in which

the EU found itself. Because immigration was rated the most important issue which Germany was facing, it is likely that either of the issues could explain the distrust. The fact that trust in the EU rose after the peak of the migration crisis was over, supports this argument.

	STANDARD EB 81 Spring 2014	STANDARD EB 82 Autumn 2014	STANDARD EB 86 Spring 2016	STANDARD EB 87 Spring 2017
Do you feel you are a citizen of the EU?	Yes 79 %	Yes 74 %	Yes 77 %	Yes 82 %
	No 20 %	No 25 %	No 22 %	No 17 %
	Don't know 1 %	Don't know 1 %	Don't know 1 %	Don't know 1 %

The extent to which Germans felt that they were citizens of the EU, dropped a little bit at the beginning of the migration crisis, but rose already in before the peak of the crisis had passed. Hence, there is no strong indication that the migration crisis was the cause for the short drop in extent of feeling a connection to the EU identity among Germans. If this was the case, there should have been a decline in the degree to which Germans felt they were EU citizens. Based on the social identity theory, it can therefore be argued that support for European integration in Germany was not influenced in a negative way by the migration crisis.

Summary

Chapter four illustrated that there was potential for dissatisfaction with the EU, based on the unity and distribution problems of the EU migration policy. The distribution of refugees and uneven participation in operations are examples of weaknesses in the migration policy. The examination of scholarly literature related to the media coverage of the migration crisis in Germany, revealed a two-folded picture. Mainly, there was an empathy-characterized coverage of the crisis in the German press. Hence, there is little evidence in the media that the lacks in the migration policy led to frustration among Germans and decreasing support for the EU. But besides the media, there are other features of negativity towards immigration in German society found among anti-Muslim movements and politicians. Hence, the political sphere in Germany was not unanimous during the time of the migration crisis. The divergence in the political space could have the potential to influence parts of the public in a sceptic direction. The AfD's success in the 2017 national federal election may seem to indicate an

increase in Euroscepticism in Germany. Because immigration was central in their new party program, this increase can be linked to the migration crisis. In addition, it can be argued that the AfD can have caused increasing Euroscepticism too. The Eurobarometer data found that immigration was the most salient issue during the time of the migration crisis. This could both mean that Germans felt that this needed to be solved with their contribution, or that this problem was a threat to Germany. Based on the findings in the examined articles, that sympathy was most prominent in the press, it can be argued that the former explanation is more probable. Terrorism was also a salient issue according to the Eurobarometer. This finding was conflicting with the findings from the articles on media coverage. Alternative information channels, e.g. AfD's party program or statements by politicians may explain the salience of the topic terrorism. Further, the Eurobarometer data illustrated a high degree of distrust in the EU among Germans. We can argue that the EU's bad handling of the migration can explain this, as trust in the EU rose after the peak of the migration crisis was over. Based on the Eurobarometer data about degree Europeanness and social identity theory, it can be argued that support for European integration in Germany was not influenced in a negative way by the migration crisis. To sum up chapter four, there is little evidence that dissatisfaction with the migration crisis led to increased opposition towards the EU. Dissatisfaction with the EU's lack of unity in the managing of the crisis can be an explaining reason, but political statements and AfD's development stand out as more probable causes behind the increase in Euroscepticism. Yet, the AfD can be categorized both as Eurosceptic and right-wing extreme. Hence, it can be argued that the success of the AfD indicates a rise in right-wing populism rather than Euroscepticism, with regard to the migration crisis.

Conclusion

The research question of the theses is, ‘How has public opinion on European integration changed in the time period 2010 until 2017 in Germany, and what are the causes for the increase in Euroscepticism here?’. The main findings indicate that the Eurozone crisis created a contradiction between the political elite and the public in Germany, where the public was more sceptic towards the EU than the national elite was. The crisis-management measures, the asymmetry-issue of the Eurozone crisis, as well as the foundation of AfD are the main reasons for the increase in Eurosceptic views in the context of the economic crisis.

Economic matters were most salient among the public in Germany. As these matters were salient at the same time as Euroscepticism in Germany increased, we can further argue that there is a link between these two features. Since the party of AfD was founded as a reaction to the handling of the Eurozone crisis and have been rather successful, it can be argued that the Eurozone crisis resulted in an increase in Eurosceptic views, and that the AfD made these opinions more visible. The Euroscepticism caused by the Eurozone crisis, mainly was in the policy sceptic category. A great majority was for cooperating on handling the crisis, which indicate that Germany is policy sceptic, as they clearly are supportive of the idea of cooperation with other EU nations.

The AfD’s success in the 2017 national federal election may seem to indicate an increase in Euroscepticism in Germany. Because immigration was central in their new party program, this increase can be linked to the migration crisis. There is however little evidence that dissatisfaction with the migration crisis led to increased opposition towards the EU, when taking articles examining the German press and Eurobarometer data, and social identity theory into account. Dissatisfaction with the EU’s lack of unity in the managing of the crisis can be an explaining reason, but political statements and AfD’s development stand out as more probable causes behind the increase in Euroscepticism. Yet, the AfD can be categorized both as Eurosceptic and right-wing extreme. Hence, it can be argued that the success of the AfD indicates a rise in right-wing populism rather than Euroscepticism, with regard to the migration crisis.

To sum up, it can be stated that events or aspects at domestic level have been more decisive for the increase in Euroscepticism in Germany. For future work related to the topic of this thesis, it could be relevant to look more into how domestic politics affect public opinion

Candidate 10007

towards the EU, and to try to look into differences between Euroscepticism and ring-wing populism.

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