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The Impact of Economic aid on Euroscepticism During Covid-19.

A comparative case study of the Eurosceptic trend in Denmark and Spain

Bachelor's thesis in European Studies

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Kunnskap for en bedre verden

Abstract

As the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic turned increasingly more severe, so did the concerns of the consequences this might cause on the world society. Especially, the health sector and the economy were areas of concern, leading to the creation of the 'Next Generation EU' (NGEU) economic aid, to help European countries in need. However, as EU is a vast and diverse union, further economic integration has not always been a popular way to develop the cooperation. As the levels of Euroscepticism has also increased some in the past years, the question of whether this economic integration might increase levels of Euroscepticism after the outbreak of the pandemic.

For that reason, this thesis will explore whether the introduction of the NGEU increased levels of Euroscepticism, by looking at the representative countries Denmark and Spain. The two represent different parts of the union, by being very different in character on several political and societal areas. By analyzing numbers retrieved from the Eurobarometer and national surveys, the thesis will conclude that both countries have a decreasing trend in Euroscepticism after the outbreak of the pandemic, which can be perceived as surprising based on previous perceptions of how Euroscepticism is represented in Denmark and Spain.

Sammendrag

Ettersom utbruddet av Covid-19 pandemien ble i økende grad mer alvorlig, økte også bekymringene for konsekvensene som kunne ramme verdenssamfunnet. Spesielt innenfor helsesektoren og økonomien var bekymringene store, noe som førte til innføringen av den økonomiske bistanden 'Next Generation EU' (NGEU), for å kunne hjelpe Europeiske land i trengsel. EU er allikevel en stor og mangfoldig union, noe som tidligere har ført til at enkelte land ikke er like mye for en utvikling av den økonomiske integrasjonen. Samtidig har EU sett en økning i tallene for euroskeptisisme i de siste årene, noe som leder til spørsmålet om denne økonomiske utviklingen kan øke tallene for euroskeptisisme etter utbruddet av pandemien.

Av den grunn vil denne avhandlingen utforske om introduksjonen av NGEU økte tallene for euroskeptisisme ved å se på landene Danmark og Spania. De to landene representerer forskjellige deler av unionen, ved å ha store forskjeller på flere forskjellige politiske og sosiale arenaer. Ved å analysere tall hentet fra Eurobarometer og nasjonale undersøkelser, vil oppgaven konkludere med at begge landene har en synkende trend for euroskeptisisme etter utbruddet av pandemien, noe som kan oppfattes som overraskende ettersom tidligere antagelser om euroskeptisisme i Danmark og Spania tilsier noe annet.

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List of Abbreviations

Covid-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGEU	Next Generation EU
EP	European Parliament
MEPs	Members of Parliament
UK	United Kingdom
EC	European Communities
EEC	European Economic Community
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
MDSD	Most different systems design
MFF	Multiannual financial framework

1 Introduction.

As the realization of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) hit the entire world in the earlier months of 2020, so did a fear of the consequences the pandemic might bring along (Portes, 2020). The European Union (EU) had in previous years experienced an economic crisis, later named the Great Recession, and the migration crisis, making another crisis a highly undesirable situation. The uncertainty was rooted extensively in the health sector and the economies, both nationally and globally, as many companies and national bodies had to close down to prevent further spread of the virus (Portes, 2020). The timing would never have been ideal, however, the context of the period raises questions on whether member states would keep supporting the union, or if the skepticism towards the EU would increase. For that reason, the following steps taken by the union was vital considering the outcome of the situation.

As the crisis developed, a need for economic aid arose in the member states of the EU. The world gross domestic product (GDP) dropped by 5 % in 2020, while the EU experienced a 9 % drop during the same period (Arbolino & Caro, 2021, p. 110). Portes (2020) estimates that around 20-30 % of the workforce in many countries were unable to partake in their occupation, leaving several in an economic crunch. But not only that, restrictions on international travel, tourism, export and import had to be enforced to assure the public safety, leaving several sectors in a difficult situation (Maheswar et al., 2021, p. 259). For that reason, many national states offered aid within their nation's borders, however, they generally acted different to the seemingly similar situation (Toshkov et al., 2021). This could possibly have led to the EU choice of negotiating the 'Next Generation EU' (NGEU) funds, which would consist of 750 billion euros to help the countries and companies in need (The European Council, 2021). These funds are partly grants and loans taken out by the European Commission, and were meant to be a resource for the ones most in need at different points of time (The European Council, 2021). As the EU is a vast and diverse cooperation, the question remains on whether this economic aid is ideal for all member states.

However, looking at the years preceding the outbreak of the pandemic, the EU also experienced a certain growth in Euroscepticism within the member states. One can specifically note the expansion of Eurosceptic parties in several countries in Europe, and the 2019 vote for the European Parliament (EP) reported that 28 % of the Members of Parliament (MEPs) are representatives for Eurosceptic parties at different levels (Treib, 2021). Several national assemblies have also been influenced by Eurosceptic parties, some examples being Poland and Greece, confirming the fact that the public in the European countries choose to vote for these parties (Clements et al., 2014; Lázár, 2015). Additionally, previous crises such as the migration crisis and the Great Recession, had an impact on the numbers concerning the attitudes towards the union, stating that crises in the past have had an impact in the Eurosceptic tendencies in European countries (Serricchio et al., 2013, p. 56).

Connecting these two issues together, one can ask whether the economic aid introduced during the pandemic, had any impact on the levels of Euroscepticism in the public opinion. This thesis precedes to explore whether the economic aid provided during the covid-19 crisis, by looking at the two different cases of Denmark and Spain, have had

any impact on Euroscepticism within the EU. These two countries have very different histories concerning both economy and Euroscepticism, with Denmark being perceived as a traditionally more Eurosceptic with a stronger economy, compared to Spain (Berntzen, 2013, p. 301; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2018, p. 1209). For that reason, there is a preconception that the economic aid might cause more Euroscepticism in Denmark than Spain, however the results will tell whether this is applicable or not.

The research question for this thesis will therefore be: To what extent Euroscepticism has increased or decreased in Denmark and Spain, following the provision of the NGEU economic aid. This will be executed by analyzing questions on Euroscepticism and economic conditions provided by the Eurobarometer and national surveys, as well as questions specifically regarded to the handling of the covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, Euroscepticism and theoretical framework will be described, before giving a thorough explanation of the NGEU economic aid and the numbers collected from the surveys. The thesis will conclude by discussing why the Eurosceptic trend is decreasing in both countries and why this might be a surprising result, considering the expectation that the trend would be different in the analyzed countries.

2 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework and Methodology.

2.1 Conceptual framework: Euroscepticism.

Firstly, it is essential to understand the term Euroscepticism, to be able to use it in an analytical framework further on. There are several ways to define this term, as different environments and political situations are important in the embodiment of anti-EU attitudes. Usage of this term can be traced back to the early 1950s, where it was used by political elites as opposition towards a supranational institutional system (Leconte, 2010, p. 43). It was, however, more commonly used in the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1980s, referring to a person in opposition of the European Communities (EC) (Brack & Startin, 2015, p. 239). One of the most advocated definitions is the one introduced by Taggart & Szczerbiak (2018), who distinguishes between 'hard' and 'soft' Euroscepticism, and whether the term is being used by political parties or within the public opinion (p. 1198). 'Hard' Euroscepticism was described as principled opposition to all of the European integration project, while the 'soft' version refers to contingent or qualified opposition to European integration in general (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2018, p. 13). This definition has, however, been criticized for being too inclusive, especially by Kopecký & Mudde (2002), claiming that the different categories melt together, while trying to fit too many perceptions into the 'soft' category (p. 300). They alternatively distinguish between 'diffuse' and 'specific' Euroscepticism, where diffuse refers to the different ideas of European integration, while specific is the general practice of European integration, meaning the EU (Kopecký & Mudde, 2002, p. 300).

Euroscepticism can also be defined by the topics triggering the attitude, making political and economic Euroscepticism the topics of this text. Leconte (2010) defines political Euroscepticism as resentment towards further development of common political and cultural values, shedding light on matters such as a common culture and identity, as well as common European policies (p. 52). This includes developments of political

supranational institutions, or the creation of identity-tokens such as the EU flag (Leconte, 2010, p. 53). Economic Euroscepticism is rather resentment towards further economic integration, which has become increasingly relevant after the Maastricht Treaty and the Great Recession (de Wilde, 2018, p. 55). Serricchio, Tsakatika & Quaglia (2013) does also state that the two can be more intertwined, as the financial crisis led to the connection of economy to identity. This makes the definition somewhat broad, however, ideal when explaining the reactions to economic aid, as economy and identity can both explain resentment of such intensives.

Ultimately, to operationalize the term, one can state that the most relevant description of Euroscepticism for this particular thesis, is 'soft and specific Euroscepticism'. The 'soft' definition is included because it represents qualified opposition, which is relevant in this case because there are certain aspects of the European integration which does not benefit the specific actors mentioned. 'Specific' on the other hand, represents the specific political areas that the actors are in opposition against, namely economy and a European social sphere. This leads to the relevance to economic, and political and cultural Euroscepticism as triggers of the term.

2.2 Conceptual framework: The link between European integration, economic crises, and Euroscepticism.

Furthermore, studies have shown that Euroscepticism in Europe have increased, and that both national identity and economy in general can measure this increase. Bruter (2008) claims that a European identity needs to be adapted to what citizens perceives it as, and also what they eventually want it to become (p. 283). He also mentions that the perception of the EU today is mostly recognized by the open borders, free trade and the Euro, rather than a unifying actor, making it difficult to measure identity and Euroscepticism on a deeper level (Bruter, 2008, p. 283). Eichenberg & Dalton (2007) supports this point of view, as they contribute with numbers from the Eurobarometer showing that there is a drop in the support for European integration after the introduction of the Maastricht treaty, claiming that macroeconomics influence citizens' support for European integration (p. 42). Gabel and Whitten (1997) also argue that there are good reasons to believe that citizens of the European Union will use economic criteria to evaluate their perception of European integration, shedding light on preferences in national economy as an important citizen value (p. 81-83). This has, however, been contested by McLaren (2007), who claims that a national identity, and the fear of the annihilation of this, is one of the key opponents to why people are sceptic towards further European integration (p. 248). This makes the possibility to measure Euroscepticism more complex, however, one can state that identity and economy can be perceived as two important measures.

To be able to contextualize this, Europe has previously been subject to other urgent economic situations, which also ignited questions on whether levels of Euroscepticism was affected. The most resent and comprehensive economic crisis in Europe was the Great Recession in the late 2000's. As a result, Serricchio et al. (2013) noted that there was a steady increase in Euroscepticism throughout Europe from 2007 into the following years of the crisis (s. 56). The countries experiencing this increase were mostly those most hard-hit by the crisis, leading to the assumption that that the situation led to an increase in Euroscepticism (Serricchio et al., 2013, pp. 56-57). Gomez (2015) also advocates this point of view, mentioning that the Eurobarometer in 2011 saw a record

number of 18.6 per cent categorizing EU membership as 'a bad thing' (s. 577). Furthermore, Taggart & Szczerbiak (2018) also researched whether the Great Recession affected the levels of Euroscepticism in the different nations, and they concluded that the party systems of the countries most affected by the bailout packages experienced a powerful effect on Eurosceptic parties; namely in Germany, Greece, and Ireland (p. 1207). For that reason, there are findings in different studies proving that there can be a connection between economic integration and Euroscepticism, making this a subject worth exploring.

2.3 Theoretical framework.

2.3.1 Social Constructivism and Euroscepticism.

It is, however, useful to explain this matter from a theoretical point of view, to be able to better understand why certain matters happen. Social constructivism is a theory focusing on a structure and an agent working together as a whole. For that reason, the theory advocates a view of the structure of European integration shaping and enabling the behavior of actors, as well as their social identities, preferences, and interests (Risse, 2019, p. 132). It is stated that EU membership matters, because nation states create a common identity within the social sphere of the union, as they voluntarily take on the rules and obligations of the community (Risse, 2019, p. 134). This can be referred to as a social culture, where those who identify with this culture and identity, are expected to be less likely to be xenophobic and Eurosceptic (Risse, 2019, p. 137). However, this identity, and the feeling of belonging to this identity, can be contested in regard to political situations, and in some cases, political scandals (Risse, 2019, p. 138). This is where Euroscepticism becomes relevant, as the European culture can lead to an increase in disassociation with the European identity (Risse, 2019, p. 141). As mentioned earlier, further European integration, on many different levels, have caused nations to be more skeptical towards the EU, for example during the creation of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Leconte, 2010, p. 51). Risse (2019) also argues that the political climate during the migration crisis in the mid 2010's led to a higher level of Euroscepticism, both possibly triggered by the public disassociating themselves with the union (p. 140). For that reason, one can understand that the culture and identity aspect within the structure of the European union is important when explaining why members become more or less Eurosceptic.

2.3.2 Liberal intergovernmentalism and economic integration.

However, as one is focusing on the economic aid provided during the covid-19 pandemic, there is also a requirement to be able to explain economic integration and how the different states perceive it. Liberal intergovernmentalism is a theory focusing on the state as an actor within a bigger framework, as well as how domestic politics shape the international focus of each nation state (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 65). The choices made by each state is rational, meaning that a single action could directly influence the state in a preferred manner, or it could be a choice made to strengthen the overall position of the state in a global context (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 66). This is called bargaining, where a state can approve a less suited outcome, if they win more than they lose on the negotiation itself (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 68). One can use this notion to explain the economic crisis in the late 2000's, where states negotiated for a longer period of time to prevent the eurozone from failing, at the same time as the bigger and more economically stable nations did not want to spend an

excessive amount of money to help the suffering countries (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 72). Germany was one country who utilized this theory, as they contributed with more funds and later achieved a leading role in the decision-making of the economy (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 73). The indebted countries which were already in an inconvenient position, such as Greece, approved the measures, to be able to maintain the union which in itself is perceived as an advantage (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 73). This is a good example of bargaining during a crisis, and how economic issues are solved to make the best possible situation for all actors.

2.3.3 The fusion of social constructivism and liberal intergovernmentalism.

Therefore, as the theoretical framework of the thesis, it can be useful to combine social constructivism with liberal intergovernmentalism, to be able to explain why Euroscepticism emerged in Europe. Risse (2019) concludes that social constructivism can broaden the understanding of bargaining during intergovernmental negotiations, as it can contribute with perspectives of each state's preferences, and how these evolve as perceptions change (p. 143). The tradition of social constructivism has over the years taken an intergovernmentalist point of view, concerning interstate negotiations as a way to understand the EU (Risse, 2019, p. 129). In social constructivism, it is stated that the nations know the appropriate behavior to execute within this particular structural framework, which can also be combined with the intergovernmentalist view of states reaching for what is most beneficial for their exact position in the union (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 66; Risse, 2019, p. 134). Also, as none of the theories make any claims on the importance or position of supranational actors in European integration, they can easily intervene (Risse, 2019, p. 131). Ultimately, social constructivism can explain why and to which degree Euroscepticism occurs, while liberal intergovernmentalism shed light on negotiation processes, in this case, the economical one that will be analyzed.

2.4 The cases and their relation to the EU.

Before one can analyse numbers of the current situation between Denmark and the EU, one must create a picture of what their relationship has looked like through history. Denmark joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, together with the UK and Ireland (Cini et al., 2019, p. 5). At the time, the official of the Danish Ministry of Economic Affairs from 1961 to 1964, Niels Thygesen, stated that the Danish economic goals at the time were characterized by a wish for liberalization of the economy, development of the welfare state and also further economic interaction with the rest of the world, which seemed to unify quite effortlessly with the goals and the rapid growth of the EEC (cvce.eu, 2016). From the beginning, Denmark seemed to have a good connection to the cooperation, until the introduction of the Maastricht treaty, which Lubbers & Scheepers (2010) characterized as a turning point when analyzing Euroscepticism (p. 788). In Denmark's case, this was the treaty where the further economic cooperation did not benefit Denmark as much as other member states, and the government called for a referenda to decide the fate of the treaty (Taggart, 1998, p. 365). They rejected the treaty in 1992, before approving it in 1993 after being granted opt-outs from EMU and the Eurozone, showing that the Danish public was against further economic integration (Leconte, 2010, p. 50; Taggart, 1998, p. 365). This is probably the reason why Denmark has been viewed as a country with a longer Eurosceptic tradition

than other nations, as economic integration has been the heart of the union since the very beginning (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2018, p. 1209).

Spain has a somewhat different history of connection to the EU, making the contrast between the two countries more prominent. Spain joined the EEC in 1986, together with Portugal (Cini et al., 2019, p. 5). Berntzen (2013) concluded that the country since their accession has been enthusiastic and dedicated towards further European integration, with only one political party voting against the Maastricht treaty in 1992 (p. 301). Preceding their membership in the community, their economy was weak compared to the EEC and their market, which made this an attractive community to be a part of (Escribá-Pérez et al., 2022, p. 39). Their unemployment rates were also high, being the highest in all of EU in 1994 with 19.8 % (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010, p. 796). Furthermore, they were also one of the countries to suffer the hardest from the Great Recession in the late 2000's, leaving a larger portion of the public unemployed, and in an economic crisis (Escribá-Pérez et al., 2022, p. 38). One would therefore believe that this would leave Spain in a position to be skeptical towards the union, however, this has not been the case. Lubbers & Scheepers (2010), among others, argue that the countries that are expected to be least skeptical in regards to European integration is the southernmost states and Ireland, as these are expected to benefit more than the largest contribution countries (p. 790). This has been proved to be true in the case of Spain, as support like voting turnouts has been stably high (Berntzen, 2013, p. 301).

2.5 Methodology.

For this research specifically, the methodological framework will be qualitative research in the form of a comparative case study. A comparative study is, firstly, a study where two or more subjects are being analyzed and compared to each other to state a claim (Burnham, 2008, p. 70). A comparative study does not need to consist of several cases, but for this exact study, there will be two (Burnham, 2008, p. 70). The cases chosen are two countries with their common ground being the EU and the economic aid that was introduced after the outbreak of covid-19, to be able to measure the Euroscepticism and how this developed in the following period. The dependent variable is therefore Euroscepticism, and the independent variable is NGEU. The countries are Denmark and Spain, representing a most different systems design (MDS) as the countries are very different within the EU, except for their actual membership and their connection to the NGEU (Burnham, 2008, p. 73).

The reasoning for choosing Denmark and Spain as subjects of analysis, is based on their positioning in the union and what conclusions one wants to find. As mentioned, the two countries have little in common in a European context, making it possible to create a more nuanced picture of the overall trend in the union, by not analyzing the trend in only one group of similar countries. However, it is important to note that these two countries cannot state that the trend is valid in all EU nations.

Qualitative research in general has often been compared to the quantitative discipline and the experimental research designs as more difficult to draw conclusions from, as one seldom can control all possible spurious variables (Burnham, 2008, p. 71). Additionally, statements have claimed that small N studies can lead to a biased and unrepresentative result (Marsh & Stoker, 2010, p. 300). This might be the case in some studies; however, this thesis aims only to see the difference between the two different countries analyzed,

and for that reason, be more representative of the union. Also, the choice of two cases and not any more or less, gives a more in-depth analysis of the two countries, without limiting the research to one country or group.

As Euroscepticism is being analyzed, the Eurobarometers include questions measuring exactly this, making it a good basis for comparison between the two. Additionally, as the thesis specifically wants to observe change in Euroscepticism after the introduction of the NGEU, it is appropriate to include the survey-questions on national economy, and specific questions regarding the handling of the pandemic. This will be complemented with additional numbers from the respective countries, to be able to assure the quality of the numbers provided by the European Commission. The result will therefore be a discussion on the numbers found for each of the countries, and compared to observe if the economic aid was a trigger for an eventual change in the numbers on Euroscepticism.

3 Empirical evidence.

3.1 The covid-19 economic aid.

As the covid-19 pandemic hit Europe in the early months of 2020, an increasing fear spread that a roaring recession was approaching, as companies and workplaces had to close down to prevent further spread of infection (Hale et al., 2021, p. 531). Following this, the nations of Europe, and also the EU, realized the need for political adjustments to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the citizens. This eventually led to the economic aid given by the EU to the countries most in need of help, an example being Italy with full hospitals and limited resources to help all infected people (Arbolino & Caro, 2021, p. 110). This economic help was presented and adopted in July 2020, when President Michel of the European Council concluded that:

We have reached a deal in the recovery package and the European budget. These were, of course, difficult to negotiate in very difficult times for all Europeans. A marathon which ended in success for all 27 member states, but especially for the people. This is a good deal. This is a strong deal. And most importantly, this is the right deal for Europe, right now.

With this, the EU leaders agreed on a package consisting of 1 824.3 billion euros, combining the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the NGEU, which is a recovery effort specifically made to help during the pandemic (The European Council, 2021). The NGEU itself consists of 750 billion euros, which will be borrowed by the European Commission from the markets and will be used to provide for loans through the MFF programs (The European Council, 2021). NGEU also makes sure that the money is given to the countries most in need of it at the time, and the loans should be repaid by 2058 (The European Council, 2021).

However, as President Michel concluded that this was the right deal for Europe, the nation states still had to handle and provide crisis management within their nations, which leads to the question of whether Europe saw this as the best solution for themselves. All countries still had to manage their own restrictions and regulations, which happened quite differently considering which country one was to look at, supported by the research done by Toshkov, Carroll & Yesilkagit (2021). Europe and the EU is diverse when it comes to resources within the health sector, but also in political

organization (Toshkov et al., 2021, pp. 4-10). Toshkov et al. (2021) provide numbers that show that the countries with more resources and bigger hospitals, acted slower and to a less degree than the countries with little capacity in this area (p. 12). They also state that ideologies are statistically significant on the timing of restrictions, where parties positioned to the right decided to lock down faster than their opposing parties (Toshkov et al., 2021, p. 14). As the countries are this different, there is a possibility that the economic aid does not suit all countries and their respective resources during the current pandemic.

3.2 Eurobarometers before covid-19.

For this analysis, the Standard Eurobarometer published by the European Commission, will be used to measure how content Europeans are with their economic life, as well as the skepticism they feel towards the EU. To be able to give a proper analysis of these numbers and to observe if there is a change in attitudes after the beginning of the covid-19 crisis, one must also analyse the numbers from before the pandemic. For that reason, the Eurobarometer 89 (2018) and 91 (2019) will be included, to find the general trends in Euroscepticism the later years. In the two spring surveys, the standard question on how one perceives the EU is included with these answers from Spain and Denmark.

Table 1.

<i>Q: In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?</i>					
		Total positive	Neutral	Total negative	Don't know
Denmark					
	Spring 2018	43 %	42 %	14 %	1 %
	Spring 2019	54 %	32 %	13 %	1 %
Spain					
	Spring 2018	33 %	50 %	15 %	2 %
	Spring 2019	44 %	42 %	13 %	1 %
EU in total					
	Spring 2018	40 %	37 %	21 %	2 %
	Spring 2019	45 %	37 %	17 %	1 %

These numbers show that both Denmark and Spain had an increase in positive attitudes towards the EU in the two years preceding the covid-19 pandemic. Both countries have an 11 % increase in positive attitudes, with Denmark being the most positive in 2019. Spain on the other hand is just 1 % lower than the EU in total, with 10 % less than Denmark. The negativity, which in this case is the Euroscepticism, decreases in both countries from 2018 to 2019, by 1-2 %. For that reason, the general trend on Euroscepticism just before the outbreak of covid-19 is decreasing, as these numbers prove as well.

Furthermore, one should also look at the economic trends in the two years before the covid-19 pandemic, to see whether this changes after the outbreak. The Eurobarometers include a question to measure the public opinion on the nation's national economy, making this a good indicator for further analysis.

Table 2.

Q: How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? The situation on the national economy.				
		'Good'	'Bad'	'Don't know'
Denmark				
	Spring 2018	89 %	7 %	4 %
	Spring 2019	91 %	6 %	3 %
Spain				
	Spring 2018	16 %	83 %	1 %
	Spring 2019	26 %	72 %	2 %
EU in total				
	Spring 2018	49 %	47 %	4 %
	Spring 2019	49 %	47 %	4 %

By looking at these numbers, one can see that Denmark is in general very content with their national economy, with 91 % categorizing it as 'Good' in 2019, being an increase from the year before. Spain, however, is on the other end of the scale, with an increase from 16 % to 26 % who are content with the national economy from 2018 to 2019. This is a 10 % increase making the trend positive; however, the numbers are still very low, considering the EU in total is at 49 %.

3.3 Eurobarometers after covid-19.

There are four editions of the Eurobarometer released after the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic. The first one is the Standard Eurobarometer 93 (2020), which included a new section of questions regarding the pandemic. The next is the Standard Eurobarometer 94 (2020-2021), which, similarly to the Standard Eurobarometer 95 (2021) and 96 (2021-2022), includes more questions on the economic aid, as this had been introduced during the period. However firstly, the questions on Euroscepticism and economy from these past surveys will be analyzed.

Table 1.

Q: In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?					
		Total 'positive'	Neutral	Total 'negative'	Don't know
Denmark					
	Summer 2020	45 %	40 %	14 %	1 %
	Winter 2020-21	47 %	34 %	19 %	0 %
	Spring 2021	46 %	39 %	14 %	1 %
	Winter 2021-22	50 %	34 %	16 %	0 %
Spain					
	Summer 2020	35 %	48 %	15 %	2 %
	Winter 2020-21	45 %	45 %	8 %	2 %
	Spring 2021	46 %	42 %	11 %	1 %
	Winter 2021-22	40 %	46 %	13 %	1 %
EU in total					
	Summer 2020	40 %	40 %	19 %	1 %
	Winter 2020-21	46 %	38 %	15 %	1 %
	Spring 2021	45 %	38 %	16 %	1 %
	Winter 2021-22	44 %	38 %	17 %	1 %

As one can see, the numbers does not change significantly from before the outbreak of the pandemic. Both Denmark and Spain have a slight decrease in 'positive' answers from before the pandemic till summer 2020, however, the number increases again in winter 2020-21 and stabilizes thereafter. It is also interesting to note that Spain has a particularly low turnout in 'negative answers in Winter 2020-21, even though this does not seem to be a trend. In general, the 'positive' numbers increase again as the pandemic grows longer, which assumes that the support for EU experienced a downfall just after the pandemic broke out, but an increase again in the following years. It is still important to note, that Denmark does have an increasing number of 'negative' answers, with all answers being higher than before the pandemic, and at its highest in Winter 2020-21 with 19 %.

Table 4

Q: How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? The situation on the national economy.				
		'Good'	'Bad'	'Don't know'
Denmark				
	Summer 2020	82 %	12 %	6 %
	Winter 2020-21	71 %	29 %	0 %
	Spring 2021	84 %	12 %	4%
	Winter 2021-22	90 %	8 %	2 %
Spain				
	Summer 2020	11 %	88 %	1 %
	Winter 2020-21	8 %	91 %	1 %
	Spring 2021	12 %	88 %	0 %
	Winter 2021-22	17 %	81 %	2 %
EU in total				
	Summer 2020	34 %	64 %	2 %
	Winter 2020-21	29 %	69 %	2 %
	Spring 2021	40 %	58 %	2 %
	Winter 2021-22	39 %	59 %	2 %

The question regarding the national economy is also included in all surveys conducted after the outbreak of the pandemic. One can identify a trend in both countries, where the 'good' answers are lower than before the pandemic. Denmark still has very high percentages compared to Spain and EU in total, even though one can see the effects of the pandemic in the winter 2020-21 survey. The number of 'good' answers are, however, almost back to the results in 2019 in the latest edition of the survey, suggesting that there is a positive trend when it comes to the public opinion on national economy. Spain's numbers do also decrease a significant amount after the outbreak of the pandemic. They do also see their lowest numbers in the winter 2020-21 edition, with only 8 % 'good' answers. The country does, however, see an increase in 'good' answers in the latest edition, but the numbers continue at a low measure, and they never reach the numbers that were registered in the years before covid-19.

The 93rd edition of the Eurobarometer was the first to include questions regarding the covid-19 pandemic. They included several new questions regarding the pandemic, however for this analysis, the question of how content the respondent is with the handling of the pandemic by the EU, will be used. This is because it gives more information about the public opinion on EU politics, but especially on the regulations introduced during covid-19. This specific question was also included in the other Eurobarometers released after the outbreak, and can therefore be compared by year.

Table 2.

Q: In general, how satisfied are you with the measures taken to fight the coronavirus outbreak by the European Union institutions?				
		Satisfied	Not satisfied	Don't know
Denmark				
	Summer 2020	57 %	19 %	24 %
	Winter 2020-21	68 %	31 %	1 %
	Spring 2021	65 %	28 %	7 %
	Winter 2021-22	79 %	23 %	6 %
Spain				
	Summer 2020	36 %	52 %	12 %
	Winter 2020-21	44 %	44 %	12 %
	Spring 2021	50 %	42 %	8 %
	Winter 2021-22	51 %	40 %	9 %
EU in total				
	Summer 2020	45 %	44 %	11 %
	Winter 2020-21	43 %	49 %	8 %
	Spring 2021	51 %	41 %	8 %
	Winter 2021-22	49 %	42 %	9 %

The question on the handling of the crisis by the EU creates a good picture of how the states have felt towards the union during the pandemic. The first survey after the outbreak shows that both Denmark and Spain were quite content, but the numbers would only increase by the years that goes by. This first survey seems to be standing out in general, as a high amount of respondents answered 'don't know', in both countries analyzed. This indicates that the first year was more uncertain for both countries, and that the measures taken by the union was unclear. Spain has, however, lower numbers than Denmark throughout all the surveys, but their trend is also an increasing satisfaction as time goes by.

Table 3.

Q: In general, how satisfied are you with the measures taken to fight the coronavirus pandemic by the national government?				
		Satisfied	Not satisfied	Don't know
Denmark				
	Winter 2020-21	79 %	21 %	0 %
	Spring 2021	85 %	15 %	0 %
	Winter 2021-22	84 %	15 %	1 %
Spain				
	Winter 2020-21	30 %	69 %	1 %
	Spring 2021	39 %	60 %	1 %
	Winter 2021-22	45 %	53 %	2 %
EU in total				
	Winter 2020-21	43 %	56 %	1 %
	Spring 2021	53 %	46 %	1 %
	Winter 2021-22	50 %	48 %	2 %

All editions of the Eurobarometer from Winter 2020-21 included the question on how content the member states were with the handling of the crisis by their national government. Throughout the period, one can see that there is a large difference between Denmark and Spain concerning this specific matter, as Denmark is persistently more satisfied with their national government than Spain. Denmark is also more satisfied with the national handling than the EU handling, being a contrast to the outcome in Spain, where they are more content with EU's handling of the situation.

Table 4.

<i>Q: How effective or not do you think that this measure is to respond to the economic effects of the corona virus pandemic?</i>						
		Very effective	Fairly effective	Not very effective	Not at all effective	Don't know
Denmark						
	Winter 2020-21	3 %	60 %	32 %	4 %	1 %
	Spring 2021	5 %	56 %	30 %	4 %	5 %
	Winter 2021-22	5 %	56 %	28 %	5 %	6 %
Spain						
	Winter 2020-21	6 %	46 %	35 %	6 %	7 %
	Spring 2021	6 %	51 %	32 %	5 %	6 %
	Winter 2021-22	10 %	45 %	30 %	6 %	9 %
EU in total						
	Winter 2020-21	7 %	48 %	31 %	7 %	7 %
	Spring 2021	8 %	49 %	29 %	6 %	8 %
	Winter 2021-22	7 %	47 %	28 %	7 %	11 %

The last numbers that will be analyzed from the Eurobarometer is the question on how much the NGEU economic aid will help the countries and their economies after the pandemic. This is specifically aimed towards the economic aid that is being analyzed in this thesis, making the numbers vital for the discussion. After looking at the survey, both countries seem to have an increasing satisfaction with the aid, with Denmark having some more satisfaction than Spain.

3.4 Additional surveys from Denmark and Spain.

In addition to these numbers from the Eurobarometer, the respective countries have also gathered some information on the covid-19 pandemic and if people have become more or less skeptical about the EU during the period. The European parliament (2020), and their office in Denmark, provide numbers from a later Kantar survey, stating that 50 % of the Danish population have a positive perception of the EU, while only 33 % view the union as something negative in 2021. Also, the Danish think tank 'Tænketanken Europa' provides numbers from 2020, informing that 78 % of the Danish people prefer being a member of the EU, while only 18 % does not (Rønnsstad, 2020). The European parliament and their office in Denmark (2021) did also order a poll to measure how content people were with the handling of the covid-19 pandemic in June 2020, and 61 % of the Danish respondents answered that they were content with the measures taken. This was an increase from the end of April, and significantly higher than the 49 % EU-average from the same survey (Europa - parlamentet: Kontoret i Danmark, 2021). As a summary of

the different surveys, there is an overlining trend that most Danish people are content with their membership in the EU and the properties connected to it. 'Tænketanken Europa' does have some higher percentages than the two other surveys, however the trend seems to be cohesive between the different operators.

Spain does also have some additional information concerning the rise in Euroscepticism after the outbreak of the covid-19 crisis, and the numbers are to a certain extent similar to the Danish ones. Margalef (2020) uses numbers provided by YouGov in his text, and the survey concludes that 67 % of the Spanish people prefer being a part of the EU. However, he also includes numbers from the same survey, which states that 84 % of the Spanish people would have preferred there to be a more holistic response to the pandemic by the EU (Margalef, 2020). In addition to these numbers, the newspaper Vice.com interviews several individuals regarding the opposition towards the EU after the debates on the economic help provided during the pandemic, as there were several different options for aid and different preferences across the nations (Simón, 2020). One of the individuals interviewed, Emilio (32), is asked whether he believes that the covid-19 pandemic and the handling of it will produce more Eurosceptics, and he states that "This handling of the crisis is probably a factory producing Eurosceptics" (Simón, 2020). Another individual, Eve (32), states that she supports the EU even though she is disappointed with the handling of the covid-19 aid (Simón, 2020). This supposes that the support for EU is still high, even though a large amount of the public would have preferred more information, and to a certain extent a different solution to the economic aid, however, this is not enough to make the public more Eurosceptic

4 Discussion.

After looking at these observed numbers, one can say that they are somewhat surprising compared to other economic situations in the past. Firstly, economic difficulties are expected to increase Euroscepticism, as political elites have been given the responsibility to keep this balanced from the public's point of view (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010, p. 791). When negotiating this economic aid, Denmark was vocal about their views on the budget introduced by the European Commission, with government leader Mette Fredriksen calling it 'completely gaga' (Sørensen, 2020). When the Danish people rejected the Maastricht treaty in 1992, including the introduction of the Euro and EMU, it was made clear that the Danish people opposed further economic integration (Taggart, 1998, p. 365). The economic aid provided during the pandemic does encourage economic cooperation in the sense that the aid of partially grants and loans are being borrowed by the European Commission from the markets (The European Council, 2021). This will only benefit the countries who cannot provide for themselves as a result of the pandemic, which from an intergovernmentalist point of view, will increase Euroscepticism because the prioritized interests of the state is not fulfilled (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 66; The European Council, 2021). This is why one can perceive the results of decreasing Euroscepticism in Denmark as surprising, because they have in the past shown opposition towards economic integration. Their national economy is also strong, making it less likely that they will benefit from the aid, and surprising that the public does not oppose the solution going against the state's best interest.

Furthermore, by looking at the numbers concerning the Spanish opinion, the trend is similar to Denmark's, however, not as surprising as the former. The public opinion

concerning the national economic situation is very low compared to other countries, and as the pandemic turned into a fact, combined with the fear of another economic recession, a country like Spain could possibly want a closer economic cooperation with the EU. After analyzing the numbers on Euroscepticism, table 3 shows that the opinion becomes increasingly better by each year, except for the latest survey where the opinion drops some per cent, but the 'neutral' answer is possibly the one gaining most of the lost votes. In addition, Spain has through many years maintained their strong opinion on the union despite situations that have occurred on the way, legitimizing the notion that there might be a stronger connection in general between a possible Spanish identity and a European one (Berntzen, 2013). It is also worth noting, as seen in table 5 and 6, that Spain had persistently low numbers on the perception of the nation's handling, while having much higher satisfaction with the EU handling. This creates a picture of a state that is a candidate to receive economic aid during the crisis, as well as one in favor of the restrictions provided by the union. For that reason, the Spanish outcome in these surveys can be perceived as something more expected than the Danish one, as the economic situation and the connection to the union from the beginning, has been significantly different from Denmark.

Despite this observed trend in both countries, one can see that there is, in fact, some more negative perceptions of the EU just after the outbreak of the pandemic, suggesting that there was an existing fear or discontent in the beginning of the crisis compared to the surveys to come. As table 3 and 4 shows, both Spain and Denmark experienced an increase in Euroscepticism after the beginning of the pandemic, as well as a lower public opinion on the national economy. This indicates that the two factors do have a connection to each other, however, the drop in this first survey is as low as it has gotten during the pandemic. The numbers do increase again in the surveys to come after summer 2020, however, one can still argue that the beginning of the pandemic brought more discontent and uncertainty, which is visible in the numbers from the Eurobarometer 93. This, however, does not describe the trend which emerged in the later surveys, but the numbers do show that the situation in itself could have caused another trend than the one observed in the later surveys.

However, an observation that is more surprising concerning the economic aid, is the fact that Denmark seems more content with the economic handling of the pandemic than Spain, even though Spain has a higher chance of receiving aid. The Eurobarometers after the outbreak all had a specific section of questions regarding the pandemic, where table 7 shows the public opinion on the NGEU recovery plan and its effectiveness. Spain has in general throughout all the surveys a bigger amount of 'Not very effective' and 'not at all effective' answers than Denmark, and even though they have a slightly higher percentage in 'very effective' answers, they are again lower in the 'fairly effective' category. Denmark, on the contrary, have over 50 % of 'fairly effective' answers, and seems to have a stable opinion on this throughout the pandemic. This is surprising, as they are already content with their national economy and therefore their possibility to handle the crisis, but still note more positive answers towards the effect of the NGEU economic aid on their own economy than Spain. A possible explanation to this can be the EU discussions on alternatives to the aid that was eventually chosen, which is also mentioned in the interviews performed by vice.com, where one of their subjects picture this choice of economic aid as a factory producing an increasing amount of Eurosceptics in Spain (Simón, 2020). Still, the nation is a subject for aid provided by the union, making the results unforeseen, but possibly more understandable. For that very reason,

one can argue that the observation of Spain being less content with the NGEU recovery plan was not expected, considering the fact that they might benefit from the measures taken.

To be able to explain why these surprising outcomes occurred, one can take a theoretical approach on economy and understand that cooperation between states sometimes require bargaining. As mentioned earlier, liberal intergovernmentalism highlights bargaining as a tactic for states to be able to gain more in a longer period of time, by tolerating certain matters that are not always in the state's best interest (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 68). This has been visible both in countries in a strong position, wanting to strengthen their position in the future, or some that are in more of a desperate situation, like the indebted countries during the Great Recession (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 73). Bargaining is also supported by the theory of social constructivism, only by adding a notion of the states being able to change their perceptions considering the context they appear in (Risse, 2019, p. 143). As the numbers from the national surveys and the Eurobarometers showed, the Eurosceptic trend in Denmark and Spain is decreasing, meaning that the public is less hostile towards the union despite the ongoing crisis. An explanation of this can be that the Danish people have enough faith in their own national economy to be able to handle the pandemic, and for that reason, do not see it as a problem that the EU are taking up loans to be solidaric towards other member states. As for Spain, they might have been in favor of another form of economic aid, but choosing to support NGEU anyway in favor of no aid at all. The bargaining in this situation will therefore be Denmark agreeing on economic cooperation despite their attitudes towards the matter, and Spain bargaining to have some economic aid considering their poorer national economy, to reach the higher goal of eradicating the pandemic. Finally, Denmark might also have a higher possibility of reaching their own interests in the union at a later stage, because they have already agreed to engage in cooperation that usually would not be a priority for the country.

Ultimately, a sense of community could also explain why Euroscepticism decreased, as the covid-19 pandemic was a very different situation compared to previous economic situations. Risse (2019) argues that EU citizens is increasingly more willing to grant each other benefits if needed (p. 139). The humanitarian perspective dominated the focus of most actors during this pandemic, and one can assume that the sense of community and willingness to be selfless might surpass other concerns present at the time. A sense of community is highlighted in social constructivism as a perception of a common public sphere, as well as common norms and identities (Risse, 2019, p. 129). As the Eurosceptic trend is declining in both countries, this can be a possible explanation for why this outcome occurred, despite the fact that a comparison from previous crises would suggest differently. A socially constructed community might have been created during the early stages of the pandemic as every nation wanted to fight the virus, explaining why the EU might increase their support by creating aid for those most in need. Both social constructivism and liberal intergovernmentalism mentions this 'crisis mentality', as well as the fact that each nation state might see the importance of cooperation between nations to prevent a bigger global crisis. Also, social constructivism highlights the fact that context is important when analyzing identity and norms, which again is suitable for a situation where human lives and global economy is at stake (Risse, 2019, p. 143). In this sense, the identity trigger of Euroscepticism is at a decrease, as a common goal and sphere makes individuals less Eurosceptic (Risse, 2019, p. 137).

5 Summary and Conclusion.

The aim of this thesis was to decide whether or not the NGEU economic aid provided by the EU after the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic increased the levels of Euroscepticism in Denmark and Spain. The results of the analysis revealed a decreasing trend in Euroscepticism in both countries, which was unexpected before conducting the analysis. This is because Denmark had a tradition of being more Eurosceptic, while Spain has throughout the years been more positive towards their membership in the union. However, this led to the realization of three different conclusions on the trend of Euroscepticism after the outbreak of covid-19.

Firstly, the observation of a previous trend in Denmark is not visible in the Eurobarometer measures on Euroscepticism after the covid-19 pandemic. As mentioned, Denmark has been perceived as more Eurosceptic, but the numbers presented after the pandemic show that Denmark have a small portion of Eurosceptics, and the trend is decreasing. The discussion has highlighted reasons such as the country seeing the possibility of bargaining, or the fact that the pandemic itself created a stronger social identity and community to solve a common cause. Bargaining might have happened in Denmark's case because they perceived the NGEU as something they could accept, in order to have more sovereignty in other cooperations in the future. Another possibility is that they accepted the economic aid to annihilate the bigger issue, being the pandemic. This is supported by the theories of liberal intergovernmentalism and social constructivism, as states can change their national interests in international cooperations, if the situation requires it.

Another conclusion is the observation of Spain keeping their low numbers on Euroscepticism, which has been an expectation considering their persistent high support. As the numbers showed in both countries, Euroscepticism grew slightly in the first Eurobarometer after the outbreak, but the numbers have been decreasing every year since. In advance of the analysis, it was expected that Spain would keep their high numbers considering they might be a candidate to receive economic aid. However, the picture seemed to be more nuanced, as alternatives to the NGEU could have suited Spain better, which again could have influenced the outcome. However, this was not the case, and Spain did have a steady decrease in Euroscepticism on the same level as Denmark. Bargaining may also have been a factor in the Spanish case, as they accepted the NGEU and kept their Euroscepticism decreasing, to be able to end the pandemic and have possible aid if needed.

The last conclusion observed is when comparing Denmark and Spain, Denmark is in fact more satisfied with the handling of the pandemic than Spain. Spain is not content with their national economy, and would be expected to receive economic aid if needed. However, Denmark has higher 'positive' and 'satisfied' answers regarding EU attitudes and handling of the pandemic, proving to be more content than Spain. This is surprising, as previous research labeled Denmark as more Eurosceptic and Spain as very positive towards the union. It is uncertain what might cause this, however, it may be because of different views of what can be categorized as Euroscepticism, and if the triggers of Euroscepticism is influenced by the unusual situation that is a pandemic. A common cause may decrease identity as a trigger, creating a common social sphere with a goal of eradicating the pandemic.

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