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Research Article

The European Union under Threat of a Trend toward National Sovereignty

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Abstract

The European Union represents the most advanced case of voluntary regional integration in the world. But today, after several decades of the pooling of sovereignty within the EU, Europe is experiencing a renaissance of national sovereignty supported by a nationalistic turn of public opinion and represented by parties on both ends of the political spectrum. The size of the national sovereignty trend among European citizens and discovery of its main drivers are the main problems that we address in the article. Through Eurobarometer data of the period before the referendum on Brexit, we show that seeing a better future outside the Union is related to shrinking support for globalization and liberal values among the population. Furthermore, popular disaffection toward EU membership did not develop in a vacuum but is fuelled by the contemporaneous occurrence of two shocks, the economic and the migration crises, a combination of circumstances that have aggravated the problem of the reduced legitimacy of the EU among citizens.

Keywords

EU; Nationalism; Liberalism; Economic crisis; Immigration

Considering the scope of integration attained through economic policy coordination at the EU level, scholars have addressed the question of whether a common market created ‘from above’ by national and supranational elites with the support of transnational economic interests, may develop into a democratic political community legitimised by citizens ‘from below’. The integration of Europe has indeed become a more divisive, yet politicised issue within society and scholarly research currently reflects the primacy of this issue in the European public debate (Kriesi, Grande, Dolezal, Helbling et al. 2012; Zürn 2016).

Citizens’ attitudes toward the EU have been explained through different theoretical approaches that focus mainly on cultural predispositions (McLaren 2002), interests (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel 1998), cognitive mobilisation (Inglehart 1970), values (Inglehart 1971) and trust in institutions (Anderson 1998). However, recent emerging phenomena have challenged these traditional arguments. Nationalism in its different facets, consisting above all of cultural and economic chauvinism (or neo-protectionist economic nationalism), is on the rise across Europe and has been building more rapidly since the global financial crisis. More recently, a call for border control has been fuelled by Europe’s migrant crisis. After several decades of pooling sovereignty in the EU, Europe is experiencing a renaissance of sovereigntist ideology that has found a voice in recently emerged parties on both ends of the political spectrum, or in former minority parties that have been rejuvenated by the nationalistic turn of public opinion. The size of the national sovereignty trend² among European citizens with respect to the EU is the first problem that we address in the article. We are not only interested in the description of this problem, in the article we also identify its main drivers. Thus, the two problems (scope and determinants) of the sovereigntist trend among the EU population will be addressed through the two following research questions. To what extent do the citizens of the member states support the idea that their country would be better outside the EU (the hardest form of Euroscepticism one may think about)? To what extent is citizens’ discontent with the EU contingent on the current situation of multiple (economic, migration) crises affecting the

European continent? To existing scholarship in the field, we add the use of fresh data that incorporate the EU crisis context (economic and refugee crisis, Brexit) and we test the validity of theory in the critical scenario of our days.

The article is organised as follows. The first section discusses different theoretical approaches explaining citizens' support for a more united Europe. It also introduces our theoretical framework and working hypotheses. The second section presents the data and the method used to test our hypotheses along with some descriptive analyses. The third section discusses the main results of our multivariate analysis, while the conclusion summarises the main findings of the article and their implications for the future of the EU.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Public attitudes toward the EU have been studied very intensely in the past and especially in recent times. For a long time, there was only limited interest in the study of public opinion and the EU, as citizens were considered to give their permissive consensus to the elites to pursue the goal of Europe's integration (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). However, since the Maastricht Treaty and the launch of a Monetary Union, the EU has produced an impact on the member states that has certainly become more evident to citizens who, as a consequence, have changed their views significantly (Eichenberg and Dalton 2007). Since then, the political elites can no longer rely on the permissive consensus of citizens (Hooghe and Marks 2009) and a Eurosceptical turn has materialised within society (Usherwood and Startin 2013).

Classic research shows that the most relevant determinants of citizens' attitudes toward the EU pertain to a mix of socio-demographics, utilitarian calculations, ideological and symbolic motivations, cues. In the attempt to systematise these different determinants in an encompassing theoretical framework, some authors (Hooghe and Marks 2005 and, more recently, Sanders, Bellucci, Toka and Torcal 2012: 222-225) have grouped the relevant factors under the four dimensions of 'cognitive mobilization', 'utilitarian calculations', 'political heuristics' and 'polity identification'.³ These multiple motivations that inform attitudes can be considered evidence of progress in the integration process, from mainly addressing economic cooperation to encompassing political and symbolic aspects as well.

As to cognitive mobilisation, already in the 1970s, Inglehart (1970; 1991) argued that information and knowledge of the EU as well as a higher level of education positively influence citizens' attitudes toward the integration process. This argument was also confirmed in more recent research (Hakhverdian, Van Elsas, Van der Brug and Kuhn 2013). Following a utilitarian approach, other authors argued that citizens make their own calculations about the costs and benefits stemming from EU membership based upon their personal interests and those of their community (Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Loveless and Rohrschneider 2011). In this vein, Hobolt and de Vries (2016) have recently demonstrated that those citizens who felt more adversely affected by the economic crisis and discontented with its handling by the EU have been more prone to vote for Eurosceptic parties in the most recent elections of the European Parliament.

Some other scholars maintained that the political orientations of citizens and their attitudes toward national politics filter their stance on the EU. In this perspective, ideology (Lubbers and Scheepers 2010) and attachment/trust in the national institutions (Anderson 1998) are considered influential factors.

In more recent times, identity was proposed as another powerful source of support for and opposition to the EU, but whereas some authors argued that a strong national identity is an obstacle to the development of a truly European identity (McLaren 2002; Carey 2002), others maintained that there is a positive correlation between these two layers of identification (Bruter 2005; Citrin and Sides 2004). In general, research on Euroscepticism found a close relationship between a general hostility toward other cultures (of non-nationals) and opposition to the EU (De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005; Hobolt, Van der Brug, De Vreese, Boomgaarden et al. 2011).

In this study, we build on the above theoretical arguments to see if they reflect Europe's situation of today. Since European reality has experienced dramatic changes in recent times, our framework reflects on the impact of new circumstances. The recent crisis context of the EU calls for testing how the impact of economic and cultural concerns shape public opinion. Notably, we consider the impact of chauvinist beliefs within society, perceived effects of the economic crisis and attitudes toward immigration. As to national chauvinism, after several waves of enlargement, the EU has become a more diverse community, which has created new opportunities but also unprecedented competitive pressures on the economies of the member states while the economic imbalances within the EU have become greater. These phenomena are specific to Europe, at the same time their particular effects have interacted with other global pressures that, in the end, have induced greater market competition (including labour competition) along with uneven economic opportunities within society and among European countries. This, in turn, has generated a more diffuse sense of economic insecurity within sizable groups of EU citizens, it has also led many to turn their back on the core values of European integration based on free movement and international economic interdependence and to embrace, as a reaction, the principles of economic chauvinism (Hobolt and Tilley 2016; Kriesi et al. 2012; Teney, Laceywell and De Wilde 2014). Given the circumstances, it becomes relevant to understand whether the liberal foundations of European integration (Scharpf 2010; Schmidt 2003) are at risk due to an upsurge of economic chauvinism at the individual level among EU citizens, hence our first hypothesis:

H1: Positive attitudes toward globalization and economic liberalism increase the probability of seeing a better future within the EU. On the opposite side, negative attitudes toward globalization and economic liberalism increase the probability of seeing a better future outside the EU (exit).

These long-standing processes and their effects have interacted in more recent times with two of the most serious crises that the EU has ever faced. The close economic interdependence within the EU, along with the economic imbalances within the Eurozone, have transformed the effects of the global economic crisis into a more specific Euro crisis (Copelovitch, Frieden and Walter 2016; Offe and Preuß 2015). Faced with this challenge, Monetary Union has revealed its structural weaknesses and the more vulnerable European economies have become the objects of exceptional financial pressures, as well as of consequent efforts of crisis management at the EU level. In this process, the interests of the EU member states appeared to conflict and to antagonise the debtor and creditor countries, while the mediating role of the EU institutions emerged as one that can easily be trapped by the uncompromising interests of the different parties. The duration of the bargaining process and the unpopularity of the applied solutions for the constituencies representing the different parties in this game have produced increased pessimism in public discourse about the EU and its mediating capacities (Brack and Startin 2015). Indeed, the Euro crisis has revealed divisions across countries that are heavily dependent on their asymmetric power and varieties of capitalism, while Monetary Union has become a more polarising and more politicised issue across the member states (Hobolt and de Vries 2015; Leupold 2016; Zürn 2016). At the same time, opposition to austerity politics has also expanded in the member states. Austerity has become identified with the EU, the established parties have become perceived as the executors of the EU policy plans, and there has been a sudden increase in protest events and votes for the radical parties (Della Porta 2015; Hobolt and Tilley

2016). We hypothesise that this distress felt about the European economic system and the enduring effects of the economic crisis are leading to mass mobilisation against the EU.

H2: Pessimistic perspectives about the effects of the economic crisis increase the probability of seeing a better future outside the EU.

Another crisis that has raised many concerns among the European public involves immigration. The fears of Europeans have increased along with the mounting number of illegal immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers reaching EU borders, especially as a consequence of conflicts in the Middle East. Under the economic crisis, concerns about the cultural impact of immigration have become strengthened by fears about its economic impact, especially where immigrants are perceived as competing for the same resources as the host population and these resources are scarce. The exceptional external immigration pressure adds to the broad phenomenon of internal migration within the EU that has also created concerns among the host populations, particularly after the most recent waves of enlargement. Although freedom of movement and residence for citizens is a cornerstone of EU citizenship, and despite the fact that internal migration is necessary for the common market, it has had negative effects on support for European integration in the host societies (Azmanova 2011; Toshkov and Kortenska 2015). As a consequence, overt opposition to immigration, expressed as support for closed national borders, has increased throughout Europe. This has played a role in reinforcing nationalism and the tendency toward ethnic chauvinism among Europeans. Thus, nowadays, immigration is a broad phenomenon – both endogenous and exogenous to the EU – that may undermine broad public support for EU integration (Hobolt et al. 2011; Toshkov and Kortenska 2015). We hypothesise that fear of immigration has emerged as a main driver of mass mobilisation against the EU in recent times.

H3: Negative views about immigration increase the probability of seeing a better future outside the EU.

Finally, we aim to check how perceptions of the economy and attitudes toward immigration interact with the liberal ideology that has inspired the EU up to the present day. In this respect, we hypothesise that the economic crisis and immigration have become a main concern for European citizens that may water down the positive impact of liberal economic values on support for the EU.

H4: Concerns about the economy and immigration weaken the positive effects of liberal economic values on support for the EU.

Our explanatory framework allows us to update theory on public attitudes toward the EU in light of the most urgent pressures that currently afflict Europe and in an unprecedented context where leaving the EU has materialised as an option for citizens in the member states.

VARIABLES AND METHOD

In order to test our working hypotheses, we focused primarily on the Eurobarometer (EB) 84.3 of November 2015. This EB wave fits the purpose of the present study since it includes a variety of indicators of policy preferences, political and economic beliefs, concern for political and social issues and views about the EU.⁴ We completed our descriptive analyses with longitudinal data that document the recent trends.

The dependent variable that we selected from the dataset refers to the level of agreement with the idea that, in the future, the respondent's country would be better outside the EU.⁵ This indicator is

conceptually different from a classic indicator of diffuse support for the EU such as *benefits* coming from EU membership. Indeed, the indicator that we selected here introduces a perspective assessment (future outside the EU) that is more suitable for our research questions and for contemporary times than the traditional retrospective assessment (benefits of membership) about the effects of EU membership on the respondents' own country. Indeed, this question has become more crucial since the morning of 24 June 2016, when the results of the UK referendum gave an unexpected result in favour of Brexit, a process that immediately brought to reality the formerly only hypothetical option of the exit of a member state (stated in art. 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon).

The EB series has administered a specific question on exiting the EU since November 2012, when the debate on Brexit started to become mainstream.⁶ Taking 2012 as a starting point, if we look at the broader picture of the EU countries, we find a trend made of flat lines for both the respondents agreeing (better outside the EU coded as 1) and disagreeing with an exit option. However, a clear majority of citizens (between 55 and 59 per cent) refused the idea of a better future outside the EU. Around 30 per cent of EU citizens (between 29 and 34 per cent), on the contrary, thought that their country would be better outside the EU. Hence, public support for 'remain' appears majoritarian and resilient overall.

However, the picture partially changes as soon as we break down data by country. Within a majority of countries, the share of citizens who thought that their future would be better off outside the EU was below the EU average (33 per cent), but ten out of twenty-eight countries were actually above. Most notably, in Austria, Cyprus, Slovenia and the UK, the share of people who saw a better future outside the EU was close to or above 50 per cent;⁷ this share exceeded 35 per cent in Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Poland (Figure 1). The level of integration attained in the European continent has no comparison worldwide and, today, the EU is a layer of the European multi-level governance system consisting of substantive power and capacity to constrain the member states. In the presence of such an extraordinary political power, it is certainly detrimental to EU legitimacy that citizens question their country membership in the EU in such large numbers.

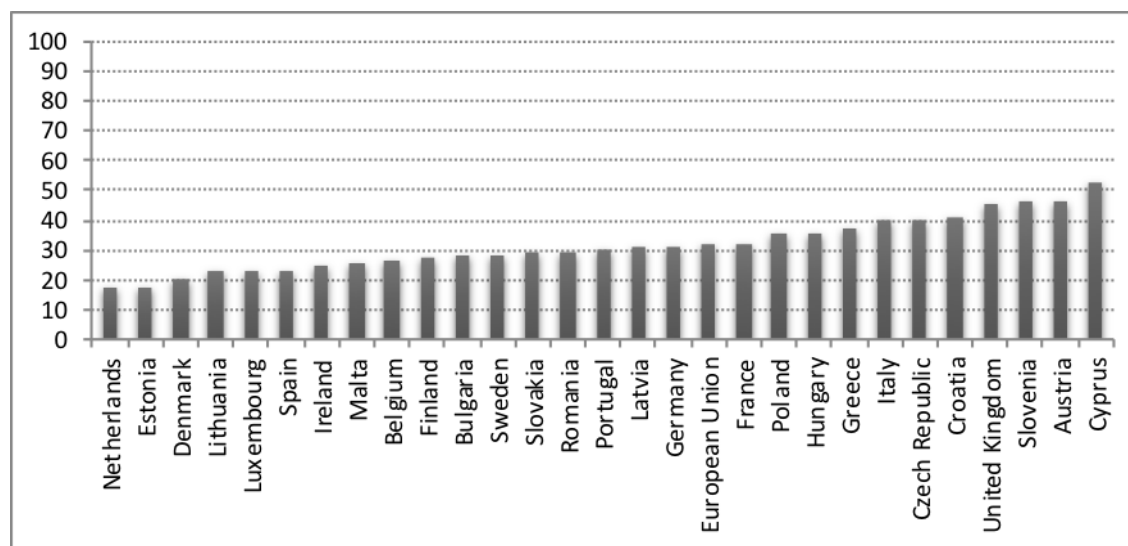


Fig.1 Percentages of people agreeing about a better future outside the EU per country, November 2015.

Note: Don't Know included. Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

In order to understand why this happens, we now turn to possible motivations dictated by cultural backlash, fear of immigrants, economic insecurity and anti-economic liberal views. These are phenomena that have recently erupted in many Western societies and that have seriously contributed to enhancing protest among the population (Inglehart and Norris 2016). Hence, in our

attempt to explain the negative attitude of many Europeans toward EU membership, we first selected from the dataset an indicator of exclusive national identity⁸ and one measure of attachment to the EU.⁹ Eurobarometer data show that the exclusive national identity has been, on average, quite stable during the last five years, at around thirty-eight per cent.¹⁰

Also in this case, percentages vary substantially across member states. In November 2015, fifteen countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, UK) show percentages of exclusive national identity above the EU average (more than 40 per cent). Nine countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden) report values between 30 and 38 per cent, while only three countries (Croatia, Luxembourg and Spain) are more than 10 per cent points below the EU mean (Figure 2). Attachment to the EU seems to have gone in the opposite direction: it is higher in countries with low percentages of exclusive nationalists and lower in countries reporting high percentages of exclusive nationalism (Figure 2). Investigating this negative relationship is far from the purposes of this article and would deserve a specific analysis. Moreover, some cases (Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania) clearly do not show any tension between exclusive national identity and attachment to EU. Without entering into this complex debate (see among others Haller and Ressler 2006; Fligstein 2008) we can claim here that identification with their own nations has certainly not vanished and it is even predominant within a large share of society. This high identification, in some countries, coexists with a low level of attachment to Europe, while in some others the two have similar values.¹¹

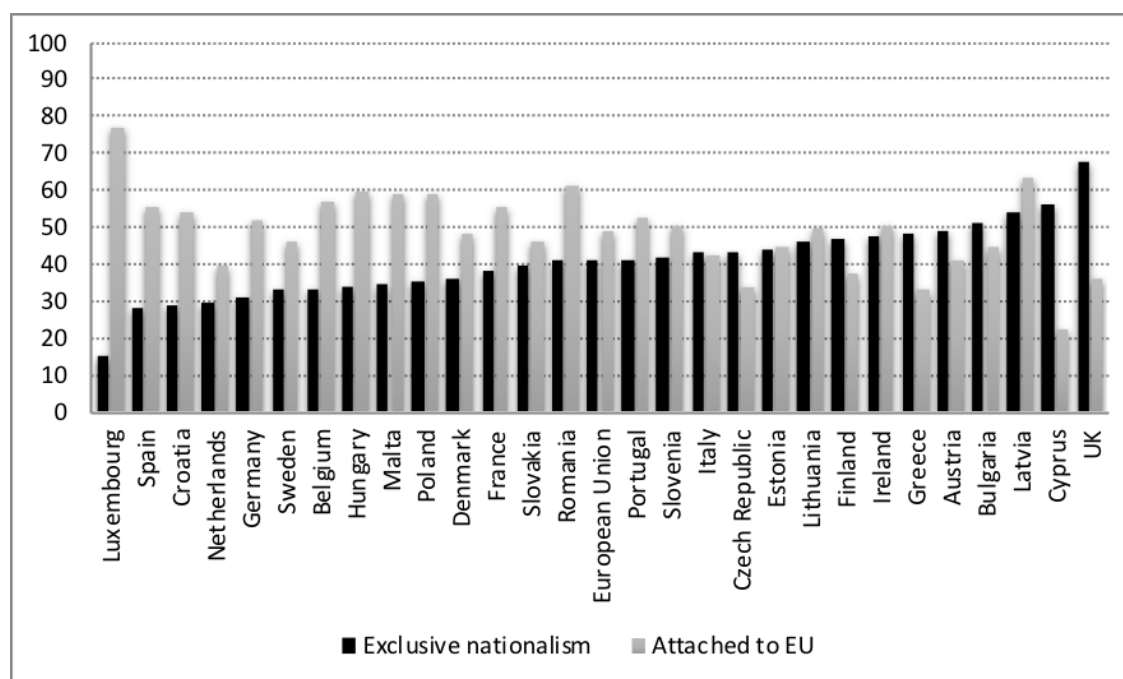


Fig.2 Percentages of exclusive national identity and attachment to EU by country.

Note: Don't Know included. Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

We now turn to public perceptions of immigrants. We are interested in understanding if those who perceive immigration as a threat would prefer their country to be out of the EU as a means of limiting the intermingling of people. In the analysis, views about immigration¹² were tested at a time (2015) when the migration crisis was particularly acute through a question that points to the perceived costs/benefits of immigration (an encompassing measure, as the question does not discriminate between cultural and economic costs/benefits). In seventeen European states, the majority of people disagree with the idea that immigrants contribute to their own country

(disagreement has been coded as 1, see Figure 3). In five countries, percentages range from 42 to 48, while only six EU countries show percentages below 35.

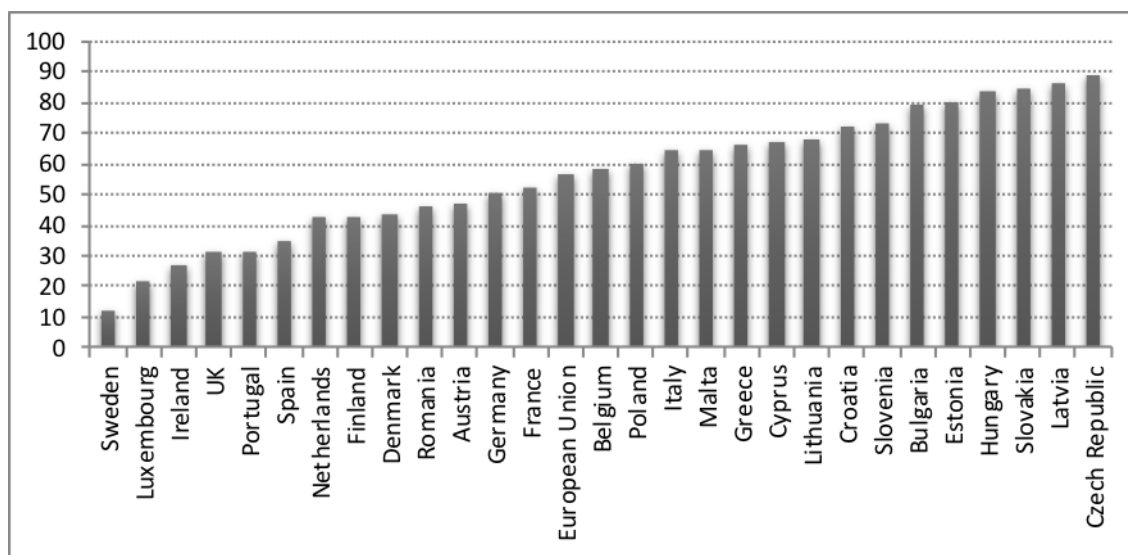


Fig.3 Percentages of respondents disagreeing with the statement that ‘immigrants contribute a lot to their country’.
 Note: Don’t Know included. Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

Turning to views about the economy, the effects of the economic crisis have been tested through a question (transformed in a binary variable) that reflects the degree of optimism/pessimism about the future of the economy as a consequence of the economic crisis.¹³ In 2015, about six years from the beginning of the Great Recession, almost half of the EU citizens (46 per cent) think that ‘the worst is yet to come’ (coded as 1). Once again, among the EU countries, people show different levels of pessimism, although, in 17 out of the 28 member states, more than 40 percent of people remain pessimistic about the future of the economy (Figure 4).

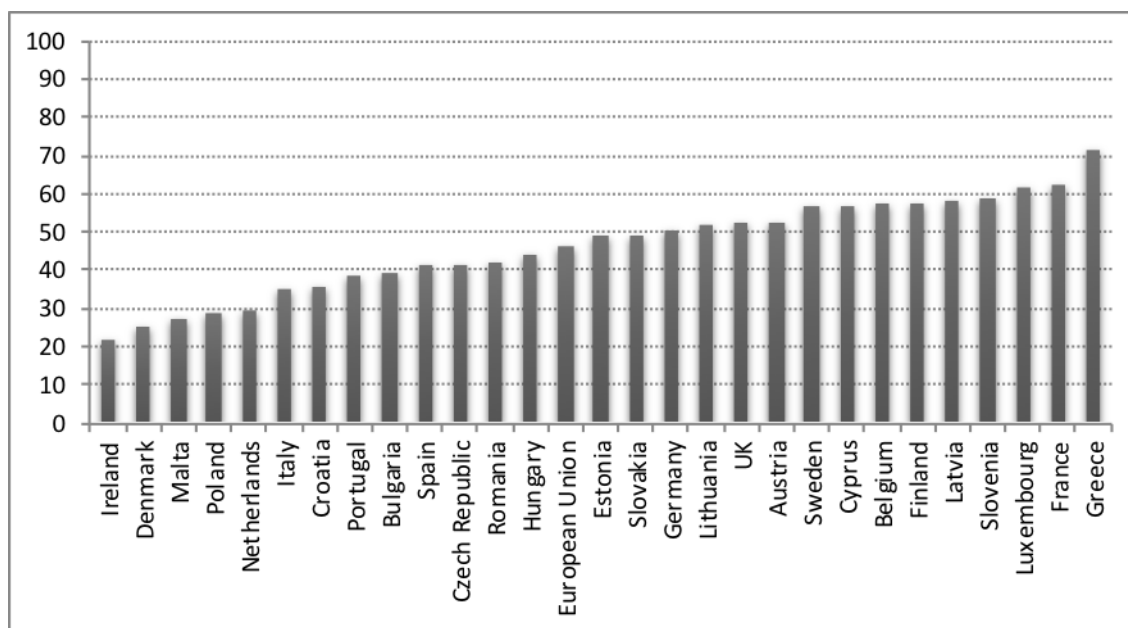


Fig.4 Percentages of pessimism about the future of the job market as an effect of the economic crisis (‘the worst is yet to come’).
 Note: Don’t Know included. Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

In order to define viable measures of attitudes toward economic globalization and liberalism, we created two indexes based on the factor scores of two factor analyses (FA). The first index was created using a question on attitudes (negative vs. positive) toward economic liberalism, relevant economic actors and state intervention.¹⁴ We first recoded answers into binary variables, assigning one to the positive ('very' and 'fairly' positive) answers and zero to the negative ones. Then, we ran a factor analysis (Varimax rotation, see Appendix for factor loadings) including one variable for each item and we obtained three different factors as a result. We selected the second factor where only *free trade*, *globalization* and *liberalization* came out as most related items. We labelled this factor as *globalization* and we calculated the factor scores for each respondent on this factor. We obtained an index, ranging from -4.297 to 1.631 pointing to positive and negative views about the global economy: the higher the score, the more positive the perception of globalization. Figure 5 shows average values per country: Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and UK are, on average, less supportive of global economic liberalization than the other countries. The result for UK may well anticipate the fears of the British public over the economic transformations of the country in recent decades that a few months later were epitomised by the vote in favour of Brexit, where the most 'left behind' social groups massively mobilised against EU membership (Goodwin and Heath 2016).

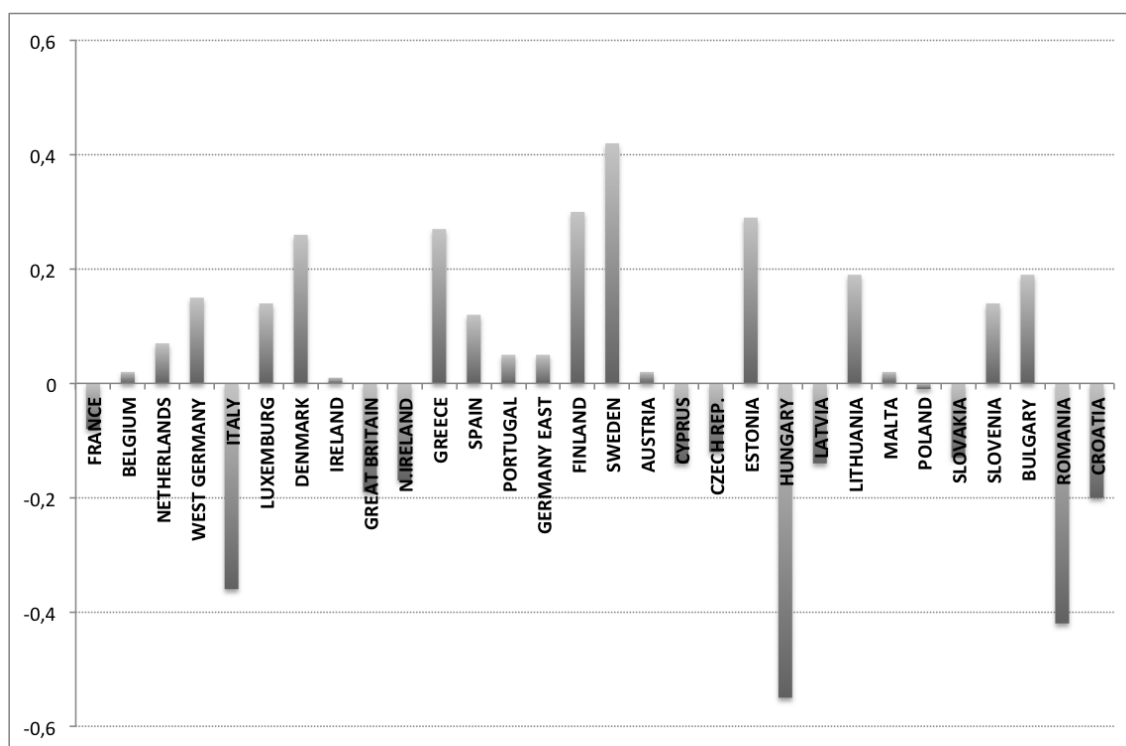


Fig 5. Average values of Globalization index by country, November 2015.

Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

The index that we labelled *economic liberalism* was created from a question asking respondents to indicate their most important personal values.¹⁵ The index measures to what extent respondents share liberal economic values such as individual freedom and self-realisation. Each respondent could select a maximum of three items and we focused in particular on *individual freedom* and *self-fulfilment* (Factor 1, see appendix). These two dummy variables have been aggregated in an additive index ranging from zero to two depending on whether respondents selected both (coded as 2), one (coded as 1) or neither of these two items (equal to 0). The average values (not shown) appear close across countries (with a range from 0.55 for Lithuania to 0.23 for Denmark) but show larger variation at individual level (the average value is 0.38 with a standard deviation of 0.54).

Finally, European efficacy is measured by respondents' confidence in the capacity of the EU to defend its interests at the global level.¹⁶ In our framework, this variable is meant to prove whether the perception of the EU as a successful global actor increases the likelihood of supporting a 'remain' option.

Along with these main independent variables, the models that we present in the following section also include some control variables whose relationship with support for Europe has been tested in past studies. These indicators include confidence in the national government to test whether citizens employ proxies rooted in attitudes about domestic politics when responding to survey questions about the EU (Anderson 1998);¹⁷ education,¹⁸ whose impact is emphasised by supporters of the cognitive mobilisation argument (Inglehart 1970; Inglehart, Rabier and Reif 1991); and the respondent's working position to test arguments about a rationalistic approach when people make assessments about the EU (Gabel 1998).¹⁹ Finally, in the models we inserted some socio-demographic variables such as gender²⁰ and age,²¹ as control variables.

The descriptive statistics that we present in this section show some important national variations suggesting that strong national patterns might be at work. This result recommends controlling for the nationality of respondents when testing our hypotheses at the individual level.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In order to test our hypotheses, we estimated four logistic regression models where 'future better conditions outside the EU' is taken as the dependent variable.²² We created the first model by including identity, attitudes toward globalization, economic liberalism, the socio-demographic variables and the control variables. This model is meant to test the effects of personal beliefs (identity, globalization and economic liberalism) on the perception of a better future outside the European Union. We then moved the focus of the analysis to the two most urgent issues for European public opinion: the economic crisis and immigration. Accordingly, the second model includes all the socio-demographic variables, the control variables along with perceptions about immigration and the future of the economy. The third model includes all the selected variables and the fourth adds interaction terms between the globalization index and the two variables related to immigration and the future of the economy.

Table 1 reports the results of the analyses.²³ In model one, identity plays a crucial role for individual perceptions about a future outside the EU. People feeling (very or somewhat) attached to the EU are more likely to see a better future within the Union. The opposite is true for exclusive national identity holders. Those people identifying themselves exclusively with their national community tend to refuse membership of a supranational entity such as the EU. This result is consistent with the theory of perceived threats that, in the case of more nation-minded citizens, are strongly associated with other nations and other cultures (McLaren 2002), with which the EU seeks to intermingle. As its explanatory power shows (those respondents with an exclusive national identity have twice the probability of seeing a better future outside the EU), an exclusive national identity produces the largest effect in favour of exiting the Union. This finding explains why the Eurosceptical propaganda of populist parties, largely based on a nationalistic drive and calls for a shift of powers back to the nation state, has become so successful in mobilising citizens.

Table 1. Logistic Regression Models with 'a better future outside the EU' as dependent variable (clustered by countries).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.
Exclusive Nationalism	1.917****	0.084			1.812****	0.080	1.808****	0.081
Globalization index	0.881****	0.018			0.904****	0.019	0.716****	0.026
Economic liberalism index	0.898***	0.033			0.895***	0.033	0.897***	0.033
European efficacy	0.805****	0.036			0.858***	0.039	0.847****	0.039
Confidence in government	0.830****	0.037			0.885***	0.041	0.886***	0.041
EU attachment	0.574****	0.025			0.613****	0.027	0.614****	0.027
Immigration			1.657****	0.068	1.293****	0.056	1.323****	0.058
Economic crisis			1.714****	0.070	1.366****	0.059	1.377****	0.060
Globalization index* Immigration							1.318****	0.052
Globalization index* Crisis perception							1.157***	0.046
Gender (male)	0.939	0.037	0.897***	0.035	0.935*	0.037	0.935*	0.037
Age	0.995****	0.001	0.995****	0.001	0.995***	0.001	0.995****	0.001
Education								
16-19	0.963	0.061	0.915	0.057	0.987	0.063	0.986	0.063
20+	0.735****	0.051	0.639****	0.043	0.755****	0.053	0.761****	0.053
Social position								
manual workers	1.108*	0.061	1.135**	0.062	1.107*	0.062	1.101*	0.061
skilled workers	0.994	0.050	0.968	0.047	1.016	0.051	1.025	0.051
Country	@		@		@		@	
Constant	1.039	0.159	0.479****	0.070	0.703**	0.112	0.723*	0.115
Pseudo R2 (McFadden)	0.097		0.071		0.103		0.107	
Count R2	0.675		0.654		0.682		0.680	
Adj. Count R2	0.127		0.071		0.146		0.140	
Wald (sig.)	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	
Number of obs.	12,749		12,749		12,749		12,749	

Note: ****p<0.001; : ***p<0.010; : **p<0.050; *p<0.100. The reference category for Education is 0-16, while for Social Position is 'not into the labour force'.

Country dummies were calculated (see Appendix) but they are not reported here.

Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

Contrarily, economic liberalism still represents the underlying ideology of EU integration (H1). People having positive views on free trade, economic liberalisation and globalization tend to support the EU and are less likely to perceive a better future outside of it (odds ratio [or]=0.88). The relationship between economic liberalism and support for (remaining in) the EU is also sustained by another two indicators included in model one: EU efficacy at the global level and the economic liberalism index. Our results show that 1) citizens who consider the EU as a power able to defend its own interests in the global world also tend to refuse any exit option; 2) personal inclinations to self-fulfilment and individual freedoms increase the willingness to remain part of the EU polity. These findings appear to confirm from a bottom-up perspective the scholarly notion of the European Union as a 'regional variant of globalization' (Schmidt 2003) where the EU is conceived as a by-product of economic liberalism and globalization.

The control variables reinforce the robustness of our findings and at the same time they largely confirm the results reached by past studies. As was expected, the proxy effect of trust in government and factors of cognitive mobilisation (such as education) are significant and negatively related to the view of a better future outside the EU. The work occupation only partially respects the expectations of Gabel on rational calculation (1998). As expected, manual workers, who tend to be less specialised and more exposed to competition in the job market, are more likely to see a better future outside the EU. However, self-employed and white-collar workers do not show the expected support for the EU despite their skills and the fact that they may find better recognition and larger opportunities in the common market. Finally, the older generations tend to see a better future within the EU, as well as men compared to women.²⁴

The second model includes all control variables, the socio-demographic variables, the perceptions about the economy and attitudes toward immigration. Pessimistic perceptions about the future of the economy significantly increase the likelihood of seeing a better future outside the EU (1.7 times more likely). Similarly, people perceiving immigration as not beneficial for their country tend to prefer an exit option (1.7 times more likely). Hence, our results show that the most urgent issues creating greatest concern among the European citizens, such as the economic crisis and immigration, increase distrust of the EU and drive people to prefer an exit option (H2 and H3). We interpret this as a sign that, despite such large-scale crises having their origins outside Europe, people blame the EU for not being able to anticipate their effects or manage their impact.

Model three includes all selected variables. This model confirms the relationships found in the previous models. Exclusive nationalism, economic crisis and immigration represent the most influential factors in this model. Support for globalization, attachment to Europe and high education are, on the contrary, the factors that increase the probability of refusing any exit option.

Our fourth model looks at the relationship between endogenous and exogenous factors. We find that the interactions between the globalization index and both opposition to immigration (figure 6) and pessimistic perceptions of the crises (figure 7) are significant. However, the analysis of marginal effects shows that it is mainly the economic crisis that impacts on attitudes: the positive effect of support for globalization on 'remain' is weaker when people think that, as an effect of the economic crisis, *the worst is yet to come* (H4). The economic crisis undermines the positive impact of liberal economic values as a source of support for the own country membership in the EU (Figure 6).

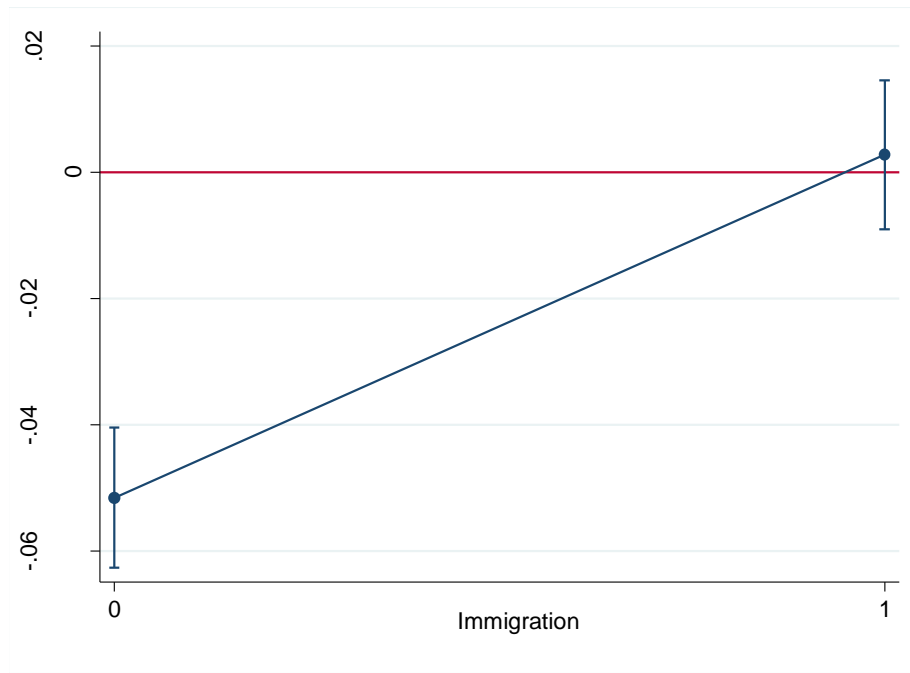


Fig.6 Average Marginal Effects of Globalization index on ‘exiting the EU’, when negative attitudes towards immigration increase - with 95 per cent Cis.

Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

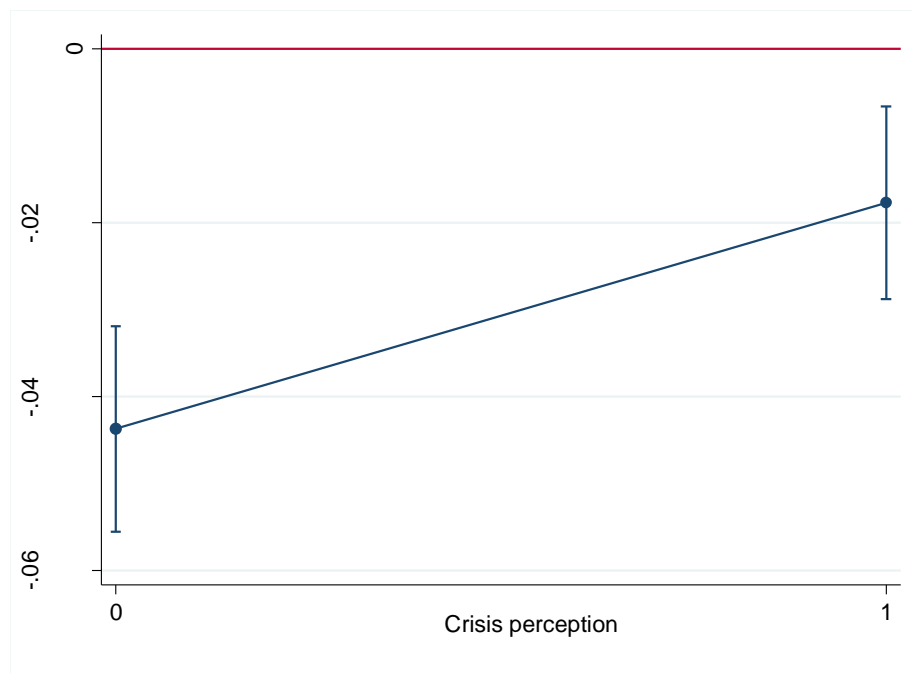


Fig.7 Average Marginal Effects of Globalization index on ‘exiting the EU’, when crisis perception increases - with 95 per cent Cis.

Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).

In the analysis, hostility against a global liberal ideology, concern about the effects of the economic crisis and negative attitudes toward migration have emerged as the main factors for the explanation of opposition to respondents’ own country membership in the EU. In the presence of other factors, whose influence has been maintained by past research and largely confirmed by our study, our models show that the above three factors have emerged as valuable explanations of citizens’ commitment to the project of European integration. The economic crisis in particular has more

negatively affected the image of the EU; a sustained period of economic growth and of a fight against socio-economic grievances would therefore be necessary to restore citizens' faith in the EU.

CONCLUSIONS

A trend toward national sovereignty has become widespread across Western societies. On the European continent, this trend creates a serious challenge to European integration, the main course of action in recent European history and the most advanced case of macro-regional integration world-wide. European countries have accepted an incremental transfer of sovereignty and regulatory power to the EU, and, where this has occurred, the political benefits of integration have been considered by national decision-makers to outweigh the costs of losing political control over policy. However, this course of action has now come under tension because of a turn in support of sovereignty in politics and in society. The debate opposing an integrated and liberal world based on interdependences against a 'return' to national supremacy and closure has become more central. As part of a global liberal system, the EU is challenged by sovereigntist forces on the basis of revanchist propaganda pushing toward exiting the EU.

In this article, we found that a preference for remaining in the EU is majoritarian among citizens, but not in every member state. Since the referendum on Brexit, the exit option has materialised as a possible strategy for the member states and in many countries the political debate, especially by radical forces, has incorporated this kind of option. If the decision on whether to remain in the EU were submitted to referendum today, the result would be uncertain in many countries. One explanation of this Eurosceptical turn in public opinion is related to the shrinking of support for globalization and liberal economic values among the population; when they shrink, the support for the EU process declines. The notion of a liberal economic order, a system based on open borders and open societies, is increasingly condemned for increased insecurity and for the decline of the economy and of social harmony since it creates winners and losers within society. On the opposite side, growing demands for homogenous societies and tighter control by the government over the territory and its borders have emerged.

We showed that this paradigm shift in Europe did not develop in a vacuum, but is fuelled by the contemporaneous occurrence of two shocks, the economic and the migration crises, a combination of circumstances that have aggravated the problem of reduced legitimacy of the EU among citizens. Many citizens consider the EU impotent in the face of the current crises, maybe they even see the EU as one of their causes. Indeed, citizens who see immigration and the future state of the economy in more pessimistic terms would also see their country as better off outside the EU.

The situation appears critical under different viewpoints. On the one hand, the EU is called to provide solutions to the most urgent crises that create concerns among citizens. On the other hand, the time for doing so, as well as the scope of manoeuvre, are severely limited by citizens' disillusionment with the EU and by a national introverted turn in public opinion. Citizens sanction the EU and any further pooling of national sovereignty in many ways, such as through negative voting in EU referenda, or voting for anti-EU forces in the national elections. The main problem for EU legitimacy today appears to be providing fast solutions to the most urgent problems perceived by citizens, something that is not easy to attain through EU decision-making, which is based on long negotiations and consensus that is difficult to reach given the vested interests of the national governments.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The authors are listed in alphabetical order and contributed equally to this work.

² Colgane and Keohane (2017) observe a general tendency in Western countries of leaders who promise to cast off external restraints in defence of national sovereignty becoming increasingly popular.

³ In our view, the more recent contributions, rather than replacing the four approaches, have simply explored some of their more specific dynamics. For example, among them, we would like to mention the studies considering the welfare state (Beaudonnet 2015), instrumental sociotropic proxies (Guerra 2013) and inequalities (Beckfield 2006; Kuhn, van Elsas, Hakhverdian and van der Brug 2014) that could be ascribed to the utilitarian calculation approach.

⁴ The most recent EB waves of 2016 do not include, unfortunately, all the variables that are crucial for the test of our hypotheses. For this reason, information from 2016 is of more limited use in the article.

⁵ The question reads as follows: *Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements - (YOUR COUNTRY) could better face the future outside the EU.* It is an ordinal variable that we have recoded assigning 1 to 'totally agree' and 'tend to agree' and 0 to 'tend to disagree' and 'totally disagree'.

⁶ The British Prime Minister Cameron announced that he wanted to renegotiate the UK's relationship with the EU and then give people the choice between staying in under those new terms or leaving the EU.

⁷ The discrepancy between the result of UK (47 per cent in favour of Brexit) and the actual vote in the referendum (51.9 per cent in favour) can be explained by the fact that the survey was conducted months before the referendum when the voting choice of citizens was not definitive yet.

⁸ The question is *Do you see yourself as...? (NATIONALITY) only; (NATIONALITY) and European; European and (NATIONALITY); European only.* Starting from this question, we created a binary variable for nationalism where 1 defines respondents answering 'nationality only' and 0, all the other options.

⁹ The question reads as follows: *Please tell me how attached you feel to... [the European Union], answers include 'very' and 'fairly' attached (recoded as 1), and 'not very', 'not at all' attached (recoded as 0).*

¹⁰ The exact figures are: 38 per cent (May 2012), 38 per cent (May 2013), 39 per cent (May 2014), 38 per cent (May 2015), 39 per cent (May 2016), 35 per cent (May 2017).

¹¹ It is worth mentioning that there is an open debate in the literature on how to measure identity at different levels (national, European etc.) and that the so-called 'Linz-Moreno' question has attracted some criticism (see Guinjoan and Rodon 2015). Sinnot (2006) concluded that these types of questions (i.e. the Linz-Moreno) in the Eurobarometer surveys perform better than others, while Guinjoan and Rodon (2015) emphasised their limits and observed that at best they show whether one identity is preferred over another. In the end, the discussion on how to best measure attachment has not driven scholarship to discard the Linz-Moreno question, which, on the contrary, remains a widely used question in scholarly research.

¹² The question reads as follows: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?' - *Immigrants contribute a lot to (YOUR COUNTRY).* It is an ordinal variable that we have recoded assigning 0 to 'totally agree' and 'tend to agree', and 1 to 'tend to disagree' and 'totally disagree'.

¹³ The question reads as follows: *Some analysts say that the impact of the economic crisis on the job market has already reached its peak and things will recover little by little. Others, on the contrary, say that the worst is still to come. Which of the two statements is closer to your opinion?* We recoded the variable giving a negative direction by assigning 1 to 'The worst is still to come' and 0 to 'The impact of the crisis on jobs has already reached its peak'.

¹⁴ The question reads as follows: 'Could you please tell me for each of the following, whether the term brings to mind something very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative?' - *Large companies, Small and medium-sized companies, Free trade, Protectionism, Globalization, Liberalization, Competition, Trade Union, Reforms, Public service, Security, Solidarity, Entrepreneurship.*

¹⁵ The question reads as follows: 'In the following list, which are the three most important values for you personally?' (list of items, see appendix for items and factor loadings).

¹⁶ The question reads as follows: 'For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree' - *The EU has sufficient power and tools to defend the economic interests of*

Europe in the global economy. It is an ordinal variable that we have recoded assigning 1 to 'totally agree' and 'tend to agree', 0 to 'tend to disagree' and 'totally disagree'.

¹⁷ The question reads as follows: 'I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it' - *The (NATIONALITY) Government*. We created a binary variable where 1 indicates 'Tend to trust' and 0 'Tend not to trust'.

¹⁸ The question was *How old were you when you stopped full-time education?* The ordinal variable was coded in the following way: 1= <16, 2=16-19; 3=20 or more.

¹⁹ The question reads as follows: *What is your current occupation?* We first selected the EB variable with recoded categories (D15a_r2 of the original file). We assigned a value of 0 to the people not in the labour force, 1 to manual workers, and 2 to skilled workers (including white collar).

²⁰ The variable is coded in the following way: 0=female; 1=male.

²¹ The variable ranges from 18 to 99 (and older).

²² In order to avoid the influence of contextual factors (Heteroskedasticity) related to the respondents' country of residence, the models have clustered standard errors. We also included binary variables to control for country effects.

²³ The interpretation of R2 in the logistic regression models is not as straightforward as in linear regression models (see Long and Freese 2000). To assess the explanatory power of the models we have considered Count R2 – it measures the percentage of cases that were correctly predicted – and Count Adjust R2 – the explained variance that was correctly predicted. These parameters allowed us to estimate models on cases that were correctly predicted and to avoid misleading conclusions (see Long and Freese 2000; Menard 2002).

²⁴ Gender is only significant in models 2, 3 and 4 ($p < .1$).

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APPENDIX

Table A.1 Factor loadings of attitudes toward globalization and free market

Variable	Fact or1	Fact or2	Factor3	Uniquen ess
Large companies	0.17 42	0.58 57	0.1904	0.5903
Small companies	0.73 65	0.10 33	0.1155	0.4336
Free trade	0.44 49	0.55 76	-0.0667	0.4866
Protectionism	- 0.0641	0.46 85	0.3765	0.6346
Globalization	0.05 49	0.70 58	0.2264	0.4476
Liberalisation	0.23 48	0.68 31	0.0809	0.4717
Competition	0.49 23	0.43 27	0.0439	0.5685
Trade unions	0.09 61	0.11 90	0.7514	0.4120
Reforms	0.37 33	0.33 45	0.3558	0.6221
Public service	0.24 53	0.14 53	0.6676	0.4730
Security	0.56 35	0.04 62	0.4109	0.5115
Solidarity	0.61 02	0.10 09	0.2775	0.5405
Entrepreneurship	0.68 93	0.24 28	0.0859	0.4586

Note: Number of obs. =16,384; Retained factors = 3 Rotation: varimax; number of params = 36; LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(78) = 4.3e+04$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$; Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (Nov. 2015), Variables QA10_1 to QA10_16 recoded in binary variables (positive=1; negative=0).

Table A.2 Factor loadings of personal values including attitudes toward economic liberalism

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5	Factor6	Factor7	Factor8	Factor9	Uniqueness
The rule of Law	-0.0732	-0.0549	0.0510	-0.1197	-0.0517	0.9154	0.0222	-0.0560	-0.0548	0.1274
Respect for human life	-0.0764	0.7232	-0.0735	0.0861	-0.3113	0.0242	0.0335	-0.1172	-0.1147	0.3329
Human Rights	-0.0593	0.0288	-0.8418	-0.1030	0.0556	-0.0446	0.1722	-0.0596	-0.0578	0.2347
Individual freedom	0.7638	0.0139	-0.0287	-0.1498	-0.2278	-0.1636	0.0251	-0.0585	-0.0571	0.3072
Democracy	-0.1228	-0.7251	-0.0513	0.0888	-0.2546	0.1090	0.1161	-0.0656	-0.0639	0.3501
Peace	-0.4068	-0.1895	0.2972	-0.4309	-0.1040	-0.4130	0.0683	-0.2293	-0.2235	0.2360
Equality	-0.0716	-0.0137	-0.0466	0.0041	0.8908	-0.0458	-0.0114	-0.0436	-0.0427	0.1930
Solidarity	-0.0860	-0.0200	0.0908	0.9130	-0.0099	-0.1242	0.0167	-0.0566	-0.0553	0.1282
Tolerance	-0.0442	0.0443	0.1055	-0.0130	0.0130	-0.0156	-0.9331	-0.0150	-0.0144	0.1133
Religion	-0.2726	0.2872	0.4248	-0.0655	0.0130	-0.0080	0.3608	0.0283	0.0290	0.5264
Self-fulfilment	0.5842	0.0010	0.3406	0.0093	0.2378	0.0760	0.1212	-0.0496	-0.0483	0.4608
Respect for other cultures	-0.0263	-0.0189	0.0335	-0.0301	-0.0284	-0.0321	0.0140	-0.0213	0.9841	0.0259
None	-0.0273	-0.0193	0.0347	-0.0311	-0.0292	-0.0330	0.0147	0.9834	-0.0215	0.0269

Note: Number of obs = 27,681; Retained factors = 9; Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off); Number of params = 78; LR test: independent vs. saturated: $\chi^2(78) = 2.5e+04$ Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Table A.3 Variance inflation factors (VIF) for each model

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Variable	VIF	VIF	VIF	VIF
Better future outside the EU	1.12	1.11	1.06	1.12
Exclusive Nationalism	1.26	1.24		1.26
Immigration	1.15		1.06	1.09
Economic crisis	1.14		1.06	1.15
Globalization index	1.09	1.07		1.14
Economic liberalism	1.02	1.02		1.02
European efficacy	1.10	1.08		1.10
Confidence in government	1.10	1.08		1.10
EU attachment	1.26	1.23		1.26
Gender (male)	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01
Age	1.19	1.18	1.16	1.19
Education	1.17	1.17	1.14	1.17
Social position	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23
Country	1.03	1.03	1.02	1.03
Mean VIF	1.13	1.12	1.09	1.13

Table A4. Logistic Regression Models with 'a better future outside the EU' as dependent variable (clustered by countries, country dummies shown)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.
Exclusive Nationalism	1.917****	0.084			1.812****	0.080	1.808****	0.081
Globalization index	0.881****	0.018			0.904****	0.019	0.716****	0.026
Economic liberalism index	0.898***	0.033			0.895***	0.033	0.897***	0.033
European efficacy	0.805****	0.036			0.858***	0.039	0.847****	0.039
Confidence in government	0.830****	0.037			0.885***	0.041	0.886***	0.041
EU attachment	0.574****	0.025			0.613****	0.027	0.614****	0.027
Immigration			1.657****	0.068	1.293****	0.056	1.323****	0.058
Economic crisis			1.714****	0.070	1.366****	0.059	1.377****	0.060
Globalization index* Immigration							1.318****	0.052
Globalization index* Crisis perception							1.157***	0.046
Gender (male)	0.939	0.037	0.897***	0.035	0.935*	0.037	0.935*	0.037
Age	0.995****	0.001	0.995****	0.001	0.995***	0.001	0.995****	0.001
Education								
16-19	0.963	0.061	0.915	0.057	0.987	0.063	0.986	0.063
20+	0.735****	0.051	0.639****	0.043	0.755****	0.053	0.761****	0.053

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.	OR	Robust St. Er.
Social position								
manual workers	1.108*	0.061	1.135**	0.062	1.107*	0.062	1.101*	0.061
skilled workers	0.994	0.050	0.968	0.047	1.016	0.051	1.025	0.051
Country (France)								
Belgium	0.851	0.115	0.857	0.115	0.875	0.119	0.859	0.117
Netherlands	0.352****	0.057	0.463****	0.074	0.405****	0.066	0.396****	0.065
Germany	0.995	0.132	1.008	0.131	1.034	0.138	1.014	0.136
Italy	1.805****	0.252	2.228****	0.305	2.001****	0.283	2.007****	0.284
Luxembourg	0.772	0.141	0.659**	0.118	0.783	0.144	0.790	0.145
Denmark	0.647***	0.102	0.836	0.129	0.735*	0.116	0.734*	0.117
Ireland	0.816	0.121	1.212	0.177	0.998	0.150	0.976	0.147
United Kingdom	1.627****	0.225	2.236****	0.301	1.737****	0.242	1.696****	0.236
Greece	1.016	0.132	1.119	0.141	0.994	0.130	0.954	0.125
Spain	0.805	0.124	0.881	0.133	0.908	0.141	0.895	0.139
Portugal	0.952	0.136	1.104	0.155	1.078	0.156	1.056	0.153
Finland	0.872	0.134	1.068	0.160	0.938	0.145	0.912	0.143
Sweden	1.036	0.150	1.223	0.172	1.113	0.162	1.112	0.163
Austria	1.924****	0.258	2.402****	0.316	2.087****	0.283	2.057****	0.279
Cyprus	1.807***	0.308	2.324****	0.386	1.859****	0.318	1.830****	0.312
Czech Republic	1.407**	0.196	1.649****	0.225	1.482***	0.209	1.483***	0.209
Estonia	0.599**	0.137	0.677*	0.152	0.636**	0.146	0.624**	0.143
Hungary	1.346**	0.182	1.356**	0.179	1.411**	0.192	1.392**	0.189
Latvia	1.330	0.237	1.424**	0.247	1.357*	0.243	1.346*	0.241
Lithuania	0.705**	0.109	0.747*	0.113	0.741*	0.115	0.724**	0.112
Malta	1.168	0.238	1.248	0.249	1.294	0.265	1.261	0.258
Poland	1.977****	0.315	2.307****	0.362	2.260****	0.365	2.286****	0.371
Slovakia	0.818	0.113	0.899	0.121	0.835	0.116	0.827	0.115
Slovenia	2.314****	0.321	2.498****	0.341	2.409****	0.337	2.417****	0.339
Bulgaria	1.193	0.190	1.457**	0.226	1.312*	0.211	1.320*	0.213
Romania	1.150	0.170	1.218	0.176	1.254	0.187	1.220	0.182
Croatia	1.676****	0.224	1.972****	0.259	1.900****	0.257	1.829****	0.248
Constant	1.039	0.159	0.479****	0.070	0.703**	0.112	0.723*	0.115
Pseudo R2 (McFadden)	0.097		0.071		0.103		0.107	
Count R2	0.675		0.654		0.682		0.680	
Adj. Count R2	0.127		0.071		0.146		0.140	
Wald (sig.)	0.000		0.000		0.000		0.000	
Number of obs.	12,749		12,749		12,749		12,749	

Note: ****p<0.001; ; ***p<0.010; ; **p<0.050; *p<0.100. The reference category for Education is 0-16, while for Social Position is 'not into the labour force'.

Source: Eurobarometer 84.3 (2015).