

# European Union Issues and Party Competition: How Does the Popularity of Extreme Right Parties Affect EU Positions of Mainstream Parties?<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Different political parties, from the left or the right, hold a Eurosceptic position. But extreme right parties (ERPs) have so far benefited the most from Eurosceptic attitudes among the electorate. They have multiplied and surprisingly grown in popularity in many countries. They have recently run the second round in presidential elections in countries like Austria and France. And they can be key actors in government formation in some political systems, turning into junior partners in a number of governing coalitions. Studies show that issues directly or indirectly related to the EU are central to explain voting for extreme right parties. This goes from critics to the functioning, institutions and the elites of the EU, to the way this supranational institution deals with immigration, or threatens national sovereignty. Furthermore, scholars argue that a new cultural cleavage has gained prominence on the electoral competition. One of the main components of this cleavage concerns a general idea of cultural openness/defense of cosmopolitanism, opposed to closeness/strong nationalism. As nationalism is the main feature of the extreme right's ideology, issues related to the EU are inevitably present in their political discourse, and they are often culturally framed, instead of driven by economic concerns. However, a clear common position towards the EU hasn't been identified within this party family yet. Some extreme right parties (ERPs) oppose specific elements of the EU, while others are completely against the principle of the integration process itself. Exploring comparative data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (1999-2014), this paper will focus on two objectives. First, it will develop a descriptive analysis of extreme right parties' positions regarding the EU. What is the position of this party family regarding Europe? Is this a distinguishable feature of ERPs? Secondly, I will address the question of whether the salience of EU issues has increased in electoral competition. If so, could this dynamic be explained by the electoral performance of extreme right parties, which would be pushing mainstream parties towards more radical positions on EU issues?

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary version

## I) Introduction

About two decades ago, the European Union was a matter of wide consensus among the public and political elites. This has been referred in the literature as the “permissive consensus” (Kriesi, 2007), and to a large extent, it has allowed the advancement of the European project to its current level of integration and enlargement. Besides being widely accepted in its initial phase, the European Union has been considered a “second order” issue on electoral competition for a long time. This means that its salience used to have, overall, much less importance than other traditional concerns during elections, such as unemployment, welfare, and economic development.

Today, Europe is among the most contested issues in the political debate, and it is a central topic on national electoral competition (Kriesi, 2007). In several nations, there is a substantive part of the population that opposes the EU, or at least elements of it, like the Euro currency. Euroscepticism is on the rise, especially in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, further aggravated by waves of refugees. Europe is also constantly associated, from a negative point of view, with other concerning issues among the public, such as immigration, terrorism, and loss of national identity. Furthermore, scholars have identified a close link between negative attitudes towards Europe and discontent with traditional institutions and political elites.

In this scenario, populist parties benefit electorally from strongly criticizing Europe, and just like national elites, Brussels’ officials are blamed as inefficient and distant from the common citizen. Extreme right parties, defined here as nativist, authoritarian and populist (Mudde, 2007) have been systematically gaining votes across Europe based on such rhetoric. As nationalist entities, they consider the EU as a threat to the national sovereignty of their peoples, and some parties included in this family explicitly propose popular referenda proposing the withdrawal from the EU. Some common examples of parties advocating this kind of referendum are the French National Front (FN), the Belgium Vlaams Belang, and the Italian Tricolour Flame (MSFT) (Vasilopoulou, 2009). But not all extreme right parties (ERPs) hold the same positions. Their approach of the EU can be largely linked to the context of the national party system, and the position that other (established) parties in the national party system, take on the issue.

By its turn, the growing popularity of ERPs may affect national party systems, not only because it produces electoral de-alignments, possibly realignments, but also because it introduces new issues into the political agenda, which other may parties feel pushed to address as well (Schain, 2002, 2006). If extreme right parties gain progressive support, and given that a relevant part of this success can be attributed to their emphasis on opposing Europe, it is expected that established parties will also adapt their strategies, issue-salience and/or preferences in a response to their rise. Extreme right parties (ERPs) have benefited considerably from Eurosceptic sentiments on the public opinion, and they have been able to frame urgent problems through the lens of threatened national sovereignty, notably immigration controlling, security, and loss of cultural identity.

However, it is not clear if Euroscepticism is a defining feature of this group of parties, usually defined as nativist, authoritarian and populist (Mudde, 2007). Euroscepticism is often taken as a secondary issue on ERPs’ ideology. Vasilopoulou (2011) argues that there is an important

variation on the underlying reasons why extreme right parties could oppose the EU, and this leads to a variety of “Euroscepticisms” among ERPs as well. Furthermore, over time ERPs have also changed their position on the EU. Examples are the French National Front (FN) and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), that initially held pro-Europe positions, but changed over time (Topaloff, 2012). A complicating factor to understand this topic is the fact that established parties of the left and the right have also adopted harder stances on the EU, like the British Conservatives and the French Republicans.

In this paper, I will focus on the relationship among these three elements: extreme right parties, Euroscepticism, and party competition. My aim is to better understand two points about in this field from an exploratory analysis of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) data. First, I want to comparatively describe the positions of ERPs on different issues related to the European Union. The CHES allows one to do so, because it asks about party positions on several dimensions of the European Union. Do ERPs’ positions on the EU distinguish them from other party families? Second, I will discuss the role of Euroscepticism in party competition and how it relates to the rise of ERPs. I expect that mainstream parties will adapt their issue-salience and positions on the EU as a response to growing popularity of ERPs. Has the EU issue gained salience on parties’ positions? Could this be possibly linked to the rising popularity of extreme right parties, and the way ERPs frame the European issue?

The next section of this paper will present a brief discussion about the concept of Euroscepticism and its expression among political parties. Following that, I will turn more specifically to the relationship of extreme right parties with Euroscepticism. In the same section, I will also explore some descriptive data from the CHES. Next, I will discuss the salience of the EU in the electoral competition and whether and how ERPs could affect other parties’ positions on the issue. Finally, I will conclude with the main points explored in this paper, which is a preliminary study of ERPs, Euroscepticism and party competition.

## **II) Euroscepticism and political parties**

There are two general views about the role of Europe in national partisan competition. On the one side, some authors believe that Europe would remain a minor, “second order” issue in politics (Mair, 2000). As such, Euroscepticism would only be located into the extremes or opposition parties, not able to reach the mainstream (Topaloff, 2012; Ray, 2007). On the other side, national political competition would have been considerably affected by the European issue (Whitefield and Rohrscheider, 2015), particularly in places with historic opposition to Europe among the public (Kriesi, 2007). This approach considers the EU issue as inserted in a broader cultural cleavage dynamics, in which a conflict between cosmopolitanism and cultural openness versus nationalism and cultural protectionism emerges (Kriesi, 2007; Borsnchier, 2010).

Euroscepticism represents an idea of mistrust in Europe. But Euroscepticism is not an absolute concept, and it is not clear to what aspect of Europe it opposes to. This attitude or position can

appear in different levels: among the public, political parties, and on party competition (Whitefield and Rohrscheider, 2015). Over the past years, the literature has nuanced this complex term, showing that Euroscepticism can have different intensities, it can concern different aspects of Europe, and it is multidimensional. The precise definition and operationalization are, of course, a matter of ongoing debate.

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002) explained that Euroscepticism was hard to be precisely defined because it affects different contexts of membership and entrance in the EU, so it is problematic to provide a definition that travels well among diverse countries, states which relationship with Europe varies. They provide a definition that comprises two kinds of Euroscepticism: hard and soft (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2000). Hard Euroscepticism means a principled opposition to the EU and the European integration. Parties that carry this attitude towards Europe manifest the desire to withdraw from the EU, or their proposed policies oppose the whole European integration project as it is (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002: 7). Soft Euroscepticism, on the other hand, is a qualified opposition to the EU. In this case, the political party opposes specific policies of the EU, and holds a sense that national interest is somehow threatened by the EU integration (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002: 7). It is not clear, though, how these two types of Euroscepticism are separate from each other, since they seem to overlap. While a political party can be against the current European Union integration project, it can at the same time be willing to have its country as a member of an integration with other countries in Europe, but through a different frame, or concerning specific policy domains.

Kopecky and Mudde (2002) provide a definition that takes into consideration a demarcation between the ideal and the practice of the European integration. They define the term Euroscepticism in relation to other party positions on Europe, including those in favor. In their view, there are two dimensions of position towards Europe: diffuse and specific. By diffuse support, they mean support for the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU. By specific, the authors denote support for the general practice of European integration; that is, the EU as it is and as it is developing legally, institutionally, and politically. On the diffuse dimension, parties can be either Europhiles, who encourage the European integration as a project, or Europhobes, who do not support or are even opposed to the general idea of integration at the European level. On the specific dimension, parties can be EU-optimist, or EU-pessimist with regards to the direction and development of the European Union framework.

The combination of opposing and favoring positions in each of the two dimensions generates a two-by-two matrix with four types of political parties: Euroenthusiasts, Eurosceptics, Eurorejects, and Europragmatists (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002). The first two types share support for the general ideas of the European integration, but while the Euroenthusiasts support both the idea and the practice of the EU, the Eurosceptics like the idea of a European integration, but not approve it on its current terms, so they reject the practice of the EU. The two last types of parties do not support the ideas underlying the process of European integration. But, while the Eurorejects refuse both the ideas and the practice of the EU, the Europragmatists do not support the general ideas of

European integration underlying the EU, nor do they necessarily oppose them, yet they do support the EU.

While Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) typology introduces an interesting nuance between the European integration as an idea and as the institutional and political framework in place, and puts opposition to Europe in relative terms, it can be theoretically inconsistent to have a party that opposes any kind of European integration, but is in favor of the EU framework (Vasilopoulou, 2009). Furthermore, it raises the question of what exactly it means to be against the practice of the EU. Since the EU has evolved from an economically-centered idea of the common market to the political integration, including the transfer of some policy-making from the national-level to the European-level, could a party support the economic policy, but not other policies, for instance?

Sofia Vasilopoulou (2009) adds a third dimension to understand these nuances in Euroscepticism. She considers that party positions can be conceptualized in three dimensions: principle, practice and future. The principle refers to the wish and willingness for cooperation at a European multilateral level. The practice denotes the institutional and policy status quo of how the EU functions. The future is about the deepening of integration (Vasilopoulou, 2009, p.6). The combination of positions in these three dimensions gives origin to three different types of Euroscepticism: rejecting, conditional and compromising. Rejecting parties are against Europe in all three dimensions, so they oppose the idea of any multilateral integration, as well as the EU framework and the future integration. The conditional type comprises parties that are not opposed to the principle of European cooperation, but are against its practice and future. The third is the compromising type, it includes parties accepting both the principle and the practice of EU cooperation, but opposing further integration.

In addition to the debate about the conceptual definition of Euroscepticism, there is also discussion about the underlying motivations for parties to oppose or support the EU. The general question that this literature tries to address is the following: is opposition to the EU motivated by ideological reasons, or is it purely a strategic behavior? Mudde (2007) and Kopecky and Mudde (2002) take the stance that Euroscepticism is related to a nationalist ideology, and that the motivation for such position is based on ideological features of parties. On the contrary, Topaloff (2012) argues that the reason why extremist parties, and not mainstream ones, take hard positions against Europe is for strategic considerations. Mainstream parties cannot afford hard stances against the EU, because they benefit from the EU institutions, and being pro-Europe attaches coalition potential to these parties. On the contrary, parties located on extreme positions can risk more and try to capture the Eurosceptic sentiment among the public by having a hard stance on the EU.

However, at some point issue-entrepreneurs have been successful in mobilizing the European issue in their campaigns, and attract voters through the mobilization of such issues (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012). Although challenger parties from the left and the right have engaged in issue-entrepreneurship strategies, extreme right parties (ERPs) have particularly benefited from it (Brack and Startin, 2015; Leconte, 2015). Could mainstream parties benefit from keeping their strategies of attributing low salience and overall positive orientations towards the EU, even if extremist

parties have been successful in mobilizing voters on this new issue? This is one interesting question that arises from the phenomenon. Although I will not be able to provide an answer to it in this paper, I will introduce my hypothesis on the fourth section of this work, and start to explore some descriptive data to see if there is any discernible pattern.

### III) Extreme right parties and the European issue

- *Theoretical considerations*

Extreme right parties (ERPs) are defined here as nativist, authoritarian, and populist (Mudde, 2007). ERPs have been subject of a wide debate in the literature, perhaps more than the concept of Euroscepticism itself. This debate concerns many elements of it, starting from the denomination of this group of political parties itself, going through its definition, classification and operationalization of the concept. Mudde (2007) is a reference on the research subfield, and he applies the term “populist radical right” to a party family defined by three core ideological features. The first one is nativism, which combines nationalism and xenophobia, and excludes liberal forms of nationalism. The idea underlying nativism is the conception that “states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (‘the nation’) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state. The basis for defining (non) ‘nativeness’ can be diverse, e.g. ethnic, racial or religious, but will always have a cultural component” (Mudde, 2007, p.19). The second feature is authoritarianism, that in this case does not mean opposition to the liberal democratic order, or the desire to replace the democratic regime. Instead, it means adhesion to authoritarian values and beliefs. According to Mudde (2007, p. 23), “authoritarianism is defined here as the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely. In this interpretation, authoritarianism includes law and order and ‘punitive conventional moralism’”. Thirdly, ERPs are defined as populist, a concept that means a “thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2007, p. 23).

In this work, although using the definition provided by Cas Mudde (2007), I prefer to use the term “extreme right”, because it clearly indicates the position of such parties on the extreme right-wing of the political spectrum, while the term “radical right” suggests a relative position to other parties. ERPs are located on the extreme right-wing spectrum in the libertarian-authoritarian dimension (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995). The term “extreme” doesn’t imply the use of violence, it indicates that such parties are the ones on the most right-wing position regarding socio-cultural values. Additionally, calling these entities ERPs also brings to the attention a quite consensual understanding in the literature that, although they are compatible with procedural democracy, and they can be analyzed under classic theory of political parties (De Lange, 2008), ERPs’ positions can be in tension with fundamental democratic values, such as pluralism, universalism, and egalitarianism (Hainsworth, 2008).

This party family is particularly interesting with regards to Europe, because while some of its defining traits can fuel opposition sentiments to supranational cooperation, it is also in European elections that extreme right parties have gained their most successful results on the last years, particularly in countries with plurality electoral systems. The proportionality of European elections has favored ERPs (Reungoat, 2015), this group of parties being the one that grows the most in European Parliament. Some Eurosceptic leaders have tried to articulate supranational alliances in the European Parliament, and they also get considerable resources to their parties through participation in European institutions (Mudde, 2007; Reungoat, 2015). Additionally, the EU has benefited ERPs in their issue-entrepreneurship strategies. With the EU, they are able to mobilize on an underexplored issue in politics, and to boost their emphasis on a nationalist versus cosmopolitanist divide.

While some populist radical left parties also oppose Europe and gain support based on their Eurosceptic appeal (Lubbers and Sheepers, 2007), the extreme right is even more aggressive in its opposition to Europe. Furthermore, the motivations and the justifications for radical left and extreme right parties to oppose Europe are essentially distinctive. For extremist left-wing parties, the general approach is economically-based, so they oppose the EU because of the common market and its economic policies, that serve the interest of the capitalists. For ERPs, however, the opposition is essentially in cultural terms. The concession of policies to the European level clearly means a loss of sovereignty for ERPs (Mudde, 2007), and it represents a menace to national way of life.

Although there seems to be a clear connection between ERPs and Euroscepticism, this issue has been treated as of secondary-order in the literature, or coupled with other elements defining ERPs' support. Euroscepticism is usually derived from other features of ERPs, it is an attitude identified among their voters as one of the of their drivers for support, or Euroscepticism is coupled with other anti-establishment, protest and anti-elite attitudes. Only few studies focusing on Euroscepticism among the extreme right party family have been identified (Vasilopoulou, 2009; Vasilopoulou, 2011; Mudde, 2007; Reungoat, 2015).

The position of the extreme right party family regarding the European integration is still blurred and not plainly understood. While it seems somehow evident that ERPs are against the European Union, and that they profit electorally from Eurosceptic appeals, some of the most prominent ERPs used to be pro-EU at the beginning (Topaloff, 2012). For instance, both the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the French National Front were born Europhiles, but became Eurosceptics in the 1990s (Topaloff, 2012; Mudde, 2007). A turning point for such changing positions was the Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992 (Mudde, 2007; Whitefield and Rohnscheider, 2015). Virtually all ERPs believe that with the Maastricht Treaty "the E.U. has taken a significant step further towards becoming an intrusive supranational body" (FPd 1998 apud Mudde, 2007, p.159). Moreover, the way ERPs frame their opposition towards Europe has also suffered changes over time, as well as the dimensions of the EU that they emphasize in their opposition. As an example,

the French National Front has recently adapted its approach to the Euro currency into a more flexible proposal, while before it used to defend the come back to the franc.

In Kopecky and Mudde's (2002) typology, ERPs could be found in all types, but the vast majority are at least EU-pessimist: they oppose the practice of the EU. Many of them believe in the principle of a European integration, but not on the EU terms, they are skeptical about the current direction of the EU (Mudde, 2007). Other ERPs oppose both dimensions of the EU, as also identified by Vasilopoulou (2009).

Vasilopoulou (2009) implies that all ERPs are Eurosceptic in at least one of her three dimensions of opposition to Europe. As explained before, she conceives Euroscepticism as a three-dimensional concept regarding opposition to the principle, practice or future of the European integration. The combination of these three dimensions result in three types of Eurosceptic parties: the rejecting Eurosceptic parties, that oppose European integration in all three dimensions; the conditional Eurosceptic parties, that accept the principle of cooperation on the European level, but oppose the current EU framework and its future; and the compromising Eurosceptic parties, which are in favor of the principle of cooperation at the European level and accept the practice of status quo. Compromising Eurosceptics favor particularly the economic policies of the EU, and accept the institutional settings, but they do not advocate an ever closer union.

The author analyses the positions and ideology of 11 ERPs from seven member-states and concludes that there are links between the type of Euroscepticism and the broader ideology held by types of ERPs. The ideological positions of ERPs on the economic and socio-cultural dimensions would be connected to their types of Euroscepticism. In summary, strong authoritarianism, regardless of economic policy preferences, drives ERPs to reject Europe. On the contrary, parties refraining from "rejecting" Euroscepticism support centrist and capitalist economic policies, and they also display comparatively less authoritarian values. Vasilopoulou (2011) argues that there is a connection between authoritarianism and opposition to Europe, concerning specifically the rejecting type of Euroscepticism.

Mudde (2007), however, emphasizes that while most ERPs constantly criticize the process of European integration in general, and the EU in particular, many parties support some alternative form of European cooperation. Again, they disagree on the alternative project, notably the fields of policy in which to cooperate. What they do share is the definition of Europe as a civilization, and derived from it there is a clear consensus over the non-entrance of countries that belong to a different cultural tradition, like Turkey. ERPs conceive the European civilization as rooted in the Christian, Hellenistic and Roman traditions (Mudde, 2007), and these commonalities set them apart from neighboring countries.

The presented theoretical considerations found in the literature inspires two questions. First: is Euroscepticism a defining feature of ERPs? Second: is ERPs' position on Europe a distinguishing trait from other party families? My hypothesis is that, although there is a degree of variation of ERPs' positions on the European integration, they are more homogeneous as a party family than others. Moreover, although other party families can also display Eurosceptic positions, ERPs are



overall more radical than other groups of parties. I will now explore some descriptive data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (1999-2014).

- *Exploring comparative expert survey data: evidence from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (1999-2014)*

The Chapel Hill Expert Survey – CHES (1999-2014) captures positions of political parties in several dimensions on the EU issue, among other policy positions. This is one of the reasons why it is a more interesting source to study ERPs than other datasets, for example the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP). Most studies about policy positions and ideology of ERPs are conducted qualitatively, using party manifestos as the main source of information. Since it lacks a broad comparative qualitative database of ERPs manifestos, it is hard to conduct investigations over time with a larger number of parties from this family. The CMP could be an alternative for this design, but the problem with it is that it includes very few ERPs, because of their low presence in parliament or low share of vote, which are some conditions to include political parties into the study.

Another reason why the CMP is a limited source to study ERPs is because it focuses on a unidimensional left-right spectrum of politics, particularly emphasizing economic policy positions. It doesn't explore deeply and with a variety of questions the issues considered as core ones in ERPs platforms: identity, immigration and the EU. There are two variables in the CMP to measure position on the European Union, one concerning positive mentions to the EU integration, and the other concerning negative mentions. However, they are unidimensional, they can include mentions to Europe in very different spheres, mixing all the dimensions of Euroscepticism that has been previously discussed.

The CHES data comprises 88 observations about 36 ERPs (included in the original dataset as part of the “Radical Right” party family) for the period ranging from 1999 to 2014. The list of parties included in the ERP category is on the appendix. One of the advantages of the CHES is that it asks experts to place political parties in different dimensions concerning Europe. Most of them refer to what Vasilopoulou (2009) refers to as the “practice” of Europe, as I understand it, because they concern the current EU framework and institutions: the powers of the EU parliament, if the country has benefited from becoming a member, the common market, the foreign policy, etc.

Table 1 below summarizes the position of ERPs on different EU issues, according to data from the CHES. Unfortunately, some of the questions were only included in only one or two waves of the survey, which reduces significantly the number of observations. So, here I included only the questions displaying a reasonable number of observations for ERPs ( $N > 40$ ). It describes the position of ERPs on nine dimensions of EU issues, the first ones being the overall position on the European integration, and the second being the salience of the issue for the party.

In general, ERPs tend to hold very negative positions on different dimensions related to the EU. They are quite homogeneous on those positions, since the average variation among the

observations is relatively low. It is hard to find ERPs holding very positive positions on the EU (most positive positions being held by the Italian National Alliance 2008, and the National Alliance in Latvia 2014). The issue does not have a high salience for all parties included in this party family, however. It is interesting to constant that, even though their positions on the EU is broadly negative, they tend to think that their countries benefited from entering the EU, which could be an indicator that ERPs do favor the principle of European integration. The enlargement to Turkey is a topic of major and clear opposition, which is probably linked to the Islamophobic appeal of most ERPs, and it agrees with Mudde's (2007) argument about the consensual opposition to the enlargement to Turkey because this country would not share the roots of European civilization.

Overall, ERPs hold a quite homogeneous and very negative position on the EU, on several dimensions. The family is more heterogeneous regarding EU salience, the UKIP being the party to which the EU issue is most salient, with a value of 10. But some ERPs don't emphasize the EU issue too much on their platforms, like the MS and the Belgium FN in the late 1990s. While specific issues can divide ERPs more than others, they generally hold more positive views on the fact that their countries have benefited from becoming a member of the EU, and that the powers of the European Parliament should be expanded. This might be linked to the fact that ERPs know that they benefit from European elections, particularly in countries displaying plurality electoral systems. The proportionality provided by the EU elections is a factor that boosts their success.

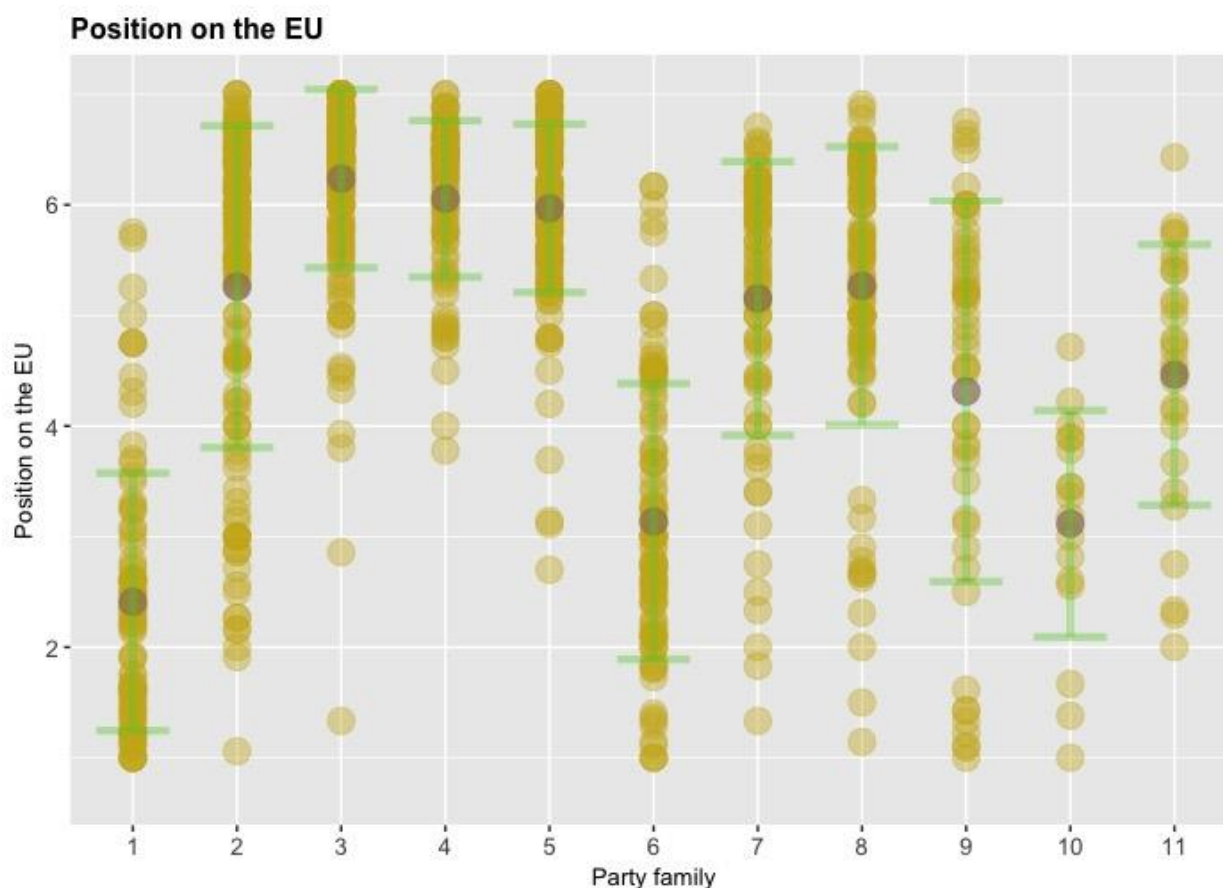
**Table 1: Position of extreme right parties on EU issues**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Sd.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>N</b>
Overall position	2.41	2.28	1.16	1.00	5,75	88
Salience	5.68	5.64	1.94	1.25	10.00	88
Dissent	2.03	1.70	1.36	0.00	7.50	88
Benefit for country to be a member	2.61	2.82	0.49	1.11	3.00	41
Powers of the European Parliament	2.83	2.59	1.18	1.08	5.50	88
Internal market	2.83	2.90	1.14	1.10	6.46	73
Cohesion or regional policy	3.56	3.46	1.59	1.00	6.71	88
Foreign and security policy	2.50	2.25	1.27	1.00	7.00	88
Enlargement to Turkey	1.66	1.20	0.87	1.00	4.25	58

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey – 1999-2014. Description of scales: Overall position, Powers of the European Parliament, Internal market, Cohesion or regional policy, and Foreign and security policy: 7-point scale, where 1 means “Strongly opposed” and 7 means “Strongly in favor”; Salience: 11-point scale, where 0 means “European integration is of no importance, never mentioned” and 10 means “European integration is the most important issue”; Dissent: 11-point scale, where 0 means “Party was completely

united” and 10 means “Party was extremely divided”; Benefit for country to be a member: 3-point scale, where 1 means “benefited”, 2 means “neither benefited not lost”, and 3 means “not benefited”. In total there are 88 observations (party-year) in the dataset which are classified into the “Radical Right” party family. Some questions, however, haven’t been asked on all waves of the survey, which lowers the number of observations for certain questions.

After identifying a relative homogeneity within the extreme right party family, I compare its position with other families. As shown in Graph 1 below, ERPs hold a more negative position on the European integration, on average, when compared to other party families, even though the variation within the party family is common to other groups of parties. In a scale ranging from 1 to 7, some ERPs can hold positions close to 6, as mentioned before, but the major part of them in concentrated between 1 and 3. The most critical parties to the EU are the French FN 2002, the UKIP 1997, 2005, 2010, and the Dutch PVV 2012. Mainstream party families, including the Conservative, Liberal, Christian-Democratic, and Socialists are, on average, closer together, holding general positive positions on the EU integration. But the Conservatives party family is more heterogeneous than the other mainstream families, with many parties overlapping the positions of ERPs. Instead, the liberals are overall more homogeneously pro-Europe. Even if the radical left family is also Eurosceptic, their average position on the EU is more positive than ERPs’.



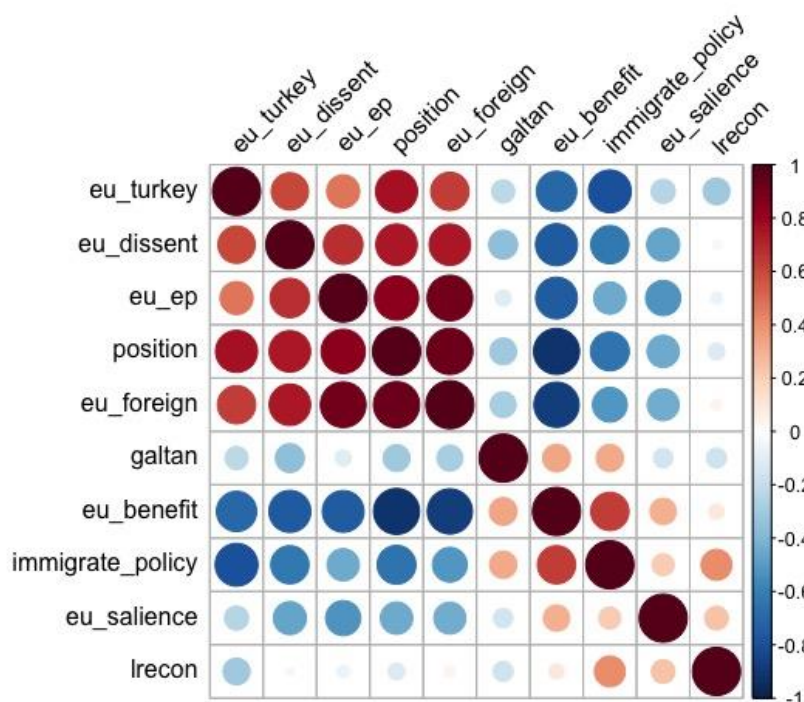
Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey – 1999-2014.

Labels of party families: 1-Extreme right, 2-Conservatives, 3-Liberal, 4-Christian-Democratic, 5-Socialist, 6-Radical left, 7-Green, 8-Regionalist, 9-No family, 10-Confessional, 11-Agrarian/Center

The following graph explores the correlation between position on the EU and other policy positions of ERPs. It represents the binary correlations of different variables measuring positions on EU issues, immigration policy and location on the ideological scales, economic and socio-cultural. Six variables refer to positions on EU issues (eu\_turkey, eu\_dissent, eu\_ep, position, eu\_foreign, and eu\_benefit). The variable eu\_salience measures the salience of the European issue. The ideological variables are Irecon, which places parties on a classic economic left-right scale; and the variable galton, that places parties on a libertarian-authoritarian scale. Graph 2 shows the direction and strength of Pearson correlations between pairs of variables, only for ERPs.

It is possible to identify two clusters of variables that show stronger relationship between each other, and suggests that ERPs display a level of coherence on it, because they tend to vary together. The red color indicates positive correlations, and the blue color indicates negative correlations. The first cluster concerns the various positions on the EU, except the eu\_benefit variable. Position on the EU is usually positively correlated with other dimensions of the European integration, particularly eu\_turkey, eu\_dissent, eu\_ep, and eu\_foreign. These variables vary positively with the overall position on European integration. On the other side, the variables immigrate\_policy and eu\_benefit are negatively correlated with the overall position on the EU, suggesting that ERPs that tend to oppose Europe more, also favor more restrictive policies on immigration, but they think that their country benefited from becoming a EU member-state. Contrary to what has been argued by Vasilopoulou (2011) in her analysis of ERPs' type of Euroscepticism and ideology, there is no significant relationship between the variables position on the EU, and location on the economic left-right spectrum, neither with the placement on the socio-cultural scale (galton)

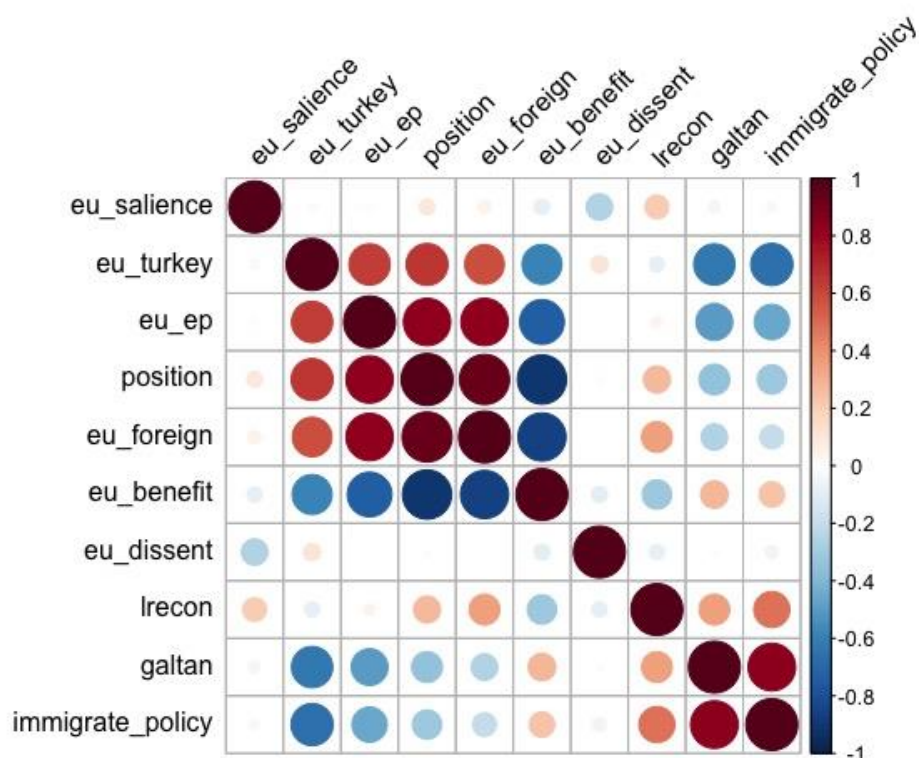
**Graph 2: Two-by-two correlation of variables for Extreme Right Parties: EU issues and ideology**



Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey – 1999-2014.

To a certain extent, the observed links between position on the EU and other topics also hold when all the parties in the dataset are considered. In short, more positive positions on the EU tend to be associated with more positive views of the European parliament, support for the EU foreign policy, and the enlargement to Turkey, for instance. The correlations also suggest that, on the cultural dimensions, parties tend to link their immigration policy preferences to their position on the socio-cultural (galtan) scale. Overall, positions indicating cultural openness are also related to approval of integration policies.

**Graph 3: Two-by-two correlation of variables for all party: EU issues and ideology**



Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey – 1999-2014.

#### IV) Party competition and the European issue: could ERPs influence mainstream parties?

Challenger parties, among them ERPs, have benefited from issue-entrepreneurial strategies. Studies show that the European issue has been successfully mobilized by issue-entrepreneurs (De Vries and Hobolt, 2012). The European issue equally plays a central role to understand support for ERPs (Norris, 2005; Betz, 2002; Lubbers and Sheepers, 2007). Moreover, the literature argues that Euroscepticism is no longer limited to the margins of the political competition, but it has entered the mainstream (Spoon, 2012; Brack and Startin, 2015; Leconte, 2015). It has been argued that the salience of the European integration has increased on national competitions (Whitefield and Rohnscheider, 2015; Kriesi, 2007; Hobolt, 2004). And according to Netjes and Binnema (2007, p.40) “it is now conventional wisdom to assume that European integration has become a more salient issue for political parties and national publics”.

The issues that dominate the political competition are central to understand politics. Parties wish not only to present their policy positions to voters, and try to capture the maximum number of

supporters by being ideologically closer to the medium voter (Downs, 1957), they are also interested in influencing which issues will determinate the political conflict (Benoit and Laver, 2009). This way they can influence the agenda and occupy a central position on the political debate. Although attitudes towards the EU influence vote choice in national elections, it is not clear how parties promote this issue, and how their positions change over time. It has been argued that parties that politicize the EU issue are to be found at the extremes of the political spectrum (Netjes and Binnema, 2007; Topaloff, 2014). But the salience of an issue is largely determined by inter-party behavior, since even mainstream parties can't afford to be excluded from the debate by not considering such an important issue in the public's view.

Descriptive data from the CHES has shown that, although extremist parties of the right and of the left both display more Eurosceptic positions compared to other party families, ERPs are the most critical to Europe, on average. Given that ERPs electorally benefit from their Eurosceptic position, it is expected that mainstream parties should react somehow to their loss of voters, when they feel threatened by ERPs in the electoral arena. While it has been clear that ERPs have benefited from issue-entrepreneurship regarding Europe, it is less clear whether and how mainstream political parties have reacted somehow to such success of ERPs. It is expected, however, that they will adapt their strategies over time, particularly regarding the European issue.

The theory of issue-uptake can shed some light to this discussion. It links the electoral and the legislative arenas, and provides a behavioral mechanism through which elections can influence legislative politics and policy making. Issue-uptake is the phenomenon in which "winning legislators regularly take up their challenger's priority issues from the last campaign and act on them in office" (Sulkin, 2005, p.2). So, when issue-uptake happens, incumbents update their agenda's priorities and legislative activity while in office, based on their previous experience in elections. They try to cover topics that his/her electoral competitor pointed as missing or weak, as a way to close any gaps for criticism that could potentially benefit his/her competitor in the next campaign.

According to this theory, the behavior of individual legislators is influenced not only by prospective expectations of reelection, but also by their past campaign experiences. Sulkin (2005, p. 2) explains that legislators are motivated to engage in issue-uptake "because challengers focus their campaigns on the incumbent's weaknesses, their choices of campaign themes provide signals to winning legislators about important issues that they may have previously neglected. To the extent that legislators act on these signals, taking up salient issues and making them a part of their agendas, they can remedy any weaknesses, straightening their records before their next campaign and inoculating themselves against possible attacks".

The foundation of the theory of issue-uptake focus on the behavior of individual legislators. However, the logics behind it could reasonably be extended to political parties, collective entities that also search to maximizing votes, policy, and office. Political parties compete in elections because they wish to access power, so they can implement their preferred policies. Once in government, they also wish to remain in office, thus one central motivation of governing parties is

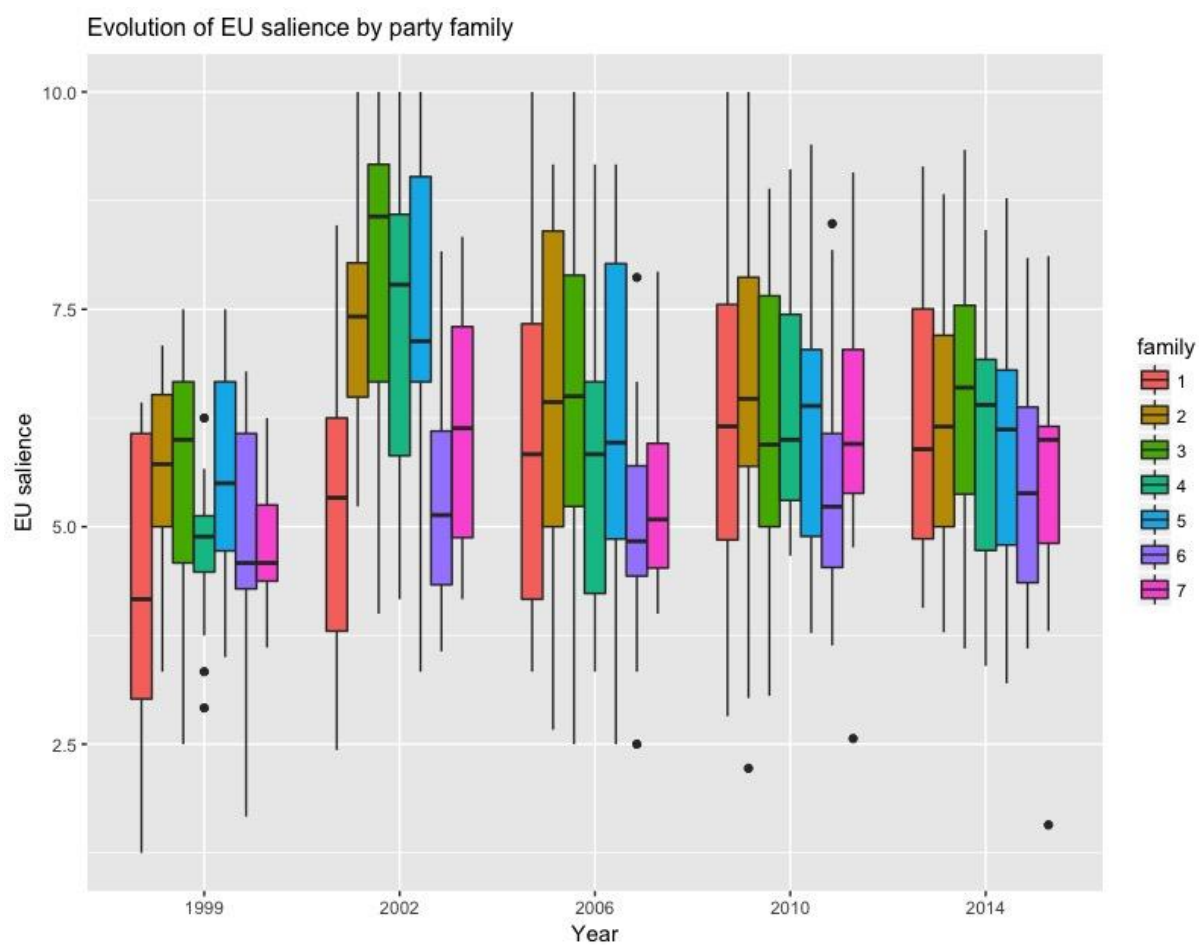
reelection. Parties wish to implement their preferred policies, as a means to be accountable to voters, to preserve their reputation, and to maximize their gains on future elections, by getting closer to the public's preferences. Therefore, established political parties that hold office should also try to remedy their electoral losses in the following elections by learning from past campaigns and addressing their challengers' issues while in office. ERPs' most salient issues are expected to appear more often on the policy agenda when established parties feel threatened by them in elections.

Derived from this discussion, I expect that over time mainstream parties attribute more salience to the European issue, and take harder stances on the EU in response to the growing popularity of ERPs. They should do so in attempt to recapture or stop losing their voters to ERPs, since their supporters also attribute more relevance to European issues to cast their vote, and Euroscepticism is rising. I will explore some descriptive data from the CHES in order to verify how the salience and position of different party families has evolved from 1999 to 2014.

Descriptive data from the CHES (1999-2014) shows that EU salience has raised among ERPs and Green parties over time since the early 2000s, while they were initially higher among mainstream party families, notably the Conservatives, and the Liberals. However, contrary to expected, for most other party families, the salience of EU has decreased or remained stable.

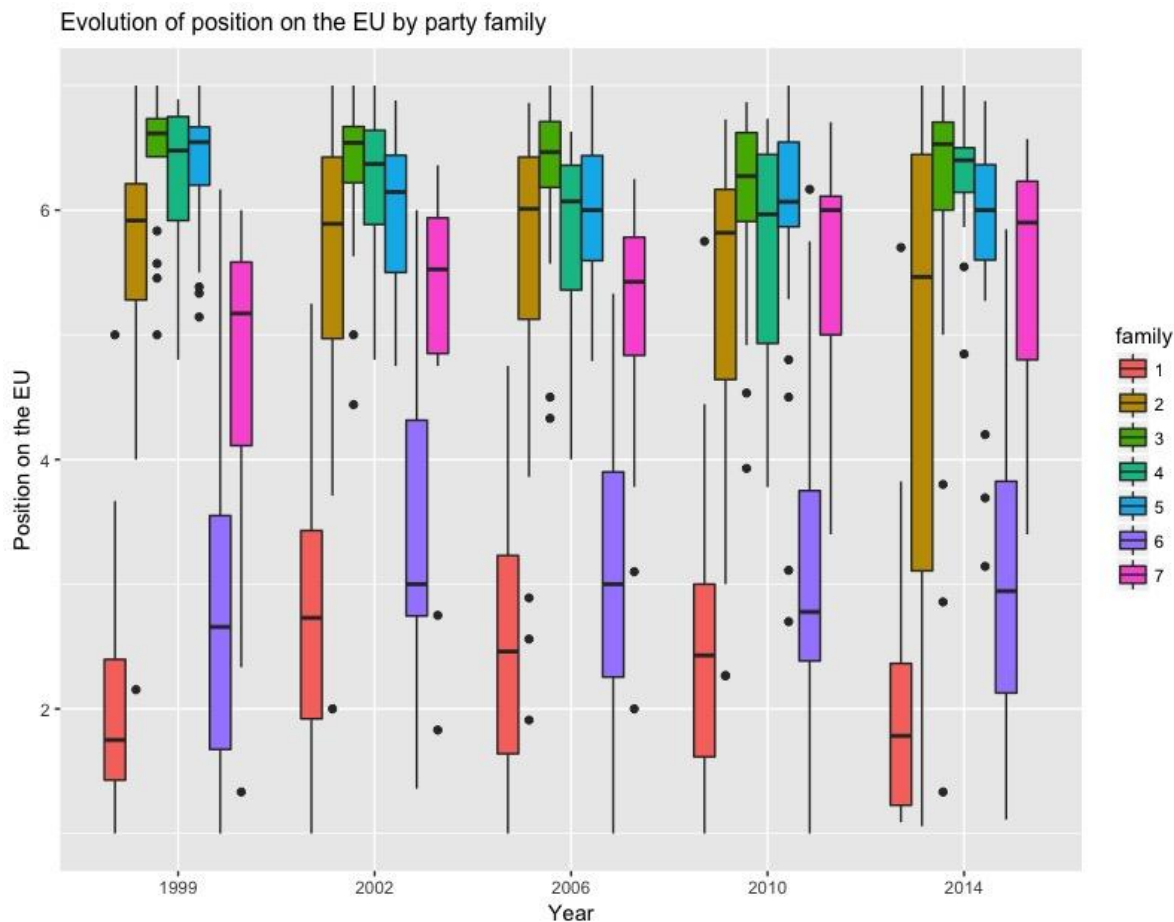
Over the 2000s, different party families have become closer together regarding the salience of the European issue, with mainstream party families following a declining trend in issue-salience. But it can also be noticed that, among the Conservatives, for example, the variation within the party family becomes particularly strong in 2006.



**Graph 4: EU salience by party family over time**

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey – 1999-2014.

Labels of party families (as in the CHES): 1-Extreme right, 2-Conservatives, 3-Liberal, 4-Christian-Democratic, 5-Socialist, 6-Radical left, 7-Green

**Graph 5: Overall position on the EU by party family over time**

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey – 1999-2014.

Labels of party families (as in the CHES): 1-Extreme right, 2-Conservatives, 3-Liberal, 4-Christian-Democratic, 5-Socialist, 6-Radical left, 7-Green

Graph 5 shows that the position on EU shows much more distinction among party families than issue-salience. While the gap between ERPs and radical left parties, on the one hand, and more central party families on the other remains over the period, it can be seen that the position within the Conservatives becomes much more heterogeneous than it used to be in 1999. On a lower degree, the same happens to the Christian-Democrats. As center-right parties, these two groups could be the most affected by the rise of ERPs, and they might be pressured to adapt their strategies on the EU issue more than center-left parties. Of course that studies on the country level should be developed in order to better understand the dynamics of changing strategies in the inter-party competition. What this descriptive data suggest is that ERPs have maintained a quite stable average very negative position on the EU integration, even more Eurosceptics than radical left parties. At the same time, particularly the Conservative family has adopted more critical position on the EU.

## V) Conclusions

This paper raises two main questions regarding the intersection among the topics of extreme right parties, Euroscepticism, and party competition. First, it asks about the position of ERPs on different matters related to the European Union integration. Second, it raises the question of issue and position evolution among established party families as a possible reaction to increasing support for ERPs. It develops a preliminary and exploratory analysis of positions and salience on the issue of the European Union, focusing first on the extreme right party family and, then, comparing different party families over time.

ERPs are the most Eurosceptical family of all, and they tend to be relatively homogeneous regarding European issues. Although more sophisticated methods need to be used to find evidence for the issue-uptake thesis, this preliminary finding suggests that center-right parties are adopting more critical positions on the European Union, and this could be a changing strategy in reaction to rising ERPs. The position of political parties on the European Union should be comprehended in a broader strategic action framework, and studies considering inter-party competition should be further developed.

Unfortunately, although the CHES provides party positions on different topics of the European integration, I interpret most of them as measuring the “practice” dimension in Vasilopoulou’s (2009) terms. Therefore, it does not offer measurement of opposition to Europe on the different dimensions of Euroscepticism. To do so, case studies must be conducted using content analysis of party manifestos, discourse of political elites on occasions such as party congresses and campaigns, presidential debates, among other sources through which political parties signal to voters and other parties during electoral competitions.

The development of comparative measures of opposition to Europe on different dimensions would be very useful to advance the studies on the topic. The EU itself has become a very complex framework, and this turns the potential advantages or disadvantages of parties while exploring the European topic very complex and multifaceted as well. Not only ERPs, but other political parties can adopt different positions regarding different dimensions of Europe, but the currently available comparative data sources do not really capture those different dimensions of positions on the European integration. For instance, many ERPs critique EU officials with a populist discourse, they also critique the democratic deficit of the EU, but they claim that occupying positions in the EU Parliament will be beneficial to recovering sovereignty. Moreover, while they are nationalist and very often apply the rhetoric of “France for the French”, “Austria for the Austrian”, there exist an effort to build an international network among ERPs, and it becomes explicitly addressed in their discourse. This is apparently ambiguous, but more research should be conducted to better understand such behavior coupled with the general strategies and ideologies of extreme right parties.

Opposition to Europe should also be addressed from a broader international orientation of political parties. In this sense, EU opposition should be analyzed in conjunction to the position of parties on other multilateral organizations and international treaties. This kind of study could reveal more

evidence on the underlying motivations for Euroscepticism, whether it is inserted in a broader ideological orientation, or if it is purely strategic and electorally oriented. If there are many inconsistencies, then this could be indicative of a more pragmatic and strategic framing of EU integration than general ideological orientations towards internationalism.

## VI) Appendix

### List of parties belonging to the extreme right category as in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (1999-2014) dataset

Country	Party Abbrev.	Party Name	Party Name (English)
Belgium	VB	Vlaams Blok; Vlaams Belang	Flemish Bloc; Flemish Interest
Belgium	FN	Front National	National Front
Denmark	FP	Fremskridtspartiet	Progress Party
Denmark	DF	Dansk Folkeparti	Danish People's Party
Germany	DVU/NPD	Deutsche Volksunion; Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands	German People's Union; National Democratic Party of Germany
Germany	REP	Republikaner	Republikaner
Greece	LAOS	Laikós Orthódoxos Synagermós	Popular Orthodox Rally
Greece	ANEL	Anexartitoi Ellines	Independent Greeks
Greece	XA	Laikós Síndesmos—Chrysí Avgí	Popular Association— Golden Dawn
France	FN	Front National	National Front
France	RPF/MPF; MPF	Rassemblement pour la France/Mouvement Pour la France	Rally for France/Movement for France
France	MN	Mouvement National Républicain	National Republican Movement

Italy	AN	Alleanza Nazionale	National Alliance
Italy	MS	Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore	Tricolor Flame Social Movement
Netherlands	CD	Centrum Democraten	Center Democrats
Netherlands	LPF	Lijst Pim Fortuyn	List Pim Fortuyn
Netherlands	PVV	Partij voor de Vrijheid	Party for Freedom
United Kingdom	UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party	United Kingdom Independence Party
United Kingdom	BNP	British National Party	British National Party
Austria	FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Freedom Party of Austria
Austria	BZÖ	Bündnis Zukunft Österreich	Alliance for the Future of Austria
Finland	PS	Persussuomalaiset	True Finns
Sweden	NyD	Ny Demokrati	New Democracy
Sweden	SD	Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats
Bulgaria	NOA; Ataka	Nacionalno Obedinenie Ataka; Ataka	National Union Attack; Attack
Czech Republic	USVIT	Úsvit p římé demokracie	Dawn of Direct Democracy
Hungary	MIEP	Magyar Igazság és élet Pártja	Hungarian Justice and Life Party
Hungary	JOBBIK	Jobbik Magyarorszagert Mozgalom	Movement for a Better Hungary
Latvia	TB-LNNK; NA	Nacionala apvieniba “Visu Latvijai!”— “Tevzemei un Brivibai/LNNK”	National Alliance “All For Latvia!”— “For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK”
Lithuania	LLS	Lietuvos laisves sąjunga	Lithuanian Liberty Union
Lithuania	JL-PKS	Lietuviu Nacionaline Partija—	Young Lithuania—New

		“Jaunoji Lietuva”	Nationalists and Political Prisoner’s Union
Poland	PiS	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	Law and Justice Party
Romania	PRM	Partidul România Mare	Party of Great Romania
Slovakia	PSNS	Pravá Slovenská národná strana	Right Slovak National Party
Slovakia	SNS	Slovenská národná strana	Slovak National Party
Slovenia	SNS	Slovenska nacionalna stranka	Slovenian National Party

Source: The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (1999-2014) codebook.

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