

EUROSCEPTICISM OR EUROPHOBIA: VOICE VS. EXIT?

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SUMMARY

“ THIS POLICY PAPER
 CALLS FOR A MORE PRECISE
 DISTINCTION BETWEEN
 EUROSCEPTICISM AND
 EUROPHOBIA ”

Six months after the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections, it is time to assess the composition of Eurosceptics and their potential for political influence at the European and national levels. **This Policy Paper argues that Euroscepticism represents an over-inclusive category and calls for a more precise distinction between more moderate Euroscepticism and Europhobia.** The argument is developed in three parts:

1. Multiple facets of Euroscepticism

A review of existing definitions and typologies leads us to two categorisations. The first identifies **four substantive roots of Euroscepticism: democracy; national sovereignty; liberalism, austerity, and solidarity; and identity.** Arguing along these four lines, **Eurosceptics criticise or reject the European Union (EU)** as a political system, as a free movement area, and increasingly also as an Economic and Monetary Union. We further distinguish **two degrees** of the phenomenon: **Eurosceptics** are the more moderate political forces expressing vocal criticism against the Union and its policies and calling for reform. **Europhobes** refer to those that reject European belonging and call for an exit from the EU, the Euro, and/or the Schengen area.

2. Widespread and heterogeneous Euroscepticism

According to our categorisation, there are **currently 30 Eurosceptic parties from 18 member states and with a total of 125 seats in the EP, i.e. 16.6% of the total.** The Eurosceptics are ideologically diverse and scattered across three political groups and the non-attached. While ideological diversity might prevent them from exerting influence at the level of the EP, they are likely to have a direct or indirect impact on national political systems. Eurosceptic parties were among the top three in the latest national and EP elections in seven EU member states.

3. Less powerful Europhobes: rejecting European belonging

With **16 parties from 13 member states and a total of 82 EP seats, i.e. 10.9% of the total,** the **Europhobes** are a much smaller group. Most of them are clustered at the right or far right of the political spectrum. Due to their diverse convictions and exit preferences as well as their structural difficulty to forge cohesive political or voting alliances, they are even less likely to shape political decisions in the EP. They are not part of any national government, even if their national influence is growing. Europhobe parties were among the top three in the latest national and EP elections in seven EU member states. If this trend continues, their direct and indirect influence on European policy-making is likely to be felt.

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INTRODUCTION: THE EUROSCEPTIC RISE

In the wake of the European Parliament (EP) elections in May 2014, media and policy analysts reported that a ‘Eurosceptic earthquake’ rocked the continent¹. As some put it, the Union faced a sweeping “enemy invasion” by the populist far-right, riding high on a “wave of discontent” and triggering a deep crisis of European democracy².

Indeed, the expression of popular discontent in the EP elections was unprecedented. The Eurosceptic United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) came first in Great Britain as did the French far-right party National Front. Italy’s populist newcomer, the Five Star Movement, secured a fifth of the votes and came second. Even in Germany, a country traditionally characterised by a solid pro-European consensus, the new Eurosceptic party – the Alternative for Germany – received over 7% of the votes.

Since then, Eurosceptic successes have also been replicated at the regional or local levels. To mention only one example, the Alternative for Germany won around 10% of the votes in all three 2014 elections to the *Länder* parliaments. All these political parties have to a large extent built their progression on national and domestic issues, but targeting the EU has also become an integral part of their political strategies and successes.

The year 2014 certainly reminded the end of the so-called ‘permissive consensus’ on European integration. The ‘European question’ has irrevocably entered the terrain of party political contestation, including by extremist parties. The economic downturn resulting from the economic and financial crisis that started in 2007 has eroded one of the core foundations of public support to the European project, namely the promise that the Union generates economic prosperity³. The crises have substantially increased the salience of the European dimension in public debates, with contradictory denunciations of the absence of solidarity or excesses of austerity, depending on the country or party concerned.

These new political realities should lead us to closely re-examine the various ‘resistances’ to the European project, going beyond the classical but somewhat simplifying notion of ‘Euroscepticism’. This term is indeed often used in an over-inclusive manner that magnifies the actual influence of Eurosceptic parties. While some analysts depict them as an ideologically unified ‘camp’, a closer look rather conveys the impression of a ‘nebulous constellation’.

TABLE 1 ▶ Euroscepticism and Europhobia in numbers

PARTIES IN EP	NUMBER OF SEATS (%)	NUMBER OF PARTIES (%)
Eurosceptic	125 (16.64%)	30 (16.3%)
Europhobe	82 (10.92%)	16 (8.67%)
Other political forces	544 (72.44%)	138 (75%)
Total	751 (100%)	184 (100%)

Source: own compilation based on European Parliament elections data.

1. See for example: BBC, „Eurosceptic ‘earthquake’ rocks EU elections”, *News Europe*, 26 May 2014.

2. Jon Henley, “The enemy invasion: Brussels braced for influx of Eurosceptics in EU polls”, *The Guardian*, 28 April 2014.

3. For a pertinent analysis of public opinion data see: Daniel Debomy, “EU no, euro yes? European public opinions facing the crisis”, *Policy Paper No. 90*, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, March 2013.

“EUROSCPTICIS AND EUROPHOBES COMBINED NOW HOLD 207 SEATS AND THUS ROUGHLY 28% OF THE EP’S TOTAL SEATS”

Our analysis shows that Eurosceptics and what we will call “Europhobes” combined now hold 207 seats and thus roughly 28% of the EP’s total seats (see table 1). With 82 seats, the Europhobes still represent a clear minority despite recent successes. Overall, we argue that ideological disparities among the Eurosceptics and the Europhobes’ lack of political cohesion are likely to limit their actual impact at the European level. However, recent years and months have already given us a glimpse of their potential political impact through national party systems.

1. Multiple facets of Euroscepticism

Euroscepticism has become a catch-all term, which is often misused not only by the media but also in academic circles. It is thus important to clarify upfront what we understand by Euroscepticism and how it can be categorised. This part reviews existing definitions and taxonomies and presents the dimensions and criteria we use to analyse and delineate the group of Eurosceptic and Europhobe parties in today’s EP.

1.1. The intersection of Euroscepticism and populism

Euroscepticism is commonly defined as “the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration”⁴. The term often appears in conjunction with populism. While the two phenomena intersect, they should be distinguished⁵.

Populism is a much broader term that is used in the context of national political games and primarily refers to the rejection of an elite or ‘political class’ in favour of the interests of the people. According to Yves Surel⁶, the examination of ‘populist’ discourse displays certain constants, revolving “around three fundamental propositions:

- the reminder (...) that all power derives necessarily from the people, a group defined by nationalism or other social criteria (...);
- the idea that institutions and politicians have undermined this ideal by diverting the exercise of power from its first mission, that of respect for the sovereign people, which gives rise to a rhetoric focusing on betrayal by various elites; and
- the desire to restore a previous and/or more legitimate order guaranteeing the sovereignty of the people and their representatives”.

On this basis, and considering that analyses of citizens’ attitudes vis-à-vis the EU have consistently identified a mass-elites divide⁷ or an ‘elite-mass opinion incongruence’, it is all the less surprising to observe that so-called ‘populist’ discourses usually reject European integration⁸.

Nevertheless, Euroscepticism should not be understood as a mere sub-category of populism. Eurosceptics are certainly prone to adopt populist positions and ideologies and to use populism as a “rhetorical resource”⁹. It is no coincidence that populism and Euroscepticism concentrate and mingle at the fringes of Europe’s party

4. Paul Taggart, “A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems”, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 33 no. 3, 1998, p. 366.

5. Robert Harmsen, „On Understanding the Relationship between Populism and Euroscepticism”, *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, vol. 11 no. 3, 2010.

6. Yves Surel, “The European Union and the challenges of populism”, *Policy Brief No. 27*, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, June 2011: 2.

7. See for example Céline Teney and Marc Helbling, “How Denationalization Divides Elites and Citizens”, *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Jg. 43, Heft 4, August 2014, pp. 258–271.

8. See in particular Heinrich Best, György Lengyel and Luca Verzichelli, *The Europe of Elites: A Study into the Europeaness of Europe’s Political and Economic Elites*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

9. On this point, see Yves Surel, “The European Union and the challenge of populism”, *op. cit.*

systems¹⁰. Populism and Euroscepticism can also be found among governing parties and ruling elites. But more importantly, promoting criticisms vis-à-vis EU decisions or European integration is part of the natural political game. The origin and nature of such criticisms should thus be carefully examined, while resisting the reflex to group all of them in the overly vague and unified category of ‘Euroscepticism’.

1.2. Four core roots of Euroscepticism

The recent growth and diversification of the so-called ‘Eurosceptic’ forces demands a review of the substantive dimensions underlying Euroscepticism. Substantive dimensions allow us to classify the most common grounds for opposing European integration, institutional aspects, or policies. They are intimately linked to party political ideology. However, the causal relationship between ideology and Euroscepticism is not straightforward apart from the fact that peripheral or radical parties tend to endorse extremer versions of Euroscepticism¹¹.

“ WE DISTINGUISH FOUR MAIN ROOTS OF EUROSCEPTICISM LINKED TO DEMOCRACY, NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, ECONOMY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY”

On the basis of the analysis of their programmes, we distinguish four main roots of Euroscepticism, while being aware that parties from different ideological camps may adopt cross-cutting positions or manifestos.

The first root of Euroscepticism centres on the issue of democracy. It has a normative connotation as it is chiefly concerned with the EU’s democratic and political legitimacy. Criticism is often directed at the Union’s democracy deficit and the EU is decried for a lack of transparency in decision-making as well as for its elitist, inflated, opaque, technocratic, overbearing, and costly bureaucracy. Commonly proposed solutions include more direct democracy or a substantial downsizing of Europe’s bureaucracy. Centred on democracy, this dimension easily lends itself to populist ideology or rhetoric¹².

The second root of Euroscepticism relates to national sovereignty. It is closely linked to the first one but focuses more on the transfer of power between the member states and the EU and views it as a ‘loss’ of sovereignty rather than a ‘pooling and sharing’ mechanism. This dimension of Euroscepticism is fed by the ‘compliance costs’ linked to the implementation of EU laws and rules, under the control of the Commission and the Court of Justice. It is often accompanied by the pledge for a full or partial return of competences and powers to the national level. This dimension has gained importance during the ‘sovereign debt crisis’ and after the creation of the ‘Troika’, which symbolised an ‘IMF type’ relation between Brussels and the countries under programme, based on the conditionality principle. The reform of ‘Economic and Monetary Union governance’ has also given new impetus to this Eurosceptic dimension.

The third root of Euroscepticism essentially focuses on the economy and has a utilitarian connotation. It can be grouped along the terms liberalism, austerity and solidarity. This Eurosceptic dimension has long been fed by the denunciation of Brussels “free market liberalisation”, especially since the entering into force of the Single European Act in the 1980’s, which did not only promote liberalisation but also fostered solidarity (especially via the structural funds). It has substantially contributed to the rise and diversification of the Eurosceptics since 2008 and throughout the sovereign debt and euro area crises. On the one hand, new voices have arisen (mostly on the right) opposing financial transfers to crisis-ridden countries. On the other, the radical left views the EU and the euro as amplifier of globalisation subjecting its member states and citizens to neoliberal policies, which engender rising inequality and wage cuts. The EU is also held responsible for the strict austerity course leading to massive unemployment and an erosion of the welfare state. While national governments are also blamed, the EU and its member states are criticised for their lack of solidarity.

10. Yves Bertoncini, “European Elections: less abstention, more populism?”, *Tribune*, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, November 2013.

11. The link between ideology and Euroscepticism is variable as parties can interpret their own ideologies and the EU flexibly. They can adapt these interpretations strategically depending on the contextual and political opportunity structure.

12. Yves Surel, “The European Union and the challenge of populism”, *op. cit.*

The fourth root of Euroscepticism has a more ‘emotional’ connotation and revolves around national identity. Founded on the principle of free movement of people, the EU is blamed for an increase in migration both from within and without its borders. Criticism of the Union is linked to fears of the erosion of national identity due to threats from distinct ethnic groups (such as the Roma) or different religions (such as Islam). Another type of criticism, which carries a more utilitarian than xenophobic connotation, can be referred to as ‘welfare populism’. This phenomenon has been observed in more prosperous Northern European states where fears are fuelled that immigrants will abuse and hollow out national social systems.

The first two roots of Euroscepticism described above reflect the denunciation of the EU as a ‘political system’, whereas the two latter rather concern the rejection of the EU as a ‘free movement area’. Both types of criticism arise around issues such as democracy, sovereignty, liberalism or identity. The European Monetary Union can be situated at the crossroads of these two types of attacks, as it can be subject to all of the crosscutting criticisms classically developed by Eurosceptic forces (see table 2).

TABLE 2 ▶ Euroscepticism and Europhobia: main sources and issues

ISSUES/SOURCES	EU AS A POLITICAL SYSTEM	EU AS A FREE MOVEMENT SPACE	EUROPEAN MONETARY UNION
Democracy	X		X
Sovereignty	X	X	X
Liberalism		X	X
Identity		X	X
Solidarity		X	X
Austerity	X		X

Source: Yves Bertoncini and Nicole Koenig

1.3. Euroscepticism or Europhobia?

“THERE IS AN ACUTE NEED TO DISTINGUISH A MODERATE FORM OF EUROSCEPTICISM FROM AN EXTREMER VERSION OF EUROPHOBIA”

This broad analysis of Euroscepticism and the rise of political forces promoting such criticisms call for a second categorisation, based on the magnitude or degree of Euroscepticism. In this perspective, there is an acute need to distinguish a moderate form of Euroscepticism from an extremer version of Europhobia.

The first category is commonly referred to as ‘soft Euroscepticism’ in academic literature¹³. Soft Eurosceptics display qualified or contingent criticism towards the European integration process or the EU. They do not reject the principle of European integration *per se*, but oppose specific policies or institutional aspects of the EU. Meanwhile Europhobes or ‘hard Eurosceptics’ oppose the principle of European integration¹⁴. They reject EU membership altogether or hold attitudes standing in such stark contrast to the integration process that they are tantamount to its complete rejection. While this dichotomy has been widely applied in the academic and policy literatures, it seems to lack precision in two respects.

First, we need clearly circumscribed criteria that allow us to distinguish more moderate forms of Euroscepticism from outright Europhobia¹⁵. Blurring boundaries between Euroscepticism and Europhobia may lead to the

13. See in particular Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak “Parties, positions and Europe: Euroscepticism in the EU candidate states of Central and Eastern Europe”, *Opposing Europe*, Sussex European Institute, *Working Paper*, no. 461-38, 2001.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde, “The Two Sides of Euroscepticism: Party Positions on European Integration in East Central Europe”, *European Union Politics*, vol. 3 no. 3, 2002, p. 300.

exaggeration of the ‘threat’ Eurosceptics pose to the European integration process. The key question is then: which or how many policy areas or institutional aspects a party has to oppose in order to fall into the Europhobe category?

Second, it is unclear how (soft) Euroscepticism can be distinguished from a critical but differentiated perspective on European integration as an issue subject to ‘normal’ political contestation, along the four main lines identified above (see § 1.2.). In other words, what should be the threshold for Euroscepticism? The breadth of the category carries the risk of inflating the number and influence of the Eurosceptics by including all the political actors formulating harsh criticisms vis-à-vis the EU or its policies. In these times of crisis, the sheer number of critics is unusual but not all of them are truly ‘anti-European’.

To provide a more clear-cut distinction between Eurosceptics and Europhobes, we propose to rely on the distinction of exit, voice, and loyalty as identified by Albert Hirschman in his seminal work on members’ reactions to a given political or economic system¹⁶. On this basis, the members, i.e. EU citizens and, by derivation, political parties can be divided into three groups as regards their attitude vis-a-vis the European construction. The first includes those that wish to remain loyal to the EU. The second is constituted of protesters that use their right to make their voice heard: they can be extremely critical, but want to shape and change public decisions without ‘destroying the system’. The third and last group includes political forces that have lost trust in the system and firmly advocate its exit.

**“ WE RELY ON THE
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We believe that this sharp distinction can be useful to shed light on the results of the May 2014 European elections and on the evolution of the public debate on EU affairs. We thus develop the conceptual basis further and introduce three major exit-voice dilemmas that are relevant in the context of European integration.

The first and perhaps least ambiguous is a proposed exit from the Union. It is a clear sign of principled opposition both to the EU as a political system and to the integration process as a whole. Proposing withdrawal presupposes opposition to the EU along the four core roots mentioned above.

The second element relates to a policy area lying at the heart of European integration, namely the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). We classify a party as Europhobe if it advocates, in one form or another, an exit from the euro area or a radical transformation of the EMU. Party political justifications for withdrawal can revolve around one or several of the issues identified in table 2 depending on ideology and nationality.

The third element concerns the Schengen area and the principle of free movement of citizens – two very distinct notions¹⁷, which are often linked by Eurosceptic/Europhobe forces. We classify a party as Europhobe if it proposes measures that fundamentally contradict the freedom of movement (of workers and migrants). More concretely, a party is considered Europhobe if it proposes an exit from the Schengen area or the permanent restoration of national borders. Depending on the party and country, such proposals typically rest on utilitarian and/or identity-related arguments.

Europhobes thus advocate withdrawal from the Union or its core policy areas while more moderate Eurosceptics voice their discontent and call for reform. While the exit-voice criteria seem rather clear-cut, there are two types of ‘borderline’ cases, for which the delineation blurs.

The first includes parties that make withdrawal contingent on a referendum. Their classification then depends on whether they explicitly advocate exit or not. We only classify a party as Europhobe if it clearly positions itself in favour of exit, with or without referendum.

16. Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Harvard University Press, 1970.

17. The free movement of people has been proclaimed by the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and is applied in all EU countries; the Schengen agreements have been concluded in 1985 and provide for technical arrangements as regards border controls and police/justice cooperation.

The second case refers to parties that propose reforms or changes that are radical enough to require a complete overhaul of the Union or its core policy areas. In these cases, parties are also classified as Europhobes. As these caveats show, the distinction between Eurosceptics and Europhobes is not always straightforward. Therefore, the following sections explicitly identify potential ‘borderline’ cases in either category.

Overall, parties are classified on the basis of their manifestos for the EP elections (if available), national manifestos and party websites. We also relied on electoral data from the VoteWatch Europe and the European Parliament websites.

2. Widespread and heterogeneous Euroscepticism

How many Eurosceptic parties are represented in today’s EP? To what extent do they diverge ideologically? And in which member states are they likely to have most political impact? This section provides an overview of Eurosceptic parties. We classified a political party as ‘Eurosceptic’ when its members develop a significant number of criticisms vis-a-vis European integration or EU decisions – while not calling for an exit from the EU, the EMU or Schengen, which would lead us to consider them as “Europhobe”.

The category excludes temporary and specific criticism concerning, for instance, dissatisfaction with the way national interests are reflected at the European level in particular issue areas or with regard to certain decisions¹⁸. We also exclude parties, which only oppose integration in selected policy areas such as the Common Security and Defence Policy while being generally in favour of integration in other (perhaps more central) policy areas. Furthermore, we do not take opposition to further EU enlargement as a clear sign of Euroscepticism. Proponents of further deepening may reject widening to prevent dilution and *vice versa*. Finally, calls for a more effective European bureaucracy or accusations of Brussels-led over-regulation have become part of mainstream EU criticism. We do not classify this kind of criticism as fundamentally Eurosceptic, also because it is largely in line with one of the EU’s central tenets – the subsidiarity principle.

2.1. A large group with fuzzy boundaries

“THERE ARE CURRENTLY 30 EUROSCEPTIC PARTIES FROM 18 COUNTRIES IN THE EP”

According to the outlined criteria, there are currently 30 Eurosceptic parties from 18 countries in the EP (*see table 3*). Together they have 125 seats and thus roughly a sixth of the EP’s seats. Compared to the last legislature, the Eurosceptics have gained 41 additional seats (*see table 3*)¹⁹. This increase is in large parts attributable to new parties such as the Alternative for Germany, the Italian Five Star Movement, or the Polish Congress of the New Right. Overall the ‘newcomers’ account for 40 seats and constitute almost one third of the Eurosceptic ‘family’.

For some parties, the boundaries between Euroscepticism and Europhobia blur. We adhered to the criteria outlined in section 1.3 and identified a number of ‘borderline’ cases that fall into three groups.

The first includes parties that advocate withdrawal from the euro area but make it contingent on a referendum. This applies particularly to Italy’s Five Star Movement.

Members of the second group do not generally reject the idea of a common European currency but push for a substantial reform of the EMU. Interestingly, this group includes right-wing parties such as the Alternative

18. See also: Paul Taggart and Aleks Szczerbiak, “Theorising party-based euroscepticism: problems of definition, measurement and causality”, 8th Biannual International Conference of the European Studies, Nashville, March 2013, p. 10.

19. These numbers are based on the parties currently represented in the EP. We have not taken into account Eurosceptic parties that have dropped out of the EP.

for Germany as well as left-wing parties, notably the French Left Front, the Spanish Podemos, and the Dutch Socialist Party. While their arguments are diametrically opposed, they converge in advocating either a split of the euro area or the possibility of voluntary, unilateral withdrawal of single member states.

The third group of ‘borderline’ Eurosceptics includes parties that do not expressly advocate withdrawal from the Union but propose Treaty renegotiation and a subsequent referendum on EU membership. This group is largely populated by British Eurosceptics, but also includes the Hungarian Jobbik as well as the Finns Party. Both of the latter have changed their Eurosceptic course in recent years by softening their stances on euro and EU membership and revoking statements expressly advocating euro or EU exit²⁰.

2.2. Ideologically diverse

While the Eurosceptics have increased their nominal power in the EP, their ideological diversity lowers their potential institutional impact. Eurosceptic MEPs are scattered across three political groups (*see table 3*).

TABLE 3 ➤ Eurosceptics by political group

GROUP	TOTAL NUMBER OF SEATS	SEATS HELD BY EUROSCPTIC PARTIES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES	NUMBER OF EUROSCPTIC PARTIES
ECR	70	54	24	12
GUE/NGL	52	42	22	12
EFD	48	21	7	4
NA	52	8	15	4
% of the total	29.56%	16.64%	36.96%	17.39%*

Source: own representation based on European Parliament data.

* The percentage differs from that in table 1 as some parties or coalitions are divided between two political groups (*see table 4*).

The largest share is organised within the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR). With 70 seats, the ECR is now also the third largest political group in the EP. All of the Eurosceptic members of the group can be classified as moderate-right²¹. The group presents itself as “euro-realist”²² and thus clearly as moderate Eurosceptic. It does not reject the principle of European integration *per se* but opposes the creation of a “European super-state”. ECR is in favour of more flexible European integration and emphasises pro-open market policies, the respect of national sovereignty and subsidiarity, increased democratic accountability and controlled migration.

With 42 seats, the second largest share of Eurosceptics is organised in the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). The group includes 12 of the Eurosceptic parties, which are all situated at the far left of the political spectrum. As the group’s slogan – “Another Europe is possible” – indicates they do not oppose the EU or European integration but want to change its character²³. The group generally portrays itself as anti-liberal and pro-social. Its vision of Europe is based on enhanced solidarity, equality, and sustainability. GUE/NGL criticises the EU for being an elite project and advocates more transparency and direct democracy.

Only four of the 29 Eurosceptic parties – namely Italy’s Five Star Movement, the Dutch Reformed Political Party, the Lithuanian Order and Justice Party and the Polish Congress of the New Right – joined the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFD). Overall, the group is the most Eurosceptic of all. As part 3 of this Policy Paper shows, Europhobe parties actually predominate in this group. In terms of the ideology of

20. Teemu Rantanen, “Finnish Country Report – EU-28 Watch”, 2014; Krisztina Vida and Tamás Szigetvári, “Hungarian Country Report – EU-28 Watch”.

21. The ideological classification of parties is based on: Oliver Treib, “The voter says no, but nobody listens: causes and consequences of the Eurosceptic vote in the 2014 European elections”, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2014, vol. 21 no. 10, pp. 1541-1554.

22. European Conservatives and Reformists Group, “About us”, 2014.

23. European United Left/Nordic Green Left Parliamentary Group, “The Group”, 2014.

Eurosceptics it is also the most diverse. EFD opposes further European integration and advocates open cooperation among sovereign European nation states. Underlying reasons for the return of power to the nation state are increased transparency and democratic accountability as well as less bureaucracy. The EFD group allegedly rejects “xenophobia, anti-Semitism and any other form of discrimination”²⁴. However, when the withdrawal of a Latvian MEP from the Farmer’s Union almost led the group to collapse²⁵ in October 2014, it accepted a member from the Polish Congress of the New Right whose leader is described as racist, sexist and Holocaust-denying²⁶. The EFD’s ideological diversity also translated into a relatively low voting cohesion of 48.59% in the past legislature²⁷. The group stands by its low cohesion and explicitly states that, beyond certain core principles, it “respects the freedom of its delegations and members to vote as they see fit”²⁸.

Finally, members of four Eurosceptic parties, including for instance Jobbik, are non-attached (NA). With 8 seats, they only represent a small sub-group. In addition, they are very diverse in terms of convictions and ideology. However, a clear majority can be situated at the far-right of the political spectrum. If measured voting cohesion among the non-attached would probably be lower than that of EFD group²⁹.

This overview showed that most Eurosceptic parties are organised in the ECR and GUE/NGL groups and can be located at the far left and moderate right of the political spectrum. Much fewer belong to the ideologically diverse EFD group or the non-attached. Table 4 also shows that most of the new ‘Eurosceptic seats’³⁰ (35 out of 40) went to the GUE/NGL and EFD groups. The increase in Eurosceptics in the EP is largely attributable to the political left and centre³¹. This finding is interesting as it seems to contrast with the popular belief that right-wing Eurosceptics were the real winners of the EP elections. As part 3 of this Policy Paper shows, such beliefs should be reviewed in light of the Eurosceptic-Europhobe distinction.

24. Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group, “Charter”, 2014.

25. MEPs from at least seven member states are needed to form a political group in the EP.

26. Rowena Mason and Rajeev Syal, “Nigel Farage deal with Polish far-right party ‘raises serious questions’”, *The Guardian*, 21 October 2014.

27. VoteWatch Europe, “Political Group Cohesion”, 2014.

28. Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group, *op. cit.*

29. Yves Bertoncini and Valentin Kreilinger, “What Political Balance of Power in the New European Parliament”, *Policy Paper No. 102*, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute, November 2013: 5.

30. The notion of Eurosceptic or Europhobe seats reflects their belonging to parties with respective political positions. However, there are different degrees of voting cohesion and loyalty to political group and that single MEPs might not share the Eurosceptic or Europhobe convictions of their party to an equal extent (see VoteWatch Europe, „National Parties”, 2014.).

31. The centrist Five Star Movement accounts for most additional EFD seats.

TABLE 4 ➤ Eurosceptic parties – votes and seats

GROUP	PARTY*	VOTES	SEATS	CHANGE
ECR (+3 seats)	Conservative Party (UK)	23.05%	19	-6
	Law and Justice Party (PL)	32%	18	+3
	Alternative for Germany (D)	7.1%	7	+7
	Civic Democratic Party (CZ)	7.67%	2	-7
	Finns Party (FI)	12.9%	2	0
	National Alliance (LV)	14.25%	1	+1
	Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (SK)	7.98%	1	+1
	New Majority (SK)	7.46%	1	+1
	Independent Greeks (GR)	3.46%	1	+1
	Party of Rights (CRO)	41.42%**	1	+1
	Ulster Unionist Party (UK)	0.51%	1	0
ECR/ EFD	Coalition (NL) of Christian Union and Reformed Political Party	7.67%	1	0
			1	0
GUE/NGL (+17 seats)	The Left (D)	7.4%	7	-1
	Syriza (GR)	26.57%	6	+5
	Podemos (ES)	7.98%	5	+5
	Left Front (F)	6.33%	4	0
	Sinn Féin (IE)	19.5%	3	+3
	Communist Party (CZ)	10.98%	3	0
	The Other Europe with Tsipras (I)	4.03%	3	+3
	Socialist Party (NL)	9.6%	2	0
	Left Alliance (FI)	9.3%	1	+1
	Left Bloc (PT)	4.93%	1	-2
	Sinn Féin (UK)	0.97%	1	0
GUE/NGL/ Greens/EFA	Plural Left (ES): United Left and Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds	10.03%	4	+3
			1	0
EFD (+18 seats)	Five Star Movement (I)	21.15%	17	+17
		Order and Justice (LI)	14.25%	2
NA EFD	Congress of the New Right (PL)	7.15%	3	+3
			1	+1
NA (+4 seats)	Jobbik (H)	14.67%	3	0
	Union of Greens and Farmers (LV)	8.26%	1	+1
	Democratic Unionist Party (UK)	0.8%	1	0
Total	30 parties or coalitions		125	+41 seats

Source: European Parliament election results.

* The parties are ordered by political groups and within the groups by seats.

** This number refers to a broader coalition. Disaggregated data for the Croatian Party of Rights were not available.

2.3. No sharp increase in national influence

In the EU, the most consequential political decisions continue to be shaped in national capitals. It is therefore important to examine the potential national influence of Eurosceptic parties.

One of its indicators is their ranking in terms of vote shares in the EP elections. The Eurosceptics only came first in Greece with the far-left party Syriza leading the list (see table 5). Furthermore, they represented the second biggest political force in Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the UK. In Finland and Spain, they became the third strongest force.

TABLE 5 ▶ Seven countries with Eurosceptics in top three in latest EP or parliamentary elections

COUNTRY	EUROSCEPTIC PARTY	VOTES IN LAST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS	RANK IN LAST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS	VOTES IN EP ELECTIONS	RANK IN EP ELECTIONS
UK	Conservative Party	36.1% (May 2010)	1 st	23.31%	3 rd
Poland	Law and Justice Party	29.89% (October 2011)	2 nd	31.78%	2 nd
Greece	Syriza	26.89% (June 2012)	2 nd	26.58%	1 st
Italy	Five Star Movement	25.55% (February 2013)	3 rd	21.15%	2 nd
Hungary	Jobbik	20.3% (April 2014)	3 rd	14.67%	2 nd
Finland	The Finns	19.05% (April 2011)	3 rd	12.9%	3 rd
Spain	Plural Left	6.9% (November 2011)	3 rd	10.03%	3 rd

Source: European Parliament elections results/Wikipedia.

A more immediate indicator of national influence is the positioning of Eurosceptic parties in the latest national parliamentary elections. The overview in table 5 shows that the parties that were among the top three in the EP elections were also among the top three in parliamentary elections. According to recent polls, the same parties are likely to remain in the top three in upcoming parliamentary elections³². They thus play and should continue to play an important role in national politics, with a more or less direct impact on EU politics.

“THERE WAS NO GENERAL INCREASE OF THE EUROSCEPTICS’ NATIONAL INFLUENCE IN RECENT YEARS”

However, table 5 also shows that in some member states, such as the UK, Finland, Italy, and Hungary, Eurosceptic parties have lost votes in the EP compared to previous national parliamentary elections. Only in Spain and Poland a reverse trend could be observed³³. While national and European electoral results cannot be directly compared, the numbers indicate that there was no general increase of the Eurosceptics’ national influence in recent years.

Even if Eurosceptic parties are among the top three in seven EU member states, only one of them is currently a member of government: the British Conservative Party. With David Cameron as Prime Minister, the Tories certainly exert important political influence at the European level. However, there seems to be no room for a broader Eurosceptic coalition in the European Council.

32. For an overview of polls for different member states, see: Metapolls, “Europe”, 2014.

33. According to polls for the 2015 Spanish parliamentary elections, Podemos should gain large numbers of votes and replace the Plural Left in the top three (Metapolls, „Spanish General Election 2015”, 7 November 2014).

3. Less powerful Europhobes: rejecting European belonging

Eurosceptics and Europhobes often resort to similar arguments. Both groups mainly criticise the Union along the issues outlined in section 1.2 (democracy, sovereignty, liberalism, identity). Their key difference lies in the conclusions they draw from this criticism. While Eurosceptics voice their criticism and call for change, Europhobes reject European belonging and advocate exit from the Union or its component parts. The question this section aims to answer is who these Europhobes are? To what extent do they converge or diverge ideologically and what real political impact could they have?

3.1. Diverse exit options

“THERE ARE CURRENTLY 16 EUROPHOBE PARTIES FROM 13 MEMBER STATES HOLDING A TOTAL OF 82 SEATS IN THE EP”

On the basis of our three exit criteria outlined in section 1.3, there are currently 16 Europhobe parties from 13 member states holding a total of 82 seats in the EP. However, the application of the criteria offers a somewhat mixed picture. Table 6 shows the different combinations of exit options ranging from the more to the less extreme.

Only 9 out of the 16 Europhobe parties are explicitly calling for a withdrawal from the EU. Most of these parties are also in favour of withdrawing from the euro area and the Schengen Agreement. Parties holding the most extreme exit preferences are scattered across the EFD and GUE/NGL groups as well as the non-attached (*see table 6*).

TABLE 6 ► Europhobe parties and their exit options

PARTY	GROUP	SCHENGEN EXIT	EURO EXIT	EU EXIT
National Front (F)	NA	yes	yes	yes
Party for Freedom (NL)	NA	yes	yes	yes
Golden Dawn (GR)	NA	yes	yes	yes
Sweden Democrats (SE)	EFD	yes	/	yes
United Kingdom Independence Party (UK)	EFD	/	/	yes
People's Movement against the EU (DK)	GUE/NGL	referendum	/	yes
Free Citizens Party (CZ)	EFD	to be decided after EU exit	/	yes
Left Party (SE)	GUE/NGL	no	/	yes
Communist Party (GR)	GUE/NGL	no	yes	yes
National Democratic Party (D)	NA	yes	yes	referendum
Freedom Party of Austria (AT)	NA	referendum	split	last resort
Northern League (I)	NA	yes	yes	no
Flemish Interest (BE)	NA	yes	yes	no
Danish People's Party (DK)	ECR	yes	/	no
Communist Party (in Democratic Unitarian Coalition) (PT)	GUE/NGL	no	yes	no
Progressive Party of Working People (CY)	GUE/NGL	/	yes	no

Source: own compilation

* For parties in member states that are not part of Schengen or the euro area, table 6 does not include any values.

The remaining seven parties hold slightly softer Europhobe positions. The German National Democratic Party is in favour of exiting the Union, but makes this option dependent on a referendum. The Austrian Freedom Party emphasises that withdrawal from the Union is ‘no taboo’ if it continues on its path towards the ‘United States of Europe’. However, it underlines that EU exit would be the last resort. It is in favour of splitting the euro area. While it argues against Schengen and for the restoration of national borders, the Austrian Freedom Party makes both dependent on a referendum.

The Italian Northern League and the Flemish Interest do not explicitly oppose EU membership but are against euro and Schengen membership. The Danish People’s Party mainly opposes Schengen and has repeatedly advocated a reintroduction of national borders³⁴.

Finally, the Communist parties in Portugal and Cyprus have both advocated an exit from the euro area in recent years but do not oppose Schengen or EU membership. These two parties are arguably ‘borderline’ Europhobe and have often been classified as soft Eurosceptic in the past³⁵.

3.2. A smaller and extremer group

The number of ‘Europhobe seats’ increased by 39 in comparison to the last legislature (*see table 8*). Unlike for the Eurosceptics, this increase does not stem from political newcomers. It can largely be attributed to important electoral successes of two long-standing Europhobe parties, namely the French National Front (+21 seats) and UKIP (+11 seats). As seen in table 7, Europhobes are also scattered across three political groups. However, their distribution is quite different from that of the Eurosceptics.

TABLE 7 ► Europhobes by political group

GROUP	TOTAL NUMBER OF SEATS	SEATS OF EUROPHOBE PARTIES	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTIES	NUMBER OF EUROPHOBE PARTIES
NA	52	44	15	8
EFD	48	27	7	3
GUE/NGL	52	7	22	4
ECR	70	4	24	1
% of the total	29.56%	10.92%	36.96%	8.67%

Source: own representation based on European Parliament.

With 44 seats, the largest share of mostly far-right Europhobe parties is non-attached. Among these, the National Front and the Dutch Party for Freedom attempted to forge a new EP group to “wreck” the EU from within and liberate the citizens “from the European elite, the monster in Brussels”³⁶. They wanted to join forces with the Sweden Democrats, the Danish People’s Party, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Northern League and the Flemish Interest within the ‘European Alliance for Freedom’. However, as the Sweden Democrats joined the EFD and the Danish People’s Party the ECR, their group was short of two members. And even those interested in joining hold very diverse views. For instance, the Dutch Freedom Party is pro-Israel, pro-women’s rights, and gay-friendly while the National Front has often been described as having homophobic and anti-Semitic attitudes³⁷.

34. As the Finns Party, the Danish People’s Party has recently softened its position on the EU. The fact that both parties have switched from the EFD to the ECR group in this legislature can be seen as a sign in this regard.

35. See for example Treib, *op. cit.*

36. Ian Traynor, “Le Pen and Wilders forge plan to ‘wreck’ EU from within”, *The Guardian*, 13 November 2013.

37. *Ibid.*

Aside from the non-attached, the second-largest share of Europhobes is organised within the EFD group and only a few are members of the GUE/NGL and ECR groups.

“UNLIKE
EUROSCEPTICISM –
EUROPHOBIA IS LARGELY
A RIGHT-WING, AND
PARTICULARLY A
FAR-RIGHT PHENOMENON”

While holding diverse views, Europhobe parties are ideologically more concentrated than the Eurosceptic ones. 67 out of the 80 ‘Europhobe seats’ can be assigned to the political right and 42 thereof to the far-right. Only one party, namely the Danish People’s Movement against the EU, can be classified as centrist while six seats belong to the far left. The bottom line is that - unlike Euroscepticism - Europhobia is largely a right-wing, and particularly a far-right phenomenon³⁸.

TABLE 8 ► Europhobe parties – votes and seats in the European Parliament

GROUP	PARTY*	VOTES	SEATS	CHANGE
NA (+22 seats)	National Front (F)	24.86%	24	+21
	Northern League (I)	6.15%	5	-4
	Freedom Party of Austria (AT)	19.72%	4	+2
	Party for Freedom (NL)	13.32%	4	0
	Golden Dawn (GR)	9.39%	3	+3
	Communist Party (GR)	6.11%	2	0
	Flemish Interest (BE)	4.26%	1	-1
	National Democratic Party (D)	1%	1	+1
EFD (+14 seats)	United Kingdom Independence Party (UK)	26.6%	24	+11
	Sweden Democrats (SE)	9.67%	2	+2
	Free Citizens Party (CZ)	5.24%	1	+1
GUE/NGL (+1 seat)	Communist Party (in Democratic Unitarian Coalition) (PT)	13.71%	3	+1
	Progressive Party of Working People (CY)	26.98%	2	0
	People’s Movement against the EU (DK)	8.1%	1	0
	Left Party (SE)	5.66%	1	0
ECR (+2 seats)	Danish People’s Party (DK)	26.6%	4	+2
Total	16 parties or coalitions		82	+39

Source: European Parliament election results.

* The parties are ordered by political groups and within the groups by seats.

38. See also: Treib, *ibid.*

3.3. Growing national influence

Though Europhobe parties only represent roughly one tenth in the EP, they were among the top three political parties in seven EU member states at the latest EP or national elections. The most striking cases were the UK, Denmark and France. A comparison between the 2014 EP and the latest parliamentary elections shows that the number of votes of UKIP, the Danish People's Party and the National Front has dramatically risen.

While UKIP gained no single seat in the latest parliamentary election it topped the list in the EP elections. The Danish and French counterparts moved from the third rank at national level to the first in the EP elections and they both doubled their share of votes. The Sweden Democrats came fifth in the EP but third in subsequent parliamentary elections.

TABLE 9 ▶ Seven countries with Europhobes in top three in latest EP or parliamentary elections

COUNTRY	EUROPHOBE PARTY	VOTES IN LATEST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS	RANK IN LATEST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS	VOTES IN EP ELECTIONS	RANK IN EP ELECTIONS
Cyprus	Progressive Party of Working People	32.67% (May 2011)	2 nd	26.98%	2 nd
Austria	Freedom Party	20.51% (September 2013)	3 rd	19.72%	3 rd
France	National Front	13.60% (June 2012)	3 rd	24.86%	1 st
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	12.86% (September 2014)	3 rd	9.67%	5 th
Denmark	Danish People's Party	12.3% (September 2011)	3 rd	26.60%	1 st
Netherlands	Party for Freedom	10.1% (September 2012)	3 rd	13.32%	3 rd
UK	United Kingdom Independence Party	3.10% (May 2010)	No seat	26.77%	1 st

Source: European Parliament elections results/Wikipedia.

A juxtaposition of tables 5 and 9 reveals another interesting trend. Far-left Eurosceptics and Europhobes were particularly successful in Spain, Greece, and Cyprus, and thus in three 'programme countries' (in Spain only the banking sector benefited from an assistance) where criticism of the Troika's strict austerity measures was abundant and trust in European institutions at a low point³⁹. Meanwhile, successful far-right Europhobes can mostly be found in the more prosperous Northern countries such as Sweden, Denmark, or the Netherlands. The ideological discrepancy between Northern and Southern Euroscepticism and Europhobia is another illustration of the deeply divisive effect the economic and euro area crises have had on the EU.

39. European Commission – DG for Communication, "Standard Eurobarometer 81", Spring 2014.

“THE ‘EUROPHOBE RISE’
IS NOT YET OVER”

None of the Europhobe parties listed in table 9 is currently member of a national government. However, a look into recent polls conveys the impression that the Europhobe successes were not merely the result of ‘protest votes’ and that the trend is bound to continue. It seems as if the Danish People’s Party could come first in the 2015 parliamentary elections⁴⁰. With consistent polling values well into the teens, UKIP is likely to become the third strongest political party in the UK’s general elections in 2015⁴¹. Meanwhile, National Front Leader, Marine Le Pen, might win the first round of the 2017 French presidential elections while losing the second round to a candidate from centre-right⁴². In addition, the Dutch Freedom Party might have chances to rise to the second rank in 2017⁴³. Finally, recent polls denote a further rise of the Austrian Freedom Party, which could top the list in the 2018 general elections⁴⁴. It is no doubt too early to draw any sound conclusions from these polls. However, they could indicate that the ‘Europhobe rise’ is not yet over.

40. Metapolls, “Danish General Election”, June 2014,.

41. *The Guardian*, “How many seats will UKIP win at the general election?”, 14 October 2014, DataBlog.

42. *Le Figaro*, “Présidentielle 2017 : Marine Le Pen en tête au premier tour dans tous les cas de figure”, 5 September 2014.

43. Metapolls, “Dutch General Election”, 26 September 2014.

44. Metapolls, “Austrian Legislative Election”, 31 October 2014.

CONCLUSION

More than one quarter of today's MEPs from 23 EU member states opposes or rejects the Union or the integration process in one way or another. It is easy to conclude that 'Euroscepticism' has become a mainstream phenomenon and that the Eurosceptics have moved from the political periphery towards the centre of power. However, this Policy Paper argues that such conclusions deserve further qualification by distinguishing a more moderate version of Euroscepticism from an extremer version of Europhobia.

The analysis shows that the Eurosceptics constitute the larger and ideologically more diverse political force in the EP – so diverse that it can hardly be perceived as a united force. They voice their discontent, call for a reform of the Union, its policies or institutions, and are mostly organised within the far-left and more or less moderate right political groups. Their views are partially compatible with those of mainstream political parties. While influential at the national level, their influence has not massively increased in recent years.

Meanwhile, the Europhobes only represent a tenth of all MEPs. They reject European belonging and call for a withdrawal from the EU, the euro area, and/or the Schengen Agreement. They are mostly right-wing parties with a majority at the far-right. They thus remain at the fringes of national party systems. Their divergent and often nationalist convictions prevent the formation of durable and cohesive political alliances. That also explains why half of the Europhobe parties in the EP are non-attached. Despite their important gains in seats, their institutional impact in the EP is likely to remain inferior to that of more moderate Eurosceptics, and clearly inferior to that of the more EU-loyal mainstream parties.

However, the analysis of electoral data also suggests that the Europhobes' numerical successes in the EP elections inscribe themselves into a broader political trend. Polls indicate that Europhobe parties might exert more substantial (direct or indirect) political influence on the European agenda through national political systems. A prominent example of indirect influence is the rise of UKIP that substantially contributed to hardening the Eurosceptic convictions of the governing Conservative Party. As the only member state with both a Eurosceptic *and* a Europhobe party among the top three, the UK is in a very specific position, on the verge of the exit option.

**“ MAINSTREAM
PARTIES SHOULD RESTORE
TRUST AND REVIVE
EURO-ENTHUSIASM ”**

If the national weight of Europhobe parties continues to grow, they will fuel further tendencies of disintegration. Even below the 'exit threshold', their influence would be felt more strongly in the European Council and thus at the very centre of European decision-making. These conclusions might become obsolete if the mainstream parties use the coming months and years to restore trust in the European institutions and to revive euro-enthusiasm through intelligent rhetoric and, more importantly, tangible political and economic outputs at the national as well as European levels.

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