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# Euroscepticism. Contemporary Trends and Manifestations

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**Abstract:** *The European Union is one of the most important global players to be found at the present time. What initially seemed to be a purely economic organization, transformed over time and became a political entity of particular importance. Over time the union has faced many problems, but every crisis has made the EU stronger and more integrated. The article aims to build a comprehensive image of the Eurosceptic phenomenon and its manifestations in contemporary society. The objectives of the research consist in the more comprehensive conceptualization of the term by collecting a large number of definitions. We are also proposing to pursue how its historical evolution at key times of European integration, in various regions of Europe. Euroscepticism is a central theme in European studies, the subject being of interest by nature, which uncontrolled can lead to negative effects on the EU. The Research methodology used is based both on the analysis of texts and literature and on the analysis of empirical data obtained from various studies.*

**Key words:** *Euroscepticism, Euro-European Union, Europe, political parties, evolution, manifestations.*

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## Introduction

**I**N AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE EUROSCEPTICISM, we have identified a number of authors who have varied approaches and opinions on this phenomenon. According to Ogden Richard, Euroscepticism is a concept, that is, a mixture of a term, a meaning and certain referent (Alibert 2015: 1). The term can be divided into euros, scepticism and the suffix -ism. According to (Euractiv 2013) the word sceptic came from the old Greek schools of philosophy, especially from the Prior of Elis, who claims that it is impossible to know the true reality of things. Thus, scepticism can be described as doubt, suggesting an attitude and a doubtful situation regarding an object. When used with the prefix euro, the term is clearly linked to the European Union

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(EU), and the suffix *ism*, generally used for ideologies, gives the word the connotation of ideology and political problem (Ultan and Ornek 2015: 50). In 1998, Paul Taggart suggests a definition of the concept of Euroscepticism that is used later in most of the political discourses that covered this topic (Taggart 1998) "He determines Euroscepticism as a comprehensive term that expresses the idea of a contingent or qualified opposition," as well as the incorporation of an absolute and unmatched opposition to the process of European integration"(Taggart 1998: 366).

From the beginning it is necessary to distinguish between Euroscepticism and other related terms such as: Eurocriticism, Europhobia, and Anti-Europeanism. Eurocriticism or Eurocritics "knows what it is talking about" (Wilde 2010: 2). He is informed about the EU, but he simply doesn't like everything, even though he can recognize its qualities. This is in contrast to the Europhobe, which, unlike the Eurosceptic, has an "irrational fear of the EU." Anti-Europeanism is similar to the first term mentioned but is a much more "radical" form (Wilde 2010: 2). Anyone who declares himself an anti-Europeanist does not like anything about Europe at all (Wilde 2010: 2). French historian Christophe Le Dréau (2011: 11) points out in the Introduction to the European identity of the Europeans: *l'énigme* Philippe Chalamont that Euroscepticism is therefore a term issued by the media and not a lexicon of political science and that it should not be to be understood as a direct opposition to the feeling of Euro-optimism, but as a movement of opposition to the European construction.

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## The evolution of Euroscepticism

Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde propose an alternative definition to the term which is in relation to other European political positions: "In our scheme, Euroscepticism is defined less including, but more precisely, than in the definitions mentioned above." (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 299). David Easton made a distinction between support for European integration, thus talking about diffuse and specific support. The *diffuse* means the support given to the general ideas related to the European integration underlying the EU. Through *specific support* we perceive sustenance for the general practice of European integration, "that is, the EU, as it is and how it develops." (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 229) The first dimension separates Europhiles from Europhobes. Europhiles believe in the key ideas of European integration, "institutionalized cooperation based on common sovereignty (the political element) and a liberal

integrated market economy." (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 300-301) Thus, the Europhilic attitude may include those who "see European integration as a project for the creation of a new supranational state (for example, the federalists), but also for those who see European integration exclusively from an economic point of view (for example, the creation of a free trade area)." (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 301).

Euroscepticism appeared for the first time in "November 11, 1985, in the British newspaper *The Times*" (ESO 2015: 2), where its significance was explained as "opposition to European Union policies. Another moment, recently, this time, which has given rise to a new wave of Euroscepticism, is identified with the parliamentary elections of 2014. Then, elections took place in all the member states of the Union, in order to set up the European Parliament, but which culminated in an increase. of Eurosceptic political parties. About 25% of the available seats were allocated to MEPs with Eurosceptic inclinations. Moreover, national elections in some European countries have also been won by Eurosceptic parties: UK Independence Party (UKIP) in the United Kingdom (for the first time in history), the People's Party in Denmark and the Radical Left Coalition (Syriza) in Greece. "Another situation in which the states of the Union were found is, for example, that of Italy. Here the 5-star Movement of Beppe Grillo, although he did not get the majority of votes 21.16% of the votes shocked by the fact that he ranked in second place 21.16% of the votes." (Blându Andreea).

Over time, the phenomenon of Euroscepticism has undergone a periodization, thus adapting its content and intensity, diversifying its supporters and promoters in the same way. There are three major phases in the history of the phenomenon. The first is the period between the first moments of debate until the first moments of integration took place. "Now the main actors are the elites, and the message focuses on different visions of integration" (Vasilopoulou 2013: 6). The second is between the Maastricht Treaty's enter into force and the debates related to the Lisbon Treaty when the actors diversify, newly emerged political parties gain electoral visibility at national and European level, and public opinion sanctions the delegation of sovereignty at national level, at European level (for example, the Danish referendum). Third, it coincides with the recent financial crisis in which public opinion protests unite with the critical reactions of elites, and the national interest becomes central in European debates (Gherghina et.al 2016: 15).

If we analyse the definitions, we can extract four essential tools of Euroscepticism: democracy, national sovereignty, liberalism, austerity and identity (Bertocini and Koenig 2014: 1). However, it is important to make a distinction between the sources of the phenomenon and outline sources either

of ideological domination or of strategic nature. They cannot be strictly separated, because they are interdependent. In this respect, Gherghina and Soare emphasise that "Euroscepticism, ideologically fuelled, represents the manifestation of Eurosceptical political positions and is the result of the application of dogmatic principles, the actors promoting Euroscepticism considering, explicitly or implicitly, that the opposition towards European integration is consonant with their ideological belonging to families such as the nationalism or the sovereignty." (Gherghina et.al 2016a: 22). This perception feeds on the idea that Europeanization is an intense and rapid form of globalization on a regional scale, which will mainly result in diminishing the importance of nation-states and the forced dilution of national identities "(Gherghina et.al, 2016a: 22) European Union it is interpreted according to a set of pre-existing beliefs in the light of which a certain set of beliefs or values may be considered benign or evil.

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## Typologies

A first distinction between the types of Euroscepticism is based on the extremism with which it manifests itself. In this sense, two forms are distinguished: soft Euroscepticism and hard Euroscepticism. The first type does not reject European integration, "*per se*, but it criticizes the EU integration process and institutional policies." At the opposite pole, the other type implies the complete rejection of the whole project of European and economic integration, plus the opposition to joining the EU or even support the exit from the Union. These attitudes come from the belief that the EU is against certain values or is too capitalist, liberal or socialist. (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001: 10). Paul Taggart states that there are three positions of Euroscepticism reported to the European Union: the first is of those who are anti-European integration in general, in the second category are those who "do not oppose integration, but are sceptical that EU is the best form of integration, because it is too inclusive. In other words the EU is trying to force together elements that are too diverse to be compatible" (Taggart 1998a: 365-366). In this class, those who see European integration as an opportunity for mass immigration can fit. The last category is those who do not oppose integration but are sceptical considering that the EU is too exclusive, both geographically and socially. In the latter grouping are those who oppose the EU for reasons relating to the exclusion by the EU of the poorer regions of the world or the disadvantage of the working class (Taggart, 1998b: 366). Sofia Vasilopoulou (2011: 224) argues that radical

right-wing parties can be grouped into three models of opposition to integration and the European Union. As follows: rejection, conditioning and compromise.

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2001: 239) issue several assumptions regarding Euroscepticism based on political parties:

- The position of a party on a left-right scale is not decisive when determining whether a party is Eurosceptic or not;
- Usually the foreign parties manifest Eurosceptic behaviour;
- Euroscepticism manifested at the level of political parties is different from that expressed among the population;
- It is especially pronounced in the states that are to join the EU;
- Euroscepticism varies from country to country, both in terms of form and intensity.

Another type of Euroscepticism is the so-called *Atlantic*, referring to a contradictory feeling between pro-Americanism and pro-Europeanism. Another form of Euroscepticism is policy-based, that is, it opposes certain common policies such as common currency or the agricultural policies required by the EU.

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## Current manifestations of Euroscepticism

Eurosceptic parties in Europe are not of central importance, but they are part of the spectrum of European parties and extend across the continent, whether we are EU member states, candidates or non-EU states (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001: 24). Similarly, Eurosceptic parties often, though "protest parties may use their position on the EU as one means of differentiating themselves from the established parties" to gain electoral attention (Taggart 1998: 382). Since the European Parliamentary elections in 2014, there has been a considerable increase in Eurosceptic parties on the EU political scene (European Parliament 2014). Following 2014, the European Parliamentary parties won 135 seats out of 751, that is, 18 percent of the total number of seats in the European Parliament, increasing the presence in Parliament by 63 seats compared to the 2009 elections. Moreover, the number of parties that received more than 15 percent of the votes doubled from previous elections (Emanuele et.al 2016: 700). In Western Europe, several aspects need to be considered when discussing Euroscepticism and its approach of manifestation. It unites several ideologies, which do not seem to have any common ground. If we only refer to the states of Western Europe, then we notice that Euroscepticism is a contingent idea, and their supporter lost the connection they had with the right because it began to limit the electors' scope (Taggart 1998: 384). Instead, when it comes

to Central and Eastern Europe, it is extremism and nationalism that have taken root in this part of Europe. Some of the extremist groups developed as anti-communist movements but continued their activity after the collapse of the communist bloc, addressing contemporary issues and issues. They were divided into two categories: some chose to operate independently, while others remained under the aegis of larger parties with anti-communist programs. After the first elections that took place after the fall of the Soviet dictatorial regime in the Czech Republic, many new parties have appeared, some even extremist. In other states, such as Hungary, umbrella parties have resisted, but they have lost their rightful connection because they have begun to limit their electoral space (Mudde 2005: 162- 164).

In 1991 the Visegrad Group (V4) was established from the desire of the Central European countries to cooperate in several areas of common interest within the framework of European integration. The member states of this organisation are: Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. They are not only linked by geographical location, but also by the fact that they share values and a common culture (Trulli 2017: 1). An essential feature of the Euroscepticism manifested by the Višegrad group is the support of the relationship with Russia. V4 supports cooperation with Russia, both economically and because the EU needs its resources. They also state that the EU needs the Kremlin to solve its problems in the neighbourhood, especially the problem in the East, where Russia's involvement is indispensable. V4 believes that these two have to make exchanges between them, and that is why "the Union needs to solve its problems with Russia, as Donald Trump did, for example, and if some states see Russia as a threat, politicians from there they should work to change their mind (Tereszkiewicz 2018: 150). Also, V4 opposes any development of Common Defence policies (ESDP, PSAC), they consider this to be the first step towards a European federal state (Tereszkiewicz 2018: 150).

We note that Euroscepticism is widespread throughout the European continent, and there is no rule after which it acts. From founding countries like France, which have impressive and essential implications for the evolution of the Union to what it has become today, to countries in Eastern Europe, which have recently joined the Union, such as Poland. A country that has only gained from accession, both through the funds they have accessed and because it has offered Polish citizens all the benefits of gaining a place in the EU. We also find that theorists' statements about the complexity of the Eurosceptic phenomenon are also found in the manifestations of the countries we have considered in our analysis. If in France the increased level of Euroscepticism is due to economic problems, in the Netherlands it has a political basis, and in Austria a national one. In the east there is a common feature of the states, because they are also grouped in the V4 form, which ideologically shapes them. The trend in countries

such as Poland, the Czech Republic is heading towards nationalism and xenophobia, even if immigrants do not directly affect them.

Countering Euroscepticism can often be considered a work of skill. Since the first election of the Parliament, there have been Eurosceptics. It is hard to prohibit it, you are practically violating the right to free expression, and the Union is the living expression of democracy. However, solutions need to be found, as this can be a real problem for the EU. In the next chapter we will try to look at the ideas proposed by some European institutions or various leaders or actors, whether political. We will also refer to non-governmental organizations that have addressed this topic. Through our analysis we will analyse what are the main causes of the increase of the rate of Euroscepticism among the citizens of the Union, then what potential risks generated by Euroscepticism have found these strategies and not lastly if they have presented efficiency in time.

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## Final Remarks

Eurosceptic speech is generally based on an emotional language and brings to the attention of the general public obvious issues, which are very disturbing by their nature. For example, immigration or economic crisis are well known topics that they use to get what they want. Most of the time, they are liked by the media and then exposed in a variant that may not convey the real information. The general arguments they bring are linked to the threat of sovereignty and democracy and only the nation state can defend its citizens, an argument characteristic of the right-wing parties. The left wing focuses more on the fact that the EU is the "engine of capitalism and competition, destroying solidarity" (Oomsel: 4), and their policy is one of withdrawal within the nation state, because there is true solidarity.

Like any instigating phenomenon, Euroscepticism is firstly grounded among the less informed, or even misinformed, population, where political elites know how to shape their discourse. Speech, which creates its arguments using real problems and which greatly disturbs society. Most of the time I expose them only in half, and they bring possible unattainable solutions. The EU's competent authorities have begun to develop various strategies and reports to focus on citizens and their relationship with the Union. Great emphasis is placed on correct information and on strengthening their relationship with them, but also with the EU institutions, which are often seen as too bureaucratic.

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