

Government coalitions and Eurosceptic voting in the 2014 EP Elections

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Abstract

The 2014 European elections were characterized in many countries by growing support for Eurosceptic parties. This growth was not uniform and not clearly associated with the economic performance of these member states. In this article we investigate the role played in the 2014 European Parliament elections by a country-specific factor - the composition of government coalitions - different from economic performance. In particular, we argue that in those countries where moderately Eurosceptic parties were more involved in the government, citizens with negative attitudes toward the EU were more likely to vote for highly Eurosceptic parties. This was especially the case when the governments also included strongly pro-EU parties. The empirical analysis, based upon the 2014 European Election Voter Study (EES), the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, and the ParlGov database, confirms our hypotheses.

Keywords

European Parliament Elections; voting behavior; Eurosceptic parties; government coalitions; veto players

Introduction

The 2014 European elections were characterized by a huge increase of votes for *anti-establishment* parties also very critical of European institutions and European policies (Treib, 2014)¹. At first glance, this phenomenon does not seem very surprising; indeed, the recent economic and financial crisis has severely affected a considerable part of the European population. The European institutions and many national governments have seemed unable to counter unemployment and loss of income. Against this background, large sectors of the electorate may have punished the traditional pro-Europe parties that were also the government parties during the crisis years and just before the European Parliament (EP) elections because of their poor economic performance (Hernández and

¹ Because in this study we focus on voting behavior at the 2014 European Parliament elections, we will simply refer to these parties as 'Eurosceptic'. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that their general opposition to the policies of the EU has often been considered to overlap with their general opposition to the functioning of national political systems (e.g., Taggart 1998). A quite developed literature on populism and anti-establishment politics argues that these parties try to emphasize issues extraneous to the mainstream party competition so as to attract voters deeply disenchanted with politics, at both the national and EU level (e.g., Barr 2009; Mèny and Surel 2002; Mudde 2004, Deiwiiks 2009). For an overview of the concept of anti-establishment party, see also Schedler (1996) and Abedi (2004).

Kriesi, 2016; Hobolt and de Vries 2016). Nevertheless, further analyses have shown that the success of Eurosceptic parties at the 2014 EP elections, although undeniable, cannot be explained by the economy alone. At the individual level, for example, also policy attitudes have been found to contribute significantly to the explanation of voting for Eurosceptic parties (Hobolt and Tilley 2016). At the country-level it has been found that these parties performed very well also in countries achieving a relatively good economic performance (for instance Denmark and the Netherlands), whilst in other countries substantially put under the tutelage of the European institutions and IMF because of their financial and economic conditions (for instance Portugal and Spain), such parties were less successful or proved to be an almost marginal phenomenon (De Sio *et al.*, 2014; Halikiopoulou and Vasilopolou 2014; Emanuele Maggini and Marino 2016).

To summarize, on the one hand the great variance of Eurosceptic vote shares among European countries suggests the importance of national contexts in explaining the success of Eurosceptic parties; on the other hand, national economic conditions do not seem to be a particularly promising explanatory factor.

In this article we investigate the role played by a country-specific factor different from economic performance: the composition of national government coalitions. This approach draws upon previous studies already focusing on the explanatory importance of coalition outcomes for voting decisions (Blais *et al.*, 2006; Cox, 1997; Duch *et al.*, 2010; Indridason, 2011). In particular, consistently with previous articles arguing that high levels of policy stability induce extremist voting (Kedar, 2005, 2009), we hypothesize that in countries where moderately anti-EU parties share governmental power with highly pro-EU parties, citizens are generally more likely to vote for opposition Eurosceptic alternatives. We expect that, in the dimension that they consider salient, voters evaluate comparatively the opposition platforms and the government performance in order to choose the party for which to vote. In particular, when the *status quo* on a particular policy issue cannot be changed (or can be only marginally changed) because it is confined within the range of the relevant veto players, we assume that voters favorable to a policy change will be more likely to vote for opposition parties promising a radical shift in their desired direction. In our view, party competition on EU-related issues - and particularly on EU integration - furnishes a vivid example of this phenomenon. In this case, indeed, national governments cannot significantly and unilaterally change the *status quo* unless they undertake a formal exit from the European Union. Moreover, when they are coalition governments, they almost always include at least one influential pro-EU party,

presumably imposing a veto on such a decision. Within this scenario, both moderately and extremely Eurosceptic voters would be more likely to converge on fully oppositional Eurosceptic parties as objects of their electoral choice. The reasons for this choice may be different. On the one hand, voters may want to show strategic support for the policies espoused by an opposition party in the hope that moderately EU-critical parties in the government will fight more convincingly to get a light version of them adopted (Franklin et al., 1994; Rosenstone et al., 1996; Rüdig et al., 1996). On the other hand, they may sincerely value the programmatic platform of the opposition party as their most preferred one, especially in light of the poor outcome of the moderately EU-critical forces in charge.

In this article we will not explicitly distinguish these two subjective mechanisms. Rather, for the sake of simplicity, we will assume that both patterns underlie a more general disagreement with the current government's performance on the EU dimension, and that the expression of such disagreement will be more likely to coincide with voting for opposition Eurosceptic parties in countries where moderately anti-EU options are compromised in government coalitions together with pro-EU actors.

In order to test our hypotheses rigorously we take advantage of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, the ParlGov database and the 2014 European Election Voter Study (EES). This last is a EU-wide survey that makes it possible to control at individual level for a number of variables already ascertained in the literature as explanatory factors of Eurosceptic voting. The empirical analysis confirms that in those countries where moderately Eurosceptic parties were more involved in the government, citizens with negative attitudes toward the EU were more likely to vote for opposition (very) Eurosceptic parties, above all when the governments included also strongly pro-EU parties.

A theoretical account of voting behavior in EP elections

We suppose that the level of desired European integration is the salient dimension along which some voters choose their party. Of course, this is an extreme simplification, since it is well-known that many other considerations enter the individual calculus of voting in this type of competition, where national-level political concerns are notoriously prominent (Reif, 1984; Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Yet, alongside the mainstream explanation of European elections as second-order national elections, studies investigating the consistency of EU-issue voting have found increasing empirical support over time (Bellucci et al., 2012; De Vries et al., 2011; Hix and Marsh, 2007; Hobolt et al., 2009; van der Eijk

and Franklin, 1996). In particular, with regard to the 2014 EP elections, recent analyses have found concrete evidence of a stronger politicization of Europe generated by EU policies trying to address the economic and financial crisis in Europe (Trechsel et al., 2015).

The utility of the voters is defined as a function of the Euclidean distance that separates them from the perceived party positions on the EU integration dimension. While as regards opposition parties, voters are assumed to evaluate only parties' electoral platforms as in classic proximity voting (Davis et al., 1970; Enelow and Hinich, 1984), in the case of government party positions voters consider also the government outcome, i.e. the position of the *status quo* before the elections. Also this evaluation is assumed to be performed with respect to the level of desired European Integration. This difference between government parties and opposition parties was first drawn by Downs, who considered the party differential, i.e. the difference between the utility that the voter actually received from the government parties and the one that s/he would have received if the opposition had been in power during the same period (Downs 1957: 40). Similarly, we consider the perception of the government party positions as at least partially affected by the government's performance.

More formally, the utility of voter i ($i=1,...,n$) for opposition party o ($o=1,...,m$), is inversely related to the ideological distance between i and o . In one dimension

$$U_{io} = -|v_i - p_o| \quad (1)$$

where v_i is the ideal point of voter i , p_o is the position of party electoral platform o .

The utility of voter i ($i=1,...,n$) for government party g ($g=m+1,...,n$) is inversely related to a weighted average of the ideological distance between i and g and the distance between i and the *status quo* policy before European elections at time $t1$, sq_{t1} . In one dimension

$$U_{ig} = -[\alpha |v_i - p_g| + (1 - \alpha)|v_i - sq_{t1}|] \quad (2)$$

where p_g is the position of party electoral platform g and $\alpha \in (0,1)$ is the relative weight of the two components of voter utility such that the more proximity-led is voting, the larger α becomes. When α tends to one the government party is fully evaluated according to its electoral platform. When, on the contrary, α tends to zero the government's performance evaluation will prevail in the party position perception and the government's party position will be equal to sq_{t1} .

Suppose that a political system of an European Union country has four parties (Fig. 1) ranging from a strong pro-Europe party $g1$ on the right (high values) to a fully Eurosceptic opposition party

o on the left (low values). Every government party is presumed to be a veto player and to decide in conditions of complete information. At time t_0 a new government is formed. At time t_1 the parties that are government members will change (or preserve) the *status quo* sq_{t_0} left by the previous government. At time t_2 , the voters vote for the European Parliament elections by considering the party platforms p_o , p_g and sq_{t_1} .

For the purposes of clarity assume that:

- 1) $\alpha = 0$: in other words, the perceived government party positions coincide with sq_{t_1} ;
- 2) the voters are uniformly distributed along the European integration dimension;
- 3) $sq_{t_1} = p_{g_1}$: in other words, the *status quo* is located on the pro-Europe side of the ideological spectrum and coincides with the electoral platform of g_1 , a very pro-European integration party²;
- 4) $sq_{t_1} = sq_{t_0}$, i.e. the *status quo* is very stable. In all EU countries the level of European integration cannot be unilaterally changed, and it is similar everywhere given the common country membership of the EU and the policies and regulatory framework shared at the European level. Moreover, in almost all EU countries before the 2014 EP elections the government included at least one pro-European integration party that could veto a decrease in the country's level of European integration.

Each cut point cp_n in Figure 1 is equally distant from the two closest perceived party positions on left and right. Since we assume that the voters are uniformly distributed, cut points help to identify the support that each party enjoys.

Within this framework, we can envisage different scenarios (Fig.1). In scenario *a*, at time t_1 g_1 forms a single party government. In scenario *b*, g_1 and g_2 form a two-party government quite homogenous along the European integration dimension. In scenario *c*, on the contrary, the government is heterogeneous because g_3 , a moderately Eurosceptic party, is a government member.

In scenario *a*, because p_{g_1} is equal to sq_{t_1} and g_1 is the only government party, voters' decisions are the same decisions that would be made according to the canonical proximity model. All voters on the left of cp will vote for g_2 .

In scenario *b*, the government is composed of g_2 and g_1 . The perceived position of g_2 will not be p_{g_2} . As the government outcome is sq_{t_1} , sq_{t_1} will consequently be the perceived position of g_2 on the EU integration dimension. The cut point cp_1 shifts to the right compared to scenario *a*. Voters that

² We can relax this assumption and imagine that $sq_{t_1} < p_{g_1}$. The substantive implications of the model do not change. If in the government coalition there is also a party that prefers a decrease in European integration then sq_{t_1} will not be changed for the g_1 's veto. As we shall see later, implications change if we assume that $sq_{t_1} > p_{g_1}$.

in scenario a would have voted for g_2 will vote for g_3 if p_{g_3} is closer to their ideal points than sq_{tl} . Nevertheless, in this scenario b we do not expect any increase of consensus for the very Eurosceptic party o.

In scenario c, when the government is somewhat heterogeneous on the European integration dimension, the cut point cp_2 shifts to the right and additional voters on the left of g_3 are willing to vote for o because for them sq_{tl} is farther than p_o . Therefore, if we compare scenario a or b with scenario c we find that voters with the same policy preferences will vote differently and in scenario c for the extremist party o.

[Figure 1 about here]

Because policy inertia on the EU integration dimension reduces the credibility of those government forces supporting a moderate change in that respect, it increases the propensity to vote for more extremist parties without necessarily any change in the voters' preferences distribution.

We can plausibly relax the assumption 4) of full inertia and allow for a limited policy change. In scenario d (Fig. 1) we hypothesize that $sq_{tl} \neq sq_{t0}$ and that $sq_{t0} > p_{g1}$. In other words, g_1 , the most pro-European government party, is now to the left of sq_{t0} , and it wants to implement a decrease in the current level of the country's European integration. In this case we can envisage a change of sq_{t0} towards p_{g1} . The level of European integration of sq_{tl} will be lower than in the previous scenarios. Such a change thwarts the voters' radicalization because it reduces the distance between the Eurosceptic voters and the perceived position of the most Eurosceptic government party, g_3 , namely sq_{tl} .

The implications of this simple model are quite straightforward and can be summarized in the following three hypotheses:

- 1) An increase in negative attitudes toward EU integration is more likely to generate a vote for Eurosceptic opposition parties when the level of a government's Euroscepticism is high, i.e. when moderately Eurosceptic parties form a government coalition with pro-EU parties;
- 2) An increase in the level of the government's Euroscepticism, i.e. an increase in the level of Euroscepticism of the most Eurosceptic government party, is more likely to increase the propensity to vote for a very Eurosceptic party in the opposition when voters have negative attitudes toward EU integration;

- 3) The role played by the government's Euroscepticism in increasing the propensity to vote for a very Eurosceptic opposition party is greatly weakened when the most pro-EU government party in the national government coalition wants a considerable decrease in the level of European integration.

Differently from other studies in the literature that stress the importance of government coalitions in the individual electoral choice, here we do not assume any purely strategic voting. Indeed, although EP elections are clearly national contests, implying a choice among parties at a national level, they do not have a direct impact on the composition of national parliaments and governments (Marsh and Mikhaylov, 2010). We argue that, on the occasion of EP elections, voters mainly choose expressively, i.e. with the aim of showing their level of agreement with policies on the EU dimension, both those enacted by the government parties and those promised by the opposition parties (Hamlin and Jennings, 2011; Hillman, 2010).

Finally, the hypotheses also apply to the more conventional two-dimensional space, where the other dimension is left/right, provided that the two dimensions are equally salient³.

Data

In order to test the hypotheses outlined above we drew on the most recent post-electoral study at the European level, the 2014 European Election Voter Study (EES) (Schmitt et al., 2016). This choice suited the purposes of our analysis for two main reasons. First this survey gathers information about electoral behavior at the 2014 EP Election in all the 28 member states, which is a condition necessary to test our cross-country hypotheses. Moreover, it was carried out a few weeks after the EP election at issue, which is a guarantee of response accuracy of the key question about EP vote recall (see next paragraph for a detailed description) (van der Meer, Lubbe, van Elsas, Elff and van der Brug 2011). Furthermore, this data set is reliable also because it has been constructed according to a stratified random sampling procedure, providing approximately 1,100 respondents per country, with the exceptions of Malta and Luxembourg, with about 500. As argued by Marsh (2002), taking account of the huge variation in country size in the European Union, such a balanced distribution of

³ For further details see Online appendix

respondents across countries clearly entails disproportionality. Nevertheless, this can be considered as the best strategy in order to take effective account of national level differences in voting behavior in one's estimates, especially if compared to a random sample of the European electorate. In this latter, we *'would have far too few individuals to assess the extent to which voters in Ireland, or Denmark, or Sweden fitted the European model as well as those in France, The Netherlands or Finland'* (Marsh 2002, 12).

Against this background, the original matrix was integrated with political and economic variables at the country-level and at the level of the party voted for. In particular, macroeconomic conditions were inferred from Eurostat data regarding employment rate and median net income for the time span 2009–2013 (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>), while the level of Euroscepticism of government coalitions was calculated on the basis of party policy positions derived from the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data set (<https://www.chesdata.eu/2014-chapel-hill-expert-survey/>). Finally, information about government party compositions was derived from the ParlGov data set (<http://www.parlgov.org/>).

The dependent variable

Similarly to some recent studies (Auel and Raunio, 2014; Tronconi and Valbruzzi, 2014), in order to identify the Eurosceptic parties we referred to the mean of the Chapel Hill survey (CHES) experts' responses about overall orientation of national party leaderships toward European integration in 2014 (Bakker et al., 2015). By default, this data source characterizes European parties according to increasing degrees of support for EU integration. However, since our hypotheses focused on levels of Euroscepticism, both in government coalitions and in the contents of individual vote choice, for the sake of a clearer understanding we reversed the values of the original variable. This basically entailed that, on a readapted scale ranging from 0 (strongly in favor of EU integration) to 6 (strongly opposed to EU integration), we categorized as Eurosceptic those parties with a mean experts' score higher than or equal to 4⁴. The resulting dependent variable is thus equal to 1 when the respondent declared that s/he had voted for an Eurosceptic party in the 2014 EP elections⁵ and zero when he s/he declared to have voted for another type of party. The causal mechanism we propose is based on the disrepute

4 Parties with a score included between 2 and 3 on the same scale have been considered to be moderately – but still not strongly – Eurosceptic.

5 In the 2014 ESS Voter Study respondents were asked, "Which party did you vote for in these recent European Parliament elections?" and "Which party did you vote for in these last parliamentary elections?". After these questions, they were presented with the names of the parties deemed most important in their political systems.

that affects the ruling parties unable to keep their promises of change for the benefit of opposition Eurosceptic parties. Thus, when the respondents reported having voted for a strongly Eurosceptic party that was part of the government during the period under consideration, the variable on Eurosceptic voting was equal to 0⁶. However, only a few cases fall into that category according to our data source. A complete list of the categorized opposition Eurosceptic parties, also including those in charge during the time span considered, is provided in the Online appendix.

Main independent variables

According to the theoretical model, an increase in the level of Euroscepticism of government parties increases the propensity to vote for an opposition Eurosceptic party, the more the voter is located on the Eurosceptic extreme of the ideological spectrum. Conversely, an increase in the voter's Euroscepticism is more likely to be translated into a vote for a strong Eurosceptic opposition party, the more Eurosceptic the parties in government are. Therefore, our main independent variable is an interaction term between the position of the most Eurosceptic party in the government coalition and the voter's attitude toward EU integration.

In tune with the theoretical model, our measure of Euroscepticism of government parties is "spatial". We explicitly focused on the scores of those parties which had been part of a government coalition between (September) 2008 and (April) 2014 in their country, i.e. between the official beginning of the financial and economic crisis and the EP elections. Importantly, such scores are the same as those of the readapted scale of Euroscepticism that we used to construct our dependent variable, i.e. vote choice for Eurosceptic parties, ranging from 0 (strongly in favor of EU integration) to 6 (strongly opposed to EU integration). Within this framework, in order to construct our government-level index, we took the values of the government party with the highest score (less EU integration) in each government of the period under analysis. Therefore, for each country we considered as many government parties as the governments that were in office during the period selected. We calculated the weight in days of each government and, on the basis of the values of the most Eurosceptic government parties, an average score of government Euroscepticism for each country. Moreover, in the case of a caretaker cabinet, (e.g. the Monti Government in Italy), in order to derive the corresponding score of governmental Euroscepticism we considered to be a coalition

⁶ If we run the regression models (see below) by assigning value 1 on our dependent variable even to Eurosceptic parties in the government, results are quite similar and models fit slightly worse. Results are available upon request.

government party each party that supported the government investiture in the national Parliament, on the strict basis of information included in the ParlGov data base⁷. This variable, which is key for the testing of hypotheses 1 and 2, is called “*Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions*”. On the other hand, in order to test hypothesis 3, the same procedure described above was applied to the most Europhile party in each national government under investigation, so as to obtain their weighted average per country over the period considered. Afterwards, for the sake of simplicity, we transformed this variable into a dichotomous one contrasting those countries where the Eurosceptic score of these parties was equal to or higher than the European mean to those where it was lower. Its name is “*Euroscepticism of Most Pro-EU Government Parties*”⁸.

We now consider the position of the voter along the EU integration dimension. In this case, we alternatively referred to two different variables that capture the so-called “utilitarian” and “strengthening” dimensions of EU integration (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2005, 2010; van Spanje and de Vreese, 2011). Both were inferred from the answers to two questions included in the 2014 European Election Study. In the first question the respondents were asked: “Generally speaking, do you think that our country’s membership of the EU is a good thing, a bad thing or neither a good thing nor a bad thing?” The variable “*Perceived Utility of Country’s EU Membership*” is equal to 1 when the respondent answered that his/her country’s membership was a bad thing, while it assumed a value of 0 in all other cases. The second variable, “*Attitude toward EU Integration*”, concerned the level of agreement with the EU integration process in general. It was inferred from the answers to the following question: “Some say European unification should be pushed further. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion?” The respondents were asked to indicate their view using a scale from 0 to 10. The value 0 means it “should be pushed further”. while 10 means “has already gone too far”⁹.

7 A complete list of the caretaker governments considered in our analysis is provided in the Online appendix. In order to ascertain that the presence of this type of cabinets in our analysis did not influence our results in any way, we performed the same sequence of models after excluding them from the computation. Results are very similar to those already shown here and are available upon request.

8 The mean score of Euroscepticism of the most pro-EU parties used as a threshold value for the creation of this dummy variable is 0.806.

9 To be specified is that respondents who placed themselves at the right end of this scale (i.e. on scores 8 to 11) are here considered to have an extreme Eurosceptic attitude. On the other hand, those holding intermediate values (i.e. between 5 and 7) have been regarded as moderately Eurosceptic, while those with lower values (i.e. between 1 and 4) have been considered as at most weakly Eurosceptic.

Control variables

Citizens who had voted for a Eurosceptic party in the past were *a priori* very likely to confirm this choice also in the 2014 European Parliament elections. Therefore, in order to insulate the effect of the government party composition on voting for Eurosceptic parties, we included in our models vote recall for Eurosceptic parties at the last national parliamentary elections as a control variable (*Previous Eurosceptic Voting*)¹⁰. The effect of this latter on 2014 EP vote choice, however, is in turn presumably affected by the time difference between the 2014 EP Elections and the previous National Election in a country. In particular, we can suppose that the closer the previous National Election is to the EP election at issue, the higher the probability that the previous electoral behavior will be confirmed in its substance (i.e. previous Eurosceptic voters will continue to vote for Eurosceptic parties). Accordingly, we introduced into our models also an interaction between *Previous Eurosceptic Voting* and the time distance measured in months between EP and previous National Elections in each country (*Time Span from previous National Elections*).

The remaining variables that, according to previous studies, usually have an explanatory role can be divided into contextual (or country) variables, socio-economic variables, and political individual ones. Regarding the first type, we included, first of all, two measures of country economic performance: the *Percentage Change of the National Rate of Employment* and the *Percentage Change of the National Median Equivalized Net Income*, both from 2009 to 2013. The latter, in particular, indicates the median income of a household after taxes and considering the household composition (in terms of household members' age)¹¹. Both these measures summarize countries' economic performances – which are generally assumed to affect Eurosceptic voting in a negative way - and are politically sensitive indicators. Another country-level variable that we included is a dummy contrasting post-communist countries to all the others, which is equal to 1 when the country had been a communist country in the past (*Post-Communist Country*). We took this information into account because post-communist countries have often been associated with limited electoral experiences and low participation (Schmitt, 2005). In particular, since non-voting could be interpreted as an alternative way to signal

¹⁰ In the Online appendix we also report an alternative analysis without Eurosceptic vote recall among the predictors, in which Eurosceptic voting was substituted with vote switching to a Eurosceptic party. This is an alternative dependent variable that took a value of 1 if respondents declared that they had switched their vote from a pro-EU party to an anti-EU party at the last European Parliament Elections, and assumed value 0 in all other cases.

¹¹ Using median, rather than mean, income results in a much more accurate picture of the average income of the middle class because the data will not be skewed by gains and abnormalities at the extreme ends.

Euroscepticism (Hobolt et al., 2009, see below), we expect that in these countries the probability of voting for Eurosceptic parties would be low because the same distaste toward the EU is often communicated by abstention.

Moving to individual-level variables, a first set of predictors related to economic considerations. The rationale for this choice was to take account in our analyses of those European studies arguing that negative economic evaluations, related either to national economic performance (sociotropic evaluations) or to personal conditions (egotropic evaluations), favor voting for opposition and/or Eurosceptic parties (van der Eijk et al, 2007; Lewis-Beck et al., 2008; Nadeau et al., 2013; Hobolt and Tilley 2016). As sociotropic evaluations, we considered predictors concerning retrospective and prospective assessments of the economy in a country (*Retrospective Economic Evaluation*, *Prospective Economic Evaluation*)¹². Concerning egotropic evaluations, on the other hand, we relied on individual self-perception on the social staircase. This variable, which we call “Perceived Social Status”, consists in a scale ranging from 1 (the lowest level in society) to 10 (the highest level in society).

Furthermore, several studies have also argued that higher levels of information and interest in politics decrease the probability of voting for Eurosceptic parties (Hobolt, 2009), while at the same time they increase the likelihood of EU issue voting at EP elections (De Vries et al. 2011). For these reasons, our analyses also took account of a series of cognitive variables. The first of them, *Political Information*, is a dummy measure equal to 1 when the respondent followed the news at least once a week (on the Internet, on television or in a newspaper). The second, *Education*, is equal to 1 when the respondent had continued studying after the age of 15. The third, *Political Interest*, is equal to 1 when the respondent was at least moderately interested in politics.

EP elections are often considered second-order national elections where vote choice is prevalently driven by national concerns (Hix and Marsh, 2007; Marsh, 1998; Schmitt, 2005; Van Der Brug et al., 2007; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). To take account of this further aspect, we introduced another control variable: (dis)approval of the government’s record. Specifically, *Government Disapproval* was a dummy variable equal to 1 when the respondent disapproved of the current government’s

¹² The retrospective question wording in the 2014 EES Voter Study is “What do you think about the economy? Compared to 12 months ago, do you think that the general economic situation in our country is a lot better, a little better, has stayed the same, a little worse, a lot worse?” while the prospective one reads, “And over the next 12 months, how do you think the general economic situation in our country will be?” Possible answers to both questions are ranked on a five-point Likert scale (i.e. a lot better, a little better, stay the same, get a little worse, get a lot worse).

record. This information was very important as it would make it possible to exclude that our findings were simply due to a generic disappointment of the voter in the government's performance in general.

Finally, as additional controls, we considered also *Ideological Self-Placement* on a scale from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right), *Age* (centered to the sample mean), *Gender*, *Location* and *Occupational Condition*. This last was a dummy variable equal to 1 when the respondent was unemployed, a manual worker or a housekeeper, while the place of residence (*Location*) was classified according to the following trichotomy: living in a rural area or village, in a small- or middle-sized town, or in a large town¹³.

Empirical analysis

The nature of the data that we analyze implies that individual observations are not completely independent from each other because they are nested in a superior level, the country to which each respondent belongs. This inclusion could generate residuals that are not independent within the same country. Therefore, if we used ordinary regressions, the standard errors and the significance of coefficients would be, respectively, under- and over-estimated (Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). In order to make our analyses reliable, we applied multi-level logistic regression analysis to EES data (Snijders and Bosker, 1999)¹⁴.

Specifically, we ran three classes of regression models – two for each of our three hypotheses – in which our key country-level predictors were combined with two different operationalizations of individual attitudes toward the EU (perceived utility of EU membership or individual agreement with EU integration), and with two types of contextual economic variables. In this regard, we show here only the models with the percent change of national rate of employment over time. For the sake of simplicity, we provide in Fig. 2 a graphical representation of the coefficients related to the first two models. Readers may refer to the Online appendix for

¹³ For further details see the descriptive statistics in the Online appendix.

¹⁴ Although multilevel regressions with individuals nested in countries have often been used for cross-country studies on electoral behavior and party competition in Europe, it should be taken into account that there is no consensus within the scientific community on whether 28 EU member states represent a sufficient number of level 2 units to gain reliable estimates. Some authors suggest that this is actually the case (Stegmueller, 2013) while some others argue that at least 30 cases (i.e. only two more than those that we have available) would be needed in a multilevel logistic framework (Bryan and Jenkins, 2016). To remove any doubt, alongside the present analysis, we performed also a series of logit models with fixed effects and with clustered standard errors at the country level. The results of this robustness check showed that this alternative procedure led to results substantially similar to those reported here. Such results are available upon request from the authors.

complete regression table, as well as for the analysis (with very similar results) when the percent change of the national median equivalized net income is the contextual economic variable.

[Figure 2 about here]

Models without interaction terms

The first two models, which include alternative aspects of attitudes toward EU, show that once one controls for vote recall at the last national elections and for other well-known predictors, *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* has a significant effect on the probability of voting for an opposition Eurosceptic party in the 2014 EP elections. Indeed, an extension of the government coalition of one unit toward the Eurosceptic extreme of the EU integration dimension implies, *coeteris paribus*, an average increase of around 60% in the probability of voting for a very Eurosceptic (opposition) party. This satisfies the first general expectation of this study. Against this background, the control variables that behave as expected are *Prospective Economic Evaluation*, *Government Disapproval*, *Ideological Self-Placement*, *Occupational Condition*, *Post-Communist Country*. In other words, this means that Eurosceptic voters in 2014 EP elections were pessimistic about economic prospects; they were mainly manual workers or unemployed; they disapproved of the government's record; they were prevalently rightist; and they more frequently belonged to Western European countries. On the other hand, *Perc. Variation in Rate of Employment (2009-2013)*, at the country level did not play any role. Almost the same applies to individual "cognitive" variables, because both *Political Interest* and *Education* are never significant, while *Political Information* seems to exert only a slight effect in Model 1 and 3 ($p < 0.10$). Lastly, opposition Eurosceptic voting seems to be predominantly a male "affair". Being a woman, indeed, decreases the probability of voting for an anti-EU party by approximately 50%.

Models with interaction terms

In addition to the general expectation that the greater the Euroscepticism of government coalitions, the greater the propensity to vote for opposition Eurosceptic parties, our theoretical account predicts also that this should apply in particular to voters who have an anti-EU attitude. On the other hand, we also expect that having a negative attitude toward EU integration is more likely to be translated into Eurosceptic voting (for an opposition party), the higher in a country is the degree

of Euroscepticism of the government coalition. In other words, the theory led us to consider the effect of government coalitions' Euroscepticism as mediated by individual attitudes toward the EU and the reverse. In order to test these hypotheses, we introduced in Models 3 and 4 the interaction between *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* and each of our two measures of attitudes toward the EU in turn (*Perceived Utility of Country's EU Membership*, *Attitude Toward EU Integration*). As anticipated, we also included an additional interaction term: *Previous Eurosceptic Voting* with *Time Span from Previous National Election*.

[Figure 3 about here]

If we consider the individual level of disagreement with the unification process, scaled from 0 to 10 (*Negative Attitude toward EU Integration*), an increase of *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* has a positive and significant impact on the probability of voting for an opposition Eurosceptic party, but only when voters already have a relatively pronounced negative attitude toward EU unification. In fact, the marginal effect loses its significance below score 5, which still identifies moderately Eurosceptic voters according to the criterion set out at previous footnote 8, and increases with the strength of this attitude (see upper-left graph in Fig.3). For voters who have the highest score (10), an increase of one unit in *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* implies on average an increase of around 4% in the probability of voting for a Eurosceptic party. If we consider as attitude toward the EU the dichotomous evaluation of one's country membership of the EU, namely *Perceived Utility of Country's EU Membership*, the dynamic is similar. Indeed, among respondents who considered their country's membership of EU to be a bad thing, the same increase of *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* implied an increase of approximately 5% in the probability of voting for an opposition Eurosceptic party.

The reverse relationship, i.e. the effect of an increase in the anti-EU attitude (both versions of the attitudinal variable) according to different degrees of government parties' Euroscepticism is confirmed as well. In the case of the scalar index, however, the impact seems very small. A unitary increase in a person's anti-EU integration attitude, indeed, implies an around 2% increase in the probability of voting for a Eurosceptic party when a government party has a Eurosceptic score of 4.5 on our 7 point scale. On the contrary, when we consider the utilitarian dimension of EU attitudes (i.e. the dichotomous index that we called "*Perceived Utility of Country's EU Membership*") the effect of the

radicalization of negative attitudes toward the EU is much stronger. In particular, when the level of Euroscepticism of a government is 0.25, shifting from a non-negative to a negative opinion about one's own country membership of the EU implies an increase in the probability of a Eurosceptic vote of almost 5%. However, when the *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* is around 4.5, then such an increase reaches almost 17%. Ultimately, even if a direct comparison between the explanatory power of our variables on EU attitudes is not possible, because they are different in nature, what really matters for the voters seems to be, not a general evaluation of the EU project, but the relationship between their country and the EU, within the framework of the integration process.

As said, when the most pro-EU party in the government prefers a significant decrease in European integration, we predict that at least a marginal and symbolic change in such a direction takes place by altering the effects predicted by the two previous hypotheses (Hypothesis 3). This expectation is fully confirmed by the results from Model 5 and 6. In these models we introduced a third dichotomous term, *Euroscepticism of Most Pro-EU Government Parties*, to the interaction between *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* and the measures of individual attitudes toward the European Integration. Considering in particular the marginal effects shown in Fig. 4 below, it is clear that when *Euroscepticism of Most Pro-EU Government Parties* is equal to one, i.e. when the most pro-EU party of the coalition is in fact more Eurosceptic than the mean of the most pro-European integration government parties in Europe, then the effect of the interaction between the voter's attitude toward EU integration and governments' Euroscepticism on Eurosceptic voting becomes weak or non-existent¹⁵. In other words, when the governments are not perceived as completely ineffective or non-credible in relation to Eurosceptic citizens' desired policy outcomes on the European Integration dimension, these voters' electoral radicalization (i.e. their tendency to vote for opposition Eurosceptic parties) does not take place or is much smaller.

On the contrary, when the most pro-EU party is close to the extreme values of the European Integration dimension (i.e. when *Euroscepticism of Most Pro-EU Government Parties* is equal to zero), the effects of the interaction is stronger than in the previous analysis (Fig.3). In particular, for extremely anti-EU voters, i.e. those who have the highest score (10) in *Attitude toward EU Integration*, an increase of one unit in *Euroscepticism of Government Coalitions* implies on average an increase of around 8% of voting for an opposition Eurosceptic party, which becomes approximately 12% when we consider the

¹⁵ For clarity, these are the scenarios shown on the right side of each pair of graphs in Figure 4, under the label "High Euroscepticism of most pro-EU gov. parties".

voters with a negative value of *Perceived Utility of Country's EU Membership*. A unitary increase in a person's anti-EU integration attitude, indeed, implies an around 5% increase in the probability of voting for a Eurosceptic party when a government party has a Eurosceptic score of 4.5 on our 7 point scale. Such increase stands at around 43% if we consider a change from a neutral or positive to a negative value of *Perceived Utility of Country's EU Membership*.

That said, we conclude by commenting on the effect of another interaction of interest, that between past voting and the time distance between the 2014 EP Elections and previous General Election (Fig. 3). As to be expected, this time element moderates the impact of previous Eurosceptic voting on a Eurosceptic choice within a second-order framework. In particular, the closer the position of the EP Election to the beginning of the national election cycle, the higher the reiterative character of a Eurosceptic vote.

[Figure 4 about here]

Conclusions

An increasing number of studies insist on the importance of political and institutional constraints in explaining the different aspects of electoral behavior (Adams et al., 2005; Carlin and Love, 2013; Fiorina, 1996; Grofman, 1985; Hahm, 2016; Kedar, 2005, 2009). The policy inertia would feed polarization in the electoral choice because the voters “predicting their vote to be watered down along the path, prefer parties to hold positions more extreme than their own opinions” (Kedar, 2005: 186). All of these approaches deal with first-order elections and more or less explicitly assume that voting is strategic and prospective. In other words, they assume that what would really matter for the voter are the future policies and how features of the political systems (namely the decision-making capacity) affect them.

In this article we have taken a slightly different path. We have investigated the 2014 EP elections. This type of election is usually considered a second-order national election (Hix and Høyland, 2013; Hobolt and Wittrock, 2011). Indeed, its electoral campaign and actors belong to a national level of political competition. Nevertheless, their electoral stakes are not the composition of future national parliaments and governments. In such a context, any explanation of voting behavior based on purely strategic considerations would be completely out of place. According to our theoretical account, voters choose retrospectively and “correct” the official positions of the government parties by looking at the

real achievements of the government. In other words, by voting they express their level of agreement with the current policies, both those in place and those that are promised by the opposition parties. The aim could be either to reward their best-preferred option or to signal dissatisfaction with the performance of parties in the government. Within this general framework, we focused on Euroscepticism as the specific content of vote choice. Consistently with this research interest and a Veto player theoretical framework (Tsebelis, 2002), we assumed that the *status quo* on the EU integration dimension is very stable. National governments cannot usually change unilaterally the level of EU integration, and when they are coalition governments they almost always include at least one pro-EU party. Therefore we suppose that some voters prefer very Eurosceptic opposition parties, because moderately Eurosceptic government parties are ineffective, although the latter propose electoral platforms that are the closest to their ideal points¹⁶. More in detail we hypothesized that 1) an increase of Euroscepticism in voters' attitudes is more easily translated into a very Eurosceptic voting when governments include moderately Eurosceptic parties, and 2) an increase in the level of the Euroscepticism of the most Eurosceptic government party is more likely to increase the propensity to vote for a very Eurosceptic opposition party when voters have negative attitudes toward EU integration. When we relax the assumption that the *status quo* on European integration cannot be changed, we expect that a partial, maybe mostly symbolic, change toward a lower level of European integration can, *ceteris paribus*, decrease the propensity to vote for very Eurosceptic opposition parties. The most Eurosceptic government members are now considered less ineffective. In accordance with Veto players theory, we hypothesized that such a change takes place in countries where the most pro-European government party wants a significant decrease in the level of European integration.

Empirical analysis has largely fulfilled all our expectations. An open research question concerns the possibility of extending the casual mechanism behind our hypotheses from voting behavior in the last European elections to voting behavior in the national elections. One might argue that in general when the *status quo* cannot be changed on a specific policy dimension an increase in the level of government polarization (heterogeneity) on that dimension will fuel further radicalization in the voting behavior in favor of opposition parties without there necessarily being any further radicalization in the original preferences of the voters. Conversely, increasing extremism of policy preferences on a specific issue are more likely to be translated into a more extreme vote where government coalitions are more

¹⁶ See previous footnotes 3 and 8 for further details on the operational distinction between moderately and very Eurosceptic voters and/or parties.

polarized - and thus ineffective - on that dimension. Nevertheless, the different stakes and the existence of incentives for strategic voting when it comes to national elections advise caution. Only future research will furnish a reliable answer.

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Figures

Figure 1: Spatial model with government and opposition parties' positions on the EU integration dimension and Eurosceptic voting

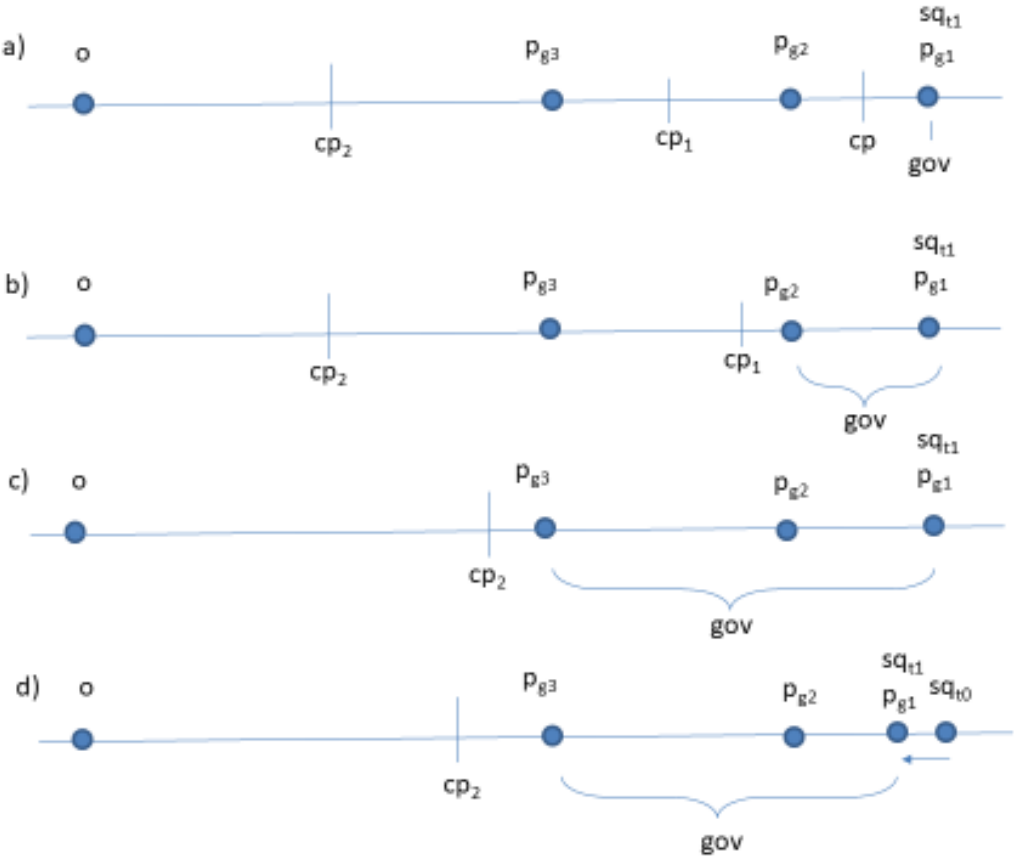
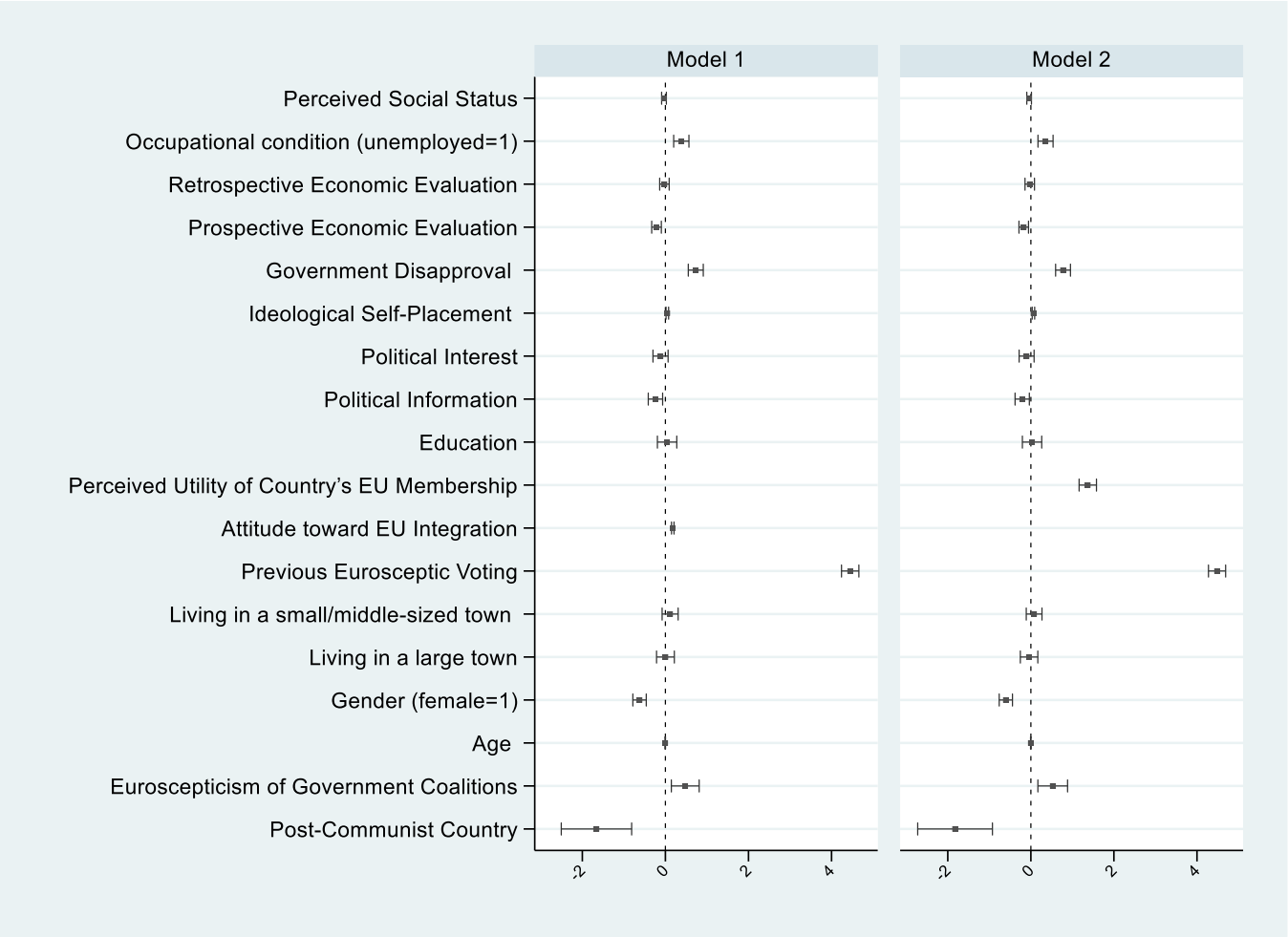
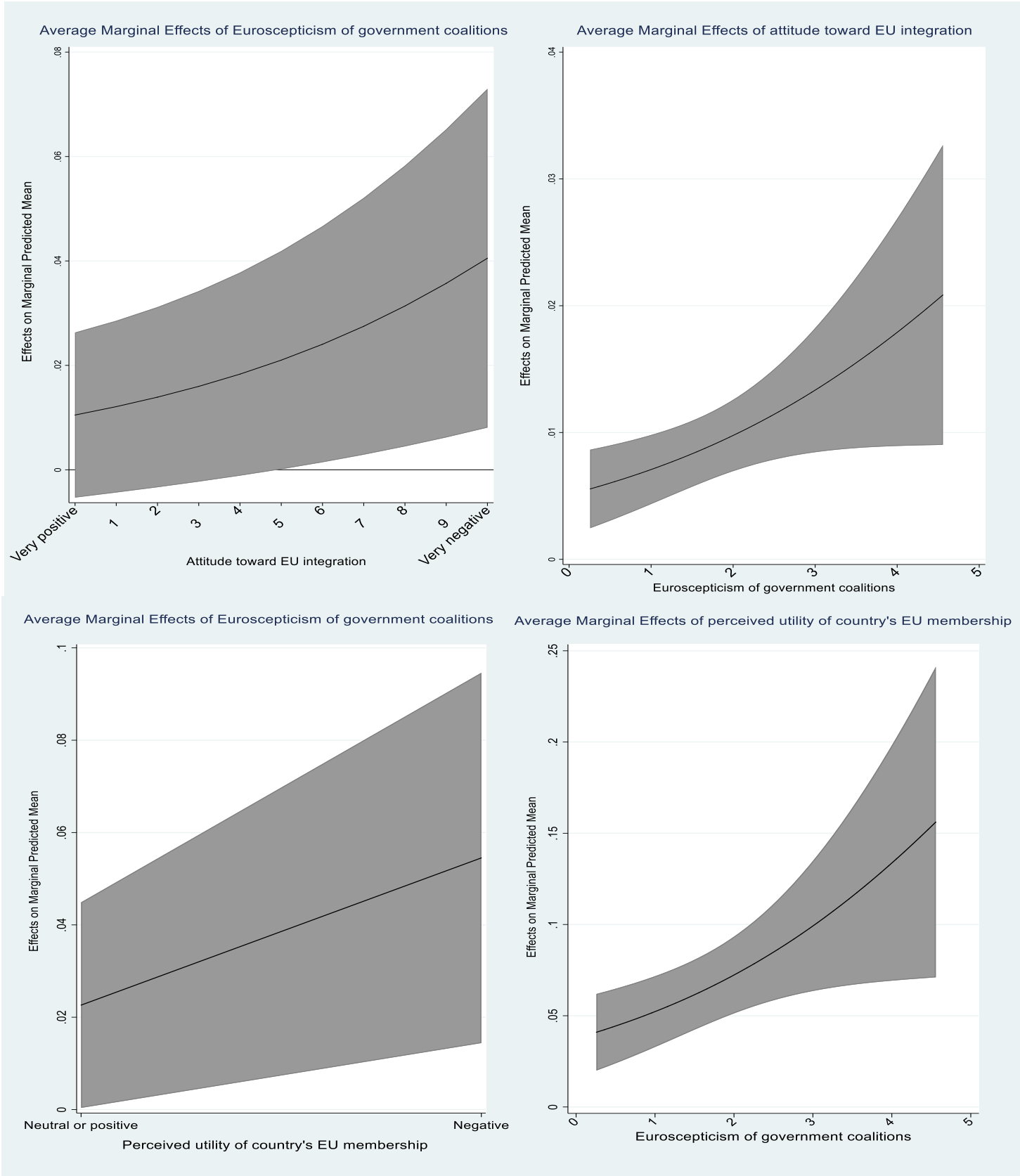


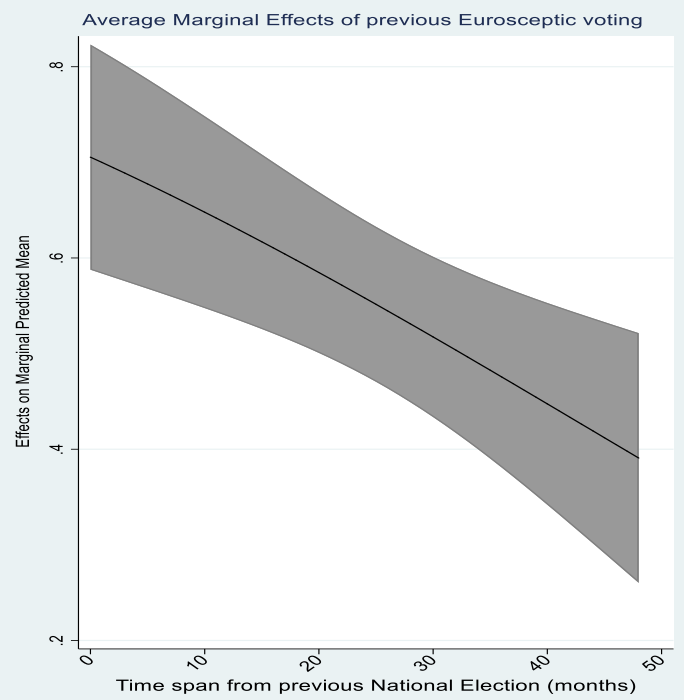
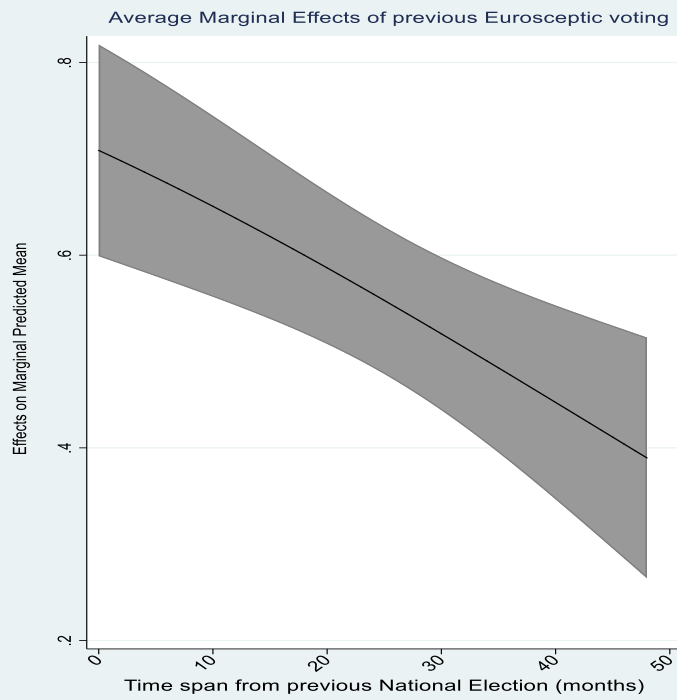
Figure 2: Predictors of Eurosceptic Voting. Regression coefficients plot (Models 1 and 2)



Note: unstandardized regression coefficients (90% CI)

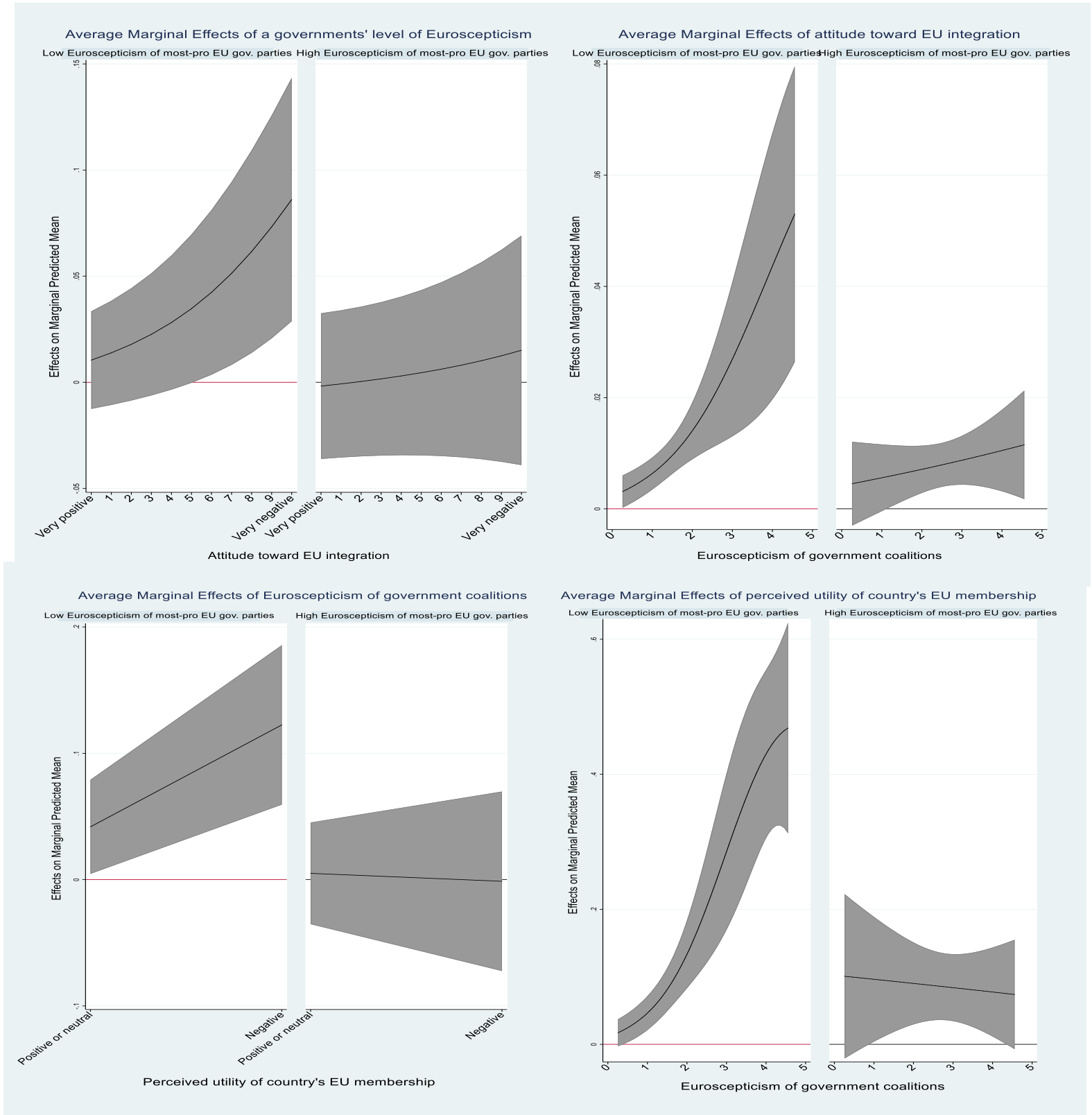
Figure 2: Average marginal effects (models 3-4)





Note: conditional marginal effects (95% CI)

Figure 3: Average marginal effects (models 5-6)



Note: conditional marginal effects (95% CI)

Appendix

Table A.1. List of Eurosceptic parties (source: CHES Expert Survey 2014)

Country	Party label	Party name	Eurosceptic score
AUSTRIA	FPÖ	The Freedom Party of Austria	5,11
	BZÖ	Alliance for the Future of Austria	4,3
	Team Stronach*	Team Stronach*	4,1
BELGIUM	VB	Flemish Interest	4,40
	PP	People's Party	4,5
BULGARIA	NOA	National Union Attack	5,5
	NFSB*	National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria*	4
CZECH REPUBLIC	KSCM	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	4,27
	Svobodni	Party of Free Citizens	5,67
	Úsvit*	Dawn of Direct Democracy*	4,73
	ODS**	Civic Democratic Party**	4,13
DENMARK	DF	Danish People's Party	5,09
	FolkB	People's Movement Against EU	5,91
	Enhedslisten*	Red-Green Unity List*	5,18
GERMANY	Linke	The Left	4
	AfD	Alternative for Germany	5,39
	NPD*	National Democratic Party*	5,33

FINLAND	PS	True Finns	5,4
FRANCE	LO	Left Front	4,92
	FN	National Front	5,79
	MPF*	Movement for France*	5,77
	PCF*	French Communist Party*	4,36
GREECE	ANEL	Independent Greeks	4,78
	KKE	Communist Party of Greece	5,89
	XA	Golden Dawn	5,89
HUNGARY	JOBBIK	Movement for a Better Hungary	5,77
	Fidesz**	Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Union**	4,29
SWEDEN	V	Left Party	4,86
	SD	Sweden Democrats	5,73
UK	UKIP	UK Independence Party	5,86
IRELAND	SF	We Ourselves	4,22
	SP	Socialist Party	4,79
	PBPA	People Before Profit Alliance	4,75
ITALY	LN**	North League**	5,86
	M5S	Five Star Movement	5,57
	Fd'I	Brothers of Italy	4,83
	RC*	Communist Refoundation Party*	5
LATVIA	LKS	Green & Latvian Russian Union	4,11
LUXEMBOURG	ADR	Alternative Democratic Reform Party	4

NETHERLANDS	SP	Socialist Party	4,90
	PVV	Party for Freedom	5,91
	CU-SGP**	Christian Union–Political Reformed Party**	4,45
POLAND	KNP	Congress of the New Right	5,94
	SP	United Poland	4
PORTUGAL	CDU	Unitarian Democratic Coalition	5,13
SLOVAKIA	SaS**	Freedom and Solidarity**	4,14
	OĽaNO	Ordinary People and Independent Personalities	4
	SNS**	Slovak National Party**	4,72

* Not included in the 2014 EES Voter Study; **Participating in a government coalition during the period 2008–2014

Table A.2. List of caretaker governments in the European Union over the period 2008-2014
(source: ParlGov database)

Country	Government name	Type of support	Period in charge (months)
Belgium	Verhofstadt IV	Parliament's confidence vote	3
	Leterme III	Parliament's confidence vote	6
Bulgaria	Raikov*	Only Presidential nomination	2,5
	Oresharski	Parliament's confidence vote	14,5
Czech Republic	Fischer	Parliament's confidence vote	14,8
	Rusnok	Presidential nomination (confidence vote lost)	6,3
Greece	Papademos	Parliament's confidence vote	6,2
	Pikramenos*	Only Presidential nomination	1,1
Italy	Monti	Parliament's confidence vote	17,4
Luxembourg	Juncker V	Parliament's confidence vote	4,8
Netherlands	Balkenende VI	Parliament's confidence vote	7,7
	Rutte II	Parliament's confidence vote	6,4
Slovakia	Radicova II	Parliament's confidence vote	5,5

*These governments have not been included in our analysis due to their lack of any ideological profile and/or support toward the EU, both at the government and at the parliamentary level. In other words, their extremely short-term and bureaucratic nature, merely aiming at favoring the transition to new imminent elections, makes it basically impossible to assign to them any level of Euroscepticism.

Table A.3. Descriptive statistics of independent variables

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Standard deviation	N
Individual level					
Attitude toward EU integration	5.34	0	10	3.11	27,362
Attitude toward one's own country's EU membership	0.14	0	1	0.35	30,064
Eurosceptic voting at last national election	0.10	0	1	.294415	16857
Government disapproval (dummy)	0.60	0	1	0.49	26,410
Left-right self-placement	5.08	0	10	2.63	24,388
Judgment toward the state of the economy (past 12 months)	2.79	1	5	1.01	29,449
Judgment toward the state of the economy (next 12 months)	3.00	1	5	0.93	28,349
Political interest (dummy)	0.51	0	1	0.50	29,859
Political information (dummy)	0.28	0	1	0.45	30,031
Subjective social status	5.39	1	10	1.58	29220
Occupational condition (dummy)	0.34	0	1	0.47	30,064
Place of residence	1.94	1	3	0.77	30,042
Education (dummy)	0.82	0	1	0.38	29,511
Age (centered to sample mean)	0	-35.06	47.94	17.92	30,064
Female	.55	0	1	.50	30,064
Country level					
Euroscepticism of government coalitions (period 2008-2014)	1.82	0.26	4.64	1.19	28
Euroscepticism of most pro-EU government parties (dummy) (period 2008-2014)	0.32	0	1	0.48	28
Time span from previous national election (months)	25.32	1	48	13.12	28
Rate of employment (difference 2009-2013)	-0.01	-0.19	0.10	0.06	28
Median equivalized net income (difference 2009-2013)	0.03	-0.27	0.24	0.11	27

Table A.4. Predictors of Eurosceptic voting

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>Individual variables</i>						
PERCEIVED SOCIAL STATUS	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
OCCUPATIONAL CONDITION (unemployed=1)	0.38*** (0.11)	0.35*** (0.11)	0.40*** (0.11)	0.37*** (0.11)	0.40*** (0.11)	0.3*** (0.11)
RETROSPECTIVE ECONOMIC EVALUATION	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.03 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.07)
PROSPECTIVE ECONOMIC EVALUATION	-0.21*** (0.07)	-0.17** (0.07)	-0.22*** (0.07)	-0.18** (0.07)	-0.22*** (0.07)	-0.19*** (0.07)
GOVERNMENT DISAPPROVAL (disapproves= 1)	0.73*** (0.11)	0.78*** (0.11)	0.77*** (0.11)	0.81*** (0.11)	0.77*** (0.11)	0.82*** (0.11)
IDEOLOGICAL SELF- PLACEMENT	0.05** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.04** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
POLITICAL INTEREST (interested in politics=1)	-0.12 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.11)	-0.14 (0.11)	-0.12 (0.11)	-0.15 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.11)
POLITICAL INFORMATION (informed=1)	-0.24** (0.10)	-0.21** (0.10)	-0.24** (0.10)	-0.21** (0.10)	-0.24** (0.11)	-0.21* (0.10)
EDUCATION (highly educated=1)	0.04 (0.14)	0.029 (0.14)	0.02 (0.14)	0.01 (0.14)	0.03 (0.14)	0.02 (0.14)
(NEGATIVE) ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION	0.18*** (0.02)		0.14*** (0.04)		0.08 (0.05)	

(NEGATIVE) PERCEIVED UTILITY OF COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP		1.37***		1.03***		0.42
		(0.13)		(0.25)		(0.33)
PREVIOUS EUROSCEPTIC VOTING	4.45***	4.48***	5.64***	5.67***	5.56***	5.58***
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.26)
LOCATION						
(Rural, benchmark level)						
Small- or middle-sized town	0.11	0.08	0.09	0.06	0.08	0.06
	(0.12)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Large town	0.00	-0.04	-0.00	-0.04	-0.00	-0.04
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
GENDER (Female=1)	-0.62***	-0.60***	-0.63***	-0.61***	-0.63***	-0.62***
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
AGE (centered to sample mean)	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Contextual variables						
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOVERNMENT COALITIONS	0.48**	0.53**	0.27	0.46**	0.29	0.93**
	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.23)	(0.21)	(0.42)	(0.37)
POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRY	-1.66***	-1.82***	-1.72***	-1.88***	-1.72***	-1.86***
	(0.51)	(0.55)	(0.51)	(0.55)	(0.52)	(0.53)
TIME SPAN FROM PREVIOUS NATIONAL ELECTION			0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.02
			(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
PERC. VARIATION IN RATE OF EMPLOYMENT	3.00	4.50	3.30	4.61	1.53	2.18
(2009-2013)						
	(4.11)	(4.38)	(4.00)	(4.28)	(3.98)	(4.12)
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES					1.26	1.35
(I=countries with a score over the European average)					(1.33)	(1.21)
Interactive terms						
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE			0.02		0.08***	

TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV.
COALITIONS

(0.02)

(0.03)

NEGATIVE ATTITUDE
TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*

-0.01

EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST
PRO-EU GOVERNMENT
PARTIES

(0.09)

NEGATIVE ATTITUDE
TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*

-0.06

EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST
PRO-EU GOVERNMENT
PARTIES* EUROSCEPTICISM
OF GOV. COALITIONS

(0.04)

PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN
COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP*
EUROSCEPTICISM OF
GOVERNMENT COALITIONS

0.16

0.59***

(0.11)

(0.17)

PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN
COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP*

1.00

EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST
PRO-EU GOVERNMENT
PARTIES

(0.67)

PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN
COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP
*

-0.69***

EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST
PRO-EU GOV. PARTIES*
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV.
COALITIONS

(0.25)

EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST
PRO-EU GOV. PARTIES*
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV.
COALITIONS

-0.35

-0.84

PREVIOUS EUROSCPTIC VOTING* TIME SPAN FROM PREVIOUS NATIONAL ELECTION			-0.05***	-0.05***	(0.59) -0.05***	(0.54) -0.05***
			(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
CONSTANT	-4.68***	-3.96***	-4.52***	-4.03***	-4.15***	-3.91***
	(0.61)	(0.62)	(0.81)	(0.80)	(0.85)	(0.78)
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-1678.60	-1719.80	-1662.39	-1703.60	-1655.68	-1695.92
AIC	3397.19	3479.60	3370.78	3453.19	3365.36	3445.84
BIC	3538.37	3621.57	3533.13	3616.46	3555.95	3637.50
RES. INTRACCLASS CORRELATION	.26	.29	.25	.28	.23	.24
OBSERVATIONS	8594	8942	8594	8942	8594	8942
NUMBER OF GROUPS	28	28	28	28	28	28

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.5. Predictors of Eurosceptic voting (with median equivalized net income as macroeconomic predictor)

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>Individual variables</i>						
PERCEIVED SOCIAL STATUS	-0.0335	-0.0405	-0.0334	-0.0397	-0.0353	-0.0377
	(0.0346)	(0.0342)	(0.0346)	(0.0343)	(0.0348)	(0.0345)
OCCUPATIONAL CONDITION (unemployed=1)	0.383***	0.354***	0.396***	0.370***	0.396***	0.367***
	(0.112)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.111)	(0.112)	(0.111)
RETROSPECTIVE ECONOMIC EVALUATION	-0.0230	-0.0254	-0.0175	-0.0188	-0.0172	-0.0168

		(0.0694)	(0.0691)	(0.0691)	(0.0691)	(0.0693)	(0.0694)
PROSPECTIVE EVALUATION	ECONOMIC	-0.213***	-0.170**	-0.215***	-0.175**	-0.215***	-0.189***
		(0.0702)	(0.0697)	(0.0700)	(0.0696)	(0.0702)	(0.0701)
GOVERNMENT DISAPPROVAL (disapproves= 1)		0.730***	0.773***	0.768***	0.807***	0.771***	0.820***
		(0.110)	(0.109)	(0.111)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.111)
IDEOLOGICAL PLACEMENT	SELF-	0.0465**	0.0624***	0.0451**	0.0600***	0.0457**	0.0582***
		(0.0188)	(0.0185)	(0.0189)	(0.0187)	(0.0190)	(0.0188)
POLITICAL INTEREST (interested in politics=1)		-0.118	-0.103	-0.143	-0.120	-0.152	-0.106
		(0.111)	(0.110)	(0.111)	(0.110)	(0.112)	(0.111)
POLITICAL INFORMATION (informed=1)	INFORMATION	-0.236**	-0.204*	-0.240**	-0.204*	-0.232**	-0.201*
		(0.105)	(0.104)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.106)	(0.105)
EDUCATION (highly educated=1)	(highly	0.0432	0.0320	0.0254	0.0170	0.0377	0.0267
		(0.142)	(0.141)	(0.143)	(0.143)	(0.144)	(0.145)
(NEGATIVE) TOWARD EU INTEGRATION	ATTITUDE	0.177***		0.137***		0.0866*	
		(0.0182)		(0.0387)		(0.0516)	
(NEGATIVE) UTILITY OF EU MEMBERSHIP	PERCEIVED COUNTRY'S EU		1.370***		1.023***		0.416
			(0.127)		(0.253)		(0.326)
PREVIOUS VOTING	EUROSCEPTIC	4.445***	4.479***	5.627***	5.657***	5.558***	5.574***
		(0.127)	(0.126)	(0.262)	(0.260)	(0.260)	(0.257)
LOCATION (Rural, benchmark level)							
	Small- or middle-sized town	0.114	0.0782	0.0860	0.0553	0.0829	0.0598
		(0.117)	(0.115)	(0.119)	(0.116)	(0.119)	(0.117)
	Large town	-0.00223	-0.0459	-0.00674	-0.0491	-0.00603	-0.0438
		(0.130)	(0.128)	(0.131)	(0.129)	(0.131)	(0.129)
GENDER (Female=1)		-0.622***	-0.601***	-0.626***	-0.608***	-0.625***	-0.620***

	(0.0982)	(0.0971)	(0.0987)	(0.0978)	(0.0990)	(0.0985)
AGE (centered to sample mean)	-0.00416	-0.00242	-0.00425	-0.00257	-0.00455	-0.00268
	(0.00336)	(0.00328)	(0.00339)	(0.00331)	(0.00340)	(0.00332)
Contextual variables						
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOVERNMENT COALITIONS	0.476**	0.536**	0.280	0.466**	0.393	1.041***
	(0.197)	(0.215)	(0.229)	(0.213)	(0.415)	(0.365)
POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRY	-1.455***	-1.584***	-1.502***	-1.625***	-1.581***	-1.712***
	(0.505)	(0.547)	(0.507)	(0.551)	(0.506)	(0.524)
TIME SPAN FROM PREVIOUS NATIONAL ELECTION			0.00945	0.00914	-0.0119	-0.0167
			(0.0170)	(0.0186)	(0.0196)	(0.0204)
PERC. VARIATION IN NET EQUIVALISED INCOME (2009-2013)	-0.801	-0.581	-0.547	-0.343	-1.841	-1.942
	(2.065)	(2.254)	(2.030)	(2.224)	(2.047)	(2.127)
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES					1.298	1.403
(I=countries with a score over the European average)					(1.258)	(1.127)
Interactive terms						
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*			0.0234		0.0787***	
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV. COALITIONS						
			(0.0173)		(0.0294)	
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*					-0.00945	
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES						
					(0.0897)	
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*					-0.0553	
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST						

PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES* EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV. COALITIONS					(0.0397)	
PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP*			0.165			0.593***
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOVERNMENT COALITIONS			(0.106)			(0.167)
PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP*						0.997
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES						(0.662)
PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP *						-0.691***
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOV. PARTIES*						(0.250)
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV. COALITIONS					-0.461	-0.962*
					(0.566)	(0.504)
PREVIOUS EUROSCEPTIC VOTING* TIME SPAN FROM PREVIOUS NATIONAL ELECTION		-0.0481***	-0.0479***	-0.0462***	-0.0457***	
		(0.00869)	(0.00864)	(0.00867)	(0.00860)	
CONSTANT	-4.722***	-4.064***	-4.629***	-4.160***	-4.222***	-3.987***
	(0.572)	(0.586)	(0.787)	(0.791)	(0.810)	(0.739)
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-1677.3716	-1718.8862	-1661.2832	-1702.7553	-1653.9304	-1694.1872

AIC		3394.743	3477.772	3368.566	3451.511	3361.861	3442.374
BIC		3535.48	3619.29	3530.413	3614.256	3551.855	3633.424
RES. CORRELATION	INTRACCLASS	.2488183	.2861219	.2368348	.274774	.2071607	.2211335
OBSERVATIONS		8,407	8,742	8,407	8,742	8,407	8,742
NUMBER OF GROUPS		27	27	27	27	27	27

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A.6. Predictors of vote switching toward Eurosceptic parties

VARIABLES		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>Individual variables</i>							
PERCEIVED SOCIAL STATUS		-0.0405 (0.0404)	-0.0462 (0.0396)	-0.0387 (0.0404)	-0.0471 (0.0396)	-0.0391 (0.0406)	-0.0427 (0.0401)
OCCUPATIONAL CONDITION (unemployed=1)		0.461*** (0.127)	0.417*** (0.126)	0.463*** (0.128)	0.419*** (0.126)	0.463*** (0.128)	0.420*** (0.127)
RETROSPECTIVE ECONOMIC EVALUATION		-0.0631 (0.0784)	-0.0570 (0.0781)	-0.0632 (0.0785)	-0.0572 (0.0782)	-0.0665 (0.0787)	-0.0583 (0.0789)
PROSPECTIVE ECONOMIC EVALUATION		-0.174** (0.0790)	-0.146* (0.0783)	-0.180** (0.0791)	-0.147* (0.0783)	-0.180** (0.0794)	-0.167** (0.0792)
GOVERNMENT DISAPPROVAL (disapproves= 1)		0.900*** (0.126)	0.957*** (0.125)	0.899*** (0.126)	0.954*** (0.125)	0.902*** (0.127)	0.982*** (0.126)
IDEOLOGICAL PLACEMENT	SELF-	0.0455** (0.0224)	0.0638*** (0.0219)	0.0440** (0.0224)	0.0628*** (0.0219)	0.0450** (0.0225)	0.0627*** (0.0222)
POLITICAL INTEREST (interested in politics=1)		-0.0758 (0.127)	-0.0622 (0.126)	-0.0736 (0.127)	-0.0634 (0.126)	-0.0864 (0.128)	-0.0409 (0.127)

POLITICAL INFORMATION (informed=1)		-0.301**	-0.297**	-0.301**	-0.299**	-0.289**	-0.296**
		(0.121)	(0.120)	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.122)	(0.122)
EDUCATION (highly educated=1)		0.0401	-0.0397	0.0399	-0.0350	0.0606	-0.0252
		(0.161)	(0.160)	(0.162)	(0.160)	(0.163)	(0.162)
(NEGATIVE) ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION		0.234***		0.126**		0.0838	
		(0.0222)		(0.0500)		(0.0680)	
(NEGATIVE) PERCEIVED UTILITY OF COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP			1.517***		1.317***		0.456
			(0.138)		(0.296)		(0.398)
LOCATION (Rural, benchmark level)							
Small- or middle-sized town		0.0208	0.0167	0.0177	0.0185	0.00991	0.0267
		(0.133)	(0.131)	(0.133)	(0.131)	(0.134)	(0.132)
Large town		-0.172	-0.171	-0.177	-0.171	-0.175	-0.156
		(0.152)	(0.150)	(0.152)	(0.150)	(0.153)	(0.151)
GENDER (Female=1)		-0.627***	-0.601***	-0.640***	-0.604***	-0.642***	-0.623***
		(0.113)	(0.112)	(0.113)	(0.112)	(0.114)	(0.113)
AGE (centered to sample mean)		-0.00611	-0.00475	-0.00664*	-0.00487	-0.00673*	-0.00518
		(0.00390)	(0.00376)	(0.00391)	(0.00376)	(0.00392)	(0.00379)
Contextual variables							
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOVERNMENT COALITIONS		0.539**	0.583**	0.125	0.561**	0.257	1.206***
		(0.240)	(0.259)	(0.299)	(0.260)	(0.526)	(0.438)
POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRY		-2.267***	-2.472***	-2.229***	-2.399***	-2.202***	-2.343***
		(0.628)	(0.673)	(0.632)	(0.676)	(0.627)	(0.636)
TIME SPAN FROM PREVIOUS NATIONAL ELECTION				0.0103	0.0113	-0.0170	-0.0228
				(0.0207)	(0.0223)	(0.0250)	(0.0255)
PERC. VARIATION IN RATE OF EMPLOYMENT (2009-2013)		2.987	5.155	3.462	5.349	0.893	1.654

	(4.813)	(5.192)	(4.800)	(5.164)	(4.728)	(4.803)
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES					2.190	1.948
(I=countries with a score over the European average)					(1.610)	(1.399)
Interactive terms						
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*			0.0543**		0.113***	
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV. COALITIONS						
			(0.0230)		(0.0380)	
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*					-0.0656	
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES						
					(0.110)	
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD EU INTEGRATION*					-0.0499	
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES* EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV. COALITIONS						
					(0.0506)	
PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP* EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOVERNMENT COALITIONS				0.0932		0.694***
				(0.123)		(0.196)
PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP*						1.054
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOVERNMENT PARTIES						
						(0.741)
PERCEIVED UTILITY OF OWN COUNTRY'S EU MEMBERSHIP *						-0.899***
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST						

PRO-EU GOV. PARTIES*						
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV. COALITIONS						(0.286)
EUROSCEPTICISM OF MOST PRO-EU GOV. PARTIES*					-0.669	-1.169*
EUROSCEPTICISM OF GOV. COALITIONS					(0.737)	(0.629)
CONSTANT	-5.329***	-4.166***	-4.759***	-4.407***	-4.462***	-4.271***
	(0.707)	(0.718)	(0.974)	(0.952)	(1.024)	(0.896)
LOG LIKELIHOOD	-1278.2723	-1322.909	-1275.2518	-1322.5021	-1266.9709	-1309.7856
AIC	2594.545	2683.818	2592.504	2687.004	2583.942	2669.571
BIC	2726.624	2816.669	2738.487	2833.84	2757.731	2844.376
RES. INTRACCLASS CORRELATION	.3221346	.3640613	.3178988	.3575555	.2862076	.2939965
OBSERVATIONS	7,720	8,040	7,720	8,040	7,720	8,040
NUMBER OF GROUPS	28	28	28	28	28	28

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

A theoretical account of voting behavior in EP elections in two dimensions

In two dimensions (EU integration and Left-Right), the utility of voter i ($i=1, \dots, n$) for opposition party o ($o=1, \dots, m$), is inversely related to the ideological distance between voter i and o . Such a distance is calculated according to the Pythagorean theorem. In formula

$$U_{io} = -\sqrt{(v_i - p_{oEU})^2 + (v_i - p_{oLR})^2} \quad (1)$$

where v_i is the ideal point of voter i , p_{oEU} and p_{oLR} are the positions of party electoral platform o , respectively on the dimension “EU integration” and the dimension “Left-Right”.

The utility of voter i ($i=1, \dots, n$) for the government party g ($g=m+1, \dots, n$) is inversely related to a weighted average of the ideological distance between i and g and the distance between i and the *status quo* policy at time $t1$, sq_{t1} . In two dimensions (EU integration and Left-Right)

$$U_{ig} = -\alpha \left[\sqrt{(v_i - p_{gEU})^2 + (v_i - p_{gLR})^2} \right] - (1 - \alpha) \left[\sqrt{(v_i - sq_{t1EU})^2 + (v_i - sq_{t1LR})^2} \right] \quad (2)$$

where p_{gEU} and p_{gLR} are the positions of party electoral platform g respectively on the dimension “EU integration” and the dimension “Left-Right”; $\alpha \in (0,1)$ is the relative weight of the two components of voter utility. The more proximity-led is voting, the larger α becomes. When α tends to one then the government party is fully evaluated according to its electoral platforms p_{gEU} and p_{gLR} . When, on the contrary, α tends to zero the government’s performance evaluation will prevail in the party position perception and the government’s party position will be equal to sq_{t1EU} and sq_{t1LR} .

Suppose that a political system of an European Union country has four parties (Fig. A1), ranging from a strong pro-Europe party $g1$ on the right (high values) to a fully Eurosceptic opposition party o on the left (low values). Every government party is supposed to be a veto player and to decide in conditions of complete information. At time t_0 a new government is formed. At time t_1 the parties that are government members will change (or preserve) the *status quo* sq_{t0} left by the previous government. At time t_2 , the voters vote for the European Parliament elections by considering the party platforms p_o , p_g and sq_{t1} .

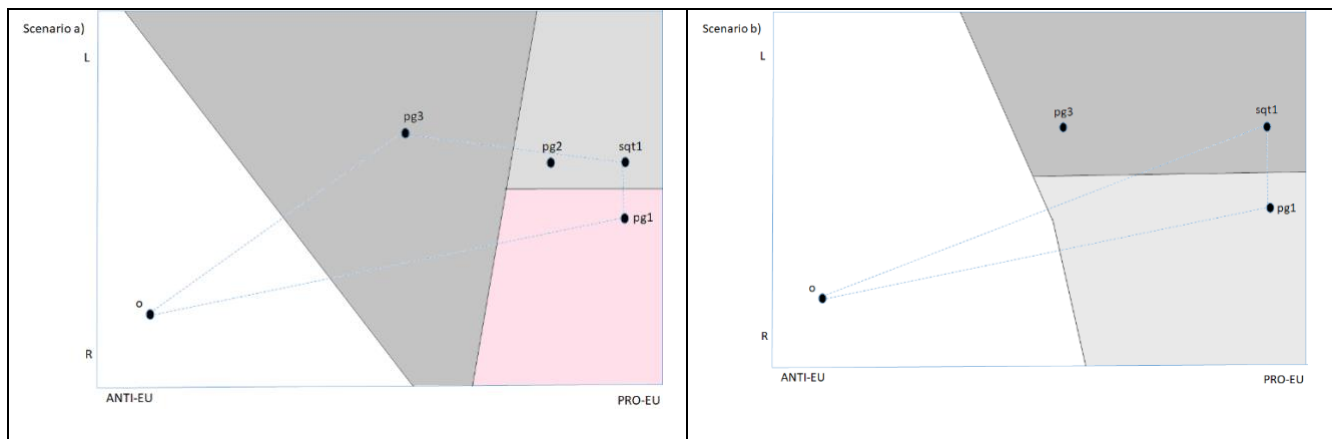
Assume that

- 1) $\alpha = 0$, in other words, the perceived government party positions depend on the policy outcomes on both dimensions before European elections (sq_{t1LR} and sq_{t1EU}).
- 2) the voters are uniformly distributed along both dimensions, namely the European integration dimension and Left and Right;

- 3) $sq_{tIEU} = p_{gIEU}$: in other words, the *status quo* on EU dimension is located on the pro-EU side of the ideological spectrum and coincides with the electoral platform of g_I , a very pro-European integration party;
- 4) $p_{g2LR} = sq_{tILR}$ when the government is formed by g_2 and g_I ; $p_{g3LR} = sq_{tILR}$ when the government is formed by g_3 and g_I . Model's implications hold also if we assume that the status quo on the Left-Right dimension is a compromise between g_I and g_2 or g_I and g_3 . If the $p_{gILR} = sq_{tILR}$, as we assume that $sq_{tIEU} = p_{gIEU,v}$ there is no difference with the theoretical account in one dimension.

Since we assume that the voters are uniformly distributed and that the space is two-dimensional, we use the cut lines to identify the support that each party enjoys. Within this framework, we can envisage two different scenarios (Fig.A1). In scenario a, g_I and g_2 form a two-party government quite homogenous along the European integration dimension. In scenario b, on the contrary, the government is heterogeneous as g_3 , a moderately Eurosceptic party, is a government member.

Fig.A1 Spatial model with government and opposition parties' positions on two dimensional space and Eurosceptic voting



The area of support in favor of very euroskeptical party o is much bigger in scenario b. Also in two dimensions the existence of a moderately euroskeptical government party (g_3) increases, *ceteris paribus*, the propensity to vote for a very euroskeptical party. Such a result does not depend on the specific positions of the parties on the Left-Right dimension.