

The interplay between Euroskeptic challenger and pro-European mainstream parties

—

A six country comparison of strategic party communication in the run-up to the 2014 European Parliament election

Silke Adam*, Eva-Maria Antl-Wittenberg, Beatrice Eugster*,
Melanie Leidecker*, Michaela Maier* & Franzisca Schmidt*
University of Berne & University of Koblenz-Landau

The study is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Swiss National Fonds (SNF)

(listed in alphabetical order, contributed equally)*

Politicization and party strategies – research questions and hypotheses

- **Politicization** (De Wilde, 2007; Hutter & Grande, 2014): a process that results in public debate about an issue based on two aspects:
 - 1) salience is attached to **specific issues** (i.e. similar issues),
 - 2) (polarized) **opinions** are voiced
 - **Party communication and party strategies** – or how do parties contribute to politicization?
 - Two strategies parties can choose
 - Raising **different** issues/positions → **adversarial strategy**
 - Focusing on the **same** issues/positions → **co-orientation strategy**
- Issue:** by focusing on the **same** issues → **co-orientation strategy**
- Opinion:** by raising **different** positions → **adversarial strategy**

Politicization

Applying politicization to Europe

- for a long time Europe has been non-politicized...
- ... but might be triggered by Euroskeptical challengers

→ Euroskeptical parties might challenge pro-European parties by putting new issues and positions on the agenda to “upset the dominant party alignment”

(Carmines & Stimson, 1993)

Euroskeptical political parties' seats in European Parliament

Belgium	Vlaams Belang (VB)	1
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti (DF)	4
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)	7
	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD)	1
Finland	Perussomalaiset (Die Finnen) (PS)	2
France	Front National (FN)	24
Greece	SYRIZA – Enotiko Kinoniko Metopo	6
	Chrysi Avgi	3
Great Britain	United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)	24
Italy	Lega Nord (LN)	5
	MoVimento 5 Stelle (M5S)	17
Lithuania	Partija Tvarka ir teisingumas (TT)	2
The Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV)	4
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)	4
Poland	Kongres Nowej Prawicy (KNP)	4
Sweden	Sverigedemokraterna (SD)	2
Hungary	Jobbik Magyarorszáért Mozgalom	3

Politicization and party strategies – research questions

- How did Euroskeptic parties use European Parliament election...
 - ... to put forward their issues?
 - ... to voice their critique on the European Union?
- How did pro-European mainstream parties communicate in the context of a rising Euroskeptic challenge?
 - ... with regard to issues?
 - ... with regard to the critique on the European Union?

Politicization and party strategies – hypotheses

Issue focus

- *H1a: Euroskeptical challenger parties focus their campaign on other EU-issues than pro-European mainstream parties (adversarial strategy).*
- *H1b: We expect this difference between Euroskeptical and pro-European parties to be less pronounced in EU-skeptical countries (co-orientation).*

Politicization and party strategies – hypotheses

Opinions

- *H2a: Euroskeptical challenger parties criticize Europe more often (salience) and more fundamentally (type) than pro-European mainstream parties (adversarial strategy).*
- *H2b: We expect this difference between Euroskeptical and pro-European parties to be less pronounced in EU-skeptical countries.*

Study design and methods

Case selection

		EU-skepticism (among citizens)	Euroskeptic parties
EU-friendly ↑	Germany	22%	Linke, AfD
	Netherlands	28%	SP, PvdD, CU-SGP, PVV
	Austria	33%	FPÖ, BZÖ
	Portugal	35%	CDU, BE, PCP
EU-skeptic ↓	UK	36%	Conservative, UKIP, BNP
	Greece	48%	KKE, SYRIZA, ANEL, XA, LAOS

Source: Eurobarometer 81.2 2014, Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

Quantitative content analysis:

of all press releases published by all parties (vote-share > 3%) twelve* weeks prior to the EP election (N=2513)

*for Portugal only data for 8 weeks are included in the analysis so far.

Study design and methods

Similarities vs. differences of pro-European and Euroskeptical parties

- Issue focus

- All issues are related to the EU
- 17 aggregated categories (e.g. economy, territorial questions etc.)
- Duncan Index of Dissimilarity (and Cramer's V)

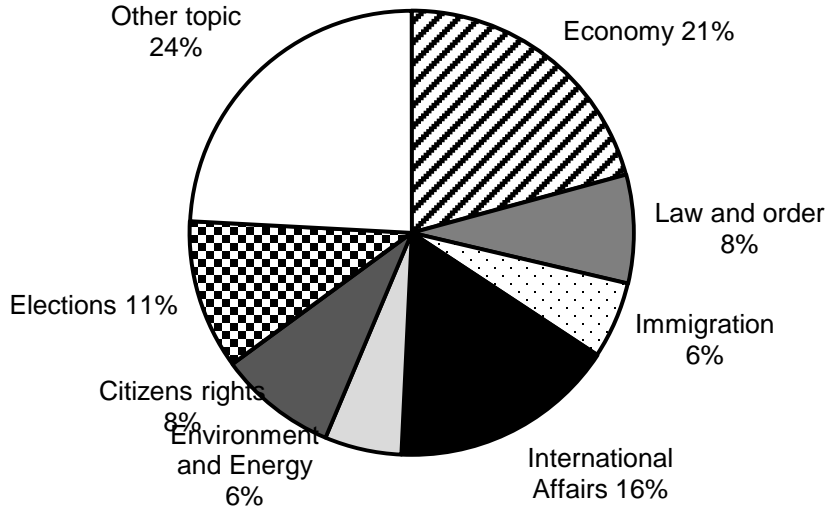
- Opinions on Europe (Taggart, 1998; 2002)

- *Soft Euroskepticism*: criticism of EU polity, EU politics and EU policies
- *Hard Euroskepticism*: fundamental opposition to the idea of European integration as such
- Frequency tables

Issues in the 2014 EPE campaigns

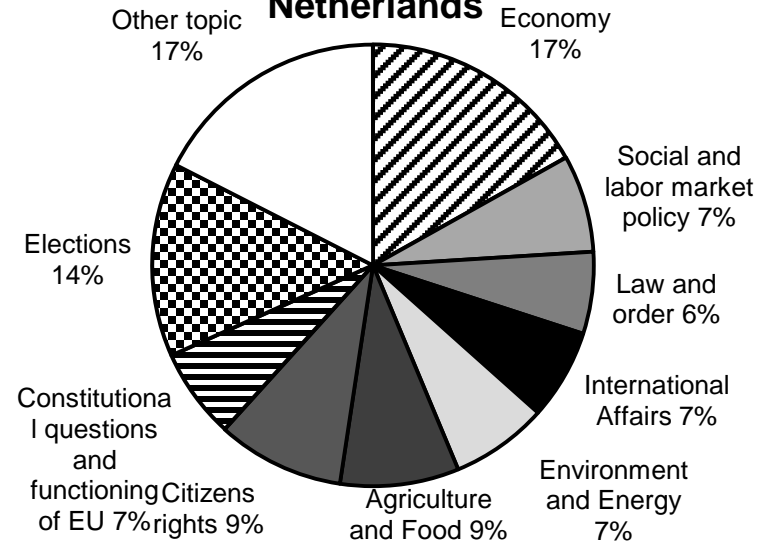
Issues in the 2014 EPE campaigns

Germany



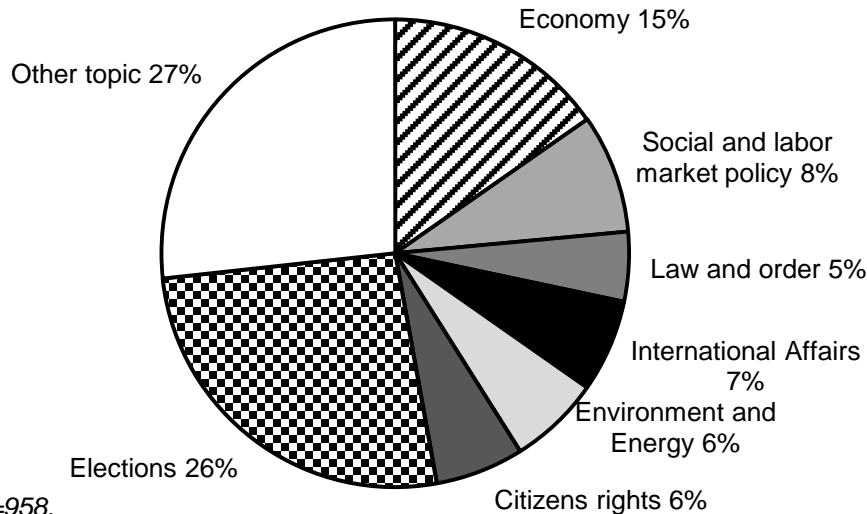
N = 303

Netherlands

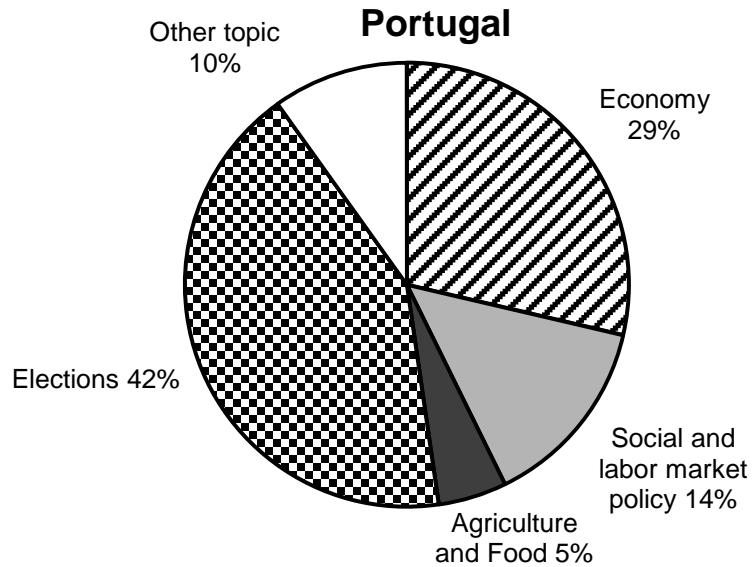


N=183.

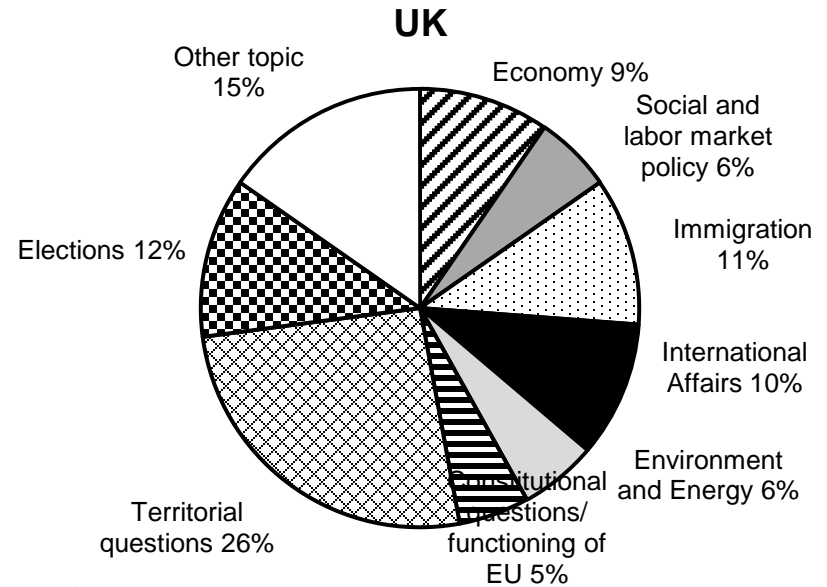
Austria



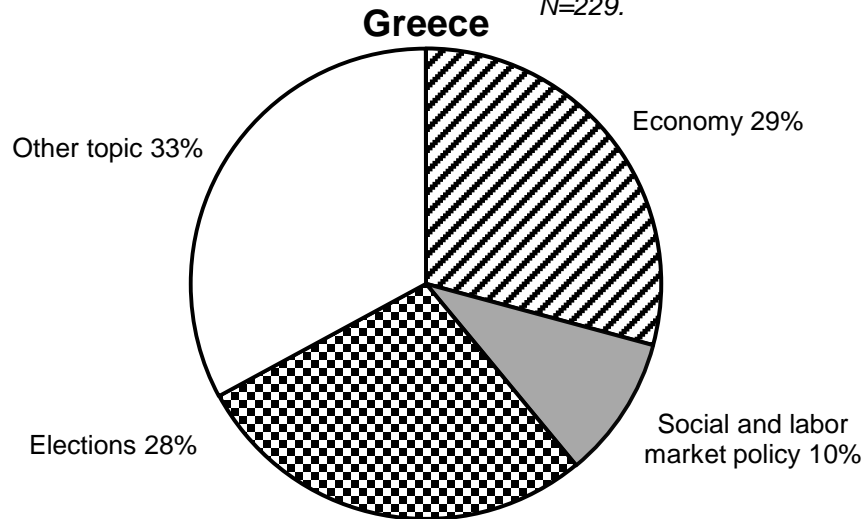
N=958.



N=341



N=229.



N=520.

Empirical findings

Issue focus – aggregated main issues per Party in UK (%)

	Europhile parties		Euroskeptic parties			All parties	
	%	N	Conservative	UKIP	BNP	%	N
Economy	11	12	33 (0.154)	12	4	10	22
Social and labor market policy	6	7	0	2	7	6	13
Education and Research	2	2	0	0	2	1	3
Law and order	2	2	0	0	7 (0.140)	3	7
Immigration	6	7	17	12	16 (0.162*)	11	25
International Affairs	6	7	17	5	19 (0.200**)	10	23
Culture and Other	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Environment and Energy	11	12	0	0	2	6	13
Infrastructure	4	4	0	0	2	2	5
Agriculture and Food	1	1	0	2	2	1	3
Consumer Protection	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Citizens rights	4	4	17	0	3	3	7
Constitutional questions and functioning of EU	3	3	0	17 (0.259**)	3	5	12
Territorial questions	34	38	17	24	15	26	59
Administration and bureaucracy	0	0	0	7 (0.234**)	0	1	3
Elections	11	12	0	12	15	12	27
Other topic	1	1	0	5	3	2	5
N		113	6	41	68		229

Comment. Cramer's V in parenthesis, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001.

Empirical findings

Issue focus – aggregated main issues per Party in Greece (%)

	Europhile parties		Euroskeptic parties					All parties	
	%	N	KKE	SYRIZA	ANEL	XA	LAOS	%	N
Economy	27	47	26	36 (0.106)	37	0	22	29	152
Social and labor market policy	5	8	18 (0.217***)	17 (0.203***)	3	0	3	10	50
Education and Research	5	8	1	1	0	0	0	1	4
Law and order	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Immigration	2	3	4 (0.113)	3	0	0	0	2	8
International Affairs	1	2	8	3	0	8	5	4	21
Culture and Other	2	4	0	0	3	0	0	2	10
Environment and Energy	4	7	2	6 (0.102)	2	0	3	3	17
Infrastructure	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Agriculture and Food	1	2	1	1	2	0	0	1	6
Consumer Protection	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Citizens rights	1	1	8	3	2	0	3	4	21
Constitutional questions and functioning of EU	1	1	4	3	2	0	11 (0.133)	4	18
Territorial questions	1	1	0	1	2	0	3	1	6
Administration and bureaucracy	5	8	1	4 (0.107)	2	31 (0.476***)	0	2	12
Elections	31	54	20	18	36	62 (0.167*)	49 (0.145*)	28	145
Other topic	12	21	7	4	11	0	3	8	41
N		177	85	143	62	13	37		517

Comment. Cramer's V in parenthesis, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001.

Empirical findings – Issue focus (Hypothesis 1a and b)

	Europhile vs. all Euroskeptik parties	Europhile vs. specific Euroskeptik parties
	Duncan index (0-100)	Duncan index of dissimilarity (0-100)
All countries	39.4	
Germany	38.5	Linke: 36.2, AfD: 40.8
Netherlands	63.1	SP: 47.6, PvdD: 63.6, CU-SGP: 61.0, PVV: 80.2
Austria	27.9	FPÖ: 27.1, BZÖ: 28.7
Portugal	29.4	CDU: 19.8, BE: 25.9, PCP: 42.7
UK	43.8	Conservative: 56.8, UKIP: 36.4, BNP: 38.1
Greece	33.4	KKE: 25.0, SYRIZA: 31.7, ANEL: 17.0, XA: 65.0, LAOS: 28.5

Comment: Higher values indicate lower correspondence in issue agendas of Europhile and all/specific Euroskeptik parties.

H1a: Euroskeptik challenger parties focus their campaign on other EU-issues than pro-European mainstream parties (adversarial strategy).

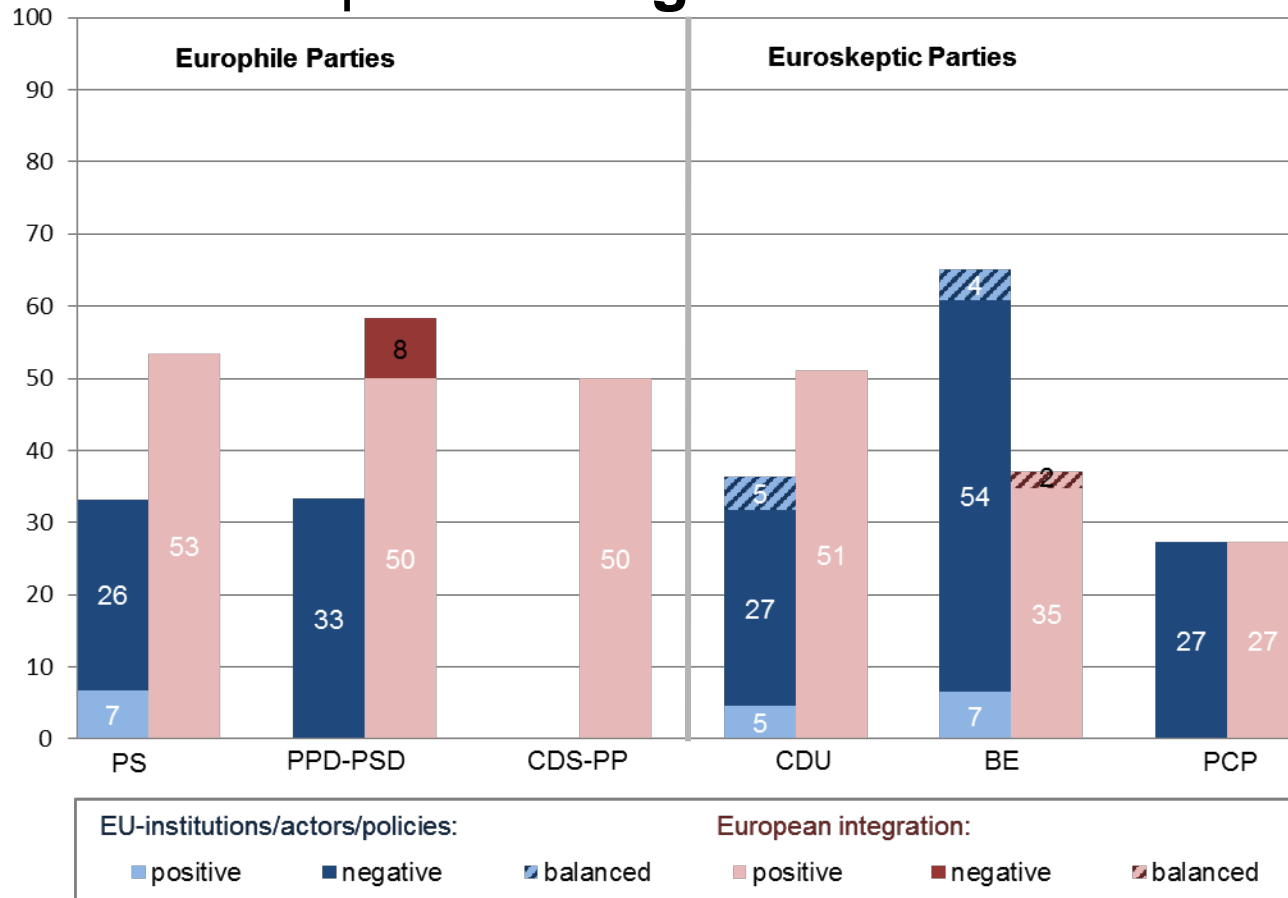
mostly

H1b: We expect this difference between Euroskeptik and pro-European parties to be less pronounced in EU-skeptik countries (co-orientation strategy).

reject

Empirical findings

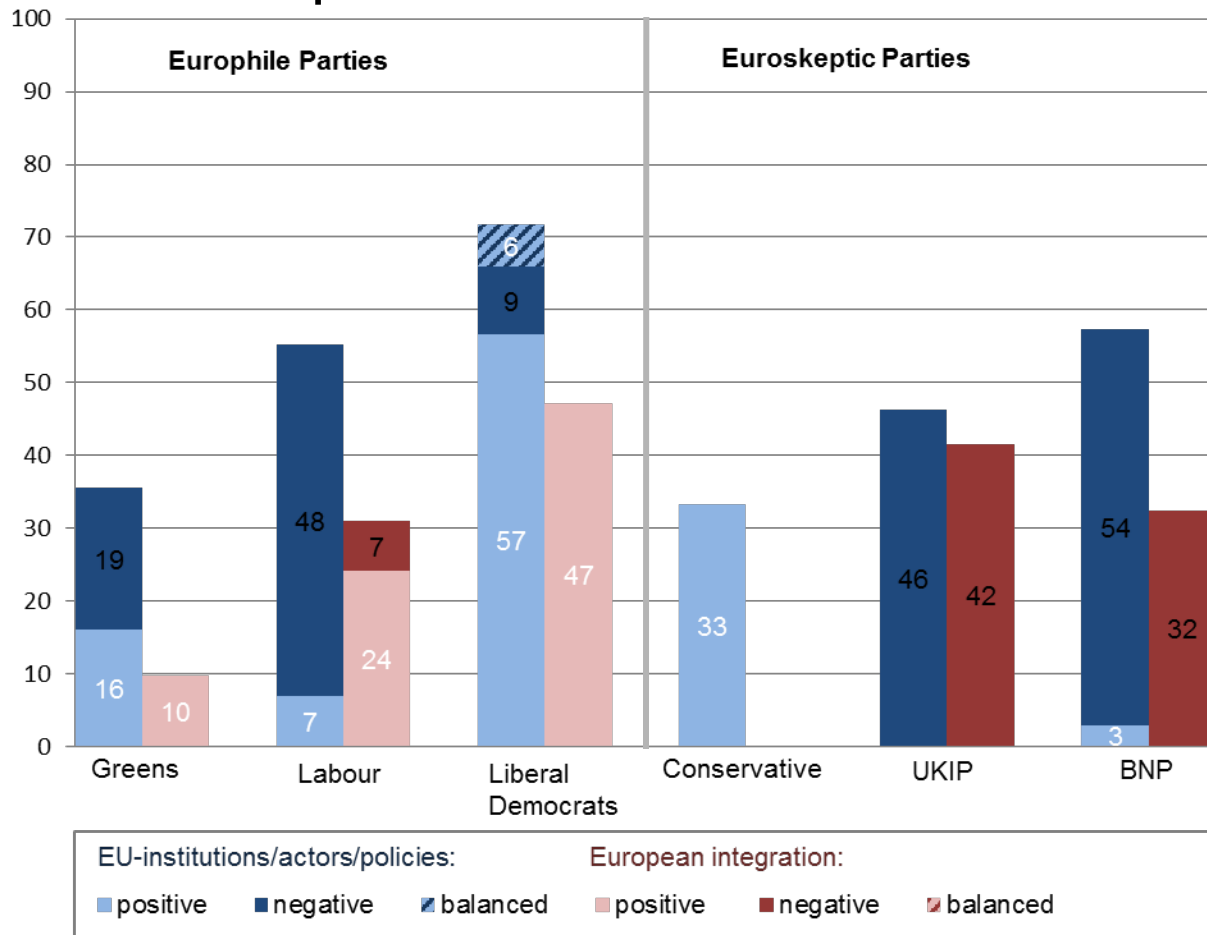
Opinions about Europe – Portugal in %



N=341.

Empirical findings

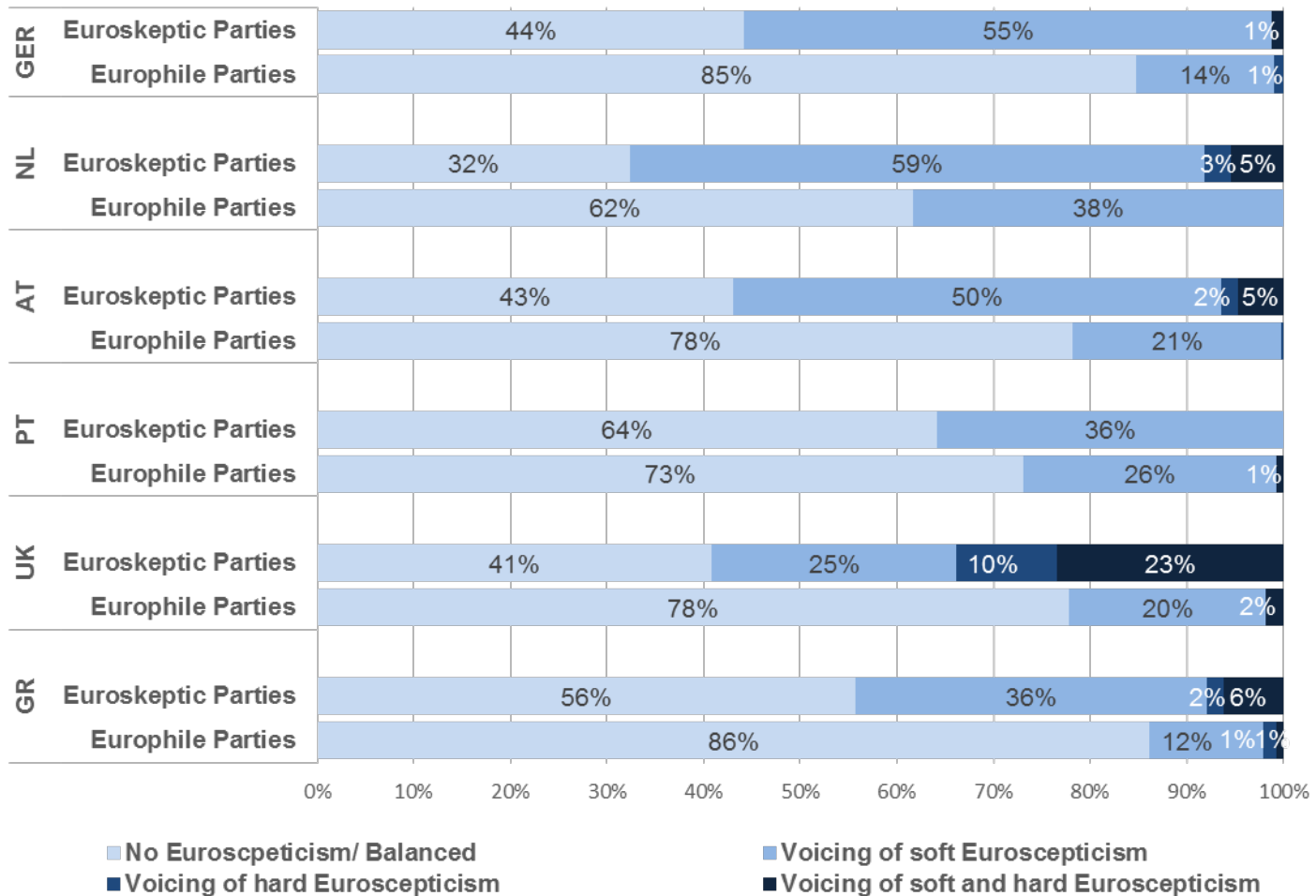
Opinions about Europe – UK in %



N=229.

Empirical findings

EU-Evaluations per country and party type (in %)



N=2446.

Empirical findings

Opinions about Europe (Hypothesis 2a)

H2a: Euroskeptic challenger parties criticize Europe more often (salience) and more fundamentally (type) than pro-European mainstream parties (adversarial strategy).

☑ Yes

	Euroskeptic parties	Europhile parties
Mean share of EU-critique (all) (%)	53	23
Mean share of hard Euroskepticism (%)	10	1
Mean share of soft Euroskepticism (%)	50	23

N=2510.

Empirical findings

Opinions about Europe (Hypothesis 2b)

Difference between Euroskeptic and Europhile parties

	EU-critique (all)	
EU- friendly ↓ EU- skeptical	Germany	41
	Netherlands	29
	Austria	35
	Portugal	9
	UK	37
	Greece	28

N=2510.

H2b: We expect this difference between Euroskeptic and pro-European parties to be less pronounced in EU-skeptical countries.

Reject

Conclusions

Issues

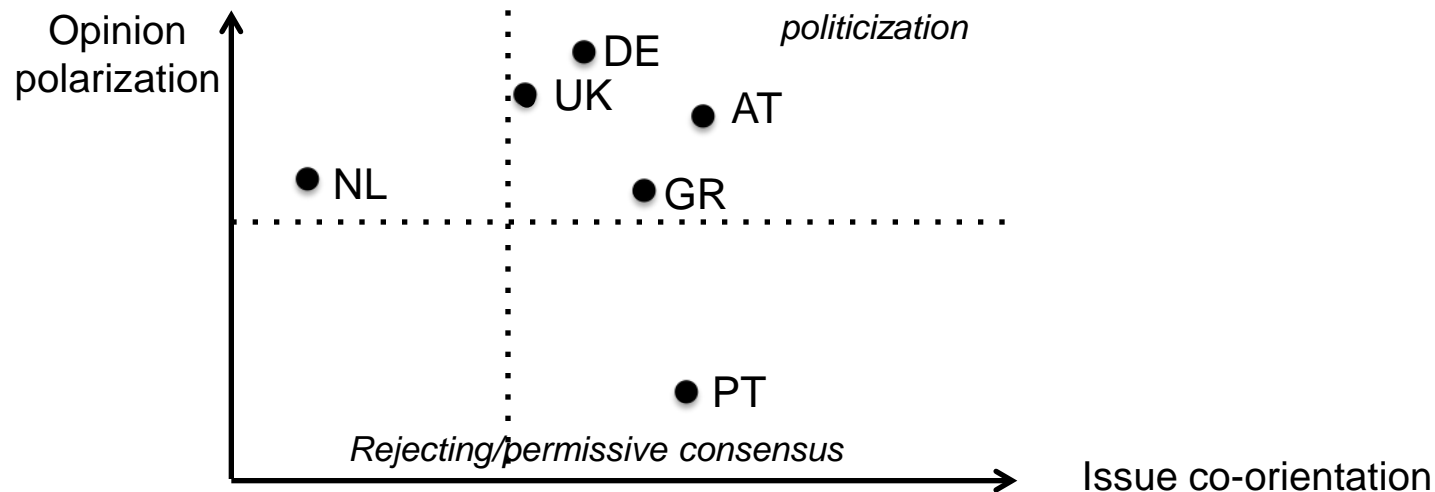
- Euroskeptic parties tend to choose an adversarial strategy, i.e. focus on other EU-issues than pro-European mainstream parties
- “We often find “administration and bureaucracy“, “immigration“ or “constitutional questions“ among them
- no systematic differences between EU-friendly and EU-skeptic countries

Opinions

- Almost no hard criticism voiced (less than 5%, except UK) and only from Euroskeptic parties.
- Again no systematic differences between EU-friendly and EU-skeptic countries

Conclusions

Politicization = issue co-orientation AND opinion polarization



Future studies

- Impact of ideological proximity
- Silencing strategy as a third alternative

Thank you very much for your attention!