


# Divergent Attitudes of Eurosceptic Parties Towards Intergovernmental and Supranational EU Institutions

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## Abstract

How do Eurosceptic parties position themselves regarding individual European Union (EU) institutions? Using Euromanifesto data from 1979 to 2019, this study addresses this question by disaggregating the attitudes of party families towards separate intergovernmental and supranational EU institutions. It focuses on the relationship between the identities of radical left- and right-wing parties and Euroscepticism. The findings reveal that post-communist parties are more sceptical of intergovernmental institutions than nationalist parties, whilst nationalist parties are more sceptical of supranational institutions. Despite widespread Euroscepticism in both nationalist and post-communist party families, nationalist parties' attitudes towards intergovernmental institutions align with those of other party families. In contrast, post-communist parties support the transfer of more competences to the European Parliament but are sceptical of intergovernmental institutions. These results suggest that foundational party identities influence party-based Euroscepticism, which has implications for the EU's handling of increasing Euroscepticism.

**Keywords:** Euroscepticism; Eurosceptic party families; intergovernmental institutions; supranational institutions

## Introduction

Right-wing Eurosceptic parties – such as the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, the German *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)* and the Hungarian *Fidesz* – criticise the erosion of national sovereignty and the transfer of competences to European Union (EU) institutions (Brack, 2013, 2018). They question the relevance of the European Parliament (EP) and advocate for its discontinuation (Anderson, 2019; Collins, 2021). Conversely, post-communist and left-wing parties, including the German *Die Linke* and Spanish *Podemos*, support strengthening the EP's competences (Brack, 2020). This divergence raises questions regarding the positions of radical left- and right-wing parties towards individual EU institutions. Our study addresses this issue by disaggregating Eurosceptic party families' attitudes towards intergovernmental and supranational institutions.

The rise of Eurosceptic parties has led to a burgeoning literature investigating the role of Eurosceptic parties in the EU's politicisation following the global financial crisis (Hutter and Grande, 2014) and their impact on EU politics and policies (Börzel et al., 2023; Braun et al., 2016; Braun et al., 2019; Kantola and Miller, 2021). This body of literature demonstrates that the contestation of European integration is increasing at both the national and European levels (Csehi and Zgut, 2021; Nicoli, 2017; Ripoll Servent and Panning, 2019; Serricchio et al., 2013; Treib, 2021). Building on the existing literature, this study makes three major contributions. *First*, we examine the positions of radical left- and right-wing Eurosceptic parties towards EU institutions. Whilst

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) explored the depth of Euroscepticism using the terms ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Eurosceptic party, we extend their work by investigating the nexus between party-family identities and the targets of Euroscepticism. *Second*, this study addresses the polity aspect of Euroscepticism. We analysed Eurosceptic parties’ attitudes towards EU institutions at a more granular level by distinguishing between intergovernmental and supranational institutions. *Third*, our approach recognises that Euroscepticism, defined as opposition to the EU, is not merely a question of European integration but also concerns the type of integration – more or less intergovernmentalism or supranationalism. Thus, our study provides a more nuanced understanding of polity-based Euroscepticism, building upon the distinction made by Kopecký and Mudde (2002) regarding specific and diffuse support for the EU. We argue that these two dimensions are significantly more interdependent than previously assumed.

Empirically, we explore the varied nature of the Euroscepticism expressed by different party families by focusing on how opposition towards EU institutions differs between the two most Eurosceptic party families, the nationalist and post-communist parties,<sup>1</sup> and the remaining parties. Hooghe et al. (2002) were amongst the first to study the impact of left–right party structure on European integration. Building on this work, we focus on the attitudes of different party families towards intergovernmental and supranational institutions. Thus, this study embraces the North Carolina School’s approach, which considers parties as institutional bearers of ideological tradition by disaggregating Eurosceptic party families’ positions on the European Council, Council of the EU (hereafter, the Council), European Commission (henceforth, the Commission), European Central Bank (ECB), European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the EP.

This study contributes to the literature both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, it focuses on identifying which EU institutions are the ‘targets of opposition’ for Eurosceptic parties. In this process, we scrutinise a sub-set of the attitudes of radical left- and right-wing Eurosceptic parties towards intergovernmental and supranational institutions. Empirically, our contribution builds on the Euromanifesto dataset (Carteny et al., 2023)<sup>2</sup> and encompasses all EP election cycles from 1979 to 2019. We utilise previously overlooked data points to analyse the attitudes of Eurosceptic parties towards the supranational and intergovernmental underpinnings of the EU. The dataset includes parties from all EU member countries that secured representation in an election, or in the two preceding elections, for each year (Carteny et al., 2023).<sup>3</sup> It comprises 1127 party manifestos by 386 parties from nine distinct EP elections.

This study posits that nationalist and post-communist parties are less inclined to endorse the delegation of competences to supranational and intergovernmental EU institutions compared to Europhile party families (see also Braun et al., 2019). It anticipates that post-communist Eurosceptic parties will be particularly critical of intergovernmental institutions, namely the European Council and the Council of the EU. Conversely, nationalist parties are expected to express greater scepticism towards the empowerment of

<sup>1</sup>The term ‘post-communist’ is used in line with the party family categories of the Euromanifesto Project. It describes radical left parties that identify or have identified as communist or have communist roots. These parties, competing in elections across the EU, should not be conflated with post-communist countries.

<sup>2</sup>The analysis utilises version 3.0.0 (2023-05-31) of the publicly available Euromanifesto Study dataset, available at <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.14120>. R files can be provided upon request.

<sup>3</sup>Our analysis excludes manifestos for the EU-wide party groups.

supranational institutions such as the Commission, ECJ, ECB and EP. Our findings reveal that nationalist and post-communist parties are, overall, the most Euro-sceptic and least supportive of most EU institutions relative to other parties. However, there are some notable exceptions. The attitudes of nationalist parties towards intergovernmental institutions are as supportive as those of ‘Europhile’ party families, and post-communist parties show almost equal support for the EP as other parties.

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. Section I briefly reviews the literature on Euro-scepticism and its associated caveats regarding the EU polity. Section II introduces a framework for examining the attitudes of nationalist and post-communist parties towards EU institutions. Section III presents an empirical analysis comparing the attitudes of different party families towards EU institutions. Section IV summarises the principal findings and their implications for the analysis of the European integration process.

## I. Euro-scepticism and EU Institutions

Euro-scepticism is a multifaceted political phenomenon (Bijmans, 2020) that encapsulates a critical stance on the European integration process (Crespy and Verschueren, 2009). Taggart and Szczerbiak (2004) differentiate between ‘hard’ Euro-scepticism, an outright opposition to EU integration, and ‘soft’ Euro-scepticism, which represents a more conditional opposition. Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p. 300) distinguish between diffuse support for the European integration and specific support for EU practices. Thereby, they introduced a typology of four possible attitudes towards the EU and European integration: Euro-enthusiasts, Euro-sceptics, Europragmatists and Eurorejects. Euro-enthusiasts support both the EU and European integration. Euro-sceptics, in turn, are in favour of European integration but oppose its current shape in the EU. Europragmatists oppose the principle of integration but support some aspects of the EU. Finally, Eurorejects oppose both the EU in its current form and the principle of European integration (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002, pp. 302–304). Euro-scepticism combines Europhile positions – supporting the idea of European integration – with EU-pessimism, defined as criticism of the current state of the integration process. However, the interactions between these components and their impact on EU institutions remain underexplored.

Whilst the existing literature primarily focuses on the depth of Euro-scepticism, little is known about the specific targets of party-level opposition. When discussing Euro-scepticism, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) mention power transfers regarding supranational institutions (cf. Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2018). Recent studies indicate that Euro-sceptic parties emphasise constitutive issues more than policy-related criticism in EP elections (Braun et al., 2016), with both far-right and far-left parties becoming increasingly critical in their assessment of the EU polity between 2009 and 2014 (Braun et al., 2019). Other research links party-level and individual Euro-scepticism (De Vries, 2018) and shows that left-wing and right-wing Euro-sceptics differ in their motivations and objects of criticism (Van Elsas et al., 2016).

At the individual level, Krouwel and Abts (2007) identify various ‘targets of discontent’ by examining oppositional attitudes towards the EU polity and institutions from a responsiveness and fairness perspective. However, they do not differentiate between EU institutions. Vasilopoulou (2011) identifies four aspects of European integration,

including the institutional status quo and the creation of a European polity. She categorizes radical right parties into ‘rejecting’, ‘conditional’ – which involve strong opposition to supranationalism – and ‘compromising’, noting that these parties only agree on a cultural definition of Europe and on their opposition to the EU polity. However, she neither considers radical left Eurosceptic parties nor differentiates between individual supranational institutions. Boomgaarden et al. (2011), in turn, examine policy-making at the EU level and identify five dimensions of public attitudes towards the EU, including a ‘strengthening dimension’ that refers to ‘further deepening and widening the EU’ (Boomgaarden et al., 2011, p. 250). We build on this research in two ways. First, we complement this literature by differentiating between intergovernmental and supranational EU institutions. Second, we study both radical left- and right-wing Eurosceptic parties.

In doing so, this study deepens research by mapping Eurosceptic party positions on individual EU institutions. This approach suggests that Euroscepticism necessitates further disentanglement and posits that party identity, rather than strategic decisions, influences parties’ Eurosceptic views. We disaggregate the attitudes of radical left- and right-wing parties towards intergovernmental and supranational EU institutions by focusing on their preferences for different EU institutional designs over time. The relevance of this approach is demonstrated by its relationship with long-term party-family identities in EP elections.

## II. Party-Level Euroscepticism and EU Institutions

What are the attitudes of post-communist and nationalist Eurosceptic parties towards EU institutions? Drawing on Kopecký and Mudde (2002), this study hypothesises that diffuse support influences specific support for the EU amongst these parties. Parties advocating a closer union through intergovernmental bargaining may be highly critical of any further extension of competence to supranational institutions. Their specific support could be based on the current institutional state of the EU, reflecting the diffuse ideal of the European integration. We propose that Eurosceptic party families harbour different visions of EU integration, which are reflected in their negative attitudes towards specific EU institutions. These parties may support either an intergovernmental or a supranational institutional dimension of European integration. Extensive literature on the EU has identified divergent visions of the union. Russo and Cotta (2013) observed that members of the EP hold three distinct views of the EU: a federal perspective that supports the Commission and criticises national governments, an intergovernmentalist perspective that favours the role of national governments and is critical of the Commission and a compounded view that supports both national and supranational actors.

Schmidt (2012) differentiates between a pragmatic discourse favouring the intergovernmental EU and a normative discourse supporting a political union. Brack (2012) expands on this distinction by defining the intergovernmentalist and institutionalised perspectives of Eurosceptic members of the EP. The intergovernmentalist perspective supports co-operation between member states through unanimity at the Council, whilst the institutionalised perspective favours limited institutionalised co-operation and sovereignty transfer, linked to strengthening oversight mechanisms (more transparency and accountability mechanisms) in the EU polity. Hooghe et al.’s (2002) seminal study on party attitudes towards European integration use left–right and GAL-TAN

differentiations. Subsequent studies have shown that extreme positions on the left–right scale are more likely to be Euro-sceptic (De Vries and Edwards, 2009). However, some studies suggest that focusing solely on right- or left-leaning ideologies does not fully explain Euro-sceptic parties' attitudes towards the EU. For instance, Prosser (2016) contends that party positions on European integration can be better comprehended through a two-dimensional approach to ideology. Schäfer et al. (2021) similarly distinguished between economic right/left and cultural/authoritarian dimensions.

Pro- and anti-EU views are spread across a complex matrix of debates on globalization, economic liberalization, liberal values, the welfare state, diversity and representation (McMahon and Kaiser, 2022, p. 4). Thus, we propose using party family affiliation as an alternative explanation for the different types of Euro-scepticism. Whilst a shared ideology is often a key aspect of a party family, party families encapsulate more than just one ideology. They reflect on what parties are rather than what they do (Mair and Mudde, 1998), including considerations of their origins, traditional support base and identities. Party-family affiliation is more stable than ideological views expressed in individual party manifestos, which are likely to change over time and across parties within a party family. We suggest that these relatively stable political identities shared by party families are the main drivers of different attitudes towards the EU.

Given the specific interests and ideologies that Euro-sceptic party families claim to represent, this study focuses on what we term 'nationalist' and 'post-communist' parties, encompassing both established and emerging radical left-wing parties. These labels, derived from the Euromanifesto project, acknowledge the overlap between party family identity and a left-/right-wing ideology scale. Typically, these two-party families fall on opposite extremes of the left-/right-wing spectrum. However, there are clear distinctions between party families and right-/left-wing ideologies (Mair and Mudde, 1998). Nationalist parties do not necessarily endorse traditional right-wing economic policies, and their position on the right–left wing scale can be inconsistent. Similarly, Wagner (2022) argues that radical left-wing parties should not be viewed as unidimensional entities focused solely on economic aspects but also as political actors whose non-economic positioning is significant. Given these considerations, our first hypothesis posits that party-family identity is a crucial dimension for understanding Euro-scepticism:

*H1*: Nationalist and post-communist parties are more Euro-sceptic than other party families.

In the second step of our analysis, we anticipated that nationalist and post-communist party families would exhibit more EU-critical stances, rooted in their ideological backgrounds. Post-communist parties, often categorized as radical-left (cf. Gomez et al., 2016), typically espouse anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist/neo-liberal positions, whilst advocating for social and political equality (see also Heldt and Mahrenbach, 2020; Vaduchova and Hooghe, 2009). Despite various classifications of radical left-wing parties, a common thread is their opposition to neo-liberalism. However, their views on institutional arrangements such as federalism and intergovernmentalism remain ambiguous (cf. Charalambous, 2011). Post-communist parties frequently champion internationalism (March and Mudde, 2005) or cosmopolitanism and are characterised as 'fundamentally "strongly internationalist"' (Wagner, 2022, p. 1071). They resist the risk of exploitation associated with nationalism (Heine, 2010) and challenge 'the capacity of national

governments to carry out redistributive policies' (Beaudonnet and Gomez, 2017, p. 320). We classify post-communist parties as Eurosceptic parties not only because of their critical view of the EU's economic direction but also because they propose alternative political power structures that challenge what they term the 'ultraliberalism of European technocrats with the complicity of national governments' (Beaudonnet and Gomez, 2017, p. 331). Whilst Halikiopoulou et al. (2012) posit that radical left-wing parties pursued economic and territorial nationalism, Charalambous (2013) critiques the operationalization of nationalism. Nonetheless, if we accept the nationalist premise, radical left-wing Eurosceptic parties are predicted to resist any form of imperialism that could jeopardise the popular classes.

Therefore, we anticipate that post-communist parties will be highly critical of intergovernmental institutions that could potentially consolidate the influence of major powers. However, their stance on supranational institutions is more nuanced. First, their advocacy for Keynesian policies and state intervention in the economy leads them to criticise any constraining regulatory institution, such as the Commission. They perceive the single market as a mechanism for further deregulation by the industrial sector and, hence, a vehicle for socio-economic exploitation. They also resist the limitations imposed by the economic and monetary unions and the ECB. Second, post-communist parties often emphasise the significance of popular sovereignty (cf. Halikiopoulou et al., 2012). Radical left-wing parties frequently promote radical democracy, solidarity and equality (Beaudonnet and Gomez, 2017), advocate for more participatory practices (Gomez et al., 2016) and express dissatisfaction with the democratic system (Ramiro, 2016). Consequently, they prefer institutions that better represent the general will (directly elected institutions) to non-majoritarian institutions that is neither directly elected nor governed by directly elected individuals (Thatcher and Stone Sweet, 2022). For instance, Kaiser (2022) illustrate how communist Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) criticised national governments for opposing the expansion of EP powers in the 1980s. Based on these observations, we propose the following hypotheses:

*H2A:* Compared with other party families, post-communist parties are more sceptical of transferring (further) competences to intergovernmental institutions.

*H2B:* Compared with other party families, post-communist parties are more sceptical of transferring (further) competences to supranational institutions, but less sceptical than nationalist parties.

Despite the diversity in their stance on European integration (Vasilopoulou, 2011), radical right parties perceive the current trajectory of the EU as excessively empowering supranational institutions at the expense of national sovereignty (cf. Halikiopoulou et al., 2012). They regard European integration as a mechanism that undermines the nation-state, national identity and state sovereignty (Startin, 2018, p. 78). Consequently, they consider intergovernmental decision-making as the only format that ensures democratic legitimacy and sovereignty. They believe that transnational decision-making should be conducted by duly elected national officials rather than by supranational institutions. In essence, nationalist parties advocate an 'intergovernmental vision of a European "community of sovereign states"' (McMahon, 2022, p. 10) and reject any notion of a federalist

understanding of the EU. Based on these observations, we propose the following hypotheses:

*H3A:* Compared with other party families, nationalist parties are more sceptical of transferring (further) competences to supranational institutions.

*H3B:* Compared with other party families, nationalist parties are not more sceptical of transferring (further) competences to intergovernmental institutions.

### III. Research Design: Data and Methods

#### Data

To validate our hypotheses, we employed data from the Euromanifesto project, which has consistently coded party manifestos for all EP elections since 1979 (Carteny et al., 2023). These manifestos, as a reliable and frequently used data source, enable us to measure party positions on European integration (Braun et al., 2019; Marks et al., 2007; Schäfer et al., 2021) and compare Euro-sceptic parties' attitudes towards EU institutions over time.

The Euromanifesto project categorises each 'quasi-sentence' in manifestos into specific policy areas, determining whether the sentence supports or opposes a specific policy issue. The dataset provides a percentage for each code, representing the proportion of the manifesto composed of quasi-sentences with that code. Additionally, the coding scheme also differentiates between national, regional and European policy levels for each code. Consequently, there are at least two measures for each concept of interest: a positive and a negative mention. To assess the overall position on EU institutions, it is crucial to consider how these codes are scaled into a single measure to assess an overall position on EU institutions. Following Lowe et al. (2011), we calculate the scales for each of the dependent variables using the following logarithmic scale:

$$\text{Support}_{EU\text{institution}} = \log \frac{\text{Pro}_{\text{sentences}} + 0.5}{\text{Anti}_{\text{sentences}} + 0.5}$$

In line with the Euromanifesto dataset, we used relative percentages to calculate the dependent variables. The above formula resulted in a scale ranging from  $-5.3$  to  $5.3$ , where positive values indicate overall support for an issue in a manifesto (i.e., more positive than negative mentions of a concept), and negative values indicate overall opposition. This scale accounts for both the salience and position of a concept with a decreasing marginal effect for each additional mention.<sup>4</sup> A zero value indicates either a lack of mention of a specific concept in a manifesto or an equal number of positive and negative mentions. However, we interpret a party's position on an issue as neutral if it does not mention it in its manifesto, assuming that parties with strong views would typically highlight these positions. This assumption may be contentious, considering the generally low salience of

<sup>4</sup>See also Appendices S4 and S5.

EU issues in party politics, a point Mudde (2012) has referred to as the Achilles' heel of Euroscepticism studies. Therefore, we coded alternative variables with missing values when the manifestos did not mention an institution, allowing us to test whether our results would differ if we included manifestos that explicitly mentioned each institution.<sup>5</sup> In this way, we obtain the best possible notion of the attitudes parties have given the available data. However, an inevitable weakness is that we cannot know what parties believe about the issues they do not mention.

We used the Euromanifesto project codes to measure the dependent variables of support for specific EU institutions, focusing on mentions of the transfer of competence. This approach diverges from previous studies on Euroscepticism and views of supranationalism and intergovernmentalism, which are typically framed in terms of decision-making rules (Conti and Memoli, 2012; Treib, 2021). Schäfer et al. (2023) discovered that the Eurosceptic parties' preferred option in the supranational-intergovernmental dimension was decision-making under qualified majority rule, necessitating a more in-depth examination. Our analysis categorises mentions of the European Council and the Council as examples of intergovernmental institutions and the EP, EC, ECJ and ECB as supranational institutions. These institutions are mentioned with varying frequency in the manifestos, revealing patterns in the party families that mention them the most and the manner of these mentions. Each category includes one positive and one negative code,<sup>6</sup> thus providing a comprehensive picture of party positions on each institution and the attention they receive, despite the broader nature of the codes.

We also incorporated measures of overall support for European integration and combined support for all EU supranational institutions.<sup>7</sup> These measures were constructed by summarising lists of positive and negative items, which were then scaled similarly to the individual measures using the following formula inspired by Lowe et al. (2011):

$$Support_{concept} = \log \frac{\sum Pro_{sentences} + 0.5}{\sum Anti_{sentences} + 0.5}$$

To measure the overall specific support for supranational institutions, we combined the four positive and negative codes indicating support for the Commission, EP, ECJ and ECB. For overall support for European integration, we used the list of items suggested by the Euromanifesto project and rescaled it using Lowe et al.'s (2011) logit method, which includes 18 pro-EU and 21 anti-EU variables.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup>See Appendix S5 for further details.

<sup>6</sup>According to the Euromanifesto codebook, a positive code includes: '[All] positive mentions of the [institution] in general. Need to maintain or increase the legislative power and/or competences of the [institution] and/or of [its members]. Favourable mentions of the [institution] pertaining to the democratization of the EC/EU.' Negative codes include: '[All] negative mentions of the [institutions] in general. Need to cutback or decrease the legislative power and/or competences of the [institution] and/or of [institution].'

<sup>7</sup>Support for the European Council and the Council are coded together.

<sup>8</sup>Pro-EU variables from the Euromanifesto dataset: per\_v[x]\_108a + per\_v2\_203a + per\_v2\_3011a + per\_v2\_306a + per\_v2\_308a + per\_v2\_310a + per\_v2\_3101a + per\_v2\_312a + per\_v2\_314a + per\_v2\_3141a + per\_v2\_316a + per\_v2\_3161a + per\_v2\_4011a + per\_v2\_4084a + per\_v2\_601a + per\_v1\_601b. Anti-EU variables from the Euromanifesto dataset: per\_v[x]\_108b + per\_v1\_1081b + per\_v2\_203b + per\_v2\_3011b + per\_v2\_306b + per\_v2\_308b + per\_v2\_310b + per\_v2\_3101b + per\_v2\_312b + per\_v2\_314b + per\_v2\_3141b + per\_v2\_316b + per\_v2\_3161b + per\_v2\_318a + per\_v2\_4011b + per\_v2\_4084b + per\_v2\_4086b + per\_v2\_601b + per\_v1\_601a.



Table 1: Overview of Dependent Variables Including Descriptive Statistics.

Statistic	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. dev.</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Pctl(25)</i>	<i>Pctl(75)</i>	<i>Max</i>
Overall EU attitude	1127	0.76	1.75	-5.30	-0.18	1.98	5.02
European Parliament	1127	0.69	0.96	-4.08	0.00	1.37	4.59
European Commission	1127	-0.03	0.65	-3.31	0.00	0.00	4.43
European Council	1127	0.01	0.43	-2.07	0.00	0.00	2.40
European Court of Justice	1127	0.03	0.32	-2	0	0	2
European Central Bank	1127	0.01	0.42	-2	0	0	3
Supranational institutions index	1127	0.58	1.12	-4.08	0.00	1.35	4.59

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for each variable. On average, most party manifestos were predominantly positive towards EU integration (mean = 0.76), although attitudes varied widely across the manifestos, with minimum and maximum values approaching the theoretical extremes of the scale. Support for the EP similarly ranged from extensive support (max = 4.59) to high opposition (min = -4.08), with a lower standard deviation and a range between the first and third quartiles indicating a clustering of manifestos around the zero value. This clustering was even more pronounced for the other four EU institutions, where the quartiles showed that more than half of all manifestos had a value of zero.

The views of the parties regarding the Commission exhibited less variation than those of the EP, with some party manifestos expressing strong support or opposition. The three remaining EU institutions – the ECJ, ECB and EC – garnered lower values, potentially indicating more moderate views. However, it is likely that these institutions received much less attention in party manifestos. The overall measure for supranational institutions closely mirrored the manifesto views on the EP, which received significantly more attention than other supranational institutions.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the EP had a greater impact on the combined measure than the positions on the other institutions. Given the observed differences in the distributions of the positions on the individual supranational institutions, we included all of them separately in the subsequent analysis and in the combined measure. The ECB and ECJ were mentioned less frequently in the manifestos than the other institutions. However, to test the hypotheses on supranational versus intergovernmental institutions, it was necessary to include all supranational mentions in the combined measure. It should be noted that this measure is likely driven primarily by attitudes towards the EP and the Commission.

### *Independent and Control Variables*

Our hypotheses aimed to identify the distinguishing factors between nationalist and post-communist Euro-sceptic parties and other party families in their attitudes towards EU institutions. The independent variable of interest was the party family classification of each manifesto, using the '*pfamily*' categories from the Euromanifesto project. For simplicity, we grouped party families into three categories: *nationalist parties*, *post-communist parties* and a combined group of all *other parties*, which included *green*, *social democratic*,

<sup>9</sup>Appendix S5 provides an overview of the frequency of institutional mentions in the manifestos.

*liberal, Christian democratic, conservative, agrarian, regional and special interest parties.*<sup>10</sup> The post-communist party family, as defined by the Euromanifesto dataset's *pfamily* variable, encompasses traditional communist parties such as the French Communist Party (until 1999), established radical left parties like Germany's *Die Linke* and emerging radical left parties such as Spain's *Podemos* and Greece's *Syriza*. Whilst there are notable diversities within this category (Keith and March, 2023), these parties share enough of an identity, support base, and history to be considered as one party family, allowing us to analyse consistent patterns over time for this group of parties.

To test our hypotheses on how party families influence support for specific EU institutions, we computed several mixed-effect multilevel models with separate random intercepts for election years and parties nested within countries. Therefore, the data are clustered into parties nested in countries and crossed with election years. This approach allowed us to account for the country-specific factors that could influence each election year.<sup>11</sup> The models also included fixed-effect control variables previously identified as influencing party-level Euroscepticism (Braun et al., 2019; Schäfer et al., 2021). These variables include party size (measured as a percentage of the vote share in the last national election), whether the party was part of a national government at the time of the EP election, and the length of the manifesto (measured by the number of quasi-sentences).<sup>12</sup> We also controlled for whether the parties originated from former communist countries and whether they were from old or new member countries. However, these dimensions did not affect our results.<sup>13</sup> We conducted seven mixed-effect multilevel models to predict the overall support for European integration, support for each specific EU institution and combined support for all supranational EU institutions. Table 2 presents the fixed-effects coefficients of these models.<sup>14</sup>

## IV. Results

### *Overall Support for European Integration Amongst Party Families*

The first column of Table 2 demonstrates that the EP manifestos of both post-communist and nationalist party families were significantly ( $p > 0.01$ ) more Eurosceptic than those of other parties (reference group), thereby confirming our initial hypothesis. On a scale where a value of  $\pm 5.3$  signifies that every sentence in a manifesto discusses European integration in either negative or positive terms, post-communist parties scored an average of 1.22 lower, whilst nationalist party manifestos scored 2.12 lower. The model also indicates a tendency for parties in government and larger parties to take a more positive stance on EU integration.

<sup>10</sup>Analyses were also conducted without grouping the remaining party families together. These analyses revealed that the nationalist and post-communist party families are the most Eurosceptic overall. See Appendix S3 for model results and Appendix S2 for mean values for each party family and Appendix S1 for more details about the included parties.

<sup>11</sup>Our approach aligns with that of Schäfer et al. (2021).

<sup>12</sup>Whilst some manifestos were brief, they referenced the delegation of powers to particular institutions. A single mention could therefore constitute a significant portion of the manifesto's content, particularly if the manifesto is short. To prevent overestimation of the impact of these mentions, we controlled for the total length of the party manifesto.

<sup>13</sup>Consequently, we excluded these controls from the final models (refer to Appendices S7 and S8 for models incorporating controls for the east/west and old/new dimensions). We express our gratitude to a reviewer for highlighting this issue.

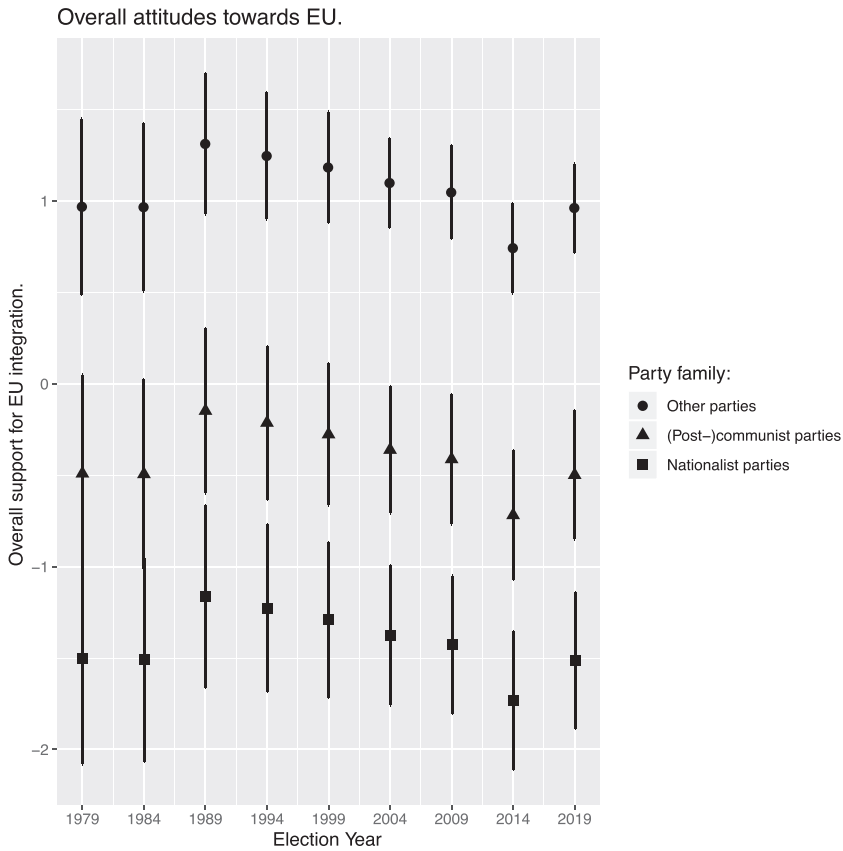
<sup>14</sup>We did not report variations in random effects because they were only included to account for country, party and election-specific effects.

Table 2: Fixed Coefficients of Mixed Effects Models With Random Intercepts for Parties, Clustered Within Countries and Crossed With Election Years.

	Overall EU sentiment Model 1	European Parliament Model 2	European Commission Model 3	European Council Model 4	European Court of Justice Model 5	European Central Bank Model 6	Supranational institutions index Model 7
Post-communist	-1.224*** (0.198)	-0.131 (0.114)	-0.187** (0.078)	-0.142*** (0.051)	-0.075** (0.035)	-0.270*** (0.047)	-0.422*** (0.131)
Nationalist	-2.124*** (0.199)	-0.719*** (0.120)	-0.357*** (0.083)	-0.035 (0.055)	-0.158*** (0.039)	-0.146*** (0.052)	-0.999*** (0.137)
In government	0.379*** (0.090)	0.047 (0.064)	0.159*** (0.045)	0.017 (0.031)	0.043* (0.022)	0.064** (0.030)	0.197*** (0.071)
Party size (in last national election)	0.019*** (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)	0.005*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.004 (0.003)
Manifesto length	0.00004 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001* (0.00004)	-0.00001 (0.00003)	0.0001*** (0.00002)	0.00003 (0.00003)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Constant	0.698*** (0.112)	0.792*** (0.098)	-0.111** (0.048)	-0.046 (0.032)	0.062** (0.031)	-0.005 (0.029)	0.599*** (0.097)
N	1021	1021	1021	1021	1021	1021	1021
Log likelihood	-1700.899	-1317.472	-965.050	-587.250	-242.085	-557.874	-1433.908
AIC	3421.798	2654.943	1950.099	1194.501	504.170	1135.749	2887.817
BIC	3471.083	2704.229	1999.385	1243.786	553.455	1185.034	2937.102

Notes: 'Post-communist' and 'nationalist' are dummy variables for a nominal variable, with 'other parties' as a reference category. \*  $p < 0.1$ . \*\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Figure 1: Predicted Attitudes Towards European Integration Conditional on Election Year and Party Family With All Additional Control Variables in the Model Held at Their Mean Values (Party Size: 14.58%; Manifesto Length: 284 Quasi-Sentences) or the Reference Value (Not in Government).



Notes: Vertical lines represent 95% confidence intervals. The figure is based on the mixed-effect model with random intercepts for countries and fixed-effect dummy variables for each election year (see Appendix S10 for similar graphs for each institution).

However, this model does not allow for the exploration of temporal trends as it only permits random variations for each election year in each country. Consequently, we ran an alternative model incorporating fixed-effect coefficients for each election year and random intercepts for countries only. The fixed-effects coefficients of interest from this model were nearly identical to those from the previous model<sup>15</sup> enabling us to calculate the marginal effects over time, as depicted in Figure 1.

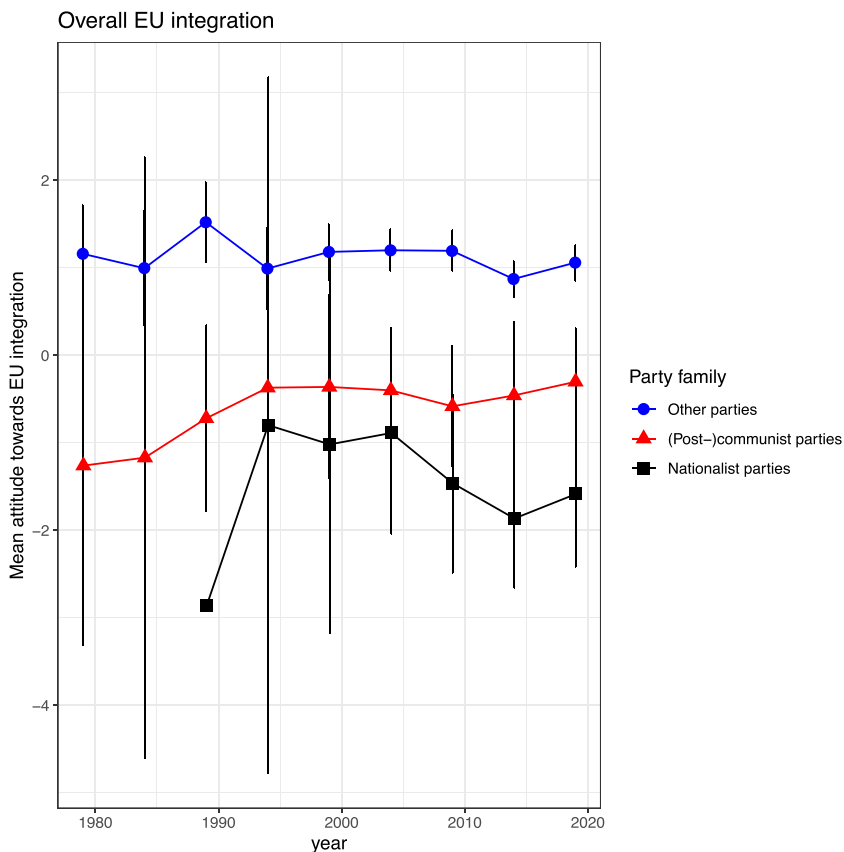
Figure 1 shows that parties generally became more sceptical of further European integration in each election between 1989 and 2014 whilst the first two EP elections in 1979 and 1984 saw relatively little enthusiasm for European integration in party manifestos. In 2019, there was a small increase in support for European integration. However, support

<sup>15</sup>See Appendix S6.

levels were still the second lowest ever recorded. The figure also highlights the size of the predicted differences between post-communist, nationalist and other party families, indicating that both nationalist and post-communist parties were more critical of European integration than other parties. Interestingly, a typical nationalist party (with a mean party size and manifesto length and that was not in government) was consistently opposed to European integration in all elections, whereas a similar post-communist party was close to having a moderate opinion of zero in many election years. However, the confidence intervals of the predicted values for 2009, 2014 and 2019 also fell below zero for the post-communist parties. Figure 2 depicts the simple means of supporting European integration for each party's family over time.

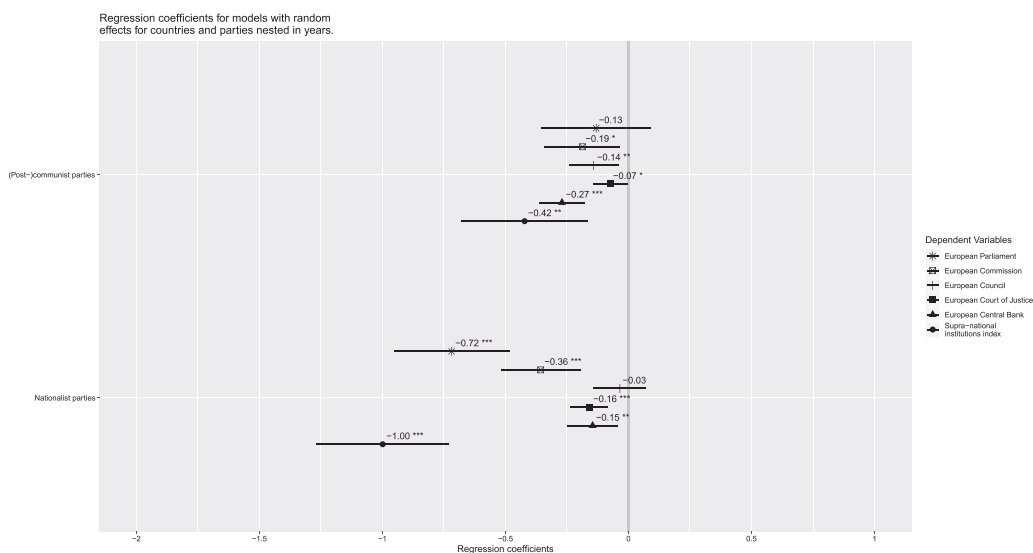
Figure 2 reveals that whilst the relative differences between party families fluctuated over the years, nationalist parties were consistently the most negative towards European integration across all elections, with post-communists slightly less negative and other parties relatively positive.

Figure 2: Mean Support for EU Integration by Party Family in Each EP Election. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



Notes: Vertical lines indicate 95% confidence intervals (see Appendix S9 for similar graphs for each institution).

Figure 3: Fixed Effects of Party Families on Different EU Institutions.



Notes: This figure is based on the mixed-effects models presented in Table 2, with country-years as a random intercept and party size, manifesto length and government as fixed control variables (not included in the plot). \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.1$ .

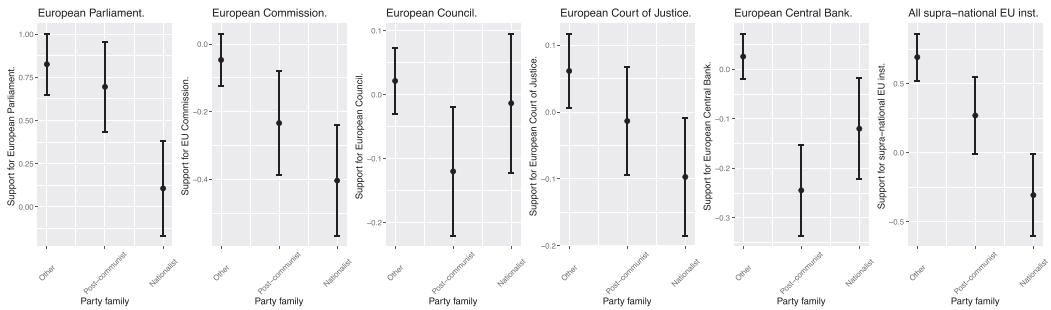
### *Support for Specific EU Institutions Amongst Party Families*

Models 2–7 underscore that, with a few exceptions, both post-communist and nationalist party manifestos exhibited greater scepticism towards EU institutions than other parties. Our hypotheses anticipated scepticism towards different institutions within these two-party families. Figure 3 illustrates the model coefficients for support for each EU institution and all supranational institutions combined for nationalist and post-communist parties.

In line with H2A, we found that post-communist parties were significantly more opposed ( $p < 0.05$ ) than other parties to transferring competences to intergovernmental institutions, such as the European Council and Council, compared to other parties. Conversely, nationalist parties did not deviate significantly from other parties in their manifesto discussions regarding the transfer of more power to intergovernmental institutions, thus supporting H3B. Despite nationalist parties' high general Euroscepticism, Model 4 indicates that this scepticism was not targeted at intergovernmental forums. To evaluate not only the extent of the difference between nationalist and post-communist parties and other parties but also their level of scepticism or support for the European Council, we plotted the predicted values of party families for a typical party manifesto in Figure 4. The predicted values for all party families were near zero, with post-communist parties having slightly lower values than nationalists and other parties. This is likely because 67.7% of the manifestos did not mention the Council at all,<sup>16</sup> which makes the significant

<sup>16</sup>See Appendix S5.

Figure 4: Predicted Values Conditional on Party Families When Keeping All Additional Control Variables at Their Mean Values (Party Size: 14.58%; Manifesto Length: 284 Quasi-Sentences) or the Reference Value (Not in Government).



Notes: Figure based on the mixed-effect models from Table 2. The different scale for each graph is owing to variations in how often each institution was mentioned in the manifestos. Vertical error bars depict 95% confidence intervals.

difference observed between post-Communist parties and other parties even more pronounced. Overall, our hypotheses regarding Euro-sceptic parties' approach to intergovernmental institutions were confirmed.

H3A posits that nationalist parties exhibit greater scepticism towards supranational institutions than post-communist parties. This is supported by Model 7, which predicts the impact of being a nationalist or post-communist party on attitudes towards all supranational institutions in party manifestos. The model coefficients for both nationalist and post-communist parties were statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) and negative, with post-communist party manifestos scoring an average of 0.42 lower than other parties and nationalist parties scoring 1.00 lower, thus supporting H3A. Figure 3 clearly illustrates this, showing no overlap in the 95% confidence intervals between the coefficients of the nationalist and post-communist parties. Thus, the data of Model 7 support hypotheses H3A and H2B.

Support for supranational EU institutions varies across party families. The dataset includes mentions of four supranational institutions in party manifestos predicted in Models 2, 3, 5, and 6. Both post-communist and nationalist parties exhibited negative coefficients in all models, indicating greater scepticism of all the supranational institutions; however, not all coefficients were statistically significant. Nationalist parties were significantly more negative about the EP in their manifestos, but the smaller coefficient for post-communist parties was not statistically significant, suggesting the data does not support H2B regarding post-communist parties' scepticism of the EP. Consistent with H2B, Models 3 and 5 reveal that post-communist parties were statistically significantly more sceptical of the Commission and the ECJ than other parties, with nationalist parties demonstrating even more negative fixed coefficients (consistent with H3A). However, the negative coefficients of the nationalist and post-communist parties are closer for these two institutions than for the EP. Figure 3 illustrates overlapping 95% confidence levels, indicating that we cannot confidently conclude that nationalist parties were more sceptical of these two institutions than post-communist parties, although there were some indications of this trend. Finally, Model 6 demonstrates that the nationalist and

post-communist parties were both statistically significantly more critical of the ECB in their manifestos. However, post-communist parties were the most critical of the two different party families, which contradicts the expectations of H2B.

Figure 4 depicts that the predicted values of typical party manifestos align with the hypothesised pattern on the Commission, EP, ECJ and all supranational institutions combined, whilst their positions on the ECB are reversed with post-communist parties being the most sceptical. The figure demonstrates the actual sizes of these predicted values. Whilst the prototypical nationalist party manifesto is predicted to take an overall negative position on supranational institutions ( $-0.31$ ), post-communist party manifestos are predicted to be slightly positive ( $0.27$ ), although this remains significantly less positive than other party family manifestos, which are predicted to have a score of  $0.69$ . The prototypical post-communist party manifesto is predicted to favour the transfer of competences to the EP. Overall, post-communist parties have a more negative than positive attitude towards the Commission, Council and the ECB. The prototypical nationalist party manifesto exhibits a moderate position on the Council, ECJ, ECB and EP but has very negative attitudes towards the Commission.

In sum, our study substantiates the hypotheses concerning supranational institutions. This reveals that the less supportive attitudes prevalent amongst the nationalist and post-communist parties stem from their negative attitudes towards various supranational institutions. Both parties exhibit scepticism towards delegating competences to the Commission. Nationalist parties, in comparison to others, show significantly lower support for the EP, whilst post-Communist parties express notable scepticism of the ECB.

Appendix S5 presents the results of identical multilevel models but only includes manifestos that explicitly mention each institution. Despite the reduced dataset resulting from the exclusion of manifestos that do not mention institutions, patterns of support for EU institutions amongst the party families remain consistent. Moreover, the regression coefficients retain statistical significance. This indicates that the models capture the parties' positions rather than mere salience, as all parties in these models actively mention each institution and continue to exhibit similar patterns.

## Conclusion

This study posits that the attitudes of Eurosceptic parties towards intergovernmental and supranational EU institutions are influenced by their party-family identity. Despite being the most Eurosceptic, neither post-communist nor nationalist party families rejected all EU institutions. Our study demonstrates that post-communist party manifestos express support for the EP comparable to Europhile parties. Similarly, nationalist parties support intergovernmental institutions on par with Europhile parties. Nationalist parties have been found to be the most critical of supranational institutions. However, post-communist parties, which are less Eurosceptic than nationalists, are more sceptical of intergovernmental institutions. Post-communist parties exhibit a nuanced stance towards supranational institutions, supporting the EP as much as other party families but expressing the most negative attitudes towards the ECB amongst all party families.

These findings have significant implications for Euroscepticism literature. *First*, the distinct targeting of Euroscepticism at different supranational and intergovernmental institutions emphasises its multifaceted nature and necessitates appropriate political responses.



*Second*, this study builds upon the work by Kopecký and Mudde (2002) by adding nuance and demonstrating the close intertwining between specific and diffuse support for the EU. Attitudes towards EU institutions can vary leading to different focuses on institutional criticism. Nationalist parties, for instance, specifically criticise the EU's supranational elements but are less critical of an intergovernmental approach to European integration. *Third*, our findings have implications for the future intergovernmental or supranational path (Bickerton et al., 2015; Moravcsik, 2018). Post-communist Euro-scepticism with its diverse criticism of the EU's intergovernmental foundations and its positive attitude towards the EP could suggest a focused examination on the EU's 'democratic deficit' (Moravcsik, 2002). These parties may be open to further European integration, provided it is overseen by a directly elected body. This aligns with Conti and Memoli's (2012) argument that the radical left could be a potential ally in deepening the European integration process.

Our analysis reveals the statistically significant effects of party-family affiliation over time, which have crucial implications for the EU's handling of rising Euro-scepticism. One potential solution is to introduce new (or strengthen) accountability mechanisms (see, also, Heldt and Herzog, 2022; Heldt and Mueller, 2022). Although this may invite complications, it offers hope to European integration supporters by demonstrating potential EU reforms that could appeal to Euro-sceptic voices. However, the divergent attitudes of nationalist and post-communist Euro-sceptics make them unlikely to satisfy all Euro-sceptic parties simultaneously. The Euro-sceptic parties' clear stances on the EU's institutional design call for an open debate on this topic. The stable support for and opposition to the delegation of power to EU institutions, primarily driven by party identities, suggest that dissatisfaction with the EU is related to its functionality.

These findings pave the way for future research in this area. The influence of party-family affiliation on different types of party-level Euro-scepticism raises questions about whether similar foundational political identities also drive Euro-scepticism at other levels. It would be intriguing to distinguish between Euro-scepticism aimed at different EU institutional arrangements concerning both its causes and consequences. For example, following Huysmans' (2018) examination of Euro-scepticism's impact on government behaviour, there is scope to investigate whether post-communist and nationalist Euro-scepticism affect governments' interactions with different EU institutions. Furthermore, our study suggests that public support for Euro-sceptic views may be more nuanced than Schäfer et al. (2023) suggest, indicating that Euro-sceptic citizens may favour stronger intergovernmental elements along the unanimity-qualified majority voting dimension in European integration.

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## Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

**Appendix S1:** Details on party families.

**Appendix S2:** Mean values for each party family.

**Appendix S3:** Models including all party families.

**Appendix S4:** Note on measurements of support for different EU institutions.

**Appendix S5:** Manifestos with no mentions of each EU institution.

**Appendix S6:** Multilevel models with fixed effects control for years.

**Appendix S7:** Models with control for east/west.

**Appendix S8:** Models with control for new/old.

**Appendix S9:** Mean support for each institution over time.

**Appendix S10:** Predicted values for each institution over time.