



Faculteit Politieke en Sociale Wetenschappen
Departement Politieke Wetenschappen
Academiejaar 2014-2015

Belgian public opinion, a matter of public feelings?

An assessment of Belgian support for EU-membership throughout the years

Liesje D'Hulster
20112530

Masterproef voorgelegd met het oog op het behalen van de graad van Master in de Politieke Wetenschappen - 1 juni 2015

Promotor: Prof. Dr. Jan Beyers
Medebeoordelaar: Prof. Dr. Peter Van Aelst

Table of content

ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)	I
ABSTRACT (NEDERLANDS)	II
1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM	3
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES	5
2.1 THE GENERAL EVOLUTION IN PUBLIC OPINION ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION.....	5
2.2 HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN CHANGES IN PUBLIC OPINION ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?	6
2.3 PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE FINANCIAL CRISIS	10
3. THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN BELGIUM	11
4. RESEARCH DESIGN	15
4.1 DEPENDENT VARIABLE.....	15
4.2 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	17
4.3 CONTROL VARIABLES.....	21
5. METHODS AND MODELS	22
6. RESULTS	26
6.1 LIMITED MODEL.....	26
6.2 ELABORATE MODEL	29
7. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION	32
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	35
APPENDIX I: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	XXXVII
APPENDIX II: LIST OF VARIABLES	XXXIX

Figures and tables

FIGURE 1: Perception of EU-membership in Belgium (in percent).....	13
FIGURE 2: Net support for EU-integration (in percent)	14
FIGURE 3: Distribution of the dependent variable ‘principle of membership’	16
FIGURE 4: Distribution of the independent variable ‘national economic situation’	20
FIGURE 5: Distribution of the independent variable ‘exclusive national identity’	20
TABLE 1: Descriptive statistics of the dependent variable	16
TABLE 2: Descriptive statistics of the independent variables	19
TABLE 3: Descriptive statistics of the control variables	21
TABLE 4: Explaining Belgian support for European integration (logit regression)	23
TABLE 5: All variables compared 1991-2002 (logit regression).....	24
TABLE 6: All variables compared 2002-2011 (logit regression).....	25
TABLE 7: Predicted probabilities for ‘national economic situation’	27
TABLE 8: Predicted probabilities for ‘exclusive national identity’	28
TABLE 9: Predicted probabilities related to ‘European attachment’	30
TABLE 10: Summary of the effects of the independent variables	31

Abstract (English)

In the most recent European elections (2014) parties of the Eurosceptic right have taken center stage. The number of citizens who perceive European membership as a bad thing increased considerably in recent years. This prominence of diffuse Euroscepticism poses a challenge to the legitimacy of the European Union (EU). The main purpose of this Master-thesis is to identify the main drivers of these changes in public support for EU-membership in the case of Belgium, a traditionally EU-supportive country. Existing theories have focused on economic calculus on the one hand, and identity feelings on the other, to explain public opinion on European integration. Because of the recent economic and financial crisis, economic factors may have become more important to form an opinion on EU-support. Using Eurobarometer data from 1991, 2002 and 2011, a logistic regression was used to test hypotheses regarding economy and identity determinants. The results lend strong support to both types of variables. Economic calculus shapes EU-support and proves to be more important in 2011 than in 1991 or 2002. However, identity variables are significant determinants of Belgian EU-support in every year of analysis. Public support is shaped by a number of factors, among them economic calculations and identity concerns. Economy and identity variables are complementary and not necessarily competitive.

Key words: public opinion, support for EU-membership, Euroscepticism, Eurobarometer, Eurocrisis

Abstract (Nederlands)

Bij de jongste Europese verkiezingen (2014) hebben partijen die zich aan de Eurosceptische rechterzijde bevinden, het uitstekend gedaan. Ook het aantal burgers dat lidmaatschap van de Europese Unie als een negatief gegeven ervaren, is de voorbije jaren aanzienlijk gestegen. Dit almaar groeiende en zich in diverse gedaanten voordoende Euroscepticisme vormt een ernstige uitdaging voor de legitimiteit van de Europese Unie. De belangrijkste doelstelling van deze Master-thesis is de identificatie van de factoren die zouden kunnen leiden tot een verandering in de publieke steun voor het Europese lidmaatschap. Meer bepaald in België, een land dat traditioneel de Europese gedachte ondersteunt. Reeds bestaande theorieën hebben zich enerzijds gefocust op economische parameters, anderzijds op gevoelens van identiteit om zo de publieke opinie ten opzichte van de Europese eenmaking te kunnen duiden. Door de recente economische en financiële crisis, hebben de economische factoren mogelijk aan belang gewonnen bij het al dan niet steunen van een eengemaakt Europa. Door Eurobarometer data uit 1991, 2002 en 2011 te gebruiken, werd een logistische regressie gehanteerd om enkele hypothesen aangaande economie en identiteit als determinerende factoren, te toetsen. De resultaten leveren een sterke ondersteuning voor beide types van variabelen. Economische parameters hebben invloed op de steun aan het Europese project en hebben aan belang gewonnen in 2011, vergeleken met 1991 en 2002. Maar ook identiteitsvariabelen zijn belangrijke factoren voor de steun voor Europa in België, en dat voor elk analysejaar. Publieke steun wordt dus bepaald door een waaier aan factoren, onder meer de economische parameters en het aanvoelen van de eigen identiteit. Deze theorieën vullen elkaar veeleer aan dan dat ze elkaar zouden tegenspreken.

Sleutelwoorden: publieke opinie, steun voor EU-lidmaatschap, Euroscepticisme, Eurobarometer, Eurocrisis

1. Introduction and definition of the problem

Today, the European Union (EU) is an ‘ever closer Union’ (Dinan, 1999). European integration has been a process of moving towards more unification in a range of policy fields and of providing the European level and its institutions with more power and influence. (Smith and Ray, 1992). In 1952, the EU was only coordinating the production and distribution of coal and steel in six member states (Janssen, 1991). Nowadays, it is a strong political actor that influences the daily lives of citizens from 28 member states (Dinan, 1999). Eurosceptics are critical about this trend towards more Europeanization.

In the most recent European elections (2014) parties of the populist and Eurosceptic right have taken center stage. There was a general increase in support for these parties and for their messages emphasizing negative consequences of EU-membership (De Sio, Emanuele and Maggini, 2014). Their sweeping victories reflect an ever growing discontent with the EU since the beginning of the great recession (Levy and Phan, 2014). These Eurosceptic sentiments have definitely dominated the public debate during the recent European Parliament (EP) elections. Nowadays citizens, especially online, show themselves more critical of the EU and seem to be more concerned with its democratic credentials. This prominence of diffuse Euroscepticism poses a major challenge to the legitimacy of the EU (de Wilde, Michailidou and Trenz, 2014). With a pending UK in/out referendum on EU-membership before 2017, this issue remains topical. It is therefore relevant to try to define an explanation for the growing public support for Eurosceptic parties.

Notwithstanding the overall increase in support for Eurosceptic parties, their success has not been homogenous in all member countries (Lubbers and Schepers, 2010; Bølstad, 2014; De Sio et. al., 2014). Let us take Belgium for example. According to the Eurobarometer (EB) surveys Belgian citizens have, along with their counterparts in other founding member states, traditionally been more supportive of European integration than citizens of countries that joined later (Hix and Høyland, 1999; Beyers and Bursens, 2006).¹ Do these countries that are traditionally more supportive of the EU also show a trend towards a more Eurosceptic public opinion? And if so, in what manner can this trend be perceived? Hence, my research question:

¹ Eurobarometer is the Public Opinion Analysis sector of the European Commission that conducts pan-European opinion surveys between two and five times per year (Beyers and Bursens, 2006).

Under what conditions does a shift in public support for European membership occur in a traditional pro-European country such as Belgium?

To answer this question, I first have to provide a theoretical framework. From a review of the academic literature, I derive three sets of research expectations. The first two research expectations relate to a descriptive first step in my research: a trend study to map how (Belgian) public opinion on EU-membership has evolved since the start of Eurobarometer surveys in 1974. The second set includes Hypotheses H1 to H6, explaining factors that influence the public support for European integration: ‘economic calculus’ on the one hand, perception of ‘identity’ on the other. The third set (H7) elaborates on the effect the recent economic and financial (Euro)crisis has had on public opinion towards the EU. To test these hypotheses, I will rely on Eurobarometer data to conduct a logistic regression, in order to explain the changes in public support for EU-membership over the years.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

In this chapter, I review the relevant academic literature applicable to my research. I derive my hypotheses from these readings. Firstly, I focus on the general evolution in public opinion towards European integration. Secondly, I elaborate on the factors that shape public support for the EU. If there are shifts, how can we explain them? Lastly, I look into the potential impact of the recent economic and financial (Euro)crisis regarding public support for European integration.

2.1 The general evolution in public opinion on European integration

My research question is embedded in a broader theoretical framework. The earlier discussed trend towards a more Eurosceptic public opinion can be seen as part of a more general evolution (De Sio et. al., 2014; Van Spanje and de Vreese, 2011). Simon Hix and Bjorn Høyland (1999), for example, establish such a bigger picture. They describe how we move away from a permissive consensus on European integration towards more disputed attitudes (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970; Hooghe and Marks, 2009). A permissive consensus existed because the EU essentially used to be a consensual system of governance that was mostly dealing with economic issues. However, in the early 1990s, this permissive consensus collapsed. Widespread opposition emerged during the process of ratifying the Maastricht Treaty (Hix and Høyland, 1999). One explanation is the fact that this Treaty changed the nature of the European project. In addition to economic policies, the EU started taking on regulation in other domains, such as foreign policy, border control or judicial policies (Hakhverdian et. al., 2013). This scepticism amongst the public has been called the ‘post-Maastricht blues’ (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). More contested attitudes (‘constraining dissensus’) towards the European Union were the result (Hix and Høyland, 1999).

Data collected from Eurobarometer correspond to the conclusions of the authors above. Since the nineties there has indeed been an overall decline in ‘net support’ for European integration (European Commission, 2014).² Based on my present knowledge of the literature I draw two

² ‘Net support’ refers to the percentage of individuals that perceive EU-membership as a ‘good thing’ minus the percentage that perceives it as a ‘bad thing’.

general research expectations regarding the first descriptive step in my research. Firstly, I expect Belgian public opinion on European integration to have evolved from widespread support towards more disputed attitudes. In other words, net support for EU-membership will have decreased since the 1990s. However, since Belgium, being a founding member state, has traditionally been EU-supportive, I do expect that the support for European integration in Belgium still will be higher than the EU average (European Commission, 2009). Based on a trendplot of Eurobarometer data, I will clarify whether there is a declining trend in public support for European integration in Belgium and if so how this trend relates to the European average. A detailed overview of this trend will be crucial for my next research steps.

2.2 How can we explain changes in public opinion on European integration?

In this chapter, I will focus on the factors shaping the level of support for European integration. I will start with briefly discussing studies of Matthew Gabel, Hanspeter Kriesi and Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks. I will also have a look into more recent literature that focuses specifically on Belgium. From this I will then derive testable hypotheses that can explain which factors have been important in creating changes in public support for EU-integration in Belgium, a country traditionally rather supportive of EU-integration. Since there is no scholarly consensus (yet) on the question ‘what drives citizens to oppose or support the EU’ (Hooghe and Marks, 2005), I want to add to the existing academic literature by identifying the most relevant factors shaping public opinion in one particular country, i.e. Belgium.

Matthew Gabel (1998) empirically tests five theories that could explain a change in public opinion. Firstly, he tests the utilitarian theory, which implies that individuals aim to maximize utility, by considering the costs and benefits of possible outcomes. He finds that this approach has indeed explanatory power. First of all, EU-support is positively related to the level of human and financial capital. Furthermore, the amount of support for European integration is positively related to the level of economic benefits citizens expect to derive from it. Secondly, he tests the class partisan theory and finds support for it. He concludes that class partisanship has an influence on support for European integration. Respondents who identify with a bourgeois party, are more EU-supportive than those who identify with a proletariat one. The

third theory tested, proved to be true, but only up to a certain point. Support for government does provide a systematic explanation for support for integration. Respondents who indicated electoral support for the prime minister, expressed, on average, greater support for integration. Yet, support for government appears to have more impact in the newer EU member states than in the original ones. The results provided only limited support for the two last theories: the political values theory and the cognitive mobilization theory. Nevertheless, in the original member states, for example Belgium, support for integration is greater among postmaterialists and is positively related to the frequency of political discussion.

In short, Gabel (1998) concludes that the utilitarian theory is the strongest and the most robust theory to explain changes in public opinion on European integration. In his conclusion, he divides the theories into two groups. On the one hand, theories of cognitive mobilization and political values, which posit that a citizen's support for integration is based on personal political characteristics, generally immutable throughout adulthood. On the other hand, the remaining theories emphasizing that a citizen's EU-support may change over the years depending on certain factors, namely: how integration can affect their welfare (utilitarian), how their political party portrays integration (class partisanship), and their support for the governing party (support for government). According to Gabel (1998), the latter group of theories account for much greater variance in EU-support than the former. This way, he stresses the volatile nature of support for European integration (Janssen, 1991).

More recently, Hanspeter Kriesi (1998; Kriesi et. al., 2008) explains how processes of globalization and denationalization have created a division between 'winners' and 'losers' of globalization in Western Europe in the past three decades. Because of structural transformations and the strategic repositioning of political parties, a new political cleavage emerged. This value-based division, called libertarian/authoritarian or post-materialist/materialist, has mainly, albeit not exclusively, been driven by the challengers of the New Left and the new populist right. Accordingly, a 'new' issue, such as a decline in support towards European integration, should best be interpreted in terms of this new divide and not in terms of the traditional focus of the political debate: the economy. For example, if globalization makes you a 'winner', you will benefit from open borders and thus from more European integration. If you are a 'loser', more open borders propose a threat. As a result, you will try to protect your national identity. Indeed, some recent studies prove that people with a

lower education level, often ‘losers’ as a result of globalization, are more Eurosceptic (Hakhverdian et al., 2013).

Koen Abts, Dirk Heerwegh and Marc Swyngedouw (2009) build on Kriesi’s work to examine the determinants of Belgian Euroscepticism. These authors make a distinction between three sets of explanations: economic interests, cultural attachments, and political discontent. They conclude that negative evaluations of the egocentric benefits of European membership, social distrust in European fellow citizens and institutional distrust in the EU are the most important determinants of Euroscepticism. However, their data does not provide an outright conclusion on which set of determinants is the most important in shaping Euroscepticism.

Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2005) structure their explanatory variables for support of European integration in a similar manner. Firstly, they test a theory of economic calculus. European integration is perceived by most citizens to affect their economic welfare. This theory presumes that individuals evaluate the economic consequences of European integration and that this motivates their attitudes. The theory of economic calculus is therefore comparable with the utilitarian theory. In most recent years, trade liberalization and increased factor mobility made it possible for firms to shift production across borders. Therefore, job insecurity for less-skilled workers has grown. Trade liberalization advantages, in general, those with higher levels of human capital since they can benefit more from international economic openness. Furthermore, economic internationalization benefits those individuals who own skills with which the national economy is relatively well endowed. Secondly, Hooghe and Marks (2005) look at theories regarding community and identity feelings. Social identities, and above all national identities, can indeed constrain support for European integration. It can provoke a sharp sense of identity loss among defenders of the nation. Thirdly, political cues can influence support for European integration. The premise of this theory is that underlying values and interests need to be primed to become politically salient. In the context of EU-support, this means that national contexts, and in particular political ideology, political parties, and political elites in the domestic arena, frame views on European integration.

Hooghe and Marks (2005) conclude that the motivations underlying public support for European integration draw on all three aspects. Economic interests and communal identities interact with national institutions and elites. While they find support for all three perspectives,

the analysis suggests that the theory of communal identity has the strongest explanatory power. Citizens may still evaluate a policy with clear distributional consequences as an issue related to identity. Furthermore, national attachment appears to be more influential than conventional economic factors.

Is this conclusion also valid in the context of a traditionally EU-supportive country such as Belgium? Does identity indeed provide a strong explanation? Or is the perception of economic costs and benefits more important, in comparison to identity? Following the framework of Hooghe and Marks (2005), these questions will be tested using Eurobarometer data. Since this research focuses on individuals in a particular political context, the theory of political cues was not tested. From the two remaining perspectives, namely theories of economic calculus and identity, I derive 6 hypotheses:

1. Economic calculus

- 1.1 **H1:** The higher a respondents' general level of education, the more supportive he is of EU-integration.
- 1.2 **H2:** In a capital-rich member state such as Belgium, individuals who have skilled occupations (professionals and executives) are expected to be more EU-supportive than unskilled workers.
- 1.3 **H3:** Individuals who feel confident about their personal financial prospects are expected to be more EU-supportive.
- 1.4 **H4:** Similarly, individuals who feel confident about the economic future of their country are expected to be more supportive of EU-integration.

2. Communal identity

- 2.1 **H5:** Individuals who identify themselves exclusively as 'Belgian' or 'Flemish' (exclusive national identity) are less EU-supportive than respondents with a 'mixed identity'.
- 2.2 **H6:** National attachment undermines support for European integration.

However, since 2008 the political context has radically shifted because of a worldwide financial crisis. This crisis may have had a negative impact on the influencing factors explained above. Hence my question, how has public support for European integration responded to all this?

2.3 Public support for European integration and the financial crisis

Many authors in this field believe that, in times of crisis, economic factors are key in shaping public opinion towards the EU, as the crisis amplifies the salience of the redistributive consequences of EU decision-making (Hobolt and Wrátil, 2015). In other words, the efforts taken to tackle the Euro crisis, in particular the expensive bailouts (e.g. for Greece), have put a price tag on the aim of unifying Europe (Kuhn and Stoeckel, 2014).

Hobolt and Wrátil's (2015) research focuses primarily on attitudes towards the Euro. Nonetheless, their results are an important guidance for my research study. Firstly, they show that support for the Euro inside the Eurozone still remained high, whereas it declined outside the Eurozone. This because Europeans generally consider the EU to be more effective in tackling the crisis than any other government, including their national governments. Furthermore, the authors demonstrate that utility calculations became more important than identity heuristics to 'Euro insiders', as the Euro crisis has emphasized the economic and redistributive implications of integration. In other words, cost-benefit considerations (or economic calculus) have recently played a bigger role in shaping attitudes on European (monetary) integration. This was, however, not the case for 'Euro outsiders'. As a consequence, the gap between in- and outsiders grew even wider. Braun and Tausendpfund (2014) reach a similar conclusion, namely that the Euro crisis had an important impact on citizens' support for the EU. Individuals need to be affected personally in order to withdraw their support. This is in line with the utilitarian theory as people become less supportive of the EU when they fear or undergo personal threats. Secondly, they conclude that people use national cues to better assess the crisis. This effect of how individuals perceive the national economy on EU-support is strongest in economically powerful countries within the EU.

Both articles show that we should take the economic context in consideration. When doing so for the Belgian case, we can pose the following Hypothesis:

H7: During the recent financial (Euro)crisis, economic calculus became more important to Belgian citizens, being 'Euro insiders', to form their opinion on European integration.

3. The evolution of public support for European integration in Belgium

Before conducting my quantitative analysis, I set out a general trendplot for public support of European integration in Belgium since 1974. Firstly, because it provides a useful broader framework and secondly, because I will select my years of analysis based upon this trendplot. I chose ‘principle of membership’ to represent public support for European integration, since the survey question that corresponds to this variable is asked in the same manner throughout most Eurobarometer surveys. The first year depicted on the graph is 1974, as this is the year the Standard Eurobarometer was established. The last year of analysis is 2011, because the questions on ‘principle of membership’ in following Eurobarometer surveys focus only on candidate member states.

Respondents were asked the following question: *‘Generally speaking, do you think that Belgium’s membership of the European Union is a bad thing, neither good nor bad or a good thing?’* Belgian answers (in percent) are shown in Graph 1 below. First of all, the Belgian public opinion is rather volatile. The graph shows big highs and lows that coincide with important internal affairs, of which some have connections to the European level. The dip at the beginning of the 1980s, for example, can be explained by a discontent about the internal socio-economic policy at the time. 1982 was, among other things, the year of the devaluation of the Franc (Beyers and Bursens, 2006). Our first research expectation can be confirmed, however only partially. Support for European integration is indeed the highest in the year 1991 and after the Maastricht Treaty support decreases. There is a sudden upsurge in Europositivism in 1995, a high that is less recognizable on the average EU level, because of Jean-Luc Dehaene’s candidacy for President of the European Commission (Beyers and Bursens, 2006). But, besides this, support decreases in the nineties. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, support for European integration is on the rise again and stays between levels of 60 and 70 percent in Belgium.

Graph 2 depicts ‘net support’ (‘a good thing’ minus ‘a bad thing’). Both the Belgian net support and the European average are shown. We see that the second research expectation can be confirmed. Belgium is indeed more supportive of European integration than the average European member state. Only in the year 1998, is EU average support slightly higher than the Belgian level. This is due to the enforcement of strict austerity measures in order to join the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) (Beyers and Bursens, 2006). It is notable that, in the

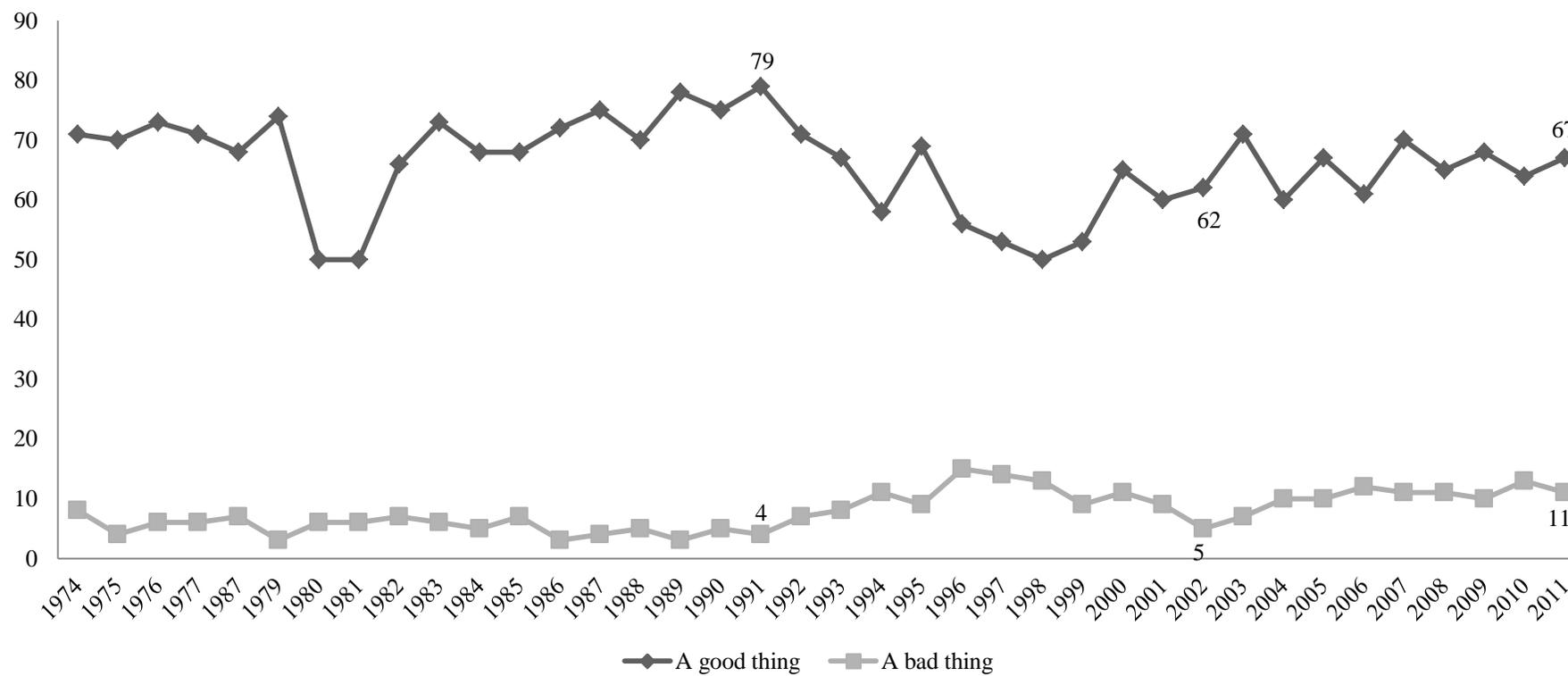
most recent year of analysis, namely 2011, EU net support seems to be in decline, which is possibly related to the economic and financial crisis. Belgian net support, however, seems to increase again. Expanding this trendplot up to 2014, or even 2015, could provide a more clear understanding of the evolution of support for European integration. However, this was not possible because the survey question regarding principle of membership is no longer asked in the same way. It focuses now on candidate member states.

Based on these graphs the following years of analysis were chosen; 1991, because Belgian support for the EU reaches its overall highest level in this year; 2002, because it is situated in the first half of the 21st century and is prior to the crisis;³ and 2011, firstly, because salience of EU (economic) integration should have grown due to the crisis, and secondly, because it is the most recent dataset available.⁴

³ There is no precise date for the beginning of the European economic and financial crisis. However, the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 is often referred to as the onset. Nevertheless, survey data show that Europeans were aware of the looming crisis as early as the beginning of 2008. The sovereign debt crisis, and the general 'Euro area crisis', emerged only a little bit later in 2009. Concerns intensified in 2010, leading the EU to implement a series of rescue measures. These were extensively covered in the national media across Europe (Hobolt and Wrátil, 2015).

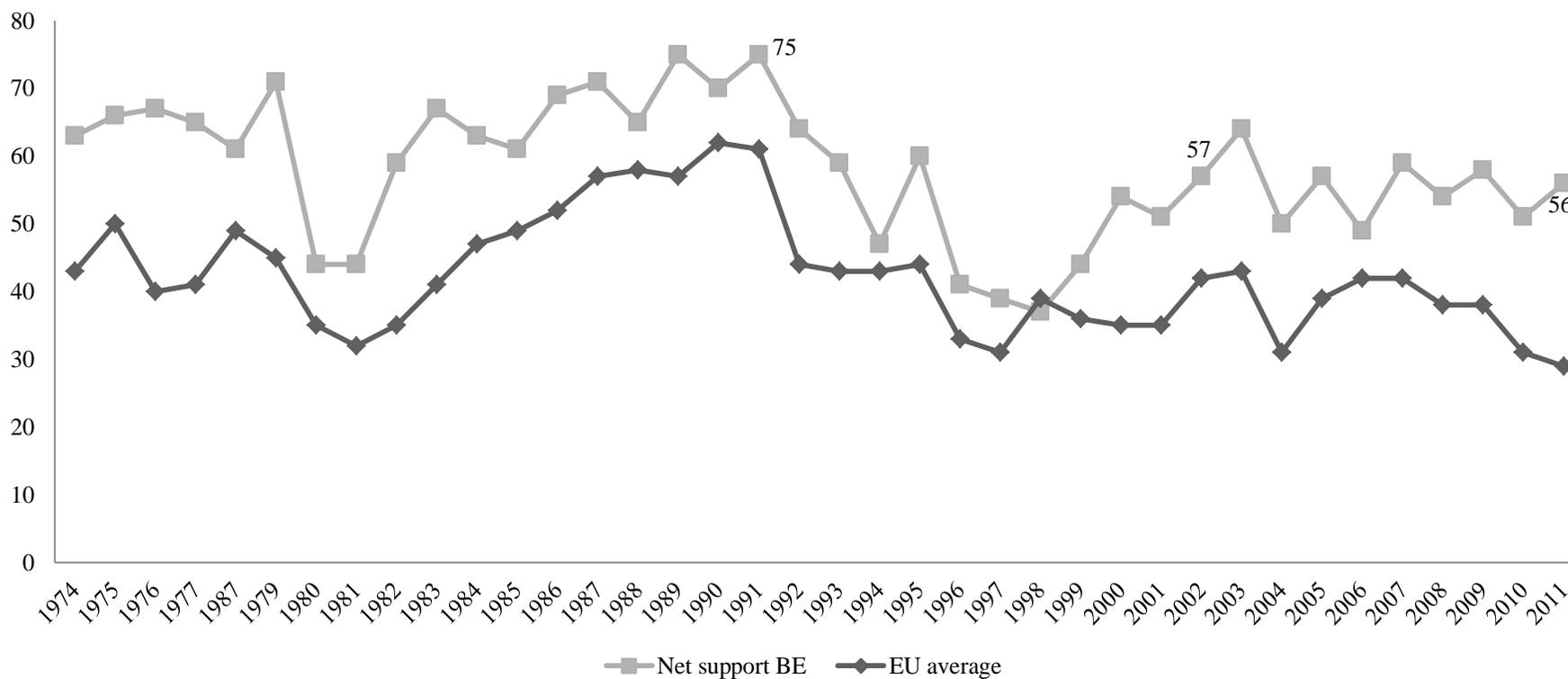
⁴ Overall data availability also played a role in choosing the most opportune Eurobarometer survey per year.

Figure 1: Perception of EU-membership in Belgium (in percent)⁵



⁵ Source: Eurobarometer surveys 1974-2011

Figure 2: Net support ('a good thing' minus 'a bad thing') for EU-integration (in percent)⁶



⁶ Source: Eurobarometer surveys 1974-2011 and Eichenberg, R. C., & Dalton, R. J. (2007). Post-Maastricht blues: The transformation of citizen support for European integration, 1973–2004. *Acta Politica*, 42(2), 128-152.

4. Research design

In this chapter, I will go deeper into the most important concepts used in this Master-thesis. Furthermore, I will explain how they were measured in my quantitative data-analysis. This chapter also provides the descriptive statistics of the variables. The exact Eurobarometer survey questions can be found in Appendix II. The following concepts hold the key to my research question: ‘Euroscepticism’ and ‘public opinion’ or ‘public support’. These concepts are defined in chapter 4.1. Additional concepts of ‘economy’ and ‘identity’ are needed, since both theories are tested as possible causes of shifts in public opinion. I based my selection of the corresponding variables based upon the work of Hooghe and Marks (2005). However, since I am conducting longitudinal research based on Eurobarometer surveys, not all variables are available throughout every year of analysis. Therefore, I had to make some pragmatic choices, which are accounted for below. Although the unavailability of some variables may constitute some limitations to my analysis, using the Eurobarometer surveys was the only possibility, as they are the only adequate source to conduct EU public opinion analysis over a longer time period (Braun and Tausendpfund, 2014).

4.1 Dependent variable

In the introduction, the concept of Euroscepticism was used to describe the recent trend in EU public opinion. According to Paul Taggart (1998; 366), Euroscepticism is “contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration.” It is a multifaceted concept that can consist of different indicators, such as attitudes towards EU-membership, European integration or European enlargement (Swyngedouw et. al., 2009). However, in this volume, the dependent variable is not Euroscepticism as a whole, but rather one of its components. Following Hooghe and Marks (2005), I formulate the dependent variable in terms of public support. To measure support for European integration, these authors combine three elements: principle of EU-membership, desired speed of future integration, and desired direction of future integration. Only ‘principle of membership’ was available in every year of analysis. Fortunately, the corresponding survey question was formulated the same way every year. The operationalization of a multidimensional concept as EU-support, using a one-dimensional

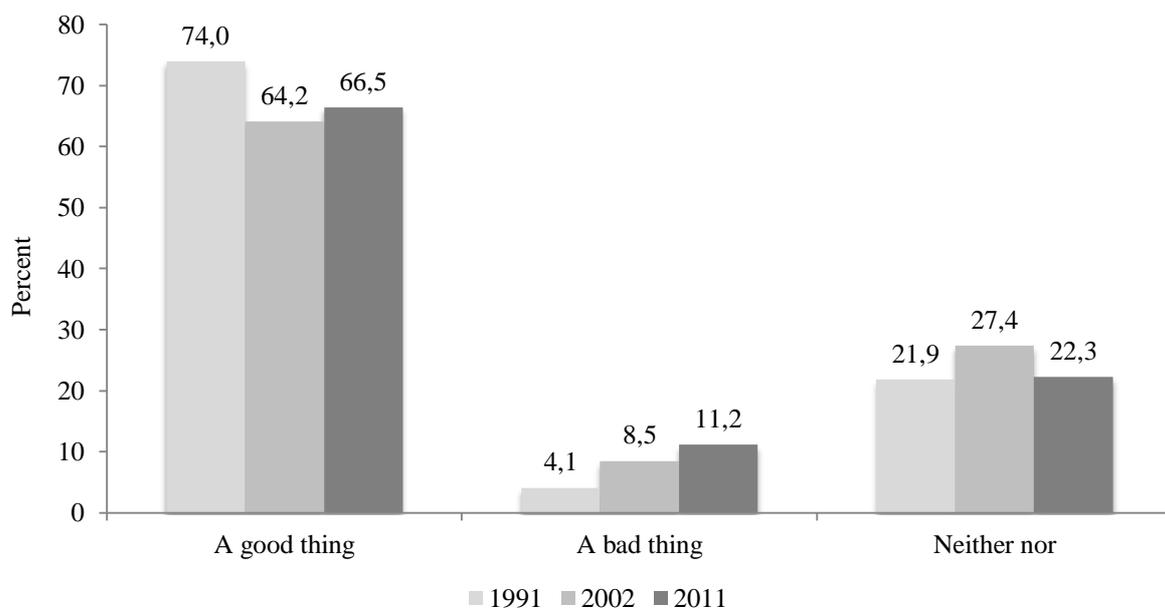
indicator is certainly not ideal. However, as stated above, it proved the only option for this research (Braun and Tausendpfund, 2014).

Support for EU-membership was measured by the following survey question: *Generally speaking, do you think that Belgium's membership of the European Union is a bad thing, neither good nor bad or a good thing?* This was recoded as a dummy with value 1 for 'a good thing' and value 0 for 'a bad thing' plus 'neither good nor bad'. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of this variable and Figure 3 shows its distribution.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the dependent variable 'principle of membership'

Year	Valid N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1991	962	0,7401	0,43879	0,00	1,00
2002	982	0,6415	0,47979	0,00	1,00
2011	1009	0,665	0,47222	0,00	1,00

Figure 3: Distribution of the dependent variable 'principle of membership' in percent



4.2 Independent variables

From the academic literature, I derived that independent variables concerning EU public opinion are categorized in terms of ‘economic calculation’ on the one hand, and in terms of ‘community and identity’ on the other. The former “view the EU as a regime that facilitates economic exchange, with profound distributional consequences for individuals arising from differences in asset mobility and for countries arising from varieties of capitalism” (Hooghe and Marks, 2005; 420). Whereas, social identity theory “conceives of the European Union as a polity overarching established territorial communities, and considers how public opinion is constrained by citizens’ conceptions of their identity” (Hooghe and Marks, 2005; 420).

To analyze the economic factors, I look at (objective) demographic variables, as well as at more subjective, ‘core’ economic variables. Economic calculation therefore consists of four variables: the age the respondent stopped full-time education (‘age education’), the occupation of the respondent and how he or she perceives personal financial prospects and the future national economic situation.⁷ All economic variables were available for every year of analysis. ‘Age education’ is a continuous variable. However, in 1991 it was grouped from 1 to 10, with 1 being ‘up to 14 years’, 2 to 8 being 15 to 20 years, 9 was ‘22 and older’, and 10 ‘still studying’. ‘Occupation’ was recoded as a dummy with value 1 for a professional, a manager or a business owner, and value 0 for all other occupations. In 1991, the evaluation of personal financial prospects and the perception of the future national economic situation, were answered as follows: from 1 to 5, with 1 as ‘will get a lot better’ and 5 as ‘will get a lot worse’. In 2002 and 2011, with 1 as ‘will get better’ and 2 as ‘will get worse’.

The only ‘identity variable’ available for every year of analysis, is ‘exclusive national identity’. This variable was recoded as a dummy. Value 1 refers to respondents who state that they do not or will never see themselves as European in the future. Because this variable is available in 1991, 2002, and 2011, it allows us to compare its effect. However, the other identity variables need to be handled more cautiously. This is why they are added in two steps.

⁷ Since there is no country variation, I did not include ‘gross national income’, ‘level of fiscal transfer’, and ‘type of capitalism’.

Firstly, I compared the year 1991 with 2002. To compare these two years, one's level of national attachment, as well as one's level of European attachment, were added. Both questions were surveyed in the same manner in both years: namely, from 1 to 4, with 1 as 'very attached' and 4 as 'not at all attached'. Secondly, I compared 2002 with 2011, because the questions related to national and European attachment were not available in the year 2011. I used trust in EU institutions as a proxy for European attachment. Cultural and affective explanations of political trust, invoke indeed concepts as group identification, and attachment to a community (Berg, 2007). For the year 2002, I created a new variable that includes trust in the European Parliament, as well as trust in the European Commission. In the year 2011, trust in EU institutions was surveyed as trust in the European Union in general. In both years, trust in EU institutions was surveyed in the following way: with 1 as 'tend to trust' and 2 as 'tend not to trust'. Lastly, also in the comparison of 2002 with 2011, 'satisfaction with national democracy' was added as an identity variable to replace national attachment. It was measured from 1 to 4, with 1 as 'very satisfied' and 4 as 'not at all satisfied'. This variable was not available for 2011; hence, 'satisfaction with the direction one's nation is going in' was used as a replacement. When respondents agreed that 'things were going in the right direction', they answered 1. When 'things were going in the wrong direction', they answered 2. Again, there is need for caution, as these last variables only presumably measure roughly the same. Nevertheless, these variables can always be related to identity, and are therefore less of an economic nature. Below, Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of all independent variables and Figure 4 and 5 depict the distribution of the most important economy and identity variable.

To expand our understanding of the relationships among the independent variables, several interaction terms were tested. An interaction term represents the combined effects of two independent variables on the dependent variable. When an interaction effect is significant, this indicates that the effect of one of the variables differs depending on the level of the other variable. This leads to results that would not have been anticipated on the basis of the main effects of those variables (Jaccard, 2001). For all years of analysis following interaction effects were tested: personal financial prospects*exclusive national identity, personal financial prospects*national attachment (or proxy), national economic situation*exclusive national identity, and national economic situation*national attachment (or proxy). None of these had a significant effect.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the independent variables

Independent variable	Valid N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1991					
Age education - grouped	1006	5,67	2,957	1	10
Occupation dummy	944	0,3581	0,47968	0	1
Personal financial prospects	954	2,88	0,844	1	5
National economic situation	916	2,94	0,871	1	5
Exclusive national identity	958	0,4614	0,49877	0	1
National attachment	992	2,03	0,875	1	4
European attachment	940	2,57	0,965	1	4
2002					
Age education	1037	25,45	23,38	10	98
Occupation dummy	1037	0,0955	0,294	0	1
Personal financial prospects	991	2,36	0,858	1	3
National economic situation	983	2,30	0,738	1	3
Exclusive national identity	1006	0,3628	0,48105	0	1
National attachment	1031	1,78	0,767	1	4
European attachment	1010	2,52	0,845	1	4
National democracy satisfaction	996	2,29	0,71	1	4
Trust in EU institutions	851	2,4136	0,76727	2	4
2011					
Age education	1011	24,51	20,47	12	98
Occupation dummy	1020	0,0598	0,23724	0	1
Personal financial prospects	1009	2,41	0,832	1	3
National economic situation	1013	2,10	0,857	1	3
Exclusive national identity	1019	0,0343	0,18221	0	1
Present national direction	1018	1,90	0,666	1	3
Trust in EU institutions	1000	1,37	0,484	1	2

Figure 4: Distribution of the independent variable 'national economic situation' in percent

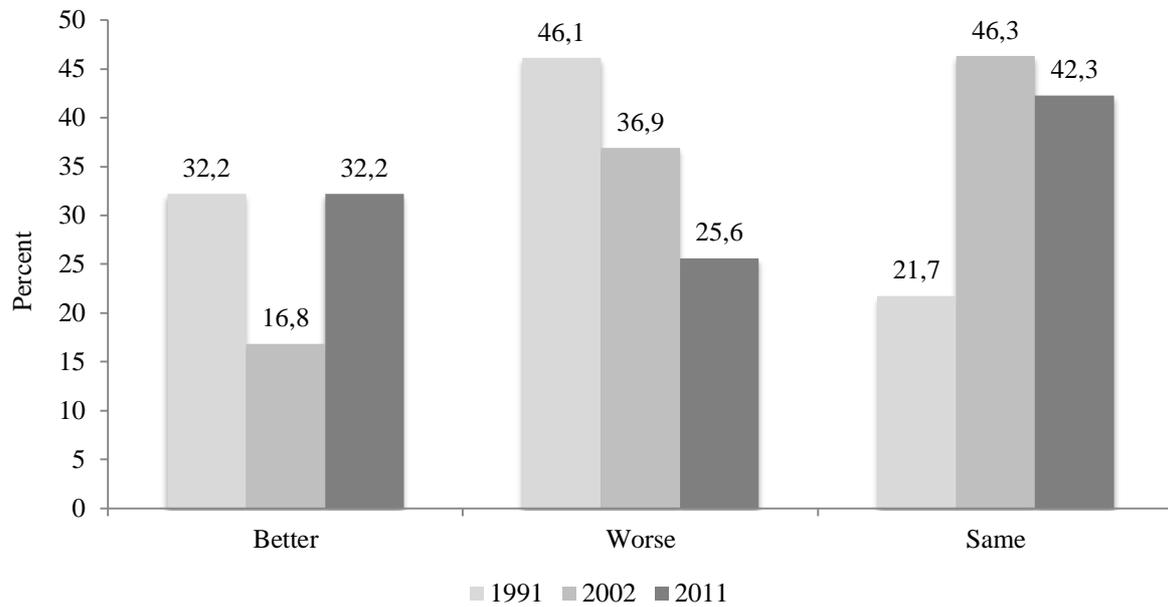
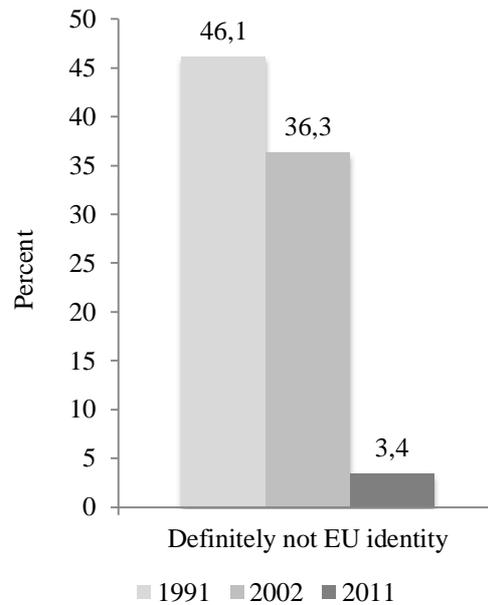


Figure 5: Distribution of the independent variable 'exclusive national identity' in percent



4.3 Control variables

Finally, the following control variables were used: opinion leadership, age, and gender. Support for the EU is expected to be greater among opinion leaders, men and younger individuals (Hooghe and Marks, 2005). Opinion leadership is an index of two variables: on the one hand, the frequency of discussion of political matters, on the other hand, persuasion of friends, relatives, or fellow workers. Eurobarometer defines the score on the opinion leadership index as a level of cognitive mobilization. High cognitive mobilization is characterized by a high level of political awareness and well-developed skills in political communication (Inglehart in Gabel, 1998). In 1991, value 1 refers to high cognitive mobilization, 2 to medium-high, 3 to medium-low and 4 to low cognitive mobilization. However, in 2002 and 2011, it is the other way around: value 4 for high- and value 1 for low cognitive mobilization. Secondly, age is a continuous variable. Lastly, gender is in 1991 still surveyed as ‘sex’. In 2002 and 2011 the word ‘gender’ is used. Value 1 stands for ‘male’, value 2 for ‘female’.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the control variables

Control variable	Valid N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1991					
Opinion leadership	1006	2,77	0,905	1	4
Age	1006	42,99	18,078	15	98
Sex	1006	1,50	0,5	1	2
2002					
Opinion leadership	1034	2,14	0,904	1	4
Age	1037	44,68	18,397	15	98
Gender	1037	1,51	0,5	1	2
2011					
Opinion leadership	1020	2,46	0,951	1	4
Age	1020	50,01	17,859	15	93
Gender	1020	1,52	0,5	1	2

5. Methods and models

To test Hypotheses 1 to 7, a logistic regression was performed in each year of my analysis. This method was chosen because of the binomial nature of my dependent variable ‘principle of membership’. This variable takes value 1 when EU-membership is perceived as a good thing, and takes value 0 when it is perceived as a bad- or neither good nor bad thing.

For each Standard Eurobarometer survey new and independent samples are drawn. For this research in particular, the data of EB 36 (1991), EB 58.1 (2002) and EB 75.3 (2011) were used. The number of Belgian respondents was always around 1000 in our years of analysis. The methodology used by Eurobarometer consists of face-to-face interviews, conducted in respondent’s homes, using detailed and uniform instructions. Equivalent basic bilingual questionnaires are developed in English and French, and then translated into the other languages used in the (candidate) member states. Back-translation control is applied. In Belgium, three language versions are used (GESIS, 2015).

This analysis was conducted in two steps in order to interpret results correctly. Firstly, a rather more restricted or limited model was applied. The only variables used in this model, are the ones available for every year of analysis. This limited model allows us to compare the effect of the economic variables over time. Then, another limited model was created with an addition of ‘exclusive national identity’. This variable was also available in all years. Secondly, in a more elaborate model, all identity variables were added. Again, this elaborate model needs to be interpreted more cautiously because not all variables have been surveyed in every year of analysis.

Table 4: Explaining Belgian support for European integration (logit regression) (With $p < 0,01 = **$ and $p < 0,05 = *$)⁸

Variable	1991						2002						2011					
	Model I			Model II			Model I			Model II			Model I			Model II		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Independent																		
<i>Economy</i>																		
Age education	0,013	0,123	1,013	-0,028	0,128	0,973	0,205	0,111	1,128	0,204	0,114	1,226	0,207	0,039	1,230**	0,204	0,039	1,226**
Ageeducation_square	0,009	0,011	1,009	0,012	0,011	1,012	-0,005	0,010	0,995	-0,006	0,010	0,994	-0,002	0,000	0,998**	-0,002	0,000	0,998**
Occupation dummy	0,550	0,188	1,734**	0,504	0,196	1,655*	0,733	0,308	2,082**	0,762	0,330	2,143*	0,440	0,357	1,553	0,496	0,365	1,642
Personal financial prospects	-0,130	0,110	0,878	-0,156	0,116	0,855	0,007	0,096	1,007	0,037	0,099	1,038	-0,222	0,094	0,801*	-0,243	0,096	0,784*
National economic situation	-0,408	0,106	0,665**	-0,375	0,111	0,687**	0,106	0,108	1,112	0,115	0,112	1,122	-0,193	0,085	0,824*	-0,184	0,086	0,832*
<i>Identity</i>																		
Exclusive national identity				-0,950	0,178	0,387**				-0,834	0,158	0,434**				-1,887	0,432	0,151**
Control																		
Opinion leadership	0,014	0,096	1,014	0,145	0,103	1,156	0,460	0,086	1,583**	0,413	0,089	1,511**	0,072	0,076	1,075	0,065	0,077	1,068
Age	0,006	0,006	1,006	0,006	0,006	1,006	0,003	0,005	1,003	0,005	0,005	1,005	0,018	0,005	1,019**	0,019	0,005	1,020**
Gender	-0,220	0,167	0,803	-0,163	0,174	0,850	0,099	0,147	1,104	0,105	0,152	1,110	-0,470	0,143	0,625**	-0,487	0,145	0,614**
N	1006			1006			1037			1037			1020			1020		
-2 Log Likelihood	885,773			821,29			1103,902			1041,095			1178,175			1154,474		
Hosmer and Lemeshow	.0767			0,377			0,309			0,739			0,088			0,036		
Chi2	56,619** (df=8)			85,100** (df=9)			85,820** (df=8)			113,314** (df=9)			82,128** (df=8)			105,003** (df=10)		
Nagelkerke R2	0,097			0,149			0,123			0,164			0,111			0,140		
Percentage correctly predicted value 0	7,5			13,2			31,4			37,9			21,6			25,2		
Percentage correctly predicted value 1	97,9			95,7			89,5			87,6			91,3			92		

⁸ After testing the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), no multicollinearity problems are expected.

Table 5: All variables compared 1991-2002 (logit regression) (With $p < 0,01 = **$ and $p < 0,05 = *$)

Variable	1991			2002		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Independent						
<i>Economy</i>						
Age education	-0,053	0,133	0,949	0,244	0,118	1,277*
Ageeducation_square	0,014	0,012	1,014	-0,010	0,010	0,990
Occupation dummy	0,522	0,205	1,686*	0,694	0,337	2,002*
Personal financial prospects	-0,148	0,121	0,862	0,049	0,103	1,051
National economic situation	-0,327	0,115	0,721**	0,137	0,117	1,146
<i>Identity</i>						
Exclusive national identity	-0,871	0,192	0,419**	-0,423	0,177	0,655*
National attachment	0,173	0,114	1,189	0,151	0,111	1,163
European attachment	-0,228	0,106	0,797*	-0,639	0,110	0,528**
Control						
Opinion leadership	0,215	0,107	1,239*	0,351	0,092	1,420**
Age	0,005	0,006	1,005	0,002	0,006	1,002
Gender	-0,162	0,180	0,851	0,061	0,157	1,063
N	1006			1037		
-2 Log likelihood	766,907			989,014		
Hosmer and Lemeshow	0.933			0.076		
Chi2	87,275** (df=11)			149,249** (df=11)		
Nagelkerke R2	0,162			0,215		
Percentage correctly predicted value 0	14,0			45,3		
Percentage correctly predicted value 1	95,1			87,8		

Table 6: All variables compared 2002-2011 (logit regression) (With $p < 0,01 = **$ and $p < 0,05 = *$)

Variable	2002			Variable	2011		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)		B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Independent				Independent			
<i>Economy</i>				<i>Economy</i>			
Age education	0,250	0,135	1,284	Age education	0,194	0,044	1,214**
Ageeducation_square	-0,008	0,012	0,992	Ageeducation_square	-0,002	0,000	0,998**
Occupation dummy	0,508	0,356	1,661	Occupation dummy	0,455	0,402	1,577
Personal financial prospects	-0,128	0,116	0,880	Personal financial prospects	-0,203	0,109	0,817
National economic situation	0,251	0,130	1,285	National economic situation	-0,164	0,099	0,849
<i>Identity</i>				<i>Identity</i>			
Exclusive national identity	-0,483	0,189	0,617*	Exclusive national identity	-1,310	0,486	0,270**
! National democracy satisfaction	-0,315	0,127	0,729*	! Present national direction	-0,532	0,127	0,587**
Trust in EU institutions	-0,807	0,118	0,446**	Trust in EU institutions	-0,941	0,087	0,390**
Control				Control			
Opinion leadership	0,425	0,101	1,529**	Opinion leadership	-0,006	0,088	0,994
Age	0,007	0,006	1,007	Age	0,012	0,006	1,012*
Gender	0,056	0,177	1,058	Gender	-0,367	0,164	0,693*
N	1037				1020		
-2 Log likelihood	792,395				936,266		
Hosmer and Lemeshow	0,778				0,853		
Chi2	158,322** (df=11)				260,224** (df=11)		
Nagelkerke R2	0,265				0,336		
Percentage correctly predicted value 0	43,9				55,6		
Percentage correctly predicted value 1	89,1				88,3		

6. Results

Firstly, I will expand on the results of the limited model. This allows me to provide an answer to Hypotheses 1 to 4. Secondly, I will look into the more elaborate model: firstly, to test Hypothesis 5 and 6 (related to the identity theory), and secondly, to make a comparison over time, and thus provide an answer to Hypothesis 7. I included the mean of predicted probabilities for the most important independent variables to get a better understanding of the results.

6.1 Limited model

First of all, let us have a look at the -2 Log Likelihood in the limited model. It decreases from model I to model II in every year of the analysis. This suggests that model I is improved by adding the explanatory variable 'exclusive national identity'. Nagelkerke's R2 confirms this. In 1991 an additional 5% of the variation in the outcome is explained, in 2002 4% and in 2011 3%. The Hosmer & Lemeshow values explain whether or not our model is a good fit. If the Hosmer & Lemeshow value is not significant, the model is a good fit for the data. We see that model II in 2011 has the only significant Hosmer & Lemeshow value (0,036), which means that this particular model is not a good fit. However, other goodness of fit measures, such as Nagelkerke's R2, contradict this. In general, we can assume that the addition of identity variables improves the model.

Let us now look at the economic variables separately. Firstly, age education has indeed a positive effect on perception of EU-membership in every model I. This effect seems to grow stronger over time. Age education is, however, only significant in 2011. Respondents who stopped full-time education at the age of 16 or younger have less than 56 percent chance of being EU-supportive. Other respondents have a chance of 60 percent or higher. Individuals who are still studying, have a predicted probability of 84 percent to be EU-supportive. A possible explanation for this increase in importance of 'age education' could be that there is now more attention towards the EU topic in schools and universities. In higher education, at least, the EU has definitely increased its visibility. For example, over the last years, the EU has invested a lot in the Erasmus (+) program, which provides opportunities for over 4 million

Europeans to study, train or gain work experience abroad (European Commission, 2015). Hypothesis 1 can be confirmed. Respondents who finish their full-time education later, are more EU-supportive. That is, however, only of significant importance in 2011. Hypothesis 2 can be confirmed as well. Occupation - in particular being a professional, a manager, or a business owner - has a positive effect on EU-support. This effect is significant in 1991 and 2002, but decreases in importance in 2011. Occupation has the biggest impact in 2002, when professionals have a predicted probability of 85 percent to be EU-supportive, whereas this decreases to 62 percent for respondents with other occupations.

Let us move on to the ‘core’ economic variables. When respondents believe that their personal financial prospects are going to get worse over the next 12 months, it is less likely that they are EU-supportive in 1991 and 2011. For these two years of analysis, Hypothesis 3 can be confirmed. For the year 2002 it has to be rejected because the odds of being EU-supportive are approximately 50/50. Personal financial prospects proved only significant in 2011. According to hypothesis 7, this can be related to the economic and financial crisis. In 2011, respondents might interpret European integration as a threat to their financial situation (Ritzen, Zimmerman and Wehner, 2014). Evaluation of the future national economic situation, on the other hand, is significant both in 1991 and in 2011. Hypothesis 4 can be confirmed for those years: respondents who believe that the economic situation in Belgium will get worse, are less EU-supportive. In general there are fewer individuals who feel that it will get worse in 2011 than in 1991. If you are very optimistic about the future, you have a predicted probability of 88 percent in 1991 of being EU-supportive, this declines to 52 percent if you are very pessimistic. In 2011, optimistic respondents have a 75 percent chance to support the EU and pessimistic individuals have a chance of 63 percent.

Table 7: Predicted probabilities of the independent variable ‘national economic situation’

Year	National economic situation					Total
	Lot better	Little better	Same	Little worse	Lot worse	
1991	0,88	0,82	0,73	0,68	0,52	0,74
		Better	Same		Worse	
2002		0,66	0,65		0,62	0,64
2011		0,75	0,62		0,63	0,66

In Model II we added the variable ‘exclusive national identity’. This proved to have a significant negative effect on EU-support in all years of analysis. Respondents who only identify themselves with the national or regional level, are less EU-supportive than respondents with a mixed identity. We can thus confirm Hypothesis 5. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the number of respondents with an exclusive national identity decreases: from 46,1 percent in 1991, to 36,3 in 2002 and to 3,4 in 2011. However, the remaining number of respondents that has no mixed identity, is less probable of being EU-supportive. In 2011, only 20 percent of individuals with an exclusive national identity are expected to support EU membership.

Table 8: Predicted probabilities of the independent variable ‘exclusive national identity’

Year	Exclusive national identity		Total
	No	Yes	
1991	0,82	0,63	0,74
2002	0,73	0,48	0,64
2011	0,68	0,20	0,66

When we look at the control variables, we see that opinion leadership and age have a positive effect on perception of EU-membership. This was expected. The impact of opinion leadership proves to be significant in 2002. In other words, respondents with a higher cognitive mobilization are significantly more EU-supportive in 2002. This might be related to the introduction of the Euro as the day-to-day currency in EU member states on 1 January 2002. The introduction of the European common currency was top of the agenda in important (evening) television shows (De Vreese, Peter and Semetko, 2010). One of the determinants of the opinion leadership index is the frequency of political discussion; this could have increased because a bigger proportion of the newscast was devoted to political and economic news.

Age has a very small effect, but is nevertheless significant in 2011. When gender has a negative effect, which is the case in 1991 and 2011, men are more EU-supportive. When gender has a positive effect, women are more EU-supportive. This was the case in 2002. In 2011, gender proves to be a significant determinant of EU-support. In this year of analysis,

men have a predicted chance of 72 percent of being EU-supportive and women 61 percent. A possible explanation for significance in 2011 could be that women suffer relatively more in times of crisis than men (Harcourt and Trejo Mendez, 2014).

6.2 Elaborate model

The limited model suggests that the economic variables have become more important in shaping public opinion on EU membership from 1991 to 2011. All economic variables, except for occupation, have a significant effect on EU-support in 2011. However, we have to add all identity variables in order to evaluate Hypothesis 7 correctly. As explained in chapter 4, the identity variables related to national and European attachment were added in two steps to compare the years of analysis accurately. First of all, the addition of more identity variables proves to truly enhance the models. Especially in 2002 and 2011, the percentage of correctly predicted respondents that are not EU-supportive increases. Therefore, it gives us a better understanding of public support for the EU.

Firstly, let us look at the effect of national attachment. A positive relation in 1991 and 2002 indicates that individuals who are more attached to the national level (with a range from 1 = very attached to 4 = not at all attached), are less EU-supportive. However, national attachment is not significant and therefore we cannot confirm Hypothesis 6. Let us now look at the proxy used in 2002 and 2011: national democracy satisfaction and present national direction. Both variables have a significant effect. However, we must not interpret this as national attachment. Respondents who indicate that they are very satisfied with the level of democracy in Belgium in 2002, have a predicted probability of 75 percent for being EU-supportive. This declines to 48 percent for respondents who are not at all satisfied. A similar relation can be perceived in 2011. If respondents report that Belgium is going in the right direction, they have a predicted 83 percent chance of being supportive of EU-membership. If they perceive the present direction as wrong, on the other hand, the probability decreases to 60 percent. Thus, not all variants of national attachment undermine support for EU-membership.

European attachment and trust in EU institutions are both negatively related to EU-support. When a respondent is less attached to the European level (with a range from 1 = very attached

to 4 = not at all attached), he is less supportive of EU-membership. Similarly, when a respondent tends not to trust the EU, he is less supportive of EU-membership. These variables are significant in every year of analysis and prove to be a strong determinant of level of EU-support. Someone who is very attached to the EU in 1991 has a predicted probability of 83 percent to be in favor of EU-membership. In 2002, the predicted chance is 84 percent. When we look at trust in EU institutions, we see that respondents in 2002 who tend not to trust the EU have only a 32 percent chance of being EU-supportive. In 2011 this probability increases a little to 46 percent. Thus, since national attachment might not be the best determinant of EU-support, I would suggest using European attachment as an independent variable instead.

Table 9: Predicted probabilities of the independent variable related to European attachment

Year	European attachment				Total
	Very	Fairly	Not very	Not at all	
1991	0,83	0,79	0,72	0,63	0,74
2002	0,84	0,75	0,56	0,37	
	Trust in EU institutions				
	Tend to trust		Tend to not trust		
2002	0,76		0,32		0,67
2011	0,78		0,46		0,66

Finally, to test Hypothesis 7, we have to compare the effects of the independent variables over the years. Core economic variables lose significance in 2011 when identity variables are added: personal financial prospects and national economic situation no longer have a significant effect. Meanwhile, identity variables have a significant impact on the probability of being EU-supportive in every year of analysis, 2011 included. Therefore, we can confirm Hypothesis 7 only partly: in the limited model, economic calculus does become more important to form an opinion on the EU in the aftermath of the crisis. Being a winner or a loser of Europeanization shapes Belgian EU-support and in the limited model, the economic variables are more important in 2011 than in 1991 or 2001. However, identity variables prove to be significant determinants of EU-support in every year of analysis. A strong attachment to the national level is compatible with EU-support but a strong exclusive national identity undermines it (Levy and Phan, 2012). Table 10 summarizes the effect of the independent

variables and more specifically the effect of adding identity variables to the model (with -- = no significant variable, - = one significant variable, + = two significant variables and ++ = more than two significant variables).

Table 10: Summary of the effects of the independent variables

Year	Limited model	Elaborate model
1991	Economy: +	Economy: + Identity: +
2002a	Economy: -	Economy: + Identity: +
2002b	Economy: -	Economy: -- Identity: ++
2011	Economy: ++	Economy: + Identity: ++

7. Conclusion and discussion

Public support for European integration has changed substantially over the past decades. Having analyzed trends in the Eurobarometer data we can observe clear highs and lows in the average public support for EU-membership. In recent years, the number of citizens who perceive EU-membership as a bad thing has increased considerably and Euro-critical sentiments are on the rise. The main purpose of this Master-thesis was to identify the main drivers of these changes in public support for European membership in the case of Belgium, a traditionally EU-supportive country. Although Belgian public opinion is still strongly pro-European, it is, considering the past twenty years, in decline.

With this purpose in mind, I started reviewing the academic literature on public opinion and the EU. One key question in this literature asks whether evaluations of costs and benefits or feelings of national identity shape public opinion on the EU (Swyngedouw et. al., 2009). Some scholars, for instance, Hooghe and Marks (2005), claim that identity has the most explanatory power. However, recent events, more specifically the economic and financial crisis, warrant a re-examination of this view. Because the worldwide crisis has clearly affected the socio-economic status and prosperity of many citizens, it is expected that economic calculus might have become increasingly important since 2008 (Hobolt and Wrátil, 2015). To add to this debate, I test, with regards to the Belgian case, both economic and identity variables. Using Eurobarometer data from 1991, 2002 and 2011, a logistic regression was used for testing hypotheses pertaining to the calculus- and identity-based explanations. I am aware that my approach has some limitations. For instance, I face the problem that some key concepts are not measured in equivalent ways. This makes for the fact that I had to measure the multifaceted concept of public support with a one-dimensional indicator, namely ‘principle of membership’. Furthermore, not all independent variables were included in every Eurobarometer survey. Nevertheless, some interesting conclusions about the determinants of EU-support can be made. This Master-thesis provides new insights on EU-support because it focused on multiple years of analysis within the context of a traditionally EU-supportive country.

Firstly, the limited model established that the occupation of the respondent is a significant determinant of EU-support in 1991 and 2002. Professionals (managers, executives and business owners) are more supportive of EU integration. Secondly, in 1991, the evaluation of

the future national economic situation proved to be a significant economic variable as well. Respondents who believe that the economic situation in Belgium is going to get worse, are less EU-supportive. In 2011, all economic variables, except for occupation, had a significant impact: the age the respondent stopped full-time education, his personal financial prospects and his evaluation of the national economic situation. Positive economic perceptions prove to be associated with higher levels of support for EU-membership. The implication of the significance of the 'core' economic variable personal financial prospects is therefore as follows: respondents who believe their personal financial situation is going to get worse, are less EU-supportive. This can relate to the economic and financial crisis, as respondents may interpret European integration as a threat to their financial situation (Ritzen, Zimmerman and Wehner, 2014).

Secondly, the identity variables prove to be strong determinants of Belgian EU-support. Exclusive national identity is significant in 1991, 2002 and 2011. Respondents who identify solely with the national level, are less EU-supportive. The effect of national attachment was not significant. The effect of its proxy's national democracy satisfaction (in 2002) and present national direction (in 2011) was, but the variables were related to EU-support in a different way than expected. If a respondent indicates that he is satisfied with the level of democracy and with the way things are going in Belgium, then his chance of being EU-supportive is higher. Thus, not all variants of national attachment undermine support for EU integration. Finally, European attachment and trust in EU institutions proved to be significant in shaping public opinion on the EU. If a Belgian respondent feels attached to the EU and trusts its institutions, he is more likely to be EU-supportive. Trust in the EU is highly relevant in the context of a Euro crisis because it might be related to an evaluation of how the EU is tackling the crisis. However, further research is needed to establish this relation.

To conclude, economic calculus and being a winner or loser through European integration do shape EU-support and in the limited model, these economic variables prove to be more important in 2011 than in 1991 or 2001. However, identity variables are significant determinants of Belgian EU-support in every year of analysis. Furthermore, the economic and financial crisis (and the decrease of support for the EU) has not constrained further integration. On the contrary, the financial and economic crisis also served as an opportunity structure for further European integration because of the continuous, but incremental, changes it triggered in EU institutions and policies (Tosun, Wetzel and Zapryanova, 2014). Political

leaders could respond to Eurosceptic concerns about legitimacy, by using an identity frame to politicize the integration debate (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). The media can play an important role in this. Research shows that opinions on European integration are indeed strongly influenced by the way a news item is framed, either in a positive or a negative way (Vliegenthart et. al., 2008; Beckers, 2013). For example, if politicians can reassure individuals via a smart communication strategy that their nation's economic future looks positive and that EU membership contributes to this, individual attitudes may follow and citizens might get convinced the EU is a valuable construction despite poor socio-economic conditions (Levy and Phan, 2012). How cueing and strategic communication affects individual opinion was not part of my research design, but it is definitely something to consider for follow-up research.

Therefore, for future research, I would suggest including how cueing shapes opinions, as it might generate a significant influence on support for EU-membership. Furthermore, it could be interesting to extend this research to other cases or to other years. More specifically, it could be useful to compare the Belgian results to those of a country traditionally Eurosceptic. One problem with the data for the year 1991 (and to some extent 2002) is the limited variation with respect to the dependent variable – a vast majority of Belgian citizens are pro-European – making that there was not that much variation to explain. Moreover, adding more years might result in a more precise and robust understanding, for example by adding the year 2008 or 2009 in the midst of the crisis. A final addition to my models could be the inclusion of interaction terms of the economic and identity variables with political cues, as described by Hooghe and Marks (2005). This could provide a better understanding of how our national context frames views on European integration.

Public support is shaped by a number of factors, among them economic calculations and identity concerns. I can conclude that these theories are complementary and not necessarily competitive. Yet, the evidence shows that economic calculus plays a much stronger role in periods of economic crisis. More detailed and refined studies on this topic are needed in order to improve our understanding of EU-public opinion even more.

8. Bibliography

- Abts, K., Heerwegh, D., & Swyngedouw, M. (2009). Sources of Euroscepticism: utilitarian interest, social distrust, national identity and institutional distrust. *World Political Science Review*, 5(1).
- Becker, L. B., & Dunwoody, S. (1982). Media Use, Public Affairs Knowledge and Voting in a Local Election. *Journalism Quarterly*, 59(2), 212.
- Beckers, K. (2013). *Risico of opportuniteit? Een experimenteel onderzoek naar de invloed van frames op opinies ten aanzien van Europese financiële integratie.*, Univerisiteit Antwerpen, Antwerpen.
- Berg, L. (2007). *Multi-level Europeans. The influence of territorial attachments on political trust and welfare attitudes.* Department of Political Science Statsvetenskapliga institutionen.
- Beyers, J., & Bursens, P. (2006). *Europa is geen buitenland: Over de relatie tussen het federale België en de Europese Unie* (No. 4). Acco.
- Bølstad, J. (2014). Dynamics of European integration: Public opinion in the core and periphery. *European Union Politics*.
- Braun, D., & Tausendpfund, M. (2014). The impact of the Euro crisis on citizens' support for the European Union. *Journal of European Integration*, 36(3), 231-245.
- De Sio, L., Emanuele, V., & Maggini, N. (2014). The European Parliament Elections of 2014.
- De Vreese, H., Peter, J., & Semetko, C. (2001). Framing politics at the launch of the Euro: A cross-national comparative study of frames in the news. *Political communication*, 18(2), 107-122.
- de Wilde, P., Michailidou, A., & Trenz, H. J. (2014). Converging on euroscepticism: Online polity contestation during European Parliament elections. *European Journal of Political Research*, 53(4), 766-783.
- Dinan, D. (1999). *Ever closer union: an introduction to European integration.* Boulder: London.
- Eichenberg, R. C., & Dalton, R. J. (2007). Post-Maastricht blues: The transformation of citizen support for European integration, 1973–2004. *Acta Politica*, 42(2), 128-152.
- European Commission. Eurobarometer 72: De Publieke Opinie in de Europese Unie: Nationaal Rapport: België, Najaar 2009, survey by TNS Opinie & Sociaal.
- European Commission. Eurobarometer 72: De Publieke Opinie in de Europese Unie: Nationaal Rapport: Nederland, Najaar 2009, survey by TNS Opinie & Sociaal.
- European Commission. Standard Eurobarometer 81: Public Opinion in the European Union, Spring 2014, survey conducted by TNS Opinion & Social.
- European Commission. (2015). Erasmus + EU programme for education, training, youth and sport. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/discover/index_en.htm
- Kuhn, T., & Stoeckel, F. (2014). When European integration becomes costly: the euro crisis and public support for European economic governance. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(4), 624-641.
- Gabel, M. (1998). Public support for European integration: An empirical test of five theories. *The Journal of Politics*, 60(02), 333-354.
- Gabel, M., & Whitten, G. D. (1997). Economic conditions, economic perceptions, and public support for European integration. *Political Behavior*, 19(1), 81-96.
- GESIS (2015). Eurobarometer data service. Sampling and fieldwork. Retrieved from <http://www.gesis.org/eurobarometer-data-service/survey-series/standard-special-eb/sampling-and-fieldwork/>

- Harcourt, W., & Trejo Mendez, P. (2014). Women, Youth and the Economic Crisis in Southern Europe.
- Hakhverdian, A., van Elsas, E., van der Brug, W., & Kuhn, T. (2013). Euroscepticism and Education. A Longitudinal Study of Twelve EU Member states, 1973-2010.
- Hix, S., & Høyland, B. (1999). *The political system of the European Union*: Macmillan London.
- Hobolt, S., & Wratil, C. (2015). Public opinion and the crisis: the dynamics of support for the euro. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(2), 238-256.
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2005). Calculation, community and cues public opinion on European integration. *European Union Politics*, 6(4), 419-443.
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2009). A postfunctionalist theory of European integration: From permissive consensus to constraining dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(01), 1-23.
- James Jaccard (Ed.). (2001). *Interaction effects in logistic regression* (Vol. 135). Sage.
- Janssen, J. I. (1991). Postmaterialism, cognitive mobilization and public support for European integration. *British Journal of Political Science*, 21(04), 443-468.
- Kriesi, H. (1998). The transformation of cleavage politics The 1997 Stein Rokkan lecture. *European Journal of Political Research*, 33(2), 165-185.
- Kriesi, H. (2005). The mobilization of the political potentials linked to European integration by national political parties. *Euroscepticism, Amsterdam*.
- Kriesi, H. (2007). The Role of European Integration in National Election Campaigns. *European Union Politics*, 8(1), 83-108.
- Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S., & Frey, T. (2008). *West European politics in the age of globalization*: Cambridge University Press Cambridge.
- Levy, N., & Phan, B. (2014). The Utility of Identity: Explaining Support for the EU after the Crash. *Polity*, 46(4), 562-590.
- Lindberg, L. N., & Scheingold, S. A. (1970). *Europe's would-be polity: patterns of change in the European community*: Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Lubbers, M., & Scheepers, P. (2010). Divergent trends of euroscepticism in countries and regions of the European Union. *European Journal of Political Research*, 49(6), 787-817.
- Maggini, N. (2014). The electoral progress of the populist and Eurosceptic right. *The European Parliament Elections of 2014*, 307.
- Pausch, M. (2008). Eurobarometer Makers on a Magic Island-on the Construction of a European Public Opinion by Survey Research. *SWS-RUNDSCHAU*, 48(3), 356-361.
- Ritzen, J., Zimmermann, K. F., & Wehner, C. (2014). Euroskepticism in the Crisis: More Mood than Economy.
- Smith, D. L., & Ray, J. L. (1992). European integration: Gloomy theory versus rosy reality. *The*, 9-44.
- Taggart, P. (1998). A touchstone of dissent: Euroscepticism in contemporary Western European party systems. *European Journal of Political Research*, 33(3), 363-388.
- Van Spanje, J., & de Vreese, C. (2011). So what's wrong with the EU? Motivations underlying the Eurosceptic vote in the 2009 European elections. *European Union Politics*, 12(3), 405-429.
- Verthé, T. (2014). Belgium: Far beyond second order. *The European Parliament Elections of 2014*, 141.
- Vliegenthart, R., Schuck, A. R., Boomgaarden, H. G., & De Vreese, C. H. (2008). News coverage and support for European integration, 1990-2006. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 20(4), 415-439.

Appendix I: Descriptive statistics

Variables	Valid N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1991					
Dependent					
Principle of membership	962	0,7401	0,43879	0,00	1,00
Independent					
Age education - grouped	1006	5,67	2,957	1	10
Occupation dummy	944	0,3581	0,47968	0	1
Personal financial prospects	954	2,88	0,844	1	5
National economic situation	916	2,94	0,871	1	5
Exclusive national identity	958	0,4614	0,49877	0	1
National attachment	992	2,03	0,875	1	4
European attachment	940	2,57	0,965	1	4
Control					
Opinion leadership	1006	2,77	0,905	1	4
Age	1006	42,99	18,078	15	98
Sex	1006	1,50	0,5	1	2
2002					
Dependent					
Principle of membership	982	0,6415	0,47979	0,00	1,00
Independent					
Age education	1037	25,45	23,38	10	98
Occupation dummy	1037	0,0955	0,294	0	1
Personal financial prospects	991	2,36	0,858	1	3
National economic situation	983	2,3	0,738	1	3
Exclusive national identity	1006	0,3628	0,48105	0	1
National attachment	1031	1,78	0,767	1	4
European attachment	1010	2,52	0,845	1	4
National democracy satisfaction	996	2,29	0,71	1	4
Trust in EU institutions	851	2,4136	0,76727	2	4
Control					
Opinion leadership	1034	2,14	0,904	1	4
Age	1037	44,68	18,397	15	98
Gender	1037	1,51	0,5	1	2

Variables	Valid N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
2011					
Dependent					
Principle of membership	1009	0,665	0,47222	0,00	1,00
Independent					
Age education	1011	24,51	20,47	12	98
Occupation dummy	1020	0,0598	0,23724	0	1
Personal financial prospects	1009	2,41	0,832	1	3
National economic situation	1013	2,1	0,857	1	3
Exclusive national identity	1019	0,0343	0,18221	0	1
Present national direction	1018	1,9	0,666	1	3
Trust in EU institutions	1000	1,37	0,484	1	2
Control					
Opinion leadership	1020	2,46	0,951	1	4
Age	1020	50,01	17,859	15	93
Gender	1020	1,52	0,5	1	2

Appendix II: List of variables

1991 (EB 36)	
Dependent variable	
Principle of membership (v64/Q17)	‘Generally speaking, do you think that Belgium’s membership of the European Community is (a good thing, neither good nor bad, a bad thing)?’ Recoded as a dummy variable that takes value 1 for ‘a good thing’ and value 0 for ‘neither good nor bad’ and ‘a bad thing’.
Independent variables	
Age education - grouped (v406/D11)	‘How old were you when you finished your full-time education?’ 1 = up to 14 years, 2 to 8 = 15 to 21 years, 9 = 22 years and older, and 10 = still studying
Occupation of respondent (v415/D17)	‘What is your occupation?’ Recoded as a dummy that takes value 1 for professionals, managers, and business owners and value 0 for all other professions.
Personal financial prospects (v100/Q38)	‘And over the next 12 months, do you expect that the financial situation of your household will (1 = get a lot better, 2 = get a little better, 3 = stay the same, 4 = get a little worse, 5 = get a lot worse)?’
National economic situation (v98/Q36)	‘And over the next 12 months, how do you think the general economic situation in this country will be? Would you say it will (1 = get a lot better, 2 = get a little better, 3 = stay the same, 4 = get a little worse, 5 = get a lot worse)?’
Exclusive national identity (v95/Q33)	‘Do you ever think of yourself as not only Belgian, but also European? Does this happen often, sometimes or never?’ Recoded as a dummy variable that takes value 1 for ‘never’ and value 0 for ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’.
National attachment (v189/Q64)	‘Please tell me how attached you feel to your country?’ 1 = very attached, 2 = fairly attached, 3 = not very attached, and 4 = not at all attached
European attachment (v190/Q64)	‘Please tell me how attached you feel to the European Community?’ 1 = very attached, 2 = fairly attached, 3 = not very attached, and 4 = not at all attached
Control variables	
Opinion leadership (v469/C1)	Constructed variable that combines responses to the following questions: ‘When you hold a strong opinion, do you ever find yourself persuading your friends, relatives or fellow workers to share your views? If so, does it happen often, from time to time, or rarely?’ and ‘When you get together with friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally, or never?’ Based on these questions respondents are given a value of 1 for high cognitive mobilization, 2 for medium-high, 3 for medium-low and 4 for low cognitive mobilization.
Age (v408/D13)	‘How old are you?’ Answer is the respondent’s age in years (15 to 98).
Sex (v407/D12)	‘What is your sex?’ 1 = male and 2 = female

2002 (EB 58.1)	
Dependent variable	
Principle of membership (v92/Q12)	‘Generally speaking, do you think that Belgium’s membership of the European Union is (a good thing, neither good nor bad, a bad thing)?’ Recoded as a dummy variable that takes value 1 for ‘a good thing’ and value 0 for ‘neither good nor bad’ and ‘a bad thing’.
Independent variables	
Age education (v417/D8)	‘How old were you when you stopped full-time education?’ Answer is in years (6 to 35 or still studying).
Occupation of respondent (v423/D15a)	‘What is your current occupation?’ Recoded as a dummy that takes value 1 for professionals, managers, and business owners and value 0 for all other professions.
Personal financial prospects (v43/Q5)	‘What are your expectations for the year to come: will 2003 be better, worse or the same, when it comes to the financial situation of your household?’ 1 = better, 2 = worse, 3 = same
National economic situation (v42/Q5)	‘What are your expectations for the year to come: will 2003 be better, worse or the same, when it comes to the economic situation in your country?’ 1 = better, 2 = worse, 3 = same
Exclusive national identity (v214/Q32)	‘In the near future, do you see yourself as (1 = nationality only, 2 = Belgian and European, 3 = European and Belgian, and 4 = European only)?’ Recoded as a dummy variable that takes value 1 for ‘nationality only’.
National attachment (v212/Q31c)	‘Please tell me how attached you feel to your country?’ 1 = very attached, 2 = fairly attached, 3 = not very attached, and 4 = not at all attached
European attachment (v213/Q31d)	‘Please tell me how attached you feel to the European Union?’ 1 = very attached, 2 = fairly attached, 3 = not very attached, and 4 = not at all attached
National democracy satisfaction (v131/Q22a)	‘On the whole, are you (1 = very satisfied, 2 = fairly satisfied, 3 = not very satisfied, or 4 = not at all satisfied) with the way democracy works in your country?’
Trust in EU institutions (v121/Q21 and v122/Q21)	A variable that combines trust in the European Parliament and trust in the European Commission: ‘Please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend to not trust it?’ 1 = tend to trust and 2 = tend to not trust. Constructed variable has values between 2 to 4.
Control variables	
Opinion leadership (v502/C1)	Constructed variable that combines responses to the following questions: ‘When you, yourself hold a strong opinion, do you ever find yourself persuading your friends, relatives or fellow workers to share your views? If so, does it happen often, from time to time, or rarely?’ and ‘When you get together with friends, would you say you discuss political matters frequently, occasionally, or never?’ Based on these questions respondents are given a value of 1 for low cognitive mobilization, 2 for medium-low, 3 for medium-high and 4 for high cognitive mobilization.
Age (v420/D11)	‘How old are you?’ Answer is the respondent’s age in years (15 to 98).
Gender (v419/D10)	‘What is your gender?’ 1 = male and 2 = female

2011 (EB 75.3)	
Dependent variable	
Principle of membership (v302/QA10C)	‘Generally speaking, do you think that Belgium’s membership of the European Union is (a good thing, neither good nor bad, a bad thing)?’ Recoded as a dummy variable that takes value 1 for ‘a good thing’ and value 0 for ‘neither good nor bad’ and ‘a bad thing’.
Independent variables	
Age education (v613/D8)	‘How old were you when you stopped full-time education?’ Answer is in years (2 to 67 or no full-time education or still studying).
Occupation of respondent (v619/D15A)	‘What is your current occupation?’ Recoded as a dummy that takes value 1 for professionals, managers, and business owners and value 0 for all other professions.
Personal financial prospects (v128/QA6A_3)	‘What are your expectations for the next 12 months: will the next 12 months be (1 = better, 2 = worse, 3 = the same), when it comes to the financial situation of your household?’
National economic situation (v127/QA6A_2)	‘What are your expectations for the next 12 months: will the next 12 months be (1 = better, 2 = worse, 3 = the same), when it comes to the economic situation in your country?’
Exclusive national identity (v588/QD4_1)	‘For each of the following statements, please tell me to what extent it corresponds or not to your own opinion. You feel you are a citizen of the EU.’ 1 = yes, definitely, 2 = yes, to some extent, 3 = no, not really, and 4 = no, definitely not Recoded as a dummy variable that takes value 1 for ‘no, definitely, not’.
Present national direction (v304/QA121_1)	‘At the present time, would you say that, in general, (1 = things are going in the right direction, 2 = things are going in the wrong direction, or 3 = neither the one nor the other)?’
Trust in EU institutions (v312/QA13_3)	‘I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. Please tell me if you (1 = tend to trust or 2 = tend not to trust) the European Union.’
Control variables	
Opinion leadership (v750/C1)	Constructed variable that combines responses to the following questions: ‘When you hold a strong opinion, do you ever find yourself persuading your friends, relatives or fellow workers to share your views? If so, does it happen often, from time to time, or rarely?’ and ‘When you get together with friends, would you say you discuss frequently, occasionally, or never about (national/European/local) political matters?’ Based on these questions respondents are given a value of 1 for low cognitive mobilization, 2 for medium-low, 3 for medium-high and 4 for high cognitive mobilization.
Age (v616/D11)	‘How old are you?’ Answer is the respondent’s age in years (15 to 98).
Gender (v615/D10)	‘What is your gender?’ 1 = male and 2 = female

