

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS, PRAGUE
FACULTY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MASTER'S THESIS

2020

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International and Diplomatic Studies

The Phenomenon of Euroscepticism – A Comparative Analysis of the Federal
Republic of Germany and the Czech Republic

(Master's Thesis)

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Author's Declaration

Herewith I declare that I have written the Master's Thesis on my own and I have cited all sources.

Prague, 10.04.2020

.....
Author's Signature

Acknowledgements

The completion of this undertaking would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends and supervisor. Although I will not mention everyone by name, I would like to hereby declare that all of their contributions are sincerely appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. However, I would like to express my great appreciation and indebtedness particularly to the following:

My parents, who have not only supported me in studying in a foreign country, but who have also paved my personal and academic path throughout my entire life.

My grandparents, who have spent countless hours crossing their fingers at home.

My friends, who have emotionally, as well as professionally advised me, and offered me sources of distraction when I needed them.

My supervisor, who consistently provided me with guidance, even though the world is currently suffering from a pandemic.

Thank you.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| EU | European Union |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UKIP | UK Independence Party |
| ES | Euroscepticism |
| FRG | Federal Republic of Germany |
| CZ | Czech Republic |
| AfD | Alternative für Deutschland |
| ODS | Občanská demokratická strana |
| CDU | Christliche Demokratische Union Deutschlands |
| CSU | Christlich-Soziale Union |
| FDP | Freie Demokratische Partei |
| EP | European Parliament |
| GDR | German Democratic Republic |
| ECR | European Conservatives and Reformists |
| ID | Identity and Democracy |
| EFD | Freedom and Direct Democracy |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GNI | Gross National Income |
| SPD | Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| MEP | Members of the European Parliament |
| ČSSD | Česká strana sociálně demokratická |
| US-DEU | Unie svobody – Demokratická unie |
| KDU-ČSL | Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová |
| RMS | Republikánská strana Československa |
| KSČM | Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy |
| ANO | Akce nespokojených občanů |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| ACRE | Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |

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1. Introduction

For as long as people can remember, there has been conflict on the European peninsula. Historic feuds have led to frequent clashes between its ruling powers, resulting in reoccurring wars, hardships and economic devastation. These disputes reached a dramatic peak when Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939, starting a disastrous World War that had left the world in shatters and millions dead. In order to create long-lasting peace, the leaders of France, Italy, Germany and the Benelux came together and founded the ECSC in 1952 – the first step to what is now known as the European Union.

In the following years numerous efforts followed, starting an integration process that increased the dependency between the member states, while simplifying the movements of people, money and goods. Soon the EU had produced a number of milestones, including the Single European Act in 1987, the completion of the single market in 1993, the creation of the Schengen zone in 1995, the introduction of the Euro in 2002 and the eastward enlargement in 2004. In solely 50 years, the European Union had become a powerful player in the realms of international affairs and of the world's most important markets. However, the growing dependency, economic crises and the supranational character of the EU have also triggered a great scale of criticism. Among its critics, the EU is often perceived as undemocratic, untransparent, too distant to its citizens, too neoliberal, too involved in national affairs or as too financially demanding. While this sentiment was long limited to bumper-sticker wisdom, it has lately contributed to the success of numerous left- and right-wing political parties all over the European Union, sparking a debate on one of the EU's greatest contemporary problems: Euroscepticism.

This thesis aims to shed light on the phenomenon of Euroscepticism, while comparing its differing origins and manifestations in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Czech Republic. The central research question hereby is as follows: How does the practice of Euroscepticism differ in Germany and the Czech Republic? In order to explain the different characteristics in greater detail, it is therefore important to firstly explain the concept of Euroscepticism itself, while examining its differing typology, origins and peculiarities. Subsequently, both countries will be introduced, focusing on their main right-wing Eurosceptic movements: Germany's *Alternative für Deutschland* and Czechia's *Občanská demokratická strana*. Due to their size, these parties function as appropriate exemplary representations for their countries and simultaneously offer an appropriate common base for the subsequent comparison. It is hereby the Eurosceptic character that is going to be analyzed primarily. Finally, both countries face a comparison, outlining the key similarities and differences.

2. Euroscepticism

It is important to define the term Euroscepticism to begin with, as it bears room for misinterpretation and functions as a base for the subsequent chapters. Although the term “Euro” suggests that it may concentrate on the skeptical perception of the common European currency “Euro”, its focus is much larger. Euroscepticism deals with the negative perception of the European Union as a whole, defining the sentiment of doubt towards its political-institutional framework, policies and future development. Taggart, who is often considered to be one of the founders of the Euroscepticism theory, defines Euroscepticism as

“The idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration. [...] Scepticism in the face of an institutional reality is here taken as equivalent to opposition in the face of uncertainty. It is also used because it is more inclusive. All opponents of the EU are, at least, sceptical, but not all sceptics are opponents.” (Taggart 1998: 366)

However, there is no singular way to define Euroscepticism in the political discourse. According to Daddow, this is owed to the fact that the term is used by “people in various countries and for whatever motive who oppose anything from European integration per se to the institutional form integration has been taking in [...] the EU” (2006: 313) – even the word Europe itself is often perceived as debatable, as people disagree on its geographical outlines. He furthermore explains that a variety of different terms have come to light, challenging the usage of the term Euroscepticism: “‘Europhobes’ [...], ‘ultranationalist europhobics’ and ‘euro critics’. [...] or ‘Euro-agnostic’, ‘Euro-realist’ and ‘Euro-pragmatist’ (Daddow 2006:313) are often used synonymously.

The term Euroscepticism itself was coined by the *Times* in 1986, describing the EU-critical attitude of the Conservative Party and Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister of the United Kingdom at the time (cf. Oberkirch & Schild 2010: 10). However, ever since the backdrop of the Treaty of Maastricht in the early 1990’s, it became obvious that Euroscepticism was not solely an English phenomenon, but clearly a European one: Many political parties and citizens throughout the Union openly criticized the increased EU competences, the creation of the Eurozone, the great Eastern enlargement of 2004 and the attempted European Constitution. These sentiments reached a historic peak during the Eurozone crisis in 2009, marking the point when Euroscepticism became increasingly embedded across Europe as a whole (cf. Brack & Startin 2015: 239). From this time forth the public opinion of the European Union has become increasingly antagonistic, while the support for Eurosceptic parties, civil society groups and anti-European rhetoric has skyrocketed. This antagonism has not only manifested itself in

Brexit, but also – for instance – in the rise of Italy’s right-wing Lega Nord, Germany’s Alternative für Deutschland or France’s Front National. This shift is moreover undeniably present in the European Parliament.

“Roughly a fifth of MEPs were [...] Euroskeptics from 1979 to 2009, according to [...] EU election results. In 2014, the Euroskeptic share jumped to 29%, or 221 MEPs. In the Greek and UK delegations, in fact, Euroskeptics outnumber pro-EU members.” (Desilver 2019).

2.1 Definitions and Typologies

As previously elaborated, a single definition of Euroscepticism does not exist. The term itself is ought to be understood as a catch-all term, attempting to recapitulate critical sentiments towards the European Union and its integrational process. Therefore, it is essential to dive into its specific variations, based on differing interpretations, focuses or authors. The following paragraphs thus aim to explain the distinct definitions and typologies of the term Euroscepticism.

2.1.1 Hard and Soft Euroscepticism

Taggart and Szczerbiak define two types of Euroscepticism: Hard and Soft Euroscepticism. As hinted in his quote above, Euroscepticism differs in its intensity and level of exclusivity. By stating “not all sceptics are opponents” (Taggart 1998: 366), Taggart and Szczerbiak explain that not all sceptics are against the European Union in itself, but simply criticize its current realization. Naturally, both categories may intertwine at times.

Hard Euroscepticism is hereby defined by the former: Rejection. It describes the opposition to the EU and its integration process, while striving for their countries’ membership withdrawal, as the project of the European Union is considered as harmful and unwanted (cf. Taggart & Szczerbiak 2002: 4). Hard Eurosceptic parties are often single-issue parties, meaning that the party’s singular aim is the mobilization against the European Union and its core principles. This method is based on the idea that a party would only rally solely against the EU, if it is truly opposed to the foundation of its existence itself. If the party’s discourse language stresses that the EU is too capitalist, socialist, neo-liberal or bureaucratic (depending on the ideological framework) and demands the for “fundamental re-casting of the terms on which their country is an EU member that is incompatible with the present trajectory of the European project” (Taggart & Szczerbiak 2002:4), it proves that the party’s claims are too unattainable and therefore also against maintaining an EU membership.

Soft Euroscepticism, on the other hand, is not opposed to the sheer existence of the EU or its core principals, but rather criticizes its current implementation. Because of that, its criticism is typically aimed against particular policies or structures, but not against the European project itself. It is often based on the idea that certain policies may be at odds with national interest. In order to detect soft Euroscepticism, Taggart and Szczerbiak recommend analyzing a party's political agenda and rhetoric, which ought to

“capture those positions that constitute real skepticism about the way European integration is currently developing. [...] If someone supports the EU as it currently exists and opposes any further integration, [...] they are effectively Eurosceptic because this is at odds with what is the dominant mode of integration that is ongoing.” (Taggart & Szczerbiak 2002:4)

Concerning the contemporary reality of the European Union, one may refer to Brexit as the result of hard Euroscepticism, as UKIP did not desire a reformation of particular policies, but a concrete exit from the European project. Soft Euroscepticism, however, is often found in the opposition to further geographical enlargements, a European military, constitutional efforts or the Common Agricultural Policy (cf. Taggart & Szczerbiak 2002:5)

2.1.2 Specific and Diffuse Euroscepticism

Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde acknowledge the significance of the differentiation in hard- and soft Euroscepticism but address a number of concerns. Soft Euroscepticism, for instance, is deemed to be too broad, interpreting the slightest disagreement with the EU as Eurosceptic. Furthermore, Mudde and Kopecký argue that the different characteristics are too blurred at times, making a distinction between soft and hard Euroscepticism close to impossible.

Because of that, Kopecký and Mudde decided to add two additional dimensions: specific and diffuse Euroscepticism. These distinctions are supposed to eradicate these flaws, while framing the term Euroscepticism in relation to comparable party positions throughout the European Union. “Diffuse support [...] [hereby] mean[s] support for the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU. [...] Specific support [...] denote[s] support for the general practice of European integration; that is, the EU as it is and as it is developing.” (Kopecký & Mudde 2002: 300). The former, the diffuse support (for the idea of the European integration), consists of Europhiles and Europhobes.

Following the footsteps of Jean Monnet, Europhiles believe in the core principles that constitute the foundation of the European integration process: “institutionalized cooperation on the bases of pooled sovereignty (the political element) and an integrated liberal market economy (the economic element) (Kopecký & Mudde 2002: 301). Because of that, Europhiles may either

evaluate the integrational process from a federalist- or a predominantly economic perspective. Europhobes, on the other hand, constitute the direct opposite to Europhiles and do not support the core principles of the integrational project. Their non-existent support or even opposition is often owed to their political beliefs, as ideologies such as nationalism, socialism or isolationism struggle with the idea of the submission to a supranational institution (cf. Kopecký & Mudde 2002: 301). Although even nationalists are in favor of a certain degree of intergovernmental cooperation on the European continent, “they fail to support one or more of the ideas underlying European integration” (Kopecký & Mudde 2002: 301).

The latter, the specific support (for the European Union), distinguishes between EU-optimists and EU-pessimists. The EU-optimists are defined by their satisfaction with the current and future realization of EU policies and developments. Nevertheless, a party can be critical towards EU policies and still be considered Euro-optimist, as long as it welcomes the European Union on the whole (cf. Kopecký & Mudde 2002: 302). The EU-pessimists negatively perceive the current state of the European Union, as well as its future advancement. However, being an EU-pessimist does not necessarily mean a desired withdrawal from the Union, but may be expressed in the idea that

“the current EU [...] [is] a serious deviation from their interpretation of the founding ideas of the European integration. However, because they do support these ideas, they hope to change the EU in such a way that it become a truer reflection of them” (Kopecký & Mudde 2002: 302)

| | | Support for European Integration | |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| | | Europhile | Europhobe |
| Support for the EU | EU-Optimists | Euroenthusiasts | Europragmatics |
| | EU-Pessimists | Eurosceptics | Eurorejects |

Image 1: The sub-categories of Euroscepticism according to Kopecký and Mudde

In order to specially assign each dimension accordingly, Kopecký and Mudde created the four ideal-type matrix shown above (image 1). Both, Europhiles and Europhobes, contain two additional sub-categories: Euroenthusiasts, Eurosceptics, Europragmatics and Eurorejects. While the Euroenthusiast is firmly convinced that the EU is the greatest possible realization of the European idea, the Eurosceptic is generally in favor of the European integration but views

the current state and future of the EU critically (cf. Oberkirch & Schild 2010: 11). The Europragmatics, on the other hand, behave contradictory to the Eurosceptics: They “do not support the general ideas of European integration underlying the EU, nor do they necessarily oppose them, yet they do (often for purely pragmatic reasons) support the EU” (Harmsen & Menno 2004: 232). Finally, the Eurorejects reject all previous dimensions.

2.1.3 Ideological and Strategic Euroscepticism

Jan Rovny incorporated Taggart and Szczerbiak’s dimensions of hard- and soft Euroscepticism and combined them with two additional dimensions: Ideological and Strategic Euroscepticism (cf. Rovny 2004:34). Ideological Eurosceptics view the European Union critically, as its principles, values and policies are colliding with their political beliefs. A nationalist, for instance, opposes the EU’s supranational character, as it compromises its country’s sovereignty. A socialist, on the other hand, may criticize the Union’s economic policies. Strategic Eurosceptics, however, typically do not perceive the EU’s issues as an ideological threat, but as a practical addition to their political agenda. The EU is hereby often used as a scapegoat, deemed to take the blame for national issues. Political accomplishments, contrarily, are claimed as personal achievements of the party— although they might be direct results of EU policies. “Eurosceptic parties usually use it to attract new voters, extend their coverage of the electorate and increase their political influence” (Ultan & Ornek 2015: 51). According to Rovny, hard Euroscepticism is likely to be an expression of ideological Euroscepticism but can also serve a strategic purpose. Soft Euroscepticism, on the other hand, is less probable to be ideologically motivated. This distinction is essential to evaluate a party’s durability and therefore its influence on voters (cf. Oberkirch & Schild 2010: 12).

2.2 Explanatory Models and Manifestation

While the typology of Euroscepticism is rather diverse, so are its origins and manifestations. Now that the reader is familiar with the terminology and its different characteristics, it is important to focus on its sources. Why and how does Euroscepticism arise? In order to create an elaborate model of its provenance, the subsequent paragraphs will focus on economic, cultural, institutional and ideological reasons. Does a country practice an economic form of Euroscepticism, or is its Euroscepticism based on identity?

2.2.1 Socio-economic Origins

It appears as obvious that economic factors shape the perception of the European Union, considering that its integrational process started with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and soon continued with additional institutions such as Euratom or the European Economic Community. Before the European Union became increasingly supranational, it was long solely understood as a forerunner for a single free market. Because of that, the attitude towards the EU is inseparable from its economic success (cf. Zabel 2017:35).

“Citizens will come to identify with a construction like the EU when they realize that it provides the infrastructure by which all their other attachments (local, national, gender, sexual, occupational...) can be managed and prevented from coming into excessive conflict with one another. [...] The EU, in other words, obtains its *raison-d'être* from being utile. As such, these perspectives thus open the door for a type of euroscepticism that is based on the critique of lacking benefits from the EU or the inefficiency of the EU's set up (including fraud and bureaucracy) (Sørensen 2004: 7).

Sørensen hereby argues that citizens make an individual cost-benefit-analysis, while evaluating their own personal gain. Zabel claims, however, that this assessment is not always based on hard empirical facts, but rather on subjective sentiments. He hereby refers to Eichenberg and Dalton's research and states that their “results indicate that it is the ‘subjective’ economy, as perceived by EU-citizens, rather than the ‘objective’ economy, as measured by economic indicators, that influences support for integration” (Gabel and Whitten 1997: 92). Euroscepticism hence is the feeling of being part of the losing side, as the European integrational process has not only created winners, but also losers. Due to the fact that socio-economic Euroscepticism is often an irrational sentiment, it hints that both, support and rejection of the EU, are instable, as they are not directly connected economic developments (cf. Zabel 2017: 37).

It is the sociodemographic frame of reference that is furthermore significant, as it shapes the individual's perception of reality: Socio-economic Euroscepticism is significantly more present among lower-class individuals with a low level of education, like low-skilled workers or those without employment. Following the previously established concept of utilitarianism, the lower class does therefore not view the liberation of the markets and the opening of the job as utile, but as threatening (cf. Zabel 2017: 38). Nevertheless, the socio-economic model does not only affect the underprivileged, but is also instrumentalized by the political elites: Almost all political parties evaluate the EU based on its advantages or disadvantages for their own country and their regular voter base. The cost-benefit-analysis is hereby complemented by the party's particular ideology, condemning the EU as either too neoliberal or too socialist (cf. Zabel 2017:39). Conclusively, the socio-economic model explains why a country's EU membership is desirable or not and also defines the criticism of political decisionmakers.

2.2.2 Culture and Identity

Although the European Union has become increasingly interdependent, it has failed to create a shared European identity. Indeed, one may even argue that a countermovement is on the rise, as nationalist sentiments and the political right are becoming more and more influential throughout Europe. However, a sense of togetherness is deemed as essential by many Europhiles, as it is believed to improve the acceptance for European policies. It could furthermore function as a buffer against radical anti-European movements, aiming to stabilize the Union (cf. Zabel 2017: 39).

Ever since the treaty of Maastricht in 1993, many European citizens have come to realize that the European Union is far more than just an economic construct. With the establishment of common policies – especially a shared asylum plan – many EU critics felt as if the EU was getting too involved, threatening their nation's sovereignty and identity. The national identity, which is defined by a “historic homeland, [...] a shared history, a common mass public culture, myths of common ancestry, shared symbols, traditions and customs, [a shared language], and [a] demonstrate[ion] of self-awareness as a nation” (Tartakovski 2010:1850), is hereby specifically important, as it is based on a subjective sentiment – similar to the subjective economy mentioned above. Although a strong sense of national identity does not always lead to a high degree of Euroscepticism, a direct correlation between the two feelings can be witnessed in most cases. An exclusive incompatibility between the two, however, solely exists among voters of the extreme right.

Because of that, Hooghe and Marks explain that a critical stance on the integrational process is highly dependent a country's political framework: “Exclusive national identity is mobilized against European integration in countries where the elite is polarized on European integration, where political parties are divided, and where radical right parties are strong” (2004: 21). Therefore, the national sense of identity is not only significant for the people, but also for political parties.

2.2.3 Proxy Support and Cognitive Mobilization

Apart from socio-economic and identity related factors, it is furthermore important to understand the EU citizens' attitude towards political institutions in general. When trying to comprehend political processes, many people subconsciously make use of the so-called proxy model. This model is based on the assumption that only a small amount of EU citizens is

familiar with the EU's political framework, which forces them to rely on proxies: A projection of their individual country's politics on the European Union. "They use information about something they know, that is the national politics and the national institutional system, to make judgment regarding something they know less" (Capuzzi 2016: 17). Consequently, a positive evaluation of the national government will lead to positive perception of EU politics. However, if they identify their own government as corrupt and ineffective, they are likely to assess the EU the same way. In this context, Ingelhart introduces his model of cognitive mobilization, which is based on the idea that "individual attitudes towards the European integration are highly influenced by the level of political skills. [...] He looks at the education and the cultural and political knowledge to explain support for supranational integration" (Capuzzi 2016: 17). Due to the high level of complexity of European affairs, Ingelhart explains that having political knowledge is "the antecedent needed to produce positive attitudes towards Europe, since to higher skilled people the European dimension is more familiar and less threatening than for poorer skilled ones" (Capuzzi 2016: 18). Indeed, empirical analysis have proven that the EU support among the educated is higher than among the uneducated.

2.2.4 The Media Portrayal

Catalyst factors are typically not based on sentiments or socio-economic aspects but describe outside influences that foster a breeding ground for Euroscepticism.

One of the most influential outside factors in politics is the media, often named the fourth branch of government. In the case of the European Union, its coverage has increased dramatically: The number of EU focused articles in premium newspapers increased from solely three percent in 1982 to nine percent in 2003 (cf. Zabel 2017: 56). Aside from the media's main task – the delivery of information of data – it is also known for its ability to "influence what citizens think about (agenda setting), but also how they think about these issues (framing). Indeed, news frames can affect, for example, cognitive responses" (De Vreese 2007: 273). This narrative is also known as strategic framing, as it does not prioritize the reporting itself, but rather the illustration of a political horse race. Considering that EU politics are often perceived as too distant and therefore as too boring or complex, the media has a higher tendency to engage in strategic framing on the European level, than on the national level. The hereby expressed criticism has the potential for being a catalyst, specifically when it includes the previously mentioned explanatory models (cf. Zabel 2017: 57). However, in light of the fact that most premium newspapers do not engage in outright Euroscepticism, the strategic framing on expense of the EU is typically pursued by the tabloid press. It is also dependent on the attitude

of the reader, who – according to cognitive mobilization – may interpret an article differently based on his or her educational background.

2.3 Measuring Euroscepticism

Now that the reader is familiar with the broad concept of Euroscepticism, its definitions, typologies and origins, this paragraph aims to explain a variety of methods to pursue its detection and its categorization. In the realms of the studies of the European Integration, there are three main methods that have proven to be particularly efficient for the goal of this thesis: discourse analysis, textual approaches and reputational measures. Due to their individual relevance to the detection, a mixture of all methods will be applied subsequently.

2.3.1 Textual approaches

The textual approach is the most common method to detect a party's political stance on particular issues. It analyses its election program, as it presents the party's official positions. One can hereby measure two different aspects: the quantity and quality of the issues. In regard to quantity, it appears as obvious that a frequently mentioned topic is more important to a party, than a topic that is merely a side topic in its election program. Therefore, a high coverage is likely to equal a high importance. The analysis of quality is slightly more complex: A party's election program can be evaluated by its connection to its political practice and motivation, differentiating between contracts, advertisement and proclaims of identity (cf. Havlík 2008: 354). The contracts are ought to be understood as an agreement between the voters and the party, reflecting the actual goals of the election program. As the party's reputation is based on it, the contract is typically based on a realistic idea of future implementations. The advertisement factor, however, is usually highly unrealistic and does not genuinely reflect the party's stance, as it used as a strategic exaggeration to attract attention. Finally, the proclaims of identity are particularly beneficial to the detection of a party's practice of Euroscepticism, as they shed light on the party's ideology (cf. Havlová 2011: 30).

2.3.2 Discourse Analysis

While a political manifesto offers a rational synopsis of a party's agenda and ideology, it is typically well thought out and does therefore often fail to show a party's true motives and intentions. Because of that, Drid argues that "the study of language in context will offer a deeper insight into how meaning is attached to utterances than the study of language in isolated

sentences” (2010: 22). Different than the textual approach, the discourse analysis includes the communicational metalevel and thus the tone. This is essential, as the usage of particular words or emotions contributes to the detection of its author’s real objectives. Furthermore, the voter is usually unfamiliar with the party’s manifesto and hence relies on its political mouthpiece: the politician. The politician often functions relatively autonomic, as he or she represents a particular ideological wing or constituency. Nevertheless, prominent politicians – especially those who are in high positions – are still a valuable representation of their party’s politics, as they basically function as the manifesto’s “real-life” implementation. Consequently, it is necessary to analyze a party’s discourse to identify its degree of Euroscepticism.

2.3.3 Reputational Measures

Unlike the previously mentioned measures, the reputational approach is not based on primary sources, but on secondary ones. It is founded on the opinions and interpretations of previously established research. Typically, one hereby makes use of existent surveys and the investigations of experts. Surveys are particularly useful to detect the voters’ attitude towards a political party or the political system. In the context of Euroscepticism, this may serve to detect certain sentiments, such as the feeling of socio-economic neglect or national identity. These surveys are even more valuable when paired with the interpretation of experts, who are capable of equipping them with the necessary political context (cf. Havlová 2011: 31). The specific surveys that are hereby particularly useful are those that depict the people’s opinion on their national government, as well as on the European Union and the way it influences their home country. Apart from those that are conducted by political foundations – such as the Friedrich Eber Stiftung in Germany or the Center for Insights in Survey Research - it is the regularly published Eurobarometer by the European Commission and the European Parliament that offer essential insights on the public opinion of the EU member states. These information are not only useful for the display of national peculiarities, but also for the comparison to other EU members.

3. The Nature of Euroscepticism in Germany and the Czech Republic

The previous paragraphs have created a detailed image of Euroscepticism, establishing the theoretical framework of this thesis. Subsequently, the characteristics of Euroscepticism are individually applied to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the Czech Republic (CZ). Logically, the introduction hereby follows the structure and methodology above. For introductory purposes, this analysis starts with an overall political overview, including its

historical and current presence. Considering that a homogenous national practice of Euroscepticism does not exist, it is consequently useful to concentrate on a more specific, but exemplary focus group. Because of that, this thesis focuses on Germany's "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD) and the Czech "Občanská demokratická strana" (ODS) – the two most popular Eurosceptic parties in their respective countries. However, as the origins are mostly related to cultural and socio-economic factors of the electorate, the analysis of the origin of Euroscepticism concentrates on the political and social climate of the countries' societies.

3.1 Euroscepticism in Germany

"No European nation is capable of military protection or economic development on its own. If one insisted on upholding the traditional concepts of nationalism in today's world, this would mean Europe's end." (Adenauer 1953)

In Germany, however, nationalism did not gain a foothold until recently. On the contrary, Germany has been a prime example of European integration for a long time. The German constitution already stated that in "establishing a united Europe, the Federal Republic of Germany shall participate in the development of the European Union that is committed to democratic, social and federal principles" (Article 23 Basic Law) when it was adopted in 1949. In the following years, the approval rate of the European integrational process was that strong that Helmut Kohl (the sixth chancellor of Germany) even called the German reunification and the European unification as two sides of the same coin in 1990 (cf. Becker 2014: 18). Nevertheless, after years of economic growth and prosperity, the German euphoria soon began to stagnate. The troubles of Germany's reunification and the planned introduction of the European economic- and monetary union marked the beginning a discursive shift on German soil. In the late 1990's, the majority of the population believed that the European integration had caused more disadvantages than advantages, while framing the integrational process as a threat for the social state (cf. Becker 2014: 19). Although the public opinion had become more Eurosceptic, the ruling political parties did not jump on the bandwagon, nor profited politically from the suspicion. This is also owed to institutional setting of the FRG, which limits the influence of radical parties due to a five percent threshold and the necessity of forming coalitions. Furthermore, political parties in the *Länderparlamente* (parliaments of the federal states) cannot determine the agenda setting or legislation of the FRG as a whole. Overall, the political climate of Germany's *Bundestag* (federal parliament) was thus defined by a common openness towards the European integration. Considering this shared agreement, the European Integration was not frequently themed, as it did not allow a content-based delimitation from the

other parties (cf. Becker 2014: 19). However, in light of the fact that it was indeed present among the people, Lees considered a “dark matter” (Lees 2002: 244) in German politics.

This dark matter slowly began to influence the main players of German politics. Even though it was never part of the parties’ official programs, individual party members of the CDU/CSU, Die Linke (the left), the FDP and the Green party began to express their concern regarding the European integration process. Nevertheless, none of the parties ever criticized the European project, nor questioned Germany’s membership. Germany’s general stance towards the European Union thus remains overall positive. According to the Standard Eurobarometer 91, only 16% believe that leaving the EU would be a good thing, while 78% totally disagree with a potential Dexit (2019: 89). Furthermore, 78% of the Germans consider Germany’s membership in the EU as a good thing – that is almost 20% above the European average (cf: EP Barometer 2019: 16). Therefore, German Euroscepticism was long considered to be extremely soft. Nevertheless, the degree of Euroscepticism among particular groups has changed with the emergence of the “Alternative für Deutschland”. Although the AfD has not yet been part of the government, it is currently the strongest opposition party in Germany. Due to its essential importance to this thesis, the AfD will be analyzed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

3.1.1 Introducing the “Alternative für Deutschland”

In an interview with the newspaper *Tagesspiegel*, Bernd Lucke – the founder of the Alternative für Deutschland - explains his motivation that lead to the creation of the AfD the following way: “I saw the euro and the euro rescue policy as a misconception - and I still do so today. [...] We had to become more political. [...] There was no Euro-critical party in the political center, and it was impossible to make oneself heard. So, we founded the AfD in a small circle in February 2013” (2018). What started as a small circle of frustrated economists, soon became Germany’s loudest Eurosceptic voice. Nowadays the AfD is Germany’s third strongest party and the only right-wing party in national parliament. Although a variety of right-wing parties have existed prior to the AfD, the Alternative für Deutschland is the first one that successfully passed the five percent threshold and managed to gain a total of 12.6% in the 2017 election (Der Bundeswahlleiter 2017). It has hereby been particularly successful in the *Bundesländer* (federal states) of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) in Eastern Germany. According to surveys and election analyses, the voter potential is almost twice as high in these regions – and so is the degree of dissatisfaction with the government (cf. Decker 2018). Lucke,

the founder of the AfD, has resigned in 2015. After internal power-struggles, the Alternative für Deutschland is now ruled by Alexander Gauland and Professor Jörg Meuthen.

The self-proclaimed civic, liberal and conservative party is – according to political scientists - considered to be part of the European right-wing populism group (cf. Decker 2018). Depending on the *Bundesland* (federal state), certain political splinter group are even regarded as part of the extreme right. The electoral program which was once mainly focused on the European monetary union and market-liberal views has now shifted its focus to asylum- and migration policies. Socio-politically, the AfD follows a conservative agenda that is – among other aspects – defined by traditional view on family and values. The market policies merely play a subordinate role. However, the criticism of the EU naturally remained.

According to the AfD's manifesto, this EU critique is mainly based on economic and identitarian concerns. Economically speaking, the AfD mostly assesses the EU for its common currency and its economic migration. Concerning the former, the AfD demands a national referendum on the Euro, as it claims that it is “no longer viable without ongoing massive wealth transfers into EU member states that do not meet the standards of the currency union” (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 17). The party hereby refers to the European debt crisis, in which Germany mainly contributed to the bail out. According to the AfD, this did not only threatened the peaceful coexistence on the European continent, but was also unconstitutional, as it violated the “authority on government expenditure” (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 18). In regard to the latter, the AfD requests a

“moderate legal immigration based on qualitative criteria where is irrefutable demand, which can neither be satisfied from domestic resources, nor by EU immigration. [...] [It] welcome[s] highly-skilled immigrants with a distinct willingness to integrate. This is to be strictly separated from an uncontrolled influx of asylum seekers which do not benefit Germany's economy and harm German society (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 62).

By “harm”, the AfD refers to the alleged “immigration into the social system [that] has become common-place” (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 61). The party hereby claims that problematic migration is not only favored by the EU, but that the German justice system has been paralyzed by its legislations and is therefore no longer able to appropriately handle this national problem. This migration is seen as an economic, but also as an identitarian threat. Due to the low birthrate among native Germans, many fear to become a minority in their own country. Ultimately, this process is believed to end up in the loss of German cultural identity. Claiming that the preservation of identity is the AfD's “primary political goal” (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 45), multiculturalism is seen as its direct antagonist. Because of that, the AfD claims that the refugee crisis should not be a German issue, but a southern European one, as migrants do not

arrive in Germany first. The EU is hereby perceived as responsible for the redistribution of migrants and refugees and therefore as the problem's core. Considering their Eurosceptic views, the AfD joined the Eurosceptic, anti-federalist political group "European Conservatives and Reformists" (ECR) in the European Parliament and later co-founded the "Identity and Democracy" (ID) group. Politically speaking, this meant a step further towards the right.

3.1.2 The Eurosceptic Character of the "Alternative für Deutschland"

What, however, defines the practice of the AfD's Euroscepticism? Does the AfD pursue a hard Euroscepticism, or simply a soft one? Where is the AfD located on Kopecky's and Mudde's four ideal-type matrix? Is it strategically or ideologically coined? The following paragraphs aim to answer these questions by following the previously explained concepts and methodology.

3.1.2.1 Hard or Soft Euroscepticism?

According to Taggart and Szczerbiak, hard Euroscepticism is defined by a negative stance towards the European integration itself, while soft Euroscepticism is not against the European project per se, but against particular implementations or policies. In the early stages of the AfD's existence, the party

"presented itself as a single-issue party with a rather narrow focus on the European debt crisis. Its slim political agenda was dominated by liberal-conservative Euroscepticism. Its platform demanded an 'orderly dissolution' of the European monetary zone and a return to national currencies or smaller, more homogeneous monetary associations. Germany should insist on a unilateral withdrawal from the Eurozone." (Schmitt-Beck 2017: 126).

The focus of the AfD, however, has drastically shifted since the European migrant crisis in 2015. What was once the party's main concern, now merely comprises six out of 95 pages in the party's political manifest. In the abstract of chapter two "Europe and the Euro", the AfD claims to be delighted by the great diversity of the continent's cultural traditions (cf. Manifesto for Germany 2016: 15). Nevertheless, it demands the EU's return to "an economic union based on shared interests, and consisting of sovereign, but loosely connected nation states." (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 15). In other words, the party requests a sovereign Germany that – if the AfD's reformation requests are not met – needs to withdraw from the European Union. Alternatively, they "seek Germany's exit, or a democratic dissolution of the EU, followed by the founding of a new European economic union" (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 15). This short introduction of the party's stance on "Europe and the Euro" offers an interesting insight on the party's practice of Euroscepticism. These paragraphs present both, hard- and soft, Eurosceptic elements. By stating that "returning the European Union to an economic union based on shared interests, and consisting of sovereign, but loosely connected nation states"

(Manifesto for Germany 2016: 15) is desired, the party hints that it is unsatisfied with the EU's current implementation, but agrees with its basic foundations. However, it appears as if this idea is based on the common misconception that the EU was solely intended as an economic union in the first place. After all, the priority was a peaceful coexistence between the European countries – especially between Germany and France. Because of that, one may argue that the AfD's criticism goes beyond the current implementation of EU policies and questions its ideological principles instead. Thus, this declaration entails rather hard Eurosceptic intentions. As Taggart and Szczerbiak explained, a “fundamental re-casting of the terms on which their country is an EU member that is incompatible with the present trajectory of the European project” (2002: 4) is also hard form of Euroscepticism, as its claims are so infeasible, that maintaining an EU membership is close to impossible. Concerning the administrative necessity of the EU's supranational character, the demand for a union based on “sovereign, but loosely connected nation states” is highly unattainable. Hence, this appeal also incorporates hard Eurosceptic elements. Considering that a return to pre-Maastricht times is extremely unlikely, it appears as if the Alternative für Deutschland actually desires Germany's exit in the long run. The balancing act between soft- and hard scepticism continues in the manifesto's subsequent subchapters. It rejects, for instance, the “common EU Foreign and Security Policy” (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 17) and states that the “Euro actually jeopardizes the peaceful co-existence of those European nations who are forced into sharing a common destiny by the Eurocracy. [...] [Because of that] the foolhardy Euro experiment should be instantly discontinued” (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 19). In the context of alleged dramatic situation of the monetary union, the AfD moreover recommends “limiting the liability of German banks to the national level. [It] will become a non-negotiable item of any future coalition agreement on government signed by the AfD” (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 20). All of these policies are perceived as threatening to Germany's sovereignty or economic well-being. Considering that these recommendations are aimed against particular policies or structures, but not against the European project itself, they are therefore considered as soft Euroscepticism. Taggart and Szczerbiak also claim that the tone itself may offer clues on a party's practice of Euroscepticism. Throughout the European election program, the language became increasingly hostile, arguing that the economic competition is increasingly “strangled by a rage of regulations” (Europawahlprogramm 2019: 11) The EU administration is hereby described as “monstrous” (Europawahlprogramm 2019:12), “bloated” (Europawahlprogramm 2019:12) and as too bureaucratic. The “army” (Europawahlprogramm 2019:12) of bureaucrats is labeled as inefficient and lurid, while living in “paradisiacal” (Europawahlprogramm 2019:12) conditions.

Although the AfD hereby mainly criticizes certain structural elements, hinting a soft Euroscepticism, they also offer insights on their party's creed. According to Taggart and Szczerbiak, the critique of bureaucracy can indeed be considered ideological and therefore identified as hard Eurosceptic.

A party's political manifesto is typically well-crafted and thought-out, defining a party's consensus on particular issues. The statements and ideas of individual politicians, however, may differ drastically. As they are the party's face and mouthpiece, their beliefs and proclamations are equally important and may – in some cases - even be more beneficial to detect the party's real degree of Euroscepticism. While the manifesto describes the party's foundations, the politicians describe their actual realization. Because of that, it is helpful to take a closer look at the statements of the AfD's main personnel – especially those, who are currently representing the EU in the European Parliament. Out of the twelve representatives, the two most prominent figures are Guido Reil and Professor Jörg Meuthen.

Reil, a miner with no previous political experience, views himself as the voice of the working class. He ridicules the EU by showing his viewers around the Parliament, pointing out things that he deems as unnecessary. In a video on AfD TV called "Brussels is insanity in bags" (AfD TV 2019), he criticizes the money spent for newly renovated offices, traveling and media-booths and even mocks the local artwork. He hereby does not question the European Integration itself, but merely its current implementation. Because of that, his criticism is mainly soft Eurosceptic. However, his tone suggests otherwise. When commenting the artwork, Reil says that it is "scary and confusing, [...] symbolizing the character of the EU perfectly" (AfD TV 2019). This sentence hints a degree of hostility that goes beyond the criticism of policies but frames the EU itself as harmful instead. His statements thus have a hard Eurosceptic undertone. Meuthen, on the other hand, concentrates on the supposed lack of sovereignty. In an interview with the media department of the right-wing populist political group Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFD), Meuthen is confronted with the accusation of being against the European idea (AfD TV 2018). He, however, explains that the AfD is the only real proponent of the European project, as the EU was never meant to be politically integrated, but was intended to be a Europe of patriotic, sovereign countries. By denying the necessity of the previously established integrational process, his criticism goes beyond individual policies, but assess the cores of European integration instead. Because of that, his statements hint a hard Euroscepticism.

Conclusively, the AfD superficially practices a soft form of Euroscepticism, but appears to be following hard Eurosceptic goals. The line, however, is thin. Although the AfD does not openly advocate for Dexit, it views Germany's withdrawal as a possible option. Considering the demands for a pre-Maastricht European Union, one may even argue that a Dexit appears as unavoidable, as such requests are very unlikely to be met. Since the AfD does not push for a leave campaign, but does not fully support the European idea either, it is located closer to the hard Eurosceptic side on the soft Eurosceptic spectrum. Therefore, one may argue that the AfD practices a very tough soft Euroscepticism.

3.1.2.2 Specific or Diffuse Euroscepticism?

Thus, one may certainly cancel out one field early on: Euroenthusiasts. Judging by Meuthen's statement above, it is undeniable that the AfD does not see the EU as the greatest possible realization of the European idea (cf. Oberkirch & Schild 2010: 11). At the same time, however, the AfD is certainly not openly part of the Eurorejects, as its main political goal is not the withdrawal from the European Union. Therefore, the party's practice of Euroscepticism is either in the realms of the Eurosceptics or the Europragmatics. Judging by Guido Reil's statements, it becomes clear that he is mainly concerned with the EU's current state and its potentially critical future development. By mocking the EU's bureaucracy and its supposed waste of tax money, he is generally more concerned with the implementation of allegedly bad policies. Although he is not in favor of the political realization of the European Union either, it is safe to say that the "European idea" is not the main concern of his critique. Considering that Meuthen claims that the current and the future execution of the EU is the end of national sovereignty, he is certainly not a supporter of particular policies – such as the Treaty of Maastricht – either. At the same time, however, he also interprets the European idea as an economic one and therefore opposes the values that are attached to it. Conclusively, the AfD cannot exclusively be placed in either of the two categories. Nevertheless, it appears as if the category of Eurosceptics is most suitable, as it is mainly the current and future state of the EU that is being criticized, rather than the idea itself. The AfD is therefore part of the Europhiles, but also part of the EU-pessimists.

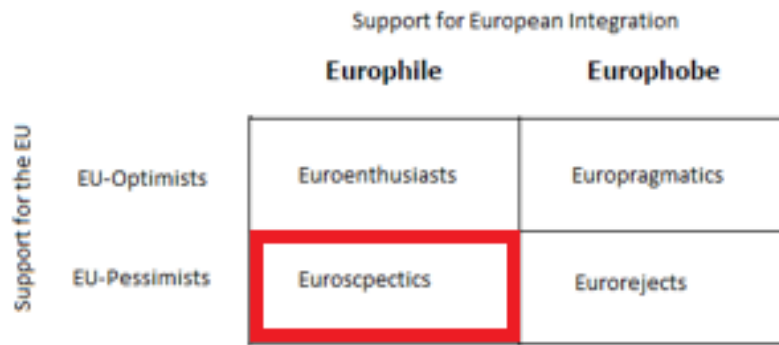


Image 2: The AfD's placement in the sub-categories of Euroscepticism according to Kobecký and Mudde

3.1.2.3 Strategic or Ideological Euroscepticism?

The following paragraph aims to analyze the motivation behind the AfD's Euroscepticism. Is the Alternative für Deutschland Eurosceptic because the European Union clashes with its ideological beliefs or because being opposed to the European Union is an effective way to gather votes in Germany? To find a definite answer, it is useful to determine the AfD's political foundations, as well the political climate in Germany.

A variety of reporters, as well as political scientists have described the AfD as nationalistic. Nationalism is "an ideology based on the premise that the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests" (Kohn 2020). It furthermore describes the degree of inclusiveness of the state: Civic nationalism includes anyone who holds a German passport, while ethnic nationalism only views ethnic Germans as part of the German people (cf. Karolewski 2011: 90). Judging by Meuthen's demand for a Europe of patriotic, sovereign countries, it is obvious that his loyalty is clearly with the nation-state. The party's manifesto supports this impression. Apart from the subchapter "A Europe of Nation States" (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 16), the manifesto furthermore elaborates its stance on "Culture, Language and Identity" (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 45) in its own chapter. In chapter 7.1 "Preserve German Culture, Language and Identity" (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 46), the AfD states that one of its primary goals is "to preserve the great cultural heritage for future generations, and to develop and retain its unique characteristics in an age of globalization and digitalization" (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 46). The AfD hereby views the process of migration as a direct threat and argues that

"the ideology of multiculturalism is blind to history and puts on par imported cultural trends with the indigenous culture, thereby degrading the value system of the latter. The AfD views this as a serious threat to social peace and the survival of the nation state as a cultural unit. It is the duty of the government and the civil society to confidently protect German cultural identity as the predominant culture" (Manifesto for Germany 2016: 46).

This proclamation does not only hint the AfD's practice of ethnic nationalism, as it refers to Germany as cultural rather than a legal entity, but also subliminally defines the European Union as a threat, as the process of globalization is seen as antagonistic to the preservation of identity. This decree is repeated in the party's European election program, which criticizes the EU's asylum policy as a comprise to Germany's sovereignty and identity (cf. Manifesto for Europe 2019: 38). Meuthen even co-founded the far-right political group "Identity and Democracy" in the European Parliament to stress the importance of safeguarding identity. He explains the group's political goal by stating: "We strive for a Europe of sovereign states, in which national, regional and cultural peculiarities are honored and protected and in which the identity is defended" (AfD TV 2019). The party therefore pursues an ideological form of Euroscepticism that opposes the EU's supranational character.

However, does the AfD's nationalistic belief outweigh its potential strategical value? Considering that the AfD was created as a single-issue party during the EU's economic crisis, it appears as if it was very aware of the strategical value of Euroscepticism. By solely focusing on EU related issues, the party managed to gain 4.7% at the federal election – only nine months after its creation (cf. Bundeswahlleiter 2013). Nevertheless, the AfD did not manage to make its way into parliament, as it failed to pass the five percent threshold. According to Lisa Anders, this is owed to the fact that the EU is not a subject of discussion. As previously explained, Germany's EU membership is based on a general consensus. It is furthermore not deemed as a decisive issue (2014: 57). Anders even explains that "that Europe is deliberately being underemphasized. [Thus] parties collude to keep the issue of Europe off the domestic agenda (2014:58). Moreover, she claims that a neglect of European topics among the established parties is typically owed to the fact that it does not positively influence the voting behavior sufficiently. Nonetheless, it does offer the opportunity for smaller parties as a way to distance themselves from the political mainstream. In the case of 2013, this strategy proved as successful. According to a survey conducted in 2011, a third of all respondents answered that the Euro-crisis is the biggest threat to German prosperity. Even though the AfD managed to gain almost five percent in the 2013 election, the topic did not prove to be politically valuable (cf. Anders 60). The political focus of the AfD switched to the subject of migration during the refugee crisis in 2015. Although the concrete reasoning of this switch is subjected to speculations, it appears as obvious that it is related to the fact that a mere European agenda was not sufficiently attractive for the AfD's potential voting base.

Based on the strong focus on identity, the little popularity of European related topics in Germany and the switch to a more nationalistic program, one may conclude that the practice of Euroscepticism was once solely strategic but has now become ideological.

3.1.3 The Origins and Manifestations of German Euroscepticism

The previous chapter has shown that the Alternative für Deutschland is indeed Eurosceptic, practicing a very tough soft Euroscepticism. Its motivation is hereby based on nationalistic ideological foundations. The question that remains unanswered, however, is where these sentiments originate. The following subchapters aim to shed light on the origins of Euroscepticism and attempt to identify its economic and social breeding ground. It is hereby helpful to take a closer look at Germany's society, political system and economic situation. Why do some Germans feel as if the European Union has failed them?

3.1.3.1 The Socio-economic Situation

According to Sørensen, individuals tend to make a subjective cost-benefit analysis to evaluate the performance of the European Union for themselves and for their country. Because of that, it is also referred to as the subjective economy.

While the perception of the subjective economy may vary, the facts concerning the objective economy are rather clear:

“None of the 15 founding nations of the European single market profited more from the modalities of the single market than Denmark and Germany. [...] Between 1992 and 2012, some 37 billion euros [...] were added annually to Germany's gross domestic product (GDP) alone, equaling a 450-euro income hike per inhabitant, the market researchers said (Graupner 2014).

The European debt crisis of 2009 is viewed as the starting point of popular Euroscepticism in Germany. It is known as “a period when several European countries experienced the collapse of financial institutions, high government debt, and rapidly rising bonds yield spreads in government securities” (Kenton 2019). Due to its economic nature, this event is undoubtedly important to the socio-economic reasoning of Germany's Euroscepticism. During the crisis, Greece had almost become a synonym for economic failure and became a subject of aversion to many Germans. Considering that the average citizen does not have profound knowledge of economic processes, they soon felt as if their tax money and retiring funds were gambled away to a foreign country. According to surveys, almost 60% of all Germans desired a Grexit (cf. Bernau 2015). As the Greek crisis became a synonym for the Euro crisis, many Germans started to have a negative outlook on the EU as a whole; some even believed that Greece – in spite of its crisis – was the greatest profiteer of European Union (cf. DPA 2016). This survey shows the

great discrepancy between the subjective and objective economy. In reality, Germany had gained 2.5 billion euros in interests alone (cf. Der Tagesspiegel 2018). The unawareness of Germany's concrete profits is also reflected in the peoples' views economic migration: While 57% of German respondents are against so called "poverty migration", 29% do not perceive migration as a chance, but rather as a burden (cf. Welt 2019). The shortage of skilled professionals in Germany is hereby not considered.

The alleged threat to the social state is particularly felt by those who already feel neglected. Although Germany has clearly profited from its EU membership as a whole, the German people themselves have benefited quite differently throughout the country. The regions with a strong industry and an export orientation have hereby profited the most. Considering that these regions are mainly located in the west, the east has comparatively been neglected. In concrete numbers, this means that the per capita income in the west has risen by circa 1400 euros, whereas the income in the east has risen by roughly 700 euros (cf. Gnath 2019). Although both regions profited, the margin differs significantly.

Considering that the AfD serves as a valuable example for Germany's Euroscepticism, it is useful to take a closer look at its supporter base throughout Germany. Geographically speaking, the AfD's backing is tremendously higher in Eastern Germany: An average of 21.6% of East-Germans voted for the AfD in 2017, while only 9,6% of West-Germans supported the party. The latest results in the European election underline this trend (cf. Tagesschau 2017). The AfD gained an average 21,6% in East Germany and 8,6% in West Germany. The AfD was hereby the strongest party in Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia (cf. Buchholz 2019).

These results are in direct correlation with the economic situation of these regions. Although the situation has improved since Germany's reunification, there are still significant differences. The gross wage, for instance, is on average 550 euros higher in the West. While the working population has increased by over five million people in the west (2005-2018), it merely expanded by 300 000 workers in the east – compared to pre 1991, that is still 800 000 people less (cf. Bidder 2019). These objective facts certainly influence the perception of the subjective economy. Many East Germans still feel like second class citizens (cf. Beckmann 2018). These feelings are especially strong among the male members of the working class. During the 2019 elections in Brandenburg and Saxony, 55% of the voters were part of the working class and only 13% had a university degree. The AfD was hereby particularly strong in rural areas where the population is declining. Due to the lack of infrastructure and entertainment in these areas, the feeling of neglect is significantly higher. Since many East-Germans had lost their job after

the GDR's Economy opened westwards, it seems logical that some fear a repetition on the European market. Considering that the economic improvement through the EU membership has continued to favor the west (cf. Gnath 2019), one may argue that the negative sentiments towards West-Germany are projected on the European Union.

The current Eurobarometer shows the German attitude towards the EU. Even though 76% of the German respondents totally agree that Germany has benefited from the EU membership (cf. EP Barometer 2019: 20), there is a significant difference in opinion regarding its main reason: Only 36% totally agree with the statement "The EU contributes to economic growth in (OUR COUNTRY)" (EP Barometer 2019: 24), 16% with "The EU improves [...] people's standard of living" (EP Barometer 2019: 24) and 21% with "The EU brings [...] people new work opportunities" (EP Barometer 2019: 24). In the same context only 58% of all German respondents view the EU economy as good, while 32% evaluate it is a bad (cf. Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 204). This scepticism also regards the perception of the European economy's future: Only 11% of German respondents believe that the economy will be better in the following twelve months (cf. Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 209), leaving Germany in the penultimate position. Concerning the prediction of the country's economic situation, Germany takes the last position in the EU wide ranking: Only 12% believed that the situation will be better (cf. Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 209).

Although negative attitudes towards the EU's economy most certainly exist, it is important to point out that it does not appear to be the main concern of Germany's Eurosceptics. In response to the question "What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment?" (Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 33), only 5% named "Economy Situation" as the most important subject. This impression is moreover supported by the AfD's change in the polls. When the party solely ran on economic related issues during the Euro crisis, the party did not manage to pass the five percent threshold.

3.1.3.2 The Threat to Culture and Identity

What once triggered the Eurosceptic movement soon became subordinate to many Germans. The European debt crisis was "replaced" by the European migrant crisis (also known as the refugee crisis) in 2015. Due to several conflicts, particularly the civil war in Syria, more than one million people sought refuge on German soil. Soon many people and politicians began referring to the mass migration as a flood or wave, symbolically threatening to wash away everything that stands in its way. Apart from the alleged economic threat to the social state,

many feared that number of newcomers would change the face of Germany for ever. This particularly regards Germany's identity. Many Germans soon believed in the "great replacement" by predominantly Muslim immigrants. The AfD politician Beatrix von Storch even tweeted "the plans for the mass replacement have long been written" (Reveland & Gensing 2020). The angst has taken on a conspiratorial dimension. In reference to the European Union, the AfD declares the following on its website:

"EU asylum law has proved to be a pure "fair-weather law" which nobody obeys in case of a crisis: In Germany alone, for example, since 2015, as a result of the failed EU system, over 1.5 million [...]. Any immigration into Europe must be limited and managed in such a way that the identity of the European cultural nations is preserved under all circumstances." (AfD Website 2019).

The AfD therefore interprets migration as a threat to Germany's identity and sovereignty. These fears were analyzed in a study of the SPD's foundation "Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, aiming to detect the Germans' perception of migration. 45% of the respondents believe that too many refugees sought asylum in Germany (cf. Faus & Storks 2019: 20), while 47% doubt the government's ability to handle the situation appropriately (cf. Faus & Storks 2019: 21). The majority of respondents hereby labeled "Migration/Flight/Asylum" as the country's greatest challenge in the next ten to twenty years – this number was particularly high among those who are politically nationally oriented (cf. Faus & Storks 2019: 21). Considering that only 4% mentioned the economic development in this context, it is obvious that the people's worries go beyond their financial well-being, but are rather tied to social factors such as identity and stability. This assumption is supported by the response to the question "When you think about the consequences of the influx of refugees and migrants, are you very worried, rather worried, rather not worried or not worried at all about the following things?" (cf. Faus & Storks 2019: 24). The biggest sources of fear are – apart from the rise of right-wing extremism – the increasing division of society (81%), the rise of crime and terrorism (73%) and the growing influence of Islam (64%) (cf. Faus & Storks 2019: 24). Economic fears, such as an increased competition on the labor market, were rather low. Only 30% of the respondents were concerned (cf. Faus & Storks 2019: 24). This survey hints that the religion of Islam is perceived as antagonistic to German values and proves that the average German values social and cultural aspects more than economic factors. These sentiments are backed by the official Eurobarometer. When "What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment?" (Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 33), 24% of respondents answered "Immigration", making it the third most popular answer after environmental issues and housing. Similar to those who had socio-economic concerns, these attitudes are generally held by the poorly educated and those who feel socially neglected (cf. Faus & Storks 2019: 27).

Conclusively, the German population views the threat to identity as the most significant point of critique. Judging by the electoral success of the AfD, the party has managed to weaponize these attitudes in its favor. Due to the fact that the AfD blames the failed EU asylum policy, this blame is ultimately directed at the European Union itself, proving “culture and identity” as one of Germany’s most important sources of Euroscepticism.

3.1.3.3 Proxy Support and Political Education

According to Inglehart, a people’s attitude towards the European union furthermore depends on their perception of their own government, as well as their cognitive mobilization – their political skills. Ergo, if one believes that his country’s government is corrupt and incompetent, he or she is likely to feel the same way about the European Union. This also applies if he or she does not understand its basic political foundations and processes. In order to detect the phenomenon of proxy support, it is helpful to compare the people’s attitude towards the EU with the stance towards their home country. The dimension of political trust is hereby essential.

“In its broadest sense, political trust refers to citizens’ assessments of the core institutions of the polity and entails a positive evaluation of the most relevant attributes that make each political institution trustworthy, such as credibility, fairness, competence, transparency in its policy-making, and openness to competing views. (Zmerli 2014)”

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung once again offers a helpful analysis on Germany’s level of political trust. Since the democracy is the political foundation of Germany’s political system, the faith in democracy itself is essential and representative for the people’s perception of the government. When asked about the “satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in percent” (Decker et al. 2019: 30), only 7.8% answered with “very satisfied” and 38.8% with “quite satisfied”, leaving 53.4% with “very unsatisfied” or “quite unsatisfied”. The satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is also very dependent on the respondents’ social and financial background. Overall, roughly 60% of those with a low or medium level of education stated a negative verdict, while the financially weak participants almost reached 70%. This similarity is also reflected in the East-West divide: Only one third of respondents is satisfied with Germany’s implementation of democracy (cf. Decker et al. 2019: 32). Among AfD supporters, only 7.2% answered “very satisfied”, whereas 60.8% agreed on being “very unsatisfied”: Nevertheless, the level of content among the established parties is much higher: 65% CDU, 56% SPD, 60% Green Party and 57% FDP.

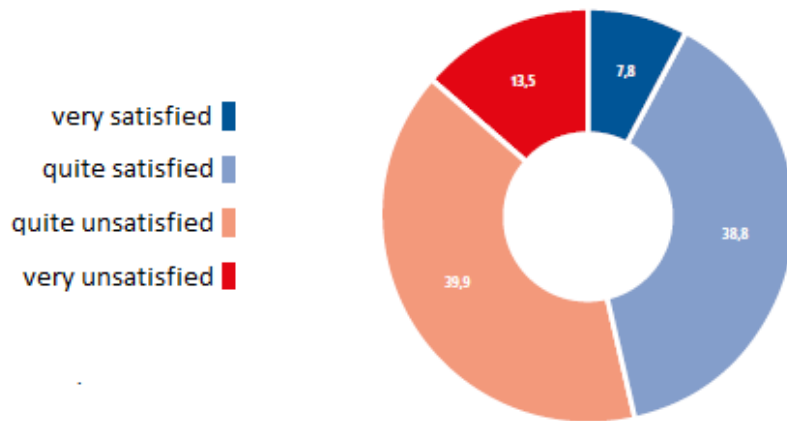


Image 3: Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in percent (Decker et al. 2019: 29)

This discrepancy is also shown in the attitudes towards the *Bundesregierung* (government) (40%) and the *Bundestag* (federal parliament) (46%) (cf. Decker et al. 2019: 39). The low level of trust invested in the government may be explained by the response to the statement “It makes no difference who is in the government”. 37% agree with this statement. This egalitarian attitude hints that many seem to believe that their voices do not matter. The negative sentiments are particularly strong among those who are discontent with the social state. The results of this survey prove that many Germans are generally unhappy with their government’s output and integrity. How, however, do they feel about the European Union? The Standard Eurobarometer 91 also includes multiple surveys on political trust. In response to the statement “For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend to not trust it” (Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 47), 48% answered that they tend to trust the EU and 48% replied the same for the national parliament (cf. image 4). The level of trust for the national governance (45%) is also very close to the level of trust invested in the European Union. Furthermore, 32% percent of Germans do not believe that their voice counts in the EU (Democracy on the Move 2019: 4). Compared to the 37% on the national level, this is also almost identical. Another indication is the level of trust that AfD voters invest in the EU. Only 6.2% of AfD voters place confidence in the EU, whereas 7.8% trust the works of national parliament (cf. Clamann 2019). Judging by the socio-demographic results, it appears as if the degree of distrust originates from the same social class (cf. Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 111).

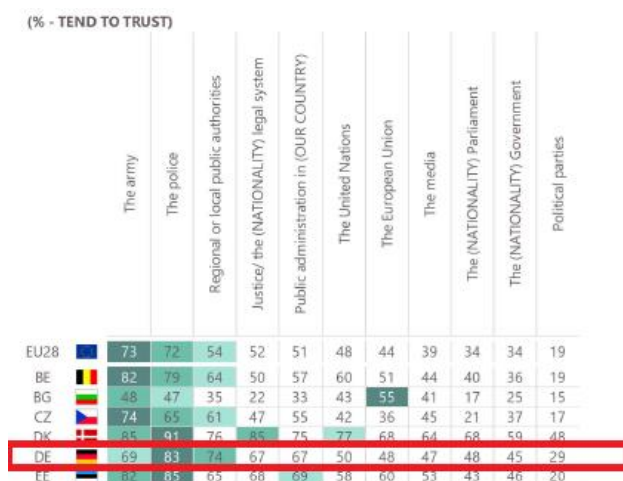


Image 4: Level of trust invested in institutions – highlighting Germany (Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 47)

Due to the exact accordance between the supranational- and the national level, it is proven that the German Euroscepticism is indeed subjected to the phenomenon of proxy-support. Since EU politics are shaped by different circumstances and personal, the usage of proxy-support is rather irrational.

The extent to which people are capable of judging their government appropriately depends on their cognitive mobilization: The higher its manifestation, the lower the chance to fall for Eurosceptic beliefs, as people are more likely to make their own decisions, decreasing the influence of Eurosceptic parties. In the realms of European politics, 69% of German respondents claim to understand how the EU works. In a European comparison, Germany is hereby in the upper midfield (cf. Eurobarometer 91 2019: 131). In response to the statement “You understand well what is going on in today’s world” even 76% of Germans answered with “totally agree” or “tend to agree” (cf. Eurobarometer 89 2018: 72). These positive self-assessments are likely owed to Germany’s historic focus on political education. According to the recognized historian Geoffrey Roberts, “in no other country in Western Europe has political education been given so much attention [...] as in [...] Germany” (2002: 55). Due to Germany’s dark past, the German government encouraged political education early on, as it “shall impart people’s knowledge about society, state, European and international politics and socially important developments in the fields of economy, culture, technology and science” (Cremer 2017: 1). Because of these profound affords, the level of civic education is rather high in Germany. It can be assumed that a higher level of education is furthermore tied to a higher level of political awareness. In reference to the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) education index, Germany is ranked as 6th in the world. Therefore, Germany is ought to be considered as a country with a rather high cognitive mobilization.

3.1.3.4 Portrayal by the German Media

Most people are unlikely to follow the doings of the German parliament directly but rely on the media instead. Due to the secondary nature of this access to information, the reader is automatically subjected to a certain degree of subjectivity. Depending on the news outlet's readership and agenda, this subjectivity can either be coined by a critical or a positive outlook on European affairs. This process is tremendously important to the formation of political opinion. Naturally, strategic framing is hereby particularly significant. The following paragraphs aim to shed light on the German media portrays the European Union. According to Galpin and Trenz,

“German news demonstrate a positive bias in the context of debates about the EU. German journalists are [hereby] more likely to write about the EP elections from the perspective of EU actors. [...] Media salience of EU actors is further found to correlate with a better knowledge of candidates and a high likelihood of turning out to vote (2018: 4).

This great level of knowledge is owed to the previously explained high degree of cognitive mobilization in Germany. Although journalists are generally likely to favor negative news (Germany is no exception), the German press gives relatively little coverage to the AfD and its Eurosceptic agenda (cf. Galpin & Trenz 2018: 8). In detail, Galpin and Trenz's media analysis has shown that a “third of quotes coded as positive” (Galpin & Trenz 2018: 9) in German newspapers, proving that “German journalists [...] tend to quote actors who discuss the EU and its actors in an affirmative way, thus constituting an exception to negativity as a news value. In the differentiated assessment of the EU and its actors, German news media in particular are more reserved in their negative assessment (17.9% negative compared to 14.5% positive assessment of the EU) (cf. Galpin & Trenz 2018: 160). These results are supported by a study that analyzed the member states' media's usage of positive or negative frames. The variables to define what is positive and what is negative asked the following:

“Does the story cast the EU as contributing to peace and freedom, does the story cast the EU as contributing to economic development, and does the story cast the EU as contributing positively to the member states. The variables used to identify the anti-EU sub-frames asked: does the story cast the EU as an organization incapable of addressing important problems facing the member states; does the story cast the EU as an overly bureaucratic and inefficient organization, costing too much in relation to what it delivers; and does the story cast the EU as a threat towards national sovereignty” (cf. Strömbäck et al 2011: 171).

The results have proven that the German media hereby used a significantly greater number of positive frames than negative frames. Hence, it portrayed the EU in a rather positive light. The interpretative journalistic style, which goes beyond the sole narration of the news, but applies

an individual frame instead, is furthermore highly uncommon in Germany (cf. Strömbäck et al 2011: 172).

3.2 Euroscepticism in the Czech Republic

When the Czech Republic was created in 1993, one of the country's central goals was "the return to Europe" - the membership in the European Union (cf. Oberkirch & Schild 2010: 66). Fourteen years later, on the 13th and 14th of June 2003, the country held a referendum to decide Czechia's faith: An astonishing majority 75% of Czechs voted in favor of the country's membership. However, the voter turn-out only barely passed the 50 percent mark (cf. Schuster 2003). The Czech political scientist Dürr evaluated the decision as following:

"One has to see the referendum result in the entire context of the past 13 years, because official Czech politics and all previous governments were clearly in favor of the country joining the European Union. Paradoxically, this also applies to the Communists, whose program also contains a clear commitment to Europe, even though the current structure of the EU is rejected. I think that this YES of the Czechs should also be seen as a conditional approval. The governing parties, which cheered so much after the result was announced and even wanted to read out support for government policy in it, run the risk of misinterpreting the public mood on the European issue in future. The real test will not take place until a year from now, when the first Czech MEPs will be elected to the European Parliament. This time, however, the correlation between the support of the parties and the results of the referendum was not great" (Schuster 2003).

The public discourse quickly supported Dürr's assumption. When the EU debated the creation of a common EU constitution, the same politicians that attempted to take credit for the successful EU referendum earlier, now began to paint the EU as a threat to national sovereignty. This change in rhetoric drastically influenced the polls. The former enthusiasm gave way to an increase in scepticism. Merely a year later, only 41% of Czech citizens called the EU membership "a good thing" (cf. Eurobarometer Spring 2004: 185).

Concerning the constellation of the parliament, the party landscape is strongly polarized. Apart from Europhile parties such as the Social Democrats (ČSSD), the Freedom Union (US-DEU) or the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) exist four openly Eurosceptic parties: The Republicans (RMS), the Communist Party (KSČM), the Civic Democratic Party (ODS) (cf. Oberkirch & Schild 2010: 67) and the Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (ANO). According to Oberkirch and Schild, the former hereby advocates strong anticommunist- and nationalistic beliefs and is located among the hard Eurosceptics. Its political influence, however, is relatively marginal (cf. 2010: 67). The KSČM, on the other hand, is significantly more influential. It gained 14% during the European election in 2009, making it the third strongest party at the time. The KSČM is a self-proclaimed radical, anticapitalistic antisystem party that views the European integration process as a thread to Czech traditions and sovereignty. The prime minister Andrej Babiš's party ANO

“began to run on the basis of pro-EU program. Being ideologically unanchored, however, the ANO party soon derailed from its pro-EU direction. At the end of its first term of office in the government coalition, the party was dumped by two of its MEPs who were no longer able to identify with the party’s shift away from a pro-EU position and towards that of President Zeman, who openly maintains that people should be given the opportunity to vote about EU membership in a referendum.” (Kovář 2018)

The most popular Eurosceptic party in the Czech Republic, however, is the ODS. It has been around this the creation of the young republic itself and has been in a powerful position ever since. Due to its special role in Czech Euroscepticism, its practice is analyzed more thoroughly in the following chapter. According to the EP Eurobarometer, the sentiments of Euroscepticism are still very strong in the Czech Republic. While 59% of all Europeans evaluated their country’s membership as a good thing, merely 37% of the Czechs felt the same way (cf. 2019:16). The same amount of people totally agrees with the statement that Czechia could face a better future outside the EU (cf. Standard Eurobarometer 91:89). Czechia is hereby among the top ten most EU-critical countries in the whole Union.

3.2.1 Introducing the “Občanská Demokratická Strana”

In 1991 the right-wing ODS was created as a splinter group from the Civic Forum, which won the first free elections in what later became known as Czech Republic. Against popular belief, the ODS “did not emerge as a top-down, elite initiated project, but through the transformation of a broader grassroots movement” (Hanley 2010:118) Due to their successorship to the Forum, the ODS managed to inherit many of its organizational structures, networks and voter bases and took a leading part in the post-communist transformation. Since its beginning, the party has followed the model of the British Conservative Party and strongly pursued economic liberal, pro-free market policies (cf. Terry 2014). The ODS has been rather successful with its political approach, considering that it repeatedly took part in the government and even provided the former president and two prime ministers – the most famous one being Václav Klaus. Klaus became a two-term president only 14 months after Czechia had joined the EU and stayed in office for a decade. His persona is essential to the understanding of the ODS, as he established the party and “influenced the Eurosceptical stance reflected in [...] [its] programs” (Miller 2017:3). Concerning the EU, Klaus stated the following during a meeting of the World Affairs Council in Los Angeles in 1997:

“I consider the enlargement of EU to the East an enormous and at the same time unrepeatable European chance and challenge. I strongly believe that the genuine and gradual enlargement of EU will be a positive contribution to European stability and prosperity.”

Domestically, however, Klaus remained openly critical of the EU. This is highly important to Czech Euroscepticism, as “the Czech Republic does not have a strong presidency, it has a

tradition, established with the founding of Czechoslovakia, of presidents with high intellectual and moral standards” (Miller 2017: 2). Therefore, the Czech public opinion is greatly shaped by its leaders. Klaus defined himself as a Eurorealist - acknowledging some positive aspects of European integration – but it “is likely that he also preferred Eurorealist label because it may not have alienated potential supporters who looked favorably on the EU” (Miller 2017:3). His real stance towards the EU only became clear after his presidency, when he openly demanded Czechia’s withdrawal from the union.

Today, the ODS is the second strongest political party with 25 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (cf. Website of Chamber of Deputies) and 18 seats in the Senate (cf. Website of the Senate). During the parliamentary elections in 2017, the ODS gained 11.32%. It is, however, not part of the government, but leads the opposition instead. On the European level, the ODS was first part of European People’s Party – European Democrats (EPP-ED) and later created the Movement for European Reform together with the British Conservative Party. Nowadays the ODS is the cofounder and member of the center-right European Conservatives and Reformist Party (ECR) and the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE).

Concerning its agenda, the ODS stresses its 5+3 plan. It describes a campaign consisting of five program priorities based on three principles of governance: Good management, good governance and the values of 89. The program focuses on state-guaranteed pensions, a conservative environmental plan, massive tax deductions, a reform of the state and a high quality of education (cf. Campaign for Change 2019). The ODS does not thematize migration, nor critique towards the European Union in its manifesto. Unlike the typical opposition party, it appears to highlight what it is in favor of, not the opposite.

3.2.2 The Eurosceptic Character of the “Občanská demokratická strana”

Following the structure above, the Eurosceptic tendencies of the previously introduced ODS are now being analyzed. Therefore, it is important to shed light on the party’s Eurosceptic character first, before moving on to its manifestations and possible origins.

3.2.2.1 Hard or Soft Euroscepticism?

Although the ODS is often considered to be Eurosceptic, the party’s manifesto offers close to no stance on the EU at all. Merely in the framework of its chapter “Values of 89” (the velvet revolution), its view on Czechia’s role in Europe is partially revealed. The party hereby states that it anchors “Czech Republic in the political and security pillars of the Western civilization,

NATO and the EU” (Campaign for Change 2019: 7) and stresses how the “Czech position has greatly contributed to connecting Central Europe to [...] [these] structures” (Campaign for Change 2019: 7). However, it also compares today’s challenges to the dangers of the communist regime and demands that Czechia emerges as a winner. In order to so, the ODS demands that the Czech Republic strengthens its role in NATO, reinforcing itself against the European “plans to weaken the military and political power of NATO in Europe” (Campaign for Change 2019: 7). It also pledges to enforce national interest in the European Union and stresses its will to assert the Czech “voice of sanity” (Campaign for Change 2019: 7) in European politics. Although these statements and demands are neither hard or soft Eurosceptic, they seem to subliminally evaluate the current EU as a weak and somehow irrational actor. The demand to strengthen the national military and the focus on national interest furthermore may express the desire to “regain” allegedly lost sovereignty. The ODS becomes a bit more specific under the bullet point “About us” on its website. Based on the idea that the ODS has a “a sober and rational attitude towards the European Union, emphasizing the need to increase competitiveness and develop effective cooperation while defending the national interests of the Czech Republic and its citizens” (ODS Website 2020), the party then proceeds to explain that its attitude towards the European Union is based on ACRE’s core values. ACRE and the ODS believe in

“a Europe of the independent states that work together for mutual benefit while maintaining individual identities and integrity [...] [in which] all European states [are equal], regardless of their size and regardless of the international groupings of which they are members. [In this context it] favors the exercise of power at the lowest possible level [and states that’s] where possible, the exercise of authority should be an individual or local or national institution rather than a supranational institution. [It hereby outlines] the unique democratic legitimacy of the nation-state” (ODS Website 2020).

By declaring a sober and rational attitude towards the European Union, the ODS self-proclaims its subscription to the European idea. Judging by the desire safe-guard Czechia’s interest, one could argue that the ODS attempts to shape EU policies in a way that favors the Czech Republic. As the ODS still operates within the framework of the EU, this approach appears to be a soft Eurosceptic nature. The goals of the ACRE, however, seem to express a more radical approach. The ACRE’s opposition to the supranational character of the EU, for instance, hints a certain objection to the European idea in general, as the term “supranational” was already mentioned in the establishment of the EU’s predecessor (the ECSC) in the Treaty of Paris in 1951 (cf. Parliament 2013). The reference to the unique democratic legitimacy of the nation-state supports this assumption, as it subliminally questions the legitimacy of other political models. Considering that these desires are considerably unattainable, Taggart and Szczerbiak would likely place them on the hard-Eurosceptic spectrum. Nevertheless, none of the claims mention Czechia’s withdrawal as a possible option. Therefore, the ODS is likely to view the EU as a

necessary evil, that is ought to benefit the Czech Republic more than it already does. This striving is connected to the ODS's campaign slogan "ZEMĚ KTERÁ VÍTĚZÍ" (the country that wins). The ODS is thus not in direct opposition to the EU's existence, but solely against particular circumstances that disadvantage the Czech Republic. This alleged sentiment of disadvantage is supported by the ACRE's desire for more equality among the European member states – particularly for rather small one's like Czechia. In order to gain further insights, it is helpful to take a look at the party's press releases. One of the most outspoken members on European issues is its EP chairman Jan Zahradil. In an interview with EURACTIV, Zahradil states that he is in favor of cooperating with "reformist parties [...] that really want to change the European Union, [...] [and] anti-federalist parties that promote [...] multispeed, multipolar and [...] multicurrency European Union" (2019). The self-proclaimed Eurorealist describes his party's position as follows:

"We are a common-sense voice between the two extremes. One extreme is [...] anti-Eu radical who wants to destroy, dismantle, or leave the EU. This not our policy. The other extreme is that arch-federalist prototype who wants to integrate everything [...] [like] taxes, health-care policies, pension policies. Who wants to introduce a qualified majority vote on almost anything, [...] foreign policy and everything. We disagree with that as well. [...] I believe that Brexit is bad news, particularly for us in a central-eastern Europe, because it changed the political equilibrium on the continent. [...] Those people who play with [...] Czechxit should think twice, because even if such a mighty country [...] like United Kingdom has such big troubles with leaving the European Union, what about much smaller countries?" (Zahradil 2019).

This quote is highly representative of the ODS's attitude towards Europe. Jan Zahradil openly rejects the idea of leaving the European Union and does not engage into negative rhetoric on its behalf. He does not, however, seem to be a fervent devotee of the European ideals, but rather recognizes its importance for the geopolitical and economic situation of the Czech Republic. Based on the party's manifest, its website and its main EU representative, it is thus apparent that the ODS practices a soft-Euroscepticism with very mild, hard tendencies.

3.2.2.2 Specific or Diffuse Euroscepticism

Following the previous approach, it is necessary to further categorize the ODS's practice of Euroscepticism. Does the ODS practice a diffuse support, which is in favor of the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU or a specific support that denotes support for the general practice of European integration? Considering that the preceding analysis has already proven that the ODS indeed practices a form of soft Euroscepticism, the category of the europhile Euroenthusiasts is ought to be disregarded. Furthermore, neither the national representatives, nor the party's manifesto or EP chairman are outspoken supporters of Czechia's withdrawal from the European Union. Zahradil, the previously introduced EP chairman, even considered Great Britain's Brexit as foolish and even fatal for smaller countries such as the

Czech Republic - the party does not even consider this option in case its ideas of the European Union are not met. Therefore, it is safe to say that the europhobe category of Eurorejects is also rejected. Because of that, the practice of Euroscepticism of the Občanská Demokratická Strana is either located among the europhobe Europragmatics, or the europhile Eurosceptics. Zahrádil followed the footsteps of the party's former leader Vaclav Klaus and considers himself a Eurorealist on his personal twitter page. By criticizing the European involvement in domestic matters, but also by acknowledging his country's minor influence in international affairs and the global market, Zahrádil and the ODS subliminally offer insights into their personal perception of the European Union. It appears as if they are neither particularly passionate about its ideas, nor its current implementation, but are not firmly against it either. This lukewarm perspective matches Harmsen and Menno's definition of the Europragmatics: "They do not support the general ideas of European integration underlying the EU, nor do they necessarily oppose them, yet they do (often for purely pragmatic reasons) support the EU" (2004: 232). Thus, the ODS is part of the europhobe EU-Optimists, placing it in a more EU friendly position than the Eurosceptics.

| | | Support for European Integration | |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| | | Europhile | Europhobe |
| Support for the EU | EU-Optimists | Euroenthusiasts | Europragmatics |
| | EU-Pessimists | Eurosceptics | Eurorejects |

Image 5: The ODS's placement in the sub-categories of Euroscepticism according to Kobecký and Mudde

3.2.2.3 Strategic or Ideological Euroscepticism

Why, however, does the ODS practice a soft Euroscepticism? Is it due to the party's ideological foundation, or because it views the practice of Euroscepticism as a suitable tool to attract the masses and therefore potential voters? Before weighing which motive may have a greater influence on the ODS's implementation of Euroscepticism, it is helpful to take closer look at its ideological foundation. According to its website, the party labels itself as a "liberal-conservative party following the traditions European Christian civilization, the humanitarian and democratic legacy of the First Republic, and the experience of Western democracies" (ODS

Website 2020). It allegedly promotes individuality and the free market, which it deems as “the best prerequisite for general prosperity [...] [and puts] emphasis on private ownership, low taxes, entrepreneurship, solidarity of the responsible, cutting red tape, a small and secure state, privacy, individual responsibility, sound public finances and an indebted future.” (ODS Website 2020). Due to its economic focus, the ODS is widely considered as neo-liberal, supporting the “single market and the “four freedoms”, which it regards as the EU’s greatest achievements” (Marek and Baun 2010: 38). Therefore, the ODS’s is a general supporter of the economic integration process but criticizes the overly bureaucratic, complicated attempts to establish a unified system that – among other things - dictates the national fiscal distribution, which is perceived as a direct obstruction of the neoliberal idea of the free market. Nevertheless, the party’s ideology also included some severely nationalistic elements prior to Czechia’s accession:

“The June 2002 election programme [- for instance-] also paid considerable attention to the defense of the [Beneš] Decrees, challenges which it depicted as ‘property and perhaps also territorial claims against the victims of past Nazi aggression’ which could ‘call Czech statehood intoquestion’. During the course of the election campaign, this position was radicalized by Václav Klaus in his demand that the retention of the Decrees be legally guaranteed as part of Czech EU accession” (Hanley 2004: 22).

As Zahradil previously mentioned, the ODS hereby specifically feared for a strengthening German position, threatening the EU power equilibrium and geographic integrity of the Czech Republic. While the tone has softened since, the incorporation of state interest remained. Its interpretation, nonetheless, arguably changed and increasingly concentrated on Czechia’s economic improvement by neoliberal means instead.

If today’s ODS based Euroscepticism is predominantly founded on these ideological elements, however, remains highly questionable. Considering that the previous analysis has assigned its practice to the ranks of the Europragmatics, it is likely that the ODS incorporates opportunist behavior. This assumption is supported by its shifting attitude towards the European Union. Shortly before the Czech Republic joined the European Union, the people were greatly in favor of Czechia’s membership and allegedly – as mentioned above – so was the ODS and its leader Vaclav Klaus, who submitted the formal EU membership application himself (Marek and Baun 2010: 38). However, when the Eurobarometer began to indicate the Czechs’ discontent with the European Union after its official accession, the ODS’s tone became increasingly skeptical as well. Adapting the political stance to the social discourse is a clear sign of strategic Euroscepticism. Although the emphasis on the Beneš Decrees is often interpreted as a sign of nationalism, one may argue that it was a merely strategical ploy, as their revocation was highly unlikely in the first place – especially since Germany had already accepted the Oder-Neisse line

as the new international border between Germany and Poland in 1970, disregarding claim on the its previous eastern territories. The assumption of the ODS acting on predominantly strategic grounds is also supported by the theory of Klausism and Klausism without Klaus. This theory named after Vaclav Klaus is - according to Bohumil Doležal – a “fight[...] against isms” (2017) . It describes the struggle “for realistic politics that solve problems and don't serve dogmatic ideologies” (Doležal 2017). Klausism without Klaus is the support of his ideas, but not of his persona. Considering how intensively Klaus had shaped the ODS, one may argue that the ODS does prioritize its ideological opposition of the EU, but the political value of Euroscepticism in general. This assumption is backed by the party’s previous behavior: “credit for any popular policies was claimed by Czech governments, while the blame for unpopular policies was shifted to Brussels” (Kovář 2018).

Conclusively, the ODS’s practice of Euroscepticism does indeed incorporate neo-liberal and nationalistic elements of criticism but does not prioritize them as its main source of scepticism. Following the legacy of Klausism and its Europragmatic character, the topic of Euroscepticism is rather instrumentalized as a political tool. While Euroscepticism may be used as a way to stand out in the political landscape, it appears to be a necessary instrument to be part of the political mainstream in the Czech Republic.

3.2.3 The Origins and Manifestations of Czech Euroscepticism

The ODS practices a soft Euroscepticism in the realms of the Europragmatics, while predominantly following strategic goals. In order to paint a bigger picture, the subsequent paragraphs will shed light on Czechia’s origins and manifestations of Euroscepticism. Doe the Czech’s fear for the socio-economic livelihood, or do they perceive the European Union as a threat to their sovereignty and national identity?

3.2.3.1 The Socio-Economic Situation

After its EU accession in 2004, the economic situation in Czech Republic changed almost instantly. The Czech economy, which is tightly imbedded in the EU single market, rapidly increased its capacity and consequently the people’s prosperity. This drastic improvement is backed by the world bank’s data on the country’s GDP and GNI: While the gross national income per capita was at roughly 21 000 Czech crowns in 2003, it skyrocketed to about 52 000 crowns per capita in recent statistics (cf. World Bank GNI 2020). Ergo, the personal income

had more than doubled. For the economy as a whole, that translates to a GDP increase of almost 150% (cf. World Bank GDP 2020) .

Naturally, Czechia was not spared by the European debt crisis in 2009. Nevertheless, while it put Greece in danger of default, the Czech Republic was in a more fortunate position. Its economy was not only in the upward arc of its economic cycle, but its national banks were also better prepared. Due to Czechia's profound financial sector practices and policies, the market remained relatively stable. This is also owed to its export-based economy, which is heavily dependent on Germany, which also widely withstood the crisis. The crisis did, however, lastingly change the country's perception of the monetary union and its currency, the Euro.

“The Czech Republic are reticent to join the currency because they don't want to be bound by the rules that they are responsible for the bailout of Greece. The nation feels that as the decisions were out of the hands of the Czech people and happened before they adopted the currency, they shouldn't be responsible for the consequences” (Prague Post 2019).

Either way, the Czech economy remains buoyant and continues to grow annually. The most important dimension to socio-economic Euroscepticism, however, is the Czech's view on the subjective economy. Although the Czech economy has drastically improved, many Czech's did not personally feel the change, as their income and standard of living are still well below the western European standard. The economy has furthermore shifted towards higher-skilled employment. “The increase in computerization and automation not only led to a change of job profiles, but also to a loss of non-cognitive routine jobs due to automation” (cf. OECD Economic Survey 2018). Naturally, this development has been threatening to the low skilled class – especially outside of Czechia's capital, which is the country's only economic hub. In 2019, Prague accounted “for more than one-quarter (25.4%) of the Czechian GDP “ (Website of European Commission 2020). It has double the GDP of any other region in Czech Republic. Considering the construction boom, the mass tourism and the overall increase in standard of living, the population of Prague can visibly witness the improvement since the country's EU accession. However, Prague only offers about a 10th of the national population, leaving a majority of the country unaffected. Up until today, rural regions – particularly in the north and west of the country – remain severely disadvantaged. As the government is notorious for blaming national issues on Brussels, this divide is consequently also reflected in the people's stance on the European Union. Prague, for instance, had – compared to other regions in the Czech Republic - “by far the greatest interest [...] and voter turnout” (Eurocommpr 2019) in the 2019 European elections.

According to the Eurobarometer, 64% of the Czech people totally agree with the statement that Czech Republic had profited from its EU membership (cf. EP Barometer 2019: 20)p. The

previously explained divide is also visible in the people's perception of the EU's contribution to the national economy: Only 32% of all Czech respondents totally agree with the statement that the EU had added to economic growth (cf. EP Barometer 2019: 24). However, this is still one percent higher than the EU average. Furthermore, solely 30% agree with the statement that the EU membership had improved the standard of living, but 51% believe that it had brought new work opportunities – that is 20% above EU average. In regard to the EU economy as a whole, 55% evaluate it as good (cf. Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 204). The Czech people are furthermore not particularly optimistic concerning the future of the European economy. Only 19% believe that it will be better. The apparent core of the issue is found in the Czech's response to the question "What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment?" (Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 33): 38% of the respondents named "Rising prices/inflation/cost of living", ranking almost twice as high as the second and third choice, health and social security and government debt. Only 10% named the "economic situation". Logically, the improvement of the overall situation does not positively affect the individual, when his or her life has become generally more expensive and therefore negatively unbalanced. Therefore, it appears as if many Czechs are unaware of the overall improvement, since their respective lives have not necessarily improved. The previously mentioned rise in GNI per capita is hereby also irrelevant, as the subjected purchasing power did not correlate. Because of that, many people – especially outside of Prague – do not give Credit to the economic efforts of the European Union. This effect is increased by the fact that the complex international financial network is incomprehensible to many, which leads to accrediting the national government instead. This fear is also connected to the people's antagonist stance against the Euro, as many believe that its introduction could ultimately favor the trend of increasing prices.

3.2.3.2 The Threat to Sovereignty and Identity

Due to its geographic location in the heart of Europe, the Czech Republic has been pawn in geopolitical powerplays for centuries. Starting in 1526, Ferdinand I of Habsburg took up the Czech Crown and continued the family dynasty for almost 400 years (cf. myCzechRepublic 2020). On the 28th of October 1918, Czechoslovak independence was declared on Wenceslas Square. "In this way two weeks before the end of the war to this day is known as the "First Republic" was founded. The term applies to the period from October 1918 then until the Munich Agreement of 1938" (cf. Radio Prague International 2020). What became known as the Munich betrayal led to the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, when Hitler and the Nazis

annexed the Sudetenland and later Bohemia and Moravia. For the following five years, the Nazis and – above all Reinhard Heydrich – ruled the country with an iron fist, torturing, murdering and displacing thousands of Czech citizens (cf. History 2009). Although the Czech people had attempted to liberate themselves to avoid a potential Soviet takeover, the country fell under communist rule in 1948 and remained a satellite state of the Soviet Union until 1990. Naturally, the years of oppression have led to a strong opposition and distrust towards the government and foreign rule, increasing the desire for independence and personal freedom.

This traumatic past has led to a “victim mentality and an inferiority complex that makes it difficult for many Czechs to [...] believe in joint European projects. Though the Czech Republic is a mid-sized state in European terms, some Czechs see their country as small and lacking in influence.” (Anderson 2019) Klaus famously warned Czechs “that they would dissolve in the EU like a sugar cube in a cup of coffee and that Brussels was issuing orders like the Kremlin used to” (Anderson 2019). These statements are typically accompanied by a subliminal anti-German undercurrent, that views “European integration in terms of a clash of German and non-German interests, [while stressing] an assertion of Czech national identity and independence against the dominance of Austro-German influences in Central Europe” (Hanley 2004) While many believe that EU has long become a German tool, the current Czech president Milos Zeman even discredited his political opponent Karel Schwarzenberg by stating he was “speaking like a Sudeten German” (Aktualne 2013). A survey by the “Center for Insights in Survey Research” supports this alleged fear. In response to the question “what is the greatest cost the Czech Republic incurs because of its membership in the European Union?” (2017: 28) 29% of participants stated the “loss of independence and sovereignty”. The supposed inferiority complex was hereby represented by the 11% that answered with “being treated like “junior partners” in the European Project” (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2017: 28). The perceived loss of sovereignty is also related to the fear of immigration, as 17% believe that the EU is “undermining [Czech] traditional values and ways of life” (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2017: 28). Politicians like Tomio Okamura, for instance, “suggested not buying halal food to defend the Czech way of life” (Law et al. 2019: 162). Many hereby also draw a connection between migration and terrorism, which 21% of the respondents view as the greatest threat to Europe (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2017: 7). Although Czechia has been spared by terrorist attacks, the threat is very much alive in the people’s minds. This is – among other factors - owed to the politician’s radical rhetoric. President Zeman is opposed to granting asylum to anyone, as he refuses to expose Czech citizens to the barbaric attacks of immigrants

(cf. Zeit 2016). Zahradil, the ODS EU representative, supports this opposition and advocates against the planned EU migration quota system.

The main focus of Czechia's identitarian criticism regards the loss of sovereignty, which is closely related to the country's historic oppression and the fear for the loss of self-determination. This angst is followed by the loss of Czech identity and immigration related terrorism. Due to their nature, these factors are deeply intertwined and therefore codependent. However, the increased cost of living remains the Czech's main point of criticism.

3.2.3.3 Proxy Support and Political Education

In order to detect Czechia's existence or non-existence of proxy support, it is once again important to analyze the people's level of political trust, before comparing the national to the supranational level. In response to the question "What would you say is the single biggest problem facing the Czech Republic today that is, the one that you are most concerned about?" (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2017: 6), most people named "corruption" (16%) as the leading issue and named "politics/internal politics" (11%) as the secondary cause. These two problems rank even higher than the previously explained issues. This dissatisfaction is also impressed when asked about the political system: 39% of the respondents claim that "constitutional change or systematic change that would completely alter the way government business is conducted" (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2017: 17) is most needed in the Czech Republic. This uncertainty also regards the country's democratic foundation. Although many have lived in an autocratic system for a significant part of their lives, most participants (32%) answered with "Prosperity is somewhat more important to me" (Center for Insights in Survey Research 2017: 19) when asked about what they value more, democracy or prosperity - only 23% claimed that democracy was definitely more important to them. This distrust is also reflected upon the ruling political class. The level of mistrust is dependent on the "distance" between the voter and the decisionmaker. While the majority of people trust the local ombudsman or mayor, more than 55% of the respondents mistrust the president. The highest level of mistrust is carried by the leading political institutions. Only 28% claimed that they trusted the Senate and only 21% the Chamber of Deputies (cf. Czech Statistical Office 2014). The Standard Eurobarometer 91 does not differentiate between the chambers, but generally refers to the national parliament instead, stating that 21% of the respondents trust it (2019: 47). It furthermore explains that 37% of the Czech participants trust the national government. Naturally, those sentiments were particularly strong among the members of the lower class. By comparing this number to the percentage of people that trust in the European Union (36%), it

appears as if the number is almost identical. Because of that, one can generally assume that proxy support plays a significant role in the degree of trust invested in the EU. Due to the suspicion towards the national government, the Czechs are also more likely to mistrust its EU counterpart.

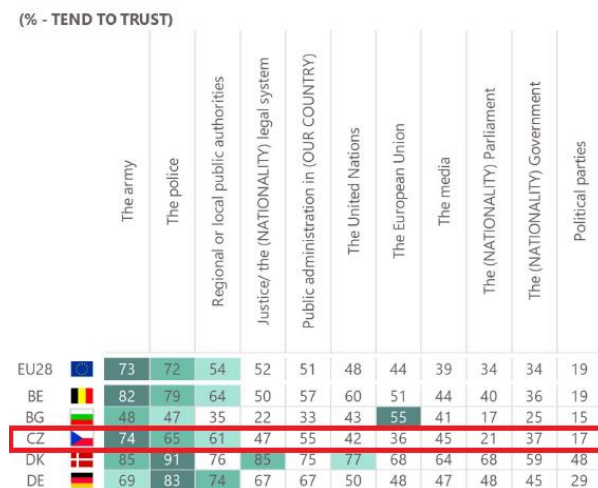


Image 6: Level of trust invested in institutions – highlighting the Czech Republic (Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 47)

Is this high degree of mistrust also related to Czechia's level of cognitive mobilization? When confronted with the statement "I understand how the EU works" only 54% of Czech respondents agreed with "Totally Agree" (cf. Standard Eurobarometer 91 2019: 131) – leaving it fourth to last place. Even more shocking, however, are the 44% that answered "Totally Disagree". In reference to the statement "You understand well what is going on in today's world" the Czech Republic ranked last: Only 49% agreed with the statement, while only 8% were sure enough to claim "I totally agree". According to Lorenz and Formánková, this low level is related to the fact that Czechia has invested relatively little into the development of political education, culture and participation. (cf. 2018: 6). In this context, they also criticize the lacking debate culture. This is "connected to the political situation that existed [in Czechia] before 1989 because of course independent thinking and public speaking were not supported [...]. Rhetoric was something we only knew about from history." (O'Conner 2005). Due to the one-sided political focus in the communist regime, the proper development of political science took significantly longer and is – compared to other EU countries – still catching up. As previously explained, a generally high level of education is furthermore a hint for a decent political education. According to the UNDP education index, Czech Republic is located as number 28 in the international ranking. Conclusively, one can therefore state that Czech voters are very likely to be proxy voters and to have a comparatively low level of cognitive mobilization.

3.2.3.4 Portrayal by the Czech Media

Ever since the accession negotiations in 1999, the Czech media has begun to increase its coverage of the European Union and even sent numerous foreign correspondents to Brussels. Although the return to Europe had caused a high degree of euphoria, the coverage remained relatively negative and Eurosceptic – particularly in regard to the so-called “custom wars”, which were based on Klaus’ promise that Czechia could join the economic zone without political integration. These sentiments were particularly sparked by the tv channel NOVA, which has close ties to the ODS. The role of the media was especially important at that time, as

“in the Czech Republic, the media are perceived to be a major source of information on EU accession, i.e. nine out of ten Czechs believe that first and foremost the media should have a duty to familiarize citizens with EU accession. Only then followed by government representatives, scientific institutes, members of parliament and senators, parties and most recently the President” (von Schnurbein 2002: 9).

The Czech Republic has been a member state for several years, but the media’s portrayal of the EU has widely been the same. This is supported by the same survey used in chapter 3.1.3.4 above. According to its analysis, the Czech media uses fewer positive frames than negative frames in its portrayal of the EU – the lowest among all countries analyzed (cf. Strömbäck et al 2011: 171). The Czech media is also coined by a high usage of interpretative journalism. Conclusively, the Czech media makes frequent use of Eurosceptic frames.

4. Comparing German and Czech Euroscepticism

Now that the theory of Euroscepticism is properly explained and its practice in both, Germany and the Czech Republic, has been elaborated in detail, it is time to dive into their comparison. Logically, the consistent structure remains. How does the implementation differ in these respective countries and how is it related? Following the existing model, the comparison focuses on the basic characteristics first, before moving on to a more detailed description.

4.1 The Culture of Euroscepticism

Historically speaking, the existence of Euroscepticism in Germany and the Czech Republic differs tremendously. Due to the bipolar world order and particular circumstances at the time, West Germany ended up co-founding the EU, while the Czech Republic remained behind the iron curtain until 1990. Because of the country’s isolation and troublesome political circumstances, the “return to Europe” remained a dream to many Czech citizens. This desire, however, has changed since Czechia’s EU accession, as anti-EU sentiments have become

widely accepted among the people and their political representatives. The German EU enthusiasm, on the other hand, had almost been unchallenged until recently. Until then, most politicians and citizens had commonly agreed on the EU's benefit for Germany, while its criticism was not only discouraged, but almost a taboo. Although this tendency still exists in the German political landscape, it has increasingly been tested by the rising AfD. Nevertheless, as of right now, it remains the only significant Eurosceptic party that is represented in German politics. Eurosceptic rhetoric is a lot more salient in the Czech Republic, as the Czech parliament contains multiple Eurosceptic parties – the ODS being the most popular one of them. However, the amount of parties in general is also significantly higher than in Germany. While the German Bundestag consists of six parties, the Czech parliament contains nine. This difference also translates to the amount of populist parties and therefore the countries' political leadership. Whereas Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel and president Frank-Walter Steinmeier are outspoken supporters of the European Union, their Czech counterparts are quite the opposite: Babiš was investigated for the embezzlement of EU substitutions, Milos Zeman engages in outright anti-EU rhetoric and openly supports the option of Czechxit. Naturally, these profound distinctions are also found in hard numbers. While 78% of all Germans consider the EU membership a good thing, only 37% of Czechs stated the same, marking one of the EU's lowest approval ratings.

4.2 The ODS and AfD

As mentioned above, the ODS and AfD look back on two different historical developments: The former is a direct successor of the Civic Forum and thus has been involved in Czech politics from the early nineties. The latter, on the other hand, is a political reaction to the European debt crisis and was founded in 2013. Logically, this also had implications on the party's political impact. Due to the "personality cult" around Vaclav Klaus, him and the ODS shaped the republic early on and had a significant influence on the people's perception of national and international realities. This importance was furthermore elevated by their political position, considering that ODS was repeatedly represented in the government and even provided multiple presidents. The AfD, contrarily, has never been part of the government and also has not provided any charismatic leaders, deputies or even presidents (yet). The AfD does not prioritize being a governing party but prefers its role as an opposition party instead. The ODS, however, aspires to take part in governmental affairs but has recently been overpowered by ANO. Although the AfD has gained more votes (12.4%) than the ODS (11.3%) in the previous election, its political influence remains undoubtedly lower. This is owed to the different

political climate. Due to the low salience of Eurosceptic and anti-Immigrant topics in Germany, every relevant party has denied the AfD corporation or possibilities to form a coalition. The ODS, on the other hand, is part of the political mainstream and thus has a greater sphere of influence.

These differences also regard the parties' respective agendas. Although the AfD has expanded its reach beyond the sole criticism of the Eurozone, it still has a rather singular focus: The refugee crisis of 2015 and its implications. The economic and social focus is hereby existent, but not particularly highlighted and therefore clearly subordinated. The ODS is not a classic single-issue protest party and identifies as neo-liberal. Other than the AfD, the ODS underlines its free market goals and does not predominantly emphasize identitarian politics. They therefore use different frames and evaluate their goals from differentiating perspectives. Both parties are furthermore represented differently in the European Parliament. The ODS is part and cofounder of the AICRE, whereas the AfD cofounded the ID movement. The former hereby aims its attention at economic issues, while the latter places its focal point on identitarian issues.

4.2.1 The Practice of Euroscepticism

Although the European chapter is merely a small part in the part in the AfD's manifesto, its message is quite clear. The AfD demands a return to the pre-Maastricht days and desires a Europe of the sovereign, but loosely connected countries. It furthermore requests leaving the Eurozone and demands the destruction of the EU's supranational character. Nevertheless, it also criticizes specific policies such as the creation of a European army or the power of the European Central Bank. Throughout the manifesto and a variety of its representatives' speeches, the EU is hereby repeatedly described as a dictating, monstrous and even evil power that plays off member countries against each other. The ODS has very similar demands but stresses the European issues even less in its actual manifesto, as they merely appear as a side note in the description of the party's ideals. Their depiction is closely connected to the party's EU parliamentary affiliation – a fact that is not even regarded in the AfD's manifesto. The ODS also strives for a “return” to the days when the EU was only economically integrated and hereby also craves a losing of the EU's supranational body. Because of that, both parties practice elements of soft but also of hard Euroscepticism. The main differences, however, lie in the tone and the threatened consequences. Both, the ODS' manifesto and its representatives seek to sound sober, analytic and pragmatic in attempt to be the self-proclaimed voice of sanity. Zahradil, who identifies as a Eurorealist, outlines the EU's bureaucratic deficits and advocates the liberation of the market in a predominately rational manner. His AfD counterpart Guido

Reil, on the other hand, portrays himself as the voice of the working class and depicts the EU in a very antagonistic, colloquial manner. Instead of offering constructive criticism, he engages in outright populism. Although Jörg Meuthen articulates himself more appropriately, he supports the doings of his colleague. In spite of the voiced criticism on both sides, they draw different conclusions. Zahradil and the ODS acknowledge Czechia's relatively small size and high dependence on the EU and therefore do not consider a Czechxit as a possibility. The AfD, however, demands a Dexit if its expectations are not met, which is – in light of the current political circumstances – highly unlikely. Hence, both parties practice a soft Euroscepticism, as they do not openly call for the withdrawal of their respective countries. Nevertheless, they are placed on different points of the spectrum. Because of its tone and consequential Dexit, the AfD is located a lot closer to the hard Eurosceptic side than the ODS.

Consequently, the ODS and AfD also differ in the categorization of Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde. Due to their proven Eurosceptic nature, neither the ODS nor the AfD are located in the realms of the Euroenthusiasts, as they clearly do not view the EU as the greatest realization of the European idea and prefer a Europe of the independent sovereign states instead. Nonetheless, they are also not among the Eurorejects, as they do not exclusively demand a Czechxit or Dexit. Because of that, they do not belong in the same category as the single-issue party UKIP, which's singular purpose was the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU. Although the parties do indeed have a relatively similar stance on the EU, it is once again the subliminal consequences that define the differing categorization. The AfD is part of the Eurosceptics: It is generally in line with the European idea but criticizes its post-Maastricht realization heavily. The ODS, on the other hand, follows its Eurorealist ideals and is therefore associated with the Europragmatics. They are neither in absolute favor of the EU, nor absolutely opposed to it, but are clearly obliged to support the EU to some extent, as a withdrawal is factually not considered an option.

4.2.2 The Motivation of Euroscepticism

Logically, the practice, categorization and motivation are codependent. Considering the ideology, both parties claim to be economically (neo-)liberal. While the AfD does not highlight its economic focus, nor uses it to appeal to voters, it is the center of the ODS' agenda. It uses its neoliberal frame to evaluate political circumstances and bases its decisions accordingly. Due to its ideology, the ODS favors the economic integration of the EU, but simultaneously criticizes the allegedly overly bureaucratic structure. Both, the AfD and the ODS, hereby highly criticize the monetary union and demand the withdrawal or rather the rejection of the Euro.

Contrary to the ODS, the AfD mainly emphasizes its identitarian politics and only partially engages in economic discussions – although it was founded as a consequence of the European debt crisis. Since then, its main focus has become the refugee crisis. The AfD hereby blames the EU as a dictating power that forces Germany to take in asylum seekers, while simultaneously identifying migration and multiculturalism as the death of German identity. Even though the ODS has also voiced its antagonism against migrants and its fear of loss of sovereignty, it is not nearly emphasized as much as by the AfD. However, are these ideological beliefs responsible for the respective parties' Euroscepticism, or is the practice of Euroscepticism itself a means to gain attention and voter support?

In the case of Germany, the answer to this question seems relatively obvious. The AfD's use of Euroscepticism was once strategic, as the historical context of this party's founding proves. When the European debt crisis was in the center of the public's attention, the AfD's rhetoric almost exclusively evolved around it. However, the party failed at the 5% threshold in the 2013 election. Ever since the refugee crisis of 2015, the focus on the EU has shifted towards the almost singular focus on immigration. The EU is now barely mentioned in the AfD's manifesto, while the emphasis on identitarian politics has increased drastically. Considering the low potential political value of Euroscepticism itself, it is safe to say that the AfD criticizes the EU for its alleged threat to German identity, not because the topic is significantly attractive to voters. In Czechia, on the other hand, the salience of Euroscepticism is a lot higher than in Germany. Although the ODS actively promoted the return to Europe, it engaged in Eurosceptic rhetoric almost immediately after Czechia had joined. Following its Eurorealist and Europragmatic nature, it appears as obvious that the ODS practiced Klausism to maximize its sphere of influence. Due to the strong existence of Eurosceptic feelings among the population, portraying oneself as Eurosceptic bears a high potential among potential voters. The usage of identitarian issues, for instance, has tactical value. A suitable example is hereby the ODS' insistence on the Beneš decrees: Although their abolition was close to impossible to begin with, the ODS deemed it as the most important requirement for Czechia's accession to the EU, as it knew of its popularity for the people of Czech Republic. Conclusively, the AfD's practice of Euroscepticism is more based on ideological foundations, while the ODS also entails ideological features, but mainly predominantly instrumentalizes it as a strategic means.

4.3 The Display and Background of Euroscepticism

Now that the two most popular political parties of both respective countries have been compared in detail, the following chapter proceeds to compare the manifestations and origins of

Euroscepticism in Czech Republic and Germany in general. Is the people's scepticism enrooted in their economic despair, or is the threat to sovereignty, cultural and identity the main subject of concern? What role does political education play and how does the media influence the people's perception of the EU?

4.3.1 Socio-Economic and Identitarian Realities

Although both countries have objectively benefitted from the accession to the European Union, citizens of both Czechia and Germany have voiced their concern regarding the so-called subjective economy. As underlined by the historical context of the rise of Euroscepticism in Germany, many of the economic concerns are directly connected to the European Debt crisis and the attempt to save Greece financially. Because of that, many Germans felt as if their tax money was being wasted on a foreign country. Thus, many desired a Grexit and began to view the common currency Euro increasingly skeptically. Another issue to many Germans is rather rooted in national differences but projected on the EU regardless: The inequality between East- and West Germany. Even though the situation in the former GDR has improved, many still earn significantly less than their West German neighbors and are still waiting for the arrival of financial hubs in their region. Therefore, the overall change is not perceived equally throughout the country. This issue also affects the Czech Republic. While it is mainly the East that is neglected in Germany, most rural areas suffer from low structural development in Czechia. While Prague - the only financial hub of the country - has prospered significantly, great parts of the population have not yet witnessed significant improvements in their personal lives. Contrarily, many have experienced an increase in their cost of living since Czechia's accession to the EU. While the Euro is often associated with the bail out of economically weak countries in Germany, it is connected to rising prices in Czechia. Considering the high popularity of Eurosceptic sentiments in the political landscape of Czechia, the government has often blamed the EU for these problems, while accrediting itself with any improvements – regardless of EU influence. Due to the fact that Germany has never had a Eurosceptic government, this phenomenon is significantly less distinct in Germany. Germany, however, faces a different issue: Since it has been part of the EU from the beginning, many do not associate Germany's economic success with the efforts of the EU, as most people do not have access to a before- and after comparison. Because of the transformation from communism, this is not the case in Czechia. Consequently, both nations only merely accredit the EU for their economic growth: 32% of all Czechs and 36% of all Germans believed that the EU had contributed to the economic growth of their country. Nevertheless, these values differ in their specificities. Almost twice as

many Czechs (16% Germany/ 30% Czechia) believe that their overall situation has improved and even more (21% Germans/ 52% Czechia) claim that the EU has created new work opportunities. These differing sentiments are likely owed to the words “new” and “improved”, which entail an underlying comparison that most Germans do not have. Additionally, the standard of living and employment has always been high in Germany. Because of that, only 5% of all Germans mentioned the economic as the greatest issue that Germans are facing within the European Crisis. Among Czechs, this percentage is twice as high, and the number one issue mentioned is rising prices and cost of living. Ergo, the economic situation is a significantly greater point of concern to Czech citizens, than to their German counterparts. The most important problem to Germans – apart from climate change – is migration: 24% mentioned migration in the Eurobarometer. Ever since the refugee crisis in Germany, more and more Germans fear for the perseverance of their national identity. With more than 1.5 million refugees, Germany had taken a key role in the crisis and many soon began to blame the EU for this alleged burden. In Czech Republic, many politicians – including the president – have sparked anti-immigrant feelings as well. Czechia, however, is among the countries which have granted asylum to the fewest amount of people. Mass-migration therefore never occurred on Czech soil. Although migration is also an important issue to many Czechs, it is merely secondary to most. Instead of predominantly fearing for their loss of identity, the greater fear for Czechs is the loss sovereignty. This is owed to the dramatic history of Czechia, which was coined by centuries of oppression and only a short term of self-determination. Considering that Germany was an oppressor and is now among the most powerful in the EU, this feeling is clearly enhanced. This role allocation also explains why Germans, on the other hand, do not fear for their sovereignty as much. Conclusively, the Czech Euroscepticism is predominantly based on economic and political concerns, while the German Euroscepticism is concerned with alleged identitarian threats.

4.3.2 Proxy Voting, Cognitive Mobilization and the Influence of the Media

As the comparison between national and supranational trust has proven, both Germany and the Czech Republic are subjected to the phenomenon of proxy voting. In Germany, the trust in both the national and supranational government is 48% - 46% trust in the national parliament. This level of trust is significantly lower in the Czech Republic. Only 37% trust in the government and only 21% stated that they trusted the parliament. Germans and Czechs also placed different value in democratic principles. These differences are owed to the differing levels of corruption and the different historical developments. While corruption does not play major role in German

politics, the majority of Czechs named corruption as the number one issue that the country is facing internally – followed by internal power politics. This is enhanced by the country's recent history, which was defined by a corrupt, communist government that was not democratically elected, nor offered basic democratic freedoms. Due to the phenomenon of proxy support, the Czechs – among other factors - therefore trust the European government and parliament less than the Germans do. Naturally, the level of trust is also affected by how well the system is understood. According to the Eurobarometer, 69% of all Germans stated that they understood how the EU works and even 78% claimed that they understood what is happening in the world. In the Czech Republic, this amount is significantly lower: 54% totally agreed with the former and only 49% with the latter. These differing results are owed to a different level of (political) education. While the field of political science and general education was one of the main focuses of post-Nazi Germany, a profound and reflected understanding of politics was not only not taught in the communist ČSSR, but actively discouraged. This also affected the political discourse in the private sphere, as individuals had to fear the infiltration by the secret police. As stated by the UNDP, the two countries also rank tremendously different in the education index. While Germany is located at 6th place, the Czech Republic is at the 28th. Those who are less informed are also more likely to be vulnerable to the influence of third-party entities. As most people do not actively monitor the political sphere themselves, they typically rely on their coverage by the media. In regard to their portrayal of the EU, the Czech and the German Media differ significantly: While the German media uses predominantly positive frames to cover the EU, the Czech media does the exact opposite. This effect is also caused by the different style of reporting. Whereas the German media typically engages in journalistic wrap-ups, the Czech media stresses interpretative journalism.

5. Conclusion

The comparative analysis above has proven that the manifestations and origins of Euroscepticism differ substantially in Germany and the Czech Republic. The criticism of the EU is not only more prominent in the political landscape of the Czech Republic, but also among its citizens. In Germany, on the other hand, the subject of Euroscepticism is still on the rise and has not yet reached the mainstream discourse - whereas the ODS has taken active part in the government several times, the AfD has exclusively been in the opposition. Because of that, the AfD is capable of practicing a harder and more pessimistic way of soft Euroscepticism, placing it in the category of Eurosceptics. The ODS, which is part of the Europragmatics, pursues a rather sober and more realistic way of soft Euroscepticism. While both incorporate ideological

beliefs, only the ODS instrumentalizes its Euroscepticism in a strategic way, as its low salience in Germany has proven to have a low political value. However, it is furthermore the focus of the criticism itself that differs. Economically speaking, the Germans tend to predominantly criticize Germany's position as a net contributor in the Eurozone and for its strong involvement in the EU bail outs. In Czechia, this critique rather evolves around the sentiment of not benefitting enough and the fear of rising prices. In terms of culture and identity, the Germans are more preoccupied with the topic of migration, owed to Germany's role in the refugee crisis. Although this subject is also important to many Czechs, it is the alleged threat to Czechia's sovereignty that is a key issue to most Czechs. Considering that Germany has not experienced oppression to the same degree, this distinction appears as natural. In regard to the prioritization of these issues, the Germans overall practice a more identitarian Euroscepticism, while the Czechs focus more on economic problems. These sentiments are increased by the media and the level of education. As the comparison has proven, the Czech population is not only less politically educated, but also more subjected to Eurosceptical media than the German people. Naturally, this negatively affects the Czech perspective on European affairs. This issue is paired with the irrational phenomenon of proxy support, which projects national mistrust and antagonism on the supranational level – although they are not necessarily related.

Conclusively, this analysis has shed light on how the practice of Euroscepticism differs in Germany and why the Czech Republic is more affected in particular categories. It has moreover stressed the importance of history and on how it continues to affect the perception of the government, the EU and the Czech-German relationship. The detailed depiction of both countries has furthermore highlighted the fact that Euroscepticism itself is a highly subjective phenomenon: Although both countries have significantly benefited from the accession to the EU, their people widely fail to acknowledge that – especially in those regions where change may be existent, but not visible. Now that some of the issues and their origins are identified, more research is required in order to find solutions. Regarding the issues above, this research is ought to shed light on how to minimize the distance between the EU and their member states and on how to reestablish the trust between historic opponents. Apart from these external factors, however, more research is also needed on the influence of internal factors, such as the coping with pre-existing authoritarian regimes and the projection of national problems on a supranational level. As Euroscepticism is becoming increasingly popular, these further investigations appear as essential and may contribute to the upholding of the European idea.

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