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Identifying the origins of Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 European Parliament election.

BSc Public Governance across Borders

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**In this work we made use of generative artificial intelligence. Please see the
appendix for the disclosure statement.**

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Abstract

This research examines the origins of Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 European Parliament elections, focusing on the diverging motivations behind radical left and radical right Euroscepticism, investigating the influence of social class and issue positions on Eurosceptic voting. The study employs a quantitative research design, analysing Western and post-communist European countries.

The voter-level data used in this research is from the 2024 European Election Studies (EES) survey, combined with the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) to classify Eurosceptic party positions. A binary logistic regression analysis on Eurosceptic party voting was conducted to assess the impact of social class, climate change positions, immigration attitudes and redistribution on Eurosceptic voting. The findings reveal that radical left voting is primarily driven by voters who support economic redistribution, while radical right Euroscepticism is highly dependent on anti-immigration and anti-climate change stances.

The research emphasises the influence of issue salience and ideological framing in shaping Eurosceptic voting behaviour. Additionally, contributing to the understanding of how the above-mentioned stances influence Eurosceptic voting behaviour, particularly in the context of increasing EU politicization in the recent years. Especially, by addressing the divergence in radical left and right Euroscepticism, it enhances knowledge of Eurosceptic party voting at both poles of the political spectrum.

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1. Introduction

The European Union is known as a system “*sui generis*”, being a unique international organization and the world 's most advanced case of regional integration (Braun & Carteny, 2024). The European Union has 27 member states and is an international organization with interconnected social, economic, and security policies. Criticism towards the European Union has become increasingly important for the domestic politics of member states. The lack of trust in the European Union can be seen in surveys like the Eurobarometer (2024) showing that only 51 percent of Europeans trust the EU.

The European Union was considered an unpoliticized topic for a long time, but the politicization and salience of European integration and EU policies have increased in the recent years (Beaudonnet & Gomez, 2024). Different studies show this increase in politicization, showing that the European Union has a higher influence on citizens' voting choices than some years ago (Beaudonnet & Gomez, 2024). Euroscepticism as expression of opposing against the EU has not only become increasingly politicized. Moreover, the support for this stream rose over the years with Eurosceptic parties performing considerably better than before.

Euroscepticism is related to ideological stances at the far right and far left. Leading to an increase of Eurosceptic sentiments towards the more extreme political spectrum. But Euroscepticism has changed a lot across the political spectrum, supporters became opponents and vice versa. In the face of an establishing single market in the 1980s, radical left parties and social democrats were the Eurosceptic voices with concerns about the endangerment of social protection (Ray, 1999). A criticism that originated from the core values of left ideology, that regards to the European Union as a capitalist's project for wealth accumulation threatening the national welfare state. This situation changed in the late 1990s, when Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist parties opposed stronger against European unification (Hooghe et al., 2002). Their opposition originated from a nationalist's ideology, that perceived the European Union as threat to national sovereignty and endangering the core values of their ideology surrounding the national state. The European Union was experiencing major crises since the 2000s, the Eurozone crisis (2008), the immigration crisis (2015) and the British exit from the European Union (2016). These crises were a major driver of Euroscepticism leading to a substantially increasing success of Eurosceptic national parties over the past years, with the share of Eurosceptic votes in national and European elections accumulating excessively on the far right. Rodríguez-Pose et al. (2024) found that the opposition against the European Union has almost quadrupled since the financial crisis, with an increase from 7 percent in 2008 to 27 percent in 2022. Nowadays most European national party systems include a successful Eurosceptic party (Braun & Carteny, 2024). As response, many far left parties are taking a more pro-EU stance than before to oppose against the radical right position (Wagner, 2021).

Parties on the opposite poles of the political spectrum diverge on the motivations for opposing against the EU. Traditionally, radical left parties are unsatisfied with how the status quo EU is working and criticizes the EU as a capitalist project, fearing the loss of social protection (Braun & Carteny, 2024) On the contrary, right-wing Euroscepticism is against further European integration and concerned about the loss of national sovereignty and cultural identity (Braun & Carteny, 2024).

Eurosceptic voting is almost only happening on the political extremes but not exclusively. This research is identifying and analysing the voter's motivations behind Eurosceptic voting. Investigating ideological motivation of voter stances, issue positions and social class to explore

their influence on Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 European Parliament election. Especially, focusing on the diverging origins on the radical right and radical left. To identify the origins behind the rise of Eurosceptic voting in the recent years this research is analysing the most politicized topics in European politics. Migration and climate change have become extremely politicized topics within the European Union and will be viewed as key motivations for the rise of Euroscepticism. Therefore, specific voter stances on migration and climate change policies that voted for a Eurosceptic party are classified as main motivations behind the rise of Euroscepticism in the recent years.

Therefore, the goal of this research will be to answer the following questions: *What are the origins of Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 European Parliament election? What are the diverging motivations between radical left and radical right Eurosceptic voting? What influence have certain issue positions in supporting Eurosceptic voting? What's the social classes influence on Eurosceptic voting?*

This paper is beginning with the explanation of the theoretical framework behind Euroscepticism, defining Euroscepticism and identifying the ideological differences behind Eurosceptic voting on both poles of the political spectrum. Additionally, discussing the differences of European Parliament elections to national elections and the influence of issue salience on Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 EP elections. Based on this theory the research is postulating Hypotheses that will be the main subject of matter for the analysis. The research design for answering the above mentioned questions is utilizing the European Election Studies Survey (EES) data to conduct a logistic regression analysis on the motivations behind the Eurosceptic voting, identifying the diverging motivations on the radical right and radical left. Eurosceptic voting is classified through the use of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) that allows an expert based classification of parties as Eurosceptic.

The social relevance of this research is given once due to the increasing politicization of the European Union as well as the increasing success of Eurosceptic parties in the recent years. This makes the research particularly relevant for this current development, with the aim of enhancing the understanding behind the motivations and origins of Eurosceptic voting. Because of that, the analysis is serving a relevant societal purpose.

Some scholars conducted research with a similar aim, but with some distinct differences to the scope and design of the research. Most former research on this topic exclusively focused on Western European countries and neglected Eastern European countries. As a consequence, this research is including Eastern European countries (post-communist) to counteract this scientific trend of regional underrepresentation in research. The conducted research on Eastern European countries has one restriction, which is to exclude left wing Eurosceptic parties from the analysis. This is due to the specific characteristics of left parties in post-communist countries, which makes them only comparable inside the former Iron Curtain (March & Mudde, 2005). Therefore, the theoretical framework on Eurosceptic radical left voting and the based on that postulated hypotheses are made based on Western European countries and can't be expected to work for post-communist countries.

Another difference to other research on this topic is that this research is using Eurosceptic party voting instead of a mostly used ideological Likert scale to identify Eurosceptic voting for the analysis. Hence, this research going to identify how the voter motivations influenced Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 European Parliament election in difference to previous research's only looking at the motivational influence in relation to a Eurosceptic self-placement.

Additionally, there is no research on the motivations behind Eurosceptic voting that is using data with a similar up-to-dateness.

2. Euroscepticism

The term Euroscepticism was framed as opposing to European integration or Europe in general and originates from the term sceptics which means “an attitude of doubt or a disposition of disbelief” (Hooghe & Marks, 2007, p.119). The term Euroscepticism was first mentioned by the Wall Street Journal in 1988, in face of the economic changes for companies through the Maastricht Treaty (1992) (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.).

Kopecký and Mudde (2002) identified the issue that the current definition of Euroscepticism was blurred and unable to distinguish between simple criticism or opposition to European integration. Kopecký and Mudde (2002) distinguish between two kinds of Euroscepticism: between specific support of the practices of European policies and the diffuse support of the idea of European integration.

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002) made a further distinction, introducing the terms “hard” and “soft” Euroscepticism that differentiate between principled and qualified opposition to the EU. Hard Euroscepticism is a principled opposition to European integration and the transfer of decision-making power to the European Union as a supranational institution (Szczurbiak & Taggart, 2008). Soft Euroscepticism is a qualified criticism of the current functioning of the European Union and its policies but doesn't reject the idea of supranationalism and further European integration (Szczurbiak & Taggart, 2008). This definition is important to identify Eurosceptic party statements as qualified criticism or principled ideological rejection.

Extreme parties at the contrary poles of the ideological spectrum differ in their stance towards the European Union. Eurosceptic party positions are characterized by a pre-existing background of differing ideologies that largely define their position towards the European Union (Marks & Wilson, 2000). Based on its ideological stance parties will have diverging positions on issues and their salience like immigration, cultural identity, economy, or sexual equality (Treib, 2014).

Due to the ideological stance of radical left and radical right parties, they can be assessed as “soft” and “hard” Eurosceptic (Braun et al., 2019). Most radical left parties can be classified as having the characteristics of soft Euroscepticism that's opposing to the EU's current composition and practice (Van Elsas et al., 2016). While radical right parties tend to have a hard Eurosceptic stance that rejects every form of European integration (Braun et al., 2019). This characteristic of radical left parties being mostly soft Eurosceptic originates from their ideology and the framing of the current European Union as capitalist project for wealth accumulation. Hence, the left parties tend to be in opposition to how the EU is currently working, and their Euroscepticism is rather supporting the reform of the status quo politics of the European Union. Contrary to that, the hard Euroscepticism identity of radical right parties originates from the nationalist's ideology, which frames the European Union as threat to national sovereignty. Consequential, radical right parties are opposed to any transfer of decision making power to the supranational level.

3. European Parliament elections

The European Parliament elections were chosen for this research because they are held in every country simultaneously in contrast to national elections. But EP elections differ from national elections, as every 5 years citizens across all EU member states elect Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) representing their national party interest at the EU level (European Union, n.d.). These elections diverge from national election as the EP is responsible for passing EU legislation, budgets and supervision of other EU institutions (European Union, n.d.). In contrast to national elections were citizens vote for a government.

Reif and Schmitt (1980) introduced the concept of second-order elections that classify European Parliament elections as less important in the eyes of their voters. This theory claims to have specific implications on the EP election results in comparison to national elections, such as lower Turnout, Governing parties losing votes, and the opposition gaining votes (Reif & Schmitt, 1980).

In contrast to second-order elections theory, Wondreys (2023) compared the statistical difference of extreme parties gaining votes in European elections in relation to national elections from 1979 to 2019. Wondreys (2023) research rejects that ideological extremity has a positive effect on a party's voting outcome at second order elections, finding no significant gain of extremist parties in European Parliament elections. Therefore, the second order elections theory shouldn't have serious implications on my research. Due to extreme parties that are most Eurosceptic are not overrepresented in comparison to national elections.

4. Issue Salience

In the early 2000s, Van Der Eijk and Franklin (2004) defined the EU as a unpoliticized arena with no relevant effect on the voter Turnout and therefore called the EU a "sleeping giant. But as mentioned before the sleeping giant woke up and the European Union has become increasingly politicized over the last years. For that reason, the salience of specific political issues has become crucial to shape voter behaviour in the European Union. EU politization results from the debate of pro-European parties with those who are opposing to European integration, by doing so politicization is increasing the salience of EU issues (Beaudonnet & Gomez, 2024). This increasing politicization of the EU has given Eurosceptic parties the possibility to present their opposing to the EU to a larger audience and gain the status of having a certain position on a salient issue for the European Union. Beaudonnet and Gomez (2024) view the increasing politicization and issue salience as "a one-way street whose effects tend to favour Eurosceptic parties", resulting in a boost of voter turnout for Eurosceptic parties (Beaudonnet & Gomez, 2024, p.355). Besides that, the increasing media intention has been a key driver for issue salience and the politicization of the EU.

Issue salience plays a crucial role for this research, as the motivations for Eurosceptic party voting in the past European Parliament elections are expected to stem from increasingly politicized issues. Past research has shown that certain issues became increasingly salient especially very politicized one's as immigration and climate change are more likely to structure electoral preferences (De Vries, 2010). On a European level those issues are getting used by Eurosceptic parties for a broader debate over European integration and national sovereignty. As the European Union has become increasingly politicized, voters have become more likely to cast their vote based on some key issues. Because of that, it's expected, that Eurosceptic voting motivations stem from voter's stances on only a few highly salient issues. Therefore, the

increasing politicization of climate change and immigration stances will be classified as issues that are decisive for people to vote Eurosceptic.

5. Hypotheses

Left wing ideological hypotheses:

Far-left Euroscepticism originates from the protection of the national welfare state and the rejection of the ongoing market liberalization (Van Elsas et al., 2016). Radical left parties view the European Union as a capitalist project for wealth accumulation that endangers the welfare state and social protection at the national level (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). This risk for the national welfare state as a core value of socialist ideology is seen as a major threat for far-left parties (Hooghe et al., 2002). The left-right conflict over European issues differs to the left-right national issues, due to Hooghe and Marks (2008) postfunctionalist theory of European integration. That's because economic redistribution on the European level would only work through wealth redistribution across member states imposing costs on wealthier national states (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). This leads to the radical left neglecting redistribution and focusing on social regulation policies at the European level. This is a key difference to elections at the national level where redistribution is a key value for socialist parties. Despite this difference it's expected that redistribution remains an important predictor for radical left voting at the European level.

This research expects that support for redistribution is increasing Eurosceptic voting even though far left parties don't promote redistribution policies on the European level. It's expected that Eurosceptic voting will still be influenced due to the voters left ideology. Due to the influence of Left ideology, the following hypothesis is made:

H1: Support for redistribution has a positive effect on radical left Eurosceptic voting.

Right wing ideological hypothesis:

Radical right euroscepticism stems from the perceived threat that European integration poses to the loss of culture, national identity, and national sovereignty (Van Elsas et al., 2016). This Euroscepticism emerges from the core principles of their nationalist ideology and exclusivist values (Hooghe et al., 2002). Most radical right parties reject every transfer of decision-making power to the EU and therefore promote only economic cooperation without supranationalism endangering their sovereignty. But some far right parties like the Austrian FPÖ and Swiss SVP acknowledge the economic merits of the trade liberalisation and market integration (Van Elsas et al., 2016).

Further, far-right parties have strong anti-immigration sentiments due to the accompanying loss of cultural homogeneity (Van Elsas et al., 2016). Anti-immigration stances are very suitable as indicator for far-right Eurosceptic voting due to the increased politization and recognition of this topic in the public sphere. Anti-immigration stances have been a driver of nationalist's movements and the accompanied Euroscepticism due to fear of cultural loss. That leads to the expectation that due to right-wing ideology:

H2: Anti-immigration stances have a positive effect for the support of Eurosceptic radical right voting.

Social class hypothesis:

Nieuwbeerta (1996) finds that radical left parties are traditionally supported by the working class to reduce their suffering from income inequality. This is based on the belief that the capitalistic system is responsible for the excessive inequality of the working class (Visser et al., 2013). It's expected that class struggle still has an influence on voting radical left parties due to their support of redistribution policies and origin as parties of the working class. However, a low social class is also expected to support radical right voting and their anti-immigration positions, due to the radical right framing of immigration as cause for the voters' social issues and worse wages. Further, radical right parties frame the European Union as an elite project and are likely to gain votes from the working class as "losers of globalization". Therefore, both groups are expected to support Eurosceptic voting but with diverging motivations. This leads to the hypothesis for belonging to the working class:

H3: Belonging to the working class has a positive effect on Eurosceptic voting, on the radical left and radical right.

Issue position hypothesis:

Climate change has become one of the most salient issues on the European level, with a very politicized debate surrounding climate policies. Climate change is known to be a topic that's not solvable on the national level therefore the EU is seen as an important institution for targeting the issue of climate change. Further, climate change has become increasingly important as an EU policy issue and the EU is seen as a solution rather than as an obstacle for a green transition. Initiatives as the European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package have become a cornerstone of EU policymaking. The EU climate agenda includes emission reduction targets, carbon pricing and regulatory interventions. Radical right parties view this climate agenda as harmful for the economy, disregarding national sovereignty and as an elite project. Voters from rural, industrial and working class communities are more likely to support this radical right view on climate policies perceiving them as detached from the ordinary citizen and being especially targeted by these policies. Hence, that are opposed to climate change policies are expected to be more likely to vote a Eurosceptic radical right party. This leads to the hypothesis that:

H4: Anti-climate change policy stances have a positive effect on radical right Eurosceptic voting.

However, the hypotheses above are made knowing that the national economic context might lead to a difference in the ideological motivations for Euroscepticism as by Garry and Tilley (2014), showing that income inequality and state ownership influence left-wing Euroscepticism. This must be borne in mind as a possible influencing of the results. Further, the context of the national party system might influence Eurosceptic voting due to the absence or presence of left/right parties in the system (De Vries & Edwards, 2008).

6. Data

To test the hypotheses, I relied on the 2024 European Election Studies (EES). This cross-national survey was conducted shortly after the European Parliament elections in 2024 and was conducted in all European member states. The ESS will be used to understand the motivations of the Eurosceptic voting behaviour of the citizens. Most recent studies on Euroscepticism across European countries just looked at the Western European countries and excluded the post-communist countries. Gomez et al. (2015) is arguing that radical left parties in west- and east Europe are hardly comparable due to the still existing radical left parties in eastern Europe.

successors of former ruling communist parties. As mentioned above, these specific characteristics of the radical left in post-communist countries makes them only comparable inside the former Iron Curtain (March & Mudde, 2005). Eastern European countries have been neglected in past research's on this topic. To encounter this underrepresentation of post-communist countries this research will include them but will only be looking at right wing Eurosceptic parties. This step is justifiable due to March and Mudde's (2005) argumentation on the non-comparability of radical left parties in East- and West Europe. As well because post-communist left parties only play a minor role in Eastern European euroscepticism with relative low voter turnout and many countries without considerable radical left party. Therefore, this study will include 2 Western and 2 Eastern European states but analyse them separately.

The country selection for this research is guided by choosing theoretical relevant cases and by limiting country specific factors that might influence the results. But further with the goal of capturing the ideological and regional diversity within the European Union and ensuring the comparability of political party systems. For the Eastern European countries, the research selected Poland and Hungary, this is first due to Poland and Hungary each having two radical right parties that are identified by the Ches as well as no radical left party in der party system. This asymmetry is theoretically relevant, as it reflects post-communist legacies that make left-wing Euroscepticism ideologically and electorally marginal in Eastern Europe (March & Mudde, 2005). The presence of a similar number of radical right parties ensures the comparability of both political party systems. For the Western European countries, the analysis will be concluded for France and Germany as both countries have considerable left- and right Eurosceptic parties in their political spectrum. Additionally, both countries have a successful right wing populist party in their party system with Rassemblement National in France and the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany. But with France having a longer Eurosceptic tradition on the right- and left wing. All four countries are among the largest EU member states by population and play significant roles in the European Parliament, making them influential cases for understanding electoral trends at the EU level.

In this research, I'm using the using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey that tracks party positions since 1999 to identify the individual party position on EU integration (on a scale from 1=strongly opposed to 7=strongly in favour) as well as the party family (Jolly et al., 2021). The Ches survey is conducted through experts' judgment on the party positions for their respective country (Wagner, 2021). This approach is contrary to using manifestos to classify party positioning, as most voters don't read manifestos (Wagner, 2021). The Chapel Hill expert survey was conducted in the same year as the ESS and therefore gives a reliable method for the party positions.

The following table consists of: Party (party family:EU position).

Country	Left	Right
Poland	<i>No left party</i>	1. Confederation Liberty and Independence (1.52) 2. Law and Justice (3.10)
Hungary	No Left Party	1. Our Homeland Movement (2.11) 2. Fidesz / Christian Alliance (2.89)
France	1. Unbowed France (3.00) 2. French Communist Party (3.11)	1. Reconquest (1.64) 2. National Rally (2.18)
Germany	1. Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (2.42)	1. Alternative for Germany (1.89)

This research will use the Chapel Hill Expert Survey to identify the Eurosceptic parties for each country and further classify the party family. For the identification of Soft- and Hard Euroscepticism this research is relying on Rodríguez-Pose et al. (2024) using the Chapel Hill expert survey EU position for the classification. Therefore, Soft Euroscepticism is classified by a score of ≤ 3.5 on the Ches position scale and ≤ 2.5 for hard Euroscepticism. This Operationalisation of Soft and Hard Euroscepticism enables us to use the CHes for the party classification.

7. Operationalisation

Dependent variable: Eurosceptic voting

Euroscepticism is identified by “Which party did you vote for in the European Parliament elections?”. The Left- and Right Eurosceptic parties will be analysed in two groups. The dependent variable is a binary measure for respondents have voted for a Eurosceptic party or did not. This allows the identification of diverging motivations on the far right and far left. So, the research will conduct two analyses with the binary variable, voted for radical right Eurosceptic party or did not and voted for radical Eurosceptic party or did not.

Independent variables

Ideological hypotheses:

Support for income redistribution is measured by asking respondents to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statement ‘What do you think about redistribution of wealth?’ The answer categories ranged from (0) Fully in favour of redistribution from the rich to the poor in [country] to (10) Fully opposed to redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor in [country].

Support for Anti-immigration stances is measured by asking respondents to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statement ‘What do you think about immigration policies?’. The answer categories ranged from (0) Fully in favour of a restrictive policy on immigration to (10) Fully opposed to a restrictive policy on immigration. The variable of anti-immigration stances is used because the loss of national identity is one of the key characteristics of radical right euroscepticism (Norris, 2005).

Climate change position hypothesis:

Opposition to climate change policies is measured by asking respondents to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statement ‘What do you think about climate change policies?’. The answer categories ranged from (0) Limiting climate change should take priority even at the cost of economic growth to (10) Limiting climate change should take priority even at the cost of economic growth.

Social class hypothesis:

If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to - the working class, the lower middle class, the middle class, the upper middle class or the upper class? The scale ranges from (1) Working class to (5) Upper class, for the purpose of the research only the score (1) Working class will be used for the variable and every other social class will be coded (0).

Due to previous research on Eurosceptic voting, this research will include the following controls to ensure the reliability of the results: age (continuous measures), educational level (from 1 to 6), gender (binary measure 0 = male, 1 = female, Other = NA). Further the research makes use of a country dummy variable for country specific factors, using France as dummy for Western Europe and Poland for Eastern Europe. The controls and country dummies ensure that country specific factors and demographics aren't influencing the results of the research.

8. Method

To assess the relationship between the independent variables and Eurosceptic voting, a binary logistic regression analysis will be conducted. The model will estimate the probability of a respondent voting for a Eurosceptic party (dependent variable: 1 = voted Eurosceptic, 0 = did not vote Eurosceptic) based on the independent variables. This will be done multiple times, for voted/did not vote radical right Eurosceptic and voted/did not vote radical left Eurosceptic. Further this will be done separate for East and Western Europe, but for the Eastern European countries there will be only one binary logistic regression for the radical right voting as mentioned before.

For the sake of clarity, the research will also analyse the average marginal effects for the above mentioned variables. Further the predicted probability for the important findings will be illustrated through RStudio generated graphs showing the predicted probability of voting Radical right or radical left based on voter positions for the operationalized variables. This illustration of the findings enhances the clarity of the research's results.

By employing logistic regression analysis, this study will provide empirical evidence on the origins of Eurosceptic voting in the European Parliament election 2024. The results will contribute to a better understanding of how ideological, social class and issue positions shape support for Eurosceptic voting especially analysing the diverging motivations on the radical left and radical right in European elections.

9. Results

Table 1. shows the results of the conducted logistic regression on Eurosceptic voting for radical right (West), radical left (West), radical right (East). Further Table 2. displays the marginal effects to simplify the results of the logistic regression.

Before analysing the results of the key variables it's beneficial to examine the effects of the control variables on Eurosceptic voting. There is no clear effect of age on the likelihood to vote Eurosceptic for any of our dependent variables. Gender has a negative and significant influence on Eurosceptic radical right (West) voting with women being 4.86 percentage points less likely to vote radical right (West) at $p \approx 0.01$. But gender has no clear effect on voting radical left (West) and radical right (East). The control education has a significant effect only for voting radical right (East) but isn't a significant predictor for voting radical right (West) and radical left (West).

It's also worth describing the effect of our country dummy variables. The France dummy shows that respondents are significantly more likely to vote Eurosceptic than German respondents with the same stances. The likelihood increases 16.6 percentage points for voting radical right

if the voter is French at $p < 0.001$ and 3.1 percentage points for voting radical left at $p < 0.05$. These results show the influence of national level factors on Eurosceptic voting, with respondents in France having a higher baseline probability of voting for a Eurosceptic party.

The Poland dummy has a negative and significant effect on voting radical right (East), decreasing the likelihood by 5.4 percentage points at $p < 0.05$). These results show that, holding all other factors constant, Polish voters are less likely to vote radical right Eurosceptic compared to voters in Hungary. Showing a lower influence of country specific factors between the country selection for Eastern European radical right voting in comparison to the countries selected for Western Europe.

Table 1. Logistic Regression Results on Eurosceptic Party vote for the 2024 EP elections.

Predictor	Radical Right (West)	Radical Left (West)	Radical Right (East)
Redistribution	0.046 * (0.021)	−0.137 *** (0.033)	0.068 *** (0.020)
Immigration	−0.114 *** (0.019)	0.119 *** (0.027)	−0.095 *** (0.017)
Climate Policy	0.183 *** (0.022)	−0.029 (0.030)	0.201 *** (0.020)
Working Class	0.335 * (0.160)	0.129 (0.228)	−0.184 (0.140)
Age	−0.003 (0.004)	−0.003 (0.005)	0.006 (0.004)
Gender	−0.311 ** (0.119)	0.218 (0.175)	0.042 (0.110)
Education	−0.079 · (0.044)	0.073 (0.063)	−0.134 ** (0.044)
France (dummy)	1.063 *** (0.127)	0.421 * (0.181)	—
Poland (dummy)	—	—	−0.283 * (0.114)
Observations	1818	1818	1769
AIC	1764.3	1000.0	2012.6
BIC	1813.9	1049.5	2061.9
Log Likelihood	−873.15	−490.99	−997.30
RMSE	0.40	0.27	0.44

Table 2. Average Marginal Effects for Eurosceptic party vote for the 2024 EP elections.

Predictor	Radical Right (West)	Radical Left (West)	Radical Right (East)
Redistribution	0.0072 * (0.0033)	−0.0100 *** (0.0024)	0.0130 *** (0.0037)
Immigration	−0.0178 *** (0.0029)	0.0087 *** (0.0020)	−0.0181 *** (0.0031)
Climate Policy	0.0287 *** (0.0032)	−0.0022 (0.0022)	0.0383 *** (0.0033)
Working Class	0.0524 * (0.0250)	0.0095 (0.0167)	−0.0351 (0.0267)
Age	−0.0004 (0.0006)	−0.0002 (0.0004)	0.0011 (0.0007)
Gender	−0.0486 ** (0.0185)	0.0160 (0.0128)	0.0080 (0.0210)
Education	−0.0123 · (0.0068)	0.0053 (0.0046)	−0.0255 ** (0.0083)
France (dummy)	0.1660 *** (0.0188)	0.0308 * (0.0133)	—
Poland (dummy)	—	—	−0.0540 * (0.0215)

Hypothesis 1, support for redistribution has, as expected, a positive and statistically significant effect on the probability to vote for a radical left party. A one-point increase in opposition to redistribution decreases the probability to vote radical left (West) by 1 percentage point at $p < 0.001$. To simplify this number, being fully in favour of redistribution increases the probability to vote radical left around 10 percentage points compared to being completely opposed to redistribution. Opposition to redistribution further has a significant effect on voting radical right (East and West) with a one-point increase in opposition resulting in a 0.72 percentage point increase for voting radical right (West) at $p < 0.05$ and a 1.3 percentage points increase for voting radical right (East) at $p < 0.001$. Showing that opposition to redistribution leads to a much higher probability of voting radical right (east) than for respondents from Western Europe. Figures 1., 2. and 3. show these findings graphically to facilitate the interpretation of the results. Figure 1. and 2. shows that the predicted probability of voting radical right increases the more respondents are opposed to redistribution, being strongest in Eastern Europe. Figure 3. shows the opposite, the probability of voting radical left (West) decreases the more respondents are opposed to redistribution.

Figure 1. (West) and Figure 2. (East) Probability of radical right voting on redistribution position in the 2024 EP elections. From (0) Fully in favour of redistribution from the rich to the poor to (10) Fully opposed to redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor.

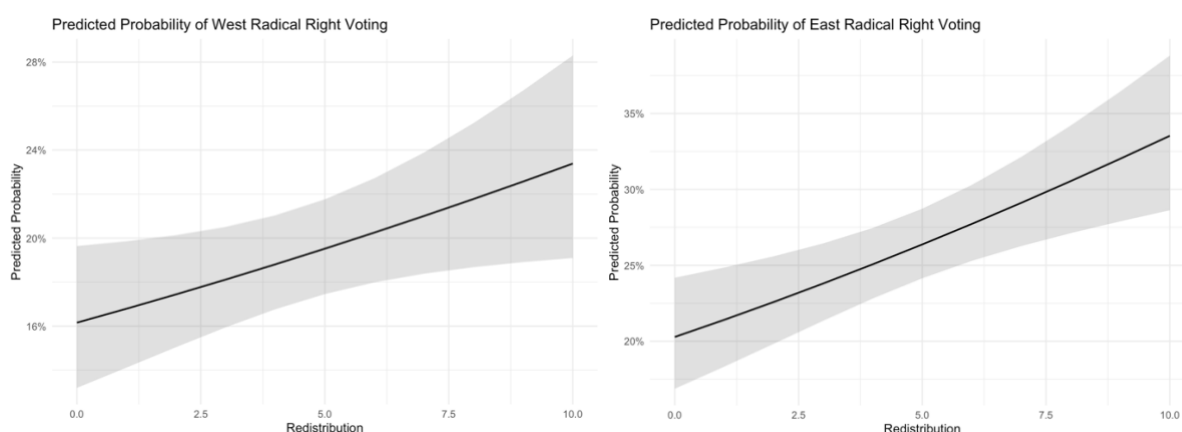
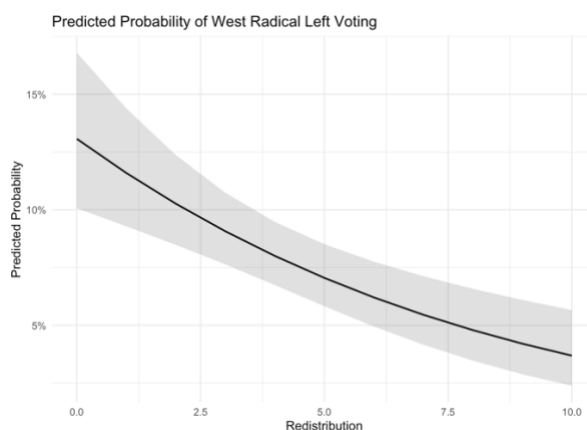


Figure 3 (West) Probability of radical left voting on redistribution position in the 2024 EP elections.



Looking at Hypotheses 2, being opposed to Anti-immigration policies has, as expected, a negative and significant effect on respondents' probability to vote radical right (West and East). Being in favour of anti-immigration policies strongly increases Eurosceptic radical right voting, both in Western and Eastern Europe with an increase of around 1.8 percentage points per one point increase at $p < 0.001$. The results show that anti-immigration stances are a very strong predictor for radical right voting in Western- and Eastern Europe.

At the same time the findings show a positive and significant effect of being opposed to a restrictive policy on immigration on the probability to vote for a radical left party (West). Figure 4. And 5. visualize the findings, showing a similar decrease due to respondents being opposed to Anti-immigration policies. Further, Figure 6. shows an increase in the probability to vote radical left (West) the more respondents are opposed to anti-immigration policies.

Figure 4. (West) and Figure 5. (East) Probability of radical right voting on immigration attitude in the 2024 EP elections. The answer categories ranged from (0) Fully in favour of a restrictive policy on immigration to (10) Fully opposed to a restrictive policy on immigration.

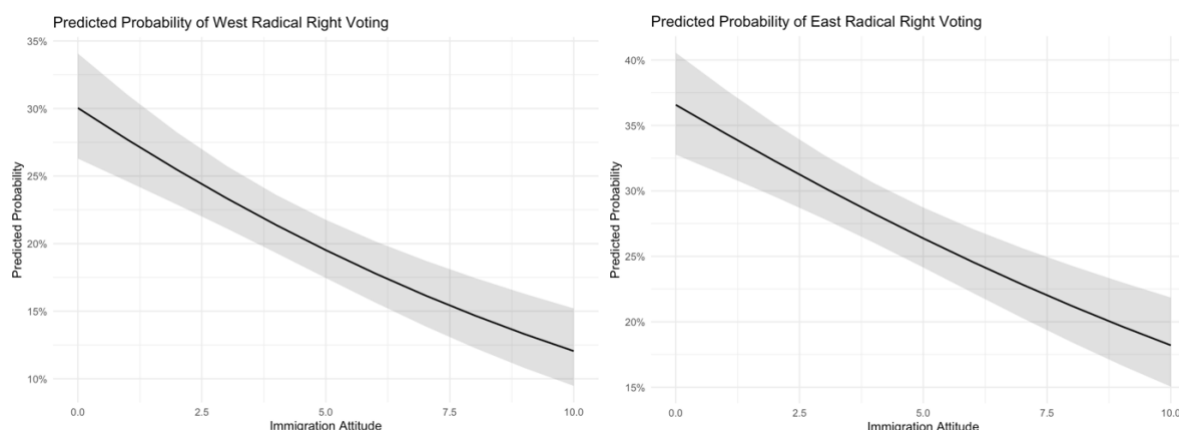
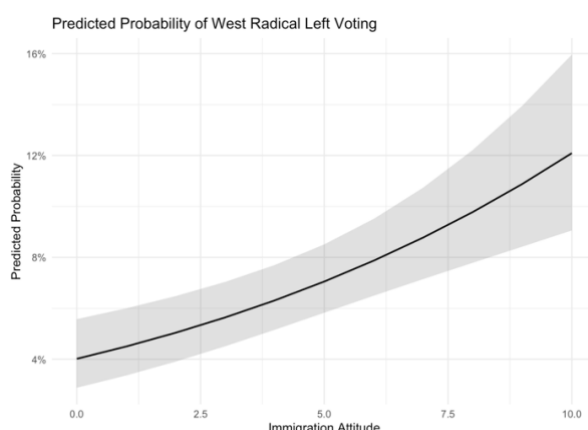


Figure 6. (West) Probability of radical left voting on immigration attitude in the 2024 EP elections.

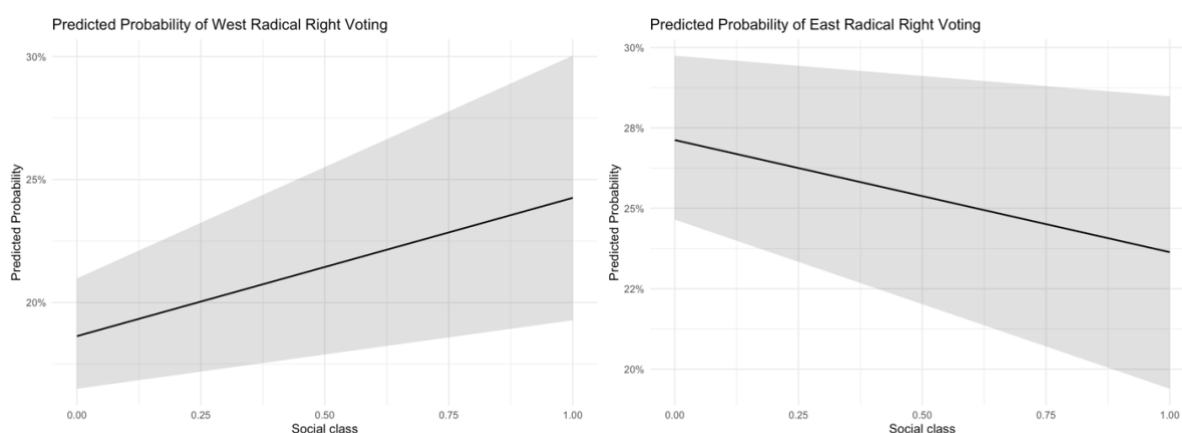


Moving on to Hypotheses 3, belonging to the working class, is inconsistent with the hypotheses and has a positive effect on Eurosceptic voting, only for the radical right (West) but not on voting radical right (East) and not on voting the radical left (West). The effect of belonging to the working class on voting radical right (West) is positive and significant with an increase of 5.2 percentage points at $p < 0.05$. Figure 7. (West) illustrates the predicted probability for voting

radical right based on belonging to the working class, displaying the 5.2 percentage points increase in relation to belonging to another social class. Figure 8. (East) illustrates the predicted probability for Eastern Europe but without a significant effect.

The hypotheses also expected belonging to the working class to have a positive effect on voting radical left (West) but there is no significant effect in the findings.

Figure 7. (West) and Figure 8. (East) Probability of radical right voting on social class in the 2024 EP elections. The scale ranges from (1) Working class to (5) Upper class. For the purpose of the research only the score (1) Working class will be used for the variable and every other social class is coded (0).

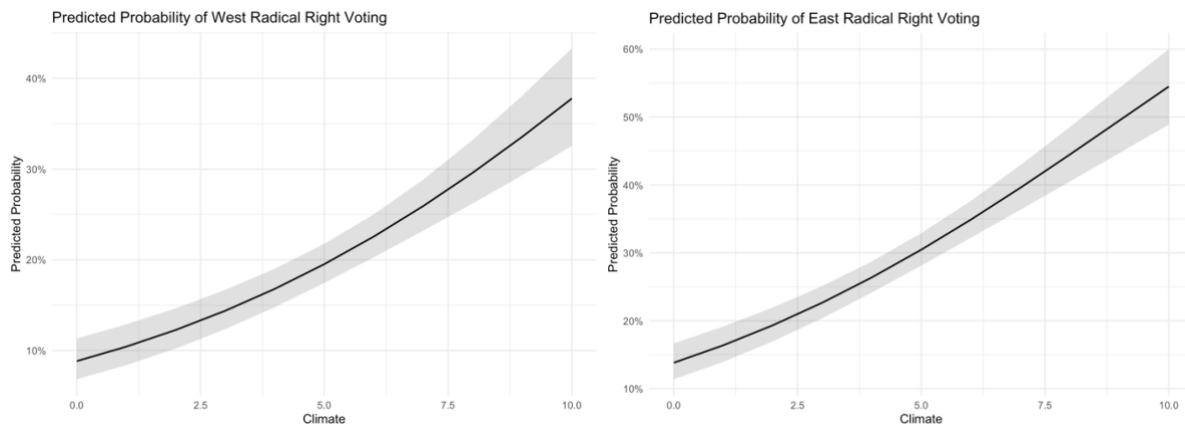


H4: Anti-climate change policy stances have a positive effect on radical right Eurosceptic voting.

Consistent with Hypothesis 4, the results show that anti-climate policy stances have a positive and significant influence on Eurosceptic radical right voting in Western and Eastern Europe. Each one-point increase in support for anti-climate change policy stances increases the probability to vote radical right by 2.9 percentage points in the West and by 3.8 percentage points in the East with an $p > 0.001$ for both. The findings show that opposition to climate change policies is the strongest predictor for radical right voting for East- and Western European countries. Being completely opposed to climate change policies increases the probability to vote radical right by 38 percent in Eastern Europe and 29 percent in Western Europe. Figure 9. (West) and 10. (East) display the probability of voting radical right with Climate change policy stances as predictor, showing a quite similar graph but a slightly stronger effect in Eastern Europe.

Further there is no significant effect of climate policy stances on Eurosceptic radical left voting (West).

Figure 9. (West) and Figure 10. (East) Probability of radical right voting on climate in the 2024 EP elections. The answer categories ranged from (0) Limiting climate change should take priority even at the cost of economic growth to (10) Limiting climate change should take priority even at the cost of economic growth.



While most findings align with the theoretical expectations, some results were unexpected based on the before made hypotheses. The working class variable has no significant influence on radical left voting in Western Europe, despite the theoretical expectation that respondents belonging to the working class support Eurosceptic radical left parties. Additionally, the working class variable contradicts Hypotheses 3, having no significant influence on voting radical right (East). This finding on social class not only contradicted the expectations but further are the only case in which the result for Eastern- and Western Europe differ for a predictor on radical right voting. Besides that, there was another finding that wasn't expected to be that significant. Opposition to redistribution has a positive and significant effect on voting radical right (West and East) but there is a big gap in the significance with a much stronger effect in Eastern Europe. Therefore, opposition to redistribution had the biggest difference in the probability to vote radical right between Eastern and Western Europe. These findings point to important theoretical conclusions, a shift from traditional ideological alignments and regional differences in respondent's motivations for Eurosceptic voting, which will be discussed further in the following discussion of the Results.

10. Discussion

This discussion will interpret the empirical findings presented in the previous results section, linking them to the theoretical framework of this research. This section will discuss both the expected as well as the unexpected findings of the logistic regression with the aim of explaining's and reflecting on what these results reveal about the origins and motivations behind Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 European Parliament elections. Additionally, the discussion will theoretically explain and draw conclusions from the differences between radical right voting in Eastern- and Western Europe as well as between the diverging motivations of radical left and radical right voting.

Country specific factors:

Before starting with the results for the hypothesis, I want to quickly evaluate on the notable effect of the country specific variable for France, especially for the radical right voting. This seems relevant due to the strong increase of the probability to vote radical right (West) for French respondents, with an increase of 16.6 percentage in comparison to German respondents. This difference is much stronger than the results found for Poland and Hungary and stronger than the increase on radical left voting between Germany and France. One part of these country specific factors is likely to stem from the long standing French Eurosceptic history on both ends of the political spectrum. Also shown in the history of the European Union, with Charles de

Gaules “Empty Chair Crisis” in the 1960s that was targeted at opposing to supranational decision making and more recently with the rejection of a European Constitution in a referendum in 2005. This Eurosceptic tradition can explain a part of the country specific factors for left and right Eurosceptic voting.

The particular strong difference on the radical right is likely caused by Germany's past of Nazi totalitarian dictatorship moderating the probability to vote a radical right party despite having the same stances on immigration and climate change policies. These differences in both countries' pasts are explaining the significant difference in Eurosceptic voting between Germany and France.

Control variables:

The control variables have only two significant effects on Eurosceptic voting. The first one is that females are significantly less likely to vote radical right but only in Western Europe, this difference is likely due to women feeling less represented or aligned with their politics. This could stem from women representing values that are more likely to conflict with the radical right agenda. Further, radical right parties conflict with politics of female emancipation, as they don't support gender equality and prefer a traditional role model for women.

The second one is that less educated people are significantly more likely to vote radical right but only in Eastern Europe. This finding is caused by education being an important ability to understand political discourse and to resist Eurosceptic framed narratives from the radical right. Hence, less educated voters are more likely to distrust politicians, elites and supranational institutions resulting in an increased voting of Eurosceptic radical right parties. But showing that these control effects on Eurosceptic radical right voting were only significant in East or West.

Diverging motivations between Eurosceptic voting:

Beginning with the ideological motivations for Eurosceptic voting, the results confirm the expectations from the hypothesis that redistribution is a strong predictor for radical left voting, while anti-immigration policy stances are a strong predictor for voting radical right.

Redistribution:

Hypothesis 1 postulated that support for redistribution will have a positive effect on radical left voting. The findings of the logistic regression confirmed the hypotheses for Western Europe, showing that support for redistribution has a significant influence on the probability to vote for a radical right Eurosceptic party. Additionally, redistribution has been the strongest predictor for radical left voting in the results of the logistic regression. These results align with the theoretical framework, that Radical left parties view the European Union as a capitalist project for wealth accumulation that endangers the welfare state and social protection at the national level (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). Redistribution is deeply rooted in the ideology of radical left parties and therefore a strong predictor for support of left Euroscepticism, viewing the European Union as a threat to the national welfare state as a core value of socialist ideology. Even though redistribution isn't a salient issue on the European level it remains to be a strong predictor for left Eurosceptic voting based on the radical left viewing of the EU as threat to social equality.

The redistribution variable also has a significant effect on radical right voting. In Eastern- and Western Europe opposition to redistribution increased the probability of voting radical right. The findings are likely to be caused by the liberal economic views of radical right parties. As they prefer conservative market based solutions for economic issues rather than redistribution. Consequently, respondents on the radical right are more likely to be in opposition to redistribution making it a strong predictor for radical right voting.

But there is a much bigger effect of opposition to redistribution on the probability to vote radical right in the East than in the West. This difference can be attributed to the post-communist legacy of Poland and Hungary, because redistribution is historically associated with authoritarianism and the former failing of state led socialism in these countries. This post-communist legacy is causing the scepticism towards redistribution in the Eastern European countries and is more embedded in the Eastern European far right ideology than in the Western. Hence, while redistribution is strongly associated with the post-communist legacy in Eastern Europe, the influence is less significant for voting the radical right in Western Europe.

Immigration attitude:

Hypothesis 2. postulated that anti-immigration stances have a positive effect for the support of Eurosceptic radical right voting. The hypothesis was confirmed by the results, showing that being in favour of restrictive migration policies had a positive and significant effect on Eurosceptic radical right voting in Eastern and Western Europe. These results align with previous research on this topic, showing that immigration is a key issue for the radical right. That's due to the perceived threat that immigration has on the loss of culture, national identity and homogeneity. Therefore, the results confirm immigration as key motivation behind Eurosceptic voting which has become an increasingly salient issue in the recent years. Further, the nationalist's ideology that aligns closely with anti-immigration stances is opposing European integration due to the fear of losing national sovereignty. Because of that, support for restrictive immigration policies is a key predictor for Eurosceptic radical right voting.

Additionally, there was an effect in the opposite direction on the radical left, where support for anti-immigration stances had a negative and significant effect on the likelihood to vote for a Eurosceptic radical left party. Even though not initially emphasized in the hypotheses it's no surprise, that the radical left is appealing to voters with progressive identities that are opposed to concepts of cultural homogeneity and to the fear of losing national identity. The result also confirms previous research, showing that the left-right ideological divide is increasingly dependent from cultural attitudes rather than economical.

Social class:

Hypothesis 3 postulated that belonging to the working class has a positive effect on Eurosceptic voting, on the radical left and radical right, which was only supported by the results of radical right voting in Western Europe. But there was no significant effect of belonging to the social class on voting radical left (West) and voting the radical right (East). The absence of a working class effect on radical left voting is a sign for a shift of the classical working class identity away from class struggle as core value of former socialist ideology. The findings might be caused by a shift to a more progressive, metropolitan and well educated voter base (March & Rommerskirchen, 2012). Finally, the findings indicate an image of a bigger trend away from class struggle as former core value of radical left parties.

The positive and significant effect on voting radical right (West) can be explained by working class voters feeling economically left behind due to globalization and European integration. Radical right parties in Western Europe are reframing class grievance through the lenses of national identity, by blaming immigration, woke politics and the European Union for economic issues and social decline (Oesch, 2008). Oesch (2008) argues that radical right support often stems from economically vulnerable people as low skilled workers that feel endangered by immigration and globalization. These people don't necessary reject welfare politics but align with a by the radical right promoted welfare chauvinism that supports social protection but rejects the support of non-native citizens. Therefore, the results likely stem from voters that feel

endangered by globalization and migration, thinking of radical right parties as protection from external threats.

There was no significant effect of belonging to the working class in the East which shows a difference to Western Europe, that indicates that radical right voting in the post-communist countries has no relation with the social class. This might be caused by the post-communist legacy of Eastern European countries with a broader voter base across different social classes. Therefore, it can be assumed that radical right voting in Eastern Europe is motivated by nationalism and social conservatism across the social classes rather than by the one particular social class.

Climate change position:

Hypothesis 4 postulates that anti-climate change policy stances have a positive effect on Eurosceptic radical right voting. The hypothesis was confirmed by the findings with a positive and significant effect on the probability to vote radical right in Eastern and Western Europe. Surprisingly, support for anti-immigration policies is the strongest predictor for Eurosceptic radical right voting (East and West) in the findings, even though climate policy stances have no strong relation to the traditional values of right ideology. This strong effect reflects the politicization of the climate change debate on a European level and it's increasing salience as a distinct topic for Eurosceptic radical right voting. Radical right parties often frame climate change policies as an elitist project that is economically harmful. Additionally, arguing that the cost of decarbonization and renewable energy sources is harming the economy and raising the cost of living. These voters do not necessarily deny climate change but are opposed against green politics and the European policies on targeting climate change. Further radical right parties frame climate policies as a corrupt and elite driven project that effects mostly the working class and rural populations. The finding suggest that climate policy stances can be viewed a central issue for Eurosceptic radical right narratives. The climate issue debate can be viewed as a main driver for the increased politicization of the European Union in recent years and opposition to climate change policies as one of the main motivations behind Eurosceptic radical right voting.

Climate change policy stances have no significant effect on Eurosceptic radical left voting, which aligns with the theory that people who align with the left ideology are unlikely to support restrictive climate policies. But additionally, voters that are highly in favour of climate policies and assess them as crucial for themselves will view the European Union as benefiting for the enforcement of stricter climate policies. Therefore, people with these views are unlikely to vote Eurosceptic due to their view on European climate initiatives as necessity for the environmental transition. Because of that the Eurosceptic radical left isn't mobilizing voters over the climate issue like the radical right does.

11. Implications

The section will draw conclusions from the before discussed results and consider their implications on the field of Euroscepticism research and for political practice in the European Union.

For political actors and policymakers, the findings of the research suggest that attempts to target Euroscepticism must account for its multidimensional character. Radical right Euroscepticism has shown to be primarily driven by anti-immigration and anti-climate sentiments, which stems

from concerns about national identity and a perceived economic burden. Additionally, left Euroscepticism is driven by ideology, the support for greater redistribution and the European Union as capitalists project with a strong neoliberal orientation.

The findings imply that environmental policies have become a core part of the radical rights Eurosceptic narrative. Policymakers should be aware that ambitious climate policies bare the risk of being used as political tool by radical right parties and fuel Euroscepticism. Hence, politicians and policymakers at the European level must improve how their actions are perceived by the public. This is possible for example by using more deliberative forms to engage with citizens in policy discussions, this enhances trust building as well as the policy quality. Further, political actors should work against Eurosceptic narratives by decreasing the perceived detachment from the ordinary citizen by explaining their action in an everyday language via social media or working with schools.

The findings emphasise on the critical role of issue salience in shaping electoral behaviour. Eurosceptic parties are capable to mobilize a large voter base around a small number of highly politicized issues where the European Union is seen as decisive actor. Eurosceptic parties are particular benefiting from framing these issues for their narrative, as shown by anti-immigration and anti-climate motivations being a catalyst for Eurosceptic voting. This source of Euroscepticism can be reduced through a better communication strategy of European actors in these areas and by acknowledging the concern of sceptical voters. Pro-European actors could improve their position by countering populists' narratives particular in these salient areas.

12. Limitations

Despite the findings, there are several limitations for this research that must be acknowledged. First, the sample size of the countries used for the analysis is limited to France, Germany, Poland and Hungary, which limits the ability of the research to generalize the before conducted findings for the European Union as a whole. Consequentially, the findings of the analysis might be different for southern European countries due to country specific or regional factors.

Second, the research focuses only on voter-level data and can't account for party-level factors. Party campaign messaging, media influence and other influences are not covered by the research even though they have a strong impact on voting behaviour.

Another limitation of the research is that the observation of motivations behind Eurosceptic voting was limited to the available data set from the European Election Study for the European parliament election in 2024. Future research on Eurosceptic voting would benefit from a questionnaire with more questions on specific policies or on the issue salience, like "what topic do you consider most important for your party voting in the EP election?". This would give an even more nuanced understanding of the motivations of Eurosceptic voting.

This research is only investigating radical Eurosceptic parties that are at the extremes of both political spectrums. Hence, the before conducted research can't estimate how the likelihood for voting a more moderate left or right party changes due to the above investigated motivations. The expectation would be that people voting a more moderate party on the left and right would also have more moderate positions on the before discussed issue positions. Investigating the differences between more moderate and Eurosceptic parties in voter motivations might be an

interesting topic for further research to access the voter differences between voting a more moderate left or right/conservative party and voting a radical party.

13. Conclusion

The findings of this research offer theoretical and practical insights into the understanding of Eurosceptic voting in the 2024 European Parliament elections, the diverging motivations for Eurosceptic voting in relation to left and right ideology as well as regional differences in Eastern and Western Europe. By analysing voter-level data from the 2024 European Election Study survey (EES) combined with party level classification using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), this research explored how redistribution, immigration, climate policies and working class belonging are causes of Eurosceptic voting.

The results confirm the theoretical distinction between radical left and radical right Euroscepticism are fundamentally different with diverging ideological motivations that are responsible for the shaping of nowadays debate on opposing the European Union.

Radical left Euroscepticism is driven by the support for redistribution, which confirms the theoretical framework that identifies left Euroscepticism as characterized by framing the European Union as a capitalist project for wealth accumulation that endangers the welfare state and social protection (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). Hence, the logistic regression on redistribution supports Hooghe and Marks (2008) postfunctionalist theory of European integration. However, the findings didn't find a significant effect of working class belonging on radical left voting, which suggests that favouring redistribution policies has shifted away from the traditional class identity. Instead, it seems that left wing Euroscepticism is driven by more educated and progressive voters who are supporting left economic policies. The results show a change of the traditional radical left voter base and a shift from the classical labour and capital cleavage that fuelled former socialist movements.

On radical right Euroscepticism the results show a strong relation to identity politics, with anti-immigration stances and anti-climate policy stances being a strong motivation behind Eurosceptic radical right voting. The findings confirm the theoretical framework that the Eurosceptic radical right is driven by the perceived threat from the European Union on national identity, sovereignty and cultural homogeneity (Van Elsas et al., 2016). Additionally, the results of anti-climate policy positions as strongest predictor for radical right Euroscepticism show the increasing importance of environmental politics as highly politicised driver of Euroscepticism. The results indicate a strong rejection of globalization, multiculturalism and environmentalism from the Eurosceptic radical right.

Comparing the regional differences of radical right voting, the research found that immigration and climate change policy stances had a similar effect in both regions. The effect of redistribution was stronger for radical right voting in Eastern Europe which likely reflects the still prevailing effect of post-communist legacy, with redistribution being strongly associated with the history of authoritarian leadership and economic inefficiency. Additionally, in contrast to Western Europe the findings confirmed that belonging to the working class has no significant effect on voting radical right in Eastern Europe. This absence of social class effects suggests that radical right Euroscepticism in Eastern Europe isn't influenced by socio-economic boundaries as it is in Western Europe.

Moreover, the results underscore the role of issue salience in driving voting behaviour. The results show that politicized issues as immigration and climate policies are core motivations behind Eurosceptic voting, showing that Eurosceptic party success in the recent years is shaped by the debate on a few distinct topics. Especially when voters perceive the European Union as the primary actor in shaping climate or migration policies, those with a strong opposition to these topics become much more likely to vote Eurosceptic. De Vries (2010) research found that voters are likely to cast their vote based on distinct personal relevant issues that are perceived as particularly important often due to their salience. The findings of the research give evidence for this, showing that especially immigration and climate policy stances are strong predictors of radical right voting.

Finally, the research shows that Euroscepticism in the 2024 European Parliament election isn't the product of a uniform opposition to the European Union, but a consequence of divergent voter concerns that are shaped by ideology, issue positions and a Eurosceptic narrative framed by radical left and radical right parties. As the European Union had to face increased opposition in the recent years, it's important to understand the motivations to effectively respond to the rise of Eurosceptic sentiment.

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15. Appendix:

During the preparation of this work the author used ChatGPT in order to look up information's and codes for my use of RStudio and for brainstorming. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the work.