

Is a transition from Eurooptimism towards Euroscepticism evident in Bulgaria?

A study on Bulgarian public opinion



Bachelor Thesis

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I. Introduction

1. Background of the topic

The support for the European integration by the European citizens is considered as a basic prerequisite for the stability and future development of the European project (Schmidberger, 1997:7), therefore the public attitudes towards the European Union and its policies has become a major research topic in a plenty of studies in the last few decades. However, during the debates over the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s, which marked the next level of European integration within the meaning of a deeper political, economic, cultural and administrative unification, the relatively novel term ‘Euroscepticism’ frequently entered the political discussions. Prior considered as a British phenomenon, the concept expanded outside the British context towards continental Europe (LeConte, 2010), as the trust in the Union has drastically decreased in most of the member states as a consequence of the European debt crisis in 2009.

‘Euroscepticism’ is nowadays used generally as a “term for a wide spectrum of sentiments, political strategies, voting behaviors and opinion poll results that mark a degree of opposition to the project of European integration in both West and East European countries” (Ilieva and Wilson, 2011:90). However, because of its multifarious nature the term is very difficult to be defined precisely. Some academics suggest a four-fold typology, distinguishing between utilitarian, political, value-based and cultural (LeConte, 2010). Others like Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) propose the complementary classification of ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ Euroscepticism. Anyway, the conceptualization of the term will be examined more thorough further in this work.

The great significance referred to the Euroscepticism phenomenon stems from the assumption that the progress of integration depends to a great extent on the citizens’ support for it and their trust in the Union. Hence, the downward trend in the trust of the European citizens could become a stumbling block on the way for further development of the European integration and the prosperous functioning of the Union. According to Eurobarometer data, the citizens’ trust in the European project has fallen most of all in West European old members like Germany, Britain, France. Nevertheless, a slightly decreasing of the support is observed also in some East European countries, where the public opinion is usually hallmarked by a very

positive attitude towards the EU. This is the case of Bulgaria, where the trust in the Union is one of the highest among all EU members. However, according to Eurobarometer data, between 2004, 3 years prior the accession of the country, and 2014, 7 years after it, the public trust has declined with approximately ten percent. These statistical results raise the question if the ‘decease’ of Euroscepticism, which is typical for West European countries, is spreading slowly to new territories, which are usually characterized by outstanding optimism towards the European project. In this respect, examining and analyzing the case of Bulgaria could be a suitable approach for figuring out the answer of this issue.

2. Research questions

Still in the 70s a concept for assessment of the support to the political system has been developed by David Easton, which was later enhanced and adjusted to the analysis of the public attitudes towards the EU by Martin Schmidberger. His pattern has been borrowed in many empirical studies of public support to the Union in different countries (e.g. Karolewski and Kaina, 2006; Blasek, 2007). However, very few studies in the academic literature are concerned with the subject of public support to the European integration in Bulgaria. Zapryanova and Abarno (2013) explore in their publications the effects of elites’ critiques towards the EU on the Bulgarian public opinion. They emphasize the great impact, which the terms ‘democratic deficit’ and ‘cultural threat’ used in Eurosceptic political messages have on public opinion-shaping. However, both scientists are concerned primarily with ‘elite Euroscepticism’. Another study on Bulgaria by Ilieva and Wilson (2011) analyzes the reasons for negative approaches towards the EU in terms of anthropological perspective. Tanasoiu and Colonescu (2008) discover in their study the different determining factors of support for the EU in Bulgaria, such as ‘lack of trust in national government’, ‘perceived individual benefits’, ‘expectations for the future’ etc. However, the above-mentioned studies are based on the assumption that the phenomenon of Euroscepticism is de facto present in Bulgaria. But is this actually true? In addition, the scientists are concerned mostly with the attitudes of the elite towards the European integration and tend to be ignorant about the citizens’ opinion.

In this regard, the objective of this thesis is to explore and analyze the public opinion towards the European Union in Bulgaria by using Martin Schmidberger’s public attitudes model as well as by employing statistical data and electronic media sources in order to discover if the Eurosceptic phenomenon has already appeared there and, if yes, to attain a clear conception of the depth of the Euroscepticism spread, the reasons for its expansion as well as the presence

of Eurosceptic trend in the Bulgarian electronic media. By conducting this analysis, I also aim at finding what differentiates the Bulgarian Euroscepticism from this in other Central and Eastern European members, since the features of this term vary among the countries due to different domestic conditions, or, in other words, what are the typical characteristics of the Euroscepticism in Bulgaria.

In order to meet the objective of the thesis, a major research question has been formulated as follows: *To what extent is a transition from Eurooptimism to Euroscepticism discernable in Bulgarian public opinion after the accession to the European Union in 2007?*

In addition to this, two sub-questions have been elaborated, the answers of which are going to lead up to the answering of the main question:

- *To what extent is there a Eurosceptic trend in the public opinion, according to Eurobarometer surveys?*
- *How is this trend expressed in the electronic media?*

As one of the major data sources for my analysis serve the Eurobarometer surveys from 2004 till 2014, by means of which we could analyze to what extent the Euroscepticism has expanded in the country. Eurobarometer is an appropriate data source for this study, because the surveys encompass questions regarding many and various social and political issues. The analysis of the results would lead to the answer of the first sub-question that is the cornerstone of this research. It aims at examining the presence of Euroscepticism in Bulgarian public opinion as well as at assessing the depth of its spread. The answer of the sub-question might also provide insights into the reasons for emergence of negative attitudes and into the main characteristics of the Eurosceptic trend in the country. The derived from the answer of the first sub-question information would allow us to delve deeper into this topic in order to achieve the objective of the thesis.

Answering the second sub-question would give information about the representation of the Eurosceptic attitude towards the EU in the Bulgarian media. It is important to be considered if an Eurosceptic trend is to be found in the mass media, because this would confirm to some extent that the Euroscepticism is not only an illusory occurrence, but is rather carefully taking roots in the public opinion. In addition, the answer of this sub-question would provide an opportunity for new insights in the topic of Eurosceptic messages and their contribution to the arising of Euroscepticism. In order to answer the question, I will make use mainly of internet

media (e.g. online newspapers, news websites), since ca. 57% of the Bulgarian households have access to Internet.

3. Approach

The above-mentioned research questions will be answered by describing and analyzing of collected empirical data. Hence, a qualitative research approach is required. Other than literature, I will employ statistical data from Eurobarometer surveys. Through an analysis of longitudinal survey data the alteration of the public attitudes in Bulgaria towards the European integration during the last decade will be described. For both analyzes, I will borrow Martin Schmidberger's analysis model, which is based on David Easton's basic concept about political support. Taking both quantitative and qualitative data sources into account, I choose the mixed methods research design, which combines the analysis of both data types.

Schmidberger's model, together with the terms 'Eurooptimism' and 'Euroscepticism', will be explained more detailed in the second chapter of the thesis, which concerns the theoretical framework. The third chapter is about the methodology of the study. It includes the research approach, methods of gathering and analyzing data. In this part the selection of the Eurobarometer questions that are to be examined and the limitations of the empirical analyze will be discussed. In the fourth chapter the empirical analysis of collected data will be conducted. By this means, the two research sub-questions of the study will be answered. The fifth chapter is the concluding one, where an answer of the main research question will be given and the empirical findings will be discussed and evaluated.

II. Theoretical framework

In the second chapter the theoretical framework conducing to the answering of the research questions will be developed. For this purpose, first the terms ‘Eurooptimism’ and ‘Euroscepticism’ will be explained and conceptualized by means of some existing models (e.g. Kopecky and Mudde’s (2002) matrix). Regarding the second term, a particular definition won’t be adopted, since the phenomenon could be observed from the perspectives of several scientists, which will be implemented in the examination of the Euroscepticism in Bulgaria in order to gain more comprehensive insights into it. After the conceptualization of the terms, Schmidberger’s model for political support will be explained, on which the analysis in Chapter 4 will be based. At the end of this chapter, the Eurosceptic attitudes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) will be briefly described. The Eurosceptic features observed in these countries could serve as a basis for an eventual comparison between them and the phenomenon in Bulgaria further in the analysis.

1. Defining the terms ‘Euroscepticism’ and ‘Eurooptimism’

As a very first step in achieving the objective of the thesis, both concepts ‘Euroscepticism’ and ‘Eurooptimism’ need to be clarified. Because of its miscellaneous nature, the ‘Euroscepticism’ term is hard to be specifically defined. Moreover, of great importance for the comprehension of its meaning is the context, within it is applied. Originating as media label at the outset (Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat, 2013:21), the concept ‘Euroscepticism’ has later become a subject of plenty of academic studies due to its increasing political importance. In contrast, there is not much literature concerned with defining and delimitating of the ‘Eurooptimism’ phenomenon. Nevertheless, in this thesis the concept ‘Eurooptimism’ is used in the sense of a favorable public position towards the process of European integration. Further in this chapter, Kopecky and Mudde’s suggestion of a more precise definition of the term will be considered.

1.1. Taggart and Szczerbiak’s model vs. Kopecky and Mudde’s typology

In 1998 Paul Taggart proposed an initial definition of the Eurosceptic phenomenon that was later adopted in most political discourses concerned with this topic. He determines Euroscepticism as ‘*an encompassing term*’ that ‘*expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration*’ (Taggart, 1998:366). In later analysis Taggart together with Alex

Szczerbiak compare the Euroscepticism in various EU members, including the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. In their work they specify the basic definition of the term as they choose a dichotomous classification, distinguishing between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ forms of Euroscepticism. ‘Hard’ Euroscepticism has been defined as ‘*a principled opposition to the EU and European integration*’ (in the form of a direct support for a withdrawal from the European Union or of opposition to membership), while ‘soft’ refers to a situation, where ‘*there is NOT a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU*’ (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002:7; Harmsen and Spiering, 2005:18).

Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde (2002:300) criticize Taggart and Szczerbiak’s dichotomous categorization for being too broad and unclear. In turn they put forward a typology model, where Euroscepticism is defined as related to other party attitudes towards the EU. According to Kopecky and Mudde (2002:300), scepticism towards the EU can be analyzed by means of two dimensions: support for the principle of European Integration (diffuse support) and support for the procedure of European Union (specific support). Under the first dimension come Europhiles and Europhobes, which constitute a horizontal axis, while on the other side Eurooptimists and Europessimists belong to the second dimension and form the vertical axis. Both scientists define the four subcategories as follows: Europhiles are those, who support the prime ideas of European integration regardless of how they are realized in detail; they are the opposite of Europhobes. Eurooptimists, on the other hand, are defined as these persons, who believe that the actual process of European Union’s development is right, either because they are content with it or because they are optimistic about its course (Harmsen and Spiering, 2005:19; Kopecky and Mudde, 2002:302). However, the optimistic attitude doesn’t undoubtedly exclude critics to one or another particular EU policy (Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat, 2013:28). Europessimists, in contrast to Eurooptimists, do not support the EU and are pessimistic about its development.

Kopecky and Mudde’s framework leads to a two-by-two matrix of possible party positions on European integration (Figure 1), consisting of *Euroenthusiasts* (top left-sided corner), *Eurosceptics* (bottom left-sided corner), *Eurorejects* (bottom right-sided corner) and *Europragmatics* (top right-sided corner). Keeping to the point, the Eurosceptic concept incorporates Europhile and Europessimist attitudes, according to the scheme. Both authors state that Eurosceptics ‘*support the general ideas of European integration, but are pessimistic*

about the EU's current and/or future reflection of these ideas' (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002:302).

		Support for European integration	
		<i>Europhile</i>	<i>Europhobe</i>
Spectrum of EU attitudes	<i>EU-optimist</i>	Euroenthusiasts	Europragmatists
	<i>EU-pessimist</i>	Eurosceptics	Eurorejects

Figure 1 Kopecky and Mudde's matrix

However, the conceptualization of the term has been later scrutinized in turn by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2003) in their article 'Theorising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality'. They share the view that Kopecky and Mudde's dichotomous classification deviates from the popular usage of the term 'Euroscepticism' in the sense that it should consist of both principled and contingent opposition to the project of European integration (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2003:8). In addition, they reformulate their 'hard/soft' model as follows: 'hard' Euroscepticism marks the principled opposition to the European integration project or more precisely to the transmission of powers to the EU, while 'soft' Euroscepticism is defined as an '*opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory based on the further extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make*' (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2003:12). Hence, the Eurosceptics oppose the EU partially and not directly.

In this work, the definition of Taggart and Szczerbiak distinguishing between 'soft' and 'hard' Euroscepticism will be adopted for the analysis of the Eurosceptic phenomenon in Bulgaria, because it encompasses a broader spectrum of public reactions towards the European integration in terms of negative attitudes and types of opposition to it, compared to the proposed by Kopecky and Mudde narrower conceptualization. Moreover, the Euroscepticism as explained by Taggart and Szczerbiak can be more probably detected during the analysis of

Eurobarometer surveys outcome, because due to its larger scope it provides the application of more survey questions that might give the necessary information about the support for the EU in Bulgaria resp. opposition to it. On the other hand, Kopecky and Mudde provide a comprehensive definition of the ‘Eurooptimism’ term, which will be applied for the Bulgarian case, where the pro-European trend is still explicitly discernable (Georgiev and Petrova, 2014).

1.2. Varieties of Euroscepticism

An applicable theoretical pattern for the achievement of one of the objectives of the thesis, namely the characterization of the emerging Euroscepticism in Bulgaria, arises from Cecile LeConte’s (2010) four-fold typology, where she distinguishes between utilitarian, political, value-based and cultural forms of Euroscepticism. According to LeConte (2010:9), the phenomenon is not associated only with non-mainstream actors or ignorant voters that want to ‘sanction national governments’ by voting against the EU, but also with mainstream political elites, national institutions and mass media, which are very important factors in the public opinion-shaping process. In the analysis of Euroscepticism in Bulgaria of interest are the mainstream, in terms of mass media, together with the not-mainstream, in terms of society, forms of Euroscepticism.

As a next step, the four types of Euroscepticism will be shortly outlined in order to determine subsequently on grounds of this categorization the most relevant forms to the Bulgarian case. The first one, utilitarian Euroscepticism, indicates skepticism towards the ‘*gains derived from EU membership at individual or country level*’ (LeConte, 2010:43). It concerns the economic disadvantages deriving from the European Monetary Union (EMU), the associated with it sanctioning mechanism of the Stability and Growth Pact and also from the EU expansion to less developed countries. The next type, political Euroscepticism, expresses the ‘*principled opposition or defiance towards the setting up of a supranational institutional system, the delegation of powers to supranational institutions beyond a limited core of policies...and to the principle of the pooling of sovereignties*’ (LeConte, 2010:50). Under this form comes the opposition to the EU citizenship, to the EU symbols and to its ‘democratic deficit’. Value-based Euroscepticism is the third form, which concerns the opposition to the excessive intervention of the EU in matters of values, such as abortion, divorce, minorities’ rights etc. (LeConte, 2010:57). The last type of Euroscepticism proposed by the author is the cultural

one, called also ‘anti-Europeanism’. It relates to ‘*scepticism towards ‘Europe’ as a civilization, as a historical and cultural entity*’ (LeConte, 2010:61).

2. Martin Schmidberger’s pattern

Second important step for reaching the thesis goals is the clarification of Schmidberger’s pattern for assessment of public attitudes, which will be applied during the actual analysis and which accordingly constitutes the core of it. As already mentioned in the introduction chapter, the public support for the political system and legitimacy by the nation are of great importance for its future stability. In order to study the public attitudes with the use of Eurobarometer surveys, Martin Schmidberger develops his own model based on the well-established David Easton’s concept that distinguishes between two types of support (diffuse and specific) and three objects of support (political communities, regime and authorities) (Dalton, 1999).

This distinction is later kept and somewhat extended by Schmidberger. In his framework he determines three modes of support: instrumental, reflexive and affective orientations. The *instrumental* support is congruent with Easton’s specific support and refers to satisfaction with the output of the political system and the economic benefits of the EU membership. The *reflexive* mode of orientation indicates the long-term satisfaction with the output of the system and it enables us to analyze to what extent the governance on interstate level is accepted by the nation. The last form, *affective* orientation, concerns the process of community building at a European level and captures the idea of integration as a ‘sense of community’ and ‘stable mutual anticipations’ (Schmidberger, 1997:63-66). Just like Easton, Schmidberger distinguishes between three objects of orientation. As mentioned above, these are political community, political regime and political authorities. Under the concept of ‘political community’ come the European Community, the European integration or just ‘Europe’. To the ‘political regime’ belong the institutions and decision-making processes and the third one, ‘political authority’ points the policy areas and issues out. For a better understanding of the model of public support Schmidberger (1997:68) creates the following matrix.

type of orientation object of orientation	Instrumental	Reflexive	Affective
Political community	generating welfare at European level	adequacy of the European level	identification with the European level

Political regime	generating welfare through European institutions	adequacy of the European institutions	identification with the European institutions
Political authority	generating welfare through European policy	adequacy of European policy	identification with European policy

Table 1 Schmidberger's matrix for acquisition of public support

This matrix could help for structuring of empirical data. However, according to the author, not all fields have to be analyzed, but rather it should be clarified which Eurobarometer questions are applicable as to their content. The availability of an appropriate empirical data should be also considered. These issues will be further explained in the methodology chapter.

3. Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe

When analyzing the transition to Eurosceptic attitudes in Bulgaria, it is also significant to look at the public attitudes towards European integration in other CEEs like Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, because they share a mutual historical and political past. These countries together with Bulgaria were part of the Soviet Bloc for about fifty years till the end of 1989 as the Soviet Union dissolved. Scholars have proven that the communist era had a lasting effect on them and their '*perceptions of identity*' (Forrester, Zaborowska and Gapova, 2004:17). After the fall of the Iron Curtain the post-communist countries with their '*different path to modernity and with the particularities of the political and social realities of socialism*' (Ilieva and Wilson, 2011:101) faced the double challenge of transition to democracy and of the accession to the EU, which led to a more difficult Europeanisation process compared to other acceding states. Due to the similarities in their political and social developments prior and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the current findings on the public attitudes towards the European integration in the four countries could give us some directions in regards to the Eurosceptic phenomenon in Bulgaria.

The Czech Republic is marked by a relatively high level of *passive* Euroscepticism in the sense of an absent strong anti-EU mobilization (Kopecky, 2004:241). According to Jan Hornat (2014), there are few reasons for the occurrence of the phenomenon in the country: first, the Eurosceptic stance of the former president Vaclav Klaus; second, the mass media that missed to inform about important EU legislation, making the EU to look like an useless

institution; and third, the Czech national trait and belief that Czechs can tackle their problems themselves without recommendations from outside.

The reasons for the high level of Euroscepticism in Hungary are similar. The media failed to introduce the significance of the Hungarian accession to the EU for the nation and also press debates on important topics concerning the EU membership were missing (Molnar, 2013:11). Other reasons are the disappointment after the accession, because many believed that it will automatically ensure higher salaries and national economic profits, the fear of sovereignty and economic losses and the cultural threat (Molnar, 2013:12).

While in Hungary the most Eurosceptics are less educated and live in the rural regions, in Slovakia most Eurosceptics live in the capital (Novak, 2014). The Euroscepticism in Slovakia is similar to the British one, which is known as ‘free market Euroscepticism’: *‘this type of euroscepticism holds that the European Union should refrain from becoming too overburdened by rules and overregulated’* (Novak, 2014). The sovereignty loss in budgetary matters is another reason for the arising anti-EU stance there.

The Euroscepticism in Poland is increasing as well. Aleks Szczerbiak (2004:264) claims that *‘it was primarily economic factors that provided the main basis for Polish anxieties regarding EU accession rather than ideological ones relating to loss of national sovereignty or identity’*. Moreover, Søren Riishøj (2004) adds that the Euroscepticism in Poland *‘(to a large extent) seems to have been identity-based’, ‘to a smaller extent institutional connected’ and ‘to some extent policy-based’*.

According to the above theoretical statements and despite their mutual communist legacy and similar political ‘path’ in the post-communist period, the motives for the relatively high Euroscepticism in these countries of Central and Eastern Europe seem to be a bit different. However, most common reasons for opposition to the EU among all four are the fear of loss of sovereignty in some national matters and of economic losses.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter the theoretical framework of the analysis has been presented. In this regard, the terms ‘Eurooptimism’ and ‘Euroscepticism’ have been conceptualized. In broader sense, the first one refers to high support for the European Union among the citizens. In the narrower sense, it indicates satisfaction or optimism with/towards the course of the European integration process. Regarding the Euroscepticism, it is difficult to be precisely defined

because of its heterogeneous character; therefore, it is very important one to take the context into account when trying to conceptualize it. As we can see in this chapter, there are several major attempts aiming to define the term. Cecile LeConte's four-fold typology gives a very suitable theoretical basis for a more detailed explanation of the Eurosceptic phenomenon in Bulgaria, because it encompasses the multifariousness of the term and succeeds to adapt it to a frame. Resting upon this typology, in the fourth chapter of the thesis it will be determined, which of the four types of Euroscepticism could be detected in the Bulgarian public opinion. This would contribute to the more thorough comprehension of the phenomenon in the country.

During the analysis of the public attitudes in Bulgaria, I will employ Martin Schmidberger's model for assessment of public support, which is especially designed to facilitate the acquiring and evaluation of Eurobarometer data. Hereby, this pattern permits the methodical classification of the Eurobarometer questions and the appraisal of the outcomes, which is an essential step for finding the answer of the major question.

The Eurosceptic attitudes and the reasons for their presence in some Central and Eastern European countries have been also described in this chapter. Apparently, the Euroscepticism is no longer a phenomenon associated mainly with Western European countries. Being mostly Eurooptimistic at the outset of their EU membership, nowadays the CEEs indicate much higher Eurosceptic attitudes. Here arises the question, whether this transformation corresponds also to the situation in Bulgaria as an Eastern European country with similar political past? In order to answer this question, statistical data from Eurobarometer and electronic media articles will be applied, as the research strategy will be explained in the next chapter.

III. Methodology

The third chapter of the bachelor thesis aims to introduce the methodological framework. In order to answer the major research question, an appropriate research approach is needed. Therefore, first the choice of a proper research design will be discussed. In this thesis, I settled on the mixed methods research approach, which combines the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Then, the methods of data collection and analysis will be discussed, as the quantitative and qualitative data analyzes will be explained separately. As already mentioned, the Eurobarometer surveys are major data source. Accordingly, the selected questions, providing the necessary for my research information, will be outlined. By means of Schmidberger's model, an analytical scheme will be developed, which systematizes the chosen Eurobarometer questions. The media articles constitute the ancillary data sources on Bulgarian public opinion. Accordingly, the qualitative data selection will be framed by Schmidberger's pattern, too. At the end of the section, some concluding remarks will be made.

1. Research design

In the analysis of the Eurosceptic phenomenon in Bulgaria two types of data sources are used: media articles and data from Eurobarometer surveys from 2004 to 2014. In addition, some existing theories and findings on the Eurosceptic attitudes will be also incorporated. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative data will be employed. Studies, where the researcher uses both types of data, have a *mixed methods research design* (Creswell, 2003:12). This type of research design is suitable for this study, because it goes beyond the limitations of a single design through the collection of a wider spectrum of data concerning the Bulgarian public opinion. Thus, through the analysis of both mass media and Eurobarometer survey results we could get better notion of the extent of Euroscepticism spread among the Bulgarian citizens, which would answer the first sub-question. Moreover, the mixed methods research approach is very appropriate to the exploration of social phenomena (Cronholm and Hjalmarsson, 2011), which is of advantage for the examination of the phenomenon in general and its representation in the electronic media in particular that will hereby provide the answer to the second sub-question. In this regard, applying the mixed-methods design allows us to observe the Euroscepticism in Bulgaria from more perspectives and by this means to explore its presence or the depth of its spread in the society in order to discover if there is a noticeable transition in the public attitudes (which corresponds to the main research question).

2. Data collection and analysis

In this section the applied data collection and analysis methods will be justified. According to Creswell (2003), the mixed-methods approach consists of three possible strategies of inquiry: sequential, concurrent and transformative. Sequential refers to a design, where the researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative methods in different phases of the research, as the second type of method aims to complement or explain better the first one (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011:66). Concurrent is a design, in which the researcher gathers both quantitative and qualitative data ‘*at the same time during the study and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results*’ (Creswell, 2003:16). The last type refers to a strategy, where the researcher conducts his study in several phases, including concurrent and/or sequential mixed methods designs (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011:66).

During my research, I will make use of quantitative and qualitative data that is collected in the same research phase. Accordingly, the chosen data collection strategy in the thesis is the *concurrent* one. By this means, through the simultaneous collection of different types of data, the findings made within this study can be more precisely confirmed, validated or just compared to each other. On the one hand, conducive to the achieving of the research objectives Eurobarometer questions will be selected with the help of Schmidberger’s pattern, the answers of which will be later evaluated and interpreted. On the other hand, especially these media articles will be collected, in which negative attitudes towards the EU are demonstrated in order to find out how is this trend expressed there and thus to answer the second sub-question. By the qualitative data selection the process will be simplified by using again Schmidberger’s categories of orientation modes. Adopting his pattern in the processes of data selection and analysis will frame a strict structure of the research, which will hinder the inquiry of invalid data and will be a connecting factor in the eventual comparisons between the gained insights during the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

2.1. Eurobarometer questions selection and analysis

Next, the selection of Eurobarometer questions and their classification to Schmidberger’s theoretical construct will be explained. For this purpose, first the survey tool will be presented and evaluated. Then, the selected questions will be categorized and the type of data analysis will be determined.

The Eurobarometer is a series of public opinion surveys conducted in all EU-members and in the candidate states on attitudes towards the European integration, institutions, policies, economy etc. (EUI, 2015). In my research I adopt mostly data from the Standard Eurobarometer surveys. They are conducted twice a year and in them participate about 1.000 interviewees from each country. I decided to use data from Eurobarometer, because the inquiries are regularly undertaken in all member states and hereby I can observe and compare statistical data from previous years up to nowadays. Other advantages are the huge amount of data that it provides as well as the emphasis of the surveys particularly on public attitudes, which confirms their appropriateness as data origins for the analysis. In this regard, the analysis of the longitudinal Eurobarometer data on Bulgarian opinion is a prerequisite for answering of the first sub-question of the thesis (i.e. ‘*To what extent is there a Eurosceptic trend in the public opinion, according to Eurobarometer surveys?*’). Thus, the suitable analysis approach in this research is the *longitudinal survey analysis*, by means of which the eventual transition from Eurooptimistic towards Eurooptimistic trend could be followed over the years. It is assumed that a noticeable transition in public opinions doesn’t occur suddenly, but it rather develops carefully, influenced by a plenty of factors. Therefore the incurrence of the phenomenon should be observed over a longer period in order to get a clearer conception of its dissemination.

Selection of questions

For a better overview I developed a schema (Table 2) based on Schmidberger’s model, which categorizes the selected questions. Under ‘instrumental support’ come questions, which examine the trust or hope of the population in the EU’s contribution to prosperity. To the ‘reflexive support’ belong these questions that concern the satisfaction of the EU citizens with the outcome of interstate cooperation, problem solving and decision making (Schmidberger, 1997:97). Under ‘affective support’ rank the questions related to the identity and the individual affinity to the EU.

	<i>Instrumental support</i>	<i>Reflexive support</i>	<i>Affective support</i>
<i>Political community</i>	Q1: Has Bulgaria benefited or not through the EU-membership? Q2: Bulgaria’s membership of the	Q6: Optimistic or pessimistic towards the EU future? Q7: Image of the EU?	Q13: Do you see yourself in near future as only Bulgarian, European or both? Q14: Attachment to

	European Community (Common Market) is a good/bad thing?		country, Europe?
<i>Political regime</i>		Q8 & Q9: Trust in the EU and the EP? Q10 & Q11: Satisfied with the national democracy and the democracy of the EU?	
<i>Political authority</i>	Q3 & Q4: Decisions should be taken on national or European level: fighting unemployment, taxation? Q5: For or against EMU?	Q12: Decisions should be taken on national or European level: defence?	

Table 2

Obviously, not for all support objects there are appropriate Eurobarometer questions. Another problem of the adoption of Eurobarometer as a survey tool is that in the course of inquiries many questions are being reformulated or interchanged. Thus, this could lead to constraints in the explanatory attempts (Blasek, 2007:34). Therefore, in the research these surveys will be analyzed, in which the questions are equally or similarly formulated. This may narrow the analysis of some results to a shorter period of time.

2.2. Qualitative data

In order to answer the second sub-question I will collect qualitative data from different electronic mass media sources, which express views and reactions towards the consequences of the Bulgarian membership to the EU. These are online versions of the Bulgarian newspapers ‘Standart’ (‘Standard’ – engl.), ‘Dnevnik’ (‘Journal’ – engl.), ‘Sega’ (‘Now’ – engl.) and also some Internet news sites such ‘bnr.bg’, ‘vesti.bg’, ‘mediapool.bg’, ‘dnes.bg’ etc. I chose them because they are quite known among the Bulgarians and are the most widely read sources of information (E-Vestnik, 2015). In addition, I will employ scholar articles and existing theories that were presented in Chapter 2 in order to attain a broader view of the Eurosceptic attitudes in Bulgaria. Accordingly, a qualitative data analysis of media articles will be conducted. Gibbs (2002) defines qualitative data analysis (QDA) as ‘*the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been*

collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating'. It refers to the process of interpretation and analysis of the meaningful and symbolic content of the data.

In order to facilitate the data collection process and in relation to Schmidberger's three variables (Table 3), I developed a scheme with three groups of search terms associated mainly with anti-European attitudes, since the major aim of the thesis is to explore the extent of Eurosceptic presence in Bulgaria. Resting upon, the existence of Euroscepticism in the electronic media will be examined. For this purpose, the study will be narrowed to these articles, which contain one or more than one of the outlined key terms. Most of them are derived from the included in the study Eurobarometer questions except for the key words 'skepticism towards the future of EU', 'NPP Kozloduy units closure' and 'cultural threat'.

The choosing of the second key term that is not considered in the Eurobarometer analysis is determined by the great importance of the issue among the public before the accession. During the post-communist period Bulgaria was engaged with the adoption of plenty of reforms in order to meet the requirements of the European Union for the admission of the country to a membership. Some of them aroused contentious societal responses regarding the advantages and disadvantages from the potential entry to the EU, like for example the closure of Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Nuclear Power Plant. Despite the fact that the country was not a Union member by that time, the inclusion of the key term is relevant for the analysis, because the fulfillment of this requirement and the public reactions to it might be contributive to the eventual developing of Euroscepticism before and after the accession in 2007.

Type of orientation	Key words for Euroscepticism
Instrumental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'disadvantages from EU membership'; - 'tax reforms'; - 'Eurozone and Bulgaria'; - 'NPP Kozloduy units closure';
Reflexive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'pessimism towards the future of the EU'; - 'mistrust in the EU'; - 'democratic deficit in the EU';
Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'European citizens'; - 'cultural threat'

Table 3

3. Conclusion

In the third chapter of the bachelor thesis the methodology used in the research was explained. By employing the mixed methods research design, the research questions of this work will be answered, as both qualitative and quantitative data will be used in the study. Applying multiple data sources is essential, because it contributes to the reliability of the research. Due to the large amounts of data, the data collection of both Eurobarometer questions and electronic media articles will follow Schmidberger's categorization of public support in order to restrain the research only to the relevant information. In this regard, mass media analysis and analysis of longitudinal survey data will be conducted. Carrying out of the two types of analyses of qualitative and quantitative data is the main presupposition for answering of the two sub-questions of the thesis. In addition, through implementation of the theory presented in Chapter 2 during the conducting of the analysis, the major research question will be answered. Associating the media and survey data with the theoretical concept of Euroscepticism would provide us the opportunity to gain deeper insights into the phenomenon presence in the Bulgarian public opinion. This will be the objective of the next chapter of the study, namely the actual analysis.

IV. Actual analysis

The objective of the fourth chapter is to present the findings and observations about the presence of Euroscepticism in the Bulgarian public opinion and to analyze them. In order to examine if there is an evident transition in the public attitudes two major steps have to be done: First, the statistical results from the Eurobarometer questions outlined in the previous chapter will be presented and discussed. The conducting of the longitudinal survey analysis will rest upon the analytical scheme (Table 2) depicted at the end of the previous chapter and would provide a clearer view on the expansion of negative attitudes towards the EU. Second, by applying Schmidberger's categorization, media articles representing the Eurosceptic phenomenon will be studied. Thus, by conducting these analyses both sub-questions will be answered. In addition, the analyses allow acquiring of further insights beyond the questions, such as reasons for emerging of the phenomenon and its typical features in the Bulgarian case, which would contribute to a better understanding of the Eurosceptic presence and to a clearer conception of it.

1. Public attitudes towards the European Union according to Eurobarometer

The main object of this section is to explore the extent of Eurosceptic presence in the public opinion according to Eurobarometer surveys through the evaluation of survey results by means of a longitudinal survey analysis. The outcome of the analysis will be conducive to the examination of an eventual change in public attitudes towards the EU in Bulgaria. On this account, the development of the attitudes will be followed from 2004, when Bulgarian citizens were polled for a first time, till the last Eurobarometer survey in the end of 2014. I will look at statistic data from the period before the membership, because only through long-ranging observations a transition in the Bulgarian public opinion could be detected. The three variables, instrumental, reflexive and affective, and the belonging to them questions will be analyzed in separate sections, as in the end of the part the outcome will be summarized and thereby the first sub-question will be answered.

1.1. Instrumental orientation

The analysis of the instrumental mode of support brings those aspects of public attitudes into focus that are based on the assessment of effectiveness and welfare gains of the European Union resp. the hope for welfare gains. The results of five Eurobarometer questions will be presented, beginning with the perceived benefits from the membership (Q1) and the attitudes

towards the European Community (Common Market) (Q2), followed by the questions about the public support for decision-making competencies of the Union in unemployment (Q3) and taxation issues (Q4) and for the European Economic and Monetary Union (Q5).

The first survey question (Q1: „Has Bulgaria benefited or not through the EU-membership?“) comprises results from the years 2004 to 2011 – three years before the date of accession, 1st of January 2007, and five after it. Chart 1 (in Appendix) displays some periodic variations in the results concerning the perception of benefits, but a generally negative trend. However, it is remarkable, that the results before 2007 express the expectations of the population, since the country was not an EU member by that time. In October 2004, 65% of the surveyed Bulgarians shared the opinion that the country would gain profits from being a member of the European Community (Standard Eurobarometer 62, 2004), while in May 2011 just 46% of the people believed that the membership is beneficial. Noticeable is also that the highest scores indicating benefits perception were reached before the accession of the country to the EU, while the sharpest decline was registered in 2008 perhaps as a consequence of the Global Financial Crisis and the appearing European debt crisis of 2009. The results indicate that the big majority of Bulgarians had expectations on an enhanced economic situation in the country through the membership, which overlaps with the case of Hungary, where these expectations were not met after the accession and which led to a discontent as well as to an arising Euroscepticism. In this regard, the curve expressing the skeptical opinions towards gaining profits in Bulgaria is steadily rising after 2007. This is the first indication for an eventual increasing of Eurosceptic attitudes from *utilitarian* perspective in Bulgaria. It is important to be mentioned that this assertion is relevant only for the time up to spring 2011 due to a missing current data.

Similar are the results regarding the attitudes towards the European Community and the Common Market in particular (Q2: “Bulgaria’s membership of the European Community (Common Market) is a good/bad thing?“). The respondents had to express their view on the Bulgarian membership, choosing from four answer options: ‘a good thing’, ‘a bad thing’, ‘neither good nor bad’ or ‘don’t know’ (Chart 2 in Appendix). Noticeable is that between the years 2004 and 2011 there is a decrease of about 12% of the polled people that see the membership as a ‘good thing’. These who consider it as ‘a bad thing’ remained rather a constant number during the years without any dramatic changes. In addition, the chart shows an increasing percent of people, who see the membership neither as good nor as bad. However, the indetermination is not necessarily a sign of negative attitudes among the people.

It could also suggest that many of them might be insufficiently informed or just indifferent to this topic.

The next two questions relate to the public assessment about the capability of the European Union to solve economic problems that are usually state affairs. The first one (Q3) concerns the fight against unemployment and comprises data from 2004 to 2010. Chart 3 (in Appendix) gives information about the preferred way of decision making: only by the nation state or jointly within the EU. In order to provide a better insight, the unemployment rate during this period (Chart 4 in Appendix) will be also included in the analysis. According to the Eurobarometer results, in 2004 most of the Bulgarians thought that the decisions concerning fight unemployment should be made together with the EU, as at that time the unemployment rate was higher than 12%. These results indicate the high expectations on the EU as a troubleshooter that the Bulgarian population had before the accession (Harris, n.d.; Higgins, 2013). However, both charts depict that in the course of decreasing percent of unemployed people, the number of interviewees, who think that the state itself should take actions against this issue, rises continuously, as there was a slight drop in 2007 perhaps due to the prognosis for an economic upswing and the high euphoria associated with the accession in the same year. Thus, the majority of Bulgarians consider that the unemployment issues are affair of state in that case, when the unemployment rates are low. In case of increasing ones, the people tend to rely on the capability of the EU to sort out national problems. Hence, according to the results, the EU is a preferred problem solver only if there are problems, which the state cannot tackle. In this regards, a negative public attitude towards the Union cannot be endorsed.

When it comes to decision-making about taxation (Q4), the survey results from 2007 to 2011 are somehow unambiguous (Chart 5 in Appendix). Although, according to the graph, there are still some noticeable fluctuations in the public opinion in the period after the accession, a very high percent of the Bulgarians believe that these decisions should be made on a national level. The outcome could be a consequence of the new taxes that have been introduced in 2007 and 2009, the corporate tax and the flat tax rate, and of the subsequent public discontent. It indicates that most Bulgarians have a negative attitude towards the introduced through the EU-membership tax reforms and expresses their opinion, that the state should be a sole decision maker in that kind of economic matters. In this respect, the unwillingness of the citizens to delegate national competencies to the EU correlates to a great extent with the *political Euroscepticism*, conceptualized by LeConte.

The last question (Q5) belonging to the instrumental support variable concerns the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the public support for it between 2011 and 2014 (Chart 6 in Appendix). Despite the fluctuations in the curve indicating support for the EMU, there is a noticeable negative trend, while the curve implying the opposing attitudes is remarkably rising through the years. Moreover, in June 2014 the chart displays a higher negative than positive attitudes towards the EMU. The decreasing support and increasing opposition in Bulgarian public opinion may be explained as an outcome of the instable economic climate in a few EU members like Greece, which is a neighboring state, Spain and Portugal and the unfavorable situation in the Eurozone after the European debt crisis. Nevertheless, the results seemingly mark the occurrence of *utilitarian* type of Euroscepticism, based again on the typology of LeConte, which in particular expresses skepticism towards the profits that would be gained through a membership in the Union.

1.2. Reflexive orientation

The analysis of the reflexive support variable aims to inform us, to what extent is an interstate government supported by the Bulgarian population. More precisely, it should explore if the Bulgarians are willing to accept situations, where some problem solutions might come from the European Union and not only from the national state (Karolewski and Kaina, 2006). For this purpose, the results of seven Eurobarometer questions will be assessed.

The first two survey questions (Q6: “Optimistic or pessimistic towards the EU future?”; Q7: “Image of the EU?”) are very significant for the whole analysis, because they give basic information about the public attitudes towards the future of the EU and the public perception of its image. The results provide the basis for answering the first sub-question of the thesis, which will be further underpinned through the outcome of the other Eurobarometer questions. According to Chart 7 (in Appendix), through the three years, as the survey was conducted, the total ‘optimistic’ and ‘pessimistic’ attitudes of the population remained rather constant, without any considerable fluctuations. It is explicitly recognizable, that the majority of the Bulgarians are optimistic towards the future of the EU, around 60%, and those, who are pessimistic, come to the half with ca. 30%. Hence, referring to Kopecky and Mudde definitions from Chapter 2, about 30% of the Bulgarians participating in the survey are Europessimists and twice as much are Eurooptimists. Hereby, the result confirms the distinctly predominating Eurooptimism in Bulgarian public opinion.

The second question is about the EU image perception among the interviewees (Chart 8 in Appendix), as the survey follows a longer period of time – from 2004 to 2014. Here again, the curves indicating positive perception of the EU are higher than the ones representing the negative perception of EU image. Nevertheless, in the last few years there is a slight decrease in the percent of people, who see the EU as positive, while the percent of those, who have a neutral view, is relatively high, as it is slowly increasing through the years. The neutral image suggests that a great number of Bulgarians are apathetic towards the EU, perhaps because they do not consider themselves affected through the membership in one way or another, as they do not personally perceive any significant benefits or disadvantages.

As a typical form of diffuse support, ‘trust’ is of great importance for the legitimacy of a political system or institution by the population (Easton, 1975:447). Consequently, the next few Eurobarometer questions that have to be evaluated concern the trust in the European Union and the European Parliament (EP) (Q8 & Q9) as well as the satisfaction with the national democracy (Q10) and this of the Union (Q11). For a better insight in the public opinion and for a better argumentation of the public approval for the European integration, the survey results about the trust in the national government and parliament will be also included in the analysis.

In Chart 9 (in Appendix) it is evident that during the last ten years a large number of the Bulgarians tend to trust the European Parliament, as the percentages variate between 46% in June 2005, 65% in November 2009, which is the highest peak, and drop up to 52% in 2014. On the other hand, there is a continuously increasing distrust trend, with one exception in 2009. While in 2004 14% of the surveyed people claimed that they do not trust the EP, in the end of 2014 the percent of those, who mistrust it, was twice as big. Similar are the results when it comes to the trust in the EU (Chart 10 in Appendix), where the number of people, who tend not to trust the Union, is steadily increasing through the years, again with one exception in 2009: in the end of 2004 these were about 14%, while ten years later the percentage reached up to 34%. However, the trend regarding the trust in the EU is rather negative: after its peak in 2009 with 69%, who have trust in the Union, this number is slowly declining up to 51% in 2014. On the other hand, the distrust of the people in the Bulgarian government and parliament (Charts 11&12 in Appendix) is extremely high, reaching the last year 68% and 75% resp. The conclusion that can be drawn from this overview is that the trust in the EU and EP is much higher than this in the national government and parliament. In addition, Tanasoiu and Colonescu (2008:371) explain that there is a correlation between the

high trust in the EU and the distrust in the nation state. In their study they come to the result that the higher the dissatisfaction with the national government and institutions is, the more intensive are the pro-European attitudes, as their findings are being confirmed also by the displayed in this work Eurobarometer results.

The low public confidence in the nation state in the last years may be a consequence of the political instability, which began with protests against the high electricity price in the winter of 2013 and the following overturning of the government (G.K., 2014). The next government announced its resignation 13 months after it had come into power, leaving an unresolved bank crisis (Tsolova and Krasimirov, 2014). The survey results evince that the support towards the European integration does not have a strong basis, first, because the trust in the EU and its institutions is slowly falling, and second, because Bulgarian representatives do not have the trust of their voters, but at the same time they are those, who drive the integration forward.

The next aspects, the satisfaction with the national democracy (Q10) and the democracy of the European Union (Q11), are also crucial for the support towards the European integration, since the issue of democratic deficit in the EU is one of the most important sources of Euroscepticism (Katz, 2008). According to Chart 13 (in Appendix), the satisfaction with the EU democracy after 2007 is rising, as the number of all those, who are satisfied ('fairly satisfied' and 'very satisfied') with it, is around 50% (last data from Eurobarometer 80: 52). On the other hand, the democracy on a national level is unsatisfactory for a total majority of the interviewees, reaching rates of over 80% in Autumn 2013 (Eurobarometer 80). According to the national report, a reason for these extremely high percentages is again the civil commotions from the same year. The high satisfaction with the European democracy is somehow paradoxical if compared to the Western European members, where the democratic deficit in the EU is much criticized. However, this paradox might be a result of the extremely high discontent with the national politics and the way how national elections are executed on one side, and, otherwise, of the image of the EU as a stable and reliable 'savior' that might solve problems on a national level. Thereby, Tanasoiu and Colonescu's findings are being confirmed again.

The last survey question (Q12), the answer of which will be analyzed, relates again to the consent of the Bulgarians to confer competencies to the EU in traditionally national areas of sovereignty such as defense. According to Schmidberger (1997:148), this question is of great significance, because defense belongs to the main functions of the state and is a basis of its

legitimacy. Chart 14 (in Appendix) comprises data from 2004 to 2011 and shows very unambiguous results: the first years after the accession around 70% of the interviewees share the opinion that decisions on this topic should be taken jointly with the European Union. The high approval of Bulgarians to the transfer of typically state competencies to the EU expresses their view that some problems are not only a national matter and should be decided on an international level (Eurobarometer 62:34). This might be a significant indicator of the public support in Bulgaria towards the process of European integration.

1.3. Affective orientation

Central concepts of the affective orientation of support are the formation of an interstate identity and an interstate community spirit, or in this case ‘European identity’ and ‘European community spirit’ in the sense of a ‘group identity’ (Schmidberger, 1997:66). In this regard, the analysis of the following Eurobarometer questions aims to examine, if the Bulgarians feel emotionally connected to the European Union and hereof if there are some eventual correlations with the integration deepening.

The first question (Q13) should give information about the extent to which a European identity, understood as an individual feeling of belonging to the EU, exists in the population. For this purpose, the interviewees should answer if they see themselves in the near future as only Bulgarians, only Europeans, Bulgarians and Europeans or Europeans and Bulgarians. It should be mentioned, that the question was not included in all surveys from 2004 to 2010, but only in 2004, 2005, 2010, 2013 and 2014. The outcome of the conducted surveys displayed in Chart 15 (in Appendix) represents that most of the people would define themselves as Bulgarians in future (around 50%), which has remained rather a constant trend through the years. Around 40% see themselves as both – Bulgarians and Europeans, a very low percent as Europeans and Bulgarians. Hence, the Bulgarian identity remains more substantial as the European one, but at the same time it incorporates it. Moreover, the strong identification with the own nation encourages the stronger attachment to the EU (Moes, 2008). However, there is not much statistical data on this topic after the accession of the country. The only Eurobarometer surveys that give information about the attachment of Bulgarians to the Union are these from May 2008 (No. 68) and from May 2012 (No.77). According to them, in 2008 40% of the interviewees felt attached to the EU, while in 2012 their number has increased, reaching up to 53%.

1.4. Summary of results and answer of the first sub-question

The outcome of the questions to the first variable, instrumental orientation, expresses the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the EU from utilitarian perspective. The remarkable drop of benefits perception, the decline of positive opinion rate towards the Common Market as well as the rising opposition to the EMU demonstrate that Bulgarians' enthusiasm towards the EU membership and the expected from it economic advantages is remarkably decreasing. Moreover, the majority of Bulgarians see the EU as a problem solver but only in cases, where the state is not able to tackle the problems itself. When it comes to economic issues that may affect directly the citizens like new taxation reforms, an extreme rejection of a decision-taking process on a European level occurs in the society. Chart 1 illustrates the exaggerated expectations that Bulgarians had on the EU to receive economic benefits that were later not answered. The negative trend that can be observed in the other charts regarding the support for transfer of decision making competencies as well as the attitudes towards the Common Market and EMU signifies the arising disappointment among the population after the initial euphoria from the accession. This, on the other side, enables the slightly emerging of *utilitarian and political Euroscepticism* in Bulgaria, referring to LeConte's typology. In addition, the great dissatisfaction with the economic situation of the country is one of the three major sources of Euroscepticism, referring to Hooghe and Marks (2007:123). Chart 18 (in Appendix) displays that, according to the prevailing opinion, the major issues of the state through the years are the unemployment, the economic situation and the raising prices/inflation. Hence, this public discontent provides very favorable conditions for the arising of Eurosceptic attitudes in Bulgaria.

With regards to the outcome of the questions belonging to the reflexive orientation, Bulgaria continues to be among the EU countries that are considerably optimistic towards the future of the Union. In addition, the EU still enjoys a high trust and a very good image perception among the population. Very similar are the results about the trust in the EP and the satisfaction with the democracy of the EU. In general, Bulgarians have been very positive towards Bulgaria's membership before the accession (Iankova, 2009:39) and kept their positive attitudes towards the EU policies up to nowadays (Shumilov, 2015). Hence, these findings are an indication of the substantial Eurooptimistic tendency among the majority of interviewees and the high support that the European integration project enjoys in the country.

On the other hand, the remarkable drop of the trust in the EU and EP after 2009 deserves a great attention, because the support for the European Union and its policies depends to a great extent on the trust that citizens have in it (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). Thus, the increasing mistrust among the population might hinder the future deepening of the European integration project and lead to its eventual destabilization. Moreover, the institutional distrust, which is the second source explained by Hooghe and Marks (2007:121), stimulates the incurrence of Euroscepticism. For a better insight in the topic, the outcome of other two other survey questions, concerning the institutional trust, is considered. According to them, an increasing distrust in other European institutions besides the EP can be also observed: these are the European Commission (Chart 16 in Appendix) and the European Central Bank (Chart 17 in Appendix). Thus, the appearing public suspicion in the EU and in the appertaining to it institutions forms another prerequisite for Euroscepticism.

The last group of questions relates to the feelings of national and European identity. The results show that the citizens continue to perceive themselves first of all as Bulgarians and then as Europeans instead of the reverse; the national identity is still much stronger than the European one. The findings are relevant for this study because the strong identification with the nation state and the risk for cultural threats motivate the opposition to the European integration resp. the arising of Euroscepticism (Hooghe and Marks, 2007:123; Abts and Swyngedouw, 2009:3). The apparent strong feeling of belonging to the nation and its traditions, customs and culture threatened by the unification processes of the EU could lead to a value-based or/and cultural Euroscepticism, which relates to Abbarno and Zapryanova's (2013:16) findings and to LeConte's typology.

With respect to the findings outlined above, the second sub-question (*"To what extent is there a Eurosceptic trend in the public opinion, according to Eurobarometer surveys?"*) will be answered. Apparently, in Bulgaria there is a very favorable climate for the formation of opposition to the process of European integration. Although Bulgarians continue to have a reputation as mainly pro-European-oriented compared to other EU members, the raising institutional distrust, the considerably strong feeling of national identity and the unsatisfactory economic circumstances in the country give a good basis for the emerging Eurosceptic attitudes among the citizens. The Eurobarometer survey results show that in Bulgaria there is a slightly emerging trend of partial opposition to the EU in terms of transfer of powers to the EU and extension of its competencies (e.g. Charts 3&5), which corresponds to Taggart and Szczesbiak's conception of Euroscepticism. According to another study conducted by the

Republikon Institutue, in which Eurobarometer data has been applied, 16% of the Bulgarians are Eurosceptics (Figure 2). Despite the low percent, the study confirms that the Euroscepticism is already present in the country, even if it is at a lower level, which is so far in line with the findings of this thesis.



Figure 2 Euroscepticism in Europe

2. The Euroscepticism in the media

This part aims at answering the second sub-question. In order to explore how the Eurosceptic phenomenon is presented, electronic media articles from multiple news sites and online newspapers will be analyzed. For a better overview, it will be again examined in three sections corresponding to the categorization in Table 3 (p.16), namely from instrumental, reflexive and affective point of view. Considering the fact that the mass media has a very crucial role in public opinion-shaping, the media analysis is very important for this study and will allow us to see what Eurosceptic messages are sent to the public and what type of Euroscepticism is mostly present in the media.

2.1. Instrumental orientation

In the analysis of instrumental type of orientation presented in the media, the emphasis will be put particularly on the public perception of output disadvantages deriving from EU policies. Referring to the majority of news media approaching the topic of Bulgarian membership to the Union and conveying Eurosceptic messages in their articles, the greatest disadvantage

resulting from it are the financial losses, which according to Yovchev (2015) reach ca. 15 billion Euros and are expected to raise up to 29 billion due to imposed financial penalties on the state. This, on the other hand, is a large number compared to the Bulgarian GDP of 55,73 billion US dollars (ca. 49,156 billion Euros) for 2014 that is the lowest among the EU-members (The World Bank, n.d.). Except for the sanctions, other economic disadvantages that are often being emphasized in the media are the tax and duty reforms, which would contribute to the withdrawal of big international companies out of the country because of unfavorable tax conditions (Vuldzhev, 2015) and to declining revenues from duties (DarikFinance, 2013). Moreover, these reforms led to the rise of contraband (Prodanov, 2014). In addition, in media articles with rather Eurosceptic disposition it is stated that the life in Bulgaria after the accession has become more expensive, to some extent as a consequence of the equalization of excise duty, whereas the average wages have still remained low (Dnevnik, 2015; Paneva, 2011; Prodanov, 2014; Vesti, 2014).

Regarding the potential switching of the national currency to euro respectively the eventual Eurozone accession of the country in future, the positions expressed in the media on this issue are diverse. In articles with distinct Eurosceptic trend stress is laid rather on the consequent unprofitable effects on the national economy, such as high additional costs and loss of sovereignty (BNR, 2015; Standartnews, 2015; Papakochev, 2015). At the same time, in other articles, where pro-European attitudes are demonstrated, it is accentuated on the financial stability that the euro area would entail (DarikNews, 2015; Mediapool, 2015).

The aim of the last key word 'NPP Kozloduy' was to show how the media has presented the closure of the units as a requirement of the EU. The articles considered in the analysis were published before 2007 and express the dramatic reaction of the society by that time as well as the negative attitudes towards the EU that were caused through the implementation of the membership condition. The Eurosceptic trend in the media has been expressed through assertions about the consequent extremely large losses, societal costs and the unjustifiable requirement (Sega, 2005); fears and assumptions that the price of electricity would increase by about 10 percent and the country will lose from unrealized electricity export (Dnevnik, 2002); citations of statistics asserting that around 60 percent of the Bulgarians prefer to 'save' the units of the NPP even at the cost of not joining the EU (Shkodrova, n.d.) and rhetoric questions about whose financial interests are being actually protected (Imoti, 2003). It is noticeable that the mass media by that time expresses only one standpoint, namely this about the 'unreasonable' shutdown of the units of the NPP, and forms a feeling of inequality with

the other European nations. In 2004 B. Dimitrova relates in her article the issue with the NPP Kozloduy to the emergence of Euroscepticism in Bulgaria. As she states, the core of the problem is rather the wounded national pride than the arguments about the economic and ecological consequences. Moreover, according to her the intensity of support towards the future EU-membership of the country has decreased conspicuously at that time of negotiations. Two years earlier, this trend was predicted by the Bulgarian ex-president Georgi Parvanov in a speech, where he asserts that the pressure from the EU regarding the Bulgarian energetic might lead to the occurrence of Euroscepticism (Mediapool, 2002).

Looking at the anti-EU messages that the media has sent through the years to the public, we could notice that the Eurosceptic trend evidently exists. In addition, the observed in this part articles confirm the presence of *utilitarian* and to some extent of *political Euroscepticism* in the media, which complies with the outcome of the Eurobarometer analysis about the occurrence of these types of Eurosceptic attitudes in Bulgarian public opinion.

2.2. Reflexive orientation

The data that will be considered in this section would give us information about the public position presented in the media towards the governance on a European level. In respect of the first key word, ‘pessimism towards the future of the EU’, the Bulgarian media provides only information about the Eurobarometer survey results on this topic. This data corresponds to a great extent with the outcome of the survey analysis in the previous section, as in the electronic media (e.g. Kapital, 2014, Dnevnik, 2013, BNR, 2014, Economy, 2014) it is accentuated mostly on the high optimism of the citizens towards the EU and the high pessimism towards the Bulgarian government. The pessimistic stance towards the future of the EU is rather superficially mentioned.

The mistrust in the EU as another source of Euroscepticism is also expressed in the media, but only related to the public attitudes in the Western European members (e.g. in DarikNews, 2013; Vesti, 2013). The electronic media doesn’t inform about the emerging of such phenomenon in Bulgaria, despite the data from the Eurobarometer surveys that points to the increasing mistrust to the Union.

The discourse on the democratic deficit of the Union is another important aspect, facilitating the development of Euroscepticism. In addition, Eurosceptic messages relating to this topic tend to reduce support for European integration, according to Abbarno and Zapryanova

(2013:590). Therefore the examination of how the media expresses the problem of democratic deficit is very significant. However, the issue is not very popular in Bulgarian electronic media, as only in two news sources (Dnes.bg and Mediapool.bg) the deficit of democracy in the EU is approached. In Vasileva's article (2015, published in Dnes.bg) a clear anti-European disposition is perceptible. She states that the Union was 'inadequately created', 'usurping sovereignty' and has a 'character, deprived of cultural basis and national passion'. Furthermore, Vasileva warns that the EU should admit its democratic deficit, because otherwise it would be ruined by the developing Europhobia. Popov (2012, published in Mediapool.bg) adds to the issue, that the current functioning way of the European institutions is not democratically legitimated and the ideas of their consolidation would only deepen the democratic deficit further.

The expressed in both articles dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy on European level is an indication of LeConte's *political Euroscepticism*. However, the lack of information in the media articles on these topics signifies that the Eurosceptic messages about the negative attitudes towards the governance on European level and the disadvantages of it are rather exceptions in the Bulgarian electronic media. It is emphasized much more on the positive evaluation of the effects of this governing type.

2.3. Affective orientation

Most important aspect of the affective mode of support is the feeling of common identity. Therefore, it will be examined how the electronic media represents the Eurosceptic rhetoric concerning the European identity resp. the European citizenship in particular. Nevertheless, the electronic media doesn't deal much with this issue, as well. Eurosceptic messages can be found only in two electronic articles, where the European citizenship of Bulgarians is expressed as inferior compared to the European citizenship in Western Europe. Tsanev (2015) presents the image of the Bulgarians as a second-class Europeans from the point of view of Western EU-members. This negative image is clarified further by Barzilska (2013), who adds that the Bulgarians are seen as 'job stealers' and 'unwanted intruders'. Thus, being a European citizen of Bulgarian descent doesn't entail only advantages, but it carries also a negative image perceived by the Western nations due to the high number of immigrants coming to their countries in times of already evident high unemployment rates.

During the data collection process, another key term, 'cultural threat' has been also applied, since the negative attitudes towards the EU depend to a great extent on the perception of

cultural threats and the strong feeling of national identity (Abts and Swyngedouw, 2009:1). However, in the Bulgarian electronic media information about this topic is missing. Although during the initial process of European integration some traditional practices have been constrained, these restrictions have not been presented by the media as a kind of threat to the national culture.

In general, Eurosceptic messages concerning the national and European identities as well as the threats to national culture are almost unapparent. This indicates that a *cultural Eurosceptic* trend is still not observably present in the Bulgarian media resp. in the Bulgarian public opinion.

2.4. Answer of the second sub-question

Resting upon the results of the qualitative media analysis, we reach the conclusion that greatest response in the media meets the utilitarian type of Euroscepticism. The electronic media expresses the Eurosceptic trend by laying stress especially on the economic disadvantages deriving from the EU-membership, since the topic about the financial profits of the country after the accession was of extreme importance for the Bulgarians. The emphasis on the financial matters is not unexpected, considering the bad economic situation in the country. In addition, these results correspond to the findings of the survey analysis, as both confirm the evident existence of utilitarian Euroscepticism in the public opinion. On the other hand, the Euroscepticism of political type concerning the support for interstate governance is very slightly expressed in the media, as only in two online articles disadvantages of this governing type are expressed. Regarding the Eurosceptic representation of European citizenship, it is determined as inferior to the national one. In addition, it is rather emphasized on the subordinate role that the Bulgarians perceive in relation to the old EU-members. Surprisingly, a Eurosceptic trend with regards to the cultural threats is almost not presented in the media, although the carrying out of some new reforms required by the EU before the accession has notably interfered in some well-established traditional practices.

V. Conclusion

The objective of the thesis was to examine the occurrence of the Eurosceptic phenomenon in Bulgaria - one of the new EU-member states from Eastern Europe marked by considerable Eurooptimistic attitudes towards the European integration project. Accordingly, a main research question was formulated (*'To what extent is a transition from Eurooptimism to Euroscepticism discernable in Bulgarian public opinion after the accession to the European Union in 2007?'*) the answer of which will be clarified in this chapter. For this purpose, two steps have been taken: the examination of the extent of Eurosceptic trend in the public opinion in terms of Eurobarometer survey data and observations on the presence of this trend in the electronic media.

According to the conducted Eurobarometer analysis, a large majority of the Bulgarians is still Eurooptimistic-oriented. Nevertheless, there are few existent prerequisites, which favor the arising of Euroscepticism: the high dissatisfaction with the situation of the national economy; the increasing institutional distrust not only in Bulgarian institutions, but also in European ones; and a strong feeling of belonging to the nation and its culture. In terms of the analysis outcome, there is an existing Euroscepticism in the public opinion towards the EU, which is characterized by pessimistic attitudes towards perceived benefits from the membership, increasing distrust to the European institutions, rising opposition to the EMU and the unwillingness of the citizens to delegate national competences in terms of financial matters. It is noticeable, that the opposing trend towards the EU is driven mostly by economic factors, which indicates the presence mainly of *utilitarian Euroscepticism*. Moreover, this result is confirmed also in the analysis of electronic media, where the Eurosceptic trend is presented by emphasizing mainly on the perception of deteriorating economic situation in the country after its accession to the Union. Both analyses reach the result that *political Euroscepticism* is to some extent also existing in the public opinion, but is not that remarkably expressed.

It is noteworthy, that the Euroscepticism in Bulgaria is quite similar to the Euroscepticism in Poland, as both are driven initially by economic factors and are 'to some extent policy-based'. In addition, some aspects of the Eurosceptic attitudes in Hungary and Czech Republic are also evident in Bulgaria, such as the disappointment after the accession because of the missing economic progress and the fear of loss of sovereignty (Hungary) as well as the missing of strong anti-EU mobilization (Czech Republic). This indicates, that these states share not only similar historical and political past, but also have similar perceptions of the European

integration process. Moreover, the conducting of a comparative study between the CEEs countries on the relationship between their similar historical background and communistic heritage and the occurrence of Euroscepticism would be interesting and would provide information to the question, to what extent is the negative attitude towards the EU related to the communist past. Are there Russophile attitudes in the public and do they correlate with the opposition to the European integration? This information would provide useful knowledge for the fight against the Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern European countries.

With respect to the results of the analyses, it could be confirmed that the Eurosceptic phenomenon has already occurred in the Bulgarian public opinion. However, the opposition to the EU is rather partial, amorphous and non-radical. The majority of Bulgarians remain Eurooptimistics, therefore a considerable transition in the public opinion cannot be observed yet. However, the favorable climate for the extension of Euroscepticism in Bulgaria leaves open the question, if it will increase in the following years. In this respect, it would be useful to conduct a study about the Eurosceptic trend in Bulgaria in future in order to observe, if there is an alteration in the public attitudes towards the Union.

The aim of this research was to gain new insights particularly on the extent of Eurosceptic presence in the Bulgarian public opinion by using Eurobarometer and media sources and by this means to provide new ideas of the phenomenon, since most of the studies on Eurosceptic attitudes concern the party-based or 'elite' Euroscepticism. For example, Zapryanova and Abbarno explore mainly the effects of 'democratic deficit' and cultural Eurosceptic messages in party speeches on the Bulgarian public attitudes. However, their studies are narrowed only to the evaluation of the impact of these two aspects, the findings on which haven't been confirmed in this thesis, namely the great impact they have on public attitudes. Although some of the findings of Tanasoiu and Colomescu's study have been supported during the analysis, they underestimate the influence of the economic factors on the formation of negative public opinion, which is in contradiction to the findings of the thesis, according to which the utilitarian Euroscepticism is most strongly embedded.

Another statistical study on the public opinion conducted by Gallup International in 2014 confirms the answer of the main research question by indicating a non-development of the Eurosceptic trend. However, an interesting finding is that the reasons for the Eurosceptic trend derive not from the Union itself but from the inability of the Bulgarians to gain profits from the membership. In this regard, in order to be successful, the fight against Euroscepticism in

Bulgaria should start first on a national level. Bulgarians themselves should eliminate the reasons provoking their dissatisfaction and consequent opposition to the EU. For this purpose, applicable measures against the arising of utilitarian Euroscepticism should be adopted, which could be controlled by the Union. Although according to some authors the democratic deficit is a major source of Euroscepticism, this is not the case in Bulgaria. In this regard, a thorough study on the reasons for the formation of Eurosceptic attitudes would give deeper insights on the topic and would provide useful information about how to suppress them.

Since the Eurosceptic trend expressed in the media was also examined in the thesis, it would be interesting to analyze its impact on the formation of Eurosceptic moods in the society. The huge power of mass media in shaping of public opinion is nowadays uncontroversial. Therefore, it would be very meaningful to explore the relationship between the Eurosceptic messages in Bulgarian mass media and the formation of negative public opinion towards the EU. Do the media manipulate the public opinion against or in favor of the Bulgarian membership in the EU and to what extent?

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VII. Appendix

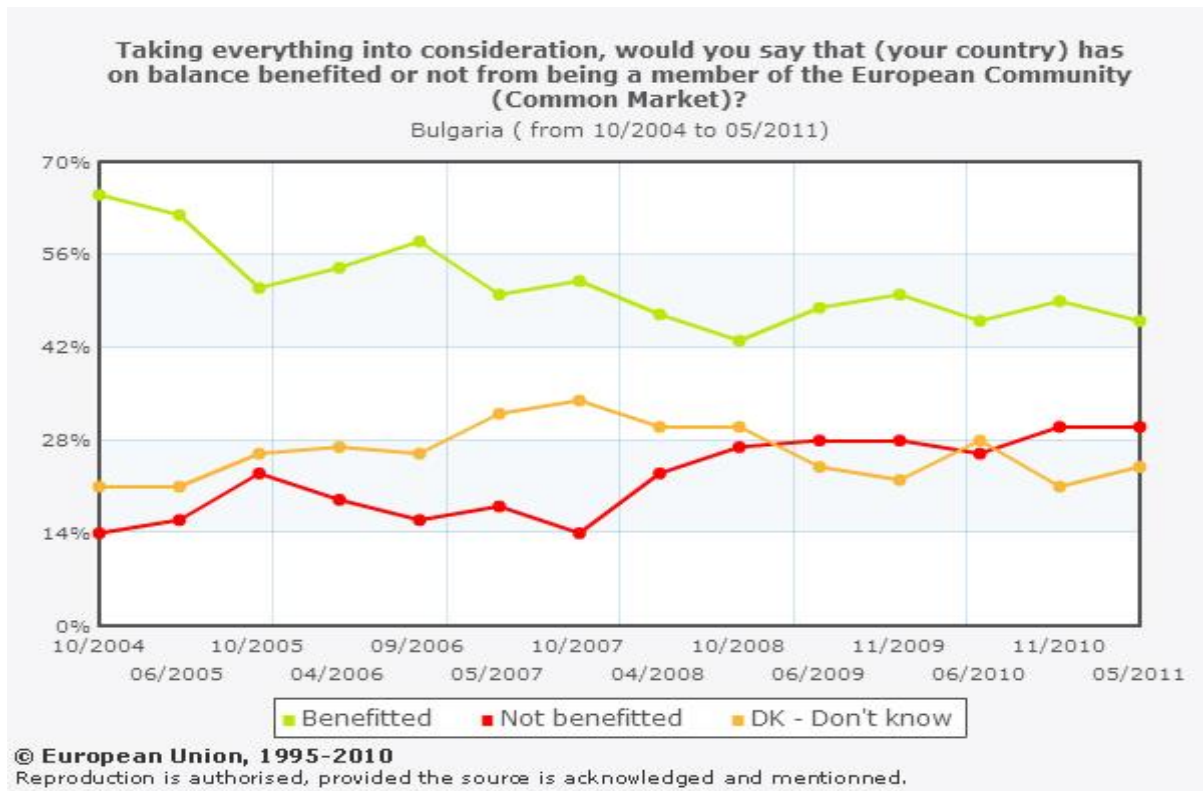


Chart 1 Benefits through EU membership

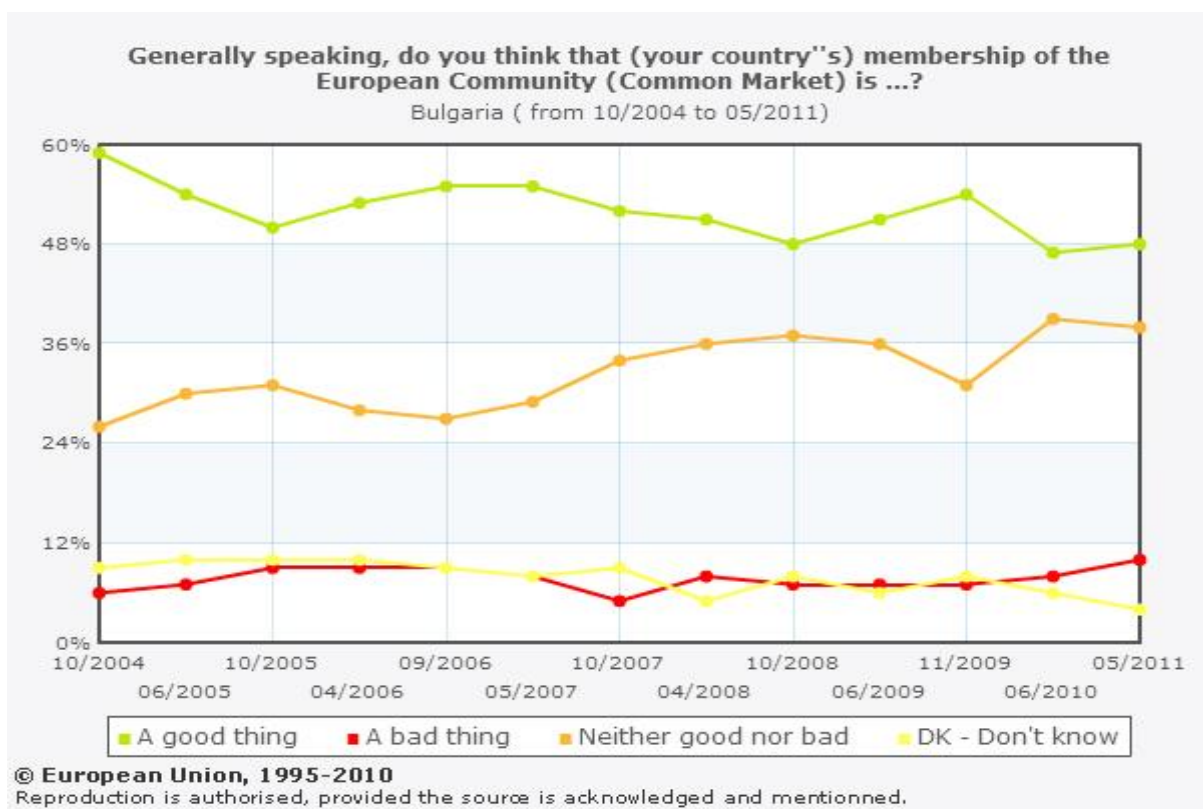


Chart 2 Membership in European Community is a good/bad thing

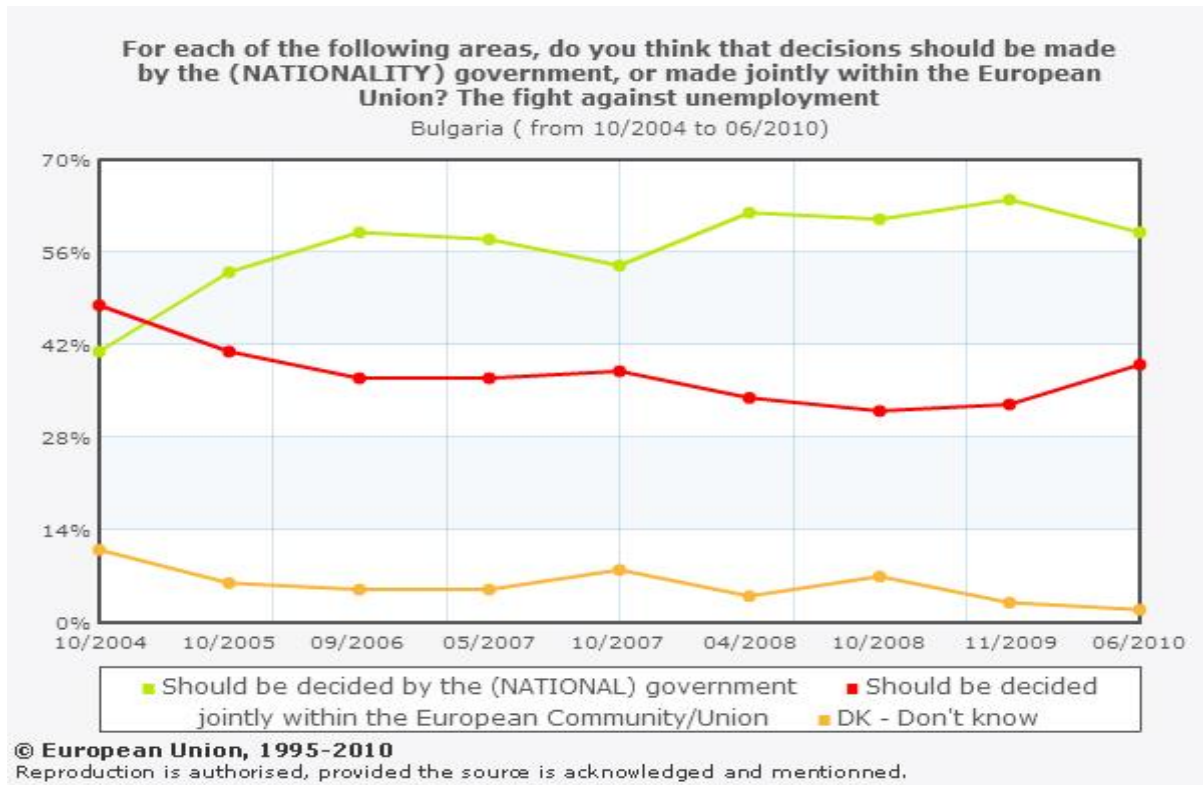


Chart 3 Fight against unemployment on national or European level

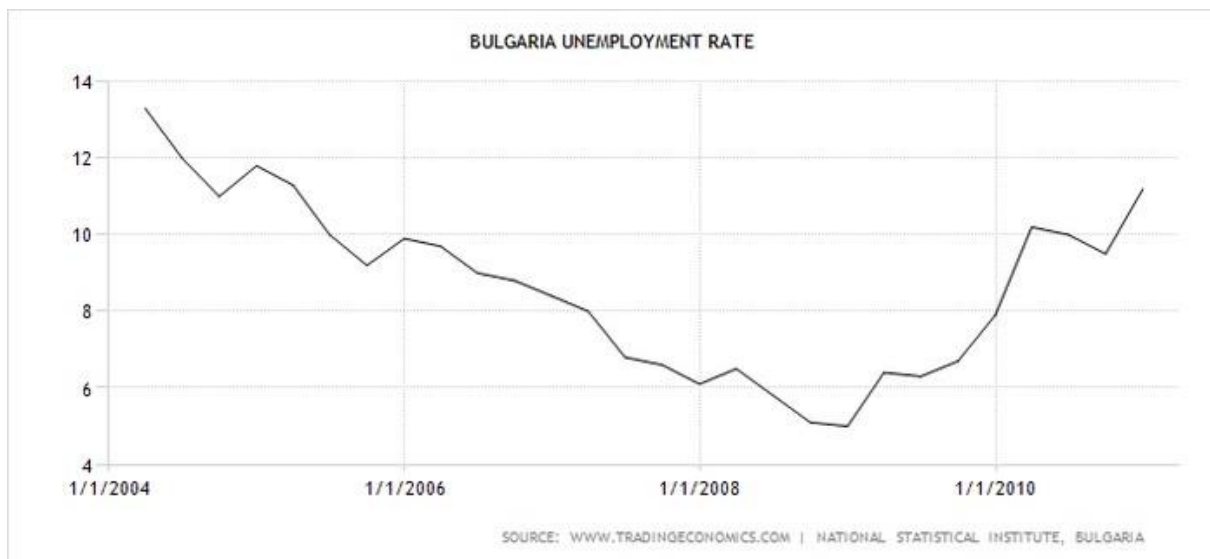


Chart 4 Unemployment rate 2004-2010

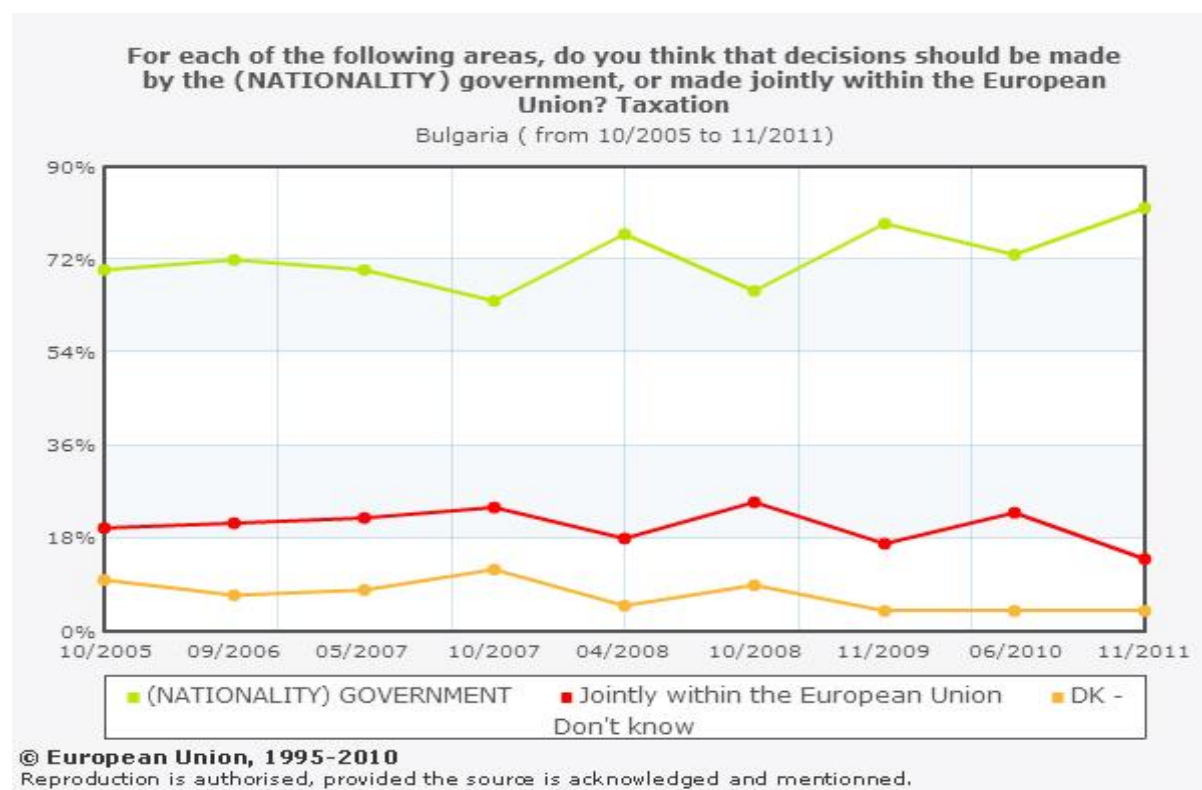


Chart 5 Decision on taxation

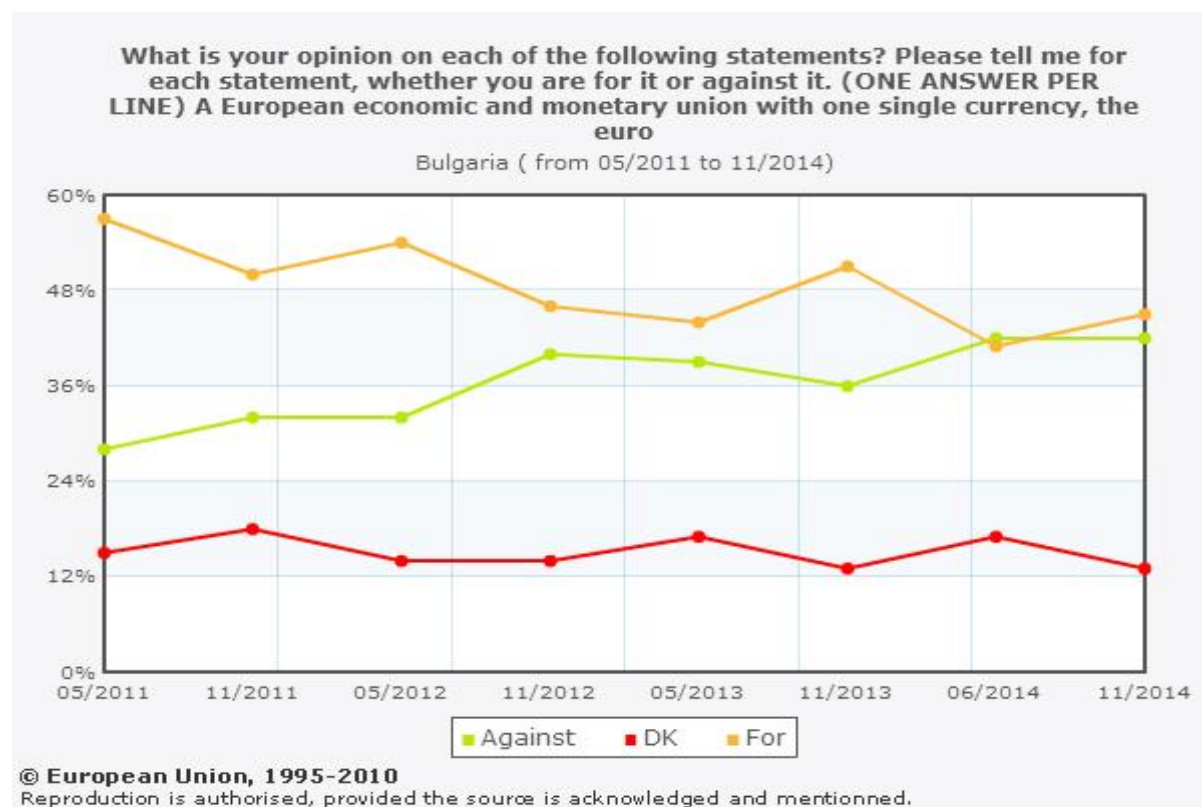


Chart 6 For/against EMU

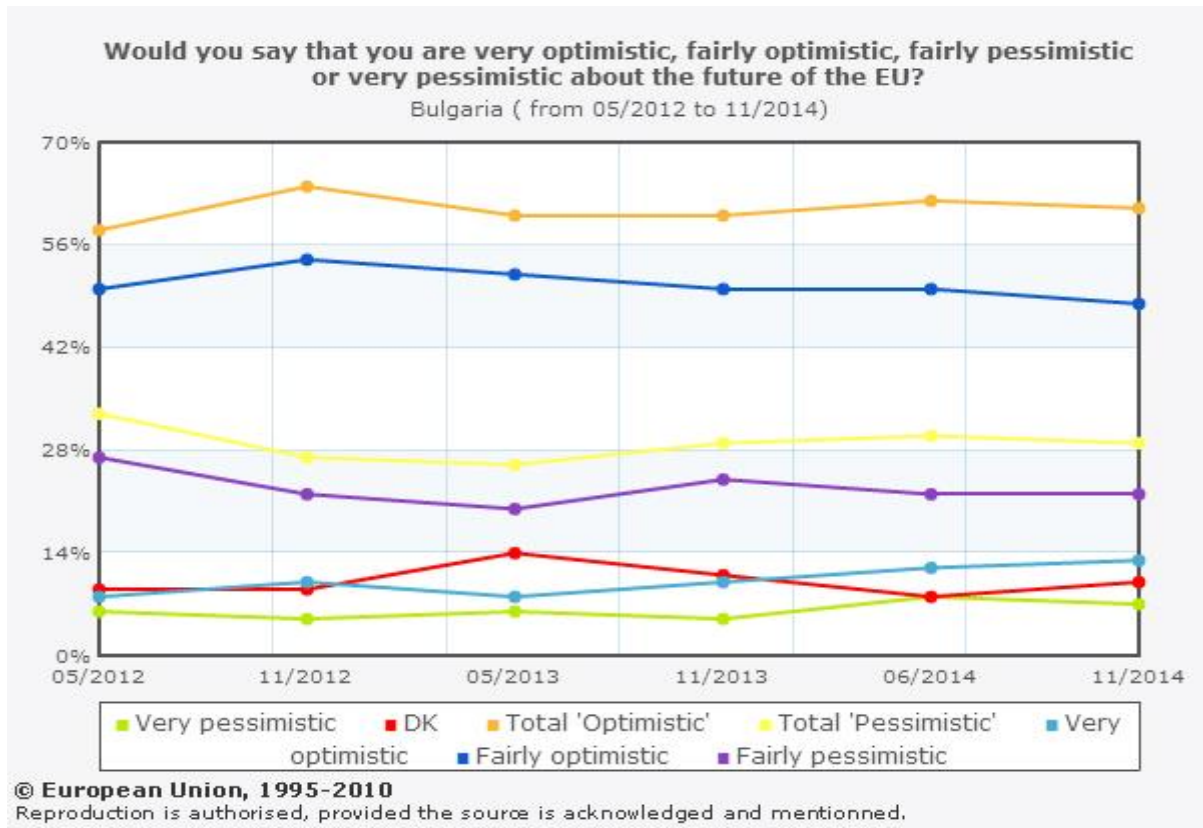


Chart 7 Optimistic/pessimistic towards the EU

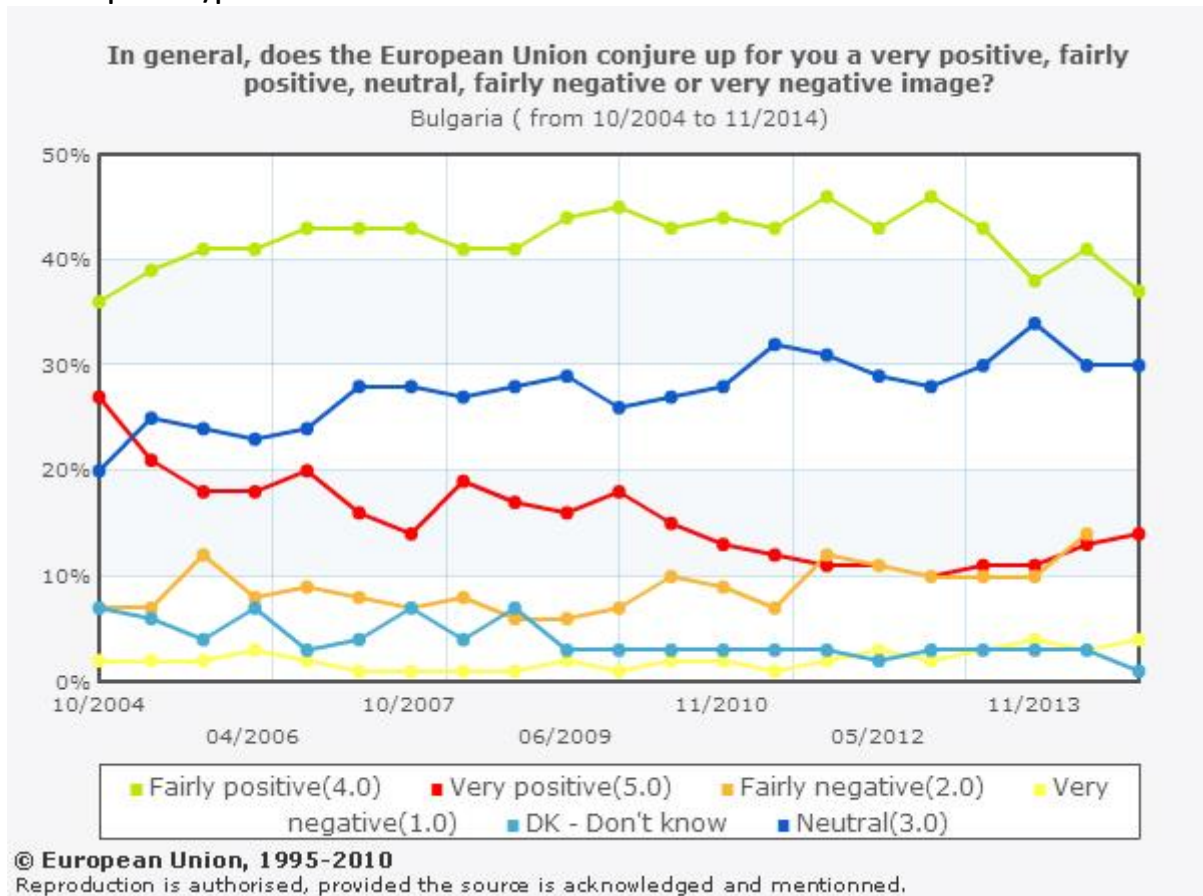


Chart 8 Image of the EU

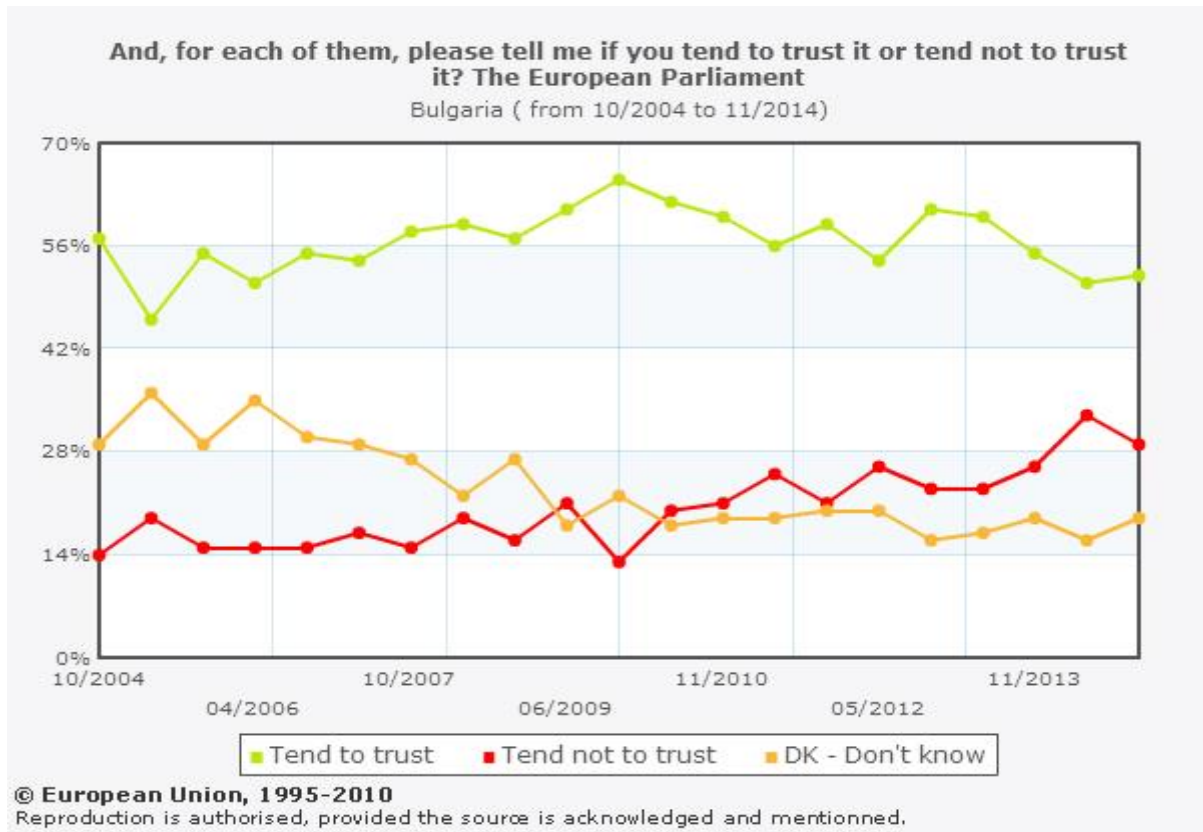


Chart 9 Trust in the EP

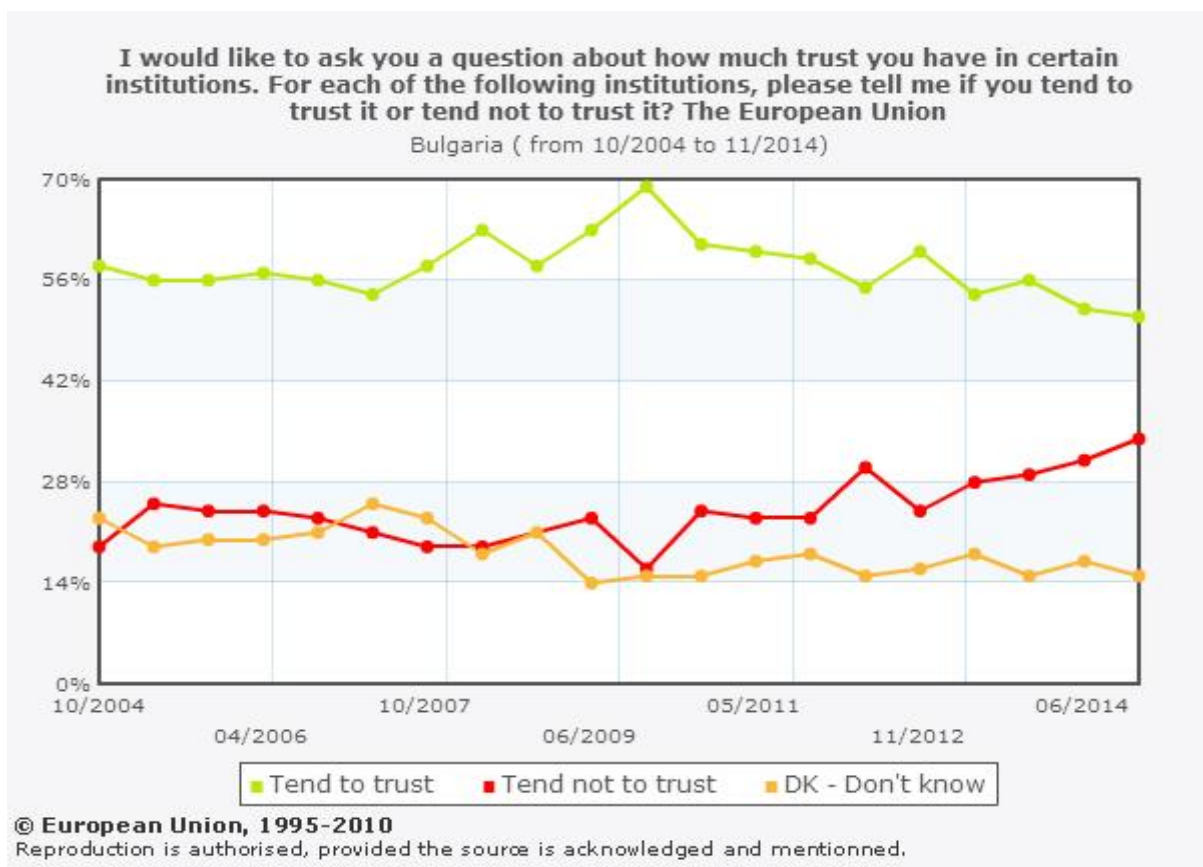


Chart 10 Trust in the EU

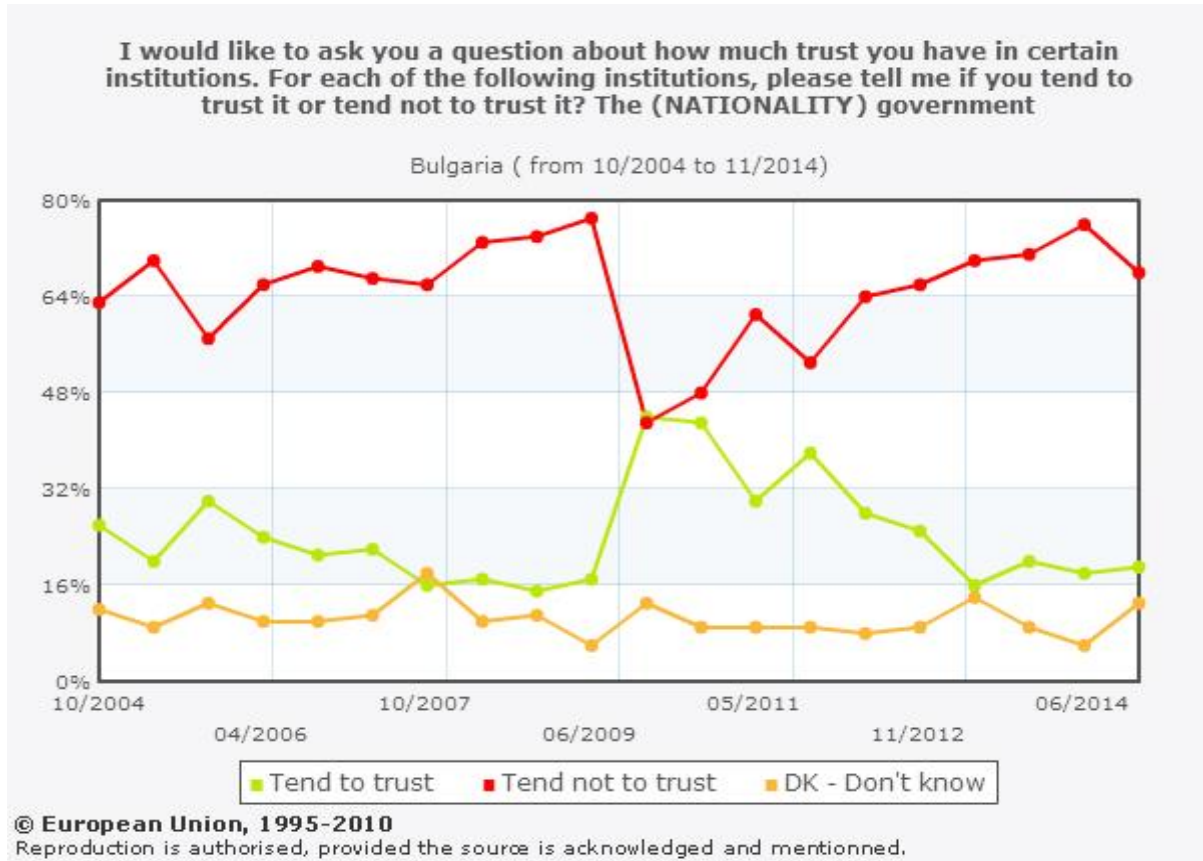


Chart 11 Trust in Bulgarian government

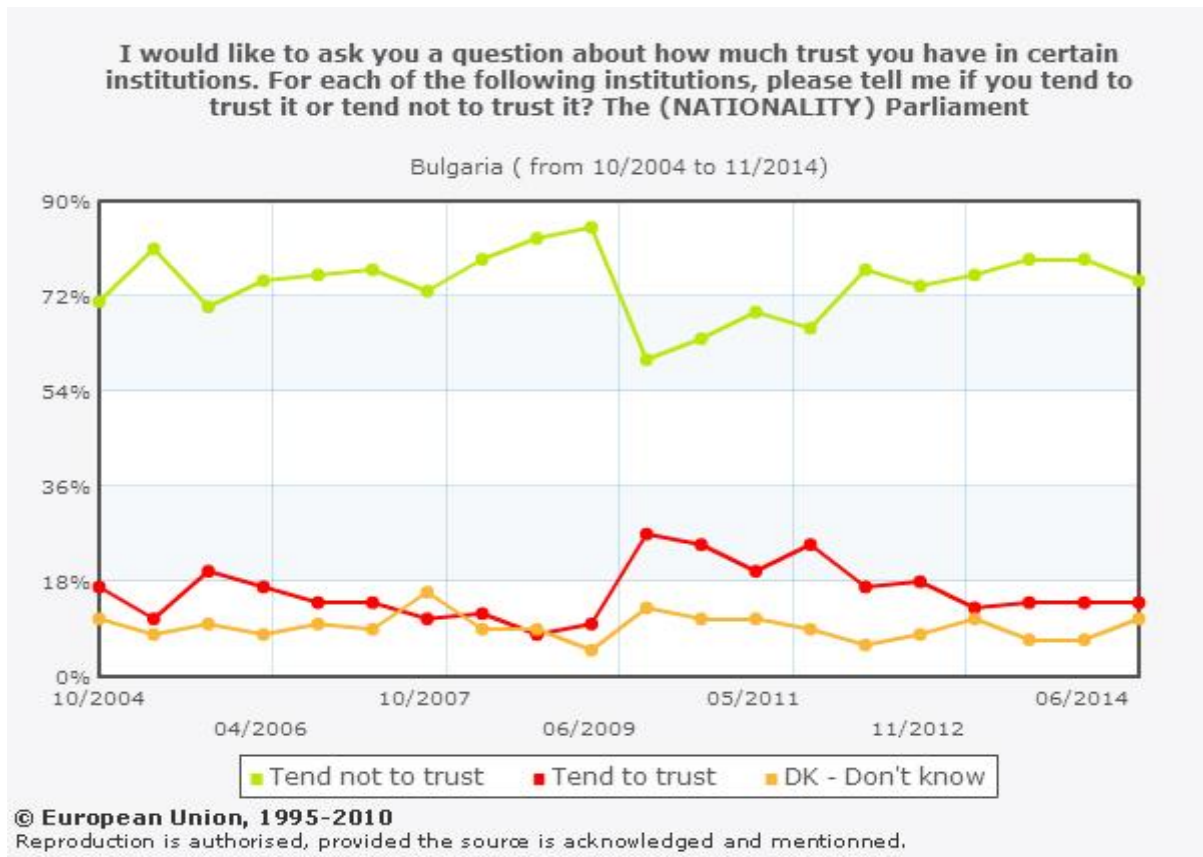


Chart 12 Trust in Bulgarian parliament

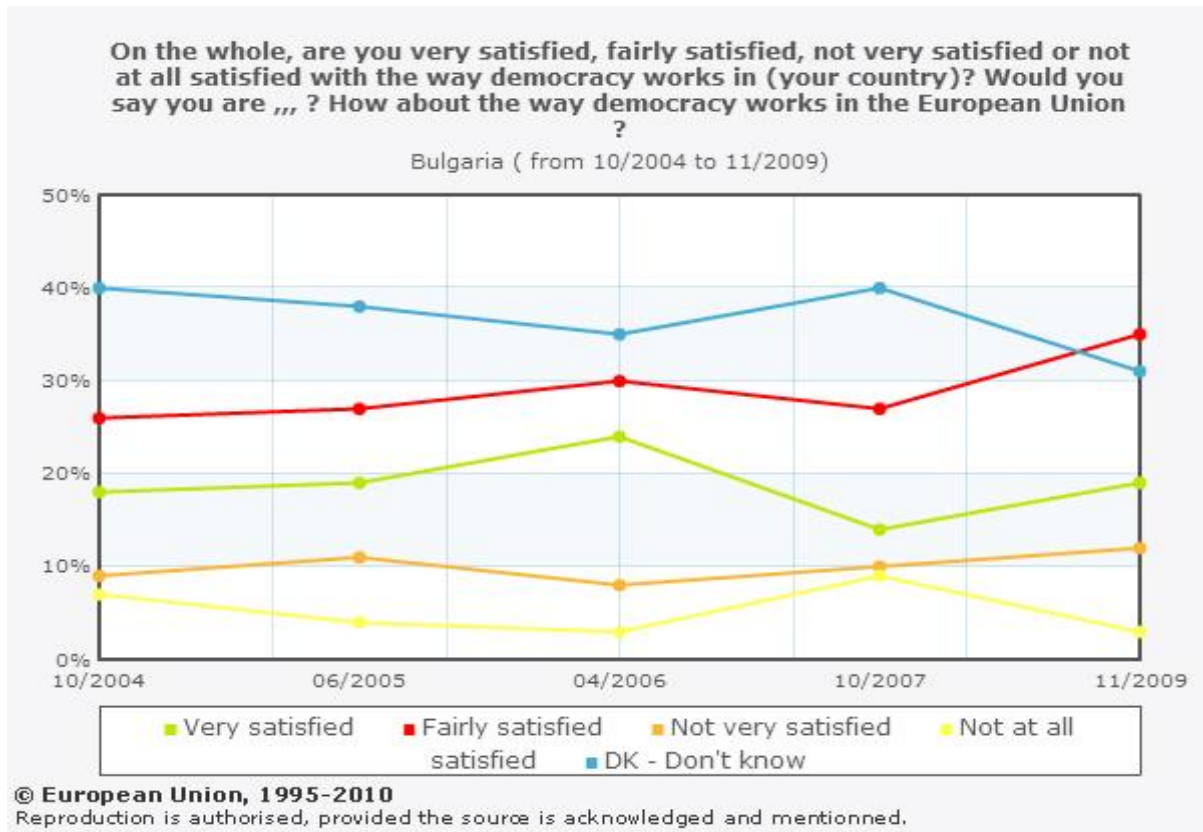


Chart 13 Satisfaction with the democracy of the EU

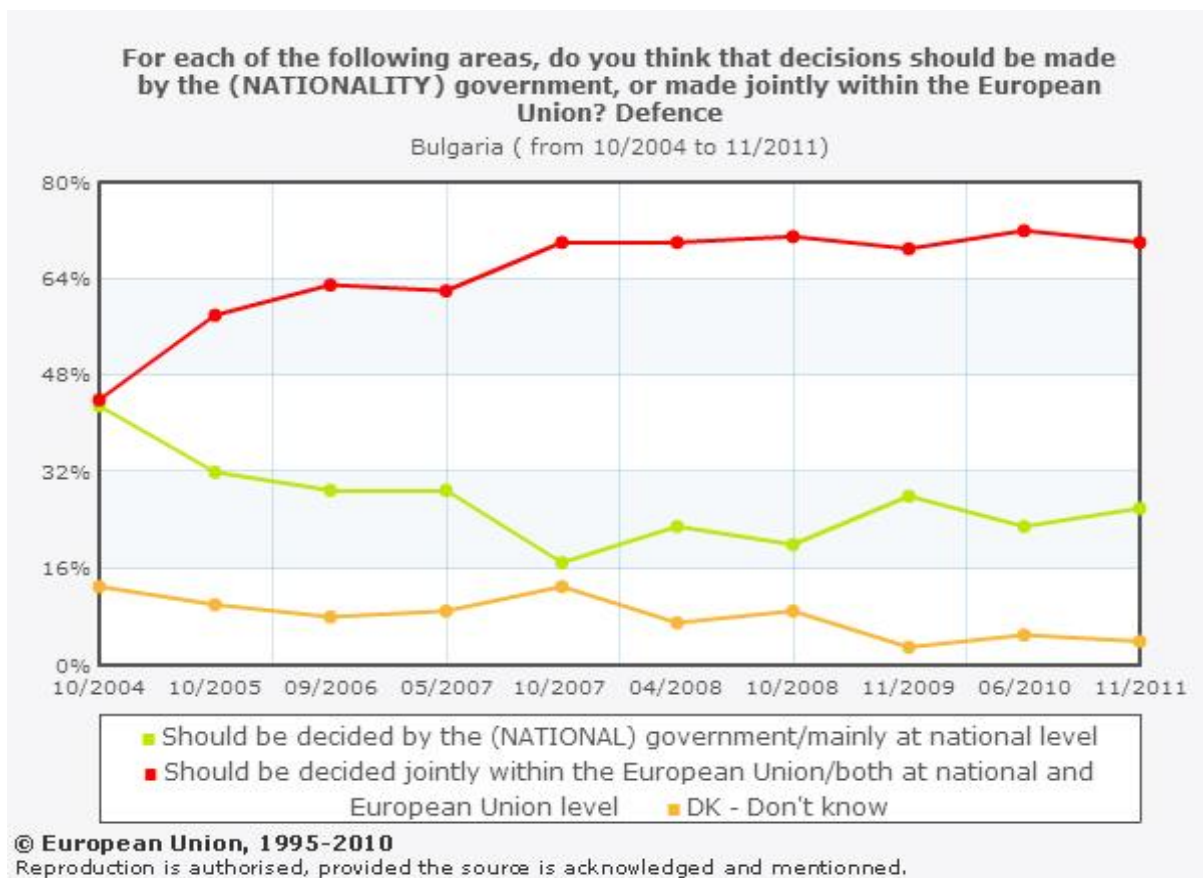


Chart 14 Defense decisions on European or national level

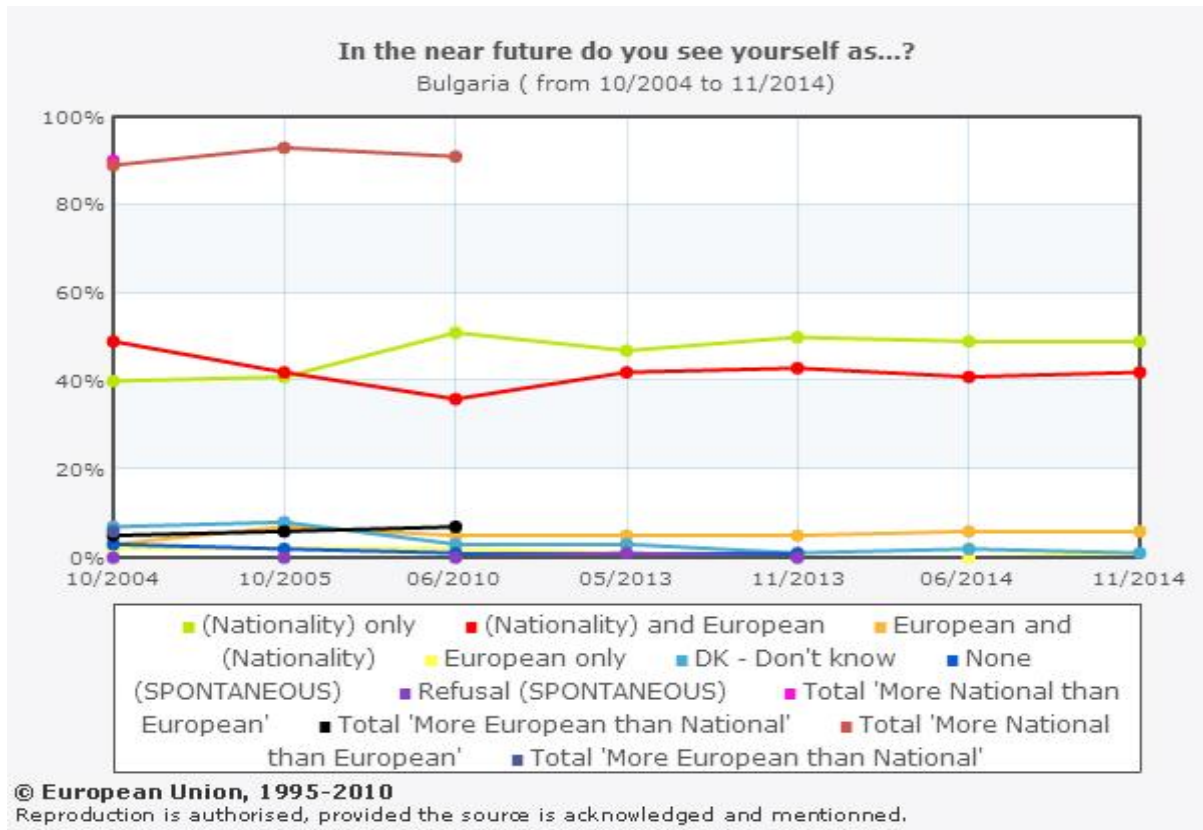


Chart 15 See yourself Bulgarian or European

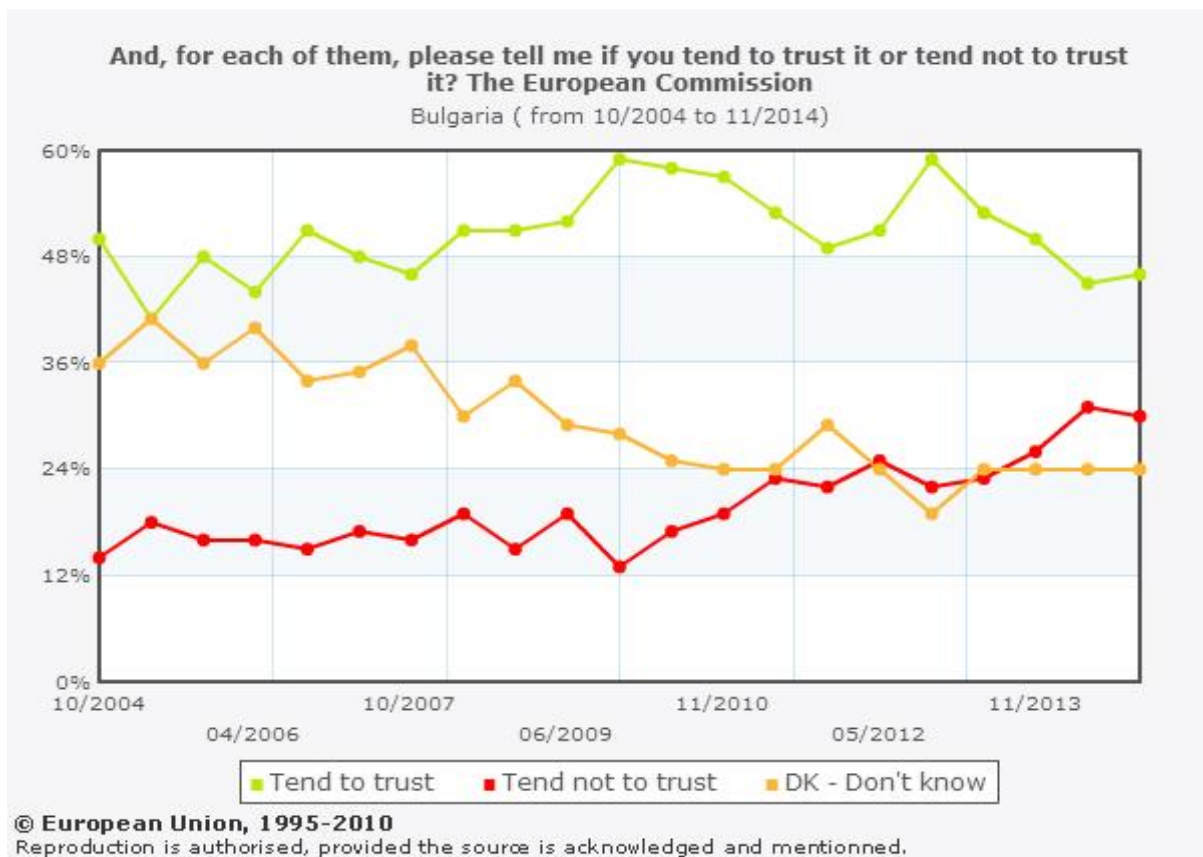


Chart 16 Trust in European Commission

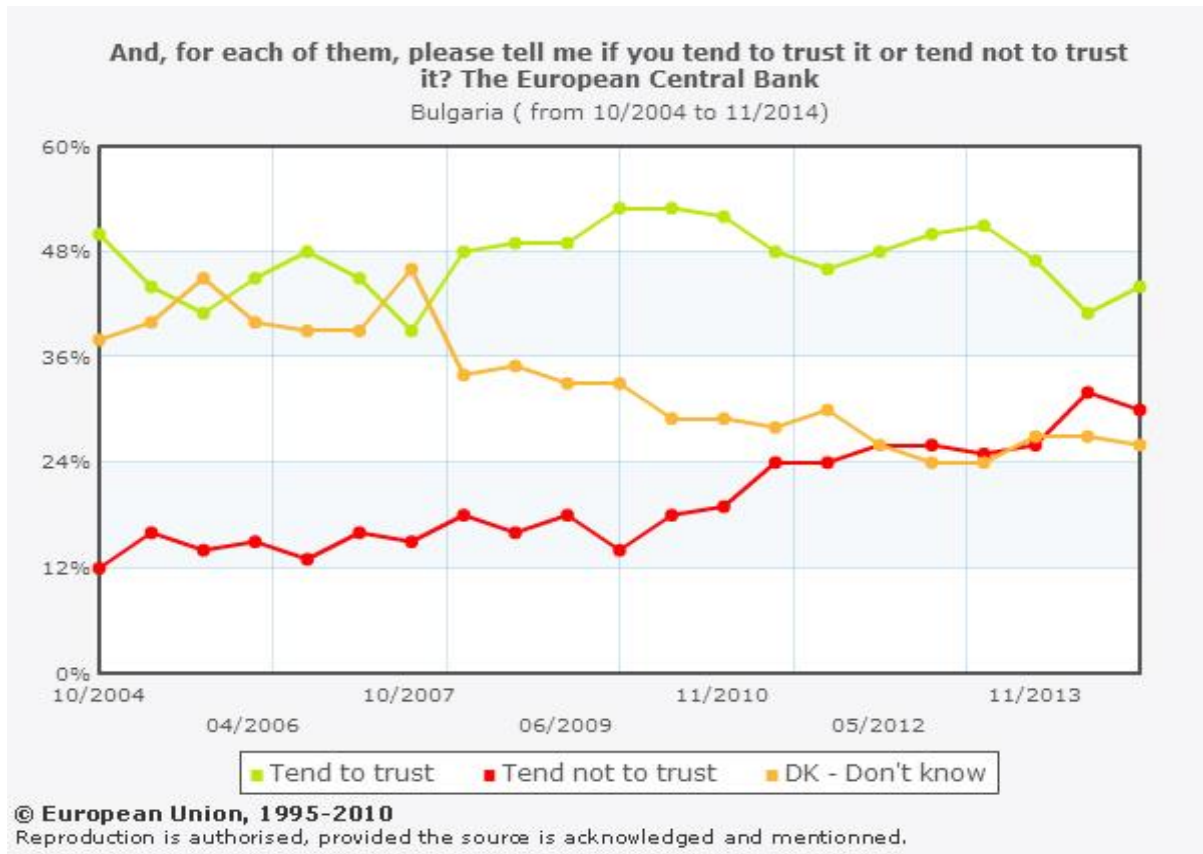


Chart 17 Trust in the ECB

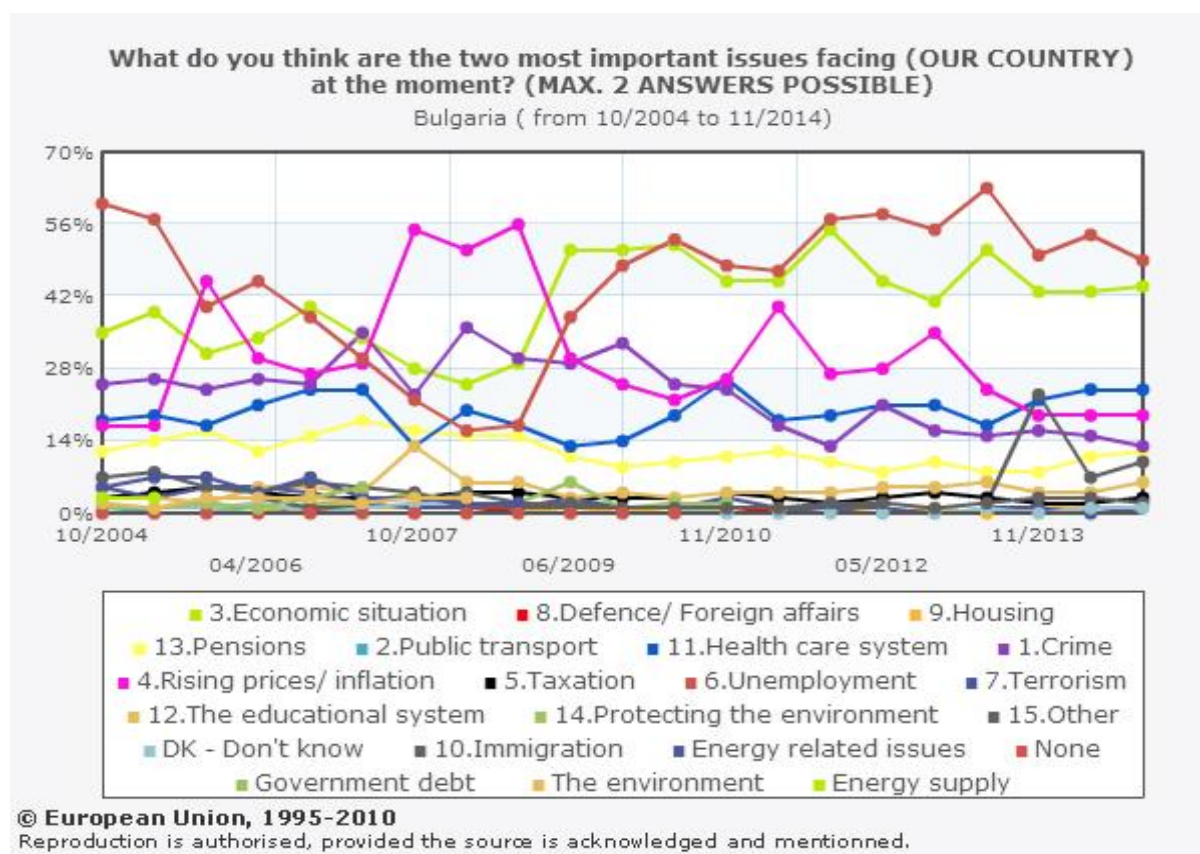


Chart 18 Most important issues in BG

