



# National political parties, public opinion, and European integration

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# Lecture outline

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1. Public opinion on European integration. Explanations for the EU support / Euroscepticism.
2. National political parties' attitudes towards European integration: a typology.
3. Party Positions on the European Union: explanatory hypotheses
4. Political Parties and Public Opinion Attitudes: “Who leads, Who Follows”?
5. Politicization of the European Union. The concept and its implications for the European integration process.
6. Data on party attitudes to European integration

# Public opinion on European integration. Explanatory models



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Before the Treaty of Maastricht – the general explanatory model was that of *permissive consensus*:

**European integration as élite-driven process:** during this period citizens preferred to delegate questions concerning Europe to national political elites (Lindberg e Scheingold, 1971)

Positive attitudes towards European project were accompanied by a low political salience of the European integration issue (Inglehart 1970)

The general public was indifferent, passive and showed no interest in European integration process (Hix 1999, Leconte, 2010).

Since the early 1990s *permissive consensus* has transformed into *constraining dissensus* (Hooghe, Marks, 2005, 2006, 2008)

# Public opinion on European integration (2)



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Explanatory models for the EU support / Euroscepticism :

**Instrumental Rationality (Economic Utilitarianism) model:** pro- or anti-European individual sentiments and public opinion attitudes are the product of rational thinking and of cost-benefit calculations

Two variations:

**Egocentric Individualism-** participation in the European integration process is evaluated on the basis of convenience and personal interests.

Individuals who directly benefit from the single market and/or the EU aid (e.g. farmers) are likely to develop positive attitudes toward Europe (Gabel,1998).

# Public opinion on European integration (3)

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- Sociotropic utilitarianism** - EU membership is seen as creating favourable environment for national economic development;
- Support for/opposition to European integration is influenced by the performance of the national economic system;
  - Support for integration is strong when the state of the national economy (in terms of inflation, unemployment and GDP growth) is good (Eichenberg e Dalton, 1993) (and vice versa).

# Public opinion on European integration (4)

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**Cognitive mobilization model** – rising levels of exposure to formal education and mass communications, as well as growing awareness of Europe and its institutions are seen as important sources of a sense of personal identification with Europe and of favourable attitudes towards European integration process (Inglehart, 1970)

According to Jensenn (1991) there is no positive relationship between cognitive mobilization and europeanism and the latter is much more affected by the development of cosmopolitan attitudes.

# Public opinion on European integration (5)

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**Affective-Identitarian model** - national (or subnational) identity is a key predictor of the orientations of public opinion with respect to the EU.

There are several different interpretations within this model:

- strong national identities is an obstacle in the way of European integration;
- a strong national identity is fully compatible with positive attitudes towards Europe;
- national identity works in opposite directions, in favour of or against European integration, according to the context concerned, and especially as a consequence of specific political events;
- Both national and supranational identities are seen as complex constructions including a number of ascriptive (ethnic) and achieved (civic) components. These components can be positively or negatively correlated.

# Public opinion on European integration (6)



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## Cueing Rationality (Political Drivers) Model:

1. Political Values: in evaluating the EU individuals use *political cues*, i.e. rely on their ideological orientations or positions of their preferred political party.
2. Individuals' perceptions of their own national political institutions :
  - *Institutional proxy mechanism* – confidence in institutions has a positive impact on citizens' attitudes to Europe because the national institutions are used as cognitive shortcuts (Anderson, 1998)
  - *substitution mechanism*: a lack of confidence in the national political system leads to the development of strong pro-European sentiments (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000)
  - *multi-level modelling*: the relationship between confidence in the national institutions and European identity, is mediated by a third variable, the quality of governance. If the letter is high, the relationship is considered to be negative (Bellucci et al., 2012)

# A Typology of Party Attitudes to European Integration (1)

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The basic division is between Euroscepticism and Pro-Europeanism

“Classical” typology of Euroscepticism (P. Taggart e A. Szczerbiak, 2004):

- *Hard Euroscepticism*: a principled opposition to the EU and European integration, it can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from the EU membership.
- *Soft Euroscepticism*: it is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership, but an expression of qualified opposition to one (or a number) of policy area(s) within the EU, a sense that “national interest” is currently at odds with the EU’s trajectory.

# A Typology of Party Attitudes to European Integration (2)

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Variety of classifications:

P. Kopecky and C. Mudde (2002); N. Conti (2003): Identity Europeanists (Euroenthusiasts), Functional Europeanists (Europragmatics), Eurosceptics and anti-Europeanists (Eurorejects);

R. Tiersky (2001): Euroscepticism, Europessimism, Europhobia and Eurocynism;

C. Leconte (2010): utilitarian Euroscepticism, political Euroscepticism, value-based Euroscepticism, cultural anti-Europeanism.

# A Typology of Party Attitudes to European Integration (3)

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There are different ways Euroscepticism can be manifested in political parties (P. Taggart, 1998):

- *Single issue Eurosceptical parties (or coalitions)*, they exist only to express opposition to the EU;
- *Protest based parties with Euroscepticism*, they take an anti-EU position as an adjunct to their general opposition to the functioning of political systems;
- *Established parties with Eurosceptical positions*;
- *Eurosceptical factions.*

# Party Positions on the EU. Explanatory hypotheses (1)

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## Ideological dimension (1)

- European integration does not act for party systems as a new cleavage, political parties “blend” the issue of European integration into existing patterns of party competition (Marks G., Wilson C., 2000).
- Any political party has its own **‘bounded rationality’ or historically embedded predispositions** (ideological propensities, endogenous constraints of party organization, constituency ties, reputation) that shape the way in which it comes to terms with new challenges like European integration.
- The characteristics summarized by party families are a ‘prism’ through which political parties deal with new issues.

# Party Positions on the EU. Explanatory hypotheses (2)

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This approach is based on **the theory of social cleavages** set out by S. Lipset and S. Rokkan.

Party positions on European integration are supposed to be dependent on following cleavages:

- class, religious and centre-periphery cleavage (Marks G., Wilson C., 2000).
- centrist ideology vs. Ideological extremism; the left/right cleavage; the state/church cleavage; the parties' positions on the "new politics cleavage" (C. Laconte, 2010)

# Party Positions on the EU.

## Explanatory hypotheses (3)

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- Class cleavage: parties generally supporting regulated capitalism (political integration is seen as beneficial) are more pro-European than parties supporting neoliberal doctrine (economic integration is seen as beneficial).
- Religious cleavage (both religion and the degree of religiosity are important) : Catholic Christian Democracy tends to be more Europeanist than both Protestant Christian Democracy and political parties defending secular values.
- Centre-periphery cleavage: parties representing ethno-territorial minorities are more pro-European than nationalist parties.

# Party Positions on the EU. Explanatory hypotheses (4)

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## Left/Right dimension

- Until the end of 1970s left-of-centre parties opposed European integration because it was perceived as a threat to social democratic achievements, first of all to the Keynesian welfare state; for parties on the right economic integration was beneficial because it constrained the economic intervention of national governments.
- Since 1980s left-of-centre parties shifted in favor of deeper integration and became more supportive to European integration than right-of-centre parties.

What is the reason?

- The enhanced regulatory capacity of the EU.

# Party Positions on the EU. Explanatory hypotheses (5)

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## **GAL/TAN dimension**

(postmaterialism/materialism, “old politics”/”new politics”):

green/alternative/libertarian vs.  
traditionalist/authoritarian/nationalist

Radical Right, Right-populist, conservative and nationalist parties supporting traditional values and opposing immigration tend to be more Eurosceptic; parties located toward GAL pole, e.g. Green parties, have become more integrationist over time (Hooghe, Marks, Wilson, 2002).

# Party Positions on the EU. Explanatory hypopheses (6)

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## Ideological dimension (2)

- European integration and Left/Right contestation are independent of each other:
- Political conflict over European integration engages national sovereignty and identity issues; Left/Right contestation involves the allocation of values among functional interests (Hix, 1999).
- A **new cleavage hypophesis**: mobilization for or against European integration is a part of a new structural conflict between the winners and losers of the processes of 'globalization' and 'denationalization', between 'integration' and 'demarcation' (Kriesi, 2007)

# Party Positions on the EU.

## Explanatory hypotheses (7)

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### Strategic dimension (1)

**The core/periphery dimension** (mainstream parties vs. marginal parties)

- Euroscepticism is “a touchstone of dissent” (P. Taggart, 1998)
- Anti-establishment parties (that wish to position themselves outside the cartel of dominant parties) intentionally use Euroscepticism as an issue that differentiates them from the more established ones.

# Party Positions on the EU.

## Explanatory hypotheses (8)

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What are the reasons?

- Mainstream political parties, either in power or in opposition, are main beneficiaries of European integration, they exert influence over the main European institutions having access to the EU agenda-setting, decision-making and redistributive mechanisms (L. Topaloff, 2013); “socializing effect” (C. Leconte, 2010)
- “The shadow of the future” – Even being in opposition mainstream parties should keep in mind that sooner or later they will return to office (L. Topaloff, 2013)

# Party Positions on the EU. Explanatory hypotheses (9)

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## Strategic dimension (2)

### The government/opposition dimension

Euroscepticism as “the politics of opposition”

- Euroscepticism is first of all “a politics of opposition”, parties’ positions on the EU depend on the dynamics of competition between government and opposition (N. Sitter, 2002).
- Parties’ attitudes are not static but dynamic, since they are largely linked to the contextual situation of challenges and opportunities open to parties at different points in time (Conti, 2003).

# Party Positions on the EU.

## Explanatory hypotheses (10)

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Why not all marginalized political parties and parties in opposition are Eurosceptic?

- This is because the principal strategic goals pursued by political parties are different:
  - Office-seeking parties: access to government
  - Policy-seeking parties: influence on policy
  - Vote-seeking parties: electoral success

# Party Positions on the EU.

## Explanatory hypotheses (11)

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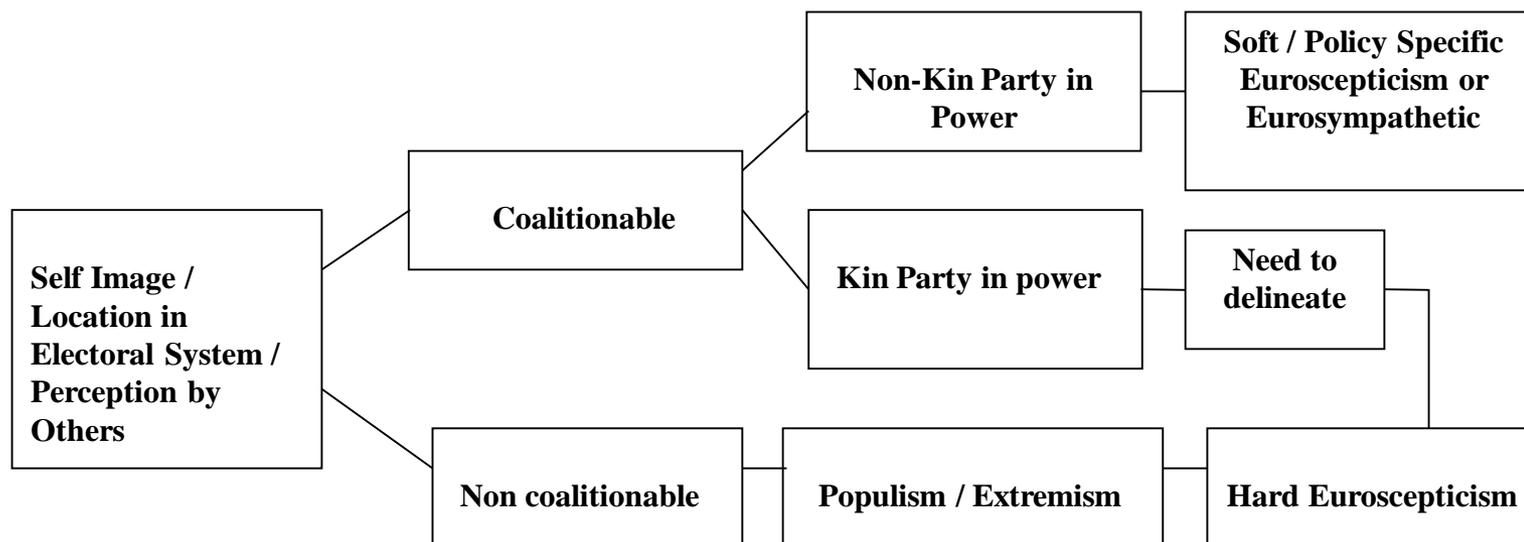


Parties' attitudes towards the European Union depend on the choice of the priority goal:

While policy seeking and vote-seeking parties have no incentives to moderate their Euroscepticism, office-seeking parties have to make a «right choice» to survive.

L. Topaloff proposes a model to explain strategic behaviour of the small political parties vis-à-vis the issue of Europe – the “**coalitionability model**” (Topaloff, 2013)

# Strategic decision-making tree of a marginal party (Topaloff, 2013)



# The Salience of European integration in political competition (1)

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Not only *issue positions* but also *issue salience* is important.

National political parties can manipulate the salience of European integration in a way that best suits their needs and strategic interests.

- “Variation in the issue salience of European integration across parties can be attributed to a considerable extent to the strategic behavior of those parties”.
- Political parties that stand to gain from the issue try to emphasize it, while parties that stand to lose try to de-emphasize it (M. Streenbergen, D. Scott, 2004).

# The Salience of European integration in political competition (2)

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The discourse on European integration (as well as on other issues) is used as a tool to achieve concrete party goals: electoral success (vote-seeking), the pursuit of political office (office-seeking, office-holding and policy-seeking), or **party cohesion (cohesion-seeking)**.

**Systemic salience hypothesis:** The political environment in which a party operates (political system and behavior of other parties) is important.

When other parties in the political system have an incentive to emphasize an issue a party can ignore or de-emphasize it only at the risk of marginalisation (M. Streenbergen, D. Scott, 2004).

# The Salience of European integration in political competition (3)

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- As far as political parties seek multiple goals that may or may not be mutually compatible, they have different incentives for (de-)emphasizing European integration issues:
- The divergence (convergence) between party positions on European integration and the positions of its voters;
- High (low) levels of party internal divisions over the issue of European integration;
- (In)compatibility between a party's own stance toward European integration and that of potential coalition partners (M. Streenbergen, D. Scott, 2004)

# Patterns of competition over European integration in European Party Systems



- **Systems of limited contestation** (the dominant type of party systems in Europe, e.g. six founding states, Spain, Finland, Slovenia): the major parties in the party system display a pervasive commitment to the European project, European integration is not an issue of competition among major parties;
- **Systems of open contestation** (the least common type of party systems: Britain, Denmark, etc.): there is a divergence in positions on European integration between major parties, one or more parties of government take a position of Euroscepticism;
- **Systems of constrained competition** (the EU member states of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe): the psychological significance of a “return to Europe” is a predominant factor, the presence of Eurosceptic parties within party system is irrelevant (P. Taggart, A. Szczerbiak, 2008)

# Political Parties and Public Opinion

## Attitudes: “Who leads, Who Follows”? (1)



There are three alternative models of the correlation between mass and elite preferences on European integration:

- 1. Top-down process:** political parties shape and determine voters' opinion on European integration (Ray, 2003, Hellström, 2008). It is difficult for citizens to calculate the impact of European integration on their lives, therefore they expect political elites to provide them with information that can form their opinions.
- 2. Bottom-up process (electoral connection):** political elites adopt positions the mass public takes on European integration. As rational actors, political parties are supposed to try to maximize their share of the popular vote and consequently they should have an incentive to take EU policy positions that reflect voters' preferences: “The more pro-EU the electorate is, the more pro-EU national parties tend to be” (Carrubba, 2001).

# Political Parties and Public Opinion

## Attitudes: “Who leads, Who Follows”? (2)

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**3. Dual-process model:** elites simultaneously seek to influence and to respond to the mass public (Streenbergen, Edwards, de Vries, 2007)

Key aspects that may influence mass–elite linkages:

- 1) *Attributes of electoral systems:* proportional representation (party median representation) vs. plurality systems (median voter representation); the proximity of an election; referendums;
- 2) *Attributes of parties:* issue salience; the degree of intra-party dissent;
- 3) *Attributes of party systems:* the degree of inter-party dissent;
- 4) *Attributes of party supporters:* the level of opinion leaders representation among party constituents.

# Politicization of the European Union (1)

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## Definitions:

- “an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of policy formulation within the EU” (de Wilde, 2011);
- “a widening of the audience or clientele interested and active in [European] integration” (Schmitter, 1969, Hurrelmann et al., 2012); “the inclusion of mass public attitudes into the politics of European integration” (Green-Pederson, 2012).

# Politicization of the European Union (2)



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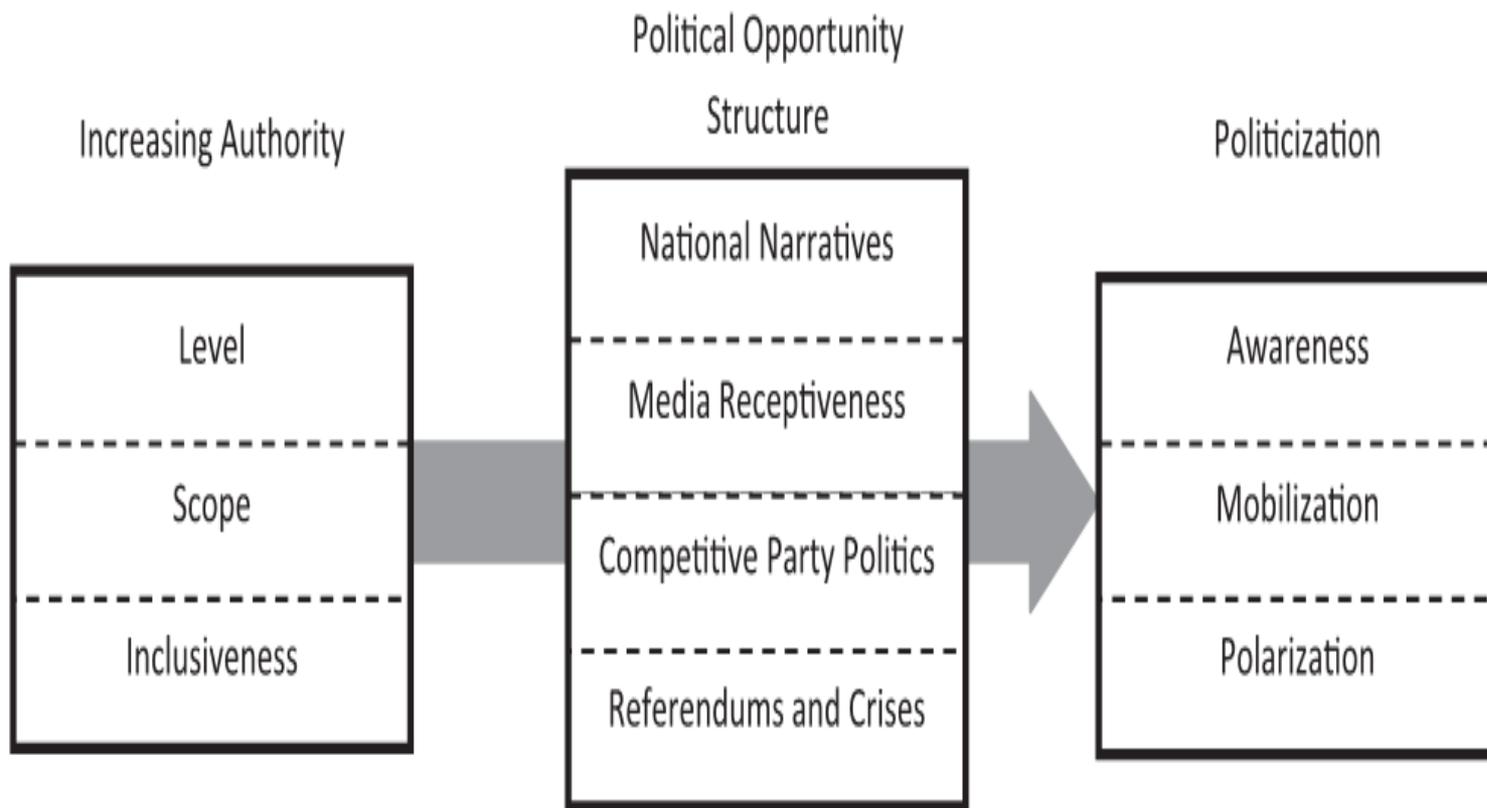
## The De Wilde-Zürn model of politicization (2012)

1. The principal real cause of politicization is increased EU authority
2. **Intermediating factors** that influence scope and patterns of politicization: national narratives about European integration, media receptiveness for the EU-related issues, national- and European-level institutional opportunities, i.e. election or referendum campaigns, treaty negotiations, or crises of various types.
3. EU politicization involves three **sub-processes**:
  - Intensification of debate (mobilization);
  - Polarization of opinion (polarization);
  - Increasing public resonance (awareness).

# Politicization of the European Union (3)



The De Wilde-Zürn model of politicization (2012)



# Politicization of the European Union (4)



Manifestations of politicization:

- Institutions (political conflict and party politics in the EU multilevel polity);
- Decision-making processes (the dominance of political actors relative to technocrats/bureaucrats in decision-making);
- Issues (the public contentiousness of European issues) (de Wilde, 2007).

The agents of politicization: politicians, experts, interest groups, mass media, all individuals and groups in a position to organize political protest (de Wilde, Zürn, 2012).

Arenas of political discourse:

- Institutional arenas;
- Intermediary arenas;
- Citizen arenas (Hurrelmann et al., 2012).

# Politicization of the European Union (5)



The process of politicization functions to:

- Structure political conflict;
- Affect the course of integration;
- Raise the question of EU legitimacy (de Wilde, 2011).

Alternative outcomes:

- Regional and national identity mobilization – rise of identity politics - public opinion becomes more negative about European integration – “constraining dissensus” that hinder further integration - renationalization (post-functionalist theory), (Hooge, Marks, 2009)
- Mass-mediated debates within European public sphere can enhance democracy – democratic deficit can be redressed (democratic functionalism), (Statham, Trezz, 2014)
- A final phase of European integration – political and attitudinal spill-over - federal United States of Europe (neofunctionalist theory), (Schmitter, 1969)

# Data on party attitudes to European integration

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## 1. Expert surveys

Chapel Hill expert surveys - University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill

<http://www.chesdata.eu/>

## 2. Party manifestos

The Manifesto Project – Free University of Berlin:

<https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>

The Euromanifesto Project – the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES):

<http://eeshomepage.net/euromanifesto-study/>