



IED - YDE Winter Academy 2018

The Future of the European Union. What Challenges ahead?

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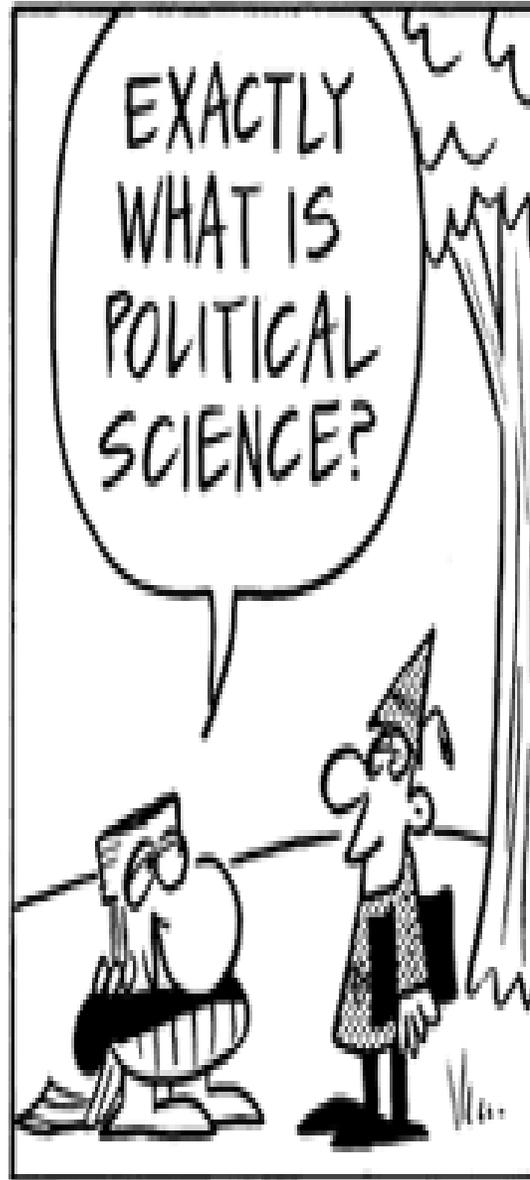
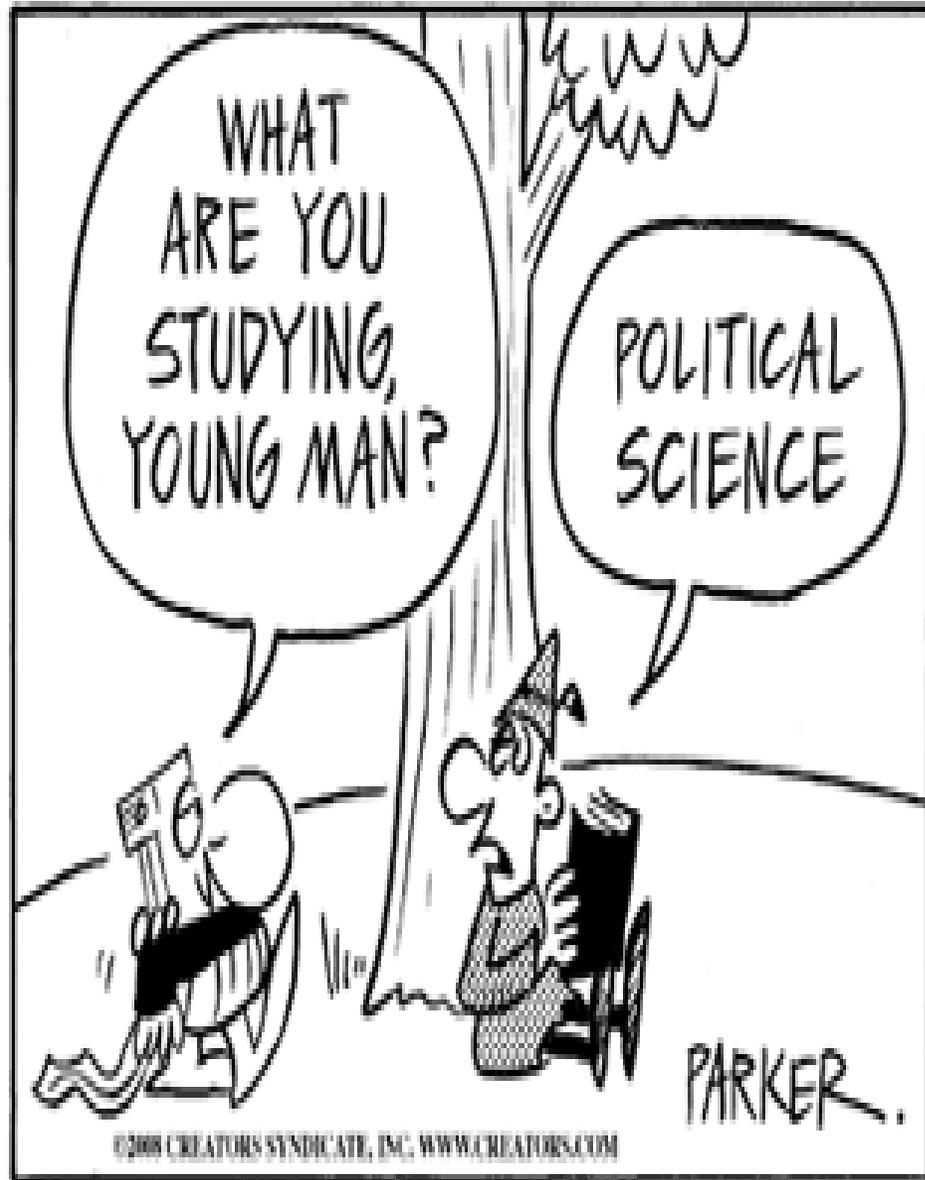
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Session 2: The rise of Eurosceptic and populist parties in the EU

Where does populism end and fascism or communism start?

Can populism be a temptation for centrist parties as well?

As European democrats, how can we listen to and talk to the voters of such parties, while staying strong on our values?



What is an Eurosceptic?

- A person who is opposed to increasing the powers of the European Union. (*OED*)
- European political doctrine that advocates disengagement from the European Union (EU). Political parties that espouse a Eurosceptic viewpoint tend to be broadly populist and generally support tighter immigration controls in addition to the dismantling or streamlining of the EU bureaucratic structure. (Michael Ray, *Britannica*)

- *Hard Euroscepticism is where there is a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived.*
 - includes the rejection of the European Union membership.
 - It is related to the pure Europhobia, and radically denies both economic and political European integration.
 - It is a kind of withdrawalist euroscepticism, which is even against to the existence of the EU.

- *“Soft Euroscepticism” is 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, or where there is a sense that ‘national interest’ is currently at odds with the EU’s trajectory.*
 - a kind of reformist euroscepticism, which supports the existence of the European Union and also the membership.
 - The opposition issues of soft euroscepticism are the integration policies of the EU and the idea of a federal Europe.
 - is related to Eurorealism that includes the desire for more sovereignty for nation states.
 - is more pervasive and contingent, so if the policies change, it can also be a subject to modification. (See Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002 & Ultan and Ornek, 2015)

- Euroscepticism is not the same as populism
- Euroscepticism is not the same as europhobia

Four core roots of Euroscepticism

- **The first root of Euroscepticism centres on the issue of democracy.**
 - It has a normative connotation as it is chiefly concerned with the EU's democratic and political legitimacy.
 - Criticism is often directed at the Union's democracy deficit and the EU is decried for a lack of transparency in decision-making as well as for its elitist, inflated, opaque, technocratic, overbearing, and costly bureaucracy.
 - Commonly proposed solutions include more direct democracy or a substantial downsizing of Europe's bureaucracy.
 - Centred on democracy, this dimension easily lends itself to populist ideology or rhetoric

- **The second root of Euroscepticism relates to national sovereignty.**
 - It is closely linked to the first one but focuses more on the transfer of power between the member states and the EU and views it as a 'loss' of sovereignty rather than a 'pooling and sharing' mechanism.
 - This dimension of Euroscepticism is fed by the 'compliance costs' linked to the implementation of EU laws and rules, under the control of the Commission and the Court of Justice.
 - It is often accompanied by the pledge for a full or partial return of competences and powers to the national level.
 - This dimension has gained importance during the 'sovereign debt crisis' and after the creation of the 'Troika', which symbolised an 'IMF type' relation between Brussels and the countries under programme, based on the conditionality principle.
 - The reform of 'Economic and Monetary Union governance' has also given new impetus to this Eurosceptic dimension.

- **The third root of Euroscepticism essentially focuses on the economy and has a utilitarian connotation.**

- It can be grouped along the terms liberalism, austerity and solidarity.
- This Eurosceptic dimension has long been fed by the denunciation of Brussels “free market liberalisation”, especially since the entering into force of the Single European Act in the 1980’s, which did not only promote liberalisation but also fostered solidarity (especially via the structural funds).
- It has substantially contributed to the rise and diversification of the Eurosceptics since 2008 and throughout the sovereign debt and euro area crises.
- On the one hand, new voices have arisen (mostly on the right) opposing financial transfers to crisis-ridden countries.
- On the other, the radical left views the EU and the euro as amplifier of globalisation subjecting its member states and citizens to neoliberal policies, which engender rising inequality and wage cuts.
- The EU is also held responsible for the strict austerity course leading to massive unemployment and an erosion of the welfare state. While national governments are also blamed, the EU and its member states are criticised for their lack of solidarity.

- **The fourth root of Euroscepticism has a more ‘emotional’ connotation and revolves around national identity.**
 - Founded on the principle of free movement of people, the EU is blamed for an increase in migration both from within and without its borders.
 - Criticism of the Union is linked to fears of the erosion of national identity due to threats from distinct ethnic groups (such as the Roma) or different religions (such as Islam).
 - Another type of criticism, which carries a more utilitarian than xenophobic connotation, can be referred to as ‘welfare populism’.
 - This phenomenon has been observed in more prosperous Northern European states where fears are fuelled that immigrants will abuse and hollow out national social systems.

- We further distinguish two degrees of the phenomenon:
- **Eurosceptics** are the more moderate political forces expressing vocal criticism against the Union and its policies and calling for reform.
- **Europhobes** refer to those that reject European belonging and call for an exit from the EU, the Euro, and/or the Schengen area. (Bertoncini & Koenig, 2014)

Why has central and eastern Europe turned so eurosceptic?

- **First, central Europe is particularly vulnerable to populism.**
 - The fallout from the last economic crisis led to a surge of populism, nationalism and isolationist tendencies in Western states
 - Let's not forget democracy and free markets were only introduced to central Europe 25 or so years ago.
 - Constitutions are less enshrined in political cultures.
 - The middle class, with its default preference for moderation, is less present.
 - the welfare state tends to have a smaller capacity to generously redistribute incomes and provide opportunities for the poor.

- **Second, the shock of transition from communism to democracy is greater than anybody predicted.**
 - societies have taken a serious knock on several levels: economic, political, social and even cultural.
 - while big cities westernised quickly, provinces were often forgotten in the push to deregulate economies and adopt EU standards.
 - Schengen has allowed people to travel and see the prosperity in other EU countries, and consequently turn sour towards their own political establishments.
 - the objective economic reality is starker than many politicians would like to admit.
 - people get impatient and look for leaders who offer shortcuts – a quick way to 'restore dignity'.
 - people understand dignity as the freedom to choose other role models and standards which came with the process of Europeanisation.
 - moreover, for easterners to be an eternal pupil to westerners is psychologically demanding

- **Third, there are genuine concerns about double standards.**
 - Companies really do sell lower quality food in eastern parts of the EU.
 - Digital services are less accessible from, say, Slovakia than Austria.
 - Unfair stereotypes about poorer easterners persist in the former EU-15.
 - Some decisions at the EU level reflect the needs of postindustrial, postmodern, developed societies in the West rather than those of the continent's East.
 - Central Europe's voice often goes unheard, the region is underrepresented in institutions like the European External Action Service.
 - EU headquarters are mostly located in Western Europe. (Wisniewski, 2018)

What will the Eurosceptics do?

- the impact that the Eurosceptics have in the new European Parliament will depend not just on their overall numbers but also on their cohesiveness as a group
- In particular, the Eurosceptics could do **three things**.
 - **First**, they could try to spoil, block, slow down, or delegitimise the selection process for the European Commission president.
 - **Second**, the Eurosceptics may seek to damage the European Parliament's reputation on a day-to-day basis.
 - **Third**, the Eurosceptics will make it harder for mainstream parties to argue for free movement within the EU and for fiscal transfers and solidarity within the eurozone.

The real danger

- However, the populist parties do not need to command a majority in the parliament to impose their agenda. Rather, the real danger of the Eurosceptics is the way that **they may influence the agenda of the mainstream parties, both in Europe and at home.**
- The Eurosceptic surge in the European elections could reduce even further the appetite for “more Europe” of some key member state governments.

What to do?

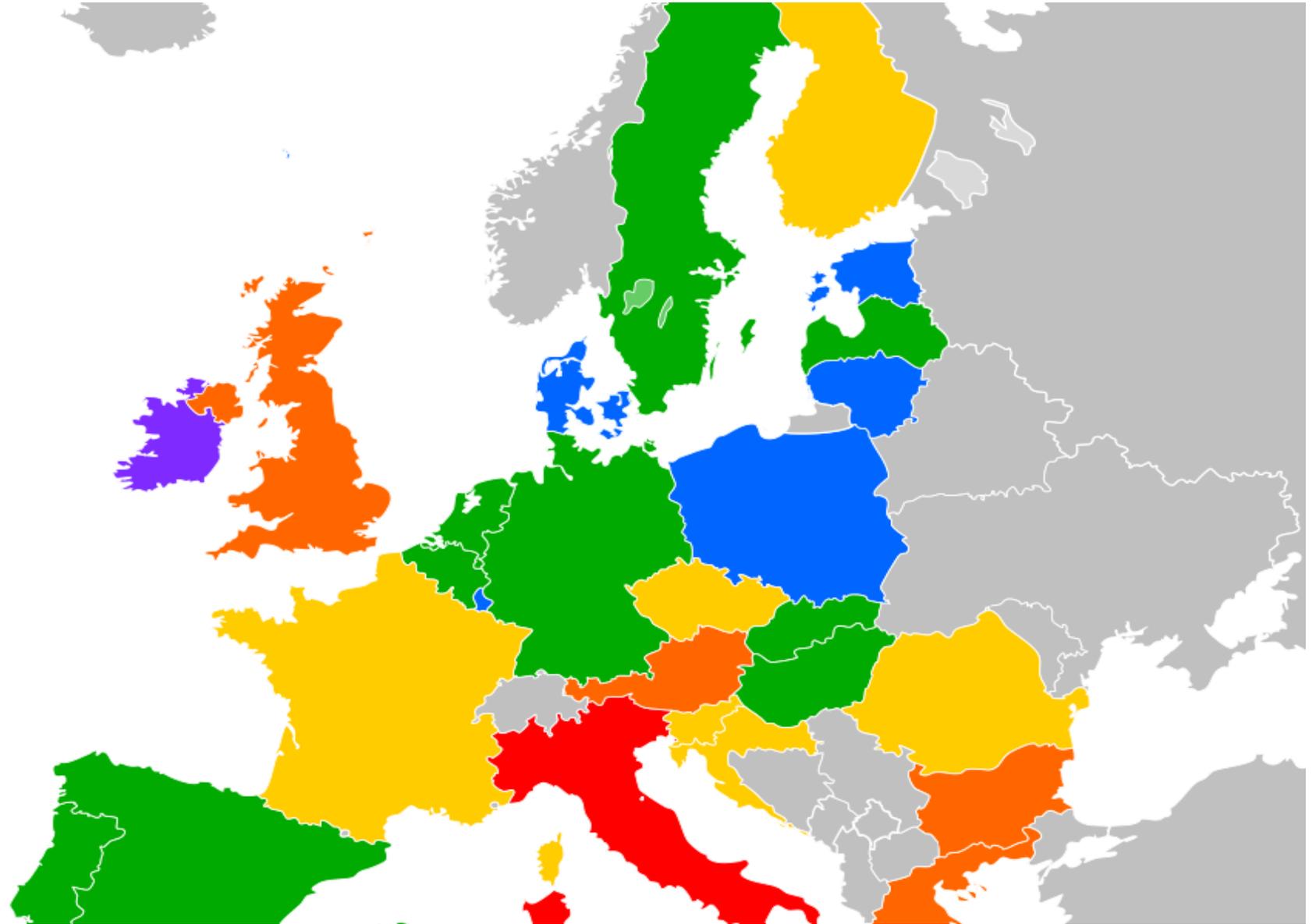
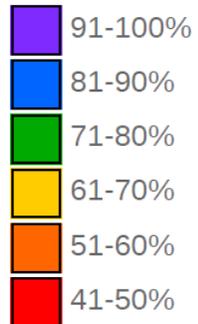
- The danger is that the response of the mainstream parties will be to retreat into technocratic co-operation and seek to continue business as usual.
- Instead, rather than forming a pro-European bloc, they should try to create the space for political battles between competing visions of Europe and thereby try to preserve left–right competition at both national and European levels.
- That will mean developing
 - a new agenda for social Europe and responsible capitalism,
 - more imaginative ideas on migration, solidarity and responsibility,
 - a policy agenda that shows how the EU is part of the solution to the problems of the twenty-first century – from dealing with big data to the rise of China.

- **If Europe is to defeat the Eurosceptics, it has to confront them at home, where they will be stronger, and not only in Brussels, where they will be weaker.**
- They will also need to pay attention to the new cleavages that have emerged throughout the crisis, such as the one dividing debtors and creditors and euro-ins and euro-outs.
- **In short, Europe needs more politics and more disagreements.**
- Rather than huddling together, mainstream parties need to give people real choices and address the issues that really concern people. (Leonard & Torreblanca, 2014)

Question: Taking everything into account, would you say that (OUR COUNTRY) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of EU? (%)

Poll about perceived balance benefit to be in EU (end 2018) - source data: [Parlamer 2018](#). Image source: Wikipedia

Answer: Benefited

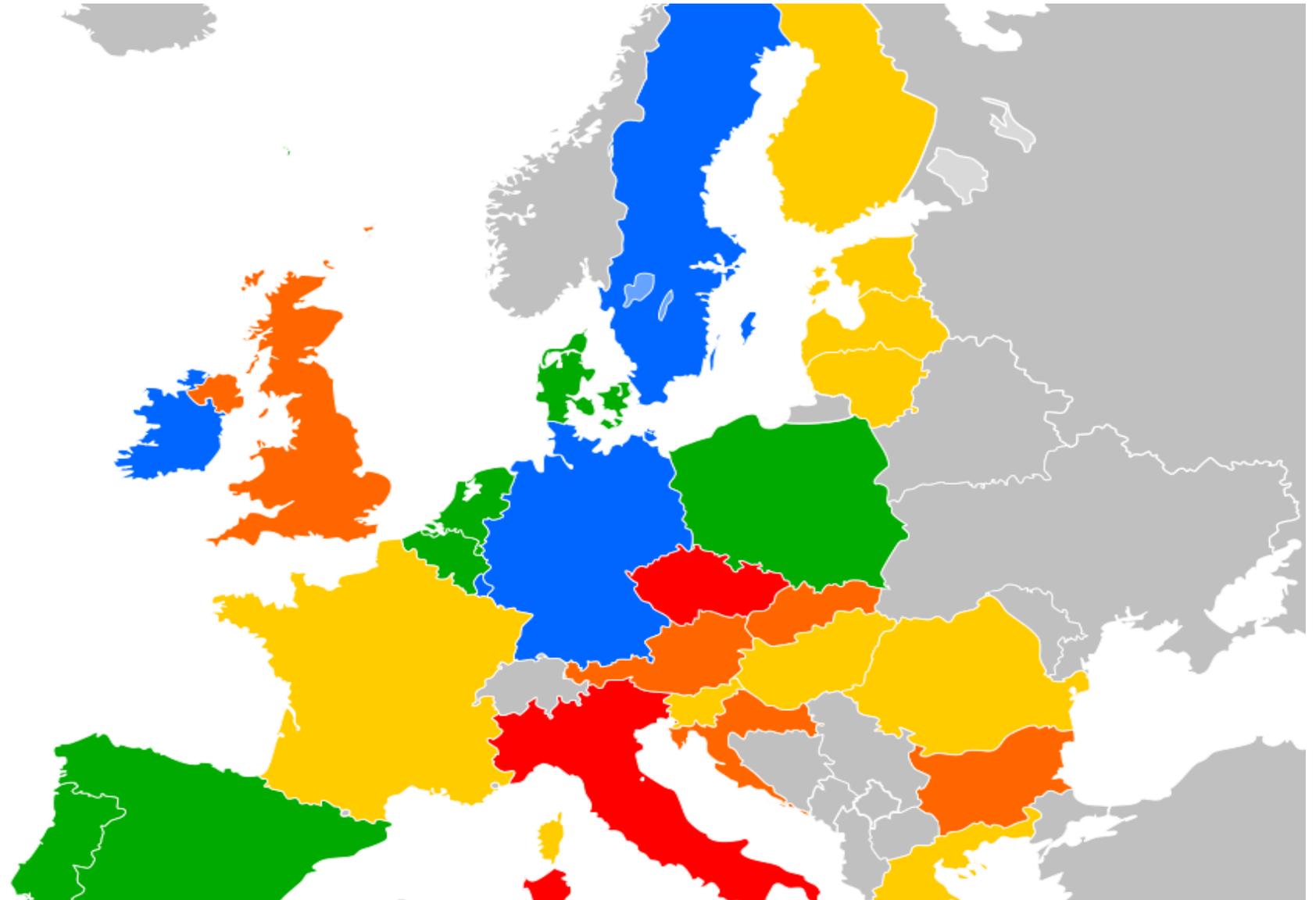
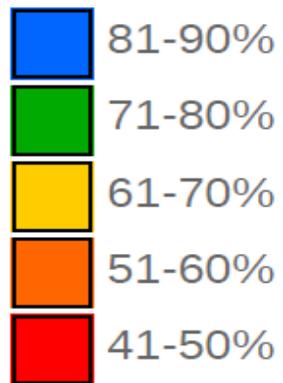


Question: *If a referendum was held tomorrow regarding (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the EU, how would you vote? (%)*

Poll about remaining or leaving EU (end 2018) - source data: [Parlamer 2018](#).

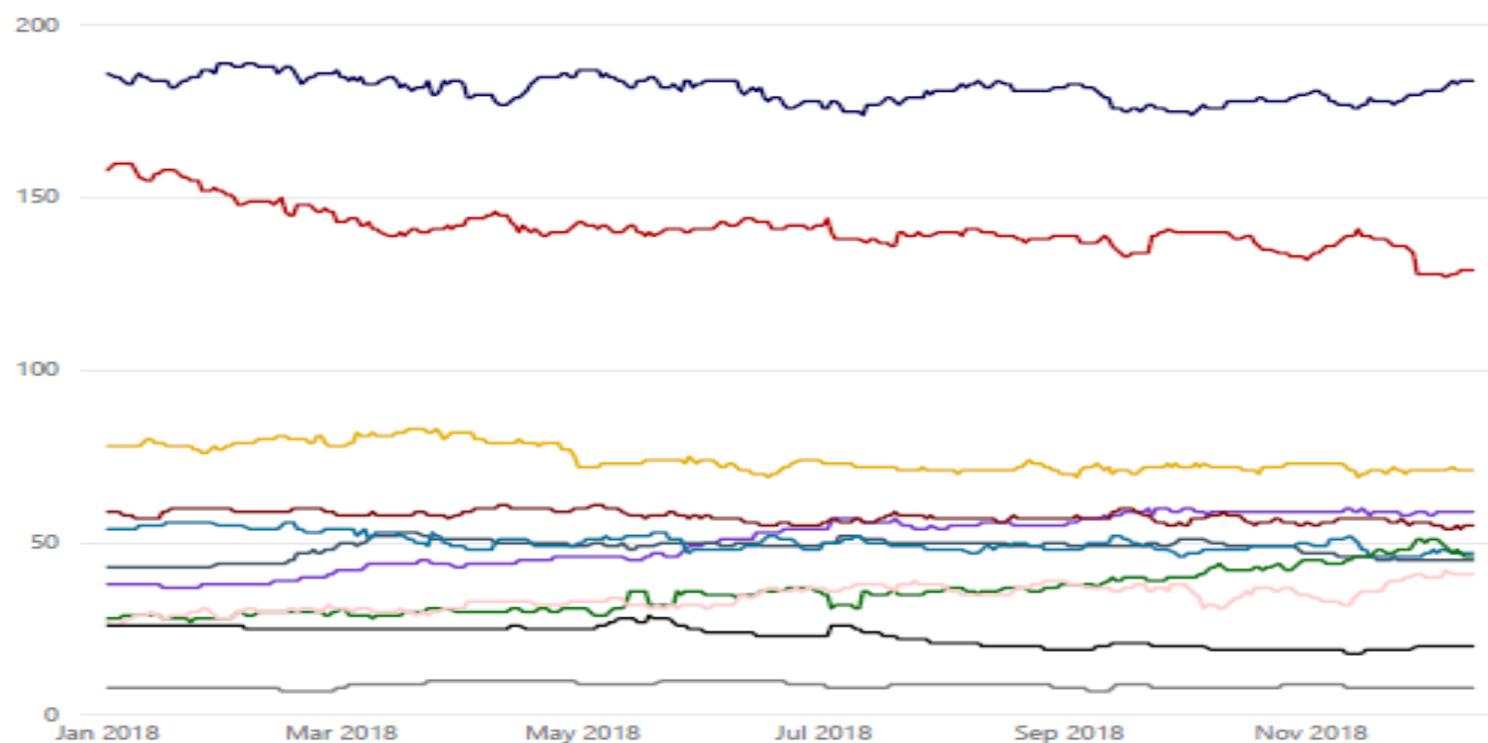
Image source: Wikipedia

Answer : I would vote to remain in the EU



European elections 2019 - Poll of polls

Number of projected seats at 2019 election for each party group in European Parliament. Total number of seats: 705. Hover over the lines for historical data or select a time frame using the slider.



Projected number of seats by group as of 12 Dec 2018

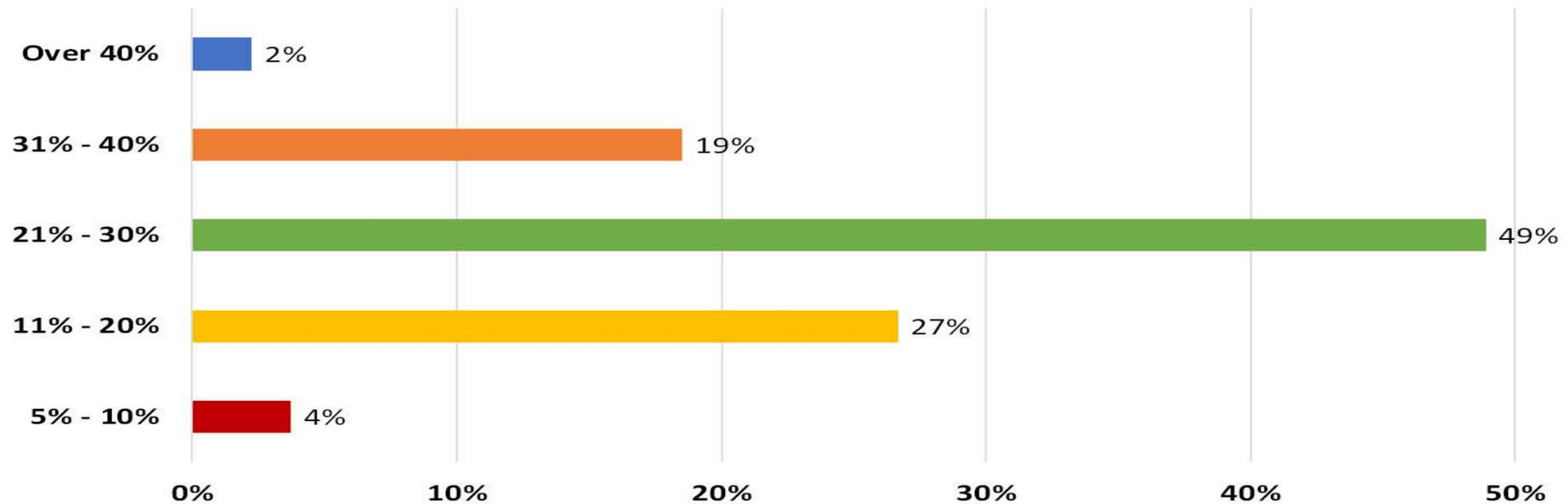
	EPP EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY GROUP	184
	S&D PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE OF SOCIALISTS AND DEMOCRATS	129
	ALDE ALLIANCE OF LIBERALS AND DEMOCRATS FOR EUROPE	71
	ENF EUROPE OF NATIONS AND FREEDOM	59
	GUE/NGL EUROPEAN UNITED LEFT/NORDIC GREEN LEFT	55
	ECR EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES AND REFORMISTS	47
	Greens/EFA THE GREENS/EUROPEAN FREE ALLIANCE	46
	EFDD EUROPE OF FREEDOM AND DIRECT DEMOCRACY	45
	New NEW PARTIES	41
	En marche LA REPUBLIQUE EN MARCHÉ	20
	NI NON-ATTACHED MEMBERS	8

Sources and Methodology: PollofPolls.eu and European Parliament. PollofPolls.eu is an independent, non-profit data aggregator that pulls polling data daily from around the EU. We cross-reference their data with poll results collected by the national offices of the European Parliament in each of the EU27 countries. For more about their methodology and sourcing, click [here](#). POLITICO updates this data with new information about the European party affiliation of national political parties. We display poll results from hundreds of polls across the EU over the past year to maximize context and avoid users being misled by individual poll results.

2019: A pivotal year for the EU

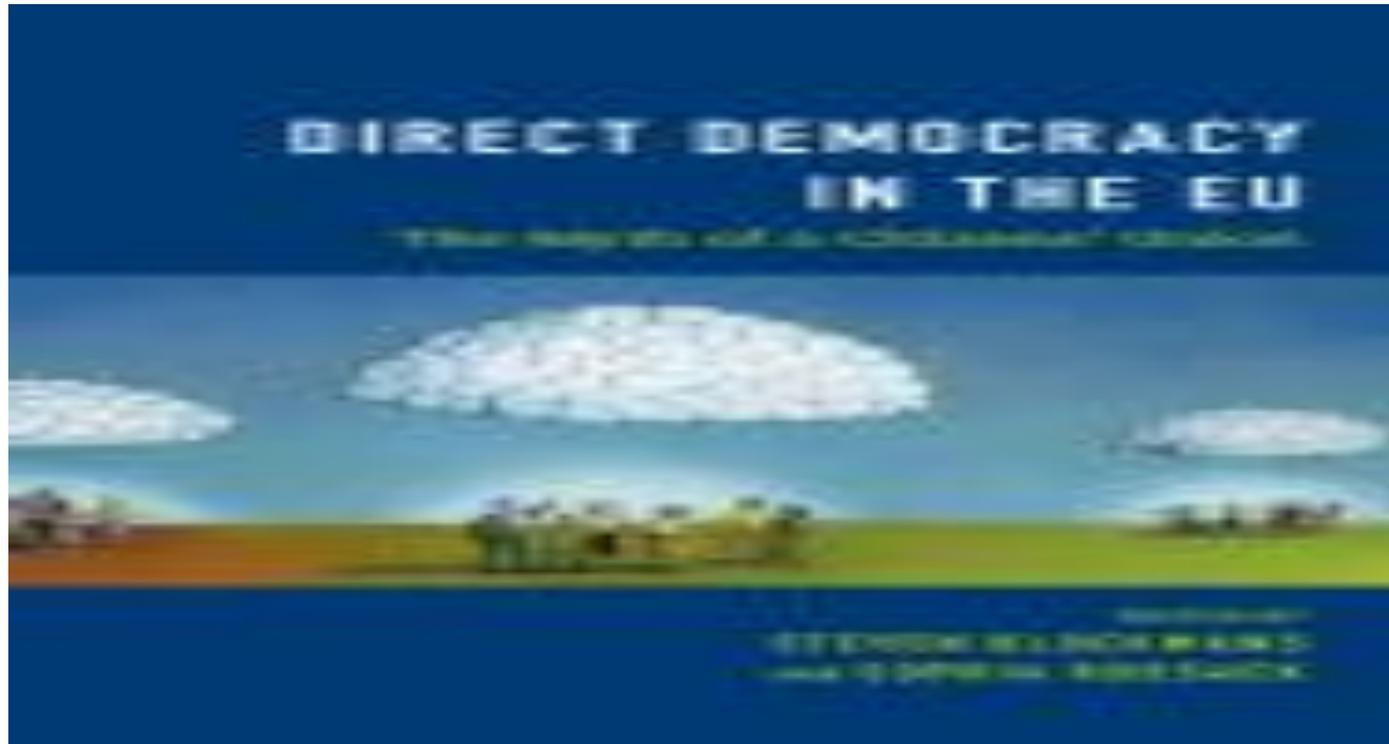
What % of seats will the (soft+hard) eurosceptics gain at the next elections?

Survey among EU affairs professionals February 2018



To discover how MEPs voted,
contact us: secretariat@votewatch.eu

Case study: *Direct Democracy in the EU: The Myth of a Citizens' Union*



- The state of democracy in the European Union is a subject of constant debate. While some have argued that concern about the 'democratic deficit' is misplaced, the prevailing sense is nevertheless that the EU has a democracy problem.
- *The achievements of single market, free movement and the Erasmus student exchange programme have all helped to break down cultural boundaries, but they risk being reversed by political narratives that drive citizens into ever more divided national mind-sets.*
- *While the leaders of the EU institutions and member states invest their hopes in reviving 'output legitimacy' ... the democratic legitimacy problem has been left to fester.*

- *As citizens make what experts consider to be 'wrong' populist-fuelled choices, sympathy has resurged for the classical concept of epistocracy or elite-mediated governance.*
- Many recent European referendums have indeed distorted accountability rather than improved democratic quality. Yet **bottom-up citizen interest in more direct forms of political control is a genie that cannot easily be put back into a bottle of elite-crafted, managerial democracy.**
- Across Europe, direct democracy needs to be improve rather than suppressed.
- Direct democracy has become more widespread around the world over the last decade and polls suggest that demand for direct democracy is on the rise across Europe.

- *A familiar critique is that citizens use referendums simply to gainsay and punish elites for reasons unrelated to the subject matter ostensibly under consideration. In recent years in Europe, EU related referendums have promoted better-informed and well-reasoned debate.*
- *A vicious circle thus forms: political parties and state institutions increasingly try to reach deals on EU issues that avoid having to call a referendum.*
- *Good direct democracy is not just about allowing citizens to trigger a referendum. It is about the quality and inclusiveness of the process that shadows direct popular votes.*

- *The use of direct democracy must not allow a majority to infringe upon the core liberal protection of minorities – this is a key part of breaking the link with populism.*
- ***Direct democracy is neither a panacea nor an unmitigated ill to be shunned. At most, it merits a modestly widened usage if used in the right way and if combined with other areas of democratic reform.***

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Thank you for your attention!